



## **Board of Trustees**

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee

**April 22, 2025**

**Minutes**

12:30 p.m.

President's Boardroom, Horace Mann Center

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

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Committee Chair Tessa Lucey, Vice Chair Michael O'Rourke, Secretary Melissa Alvarado, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

**TRUSTEE(S) PARTICIPATING REMOTELY:** Trustee Gloria Williams

**TRUSTEE(S) EXCUSED:** 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; and Director of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning, Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola.

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey called the meeting to order at 12:30 PM 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 O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Alvarado to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

### **Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning Update**

Dr. William Salka introduced Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola, the Director of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning. Ms. Spitz-Gassnola provided a recap of programming and campus engagements since the last meeting.

- A Newsletter was sent out, recap planned instead of a launch to showcase work being done.
- Partnership on inclusive staff training efforts focusing on campus belonging and culture.
- Faith-based observances with intentional acknowledgments of traditions to foster visibility and inclusion.
- Black History Month - Programming around empowerment, storytelling, and critical conversation.
- Women's History Month - Panel centering Muslim women's voices.
  - Spoken word workshop and open mic night.
  - Expressive arts workshop with SGA where students created canvases.
  - Lacesha Berry performed "Tubman" which reimagined Harriet Tubman's life.

- International Women's Day of Service - Event at Christina's House to create community care.
  - Students, staff, and faculty cleaned Christina's House.
  - Students wrote birthday letters to participants.
- Unity Fest - Annual campus-wide celebration of culture, community, and joy.
  - Co-created by affinity groups.
  - Included a boba tea cafe, game night, and "Wild and Out" comedy.
  - Cultural takeover -100 students in attendance.
  - Rep(resent) your flag cookout.
  - Club event in the Owl's Nest with a DJ and diner breakfast.
  - Culminating event with President Thompson, food trucks, spoken word, art, and a 360 photo booth.
  - "We had anywhere between 50 to 100 students at each of the weekday events. And then we served upwards of 400 students on that Sunday at the Unity Fest."

#### Sankofa

- Community committee review process.
- Awarding 24 student scholars this year.
- Four staff and faculty at Sankofa Sage special awards, including two alumni awards.

#### Sankofa Ceremony

- Ceremony for graduating seniors that honors the resilience that it took to get through the four years.
- Awards emphasize civic engagement. Nominating students requires filling out what the students have done throughout their four years to contribute to the community.
- Keynote speaker: alumni James Jackson, Jr.
- Post ceremony dinner with African drum and dance performers.
- "Anyone and everyone is welcome."

#### Future Initiatives: Deepening Work

- Focus is on deepening the work operationally and culturally.
- Goal is to embed this work into the fabric of Westfield State University space cohesively, not just event-based.
- Review programming schedule to assess what worked, who it reached, and where there is room for growth.
- Developing a digital repository to document processes for future sustainability, including vendors and traditions.
- Refreshing training content and launching workshops on inclusive pedagogy and cultural humility.
- Exploring project management tools to boost performance and track student engagement.
- Exploring restorative justice models for student conduct, conflict resolution, community accountability, and engagement.
- Exploring an emerging leaders program to develop students and provide them with skills and tools.
- Building learning modules on cultural awareness and institutional history.
- Supporting the formation of a cross-stakeholder advisory council for collaborative dialogue across the institution.

#### Discussion: Disconnect and Communication

- Comment about a disconnect despite the amount of activities and events.
- Ensure a unified voice of belonging across the institution.
- Question about how students are finding out about events and activities.

Strategies for Student Outreach

- Reinvigorating social media accounts and tagging affinity groups.
- Posting posters around campus and connecting with SGA.
- Co-sponsoring events with various departments and organizations.

There being no further business,

**MOTION** made by Trustee O'Rourke, and seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to adjourn. **ROLL CALL VOTE passed motion unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 12:53 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Minutes of February 20, 2025
- b. Belonging, Inclusion and Learning Presentation

**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 Governance and Nomination Committee meeting held on April 22, 2025.

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Melissa Alvarado, Secretary

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Date