



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

February 23, 2023

Minutes

Via Zoom, in accordance with Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker's 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: Chair Dr. Robert Martin, Vice Chair Ali Salehi, Secretary Dr. Gloria Williams, and Trustees Paul Boudreau, Melissa Alvarado, George Gilmer, Theresa Jasmin (joined at 11:07 AM), Chris Montemayor, William Reichelt, and Chloe Sanfacon

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Trustees Paul Boudreau and Madeline Landrau

Also participating were Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson and cabinet members Dr. Michael Freeman, Richard Lenfest, Jr., Lisa McMahon, Dr. Juline Mills, Dr. LaRue Pierce, and Timothy Rooke. Westfield State's New England Commission on Higher Education (NECHE) Accreditation Executive Committee members Dr. Brian Jennings, Dean of Accreditation, Tom Raffensperger, Director of Library Services, and Callie Katsounakis, Director of Accreditation and Assessment, were also participating.

The meeting was called to order at 11:03 AM by Chair Martin. A roll call was taken of the Trustees participating as listed above and it was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

Chair Martin thanked faculty and staff who worked on NECHE self-study and stressed the importance of being an accredited institution. This meeting will provide an overview of the role of the Board, each standard, and preparation for the meetings with the NECHE site team.

Overview of Accreditation. Provost Mills and Dr. Jennings provided an overview of the accreditation process, which assures the public we are a quality institution. The Board's role is to ensure we have taken a good, fair look at ourselves and are providing opportunities for improvement.

- Two factors to remember during accreditation meetings and discussions are how the institution is assuring quality and fostering improvement.
- Accreditors will balance:
 - Compliance
 - Needs of the public
 - Federal regulations
 - Safeguarding quality
 - Consistency of Standards
 - Improvement
 - Needs of institution, including the needs of faculty, librarians, staff, students, senior leadership team, Board in its role with the president, and the wider community.
 - Institution-centered approach

- Supporting innovation. The four pillars of our Strategic Plan are being tracked with metrics
- Diversity of institutional missions, which includes faculty and students presenting at Board meetings.

Every conversation with a site team member will be part of the evaluation. The nine standards and sub-standards were reviewed, with special emphasis on Standard 3 – Governance, where the Board has a special role.

When responding to questions from the site team, Board members should integrate values of the institution. Examples of how the institution is meeting the standards were provided.

There was considerable discussion on the Standards Indicator document color coding assigned to Standards 7.5 and 7.6 (Resources). This document is a self-assessment which we will not be graded on. Ideally the institution should agree on the colors assigned, but in the final analysis, the individual facts will speak for themselves. Based on what has been seen across all colleges and universities, Westfield State has done a phenomenal job managing through this recent financial situation. Part of its plan was to not fill, or freeze, empty positions and lines. Some departments consider this a financial issue, but other departments think they did a good job managing deficits with necessary cuts. New revenue sources with grant funding and innovative ways to spend limited finances and grow academic programs has been prioritized at the institution. The Commission's interest will be in how the University is dealing with this issue. The Board was reminded to bring institutional perspectives on strengths and some opportunities for improvement.

Chair Martin encouraged Trustees to review the self-study summary sheet provided with the meeting material as they prepared for the NECHE site team meetings.

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Trustee Jasmin, and seconded by Trustee Sanfacon, to adjourn. **ROLL CALL VOTE** passed motion unanimously with Trustees voting in the affirmative: Jasmin, Montemayor, Salehi, Sanfacon, Williams, and Martin. (Trustee Reichelt left the meeting at 1:30 PM and Trustees Alvarado and Gilmer left the meeting at 2:04 PM)

Meeting adjourned at 2:07 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Overview of Accreditation Presentation
- b. Standards Indicator Document
- c. Self-Study Summary Sheet
- d. Site Visit Schedule