

NORTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES
Monday, April 27, 2026
Timothy J. Nelson Innovation Center
Room 106/107

CALL TO ORDER—Chair Mark B. Keely called the regular meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Trustees Present: Mark B. Keely, Laura J. Oblinger, Kennard R. Weaver, Andrew K. Robitshek, Jody N. Lundquist

Trustees Absent: Pamela T. Horne

Trustees Remote: Kenneth E. Warner

Also present: President Nick Nissley, Lynne Moritz, Diana Fairbanks, Troy Kierczynski, Todd Neibauer, Stephen Siciliano, Jason Slade, Lindsey Lipke, Kyle Morrison, Hollie DeWalt, Jason Slade, Becca Richardson, Lindsey Dickinson, Lisa vonReichbauer, Kelly Yauk, Laura Stevens, Megan Bylsma, Beth Friend, Amy Shamroe, Fred Bimber, Noah Schneider

Due to the absence of Board Secretary Pam Horne and the slate of action items on tonight's agenda, Chair Keely asked for a motion delegating the powers and duties of the secretary for this evening through April 30, which is when Trustee Horne is scheduled to return, to Trustee Robitshek. Laura Oblinger made the motion, seconded by Jody Lundquist. Trustee Robitshek accepted serving as Acting Secretary. Trustee Warner participated in the meeting via Zoom, therefore, he was not able to vote on any action items nor count toward a quorum per the Open Meetings Act.

REVIEW OF AGENDA—The agenda was accepted as presented.

REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Mission & Values in Action—Shirl Martin, a non-credit student navigator in Extended Education shared a testimonial highlighting how NMC's "Broader Front Door" approach supports adult learners in accessing educational opportunities. The example described a local resident, new to NMC and seeking a career change without incurring debt, who connected through Extended Education & Training and the NOMIAC initiative. With personalized guidance and coordinated support, the student successfully transitioned into the new Culinary and Beverage Management certificate program. The testimonial underscored the effectiveness of strategic efforts to expand access, support student success, and strengthen regional workforce development.

Faculty Report: Visual Communications Studio Class—Caroline Schaefer-Hills, Visual Communications Instructor, provided an overview of an experiential learning project that engages students through collaboration with community partners. She highlighted the participating nonprofit organizations and shared examples of student work developed through the initiative.

Strategic Initiatives Update: Enrollment and Student Success—Jason Slade, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, and Strategy Two Champions Lindsey Dickinson, Kelly Yauk, and Lisa vonReichbauer reviewed the four objectives and metrics for strategic enrollment and student success. Integrating and strengthening a unified, data-informed enrollment ecosystem for recruitment and retention, moving beyond siloed tasks to create a cohesive student journey. Success will be measured by application to enrollment metrics, as well as dual enrollment rates. A new student portal will be developed to deliver timely, targeted communications

and deadline reminders, improving clarity around next steps for both prospective and current students. The system will prioritize relevant, real-time information throughout the semester, with the goal of reducing course drops and increasing on-time registrations. Lessons learned from this initiative will inform the development of a similar employee-facing model. The new advising model will increase student touchpoints with advisors throughout their time at NMC. All students will have a semester-by-semester academic plan to identify requirements and support on-time completion. Students will also gain a stronger understanding of career exploration tools and regional opportunities for employment and transfer. Objective 4 seeks to expand learning options and clarify stackable pathways so every student, especially adult, rural, and part-time learners, can advance toward employment or further education.

In response to a question, the application to enrollment rate was explained as on par with peer community colleges. October is college application month, requiring high school students to apply, which explains high application numbers and a 40% conversion to enrollment.

VP of Student Services and Technologies Todd Neibauer described how student input is being sought to create a new student portal. AVP of Strategic Communications and Change Initiatives Diana Fairbanks explained the significance of the website redesign engagement process, which will occur over the course of one year to provide for critical stakeholder engagement.

PUBLIC INPUT—There was public input offered by Beth Friend, Amy Shamroe, and Fred Bimber.

UPDATES

President's Update—President Nick Nissley acknowledged the 75th Anniversary Student and Community Block Party this past Saturday, and thanked Rachel Urkowitz, Marcus Bennett, and Zach Whitaker for their work in planning the signature event. Saturday's events also included welcoming the college mascot, Swoop, and the Native American Student Organization Graduation Pow Wow. The NMC Foundation's Taste of Success event, in support of the Great Lakes Culinary Institute, had the largest sponsorship amount and number of sponsors. The MCCA Capitol Day event was a great opportunity to advocate for legislative priorities; a team including the president, Board Chair, and a current student participated on behalf of NMC. Now that the governor and state legislatures have submitted their budget proposals, President Nissley shared that for practical purposes, the operational budget from the state is flat; however, ITEMS funding is included in the governor's and house budgets and all three proposed budgets include continued funding for the Michigan Achievement Scholarship, expansion of Reconnect to 21+, and funding to support dual enrollment. This summer, the college is looking at a ninth consecutive semester of enrollment growth. The BlueTech Challenge saw growth in the number of applicants, the finale will occur during the Lakebed 2030 conference (September 17, 2026). The OOPs for Education Pitch Competition received a total of 19 submissions from students, faculty, and staff. Of those 19 submissions, the top 6 were selected to move on to the pitch competition. All 6 of those received some funding.

Board Chair Update—Chair Mark Keely noted that he will work with President Nissley and executive staff to plan educational opportunities for trustees on the topic of AI and community colleges. Trustee Warner recommended a resource he discovered at a national conference.

CONSENT ITEMS—On a motion by Kennard Weaver, seconded by Jody Lundquist, the following items were approved by a unanimous vote as a group without discussion:

Minutes of the March 23, 2026, regular meeting

Enrollment Report—*Todd Neibauer, Vice President for Student Services and Technologies*
 Financial Report—*Troy Kierczynski, Vice President of Finance and Administration*
 PRMC Report—*Diana Fairbanks, AVP, Strategic Communications and Change Initiatives*
 Advancement Report—*Katharine Marvin, Vice President of Advancement*
 Policy Committee—*Pam Horne, Committee Chair*
 Building & Site Committee—*Kennard Weaver, Committee Chair*
 Audit Committee Report—*Kennard Weaver, Committee Chair*
 Executive Committee Report—*Mark Keely, Committee Chair*

ACTION ITEMS

Policies for Second Reading—On a motion by Laura Oblinger, seconded by Jody Lundquist, the Board unanimously adopted the following amended policies on second-reading basis:

- Policy A-105.01 Gift Acceptance
- Policy A-106.02 Investment
- Policy A-107.00 Board Attendance at Civic and College Events
- Policy A-108.00 Board of Trustees Electronic Communications

Geothermal Bid Package—Kennard Weaver made a motion, seconded by Laura Oblinger, recommending authorization for administration to enter into a contract amendment with The Christman Company for Bid Package 1 in the amount of \$9,597,041 for the work listed in the accompanying Cost Summary. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution for Reauthorization of Geothermal Project Financing—Laura Oblinger made a motion recommending adoption of the Resolution Authorizing the Issuance and Delegating the Sale of Bonds as prepared by bond counsel, and as presented by the administration, and that the Secretary of this Board be authorized to sign the same. Kennard Weaver seconded the motion and it passed with unanimous support.

Geothermal Project Investment—Kennard Weaver made a motion recommending authorization to utilize an additional \$5,000,000 (for a total of \$10 million) of the Boardman Lake Campus sale proceeds towards the Front Street Campus geothermal project. Laura Oblinger seconded the motion. The recommendation for the additional investment originated from the Building and Site Committee; when considering the investment, committee members emphasized the importance of aligning use of the Boardman Lake Campus sale proceeds with priorities in the campus master plan and strategic plan. The motion passed with unanimous support.

Winkler Group—On a motion by Laura Oblinger, seconded by Andy Robitshek, the Board unanimously approved authorization for administration to enter into a 24-month contract with the Winkler Group for professional campaign specific fundraising counsel regarding a \$45 million comprehensive campaign. The total projected cost of this contract is \$340,000, with the College's commitment totaling \$170,000 over two years. The NMC Foundation will fund the remaining amount. The College's contribution will be funded by the Strategic Fund. The motion passed unanimously.

Website Redesign—Jody Lundquist made a motion, seconded by Andy Robitshek, to authorize administration to enter into contract with Stamats for the amount of \$267,400 for website redesign. The source of funding is the Strategic Fund. The motion passed unanimously.

Digital Marketing—Laura Oblinger made a motion, seconded by Andy Robitshek, to authorize administration to enter into contract with Stamats for the amount of \$102,000 annually for a three-year period for digital marketing, funded by the PRMC budget. The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution Regarding East Bay Township Tax Increment Financing—Laura Oblinger made a motion, seconded by Kennard Weaver, to adopt the proposed resolution to exempt taxes from capture by East Bay Township Tax Increment Financing. Trustee Ken Warner, who participated remotely, made a statement that he supports the projects the TIF is intended to fund, appreciates the Executive Committee’s recommendation, and urged the Board to look for mutually beneficial opportunities to cooperate on the project (potentially with students engaged in the project). The motion passed with unanimous support of those trustees present in person.


Information Technology Audit—On a motion by Kennard Weaver, seconded by Andy Robitshek, the Board authorized administration to enter into a contract with Gaming Laboratories International (GLI) to complete an Information Technology Audit at the cost of \$26,250 funded from E & G funds. The motion passed unanimously.


REVIEW OF FOLLOW-UP REQUESTS—Confirmed requests made by the Board that require administrative follow-up for information to be provided to the Board at a later date.

- **Chair Keely’s request to coordinate a Board session on Artificial Intelligence**

ADJOURNMENT—The meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Recorded by Lynne Moritz, Executive Director of the President’s Office and Board Operations.

SIGNED _____

Mark B. Keely, Chair

ATTESTED _____

Andrew K. Robitshek, Acting Secretary