



## **Board of Trustees**

### **Executive Committee**

3:00 PM

November 26, 2019

President's Boardroom, The Horace Mann Center

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| <b>1. Call to Order</b>   | Chair Queenin |
| <b>2. Approval of Minutes</b><br>August 19, 2019  | Chair Queenin |
| <b>3. Items for Discussion</b><br>a) Presidential Evaluation for 2018-2019 Academic Year      | Chair Queenin |
| <b>4. Items for Action</b><br>a) Motion – Presidential Evaluation for 2018-2019 Academic Year | Chair Queenin |

#### **Attachment(s):**

- a. Draft Minutes of August 19, 2019 meeting
- b. 2018-2019 Self-Evaluation of President Ramon S. Torrecilha, Ph.D.
- c. Report of John M. Anderson, Ph.D., October 2019
- d. Distributed at meeting: Draft Presidential Evaluation for 2018-2019 Academic Year
- e. Motion to Approve and Submit Presidential Evaluation for 2018-2019 Academic Year



**Board of Trustees**  
Executive Committee  
**Minutes**

President's Boardroom, The Horace Mann Center  
August 19, 2019

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Committee Chair Queenin, Vice Chair Sullivan, and Secretary Martinez-Alvarez

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

**TRUSTEE GUESTS PRESENT:** Trustee Landrau

Dr. Ramon S. Torrecilha, President of Westfield State University, was also present. Mr. Sheridan Carey participated by Zoom as a guest.

The meeting was called to order at 1:12 PM by Chair Queenin.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Sullivan, seconded by Trustee Martinez-Alvarez, to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2019 meeting. **Trustee Sullivan abstained from voting and Motion passed.**

Chair Queenin gave an update on the Presidential Evaluation for FY19 and stated Trustee Martin would be drafting the evaluation with the assistance of Trustee Martinez-Alvarez. Outside assistance is being brought in for the evaluation and Trustee Martin is in communication with that person. Once all the details are worked out, an announcement will be made of how the procedure will work.

Chair Queenin distributed a letter of August 14, 2019 from Commissioner Santiago of the Board of Higher Education approving Westfield State University's Strategic Plan, and Chair Queenin congratulated all who participated in the process.

Dr. Jalisa Williams, Assistant Vice President of Human Resources, came to the table to share information on offering a Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP) similar to the Salem State VSIP. Westfield State has been in discussions with representatives of the Department of Higher Education (DHE) and has provided draft documents to them. The DHE will share the documents and have discussions with the state unions, who have supported the Salem State plan. Once that has been done, the proposed timeline would be to give notice to employees in October and start the plan in November. The final Incentive Program would need to come back to the Board for approval. It was stated that this current proposal is for the APA and AFSCME unions and discussion with the MSCA union will take place once the faculty are back in September.

Mr. Stephen Taksar, Vice President for Administration and Finance, expressed appreciation to the Executive Committee for meeting to discuss and approve the Investment Policy and transition plan so that the investment strategy can be implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Robert Quinn and Mr. Duke Laflamme from Eaton Vance gave a presentation of the proposed transition plan. Eaton Vance manages \$475 billion and the majority of their employees are located in Massachusetts. Their goals for Westfield State University are to enhance and preserve the funds and protect inflation adjusted purchasing power of the portfolio by placing 60% of the funds in equities and 40% in bonds and cash. All funds will be invested in cash first and then investments planned quarterly or as needed after discussions with the investment team. It was suggested to put 85% in U.S. equities and up to 15% in developed and emerging market equities. Mr. Carey suggested a three-year phase-in could be done for less risk as well.

Eaton Vance's proprietary research analysis will guide the investment opportunities and manage risk. Mr. Quinn stated that they are part of the Eaton Vance Investment Council, which makes decisions and allocations. They also have access to all of Eaton Vance's leadership team, and meet with the chief investment officer every morning. Eaton Vance has shown good performance with all the state college funds they manage. The fee structure is 36 basis points. Charles Schwab will be the custodian for the assets, charging \$4.95 per trade with no fee structure (in addition to the 36 basis points). Fees are typically \$300 per year in years two, three, and going forward. For performance reporting purposes, the portfolio will be compared to a blended benchmark of a 60% equity index (comprised of 60% S&P 500 index and 40% All Country World equity index) and a 40% bond index (Bloomberg Barclay Intermediate Term Government Credit Bond index). It was requested that Eaton Vance attend the next Finance and Capital Assets Committee meeting on October 10.

The Investment Policy (No. 0430) was brought forward for discussion.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Sullivan, seconded by Trustee Martinez-Alvarez, to approve and adopt the updated Westfield State University Investment policy (0430), as presented.

The following discussion of the Policy took place.

- Asset allocation figures were changed to 60% in equities, 38% in fixed income, and 2% in cash
- Acceptable ranges were changed to 45-65% for Equities and 35-65% for Fixed Income
- Strike the last sentence on page 2. Eaton Vance can make the rebalancing decisions.
- In the Investment Section, change the language so if a bond is downgraded below Baa/BBB, it should be sold as quickly as prudently possible.
- Bonds below Baa/BBB: colleges have 15% of fixed income in their portfolio. Below investment grade bonds offer a good investment. Mr. Carey agrees there should be some. Agreed not to put in the policy initially and it can be revisited later.
- On page 7, the fossil fuel and alternative investment strategy was discussed. Of the 10 state colleges Eaton Vance works with, 9 do not have the language. It was agreed to keep it in the policy.
- It was agreed to keep the best practice of reviewing the policy every year.

**Motion to approve and adopt the updated Westfield State University Investment policy (0430), as amended in the meeting, passed unanimously.**

**MOTION** made by Trustee Martinez-Alvarez, seconded by Trustee Sullivan, to establish an account with Charles Schwab as custodian for Eaton Vance Investment Counsel, and to approve the transfer of twenty million (\$20,000,000) dollars from Westfield State University's checking account at Berkshire Bank to the newly established Charles Schwab account for investment purposes.

Mr. Taksar stated there was \$50 million in Berkshire Bank as of July 1. After transferring these funds out, it will leave \$30 million in operating funds. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Taksar stated that he and Ms. Lisa Freeman, Associate Vice President of Administration and Finance, were signers on the Schwab account. He requested that at least two trustees be added to the account in a “trusted advisor” role who would have access to the information and to whom Eaton Vance or Charles Schwab could call if needed. It was agreed that the following Trustees should be added to the accounts as trusted advisors: The chair of the full Board (Kevin Queenin), the chair of the Finance and Capital Assets Committee (Edward Sullivan), and Trustee James Hagan.

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

Meeting adjourned at 2:09 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Minutes of June 27, 2019 (Draft)
- b. Eaton Vance Transition Plan
- c. Motion – Investment Policy
- d. Investment Policy #0430 (Revised with Tracked Changes)
- e. Investment Policy #0430 (Revised – Clean Copy)
- f. Motion – Investment Account and Fund Transfer
- g. Investment Cash Balances
- h. Handout: August 14, 2019 correspondence from Commissioner Santiago–approval of Strategic Plan

#### **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 Executive Committee meeting held on August 19, 2019.

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Lydia Martinez-Alvarez, Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# President Assessment

DR. RAMON TORRECILHA

*WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY*

September 30 - October 2, 2019

John M. Anderson Ph. D.

*Associate*

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# Introduction

This is a formative assessment of President Ramon Torrecilha to assist the Westfield State University Board of Trustees in their annual evaluation. The protocol of the Penson Center for Professional Development was followed. The primary purpose of this evaluation is to assess and enhance the effectiveness of the President.

Ramon Torrecilha assumed the Office of President of Westfield State University in January 2016. This followed a national search conducted by the Board of Trustees with broad participation from the University community.

## Methodology

Principles of constructiveness, fairness, and thoroughness were employed throughout this process. While open and broad-based, the consultant was mindful that this is a personnel matter and deserves careful, considerate treatment and professional behavior in demeanor and intent. The review focused on patterns of perceptions rather than individual views. Participants in the review process were asked to be open and were informed that all comments would be kept confidential and that no individual attribution of comments would be given in the report. The report serves as one component of the evaluation to be conducted by the Board of Trustees and submitted to the Massachusetts Commissioner of Higher Education.

Before conducting a campus tour and on-campus interviews September 30 – October 3, 2019, a document review was conducted (Appendix I) which led to the development of a series of interview questions for selected University constituencies. Those individuals who were not able to meet with the reviewer were invited to send written comments. In addition, a telephone pre-visit interview with Dr. Torrecilha was conducted on September 23, 2019.

Documents, of course, tell only part of the story. Listening to individuals reveal their accolades, emotions, passion, and concerns, is in many ways more revealing than assessing strategic plans, audit reports and fundraising outcomes. Detailing the

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content of personal interviews contributed significantly to the validity of this assessment.

Approximately 80 people were interviewed over three days. Before each interview, participants were presented with a brief overview of the evaluative process and its purpose. A framework of questions was prepared for each group to ascertain and identify the common themes of Dr. Torrecilha's presidency. The purpose is to assist the President in advancing the University's mission and ensuring its success.

Special appreciation is extended to Jean Beal, Assistant to the Board of Trustees, Westfield State University, for serving as an exemplary coordinator for this process. She collected and forwarded numerous documents for review. Ms. Beal was particularly superb in coordinating all the logistics for the site evaluation including constituency interview schedules, tours and making the consultant welcome to the campus.

## Review of President's Self-Assessment and Pre-Visit Interview

President Torrecilha was forthright in his self-assessment description of the campus "climate," citing racial incidents on campus, labor disputes, and a scarcity of public resources. He recognized that perhaps early on the discontent among faculty was related to contract-related disputes but acknowledged that the resulting vote of no confidence by faculty was also related to a lack of trust, communication, and leadership.

When his initial attempts at outreach to restore confidence in his leadership and build bridges with campus constituencies were admittedly ineffective, he issued a campus communique. In his message, President Torrecilha stated, *"...I and cabinet members are keenly aware of errors, opportunities not taken, and moments when we should have engaged differently."* He also included an offer to meet with union leaders and a list of opportunities to build communication and engagement. The President has

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expressed some disappointment in the participation to date, however, it may be too early to assess the progress on these opportunities with the beginning of the fall semester still with us.

President Torrecilha is deeply concerned about the campus discontent and necessarily preoccupied with it, but to his credit, he continues to focus on institutional priorities. He recognizes a “sense of urgency” to move forward with important strategies. According to his self-assessment, there were many issues that he felt needed his immediate attention such as developing and implementing a Strategic Plan. His concerns about enrollment and budget were supported by data such as enrollment trends and financial information. According to his self-assessment, the plan is intended to prepare the university in addressing the areas of enrollment, public funding, and workforce needs. He states, *“Directly addressing our NECHE report need to align planning activities, the document charts strategic goals of creating an excellent student experience, diversifying enrollment, improving culture, and expanding resources.”*

Again, in the context of a highly charged campus atmosphere, President Torrecilha acknowledged the hard work and continuing efforts of the Board, cabinet, faculty, and staff in accomplishing the following:

- Recognizing academic issues related to the students of color academic achievement gap and enrollment declines with specific constituencies. Strategies are underway to address these issues.
- Securing funds for the renovation of Perenzo Hall. This is an exciting opportunity to develop a fully integrated student success center of innovation that will contribute to the strategic initiative of student success.
- Aligning budgets with planning. Several dashboards have been created to monitor progress.
- Recruiting two new partners to join the “Westfield Promise” program. Westfield State has an above-average participation rate among the nine state universities.
- Procuring \$190,000 from Massachusetts Department of Higher Education to support the “Westfield Promise.”
- Adding an additional transfer agreement with a community college.



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- The Provost is leading a process for program review.
  - The Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (CURCA) presented more than 200 works to the campus and guests.
  - Fundraising is successful in its efforts, resulting in a prestigious CASE award for overall improvement at a public comprehensive institution.

In addition to last year's self-assessment, campus documents reveal other major initiatives the President has initiated during his tenure which include:

- Hiring new cabinet members.
- Reorganizing academic areas into Colleges.
- Supporting the State-wide "Westfield Promise" program and garnering financial support.
- Initiating the "Westfield Experience" program.
- Developing a program for students with intellectual disabilities.
- Building partners with local high schools and Community Colleges.
- Engaging with many community leaders to build the presence and image of Westfield State University, including the Chamber of Commerce, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, Stanly Park Board, and "MassHire."
- Providing regular Op-Eds for the local media.
- Initiating the process for a comprehensive Strategic Plan for the University.

An important role of a president is to keep an eye toward the future in preparation for necessary changes that keep pace in an ever-increasing competitive higher education landscape. In his self-assessment, President Torrecilha clearly and passionately articulates his perspective on future challenges and the need for change in higher education, and how it relates to Westfield State University. His challenge will be to inspire all campus constituencies to engage in the adjustments needed to meet future challenges.

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# Review of Campus Interviews

The following questions served as a guide for discussions with each constituency group or individuals that were interviewed. Alignment with the skill clusters identified by AACSB Penson Center informs the questions used in this assessment.

An in-depth interview process was employed for this assessment using an open-ended questioning method. For example, an initial question could lead to further development and discussion among the group.

In analyzing the results of constituency responses to in-depth interviews, patterns of responses were identified. A summary of that analysis follows in this section.

## Areas of questioning:

1. **Leadership** (What is the leadership style?)
2. **Decision making** (What is the decision-making style?)
3. **Effective Change Leadership** (Do people feel inspired to follow a new vision?)
4. **Communication** (Ability to plan, organize, manage resources, and execute.)
5. **Administration** (Good at managing resources, both fiscal and human.)
6. **Human Relations** (Ability to work with others.)
7. **Entrepreneurship** (Innovator, capturing opportunities.)
8. **Stewardship** (Commitment to protecting the good name of the institution and the office, to **high ethical standards**, and the appropriate use of the institution's resources.)

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## Summary of constituency interviews:

Many external members of the community participated in the interviews. Constituents included peer presidents in the region, community leaders, elected officials, University volunteer Board members, and business leaders. There is a rather consistent agreement among **external** constituencies on many of Dr. Torrecilha's leadership skills and attributes.

- Thoughtful in his approach and strategic in his thinking.
- He listens, analyzes, then speaks.
- He is not afraid of making decisions.
- Very thoughtful in his approach.
- Visionary and innovative.
- A facilitator.
- His effort to be part of the community.
- Astute in government relations.
- Very thorough in his preparation.
- Student-centric.
- Has a good cabinet; he hires well.
- Passionate about Westfield State.
- Doesn't show empathy.
- Not a warm and fuzzy.
- A top-down approach, not a lot of collaboration.
- Not afraid to make a decision.
- Committed to economic development.
- Cares about student success...willingness to develop partnerships with high schools and community colleges to promote student success.
- Town/gown relationships improving. Has never done anything to publicly damage the reputation of the University or faculty.
- High energy. Many wonder how he keeps the pace he has established.
- High-engagement level especially with community leaders. Not only does he show up, but he is also engaged.
- Passion for and commitment to student success.
- We are lucky to have him!

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- Different than past University leaders, more corporate style and thoroughly understands the business side of the University.
  - He seems to know where higher education needs to go and articulates that vision (for example, regular Op-Eds published in local papers).
  - Came to campus in a time of chaos...needed a more autocratic style leader to make decisions.
  - He sees himself as the one to guide the change needed at the University.
  - An excellent communicator...well prepared.
  - “I was impressed when he came to my office for an introductory meeting...that was the first time a WSU president ever visited me!”

During the course of discussions, some concerns and suggestions were also shared:

- Would like even more visibility and should maybe delegate increased community engagement to cabinet members AND train those leaders on how to participate, more active rather than passive participation, i.e. “don’t just show up and sit in a corner.”
- Would like to have more community events on campus.
- Tour more businesses.
- Reestablish stability in the leadership of the organization. Turnover and interims cause turmoil and don’t promote leadership. It’s tough to lead if you are unsure of the security of the position.
- He doesn’t show empathy.
- Not a warm and fuzzy.
- A top-down approach, not a lot of collaboration.
- Lack of relationship building.

External constituencies appear to enjoy the participation of President Torrecilha in community projects, partnerships and see him as a cooperative and engaged facilitator leader. Overwhelmingly, they are pleased he is at Westfield State University though some indicate a there are a few inconsistencies when describing his personality.

When it comes to the myriad of **internal** constituencies, the issue is far more complex with a wide range of perceptions about President Torrecilha’s leadership. Internal constituencies interviewed included department chairs, union leaders, additional faculty, “blue and white” staff, mid-level administrators, students, cabinet, and deans.

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In no particular order, the following are a sample of the paraphrased interview comments regarding President Torrecilha's leadership with subsequent summaries:

**Faculty** (includes Department Chairs as well as other faculty):

- The faculty were very adamant in describing President Torrecilha's leadership style as authoritative.
- No explanation regarding senior administrator's bonuses, implying fiscal irresponsibility and rewarding loyalty.
- Lack of transparency on budget, primarily surrounding expenditures.
- Positions not being filled creates dysfunction (too many interims)<sup>1</sup> in operations and seen by many as a way to save money.
- Post vote of no confidence attempts (office hours, town halls) to improve relations, appear to be disingenuous and scripted.
- The first year he was around campus then disappeared.
- A culture of us vs. them is very unsettling.
- Turnover and instability impacts reaccreditation for certain programs.
- Faculty are not necessarily averse to change; however, it needs to be relevant.
- Academic reorganization adds more administrators and costs and it is not clear how it benefits the University.
- Have a dialogue with faculty regarding some of his decisions like bonuses for cabinet members.
- Running on crisis mode.
- Too much time spent externally.
- Some think there are enough faculty wanting to resolve the conflict.
- Let the faculty respond to ideas.
- Not clear on vision.
- Email overload and many appear to be more self-promoting.
- Don't believe he can genuinely change.
- Monologue vs. dialogue.
- Lack of respect for faculty governance (ex. "Westfield Experience" not appropriately processed through governance system).

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- Noticed the attempt to change (for example, Town Hall meetings), however they seemed like a PR effort ...more presentation than Q&A.
  - Willful stubbornness...his way or no way...digs his heels in.
  - Communications are perceived as offensive at times citing the post attempted-Elizabeth Warren-visit communique.
  - Initial response to racial incidents was positive, although there were some different opinions on this.
  - Bring in a mediator.
  - Board of Trustees needs to take a more active role.
  - Disappointed in the board reaction to vote of no confidence.

Overall, the faculty was very sincere in explaining their concerns and some made suggestions on how the President can begin to build back trust with the faculty (these ideas follow in this report). When asked if there was hope for resolution, some faculty indicated they didn't think so. However, a couple of seasoned faculty expressed their belief that while there is a core of faculty who are adamant about having President Torrecilha removed from office, there is a larger, less vocal group who would rather see a resolution of conflict so the University can move forward and continue to serve the students in the best way possible.

**Union Leadership** (includes leaders from AFSCME, APA, and MSCA):

- Climate is punitive, not genuine.
- Lack of follow up with concerns.
- Inability to work with the union leadership.
- Don't understand why the Board thinks keeping the president is in the best interest of the University.
- During the search process, looking for approachability, vision, availability.
- Not very visible on campus except when the current evaluation was announced.
- Not listening to people with expertise.
- Efforts to change not perceived as genuine.
- It has never been this bad.

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- Too much of a like-minded cabinet.
  - Expect to be treated with respect.
  - Not collaborative.
  - A bull in a china shop.
  - Fear of retaliation.
  - Shouldn't be transactional.

It is very apparent that the union leaders feel the only solution to the conflict and discontent on campus is to remove the President from office. They are so steadfast in their position; they have begun to disengage in the governance process. For example, the faculty union leadership is not providing names of faculty to serve on the search committee for the upcoming Provost position. This type of dysfunction will harm the University's ability to find highly qualified and interested candidates for the position.

**Mid-level administrators (two groups):**

- He can be overly direct.
- Has an eye outside the institution.
- Respectful.
- Very "corporate."
- Trying to soften his approach.
- Has a 30,000 ft. perspective.
- He's fighting the culture of, "What can the University do for me?"
- Process is "driving the bus."
- The first year we were walking on eggshells...he's slowly changing now.
- He's trying to connect more.
- Wants WSU to be a player in the future.
- President shouldn't be the scapegoat.
- There has been some change...he's trying to be more visible.
- Needs to communicate better on big initiatives (for example, still confusion among faculty and administrators over Westfield Experience).
- His message during the crisis over the recent loss of a student was sincere and very much appreciated.

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- Represents WSU well outside the campus (for example, Op-Eds).
  - Very articulate and well-spoken.
  - Has made progress in “softening” his approach.
  - More sincere after the announcement of the evaluation.
  - Increased visibility on campus.
  - There is some communication fatigue.
  - Please improve sensitivity to process.
  - Faculty are discussing the conflict in the classroom.
  - Change happens when relationships are strong.
  - Has a clear vision.
  - Change takes a long time.
  - This is an unforgiving environment.
  - Changing behavior would enhance trust...up to the President.
  - This situation is affecting students.
  - I wish everyone could see the President I see, a compassionate understanding person.

There was a deep concern among the mid-level administrators over the current campus discontent. Many feel the stress and anxiety on campus and worry that the relationship with the faculty is irreversible. One comment exemplified the frustration of many mid-level administrators, who do not necessarily blame one party or another, but must navigate the tension: “It’s getting ridiculous!”

## **Students**

- Not very outgoing.
- He seems to be uncomfortable being with students.
- Not very visible at athletic events.
- Good response to the racial incidents on campus.
- No contact with RAs.
- Hasn’t met student ambassadors.
- Pancakes with the President is great...he feels sincere and seems to enjoy himself.



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- He understands where the University needs to go.
  - Faculty informed students and shared their concerns about the vote of no confidence in their classes.

It seems that President Torrecilha transitioned from an “internal” president to an “external” president sometime after his first year. The ramifications for this change seem to be reflected in the students’ (and others) comments, i.e. less visibility. There is no presidential “formula” for how much time a president should spend on or off-campus. It is contextual and depends on the needs of the University at the time. For example, when a University decides to begin a fundraising campaign, there is an expectation that the president will increase his/her time off campus to raise money. It is a very difficult balance for a president to maintain: less time on-campus results in less visibility with campus constituencies while less time off campus results in fewer opportunities to build community partners. The choice depends on what priorities are in the Strategic Plan. In every instance, those priorities should be well communicated to the University community.

**AFSCME members:**

- After meetings with the President, there is no apparent follow-up.
- Concerns were expressed over the lack of standards, SOPs, clear expectations of responsibilities from supervisors.
- Too many additional administrators.
- Perception of retaliation of whistleblower regarding bonus issue.
- There is a lack of communication between departments...interdepartmental communications need to improve. Maybe share a calendar and have monthly meetings between departments?
- Planning is not disseminated down to departments.
- President should engage more at our level.
- Doesn’t acknowledge all. “Thank yous” would be nice.

Culture at every level is reflective of senior leadership, leading by example. At the service level, there is concern over process expectations and image, as well as very

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little expression of appreciation over a job well done. This doesn't necessarily have to be from the President only, Vice Presidents could help with this initiative.

**Cabinet:**

- Direct communicator...decisive.
- Sets high expectations.
- Seen growth in his style...a better listener.
- Cabinet members feel free to disagree with the President.
- He encourages openness.
- Understands finance.
- His best strength is strategic thinking.
- With faculty union, we're stuck.
- The prior president gave away the store...now it's hard to get it back.
- It's hard to inspire those who don't want to try
- The president is extremely well-prepared...all the time.
- There has been a culture of lack of accountability in the past and now it's hard to establish that.

The cabinet is all relatively new to their positions and some are new to the University. They are a well-intentioned group and have a great deal of respect for the President. There seems to be a sense of frustration in making progress with the existing environment the way it is.

In other constituency interviews, the cabinet has sometimes been portrayed as a group of "yes men/women." This is a paradox of intention. A high-performing team is characterized as one that avoids "group-think" and is free to share alternative perspectives to make the best, well-informed decision possible. However, another characteristic of a high performing team is, once a decision has been made, support it throughout the organization. Thus, the paradox; free to argue points internally but show uniform support externally. From the outside, it may appear that the President has surrounded himself with people that only agree with him, even though that may not be the case. Cabinet members at Westfield State have described their decision-making process as one with healthy debate.

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## Deans:

- Authoritative, top-down administrative style.
- Leadership is filtered through the cabinet. How the cabinet behaves is how the president is perceived.
- The cabinet's mantra of "speaking with one voice," doesn't serve them well.
- Prior leadership gave what people wanted and was very personable.
- The President is very successful externally.
- The President is very organized.
- The number of interim positions leads to instability.
- There is a lack of dialogue between all constituencies.
- This University is like an orphan family...it needs a parent, i.e. a strong leader.
- Confusion over provost hire. A four-year interim position??
- The President's personality is variable...
- Communication is "messed," rather than genuine.
- Need to address the elephant in the room. Vote of no confidence was overwhelming.
- Questions and concerns have gone unanswered.

The Deans are in a unique position as being the closest to the faculty in an administrative role. However, there is uncertainty with so many being in interim positions. There is a great opportunity to understand faculty issues and concerns if there was more direct communication with this group. Taking care to not usurp the role of the Provost, the President should hear from this group periodically.

## Conclusions

The fabric of a University is woven together by many threads of constituencies, students, faculty, administrators, staff, alumni, community leaders, and volunteers. The President is responsible for keeping that fabric tightly woven. It requires maintenance of effort to build the support of all constituencies or everything begins to unravel. As a relatively new President, he has faced what many new campus leaders face: a sense of

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urgency to address issues that potentially place the University in peril, while at the same time listening to the myriad of constituency concerns his first year and beginning a campus-wide process of strategic thinking. Unfortunately, the relationship with faculty never gained a solid footing and remains extremely contentious, which consequently affects relationships with other constituencies. There is probably enough blame to be shared by all. Despite this toxic environment, the President has been able to establish and begin acting on strategic priorities through the new Strategic Plan and build significant positive relationships externally. However, to assure the future well-being of the University, the conflict between the President and faculty union needs to be addressed.

In this assessment, I have shared what I heard, assess what it means, and will make recommendations to assist the President and thus the University in accomplishing its mission and successfully serving its students.

This evaluation contains five recommendations, some of which originated from discussions in the interview process and suggested by caring and concerned members of this University.

### **Recommendation 1:**

It is recommended that for the University to resolve the conflict between the President and the faculty union, an external expert in conflict resolution be engaged as soon as possible. It is recommended that the Board of Trustee Chair and President of the Faculty Union mutually agree on a mediator to proceed.

### **Recommendation 2:**

In his efforts to be more engaging and enhance communication, the President initiated office hours. It is recommended that the President move his office hours from his office to other locations throughout the University.

### **Recommendation 3:**

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It is recommended that the format of “Town Halls” be changed. Town Halls should be more of a dialogue than a presentation and focus on one issue. For example, conduct an open discussion on the rationale behind bonuses handed out to senior administrators.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

To make the Strategic Plan more meaningful and promote buy-in, have Vice Presidents identify how all constituents of the University Community contribute to the Strategic Plan. This should promote buy-in at all levels of the organization.


#### **Recommendation 5:**

The President should attend critical group meetings of students throughout the year. For example, at or near the beginning of each semester, meet with RAs, student ambassadors, student government leaders, and at the beginning of each season, meet with student athletes. This provides an opportunity to show the interest of the President but also allows for an opportunity to remind students of the importance of their role.

# APPENDIX I

List of documents that were reviewed:

Tab #:	Document Requested:	Detail:
1	President's Self-Assessment 2019	September 3, 2019
1	President's Institutional Priorities, Assessments and Self-Evaluations, together with Evaluations prepared by the Board of Trustees submitted to the Department of Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●August 23, 2018</li> <li>●June 28, 2017</li> <li>●September 13, 2016 (including President's 100 Day Report)</li> </ul>
2	President's Curriculum Vitae	Ramon S. Torrecilha, Ph.D.
3	Organizational Charts for entire University	As of July, 2019
4	Last regional accreditation visitors' report transmitted to the institution – NEASC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Report from April 1-4, 2012 Visit</li> <li>●Letter dated January 24, 2013</li> <li>●5<sup>th</sup> Year Letter dated July 11, 2017</li> </ul>
5	Names, officers & committee assignments of Board of Trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●List of Board of Trustees &amp; Officers</li> <li>●Committee Assignments</li> </ul>
6	<p>Last four regular full Board of Trustees &amp; BOT committee meetings:</p> <p>Additional recent meetings:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●December 5, 2018</li> <li>●February 7, 2019</li> <li>●April 24, 2019</li> <li>●June 20, 2019</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●April 10, 2019 Investment Subcommittee</li> <li>●May 3, 2019 Audit Committee</li> <li>●May 15, 2019 Special Board Mtg.</li> <li>●June 3, 2019 Audit Committee</li> <li>●June 27, 2019 Executive Committee</li> </ul>
7	Strategic Plan 2019-2024	<p>Attached. Also link from website:</p> <p><a href="http://www.westfield.ma.edu/images/uploads/strategicplan/StratPlan_Update_ApprovedVers-WEB.pdf">http://www.westfield.ma.edu/images/uploads/strategicplan/StratPlan_Update_ApprovedVers-WEB.pdf</a></p>
8	Enrollment Management Plan	2017 to 2021

9	Summary of institution budget, w/ major revenues & allocations to major units identified. Auxiliaries, soft money, and operating moneys separated and identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●FY20 Budget Narrative</li> <li>●Cabinet Funding Recommendations</li> <li>●Schedule of Annual Tuition &amp; Fees</li> <li>●FY20 Detailed Budget by Trust Fund</li> <li>●FY20 Campus Budget</li> </ul>
10	IPEDS data summarized by revenue & expenditure category compared with revenues & expenditures of the institution's national peer group and state peer group	
11	Student, faculty, & administrative databases or the Fact Book that contains these databases	2017-2018 Draft Fact Book
12	List of all Governance Committees & members	As of September 6, 2019
13	2017 Postgraduate Report	
14	CURCA catalog from May 3, 2019 Event	
15	Massachusetts Teachers Association/NEA Massachusetts State College Association (MSCA) Union Contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2017</li> <li>●Tentative Agreement March 4, 2019</li> <li>●Second MOA April 10, 2019</li> <li>●Third MOA April 10, 2019</li> </ul>
16	Association of Professional Administrators, MTA/NEA (APA) Union Contract	July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2020
17	American Federation of State and County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Union Contract	July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2020
	Links to Documents/Information:	
18	Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogues	Links from website: <a href="http://catalog.westfield.ma.edu/">http://catalog.westfield.ma.edu/</a> click on drop down for graduate: 
19	Link to University's "view-book" (institutional overview)	<a href="http://www.westfield.ma.edu/about">http://www.westfield.ma.edu/about</a>
20	Link to Parenzo Hall Renovation page	<a href="http://www.westfield.ma.edu/parenzorenovation">http://www.westfield.ma.edu/parenzorenovation</a>

<p>21</p>	<p>DHE Email of 3/22/19 listing Statewide Priority Objectives-The Equity Agenda</p> <p>BHE Performance Measurements Reports (Data Dashboards) Background Approval 12/11/18</p> <p>Link to dashboards:</p> <p>Spotlight Reports:</p> <p>BHE Guidelines on Presidential Evaluations and Compensation</p>	<p><b><u>Attached</u></b></p> <p><a href="https://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/BHE/03%20BHE%2019-02%20Performance%20Measurement%20FINAL.pdf">https://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/BHE/03 BHE%2019-02%20Performance%20Measurement FINAL.pdf</a> (background)</p> <p><a href="http://www.mass.edu/datacenter/pmrs/home.asp">http://www.mass.edu/datacenter/pmrs/home.asp</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.mass.edu/datacenter/pmrs/home.asp#spotlight">http://www.mass.edu/datacenter/pmrs/home.asp#spotlight</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/PresidentialCompensationandEvaluationGuidelinesandProcedures-FormattedforPublicDistributionF.pdf">https://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/PresidentialCompensationandEvaluationGuidelinesandProcedures-FormattedforPublicDistributionF.pdf</a></p>
<p>22</p>	<p>Equal Opportunity, Diversity and Affirmative Action Plan</p>	<p><a href="https://www.westfield.ma.edu/images/uploads/policies/2170%20Equal%20Opportunity%20Diversity%20and%20Affirmative%20Action%20Plan%20(The%20Plan)%20(Final)%209-2018.pdf">https://www.westfield.ma.edu/images/uploads/policies/2170 Equal Opportunity Diversity and Affirmative Action Plan (The Plan) (Final) 9-2018.pdf</a></p>



**Westfield State University  
Board of Trustees**

**Evaluation of President Ramon Torrecilha**

**I. Executive Summary**

[To be written after the body of the evaluation]

**II. Description of the Evaluation Process**

Since President Torrecilha's hire in January 2016, he has been annually evaluated by the Board of Trustees in the summer or fall following each academic year. In this year the Board was mindful that the Board of Higher Education guidelines for the evaluation of college and university presidents state, "In addition to annual evaluations, more comprehensive reviews of Presidential performance must be conducted by local boards of trustees no less than three years from appointment for new presidents, and no less than every five years thereafter" (Compensation and Evaluation Guidelines and Procedures for State University and Community College Presidents, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, June 2013). In addition, during spring 2019 concerns were expressed across campus, including a vote of no confidence in the president by the faculty, about several of the president's decisions and his leadership style. For these reasons, both the Board and President Torrecilha supported a more comprehensive review that would reflect the perspectives of the larger university community, including constituencies both on- and off-campus.

The Board contracted with the Penson Center for Professional Development, an AASCU-affiliated organization, for an evaluator who could obtain an independent assessment of President Torrecilha's leadership as perceived by those in the university community and those in the external community who are impacted by the university. Dr. John Anderson, most recently the former president of Millersville University in Pennsylvania and Alfred State College in New York, was presented by the Penson Center to serve as the evaluator. Both Dr. Anderson and President Torrecilha disclaimed any personal or professional relationship. Since President Torrecilha serves on AASCU's board, he consulted with the state's Ethics Commission and filed a disclosure statement both with the Ethics Commission and the board stating that he had no involvement with the operation or management of the Penson Center. The Board also consulted with Commissioner Santiago prior to Dr. Anderson undertaking his assessment.

Dr. Anderson followed a standard assessment protocol used by the Penson Center for the evaluation of university presidents. His report to the Board and the Penson Center protocol are included as appendices to this evaluation. The protocol identifies the extensive set documents that were reviewed and the procedures that were used to select the interviewed individuals. Over three days Dr. Anderson met with approximately 80 individuals representing all segments of the university. The protocol specified individuals to be interviewed, either based upon the positions/roles they hold (e.g., cabinet members, deans, union leadership, student government leadership) or selected randomly using a table of random numbers to represent particular constituencies (e.g., faculty, administrators, staff). The

identification/selection of individuals was carried out by the administrative assistant to the board who did this independently of any involvement by the president, his staff, or the board. The Board's intent was that Dr. Anderson's review and visit would result in as fair and independent reflection of President Torrecilha's leadership and effectiveness as is reasonably possible.

In addition to Dr. Anderson's assessment, the Board also considered President Torrecilha's accomplishments against his identified priorities and goals that were established each year and endorsed by the Board. The Board considered not only the president's performance over the past year, but also his performance over the three-and-a-half-year arc of his tenure at Westfield since this is intended to be a comprehensive review of his performance. Materials considered in this phase of the evaluation included the self-evaluation that President Torrecilha submitted and his annual reviews of institutional priorities (2016-2019). These documents were supplemented by discussions with President Torrecilha.

Finally, the Board also considered a variety of metrics related to institutional goals and priorities and the BHE equity agenda. Data from the BHE's Performance Measurement Reporting System (PMRS) and the University's Office of Institutional Research were used to supplement the President's narrative about institutional and system priorities. In particular, the Board focused on data that reflected educational accessibility and affordability, student success, educational cost, financial health of the university, and fundraising, as well as the university's success in closing achievement gaps among various demographic subgroups (BHE's equity lens).

Based upon these materials, the Board's evaluation of President Torrecilha was initially drafted by two Trustees both of whom have had extensive experience in educational administration. The draft, including Dr. Anderson's report, and the president's submitted materials were shared with all Trustees for comment. The evaluation was reviewed by the Executive Committee and then presented to the full Board for its formal approval. It was then presented to President Torrecilha with opportunity to discuss its findings.

### **III. Leadership Style and Effectiveness**

One evident conclusion from Dr. Anderson's report is that there are (at least) two audiences or perspectives on President Torrecilha's leadership.

During his visit Dr. Anderson met with a representative group of peer presidents in the western Massachusetts region, community and business leaders, elected officials, and members from the several university boards, including the trustees, alumni association, and WSU Foundation. By and large this external constituency has a positive perspective on both his leadership and effectiveness in representing and advancing university interests. As summarized by Dr. Anderson, comments reflecting this perspective include:

thoughtful in his approach and strategic in his thinking; visionary and innovative; astute in government relations; cares about student success...willingness to develop partnerships with high schools and community colleges to promote student success; town/gown relationships

improving...has never done anything to publicly damage the reputation of the University or faculty; high engagement with community leaders...not only does he show up, but he is engaged; he seems to know where higher education needs to go and articulates that vision (for example, regular Op-Eds published in local papers).

On the other hand, some observers also noted issues with leadership style:

doesn't show empathy; not a warm and fuzzy; a top-down approach...not a lot of collaboration; lack of relationship building.

These latter observations mirror, but do not rise to the same level of concern or intensity, as those of several internal constituencies. With regard to this external group, Dr. Anderson concludes, "Overwhelmingly, they are pleased he is at Westfield State University though some indicate there are a few inconsistencies when describing his personality."

The picture with regard to internal constituencies is decidedly mixed to negative. Dr. Anderson states, "When it comes to the myriad of internal constituencies, the issue is far more complex with a wide range of perceptions about President Torrecilha's leadership." Negative perceptions of President Torrecilha's leadership cluster in several areas.

Stylistic concerns paralleled those articulated by some external observers:

Willful stubbornness...his way or no way...digs his heels in; a bull in a china shop; shouldn't be transactional; very corporate; he can be overly direct; climate is punitive, not genuine; please improve sensitivity to process; monologue vs. dialogue; the president's personality is variable; communication is messaged, rather than genuine; efforts to change not perceived as genuine

Concerns were also expressed with specific decisions or aspects of university operations. In particular, many comments, most often expressed by faculty commenters, related to decision making and the role of shared governance:

No explanation regarding senior administrator's bonuses, implying fiscal irresponsibility and rewarding loyalty; lack of transparency on budget, primarily surrounding expenditures; academic reorganization adds more administrators and costs and it is not clear how it benefits the University; confusion over provost hire...a four-year interim position?; lack of respect for faculty governance (ex. "Westfield Experience" not appropriately processed through governance system)

At the same time there were observers who noted strengths in the president's leadership and/or efforts to change and to respond to the concerns that have been raised:

Has an eye outside the institution; trying to soften his approach; has a 30,000 ft. perspective; represents WSU well outside the campus; has a clear vision; he understands where the university needs to go; he's trying to connect more; the president is extremely well—

prepared...all the time; he encourages openness; direct communicator...decisive; his best strength is strategic thinking

The picture that emerges from Dr. Anderson's assessment is of a president who prioritizes, who is working to address the challenges that the university confronts, who thinks strategically, and who has been particularly successful in developing positive external relationships, but has not established an internal base of support and consensus in which members of the university community feel a part of the process and are prepared to move forward together. Dr. Anderson concludes:

The fabric of a University is woven together by many threads of constituencies, students, faculty, administrators, staff, alumni, community leaders, and volunteers. The President is responsible for keeping that fabric tightly woven. It requires maintenance of effort to build the support of all constituencies or everything begins to unravel. As a relatively new President, he has faced what many new campus leaders face: a sense of urgency to address issues that potentially place the University in peril, while at the same time listening to the myriad of constituency concerns his first year and beginning a campus-wide process of strategic thinking. Unfortunately, the relationship with the faculty never gained a solid footing and remains extremely contentious, which consequently affects relationships with other constituencies....

#### **IV. Success in Meeting University Priorities and Goals**

The president's work in 2018-19 continues to demonstrate that he prioritizes strategies and goals with a clear vision of the demographic, financial and programmatic challenges that confront Westfield State University now and into the mid-term future (5-10 years). This section of the evaluation reviews the president's accomplishments with respect to the goals which he had previously established and were endorsed by the Board.

Strategic Plan. With the completion of the university's five-year strategic plan and its approval by the Board of Higher Education, the priorities which have been adopted reflect the input of constituencies across campus: building an excellent student experience (including, for example, the Westfield State Experience); diversifying enrollment; improving university culture; and expanding university resources. The president's annual goals and action items which he established at the beginning of the year when the plan was substantially completed are consistent with the plan's goals. These are reviewed below.

The university is to be commended for the completion of its strategic plan which contains important goals, relevant strategies, identification of milestones and metrics upon which to evaluate both the plan and the president's performance, and the identification of key personnel responsible for implementation of the strategies. In his approval letter Commissioner Santiago noted, "I commend and thank you and your team for the great care with which you fashioned a well-crafted proposal. You have been responsive to the need for Massachusetts public higher education institutions to work collectively toward meeting the overarching strategic goals of the Commonwealth, while at the same time, maintaining the unique characteristics and mission of Westfield State University." The president established the process and provided the resources for developing the plan but largely stayed out of the way in setting a direction. Every effort was made to be inclusive, so that the plan will hopefully have

broad community support and buy-in. Building on the plan, action items have been identified that include establishment of a protocol and cycle for program assessment, continued implementation of the Westfield Experience, and most importantly, alignment of the budget with the priorities in the strategic plan. In his commitment to the developed action items and ensuring the financial resources to achieve these, the president is clearly on board with making the plan a guiding document and relevant to the work of the university. Continued success will also critically depend on whether a critical mass of university constituencies can also see how their work continues to be critical and relevant to the plan's success.

Operational Plan for Residential Life/Responding to Demographic Challenges. President Torrecilha continues to keep the demographic challenges in his focus and is having appropriate units of the university anticipate/react, respond, and evaluate the university's strategies in meeting these challenges. Over the last several years Residential Life has experienced significant shortfalls in its occupancy targets, jeopardizing its budget. Residential Life is an "auxiliary" operation, with its own budget financed by its own revenues in the form of residence hall fees. It has restructured some operations to reduce operating expenses while using reserves from past years of high occupancy rates to keep its yearly budget in balance. Nevertheless, the demographic changes suggest that this is likely to be a continuing structural problem. Therefore, at the president's initiation the university's Residential Life operation was reorganized into two units to target problems identified through an external assessment by an independent group (Fresh Eyes): an office of residential engagement under Student Affairs to enhance the development of community and engagement in the residence halls; and an office of Housing Operations under Enrollment Management to deal with budget management and marketing of the halls. He has also thought effectively about how to use vacant space, partnering with neighboring community colleges to offer residential options [yes?] and using parts of Scanlon Hall as swing space during the Parenzo Hall reconstruction. In Enrollment Management, both Admissions and Financial Aid have modified their operations to recruit different populations of students and to improve the yield on their work. Applicant outreach (Ruffalo Noel Levitz) and communication has been improved with the implementation of a CRM package; the staff continues to be diversified to reflect the populations we are trying to reach, and use of financial aid to improve yield has been studied (EAB study) and subsequently revised. A dashboard has been developed so that progress and trends can be easily monitored.

Parenzo Hall Renovation. Last year's evaluation noted the university's and the president's success in securing funding for the renovation of Parenzo Hall, the largest deferred maintenance need on campus as identified by Sightlines. During the 2018-19 year plans moved forward with the selection of an architect, the execution of a space utilization study, and the creation and implementation of four working groups that represent affected constituencies. The working groups focus on: design of the center for student success; design of the center for entrepreneurship and innovation; design of space for academic departments; and for operations and logistical decisions (e.g., phased construction or all-at-once, what swing space to use). Several campus forums have been held to solicit input and feedback. Stepping back, Parenzo Hall has been one of the university's facilities that desperately needed either a major renovation or new construction. As the Board noted last year, President Torrecilha's strengths were readily apparent in his strategic and sustained efforts to secure funding for the project. These

included, for example, the political skills in the form frequent contacts with key legislators, governor and lieutenant governor, DCAMM commissioner, and DHE staff. He also sold the proposal to external groups (local community colleges and businesses) and got them on board as part of and in support of the proposal. Finally, he envisioned a set of centers (in addition to space for academic departments) that could advance part of the university's mission and give the university an edge in its proposal. The fact is that the \$21 million in funding **[more than to any state university or community college-yes?]** would not have been secured without these efforts and the reconstruction would not have happened without the state's funding. This is one aspect of the president's accomplishments where he has excelled. The Board would note that the creation and development of the proposal did not involve much collaboration from broad segments of the internal university community, particularly within the timelines that are often given for these proposal submissions. On the other hand, the process of executing the funded proposal over the 2018-19 year has demonstrated collaboration, shared effort, transparency, providing many opportunities for feedback from, and feedback to, the community.

College Structure. The transition to a new college structure for Academic Affairs was largely completed in 2018-19. This was an important goal of President Torrecilha for the last several years and it can put the university in a better position to support student success and to plan in a changing environment. Significant accomplishments related to this goal included disaggregating the division budgets (travel, ESTF, adjunct budget) to the colleges, training the deans to manage these budgets, creating a process for the review of faculty line requests that is rational and transparent, transitioning to the deans' role in personnel evaluations. Deans also became involved in both student and faculty recruitment processes, in managing student academic issues within their colleges, in course scheduling, in program development, and in some external fundraising.

The Board has from the beginning been strongly supportive of efforts to develop the new college structure and continues to endorse this goal strongly. The Board has observed that virtually every other comparable institution nationally has made this transition, most a while ago. That should not be and is not reason enough. The Board believes that as Westfield has grown larger in terms of students, faculty, and staff (and with more degree programs and student support services, mandates and expectations), the university has become an increasingly complex organization to manage. The challenges have also become more numerous and more significant, including a diminishing and changing demographic, financial challenges, escalating costs of attendance, among others. The Board has seen universities managed effectively ("keeping the trains moving on time"), but that is no longer sufficient in the current environment. Universities need to plan for challenges and be prepared to evolve. That work is best done with leadership at a level as close to the faculty as possible. This is where the need for resources should be discussed and prioritized, where program assessment and quality efforts should be placed, and where program development and modification can take place in response to changing circumstances.

The Board also acknowledges that the decision to create a new college structure and its subsequent implementation have received at best mixed reviews. We understand this to be a core issue in the faculty's vote of no confidence in President Torrecilha, focusing not only on the college structure itself but also on underlying issues of decision making and shared governance. The Board has seen the

president take appropriate consultative steps as the college structure was developed, consistent with both the terms of the faculty's collective bargaining agreement and generally accepted principles of shared governance. In fact, the president accepted the fundamental recommendation of the advisory committee on academic planning that was tasked with considering whether a college structure was appropriate and what models should be considered. The committee's unanimous recommendation was to restructure Academic Affairs into colleges and it advanced either a four-college or five-college model. The president opted to create a three-college model along with a fourth college of graduate and continuing education. The Board expects that President Torrecilha will make decisions, and that he will do so in what he perceives to be the best interests of the whole university. The Board also believes that when he makes a decision which is contrary to recommendations that have been presented, the president should clearly communicate his reasons and consider the impact of the decision on support for the initiative going forward. The ongoing tensions around the college structure suggest that there is certainly more work to be done.

Westfield State Experience. When fully implemented, the Westfield State Experience is planned to consist of a four-year sequential, coherent student experience that would incorporate best educational and student support practices for all students to promote engagement in and out of the classroom, learning through high-impact practices, support for transitions through the different parts of a college, and preparation for the next phase after college. During the 2018-19 academic year, the focus of efforts was on the collaboration of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to put in place the components of the years 1 and 2 of the Westfield State Experience and to scale these up for implementation in the current academic year. This was accomplished. The Westfield State Experience builds upon many initiatives and program that were already in place, but pulls these together into a coherent, structured program that can be scaled up eventually to reach all students. Since his hire, President Torrecilha has been a champion for realizing this vision and has supported the collaboration between divisions and provided the resources necessary for the program. He has recognized that the long-term success of the program is dependent not only upon committing significant resources (the strategic plan/budget already reflects the start of this commitment), but also upon building broad-based support among the faculty and staff who will be implementing the different components of the program. There is evidence that this is happening in the different groups that are working on the various aspects of the Westfield Experience, and continued attention must be given to ensuring support and ownership.

Financial Stewardship. President Torrecilha has shown himself to be extremely adept at long-term financial planning and aligning financial resources with the priorities of the university. Shortly after his hire, he moved to the development of a five-year budget model, essential to identify resources for the continuing support of various university initiatives and to model the impact of various possible changes (e.g., enrollment and/or retention changes, state appropriation changes, student fees) on the university budget. More recently, the hire of a director of budget and financial planning has been important to aligning budgeting with the strategic plan. Efforts also continued to share more budget information with the university community and to involve more constituencies in the budget development process. The past year has also seen the continuation of efforts to diversify the university's revenue stream. Specifically, the president and the Board revised the investment policy to permit the conservative

investment in equities and bonds, and an investment advisor (Eaton Vance) has been hired to manage an initial portfolio allocation of the \$20 million. The additional gain over money market rates should provide another important source of revenue support as the university manages other financial challenges. An initiative to study the organization of the office of grants and sponsored research was not completed in 2018-19, but is consistent with the president's efforts to diversify and improve the university's revenue streams.

President Torrecilha has also continued to focus on strengthening the capacity of the Institutional Advancement operations to increase fundraising (in FY 19, over \$1.5 million) by expanding the donor base, improving the quality of data, and cultivating major gift prospects. During his tenure these efforts have shown success as fundraising has consistently increased, professional staff has been added, and more donors, including faculty and staff, have contributed to the university. In fact, this past year the university was recognized with a CASE award for overall improvement in fundraising at a public, comprehensive university. Marts and Lundy, an advancement consulting group, was retained to review the structure and staffing of Institutional Advancement and to begin a campaign feasibility study to assess the potential for a capital campaign that focuses upon the Parenzo Hall renovation.

Other Considerations. The sections above have focused on the key goals for 2018-19 that were articulated by President Torrecilha. The Board also wishes to comment on several other considerations that were an important part of the 2108-19 academic year. As noted in last year's evaluation, President Torrecilha has a special strength in maintaining his focus on the long-term health of the university in addition to short-term issues and in the consistency of his priorities from year to year. Under his leadership the Westfield Promise, an early college program, continued to expand, adding the towns of Agawam and West Springfield to Westfield, Springfield, and Holyoke. The program is recognized as one of the best in the state and its enrollment represents 21% of the total enrollment in these programs across Massachusetts. Recently the university was awarded \$191,000 from the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. The Board sees the program as important not only in its own right for serving the students and towns, but also in helping to prepare the university to recruit and serve a different type of student. In the same vein the president continues to advocate for the development of articulation agreements; a new Biotechnology transfer agreement with STCC is an example of these efforts. He is recognized by his local community college peers for his efforts to collaborate and for the support he has given to improve the university's work in this area.

President Torrecilha has also been sensitive to, and focused on, the changing dynamics of higher education and its relation to the larger society. New academic programs have been added, particularly in the health sciences, that better position the university and its students. This is especially reflective in the college of Continuing Education's programmatic offerings. The addition of these has not been without some controversy, but a strong case was made for their addition and they were approved by college governance and the BHE. As noted by Dr. Anderson, much of the president's efforts have been outward-facing and his success in this area is especially noteworthy and commendable. External participants in Dr. Anderson's review are fairly consistent in this perspective and speak to his work to deepen workforce alliances with the university.



The 2018-19 year was also characterized by significant internal tension and discord on campus that culminated in and was reflected by the faculty's 211-6 vote of no confidence in President Torrecilha's leadership. President Torrecilha's self-evaluation acknowledged these issues head-on:

A February, 2019, vote of no confidence in my Presidency, and subsequent challenges to cabinet leadership, were early on fueled by an unresolved contract but revealed a much deeper set of issues on campus centered on trust, communication and leadership. Campus constituents communicated to the Board, to me, and to each other, anger and confusion over decisions regarding the newly implemented college structure, bonuses paid to several cabinet members at the end of FY18, leadership style, and philosophical differences regarding decision-making on campus.

The Board sees President Torrecilha as doing exactly what presidents are supposed to be doing: leading and directing the university community to anticipate and adapt to a changing higher education and societal landscape while managing the institution and ensuring that the resources are sufficient for university faculty and staff to achieve the university's mission. By most external indices and observations and an assessment of the president's success at meeting his annual goals, President Torrecilha has been extremely successful. [Parenthetically, the Board notes that the University's standing, as reflected in the *US News* rankings of higher education institutions, has improved significantly under President Torrecilha's leadership. In *US News*' 2020 rankings, Westfield State University ranked 86<sup>th</sup> among Regional Universities North, up from 112 in 2019 and 116 in 2018. This year's ranking puts it ahead of its Massachusetts peers and also places it 23<sup>rd</sup> among public comprehensive universities. *Money* also ranks the university highly, placing it 187 of 744 universities nationally in value for the money.]

Despite these signs of success, there exists considerable discord on campus. Several presidential decisions (e.g., bonuses) were an important source of discontent, but they cannot be undone. The bonuses were well-intentioned and deserved, at least at some level, but the award at the time was ill-considered. That should be acknowledged straightforwardly. Procedures subsequently put in place by the Board and endorsed by President Torrecilha should help to avoid a similar situation in the future. Other sources of the discontent focus on decision making and leadership style. The Board believes that President Torrecilha has been careful to follow the governance processes as established in the collective bargaining agreement. In any event there are procedures to follow (grievance article) in the event of an alleged violation. Nevertheless, these concerns may also reflect that the processes for developing proposals/initiatives and for vetting them needs to be both expanded and extended to make sure that all interested voices have the opportunity to be heard and considered. The need to accomplish something in a timely manner needs to be balanced against the imperative to ensure that proposals have sufficient support to be sustained. President Torrecilha understands the need to weigh these considerations and to be as transparent as is reasonably possible in his decision making.

#### **V. Success in Addressing the BHE Equity Agenda/Metrics**

The BHE's equity agenda affirms the state's commitment to maintaining high levels of educational attainment among the adult population while emphasizing equitable postsecondary outcomes for students from traditionally underserved backgrounds. This should be reflected in closing both opportunity gaps (measured by access and affordability) and achievement gaps (measured by success/completion indices such as timely completion of courses, retention, and graduation).

President Torrecilha has effectively incorporated these strategic priorities into the university's planning and strategic goals.

Access and Affordability. Specifically, several enrollment initiatives – the Westfield Promise, a retooling of the Admissions staff to reflect the populations we are trying to target, an analysis of how financial aid is being used – are intended both to grow enrollment and particularly to improve the representation of Latinx and African American students among our entering cohorts. While the most recent Performance Measurement Reporting System (PMRS) data show a slight decline in overall enrollment (in 2018, 5350, down 3.6% from the prior year), the percentage of Latinx, African American and Pell recipients has continued to show steady increases since 2004 -- in 2018, 11% (3% in 2004), 5% (3% in 2004), and 31% (19% in 2009), respectively. Nevertheless, the university's Institutional Research office reported that the total proportion of students of color declined by 5% in 2018. While changes in small numbers can show large fluctuations, this is concerning as it challenges the university's commitment and its future financial health. One possible explanation is the series of racial hate incidents in fall 2017 which may have impacted recruitment for the following fall. President Torrecilha has guided the university to respond assertively to these incidents and to move constructively past these.

The president's commitment to control the growth of fees (in the middle of MA state universities) and to improve its financial aid resources has had a positive impact on affordability measures. As shown in the PMRS, for 2017, the last year reported for these data, unmet financial need on direct costs is 3%, second lowest among the MA state universities. Student loan debt was \$17756, the third lowest among the MA state universities.

Student Success and Completion-First-Year. The university continues generally to do well in measures of student success. In particular, for first-year retention for 2017, the last year for these data in PMRS, Westfield's first-year retention was 79%, behind only MCAD, MMA, and Worcester among the MA state universities and in the middle of its national peer group as established by NCHEMS/DHE (72%-86%). It should be noted that more recent data from the university's Institutional Research office shows a more recent decline from these figures, likely attributable to a higher admissions exemption rates that have in the last year been reversed.

However, the university has been less successful in closing the achievement gaps between white students and Latinx and African American students. The gap in first-year retention for Latinx and African American students is 3% and 5%, both comparable to the other MA state universities. While the gap for Latinx students has decreased from a high 9.6% in 2009, it appears to have plateaued and does not seem to be trending in any direction. For African American students the gap shows some signs of increasing, though this may be a reflection of small n's that exaggerate the fluctuations. This

underscores the need for sustained and comprehensive initiatives. The Westfield Experience which focuses on student engagement, use of university support services and connection to the university in the first year should provide the framework for targeting interventions with these groups.

Student Success and Completion-Long-Term. Like first-year retention, Westfield has generally had strong six-year graduation rates, relative to the MA state universities and comparable to its national peers. Westfield's six-year graduation rate for 2017, the last year for these data in PMRS, was 65%, behind only MCAD and MMA among the MA state universities, and 5% above its national peer group average. Also positive is that the graduation rate has shown a steady increase since 2007. Similarly, the four-year transfer student rate is 67%, second only to MMA.

On the other hand, this success has not been extended to Latinx and African American students where gaps in the six-year graduation rate persist, are generally larger than our MA state university peers, do not appear to be trending in any direction either positively or negatively. For Latinx students, the gap is 12%, twice the gap for our sister universities; for African American students the gap is also 12%, comparable to our sister universities, but unacceptable. Again, acknowledging that small n's can result in large fluctuations, this is an area where President Torrecilha needs to commit resources, to support focused collaboration and coordination among student support units, and enjoin the faculty to participate in early identification and outreach efforts.

Fiscal Stewardship. This evaluation has previously discussed President Torrecilha's financial management of the university. Data in PMRS also provides insight into the president's success in this area. PMRS provides data which looks at the university's commitment of dollars to instruction and student support relative to dollars dedicated to institutional support. In the 2017 year for which data is most recently available, Westfield contributed \$6.22 toward instructional and student support for every dollar dedicated to institutional support. For comparison purposes, the mean figure for MA state universities is \$4.30 (Westfield has the highest dollar figure for instructional and student support) and Westfield's figure also places it near the top of its national peer group.



## **Board of Trustees**

Executive Committee

November 26, 2019

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### **MOTION**

To approve the presidential evaluation for the 2018-2019 academic year as presented to the Executive Committee on the above date and the submission of said evaluation to the Commissioner of the Department of Higher Education.

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Kevin R. Queenin, Chair

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Date