

GBC Presidents Council Meeting Minutes

Date: 1/26/2026

Location: Berg Conference Room and Zoom

Present:

Amber Donnelly	David Stoddard	Jeff Winrod	Lelsie Maple
John Evans	Stacy Warnert	Mack Robinson	Bryan May
Sarah Negrete	Erendira Monroy	Carrie Meisner	Sheymane Pitts
Mary Doucette	Dean Straight	Gail Rappa	Eleanor O'Donnell
Karl Stevens	Arysta Sweat	Sharon Butterfield	

Meeting called to order by President Donnelly.

President's Update

The President provided an overview of outcomes from the recent special Board meeting, highlighting the approved tuition increases. For associate degrees, tuition will increase by 2%, 3%, and 4% over three consecutive years, for a total increase of 9%. For bachelor's degrees, tuition will increase by 3%, 4%, and 5% over three years, totaling 12% for upper-division coursework. While these increases have been discussed for several months, the institution remains mindful of the impact on students.

To help offset these impacts, the college continues to prioritize student support. Last year, approximately \$880,000 in scholarship funding was awarded through the Foundation, and current efforts are approaching \$1.2 million. The college has also committed to distributing all but 25% of access fee funds. To date, approximately \$950,000 in access fees has been awarded, with most students receiving at least \$700. Enrollment trends were noted as encouraging, with current spring enrollment up approximately 156 students compared to the prior year. If enrollment remains strong over the next year, the college anticipates being able to distribute an even greater share of access fee funds. Continued emphasis will be placed on ensuring students are informed about payment plans, FAFSA completion, and available scholarships so that no eligible funding goes unused.

Planning for the upcoming legislative session will begin in March, with advocacy efforts focused on adjusting state funding levels. Depending on biennial funding outcomes, these efforts could allow the Regents to reconsider or potentially reduce future tuition increases. The administration expressed confidence in the institution's ability to support students through these changes.

The President acknowledged that the Special Board meeting was challenging due to the impacts on students, faculty, and the institution's budget, but emphasized the importance of balancing these considerations within the broader system.

The President also noted upcoming changes affecting faculty regulations, specifically extended timelines for reviews requiring committee action, with some deadlines moving from approximately two weeks to around 30 days. Additional details will be shared through Faculty Senate.

The update concluded with encouragement regarding strong student participation in campus events and the significant support provided by faculty and staff, and a call to continue building on this positive momentum.

Approval of Minutes

President Donnelly asked if there were any corrections or additions to the minutes from the last meeting. Hearing none she called for a motion to approve the minutes.

A Motion to approve the December 1, 2025 minutes was made Arysta Sweat seconded by Matt Aschenbrener and passed unanimously.

Vice President Updates

Academic Affairs

Vice President Sarah Negrete provided an update on program development and the status of several programs anticipated to move forward over the next one to two meetings.

The Business Department has submitted a Certificate of Achievement in AI in Business Technology, which is expected to be ready for presentation in March, with final approval anticipated through ARSA in June.

A Skills Certificate in Technical Writing from the English Department is also being submitted and may be brought forward for approval. Industry partners have indicated that technical writing skills are highly valuable for reporting, grant writing, and related professional needs, and the program is expected to attract individuals currently working in industry.

The proposed 90-credit Bachelor of Applied Science in Project Management proposal was presented to the Academic Affairs Council in December. Following subsequent discussions with system leadership, it was determined that a presentation on 90-credit degrees will be delivered to the Board of Regents, faculty, and staff at the March Regents meeting, with plans to move forward with the proposal for the GBC program in June. While this shifts the anticipated start date to January rather than fall, the program remains active and continues to move forward.

Accreditation update

The Year 6 report is in near-final draft form and will be shared with the Northwest Commission liaison for review and feedback prior to final submission. The report is due March 1, after which no additional changes may be made. Preparation for the Year 7 comprehensive accreditation visit will begin immediately due to the significant campus-wide effort required, and the liaison has agreed to review that report in advance as well.

Credit for Prior Learning

The working group is meeting weekly on Mondays at 1:00 p.m., with draft procedures and materials to be shared for campus feedback later in the spring.

The update concluded with a farewell to Mary and a welcome to Dean Straight, who will begin serving as Interim Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences on February 1.

Student Affairs

Vice President Matt Aschenbrener reported enrollment figures as of the day after classes began, noting a headcount of 3,292 students based on data provided by Bryan May. Between the first day of classes and the end of the term last spring, enrollment increased by 88 students, indicating that the current headcount may continue to rise. Compared to the beginning of spring term last year, enrollment is up by 121 students, reflecting positive momentum. Overall headcount is up approximately 3.8 percent from the same time last year, signaling continued progress in enrollment growth. Much of the enrollment increase has occurred on the high school side, which continues to be the largest area of growth.

Work is underway to develop a Strategic Enrollment Plan focused on sustaining and expanding enrollment. This effort is being coordinated with the Enrollment and Retention Committee, which is scheduled to meet soon. Once drafted, the plan will be shared across the institution for feedback, including outreach to center directors to identify strategies for growing enrollment at each location.

In addition, an advising plan is being developed to ensure students are supported effectively, including alignment with system rules and regulations related to advisor-to-student ratios.

There are ongoing discussions related to campus housing, including efforts to retain students in housing and evaluations of renovation needs such as carpeting, furniture, painting, and other upgrades, along with associated cost estimates.

Finance & Operations

Vice President John Evans provided an update on computer services, noting that significant work is underway to improve IT infrastructure. Mack Robinson is leading efforts to increase the number of wireless access points across campus. An assessment is currently in progress, and all access points are expected to be purchased before the end of the current fiscal year, with installation planned primarily over the summer.

Substantial improvements were made to the Zoom rooms over the winter break. Feedback from users who experienced issues during the fall semester has been very positive, and most Zoom rooms are now functioning as intended. The institution is preparing to move into the next phase of planning for the remaining USDA Zoom funding. In the coming weeks, the final Zoom installation from Phase One will be completed in McDermitt, after which Phase Two planning and implementation will begin.

On the budget side, following the previously discussed tuition increase, there were also fee increases. The technology fee was increased from \$6 to \$10 per credit, which will support cybersecurity measures, the CRM, and the new website. All CTE lab fees were approved, as well as the housing fee increase, which will provide additional funding for facilities improvements, including updates to Berg Hall.

An update was also provided on Berg Hall. Financial Aid is scheduled to move into the space next week, as they requested a slight delay to complete aid distribution. The remaining furniture is expected to arrive and be installed around February 9 as part of Phase Two, after which Berg Hall will be largely complete aside from final finishing touches.

Strategic Resource Committee

It is encouraged for all departments to submit requests as soon as possible. Excess funding has been identified for this fiscal year, but with less than six months remaining, timely submissions are critical to allow adequate time for purchasing and project completion.

Equipment Committee

Tami Potter has sent out a call for submissions, with requests due in early February.

Approximately \$100,000 has been allocated for equipment needs across campuses to support necessary updates and replacements. These efforts reflect a strong opportunity to address infrastructure, technology, and equipment needs during the current fiscal year.

Academic Program Development

Another item under the academic program development, focusing on the Bachelor of Science in Social Work. Currently, GBC offers the program in a 3+1 partnership with UNR. The institution is actively investigating options to fully offer the BS in Social Work at GBC, with progress dependent on accreditation requirements. The program is designed to provide social workers with specialized knowledge for working in rural areas, while also offering a broad foundation in social work practice. While the timeline is largely determined by the accrediting body's review process, the plan is to move forward with fully establishing the program at GBC once all accreditation requirements are met.

Strategic Resource Committee

The Chairman of the Strategic Resource Committee, Jeff Winrod, provided an update on recent strategic resource approvals and ongoing projects. Painting has been completed in Pahrump, and Sheree Beard is actively working on fulfilling furniture requests, with some items beginning to arrive. Updated lighting has been installed in GTA, with the Business Dept area partially completed, and the Pahrump Valley nursing room has received new flooring and a vanity. Many of the larger projects, particularly carpeting, are still in progress, with purchasing coordinating through Omnia partnerships to secure optimal pricing.

Current requests for this month total \$232,350 and include several significant projects. Key items include the Winnemucca Health Science expansion, which covers additional blinds, curtains, and other necessary resources for the program. Upgrades also include updated microphone equipment for the theater and multiple improvements in Ely, such as new office spaces and a redesigned front entryway to create a more inviting environment for staff and students. With no questions or concerns there was a call for a motion to approve the strategic resource requests.

A motion to approve the Strategic Resource requests was made by Dave Stoddard seconded by Carrie Meisner and passed unanimously.

Committee Reports

Classified Council

Chair Erendira Andrade reported on the Classified Council upcoming activities. The chili and soup cook-off at the Elko campus is scheduled for Monday, February 2nd. Currently, there are only a few participants signed up to bring their chili or soup, so anyone interested in contributing is encouraged to do so. Faculty and staff are also invited to participate, and those who wish to sign up should contact Sharon Butterfield. The event was noted as being very popular in previous years.

Student Government Association

SGA Update – Report Presented by Storm Rain on Behalf of President Serrano

Storm Rain provided an update on behalf of President Serrano, who was unable to attend. Key highlights from the report are as follows:

Mascot Funding and Branding Initiatives

The SGA reviewed the previously allocated \$12,000 for the Mascot initiative. While supportive of school spirit efforts, they recommended reallocating these funds until GBC's brand refresh is completed. The launch of the new newsletter and expanded use of the web campus were highlighted as positive steps in promoting the Big Horns identity. Senators expressed strong approval for updated messaging emphasizing unity and collective identity. The Explorer group-oriented branding concepts, such as "Herd Go Green" or "Gold," were noted as effective in strengthening student institutional pride.

Tuition and Scholarship Advocacy

SGA expressed appreciation that tuition increases for community colleges were lower than those for universities. They encouraged GBC to explore additional donor-based funding opportunities to expand scholarships, including naming rights for campus spaces, donor plaques, or brick walkways. The association is also eager to see the impact of the newly proposed Student Emergency Fund on students.

Student Organizations and Engagement

- Volleyball Club: Scheduled a photography session for an upcoming match to generate high-quality images for promotion and student engagement.
- Bowling Event: A recent bowling night had over 42 attendees. SGA is exploring the formation of a Bowling Club and is seeking a faculty or staff advisor.
- Other Clubs: SGA continues to support engagement in Rodeo and Agriculture-related activities.

SGA Leadership Updates

President Serrano announced she will not seek reelection in the upcoming spring election to focus on family, education, and personal development. She expressed gratitude for the support she has received and encouraged new voices to step forward. Two senators, Cowan (or Cowen) and Storm Rain, have declared their candidacy for SGA President. Elections are scheduled for February 9–13.

Upcoming Activities

SGA is planning a retreat in March to support leadership development and student engagement initiatives.

This report reflects ongoing efforts to enhance student engagement, promote school spirit, and support academic and extracurricular growth at GBC.

March SGA Retreat

SGA is planning a retreat on the Elko campus, scheduled for March 27th, for all senators to participate in leadership development sessions, team-building activities, and collaborative planning exercises. The retreat will also include:

- A lunch with the SGA Executive Team (pending availability).
- A dinner with all Deans to foster relationship-building and dialogue between students and campus leadership.

The retreat is intended to strengthen communication, teamwork, and shared governance between the Student Government Association and the broader college community.

SGA Scholarship Update

The SGA Scholarship is currently live and accepting applications through February 20th. To date:

- 77 student applications have been submitted.
- Only one faculty nomination has been received.

SGA strongly encourages additional faculty participation in the nomination process, emphasizing that faculty insight is critical to identifying and supporting deserving students. This update underscores SGA's focus on leadership development, student engagement, and scholarship support across the campus.

President Donnelly added that last spring a feasibility study was done on sports at GBC by an outside company to provide accurate, comprehensive information. Kevin Seipp will lead the next steps in implementing these initiatives, with the Rodeo Club identified as the first official program to move forward. A formal plan for the Rodeo Club will be submitted in March prior to the Board of Regents meeting. The feasibility study, which is approximately 300 pages, outlines opportunities, constraints, and financial considerations for adding sports programs.

While the administration is supportive of expanding student clubs and athletics, all initiatives will come with associated costs. Other potential opportunities, such as cross country, are also being considered, and the college is open to exploring additional feasible options to enhance student engagement and community involvement. A bowling club is a great idea.

Regarding the mascot and branding efforts. The college has engaged a professional company to help solidify and formalize elements of the institutional brand to ensure consistency moving forward. As a result of this work, the branding direction is expected to be clearly defined and largely finalized by March, at which point decisions related to the mascot can be more fully evaluated within that established framework.

The new college website is scheduled to go live on the 27th. Communications will be sent broadly to internal and external stakeholders, including system offices and regional partners, to notify them of the launch. While some links and content may still require minor updates after launch, the new website represents a significant improvement over the current site and provides a more secure platform for the institution. Faculty and staff are encouraged to share the update with students and to provide feedback on any issues encountered, with the understanding that refinements will continue as part of the rollout process.

Faculty Senate

Chair Oscar Sida reported on Faculty Senate action item regarding the new Technical Writing Skills Certificate. The certificate was unanimously approved by the Senate and is designed as a fully online program for entry-level students as well as currently employed professionals. The program addresses identified workforce gaps in professional writing and communication, particularly for individuals in technical or leadership roles who lack formal training in these areas. The certificate aligns with employer-identified workforce needs, including feedback received from the Elko Fire Department, and was brought forward for approval.

Motion to approve the Technical Writing Skills certificate was made by Dean Straight seconded by Dave Stoddard and passed unanimously.

NSHE has updated its disciplinary rules and procedures, with revisions to Title 2, Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 now moving forward for Board of Regents approval. The changes are procedural in nature and are intended to establish more reasonable timelines for mediation hearings and to clearly define the term “mediation” so it is not confused with other meetings within the disciplinary process. These proposed amendments were circulated to the Chancellor, institutional presidents, and Faculty Senate chairs for review at the December meeting. In addition, nominations are now open for the Faculty Senate Vice Chair position following Dean’s transition into the role of Acting Dean. Nominations will remain open through February 13, ahead of the next meeting, with the goal of selecting a vice chair who will assume the chair role in May.

Chair Sida noted that he had invited to participate on the low-yield programs committee and felt it was important to share this information to ensure faculty awareness, particularly for programs currently under review, so units are informed as the process moves forward. None of his own programs are impacted at this time. The review process is intended to ensure compliance with system requirements and to assess the overall viability of academic programs, with results ultimately reported to the Chancellor. It was also emphasized that there are established exceptions within the process, and when a program demonstrates clear viability, there is an opportunity for advocacy on its behalf.

Committee Reports

The Enrollment and Retention Advisory Committee is collaborating with VP Aschenbrener to develop the strategic enrollment management plan, with members breaking into small work groups to create goals and action plans for integration into the final strategy.

The recent Zoom-based new student orientation drew over 50 participants and received positive feedback, with all survey respondents indicating they felt welcomed at GBC. One survey response noted a weaker sense of connection to the GBC community, prompting discussion about whether future spring orientations should remain virtual or transition to in-person. Planning is underway for an in-person fall orientation.

Student Awards ceremony is scheduled for April 30th and is in development, with discussion of adding a citizenship-style award at each campus to encourage broader participation, though no formal decision has been made.

The Winnemucca Tech Center Open House is scheduled for February 26 from 4:00–7:00 p.m.

Graduation planning is ongoing, with the committee meeting monthly and encouraging faculty and staff to save the date and participate.

The Learning Commons announced that all campuses now offer online scheduling for testing and tutoring, allowing students to book appointments at any time for greater access and convenience. This will allow us to collect data on usage. Proctors and tutors, and it helps us. We may need additional part time employees to make all of this possible.

Compliance Updates

Arysta Sweat emphasized the urgency of meeting the federal ADA/Section 508 compliance deadline of April 24, 2026, noting that all online materials must be fully compliant by that date. Faculty were recognized for their significant efforts, with spring 2026 courses currently at 83.6% compliance and more than 2,500 documents remediated in the past month alone. While software tools assist with many fixes, more complex issues require additional review and support, and further training is planned in coordination with Distance Learning. Questions were raised about outreach to part-time faculty, with clarification that priority will be given to active and upcoming online courses, and additional communication and escalation through deans will occur as needed.

Title IX and FERPA training is now tracked through Vector Solutions, with current completion of the Title IX training is at approximately 50% and expectations that rates will rise quickly following renewed outreach. Follow up emails will be sent out this week. GBC was at 80% completion last year, which was the highest in the state.

The FERPA training we are at 70% completion. Last year we did not have a way to track the completion percentage, this will help to show GBC's compliance. We are required to send out an annual or biannual notification to students about FERPA, a notice went out in the fall and another one will go out in the next two weeks. The importance of FERPA training was underscored as a key protection for faculty in the event of complaints with an announcement during the next Faculty Senate and encouragement from the deans to ensure both full-time and part-time faculty complete required training.

New Business

No additional items were raised.

Members were reminded of the upcoming website launch and encouraged to share the information, noting that a broader communication will be sent out.

President Donnelly invited members to propose any new business items or topics for discussion at the next meeting and asked whether additional information was needed on any issues. It was suggested that Kevin Seipp be invited to return to provide a brief informational update on the feasibility study related to clubs and sports, so that all members have consistent information that can be shared more broadly.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:52 pm.