



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Academic and Student Affairs Committee

### **Minutes**

President's Boardroom, The Horace Mann Center

February 6, 2020

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Committee Chair Martin and Trustees Neves, Sullivan and Williams

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Trustees Magovern and Martinez-Alvarez

**TRUSTEE GUESTS PRESENT:** Trustees Alvarado, Boudreau, and Queenin

Dr. Ramon S. Torrecilha, President of Westfield State University, was also present.

The meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM by Committee Chair Martin.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Neves, seconded by Trustee Sullivan, to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2019 meeting. Trustee Sullivan abstained and the **Motion passed unanimously.**

Committee Chair Martin welcomed Dr. Diane Prusank, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, who started a presentation on the college structure, giving a brief review of the goals of the structure.

- The Advisory Committee on Academic Planning (ACAP) December 30, 2016 report provided findings which showed a growing support for a college structure. ACAP recommended moving to a college structure, stating it would "increase efficiency in budgeting and scheduling and support the kinds of disciplinary and interdisciplinary excellence now blossoming across campus."
- Course schedules have been aligned with the decline of students, saving \$500,000 in the part-time faculty budget.
- The structure creates and fosters better community for students and provides a home in the college closest to the interests of undeclared students, helping to increase majors being declared by second terms.

Dr. Jennifer Hanselman, Dean of the College of Mathematics and Sciences (CMS), highlighted the benefits of the college structure in recruitment and retention through:

- PK-12 outreach and 2-year collaborations through grant programs;
- STEM tutoring and CMS student representatives;
- Senior surveys and clinical and internship placements.

Dr. Emily Todd, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS) highlighted the benefits of the college structure in stewardship, allowing the deans to be a point person in managing:

- Stewardship of resources in offering standout facilities and majors by working with chairs on capital improvements, student travel opportunities, and the model UN program.
- Stewardship of the institution by contributions to the campus culture with overseeing fine arts being open to the whole campus and enabling the partnerships with community colleges and local high schools through the Westfield Promise.
- Stewardship of the future through program development across colleges.

Dr. Juline Mills, Dean of the College of Education, Health, and Human Services (CEHHS), highlighted how the college structure has helped the CEHHS to connect both students and faculty to the community by:

- Engaging approximately 50% of the students in the college through 1,526 student experiences in the community last year;
- Bringing community to the students by bringing renown experts to the campus, engaging 1,200 students last year; and
- Helping to manage programming to place our faculty into the community for programs such as leadership training, community building and skills and traits assessments.

Dr. Stefanie Sanchez, Dean of the College of Graduate and Continuing Education (CG&CE) highlighted the benefits of the structure by allowing the college to:

- Be a hub for innovations to support lifelong learning through community programs, early college and degrees and certificates;
- Diversify community involvement by changing to match shifting demographics and market demands and expanding programs, especially in health care;
- Provide curricular delivery for accessibility by helping students with the Prior Learning Portfolio Policy; and
- Reinvest in the University by providing funds back to it.

Challenges in the college structure have been seen in the following areas:

- Perceptions of the cost benefit to the structure. Can it have a narrower structure and be streamlined with less people in the mix?
- Clarity of roles. What is the distinction of work between the provost and the deans and between the deans and the chairs? Who is in charge of the budgets and do the chairs have a role in them?
- Communication. Has it been clear and quick and thorough enough? Formats of communication are affecting workloads with a new set of meetings required.

The next step is creating assessments to measure if the structure is working and to make improvements. Discussion surrounding this included:

- There are a number of foundations in the country who invest in assessing academic structures who may be able to support this endeavor.
- Saving the large amount of funds on part-time faculty resulted from the deans working with the chairs in reviewing the courses, schedules, resources needed, number of students for the classes, timing of class rollout, enrollment history, and reducing the number of course cancellations.

- The deans believe that they are viewed as advocates for their chairs, faculty, staff and students. They advocate for their colleges by constantly communicating, hearing and responding to needs, being present and knowing intimately what is happening, meeting regularly with chairs, going outside of campus to look for funding and invite others to participate in campus programming. Trustee Boudreau entered the meeting at 10:52 AM
- The committee requested that benchmarks be set to assess whether the colleges are meeting the goals of the ACAP Report and how the success of the structure will be measured. These items should be added to the agenda at a future meeting.
- Dr. Prusank suggested a timeline of engaging different areas of campus in the spring so assessments could start in the fall. Assessments need to reach beyond Academic Affairs and include feedback, advice, and participation from the Board of Trustees.

Committee Chair Martin commended the deans in the roles they play in the recruitment and retention process, which requires University-wide involvement beyond Admissions and Advising. Dr. Gloria Lopez, Vice President for Student Affairs, then gave a presentation on Student Affairs programming that affects retention.

- The mission: “Student Affairs fosters the development of knowledge, skills, and values vital to students’ personal, professional and global success.”
- Discussion of the importance of what is happening to students “in the middle” took place. These are the students who may not be involved in activities or groups.
- This Spring, Student Affairs will be focusing on:
  - Dialogue and strategies
  - Existing resources and services
  - Incorporating new approaches
  - Reviewing student learning outcomes to determine what it reveals about the student experience
- Divisional projects have included:
  - Resident student outreach related to their experience at Westfield State via the Residential Engagement Department
  - A commuter student survey in January 2020
  - A PVTA bus service data collection due to bus fee changes

Some highlights of Student Affairs programs were shared:

- The Athletics department is committed to developing a well-rounded experience for scholar athletes which helps them to cultivate leadership, discipline, wellness and community involvement. The 6-year graduation rate for scholar athletes is much higher than the average student, in part because they are receiving support from fellow team members, coaches and faculty.
- The Counseling Center had more first-time visits with the new check-in model, eliminating the waiting list and session limits. The number of students using the Center in the fall of 2019 showed a 2% increase over the fall of 2018. Outreach approaches were shared, which include relaxation coaching sessions, pet therapy, and Free Yoga Fridays.
- The Career Center reports that 95% of students surveyed indicated they were employed, in graduate school, or in the military. Of those employed, 98% gained employment within a year.

- Student activity numbers for the year were shown.
- Updates on Commuter Services, Student Conduct, Health Services and Public Safety were shared.
- The student perspective on the Aspire Conference will be presented during the June meeting since students were unable to attend today's meeting due to the weather delay. The conference was piloted this year with more than 30 students, which focused on sophomores. Both the Aspire and the Achieve Conference (for seniors) are great retention tools that fit in with the Westfield State Experience.
- It was stated that retention will increase when we identify and engage those students in the middle who are not connected. First-year students that feel isolation need to develop a sense of inclusivity. With the vacancy of two diversity positions at the University, the importance of continuing to provide diversity and inclusion events was discussed.

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

Meeting adjourned 11:34 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Minutes of December 11, 2019
- b. ACAP Report and College Information Packet
- c. College Structure Presentation
- d. Retention Efforts in Student Affairs Presentation