



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Academic Affairs Committee

February 20, 2025

Minutes

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

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: Committee Chair Chris Montemayor, Vice Chair Jason Queenin, Secretary Daniel Currier, Trustee Michael O'Rourke, Trustee William Reichelt, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Trustee George Gilmer

Also present and participating were Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. William Salka; Dean of Graduate and Continuing Education, Nora Padykula; and Professors Dr. Holly Noun and Dr. Paul Higgins.

Committee Chair Montemayor called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM and a roll call was taken of the committee members participating as listed above. It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee O'Rourke to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

Academic Affairs Plan for SUCCESS Pilot Money

- Westfield State University is receiving \$1.5 million from the State for student success initiatives.
- The money must be spent on new initiatives and cannot be used to backfill existing programs.
- A spending plan was submitted to the Department of Higher Education (DHE) in January and the money needs to be spent by September.
- Two new positions will be funded:
 - Assistant Provost of Education for Educational Excellence and Retention:
 - Will oversee how the money is being spent and manage student support areas.
 - Must be capable of gathering and analyzing data and creating assessment plans.
 - Assistant Director of Retention and Analytics:
 - Will work with the Assistant Provost to track at-risk students using the EAB Starfish product.
 - Will help connect students with tutoring, advising, and counseling services.

- The search for the Assistant Provost position is underway, but there are difficulties forming a search committee.
 - The position is grant-funded, allowing the person to retreat to their previous position if the grant runs out.
- An ad for the analytics position is about to be posted.
 - The goal is to bring them on board quickly.
- Other programs under consideration.
 - Peer mentors in every First Year Journey course.
 - Peer mentor coaches in student support offices.
 - Increased use of graduate assistants.
 - Professional development for faculty and staff on best practices for identifying and addressing student mental health issues.
 - Extension of the Huron contract to improve data analytics capabilities.
 - Financial aid awards for at-risk students to help them re-enroll.
- The \$1.5 million funding is likely to be renewed for at least two more years.
- The Huron contract extension will focus on creating a data warehouse.
 - The data warehouse will pull data from Banner, clean it, and make it accessible to campus users.
 - Live data from production is currently being used. Two people ran the same query and got different numbers for student enrollment projections. This indicates problems with the current system. A new data warehouse should correct these issues.
 - The need for this was identified a few years ago. There were difficulties managing data, requiring outside industrial groups. Setting up an in-house data warehouse would take 2-3 years and burden the IT staff.
 - Decisions should be based on clean data.
 - Question about synergy between data analytics and the information security team, especially regarding student privacy policies.
 - Huron is a world-class corporation.
 - Other provosts use external data warehouses for quicker access to clean data.

Master's Programs: Athletic Training

- Dean Nora Padykula discussed the master's program below;
- The plan is to merge Master of Science in Athletic Training with the undergraduate curriculum to create a 3+2 program.
 - Students complete three years at the undergraduate level and begin graduate courses in the fourth year, completing the degree in their fifth year.
- There are two budgets: one as a standalone master's degree and one as a 3+2 program.
 - The standalone program would generate net revenue by year five.
 - The 3+2 program is anticipated to generate about \$124,000 a year by year four.

Accreditation and Program Structure

- The accrediting body now requires a master's degree for certified athletic trainers.
 - A standalone master's degree will generate some enrollment.
 - The majority of enrollments will come from the 3+2 program.
- Synergy in Sports Medicine track allows students to decide by junior year if they want to pursue the track.
- The program is designed so that students can attend part-time.

Program Benefits and Need

- The undergraduate program draws 40-60 students to the university.
 - 95% of them stay at the university.

- The dual degree allows for post-baccalaureate students to join.
- There is an expected 24% growth in the need for athletic trainers.
 - Athletic trainers are needed in various settings, including industry, police, fire, and the military.
- Master's level athletic trainers will learn suturing, fracture casting, and MRI/X-ray interpretation.

Historical Context

- Athletic trainers were the first credentialed healthcare practitioners to graduate from the University.
- Graduates have served at every level of athletic training.
 - One graduate was elected president of the state association.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee Reichelt: The Academic Affairs committee recommends approval to the full Board: The granting of a Master of Science in Athletic Training. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

Master of Arts in History

- The board has already considered this program as a name change, but it is a change in the degree.
- The History department wants to keep the Masters of Education in History but create this Masters of Arts where students don't have to take the education courses.
 - These will likely be history teachers who are already certified.
 - The curriculum is the same for both the Masters of Arts and Masters of Education programs.
- The pro forma statement shows that it will generate net revenue of about \$10,000 in year three, growing to about \$85,000 in year five.
- There will be a shift in the way that the curriculum is delivered, with a hybrid format of online and on-campus learning.

Program Evaluation

- Trustee Montemayor asked about how the University is evaluating programs and classes to understand where there are opportunities to not offer them based on attendance or student interest.
- Every academic program has to go through academic program requirements every five years per accreditation standards.
 - The department that houses the major does a self-study of the major, which includes enrollment.
 - An external reviewer looks at the curriculum and makes sure that it's up to date.
- President Thompson hired someone to go through the curriculum of each major over the next year and a half to determine if the curriculum is relevant and attracting students.
 - The first step would be to update the curriculum of smaller majors to attract more students.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee Reichelt: The Academic Affairs committee recommends approval to the full Board: The granting of a Master of Arts in History. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

Master of Science in Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

- Expecting modest revenue in year two, but by year four, \$181,000 a year and in year five, \$233,000 a year.
- This program will bring revenue to the University and address a workforce need in the commonwealth.

- Nurse practitioners are needed in Western Massachusetts, especially for mental health issues.
 - There is a need for people who can prescribe psychiatric medication, especially for children and adolescents.
- The program is a two-year program.
 - The first year is a foundation curriculum.
 - The second year allows for specialization in mental health.
- The program can add other specialties as market demand is seen.
- Nurse practitioners are in high demand because they can conduct treatment.
- Pre-licensed students have been asking for an extended pathway to earn graduate degrees at Westfield State University.
- The program is online to increase access.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee O'Rourke: The Academic Affairs committee recommends approval to the full Board: The granting of Master of Science Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

Honorary Degree Recipients

- The first honorary degree recipient is Mr. Quinton Lucas, the mayor of Kansas City, Missouri.
 - He has launched initiatives to support residents of Kansas City.
 - This includes a zero-fare transit system and a housing trust fund for affordable housing.
 - He is considered a rising star within the Democratic Party.
- The second honorary degree recipient is Mr. Shannon Brown.
 - He is the President and CEO of BCS Consulting Services and the retired Senior Vice President of Eastern Division US operations and chief diversity officer for FedEx Express.
 - He spent 40 years with FedEx, starting as a package handler and rising to Senior Vice President.
 - He founded BCS Consulting Services after retirement.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee O'Rourke: The Academic Affairs committee recommends approval to the full Board: The granting of the Honorary Degree to Shannon A. Brown and Quinton Lucas effective February 20, 2025. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

There being no further discussion;

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Currier to adjourn the meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed by majority.

Meeting adjourned at 9:39 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- 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. DHE 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

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 Academic Affairs Committee meeting held on February 20, 2025.

Daniel Currier, Secretary

Date