

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Laramie County Community College



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FROM: Laramie County Community College District Board of Trustees
TO: Central Wyoming College Board of Trustees
DATE: September 15, 2026
RE: Response to CWC Board Memo on LCCC's Name Change

Thank you for sharing the Central Wyoming College (CWC) Board of Trustees' perspective and concerns over our intent to change the name of Laramie County Community College (LCCC) to Wyoming State College. We respect CWC's right to raise these concerns. Because we disagree with several of its conclusions, our responsibility is to answer them clearly, correct the record where necessary, and explain the safeguards we will use to prevent misunderstanding.

We understand this name change, especially one built upon a naming architecture with broad, but nuanced use across the country, invites questions from our higher education partners. It is true that the naming convention we have used (leaning on the "state college" nomenclature) is prevalent across the country, but in many ways, this is part of the appeal of the name. We also recognize that our new name may generate initial questions deriving from individual interpretation of what may or may not be implied by the new name. However, we believe these are communication challenges, not proof that the name is misleading or inappropriate. Let us explain.

Our new name is intended to clarify our location, broaden awareness of the College, and better represent the comprehensive range of credentials and experiences we now provide. It is not intended, and would not function, to change our statutory mission, governance, service area, accreditation, relationship with the University of Wyoming, or standing within Wyoming's community college system.

Because we take the questions, concerns, and claims of our educational colleagues in Wyoming seriously, we want to provide them with full consideration. We'll attempt to do just that by responding to each in kind below.

- 1. The name implies that LCCC is now a state college with a service area over the entire State of Wyoming. The de facto naming convention for community colleges in Wyoming is to include the region in the college's name. This is false advertising**

that impacts enrollments, philanthropy, grants, branding and more for the State's colleges and sole university.

A public-facing name does not define or supersede a statutory or state-assigned service area. Wyoming State College would remain legally governed by the Laramie County Community College District, accountable to its locally elected Board of Trustees, and responsible for serving its state-designated communities of Laramie and Albany Counties. None of those provisions change through a DBA or public-facing name.

At the same time, having a defined service area does not mean that a college may serve only students within it. Wyoming's community colleges already enroll students from across the state and beyond, operate statewide and regional partnerships, deliver online education, and prepare people for Wyoming's broader workforce. Indeed, our future will depend on our ability to continue doing this.

"Wyoming" communicates where the College is located, "State" anchors us to the Capital, while 'State College' identifies it through a widely recognized public-college naming convention, and collectively they represent whom our work ultimately benefits; it does not assert exclusive representation of the state.

We are not claiming to be Wyoming's only college or to speak for the entire system. We are identifying ourselves as a public college of Wyoming that serves its assigned communities while contributing to the state's educational and workforce needs. We believe this is exactly what our community and our state expect from all the colleges.

2. The name implies that LCCC is "the" State school in juxtaposition to the University of Wyoming. In Colorado, for example, there is Colorado State University and the University of Colorado. This is false advertising and harmful to the University of Wyoming.

The proposed name does not position Wyoming State College as a counterpart or competitor to the University of Wyoming (UW). "State" identifies the institution as a public college located in the State Capital as well as the significant investment (most of the community colleges' funding comes from the state), coordination, and responsibility that the colleges have by and for the state. The use of "State" does not confer university status, research responsibilities, statewide governance authority, or a place within a separate state-university system.

UW is and remains Wyoming's sole public university and land-grant university, with its distinctive responsibility for research, graduate and professional education, extension, and the broad offering of BA and BS degrees. Our institution would remain a public community college focused principally on certificates, associate degrees, transfer preparation,

workforce education, and applied bachelor's degrees authorized to meet specific workforce needs.

The Colorado analogy is also imperfect. "Colorado State University" and the University of Colorado are both universities with distinct statutory roles and governance systems. "Wyoming State College" would neither carry the word "University" nor create a new university system. It describes a different institutional type.

We recognize that some individuals, primarily those working in higher education, may initially interpret the name through the lens of their awareness of states with multiple university systems. In part, the common use of "State" in the college name is what makes the name a powerful choice for the College. Further, because no Wyoming institution has previously used the common '[State Name] State College' construct, it offers an especially distinctive and compelling option for our new name.

But we want to, and will manage potential misinterpretations through our public identity, descriptive language, and communications to consistently make clear that Wyoming State College is a comprehensive public college and a member of Wyoming's community college system, not a second university.

"False advertising" would require the College to make materially misleading representations about its authority, programs, accreditation, degree levels, or institutional status. The name, Wyoming State College, itself does none of those things.

We will accurately represent that Wyoming State College:

- Is a public college established under Wyoming State Statutes, operating within Wyoming's community college system.
- Is legally governed by the Board of Trustees of the Laramie County Community College District, doing business as Wyoming State College.
- Offers high school equivalency credentials, certificates, associate degrees, transfer pathways, workforce education, and applied bachelor's degrees.
- Is not a university.
- Is not Wyoming's Land-Grant institution.
- Does not possess authority over the other community colleges.
- Retains its defined service area and state responsibilities.

We would welcome specific examples of potential harm so they can be evaluated and addressed. If the concern is competition for students, Wyoming's colleges already recruit beyond their local service areas, and we have not identified how the proposed name would materially alter that environment. If the concern is statutory authority, none is changing.

3. The name implies that the once community college, LCCC, has somehow changed and is in a separate category in the State and is now of a higher stature in its mission and offerings.

The proposed name reflects the College's evolution, but it does not place the institution in a separate or superior category within Wyoming's higher education structure. That could not occur through a name change; it would require changes to the College's statutory authority and governance. LCCC will remain a locally governed, open-access institution with the same statutory authority, service area, and commitment to open admissions, affordable education, workforce preparation, university transfer, and community service.

What has changed is the breadth of the students we serve (and must serve) and the ways we fulfill that mission. Today, the College offers residential life, intercollegiate athletics, university transfer pathways, advanced technical and healthcare programs, and workforce-focused applied bachelor's degrees. The proposed name is intended to communicate that broader reality more clearly, particularly to students beyond our immediate service area who may misunderstand either our location or the range of opportunities available here.

"Wyoming State College" is therefore not a claim of higher stature. It is a clearer public identity for an institution that has evolved while remaining firmly committed to its access mission and its role within Wyoming's coordinated system of public higher education. It is also a name that has never been claimed or designated in Wyoming, and as has been pointed out earlier, based on common, albeit nuanced use, across the country making it immediately recognizable and respected.

4. The name essentially downgrades the other community colleges since it is implied that they serve a subservient part of the entire state of which the Wyoming State College serves.

The name does not (and structurally cannot) establish a rank or hierarchy among Wyoming's community colleges. Institutional standing is determined by statutory mission, accreditation, degree authority, governance, performance, innovation, and especially today, student outcomes and impact. Standing is not established simply by the fact that "community," "state," "technical," or a geographic reference appear in the name.

Colleges across the country use "State College" while continuing to provide open-access education, associate degrees, transfer programs, workforce credentials, and selected workforce-oriented bachelor's degrees. For example, State College of Florida explicitly describes itself as a regional, open-access public college focused on associate degrees, applied bachelor's degrees, certificates, and community needs.

Our rationale for this name is not that LCCC has become “better than” or “above” the other colleges. We are proud of LCCC’s standing as a top-performing, innovative institution producing strong student outcomes and community impact. However, our reason for the name change is that our current name creates particular barriers for this institution: confusion between Laramie County and the City of Laramie, Larimer County (CO), limited recognition outside our immediate service area, and an incomplete picture of the breadth of the College experience our students find. The proposed name addresses those specific problems quite well.

This is an institutional positioning decision, not a claim of institutional superiority.

5. The name implies LCCC is now a Land Grant Institution because many states use the word “State” to imply that status. Wyoming only has one university and so the use of the term “State” was not needed.

We reach a different conclusion based on federal policy and established higher education naming conventions. Land-grant status is established through federal and state law and formal designation. It is not created or implied institutionally by using the word “State.” In fact, to our knowledge there are no state Land-Grant institutions that refer to themselves as a “State College.”

Many land-grant institutions do contain “State” in their names, but many do not (including the University of Wyoming, Auburn University, Cornell University, the University of Arizona, the University of California system, and numerous tribal colleges). Conversely, many institutions with “State” in their names are not Land-Grant institutions.

The USDA identifies land-grant institutions through specific 1862, 1890, and 1994 designations. Naming is not a criterion. That association is understandable, but it does not establish that the use of ‘State,’ even when preceded by ‘Wyoming,’ implies Land-Grant status.

Interpretations of institutional names are often shaped by an individual’s experience with particular states and higher education systems. While someone may personally associate “State” with certain land-grant universities, that association is neither universal nor an accepted definition of the term.

UW is and will remain Wyoming’s Land-Grant university. Our proposed name makes no claim, explicit or implicit, to Land-Grant designation, research-university status, responsibility for Cooperative Extension, or any other specific Land-Grant function.

6. CWC is officially a “Non-Land Grant College” which means although it is not a Land Grant University, it is officially recognized as an agricultural college and has access

to funds and other opportunities. LCCC's proposed new name implies it is a Non-Land Grant College.

Although we are uncertain as to how this ties to our name change, we would offer the following. We respect and support CWC's designation as a Non-Land-Grant College of Agriculture and its important role in agricultural education. Nothing about our proposed name challenges, duplicates, or diminishes that designation.

In fact, CWC's designation illustrates the distinction between a college's name and its federal status. NIFA certification as a Non-Land-Grant College of Agriculture is based on federal eligibility requirements and provides access to specified agricultural capacity-building and other programs; it is not determined by the institution's name.

Wyoming State College would not claim to be "the agricultural college," an NLGCA institution, or a Land-Grant institution. Our existing agriculture, equine, and related workforce programs would continue as part of our comprehensive mission, just as individual colleges throughout the state maintain areas of strength without claiming exclusive ownership of those fields.

This concern therefore deserves recognition, but it is not substantively connected to the proposed name.

7. The proposed name change confuses students and hurts the higher education system in Wyoming.

We take seriously the possibility of unintended confusion and are committed to addressing it. In fact, much of our motivation with the name change is to ensure more people are clear who we are, where we are, and what we offer. But at the same time, concern about a potential interpretation should not be treated as evidence that the name changes our status, confuses students, or inherently harms another institution. We would welcome specific examples of anticipated confusion or operational harm so that they can be evaluated and, where appropriate, mitigated.

Summary

We appreciate CWC formally sharing its concerns and have sought to respond to each one directly. To date, you are the only institution of higher education to formally advance specific concerns. Thus, we wanted to honor your effort with a sincere effort to respond.

Please know, our name is intended to change how the College is recognized; it does not change what the College is authorized to be. Wyoming State College is not an attempt to leave the community college mission. It is an attempt to communicate the evolution of that mission more effectively, more broadly, and in a rapidly evolving environment.