



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes

December 18, 2025 3:45 p.m.

Loughman Living Room, Scanlon Hall

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, Vice Chair Melissa Alvarado, and Trustees, Barney Garcia, George Gilmer, Tessa Lucey, Chris Montemayor, Michael O'Rourke, William Reichelt and Gloria Williams.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Theresa Jasmin and Jason Queenin.

Also present and participating was Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson.

Board Chair Salehi called the meeting to order at 3:46 PM. He announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

MOTION made by Trustee Garcia and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to approve the meeting minutes of October 21, 2025. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

President's Report

- Recognition of Vice President of Administration and Finance Stephen Taksar for informative presentations on the campus budget.
 - Steve effectively articulated current financial realities and future challenges.
 - His transparent approach was valued by all.
- Steve's key message: "Every student matters."
 - Understanding the need to adjust how business is done.
 - Hope that the presentation assisted in creating a better understanding of how resources are generated and allocated.

Student Connection

- Connecting directly with students is a priority.
- Launch of "Leadership and Lunch":
 - Dean of Students Maggie Balch invites students for lunch in the Tekoa Room.
 - Conversations are relaxed and genuine.
 - Perspectives shared are invaluable.
- Groups invited: student athletes, students in the College of Professional Studies, and first-year students.

Global Engagement

- Global Engagement offers transformative experiences for students to live, work, and learn abroad.
- Network in Ireland has expanded to three institutions with a new partnership with Sacred Heart University in Dingle.
 - Existing partners: University College Cork and Dublin Business School.
 - Grace Flannery, Director of Sacred Heart University, Dingle, and Renee Pang, Director of Global Education, outlined new possibilities for students seeking study abroad opportunities.
- The City of West Springfield is a sister city to Dingle.
- Chief of Staff Dr. Mike Freeman attended the annual Golden Bridges Launch Luncheon at Babson College.
 - Event designed to promote and deepen the relationship, partnerships and transatlantic links between Northwest Region of Ireland and Massachusetts.
 - He reconnected with representatives from Ulster University who are interested in sending students for short stays in spring.
- A fantastic event dedicated to the international student community was held.
 - Thank you to Dr. Kevin Hearn for initiating the President's Reception for international students and to the International Program Office for contributing to the evening.
 - Nearly 60 international students, cabinet members, board members, staff, and faculty gathered.

Faculty Recognition

- Congratulations to Dr. Alexander Moore of the Mathematics Department for his invitation to co-chair the Philosophy of Mathematics and Mathematics Education Research group at the 16th International Congress on Mathematical Education in Prague in July 2028.
 - Selection highlights Dr. Moore as a leading American scholar in the field.
 - Invitation to represent the United States underscores his significant international influence.

Advocacy for Westfield State University

- The President testified before two legislative committees to advocate for vital state funding.
- Testified before the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies regarding the DRIVE Initiative.
 - DRIVE is crucial for growing Massachusetts research and innovation economy and creating thousands of new jobs.
 - The Governor's decision to set aside \$400 million for research and innovation is especially timely.
- Testified before the Joint Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets on the BRIGHT Act.
 - Advancement of the BRIGHT Act will address the deferred maintenance backlog and critical infrastructure needs.
 - BRIGHT act investment would allow Westfield State University to develop a human health hub to help meet the urgent workforce demand.
 - Project targets Bates Hall, which is no longer adequate for modern science education.
 - The BRIGHT act has already passed the House with an amendment that would appropriate \$100 million for Westfield State towards phase one of our master plan.
 - Optimistic that this bill will pass and be signed into law by the governor.
 - Need to secure an additional \$20 million to meet the total project goal.

Academic Program Updates

- Three new graduate programs were recently approved by the Department of Higher Education.
 - These programs aim to expand access, strengthen offerings, and address critical career needs.
 - The new offerings include:
 - Master's of Business Administration
 - Master's of Science in Athletic Training
 - Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Program
- Recognition was given to faculty and staff involved in the development of these programs.
 - MPA Program: Dr. Rebecca Morris, Dr. Liem Nguyen, Dr. Erin Moore, Dr. Brian Conz, and Professor Anthony Furnelli.
 - Sports Medicine and Human Performance Department: Dr. Paul Higgins
 - Nursing Department: Dr. Jessica Holden
- The first cohorts into these new programs will be welcomed in the fall of 2026.

Student Trustee Report

Trustee Garcia provided updates on the Student Government Association's activities since the October meeting.

- RSGA has been actively involved in campus events and hosting de-stressor dinners.
- RSGA saw year span initiatives be realized and broke records.

Ely Lounge Grand Reopening

- During Homecoming weekend on October 24, the newly renovated Ely Lounge had its official grand reopening.
- SGA President Justin Wald cut the ribbon, signifying the end of a year-long effort to update the lounge space.
- The lounge serves as a testament to student passion for involvement and change.
- The new Ely Lounge aims to make the university more competitive by offering coherent third spaces.

SGA's Philanthropic Activities

- The annual Turkey Drive kicked off on November 3rd, raising funds to feed Westfield families.
- A total of \$5,012.84 was raised, a 66.3% increase year over year, and the check was handed over to Westfield Public School.
- SGA partnered with Veterans Services and the Interfaith Center for a service trip to the Westfield Soup Kitchen on November 7th, serving hot meals to about 80 people.
- SGA is participating in a piloting run of a new club startup process to better support clubs, with an emphasis on physical and financial resources.

Common Hour Proposal

- A proposal was submitted to the Academic Policies Committee to make official multiple times designated as common hours.
- A survey was sent out to gauge community interest, with scattered results: 27% yes, 29% no, 29% dependent on time, and 15% uninterested.
- Preference was open to a potential late Monday or Wednesday block.
- Concerns remain around the implementation of additional common hours, but the benefits of extracurricular enrichment and community engagement are stressed.

Connection and Collaboration

- Focus on personal connection and the motives that drive a person.
- Attended a reception for international students and a listening session hosted by the Albert and Amelia Ferst Interfaith Center.

- Formed a connection a Trustee at Worcester State University to expand collaboration within the State University system at the SGA level.

Legislative Advocacy

- Efforts are shifting towards advocating for the wholesale passage of the Bright Act, with the concluded amendment of the new Human Health Hub.
- Aiming to grow grassroots awareness around deferred maintenance and its impact on the university.
- Tentatively planning to engage with legislators in February and March, starting with inviting local and regional elected officials back to campus.
- Hoping to leverage connections maintained by the State University's Council of Presidents to widen reach with counterpart student trustees and SGA Presidents, with a summit scheduled for February.
- All efforts will culminate in an Advocacy Day in Boston, meeting with legislators in the State House to express support for legislation like the BRIGHT Act.

Academic Affairs Committee

Committee Chair Chris Montemayor updated the Board:

- Undergraduate enrollment:
 - Has fallen significantly over the past decade around state universities.
 - 2024 marks a turning point with early signs of stabilization and modest growth.
 - In 2020, there were 3,789 undergraduates enrolled, increasing to 3,854 in 2024.
- High school GPA of incoming students:
 - GPAs above 3.5 increased from 24% in 2015 to 38% in 2024.
 - GPAs 2.5 or below also increased from 10% to 15%.
 - Highlights the increased need to provide honors or high achievers opportunities as well as targeted academic assistance for at risk students.
- Retention numbers for Westfield (2023):
 - 734 of returning students from first students when they first come in in the fall.
 - This number is pretty much the same average across all the other state universities.
 - Highlights the importance of providing resources to students when they first arrive.
 - Goal to increase this number, potentially as a KPI.

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke and seconded by Trustee Montemayor, to approve the granting of Faculty Emeritus/a status, effective December 18, 2025, to the following individuals: Dr. Stephen Adams, English and Ms. Jamie Wainwright, Art. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey updated the Board:

- Reorganization of the office:
 - Still underway, but meaningful progress has already been made.
 - Office has been physically relocated to the library, creating a central welcoming space.
 - The move aligns with requirements from the new administration and helps ensure compliance with evolving regulatory expectations.
- New structure:
 - Includes two co-directors reporting to Provost Salka.
 - One position focuses on student and campus experience, the other on institutional culture and external partnerships.

- The university is not moving away from DEI, rather restructuring, strengthening, and broadening the work.
- Assessment practices:
 - Need to begin implementing more consistent and real-time assessment practices.
 - A campus survey was done in two parts.
 - Part one was done earlier this year which will provide a baseline.
 - Another assessment is planned for mid-March to gauge progress.
- Other points:
 - Provost Salka acknowledged the anxiety present across college campuses due to the national climate.
 - A half-million-dollar Davis grant will fund faculty development.
 - Plan to return to the board in April with more detailed timelines, data collection clarity, and a roadmap for evaluation.

Enrollment Management & Student Affairs

Committee Chair William Reichelt updated the Board on the following:

- Graduating continuing education strategy:
 - Conversation and presentation about recruiting at two-year schools.
 - Looking at new degrees and opportunities to bring in new students.
- New brand platform:
 - Set to tentatively launch in March.
 - Going out across campus to get feedback from students, faculty, and staff.
 - Another update potentially in February.
- Open house in November:
 - Sold out.
 - Great to see the amount of people that were excited to learn about Westfield State and hopefully come to Westfield State in the fall.

Governance and Nomination Committee

Committee Chair Melissa Alvarado updated the Board:

- Streamlining from eight committees to five to align with the strategic plan.
- Motion will be tabled for a special meeting in January to incorporate feedback.
- New committees: Finance, Audit, Student Success and Learning, University Success, and Executive Committee.

Advancement, Marketing and External Relations

Committee Chair Gloria Williams updated the Board:

- Fundraising efforts have been diligent.
- Analysis of the 2015 report indicates a 68% increase in gifts and giving, bringing in more than \$2 million.
- Fall appeal saw 37% growth.
- In 2024, Laura Blockel was hired as a Director of Corporate and Foundation Grants.
 - By 2025, she secured two grants totaling \$85,000.
 - She has worked collaboratively to secure more than \$1.9 million, with another \$250,000 anticipated.
 - Expected to secure \$2 million by the end of 2026.
- Three campaign priorities (core pillars): Advancing access to student success, Innovation in Teaching, Learning and career Readiness, Regional impact and Health, Human Development and Community well-being.

Dr. Thompson's Initiative

- Initiative titled "We Did It," aiming for 1,000 donors with \$1,000 per donor.
- Surpassed \$1 million, establishing the Dr. Linda Thompson Scholarship for Student Access and Student Success.

MOTION made by Trustee Alvarado, seconded by Trustee Lucey, to affirm the campaign direction and scale, and commit up to \$3.1M for a multi-year (5+ years) campaign budget to be refined by the next Vice President of Institutional Advancement. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously**.

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke, seconded by Trustee Montemayor, to approve the granting of staff emeriti status, effective December 18, 2025, to the following individuals: Louisa (Tina) Bonés and Janet Garcia. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously**.

Financial Affairs Committee

Committee Chair George Gilmer updated the Board on the following:

- From July through November of fiscal year 2026, the university generated \$119 million in revenue, \$52 million in expenses, and \$67 million in income, which is \$2.7 million better than the prior year.
- The University has \$86 million in cash, up \$2 million from the prior year.
 - \$43 million is in an investment portfolio (up from \$39 million).
 - \$43 million is in working capital (down from \$45 million).
- The average age of the university's buildings is 40 years old, and the deferred maintenance is \$561 million.
- The board discussed various forms of funding available to the university, including MSCBA, DCAM, and the campus itself.
- The board also talked about the investment that they're making in deferred maintenance and some of the projects that they're working on right now, like the Eli pool and the R22H HVAC project.
- The cost of the apartment plumbing project is not as significant as originally anticipated.
- The board reviewed the annual debt report and ratios, including the debt burden ratio, visibility ratio, primary reserve ratio, return on net assets ratio, and net operating revenues ratio.
- The board approved the Revised Procurement Process Policy 0320, a minor editorial change about aggregating individual charges up to \$5,000.

MOTION made by Trustee Montemayor and seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to approve the revised Procurement Process Policy (0320), as presented. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, and **motion passed unanimously**.

There being no further business,

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

Meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m..

Attachments:

- a. Full Board Minutes – 10.21.25
- b. President’s PowerPoint
- c. Student Trustee PowerPoint

Academic Affairs Committee

- a. Minutes of October 21, 2025
- b. Power Point Persistence and Retention
- c. Motion: Faculty Emeritus/a – Dr. Stephen Adams and Ms. Jamie Wainright
- d. Faculty Emeritus/a supporting letter

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee

- a. Minutes of June 11, 2025
- b. JEDI Presentation

Enrollment Management, & Student Affairs Committee

- a. Minutes- October 21, 2025
- b. DGCE Admissions Strategy PowerPoint
- c. Introduction to the new brand platform PowerPoint

Governance & Nomination Committee

- a. Meeting Minutes: 10.21.25
- b. Motion – Charters and Bylaws
- c. WSU Revised Board Committee Structure
- d. Executive Committee Charter New
- e. Finance Committee Charter New
- f. Audit Committee Charter New
- g. Student Success Committee Charter New
- h. University Success Committee Charter New
- i. BYLAWS of Trustees as Amended 12.18.25 New (CLEAN)

Advancement, Marketing, & External Relations Committee

- a. Draft Minutes of October 21, 2025
- b. Howrigan Consulting PowerPoint
- c. Westfield State Campaign Planning Study Report
- d. Motion – Fundraising Campaign
- e. Motion – Staff Emeriti
- f. Staff Emeriti Biographies

Financial Affairs Committee

- a. Minutes 10-21-25 (Draft)
- b. Motion – Procurement Process Policy (0320)
- c. Policy – Procurement Process (0320) SUMMARY
- d. Policy – Procurement Process (0320) TRACK CHANGES
- e. Policy – Procurement Process (0320) CLEAN
- f. FY26 Budget Reporting (YOY Actual Comparison)
- g. FY26 Budget Reporting (YOY Actuals)
- h. FY26 Budget Reporting (Dashboard)
- i. University Cash Summary
- j. Capital Project Strategy (Summary)
- k. Capital Project Strategy (HE Capital Working Group)
- l. Capital Project Strategy (Dashboard)
- m. Annual Debt Report and Ratios (Summary)
- n. Annual Debt Report and Ratios (Ratio Tables)

- o. Fixed Assets Inventory Progress Report
- p. Remote Access Policy (0620) TRACK CHANGES
- q. Data Classification Policy (0630) 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 18, 2025.

Dr. Gloria Williams, Secretary

Date