

## APPROVED MINUTES

### COCHISE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, April 21, 2026  
Sierra Vista Campus  
Governing Board Room – 301  
4:00 p.m.

Members of the public who wished to attend the meeting via video conference joined at <https://cochise.zoom.us/j/96526372462>.

#### 1. GENERAL FUNCTIONS

##### 1.01 Call to Order

Mr. DiPeso called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

##### **Board Members Present:**

Mr. David DiPeso  
Mr. Mark Farr  
Mr. Steve Leeder  
Ms. Stephanie Money

##### **Board Members Absent:**

Mr. Don Hudgins

##### 1.02 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Money led the Pledge of Allegiance.

##### 1.03 Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted, as published.

Mr. Farr moved, and Mr. Leeder seconded the approval of the agenda as published. With no further discussion, the Governing Board adopted the meeting agenda, with members David DiPeso, Mark Farr, Steve Leeder, and Stephanie Money all voting aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

##### 1.04 Citizen's In-Person Interim

There were no requests to address the board.

##### 1.05 Standing Reports

##### **1.05.1 Representative to the Arizona Association of Community College Trustees**

Mr. Steve Leeder, Arizona Association of Community College Trustees (AACCT) representative, reported that he will attend the upcoming All-Trustee meeting in Phoenix,

Arizona, on April 22-23 on behalf of the board. The Acting Dean of Academic Affairs, Janelle Simpson, will present on AI.

### **1.05.2 Senate**

A written March Senate report was submitted and accepted as published.

### **1.05.3 Student Government Association**

A written Student Government Association report was submitted and accepted as published.

### **1.05.4 College President**

Dr. Perey thanked faculty and staff for all they do for the students at the college. He then provided updates to the Governing Board; highlights included:

#### Legislative Update:

- Noted, FY27 state budget negotiations remain stalled; the Governor has paused bill signings pending a formal budget proposal from legislative leadership.
- Identified unresolved issues, including Proposition 123 (K-12 funding) and federal tax conformity; emphasized the statutory deadline of June 30 for budget adoption.
- Summarized the federal FY27 budget proposal, which includes:
  - \$76.5 billion allocation for the U.S. Department of Education (a decrease from the prior year)
  - Increased funding for Pell Grants to address a projected \$10 billion deficit
  - Proposed significant reductions or eliminations to TRIO, GEAR UP, Adult Basic Education, minority-serving institutions, and Federal Work Study.
- Emphasized that Congress will determine final federal funding levels and reaffirmed the College's advocacy for student support programs.

#### Facilities Update:

- District Facility Condition Assessment (FCA) – the Gordian Group
  - Assessment Phase (Data Collection and Preliminary Findings) completed
    - 10-year prioritized needs identified separately for buildings and sites
  - Strategic Planning Phase in progress
    - Systematic approach to address deferred and upcoming projects
    - Tailors project prioritization to long-term capital investment plans
    - FCA final deliverables and presentation expected by the end of July
- Douglas Campus
  - City of Douglas Wellsite
    - Preconstruction meeting scheduled for 4/22
    - Drill start date to begin on 4/27

- Water services to the Douglas Campus in February 2028
- Remodeling (Bldg 400)
  - Roof installation rescheduled to start the week of 20 April
  - Interior build-out scheduled to start the first week in May
  - HVAC rooftop unit installation is tentatively scheduled for the first week of June
  - Project completion expected mid-June
- Drainage Improvements (Bldg 300/400)
  - Project Completed
- Roof Replacement (Bldg 900)
  - Project starts on 27 April
  - Expected completion date: end of August
- Sierra Vista Campus
  - Campus Services Building (2600)
    - New office build in progress
    - Completion date delayed until the end of June

Initiative Update:

Workforce Update:

Cochise College recently met with the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence, Dean of Academic Affairs to share ongoing efforts in AI-enhanced teaching and learning, The Army expressed strong interest in partnering with Cochise College to support their instructors in the effective and responsible use of AI for instruction and training, positioning the College as a regional leader in AI-enabled education and a valuable partner in both civilian and military workforce development.

Nursing and Allied Health:

Upcoming Nursing Pinning ceremony on May 14th, anticipate pinning 15 graduated BSN students and 68 RN candidates.

Full-time nursing faculty member Dru Simmons has organized a nonprofit in her son's memory that provides free CPR/AED training. Their first workshop is being held on May 16<sup>th</sup> from 0900-1200 at the Buena High School Gym. Several members of the nursing and allied health team are helping teach hands-on CPR and AED use. It is free for everybody in the community.

Business, Career & Technical Education:

1. Residential Construction
  - a. Justine Rivera, the current Residential Construction Technology Construction Assistant and future Instructor, was featured on the cover of Move Over Bob Magazine.
  - b. The Instructors and Students will be attending the Arizona Registrar of Contractors Apprenticeship Fair in Phoenix this Spring.
  - c. Representatives from the Arizona Registrar of Contractors will be speaking to the RCT classes on Thursday, April 30th, on the Sierra Vista Campus.
2. CYBER
  - a. The AI course AIT 101 Foundations of AI Use & Ethics course is open for Fall 2026 enrollment.
  - b. The Industry Advisory Board meeting was held last Friday and was a great success.

- c. The department and the Hackademics Technology Club are sponsoring the 11th Annual Presidents Cup CYBER competition on Saturday, April 18, on the Sierra Vista Campus. 6 teams are competing, and 18 faculty and student volunteers are helping run the event.
3. Business
    - a. Will be holding their Industry Advisory Board today, Friday, April 17, 2026.
    - b. Also, the department has started identifying "at-risk" students using a number of metrics, allowing instructors to come alongside students and share the college's wraparound services to support them along their academic path.
  4. Welding
    - a. Students from the Welding Program placed 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Skills USA Arizona State Welding Competition.
    - b. Wyatt Simis will be representing Cochise College at the National Competition.
  5. Automotive
    - a. A student who started the program in the Friday CTD classes and completed the AUT-Fundamentals certificate, continued into the college program, and has passed 6 of the 10 Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification tests. He will be attempting the next four testing sessions. He is the first Friday student to get an ASE certification. The ASE certifications are also recognized by CTD and the Arizona Department of Education.

General Comments:

- Community Engagements:
  - March 20-24 – HLC Conference
  - March 27 – Legacy Foundation Ribbon Cutting (new event space)
  - March 31 – RHTP - Rural Health Transformational Program (Grant)
  - April 1 – College Foundation Legacy Society Event
  - April 10 – 14 – AACCC Conference in Seattle
  - April 16 – Met with CTD representatives
  - April 17 – Academic Excellence Celebration (Mark and Don attended)
  - April 18 – President's Cup (Dan – Cyber)

Upcoming Events:

- April 22-23 – AACCT All-Trustee Meeting in Phx & All-AZ Academic Celebration
- April 29 – Red & White Celebration in Douglas at 3 p.m.
- April 30 – Board Retreat (1 – 5 p.m.; Dinner at 5:30) – American Southwest Credit Union
- May 1 – Board Retreat (9 – 3 p.m.)
- May 12 – Regular Board Meeting
- May 13 – Adult Education Recognition at 7 p.m.
- May 14 – Nurses Pinning @ 7 p.m.
- May 15 – President's Reception at 5 p.m. and Commencement at 7 p.m.

### 1.05.5 Monthly Financial Report – March 2026

The Financial Report for March 2026 was presented and accepted as submitted.

### 1.05.6 Monthly Academic Progress Report

The Governing Board reviewed the Monthly Academic Progress Report regarding the Academic Program Review and accepted it as submitted.

## 2. NEW BUSINESS \*

### 2.01 Consent Agenda \*

The following items were approved:

- 2.01.1 \* Non-Exempt Staff; Appointment (*Amber Baxter, Administrative Assistant - Community Engagement, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.2 \* Non-Exempt Staff; Appointment (*Samuel (Luke) Courtney, Facility Services Technician, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.3 \* Non-Exempt Staff; Appointment (*Evan Frank, Facility Services Technician, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.4 \* Non-Exempt Staff; Appointment (*Renefe (Ren) LeGrand, Accounts Payable Technician, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.5 \* Exempt Staff; Appointment (*Jose (Michael) Gaspar, Assistant Dean of Business, Career, and Technical Education, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.6 \* Exempt Staff; Appointment (*David Lauer, ERP Systems Analyst Programmer, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.7 \* Exempt Staff; Appointment (*Bailie Nelson, Bugen Hall Director, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.8 \* Coach; Appointment (*Crystal Munoz, Assistant Coach - Women's Soccer, Douglas Campus*)
- 2.01.9 \* Faculty; Appointment (*Michael (Tony) Dunn, Instructor of Anatomy & Physiology, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.10 \* Faculty; Appointment (*Nicolas Nino, Instructor of Cybersecurity, Networking, & Computer Information Systems, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.11 \* Faculty; Appointment (*Harinder Singh, Instructor of Communications, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.12 \* Exempt Staff; Transfer (*Timothy Harhan-Jones, Grants Accountant, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.13 \* Exempt Staff; Transfer (*Shelley Ulmer, Finance Compliance Coordinator, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.14 \* Non-Exempt Staff; Resignation (*Charlotte Hance, Graduation Technician, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.15 \* Exempt Staff; Resignation (*Owen Long, Facilities Maintenance and Project Manager, Douglas Campus*)
- 2.01.16 \* Exempt Staff; Resignation (*Mandy Nowlin, ERP Project Manager, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.17 \* Faculty; Resignation (*Cory Adams, Instructor of Welding Technology, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.18 \* Faculty; Resignation (*Alexia Jimenez, Instructor of Aviation Pathways, Douglas Campus*)
- 2.01.19 \* Exempt Staff; Probationary Separation (*Ciarra Ortiz, Bugen Hall Director, Sierra Vista Campus*)
- 2.01.20 \* Curriculum

- 2.01.21 \* 2026-2027 Course Fee Changes
- 2.01.22 \* Acceptance of Minutes for March 17, 2026 – Regular Meeting

Mr. Leeder moved, and Ms. Money seconded a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. With no further discussion, the Governing Board adopted the meeting agenda, with members David DiPeso, Mark Farr, Steve Leeder, and Stephanie Money all voting aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**\*\*\* Introduction of New Employees \*\*\***

Wick Lewis, Executive Director of Human Resources, introduced Heather Gijanto, Director of Testing Services; Analese Duram, Administrative Assistant for Nursing; and Justine Rivera, Instructor of the Residential Construction Technology Program.

**2.02 Adjust FY2024-25 Budget to Reflect Actual Expenditures**

The administration requested that the Governing Board adopt a motion approving the adjustments to the budget adopted for Fiscal Year 2024-25.

Mr. Farr moved, and Mr. Leeder seconded a motion to approve the adjustments to the budget adopted for Fiscal Year 2024-25. With members David DiPeso, Mark Farr, Steve Leeder, and Stephanie Money all voting aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**2.03 Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Personnel Listing**

The administration requested that the Governing Board adopt a motion to approve the 2026-2027 personnel listing containing the names of employees to be issued employment contracts for the ensuing fiscal year, pending other board actions.

Mr. Farr moved, and Ms. Money seconded a motion to approve the 2026-2027 personnel listing containing the names of employees to be issued employment contracts for the ensuing fiscal year, pending other board actions. With members David DiPeso, Mark Farr, Steve Leeder, and Stephanie Money all voting aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**2.04 Building Naming Request**

The administration requested that the Governing Board adopt a motion authorizing the president to name the Douglas Campus Science Building as the Ann Marie Stephens Science Building. Ms. Stephens' estate gift to Cochise College includes an anticipated annual distribution of \$250,000 to support the Viticulture program in perpetuity, funding faculty, scholarships, and operations. Also, Cochise College is the beneficiary of an annual \$250,000 distribution to be made indefinitely.

Mr. Farr moved, and Ms. Money seconded a motion authorizing the president to name the Douglas Campus Science Building as the Ann Marie Stephens Science Building. With members David DiPeso, Mark Farr, Steve Leeder, and Stephanie Money all voting aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

**3. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**INFORMATION**

**3.01 Communications**

- Dr. James Perey received a certificate of appreciation from the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, Arizona Region, recognizing the College's outstanding efforts in supporting the growth of Phi Theta Kappa by hosting the Spring 2026 Arizona Regional Convention. The convention was hosted by the Alpha Mu Zeta Chapter on the Sierra Vista Campus. This recognition reflects the College's continued commitment to student success, leadership, and academic excellence.

### **3.02 NISOD Awards - 2026**

Dr. Sheena Brown, Interim Vice President for Academics, announced and recognized the recipients of the National Institute for Staff and Organization Development (NISOD) Award. The organization is committed to promoting and celebrating excellence in teaching, learning, and leadership at community and technical colleges.

In March 2026, Cochise College nominated Mary King Power, Instructor of English, and Tonya Randolph, Academic/Career Advisor, CTEPS & Outreach, for the NISOD Award.

Recipients were selected based on the following criteria:

- Service to Students
- Service to Department or Area
- Service to the College
- Service to the Community

Dr. Brown read portions of the nomination letters submitted on behalf of Mary and Tonya and honored each with a plaque. Mrs. King Power and Ms. Randolph will have the opportunity to attend the NISOD National Convention in Austin, Texas, in late May for further recognition and awards.

Dr. Perey commended Mary King Power on her NISOD recognition and noted that she has always helped students. He also acknowledged Tonya Randolph for her recognition as well, and for continuing to be student-centric.

### **3.03 Human Resources Annual Report**

Mr. Wick Lewis, Executive Director of Human Resources, provided a presentation and a written annual Human Resources Staffing Profile and Report; highlights include:

Faculty and Staff Profile:

- When comparing the headcount of employees versus the headcount of students, the college averaged well, with fewer employees and more students. It was a little more economical, but nothing out of the ordinary. Overall, there were nine fewer full-time employees.
- Full-time and Part-time Employees
  - Non-Exempt staff is very similar to last year's data, about 44%. However, compared to three years ago, there is a significant change. The change is due to federal labor laws that changed how exempt and non-exempt staff are counted.
  - As a result of the changes to federal labor laws, the number of exempt staff decreased.

Recruitment:

- After COVID in 2022, it took 91 days not only to fill the job but also to get the employee into it. This was a major problem, but the institution continues to refine its hiring and onboarding processes to improve efficiency.

Employee Service Awards:

- In an effort to retain employees and reduce turnover, Cochise College emphasizes employee recognition
  - Retirement Recognition – Celebrating legacy careers
  - Service Awards – Celebrating milestones annually – Brian O'Brien and Jerry Carrilo, 25 years.

Dr. Davis recognized Mr. Lewis for his work as the director of human resources, noting that this was his last board meeting and that he would be resigning at the end of April.

### **3.04 FY26 Preliminary Budget Update**

Dr. James Perey, College President, updated the Governing Board on the FY27 preliminary budget development and prepared them for future actions in June; highlights include:

Strategic Priorities:

- Provide students and employees with equitable access to technology, including connections, devices, and skills.
- Assess, develop, and improve student wellness.
- Establish data management systems where institutional data is trusted, understood, accurate, and provided and used by stakeholders in a meaningful, secure, and consistent manner.
- Assess, add, and/or modify educational programs that increase support for individuals, communities, and the economy.

Budget Principles:

- Base Forward focuses on:
  - Being student-centered
  - Data-driven
  - Employee Friendly
  - Technologically Enhanced
  - Future Focused

FY27 Compensation Considerations:

- Continued impact from inflation (Aug 2025, 3.06% - Est. Aug 2026, 3.0%)
- Increased health care costs (6% - 12.8% increase)
- Comparator Analysis
  - State – Arizona Community Colleges
  - Regional – Mountain States Community Colleges
- Increase Full-Time employees' Base Pay by 3.5% (Structures 2.5%)
- Increase Adjunct/OL Rate by 2.78% (\$925/eq unit)
- Part-time compensation budgets by 2.5%
- Student employees--AZ minimum wage effective January 1, 2027
  - Approximately \$15.60/hour (est. inflation of 3.0%)

Benefits:

- Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS)

- The Retirement Rate Increased from 11.86% to 11.87%
- L.T.D. rates decrease from 0.14% to 0.11%
- Health/Dental/Vision Insurance
  - Increase from \$700/month to \$740/month for medical/dental coverage
  - Increase H.S.A. Incentive from \$850 to \$900 towards the health savings account for eligible employees

Proposed Ongoing Expenses:

- FY27 Compensation and Benefits Plan
- Property and liability insurance
- Utilities
- Compliance
- Third-Party Contracts
  - Security and Food Services
  - Technology Services
- Renovation and Deferred Maintenance Projects (Fund Balance)
  - DC 900 Roof (project in progress)
  - DC Water Infrastructure Refurbishment
  - SVC 2500 Storage Warehouse/LEB

Proposed Initiatives and Expenses:

- Academic Program – HVAC EPA Complaint Unit (Grant Funds)
- Associate Faculty travel adjustment
- Athletics increased costs (waivers, travel, supplies, and meals)
- Facility Condition Assessment Implementation
- Software Increases
- Electronic Door Access- continued implementation
- Continued support of ERP implementation (Fund Balance)
- Strategic Planning, Master Facilities Planning, and Academic Programming Planning
- Performance Evaluation Software
- Airport Paving Project (match of 10% using Fund Balance)

Strategic Priorities Funding:

- Equitable Technological Access (\$75,000)
- Wellness Initiative – Mental Health and Basic Needs (\$125,000)
- Data Management and Reporting (\$80,000)
- Academic Programming/Curriculum – K-12 through baccalaureate (\$135,000)

Proposed New Staffing:

- New Finance team position- Budget Management Director or Accountant
- Financial Aid Technician
- Additional Student Employee Hours – Library and Student Recruitment
- Move select CTE faculty from 9M to 10M contracts
- Total Cost (General Fund, new, ongoing, and one-time) - \$2,011,460

Revenues: (Based on JLBC FY27 Budget Proposal)

- State Aid
  - Maintenance & Operation (M&O)
  - Equalization (offsets low-accessed valuation)
    - Cochise, Graham, Navajo, and Yuma/LaPaz
  - Capital Outlay/STEM (restricted)

- Rural Aid
- Property Taxes
  - Primary tax levy to support Cochise College (1962)
  - Constitutionally Controlled
    - Limited to 2% annual growth + new construction
- Tuition and Fees
  - Set by the Governing Board

State Aid Changes:

- M&O - decrease of \$110,000
- Equalization – Increase of \$1,696,000
- Rural Aid - decrease of \$252,300
- Restricted State Aid
  - STEM/Workforce - decrease of \$45,100
  - Prop 301 - decrease of \$337,760
  - Prop 207 - decrease of \$328,384
- Annual Tuition (in-state; 30 credits) - \$2,880 or \$104,670

Reallocations/Savings (\$1,005,692)

- FY26 One-time & staffing savings
  - Tech services one-time projects
  - Vacant Position Savings
  - Budget Realignment

Revenue Changes Summary:

- State Aid (M&O and Equalization) – slight increase - \$793,000
- Rural Aid – decrease - (\$252,300)
- Tuition – stayed the same - \$0
- Property Tax Levy - new construction only - \$465,068
- Total Revenue changes - \$1,005,768
- Reallocations/Savings - \$1,005,692
- Total Funds Available - \$2,011,460

Revenue Changes vs Expense Changes:

- State Aid (M&O and Equalization) - \$793,000
- Rural Aid – (\$252,300)
- Tuition - \$0
- Property Tax Levy (new construction) - \$465,068
- Total Revenue changes - \$1,005,768
- Reallocations/Savings - \$1,005,692
- Total Funds Available - \$2,011,460
  - Ongoing expenses - \$1,883,460
  - Total Expense Increases - \$128,000
- Budget is Balanced

FY27 Budget Summary

- Based on the College's Mission and Strategic Priorities
- Follows Budget Principles
- Conservative Projections in terms of revenue and expenses
  - Revenue

- Enrollment
- State Budget – FY27 Budget Baseline
- Property Taxes – New Construction Only
- Expenses
- Addresses
  - Employee Compensation and Benefits
  - Increasing costs
  - Facilities improvements/deferred maintenance
- Provides for
  - Contingencies
  - Growth/Shrinkage
  - Opportunities
- Balanced Budget

Budget Adoption will be held on June 9, 2026.

Questions/Comments:

Mr. Leeder inquired about the state funding. Dr. Perey noted that the Governor and the legislature currently recognize the importance of community colleges, but the budget has not yet been passed.

### **3.05 Governing Board Policies Reviewed with no Recommended Changes**

The Governing Board reviewed a series of board policies per the three-year review cycle, and has no recommended changes to the following policies:

- Policy 201 – Board Responsibility
- Policy 202 – Board Chairperson's Role
- Policy 203 – Board Secretary's Role
- Policy 205 – Board Committees
- Policy 207 – Board Policy Creation and Review
- Policy 209 – Administrative Policy and Creation
- Policy 210 – Interim Policies
- Policy 211 – Governing Board Emeritus Status

No changes were requested by the Board.

### **3.06 Policies for Review with no Recommended Changes**

Following the three-year review cycle, the administration recommended that board members review several policies, and confirm that no changes are needed, or inform the administration of possible changes:

- Policy 402 – Communication and Counsel to the Board
- Policy 403 – Human Relations
- Policy 404 – Budgeting-Forecasting
- Policy 405 – Financial Conditions
- Policy 406 – Asset Protection
- Policy 407 – Compensation and Benefits
- *Policy 409 – Service of Process*

No changes were requested by the Board.

#### **4. COMMENTS FROM GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS**

Mr. DiPeso turned the time over to Governing Board members to provide comments/share information.

- Mr. Farr
  - Grateful to see the college proposes a balanced budget.
- Mr. Leeder
  - Thanks were given to the college staff for the incredible work. The NISOD recognition is a great example of the college's outstanding work.
  - The work on the budget is appreciated. Very deliberate and straightforward.
- Mr. DiPeso
  - Congratulations given to Mr. Wick Lewis for all he has done for the college as the Director of HR.

#### **5. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. DiPeso adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Crystal Wheeler, Executive Assistant, Office of the President

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Ms. Stephanie Money, Secretary of the Governing Board