



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes

August 25, 2021

Meeting held virtually via Zoom

In accordance with Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, § 20 dated March 12, 2020.

A live stream of the meeting for public viewing also took place on YouTube.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Chair Dr. Robert Martin, Vice Chair Ali Salehi, Secretary Lydia Martinez-Alvarez and Trustees Melissa Alvarado, Paul Boudreau, Theresa Jasmin, Kevin Queenin, William Reichelt, Chloe Sanfacon, and Dr. Gloria Williams

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Madeline Landrau

Dr. Linda Thompson, President of Westfield State University, was also participating remotely.

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 PM by Chair Martin, and it was announced the meeting was being live streamed, and, as a result, recorded.

A roll call identified the members participating remotely as listed above. Cabinet members also participating remotely were Daniel Forster, Vice President for Enrollment Management, Dr. Gloria Lopez, Vice President for Student Affairs, Lisa McMahan, Director of Institutional Advancement, Dr. Juline Mills, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Tricia Oliver, Chief of Staff, and Stephen Taksar, Vice President for Administration and Finance

General Announcements. Chair Martin stated he is optimistic for the new academic year and that everyone shares a commitment to the success of Westfield State and President Thompson. The Trustee sponsored lunch for faculty and staff is scheduled for September 10. The next Board meeting will be on September 15, focusing on President Thompson's and cabinet's goals and priorities and the direction for the upcoming year. The format of future Board and committee meetings will also be discussed. October 13 will be a full day of committee meetings, concluding with the full board meeting that afternoon.

President's Report. President Thompson stated she is continuing her listening tour and has heard from so many on and off campus that there is much we can do to foster relationships and partnerships to promote the University in the pioneer valley.

- Her visionary goals include:
 - More excellence and innovation in teaching
 - More engaged in promoting partnerships in the community
 - Making Westfield State University a premier regional university
- Opportunities and priorities for the year include:

- Enrollment
- Resources
- Student experience and success
- Culture on campus

President Thompson continued that the focus of today's meeting is to discuss the University Efficiency Analysis Advisory Committee's (UEAAC) recommendation to restructure academic affairs and the college structure. When the University moved to the structure of four colleges in fall of 2018 to oversee 25 departments, it put the institution in alignment with peer institutions to support the success of students. After three years, UEAAC announced their preliminary recommendation to create essential alignment for student support and to be more financially sustainable as we grow enrollment, which could result in a move to two colleges or a school structure. This change could increase budgeting and scheduling efficiencies, create better collaboration, and improved retention and graduation rates. The recommendation will be presented by Provost Mills in this meeting with a more extensive analysis of the budget impact at the September Board meeting. This restructuring can create a temporary solution as we move to be more efficient and align the program model to react to the employment needs of the region and increase enrollment in the future.

Chair Martin stated that when the agenda was sent, it was thought that action would be taken at this meeting, but it was realized that an informational presentation was needed first. The Board would benefit from hearing about where the University was organizationally, what brought it to where it is now, how the proposed plan is different, what the plan intends to accomplish, and how it fits within the financial parameters. These are ongoing questions that the president and her team are working out now and it would be premature to say there is a complete handle on the answers. A more detailed analysis will be brought to the September meeting.

University Efficiency Analysis Advisory Committee (UEAAC) Recommendation No. 1 – Reimagining Instructional Academic Affairs and the College Structure. Provost Mills gave a presentation on this topic, summarized below.

- Job descriptions and finances will be reviewed and presented at the September 15 meeting.
- The reorganization of the Academic Affairs administrative structure would best support faculty, librarians, staff and students. There are currently 20 positions in the Academic Affairs central office at a cost of \$3.38 million
- Rethinking the college structure is a result of focus groups and surveys from the campus to learn of inefficiencies in services and tasks, mostly related to redundancies in services and the organization of the college structure.
- The process to determine the new structure was shared, with 30 individuals involved in five sub-working groups. The faculty survey rated each academic department on alignment in 1) faculty specialization, 2) future collaborations, 3) shared resources, and 4) graduate programming.
- The current organizational structure and the proposed four school structure was shown, showing how it could be more manageable for each school.
- The proposed structure is an interim holding pattern as work is done with departments to strategically focus on new program and enrollment growth. This allows for the development of an academic master plan that aligns with the vision of the academic programs and the institution.
- Trustee Reichelt left at 8:17 PM.
- Mr. Taksar stated the recommended school/college structure will provide savings estimated at \$749,000 savings relating to position shuffling and consolidation. This amount has been built into the FY22 budget. Funding for the Academic Affairs central office restructuring has not yet been finalized. Adding the \$749,000 estimated school/college savings with the existing FY22 budget cost

savings of \$1.251 million results in total savings of \$2 million. Final validation of financial impacts of the recommendation will be provided at the September 15 meeting.

- Next steps of the phased process include:
 - Structure proposal
 - Refinement. Take time to use people in their best roles. There have been 35 nominations for associate deans (three self-nominations). There will be discussions with faculty in those schools to see how associate deans will be appointed.
 - Final financial validation
 - Implementation
 - Continued assessment (most important). As work continues on the master plan, it will be questioned whether departments are placed in the best school.

The presentation was followed by a period of questions and answers:

How will the associate deans be chosen?

The applicants must be from that school, tenured, work well with faculty and students, and create a culture for each department to be heard.

Will there be Human Resources engagement and how will it affect contracts?

Job descriptions will be created first and the use of interim or one-year appointments will serve as a time to evaluate the system. Most important is stabilizing the enrollment challenge and filling the positions internally first, using staff and faculty who are committed to the University and get to a point where the institution is stable and then look longer term. This will allow time to think through what we are doing, where we want to go, and how to get there.

The previous change to the college structure was to help the expected growth. How will the recommended change in structure help with graduation and retention? Glad the \$749,000 has been validated. We need to make sure all stakeholders are on the same page so the new structure is not questioned in a few years. Without having an academic master plan, should this change be happening now? Is it prudent to nominate individuals for positions that haven't been approved yet?

The University went from a school structure to a college structure and now back to a proposed school structure. At first all twenty-three departments reported directly to the provost, requiring him/her to strictly focus on day-to-day operations, becoming overwhelmed with evaluations. This does not allow the provost to help with growth and innovation. Most institutions developing a college structure will take each college and build it out. Moving into a college structure with enrollments declining created challenges which need change and innovation to correct.

The professionals at the institution need to work on the recommendations to come up with the best solutions and then come back to the Board with all of the data to support the proposal. We need to make sure that everyone, including the president, provost, students, faculty, and staff are on the same page. The most critical aspect in analyzing the recommendations are continuous assessments on how it is working and the financial implications and benchmarks that will be set up to measure the effectiveness of the program.

Chair Martin stated that when he served as provost in a flat structure with 24 academic as well as administrative departments reporting to him, it worked well for hiring and faculty development but did not work well for looking to the future and creating programs for student retention. The flat structure is difficult in today's education. Colleges with deans put support closer to the faculty. With the proposed four schools, there is a logical way departments are grouped with more comparability in the number of faculty and students, creating a more balanced load for each dean. In the central office, people responsible for

budgeting, assessment, etc. will advance the University. The goal is to create a structure to advance, not just manage, the University, and he questioned President Thompson if she felt with this type of structure she had the opportunity and flexibility to move the University forward.

President Thompson stated that at her last university, they redesigned colleges and the university structure to make it more compatible with students, faculty and disciplines in each area for ease in managing. She supports this model as it more evenly aligns faculty and disciplines in each school. The people she has been talking to on campus and in business and industry in Westfield and the pioneer valley point to an opportunity to excel in health care, business, education, and creative arts. This model is more fluid to allow for growth and change as new programs and opportunities for expansion arise. We need to work on pathways with community colleges and look at a strategic direction to engage with people who will invest in and hire our graduates. The department chairs are invested in this model, have been engaged for a year, and are supportive of the direction of the University. There is a lot of fear on our campus of our future. To have a healthy direction going forward, we need to support their vision of where they want the University to go and grow. If we work strategically with the schools there can be a smooth pathway to move forward.

It was mentioned that the faculty, staff, and president make the University successful and that whatever is done, our number one responsibility is to serve the needs of our students. It was also requested that at the next meeting, Trustee Sanfacon give a report on the students' perspective of how the restructure will affect student success.

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Trustee Martinez-Alvarez, seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to adjourn.

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** taken:

Trustee Alvarado	Yes	Trustee Reichelt	Left meeting
Trustee Boudreau	Yes	Trustee Salehi	Yes
Trustee Jasmin	Yes	Trustee Sanfacon	Yes
Trustee Martinez-Alvarez	Yes	Trustee Williams	Yes
Trustee Queenin	Yes	Trustee Martin	Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:01 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. UEAAC Final Report – Recommendation 1: Academic Affairs and School Structure
- b. Motion - Approval of Restructuring of Academic Affairs