

Portland Community College
PO BOX 19000, Portland, Oregon 97280

May 14, 2026

Board Meeting Minutes

Special Meeting

Remote

Attendance

Tiffani Penson, Laurie Cremona Wagner, Kien Truong, Brandy Penner, Dan Saltzman, Gina Sanchez Roletto, Fareeha Nayebare

Executive Session

The PCC Board of Directors met in accordance with ORS 192.660 to discuss (f) To consider information or records that are exempt by law from public inspection.

Public Meeting

Chair Penson called the Special Meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

The May 14, 2026 agenda was approved as published. Saltzman/Penner

- Cremona Wagner – Yes
- Penson – Yes
- Truong – Yes
- Penner – Yes
- Saltzman – Yes
- McKelvey – Yes
- Sanchez Roletto – Yes

Chair Penson provided comments noting that the Board will consider and vote on an important transition of PCC leadership. The Chair stated “...*this is the right time for a leadership transition, both for Dr. Bennings and for the College. Tonight, the Board will be voting on a voluntary separation agreement with Dr. Bennings. The separation agreement provides that Dr. Bennings will be on FMLA leave through June 30, which will be her last day of employment with the College. Dr. Bennings will then receive a severance payment of \$261,000, which is the equivalent of 9 months of salary, and up to 9 months of health insurance. She will also receive her \$25,000 retention bonus, recognizing her service for the 2025-26 academic year. We know that Dr. Bennings will continue to effect change for the better in her next endeavor.*

... *The Board will also be voting tonight on a motion to authorize PCC Executive Vice President Dr. Katy Ho to assume all the duties of the president of the College effective immediately. Dr. Ho will also continue to oversee her current portfolio of strategic*

leadership for Operations, Strategic Planning & Policy, Information Technology, Brand Management, and People Strategy. We are grateful that Dr. Ho has agreed to assume these duties. Dr. Ho has requested that she maintain her current salary and compensation at this time even as she takes on this larger role...

Chair Penson asked for a motion regarding a separation agreement with Dr. Bennings. Vice Chair McKelvey moved to approve the voluntary separation agreement with Dr. Bennings that includes the terms described by the chair and has been reviewed by the Board, and authorize Chair Penson to execute the agreement on behalf of the Board. Director Cremona Wagner seconded the motion.

During discussion, statements of thanks to Dr. Bennings were made by Directors Saltzman, Penner, Cremona Wagner, Nayebare. Director Truong made a statement providing reason for a “no” vote, starting on page 3 as “Exhibit A”.

- Cremona Wagner – Yes
- Penson – Yes
- Truong – No
- Penner – Yes
- Saltzman – Yes
- McKelvey – Yes
- Sanchez Roletto – Yes

Chair Penson called for a motion to approve the authorization for Dr. Ho to assume the duties of the President.

Vice Chair McKelvey moved to authorize Executive Vice President Katy Ho to assume the duties of president of Portland Community College pending determination of the plans for identifying the next president.

Director Truong seconded the motion. During discussion comments in favor of Dr. Ho were made by Directors Saltzman, Cremona Wagner, Nayebare and Penson

- Cremona Wagner – Yes
- Penson – Yes
- Truong – Yes
- Penner – Yes
- Saltzman – Yes
- McKelvey – Yes
- Sanchez Roletto – Yes

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:55 pm.

Tiffani Penson, Chair

Dr. Katy Ho, Acting President

Prepared by:

Jennifer Hamlin, Board Coordinator
Minutes approved on May 21, 2026

EXHIBIT A

To me, PCC is more than just a higher education institution that provides affordable pathways to opportunity for the community. PCC changes lives, and in my case, it changed entire generations of a family who immigrated to the United States seeking a better life.

Because of the dedicated staff, faculty, administrators, and student leaders at PCC, and because of programs like Future Connect, I was able to navigate the complex higher education system with support and guidance instead of confusion. Because of PCC, I was able to navigate my sexuality with love and education, instead of fear. And because of PCC, I was able to build my confidence and skills through internship opportunities instead of student loan debt.

That is why I have approached every major decision in front of this Board by asking myself three questions: How does this decision affect the education of our students and the lives of thousands of employees? Will this decision foster or erode trust between the college and the broader community? And is this a good use of public dollars at a time when trust in all levels of government is so low?

The Board has a significant decision in front of us tonight, and with it, a significant milestone for the college. Only earlier this week, the full Board was informed of a potential separation agreement between the Board and the College President.

I want to be clear that a decision like this is not a simple yes or no on whether the status quo is working. I do not believe the status quo is working, and, as I have previously made clear, I have not believed so for quite some time. But a separation agreement is a contract, with specific terms, specific costs, and specific consequences for the college and the public we serve. A vote on this package is a vote on every line in it, not just on the question of whether a change in leadership is needed. I want to transparently share some of my concerns about those details.

First, on process. I want to acknowledge that counsel took time to screen-share the agreement with the full Board, and met with me separately to walk through it carefully. I sincerely appreciate that effort. Even so, a decision that will cost the college hundreds of thousands of dollars should not be made in a short window without board members receiving a copy of the agreement we are being asked to vote on. Reading a document on a screen, however carefully, is not the same as having it in hand to study and analyze. That is not a good process. And as someone who does not speak English as a first language, which I have formally raised to board leadership before, it is challenging to process important legal and financial information on a short timeline.

Second, on the severance amount. I believe four months of pay is reasonable, representing one month per year of employment. I would be comfortable with six. Nine months is more than I can support. After the historic strike was settled, the FCE contract with the college provided for a blanket 90-day severance package, regardless of their tenure. Time and time again, whenever our employee unions settle a contract that provides them a much-needed pay increase, the administration uses that as justification to raise their own salaries. But in this circumstance, after being here for

four years, the President is receiving triple what other PCC employees would ever receive, including those who have been here for eight times longer, as some have been.

Third, on the non-disparagement clause. I am troubled by the non-disparagement clause in the agreement that applies to board members and cabinet members. While demeaning remarks about anyone are not acceptable, it is also important to be able to speak honestly about challenges the college has been facing. I am concerned that this non-disparagement clause, combined with a pre-negotiated glowing press release that contradicts what we have heard from the college community over the past several years, could make the public think we, as a Board, will not address those concerns, and I remain committed to addressing them.

Finally, on the trademark. As part of this package, the President will allow the college to continue using the phrase "One Together, Together One" free of charge, but the President will retain ownership of it. That means PCC does not own a phrase that it has used, promoted, and built into its identity, and the President remains free to use it elsewhere. Regardless of how any of my colleagues may feel, this is, in fact, a serious legal matter for the college that continues to be under active consideration by the Oregon Government Ethics Commission.

So in my view, this separation agreement is not a good use of public dollars, and I will vote no tonight. Not because I oppose the college moving forward, but because I cannot put my name on a package that pays too much and silences too many. I want a change in leadership. I want the college to heal. But we cannot heal without acknowledging the challenges that our college community has faced. So tonight, I want my vote to acknowledge the nearly one thousand faculty, staff, students, alumni, business leaders, and community members who have consistently told us for over a year, before, during, and after the strike, that things have not been okay on the ground.

These issues are not the exclusive responsibility of the President, administration, or any one person. To be frank, at the end of the day, the college is the Board's responsibility. Oregon law is very clear on that point. But over the last several years, the Board has collectively failed in that duty. We have heard from countless students, faculty, and staff that things are not okay with PCC, and we have chosen to do nothing. It is drilled into us as board members that we manage one employee: the President. We have neglected to do that. So as we start a new chapter at PCC, I am making this public plea to my colleagues that we uphold our legal duty to the state, to this college, and to this community. But more than that, I plead that we rebuild the trust that has been lost on our watch.

No single person, regardless of their title, can define or take away the mission and purpose of this beloved institution. It is the collective us, including students, student leaders, union leaders, faculty, librarians, counselors, security officers, custodians, IT staff, administrators, board members, alumni and community partners that help define PCC. As the college navigates the challenges and headwinds in the months and years ahead, I will continue to do my part to contribute to what makes PCC, PCC.

And finally, I need to respond to concerns raised during and after our last business meeting. To be very clear: this Board - and this college - does not belong to the Chair, nor does it belong to any one person. It does not belong to the Board as a whole. It does not belong to the President.

We, as board members, are responsible to the public who elected us, and this entire institution belongs to the students we serve and the faculty and staff who work tirelessly to make them flourish. I worry that this Board collectively, with its exclusive legal responsibility for the college, has forgotten that. I hope more than anything that we take this opportunity to recenter ourselves in that commitment. Thank you.