



Board of Trustees

Executive Committee

September 8, 2023

Minutes

Via Zoom

In accordance with Massachusetts 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: Committee Chair Ali Salehi, Vice Chair Melissa Alvarado, Secretary Dr. Gloria Williams, and past Chair Dr. Robert Martin

TRUSTEE GUESTS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Trustees Paul Boudreau, Daniel Currier, George Gilmer, Theresa Jasmin, Madeline Landrau, and William Reichelt

Also participating remotely was Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson.

The meeting was called to order at 2:06 PM by Chair Salehi. A roll call was taken of the Trustees participating as listed above and it was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

MOTION made by Trustee Williams, seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to approve the minutes of the July 27, 2022, meeting.

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

This is the first year an evaluation is required for President Thompson. Chair Salehi and Trustee Martin gathered feedback last fall from campus constituents, which has been incorporated into the evaluation.

Presidential Evaluation for 2022-2023 Academic Year. Trustee Martin shared the Open Meeting Law restrictions of creating and sharing the evaluation. The evaluation to be submitted to the Department of Higher Education (DHE) will include the president's self-evaluation and anonymous input from nine trustees, excluding himself. He and Chair Salehi have reviewed the draft evaluation with President Thompson. Trustee Martin provided an overview of the evaluation:

- The president has done a great job in setting the direction for the University that is sensitive to the dramatically changing higher ed landscape. Perhaps the most important outcome is convincing members of the community that change is necessary, possible, and doable.
- President Thompson is a significant bridge builder and has been stellar in creating partnerships with the community that are essential for enrollment and programmatic development.
- The president's challenge for the next year will be to ensure people are behind the vision, to develop momentum for change, and turn ideas into tangible action plans. A president and her team

cannot move a University by themselves. There needs to be communication and setting very specific expectations for herself, the Board, and her staff.

The following comments were provided by the committee and trustee guests:

- Wished the committee could have discussed the report prior to the meeting but understand the restrictions.
- The format makes sense and is easy to read; nothing to be added. Commended the president for having open office hours for two-way learning and being open to the campus community.
- Very comprehensive and a summary of the good work President Thompson has done in her time at the University. In the trustee feedback, there was a great deal of alignment on the president's impact on the University. Although working independently, there was consensus provided.
- Appreciated looking at barriers/negativity as opportunities and moving from challenges to goals.
- In responding to the NECHE report, the president replied in a non-confrontational way to each point given to us.
- Identified the challenges moving forward: communication and mobilizing people. Implementation of strategies are needed to increase the enrollment numbers. New programs need to come into reality and ideas into action plans. The Board needs to hold the president and staff accountable for taking those actionable steps.
- Due to the restrictions of the Open Meeting Law, going forward it may be helpful as a group to have discussions and input for the evaluation in an open meeting.
- It is a very challenging time for universities and colleges across the nation. Appreciative of the way the president has and will approach some of the challenges going forward. She is the right person to take the University through what it needs to get through.
- Agree with everything in the report – the president has done a stellar job in the last two years. Students agree and want to see her succeed because her success is the students' success. She is a change agent to move the institution forward.
- The trait of a good leader is facing challenges head on, which the president has done in a short time. She has formed strong relationships with students and cabinet. She is everywhere in the community, serving on several local boards. She is a leader who is not afraid to make decisions. She will make mistakes but will get up and move on.

MOTION made by Trustee Alvarado, seconded by Trustee Martin, to approve and recommend to the full Board the presidential evaluation for the 2022-2023 academic year as presented to the Executive Committee on this date, September 8, and the submission of said evaluation to the Commissioner of the Department of Higher Education.

Discussion: The Commissioner of Higher Education determines a salary adjustment, a portion of which will be based on the evaluation submitted. We can recommend but have no say in the increase. Typically, the Commissioner will meet with the president to discuss the evaluation and will respond to the Board Chair. Chair Salehi will share with the Board any correspondence he receives.

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

Recommendation for Compensation Adjustment.

MOTION made by Trustee Martin, seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to recommend approval to the full Board of the following:

Based on the requirements of the *Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Compensation and Evaluation Guidelines and Procedures for State University and Community College Presidents* and the Board of Trustees' evaluation of President Linda Thompson for the 2022-

2023 academic year, the Board recommends that President Thompson receive the maximum compensation increase that can be awarded.

Discussion: In past years, the DHE has provided boards with the option to request a percentage increase, but there were no guidelines this year, so the motion is phrased this way. The previous commissioner was reviewing a Council of Presidents' recommendation from EY Parthenon to make some adjustments allowing compensation to be a little more similar across different universities. It is unclear how Commissioner Ortega will move forward.

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

There being no further business,

MOTION made by Trustee Martin, seconded by Trustee Williams, to adjourn.

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

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Draft Minutes of July 27, 2022
- b. Draft Presidential Evaluation for 2022-2023 Academic Year
- c. Motion – Presidential Evaluation for 2022-2023 Academic Year
- d. Motion – Recommendation for Compensation Adjustment

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 Executive Committee meeting held on September 8, 2023.

Dr. Gloria Williams, Secretary

Date