

Sisseton Wahpeton College
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Minutes
4/21/2026 - 5:00 PM (4:30 PM meal)

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	Fran Quinn	Present
Old Agency	Travis Renville	Present
Heipa	Marie Renville	Present
Tribal Council Ex. Officio	Francis Crawford	Present
Student Senate Ex. Officio	Ashley German	Present

Others Present: Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman, Vice President of Academic Services Gretta Lavergne, William Laroque, Lorraine Rousseau, Etta Jo Marks, Melissa Marx, Mandy Grimmer, 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 5:04 PM. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established.

Vice-Chairman Resignation

- Trustee Travis Renville – Rhonda Kampeska was at the board meeting after she resigned from the district. He wants that on the record. If they have to reaffirm those motions that she had voted on, and that’s appropriate. He scanned over the notes and there were some things that she voted on, and that’s not my big concern. Your guys’ minutes are in order and proper for someone who resigned before the meeting.
 - Chairwoman Williams – Noted thank you.

The meeting began with discussion regarding the resignation of Trustee Rhonda Kampeska and questions about the proper process for resignations and district representation. Trustee Travis Renville requested that concerns about the timing of the resignation and participation in the previous meeting be entered into the record. The Board approved motions to formally accept the resignation and remove Trustee Kampeska as an authorized signer on bank accounts.

Discussion also took place regarding the Vice-Chair position, district representation, and procedures for appointing replacements when vacancies occur.

Public Comments:

Community member Etta Jo Marks addressed the Board with concerns about resignation procedures, district authority, alternates, and how Board vacancies are handled. She stressed the importance of following bylaws and maintaining clear procedures to avoid future legal or governance issues. Questions were also raised about background checks and qualifications for Board members. Board members clarified that districts often conduct background checks, although there appeared to be inconsistencies in how those procedures were handled previously.

Community member Lorraine Rousseau, with her knowledge as a former Board member encouraged the Board to continue following the bylaws closely and recommended updating policies if current language does not clearly address certain situations.

Community member William Laroque asked for updates on the forensic audit, the presidential search, and future college funding concerns. Chairwoman Williams shared that the forensic audit remains under review and that approximately ten presidential applications had been received, including several tribal applicants. Mr. Laroque also encouraged the Board to reconsider previous charter changes that increased district involvement in Board matters, expressing concern about political interference affecting the college's autonomy.

Reading of the Mission Statement

Chairwoman Williams read the mission statement.

Discussion Items

Chairwoman Williams Meeting with TCUs Focus Group

Chairwoman Williams shared information from a recent meeting with tribal colleges and universities through AIHEC. Discussions focused on training opportunities for new Board members, financial planning, leadership development, and challenges tribal colleges are currently facing. She also noted that Dr. Cynthia Lindquist recently visited the college to provide HLC training and support.

Consent Agenda

Vice President of Administrative Services Report 1

Vice President of Administrative Services Gretta Lavergne and consultant Jessica West provided updates on financial operations, audits, grant accounting, and Jenzabar implementation.

Administration reported that student account cleanup and financial reporting improvements are continuing, including efforts to improve grant tracking, payroll reporting, fixed assets, purchasing, and student accounts. It was also reported that FY2024 is nearing completion for audit purposes.

Board members raised several concerns regarding the college's financial position, including cash flow, reconciliation delays, dependence on grant reimbursements, professional service costs, and the use of multiple software systems during an active audit period. Trustee Travis Renville expressed concern about the college's current cash position and requested additional financial documents, including general ledgers, trial balances, reconciliations, and cash flow reports for further review. Trustee Quinn also questioned several financial line items and requested more detailed reporting moving forward.

Discussion also focused on federal funding concerns, especially possible cuts to Title III and other minority-serving institution grants. Administration shared that the college is working to improve collections on outstanding student balances, pursue fundraising opportunities, and search for additional grant funding sources to improve long-term sustainability. Trustees and community members discussed alternative funding strategies, including partnerships, healthcare funding models, fundraising efforts, and federal grant opportunities.

Additional discussion took place regarding student account balances, Pell disbursements, grant reporting, software costs, APRIO consulting expenses, and department access to budget information. Board members requested more detailed reports and follow-up meetings to continue reviewing financial concerns.

President's Report

Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman provided updates on graduation planning, campus improvements, academic programs, and student activities. New tables and chairs are being purchased for the café area, and preparations continue for commencement. SmartEvals continue to be used for student feedback, and summer and fall instructors have been contacted. Students also attended the Northern Plains Indigenous Film Festival, and an active shooter training is scheduled for April 23.

Dr. Buckman also shared updates regarding HLC preparation, including training sessions provided by Dr. Cynthia Lindquist and demonstrations involving the Anatomage Table. Additional updates included improvements to registration procedures, software integration planning, and efforts to streamline student services through CourseDog and other systems.

The college is continuing efforts to hire instructors in behavioral science and paralegal studies. Dr. Buckman also introduced the Interim Student Senate President and recognized the newly organized student senate leadership.

Interim Student Senate President

Interim Student Senate President Ashley German introduced the newly organized Student Senate and shared updates on recent and upcoming student activities. She explained that several students have been volunteering their time to help rebuild student involvement on campus and that flyers and outreach efforts have been taking place throughout the college. Planned events include Mustang Appreciation Day featuring games, activities, challenges, and team-building events for students, participation in the Earth Day cleanup, assistance with campus tours, and a graduation luncheon. The student senate also plans to participate in registration activities by collecting student surveys to help give students a stronger voice regarding campus concerns and future activities. Ashley also discussed future goals of increasing student engagement, fundraising for future AIHEC conferences, and creating an informational guide for both new and returning students.

Ashley German identified the current Student Senate officers, including:

- President – Ashley German
- Vice President – Deandra Garneaux
- Treasurer – Sage Dumarce-White
- Additional representatives included Laila Wells, Rachel Labatte, and Shanice Keoke. Trustee

Larsen questioned why the student senate had not been active earlier in the academic year despite student interest. Ashley German explained that several students had expressed interest throughout the year, but organizational delays and internal issues slowed the process. Records Specialist Samantha Crandall stated that she had repeatedly requested budget information necessary to move forward with student senate operations but had not received the needed information. Trustee Larsen noted that the college bylaws require student representation at the Board table and emphasized the importance of restoring that participation.

Discussion continued regarding the purpose of the student senate and the importance of student leadership opportunities. Ashley German emphasized that the group hopes to increase student engagement, improve student morale, support AIHEC participation, and provide students with stronger support systems on campus. She stated that many students need guidance and encouragement during their college experience and that the student senate wants to help create a welcoming environment for all students.

Chairwoman Williams acknowledged the importance of student involvement and noted that previous student senate groups conducted fundraising efforts to support activities such as AIHEC participation and campus events, including a past Wacipi celebration. Community member William Laroque also encouraged the Board to take student concerns seriously, noting that student representatives play an important role in college governance even without voting authority.

Dakota Studies Report

Chairwoman Williams asked Director of Dakota Studies Dr. Alejandro Jaker about a linguistics article mentioned in his report regarding tonal phonology. Dr. Jaker explained that the article was based on research completed before he began working at the college and involved language research conducted in Canada. He clarified that any research involving tribal members goes through the Tribal IRB process before publication. Dr. Jaker stated the article would be published in an academic journal and that colleges generally encourage faculty research and publication.

Dr. Jaker then provided updates on the Dakota Studies program. He shared that students in the VOA language program are showing strong progress, with several students already performing at advanced speaking and writing levels. The department is considering adding a fourth “superior” proficiency level because some students are progressing beyond the current system of beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. He also discussed ongoing community outreach efforts with local schools and tribal programs, collaboration with other tribal colleges, and continued work on Dakota language publications and research projects. The department is also preparing a second edition of the Dakota dictionary and supporting student-led historical language research projects.

Additional updates included cultural activities such as moccasin game nights and craft nights that are regularly held for students and community members. Dr. Jaker stated that the department hopes to expand those activities in the future through additional grant funding and potentially develop larger cultural events and competitions. He also acknowledged uncertainty regarding future federal funding but stated that the department is currently in a good position moving forward into the next academic year.

Board members discussed advertising for Dakota Studies events and suggested increasing promotion through the college website and paper flyers. Dr. Jaker explained that many announcements are currently shared digitally with students but agreed additional advertising could help increase participation. Trustees also discussed the Dakota language proficiency levels, dictionary development, and the importance of involving additional elders and community members in language preservation efforts.

Ex Officio Francis Crawford praised the Dakota language work being done at the college and encouraged the program to continue promoting its successes publicly, especially through opportunities such as South Dakota Public Broadcasting and Dakota Life programming.

Vice President of Administrative Services Report

Financial Aid and Pell Discussion

Trustee Quinn asked for updated grant balances and questioned whether students had received their Pell disbursements that were expected around April 17. VPAS Gretta Laverne explained that Pell funds had been disbursed, but some students experienced delays because of incomplete paperwork, Social Security verification issues, or missing authorizations. She stated that students who completed the required information eventually received their full Pell amounts and that the college was working through a second disbursement process before additional drawdowns could be completed. Trustee Quinn noted additional questions regarding 1099 forms that would later be discussed in executive session.

Gala, Software, and Program Discussions

Trustee Quinn asked about a proposed gala event budgeted at approximately \$8,000. Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman explained that the event would serve as a fundraiser through ticket sales and a silent auction. Questions were also asked regarding the proposed paralegal certificate program and tribal attorneys interested in teaching courses within the program. Dr. Buckman stated that interested attorneys had not yet formally completed applications but had expressed interest in participating.

Additional discussion took place regarding Elemental451 and other software proposals connected to financial aid and student services. Dr. Buckman explained that some software options overlapped with existing systems such as SmartEvals, and the college ultimately decided not to move forward with one of the proposed systems. Trustee Travis Renville also questioned several software and training costs and raised concerns about growing expenses related to contracts and professional services. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that future expenditures fit within the college budget and are financially sustainable.

Budget and Financial System Concerns

Trustee Quinn and other board members continued discussions regarding department budgets and access to financial information through Jenzabar. VPAS Gretta Laverne explained that staff training and portal access were still being completed for departments. Nursing Director Melissa Marx and Dean of Education Kelsey Stadtler both stated they still did not have direct access to

the system. Lavergne stated that reports and budget summaries were still being provided manually while the system continued to be updated and staff were trained.

Trustee Larsen also raised concerns regarding APRIO consulting reports and requested more detailed information regarding services provided and costs associated with those contracts. Chairwoman Williams noted that the Board had not yet received the detailed financial reports that had previously been requested.

Grant Funding and Future Financial Planning

Chairwoman Williams noted that only 12 weeks remained in the fiscal year and raised concerns regarding the future loss of NACTEP funding after September 30. Board members discussed the importance of identifying replacement grant opportunities and securing additional funding sources for programs currently supported through NACTEP. Nursing Director Melissa Marx explained that there would be no new NACTEP competition funding opportunities available at this time and that the college was continuing to monitor other grant opportunities, including rural health grants.

Trustee Travis Renville discussed possible funding opportunities connected to 105L leases, 638 funding agreements, and potential partnerships involving healthcare and nursing services. He explained that programs such as nursing clinics or healthcare partnerships could potentially generate additional revenue while also helping support student services. Chairwoman Williams stated that these discussions were part of broader long-term planning efforts related to future college funding and sustainability.

Community member William Laroque encouraged the Board and administration to aggressively pursue new grant opportunities and begin preparing for possible federal funding reductions impacting tribal colleges nationwide. Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman added that the college recently applied for two new grants and continues monitoring additional federal and private grant opportunities through E-Civis and other grant notification systems.

Admissions and Social Security Documentation

Trustee Quinn questioned whether requiring copies of Social Security cards for admissions purposes was appropriate and legal. Records Specialist Samantha Crandall explained that Social Security cards are being collected to help accurately verify student identities and correct reporting issues. Trustee Larsen noted that the requirement is now included in the admissions process, while Crandall stated she was following guidance previously provided to her and wanted to ensure all procedures were handled correctly.

Archery Discussion

Chairwoman Williams opened discussion regarding graduation and possible commencement speakers. It was confirmed that graduation is scheduled for May 16, and approximately 40 students are expected to graduate. Ex Officio Francis Crawford suggested inviting tribal leadership to speak, while Trustee Redthunder volunteered to give the commencement speech if needed.

Chairwoman Williams then presented a letter request submitted by Archery Coach Jeremy Red Eagle on behalf of the 2026 AIHEC Archery Team. In the letter, Coach Red Eagle shared that the women's team recently earned first place at AIHEC competition after only practicing together for a short time. He explained that several team members had little to no prior archery experience before joining the team. The letter requested support to officially establish an SWC Archery Club and asked the Board to consider donating \$500 to help support the new club, future fundraising activities, equipment purchases, and team jackets.

Chairwoman Williams explained that earlier discussions involved the college potentially matching fundraising money raised by the team for jackets but noted that the current request appeared to be broader and intended to support the archery club overall rather than only jackets. Student Senate Ex Officio Ashley German shared that the team had already raised approximately \$600 through fundraising efforts and explained that additional support would help reduce the amount of individual fundraising required from team members. She also stated that some athletes currently use college-owned bows and equipment while others purchase their own supplies.

Trustee Quinn asked whether the Board had received the requested financial printouts related to scholarships and budgets in order to verify funding availability and compliance. Ex Officio Francis Crawford noted that the Athletics Director should also be involved in future discussions regarding the archery club and athletic-related funding decisions. Ashley German added that Coach Red Eagle had been working with Erica Fischer regarding fundraising and organizational planning for the team.

Discussion continued regarding possible funding sources for jackets, equipment, and future club activities. Ashley German explained that the team was still actively fundraising and that instructors had suggested the college potentially assist with purchasing jackets for the team in recognition of their first-place finish among 36 teams at AIHEC competition. Trustee Quinn also asked whether the team had obtained pricing information for the jackets and whether the college had already fulfilled any matching support previously discussed.

Action Items

Motion #1: To accept Rhonda Kampeska's Resignation from the Board of Trustees. By Trustee Quinn, Second by Trustee Renville, Question by Trustee Redthunder. MVP 6/0/1NV

Motion #2: To remove Rhonda Kampeska as an authorizing signature for the bank cards. Motion by Long Hollow, Second by Heipa, Question by Lake Traverse. MVP 6/0

Motion #3 to approve the agenda. By Lake Traverse, second by Heipa, Question by Long Hollow. MVP 5/0/1 NV

Motion #4: to approve the March minutes and add the edits by Trustee Redthunder, Second by Trustee Larsen, question by Trustee Keeble. 6/0/1 NV. MVP. **Motion Passed.**

Motion #5: to approve the consent agenda by Trustee Larsen, seconded by Trustee Quinn, question by Trustee Redthunder. 6/0/1 NV. MVP. **Motion Passed.**

Motion #6 To give startup scholarship money to SWC's Archery Club by Trustee Redthunder. Motion was rescinded. DR. Julie to ask Athletics Department Director and Archery club to attend the next meeting. **Motion was tabled until a later date.**

Motion #7 to go into closed executive session. by Trustee Redthunder, seconded by Trustee Renville, questioned by Trustee Larsen. 5/0 /1 NV. MVP. **Motion Passed.**

Vice-Chairman Election (Tabled)

- Trustee Marie Renville – Nominate Heather Larsen, Mary Jo Keeble, and Francelia Quinn
 - Chairwoman Williams – Cease Nominations.

Votes:

Trustee Larsen – 3 Trustee

Quinn – 3 Trustee – Keeble

– 0

It was tied and will resume when Old Agency's Trustee is in attendance.

District Concerns

Big Coulee

- Trustee Keeble – No concerns as of now. District Meeting will be on Thursday. Heipa
- Trustee Marie Renville – No concerns as of now.

Buffalo Lake

- Trustee Larsen that that hers would be better discussed in closed session.

Enemy Swim

- Chairwoman Williams – No concerns to report. District Meeting is on Thursday.

Lake Traverse

- Trustee Redthunder – NO concerns to report. District Meeting is on Thursday. Old

Agency

- Trustee Travis Renville – Nothing to report on.

Long Hollow

- Trustee Quinn – Already addressed the Coca-Cola Scholarship, Pell Grant, and Financial Aid that was not received on April 17, 2026.

Closing Discussion

William Laroque encouraged the college fundraising committee to work with local casinos and vendors to seek donations and sponsorships for college programs, athletics, and student activities. He noted that many vendors already support tribal programs and may be willing to assist the college through organized fundraising efforts.

Closed Executive Session

The Board meeting then went into closed Executive Session to discuss legal or personnel matters.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted, SWC Recorder Kenyon Budack Jr.