MEETING MINUTES
Arizona Western College
District Governing Board Meeting
Regular Meeting 1:00pm
Yuma Campus
August 24, 2026

Board Members Present: Board Secretary Olivia Zepeda, Maria Chavoya, and Brad Sale
Board Member present by phone, Zoom: Board Chair Dennis Booth
Board Member Absent: Dr. Kenneth MacFarland

Others Present within Meeting room: (25)
Dr. Reetika Dhawan, President
Czarina Gallegos, Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services
Bryan Doak, EVP of Learning and Student Services
Katheline Ocampo, Vice President and CHRO
Scott Estes, Chief Information Officer
Ana English, Dean of Enrollment Services
Miguel Rios, Interim Director of Manufacturing
Stuart Gibson, Dean of Business, Education, Social and Behavioral Sciences
Jesus Castillo Flores, Interim Director of Apprenticeship and Prison Programs
Renee Macaluso, Dean of Mathematics, Science & Engineering
Alan Sanchez, Director of Financial Aid
Patrick Cunningham, Prison Ed Program Manager
Elaine Groggett, Executive Director of Centralized Scheduling, Assessment, Curriculum, and Special Projects
Mark Sims, Professor of Homeland Security
Cindy Zavala, Director of Student Life
Jennifer Freedman, Executive Assistant
Johanna Megui, Office Coordinator
Michelle Sims, Professor of Economics
Marlie Meza, Professor of Biology
Dr. Joann Chang, Dean of Innovation
Onyeka Udodi, SGA President
Melanie Ruiz, SGA Student
Joshua Leviton, SGA Student
Marci Hernandez, Student of the Month
Hector Zepeda, Student Award recipient

Community Members Present in Room: **(2)** Zynia Zepeda and Manuel Zepeda (family of Hector Zepeda)

Board member Ms. Maria Chavoya announced that Chair Booth will be joining remotely and he has designated Ms. Olivia Zepeda to serve as Chair Pro Tem for today's meeting, presiding over the conduct of the meeting. Chair Booth will continue to participate and vote on all matters, assuming no connectivity issues arise. There were no objections to moving forward.

Motion to designate Olivia Zepeda as Chair Pro Tem for the August 24 meeting, presented for approval.
Motion to approve made by Maria Chavoya, seconded by Brad Sale.
Final resolution: Motion carries.
Yea: Dennis Booth, Brad Sale, Maria Chavoya, and Olivia Zepeda. Motion carries.

Call to Order: Board Secretary and Chair Pro Tem Olivia Zepeda called the Regular Meeting to order at 1:00pm.

Adoption of Agenda: The agenda for August 24, 2026 meeting presented for approval.
Motion to approve agenda made by Maria Chavoya, seconded by Brad Sale
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Brad Sale, Maria Chavoya, Olivia Zepeda, and Dennis Booth
Nay: None
Abstain: None

Approval of Minutes: The Meeting Minutes for June 17, 2026 Public Hearings, Special Meeting, and Regular Meeting, presented for approval.
Motion by Maria Chavoya seconded by Brad Sale
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Brad Sale, Maria Chavoya, Olivia Zepeda, and Dennis Booth
Nay: None
Abstain: None

Call to the Audience:
N/A

College Reports

Student Government Association: SGA President Onyeka Udodi provided organizational updates, including the introduction of new officers and the announcement of Melanie Ruiz as Vice President. SGA reported an overall SGA student GPA of 3.59 and expressed appreciation to Cindy Zavala for her mentorship and continued support of the organization.

The group highlighted several campus engagement initiatives, including the launch of the Mega Matador recognition program, which celebrates outstanding Matadors. Community members are encouraged to submit nominations, and promotional materials are displayed throughout campus.

SGA also announced the upcoming Student Voice Initiative, which will provide students with an opportunity to share feedback through QR code-accessible forms located across campus. All submissions will be reviewed and discussed during SGA meetings. Students, faculty, and staff are invited to attend SGA meetings, which are held every Tuesday from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in MAC 102.

Faculty Senate Association: Dr. Michelle Sims, Faculty Senate Representative to the District Governing Board, shared highlights showcasing the outstanding contributions of AWC faculty. She noted numerous examples of faculty members exceeding their core responsibilities through professional development activities, leadership and representation of the College, participation in community events, award recognitions, volunteer service, and scholarly achievements, including book and article authorships.

Special highlights included a partnership visit to Miami Dade College in support of the Excelencia Initiative, providing opportunities for collaboration and the exchange of best practices. Dr. Sims also recognized the success of the AWC Athletic teams and coaches, marking achievements that reflect both individual excellence and the strength of AWC's athletic programs.

Student of the Month: Dr. Michelle Sims presented the Student of the Month Award to Marci Hernandez in recognition of her academic excellence, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to serving others. Marci was recognized for her outstanding performance in a four-week summer Microeconomics course, where she demonstrated exceptional resilience, flexibility, and dedication to learning.

As part of her coursework, Marci successfully created five technical videos, showcasing both her creativity and technical skills. In addition to her academic achievements, she is the owner of BrushIt Art Studio in downtown Yuma, reflecting her entrepreneurial drive and engagement with the local community. Dr. Sims highlighted Marci's positive and meaningful impact on the College and commended her continued commitment to supporting and serving others.

Department of Energy Emerging Leader Award: Miguel Rios and Jesus Castillo presented the Department of Energy Emerging Leader Award to Hector Zepeda in recognition of his outstanding accomplishments at the national level. Hector earned distinction in a highly competitive field that included participants from both universities and community colleges across the country.

During the presentation, Hector was recognized for his strong work ethic, dedication, and willingness to step outside of his comfort zone to pursue new opportunities. Presenters highlighted his commitment to personal and professional growth, noting that his active participation in challenging experiences has helped him build a strong foundation for his future success.

Action Items

Action Item #1 – Consideration to Accept Candidates for Exempt Positions, presented by Katheline Ocampo
Motion by Maria Chavoya, seconded by Brad Sale
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Brad Sale, Maria Chavoya, Olivia Zepeda, and Dennis Booth
Nay: None
Abstain: None
The **Board Approved** the Action Item as Presented.

Summary –
- Angelica Escoto, Professor of Biology
- Brenna Sydow, Professor of Biology (1-semester temporary appointment)
- Carmen Marquez, KAWC KOFA Engagement Reporter
- Chelsea Quiroga, Director of Corporate Training
- Galen Smith, Professor of Art-2D
- Georgiana “Gigi” Janko, Professor of Art-3D (1-year temporary appointment)
- Giovanni Delgado Ferreira, Professor of Theater (1-year temporary appointment)
- Hannah Whitson, Professor of Mathematics
- Ian McDougall, Professor of History
- Jeremy Voorhies, Professor of Administration of Justice & Homeland Security
- Kristin S. Martin, Professor of Nursing
- Mayra Rubio, Allied Health Clinical Coordinator – Program Specialist
- Monica Beals, Professor of Psychology
- Monica Galvez, Photographer
- Patrick Cunningham, Prison Education Program Manager

- Rachel Jones-Lord, Professor of Biology (1-semester temporary appointment)
- Rhoda Hilfiker, Nursing Lab Coordinator (1-year temporary appointment)
- Rosa M. Mendoza, Outreach and Student Services Coordinator
- Ruben Guerra, Professor of Culinary Arts
- Samuel Colton, Professor of Welding (1-semester temporary appointment)

Action Item #2 – Consideration to Approve Renewal of IGA with Arizona State University, presented by Czarina Gallegos
Motion by Maria Chavoya, seconded by Brad Sale
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Brad Sale, Maria Chavoya, Olivia Zepeda, and Dennis Booth
Nay: None
Abstain: None

The **Board Approved** the Action Item as Presented.

Summary –
This 2-year renewing Intergovernmental Agreement allows Arizona Western College to collaborate in facilitating transfer pathways and continuation of the use of AWC's Yuma, Arizona campus site.

Action Item #3 – Consideration to Approve IGA with Western Arizona Vocational Education District #50 (WAVE), presented by Czarina Gallegos
Motion by Maria Chavoya seconded by Brad Sale
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Brad Sale, Maria Chavoya, Olivia Zepeda, and Dennis Booth
Nay: None
Abstain: None

The **Board Approved** the Action Item as Presented.

Summary -
The Agreement enables WAVE to offer Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses meeting the criteria of A.R.S. §15-391 at College facilities under a centralized instructional model, giving eligible students under age 18 the opportunity to earn college credit through dual enrollment while attending WAVE partner schools. The renewed Agreement carries a five-year term, effective July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2031, subject to annual review, with continuation each fiscal year contingent on the availability and appropriation of funds.

Action Item #4 – Consideration to Approve Amended Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Forms Reflecting Corrected Assessed Property Valuations, presented by Czarina Gallegos
Motion by Maria Chavoya, seconded by Brad Sale
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Brad Sale, Maria Chavoya, Olivia Zepeda, and Dennis Booth
Nay: None
Abstain: None

The **Board Approved** the Action Item as Presented.

Summary –
Board Chair Pro Tem Ms. Olivia Zepeda shared the justification for the action item and Ms. Gallegos provided further details as follows. Following adoption of the fiscal year 2027 budget, the Yuma County Assessor notified the District that the assessed property valuations previously provided to Arizona Western College were incorrect and supplied corrected valuation information. Because assessed valuation is used to calculate the property tax levy and corresponding tax rate, the District has revised the applicable fiscal year 2027 budget forms to reflect the corrected values. The revision reduces the District's proposed primary property tax levy by $44,000, from $41,819,000 to $41,775,000. This amendment ensures that the adopted budget documentation agrees with the corrected valuation information provided by the County and accurately reflects the levy to be assessed.

Action Item #5 – Consideration to Approve Purchases from July 2026, presented by Czarina Gallegos
Motion by Maria Chavoya seconded by Brad Sale
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Brad Sale, Maria Chavoya, Olivia Zepeda, and Dennis Booth
Nay: None
Abstain: None

The **Board Approved** the Action Item as Presented.

Summary –
On June 17, 2026 during the monthly District Governing Board meeting, the Board granted the President authority to review and approve presented purchases at the Board approved threshold of $250,000.00 defined in Procedure 337.1. The following necessary purchases were made to support business continuity in preparation for a successful Fall semester:

Service Description	Amount
Ellucian Company LP	1,119,340
Sodexo Inc & Affiliates	3,125,721
Campus Works Inc	3,960,000
Coursedog Inc	448,698
Valley Schools Employee Benefits	5,682,000
Total	**$ 14,335,759**

Board Member inquired about the Sodexo contract, which was recently reviewed and reduced by nearly $100,000. The current contract is in place until 2029.

Action Item #6 – Consideration to Approve Voucher (June and July 2026), presented by Czarina Gallegos
Motion by Maria Chavoya seconded by Brad Sale
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Brad Sale, Maria Chavoya, Olivia Zepeda, and Dennis Booth
Nay: None
Abstain: None

The **Board Approved** the Action Item as Presented.

Summary –

Executive Summary

The District's financial position remains exceptionally strong, with operating and investment cash balances totaling $58.3 million as of July 31, 2026, representing a significant increase from $54.7 million one year earlier. Fiscal performance continues to trend positively, as revenues rose 19.4% compared to the prior year, while expenditures decreased slightly. Enrollment momentum also remains encouraging, with continued growth in early college and overall credit hours. Together, these factors reflect the District's commitment to fiscal stewardship and support a solid foundation for future growth, student achievement, and community engagement. Operating cash balance decreased as funds were transferred from the operating fund to the investment fund to take advantage of favorable investment rates. Dual credit enrollment figures will be presented at the next meeting.

Board Member question regarding dual credit enrollment data. VP Doak reported that staff are actively working in local high schools to enroll students, and that continued growth is anticipated. He also shared that nearly 400 high school students are currently taking courses on the AWC campus through the Early College Experience (ECE) partnership with YUHSD, providing students with the opportunity to transition from a high school environment to a college setting with AWC faculty instruction.

Board Member question regarding overall enrollment. VP Doak and VP Gallegos reported that the College's budget includes a 5% cushion between projected enrollment and budgeted enrollment to help mitigate potential enrollment shortfalls. Dr. Dhawan indicated that additional budget and enrollment updates will be provided at the November meeting. Members expressed excitement about the current momentum, and Ana English shared that the Early College Experience (ECE) program initially served only high school seniors.

Fiscal Overview

Metrics	2026-2027	2025-2026	% Change
Actual Revenues	$10,570,676	$8,850,004	+19.4 %
Actual Expenditures	$5,767,438	$5,767,778	- 0.0 %
Operating Cash Balance	$10,194,565	$14,636,763	-30.3%

Enrollment Trends

Enrollment Type	2026-2027	2025-2026	% Change
Total Credit Hours	69,257	55,950	+23.8%
Early College Credit Hours	7,115	4,709	+51.1%
Dual Enrollment Credit Hours*	0	0	0%

*Dual Enrollment information is not available, students register in August-September

Closing Statement

The District continues to maintain a stable financial position through disciplined fiscal oversight, thoughtful resource allocation, and a commitment to supporting student achievement. Investments in campus infrastructure, technology, and student services strengthen the District's ability to meet current and future needs. Continued focus on enrollment initiatives, including dual enrollment opportunities, combined with careful financial planning and responsible stewardship of resources, will support the District's long-term sustainability and its mission of serving students and the community.

Information Item #1– Informational Review – Purchases over $50,000– Presented by Czarina Gallegos
Summary –
Since the Purchasing threshold increased from $50,000 to $250,000 per Procedure 337.1, the College presents purchases over $50,000 to the next District Governing Board meeting for information.

Division	Vendor	Amount	Fund Source
Human Resources	CopperPoint Insurance Company	124,079	General
KAWC	GoalBusters LLC	54,000	General
KAWC	GoalBusters LLC	54,500	Public Service Radio
Administrative Services	Canon Financial Services Inc	58,248	General
Nursing	Ascend Learning Holdings LLC	127,838	General
Apprenticeship Program	Advanced Technologies Inc	120,002	BuilditAZ Grant
Administrative Services	Trane	75,124	Unexpended Plant Fund
Library	EBSCO Industries Inc	76,865	General
Administrative Services	Fruth Group Inc	77,485	General
Administrative Services	YCIPTA	78,210	General
Administrative Services	Bob McCloskey Agency LLC	153,900	Auxiliary
Administrative Services	Arizona School Risk Retention Trust	153,900	Auxiliary
Administrative Services	Hillyard Inc	200,000	General
Administrative Services	Instructure Inc	231,248	General

President's Reports

Prison Programming, presented by Elaine Groggett, Executive Director of Centralized Scheduling, Assessment, Curriculum, and Special Projects and Ana English, Dean of Enrollment Services

An update was provided on current Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming and the launch of new transfer-focused Associate of Arts degrees planned for Spring 2027. The program will be the first fully online offering of its kind, utilizing an educational platform called *Lantern*, which is similar to Canvas and accessed through student-issued iPads. Students will attend full-time, taking two courses at a time. Program development has been supported through collaboration with the ASPC Education Director and library staff.

The transfer degrees have been designed to ensure direct course equivalencies, allowing credits to transfer seamlessly, with an emphasis on business-related pathways. Ana English noted that participating students will be eligible for financial aid.

Ana English introduced the program team. Jesus Castillo oversees program development and management, while Patrick Cunningham provides direct student support, including admissions, advising, financial aid guidance, tutoring resources, and other student services. The program will operate under the leadership of Alan Sanchez.

The program's guiding goals are Access, Transformation, Redemption, and Reintegration. In response to a question regarding post-release employment support, the team shared that workforce and career placement information will be provided to students, and outcomes data will be tracked. Patrick Cunningham is also researching best practices from other Prison Education Programs to identify strategies that support student success, including career readiness and soft-skills development.

Vision 2026 Updates, presented by Dr. Reetika Dhawan

Dr. Dhawan reaffirmed the College's commitment to changing lives through its mission and providing an excellent student experience built on connection, opportunity, and success. She announced that the College has been named a finalist for the Excelencia in Education Award, joining only a select group of Arizona institutions recognized with the Excelencia Seal.

Dr. Dhawan provided an overview of the Vision 2026 Action Teams, which will guide strategic initiatives across four focus areas:

- **Team 1: Student Success and Belonging**, led by Dr. Michelle Sims, is focused on developing interactive dashboards and conducting belonging-focused listening sessions.
- **Team 2: Academic Innovation and AI**, led by Dr. Chang, will examine academic quality, technology integration, AI, and opportunities to strengthen bachelor's degree pathways while supporting student completion and instructional excellence.
- **Team 3: Workforce and Rural Innovation**, led by Elaine Groggett, will conduct program analysis using labor market data, engage industry partners through listening sessions, and identify strategies to better serve rural students.
- **Team 4: Strategy and Fiscal Sustainability**, led by Dr. Kris Duke, will focus on the College's long-term sustainability and strategic priorities.

Dr. Dhawan outlined success measures for each area and noted an ambitious timeline, with listening, planning, and implementation activities extending through late Spring 2027. Cabinet members will support the teams and assist in scaling initiatives across the institution. She also shared that existing committees are being reviewed, with some expected to be sunsetted following analysis of their purpose and effectiveness.

To encourage community input, Dr. Dhawan posed several key questions, including what bachelor's degree programs are most needed in Yuma, how the College can innovate learning and operations, and how AI can be leveraged to improve processes and prepare students for the future.

Additional highlights included the College receiving a $5 million Small Business Administration grant, making it the only college in Arizona to receive this funding. The grant will support entrepreneurial development and the creation of advanced manufacturing training opportunities. Dr. Dhawan also recognized several recent faculty and staff accomplishments.

During the discussion, Ms. Zepeda raised concerns about the national trend of lower degree completion rates among men compared to women and asked how the Action Teams might help address and improve student success outcomes in this area.

Closing Items:

Good of the Order by Dr. Reetika Dhawan

Dr. Dhawan shared recent outreach efforts, including visits to Salome and Bouse with Ms. Chavoya to discuss Vision 2026. She also reported productive conversations with the University of Arizona regarding potential partnerships related to semiconductor education and workforce development and noted plans to attend SEMICON Taiwan to explore additional opportunities.

Additional updates included:

- Participation of 27 staff members at AFIT focused on Vision 2026 initiatives.
- Expansion of the CDL program through grant funding, including an additional truck for La Paz County.
- A ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Parker Welding Lab scheduled for September 14.
- Installation of four grant-funded OnMed Care Stations ("clinic-in-a-box" healthcare kiosks) in Quartzsite, Parker, South County, and Yuma.

Dr. Dhawan also expressed appreciation to Scott, Marlie, Ye, Bryan, and Joann for their assistance with Board iPad and AI training.

ACCT Report

Maria Chavoya provided an update on the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) state board retreat, which focused on strengthening board effectiveness and governance. Key topics included board purpose and responsibilities, collaboration with the College President, policy development, fiduciary responsibility, financial stewardship, ethical governance, and the relationship between the board president and CEO.

Ms. Chavoya will share retreat materials with Jennifer for distribution to Board members. She also noted that a Governance Leadership Institute is being planned in Arizona next year, with details forthcoming, and suggested AWC could be considered as a host site. Ms. Chavoya commended the Board's current work and expressed support for additional board development opportunities to further enhance governance practices.

Next Meeting: The next meeting scheduled will be Monday, September 14, 2026, including a Regular Meeting in-person at the Parker Learning Center.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by Maria Chavoya, seconded by Brad Sale
Final Resolution: Motion Carries
Yea: Brad Sale, Maria Chavoya, Olivia Zepeda, and Dennis Booth
Nay: None
Abstain: None

The Board **Approved** the next meeting date and final matters of the meeting.
The meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Freedman

Jennifer Freedman, Recording Secretary