Foundation

Cuesta College Foundation
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, May 4, 2026 | 3 p.m.
Zoom Conference Call

A. Call To Order

Foundation Board President Craig Darnell called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

B. Roll Call

A quorum was present.

Board Members Present:	Board Members Absent:	Foundation Staff Present:
Craig Darnell, *President*	Janice Fong Wolf	Rick Camarillo
Jim Anderson		Andrea Horvath
Stuart Campbell		Katie Osman
Jeff Darnton		Jessica Strano
Grigger Jones		
Scott Lathrop		
Patrick Mullen		
Debbie Perrault		
Jill Stearns, Ph.D.		

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion: Approve as presented. (Jones/Campbell)
Result: Motion passed unanimously.

D. Public Comment

None.

E. Approval of Minutes

Motion: Approve minutes from March 2, 2026. (Mullen/Jones)
Result: Motion passed unanimously.

F. Executive Reports

1. Foundation Board President

Craig Darnell reported that he had no additional updates outside of items scheduled for discussion later in the agenda. Craig expressed enthusiasm about the upcoming Rodeo Benefit. He shared that early information regarding sponsorships and attendance has been very encouraging with strong sponsor participation and a growing attendee list indicating a well-supported event. No action was taken.

2. Superintendent/President

Dr. Jill Stearns reported that the college is concluding the spring term with several student recognition and year-end events. She highlighted the upcoming Rodeo Benefit and the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Campus Center on June 3, which will take place prior to the Board of Trustees meeting and mark the first Board meeting held in the new facility. She shared that administrative staff would begin moving into the Campus Center and expressed excitement about occupying the new space after three years in a temporary location. Dr. Stearns invited Foundation Board members to attend commencement, RN pinning ceremony, and other student recognition events, noting the continued success of the college's student-focused commencement ceremonies. No action was taken.

3. Board of Trustees

Patrick Mullen expressed enthusiasm for the college's upcoming commencement ceremonies, noting the continued success of the current format and the opportunity it provides to celebrate and engage with graduating students and their families. Trustee Mullen also noted the upcoming Board of Trustees meeting and encouraged attendance by those interested. In addition, he recognized the service of the outgoing Student Trustee, whose term concludes at the end of the current academic year, and highlighted the college's commitment to meaningful student participation in governance and leadership. No action was taken.

4. Foundation Executive Director

Katie Osman reported that the Foundation is experiencing strong momentum and alignment across its initiatives and expressed appreciation for the Board's partnership and support. An update was provided on the upcoming Rodeo Benefit, which is sold out with more than 220 attendees and over 30 sponsors participating. The event has secured approximately $50,000 in sponsorship revenue and $20,000 in in-kind contributions. Katie noted that the event is one of the Foundation's largest in recent years and is successfully engaging new supporters while bringing together a broad cross-section of the community in support of students. She also highlighted the continued strength of the fundraising efforts this year and thanked Board members for their contributions to that success. No action was taken.

G. Committee Chair Reports

1. Alumni Relations Committee (Fong Wolf)

Katie Osman spoke on behalf of Janice Fong Wolf, who was absent. It was reported that the deadline for Honored Alumni nominations is today. Board members were encouraged to submit any remaining nominations before the deadline. The committee will review nominations and select honorees at its next meeting, with recognition planned for the fall. No action was taken.

2. Development Committee (Darnton)

Jeff Darnton reported that, with approximately 60 days remaining in the fiscal year, the Foundation is in a strong position to meet its annual fundraising goals, with solid performance across multiple giving categories. Board giving was also described as strong, with increased participation and total contributions up nearly $70,000 year over year, though full 100% participation has not yet been achieved. Overall, the Chair expressed optimism for a strong finish to the fiscal year. No action was taken.

3. Finance Committee (Campbell)

Stuart Campbell shared that the Finance Committee met last month with a robust agenda and successfully completed a substantial amount of work. The Committee highlighted its collaborative efforts in reviewing and stewarding Foundation funds in support of the College. Rick Camarillo added that the Finance Committee approved an additional $2 million commitment to HarbourVest, bringing the Foundation’s total private equity investment to $5 million, including a previously established $3 million commitment. This action is part of a phased strategy to reach a long-term target of approximately 10% allocation to private equity, and the Committee elected to continue with the existing manager rather than engage a new firm for this tranche as part of the ongoing multi-year investment approach. No action was taken.

4. Nominating Committee (Lathrop)

Scott Lathrop reported that the Nominating Committee met and made progress on its work to find quality nominees, with additional discussion scheduled later in the agenda today. Scott expressed appreciation for Katie's efforts in developing improved, more presentable materials for the nominations process. No action was taken.

H. Business Agenda

1. Financial Report

Rick Camarillo presented the Mercer investment report, noting that overall performance remains strong and aligned with benchmark targets. He reviewed total gifts from July 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026, and concluded with an overview of income and expenditures. No action was taken.

I. Action Items

A. Strategic Plan

Katie Osman thanked Board participants in the January and February strategic planning sessions and noted that stakeholder input, along with collaboration with Dr. Stearns, Craig, and others, informed the draft Strategic Plan. Katie presented a draft Strategic Plan organized around five priorities: strengthening organizational infrastructure; enhancing the Foundation's story and community visibility; deepening alumni and donor engagement through intentional stewardship; building a broader culture of philanthropy; and growing revenue streams to support transformational philanthropy. The plan retains the Foundation's mission, vision, and purpose and incorporates both operational objectives and longer-term goals within a three-year framework. Katie reviewed the plan structure, including strategic objectives and KPIs aligned with the college's Educational Master Plan, and outlined a phased approach spanning 2026-2029: infrastructure development in year one, deeper engagement in year two, and momentum building in year three. She also described an implementation roadmap organized by quarterly action steps, deliverables, and outcomes, and proposed providing quarterly updates to the Board to monitor progress.

Motion: Approve the Strategic Plan as presented and recommend it to the full Board for approval. (Perrault/Campbell)

Result: Motion passed unanimously.

B. FY27 Budget

Katie Osman presented the proposed FY27 budget, which reflects a strategic investment phase focused on strengthening the Foundation's infrastructure, fundraising capacity, and operational effectiveness while maintaining reserve balances above the Foundation's target. The budget includes targeted investments in technology, compliance, governance, staff development, and direct marketing services to enhance donor engagement and long-term revenue growth, while reducing reliance on consultants and improving budget alignment and transparency. Personnel costs reflect contractual increases with no new positions added. Direct support to the college remains strong at $398,500, including continued funding for Foundation Grants, the CASE Fund, the Opportunity Fund, a proposed new Access Fund for students facing financial barriers, and support for enhancements to Cougar Park and the Alumni Walkway. The Board discussed the budget's emphasis on financial stewardship, student support, organizational sustainability, and readiness for future philanthropic growth and campaign activity.

Motion: Approve the FY27 Budget Plan as presented and recommend it to the full Board for approval. (Lathrop/Jones)

Result: Motion passed unanimously.

C. Review of Spending Rate

Rick Camarillo presented the Review of Spending Rate. He shared the proposed increase in the endowment spending rate from 3.75% to 4.0%. The recommendation is based on long-term capital market assumptions provided by Mercer. Benchmarking data from comparable foundations (NACUBO study) indicate average effective spending rates of ~4.5% to 5.5%, suggesting that the proposed 4.0% rate remains conservative relative to peers. Based on this analysis, the Committee recommends approval of an increase in the endowment spending rate to 4.0%, a 25-basis-point increase, to better align with inflationary pressures and peer practices while remaining within projected long-term return expectations.

Motion: Approve the Review of Spending Rate as presented and forward it to the full Board. (Lathrop/Campbell)

Result: Motion passed unanimously.

D. Cash Management Policy

Katie Osman reviewed the proposed Cash Management Policy, which

establishes a comprehensive framework for managing the Foundation's cash resources to ensure asset protection, adequate liquidity, regulatory compliance, and responsible stewardship of funds. It has been reviewed and approved by Mercer and the Finance Committee. The policy defines governance and oversight responsibilities for the Board, Finance Committee, Executive Director, and Director of Foundation Fiscal Services; establishes internal controls, approval thresholds, segregation of duties, and reconciliation requirements; and outlines standards for liquidity management, banking relationships, cash concentration, and short-term investments. The policy also provides guidance for risk management, reporting, and coordination with the Foundation's Investment Policy Statement, with the goal of maintaining sufficient funds for operations, scholarships, grants, and other obligations while preserving capital and promoting consistent, transparent financial management practices.
Motion: Approve the Cash Management Policy as presented and forward it to the full Board. (Jones/Perrault)
Result: Motion passed unanimously.

E. Operating Reserve Policy
Rick Camarillo reviewed the proposed Operating Reserve Policy, which originated in the Finance Committee and establishes guidelines for maintaining a board-designated operating reserve to support the Foundation's financial stability, sustainability, and ability to respond to unforeseen needs or strategic opportunities. The policy sets a reserve range of 25%–75% of annual operating expenses, with a target balance of 50%, and outlines parameters for funding, use, replenishment, investment, reporting, and oversight. Reserve funds may be used for temporary cash flow needs, emergency expenses, revenue disruptions, or Board-approved strategic investments, subject to appropriate review and approval. The policy is intended to strengthen long-term financial stewardship, ensure organizational resilience, and provide a clear framework for managing reserve resources in alignment with the Foundation's mission and financial goals.
Motion: Approve the Operating Reserve Policy as presented and forward it to the full Board. (Perrault/Campbell)
Result: Motion passed unanimously.

F. Investment Policy Statement Update
Stuart Campbell presented an update to the Investment Policy Statement

recommended by the Finance Committee. The update clarifies the fixed income strategy by separating domestic and international bond allocations and adding a specific benchmark for international bond funds. The benchmark aligns with the Foundation's existing Vanguard-managed international bond investments, which are currency-hedged to reduce currency risk. No changes were made to the Foundation's overall investment strategy or asset allocation; the revision was intended solely to improve clarity and accuracy in the policy statement.
Motion: Approve the Investment Policy Statement Update as presented and forward it to the full Board. (Darnton/Jones)
Result: Motion passed unanimously.

G. FY27 Board Slate
The Executive Committee reviewed the proposed FY27 Board Slate, presented by Scott Lathrop, including five new board member candidates, reappointments, continuing directors, ex officio appointments, and recommended Executive Committee officer assignments. It was noted that Janice Fong Wolf will not be returning after seven years of service, leaving the Alumni Committee Chair position vacant. The slate reflects ongoing efforts to strengthen board composition through strategic recruitment to address identified gaps in industry representation, professional expertise, and community engagement. New candidates bring experience in operations, agriculture, business, finance, and alumni engagement, with several already confirmed and others pending final acceptance. The Committee also reviewed proposed Executive Committee officer reassignments and succession recommendations.
Motion: Approve FY27 Board Slate as presented and forward it to the full Board. (Campbell/Perrault)
Result: Motion passed unanimously.

H. Foundation Board of Directors Meeting Agenda for Monday, June 1, 2026
Craig Darnell presented the proposed agenda for the June Board of Directors meeting. The agenda was prepared in accordance with applicable open meeting requirements. Committee members discussed streamlining the June Board meeting agenda by consolidating financial policy Action Items C through F, including the Review of Spending Rate, Cash Management Policy, Operating Reserve Policy, and Investment Policy Statement update, into a

single agenda item in the interest of time and efficiency.
Motion: Approve the agenda as presented, with the amendment that Items C through F be consolidated into a single financial policy approval item. (Darnton/Perrault)
Result: Motion passed unanimously.

J. Comments by Staff
None.

K. Comments by Committee Members
None.

Adjournment
Meeting adjourned at 4:26 p.m.

Next Executive Committee Meeting Date: Monday, July 6, 2026, on Zoom.