

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 28th, 2026 | 11:00am

Board Members Present: Pete Suttmeier, Donna Wadsworth, Todd LaPage, David McNally, Seth McGowan, Tricia Preston, and Tommy Sloan

Virtual (Non-voting): Linda Beers

Others Present: Joe Keegan, Stacie Hurwitch, Tara Evans, Sarah Maroun, Erik Harvey, Kyle Johnston, Jackie VanBrunt, Scott Harwood, Chris Knight, Erin Walkow, Ang Brice, and Chad LaDue. Members of the College community joined as well.

Board Chair, Pete Suttmeier called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m. after quorum was met.

Pete, and members of the Board, extended their congratulations to Dr. Lisa Keegan and Dr. Stephanie Cassell on recently earning their nursing doctorates. They voiced their gratitude to have them on our faculty and excitement for the knowledge they'll bring to our students and peers.

Minutes

Tricia Preston made the motion to accept the February 24, 2026, meeting minutes. Seth McGowan seconded the motion. February 24, 2026, meeting minutes were unanimously approved (7-0-0).

College Senate Chair | Chad LaDue

- Final Senate meeting of the academic year is scheduled for May 8th, 2026.
- Nominations have been made and voting for Senate representatives will begin shortly. These voting positions include NTP, Full-Time Faculty, Management Confidential, Classified Service, and Adjuncts.

CSEA President | Dianna Trummer

No report was presented.

Board Chair | Pete Suttmeier

- Recently Pete, David and Joe attended the annual NYCCT Conference at Dutchess Community College in

Poughkeepsie, NY. There they spoke about board initiatives, particularly focusing on the future of community colleges.

- Members shared their thoughts about their experience:
 - David voiced interest in furthering the discussion of advocacy efforts for NCCC. He will meet with Joe to discuss opportunities for NCCC, sharing advice and drawing on his professional background.
 - Joe thanked Pete and David for taking the time to participate in the convening.
 - Pete noted that trustees are discussing the future direction of their colleges. For NCCC, he plans to work with Board members to find adjustments to the meeting format that would create more time for broader discussion, with a particular emphasis on continuing the College's forward momentum.

NCCCAP President | Angela Brice

No report is presented

Vice President for Academic Affairs | Sarah Maroun

- Joe spoke on Sarah's behalf noting that she was attending a self-study institute meeting with Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The College is beginning its important work on its 2028 Self-Study so the college can maintain its accreditation.
- Highlighted all upcoming events, sharing dates and times, leading up to Commencement.
- Shared that the college will revert to previous fall schedule model for 2026. An activity period has been added to support more student engagement opportunities. This schedule change is a result of our Shared Governance process, originating with the SGA and moving through the required steps for approval.
- Briefly shared the upcoming Student Showcase event that will be held on April 29th. This event is a collaboration of both Student and Academic Affairs.
- Shared the opportunity to expand our prison education program into Upstate Correctional. The proposal moved through shared governance and was voted in support of the expansion. Careful consideration was given to this endeavor as Upstate Correctional is a maximum-security facility and we wanted to ensure employees would be safe. SUNY has a goal to have a prison education program in every facility in the state. This one is in our area but would be open to another college should we choose not to move forward.
- Joe briefly touched on an upcoming North Country Cybersecurity Conference being held on May 8th-9th at Hotel Saranac. This 7th annual conference is being co-hosted between NCCC and SUNY Plattsburgh. Several

members of the College are planned to be in attendance. This conference is open to the public and all businesses. Members of the board discussed the opportunity.

The board moved to approve the following resolutions

Seth McGowan made the motion that the North Country Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves, the following faculty/staff for initial term appointments effective with the 2026/27, academic year: Bretta LaFlame, Science Assistant Professor, Elena Lumby, Science Assistant Professor, Emma Atkinson, Nursing Clinical Coordinator, Laura Cunningham, Nursing Instructor, Ernest Hough, HUS/SS Instructor, These positions are currently funded in the 2026/27 operating budget. Tricia Preston seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. (7-0-0)

Seth McGowan made the motion that the North Country Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves the following faculty/staff for renewal of temporary appointments effective with the 2026/27 academic year: Anita Baitinger, Nursing Instructor Chelsea Drake, Nursing Instructor Luke Hudak, Dual Enrollment Coordinator, Monika Lovewell, Business Instructor, Christine Newcomb, Human Services Instructor; Courtney Roy, Nursing Instructor; Kevin Symonds, Programmer/Analyst; These positions are currently funded in the 2026/27 operating budget. In accordance with the current NCCCAP agreement Article VII-Appointment and Promotions, these appointments will expire at the conclusion of the 2026/27 academic year and will not be renewed. Todd LaPage seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. (7-0-0)

Seth McGowan made the motion that the North Country Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves the following staff for continuing appointments effective with the 2026/27 fiscal year: Angela Brice, Assistant Director of Student Affairs; Terrance Kemp, Academic Technology Coordinator; These positions are currently funded in the 2026/27 operating budget. Todd LaPage seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. (7-0-0)

Seth McGowan made the motion that the North Country Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves the temporary appointment of Betsy Davison, to the full-time, twelve-month (221-day), exempt appointment as Library Director for the remainder of the 2025/26 fiscal year, effective May 4, 2026, at an annual salary of \$66,904. This position is currently funded in the 2025/26 operating budget. In accordance with the current NCCCAP agreement Article VII-Appointment and Promotions, this appointment will expire at the conclusion of

the 2025/26 academic year and will not be renewed. Tommy Sloan seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. (7-0-0)

Seth McGowan made the motion that the North Country Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves the temporary appointment of Jennifer Cantwell, to the full-time, nine-month (164-day), exempt appointment as English Instructor for the 2026/27 academic year, at an annual salary of \$50,591. This position is currently funded in the 2026/27 operating budget. In accordance with the current NCCCAP agreement Article VII-Appointment and Promotions, this appointment will expire at the conclusion of the 2026/27 academic year and will not be renewed. Tommy Sloan seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. (7-0-0)

Seth McGowan made the motion that the North Country Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves the temporary appointment of Lisa McDowall, to the full-time, nine-month (164-day), exempt appointment as Math Instructor for the 2026/27 academic year, at an annual salary of \$50,591. This position is currently funded in the 2026/27 operating budget. In accordance with the current NCCCAP agreement Article VII-Appointment and Promotions, this appointment will expire at the conclusion of the 2026/27 academic year and will not be renewed. Tommy Sloan seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. (7-0-0)

Vice President for Marketing and Enrollment Management | Kyle Johnston

- Updated the Board on movement with SUNY Reconnect
 - Upcoming 2026 summer and winter approved program courses will be covered. While there will be stipulations which, if met, will result in the classes being funded.
 - NCCC was approved for the same seven programs as last year. The College recently petitioned for an additional six programs but was denied.
 - Next steps include continued collaboration with SUNY. A broader campaign may be launched to increase awareness of SUNY Reconnect, with program details remaining consistent.
 - After the initial announcement last year there was a significant spike in applications; a similar increase is anticipated this year and will launch within the week pending the approval by State Legislation.
- Marketing and Outreach Updates
 - Video projects began last week and are expected to be completed by mid-summer.
 - Our team is collaborating with the Village of Saranac Lake, Paul Smith's College, and BOCES to strengthen community partnerships and increase NCCC's visibility.

- The group met yesterday with a larger coalition to discuss joint initiatives, event tie-ins, promotional opportunities, and cross-branding.
- Tricia expressed interest in participating as an alumna, Kyle will voiced appreciation of her time and she will be added to the group.
- One initiative includes creating a “Welcome to Saranac Lake” experience for incoming students, highlighting local businesses, resources, housing options and many other areas of interest to our students and their families.
- Members of the Board expressed interest in the idea of creating a “College Town” feel to Saranac Lake.
- Enrollment teams continue their outreach efforts as we move into the Summer and Fall semesters.
 - Kyle discussed with members of the board on 2-year to 4-year transition opportunities for students.
 - Kyle noted this conversation is frequent among high school students who still pursue this path.
 - He noted 4-year colleges have remained competitive but online options have shifted student behavior by allowing them to study from the comfort of their home. It depends more on if a student is focused on a particular trade or program.
 - Currently NCCC partners with Paul Smith’s College, SUNY Plattsburgh, SUNY Alfred on articulation agreements.
 - Jackie briefly explained the purpose of the Transfer Committee developed by SUNY.

Interim Chief Financial Officer | Erik Harvey:

- Walked through the proposed 2026-2027 budget as was shared in his report. He explained the review process and that he will bring the budget, and any revisions, back to the table next month for approval.
- Highlighted the anticipated salaries and benefits
- Discussed retirement and Early Retirement Incentives (ERI) announcements and their related deadlines
- Erik noted that IT funding is currently stabilized as the College is still pulling funds grant dollars.
- When asked by David, Erik expanded on the noted \$45K in professional services
- Discussed the deficit and the use of the fund balance, highlighting that these investments create important student opportunities resulting in improved retention possibilities.
- Erik shared that our supporting Counties of Essex and Franklin could further fund the College with a Maintenance of Effort increase but that will be determined by them once their budget planning is completed.

- Erik and David discussed the Fund Balance, comparing what was used last year versus what is anticipated to be used. They touched on how to replenish the balance. Todd further explained how building the budget works with the deficit. Erik and Todd agreed on the importance of building budget revenues conservatively and being liberal with estimating expenditures.
- Given the recent climate overseas, members spoke of fuel oil spending and potential savings.

Interim Associate Vice President of Student Affairs | Jackie VanBrunt:

- Jackie began by sharing additional details of tomorrow's first annual Spring Student Showcase event.
 - There will be approximately 8 programs participating. It will include academic classes and internships where students will showcase skills learned this semester.
 - Highlighted Pete's comment at a previous meeting about creating opportunities for nontraditional students to engage with traditional students. Tomorrow's showcase will demonstrate this, as SUNY Reconnect adult learners will be interacting alongside traditional students.
 - David expressed interest in future involvement.
- The college applied for and was awarded a \$4,000 grant to review and enhance the First-Gen New Student Orientation program. Work will include collecting and integrating student feedback.
 - We have begun collecting student feedback and are anticipated to see implementation by August 2026.
 - Erik noted this as a strong retention initiative, supporting student success.
 - Approximately one-third of students are first-generation, and data consistently shows they benefit from additional support.
- Jackie shared a reference graphic with the Board regarding the use of our Bernie Chatbot/Edsights. March 2026 data show financial concerns as the highest risk factor at 44%, surpassing academic concerns.
 - When the students were prompted, we learned these financial concerns include food insecurity, tuition payment challenges, transportation issues, and housing instability.
 - Noted the importance of the College's Student Emergency Fund resource and Ang's ongoing work on food security initiatives.
 - Members of the board asked how many students use the Chabot feature. Jackie shared the current opt in rate for EdSights is 94%, allowing faster identification and support for at risk students.
 - Pete and Jackie discussed the financial challenges students face and the resources available, including scholarships and emergency funds.

- Jackie shared that Bernie is helping us put important resources in our students' hands faster based on how these students are responding to him.

New Business

- Selina presented to the Board on the topic of Regional Workforce Needs and Findings. Her presentation highlighted potential opportunities for NCCC to offer apprenticeship trades, soft skills, up skills, health care needs, technology, and more.
- Members discussed Selina's presentation. Linda shared her perspective on the specific needs and challenges she sees in Public Health facing Essex County youth ages 18–22. Pete thanked Selina for her presentation.

President | Joe Keegan:

- Joe began by thanking the Board for their ongoing support of our students, faculty, staff and the College overall. Their involvement and support help make a difference in our continued success.
- Thanked Pete and David for attending the NYCCT Conference and encouraged continued engagement by members of the Board in these meeting opportunities.
- Reminded the Board that the NYS budget is still under review and movement in certain areas of the college cannot happen (e.g. SUNY Reconnect) until it is approved.
- Plans to invite our Achieving the Dream (ATD) coaches to a future meeting so members have an opportunity to better understand their work. Joe voiced he will reach out soon to coordinate a time to attend a presentation.
- Joe shared there a lot of good work is happening that should go into the Strategic Plan. He will connect with President's Council how best to incorporate work involving ATD, SUNY Academic Momentum, and our Student Success Coaches.
- Highlighted Betsy Penrose is working on a Title III Grant opportunity. This grant could allow the college to add significant resources for the College. He will update the Board as he learns more. When asked by Pete, Joe confirmed this grant is from Department of Education, but it wasn't available last year.
- Discussed that he will coordinate with Pete regarding the importance of the Board becoming familiar with MSCHE standards as we go into Self Study. They have specific areas of self-reflection surrounding Board Governance and Governance of the Institution.

NCCC Association Director | Robert Rathbun

- Highlighted the recent Foundation audit.
- Spoke of housing retention from Fall 2025 to Spring 2026 is better when compared to the similar timeframe on the previous year.
- David asked for more information about housing. Rob shared the association has the potential to house up to 110 students. Rob provided the Board with an overview of how the housing license process works and outlined the obstacles he encounters related to students' housing bill payments.

NCCC Foundation Director | Erin Walkow

- Erin noted several generous gifts the Foundation received: Cloudsplitter Foundation committed \$24,000 over three years, and the Adirondack Community Foundation awarded \$15,000 to support the college's Achieving the Dream work. The Stewarts Foundation/Dake Family Fund contributed \$15,000 to the Opportunity Scholarship—an increase from their previous annual gifts of \$10,000. Our goal is \$50,000, and we have raised \$31,500 to date.
- On March 20th, 2026, we hosted the Adirondack Health Foundations Rural Health Symposium. Approximately 80 professionals in the allied health field were in attendance. Joe highlighted how North Country is addressing regional healthcare workforce needs.
- Erin noted faculty and staff are continuing to use the professional development fund. She shared recent and upcoming opportunities:
 - Mindy Fredenberg and Brian McAllister brought two students to the Northeast Natural History Conference. One student secured an advisor at SUNY Plattsburgh for the 4+1 ecology program.
 - Becky Ladue attended the Association of Educators in Radiologic Technology of NY conference.
 - Kelly Hass attended the American Massage Therapy Association NY Chapter 2026 Conference in Saratoga Springs.
 - This summer, Laura Cunningham will take Contemporary Issues in Healthcare at Empire State University as part of pursuing her master's in nursing.
- Reiterated the Foundation will cohost the upcoming annual student awards ceremony with Student Affairs on the Saranac Lake campus. To date, about 30 students will be recognized. The event begins at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, May 15th, 2026.
- Shared the student scholarship portal opened last week, and we already have about 20 applicants. Erin noted the Foundation typically receives 100–120 applications and award over \$50,000 annually through

both endowed and annual scholarships. Many scholarships are general, and gifts of any size to the NCCC Foundation Scholarship Fund are welcome.

Old Business

None

Public Comment

None

Executive Session

Seth McGowan made the motion to enter Executive Session at 12:54 p.m. in relation to collective bargaining negotiations conducted pursuant to Article 14 of the Civil Service Law; and the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation. Tricia Preston seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously (7-0-0). Joe Keegan was invited to attend the meeting at 12:55 p.m.

Adjourn

Seth McGowan made the motion to adjourn the Executive Session at 1:27 p.m. and enter back into the public session. Tricia Preston seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (7-0-0).

The board moved to approve the following resolution

Tricia Preston made the motion that the North Country Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves the temporary appointment of Erik Harvey to the full-time, 12-month, exempt appointment of CFO, effective April 20, 2026, at an annual salary of \$125,000. This position is currently funded in the 2025/26 operating budget. Seth McGowan seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously (7-0-0).

Adjourn

Seth McGowan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Tricia Preston seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (7-0-0). The Board meeting was adjourned at 1:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Stacie G. Hurwitch

Assistant Secretary, NCCC Board of Trustees

Date: May 26th, 2026

Resolution: 2025-2026 | Pending

Motion: Tricia Preston

Second: Seth McGowan

Action: Approved (8-0-0)

Witness: Stacie Hurwitch, Asst. Secretary to the Board of Trustees