

Sisseton Wahpeton College
Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Minutes

5/19/2026 - 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	Excused
Heipa	Marie Renville	Present
Tribal Council Ex. Officio	Francis Crawford	Present

Others Present: Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman, Ashley German, Aaron Keeble, Melissa Marx, Kelsey Stadtler, Crystal Renville, Josh Flute, Heather Flute, Lisa Jackson, and SWC Recorder Kenyon Budack Jr.

Call to Order and Public Comments

Chairwoman Williams called the meeting to order at 5:08 PM and a quorum was established. The agenda was approved following a brief discussion. During opening remarks, members of the board confirmed that previously requested documents, including the accounting manual, grant information, 1099 forms, and Jessica West's contract, had been given to the Board for their review.

Reading of the mission statement

Read by Chairwoman Williams.

Discussion Items

There were no discussion items for this month. Interim President Buckman mentioned that the new Mission Statement would go to the Board for review later in June.

Consent Agenda

President's Report

Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman reported that the college recently submitted two new grant applications focused on Native arts, culture, curriculum development, and community

Board of Trustees Approved on June 23, 2026 Regular Meeting: Motion #4

engagement. These grants are intended to support Dakota cultural preservation and strengthen educational opportunities throughout the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate community. Two additional grants remain under review, and a third application is currently being prepared.

Dr. Buckman shared that graduation was highly successful, with a large turnout of students, families, and community members. Because attendance exceeded available space, the college is exploring the possibility of holding future graduation ceremonies at Dakota Magic Casino. The college also hosted a graduate celebration, with meals prepared by the Culinary Department.

The college recently hired a new librarian, Salvatore O'Neill, and successfully filled a full-time faculty position. Summer enrollment opened with 47 students registered on the first day, including approximately 30 students participating in the bridge program. Dr. Buckman also reported that the Language Bowl team placed first in all events at a competition in Shakopee and was recognized during a special honoring celebration.

Additional updates included Jenzabar training opportunities for administrative staff in Dallas, an active shooter preparedness training hosted on campus, meetings regarding community grant opportunities, recruitment planning for the upcoming academic year, and continued work on HLC preparation and articulation review activities. The college is also pursuing I-20 certification to better support international students and discussing J-Treaty opportunities that may assist Canadian students attending the college. The revised mission statement will be presented to the Board next month.

Vice President of Administrative Services

In VPAS Gretta Lavergne's absence, Dr. Buckman presented information regarding the proposed renewal of Jessica West's consulting contract. Trustees reviewed the agreement and discussed concerns related to contract length, termination language, legal review, and provisions requiring disputes to be governed under Georgia law. Board members requested that legal counsel review the contract before any action is taken.

Chairwoman Williams stated that the Board would prefer a contract that allows consulting services to be used on an as-needed basis and concluded once the scope of work is complete. Trustee Larsen noted that Jessica West previously indicated her work was nearing completion and suggested modifying the agreement to allow it to end upon completion of services rather than requiring a 30-day termination notice. The Board agreed to revisit the contract after receiving legal guidance.

Discussion also focused on the college's financial leadership needs. Trustees discussed the current advertisement for a part-time remote comptroller position. Trustee Quinn expressed concerns that the college's financial situation may require a full-time Chief Financial Officer rather than a part-time position due to the amount of financial cleanup, reporting, and audit work

still needing to be completed. Administration agreed to consider that recommendation moving forward.

Trustees also reviewed grant reports and received an updated list of active and pending grants. Sponsored Programs Officer Lisa Jackson reported that two recently submitted grants remain under review and a third application is being developed. Questions were also raised regarding NACTEP supplemental funding and previously extended grant opportunities.

Financial Aid and Staffing Discussion

Trustee Larsen followed up on previous discussions regarding additional support for the Financial Aid Office and asked whether funding had been identified for a Financial Aid Assistant position. Dr. Buckman explained that funding has not yet been secured and that financial limitations remain a challenge. Trustees also discussed the possibility of utilizing work study support, although funding for those positions was exhausted earlier in the academic year.

Archery Club Discussion

Chairwoman Williams revisited the Board's previous discussion regarding the AIHEC Archery Team and the request to establish an official archery club. She noted that the Board had previously discussed placing the club under the Athletic Department and funding it similarly to other student organizations and athletic programs. Trustees also confirmed that the team jackets discussed at the previous meeting had already been purchased.

Trustees discussed whether additional action was necessary and noted that formally directing the Athletic Department on operational matters could be viewed as micromanagement. Chairwoman Williams indicated that the issue would continue moving through the appropriate administrative channels rather than through direct Board involvement.

Financial Concerns

Trustee Quinn raised concerns about the college's current financial position and suggested looking for ways to reduce expenses. Questions were raised regarding travel costs, professional fees, consulting expenses, and overall debt levels. Trustees discussed the importance of reviewing expenditures carefully and finding opportunities to reduce costs while maintaining essential operations. Trustee Keeble suggested that even small reductions in spending could contribute to overall savings.

Action Items

Motion #1: To approve the Agenda by Trustee Renville, seconded by Trustee Quinn, questioned by Trustee Keeble. 4/0. **Motion Passed.**

Motion #2: To approve the April 21, 2026, minutes by Trustee Keeble, seconded by Trustee Larsen, questioned by Trustee Renville (Heipa). 4/0/1 MVP. **Motion Passed.**

Motion #3: To approve the special meeting minutes on April 29, 2026, by Trustee Larsen, seconded by Trustee Renville (Heipa), questioned by Trustee Keeble. 6/0/1. **Motion Passed.**

Motion #4: To approve the Consent Agenda by Trustee Redthunder, seconded by Trustee Quinn, questioned by Trustee Keeble. 5/0/1 MVP. **Motion Passed.**

Motion #5: To go into closed executive session to discuss personnel or legal issues by Trustee Renville (Heipa), seconded by Trustee Quinn, questioned by Trustee Larsen. 5/0/0 MVP. **Motion Passed.**

District Concerns

Big Coulee

- Trustee Keeble reported no district concerns at this time.

Buffalo Lake

- Trustee Larsen reported no district concerns and noted this was her first excused absence from a district meeting.

Enemy Swim

- Chairwoman Williams reported that she recently discussed her HLC conference experience with district members and expressed appreciation for the college's reporting efforts, which helped her answer accreditation-related questions from the community.

Heipa

- Trustee Marie Renville reported that the district had not held a recent meeting.

Lake Traverse

- Trustee Redthunder reported no district concerns at this time but noted she would bring forward any concerns received before the next meeting.

Long Hollow

- Trustee Quinn raised questions regarding repairs to the drum structure on top of the college building. Dr. Buckman reported that insurance denied coverage due to the age and condition of the structure, and the college is now pursuing possible FEMA assistance. A meeting with architects, facilities personnel, and consultants has been scheduled to discuss options. Current repair estimates are approximately \$100,000.
- Trustee Quinn also asked about the Coca-Cola Scholarship and whether tribal members had recently received the award. Administration confirmed that a student had received the scholarship for a second consecutive year.

Additional Information

Before entering executive session, Chairwoman Williams shared information she found through the U.S. Department of Education regarding student identity verification requirements. She explained that requests for documents such as Social Security cards or birth certificates are increasingly being used as security measures to prevent fraud within the FAFSA process and student financial aid systems.

Meeting went into closed session at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

SWC Recorder: Kenyon Budack Jr.