



## **Board of Trustees**

Executive Committee

April 7, 2020

**Minutes**

### **Meeting held virtually via Zoom**

In accordance with Governor 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:** Committee Chair Queenin, Vice Chair Sullivan, and Secretary Martinez-Alvarez

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Trustee Hagan, past Chair

**TRUSTEE GUESTS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY:** Trustees Alvarado, Boudreau, Landrau, Magovern, and Martin.

Dr. Ramon S. Torrecilha, President of Westfield State University, Mr. Stephen Taksar, Vice President for Administration and Finance, and Ms. Tricia Oliver, Chief of Staff, were also participating remotely.

Chair Queenin called the meeting to order at 8:33 AM, and stated the meeting would be held entirely by Zoom and be live streamed on YouTube.

On behalf of the entire Board, Chair Queenin thanked the faculty, staff, administration and students for doing an outstanding job during these challenging times of uncertainty and the entire technology department for implementing remote learning and working. The commitment to the University is truly appreciated by the Board.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Sullivan, seconded by Trustee Martinez-Alvarez, to approve the minutes of the November 26, 2019 meeting.

**Roll Call Vote:**

Trustee Sullivan	Yes
Trustee Martinez-Alvarez	Yes
Trustee Queenin	Yes

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Chair Queenin stated that he had been in regular communication with President Torrecilha regarding the current campus condition and he asked the President to explain what he and his team are doing.

President Torrecilha stated it is really a difficult time for students, the state, nation and world. He thanked the campus community for coming together on behalf of students. The faculty have continued to do heroic work, together with staff from all over the campus. He thanked students for their flexibility during this challenge and expressed appreciation for their willingness to learn in a different way. He shared the following updates:

- He has been in daily contact with the Executive Office of Education, Council of Presidents, cabinet & chair of the Board.
- The federal CARES Act will provide some funding for higher education, and Westfield State is expected to receive approximately \$4.5 million. Fifty percent of that will go directly to students, and we are awaiting guidance from Washington on the distribution of the remaining funds.
- The Department of Higher Education (DHE), Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM), and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) advised us to centralize all requests through MEMA for personal protective equipment (PPE) and usage of our residential halls. We have been asked to provide some rooms for first responders. The initial conversation was about the use of Lansdowne, but since that property is leased through DCAMM, we are now looking at providing rooms at University Hall. MEMA would engage outside staff to manage it.
- We are working with the Executive Office of Education and the DHE to accelerate refunds to students in April in the amount of approximately \$7 million for services not rendered to students, specifically room and board. We are seeking to get additional funding from the state.
- Revenues for the Commonwealth may decline by \$2 billion, so we are expecting a decrease in the state appropriation by 5%. We are adjusting the numbers of expected students. As of now, all positions have been frozen and cabinet is reviewing the list of vacancies and will get back to the campus community this week. All expenditures are being looked at and a budget shortfall of \$10 million is expected.
- Commencement in May has been canceled, but we are working on a way to celebrate with families.
- In the middle of June, the Council of Presidents will have a discussion on the onset of the next academic year and we are hopeful to be able to come back to campus in September.
- In response to Chair Queenin's request for an update on the rapidly changing financial conditions, President Torrecilha stated that for the April 30 meeting, Vice President Taksar will create models to look at through the lens of retention, the \$7 million refund to students, and the impact of COVID-19. Because of the projected loss in state appropriations, there are many variables and the Board will need to understand some of the ramifications moving forward. Significant financial challenges need to be thought about, planned and reviewed by the Board.
- In response to Trustee Martin's request for a brief enrollment update, President Torrecilha stated that the entering class was about 15% less than projected. The dip in retention is projected at approximately 7% and we are expecting a 5% decrease in the state appropriation. The numbers are very fluid and we are continuing to look at deposits and registration, but will have a better sense toward the end of the semester. We really won't know until the fall how many students we may lose from the pandemic due to financial instability or family issues.

Chair Queenin stated this issue is not unique to Westfield State as it is state-wide. He thanked President Torrecilha and his leadership team for their service and dedication over the last one and one-half months.

Chair Queenin continued with an update on the interim president search, stating that the guidelines from the Board of Higher Education (BHE) have been shared. He has reached out to the BHE, the Commissioner of Higher Education, and other state institutions. The Registry in Peabody, Massachusetts, was contacted, who provided six interim president candidates. Trustees Martin and Queenin interviewed all six and narrowed the candidates down to two. Final interviews will be held with the whole Board on April 14 or 15

by Zoom and streamed live via YouTube. It is hoped to bring the final two candidates to the Board for vote on April 30, wrap up negotiations by May 15, and then send the candidate to the BHE for approval.

Chair Queenin gave an update on the presidential search process. Based on the BHE Guidelines, a process sheet has been created to use as a comprehensive guide moving forward. It is hoped to kick off the search committee in the summer, working with a search firm to create the job description, interview process, and on-campus visits, and then make a choice later in the winter. This plan has to be fluid based on current conditions. There are 13 search firms that have been approved by the state, and Chair Queenin has reached out to three of them after speaking with other institutions. Over the next few weeks, he will get specific information on each of the firms and will bring it to the April 30 meeting. He stated today's meeting was to give an update on the process, and asked if there were any concerns, insight, or observations.

It was questioned whether the target dates on the process sheet would be filled in prior to the April 30 meeting and it was stated that the dates would be filled in once the chairman and the committee have been selected in order to have their input. The Board was reminded that the regulations state that an interim president can act for one year so the process needs to be started soon, and that the BHE defines who will be on the search committee.

Chair Queenin ended the meeting by wishing everyone and their families well over the next weeks and months. He stated that Father Savage has been very supportive of our students and sends an e-mail every day, which is very helpful in these times.

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Trustee Martinez-Alvarez, seconded by Trustee Sullivan, to adjourn.

**Roll Call Vote:**

Trustee Sullivan	Yes
Trustee Martinez-Alvarez	Yes
Trustee Queenin	Yes

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Draft Minutes of November 26, 2019
- b. Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Guidelines and Procedures for the Search, Selection, Appointment and Removal of State University and Community College Presidents, June 2013
- c. Draft Presidential Search 2020-2021 Process Sheet