



Board of Trustees

JEDI Committee

February 20, 2025

10:15 AM

Owls Nest, Ely Campus Center

Committee Members: Chair Tessa Lucey, Vice Chair Michael O'Rourke, Secretary Melissa Alvarado, George Gilmer and Dr. Gloria Williams

A live stream of the meeting for public viewing will also take place at the following link: <https://www.westfield.ma.edu/live>

- 1. Call to Order** Trustee Tessa Lucey, Committee Chair

- 2. Approval of Minutes** Trustee Tessa Lucey, Committee Chair
 - a. Minutes of October 23, 2024
 - b. Minutes of December 9, 2024

- 3. Items for Information** William Salka, Provost
 - a. New Staff in Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning
 - b. New Initiatives in Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning

- 4. Adjournment**

Attachments:

- a. Minutes of October 23, 2024
- b. Minutes of December 9, 2024
- c. Belonging, Inclusion and Learning Presentation



Board of Trustees

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

October 23, 2024

Minutes

President's Boardroom, Hoace Mann Center

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Committee Chair Tessa Lucey, Vice Chair Michael O'Rourke, Secretary Melissa Alvarado, and Trustees Dr. Gloria Williams, George Gilmer, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

TRUSTEE GUESTS PRESENT: Trustee Daniel Currier, Trustee Montemayor and Trustee Reichelt.

Also present were Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Special Assistant to the President on University Strategies and Chief of Staff, Dr. Michael Freeman; Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost, Dr. William Salka; Vice President of Administration & Finance, Stephen Taksar; Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Dr. Kevin Hearn; Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Lisa McMahan; and General Counsel, Melinda Phelps.

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM and a roll call was taken of the committee members participating as listed above. It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

MOTION made by Trustee Alvarado seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2023 meeting.

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** passed motion with majority with Trustees Lucey and O'Rourke abstaining.

President's direction: Belonging, Inclusion and Learning

- Change in the Jedi Division noted in January 2024.
 - President Thompson consulted with experts in equity and inclusion.
 - New direction includes the concept of belonging.
- Gwendolyn VanSant's role:
 - Working on strategic planning for principles of belonging and inclusion.
 - Collaborating with HR and the Values Working Group on standards of practice.
- Training initiatives:
 - Discussed characteristics of dominant culture and cultural stewardship.
 - Engaged a Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from Lesley University for strategic direction.
- Equity Audit

- Consultant hired to conduct an equity audit.
- Engagement for the rest of the academic year, completion anticipated by the end of the year.
- Consultant details:
 - Currently the VP for Diversity and Equity at Lesley University.
- Importance of integration:
 - Need for diversity initiatives to enter the academic core of the institution.

Introduction of Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola, Director of Belonging, Inclusion and Learning

- Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola was introduced as a dedicated community educator.
 - Over a decade of experience in social justice and diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging.
 - Expertise in restorative practice.
- Educational background:
 - Bachelor's degree from UMass Dartmouth.
 - Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies with a concentration in organizational leadership from UMass Lowell.
 - Currently pursuing a Doctor of Education in Higher Ed, Leadership and Organizational Studies at Bay Path University.
- Previous role:
 - Served as D.E.I. manager and ADA coordinator at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.
 - Focused on diversity programming, affirmative action, compliance, and workforce equity initiatives.

There being no further business,

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke, and seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to adjourn.

ROLL CALL VOTE passed motion unanimously with Trustees voting in the affirmative: Alvarado, Gilmer, O'Rourke, Williams, Lucey and Salehi.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Draft Minutes of December 13, 2023, Meeting

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 Governance and Nomination Committee meeting held on October 23, 2024.

Melissa Alvarado, Secretary

Date



Board of Trustees

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee

December 9, 2024

10:45 AM – 11:15 AM

Minutes

Loughman Living Room, Scanlon Hall

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Committee Chair Tessa Lucey, Vice Chair Michael O'Rourke, Secretary Melissa Alvarado, and Trustee Dr. Gloria Williams, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

TRUSTEE(S) PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Trustee George Gilmer

TRUSTEE GUESTS PRESENT: Trustee Daniel Currier, Trustee Chris Montemayor and Trustee William Reichelt.

Also present were Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. William Salka; and Director of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning, Jenyka Spitz-Cassnola.

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey called the meeting to order at 10:46 AM and a roll call was taken of the committee members participating as listed above. It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

Enrollment Data for Underrepresented Populations

Director of Belonging, Inclusion and Learning, Jenyka Spitz-Cassnola, reviewed demographic data trends from 2019-2023 which covered gender, race, ethnicity, disability status and veteran status.

- Summary of findings show a growth in diversity at Westfield State University.
- Undergraduate statistics show there is a decline in female status, but an increase in "other" gender identities.
- Veteran status has declined in undergraduate status but is seeing growth in the graduate levels.
- Increase in undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities.
- There is a growing need for data collection and change how we collect it.

Thematic Analysis Overview

Ms. Spitz-Cassnola interviewed 75 stakeholders over 12 weeks.

Created office language for Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning mission statement, views and key functions also aligned with Westfield State University’s mission statement.

Current and New Initiatives for Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning

- Events planned by Ms. Spitz-Cassnola were successful with 40-70 attendees.
- Black History month is coming up and students are being contacted to hear their ideas of activities.
- Looking for ways to get students out of the dorm room and getting involved in activities on campus.
- Ms. Spitz-Cassnola has been working to make sure the marginalized population of students don’t fall through the cracks.
- Trying to make the JEDI floor in University Hall more competitive to bring in more diverse students.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) nomenclature focusing more on “belonging” to include faculty, staff, students, and all the different under-represented groups.
- Ms. Spitz-Cassnola would like, in the future, to create an interactive Key Performance Indicator.

There being no further business,

MOTION made by Trustee Alvarado, and seconded Trustee O’Rourke, to adjourn.
ROLL CALL VOTE passed motion unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 11:19 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Draft Minutes of October 23, 2024, Meeting

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 Governance and Nomination Committee meeting held on December 9, 2024.

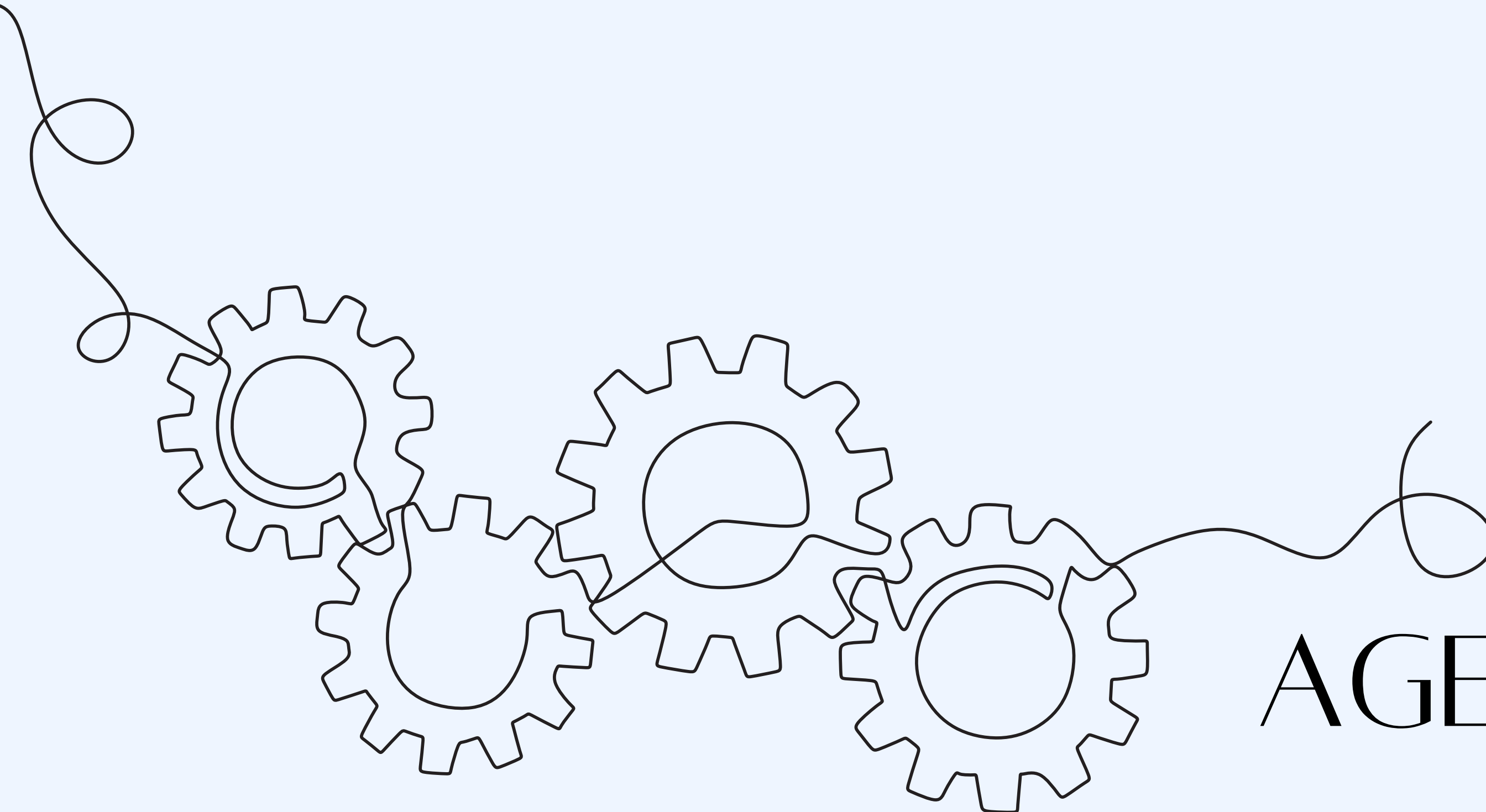
Melissa Alvarado, Secretary

Date



OFFICE OF BELONGING, INCLUSION, AND LEARNING

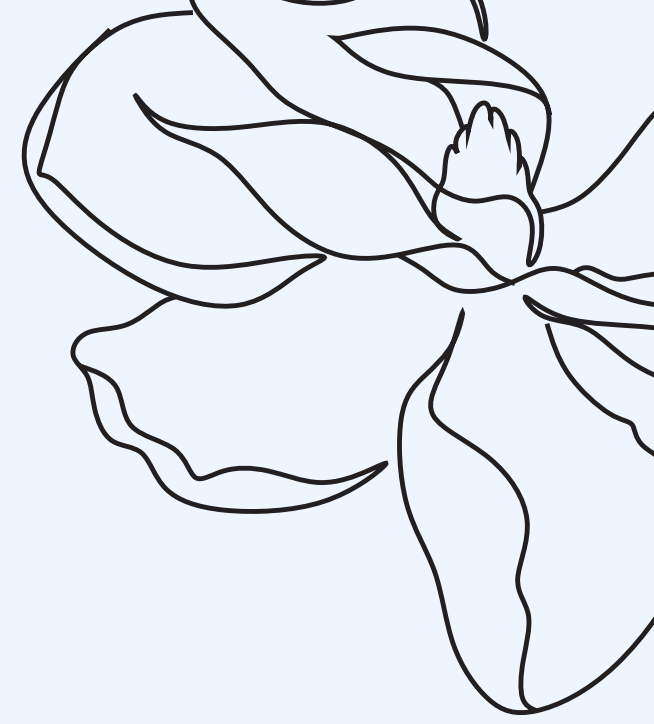
Director, Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola (she/they)



AGENDA

- Staffing Updates
- B.I.L Newsletter
- B.I.L Website
- BEST Team / Bias Incident Reporting
- Programming and Community Engagements
- Future Planning

STAFFING UPDATE



Jane Kungu (she/they)
Senior Coordinator for
Multicultural
Programming



Marjorie Rodriguez (she/her)
Assistant Director for Student
Access and Support



B.I.L. NEWSLETTER

Key Features:

- Honoring Culture
- Historical Milestones and Events
- Historical Figures
- Modern-Day Trailblazers
- Upcoming Campus Events
- Student Spotlight
- Book Corner
- Podcast Corner
- Film Corner
- Community Happenings (e.g., in-person and virtual)
- Campus Resources
- B.I.L. Office Staff

Access the newsletter by

[CLICKING HERE](#)

WSU'S OFFICE OF BELONGING, INCLUSION, AND LEARNING *Newsletter*

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Each February, we unite to celebrate and reflect on the profound contributions of Black folks and communities to our shared history. This newsletter is dedicated to honoring Black History Month by spotlighting historical figures, celebrating modern-day trailblazers, and highlighting pivotal moments in the ongoing fight for equality and justice. It's a time to recognize the resilience, joy, creativity, and impact of Black voices that continue to shape our world.

Honoring Black Culture

Black culture has long been a source of inspiration in music, literature, and the arts. From the Harlem Renaissance to today's global impact, the creativity and influence of Black artists are immeasurable.

Artists like Nina Simone, Miles Davis, and Kendrick Lamar have redefined genres, using music as a tool for social change and personal expression.

Writers like James Baldwin and Zora Neale Hurston have shaped literary history, exploring the complexities of Black identity and the African American experience in profound ways.

Directors like Ava DuVernay and actors such as Viola Davis continue to break new ground in Hollywood, bringing stories of Black life and struggle to mainstream audiences.



"On the Main Stage" by Larry Poncho Brown

Learn more about this artwork [HERE](#)

B.I.L. WEBSITE

Office of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning (B.I.L)



Fostering Equity and Inclusion at Westfield State University

The **Office of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning**, a vital part of Westfield State University's Academic Affairs Department, plays a key role in ensuring that equity, access, and belonging are central to the university's mission. Aligned with Westfield State's commitment to providing accessible, high-quality education, the office strives to create an inclusive, welcoming community where students, faculty, and staff from all backgrounds can thrive.

Contact Us

Office of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning

Scanlon Hall

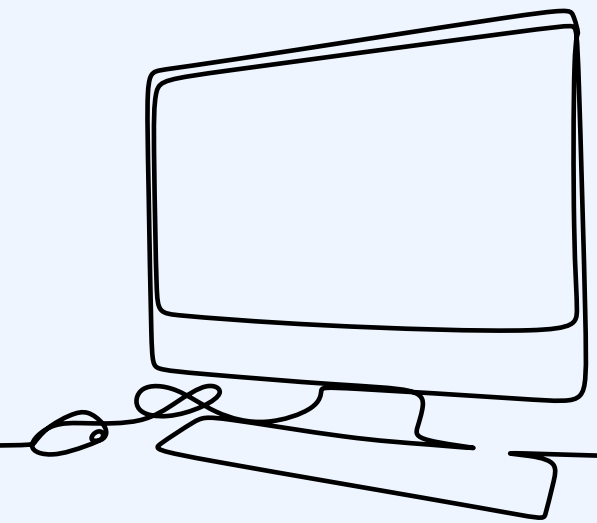
✉ belonging@westfield.ma.edu

Key Features:

- Office Description
- Contact Information
- Mission and Vision
- Links to Related Initiatives and Resources
- Affinity Group Highlights
- Newsletter Repository
- ...and growing!

Access the website by

[CLICKING HERE](#)





BIAS REPORTING



- **There have been a total of:**
 - 5 incidents reported via the Bias Incident Reporting form through Maxient since the start of the semester
- **Themes included:**
 - Racial Bias and Discrimination
 - External Intrusion vs. Campus Community
 - Ableism
 - Harmful Stereotypes and Mockery
 - Harassment and Bullying
 - Gendered Harassment and Vulgar Language
 - Intent vs. Impact
- **Targeted identities selected:**
 - Race/Ethnicity
 - Disability Status
 - Gender Identity
- **Primary location:**
 - Residential Halls



BIAS EDUCATION SUPPORT TEAM (BEST)



- **During our last BEST Meeting on 1/16, the following items were discussed:**
 - Campus-wide Bias Intervention planning/training
 - Promoting civil discourse among students during heightened political and social climates
 - Identified who is at the table and where there may be gaps in representation amongst the various stakeholder groups on campus
 - Key areas of need included:
 - Need for professional development for the team, particularly around facilitator-based “train the trainer” programming to equip BEST staff with the tools to guide constructive conversations and interventions.

PROGRAMMING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Cultural Event Calendar**

- A downloadable version will be uploaded to the B.I.L. website and accessible in future editions of the newsletter

- **Religious and Faith-Based Holiday Calendar**

- In the works!

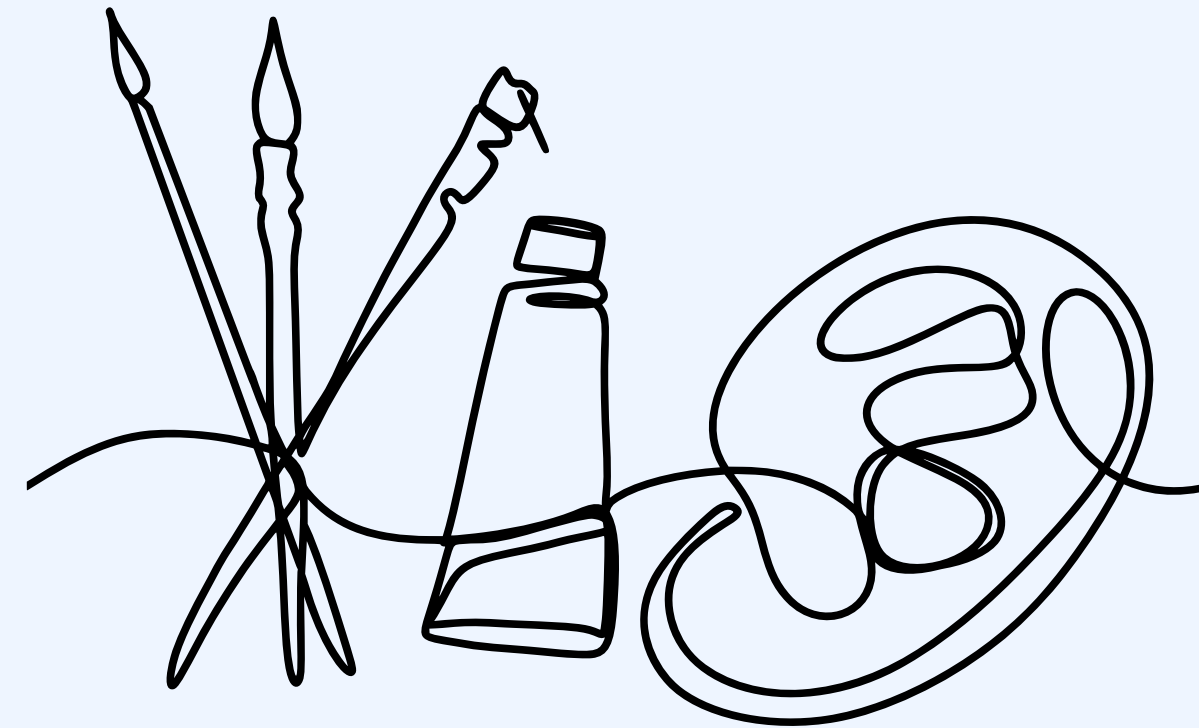
- **Black History Month (BHM) Programming**

- The campus community has united to present an expansive lineup of educational events, performances, and opportunities for meaningful dialogue, including:
 - Speaker Event: Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir, Muslim Social Justice Advocate & Former Collegiate Basketball Player
 - Speaker Event: Ashlee Haze, Spoken Word Poet & Artist
 - Alumni Speaker Event: Ayana Crawford, Educational Consultant & Speaker
 - Keeper of the Dream Celebration
 - Douglass Day Commemoration
 - Omega History is Black History
 - Film Screening & Discussion: The Matumbilas
 - 3v3 Basketball Tournament
 - BHM Kickback Celebration
 - ...and much more!



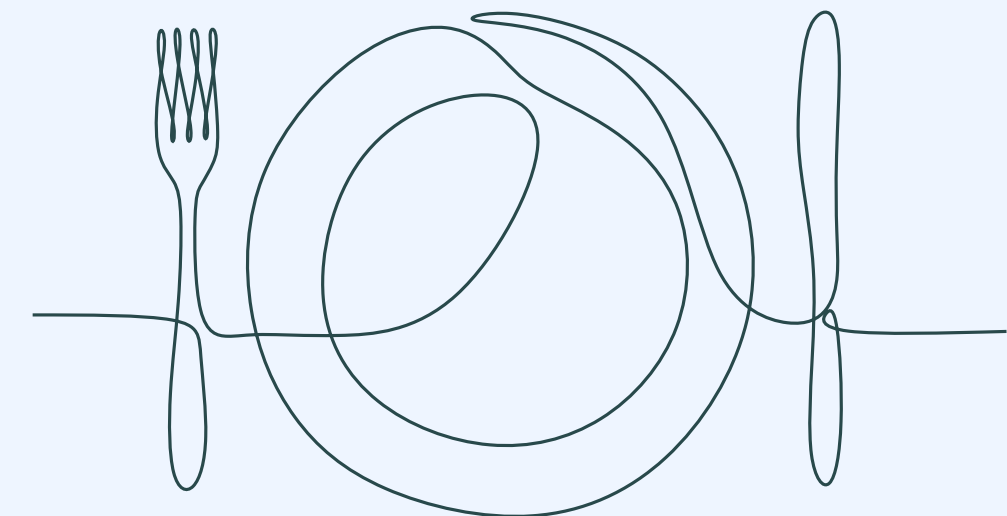
PROGRAMMING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONT'D

- **Palette to Palate: A Mural of Global Diversity**
- **Unity Fest**
 - Will take place the week of April 7th
 - Centering student voice in planning process
- **Sankofa**
 - Will take place April 29th
 - Currently creating planning committee
- **Connecting with External Networks**
 - Established and improved connections with key state and local organizations, including:
 - Chief Equity and Inclusion Officers Group of the State Universities Council of Presidents
 - Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts
 - Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI)
 - Economic Development Council (EDC)
 - Massachusetts Executive Office of Veterans' Services (MA EOVS)
 - Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women
 - Dress for Success
 - Suit Up Springfield
 - ...and more!

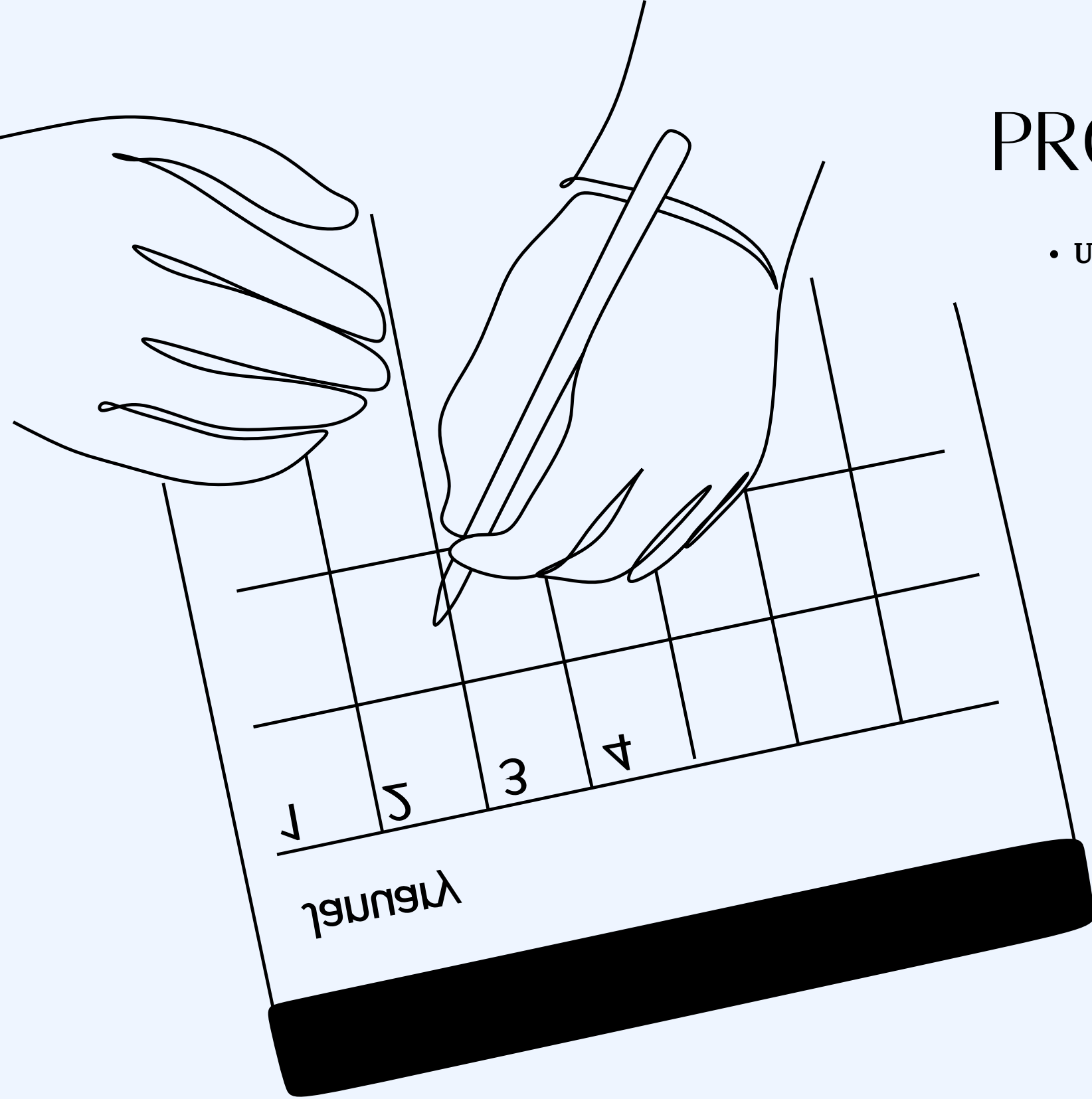


PROGRAMMING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONT'D

- **Monthly Affinity Group Dinners**
 - January 30th - Catered by Santiago's Family Restaurant
- **Provided Student Training**

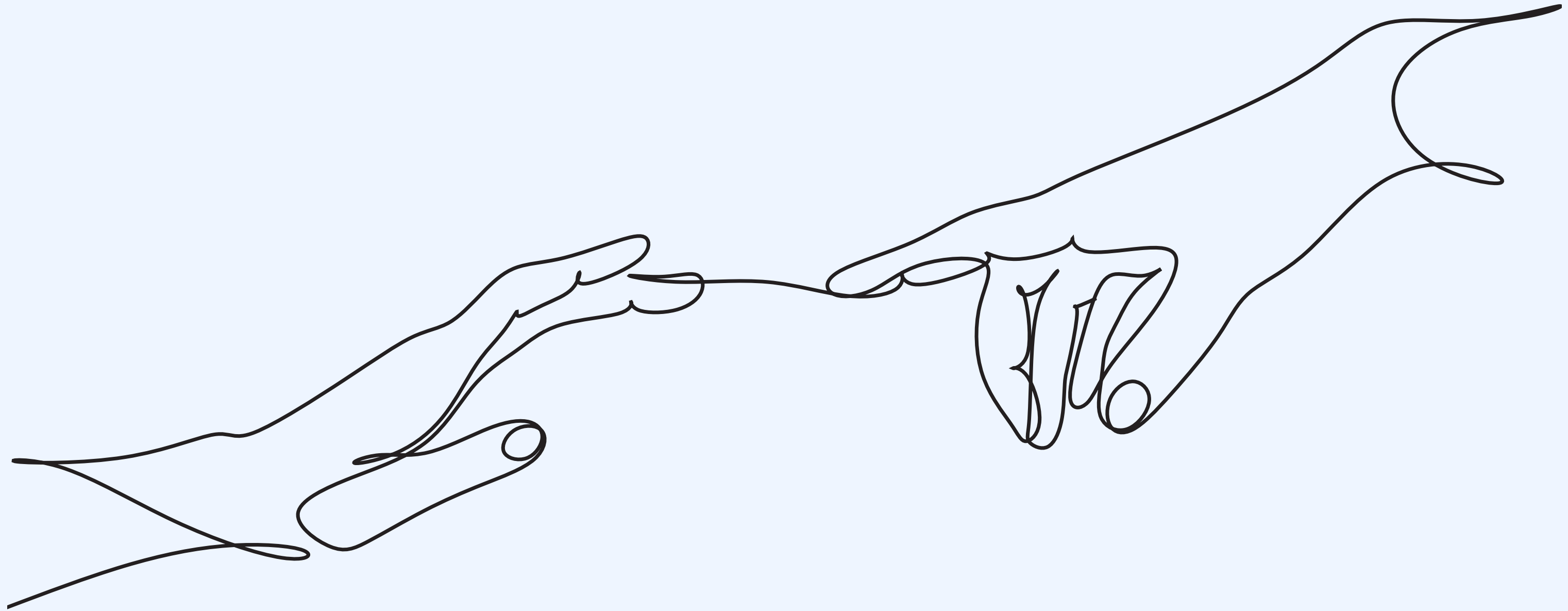


PROGRAMMING AND FUTURE PLANNING



- **Upcoming Initiatives:**

- Focus Group/Office Hour collaboration with the Dean of Students Office
 - To capture student voice/conduct pulse check
 - Highlight areas of opportunity
- Event and program planning in full effect through the remainder of the year!
 - We will be supporting programming for:
 - March
 - Women's History Month
 - International Women's Day - March 8th
 - Day of Service "Spring Cleaning" for Christina's House in Springfield, MA
 - Class of 2027 Women's Council event series including:
 - Pilates and Rock Climbing
 - Faculty Panel
 - Workshops, performances...and more!
 - Trans Day of Visibility - March 30th
 - April
 - Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Month
 - Cultural Dinner / Lion Dance
 - Tae Kwon Do Demonstration
 - Speakers
 - MSO/APISU Cultural Attire Collaboration
 - Film Festival
 - Arab American Heritage Month
 - Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Prevention programming in collaboration with the Counseling Center
 - Earth Day
 - Interactive programming to highlight sustainability features on campus with keynote
 - Jewish Holocaust Remembrance Day
 -and many more!



CONTACT ME

I'd love to talk about your ideas.

PHONE NUMBER

(413)-572-8324

EMAIL ADDRESS

jspitzgassnola@westfield.ma.edu