



# The Trustee

## WACCT Pursues Legislative Agenda

*Association's Primary Priority is Restoration of Enrollment Growth Funding*

Six months ago, natural gas prices were holding steady, and the state projected a budget surplus of more than \$400 million.

Since then, prices have plummeted, and legislators have struggled to develop a state budget that reflects that reality.

When the 2012 Budget Session of the Wyoming Legislature begins on Monday, February 13, legislators will consider a lean budget with some \$20 million available to them for additional spending priorities.

In getting to that budget, the Joint Appropriations Committee denied a request for \$8.8 million to fund enrollment growth at the community colleges.

That figure had been ratcheted down twice: first from an original request of over \$20 million to a Governor's recommendation of \$14.9 million.

The annual WACCT Conference and Legislative Reception are scheduled for Feb. 23, 2012, in Cheyenne.

The 2012 Conference will feature a half-day of educa-

Acknowledging the state's quickly changing fiscal picture, Gov. Mead revised his request down to \$8.8 million.

That funding is critical to the colleges to pay for existing obligations that have come with supporting 28 percent enrollment growth since 2004-2005.

"Restoration of enrollment growth funding to the budget is our number one legislative priority," said Steve Bahmer, Executive Director of the WACCT.

"The colleges play a vital role in developing Wyoming's skilled workforce, and this funding is necessary to continue doing that effectively when the colleges are already stretched to meet the demands of increased enrollment," he said.

Although enrollment has begun to flatten somewhat across the state, the growth that has already occurred has in-

creased the pressure on full-time and adjunct faculty at the colleges.

But it is students who face the most critical risks from a lack of funding.

Overpopulated classes and overextended faculty lead to real challenges in student retention and overall student success.

Students require greater investments in mentoring and advising than ever before. And the primary indicator of student success is engagement with their colleges.

The larger the student body, the greater the number of people who are required to support these students.

"Investment in the colleges is an investment in Wyoming's future," Bahmer said. "We will work hard during the session to communicate just how important this funding is to our state."

## WACCT Conference, Legislative Reception Set

tional programming, focused on effective governance models.

The annual WACCT Awards Banquet will be held at Little America from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. That event will be follow-

ed by a reception for legislators and the statewide elected officials from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Contact Steve Bahmer at [steve@wacct.org](mailto:steve@wacct.org) with questions.



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**Did you know?**

- 95% of businesses and organizations that employ community college graduates recommend community college workforce education and training programs.

## JAC Approves Four CapCon Projects

*New Construction Would Enhance Academic Space at Three Colleges*

### WACCT Legislative Agenda

- Restoration of funding for actual enrollment growth
- Approval of Gov. Mead's recommended capital construction projects
- Approval of the Wyoming Community College Commission's standard budget
- Restoration of major maintenance funding
- Approval of funding for the Commission's administrative computing system upgrade and relational database
- Approval of increased funding for the Veterans Tuition Waiver Program

Community college commissioners, college presidents, and trustees spent the summer and fall developing a prioritized list of capital construction projects for the colleges.

The list, approved by the commission and submitted to Gov. Matt Mead, resulted from the inaugural use of a data-driven methodology to set priorities.

During the process, the list of projects was pared from 14 to six, and ultimately to the four that Gov. Mead recommended in his budget to the Joint Appropriations Committee.

The JAC approved those four projects during its budget hearings in Cheyenne in January.

The four approved projects are:

- Academic space improvements at Central Wyoming College in Lander
- Academic space improvements at Central Wyoming College in Riverton

- Yellowstone Academic/Workforce Training Building at Northwest College
- Wellness/Athletic/Math & Science Expansion at Western Wyoming Community College

The WACCT has begun working with lawmakers to ensure that each of the four approved projects are funded in the budget that legislators must pass during the 2012 Budget Session.

In addition to the data-driven prioritization, members of the JAC expressed interest in a longer-range, pipeline approach to understanding the colleges' capital construction needs over a five to 10-year period.

The WACCT has initiated conversations about the development of such a pipeline, both to help legislators plan for funding needs, and to help the colleges conduct more effective facilities planning.

Beyond capital construction, the WACCT will also be work-

ing during the session on an agenda that includes approval of the Wyoming Community College Commission's standard budget, and approval of funding for the Commission's administrative computing upgrade and development of a relational database.

The colleges will also be seeking restoration of major maintenance funding, as well as approval for an increase of \$200,000 for the popular Veterans Tuition Waiver Program, among other items.

Legislators will begin considering the budget bill shortly after the session begins in Cheyenne on Monday, Feb. 13.

The session begins with Gov. Mead's State of the State Address at 10 a.m., and proceeds for 20 business days, with a scheduled end on March 9.

Please contact WACCT Executive Director Steve Bahmer at [steve@wacct.org](mailto:steve@wacct.org) with questions about the WACCT's legislative agenda.

## 20 to Attend National Legislative Summit



Twenty delegates from Wyoming, including college presidents, trustees, and two students, will attend the National Legislative Summit in Washington, D.C.

The NLS, sponsored by the ACCT, is scheduled for Feb. 13—16.

The summit will focus on federal legislative priorities, and will feature a Congress-

sional Panel, as well as presentations from a number of federal lawmakers, including a general session speech from Wyoming Sen. Mike Enzi.

Wyoming's delegation, with representatives from all seven community colleges, is also scheduled to meet with Wyoming's Congressional delegation to discuss issues that are of particular importance to Wyo-

oming's community colleges.

Presentations and handouts from the NLS will be available online following the summit at [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org).

Trustees will also report on the results of their trip during the WACCT Board Meeting on Feb. 22 at 4 p.m. at Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne.

## Leadership Award Winners to be Announced

Each year at its annual meeting, the WACCT honors the contributions of community college faculty, staff, students, volunteers and trustees during its Leadership Awards Ceremony.

The 2012 WACCT Leadership Awards will be announced during a ceremony at 5 p.m. on Feb. 23 at Little America in Cheyenne.

The ceremony is immediately followed by the Wyoming Community Colleges Legislative Reception.

The WACCT collaborated with Northwest College this year to highlight the out-

standing work being done at Wyoming's community colleges.

Nominations were considered by judges at the Polk State College Foundation in Winter Haven, Fla.

The nominations are judged on a number of criteria in each category.

Awards will be given for Student of the Year, Professional Employee of the Year, Classified Employee of the Year, Faculty Member of the Year, Foundation Volunteer of the Year, and for Trustee Leadership.

"The faculty, staff, volunteers and trustees at Wyoming's community colleges are truly deserving of recognition for continuing to make our colleges the exemplary institutions of higher learning that they are," said WACCT Executive Director Steve Bahmer.

"And everyone who attended our Summit now has a very clear understanding of the quality of students who attend our community colleges, and who will lead Wyoming into the future," he said.

For more information, visit [www.northwestcollege.edu/wacct](http://www.northwestcollege.edu/wacct).

### WACCT Leadership Awards

Join us at 5 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 23, at Little America to honor excellence at Wyoming's community colleges. Awards will be given for:

- Student of the Year
- Professional Employee of the Year
- Classified Employee of the Year
- Faculty Member of the Year
- Foundation Volunteer of the Year
- Trustee Leadership

## First Wyoming Summit Launches Conversation About the Future

More than 100 leaders in education, industry and government attended the first-ever Wyoming Summit on Community Colleges in Cheyenne in December.

Modeled after the White House Summit on Community Colleges, the Wyoming event was a forum for state leaders to discuss the role they all must play in preparing students to thrive in a global economy.

In his opening keynote presentation, Northwest College Trustee Rick LaPlante outlined the challenge that colleges and industry will face: by 2018, some 62 percent of the jobs in Wyoming will require some postsecondary education.

At current completion rates, LaPlante said, both Wyoming and the nation will struggle to provide the educated workforce

necessary to fill those positions.

However, relatively little has changed in the educational environment over the last several decades, from a time when a high school diploma was sufficient to the present, when post-secondary education is a minimum requirement for a life-sustaining career.

The colleges and their partners in industry and government have to think differently about some of the basics, including course scheduling, advising, and transfer agreements.

Models exist across the country to improve in each of these areas, he said, citing col-

leges that schedule all classes on a single day to accommodate working parents who must travel to take classes; or universities that have automatic enrollment agreements with their area community colleges.

"We are challenging the way in which we think at a fundamental level. That's what I'm asking you to do today," he said.

Trustee LaPlante's presentation can be downloaded from the WACCT web site at <http://wacct.org/docs-info/>.

Attendees also heard from a panel of industry experts, as well as a panel of students about ways in which the colleges can improve outcomes for both.

Gov. Matt Mead closed the Summit with a speech that emphasized the importance of the community colleges in Wyoming.

He noted that two-thirds of today's fifth-graders will need some form of higher education when they graduation from high school.

"So there's no question the role of the community colleges in Wyoming is going to be even stronger in the future,"

he said.

The WACCT is planning future summits on additional important topics, such as the current need for remediation, and initiatives that can help increase student completion.





**WYOMING ASSOCIATION OF  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES**

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### Mission

The mission of the Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees, a collaborative organization of Wyoming community college trustees with college presidents, is to promote the continued quality, strength, vitality and effectiveness of its members.

### Vision

The Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees will be the leading information source and advocate for Wyoming's community colleges, shaping public policy that strengthens community college education, and providing trustee development to ensure effective governing boards.

## Notes From the Director's Desk

-By Steve Bahmer



### Your Thoughts

*The Trustee* is one of many tools we'll be using to communicate more effectively with you about community college issues and the work of the WACCT.

To be effective, though, it has to meet your needs and provide information you find useful and valuable.

So let me hear from you. If you have story ideas, subjects that need attention, or if you would like to contribute, please email me at: [steve@wacct.org](mailto:steve@wacct.org).

In recent days, it's been said to me more than once: in Wyoming, we live by natural gas, and we die by natural gas.

A bit of an overstatement, perhaps, but the impact of declining natural gas prices could not have been more clear as the Joint Appropriations Committee prepared its budget in Cheyenne last month.

About \$87 million that was available for legislators to spend turned into a \$50 million deficit, almost overnight.

And that puts legislators in a very difficult position as they consider their funding priorities during the 2012 Budget Session of the Wyoming Legislature.

Our Legislature has historically been very generous in providing funding for our seven community colleges. Gov.

Mead has also been a strong, vocal supporter of our colleges, wrapping up our Summit with a speech that emphasized their importance to the state.

We are grateful for this support—and we know our state leaders understand the role the community colleges play in educating more than 25,000 students each year: enriching their lives, preparing them to transfer, and developing a skilled workforce.

So, despite relatively challenging economic times for our state, I remain optimistic on the eve of the Legislative Session.

Our colleges are creatively meeting the needs of students, even as their facilities, faculties and staff are stretched by increased enrollments. To continue serving students at a con-

sistently high level, though, funding must be restored to the budget for actual enrollment growth.

As you read in this edition of *The Trustee*, restoring enrollment growth funding is our top legislative priority.

This may be something of a tall order in 2012, but policy matters as much as money. And lawmakers have an opportunity during this session to make an important policy statement about the vital role the colleges play in keeping our state strong.

Contact your legislators, and let them know that investments in the colleges are investments in students—another of Wyoming's invaluable natural resources.