



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

February 20, 2025

Minutes

3:35 – 5:00 PM

Owl's Nest, Ely Campus Center

A live stream of the meeting for public viewing will also take place at the following link: <https://www.westfield.ma.edu/live>

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Ali Salehi, and Trustees, Daniel Currier, George Gilmer, Tessa Lucey, Chris Montemayor. Michale O'Rourke, Jason Queenin, and William Reichelt.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Trustee Theresa Jasmin

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Vice Chair Melissa Alvarado and Secretary Dr. Gloria Williams.

Also present were Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson, and cabinet members; Provost, Dr. William Salka; Special Assistant to the President on University Strategies and Chief of Staff, Dr. Michael Freeman; Director of Athletics, Richard Lenfest, Jr; Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Lisa McMahon; Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Dr. Kevin Hearn; Vice President of Administration and Finance, Stephen Taksar; and General Counsel and Vice President for Government and Community Relations, Melinda Phelps.

Board Chair Salehi called the meeting to order at 3:31 PM. He announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded. Board Chair Salehi made the following statements:

- The Board will stick to its missions and values, prioritizing students' rights and safety.
- The Board does not take any political standings.
- Dr. Thompson and her team have been working on a strategic plan, which will be presented as a motion for the Board to take action today.
- Motions will be taken out of order, with Dr. Thompson's motion regarding the strategic plan being addressed first. The other nine motions will be voted on as a consent motion at the end of the meeting.

MOTION made by Trustee Montemayor and seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to approve the meeting minutes of December 9, 2024 meeting. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

President's Report

- Emphasizes the importance of nurturing tomorrow's leaders with equity of opportunity, uplifting unheard voices, and advocating for those in need.
- "Our world is a better place when we achieve a balance of cultures and races who work together to achieve common goals."

- Mentions the upcoming release of Westfield State's Strategic Plan for the next five years, shaped by a strategic planning committee and leadership team.
- The plan aims to provide the best experience for students and the best learning environment to build skills required in the future.
- The strategic plan is not a static document but an organic set of actions that must be continually assessed.
- By 2029, the vision is to have full enrollment, engaged students, faculty, staff, librarians, and alumni, a financially stable university with updated facilities, supported faculty, and a trusted and renowned institution.
- At a Cabinet retreat in January, progress was reviewed, and goals were further developed.

Strategic Plan Overview

- To foster innovative learning, aligning institutional resources with innovative and relevant academic programs to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to thrive in emerging career opportunities and contribute meaningfully to a rapidly changing world.
- Goal 1: Academic Excellence and Innovation
 - Develop and update curriculum.
 - Maintain and create industry partnerships.
 - Offer continuous professional development and skill building for faculty.
- Goal 2: Student Success
 - Foster a campus culture of belonging and student engagement.
 - Promote holistic well-being by prioritizing physical and mental health.
 - Develop a student-ready campus with a student-centered governance structure.
- Goal 3: Align Resources
 - Strengthen the use of campus resources by aligning human capital and financial assets.
 - Develop a strategic talent acquisition and management plan.
 - Foster a supportive and inclusive working environment.
- Goal 4: Institutional Success
 - Enhance a dynamic community of engaged scholars.
 - Foster collaboration across disciplines to enhance innovation and creativity.
 - Promote applied research that addresses societal needs.
- Dr. Susan Leggett of Good Collaborations is assisting in creating the final document.
 - She is a former Chief of Staff at Westfield State University.
 - She also served as Interim Dean of Faculty and Associate Professor Chair of the Communications Department.
- The plan is a living document that will include data and KPIs.
- Trustee Gilmer asked to incorporate earlier discussions about budgeting.
- The final package will be presented in April for review and adjustments.

MOTION made, to adopt the 2025-2029 strategic plan with four goals and objectives. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

Campus Updates

- The Student Government Association held a legislative breakfast this month, hosting elected officials and updating them on the campus' urgent needs.
- Legislators toured Bates Hall and the RIDE center to see how maintenance issues affect learning and how much money students can save.

- Massachusetts' 2025 fiscal year State budget included historic investments in the Commonwealth's public higher education system.
- The Healy Driscoll administration's \$14 million expansion of the SUCCESS program will allow Massachusetts' nine State Universities to reach and support first-generation and historically underserved students.
- The BRIGHT Act will create opportunities to modernize and update campus facilities that support lab work, web development and automation.

Student Trustee Report

SGA Update

- Deferred maintenance needs are getting worse, as seen during the Financial Affairs Committee meeting in December when the boilers in the Horrace Mann Center stopped working.
- On January 21st, Governor Healey announced the filing of the BRIGHT Act, which would authorize the issuance of up to \$3 billion in bonds to support higher education capital projects.
- A student-led legislative breakfast was held on February 7th with members of the State Legislature in attendance to present the challenges faced and argue for immediate investment in public higher education capital projects.
- Lawmakers toured Bates Hall and the RIDE Center, and there was consensus among them that now is the time to invest in public higher education capital projects.

SGA Initiatives

- Hosting local political leaders during its meetings, including Westfield Mayor Michael McCabe and West Springfield Mayor and Trustee William Reichelt.
- Held a State of the Campus address in the newly renovated Dever Auditorium to highlight initiatives undertaken during the 2024-2025 academic year.
- SGA is providing \$100 to all active registered student organizations on campus for their 100th anniversary.
- Has proposed the establishment of an endowment program through the foundation to support registered student organizations that celebrate faith, heritage, and identity in perpetuity, with a goal of raising \$50,000. The endowment, initiative thought of by the students, is one of the first.

Upcoming Events

- Students will be on spring break from March 8th through March 16th.
- The annual Relay for Life event will be held in the Woodward Center on Saturday, March 22nd to raise funds for the American Cancer Society.
- The annual Owl Ball will take place on Friday, April 11th at the Tekoa Country Club in Westfield.
- Elections for Executive Council positions and Senate positions will take place on April 15th and 16th.
- The annual spring concert will be on Saturday, April 26th.

Audit Committee

Committee Chair Theresa Jasmin updated the Board:

- Presentation by external auditors WithumSmith and Brown.
 - Reviewed the Uniform Guidance report.
 - There was one minor finding in their audit.
 - One day late in reporting a change in student status.

- Attorney Phelps talked about rescinding a policy related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
 - Recommends the student directory be under the oversight of the President and Registrar.
 - There was a motion to rescind that policy and delegate responsibility to the cabinet.
- Vice President Stephen Taksar gave an update on internal audit programs.
 - One currently underway related to campus security being conducted by Boston Consortium Group.
 - Next internal audit will be of accounts payable.

Academic Affairs Committee

Committee Chair Chris Montemayor updated the Board:

- An overview of the SUCCESS program to support underserved students.
 - Two new positions will be created.
 - Assistant Provost for Educational Excellence and Retention.
 - Assistant Director of Retention and Analytics.

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey updated the Board:

- Provost Salka affirmed Westfield State University includes all students and will continue to support them.
- Director Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola provided an update on activities of the office of Belonging, Inclusion and Learning.
 - Staffing update:
 - Senior Coordinator for Multicultural Programming.
 - Assistant Director for Student Access and Support.
 - Launched the BIL Inclusion and Learning newsletter and website.
 - Summary on the bias and incident reporting and the Bias Education Support Team (BEST).
 - BEST is focusing on bias intervention planning, training, and civil discourse.
 - Needs include professional development and campus wide bias intervention planning.
 - Overview of programming and community engagement.
 - Highlighted events and initiatives including Black History Month programming, cultural event calendars and collaborations with external networks like the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts and the Racial Equity and Justice Institute.

Advancement, Marketing, and External Relations Committee

Committee Vice Chair Chris Montemayor updated the Board:

- Marketing update on the rebranding.
 - Presented four possible logos along with position statements.
 - Next steps are to have campus unveiling of the logo.
 - Spoke about fundraising events and an upcoming trip to Florida.
- Give a Hoot is online March 26th and 27th.
- On March 19th, Victoria Christopher Murray, a New York Times bestselling author, will be on campus.
- Fundraising campaign: Continued work is being done to engage more partners and build philanthropic momentum.

- Fundraising metrics: There has been an increase in total gifts and grants.

Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Committee

Committee Chair William Reichelt updated the Board:

- Spring 2025 review enrollment: met aggressive goal setting for the third cycle in a row; largest transfer of spring students in four years.
- Fall 2025 preview: deposits of 60%, but there is concern that FAFSAs are behind.
 - Concern that people are worried about sharing their information with the feds.
- Strategic enrollment plan update: focusing on undergraduate, graduate, and graduate enrollment for the next three years and retention.
- Career Center presentation by Junior Delgado: encouraged to watch the presentation.
- Shout out to the SGA: impressed with how well they run a meeting.

Financial Affairs Committee

Committee Chair George Gilmer updated the Board on:

- 2025 spending through the second quarter: high-level projection for fiscal 25 versus budget.
 - Reported potential spending of \$138 million versus the budget of \$132 million.
- Strategy: to have an annual operating expense budget that's equal to or less than the annual revenue.
- University Cash Summary: outlined a potential shortfall of a little over \$5 million.
- Review by FEG (Fund Evaluation Group) of the investment portfolio: increase of just under \$2 million since FEG took over.

MOTION made by Trustee Lucey, seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, by consent agenda to approve the nine motions previously approved by the committees earlier. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

Closing Remarks

- Trustee Gilmer is having a talk from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. in the Multi-Purpose Room in University Hall.
- There is also a tour of the finance and data analysis lab.

There being no further business,

MOTION made by Trustee Currier, and seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to adjourn. A roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Attachments:

- Draft Minutes of December 9, 2024
- President's Presentation
- Motion- Strategic Plan 2025-2029
- Strategic Plan 2025-2029
- Student Trustee Presentation
- Student Trustee – Legislative Breakfast Presentation

Audit Committee

- Minutes 12-9-24 (Draft)

- b. Motion – Uniform Guidance Report
- c. Uniform Guidance Report (Draft)
- d. Motion – Release of Student Directory Information Policy (0290)
- e. Policy – Release of Student Directory Information (0290)

Academic Affairs Committee

- a. Draft Minutes of December 9, 2024
- b. Plan for Success Pilot Money presentation
- c. DHE Letter of Intent for Master of Science in Athletic Training
- d. HE Letter of Intent for Master of Science Occupation Overview Analytics
- e. DHE Letter of Intent for Master of Arts in History
- f. Master in History Program Overviews
- g. DHE Letter of Intent Master of Science in Nursing: Psychiatric Mental Health Practitioner
- h. Motion. Master of Science in Athletic Training
- i. Motion. Master of Arts in History
- j. Motion. Master of Science in Nursing: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
- k. Supporting documents: Quinton Lucas
- l. Supporting documents: Shannon A. Brown
- m. Motion. Honorary Degree Recipient, Quinton Lucas
- n. Motion. Honorary Degree Recipient, Shannon A. Brown

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee

- a. Minutes of December 9, 2024
- b. Minutes October 23, 2024
- c. Belonging, Inclusion and Learning Presentation

Advancement, Marketing, and External Relations Committee

- a. Draft Minutes, December 9, 2024
- b. MarComm Presentation
- c. Keeper of The Dream Booklet
- d. Dora Robinson Speaker Series Postcard
- e. Q2 IA Dashboard

Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Committee

- a. Minutes December 9, 2024
- b. EMSA Presentation PPT

Financial Affairs:

- a. Minutes 12-2-24 (Draft)
- b. FY25 Second Quarter Update/Spending Plan
- c. Motion - Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy (0380)
- d. Policy – Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources (0380) NARRATIVE
- e. Policy – Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources (0380) CLEAN
- f. Policy – Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources (0380) TRACK CHANGES
- g. Motion – FY26 Tuition and Fee Schedule
- h. FY26 Tuition and Fee Schedule
- i. University Cash Summary
- j. Travel Expenses for the President and the President’s Direct Reports
- k. 4Q Review (Investments)
- l. Policy – Investment (0430) TRACK CHANGES

Secretary’s Certificate

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the approved minutes of the Westfield State University Board of Trustees meeting held on December 9, 2024.

Dr. Gloria Williams, Secretary

Date