



Ratified at March 18, 2026 meeting

**Board of Trustees Meeting
February 18, 2026**

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Trustees of Westchester Community College held on Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 3 PM in the Student Center Event Room.

Trustees Present:

Dr. LeRoy Mitchell, Chairperson, Dr. Norman Jacknis, Vice-Chairperson, Deborah Raizes, Vice Chairperson, Robin Bikkal, Esq., Susan Gerry, Esq., (via videoconference), Hon. John Nonna, Dr. Gregory Robeson Smith, Hon. Lyndon Williams, Yolanda Howell, Secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Trustees Excused:

Anabella Delduco, Sergio Serratto.

Cabinet Members Present:

Dr. Belinda S. Miles, President, Dr. Vanessa Morest, Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs, Jacqueline-Ann Clark, Vice President and Dean of Administrative Services, Dolores Swirin-Yao, Vice President and Dean, External Affairs, Executive Director, WCC Foundation, Tere Wisell, Vice President and Dean, Community Education and Workforce Development, Garrett McAlister, Vice President, Information Technology, Dr. Rinardo Reddick, Acting Vice President of Student Access, Involvement & Success, Ben Naylor, Chief of Staff & Vice President of Strategic Affairs.

Call to Order

Chairperson LeRoy Mitchell called the meeting to order.

Ratification of Minutes

Trustee Nonna made a motion seconded by Trustee Williams to ratify the minutes of the January 21, 2026, Board meeting. The motion passed.

INFORMATION AND DECISION

A. President's Report

Dr. Belinda S. Miles reported:

This month, we're highlighting a very special part of American History by focusing on sharing ideas, and celebrating the contributions and achievements of Black leaders, scholars, artists, and changemakers whose resilience, brilliance, and impact continue to shape our communities and our world. According to the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, "2026 marks a century of national commemorations of Black history." If you have not yet participated in the various events occurring this month, please be sure to check our Web Events Calendar for details and information on remaining events and celebrations.

Here is a sample of a few of the remaining celebratory events. Many are hybrid with the opportunity to attend remotely.

This afternoon:

- Black Soldiers in World War II – Sacrifice & Recognition

Presenter: Dr. Gary Klein

Next week:

- Tuesday, Feb 24: The 1964/65 Civil/Voting Rights Legislation: Where we are today

Presenter: Dr. George Keteku. 12 Noon, Classroom Building, Room 100 and via Zoom

- Wednesday, Feb 25 at our Yonkers Extension

Soul Food at the Yonkers Café hosted by Keyla G. Cabrera (Assistant Director), Kathy Graf (Learning Commons), and Professor Rashaun Allen

12:30 pm - 1:30 pm, 843 Kimball Avenue, Yonkers

- Friday, Feb 27: Black History Month Closing Ceremony, Dr. Julius Ford Awards Ceremony and Reception

Hosts: Dr. Gwen Roundtree Evans, Professor Gelaine Williams, and Professor Richard Adamson II

11:00 am - 1:30 pm, STC Event Room, Culinary Arts Café, and via Zoom

Additionally, I extend greetings for a Happy Lunar New Year! Yesterday, the Department of Student Involvement hosted a special event in celebration of the Year of the Horse!

Academic Momentum

As part of SUNY's Academic Momentum Campaign, I am pleased to report that our team, under the leadership of Provost Vanessa Morest, submitted SUNY WCC's comprehensive plan to further increase student success.

This initiative, announced at Chancellor King’s 2025 State of the University Address, “is designed to increase the retention and completion rates of all SUNY undergraduate students and eliminate gaps for Pell-eligible students and other demographic groups.” SUNY WCC serves as a leader in student success work within the SUNY system building on our successful implementation of the Viking ROADS initiative that replicated the CUNY ASAP model.

Special kudos to Provost Morest, and our team, comprised of representatives from across divisions and roles, each contributing their expertise in student success—for collaborating to extend this important body of student success work to for the benefit of our students and the institution.

AI Committee Update

The Ad-Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Learning & Operational Technologies has invited the college community to complete a brief survey (ends 2/20) to help us understand current AI use and to inform recommendations that support teaching, learning, operations, and student services across the college.

We thank Trustee Norman Jacknis for guidance on shaping our agenda for this work and Ed Tatton from Creative Communications for his leadership in coordinating the work that is happening on the ground.

Enrollment Management

We continue to see strong and encouraging enrollment growth for the Spring semester, with numbers aligned with goals and expectations.

- As of this morning, 11,876 credit students are enrolled for Spring 2026, a 2.2% increase compared to Spring 2025 at the same point in time.
- Similarly, FTE is up 1.6% compared to last year.
- Spring 2026 applications are up 13% and new student registrations are up 15% year over year.
- Our Enrollment Management and Strategic Marketing teams continue with outreach around encouraging Spring 2026 registration for the final 7.5-week session with classes starting March 24.

RECONNECT:

To date, 630 students verified for SUNY Reconnect are registered for Spring 2026.

- Of these, 102 are new for Spring 2026. The Enrollment Management team hosts monthly SUNY Reconnect information sessions for potential students.

In closing, our community engagement is in full swing as we actively participate in state and federal legislative advocacy for budget and policy, continue our work with 40 local high schools, expand partnerships with receiving universities, and extend relationships with the local business community.

I have accepted the invitation to join The County of Westchester, the Westchester County Association along with other higher education and business leaders as members of the Blueprint '26 Steering Committee whose work will culminate in a data driven and analytical economic development plan for Westchester. Westchester Deputy County Executive Joan McDonald and WCA Board Chair Chris Fisher are co-chairs.

We've extended the well-established legacy of excellence at WCC and already in 2026, we are on our way to achieving even more! We have a new strategic plan in tow, and we are constantly working to strengthen our team! So, as they say, buckle up buttercup! There is so much more to come!

B. Chair's Report

Trustee Mitchell reported:

- American Association of Community Colleges (ACCT)
 - I was not able to attend in person. I was able to attend the Trustee Advisory Committee meeting virtually.
 - They will be starting an international initiative where they will be selecting a certain number of colleges to interface with students and colleges in the United Kingdom and India.
 - ACCT Awards - Nominations for awards open on March 16, 2026.
- FAFSA
 - Completion rates for 2026 outpaced last year.
 - As of January 23, 2026, the increase was 52%.
- Webinar
 - March 3, 2026, at 1 pm there will be a webinar on Parliamentary Procedures for Community Colleges Trustees hosted by (ACCT).
- Items on ACCT Green Sheet
 - An effort to end taxation of Pell Grants.
- Recent Articles of Interest
 - Inside Higher Ed. – February 8, 2026 *“Is Student Loneliness the New Normal – A new @TrellisResearch report finds that more than half of*

college students feel lonely, highlighting the need for community and peer-to-peer support.

- Inside Higher Ed. – February 10, 2026 *“Historically Underrepresented Faculty Overrepresented in the Adjunct Ranks”* – New data shows that 40% of faculty is composed of adjuncts who work for meager wages. And compared to their tenure-track peers, adjuncts are more likely to be Black or female.
- ABC News- January 28, 2026 – *“Inside the 'ghost student' scam that uses identity theft to steal college loans and financial aid”*
- Workforce Training
 - There is a national initiative to equip Community Colleges to embed real world employer projects into workforce training.

C. Committees

Governance Committee

Trustee Gerry reported:

The Governance Committee had discussion on the following:

- Federal Funding
 - College receives about \$30 million in federal aid; funding is stable but increasingly tied to workforce achievements.
 - Emphasis on protecting \$22 million in Pell Grants and expanding Pell Grants for credentialing in healthcare and IT.
 - Importance of Title III and Title V grants for student success, some were cut in 2024 but efforts to reinstate them continue.
 - Trend towards competitive funding based on employment outcomes, apprenticeships, and regional labor demand.
 - Focus needed on core mission of educating students despite workforce funding shifts.
- State Funding and Advocacy
 - State lobbying day focused on ensuring funding tracks enrollment gains and rising costs of full-time equivalents (FTEs).
 - Significant work ongoing at state and federal levels to manage funding challenges.
 - Presence at ACCT National Legislative Summit to address funding issues with local federal delegation.

- Governance and Board Operations
 - Discussion on updating bylaws related to video conferencing and quorum rules for board meetings.
 - Public hearing planned next month on two resolutions to update governance laws.
 - Conversations about orientation process for new board members and planning for annual retreat later in the year.

Program Committee

Trustee Jacknis reported:

The Program Committee had discussion on the following:

- Graduation rates
 - Graduation rates have improved by 24% over historical rates.
 - Viking Roads contributed to the improvement both directly and indirectly.
 - Lessons from Viking Roads are applied to all students and will continue to be used.
- 4-year degree (nursing) debate
 - WCC considered granting 4-year (bachelor's) degrees.
 - Stakeholders prioritized nursing as the primary area.
 - Associate's degree in nursing (ADN) already qualified students to practice as nurses.
 - WCC maintained multiple articulation agreements with other institutions for transfer to 4-year programs.
 - Discussion concluded offering a local 4-year nursing degree was likely not financially viable for WCC.
- AI — Teaching & Learning
 - AI is one of the hottest topics in academia and is viewed as a threat to traditional teaching.
 - Presentation covers WCC current uses, plans, and activities related to AI and emphasizes AI beyond generative AI.
 - AI is integrated into institutional software and is being adopted across curricula and departments.
 - Faculty reported concerns about harms to learning, fairness, assessment integrity, and the time required to enforce guardrails.

AI Presentation – Dr. Vanessa Morest and VP Garrett McAlister; acknowledgements to Hector Graciano, Nicole Tschampel, Ed Tatton, contributing faculty, and a student video by the WCC Vikings Student Club.

AI — Institutional & Policy

- Security and compliance obligations include HIPAA, FERPA, and GDPR.
- AI opportunities include tutoring, scenario-based simulations, study guides, flashcards, self-assessment, resume building, and course development.
- SUNY is beta-testing fraud-detection software for the ghost-student problem.
- Governance and policy alignment include the New York State acceptable use AI policy, a newly released SUNY AI policy, and WCC drafting an AI policy to dovetail with state/SUNY; WCC staff participate in AI cohorts and the Center for Digital Education.
- Path forward includes an ad hoc committee to identify use cases; development of institutional, instructional, and administrative guidelines aligned with state and SUNY policy; deployment of AI literacy training for students, faculty, and staff; board approval for new programs; and vendor disclosure of AI enablement and long-term funding commitments.

Student Trustee Report

Board Secretary Yolanda Howell read Trustee Delduco's report into the record.

Good afternoon everyone,

Although I'm unable to be here today, I wanted to share a brief update on our Food Insecurity Initiative and our continued efforts to strengthen student support services. Addressing food insecurity is critical because when students' basic needs are met, they are better able to succeed both inside and outside the classroom. Student support services are essential, and we remain committed to ensuring every student has the resources they need to thrive.

To further this work, we are creating subgroups focused on different areas, including collaboration with FSA Dining to explore the potential for a fee to better allow students to use financial aid dollars for meals, the reactivation of Unhunger Games, and the Vikings Help Vikings bottle initiative. We are proud to share that we have already raised 150 products for the Unhunger Games campaign.

We look forward to participating in Unhunger Games alongside everyone and continuing this important work together. Thank you all for your ongoing support and commitment to our students.

*Best,
Student Trustee DelDuco*

Finance/Facilities

Trustee Williams reported:

The Finance committee had discussion on the following topics.

- Operating Forecast
- Capital Projects Update
- Contracts

Trustee Williams asked Vice President Jacqueline-Ann Clark to go over the forecast for the month ending January 31, 2026, and the contracts.

Vice President Clark presented the contracts to the Board.

Resolution: Contract Ratification

WHEREAS, Westchester Community College is required to enter into agreements for the continued operation of the College; and

WHEREAS, the attached schedule represents those agreements approved by the College since the last meeting of the Board of Trustees; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of Westchester Community College hereby ratifies the aforementioned agreements.

<u>CONTRACT #</u>	<u>CONTRACTOR NAME</u>	<u>CONTRACT DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>TERM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
24-0240-364	MEDXWASTE, LLC	Amendment of WCC-24-364 to include SUNY EOC location for Biohazard/medical waste pickup and proper disposal.	2/18/26 – 8/31/29	\$480
26-0240-702	Vorex Solutions	Operations 2025 Sprinkler and fire repairs campus wide to keep in compliance.	1/1/26 – 7/29/26	\$13,235
26-0240-423	Everon LLC	Replace obsolete bookstore fire panel and connect to student center fire panel.	1/1/26 – 5/1/26	\$5,480
26-0240-424	DSK Fire and Security LLC.	Repairs to fire alarm system in Student Center, Admin and Gateway buildings.	1/12/26 – 6/1/26	\$11,950
26-0240-425	Ramos and V Tree Service Inc.	Large dead tree removals and pruning healthy trees	1/5/26 – 5/4/26	\$8,500
26-0240-049	Artisan Fire Services	Smoke/fire alarm upgrades	1/12/26 – 6/1/26	\$11,346.77
26-0240-429	Styles Design Interiors LLC	Supply and install window shades in Gateway building.	2/2/26 – 6/5/26	\$8,420.99

<u>CONTRACT #</u>	<u>CONTRACTOR NAME</u>	<u>CONTRACT DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>TERM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
26-0240-431	Arco Protection Systems Inc.	Repairs to Maintenance III, Gateway, Student Center, and Technology Buildings outlined in the Inspection Report.	3/1/26 – 8/1/26	\$13,120.50
26-0240-718	Stark Tech Services	New contract for Stark Tech Services Andover Maintenance contract.	3/1/26 – 2/28/27	\$28,816
26-0130-722	Guidepost Solutions, LLP	Consulting Services.	3/1/26 – 2/28/27	NTE \$50,000

****Motion: Williams/Nonna – all in favor**

Public Comment

Trustee Mitchell invited members of the community for public comment.

Professor Jim Werner, Professor of English and President of the WCC Federation of Teachers

Good afternoon, and thank you for this opportunity to speak. I'm grateful that the Board has identified artificial intelligence as a topic worthy of our close attention, and I thank our colleagues Dr. Morest and VP McAlister for their insightful presentation as well as their colleagues.

Artificial intelligence is well on its way to becoming a seismic change in the relationship between humanity and technology. It offers the possibility of transformative benefits in many diverse dimensions of our society. However, it also brings with it many causes for concern. All too often, our technological abilities and achievements tend to rapidly outpace our thoughtful consideration of any possible negative outcomes, or the creation of guardrails to minimize the likelihood of such outcomes.

Our students are already surrounded by AI tools that beckon to them in many facets of their research and learning. And instructors like me are grappling with the implications. As a professor of English, I have to say that my concerns far outweigh anything I can imagine to be the positive benefits of AI for teaching and learning in reading and writing. Of course, the concern that comes to mind immediately is that students are submitting papers that are written by an artificial intelligence program or agent. And they are. I've seen a dramatic increase in the number of papers that appear to me clearly generated by AI. In fact, I will no longer choose to teach online asynchronous courses (something I once relished), because so many of the students were submitting AI-generated work, in everything from informal reading responses to major essay assignments. I found myself

spending most of my time policing for AI, rather than meaningfully engaging with students about these submissions or performing genuine assessment of student learning.

AI has also impacted the way I teach my in-person courses. The traditional take-home essay can simply no longer be seen as a reliable indicator of a student's mastery of content or writing skill, when it can quickly and easily be cooked up by artificial intelligence. So I have returned to blue books and in-class writing: for informal reading responses, for a midterm essay exam, for in-class annotated bibliographies, and even for the final paper, which my students write over the last four class sessions of the semester. That eats up a lot of instructional time, but it's the only way I can guarantee the writing is theirs.

Some instructors might put their faith in AI detection software (such as TurnItIn, to which the College subscribes). I personally believe such faith is misplaced. There is no foolproof software that will detect AI-generated text with 100% certainty, though there are many that claim to be "almost perfect." False detections, both positive and negative, abound. And software strategies to work around such detection are always keeping pace; it's an endless game of whack-a-mole and we are constantly playing catch-up. I fear that all too often, we instructors in English we are grading the writing not of students, but of machines—not a good look as we strive to maintain the nation's confidence in the value of a college degree.

There are many cognitive skills in the writing process—brainstorming and developing ideas; organizing them in a logical progression of thought and in coherent paragraphs; researching, reading and understanding secondary sources and integrating them into an essay; revising, editing and proofreading. These are complex, challenging tasks and students often struggle with them, unsurprisingly. However, they are critically important for our students to learn if they are to be effective communicators in writing, keen readers, and critical thinkers when they graduate. And these are precisely the things that AI offers to do for them, so they don't have to. In my opinion, AI does not aid learning in the development of good writers; it supplants it.

In addition to the concerns I have as an English professor, I have a host of others as President of our Faculty Union. In elementary education, we are already seeing the arrival of institutions like Alpha School, a private school with locations in multiple cities where students learn by using AI on laptops, instead of from live teachers. Unbound Academy is a Texas-based virtual charter school that uses AI for personalized learning. In higher education, we have not seen such wholesale applications of AI in the classroom—yet. But what will the future look like?

Will the adoption of AI tools lead to reductions in faculty positions, or increases in faculty workload without fair increases in compensation? How might AI tools be used to

evaluate faculty performance, or to make decisions about reappointment or promotion? Will faculty materials be used to “train” AI models to develop AI-generated curricula, or advisement scripts? Will the College adopt AI programs without input from the faculty and require their use? These are just some of the questions that demand clear thought, detailed discussion and carefully negotiated agreements.

Believe me, I am no Luddite pining for a return to our pre-technological past. And there would be no sense in wishing for an AI drawdown when billions of dollars are being spent in an AI “race to the top”; that train has clearly left the station. What we can do— what I feel we MUST do— and what I am pleased to hear that the college is doing, is to develop a more coherent and more comprehensive College policy regarding the uses of artificial intelligence on our campus. I urge the College administration to work specifically with the faculty and the faculty Union as quickly as possible to create such a policy that will set clear parameters for negotiating this ever-changing landscape in a way that advances the best interests of our campus community.

Thank you.

Moment of Silence

Trustee Robeson Smith requested a moment of silence due to the recent passing of Rev. Jesse Jackson.

The Chairperson convened an Executive Session under provisions of Section 105 of Article 7 of the Public Officers Law to discuss personnel matters.

Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel issues.

****Motion: Williams/Nonna – all in favor**

Motion out of Executive Session

****Motion: Bikkal/Raizes – all in favor**

Adjournment

****Motion: Nonna/Williams – all in favor**

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for March 18, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,

Yolanda Howell

Yolanda Howell
Secretary, Board of Trustees