

***Sisseton Wahpeton College***  
***Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Minutes***  
***8/18/2026 - 5:00 PM (4:30 PM meal)***

**Meeting called to order at 5:10 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                | Fran Quinn         | Present |
| Old Agency                 | Travis Renville    | Present |
| Heipa                      | Marie Renville     | Present |
| Tribal Council Ex. Officio | Francis Crawford   | Present |

Others Present: Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman, SPO Lisa Jackson, Dean of Business Dr. Samuel Bonsu, Financial Aid Director Aaron Keeble, Director of Nursing Melissa Marx, Business Office Specialist – Accounts Payable Lona Miller, Human Resources Director Crystal Renville, Plumbing instructor John Kampeska, Record’s Specialist Samantha Crandall, Athletics Director Devero Yellow Earring, Dean of CTE Josh Flute, Extension Director Erica Fischer, Student Success Navigator LaJune Morgan, Facilities Dawn Feather, Dean of Education Kelsey Stadtler, SWC Recorder-Office Manager-President’s Office 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 5:10 PM. Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established.

**Discussion Items:**

**Policy 400 – Satisfactory Academic Progress**

Financial Aid Director Aaron Keeble presented changes to the Satisfactory Academic Progress policy. One of the main changes clarified that students may appeal their financial aid suspension up to three times. He explained that outside financial aid professionals had reviewed the policy and provided recommendations. The updated policy will also be included in the student handbook, college website, and catalog.

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Trustee Travis Renville asked about allowing three appeals and whether students commonly need that many. Financial Aid Director Keeble stated that the most he had personally seen a student use within one-degree program was two appeals. Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman stated that her experience was similar.

## **Mission Statement and Policy Review**

The Board reviewed the proposed Mission Statement, Internship Policy, Student Organizations and Clubs Policy, and the updated Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy. Chairwoman Williams noted that these items had previously been presented to the Board and were sent back for revisions before returning for final approval. Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman shared that approximately 25 different ideas and suggestions were considered when developing the proposed Mission Statement and that, once approved, it would be updated across College materials including the website, catalog, and other official documents.

Trustee Keeble expressed concern about continuing to send the same items back for more revisions when the Board had already asked for changes and those changes had been completed through the internal process. Chairwoman Williams clarified that the purpose of bringing the items back was to confirm that the requested revisions had been made and that the internal review process had been completed. The Board discussed the importance of having the Mission Statement and related policies clearly aligned with College operations and student expectations before final approval.

## **Bills and Credit Cards**

The Board reviewed a U.S. Bank credit card bill of approximately \$10,363. Trustee Quinn asked for more information on several highlighted charges, including an Ancestry.com charge. Trustee Travis Renville also questioned charges including Amazon Prime Video and DoorDash.

Business Office Specialist Lona Miller explained that some recurring charges were connected to a former employee whose card had not been cancelled. She stated that she had brought the issue forward previously and recommended cancelling the card. Trustee Larsen noted that the employee had not worked at the college for more than a year, while Trustee Quinn questioned why the card had still not been cancelled.

The Board also reviewed the annual Powerfades subscription. Financial Aid Director Keeble explained that Powerfades is used to process Pell and other financial aid information and assist with disbursement from Financial Aid to billing.

The Board reviewed the cost of the July Board retreat and questioned which funding source would cover the expense. Trustee Larsen asked whether an allowable professional development grant could be used and noted that the funding source had been questioned previously.

The Board also approved electrical work for the two domes, DLI shirts for the trail dedication event, and an IT purchase order. The DLI shirts were identified as being funded through the

Sovereign Equity Fund, which also supports the trail, dedication event, and Food Preservation Building.

## **President's Report**

Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman reported on the women's basketball celebration, trail opening, student evaluations, recruitment, and preparation for the fall semester. SmartEvals received a 66% response rate and a 58% summer response rate, providing feedback that can be used by faculty to improve courses and teaching.

Recruitment efforts are expanding beyond the immediate area to tribal high schools such as Flandreau and Rosebud. The paralegal program is expected to begin in the fall. TERO also provided training on policies and procedures, and staff worked on the updated SAP policy and fall schedules.

New faculty orientation was held with support from HR, Student Services, Financial Aid, and IT. An all-staff meeting and professional development were also held. A new SWC Café Manager was hired to provide additional oversight of café operations.

## **Faculty and Staffing Discussion**

The Board discussed several new faculty members and the Academic Coach position. Trustee Quinn questioned whether the college already had an Academic Coach. Education Specialist Tatiana Topoluk explained that the position is similar to a tutor but includes additional administrative and student-support responsibilities.

Trustee Quinn also raised questions regarding differences between faculty, administrative faculty, and prorated staff, particularly regarding leave. Education Specialist Topoluk explained that she noticed possible inconsistencies while reviewing the faculty handbook and brought the issue to the appropriate administrative staff for clarification. Trustee Quinn noted that HR documentation also appeared to have differences in how academic positions were classified.

## **Financial Status, Budget and Audits**

A large portion of the meeting focused on the college's financial records, budget, audits, and internal controls.

Chairwoman Williams stated that the Board had not yet approved the FY2027 budget. The Board had previously put safeguards in place while waiting for a complete budget, including requiring expenses over \$5,000 to come before the Board and requiring contracts and agreements to receive Board approval.

The college was also looking at temporarily bringing in a comptroller. Interim President Buckman stated that an individual had been contacted but had not yet accepted the position.

The Board asked about prior budgets and current bank statements. Business Office staff explained that they had been searching available files and emails but had mainly located 2023 and 2024 budget information, with the 2023 audit being the most recent completed audit they could locate. Staff were also working to obtain current bank statements and other financial documentation.

Chairwoman Williams discussed concerns with internal controls, explaining that internal control issues had continued to appear in audits. The college had located a 26-page internal controls manual, and the Board discussed the importance of actually developing and following the procedures identified in policy. Chairwoman Williams explained that the temporary financial safeguards were intended to improve accountability until a complete budget could be presented.

Business Office Specialist Lona Miller asked about the FY2024 audit because APRIO had previously worked with Harshwal to provide information. It was also discussed that Harshwal was requesting additional documents. Chairwoman Williams requested that a meeting with Harshwal be scheduled as soon as possible to determine the status of the audit.

Trustee Travis Renville discussed the college's reported \$1.3 million loss from the prior year and noted that consulting expenses were among the larger costs. He questioned how the college could address the loss and prepare for the next fiscal year without a completed budget. He stated that the college needed to determine whether financial work would be completed internally or through consultants.

Trustee Quinn agreed and stated that part of the concern was that the college was paying consultants to perform work that employees would normally be expected to perform. Trustee Larsen also raised concerns regarding the previous APRIO contract, including the length of the contract and whether the scope of work accurately reflected the work that was ultimately performed.

Senior Business Office Specialist Richelle Solorio explained that Harshwal was still working on the 2023–2024 audit and had requested documentation that had not yet been provided. She stated that some of the requested work required someone with CPA-level knowledge rather than being handled by the current Business Office staff.

Ex. Officio Crawford emphasized the need for the college to hire a CFO or comptroller and expressed concern that continued financial and audit problems could eventually affect grants. Trustee Keeble also noted that internal control findings appeared in previous audits and had continued over multiple years.

Chairwoman Williams stated that timekeeping was one example of an internal control issue because requirements already existed in college policies and the employee handbook. The discussion emphasized that having policies is not enough if procedures are not consistently followed and documented.

## **Sponsored Programs / USDA Grant**

Sponsored Programs Officer Lisa Jackson presented the USDA TCU Grant #32. She explained that the grant required public notice and an opportunity for community comment during an official Board meeting. The opportunity had been advertised, although no community members provided comments during the meeting.

The approximately \$1.2 million grant would support improvements including flooring, plumbing, smartboards, and dorm doors. Trustee Quinn asked whether this was a new grant and whether matching funds were required. Jackson confirmed that it was new and did not require matching funds.

## **Grant Policies and Staffing**

Sponsored Programs Officer Jackson discussed separating grant policies from procedures to make responsibilities easier to understand. She reported that a recent NSF desk review resulted in 12 findings that needed to be addressed through college policies and processes.

SPO Jackson also explained that she is currently handling both grant writing and Sponsored Programs Officer responsibilities. She recommended separating the positions because grant writing and grant compliance have different responsibilities and should have a separation of duties.

The Board of Trustees discussed how an additional position could be funded, including whether indirect costs or grant funding could support the position. Trustee Travis Renville agreed that grant research and writing could be a full-time responsibility but wanted to better understand how another position would fit into the organization and how it would be funded.

Trustee Larsen noted that staffing structures vary between tribal colleges but agreed that SWC manages a large number of grants. She also questioned what happened to funding from a previous assistant position that had not been sufficiently staffed even though other positions have since been created.

## **FY2027 Budget**

Business Office staff reported that they were actively rebuilding the financial information needed to prepare the budget. Because more recent information could not be located, staff planned to use 2024 as a starting point, rebuild 2025 and 2026, and then move forward into FY2027.

Senior Business Office Specialist Richelle Solorio explained that financial information had previously been entered into Jenzabar but that the process appeared to stop after a former employee left. Business Office staff were working to rebuild the information, obtain bank statements and credit card records, identify open and closed grants, and update the financial system.

Chairwoman Williams emphasized that the Board needs to know whether previous fiscal years ended with deficits because this information had not been clearly presented to the Board. She stated that rebuilding the financial system should involve the entire college and should create a

framework that prevents SWC from having to rely on outside consultants for the same work in the future.

The Board also discussed the September 30 ending date for NACTEP funding and the need for the FY2027 budget to clearly identify funding sources for employees and programs.

## **District Concerns**

**Big Coulee:** No district concerns were reported.

**Buffalo Lake:** No district concerns were reported.

**Enemy Swim:** Chairwoman Williams stated that the district had not held its meeting yet.

**Heipa:** Trustee Marie Renville reported that district members had questions regarding what was currently happening at the College and some of the rumors they had heard within the community. She explained that there were certain matters she could not discuss because they had been addressed in executive session.

**Lake Traverse:** Trustee Redthunder reported that the district had previously been involved in bringing forward concerns regarding Interim President Dr. Julie Buckman. Since those concerns had already been brought before the Board, the district did not bring the matter forward again at this meeting.

**Long Hollow:** Trustee Quinn reported that the district had not held its meeting yet and that the meeting was scheduled for the following week.

**Old Agency:** Trustee Keeble reported that district members had questions regarding the permanent President position, including where the College was at in the process and when a permanent President may be hired.

## **Dakota Language Institute Request**

The Board received a request from the Dakota Language Institute to temporarily use the pasture near the rodeo grounds for horses being used for an upcoming event. The request was intended to make it easier to gather and trailer the horses for a morning event.

## **Construction / Electrical Bids**

The Board reviewed bids connected to several projects, including the Food Preservation Building, Esports area, and other facilities. Trustees discussed differences in the bids and whether contractors had the proper permits and included the correct materials and labor.

Trustee Quinn closely compared the electrical bids and questioned the large difference in pricing. She noted that one bid for the Esports work totaled approximately \$4,399 compared with another

totaling more than \$16,000. Ex. Officio Crawford also discussed contractor permits, materials, use tax, and the importance of clearly itemizing bids.

Other construction bids were not as clear. Ex. Officio Crawford recommended reviewing the grant procurement requirements, contacting TERO for a list of properly licensed contractors, and obtaining additional bids where required. Trustee Travis Renville noted that proper bid documentation would also protect the college during an audit by showing that procurement requirements were followed.

## **Financial Aid Complaint**

The Board briefly discussed a student financial aid concern. Interim President Buckman explained that the student had gone through the college's internal appeal process and won the appeal. Trustee Larsen noted that the student had followed the established process and received a decision, and the Board agreed that the matter had been resolved through that process.

## **Credit Card Controls**

Before entering executive session, Trustee Quinn returned to concerns regarding college credit card use. She noted that older credit card statements included purchases that could potentially have been handled through purchase orders, reimbursements, or per diem rather than college credit cards. She specifically questioned restaurant purchases connected to travel when employees may have already received per diem.

Trustee Quinn suggested limiting access to college credit cards and having employees follow a clearer purchasing process. She stated that the college was already having difficulty balancing and reconciling credit card accounts and suggested pulling the cards back until stronger controls were established.

Chairwoman Williams agreed that the college needs a better accountability system for credit card purchases so purchases can be approved, documented, and connected to college property or the proper funding source. Trustee Travis Renville also discussed using expense reports, receipts, and established reimbursement procedures for travel.

## Action Items

**Motion #1:** To approve the agenda for August 18, 2026. By Trustee Marie Renville, Second by Trustee Travis Renville, Question by Trustee Quinn. MVC 4/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

**Motion #2:** To approve all policies presented. By Trustee Keeble, Second by Trustee Travis Renville, Question by Trustee Marie Renville. MVC 6/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

- Policy#: 200-6 – Mission Statement. Effective 8/18/2026
- Policy#: 400 – Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy. Effective: 8/18/2026
- Policy#: 400-22 – Internship. Effective: 5/1/2026
- Policy#: 400-23 – Student Organizations/Clubs. Effective: 5/13/2026

**Motion #3:** To pay the credit card bill pending cancellation of the existing card and issuance of a replacement. By Trustee Travis Renville, Second by Trustee Quinn, Question by Trustee Redthunder. MVC 7/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

**Motion #4:** To approve the annual Powerfades subscription for \$6,737.03. By Old Agency, Second by Lake Traverse, Question by Big Coulee. MVC 4/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

**Motion #5:** To approve \$7,351.37 to Miric Group Travel Management Division for the July Board retreat. By Trustee Travis Renville, Second by Lake Traverse, Question by Trustee Larsen. MVC 6/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

**Motion #6:** To approve \$5,160.00 for DLI shirts for the trail dedication event. By Trustee Travis Renville, Second by Trustee Redthunder, Question by Trustee Marie Renville. MVC 5/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

**Motion #7:** To approve the IT purchase order submitted by Mandy Grimmer for \$5,826. By Trustee Travis Renville, Second by Trustee Redthunder, Question by Trustee Quinn. MVC 7/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

**Motion #8:** For SWC to pursue USDA TCU Grant #32 and acknowledge the opportunity for community comment at the August 18, 2026, Board meeting as advertised. By Trustee Travis Renville, Second by Trustee Redthunder, Question by Trustee Quinn. MVC 7/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

**Motion #9:** To approve the consent agenda. By Trustee Redthunder, Second by Trustee Larsen, Question by Trustee Travis Renville. MVC 4/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

**Motion #10:** To approve the July 21, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes. By Trustee Redthunder, Second by Trustee Travis Renville, Question by Trustee Keeble. MVC 4/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

**Motion #11:** To approve the August 5, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes with edits to exclude #9 as discussion only. By Trustee Redthunder, Second by Trustee Larsen, Question by Big Coulee. MVC 6/0/0. **Motion Passed.**

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**Motion #12:** To allow the Dakota Language Institute to use the pasture by the Rodeo Grounds for Monday, with a liability waiver. By Trustee Marie Renville, Second by Trustee Quinn, Question by Trustee Larsen. MVC. **Motion Passed.**

**Motion #13:** To accept Nelson Electric's Esports bid for \$4,399. By Trustee Quinn, Second by Trustee Travis Renville, Question by Trustee Larsen. MVC 6/0/0. **Motion Passed**

**Motion #14:** To go into closed executive session. By Trustee Travis Renville, Second by Trustee Marie Renville, Question by Trustee Quinn. MVC 6/0/0. Motion Passed.

**Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully submitted,  
SWC Recorder *Kenyon Budack Jr.*