



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Enrollment Management & Student Affairs Committee

Minutes

December 18, 2025 10:30 a.m.

Loughman Living Room, Scanlon Hall

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 William Reichelt
- Vice Chair Tessa Lucey
- Trustee Barney Garcia
- Trustee George Gilmer

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY:

- Secretary Jason Queenin

Also present and participating were;

- Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson
- Vice President of Enrollment Management, Marketing and Student Affairs, Dr. Kevin Hearn
- Senior Executive Director, Westfield Worldwide, Dan Forster
- Director of Marketing, Alyssa Goodreau
- Assistant Director of Marketing, John Miarecki
- Leslie Baldino, Account Director BVK
- Shannon Lester, BVK

Committee Chair William Reichelt called the meeting to order at 9:48 a.m. 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 Alvarado and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **and motion passed.**

DGCE Admission Strategy

Graduate and Continuing Education Market

- There are multiple entry points and start dates for continuing and graduate education students, so there is no break all year round.
- The graduate and continuing education market is difficult because there are fewer students.
- There is a changing loan availability for graduate students. The Grad Plus Loan will not be in effect going forward. Students will have to borrow privately and may need a co-borrower.

- This will affect the PA program.
- The department is dependent on digital ads and digital marketing.
- The age demographic can go anywhere from 18 to 60, but is more likely in the 25 to 45 range.
- The diversity as far as the amount of education they have runs the full gamut.

Competition for Students

- All of the schools were at Bunker Hill Community College on October 23, recruiting students.
 - These schools need students and it's a market that they haven't tapped into yet.
 - These schools are digging lower in their profile.
- Four-year institutions are looking for the pipeline to drive new undergraduate students.
- Institutions have traditionally had significantly large international populations, and with the tightening of that, they now need to look domestically.
 - "From a financial perspective, you're looking for the tuition revenue of two domestic students to replace one international student."

Endowment and Digital Marketing

- Endowment should be kept in mind when discussing the market, digital marketing, ads, placement, costs, and competition.
- One of the two most important things to students is cost, and the university is in a good position regarding this.
 - Main competition: sister state institutions and regional institutions in Massachusetts and Connecticut.
- The university is working on communicating the length and cost of programs, as well as financial aid options.
 - There is still work to do in offering more start dates for programs.

Enrollment Projections

- Multi-year projection to predict headcount and gain insight into revenue.
- Spring 2025 (DGCE): 62 starts; Fall 2025: 94 starts; Projected Spring 2026: 65 starts (solid number).
- Online ESW completion program is contributing to increased applications.
- Second bachelor's degrees are unpredictable, often for retooling or preparation for master's degrees.
- New programs approved by the Board of Higher Ed this fall are being launched with a new digital strategy for the spring.
 - Additional funding from the foundation will support the new campaign for these three programs.
- MBA program rolled out in November.
 - Already has four complete applications for the fall and five waiting on submission.

Graduate Admissions and MSW Program

- Fall 2025 enrollment numbers are used as a baseline for projections for Spring 2026 and Fall 2026.
- "NA" indicates that a program does not have a start in that term.
- MSW program: Digital campaigning and placement have been successful.
 - Website is now fully set up with deceptive landing pages to collect more data.
 - Applications for the first deadline of December 1st are 50% higher this year

Digital Ad Metrics

- Dashboard provided by VisionPoint shows performance in the market.

- All numbers are at or above industry standards for higher education.
- Digital ads on Google Ads and Meta:
 - For the last 30 days, \$4,250 was spent to support nine graduate programs and continuing and online programs at the undergraduate level.
 - 185,000 sets of eyeballs fell on Westfield State ads during that 30 days.
 - 1700 clicks happened on the ads.
 - Click through rate is about 1%.
 - Cost per conversion is \$184.80 (cost for every student that fills out a request for information).
 - Cost per click varies by program.
 - Nurse practitioner and MBA programs are popular and expensive to market.
- Other marketing efforts:
 - Emails to graduates and people who have asked for information on the website.
 - Direct mailings.
 - Contacting area businesses and community agencies.
- Competitiveness:
 - State universities face challenges in attracting students due to competition.
 - "We have to reinvent the wheel. We have to innovate. We have to offer new programs. We have to. We can't continue doing the same thing as we did 50 years ago."
- Community College Pipeline:
 - Concurrent nursing program with HCC: students complete their RN and want the BSN.
 - 23 or 24 students in the new cohort this fall.
 - Nora is working to create a second program for a BSW pipeline with community colleges.
- Brand and Brand Platform:
 - Alyssa Couture is the director.

Introduction to the New Brand Platform

- BVK is an agency based in Milwaukee with over 25 years of experience working with higher education institutions.
- The agency offers a range of services, including research, branding, creative work, digital and data analytics, and enrollment marketing.
- BVK emphasizes the importance of advancement and capital campaigns built off the brand platform.

Branding Matters

- Visual identity is not the brand. A brand is "the promise we make and the experience that we deliver. Built from the inside, communicated outwardly."
- A brand should be nurtured, cared for, and grown, requiring constant attention and investment.

Westfield State's Challenges

- Westfield State was often described as a "hidden gem," which indicates a lack of awareness.
- There was no consistent message or tagline that resonated, and the strengths of the university were largely unknown.
- The lack of a brand platform leads to inconsistencies, diluted recognition, internal confusion, and negatively impacts enrollment, advancement, reputation, and marketing.

Success with Branding

- University of Wisconsin, Steven Point saw an increase in first-year student applications,

- housing applications, and appointments for fall class registration, 9 months post brand launch.
- University of Utah saw undergraduate applications up by more than 1,000 and deposits of revenue nearly 800 in year one.
- TCU (Texas Christian University) had its most successful capital campaign in the history of the institution by using the brand platform as the source of messaging.

BVK's Process at Westfield State University

- The process began with brand discovery, including stakeholder interviews, an online survey, and a review of competitors.
- Research findings were used to build brand strategies, which then led to the development of creative concepts.
- The brand launch and implementation are scheduled for 2026.

Key Research Takeaways

- Westfield State students being described as hard workers didn't connect with the word impact. Audiences agreed that Westfield prepares its students to get jobs in their industry of choice.
- The supportive campus environment was seen as a strength, but the goal is to be known as a supportive institution that empowers students, not one that coddles them.
- Westfield State wants to foster student success and translate descriptors of student life to resources that jumpstart careers.
- Internships increase prospective student interest.
- Real-world active learning and career-defining opportunities are appealing.

Challenges in Higher Education

- Evolving demographics.
- Questions about return on investment.
- Political pressure.
- Pre-COVID, focus was on academic experience; after COVID, focus shifted to student experience; now, focus is on outcomes and graduate employment.

Brand Strategy

- Built by looking at culture, competition, and identifying white space.
- Considers Westfield State's values, vision, and essence.
- Focuses on audience motivations and values.
- Brand platform should encompass all aspects of the University (admissions, academics, athletics, etc.).

Brand Platform: Imagine a Future

- Aims to resonate with prospective students, higher ed peers, and legislators.
- Offers flexibility and potential for instant brand lift.
- Can be tailored for various purposes (enrollment, capital campaigns, etc.).
- Focuses on the goal of students landing jobs after graduation.
- Showcases faculty, staff, and successful alumni.

Key Considerations for Brand Rollout

- Make the internal rollout memorable.
 - Host events to create excitement among internal audiences.
- Support needs to come from the top.
 - Ensure consistent messaging from leadership.

- Provide resources like cheat sheets or brand books to department chairs.
- Stakeholder support is crucial.
 - Involve stakeholders, especially in visual identity changes like logo redesigns.
- There will be a learning curve.
 - Maintain consistency and allow time for adoption.
- Invest in the future.
 - Develop a 3-5 year marketing plan to evolve the brand.
 - Initial investment will be higher to establish the brand, then decrease for maintenance.
- John Miarecki, newly Assistant Director of Marketing at Westfield State University, has been there for about two and a half years, with 20 years in advertising agencies representing national and international clients.
- The creative concepts are designed to be flexible to communicate to different audiences and support all areas of execution with one cohesive message.
- Designs, logos, and taglines are not final but showcase the direction towards outcomes with the imaginative feature brand platform.

Campaign Examples Themes

- Bold, clean design with bold, simple, direct messaging centered around outcomes.
- Campaigns should highlight outcomes and connect to research, emphasizing hard work and support.
- Showcase support services like internships and celebrate faculty connections with students.
- The marketing team has started conversations with the mathematics department to better position and differentiate programs.

Connecting Alumni

- Show past students holding up photos from their time at Westfield State and where they are now to connect with current and future students.
- Nestor should continue to play a role, with fun elements like "baby Nestor."

Advertising Channels

- Out-of-home advertising examples include the theme of support with copies such as "from your first class to your first job, we stand beside you."
- Taglines: "founded on access, driven by purpose, built for you" or "founded on access, driven by purpose measured by success."

On-Campus Engagement

- Create opportunities for on-campus engagement and celebration of Westfield State University, such as murals.
- Encourage user-generated content on social media.
- Refresh banners across campus with messages like "It's a great day to be Owl" and "Winning is for the Owls."

Communication Channels

- Paid marketing campaigns should complement Madeleine LeBlanc's social media efforts.
- The brand platform is built and flexible.

Importance of Brand Platform

- The brand platform is critical to the University's success and should be the foundation for everything, including the capital campaign and celebrating athletic achievements.

- The current campaign, "Explore, Experience, Excel," was relaunched because the institution couldn't agree on a single campaign.
- The new brand platform aims to provide a critical differentiator for Westfield State, which is currently lacking.

Competitive Market

- The new platform launch is expected to draw attention to the university and provide a single point of focus.
- The brand platform will help with enrollment, retention, and the introduction of new graduate programs.
- The aim is to create a consistent message that resonates with all audiences, from prospective students to donors.

Athletics

- The addition of the athletic director to the Cabinet was a great decision because athletic success attracts students.
- Student athletes greet prospective students at open houses.
- The tagline "you can play anywhere, but you win at Westfield" is used.
- There are plans to display banners along Western Ave to highlight athletic achievements.
- The athletic director has committed 25% of his budget to the effort.

Next Steps

- There will be an update at the February board meeting.
- The marketing team is excited about the process.
- The speaker is anxious to see how the next logo will look.

MOTION made by Trustee Lucey, and seconded by Trustee Montemayor, to adjourn. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed.**

Meeting adjourned at 10:11 a.m.

Attachments:

- Minutes- October 21, 2025
- DGCE Admissions Strategy PowerPoint
- Introduction to the new brand platform PowerPoint

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 Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Committee meeting held on December 18, 2025.

Jason Queenin, Secretary

Date