



BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Special Meeting
March 30, 2022
Minutes

Conference Room A (Garden Level), Horace Mann Center
A live stream of the meeting for public viewing also took place on YouTube.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Dr. Robert Martin, Vice Chair Ali Salehi, and Trustees Melissa Alvarado, Paul Boudreau, Theresa Jasmin, Chris Montemayor, Chloe Sanfacon, and Dr. Gloria Williams

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Vice Chair Ali Salehi

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Secretary Lydia Martinez-Alvarez and Trustees Madeline Landrau and William Reichelt

Also present and participating in the meeting were Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson, Vice President for Enrollment Management Daniel Forster, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Juline Mills, Vice President for Administration and Finance Stephen Taksar, and Dr. Pat O'Brien, Senior Vice President of New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE).

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM by Chair Martin. It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed.

Chair Martin acknowledged a successful GiveAHoot yesterday where the University exceeded its goals in both participants and funds raised. The Board bylaw review has started and been shared with the president. A presidential evaluation has also been started with Trustee Salehi taking the lead. President Thompson will not have completed her first year to technically be eligible for an official evaluation, but she and Chair Martin believe it would be beneficial to do an informal evaluation which will include materials provided by the president and feedback from the campus community through focus groups. The Governance and Nomination Committee will continue the process this year for members to provide feedback on the Board's performance.

President's Report. President Thompson gave progress reports on four priorities – Student Experience, Enrollment and Retention, Culture, and Resources.

Motion – Honorary Degree. Chair Martin brought the following Motion forward.

MOTION made by Trustee Martin, seconded by Trustee Sanfacon, to approve the granting of an honorary degree to the individuals listed below, subject to a final vetting before the degree is granted:

Dr. Mark Keroack, Doctor of Science
Mr. John Ockerbloom, Doctor of Humane Letters

Discussion: President Thompson read justifications for both Dr. Keroack and Mr. Ockerbloom, stating they are worthy to be granted honorary degrees by Westfield State University. There being no further discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** passed motion unanimously with Trustees voting in the affirmative: Alvarado, Boudreau, Jasmin, Montemayor, Salehi, Sanfacon, Williams, and Martin.

Motion – Request to Use Reserves. Chair Martin brought the following Motion forward.

MOTION made by Trustee Martin, seconded by Trustee Williams, to approve the use of campus reserves in FY23 up to \$500,000 for supplemental financial aid awards of institutional grant funds. This is a one-year allocation from campus reserves which will be reassessed prior to FY24 in terms of future funding strategies.

Discussion: Mr. Forster stated because of the late date additional financial aid funds were approved last year, only \$250,000 of the committed funds were used. There are 1,300 additional accepted first-year students, a 30% increase from last year at this point. With the fixed budget financial aid model, funds will be spread over a larger population of students. Without additional funding, approximately 700 students would not be eligible for the funds being offered to the students applying earlier. The University should be equitable in financial aid awards across the complete timeline of the application process. Information from two years of awards will be used to construct a pilot program to see if moving to a tuition discount rate model instead of a fixed rate budget model would be helpful. A concern from Trustees was that although enrollment is the biggest priority, the University has a very tight fiscal budget model and did not want the glide path to be adversely affected. Mr. Taksar shared that it is helpful to have the assumption built into the fall models. Switching to a discount rate makes sense but the risks need to be understood. These funds would be above and beyond the glide path commitment.

There being no further discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** passed motion unanimously with Trustees voting in the affirmative: Alvarado, Boudreau, Jasmin, Montemayor, Salehi, Sanfacon, Williams, and Martin.

New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE) Workshop on Governance. Dr. O'Brien from NECHE provided a workshop on governance to prepare the Board for the upcoming accreditation process, highlighting the following:

- The dual purposes of accreditation are to foster improvement and assure quality to various organizations.
- The US Department of Education recognizes (accredits) the accreditor organizations.
- Accreditors need to balance
 - Compliance with improvement
 - Needs of public with needs of institutions
 - Federal regulations with institution-centered approach
 - Safeguarding quality with supporting innovation
 - Consistency of standards with diversity of institutional missions
- Accreditation emphasizes what the institution and their students achieve.
- Accreditation is an ongoing relationship, including a full self-study, an interim report at five years, special reports and/or focused visits, annual reports, and review of any substantive changes.

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Trustee Sanfacon, and seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to adjourn. There being no discussion, **Motion passed unanimously.**¹

Meeting adjourned at 5:54 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Motion – Honorary Degree
- b. Honorary Degree Justification
- c. Motion – Request to Use Reserves
- d. New England Commission on Higher Education Standards, January 1, 2021

¹Since Trustee Salehi was the only board member participating remotely and had previously left the meeting, a roll call vote was not necessary.