

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM (WTCS) BOARD**  
**JANUARY 20, 2026**  
**WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM**

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

Members Present: Lindsay Blumer, Eli Guthrie, Frances Huntley-Cooper, Dan Klecker, Pam McGillivray for Amy Pechacek, Timothy Nixon, Sara Rogers, Michael Rosen, Daniel Sperberg, Sharon Wendt for Jill Underly.

Members Absent: Quincey Daniels, Jr., Leslie Svacina.

System Office Staff Present: Sarah Arneson, Hilary Barker, Chevon Bowen, Victoria Chung, Rachel Colla, Danielle Cook, Julie Drake, Madeline Erce, Stephanie Glynn, Paul Hammer, Mandy Johnson, Tou Ya Khang, Christina Lorge, Ward Lyon, Chris Martin, Joel Mathis, Mandy Mayek, Colleen McCabe, Layla Merrifield, Carolann Nelson, Jeremy Nichols, Cristina Parente, Katy Pettersen, Karen Rahmeier, Anna Richter, Katie Roberts, Dan Scanlon, Chrystal Seeley-Schreck, Brent Simmons, Lenard Simpson, John Smigleski, Latisha Spence-Brookens, Megan Stritchko, Brandon Trujillo, Julie Tyznik, JP Villavicencio, Ann Westrich, Quentin Woods.

District/Others Present: Tracy Pierner, Blackhawk Technical College; Sunem Beaton-Garcia, Chippewa Valley Technical College; Lucas Carrigg, Chris Matheny, Fox Valley Technical College; Morgan Phillips, Gateway Technical College; Paul Carlsen, Cameryn Hilbelink, Chou Yang, Lakeshore Technical College; Jennifer Berne, Sylvia Ramirez, Madison Area Technical College; Shelly Mondeik, Mid-State Technical College; Anthony Cruz, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Bonnie Baerwald, Mike Chevalier, Roy Marquez, Moraine Park Technical College; Kate Ferrel, Nicolet Area Technical College; Jeannie Worden, Northcentral Technical College; Kristen Raney, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College; Rich Barnhouse, Richard Haen, Alli Jerger, Waukesha County Technical College; Wade Hackbarth, Western Technical College; Kendra Klein, Wisconsin Student Government; Bryan Albrecht, John Wyatt, Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association.

**Board President Rogers called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. Julie Drake read the open meeting statement and roll call indicated that a quorum was present.**

**ITEM A: Approval of November 4-5, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

**It was moved by Board Member Sperberg, seconded by Board Member Wendt, that the November 4-5, 2025 meeting minutes be approved as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

**ITEM B: Report of the Board President**

The November and December reports from the Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents were distributed to Board Members on January 16, 2026. Universities of Wisconsin Regent and WTCS Board Member Nixon noted that transfer issues continue to be a frequent topic of

discussion. Chancellors are strongly encouraged to consult with their local technical colleges when launching new programs to ensure effective credit transfer, as well as when planning new facilities that may offer shared opportunities. Board President Rogers also shared that, at the January Regents meeting, many chancellors spoke positively about their strong relationships with technical colleges.

Serving with Board President Rogers on the WTCS Board Tuition Workgroup will be Board Members Blumer, Guthrie and Rosen.

The Biennial Budget Workgroup Members will be announced at the March meeting.

The WTCS Executive Committee will conduct System President Merrifield's performance evaluation in February and will report back to the Board in March.

## ITEM C: Report of the System President

System President Merrifield shared System updates:

- Early in January, System President Merrifield shared her [New Year's](#) message with stakeholders across the state and beyond, including lawmakers and industry leaders. The message highlighted the depth and breadth of our work and the purpose behind it, emphasizing that students and employers remain at the center of everything we do.
- In November, System President Merrifield addressed the Wisconsin Counties Association's Transportation Steering Committee, providing an overview of the System and highlighting our colleges' transportation-related programs, with particular emphasis on CDL programs.
- On January 7, System President Merrifield testified before the Senate Committee on Universities and Technical Colleges in support of a Dual Credit bill during the committee's session held at Waukesha County Technical College.
- Due to inclement weather, System President Merrifield was unable to attend an event recognizing a monetary gift and the donation of 50 laptops from the AT&T Foundation to Milwaukee Area Technical College's Integrated Education and Training and Community Education students. Events such as this underscore the strong partnerships our colleges build with employers and the meaningful impact these relationships have on students.
- In November, System President Merrifield attended the new Dental Clinic ribbon cutting ceremony at Lakeshore College. The new space is impressive, and students were present to provide demonstrations. This project was made possible through \$20 million in oral healthcare funding from the last budget cycle. Colleges across the System are now putting these grants to work, increasing the number of graduates available to meet the needs of local employers.
- On January 15, System President Merrifield attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for Madison College's Early Learning Campus at the Goodman South Campus. This Board-approved project was designed to meet specific community, employer and student needs, and it delivers on all of them. Board Member Huntley-Cooper noted that it is an excellent facility and a tremendous asset for students. The student-centered campus

includes capacity for drop-in care and supports Madison College's early childhood education students, who will help operate the facility. Governor Evers also attended the event.

- Rebuilding America's Middle Class (RAMC) has long advocated for the expansion of Workforce Pell grants. In November, they actively participated in the negotiated rulemaking process to help inform and shape those discussions. System President Merrifield expressed appreciation to Governor Evers and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development for their close collaboration in identifying appropriate programs and effective processes to implement these changes.
- The Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) has organized a network focused on State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements. Wisconsin's Distance Learning Authorization Board (DLAB) represents the state's higher education institutions and works to support students while streamlining reciprocity processes. System President Merrifield will serve as DLAB Chair in 2026, with WTCS Policy Advisor Megan Stritchko supporting this work.
- At the invitation of Wisconsin's Department of Health Services, the System submitted a grant proposal to strengthen the rural healthcare workforce. The effort exceeded expectations, resulting in \$53 million in funding over the next five years to support our rural campuses and their healthcare, allied health, dental and EMS/paramedic programs. Board Member McGillivray expressed particular excitement about the strong partnerships driving this work.

#### ITEM D: Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association (DBA) President and Lakeshore Technical College Trustee John Wyatt and DBA Interim Executive Director Dr. Bryan Albrecht updated the Board on recent activities.

The search for a new executive director is well underway, with a strong pool of 30 candidates. Three candidates participated in virtual interviews, and two finalists are scheduled for in-person interviews on January 23. The goal is to have a new executive director in place by mid- to late February.

The association continues to advance its three-fold focus on issue advocacy, strengthening relationships with colleges and maintaining in-person engagement where possible. While in-person meetings remain a priority, an upcoming virtual meeting will be held on January 30, hosted by Mid-State Technical College. The meeting will include updates on Act 10 activity in the courts.

Monthly meetings, called Trustee Tuesday, will take place on the fourth Tuesday of each month and feature topics of interest to trustees. DBA Program and Engagement Manager Amiee Leavy was recognized for her excellent coordination of these sessions.

The Legislative Committee has been reactivated under the leadership of Betty Bruski Mallek and is focused on developing agendas addressing both state and national issues. Trustees were

encouraged to attend the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) meeting in February.

In closing, DBA Interim Executive Director Bryan Albrecht thanked the Board and highlighted the importance of celebrating our colleges' recent winter graduates. He noted that he has visited 11 of the 16 colleges over the past two months and expressed appreciation to System President Merrifield and her team for Wisconsin's unique collaborative environment, which continues to strengthen the state's workforce. He also thanked WTCS Policy Advisors Megan Stritchko and Brandon Trujillo for their work to enhance the association's advocacy efforts, and DBA Program and Engagement Manager Amiee Leavy for her continued commitment to the mission of serving students.

The Board reconvened at 9:40 am, after a ten-minute break.

#### ITEM E: Consent Agenda

**It was moved by Board Member Nixon, seconded by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, that the Board approves the program and facilities development requests and interim district board appointment, with the exception of the Chippewa Valley Technical College program and facility development requests as presented. Motion carried unanimously.**

**It was moved by Board Member Nixon, seconded by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, that the Board approves the program and facility development requests for Chippewa Valley Technical College as presented. Board Member Guthrie abstained. Motion carried 8-1.**

#### ITEM F: Fox Valley Technical College – Project Concept Review – Remodeling of Facilities at the Main Campus in Appleton

WTCS Facilities Director Dan Scanlon provided an overview of the project for the Fox Valley Technical College district to remodel the existing Quantities Kitchen (QK) and expand it into an underutilized vending nook, approximately 2,550 square feet.

**It was moved by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, seconded by Board Member Wendt, that a finding is made that the concept for Fox Valley Technical College's proposed remodeling at the main campus in Appleton is reasonable. The final scope and design of the project is subject to review and approval by the Board as required by s. 38.04(10) Stats. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### ITEM G: Waukesha County Technical College – Project Concept Review – Construction of Facilities at the Main Campus in Pewaukee

Waukesha County Technical College (WCTC) President Richard Barnhouse, Associate Dean-Business IT Alli Jerger and Director of District Facilities Richard Haen provided an overview of the proposed project for the WCTC district to construct a 13,000-square-foot second-floor addition to the "Q" Building and remodel approximately 2,300 square feet on the first floor. The project is intended to address growing demand for information technology and artificial intelligence (AI) training space.

President Barnhouse described the project as largely supported through donations and aligned with the college's strategic focus on applied AI education tailored to southeastern Wisconsin workforce and business needs. The expanded space would support AI instruction, applied research startup development and collaboration with industry partners. The project also aims to consolidate currently dispersed IT and AI programs into a centralized location.

Board discussion focused on how AI will be embedded across curricula rather than treated as a stand-alone discipline, the need for curriculum flexibility given rapid technological change, and the importance of teaching appropriate and ethical use of AI tools. Operating costs, including cloud computing and infrastructure needs, were discussed, with emphasis on managing costs and minimizing energy use.

System leadership noted that funding from the last state budget supports AI training and faculty development at all 16 colleges. Colleges are also collaborating to share curriculum and best practices, with Madison College hosting a System-wide AI Summit in March. WCTC indicated it is working with other technical colleges to share AI curriculum and explore the potential for a System-wide core AI framework.

**It was moved by Board Member Klecker, seconded by Board Member Nixon, that a finding is made that the concept for Waukesha County Technical College's proposed construction at the main campus in Pewaukee is reasonable. The final scope and design of the project is subject to review and approval by the Board as required by s. 38.04(10) Stats. Motion carried unanimously.**

#### **ITEM H: Moraine Park Technical College – Project Concept Review – Acquisition of Land, Construction of Additional Facilities in Horicon**

Moraine Park Technical College (MPTC) President Bonnie Baerwald, Director of Facilities Roy Marquez and WTCS Facilities Director Dan Scanlon provided an overview of the proposed projects at the Horicon Campus. The projects include the acquisition of approximately 12.1 acres of land contiguous to the existing campus, facility improvements to support the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program and construction of approximately 4,000 square feet of new space for general education classrooms and labs.

During discussion, it was clarified that referenced K-12 partnerships relate to dual-enrollment programming. It was also noted that there are currently seven CDL programs operating across the state.

**It was moved by Board Member Nixon, seconded by Board Member Klecker, that the Board finds that the concepts for Moraine Park Technical College's proposed acquisition of land and construction of additional facilities in Horicon are reasonable. The final scope and design of the projects are subject to review and approval by the Board as required by s. 38.04(10) Stats. Motion carried unanimously.**

## ITEM I: Apprenticeship Completion Report

WTCS Director of Apprenticeship and Construction Mandy Mayek provided an overview of the most recent [Apprenticeship Completion Report](#), highlighting high earnings and apprenticeship completers' strong level of satisfaction with on-the-job training and related instruction they receive. The median annual earnings reported for all apprentices who completed the program in 2024 is \$90,000. Median Registered Apprenticeship combines structured, on-the-job training with classroom instruction. Apprentices learn the theory and practice of a highly skilled occupation in one to six years and are paid for their time on the job and in the classroom.

Wisconsin's technical colleges work closely with the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards (DWD-BAS) to meet employer needs in apprenticeship, providing classroom instruction for apprenticeship programs in the industrial, construction and all other sectors. Highlights of the report include:

- 92% of apprenticeship completers were satisfied with their on-the-job training, and 95% reported they were satisfied with their related instruction.
- As Wisconsin employers struggle to attract and retain talent, it is important to note that 97% of employed apprenticeship completers were working in Wisconsin after their completed training. Of those, 42% worked in the district where they received training, and 32% of apprentices were considering continuing their education.

## ITEM J: Teaching & Learning – Program Approval Process

WTCS Provost and Vice President Dr. Colleen McCabe and Associate Vice President-Office of Instructional Services Chrystal Seeley-Schreck provided the Board with an overview of the program development process from concept to approval; program maintenance processes, including assessment modifications and discontinuances; and 2025 program activity. During 2025, the Board approved 42 new programs.

Board Member Klecker noted that when a college suspends a program, it is possible that the equipment for that program may be dispersed and the facility is repurposed prior to Board approved program discontinuance. He recommended that the program advisory committee be involved in the decision to suspend programs.

Ms. Seeley-Schreck also recognized WTCS Programs Education Specialist Joel Mathis and WTCS directors for their contributions to the program approval process.

## ITEM K: 2025 Public Perceptions Study Results

WTCS Director of Strategic Advancement Katy Pettersen presented an overview of the 2025 Public Perceptions Study, which showed growing confidence in technical colleges as affordable, high-value pathways to education and careers. The results indicated that approximately two-thirds of Wisconsin residents view WTCS favorably and 76% recognize its benefit to the state.

Board Member Nixon departed the meeting at 11:47 am.

During discussion, Board Member Rosen asked whether demographic data were available regarding respondents' educational backgrounds, specifically whether they attended a four-year institution or a technical college. Board Member Guthrie inquired about whether data exists comparing perceptions of respondents' local technical colleges versus the technical college System overall and whether any meaningful differences were identified.

### ITEM L: Minority Student Participation and Retention Plan

WTCS Provost and Vice President Dr. Colleen McCabe and WTCS Open Educational Resources (OER) Network Coordinator and Wisconsin State Director of Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dr. Hilary Barker provided the Board with an overview of the Minority Student Participation and Retention (MSPR) Plan. In accordance with Wis. State. s. 38.04(8)(b), the Wisconsin Technical College System has developed a MSPR plan to increase participation and retention of underrepresented populations. This report provides:

- System-level and district-level data on participation and retention, including trends over the past five years.
- Strategies and activities implemented across WTCS to enhance access, persistence and completion for all populations.
- A progress review of initiatives.

Board Member Rosen left at 12:13 pm.

### ITEM M: Legislative Update

Due to time constraints, a legislative update will be shared via email with the Board.

### ITEM N: Announcements/Adjourn

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board will be held March 17-18, 2026, at Blackhawk Technical College in Beloit-Janesville.

**It was moved by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, seconded by Board Member Sperberg, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 12:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Julie Drake