



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**December 9, 2024**

**Minutes**

**3:45 – 5:00 PM**

**Loughman Living Room, Scanlon Hall**

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

---

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair Ali Salehi, Vice Chair Melissa Alvarado, Secretary Dr. Gloria Williams, and Trustees, Daniel Currier, Chris Montemayor, and William Reichelt.

**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY:** George Gilmer and Tessa Lucey

Also present were Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson, and cabinet members Provost, Dr. William Salka; Chief of Staff, Dr. Michael Freeman; Director of Athletics, Richard Lenfest Jr; Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Lisa McMahon; Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Dr. Kevin Hearn; Vice President of Administration and Finance, Stephen Taksar; Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Sabine Klein; Interim Dean, College of Professional Studies, Ziblim Abukari; Director, Advancement and Major Gifts, Bill Hynes; General Counsel, Attorney Melinda Phelps; Associate Vice President, Capital Planning and Facilities, Maureen Socha; and Assistant Vice President of Information and Instructional Technology, Alan Blair.

Chair Salehi called the meeting to order at 3:52 PM. The meeting was being livestreamed and recorded. He welcomed Trustee Jason Queenin.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Jasmin seconded by Trustee Currier, to approve the meeting minutes of October 23, 2024, Executive Committee and Board of Trustees Special Meeting on November 15, 2024. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously**.

### **President's Report**

- Thanked the board for their voice, counsel, and contributions
- Focus on the theme of "infinite possibilities" for the 185th anniversary of Western State University
- Goals for the next five years:
  - Foster a culture of belonging and pride, optimize value for all people, enhance community of applied research and innovation

### **Strategic Plan Development**

- Upcoming cabinet retreat in January to share goals and objectives
- Draft submission to All University Committee and Board of Trustees in February
- Campus town halls planned for March with various stakeholders
- Finalization of the plan aimed for April

### Marketing and Branding

- Collaboration with BVK of Milwaukee for rebranding efforts
- Development of a marketing and branding campaign for the campus

### New Board Member Introduction

- Welcome to Jay Queenin, new board member
- Anticipation of his contributions in global partnerships and legal expertise

### International Programming

- Participation in the Annual Leadership Dialogue for the African American Irish Diaspora Network in New York
- Mission: To connect African Americans with relevant opportunities
- By some estimates, 40% of African Americans have some Irish ancestors.
- This heritage builds relationships between the Irish and African American communities through organizations like Westfield State.

### 185<sup>th</sup> Gala and Fundraising

- The gala is an opportunity to raise funds for network initiatives in education, innovation, entrepreneurship, and cultural exploration.
- Dr. Thompson expresses delight in attending and supporting the gala.

### NCAA Division III - President's Advisory Group

- Dr. Thompson recently traveled to Indianapolis for a joint meeting where a new Board of Governors was elected.
- They met with NCAA President, Charlie Baker and NCAA Chief Medical Officer, Deena Casiero.

### Alumni Engagement

- Attended an alumni reception in Washington D.C. to keep up with alumni regionally and nationally. It is an important part of extending Westfield's reach into the world.
- Dr. Thompson finds inspiration in meeting alumni and hearing their stories.

### Nursing and Health Care Initiatives

- Participated in the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education's Nursing Education and Workforce Development Task Force.
- Dr. Thompson is a member of the Commonwealth's Health and Human Services Workforce Advisory Committee.

### Awards and Recognition

- Recipient of the Diamond Award for Lifetime Achievement in Higher Education, Leadership, Philanthropy, Humanitarian Efforts, and Community Engagement.
- Dr. Thompson will be awarded this honor in January at Morehouse College, Atlanta Georgia.

### Gratitude and Team Efforts

- Acknowledges the contributions of board, faculty, staff, librarians, and students.
- Expresses gratitude for the collaborative efforts in decision-making and policy creation.

### Open House Program

- Received a note from Mike Mazeika thanking her for participation in the fall open house program.
- The turnout at open houses have been growing, highlighting the involvement of students and staff.

### Athletics Highlights

- Introduction of star students in the athletic program. Field hockey coach, Carden Brown; field hockey player, Erin Lane; soccer coach, Chris Streeter '99; soccer player, Coleby Andrade; cross-country Coach Marlee Berg-Haryasz; and cross-country athlete Tealei Chandonnet.
- Mention of specific athletic achievements and goals scored during a championship game.
- Women's Cross Country
  - Westfield State had eight of the top 10 runners in the MASCAC Championship this year.
  - The program is not a "one hit wonder" and is building a strong foundation.
  - They were the highest rated public institution in the NCAA regionals this year.
- Men's Soccer
  - Dr. Streeter is an alum of Westfield State and a member of the hall of fame.
  - Last year, the team was in the finals of the MASCAC and won the championship this year.
  - They were close to defeating Tufts University, the number two team in the country.
- Field Hockey
  - Coach Carden Brown is in her second year as a full-time employee at Westfield State.
  - Last year, the team tied the school record for wins; this year, they broke the record and won the finals.
  - The team won their first field hockey title since the early 1980s.

## **Student Trustee Report**

### Student Government Association

- The SGA raised over \$3,000 for local families as part of its annual Turkey Drive.
  - Funds were generated from the second annual Turkey Trot, a 5K road race held on campus.
- A subcommittee is exploring improvements to the lounge space adjacent to the fitness center.
  - The goal is to create a student union-like space with recreational activities.

### Campus Events

- Homecoming was celebrated earlier this semester.
- The Theater Arts department held performances, including "Twelfth Night."
- Westfield State hosted the Girls on the Run 5K road race for Western Massachusetts, with over 3,000 attendees.

### Legislative Breakfast

- Hosted on campus to showcase deferred maintenance challenges.
  - Importance of funding projects to address these issues.

- Predominantly student-led event with SGA presentation to lawmakers.
  - Linking challenges to workforce needs of the Commonwealth.
- Tour of Bates Hall, the most in need of renovation.
  - Concludes at the Ride Center in Parenzo Hall.

#### Common Hour Policy

- Updated policy submitted to Governance for review.
  - Aligns with the University's strategic plan for community involvement.
- Forwarded to the Academic Policies Committee for thorough review.

#### SGA Training

- Comprehensive training day planned for all Student Governance Association members.
  - Focus on hard and soft skill development and understanding key processes.
- Aims to prepare the next generation of leaders as current Executive Council members' graduate.

#### Constitutional Review Process

- SGA engaging in triennial Constitutional review.
  - Review and draft substantive changes for full SGA consideration early next year.

### **Governance and Nomination Committee**

Committee Chair Melissa Alvarado updated the Board:

- Dissolving the Investment Subcommittee due to duplication of efforts.
- Renaming the current JEDI Committee to standard language for Justice Equity Diversity.

### **Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee**

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey updated the Board:

- Presentation by Executive Director Jenyka Spitz Gassnola on diversity plan and demographic data.
  - Focus on the decreasing female student enrollment.
- Thematic analysis conducted over a 12-week period on community needs and priorities.

### **Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Committee**

Committee Chair William Reichelt updated the Board:

- Discussion on personalized targeted marketing for student enrollment.
  - Acknowledgment of a reduction in high school graduates in upcoming years.
- Presentation on changing needs of students by Counseling and Health Services.

### **Advancement, Marketing, and External Relations Committee**

Committee Chair Dr. Gloria Williams updated the Board:

- Collaboration with national branding and marketing firm BVK.
  - Utilizing a NASA brand approach for fundraising perceptions.
- Estimated investment of \$65,000 for branding efforts.
- The largest 185<sup>th</sup> celebration fundraising this year received \$320,000.
- Scholarships and homecoming events were successful.

- The second annual Keeper of the Dream event is being held on February 13th.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Currier, seconded by Trustee Montemayor, to approve the granting of staff emeriti status, effective December 9, 2024, to the following individuals: Karen Canary, Rudy Hebert, and Mark St. Jean. There being no further discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously**

### Academic Affairs Committee

Committee Chair Chris Montemayor updated the Board.

- WISE Program:
  - Focuses on integrated student experience prioritizing curiosity, enthusiasm, and social justice.
  - Encourages critical and creative thinking to address complex problems.
- Retention Data Analysis:
  - Examines data by gender, race, Pell grant status, and first-generation status.
  - Aims to improve student success and increase graduation rates.

### Financial Affairs Committee

Committee Chair George Gilmer updated the Board on:

- Merging Investment Subcommittee and Finance Subcommittee.
- Change to university expense policy:
  - Minor adjustments to restrictive language.
- 2025 Budget:
  - Revised from \$142 million to \$132 million.
- Emergency funding for apartment complex plumbing issues:
  - Significant plumbing stack issues in Conlin, Seymour, and Welch Halls.

Trustee Gilmer presented the following motions approved by the committee:

**MOTION** made by Trustee Currier, seconded by Trustee Montemayor, to approve the revised University Business Expenses Policy (0300), as presented. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

**MOTION** made by Trustee Jasmin, seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to approve a \$4.4 million dollar debt borrowing, through the MSCBA, to fund the critical repairs as outlined in the summary document presented today for the on-campus apartments. Further that the assumptions in Option A will be the approved financing plan in working with the MSCBA on the next bond issuance in FY25/FY26. There being no further discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

**MOTION** made by Trustee Jasmin seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to approve the FY25 revised conditional campus budget of \$131,841,221, as presented, including, but not limited to the following elements: operating budget, capital budget, vehicle lease/purchase program. Further, to authorize the President and/or the Vice President for Administration and Finance to make budget adjustments to these funds as allowed in the Trust Fund Management Policy (0604). There being no further discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

## Audit Committee

Committee Chair Theresa Jasmin updated the Board:

- Focus on cyber security as a top risk in enterprise risk management.
  - Presented by Vice President of Administration and Finance, Steve Taksar and Assistant Vice President of Information and Instructional Technology, Alan Blair.
- Daily threats to the university estimated in the tens of millions.
  - Importance of being relentless in efforts to address cyber threats.
- Alan Blair is collaborating with other state colleges and universities.
  - Focus on understanding best practices.
  - Leverage knowledge from similarly situated organizations.

## Closing Remarks

Chair Salehi wanted to further explain that the budget has not been cut but in fact increased. In the last five years Westfield State University has had an average spending of \$122 million and this year's budget is \$131 million based on factual spending. Financial Affairs Committee Chair George Gilmore has ideas to discuss post-budget process.

Chair Salehi also wanted to express disconcert with the President's expense approvals. As it stands now, every time Dr. Thompson spends a minimal amount of any expense, Board Chair Ali Salehi must approve it, but he suggests a more realistic approval amount with dignity and authority of the President. Committee Chair George Gilmer will look into changing this. Also, deferred maintenance is a major concern. The Student Government Association is addressing it.

There being no further business,

**MOTION** made by Trustee Jasmin, and seconded by Trustee Currier, to adjourn. A roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 4:56 PM.

## Attachments:

- a. Draft Minutes of October 23, 2024
- b. Draft Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting November 15, 2024
- c. Draft Minutes of Board of Trustees Special Meeting November 15, 2024
- d. President's Presentation
- e. Student Trustee Presentation

### **Governance and Nomination Committee**

- a. Draft Meeting Minutes October 23, 2024

### **Academic Affairs Committee**

- b. Minutes of October 23, 2024
- c. PowerPoint Presentation

### **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee**

- a. Minutes of October 23, 2024
- b. PowerPoint Presentation
- d. WSU High Level Demographics document

### **Advancement, Marketing, and External Relations Committee**

- a. Draft Minutes of October 23, 2024
- b. MarCom PowerPoint
- c. Advancement Fundraising and Alumni Engagement PowerPoint
- d. Westfield State Situational Assessment Board -Campaign Presentation
- e. Motion – Staff Emeriti
- f. Staff Emeriti Biographies

**Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Committee**

- a. Minutes October 23, 2024
- b. PowerPoint Presentation

**Audit Committee**

- a. Minutes 10-21-24 (Draft)
- b. Campus Cyber Update
- c. Cyber Security Awareness Audit (State Auditor)
- d. Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI-DSS)

**Financial Affairs:**

- a. Motion – Dissolution of Investment Subcommittee
- b. Motion – University Business Expenses Policy (0300)
- c. University Business Expenses Policy (0300) Clean
- d. University Business Expenses Policy (0300) Track Changes
- e. Motion – FY25 Operating Budget (Revision)
- f. FY25 Operating Budget (Revision)
- g. Motion – Residential Hall Capital Project Funding/Borrowing
- h. Residential Hall Capital Project Funding/Borrowing

**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 meeting held on December 9, 2024.

\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Gloria Williams, Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_

Date