



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Special Meeting
Minutes**

March 25, 2021

Meeting held virtually 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 Kevin Queenin, Vice Chair Edward Sullivan, and Trustees Melissa Alvarado, Paul Boudreau, Robert Magovern, Dr. Robert Martin, Ali Salehi, and Dr. Gloria Williams

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Secretary Lydia Martinez-Alvarez and Trustees Madeline Landrau and Thalita Neves

Dr. Roy Saigo, Interim President of Westfield State University, and guests Scott Liberman, President of Westfield State Alumni Association, Elizabeth Scheibel, Chair of the Westfield State Foundation, Inc., and Attorney James Cox were also participating remotely.

The meeting was called to order at 1:01 PM by Chair Queenin, and a roll call identified the members participating remotely as listed above. It was announced that the meeting is being livestreamed, and, as a result, will be captured as recorded.

MOTION made by Trustee Boudreau, seconded by Trustee Sullivan, to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2021 Board of Trustees meeting.

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** taken:

Trustee Alvarado	Yes	Trustee Salehi	Yes
Trustee Boudreau	Yes	Trustee Sullivan	Abstained
Trustee Magovern	Yes	Trustee Williams	Yes
Trustee Martin	Yes	Trustee Queenin	Yes

Motion passed with one abstention.

Chair Queenin thanked the many groups, committees, faculty, staff, librarians, and cabinet in working and teaching and managing the unknown in the environment of the last year. He thanked the students who have been flexible during a challenging academic year. Everyone is looking forward to a fall semester where we can welcome faculty to the classroom and students to the campus, playing fields, theater stage, and dining commons while taking advantage of the many opportunities to have a meaningful experience at Westfield State University.

President's Report: President Saigo shared we have come a long way in the short eight months he has been at Westfield State. He highlighted the following:

- Dr. Robert Kersting, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, has shared his plan to retire. Dr. Kersting came to Westfield 25 years ago and was the first social work faculty member, creating a program that grew from 11-13 students to 40-100 students per year in the BSW and MSW programs. He was thanked for his commitment to education and the University. President Saigo is working on a process for a replacement, will seek input from groups on campus, and share his recommendation and ask for approval from the Board in the near future.
- The article in today's *Republican* shared his experience in WWII as one of 120,000 people incarcerated in Arizona because of his Japanese heritage. Asians have been described as a model minority because they work hard and keep quiet. A Japanese saying is "the nail that sticks up gets pounded down." The Board of Trustees is a policy group assisting in directing the institution, and their leadership will help carry us to the next level. Be aware of issues coming as we are in a situation where we need to confront discrimination taking place. As an Asian, he is looked at as an enemy because of WWII, the Korean War and Vietnamese conflict. When seeing an overt act, speak up or you will be corroborating that behavior. We all need to confront racist issues and be more mindful of micro aggressions, which are debilitating for many. Our University and community needs to be more welcoming.
- On the 2021 International Women's Day, he was reading a book entitled *Vital Voices*, by Alyse Nelson, which challenges assumptions about power and the two models of leadership. The old model is hierarchical, exclusive, and about talking and not listening, with the power to discipline or not to reward. By contrast, the new model is about empowerment, listening, compassion, and empathy. Power is amplified when shared, but hierarchical leaders hold power and it tightens and disintegrates. He started the University Efficiency Analysis Advisory Committee (UEAAC) with 22 employees which has expanded to 100, creating tremendous achievement. Change in communication, trust, and respect is difficult, but it is being done together and he appreciates the commitment of assisting this institution to move to the next level.

Chair Queenin stated his announcement section will be addressed later in the meeting.

Presidential Search Committee Update: Trustee Martin, chair of the committee, gave the following update:

- The position for president was advertised in December, with a soft deadline of February 12, 2021.
- The committee met to screen 68 applications and identify 14 semi-finalists for Zoom interviews from March 16-18. Prior to the start of the interviews, one finalist withdrew.
- On March 23 the committee identified a slate of finalist candidates to invite to campus for interviews, and by next week we should be able to announce their names. Trustee Martin is proud of the committee and their ability to work together, listen to each other, and come to a consensus, voting unanimously on the slate of candidates.
- The search firm is contacting the approved slate to ascertain their willingness to continue in the search. This is a critical time for candidates because if they choose to go forward, their names will become public.
- A metric table was shared showing the diversity and highest level of positions of the applicants and semi-finalists.
- The committee desires that candidates come to campus but will be sensitive to the COVID-19 environment. Many meetings will be by Zoom with smaller meetings being a combination of in-person and Zoom. Each candidate interview will take place over 1½-2 days.

Safe Opening/COVID-19 Update: Mr. Richard Lenfest, Jr., Director of Athletics and Chair of the Safe Opening Task Force, shared the current COVID-19 Dashboard. Last week's quarantine of a residence hall was successful, having lower positive tests this week. The amount and frequency of testing has contributed

to being able to keep operating this semester. Planning is underway for a more robust campus in the fall, with the expectation of receiving further guidance from the state on testing and vaccinations needed.

General Announcements: Chair Queenin shared that he and Trustee Alvarado met with Mr. Liberman of the Alumni Association, Ms. Scheibel of the Foundation, and Dr. Erica Broman, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, to collaborate in increasing fundraising for students.

- Dr. Broman said that meeting ensured all three boards were aligning their work comparably, with terrific results. The dashboard and strategic goals of the Foundation were shared to enhance and echo what is being done on all the boards. There is collaboration, cooperation, and competition for the Give a Hoot fundraiser on April 6 to raise \$55,000 from 350 donors. There is a joint incentive of the Alumni Association, Foundation, and Board of Trustees to unlock a \$10,000 gift with 100% participation from each board. Give a Hoot donations contribute to the Westfield Fund, Owls Helping Owls, Scholarships, and Athletics.
- Mr. Liberman stated the Alumni Association is engaging with alumni, getting them to remember why they loved Westfield State and to help connect them with old and new friends. Alumni are being encouraging to help with the student experience, scholarships, and community projects. The Association has voted to give funds to Give A Hoot, Dever Stage seats, and the hockey locker rooms.
- Ms. Scheibel said there is currently so much energy with the three boards and Dr. Broman's expertise. The collective goal is to improve fundraising in order to give more money to the University to use for students. Trustee Sullivan left the meeting at 1:49 PM.

University Efficiency Analysis Advisory Committee (UEAAC) Update: Dr. Juline Mills, committee chair, stated that UEAAC has developed a process for establishing 15 working groups to build out or implement recommendations and aligned the recommendations with the Strategic Plan. They met with three Board members to identify items that need further work and are appreciative of the time and input of the Board, Attorney Cox, and the Board of Higher Education. The committee produced an implementation planning guide for each recommendation in phases and identified the purpose of the Board liaison to the working groups.

Board Communication re: UEAAC: Chair Queenin stated that in a previous meeting with Dr. Mills, she explained that there was a perception that the Board was trying to slow down the UEAAC process and the Board was asked to put in writing their support of the process. The Board was provided a draft letter of support to be reviewed with comments sent to the Board assistant.

FY21 and FY22 Budget Update. Daniel Forster, Vice President for Enrollment Management, and Stephen Taksar, Vice President for Administration and Finance, shared the following updates. Mr. Forster stated:

- Deposits are higher than the last five years, making us cautiously optimistic.
- The number of applications is down from last year. Progress is being made through phone, direct mail, and social media campaigns but it has not been enough to overcome the deficit.
- Second and third generation students are applying earlier, more often, and to more affluent colleges because of the change in SAT requirements. Students of color and first generation students are not applying in numbers previously seen. FAFSA applications are down 10%, and as much as 20-22% in gateway cities.
- A narrower 1-2-3 application has been created and provided to school counselors, along with a dedicated digital campaign, ConvertNow, to help close the gap in applications. There have been good returns from direct marketing, and the social media click through rates are above the national average.
- The application fee and official transcripts have been waived, we are having open campus tours,

have pushed hard for FAFSA completions, repackaged student awards, and retargeted funds for students to live on campus. Phone calls have been made to every accepted student and financial aid has been increased in next year's budget.

- They are trying to remove the obstacles of moving to the common app to get to a paper-free system and prepare for an increase in applications, but there are financial expenditures to implement it.

Mr. Taksar stated that FY21 scenarios and projections have been made based on shifting circumstances. The spending and hiring freeze created savings and there is optimism that the plan created in December/January will carry us through the fiscal year with the belief that substantial reserves will not have to be used. There is lost revenue from the refunds provided last fall and the loss of \$3.5 million is a true impact to the FY21 budget. COVID-19 related costs total \$1.5 million to date this year. The original planned use for reserves embedded in the budget are intact and still assumed to occur.

There is a significant amount of uncertainty for FY22 with a projected \$7 million structural deficit. Current projections show an expected enrollment decline in the deficit of 5%-6%. It had been anticipated that the UEAAC recommendations would be further along in implementation to positively affect the FY22 budget. The pandemic will affect planning for enrollment and campus operations, resulting in a modified approach for FY22 budget planning. It is recommended to continue developing the December budget model to be presented in April instead of a draft budget at that time. The early retirement program deadline has been extended and final numbers will not be available until late April or early May. A provisional budget is suggested for June to allow additional time to study options available to create the budget with federal funding, the early retirement plan, UEAAC recommendations, and enrollment.

Reductions to the deficit can be made by implementing the UEAAC recommendations, in cost savings from the vacant positions from the early retirement plan, and one-time funding for allowable COVID-related expenses. Since the financial configuration of implementing the school structure, the merge with CGCE, and recommendations 7, 8, and 9 may take longer than anticipated, another strategy is needed to prepare for FY22.

A more thorough update on the CARES Act funding will be given at the April meeting, but the CARES Act is composed of three allocations:

- Last spring \$4.5 million was received with half distributed to students in emergency grants and half distributed to the institution to support refunds to students and investment in technology.
- In December, 2020, \$7.2 million was received with \$2.2 million for student grants to be disbursed this month. The remaining \$5 million is for institutional support and can be applied to existing expenses due to COVID.
- The third allocation has not yet been determined. The federal stimulus funding bill proposes \$3 billion to Higher Education but the DHE has not announced the amounts to be issued to each campus.

Chair Queenin brought forward the following action item.

MOTION made by Trustee Queenin, seconded by Trustee Magovern, to ratify the actions of the Executive Committee on February 18, 2021 to approve the use of cash reserves to fund the upfront costs for the 2021 Voluntary Retirement/Separation Program (VRSP), as presented.

Discussion: Mr. Taksar explained that through collective bargaining, the VRSP was approved for all units with a \$25,000 cash payout per person, creating savings going into next year's

budget. The University has identified \$10 million of one-time reductions this year and does not have the ability to fund the program. Reserves are needed for the payouts, committing to replenish the funds over a two-year period. The detailed report was vetted by the Executive Committee.

There being no further discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** taken:

Trustee Alvarado	Yes	Trustee Salehi	Yes
Trustee Boudreau	Yes	Trustee Sullivan	Left Meeting
Trustee Magovern	Yes	Trustee Williams	Yes
Trustee Martin	Yes	Trustee Queenin	Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

Performance Audit Update–Office of the State Auditor: Mr. Taksar said the Office of the State Auditor has concluded their work. An exit conference was held where the content of the report was discussed with a deadline of today to submit written comments. Once the report is finalized it will come back to the University to review and discuss its content and the actions required to respond to the findings.

It was questioned whether the search for a replacement provost would be internal or external. President Saigo stated there has been a suggestion and he is working with campus groups and will be presenting his recommendation on the next interim provost, which the new president can keep or find their own.

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Trustee Magovern seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to adjourn.

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** taken:

Trustee Alvarado	Yes	Trustee Salehi	Yes
Trustee Boudreau	Yes	Trustee Sullivan	Left Meeting
Trustee Magovern	Yes	Trustee Williams	Yes
Trustee Martin	Yes	Trustee Queenin	Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 3:08 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a) Draft Minutes of January 21, 2021 Board of Trustees Meeting
- b) Candidate metric
- c) UEAAC Implementation Report
- d) Draft Board Communication re: UEAAC
- e) Motion – Ratification of Executive Committee Action February 18, 2021 to Use Reserves
- f) Use of Reserves (Summary)
- g) Use of Reserves (Analysis)
- h) Use of Reserves (AFSCME Agreement)
- i) Use of Reserves (APA Agreement)
- j) Use of Reserves (MSCA Agreement)