

# STATE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Martin Valadez, Chair // Kady Titus, Vice Chair // Crystal Donner // Debra Entenman // Mack Hogans // Chelsea Mason-Placek // Jay Reich // Jeff Wagnitz // Emily Yim

Nate Humphrey, Executive Director // Marianna Watson, Executive Assistant

Statutory Authority: Laws of 1991, Chapter 28B.50 Revised Code of Washington

**Study session: Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2026**

**Regular meeting: Thursday, Feb. 19, 2026**

**SBCTC Agency Office: 1500 Jefferson St SE, Olympia, WA 98501**

**Hybrid option via Zoom**

**State Board Members Present:** Martin Valadez, Crystal Donner, Debra Entenman (Feb. 18), Mack Hogans, Chelsea Mason-Placek, Jay Reich, Jeff Wagnitz, Emily Yim

**State Board Members Absent:** Kady Titus, Debra Entenman (Feb. 19)

## Study session

The State Board held a study on Feb. 18, 2026, from 1–5 p.m.

## Welcome and board member introductions

Chair Martin Valadez called the meeting to order at 1 p.m., welcomed those present, and asked the board members to introduce themselves.

## Land and labor acknowledgement

Board Member Jay Reich read the Land and Labor Acknowledgement.

## New board member introductions

Executive Director Nate Humphrey called on newly appointed Board Members Debra Entenman and Jeff Wagnitz to introduce themselves to the group.

## Review of the governor’s 2026 supplemental budget proposals

Stephanie Winner, operating budget director, provided an overview of the 2026 supplemental operating and capital budget proposals alongside Darrell Jennings, capital budget director. The Legislature released these proposals in December 2025, which serve as a mid-way update to the state’s two-year 2025-27 budgets.

Mr. Jennings stated the proposed 2026 supplemental capital budget continues a strong emphasis on expanding housing and shelter capacity, resulting in minimal new investment across the rest of state government. For this supplemental budget, the 2025 Legislature reserved approximately \$355 million in available bond capacity for the supplemental budget. Through savings achieved primarily

by projects completed under budget, the Office of Financial Management was able to reclaim an additional \$46 million for use the Governor’s proposed budget, raising total available capacity to approximately \$401 million. The governor’s 2026 supplemental budget proposal uses \$396 million of that amount, primarily for housing, behavioral health, and related safety-net infrastructure. As a result, the community and technical college system received no state bond funding in the Governor’s proposal for our \$149.2 million supplemental request.

Mr. Jennings explained that the Governor’s proposal does provide \$4 million in Climate Commitment Act (CCA) funding, directed toward two important, but lower priority, statewide energy-efficiency grant programs for our college system:

- Building and building-system tune-ups (\$2 million)
- HVAC control-to-schedule upgrades (\$2 million).

While modest relative to the system’s full capital needs, these investments will deliver meaningful operational benefits. Building tune-ups help colleges identify and correct inefficient equipment operation, optimize control sequences, reduce unnecessary heating and cooling loads, and improve overall system function and performance. These measures typically generate immediate and measurable reductions in energy consumption, extending the life of existing equipment and reducing deferred maintenance pressures.

Similarly, HVAC control-to-schedule upgrades allow campuses to align equipment operation with occupancy patterns, running systems only when and where needed. For colleges facing steep increases in utility costs, these strategies offer one of the most cost-effective ways to offset upward pressure on operating budgets while advancing statewide greenhouse gas-reduction goals and extending the life of building systems and equipment.

In addition to the state funding, Mr. Jennings stated the Governor’s proposal authorizes local financing authority for two capital projects:

- Lower Columbia College’s David Story Field improvements (\$3 million local)
- Spokane Community College’s Main Building East Wing renovation (\$15 million local)

Though these items do not include state funding, the authority enables project advancement using locally available resources at a time when state bond capacity is committed to other purposes.

Ms. Winner discussed the proposed 2026 supplemental operating budget. Facing multiple challenges and another serious budget shortfall due to falling revenue and rising costs, the governor’s proposed supplemental operating budget for the community and technical colleges reflects a modest reduction to base appropriations along with maintenance level adjustments rather than any new investments.

**Across-the-board 1.5% and administrative services reduction (-\$19.5 million)**

- Reduces base appropriations for the community and technical college system, starting in fiscal year 2027.

**Maintenance funding adjustments (\$18.5 million)**

- Proposed funding for the recently ratified WPEA and Highline collective bargaining agreement, including retroactive FY26 wage increases, using the established fund split.

In addition, Ms. Winner explained the proposal includes inflationary adjustments for the 2015 College Affordability Plan tuition backfill and provides additional funding to support increased enrollment in College in the High School programs.

## Monitoring report, Goal 2: improve completion and transfer rates

Ha Nguyen, deputy executive director for strategic initiatives and chief of staff, presented the monitoring report for Goal 2 of the State Board’s 2020-2023 strategic plan with Monica Wilson, student success center director, and Will Durden, transfer education and transitional studies director. Joyce Hammer, deputy executive director for education, and Noah Overby, policy research associate,

The presentation focused on two objectives within Goal 2:

- Objective 2.1: Implement research-based strategies that are proven to improve completion rates for all students
- Objective 2.2: Strengthen and expand transfer pathways with four-year institutions

Ms. Wilson presented Objective 2.1 through the implementation of Guided Pathways. It is a student-centered framework grounded in equity-minded practice designed to increase and diversify the students and communities in accessing and earning high-value community and technical college credentials. The systemic institutional approach focuses on the construction of a transparent, structured educational experience that effectively engages each student from point of entry to attainment of high-quality postsecondary credentials and careers.

To improve completion rates for all students, the Student Success Center team has implemented the following trainings/supports help colleges implement Guided Pathways strategies:

- 2026-2028 Guided Pathways Planning Guide and Action Plan
- Middle Leadership Academy
- Math Pathways and Placement
- Advising and Navigation
- Technology and Systems Support for Advising and Navigation
- Teaching and Learning

Ms. Wilson also explained the different key performance indicators (KPIs) for Guided Pathways, such as retention, Math in Year One, English in Year One, credit accumulation, and completion.

Mr. Durden discussed Objective 2.2 with the board, noting that the percentage of students in transfer pathways that transfer to four-year institutions or find employment has steadily increased, even for cohorts that started during the height of the pandemic.

Students who enter into employment after graduation often represent students that are choosing to earn and save for a few years before returning to complete a bachelor's degree. However, this population also includes transfer pathway degrees that effectively prepare students for direct employment, such as the Registered Nurse programs.

Mr. Durden stated that for the students who transfer to four-year institutions, Washington public universities remain the most popular choice, attracting around half of the transferring population. Out-of-state public institutions attract around 20%, as do the combined percentage of in-state and out-of-state private institutions. Overall, including transfers to online universities and re-enrollment from transfer pathways into CTC baccalaureate programs, approximately 70% of the students that transferred remained in Washington for their bachelor's degree. This highlights the important role of CTC transfer pathways in the knowledge economy of Washington.

The presentation concluded with conversations about the sustained, systemwide progress toward improving completion and transfer outcomes across Washington's community and technical colleges, as shown through the accomplishments and outcomes outlined in the report. Through the continued implementation of Guided Pathways, strengthened advising and instructional practices, expanded leadership capacity, and more intentional alignment of transfer pathways with four-year institutions, the system is building clearer, more equitable routes to credential attainment and bachelor's completion.

While challenges remain, particularly in closing equity gaps and accelerating progress toward statewide attainment goals, the strategies underway position the system to translate recent gains into long-term, scalable improvements that advance racial equity, economic mobility, and student success for all learners.

## International students update

Dr. Joyce Hammer, deputy executive director for education, and Summer Kennesson, policy research director, presented the board with an update on international student enrollment trends. Community and technical colleges within the system have long offered international programs designed to support students coming from outside the United States. Over the course of the past decade, International Student enrollment has experienced a downward trend exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and federal policy changes. Program areas seeing the greatest decline in international student enrollment are the Direct Transfer Agreement (DTA), business, computer science, and physical science.

Dr. Hammer noted that, despite these declines, fall-to-fall retention rates for international students have gradually improved, now surpassing pre-pandemic retention rates. However, early enrollment indicators for 2025–26 show another significant decrease in new international students, suggesting potential challenges for future enrollment trends.

## Baccalaureate programs update

Kendrick Hang, policy associate for baccalaureate programs, provided the board with the quarterly baccalaureate degree update. The State Board has approved over 170 bachelor's degree programs throughout all 34 community and technical colleges. They include seven approved Bachelor of Science in nursing (BSN) and 15 approved Bachelor of Science in computer science (BSCS)

programs. Subsequently, over 16,500 bachelor's degrees have been awarded by community and technical colleges in the system from fall 2008 to fall 2025.

Mr. Hang proposed two new baccalaureate programs at Tacoma Community College (TCC):

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN)
- Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (BSCS)

Val Sundby, provost and vice president of academic affairs at TCC, joined the conversation to explain the college's mission-aligned admissions process for the nursing program, which prioritizes diverse student backgrounds while maintaining a 99% NCLEX pass rate. These two new proposed programs would be TCC's seventh and eighth bachelor's degree programs.

## Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Valadez adjourned the study session at 4:03 p.m.

## Study session

The State Board held its regular business meeting on Feb. 19, 2026, from 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

## Welcome and introductions

Chair Valadez called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and welcomed those present.

## Establish a quorum and adopt meeting agenda

Chair Valadez noted that a quorum was present and requested a vote to adopt the meeting agenda without change.

**Motion:** Moved by Board Member Mack Hogans, seconded by Board Member Reich, and unanimously approved by the board, the adoption of the regular business meeting agenda.

## Consent agenda

Chair Valadez requested a vote to approve the consent agenda without change.

**Motion:** Moved by Board Member Hogans, seconded by Board Member Reich, and unanimously approved by the board, the adoption of the February 2026 regular business meeting consent agenda.

## Public comment

There were no public comments.

## Recognition of Jay Reich's years of service to the State Board

Chair Valadez and Nate Humphrey, executive director, presented a resolution formally recognizing Board Member Reich's nearly 13 years of service to the board. His work specifically done to help recruit and onboard the new executive director was highlighted, as well as his wealth of knowledge

stemming from an extensive legal career. Board member Reich served with distinction, providing leadership and guidance to the Washington community and technical college system. He was a champion for student success, equity, and access to education, providing invaluable legal and financial expertise, personal dedication, and engaged service during his tenure.

Several members of the group chimed in with their own accolades for Board Member Reich, including Board Members Hogans, Chelsea Mason-Placek, Emily Yim, and Crystal Donner, as well as ACT President Wendy Bohlke.

Chair Valadez then requested a vote to approve Resolution 26-02-07, formally recognizing Board Member Reich for his years of service.

**Motion:** Moved by Board Member Yim, seconded by Board Member Hogans, and unanimously approved by the board, Resolution 26-02-07.

## Legislative session update

Arlen Harris, legislative director, presented the board with an update on the 2026 legislative session. It is a short session at 60 days and is focused on refining the state's operating, capital, and transportation budgets. The November 2025 revenue forecast anticipates a roughly \$900 million shortfall over the next four years. In response to a multibillion-dollar deficit last session, lawmakers raised revenue and reduced agency spending. For the community and technical college system, this resulted in operational reductions and a partial reversal of previously approved COLA funding for faculty and staff. Many colleges are now facing difficult choices about programs and day-to-day operations.

Mr. Harris explained that a central goal for the 2026 session is restoring full state funding for employee compensation. He expressed appreciation for the Legislature's action to provide general wage increases in FY 2026 and FY 2027 for classified and non-represented employees. However, he noted that because the enacted budget funded only part of these increases, colleges must cover the remaining costs with tuition revenue and local dollars. With personnel expenses making up about 80% of college operating budgets, institutions have very limited flexibility to absorb unfunded salary obligations. To ease this strain, the agency is urging lawmakers to reinstate full state support for compensation in the 2026 operating budget.

There was also discussion of two policy proposals:

- Concerning adding workforce certificate programs and continuing education to eligibility for the Washington College Grant – House Bill (HB) 2458 (Entenman), Senate Bill (SB) 6217 (Boehnke)
- Concerning Nurse Education Programs – HB 2498 (Entenman), SB 6267 (Bateman)

Mr. Harris thanked Board Members Hogans and Mason-Placek for attending meetings with legislators on the Hill yesterday, noting that advocacy continues to be of great importance during this legislative session.

## Legislative intern update

Sam Herriot, government relations associate, introduced Ruffaro Guzha as the agency's newest

legislative intern. Ms. Guzha is a student at Pierce College Ft. Steilacoom, majoring in history, and shared with the board her experiences with the State Board so far and how she has grown through her advocacy work. She hopes to pursue a PhD in Africana Studies and a career in public health in the future.

Board Members Yim and Hogans commended and thanked Ms. Guzha for her work thus far as a legislative intern.

## ACT report

Ms. Bohlke recapped the National Legislative Summit (NLS) in Washington, D.C., which took place earlier this month. She discussed the ACT Spring Conference, which will happen in May at Semiahmoo Resort. There will also be a new trustee orientation happening in April, facilitated by Mary Spilde.

## WACTC report

Joyce Loveday, WACTC president, began her report by thanking the State Board for all its continued work throughout the legislative session and welcomed the new Board Members present. Dr. Loveday recalled the last WACTC meeting, which included Hill visits for presidents as opposed to the traditional WACTC academy. Speaker Laurie Jinkins also joined the group for dinner on the first day while Rep. Julia Reed served as a speaker during the meeting.

## System unions report

Jaqui Cain, AFT president, reported on a successful lobby day on the Hill in January. During that time, there were over 80 participants, including 14 members of the American Association of University Professors at the University of Washington. They joined in advocating for free college for all Washingtonians and the passage of the Millionaire's Tax legislation. Ms. Cain also highlighted the unpaid labor of faculty supporting parent education programs and immigrant communities and expressed concern about funding reductions for Running Start students.

Suzanne Southerland provided an update for WEA. She thanked Mr. Humphrey and Simone Boe, lobbyist at WEA, for their work done on the hill during legislative session and highlighted that there is a large coalition of supporters for higher education.

## Financial health measures update

Choi Halladay, deputy executive director for business operations, discussed the work of the Business Affairs Commission Task Force, which includes membership from Lake Washington Institute of Technology, Bates Technical College, Renton Technical College, South Puget Sound Community College, Spokane Colleges, and Pierce College. The group is developing a standardized framework for evaluating the fiscal health of Washington's community and technical colleges, emphasizing the need for independent reviews and transparent processes.

Mr. Halladay explained the process for developing financial metrics for colleges. There is a focus on creating a system to monitor and predict fiscal health. He emphasized the need for consistent and reliable data across colleges, as well as buy-in from presidents, CFOs, and trustees. His discussion emphasized the importance of early intervention and the potential for using retired CFOs as

consultants. Mr. Halladay considered the impact of metrics on staffing decisions and the need for a dashboard that would help track the financial health of individual colleges and the system overall.

## Executive director's report

Mr. Humphrey began his report by thanking agency staff for their work during the legislative session. He highlighted Mx. Herriot for their work on the weekly distributions of Legislative News, the education division for skilled navigation through a constantly changing federal landscape, Maya Esquivido-Storm for her work at the Associated Tribes of Northwest Indians conference, and ACT director Kim Tanaka for her continued accomplishments with trustees throughout the community and technical colleges system.

Mr. Humphrey highlighted several ongoing projects within the agency, such as the Microsoft Elevate partnership. He also mentioned upcoming events like the Gates Foundation meeting in March and the American Association of Community Colleges Summit in Seattle in April.

## Executive session

Chair Valadez called for an executive session at 11:13 a.m. in accordance with RCW 42.30.110(1)(g), to review the performance of a public employee. No action was taken.

Chair Valadez reconvened open session at 12:15 p.m.

## Board discussion and chair's report

Board Member Mason-Placek discussed her experience attending NLS in Washington, D.C., noting that there was excellent representation from the Washington State delegation. She stated she felt very supported in their advocacy measures and enjoyed her time at the conference.

Mr. Humphrey also chimed in about NLS and stated that there were conversations held between the summit and members of the federal administration, discussing the recent move of key components from the Department of Education to the Department of Labor. Mr. Humphrey also attended the recent WACTC meeting, which focused on college budget concerns.

Chair Valadez appointed three members of the board to serve on the nominating committee for next year's chair and vice chair positions: Board Members Hogans, Mason-Placek, and Yim. They will reconvene as a group at the June meeting and provide their report.

## Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Valadez adjourned the February 2026 regular business meeting at 12:34 p.m.



Nate Humphrey, secretary



Martin Valadez, chair