



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 27, 2026 | 11:00am

Board Members Present: Pete Suttmeier, Donna Wadsworth, Linda Beers, Todd LaPage, David McNally, and Tricia Preston.

Excused: Seth McGowan and Tommy Sloan.

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

Board Chair, Pete Suttmeier called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m. after quorum was met.

Minutes

Linda Beers made the motion to accept the November 25, 2025, meeting minutes. Tricia Preston seconded the motion. November 25, 2025, meeting minutes were unanimously approved (6-0-0).

College Senate Chair | Chad LaDue

- First senate meeting has been scheduled for 1:30pm on Friday, February 13th.
- Strategic and Long-Range Planning (SLRP) Committee continues to actively search for a chair of the committee. If not identified soon, Chad may volunteer to serve as chair of the committee for the remainder of the academic year. Though unclear, Chad's wondered if some individuals may be hesitant to step into the chair role due to the committee's past direction and associated concerns.

NCCCAP President | Angela Brice

No report was presented

CSEA President | Dianna Trummer

No report was presented

Board Chair | Pete Suttmeier

- Set goal to increase participation and engagement for the upcoming Lobby Day on February 4th. He encouraged members of the Board to attend. Pete shared there will be a zoom meeting on Friday to prepare and train for the event.
- Board representation was identified for the College Senate Spring Meetings:
 - February 13th | 1:30pm – Pete
 - March 13 | 1:30pm – Tricia
 - April 10 | 1:30pm – Linda
 - May 8 | 1:30pm - David

Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs | Sarah Maroun

- Nursing NCLEX results showed the annual pass rate average between all 3 campuses ranged from 88%-100%. These pass rates placed the program well above the statewide average.
 - Todd asked if this success is publicly promoted, noting strong outcomes across all seven programs are something to celebrate. Chris spoke about how news stories like these are shared on our online platforms (Website and Facebook) and sometimes in the local papers as well.
 - Todd gave kudos to all, from our students who passed to the folks behind the scenes who helped make it possible.
 - Linda shared that as the Board representative for our sponsor of Essex County, she will put forth a resolution to formally recognize and commend this wonderful achievement. Todd, the Board's representative for our sponsor of Franklin County will also prepare a similar resolution for Franklin County Legislature to consider.
- Pete inquired about the *Welcoming and Belonging* course offered by ANCA. Sarah shared that it is a non-credit community offered course hosted by the Saranac Lake Chamber and taught by ANCA. The course is designed for local business owners teaching best practices in creating a welcoming and inclusive space for all staff and their clients. NCCC involvement is that they are utilizing our D2L Learning Management System.

The Board moved to approve the following resolution:

Linda Beers made a motion that the North Country Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves the temporary appointment of Stephanie Cassell, to the full-time, nine-month (164-day), exempt appointment as Nursing Instructor for the SP 2026 semester, at an annual salary of \$58,288, prorated to \$29,144. 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. Todd LaPage seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved (6-0-0).

Tricia Preston made a motion that the North Country Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves the temporary appointment of Monika Lovewell, to the full-time, nine-month (164-day), exempt appointment as Business Instructor for the SP 2026 semester, at an annual salary of \$52,545, prorated to \$26,273. 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. David McNally seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved (6-0-0).

Vice President for Marketing and Enrollment Management | Kyle Johnston

- **Enrollment & Registration**

- Enrollment period for Spring 2026 incoming students will end this week.
- Planning is set and activities for Summer 2026 and Fall 2026 registration are gearing up
- The Fall 2026 marketing campaigns begin with Criminal Justice and Cyber-Security program campaigns will run in February, to be followed by others, including a Winter Carnival campaign.

- **EdSights: Bernie – Virtual Companion**

- Last week, the web version of Bernie (chatbot) was launched and is handling requests well.
- Some users are transitioning to requesting human support.
- Overall performance is going well; we are continuing to request feedback to build the knowledge base.
- Pete referenced Jackie's report on the virtual assistant:
- Showed high initial interest, followed by a dip in usage.
 - Jackie explained this was due to a late launch of Bernie; the end of the Fall 2025 semester.
- Ed Sights continued working over the break with student outreach and support.
- Kyle explained differences in how the two departments, Marketing/Enrollment and Student Affairs, are using the platform to reach students.

- Two weeks ago, Kyle's new Administrative Assistant, Susan Forrette, began her position and is off to a great start.

- Linda asked how folks are notified of campus closures and class cancellations. Chris explained the avenues we use for closures.

Interim Chief Financial Officer | Erik Harvey:

Let his report stand as it was shared in the packet.

- Future Board meetings Plan:
 - February: Revenues and Impact Report
 - April: Begin the 2026-27 Draft Budget Presentation & Review Process.
- Pete asked about the expense projection as it relates to property and liability insurance. Erik voiced there have been no changes at this time though there could be in the future.
- Pete asked about chargebacks. Erik explained to the Board how the rates change based on the current budget. Brian Pelkey added that capturing chargebacks for students in the Second Chance Pell program also helped with additional revenue in that line.

Interim Associate Vice President of Student Affairs | Jackie VanBrunt:

- EdSights Engagement (Bernie Virtual Companion):
- Shared more information on graph spanning October 2025-January 2026:
 - 93% of students elected to opt-in to receive texts from Bernie.
 - 51% of students actively engaged and texted Bernie.
 - 1543 Texts were received since launch.
- New Student Orientations update. Due to some last-minute schedule changes imposed by the weather, we are moving to a model that offers students grab and go resources.
- Shared Wellness Fair flyer and updated the Board on the upcoming event, which is taking place on Wednesday, February 11th in Sparks. Currently there are over 20 community partners registered to have a table. This is free for students and open to the community.
- Announced that the College recently received a \$22K grant from the Gates Foundation for Student Emergency needs.
- Noted and apologized for typo in the Athletics portion of her written report. Assuring the Board that the Men's basketball team are indeed quite fun watch and talented to watch. Great group of talented men both on the court and in the classroom.
- Pete asked about opportunities for our non-traditional older students and first-generation younger students to interact. Student Affairs is exploring ways to connect these groups. Jackie noted that our online population are interested in networking options for distance learners. Linda and Jackie briefly discussed the value of these cohort models.

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.
- **Achieving the Dream | Capacity Café:**
 - Joe thanked Linda for joining us virtually.
 - The goal of the 3-hour event was to identify where the College can build to better support students. The focus was on four specific areas:
 - Disciplined Implementation
 - Organizational Agility
 - Data Empowerment
 - Digital Transformation
 - Total attendance across all three campuses, in person and on Zoom: ~60 members from the faculty and staff.
 - We received a lot of great feedback from attendees (faculty and staff). Overall, we heard a majority shared they have been looking for regaining some in-person opportunities.
 - We learned COVID isolation was much more impactful than we thought and to some degree we are still in recovery. We are brainstorming ways to come out of it and better serve our students.
 - Linda gave kudos to Kyle on how he facilitated his group, *Digital Transformation*. She explained how some attendees voiced they are still resistant to technology.
 - Joe shared that our ATD Coaches, Dr. Paula Pitcher and Kara Monroe, and will be back on campus late spring to continue working on assisting us in developing a plan for us to complete later this semester.
 - Sarah shared the Café was an invaluable experience that visited topics that have not been explored, generating new ideas in a short amount of time.
 - Chad shared it was great to see so many people involved in these discussions, and suggested focus should be on one or two topics instead of four if the time frame was to be for 3 hours.
- Jessica Kemp's nomination to join the board has moved to Governor Hochul's office for review. We're hopeful a decision will be made soon.
- **Update for Community Colleges:** Fall 2025 ended better for community colleges.
 - Senate Bill S4685 was recently vetoed by Governor Hochul.
 - SUNY Administration pulled back from their plans related to appointments and contracts for Community College President's leaving that power with local Boards of Trustees.
 - Governor's budget proposal plans for expansion of ASAP (Advancing Success in Associate Pathways) model for students and capital funding requests from SUNY's community colleges.
 - Upcoming Advocacy Day in Albany will be on February 4th.

- Kudo to Kyle and his team, as well as our faculty and staff, for a great start to the semester with their ongoing efforts in welcoming our students and getting them ready for success.
- **Capital Project & Facilities Update:**
 - Pool renovation study by MACH Architecture is almost complete.
 - David asked about the timeline delay. Joe explained it had to be pushed out because of the need for a leak detection agency to inspect the pool.
 - The bid for the Vestibule Projects for Sparks has been signed. The work will begin following the May Commencement event.
 - JMZ Architect is working to complete the Library Learning Commons Study and Design.
 - The College was awarded a grant from the Northern Border Regional Commission to conduct a feasibility study for a building by the Rail Trail.
 - The winter storm in our region yesterday wreaked some havoc including frozen pipes on our Saranac Lake campus. The Ti campus experienced an unrelated leak in our 2nd floor men's bathroom. Our facilities team are working to make necessary repairs.

NCCC Association Director | Robert Rathbun

No report was presented.

NCCC Foundation Director | Erin Walkow

Erin began by extending gratitude to Tricia for attending the Foundation Board meeting in December 2025, filling in for Pete who was away.

- The Foundation ended 2025 with over \$410K raised, which included \$300K in restricted funds.
- The Foundation recently committed \$50K for the 2026-27 Opportunity Scholarship. Erin was happy to report she is already receiving donations in support.
- Recently submitted grant application to the Cloudsplitter Foundation requesting support of Achieving the Dream. A similar grant application request will go out to the Adirondack Community Foundation next week. These funds will help cover the annual fee and travel costs for event attendance.
- **Student Emergency Funds Update**
 - Currently working with Jackie, Ang and others to create a streamlined approach in the application and award process. The goal is to shorten the review timeline, minimizing the waiting time for our students in need.
 - In addition to Jackie's note about the Gates Foundation, a donor committed \$20K this year to the fund. doubling their contribution from last year.

- Erin shared she will begin the process of soliciting donations for the annual named scholarships. Noting in previous years, the Foundation had been awarded over \$50K annually, supporting over 120 students.
- David shared that he has not yet received the annual appeal letter. Ering noted she will be sending it to the Board shortly.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Public Comment

None

Executive Session

Linda Beers made the motion to enter Executive Session at 12:00 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. Todd LaPage seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously (6-0-0). Joe Keegan was invited to attend the meeting at 12:01 p.m.

Adjourn

Trisha Preston made the motion to adjourn the Executive Session at 12:35 p.m. and enter back into the public session. Todd LaPage seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (6-0-0).

Linda Beers made a motion that the North Country Community College Board of Trustees hereby approves the appointment of Sarah Maroun to the full-time, 12-month, exempt appointment of VP of Academic Affairs, effective immediately, at an annual salary of \$141,150. This position is currently funded in the 2025/26 operating budget. Todd LaPage seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved (6-0-0).

Adjourn

Trisha Preston made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Todd LaPage seconded the motion. The motion was

approved unanimously (6-0-0). The Board meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Stacie G. Hurwitch

Assistant Secretary, NCCC Board of Trustees

Date: February 24th, 2025

Resolution: 2025-2026

Motion: Linda Beers

Second: Tricia Preston

Action: Pending (6-0-0)

Pending Witness: Joe Keegan, NCCC President