

MINUTES OF MEETING
WISCONSIN TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM (WTCS) BOARD
MAY 19, 2026
HILL FARMS STATE OFFICE BUILDING

Members Present: Lindsay Blumer, Terry Craney, Eli Guthrie, Frances Huntley-Cooper, Dan Klecker, Timothy Nixon, Amy Pechacek, Sara Rogers, Michael Rosen, Leslie Svacina, Jill Underly.

Members Absent: Quincey Daniels, Jr., Daniel Sperberg.

System Office Staff Present: Sarah Arneson, Hilary Barker, Chevon Bowen, Victoria Chung, Rachel Colla, Danielle Cook, Julie Drake, Madeline Erce, Stephanie Glynn, Brandon Graf, Paul Hammer, Mandy Johnson, Tou Ya Khang, Colleen Larsen, Christina Lorge, Ward Lyon, Chris Martin, Amanda Mayek, Colleen McCabe, Layla Merrifield, Carolann Nelson, Jeremy Nichols, Katy Pettersen, Karen Rahmeier, Anna Richter, Dan Scanlon, Chrystal Seeley-Schreck, Lenard Simpson, John Smigleski, Latisha Spence-Brookens, Becky Stewart, 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; Chris Matheny, Fox Valley Technical College; Morgan Phillips, Gateway Technical College; Jennifer Berne, Sylvia Ramirez, Madison Area Technical College; Shelly Mondeik, Mid-State Technical College; Tony Cruz, Milwaukee Area Technical College; Bonnie Baerwald, Moraine Park Technical College; Kate Ferrel, Nicolet Area Technical College; Darren Ackley, Northcentral Technical College; Kristen Raney, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College; John Will, Northwood Technical College; Caleb White, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College; Rich Barnhouse, Waukesha County Technical College; Roger Stanford, Western Technical College; Elisa Colson (Advisor), Ann Ilagen (Resource Director), La Fonda Richardson (President), Wisconsin Student Government; Pat Goss, 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.

Board President Rogers welcomed new Board Member Terry Craney and LaFonda Richardson, a Blackhawk Technical College student who will serve as the Wisconsin Student Government president for the coming year and will be joining the Board for meetings.

ITEM A: Approval of March 17-18, 2026, Meeting Minutes

It was moved by Board Member Nixon, seconded by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, that the March 17-18, 2026, meeting minutes be approved as presented. Motion carried.

ITEM B: Report of the Board President

The April report from the Universities of Wisconsin Board of Regents was distributed to Board Members on May 15, 2026.

Board President Rogers commended the 2026 Student Ambassadors for sharing their stories at the banquet held on April 16. Board Member Guthrie was recognized for an outstanding performance as emcee for the event.

The Board Budget Development Workgroup met for the first time on Monday, May 18. The group will continue to meet throughout the summer and plans to present a recommendation to the full Board at the September meeting.

Board President Rogers encouraged all members to [subscribe to WTCS-In-Brief](#). The latest issue featured several notable stories, including an account of [Fox Valley Technical College students saving the life of their EMT Instructor](#), which received world news attention. Additionally, Chippewa Valley Technical College, Mid-State Technical College and Northeast Wisconsin Technical College were named [Aspen Prize semifinalists](#), ranking among the top 25 out of nearly 1,000 community colleges nationwide. Congratulations were extended to these institutions.

Board Member Blumer joined the meeting at 9:10 am.

ITEM C: Report of the System President

System President Merrifield provided updates on recent System activities and initiatives:

- The Board Budget Development Workgroup convened on May 18 to begin the budget development process. The System's process is unique by including stakeholders from across the System.
- Legislative monitoring continues, including opposition to a proposed property tax bill that would have altered long-term System funding by reducing levy authority.
- System President Merrifield shared highlights from recent engagements, including attendance at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College's State of the College event and the American Association of Community Colleges annual conference. She also recognized Dr. Jeannie Worden of Northcentral Technical College as the recipient of the Eagle Management Leadership Award.
- WTCS Provost and Vice President Dr. Colleen McCabe continues to collaborate with the Universities of Wisconsin System, Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and the tribal colleges through the *Forward Together* initiative to strengthen transfer pathways, improve degree completion and enhance student support.
- Presidents and chief financial officers from all 16 colleges convened last month to review System finances, share best practices and discuss future projections.
- System President Merrifield also reported on her participation as a senior advisor with Ascendium on a national workforce training initiative supporting community colleges.

- National Apprenticeship Week was celebrated during the last week of April. The System announced that our colleges will now be accepting apprentice-related education from institutions other than our colleges as credit for prior learning toward an associate degree. Students will need to have completed 400 hours of training and take an additional 21 credits with our colleges to be eligible. Three WTCS colleges were named in the top 25 semifinalists for the Aspen Prize – Chippewa Valley Technical College, Mid-State Technical College and Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. It's important to note that we're building on years of success with this program. Southwest Wisconsin Technical College won last year with Northeast Wisconsin Technical College being a top 10 contender. Each round is two years long and out of nearly 1,000 community and technical colleges, many of our colleges reached the top 200 invited to apply.
- The 41st Annual WTCS Student Ambassador banquet and leadership development program, sponsored by Baird, took place this April in Wisconsin Dells. The event was [live-streamed and is available on our YouTube channel](#). On Friday before the Ambassadors departed, they were interviewed about their experience with their college. These students work with our storytellers to [share their genuine stories](#).

ITEM D: Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association (DBA) Executive Director Pat Goss updated the Board on recent activities.

Elections were held at the spring meeting, with John Wyatt, Lakeshore Technical College, continuing as president; Lori Laberee, Northwood Technical College, as vice president; Erin Greenawald, Chippewa Valley Technical College, as secretary/treasurer; and Dustin Delsman from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, serving as an at-large member.

Committees are actively planning their summer meeting, scheduled for Friday, June 19, hosted by Chippewa Valley Technical College. The Bylaws Committee is working to update the organization's bylaws, with the goal of completing revisions this summer. Additionally, efforts are underway to establish a Legislative Committee to strengthen advocacy efforts.

President Bonnie Baerwald, Moraine Park Technical College, will lead a discussion on referendums at Trustee Tuesday on May 26.

Mr. Goss expressed appreciation to System President Merrifield and her staff for their collaboration and support, and he thanked the Board for its continued partnership.

ITEM E: WTCS Presidents' Association

WTCS Presidents' Association Vice Chair and Nicolet Area Technical College President Kate Ferrel provided an update on recent activities.

The presidents continue to meet bi-weekly with WTCS leadership and Pat Goss to discuss federal and state legislative developments and advance System-wide priorities. Concerns were noted at the federal level regarding proposed budget reductions to Adult Education

and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) and Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins CTE) funding, as well as ongoing advocacy efforts related to Workforce Pell and maintaining flexibility for short-term training programs.

At the state level, the Presidents' Association is focusing on developing a coordinated budget request and advocacy strategy, with representation on the WTCS State Budget Workgroup.

Presidents expressed ongoing concerns regarding long-term financial sustainability due to demographic and enrollment pressures. Colleges are taking measured steps to improve efficiency and adjust programming as needed. A Financial Forecasting Summit was held on April 17 to support proactive planning, with a follow-up summit scheduled for October 2026.

A strategic planning retreat is scheduled for June 4-5 to establish a long-term vision and identify key System priorities.

The presidents remain committed to leadership development and will support a new cohort in the System's leadership program. Appreciation was expressed for Western Technical College President Roger Stanford's contributions to the program, with leadership responsibilities transitioning to President Shelly Mondeik from Mid-State Technical College upon his retirement.

Updates to the Presidents' Association leadership for 2026-27 include Kate Ferrel, Nicolet Area Technical College, as incoming chair; Tracy Pierner, Blackhawk Technical College, as incoming vice chair; Rich Barnhouse, Waukesha County Technical College, serving as treasurer; and Jeannie Worden, Northcentral Technical College, continuing as immediate past chair.

The Presidents' Association remains focused on collaboration, advocacy and forward-looking leadership to support workforce development, student success and Wisconsin's economic vitality.

ITEM F: District Board Appointment Process

WTCS Policy Advisor Brandon Trujillo provided a high-level overview of the District Board Appointment process.

ITEM G: Consent Agenda

It was moved by Board Member Huntley-Cooper to move the district board appointments forward with the exception of Milwaukee Area Technical College's nominee James "Buddy" Robinson IV, per Board Member Rosen's request, seconded by Board Member Pechacek. Motion carried.

It was moved by Board Member Rosen, seconded by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, that the Board approves the program and facilities development requests and annual

district board appointments, with the exception of the Chippewa Valley Technical College annual district board appointments as presented. Motion carried.

It was moved by Board Member Klecker, seconded by Board Member Underly, that the Board approves the annual district board appointments for Chippewa Valley Technical College as presented. Board Member Guthrie abstained. Motion carried.

It was moved by Board Member Nixon, seconded by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, to approve Milwaukee Area Technical College's nominee James "Buddy" Robinson IV. Board Member Rosen opposed. Motion carried.

ITEM H: Teaching and Learning – Dual Enrollment

WTCS Associate Vice President for the Office of Student Success Dr. Christina Lorge and Director of Career Prep/K-12 Ann Westrich provided an overview of dual enrollment options, including associated cost savings, current challenges and the success stories that highlight the impact of this work.

ITEM I: Integrated Education & Training (IET) Development and Expansion Grant Approvals

WTCS Grants Manager Tou Ya Khang provided an overview of the 2026-27 IET Development and Expansion grant programs. While the Board approved most of the 2026-27 grants at the March meeting, the applications for this grant category were not yet due. The purpose of this grant category is to provide funds to support the development and expansion of IET. For FY26-27, \$1,500,000 was available for this grant category.

IET is a service approach that provides adult education and literacy activities concurrently and contextually with workforce preparation activities and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

It was moved by Board Member Nixon, seconded by Board Member Pechacek, that the Board approve funding awards for the Integrated Education & Training Development and Expansion grant programs for fiscal year 2026-27, with the exception of the Chippewa Valley Technical College grant as presented. Motion carried.

It was moved by Board Member Nixon, seconded by Board Member Huntley-Cooper, that the Board approve funding awards for the Integrated Education & Training Development and Expansion grant programs for fiscal year 2026-27 for the Chippewa Valley Technical College grant. Board Member Guthrie abstained. Motion carried.

ITEM J: Outcomes for 2025 WTCS Graduates

WTCS Provost and Vice President for Educational Services Dr. Colleen McCabe and Associate Vice President for Instruction Chrystal Seeley-Schreck provided an overview of the [2026 Graduate Outcomes](#) report. WTCS surveyed 26,703 graduates with 56% responding. Of those who responded and were in the labor force, 92% indicated they were employed within six months of graduation, including 81% who reported they were

employed in a job related to the training they received, and 93% are working in Wisconsin, with 68% staying in their college district.

ITEM K: Legislative Update

WTCS Executive Vice President Paul Hammer, joined by WTCS Policy Advisor Brandon Trujillo, provided an overview of state legislative items affecting the System.

WTCS Policy Advisor Megan Stritchko shared federal updates affecting the System.

ITEM L: Announcements/Adjourn

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board will be July 14-15, 2026, at Western Technical College in La Crosse.

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:48 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Drake