



Board of Trustees

JEDI Committee

April 22, 2025

12:30pm

President's Boardroom, Horace Mann Center

Committee Members: Chair Tessa Lucey, Vice Chair Michael O'Rourke,
Secretary Melissa Alvarado, Trustee George Gilmer and Dr. Gloria Williams

A live stream of the meeting for public viewing will also take place at the following link:

<https://www.westfield.ma.edu/live>

-
- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Call to Order | Trustee Tessa Lucey, Committee Chair |
| 2. Approval of Minutes | Trustee Tessa Lucey, Committee Chair |
| a. Minutes of February 20, 2025 | |
| 3. Items for Information | Dr. William Salka, Provost |
| a. Update from Belonging, Inclusion
and Learning | |
| 4. Adjournment | Trustee Tessa Lucey, Committee Chair |

Attachments:

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



Board of Trustees

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee

February 20, 2025

Minutes

10:15 AM – 11:45 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 Tessa Lucey, Vice Chair Michael O'Rourke, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

TRUSTEE(S) PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Trustee George Gilmer

TRUSTEE(S) EXCUSED: Trustees Melissa Alvarado, and Dr. Gloria Williams

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 10:15 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 O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Gilmer to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2024, meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Gilmer to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2024, meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

Dr. William Salka opened with, "In these very challenging times, it is incredibly important that all of our students feel like they are included and belong at Westfield State University."

Staffing Updates

- Jane Kungu was hired as the Senior Coordinator for Multicultural Programming.
 - Westfield State University alumni.
 - Will support initiatives and be a point of contact for affinity groups (faith and heritage based) and their advisors.
- Marjorie Rodriguez transitioned into the Office of Belonging, Inclusion and Learning.
 - As Assistant Director for Student Access and Support, she helps foster care youth and housing insecure students.

Newsletter Launch

- Launched a newsletter starting with Black History Month.
- Sent to everyone on campus to update the community on office initiatives and provide educational context on cultural heritage celebrations.
 - Includes campus and local community events (virtual and in person).
 - Includes updates on fostering/belonging on campus, including a list of events and a student spotlight section.

Website Launch

- Launched the Belonging, Inclusion and Learning website.
 - Includes office description, mission, and vision.
 - Lists all affinity groups with links to their page.

Bias Reporting and Education Support

- Bias reporting system is seen as a way to streamline information and can offer education support to the campus community.
 - Educational themes included racial bias, discrimination, ableism, and other topics.
- There have been five biased reported incidents since the beginning of the semester.
 - All incidents have been followed up on, and action has been taken.
- During the last Bias Education, Support Team (BEST) meeting on January 16th, themes were discussed and training was planned for the future.
- There was a desire for a "train the trainer" opportunity to formalize expertise and have modules accessible for different learning styles.

Black History Month Programming

- Black History Month programming was expansive, with educational events, performances, and opportunities for dialogue.
- Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir, a local social justice advocate and former collegiate basketball player, was hosted with support from the Muslim Student Organization. About 35-40 students attended.
- Ashlee Haze, an Atlanta-based poet, did a slam and book reading.
- An alumni speaker event featured Ayana Crawford, who spoke about her consultancy journey.

Palate to Palate Mural School with Diversity Competition

- Voting was finalized with 385 votes from campus stakeholders.
- The winning mural, by Anna Jean Rucci, will be installed in the dining common after approval by the public art committee.
- The winner will receive a catered party, and a global cuisine reveal night, along with custom swag featuring their artwork. This was in conjunction with the dining services team.

Upcoming Events and Connections

- Unity Fest is scheduled for the week of April 7th, with student voices being centered in the planning process.
- Sankofa is scheduled for April 29th, and a call for planning committee members went out.
- Connections with Dress for Success Springfield helped students get formal attire for the Keeper of the Dream event.

- Monthly affinity group dinners started, with the first one on January 30th, catered by Santiago's Family Restaurant, with 40-45 students attending.
- Office hours are being held with the Dean of Students to capture student voices and identify areas of opportunity.
- March will feature a series of events for Women's History Month, partnering with Christina's House in Springfield for a day of service on International Women's Day, doing a spring cleaning for the shelter.
- April will be a busy month, celebrating Arab American Heritage, and sexual assault and domestic violence prevention with the counseling center.

There being no further business,

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:33 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- Minutes of October 23, 2024
- Minutes of December 9, 2024
- 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 February 20, 2025.

 Melissa Alvarado, Secretary

 Date

April 22, 2025
12:30 P.M.

OFFICE OF BELONGING, INCLUSION, AND LEARNING

JEDI Report

Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola (she/they)

Director

Office of Belonging, Inclusion, and
Learning

AGENDA

- Programming and Campus Engagement Recap
- Upcoming Events
- Summer Planning & Institutional Capacity Building



PROGRAMMING & CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT RECAP

Newsletter

Faith-Based Observances

WSU'S OFFICE OF BELONGING, INCLUSION, AND LEARNING
Newsletter
 CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Each February, we unite to celebrate and reflect on the profound contributions of Black folks and communities to our shared history. This newsletter is dedicated to honoring Black History Month by spotlighting historical figures, celebrating modern-day trailblazers, and highlighting pivotal moments in the ongoing fight for equality and justice. It's a time to recognize the resilience, joy, creativity, and impact of Black voices that continue to shape our world.

Honoring Black Culture

Black culture has long been a source of inspiration in music, literature, and the arts. From the Harlem Renaissance to today's global impact, the creativity and influence of Black artists are immeasurable.

Artists like Nina Simone, Miles Davis, and Kendrick Lamar have redefined genres, using music as a tool for social change and personal expression.

Writers like James Baldwin and Zora Neale Hurston have shaped literary history, exploring the complexities of Black identity and the African American experience in profound ways.

Directors like Ava DuVernay and actors such as Viola Davis continue to break new ground in Hollywood, bringing stories of Black life and struggle to mainstream audiences.

"On the Mair"
 Learn more about...

WSU'S OFFICE OF BELONGING, INCLUSION, AND LEARNING
Newsletter
 MONTH CELEBRATING WOMEN

Women's History Month

Each year, as we celebrate Women's History Month in March, we honor and uplift the incredible contributions of women—not only throughout history but also in the present day. Women are making their mark in every corner of the globe, shaping the world in countless ways. From academia to the workplace, from advocating for women's rights and autonomy to leading in creative fields and STEM, women have always played and continue to play a vital role in shaping our society. Their impact is both profound and enduring.


International Women's Day

Every year on March 8th, we celebrate International Women's Day as part of Women's History Month, a day dedicated to honoring the achievements, struggles, joy, and resilience of women around the world. International Women's Day is a global call to action, emphasizing gender equality and highlighting the ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable society for women of all backgrounds.

It is a day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political contributions of women, acknowledging their pivotal roles in shaping every aspect of our lives. From pioneering activists advocating for women's rights, to scientists, educators, and leaders in every field, women continue to drive positive change and inspire progress on a global scale.

International Women's Day is also an opportunity to reflect on the challenges that remain, reminding us that the fight for equality is ongoing. By uniting across borders, we amplify the voices of women everywhere, ensuring that their stories, struggles, and victories are heard and celebrated.

RELIGIOUS Observances



During the month of March, several important religious celebrations are being observed across our campus community. These observances offer valuable opportunities to learn about and respect the traditions of others.

Here's a quick look at what's happening:

- Lent (Christianity)**
Starting on March 5, Christians enter a 40-day period of fasting, prayer, and reflection in preparation for Easter (April 20). It's a time for spiritual renewal and self-discipline.
- Purim (Judaism)**
Beginning at sundown on March 13, this joyous holiday commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people in ancient Persia. It is marked by reading the Book of Esther and celebrating with food, charity, and merrymaking.
- Holi (Hinduism)**
Celebrated on March 14, Holi marks the arrival of spring with vibrant colors, dar and joyous gatherings, symbolizing the victory of good over evil.
- Nowruz (Bahá'í Faith and Zoroastrianism)**
On March 20, the Persian New Year is celebrated, marking the first day of spring symbolizing renewal and hope.
- Feast of the Annunciation (Christianity)**
On March 25, Christians honor the announcement of the Virgin Mary's conce Jesus, a moment of divine intervention and faith.

RAMADAN MUBARAK

In addition to these celebrations, we would also like to extend our warmest wishes to all who observe the holy month of Ramadan, which is currently being observed by many in our community.

Ramadan is a time for spiritual reflection, self-discipline, fasting, and community. For our Muslim students, faculty, and staff, it is a period of heightened devotion and worship.

What You Should Know About Ramadan:

- Fasting:** During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, abstaining from food, drink, and other physical needs during daylight hours.
- Prayer and Reflection:** Many Muslims increase their spiritual practices during this month, including prayers, reflection, and charity.
- Eid al-Fitr:** The month ends with the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, a joyous occasion marking the end of fasting and celebrated with community gatherings, feasts, and prayers.

How to Engage with Religious Observances Respectfully:

- Be considerate with scheduling:** If possible, be mindful of scheduling meetings or events that require long periods of concentration or physical activity, as fasting can sometimes be physically demanding.
- Respect quiet time:** Understand that many folks might engage in extra prayers during the evening and night hours. Respect their need for a quiet, peaceful environment.
- Show support and kindness:** Ask how you can be supportive—simple gestures like offering a non-food related item or acknowledging the significance of religious observances can mean a lot.


A Reminder of Respect and Inclusion:

All religious observances are deeply personal and spiritual. Being mindful of others' practices fosters an inclusive, respectful campus environment. Celebrating these moments strengthens our community and deepens our understanding of one another's traditions.

We encourage everyone to be mindful of these diverse observances and to engage with kindness, curiosity, and respect.

For more information about or support with religious observances, please reach out to wsavage@westfield.ma.edu or visit the Albert and Amelia Ferst Interfaith Center. You can also access a list of student groups on the Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning webpage by [CLICKING HERE](#).

BUILDING A CULTURE OF BELONGING:
 Connecting with the Campus Community
 Through Inclusive Practice



Staff Training



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Events Included:

- February 7th
 - Speaker Event ft. *Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir*
- February 12th
 - Alumni Speaker Event ft. *Ayanna Crawford*
- February 19th
 - Spoken Word ft. *Ashlee Haze*
- February 20th
 - The Matumbila's Series Showing and Workshop Focused on Diasporic Narratives in American Media with Series Creator, *Zul Manzi*
- ...and many more!

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Events Included:

- March 18th
 - Spoken Word Workshop and Open Mic Night ft. *Lyrical Faith*
- March 19th
 - Muslim Women's Panel
- March 19th
 - The Art of Women: An Expressive Workshop (co-sponsored with SGA)
- March 20th
 - Tubman ft. *Lacresha Berry*
- ...and many more!

SPOKEN WORD WORKSHOP & OPEN MIC NIGHT

MARCH 18TH | OWL'S NEST
WORKSHOP AT 5:00PM SHOW AT 6:30PM

Join the Office of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning for a spoken word writing workshop followed by an open mic night. Hosted and facilitated by world renowned poet and educator **Lyrical Faith!**



Interested in attending the writing workshop? Scan the QR code or use the bit.ly link to RSVP



UPCOMING Events

The Muslim Women's Panel
March 18th | 4:30pm-6:30pm | Loughman Living Room

Join us for an insightful and thought-provoking panel discussion as we celebrate Women's History Month. Hosted by Emeritus Professor, Dr. Kamal Ali, and the Ethnic and Gender Studies Department, this event will bring together voices from within the Muslim community to discuss the unique experiences, challenges, and contributions of Muslim women.

This panel aims to highlight diverse perspectives and foster a deeper understanding of Muslim women's roles in society, both within their communities and beyond. The conversation will touch on themes of identity, empowerment, faith, and intersectionality.

Refreshments will be provided, and we look forward to a rich and engaging discussion. All are welcome to attend!



The Art of Women: An Expressive Workshop
March 19th | 5:00pm-7:00pm | Owl's Nest

Join the Student Government Association Vice President of Student Equity and the Office of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning for *The Art of Women*, a creative workshop where students are invited to explore and express what being a woman means to them through art. Each participant will receive a canvas to create a piece that reflects their personal experience. Afterward, we'll host an open dialogue where participants can share their artwork and the stories behind it. The event will feature a guest speaker who will offer opening remarks and guide discussion throughout the night.



Office of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning Presents

Tubman
By Lacresha Berry
Co-sponsored by the Ethnic and Gender Studies Department

Dever Stage
Thursday, March 20th
6:00PM





March 8th

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY - DAY OF SERVICE

Christina's House

Sponsored by the Office of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning



International Women's Day
Saturday, March 8th
10am-12pm



Be a Part of *Something Bigger!*

Together, We Create Impact.



Join Us!

International Women's Day -
Spring Cleaning Day of Service



Join us this International Women's Day to give back – volunteer for a spring cleaning at a local women and children's shelter and help create a fresh, vibrant space!

UNITY FEST 2025

Events Included:

- Monday
 - APISU hosted a *Boba Cafe* in the University Hall MPR
- Tuesday
 - ASA hosted a *Wild N Out - West vs. East Africa Contest* in the Owl's Nest
- Wednesday
 - MSO X LfE hosted a *Cultural Takeover*
 - F.A.C.E.S partnered to host *Tie-Dye On the Green*
- Thursday
 - BSU hosted the *Represent Your Flag Cookout* in the Dickinson Common Room
- Saturday
 - *In Da Club, We All Fam Party* in Owl's Nest
 - Followed by *Late Night Diner Breakfast* in the Ely Lounge
- Sunday
 - *Unity Fest* in the University Hall 1st Floor Lobby/Lammer's Lot



UPCOMING EVENTS

We will be hosting and co-sponsoring many events, including but not limited to:

- Sankofa
 - April 24th
- Student Group Chording Ceremonies
- SGA Banquet
- Equity in the 413
- ...and more!



SUMMER PLANNING & INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

SUMMER PLANNING

Advancing Belonging, Equity, and Preparedness for Fall 2025

- Conducting a comprehensive review of 2024-2025 programming to assess reach, outcomes, and impact
- Creating a repository of process documentation
- Collaborating with student leaders and campus partners to co-design Fall 2025 initiatives, events, and campus traditions
- Updating and creating training content
- Coordinating workshops on topics like cultural humility and inclusive pedagogy
- Exploring project management tools and systems to improve performance, collaboration, and efficiency across initiatives
- Strategizing institutionalization of our efforts to deepen alignment with Westfield's mission, values, and strategic plan

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Strengthening Culture, Collaboration, and Alignment

- Exploring a restorative justice framework to support student conduct, interpersonal conflict, leadership, and community accountability
- Exploring an Emerging Leaders Program
- Designing scalable, campus-wide learning modules on cultural awareness, humility, and institutional history
- Assisting with the creation of a cross-stakeholder council that engages students, staff, faculty, and upper administration in collaborative dialogue and decision-making
- Maintaining active involvement in statewide networks of diversity officers to stay aligned with system-wide trends, policy shifts, and promising practices across the Commonwealth
- Benchmarking Westfield's belonging efforts against peer institutions to ensure our approach remains relevant, innovative, and responsive



THANK YOU! ✦

Any questions?