



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Enrollment Management & Student Affairs Committee

Minutes

June 11, 2025

11:15 PM

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>

MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Committee Chair William Reichelt
- Vice Chair Tessa Lucey
- Secretary Jason Queenin
- Trustee Daniel Currier
- Trustee George Gilmer

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 Student Activities, Involvement, and Leadership, Matt Dellea
- Director of Marketing, Alyssa Goodreau
- Social Media Specialist, Madeline Leblanc

Committee Chair William Reichelt called the meeting to order at 11:17 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 Gilmer seconded by Trustee Currier, to approve the minutes of the April 22, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed.**

Undergraduate Projections for Fall 2025

- The final report for fall 2025 looks strong with a lean over last year.
- Currently at 865 first-year students and 167 transfer students.
- Goal for transfer students adjusted down to 220, confident in reaching the goal.
- 677 students brought to campus for accepted student days.

Questions and Answers

- Question about fallout in the next couple of months.
 - Fallout for first-year students usually starts around the beginning to middle of July.

- Projecting for 12% melt of total number of deposits.
- First bills will be released on July 1, 2025 with a plan to make the process less stressful for students.

Admissions Professionals' Ethical Responsibility

- When/where appropriate, admissions professionals counsel students and parents away from enrollment for economic or personal reasons.
- Admissions counselors develop trust with students and parents to discuss personal finance.
 - They are trained to address concerns about costs and payback after graduation.
- Admissions is doing financial aid consulting and student account work.
 - Significant cross-training has occurred.
- One-on-one counseling is provided, especially for those who haven't completed the bill process.
 - Students are given options like commuting or attending community college before transferring.

Financial Aid and Support

- Individual meetings with financial aid officers are offered at accepted student days.
- Financial aid officers follow up with students and refer them to federal resources.
- There is a significant amount of education offered on the admission side to support students and families.

Enrollment and Competition

- The University is running pretty similarly to last year in terms of yield.
- The biggest concern is students deciding not to go to college anywhere.
 - Competing with the message that college may not be worth it.
- Programs are redesigned to show quantifiable outcomes to parents, like job placement and salary.

Enrollment Trends and Retention

- The University has been in a situation where they are not replacing as many students as they are losing.
- They are starting to level off total undergraduate enrollment.
- Retention numbers are key to affecting the equation of incoming versus outgoing students.
 - Retention is a campus-wide initiative.

Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE) Admissions

- Dan Forster, Senior Executive Director of DGCE Admissions, presented the DGCE admissions numbers.
- The chart combines graduate and undergraduate programs and includes all aspects of the programs.
- The goal represents where they were last year in the fall.

Undergraduate Numbers

- 39 students have registered for some classes.
- 58 have confirmed by attending an orientation session or email.
- Large programs: Criminal Justice, Psych Management, Liberal Arts Studies, and Nursing.
- Almost half of the confirmed students are in an online program or online completion program.

Graduate Programs

- Masters Public Administration (MPA): 7 registered, 14 confirmed.

- Accounting: 2 registered, 6 confirmed.
- Masters Social Work (MSW): Ahead of last year, 2/3 of students are online.
 - The advanced standing course starts in summer session two.
- Counseling program: Currently at 21 registered, with more applications being processed.
- Physician's Assistant (PA) program: Spring start, cohort of 30 students per year.
 - The application process starts in July.
- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program: Low numbers, confidence in at least 11 confirmed.
- Criminal Justice (CJ) is on target.

Marketing

- Engaged with Vision Point for digital ads across platforms.
- Saw an effect from a quick-to-launch campaign in January for MSW.
- Additional increase in applications this summer.

Questions

- Online programs are becoming more regionalized.
- MSW did a great job converting some students from online to on-ground programs.
- Vision Point's market reach is beyond the state but still regional.

Online Programs

- Most colleges now have some type of online program, are launching programs, or have partnered with an OPM (online platform).
- COVID forced many universities to offer online programs.
- Marketing strategies include contacting grads, working with the undergraduate population, and reaching out to students who left without a degree.
- The vast majority of online learners (excluding major players) still study within 35-60 miles of campus.

Certificate Programs

- Launching a Business Leadership Certificate and will reach out to regional business leaders.
- Two more certificates are planned for the spring.

New Student Orientation

- Orientation starts on Monday, June 16, 2025.
- 75.2% of incoming students registered for a summer orientation session, closer to 80% as of today, compared to 35% last year.
 - Integrated orientation registration into admissions CRM (Slate program).
 - Outreach to students has been easier and more automated.
- The financial aid office speaks directly to families and is available for individual meetings.
 - A program facilitated by Dan Forster and co-presented by the director of financial aid and the director of student accounts will educate on bill pay.

Orientation Program Design

- Tailored and impactful experience for both students and parents with separate schedules.
- Unique track for first-year and transfer students.
- Part of a broader progressive engagement strategy.
- Faculty engagement includes faculty speaking to the transformative power of education and Provost Salka and Hilary Sackett-Taylor discussing academic priorities.
- Students will register on their own for their first-year Journey class online.

Enhancements to the Program

- Collaboration with campus partners has been strengthened to ensure consistent messaging across all departments.
- More opportunities have been created for one-on-one interactions between students and professional staff to support relationship building and belonging.
- Intentional time is built into the schedule for families to connect with one another.
- The University's values and expectations are articulated throughout the program to reinforce a shared commitment to student success.

Shift Away from Overnight Orientation

- Finance and the level of anxiety contributed to the move away from overnight orientation programs.
- Participation rates in summer involvement overnight programs were falling nationally, even pre-pandemic.
- The current program is a quick opportunity for families and students to come together.
- The student group is focused on social engagement, while families receive a "boot camp" to prepare them for the next eight weeks before fall.

Marketing Update

- Marketing has been restructured to build a strategic, data-driven approach to elevate, drive enrollment, and strengthen community.
- Assessments, inventory management, and the allocation of marketing projects will be in partnership.
- Marketing has realigned and strengthened partnerships with key vendors to ensure seamless integration and alignment with institutional priorities.
- Focus is on evolving the brand, improving navigation and overall user experience, and seamlessly integrating web content with the Slate CRM system.
- Exploring the creation and activation of a digital media suite to serve as a centralized hub for producing high-quality video, photography, and audio content.
- "Our brand is more than just a logo. It's more than just a tagline. It's the perception that people have of who we are and what we offer getting. It's what people think, it's what they feel."

Branded Environmental Graphics

- The installation of branded environmental graphics is underway.
 - Building signage and banners are being installed.
 - Goal is to create a more cohesive campus experience that reflects pride and identity.

Community Partnerships

- Strategic marketing partnership launched with the Westfield Starfighters baseball team.
 - Strengthens community ties and builds awareness.
 - Connect with local families, alumni, and prospective students.
- The partnership has connected with nearly 1400 students from Westfield Intermediate School.
 - Opportunity to inspire future outlook early on.
- Dr. Thompson will throw out the first pitch at the Starfires game on June 25, 2025.

University Website Progress

- Websites are one of the most powerful marketing tools.
- Content specialist Kylie Hensley has led a massive content transformation.
 - Redesigning and optimizing 123 academic program pages.
 - Launching 10 MSW program pages.

- These are strategic tools to improve prospective student engagement and boost search engine visibility.
- The Foundation provided financial support for some of this work.

AI Chatbot

- University site-wide AI Chatbot launched on June 2, 2025.
 - Led by marketing copywriter, in collaboration with 29 campus offices.
- Allows users to get quick, reliable answers 24/7.
 - Reduces the burden on staff and enhances user experience.
- Usage has already tripled in one week.

Website Updates

- Updating the University website with a new dynamic video for the hero image.
- Enhancement keeps the website visually competitive while maintaining accessibility.
- Moving aggressively to create video content to be as engaging as some competitors.

Campus Branding Initiative

- Focused on the lived experience of the Westfield State brand.
- Interior of Ely Campus Center transformed with Westfield State-inspired details.
 - Vibrant staircase graphics and a collage of student life photography.
 - New lounge features include video games, an air hockey table, and fresh furniture.
- Exterior of Parenzo Hall is being reimaged with welcoming and inspirational entrance banners.
 - Commitment, community, collaboration, champion.
 - "You can play anywhere, but you win at Westfield."

Banners and Marketing

- The banners currently displayed are drafts and will be presented to the cabinet for approval.
- The large banners say: Commitment, Community, Collaboration, Champion.
- External illustrations will be added to buildings to help students understand their location and its importance.
- There's a suggestion to include information that would "get people jazzed," such as the percentage of graduates who find jobs in their field.
- The marketing team produces creative concepts, with Alyssa's leadership being key.
- The goal is to "put the pedal down on marketing and lift up our brand."
- There's a discussion about the visual appeal of the banners, with some finding one side more appealing than the other.
- Academic achievements, publications, and faculty research will also be highlighted.

Social Media Strategy

- Madeline LeBlanc, the social media coordinator, is introduced to discuss the social media strategy.
- Social media is considered "future forward" and fundamentally important to the institution's direction.

Social Media's Importance

- Social media is the "new front page of the newspaper" for prospective students and families.
- It often serves as the first impression of Westfield State University.
- Students are increasingly using platforms like Instagram and TikTok to assess if a campus feels right for them.
- 84% of high school seniors use social media as their primary research tool for colleges.

- Students use social media for news, shopping, and finding information, moving away from traditional marketing.

Social Media Strategy and Impact

- A social media strategy was launched in April.
- Each platform now serves a specific purpose, with intentional posting to reach the right audience with the right message.
- Content is posted with intention, timing, frequency, messaging, and authenticity.
- Increased focus on student-led content to showcase the real Westfield State experience.
 - Supports goals in admissions, retention, and university reputation.
- Each social media platform serves a unique purpose and an audience.
 - Instagram: Prospective and current students, campus life, student engagement.
 - Facebook: Parents and grandparents, student success, parent engagement and transparency.
 - TikTok: Prospective students, trends, student life, recruitment and relatability.
 - LinkedIn: Alumni, faculty, staff, academic excellence, reputation and partnerships.

Social Media Performance and Resources

- Westfield State University is sixth in Instagram and Facebook followers compared to top competing schools.
- Averages about 100 new followers each month.
- More focus on social media efforts since the separation of social media, marketing and communications departments.
- Need for additional social media staff to plan, publish content, track trends, and develop daily touch points.
- Bridgewater State University has five full-time social media staff members and a student content team.
- Salem State University has three full-time social media staff members.
- Westfield State University has one full-time social media staff member and three students.

The Value of Social Media

- Social media is critically important for brand elevation and activation.
- Authenticity is key and comes through an intentional approach.
- Madeline Leblanc, a recent alum, has firsthand experience of what it's like to be a student on campus and how to reach different audiences.

Board Activation

- Board members are encouraged to engage with and share Westfield State University content on their LinkedIn profiles.
- LinkedIn is a modern-day business card.
- A “like” on LinkedIn gets shown to all of your connections signaling that you've engaged with this post and increases visibility across your network.
- A comment boosts the engagement and helps to be seen by more people, including those outside of your immediate network.
- Sharing the post allows it to go in front of your entire network experience.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier, and seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to adjourn. There being no discussion, **motion passed.**

Meeting adjourned at 12:39 p.m.

Attachments:

- a. Minutes, April 22, 2025
- b. Powerpoint Presentation

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 meeting held on June 11, 2025.

Jason Queenin, Secretary

Date