

Sisseton Wahpeton College
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Minutes
2/17/2026 - 5:00 PM (4:30 PM meal)

Meeting called to order at 5:11 PM

Roll Call:

Big Coulee	Mary Jo Keeble	Present
Buffalo Lake	Heather Larsen	Present
Enemy Swim	Janell Williams	Present
Lake Traverse	Jessica Redthunder	Present
Long Hollow	Francelia Quinn	Present
Old Agency	Rhonda Kampeska	Present
Heipa	Marie Renville	Present
Tribal Council Ex. Officio	Francis Crawford	Present

Others Present: Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman, Vice President of Academic Services Gretta Lavergne, Lorraine Rousseau, Etta Jo Marks, Melissa Marx, Lisa Jackson, Devero Yellow Earring, Daniel Nickolauson, Mia Nickolauson, Mandi Nickolauson, Sylvana Flute, Kelsey Stadtler, Tatiana Topoluk, Dr. Samuel Bonsu, David Redthunder, Heather Flute, SWC Recorder Kenyon Budack Jr

-If you attended and your name is not documented, your name was not legible on the sign-in sheet.

Chairwoman Williams called the meeting to order at 5:11 PM. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established.

Motion #1: To approve the agenda. Made by Trustee Keeble, seconded by Trustee Kampeska, Questioned by Trustee Quinn. MVP 7/0. Motion Passed.

Opening Prayer:

- Given by Trustee Quinn

Chairwoman's Report

Chairwoman Williams presented her report to the Board of Trustees.

- She informed the Board that the forensic audit has been referred to by federal authorities for review based on the recommendation of legal counsel. Since the matter may still be under investigation, the report will not be made public at the present time. No updates were received at the time of this report.

Board of Trustees Approved on March 25, 2026 Regular Meeting: Motion #2

- Chairwoman Williams also shared that there was a meeting with Tribal Leaders regarding NACTEP funding. Additionally, the Nursing Director Melissa Marx was also in attendance. The meeting was virtual between many tribal leaders and members of higher education who took part in discussion. During the meeting many had issues with the proposal to move NACTEP from the Department of Education to the Departments of Interior and Labor without prior consultation or feedback. also shared information from the recent tribal consultation meeting regarding NACTEP funding.
 - The Board was also informed that the Tribal Chairman requested to have a meeting with the College to discuss questions relating to the NACTEP Grant. The meeting is expected to take place before March 12, 2026.
- The Board had questions and concerns regarding the funding for the Nursing Program. In response to that question, Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman shared that the Nursing Program grant was still available through September of 2026, and that the program is currently using carryover funding until then.
- Chairwoman Williams also mentioned the Trust Land/Foundation Board and noted that it currently includes the Board Chair, representatives from Buffalo Lake and Long Hollow, and the College President. The Board may review this structure in the future. The foundation board meets quarterly, and the next meeting date will be announced.
- The Chairwoman also briefly mentioned that the Trust Land/Foundation Board and brought up that the current members include the Board Chairwoman, Trustee Quinn, Trustee Larsen, and Interim President Dr. Buckman. The board can review the structure in the future. The Foundation Board will have to meet quarterly, and the next meeting date will be announced on a later date.

The Chairwoman's Report was received, and no actions or motions were taken.

Public Comments

A community member addressed the Board of Trustees and shared several concerns related to student welfare, campus safety, and college practices. She described a recent situation involving a minor student being removed from campus, and expressed concern about how the situation was handled, including a lack of communication with the family, the way the student was escorted from campus, and the potential impact on the student's mental health. She also raised concerns about student confidentiality, including how sensitive information may have been shared or handled.

She further shared concerns about conditions in the student dormitories, including reports of alcohol use and lack of oversight, as well as broader concerns about student safety and well-being on campus. In addition, she referenced concerns raised by students regarding the classroom environment, including reports of inappropriate conduct and how complaints were handled, noting that some students may feel afraid to come forward due to fear of retaliation.

She explained that there is a need for accountability, better communication, and stronger protections for students, especially for the young and vulnerable students. Furthermore, she encouraged the Board and administration to take these concerns seriously and ensure a safe and supportive environment for all students.

These public comments are summarized and do not necessarily suggest the opinions of the Board of Trustees.

Reading of Mission Statement

- Read by Chairwoman Williams 5:41 pm

Discussion Items

1. Nursing Handbook Policy Addition

- Nursing Director Melissa Marx presented a proposed addition to the nursing handbook. It had to do with a drug and alcohol screening policy. She explained that the college is currently the only program in the state without a formal drug screening requirement and that the proposed policy would be used and intended to address student safety and substance use, particularly for their clinical settings and screenings.
- Nursing Director Marx also shared that the other tribal college programs like Oglala Lakota College and Sinte Gleska University do currently require initial and random drug screenings, and that similar practices are being considered. The proposed policy would include screening at the beginning of the program, as well as one additional test if the student would appear to be impaired or unsafe to participate in clinical work. If they refused to participate in that test it would be treated as a positive result.
- It was noted that the policy would follow a zero-tolerance approach, which would be consistent with expectations in healthcare and federally regulated environments. Following this, there were questions in regard to how the policy would apply to substances like marijuana, and it was clarified that the policy would align with clinical site and federal requirements.
- The Board was informed that there is no existing policy currently in place, and that the proposed policy would have to go through the college's internal review process before being brought back to the Board for consideration.

2. SWC Food Preservation Building Construction Quotes

- Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman presented updated construction quotes for the Food Preservation Building Project, noting that the bids had been reissued and additional quotes were received after the previous meeting.
- The Board had discussions on vendor options, including the use of Tri-State, and considerations for project timelines, material quality, and vendor qualifications. And it was noted that the project is time-sensitive, as delays have already impacted on scheduled course work for the students in the building trades classes. After discussions were had, there was a motion made to approve a vendor.

Motion #2 to use Tri-State as the Vendor for the Food Preservation Building Construction Quotes by Trustee Larsen, seconded by Trustee Kampeska, questioned by Trustee Redthunder. MVP. 7/0. **Motion Passed.**

- A Board of Trustees member did ask about tax, to which clarification was provided that the college is tax-exempt, and that delivery and that delivery would be handled without additional cost, and the college would not have to store additional supplies for the building.

Consent Agenda

President/VPASA's Report

- Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman presented her report and gave updates on SWC's enrollment, programs, and ongoing college activities. She wanted to report that spring enrollment at the time was sitting at 221 students, including 32 non-tribal students, with representation from all seven tribal districts.
- Dr. Buckman also shared updates on academic and program activities, including recent approvals for temporary instructional support form Head Start, Enemy Swim, and Tiospa Zina. She said that the college is continuing to work with Tiospa Zina to expand dual enrollment opportunities.
- She further reported on student engagement, especially with the upcoming AIHEC conference in Bismarck, where both students and staff will represent the college. Additional updates include the implementation of SmartEvals to improve course feedback, exploration of Talk Campus as a support resource for students and staff, and continued planning and preparation for the upcoming HLC accreditation visit in 2027.
- Furthermore, she also brought up that the college would be using reviewing tools like Turnitin to help support faculty and academic integrity, and that there was a meeting to discuss meal plans for dorms, and a meeting involving the drummer beaters falling off.

VPAS Report

Athletic Director Report

- Athletic Director Devero Yellow Earring shared updates from January. This included a senior recognition night, where a men's basketball player was honored, and a memorial dedication for a former athlete, both of which had strong community and family support. He also mentioned that he recently completed his first 90 days in the role and thanked leadership for their support during that time.
- Looking ahead, he discussed plans to remodel the gym floor, improve ADA accessibility, and continue making campus athletic facilities safer and more accommodating for students, staff, and visitors. The program hosted 11 home games, and livestreaming has helped increase visibility, allowing both local supporters and visiting teams' families to follow along. He also shared that planning is already underway for the 2026–2027 season, including scheduling and budgeting.
- A student intern was recently hired to assist with game operations and program support, helping with the workload and gaining hands-on experience. He also shared that both the men's and women's teams have qualified for postseason tournament play, which reflects the program's progress.
- Board members shared concerns about safety during games, especially making sure that trained personnel are available to respond to injuries or emergencies. There was also discussion about improving event staffing and game-day operations, as well as building stronger relationships with other tribal colleges. The idea of developing a tribal college athletic league was mentioned as a possible future direction. The Athletic Director noted that these types of conversations are already happening at a broader level and that he is staying involved in those discussions.

VPAS Report

- VPAS Gretta Lavergne shared updates on administrative systems and operations. She reported that BambooHR is now being used for payroll and employee processes. While it is up and running, there are still a few issues being worked through, and staff training is being set up to help everyone get more comfortable with the system. She also gave an update on credit card processing (CPOINT), noting that there have been communication issues with the vendor and the college is reviewing whether to continue using it or switch to another system.

- She also discussed ongoing work with Jenzabar, including cleaning up transactions, assigning them to the correct grants, and improving how the system is set up overall. This work is important as the college prepares for required reports like Title III and NACTEP. A 10-year contract is in place, and additional training has been purchased to better support staff. She also shared that key job security systems have now been installed and are in use, and that work is continuing on grant tracking and departmental budgets, with more updates expected at the next meeting.
- Board members asked questions about the financial reports, including a balance sheet that did not match. VPAS Lavergne acknowledged the error and said corrected numbers will be shared. She also provided an update on ongoing audits for FY24–FY25, noting that work is still being completed.
- There was also discussion about staffing needs, including efforts to hire a qualified library director, and the need for clearer information on grant balances and reporting, which will be updated and shared with the Board.
- The Board discussed concerns about 401(k) contributions not matching correctly, including questions about employer match amounts and reporting accuracy. Trustee Quinn raised concerns about discrepancies in the reports and whether proper documentation had been submitted.
- VPAS Gretta Lavergne explained that the issue was caused by errors during the transition to the new payroll system, including incorrect data entry and delays in processing contributions. She noted that payroll had been a couple of pay periods behind, which added to the confusion.
- Facilities Manager David Redthunder added that some of the errors were due to incorrect amounts being entered into the system, which caused mismatches, but emphasized that mistakes can happen during transitions and that the issue is being addressed. HR Director Crystal Renville clarified that the issue was related to payroll processing errors, and staff are now working to correct them.
- HR Director Crystal Renville shared that they are reviewing and correcting entries to ensure that all employee contributions and employer matches are accurate and submitted properly. VPAS Lavergne noted that they understand the importance of staying compliant with reporting requirements, and that future payroll cycles should be back on track and accurate moving forward.

Facilities Update

- Facilities Manager David Redthunder reported on a recent water issue at the dorms caused by a malfunction in the sprinkler system. The issue was quickly addressed, and he confirmed that there was no damage inside the building. Repairs were completed, including replacing a pressure switch, and monitoring has been improved to help prevent future issues.
- He also provided updates on general maintenance across campus, including roof wear, aging materials, and continuing repairs. Some temporary fixes are currently in place, but larger repairs will be needed long-term. He noted that he is working with outside contacts, including insurance, to review needs and possible coverage. Staffing was also discussed, with a small maintenance team handling multiple responsibilities while continuing general upkeep and equipment maintenance.
- Board members asked about communication during maintenance issues and suggested improving notification and response procedures to ensure timely action.

Nursing Policy and Additional Discussion

- The Board discussed a proposed update to the nursing handbook related to drug testing. Trustee Larsen asked questions about how the policy would work, including who would make decisions, how testing would happen, and how costs would be handled. Board members suggested that the policy should be clearer, so everyone understands the process.
- Nursing Director Melissa Marx explained that testing would depend on the situation and could take place at clinical sites if needed. She shared that the goal is to keep both students and patients safe. Chairwoman Williams noted that the policy will go through the internal review process and come back to the Board after a comment period.
- Additional discussion included confirming that Trustee Quinn and Trustee Larsen will serve on the President's Search Committee, with HR Director Crystal Renville noting that candidates have been pre-screened. It was also mentioned that consultant-related items may be reviewed later.
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Action Items:

- **Motion #1:** To approve the agenda. Made by Trustee Keeble, seconded by Trustee Kampeska, Questioned by Trustee Quinn. MVP 7/0. Motion Passed.

- **Motion #2** to use Tri-State as the Vendor for the Food Preservation Building Construction Quotes by Trustee Larsen, seconded by Trustee Kampeska, questioned by Trustee Redthunder. MVP. 7/0. **Motion Passed.**
- **Motion #3:** To approve the consent agenda by Trustee Larsen, seconded by Trustee Kampeska, Question by Trustee Redthunder. MVP 7/0. **Motion Passed.**
- **Motion #4:** To approve the January 20, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes by Trustee Redthunder, seconded by Trustee Quinn, Questioned by Trustee Renville. MVP 7/0. **Motion Passed.**
- **Motion #5:** To purchase a recorder for the SWC recorder by Trustee Keeble, seconded by Trustee Renville, Question by Trustee Redthunder. MVP 7/0. **Motion Passed.**
- **Motion #6** To go into closed session made by Trustee Redthunder, seconded by Trustee Kampeska, Question by Trustee Renville. MVP 7/0. **Motion Passed.**
- **Motion #7** To have all contracts before signed be sent to the attorney and the Board of Trustees, and for them all have to have a tribal business license. Made by Trustee Quinn, seconded by Trustee Redthunder, Questioned by Trustee Kampeska. MVP 7/0 **Motion Passed.**

District Concerns

- Big Coulee
 - Trustee Keeble – Our recorder should have one. District did not have concerns .

Motion #5: To purchase a recorder for the SWC recorder by Trustee Keeble, seconded by Trustee Renville, Question by Trustee Redthunder. MVP 7/0. **Motion Passed.**

- Buffalo Lake
 - Trustee Larsen – Nothing as of now.
- Enemy swim
 - Chairwoman Williams - We meet this Saturday.
- Heipa
 - Trustee Renville – I did call and ask if there were any motions for me. I could not make it to the meeting.
- Lake Traverse

- Trustee Redthunder – We had a meeting on January 7th from my district elders. Motion #18 for an elderly tuition waiver.
 - An elderly tuition waiver for elderly tuition waiver. They wanted to make sure, because there were questions for an elder.
 - Chairwoman Williams - the college does offer one course. There was no specification.
 - Trustee Redthunder – I don't think that would be in the catalogue.
 - Interim President Dr. Buckman – It's not in the student catalogue.
 - Trustee Redthunder – Could we have that updated in the course catalogue and on the website, so my district elders can see that? And it reflects. We did not have anything else.
- Long Hollow
 - Trustee Quinn – It was the 401k. and the seriousness of it.
- Old Agency
 - Trustee Kampeska – Nothing .

Closed Executive Session

Motion #6 to go into closed session made by Trustee Redthunder, seconded by Trustee Kampeska, Question by Trustee Renville. MVP 7/0. **Motion Passed.**

- The meeting exited closed executive session.

Motion #7 To have all contracts before signed be sent to the attorney and the Board of Trustees, and for them all to have a tribal business license. Made by Trustee Quinn, seconded by Trustee Redthunder, Questioned by Trustee Kampeska. MVP 7/0 **Motion Passed.**

Meeting Adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

SWC Recorder: *Kenyon Budack Jr.*