



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Academic Affairs Committee

**June 11, 2025, 9:30 a.m.**

**Minutes**

Conference Rooms A & B, University Hall

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

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Committee Chair Chris Montemayor, Vice Chair Jason Queenin, Secretary Daniel Currier, Trustee Michael O'Rourke, Trustee William Reichelt, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY:** Trustee George Gilmer

Also present and participating were Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. William Salka; and Dean of Graduate and Continuing Education, Nora Padykula.

Committee Chair Montemayor called the meeting to order at 9:30 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 O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Queenin to approve the minutes of the April 22, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

### **SUCCESS Money update:**

- Charge: Reorganize and modernize student academic support offices under academic affairs.
- Goal: Improve retention and other KPIs (persistence, time to completion, progress in accumulating credits).
- Plan to have everything in place by the fall.

#### Three Major Actions This Summer

- Reorganizing the support offices.
- Working with the Strategic Enrollment Committee.
- Creating a three-year retention model.

#### Reorganization of Existing Offices

- Existing offices are scattered across Academic Affairs.
- Offices serving distinct populations (Banacos, Military Services) will be under one umbrella.

- Likely changing the name of the Center for Student Success and Engagement (CSSE) to Opportunity Programs.
- Moving the advising center out of CSSE to serve all students.
- Adopting a dual advising model (faculty advisor and professional advisor for first and second-year students).
- Offering tutoring and success coaching.
- Expanding the Center for Belonging, including training and an emerging leader's institute.
- Embedding belonging and inclusion within all curriculums.

#### Data-Driven Retention Efforts

- Creating retention models using three methods to identify students likely to succeed or struggle.
- Goal: Intervene before students start to struggle.
- Focusing resources on students who will benefit most.
- Moving away from a "one size fits all" approach.

#### Modeling Student Success

- Using a journey mapping model to identify barriers students face.
- Using Starfish 360 data to predict student success as first-year students arrive.
  - Identify students at low, medium, and high risk.
  - Focus resources on high-risk students.
- Running logistic regression models using data not in Starfish to predict success.

#### Fall Data and Initiatives

- Observed 156 students needing withdrawal in their first year.
- Addressing this through:
  - Faculty development for FY instructors.
  - Putting peer mentors in every section.
- Peer mentors are available to help students with their problems.

#### College 101 Workshop

- Beverly Army Williams is creating a College 101 workshop.
- Workshop to clarify expectations for college students.
- Addressing basic things like attending class, doing homework, and turning in work.
- Following up with other workshops throughout the fall semester.
- Embedding peer writing mentors within the exploring complex issues.

#### Financial Affairs Materials

- There's a substantial increase in retention projected for the fall.
- Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor worked with success money this spring had a significant impact.
  - She accomplished more in two weeks than the speaker did in the eight months prior to her hiring.

#### Board KPIs

- The board appreciates the focus on KPIs.
- Retention is a major factor, and significant improvements are being seen.
- The environment is changing, with students entering college with a different mentality than in the past.
  - Adaptation is necessary to remain relevant.
- Priorities for academic affairs:
  - Ensuring the curriculum and majors attract students and provide necessary skills.
  - Retention.

## **Completers by Major**

- Completers refers to the number of graduates from each major this year (August, December, and May).
- There are some very large programs on criminal justice and psychology.
- One of the main priorities is to meet with every department to determine what makes their major unattractive and suggest improvements.
- Traditional majors are declining nationally, because students and parents don't see a clear path to employment.
  - Example: English degrees.
- Lightcast, a labor market software, will be used to identify skills and jobs for each major.
  - The University can also analyze alumni data to see what jobs graduates are getting.
  - Departments can then adjust their curriculum to teach these skills and highlight career paths to students.
- This issue is most common in arts and sciences.

## Professional Studies Programs

- Numbers are better in professional studies, but some programs still have fewer graduates.
- The same analysis will be done for every program.
- Many programs in professional studies are accredited with curriculum set by international bodies.

## Measuring Student Success

- The key is to use software to tie information together and paint a broader picture of student success after graduation.
- Success is defined as obtaining a job that provides a good living.
- This is the first time they're attempting to tie these things together.

## Rethinking Teaching

- Need to rethink how we teach and shift the focus from content to skills development.
- "The content of the discipline is not as important as it was 20 years ago because everybody's got a computer."
- Focus on critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and writing skills.

## Connecting with Industries

- Chemistry departments can combine environmental sciences to become more robust.
- Baystate Health and Cooley Dickinson are desperate for certain types of people.
- Increase the Spanish program, because doctors and nurses want to communicate with patients.

## Certificates in DGCE

- Develop certificates that provide the skills that employers are asking for.

## National Trends Affecting Majors

- There's a lack of love for math, affecting majors like accounting and finance.
- Accounting and finance have many jobs available, but marketing and management are gaining traction.
- Professional organizations are discussing pipeline issues for students not going into certain majors.

## Internships and Externships

- Discuss with departments how to incorporate required internships or externships to market majors.
- English has a required internship that is very good for marketing the major.

- The information presented includes job placement percentages and further education enrollment.
- 38 graduates with 100% job placement success.
- Data may differ from what was previously loaded into the software.

#### Graduate Programs

- Successful master's programs include social work, counseling, criminal justice, and physician assistant.
- Smaller programs may not have enough students to run a course (minimum 10 students), which impacts the quality of training.
- Many low-enrolled programs are fully on-ground, which is not ideal for graduate students who need online, asynchronous options.
- New graduate programs in Master of Business Administration and Nurse Practitioner are being considered.
- Athletic training master's and athletic training programs will go into the form this fall.
- Students are finishing capstones or counseling hours and will be in the next cycle looking at them gradually.
- Some programs have in-person requirements like orientation, but others like criminal justice offer fully online options.

#### **Emeritus Status**

- Dr. Volker Ecke, Professor Emeritus in Mathematics:
  - Served as elementary education coordinator.
  - Developed and supervised the Advanced Mathematics in Elementary Education Major program.
- Dr. Katherine Walsh, Professor Emerita in Social Work:
  - Left a tenured professorship to come to Westfield State University.
  - Demonstrated commitment to student education and advising.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee O'Rourke to The Academic Affairs Committee recommends to the Full Board of Trustees: To approve the granting of Faculty Emeritus, effective June 11, 2025, to the following individuals: Dr. Volker Ecke, Mathematics, and Dr. Katherine Walsh, Social Work. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

There being no further discussion.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee O'Rourke to adjourn the meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed by majority.

Meeting adjourned at 10:08 AM.

#### **Attachments presented at this meeting:**

- a. Minutes of April 22, 2025
- b. Success Grant Presentation
- c. Motion Faculty Emeritus

d. Faculty Emeritus Approval Letter

**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 Academic Affairs Committee meeting held on June 11, 2025.

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Barney Garcia, Secretary

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Date