

**COCONINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD**

**RETREAT**

**JUNE 4, 2025**



**COCONINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
MINUTES OF A RETREAT  
OF THE  
DISTRICT GOVERNING BOARD  
JUNE 4, 2025**

A Retreat of the Coconino Community College District Governing Board was held on **Wednesday, June 4, 2025**, at 4390 E. Burning Tree Loop, Flagstaff, AZ, 86004. Board Chair Joey Smith called the meeting to order at 8:32 am.

PRESENT:       Joey Smith, Board Chair  
                  Patrick Hurley, Vice Chair/Secretary  
                  Eric Eikenberry  
                  Patricia Garcia  
                  Nat White

**Also Present:** President Dr. Eric Heiser, Dr. Mary Spilde, Mr. Keith Becker, and Ms. Kirsten Mead.

Reports, summaries, background material, and other documents referred to in these minutes can be found in the June 4, 2025, documents file.

**CALL TO ORDER AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Ms. Patricia Garcia motioned to adopt the retreat agenda as presented, and Dr. Nat White seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (Mr. Eikenberry, Ms. Garcia, Mr. Hurly, Chair Smith, and Dr. White, voting in favor).

**BOARD SELF EVALUATION**

Dr. Spilde led a discussion with the Board on the FY2025 Board Self-Evaluation, which expanded into broader governance and operational themes. Key ideas and recommendations are summarized below.

The Board discussed:

- The Board emphasized the importance of ongoing policy review and requested
  - Longer work sessions to accommodate policy discussion
  - Establishing a 3–5 year review cycle for each policy
  - Including 1–2 policies on each work session agenda for review
  - Sending policies to legal counsel first to confirm they are legally sound before Board discussion
  - Adding a standing item to work session agendas: “Policy Review – First Read”
  - If the Board recommends changes, the policy will return to the next work session
  - If no changes are proposed, the policy can move to the regular meeting consent agenda
- **Policies Identified for Review**
  - COVID-19 Policy – currently suspended
  - Emergency Delegation – consider adding language: “In the event of a critical emergency, the Board delegates authority to the President for 7 days, or until the Board can meet to take action”

- **Policies Proposed for Development**
  - Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- **Board Meetings and Engagement**
  - Agendas may feel “light” to some Board members
    - The President clarified that budget-related items are now spaced throughout the year to allow more time for review and questions
    - Cabinet has been directed to ensure the Board receives at least one month’s review time for any action item
    - Ongoing internal discussions are clarifying what qualifies as an action item vs. an information item to reduce overload
  - **Suggestions to Improve Engagement**
    - Provide more detailed updates on college activities
    - Celebrate employee accomplishments during meetings
      - Suggestion to play the Comet Chronicles YouTube segments at Board meetings
    - Invite employees to present regularly to the Board
    - Add district-specific updates from Board members to identify community needs
    - Invite outside presenters/stakeholders to share perspectives with the Board
    - The Board expressed willingness to hold additional meetings to support the bond effort
- **Accreditation Updates**
  - CCC entered the "Year of Assurance Arguments" on June 1, 2025
  - The accreditation cycle occurs every 4 years; assurance reporting is part of the 8-year review
  - The Board requested quarterly updates on accreditation from President Heiser and Provost Hinski
- **Public Funding & Bond Strategy**
  - The Board discussed its role in public outreach and funding efforts, especially in relation to the bond
  - Ensure the Board is recognized as elected officials at all public events
    - The College should contact event organizers in advance to request acknowledgment
  - Develop talking points on a card for Board members, with a note: “These are personal opinions, not official College positions”
  - Emphasize consistent messaging across all Board members regarding the bond
  - The Board would like to meet with legal counsel to clarify what they may or may not say or do in support of the bond
  - While individual Board members may advocate, College resources may not be used for advocacy
  - The Board supports the hiring of a grant writer to expand funding opportunities
  - Members expressed interest in accompanying staff to community meetings about the bond
  - As traditional public funding declines, the Board acknowledged its role in helping the College pursue new funding avenues

- **Governance Practices**

- Board members would like to sign the Code of Conduct annually as a symbol of accountability and professionalism

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Smith adjourned the Board Retreat at 10:15 am to enter a Special Meeting of the District Governing Board.

### **RECONVENED IN OPEN SESSION**

Chair Smith reconvened the Board Retreat in open session at 12:53 pm.

### **RETREAT OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES – PRESIDENT HEISER**

President Heiser gave an overview of the upcoming topics and objectives for the remainder of the retreat.

### **STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK PRESENTATION – PRESIDENT HEISER**

The current strategic plan is set to expire in December 2025. President Heiser shared that, nationwide, community colleges are increasingly adopting a “strategic sprint” model—shorter, focused planning cycles designed to concentrate institutional efforts on specific goals over a two-year period. This approach allows colleges to remain agile and responsive, with priorities shifting every two years based on evolving needs. President Heiser then led the Board in an exercise to help determine the framework for the College’s next set of strategic pillars. Documents can be found in the June 4, 2025, documents file.

### **BOARD DISCUSSION: STRATEGIC PILLARS – PRESIDENT HEISER**

Following the exercise, the Board developed its Just Cause:

To enable students to thrive in a complex (changing/dynamic) world by providing access to purpose-driven education that prepares them to succeed in life and work—while CCC remains grounded in the values of integrity and ethical leadership, creating vibrant communities and positive generational impact.

### **GENERAL BOARD DISCUSSION**

- **Tuition**

President Heiser provided an overview of the factors influencing potential tuition increases. Key points included:

- The College is exploring a model where tuition increases are based on a percentage rather than a flat dollar amount
- While the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is commonly used, many community colleges instead align tuition increases with the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI)
- The need for increases is driven by rising operational costs, particularly those related to staff and faculty

- The Board expressed concern about implementing tuition increases without a clear, evidence-based rationale
- Discussion also included how to respond if Pell Grant funding is reduced, which could significantly impact student affordability
- President Heiser shared his desire to simplify the College's tuition model, including:
  - Eliminating differential tuition in favor of program-specific course fees
- Course fees are applied directly to programs
- Differential tuition, by contrast, is directed to the general fund
- Research suggests smaller, annual tuition increases are less likely to drive students away than large, infrequent increases
- The Board expressed commitment to considering and approving modest tuition increases annually to stay aligned with rising costs
- The Board will support development of a tuition policy that includes a planned annual percentage increase, with flexibility for additional increases if needed
- The Board supports the President's effort to simplify the tuition structure and will collaborate on policy updates to enable the transition
- **How to Schedule and Facilitate Meetings with Elected State Representatives**
  - All meetings with state legislators will be **scheduled through the Office of the President**, in coordination with the College's lobbyist
  - If a concern arises during a Board work session that merits legislative attention, the **Board Chair or Vice Chair** may request that a meeting be arranged
- **Housing**

The Board discussed recent developments and challenges related to workforce and student housing:

  - A proposed partnership between FUSD, NAU, and CCC to develop employee housing has been deemed non-compliant with the state's gift clause by FUSD's attorney
  - The land for the project belongs to FUSD, and none of the entities are interested in serving as landlords
  - Habitat for Humanity also indicated it is not interested in a landlord role
  - The College is monitoring a recent RFP issued by Mountain Line for workforce housing and may consider leveraging the process or partnering
  - Due to a lack of interest from developers, student housing projects are currently on hold
  - The Board encouraged exploring creative options to attract and retain employees willing to relocate to Flagstaff
  - Page campus housing is projected to break ground in 2026

## **FEDERAL POLICY DISCUSSION**

- President Heiser and Dr. Spilde provided updates on several federal and state-level developments:
  - The Property Tax Oversight Commission (PTOC) has appealed a recent court ruling. A decision is not expected for several months

- President Heiser is preparing a letter to Arizona’s U.S. Senators expressing concern about proposed cuts and potential elimination of Pell Grants
- The Arizona Community College Coordinating Council (AC4) is sending a unified letter on behalf of all 10 community college districts, opposing Pell Grant changes. This letter will be sent to the entire Arizona federal delegation.
- Pima Community College is among the first in the nation to have its Upward Bound TRIO program defunded, signaling broader risks to similar federal programs
- Dr. Spilde shared insights from the federal government’s proposed “Big Beautiful Budget,” which includes elements that could negatively affect community colleges.
- Arizona still lacks an approved state budget, and several problematic bills remain under legislative consideration
- The College must continue planning for the potential loss of both state and federal funding

#### **FOLLOW UP**

- Prepare an Annual Code of Conduct statement for Trustees to sign each year
- Create an elevator speech for Board members to discuss the Bond, noting that they are advocating as a citizen, not a Board member
- Look into hiring a grant writer for the College
- Contact event organizers to let them know the Board members who are attending and ensure they are recognized
- Celebrate employee achievements; play the Comet Chronicles YouTube during the Board meeting
- Invite employees to present to the Board regularly
- Quarterly presentations to the Board regarding Accreditation by the President and Dr. Hinski
- President Hesier will report to the Board in August about the Mountain Line employee housing proposal

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Smith adjourned day one of the Board Retreat at 5:51 pm.

#### **MINUTES PREPARED BY:**

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Ms. Kirsten Mead  
Board Recorder

#### **ATTEST and APPROVED:**

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Mr. Patrick Hurley  
Vice Chair/Secretary of the Board

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Mr. Joey Smith  
Board Chair