



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

### Minutes

September 15, 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.

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**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY:** Chair Dr. Robert Martin, Vice Chair Ali Salehi, Secretary Lydia Martinez-Alvarez (joined the meeting at 2:24 PM), and Trustees Melissa Alvarado, Paul Boudreau, Theresa Jasmin, Madeline Landrau, Kevin Queenin, William Reichelt (joined the meeting at 2:04 PM), Chloe Sanfacon, and Dr. Gloria Williams

Dr. Linda Thompson, President of Westfield State University, as well as cabinet members Dr. Juline Mills, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Gloria Lopez, Vice President for Student Affairs, Mr. Stephen Taksar, Vice President for Administration and Finance, Dr. Erica Broman, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Mr. Dan Forster, Vice President for Enrollment Management, Ms. Tricia Oliver, Chief of Staff, Mr. Timothy Rooke, Special Assistant to the President for Community and Governmental Affairs, and Ms. Lisa McMahan, Interim Vice President for Institutional Advancement (Designate), were also participating remotely.

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 PM by Chair Martin, and it was announced the meeting was being live streamed. A roll call identified the Board and cabinet members participating remotely as listed above, with the exception of Trustees Reichelt and Martinez-Alvarez at this time.

General Announcements. Chair Martin expressed appreciation to the Board for their University support and willingness to work with faculty and staff to make it better. Great news came out this week on the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings for the University. There was a great turnout at the employee appreciation Fiesta Friday hosted by the Board. [Trustee Reichelt joined the meeting at 2:04 PM.] It is important to know which direction the institution is moving and he is looking forward to hearing the president's goals now so they can be measured in the spring.

- Committee Assignments for 2021-2022. All Trustees assented to the draft committee assignments provided with the meeting material. While each Trustee is assigned to 3-4 committees, attendance and participation in any or all committees is encouraged. Voting is restricted to members officially appointed.

President's Report. President Thompson provided the following updates:

- She continues her listening tour, meeting with individuals and groups on and off campus to foster partnerships to help the University community flourish and thrive in the future.
- The class of 2025 moved in on August 26 with a total enrollment of 1,005 students. Returning students moved in on August 29.

- Fall registration includes 804 new first year, 202 new transfers, 112 returning, and 2,385 continuing students for a total day student population of 3,503.
- Continuing education undergraduate registration includes 8 new second degrees, 1 transfer, 7 new first time, first years, 107 new transfers, 7 returning, 357 continuing, and 269 quick admits for a total of 756.
- Graduate registration includes 235 first time graduate, 3 new post baccalaureate, 414 continuing, 7 graduate certificates, and 18 quick admits for a total of 677.
- There are 1,854 students in housing, 73 higher than the projection of 1,781.
- The many activities on campus during Welcome to the Nest, Welcome Week, and Opening Day/Week have been well attended. Appreciation was expressed to the Board of Trustees for sponsoring Fiesta Friday in appreciation of the dedicated faculty and staff.
- The president has met with student leaders, individual faculty and staff, and academic departments, and is continuing to meet with all the faculty departments this semester. Externally, her priority is to connect with community and business leaders and elected officials in Western Massachusetts.
- She acknowledged the dedication of the faculty, librarians, and staff to create solutions to work together to serve students and focus on their success in a global pandemic. We are providing a highly engaging and meaningful on-campus experience for them.
- Total students vaccinated is 87.75 percent, and 97.42 percent of residential students are vaccinated. A small portion of students were granted medical or religious exemptions.
- Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) documents were finalized at the state level with all three unions regarding masks and vaccines. Exempt or partially vaccinated individuals are required to participate in weekly asymptomatic testing.

Strategic Goals and Priorities for FY22. President Thompson stated that for the first year of her presidency, it is critical to lay groundwork in a highly collaborative manner to achieve buy-in while recognizing the importance of shared governance. Attaining the next phase of growth will require community engagement and developing close relationships with internal and external constituents. In many of her conversations she has heard a reaffirmation of the institution's mission and commitment to offering accessible, quality undergraduate and graduate programs and a focus on student engagement and success. The University is primed to develop a systematic path to achieving its vision "to be the premier public comprehensive institution in the Northeast region through its commitment to student engagement and success."

The goal for this year is to lay the appropriate foundation to focus on innovative education, collaborative partnerships, and translational research. The theme "Building a Bridge to the Future: Restoring Our Health" will be a guide to engage the campus to envision a collective path and direction focused on physical, mental, fiscal, structural, and cultural health. [Trustee Martinez-Alvarez joined the meeting at 2:24 PM.] This theme aligns with the current Strategic Plan. The president's and cabinet's supporting goals are laid out in the material and PowerPoint presentation shared with the Board that will support the University's strategic priorities:

**Presidential Goal 1: The Student Experience – Access to a fully integrated and exceptional student experience.** President Thompson shared her strategic priorities to achieve this, and Provost Mills shared the Strategic Plan priorities supporting the student experience, what is currently being done to address those priorities, and the status of those initiatives.

**Presidential Goal 2: Enrollment – Prepare to recruit, welcome, and support students in an increasingly competitive environment.** President Thompson shared her strategic priorities to achieve this, and Vice President Forster shared the Strategic Plan priorities supporting enrollment, what is currently being done to address those priorities, and the status of those initiatives.

**Presidential Goal 3: Culture – Consistently live our institutional values.** President Thompson shared her strategic priorities to achieve this, and Vice President Lopez shared the Strategic Plan priorities supporting culture, what is currently being done to address those priorities, and the status of those initiatives.

**Presidential Goal 4: Resources – Expand the Institutional Resources.** President Thompson shared her strategic priorities to achieve this, and Vice Presidents Taksar and Broman shared the Strategic Plan priorities supporting expanding institutional resources and what is currently being done to address those priorities and the status of those initiatives.

Chair Martin expressed appreciation for connecting the goals to the Strategic Plan and suggested inviting the campus community to help implement them. It is expected that Board committees will work with the president and cabinet to establish metrics for these goals to track whether they are being accomplished. Comments and questions from Trustees included the following:

- The action items to follow and trace through the year are very measurable. This ties together a focused effort by the campus community, cabinet, and the University Efficiency Analysis Advisory Committee (UEAAC) in terms of their roles, responsibilities, and expectations by the president for the entire campus community.
- Very comprehensive, well thought-out process. Having an office of strategic finance and strategic planning is a good idea. Combining the goals to an academic master plan is a large part of the process.
- Confident that these ambitious goals can be met because of the quality of people at the University doing this work.
- Do we receive information from guidance counselors on what students are looking for in new programs/degrees we may not offer? Vice President Forster stated feedback is received from high school guidance staff to improve the process, connect with students more effectively, and the difficulty students are having in the process. We have all the majors the students want with the exception of engineering. President Thompson and business faculty are meeting with business leaders to learn what students need to get into the workforce. Provost Mills added that the Campus Academic Master Plan takes the departments through that process to assess what programs need concentrations added to it. “The future of work” looks at what we offer and how to be nimble to adapt to the changing work force.
- It is essential to find the core of the four pillars to realize which are most critical to success.
- It is important to the success of the plan to receive valuable input from students on the student experience, enrollment, and culture. The students are looking for follow through and measurable outcomes. All committees and advisory boards need a student appointed to them. President Thompson stated she has met with the Student Government Association (SGA) and added members of the student body to the President’s Council. The president will continually engage with as many students as possible through the SGA and clubs.
- It needs to be advertised that we are a high-impact, values-based public institution.
- How do we get programs that are interesting and necessary for prospective students? We need to be mindful of society and community and analyze trends in business and different types of positions available in health sciences. Students are graduating from high school with limited skills and are not aware of all the career possibilities that may be available in today’s workplace.

Chair Martin stated that the Board needs to help the president keep these strategies and goals at the forefront and requested committee chairs to work with the staff liaisons to decide how and when to bring priorities back for progress reports, refinement, and updates on how the rest of the University is involved in the implementation.

Format of Future Board and Committee Meetings. Chair Martin combined feedback from the June 29 Board meeting and the president's schedule and scheduled five regular all-day meetings in October, December, February, April, and June. In alternate months, two-hour meetings will focus on key strategic issues and priorities to allow in-depth discussion. It is expected that full-day meetings will be in person (and Zoom if needed) and meetings in alternate months will be on Zoom. [Trustee Landrau left the meeting at 3:30 PM.]

Restructuring of Academic Affairs. Chair Martin requested that when additional UEAAC recommendations come forward with significant changes in structure or personnel, they be vetted by the appropriate people (legal, BHE, etc.) and presented to the Board before being implemented. President Thompson said that she will vet internally any UEAAC recommendations and provide Trustees with information for any changes proposed. The proposal being discussed today has her full support. The alignments in business and health sciences will allow us to move forward and be nimbler to create necessary programs the workforce needs in this region.

Provost Mills stated that creating an adjustable structure allows growth in enrollment, more faculty innovation, and success for students while caring for employees and maintaining our accreditation. There is still a budget deficit to balance and become stable. Benefits of the proposal include:

- Working with President Thompson to optimize growth.
- Being ready for the NECHE accreditation site visit to show how we have addressed issues that have occurred. The faculty survey proposed a smaller, balanced structure that can be changed.
- Supporting students in more effective ways instead of the separation of student support between day and College of Graduate and Continuing Education (CGCE) students.
- FY22 budget savings of \$2 million, with \$749,000 directly appropriated to the Academic Affairs restructuring. That target has not yet been met, with currently \$481,000 of the \$749,000 that has been identified. The difference is due to two targeted positions still being filled because vacant positions have not yet been identified to move them to. UEAAC was created to try to close the budget gap while retaining staff, and remains committed to closing the gap during the fiscal year. An update on the restructure will be given at the October meeting and continue through the spring.

As requested at the August 25 meeting, Trustee Sanfacon gave the students' perspective on the recommendation. There has been a short timeline to get feedback from students so most opinions are from the SGA executive council advocating on behalf of all students. Concerns of students are:

- Lack of communication with students. Since this will affect student services and departments, any structural changes should be made to help students, ideally with their input.
- Such large changes should go through governance to get all the input needed. Students have often felt blindsided by the University, and the level of transparency the University operates with is something that can be controlled.
- The University is currently operating without a college structure since college dean contracts have expired with no rehire process initiated. Students have raised the concern that delaying the rehire process and operating in this limbo without student input makes it look like the Board is being pushed to approve this recommendation with the consequences of a "No" vote being a failing academic structure.
- Some of the recommended changes are being implemented before the Board votes. The College of Graduate and Continuing Education and Day School are being combined in this recommendation and some of the CGCE faculty have begun to be moved around. The CGCE students do not know that their point-of-contact faculty have changed positions and some faculty do not have position descriptions yet.
- From the perspective of a Trustee and as a student, she would like to see a full financial breakdown of the proposed cost savings in a way students will understand.

- The reason for restructuring Academic Affairs is understood, but the methods used in creating and presenting the recommendation have been disappointing to students.

Trustee Queenin stated that he fully supports the recommended structure, but there is confusion around the process. The Board is in a difficult position because the implementation has started without the approval. Students would like more input and the UEAAC meetings should be open to the community since transparency has been discussed for several years. Activity has been happening behind the scenes and he questioned whether the recommendation has been vetted by cabinet. This recommendation is the first of more than 20 and a more defined process needs to be established going forward. Because Trustees have specific fiduciary duties, specific measurement tools need to be defined.

Provost Mills answered the questions and comments as follows:

- The merger of the Day School and CGCE is a separate recommendation (No. 2).
- Most of the recommendation regarding restructuring within academic affairs itself will not require Board approval. It has been impact bargained with the unions.
- There was a student representative on UEAAC who was unable to continue. A replacement was requested from the SGA but not received. The committee visited the SGA in the spring, and students have been placed on all subgroups and advisory committees to provide feedback to other students. Students are procured through SGA, Urban Ed, and specialty programs.
- There are no department changes; that process has to go through AUC. Structural changes to organize academic affairs to better evaluate faculty can be done on the administrative side to better serve faculty and librarians.
- Some faculty members like the college structure, but the needs of the majority have to be met.
- The college structure is ineffective. Students need 5-7 signatures to process a single form. There needs to be a balance between the budget deficit and building a structure to serve students, faculty, and staff to help innovation and growth.
- The new structure has been vetted by faculty. In 2017, the college structure was created and then communicated to and integrated with students.
- The college structure was expensed and built when enrollments were declining. Numbers are checked consistently to prevent furloughs and retrenchments. While the numbers are being refined, we need to keep going.
- There have been no structural changes before receiving Board approval. There have been divisional changes as needed, which vice presidents are allowed to do.
- Mr. Taksar stated enrollments are down 30 percent compared to the peak several years ago. We cannot afford to operate in the same way and need to change until we get back in balance.

Trustee Salehi expressed the need to be more proactive to ensure the student body, which is the institution's biggest asset, feels they are included in the process. He is disappointed that the validation is off by 36 percent. He fully supports the lead of Chair Martin, Provost Mills, and President Thompson in their knowledge of the college structure. He hopes the process is vetted and validated before the next recommendation comes to the Board and stated there needs to be a measurement of the progress and quarterly reports on the savings made. The University took a huge leap in promising budget cuts instead of reducing the deficit by other means, so we need to do everything possible to stick to that promise and be as transparent as possible.

Chair Martin stated that while this conversation feels bumpy, it is helpful in putting us in a better position to consider future recommendations. He believes that it is not the role of the Board to determine or second guess the structure; that is the job of the president, faculty, and staff. Having a structure without colleges is unworkable as the provost becomes a paper pusher. The proposed structure creates a more balanced

number of students and faculty to presumably be better served better by the leadership of a dean or associate dean who will advocate in budgeting, faculty lines, and be a quality control officer. The Board is also responsible in making sure the people of the institution are doing their work to the best of their ability. Trustee Sanfacon's comments underscore how important and hard it is to make sure proposals are fully vetted. UEAAC worked particularly hard to try to do that by sharing information and holding town halls. Going forward, everyone has the obligation to make sure that all voices have been heard.

Provost Mills stated that enrollment is critical. In moving from a college to school structure, there will be reduced salaries, but more focused job descriptions to increase enrollment. If enrollment is not increasing in the spring, program area chairs will be consulted. The budget needs to be aligned with enrollment in how to best support students and faculty. Last year most resources were frozen, which affects quality. The current college structure costs \$1.5 million and keeping it another year will increase the deficit. There are qualified, talented individuals already working here to service these positions so there is no need to create new lines to increase the deficit.

Discussion between the Trustees continued:

- The proposal and financial validation is a team effort, which underscores the validity of it. It is important that the faculty and staff have taken ownership in trying to help resolve the budget issue.
- UEAAC was given the mandate that there would be no retrenchment, layoffs, or furloughs, which clearly established the parameters. Being down so many students and trying to balance a budget is challenging without the consideration of any layoffs.
- From an institutional perspective, it makes sense that those instructions were given so that people could operate without the fear of losing their job. Looking at alternatives are appropriate reasonable institutional strategies for dealing with a deficit. Institutional buy-in will make it successful.
- The first reaction for a business facing a deficit is to cut back. Given the UEAAC charge to work to find an alternate solution, changing course in the middle of the process would be unwise. We need to give the UEAAC process a chance.
- Faculty are clear with what is happening but there may need to be a conduit for the students on committees to communicate with their classmates, maybe a question and answer session.
- The Board needs to define specifically what it needs for the next proposal.
- Provost Mills stated there have been VSIP and VRIP programs and some of the vacant positions were not backfilled. Different strategies have been made to get to where we needed to be. We cannot furlough to the future as faculty and staff are needed to grow enrollments. This was strategic to give some time to grow enrollments. We made a commitment to make changes and we need to get to that.
- The Board will develop an ad hoc committee to create criteria to establish parameters for what would assist the Board in reviewing future recommendations. Trustee Queenin will chair the group with the assistance of Trustees Salehi, Jasmin, and Reichelt.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Martin, seconded by Trustee Martinez-Alvarez, to approve the restructuring of Academic Affairs as presented this date and to authorize the President to make appointments necessary to implement the restructuring [amended to add: with the request that progress be reported back to the Board on a quarterly basis.]

Discussion: It was requested to add a quarterly progress report on the measurement against the savings, which would assure the Board that administration is paying attention to data and gives the opportunity on a quarterly basis to see if it is working. It is the Board's oversight duty to keep accountability. If the data shows it is not working, changes will be

made. This will be added to the agenda for the December Board meeting. Provost Mills stated progress reports are needed for the planning standard for the accreditation and sets the stage for how other recommendations are brought forward.

There being no further discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** taken on the amended Motion:

Trustee Alvarado	Yes	Trustee Reichelt	Yes
Trustee Boudreau	Yes	Trustee Salehi	Yes
Trustee Jasmin	Yes	Trustee Sanfacon	Yes
Trustee Landrau	Left meeting	Trustee Williams	Yes
Trustee Martinez-Alvarez	Yes	Trustee Martin	Yes
Trustee Queenin	Yes		

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Keeping the Campus Safe Policy. Ms. Donna DeCaro-Conley, Interim Associate Vice President for Human Resources, stated there is no longer a need for a Safe Return to Campus policy so it was changed to Keeping the Campus Safe policy. It incorporates the Keeping the Campus Safe Guide, mask and vaccine processes for unions and NUPS, and incorporates bargained MOUs.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Martin, seconded by Trustee Salehi, to approve changes to the Safe Return to the Campus Policy (2210), renamed Keeping the Campus Safe Policy (2210), as presented.

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

Trustee Alvarado	Yes	Trustee Reichelt	Yes
Trustee Boudreau	Yes	Trustee Salehi	Yes
Trustee Jasmin	Yes	Trustee Sanfacon	Yes
Trustee Landrau	Left meeting	Trustee Williams	Yes
Trustee Martinez-Alvarez	Yes	Trustee Martin	Yes
Trustee Queenin	Yes		

**Motion passed unanimously.**

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Trustee Salehi, seconded by Trustee Williams, to adjourn.

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

Trustee Alvarado	Left meeting	Trustee Reichelt	Left meeting
Trustee Boudreau	Yes	Trustee Salehi	Yes
Trustee Jasmin	Yes	Trustee Sanfacon	Yes
Trustee Landrau	Left meeting	Trustee Williams	Yes
Trustee Martinez-Alvarez	Yes	Trustee Martin	Yes
Trustee Queenin	Yes		

**Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 4:57 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Draft Committee Assignments for 2021-2022
- b. Presidential Vision and FY22 Presidential Strategic Goals
- c. Draft Schedule for 2021-2022 Board of Trustees meetings
- d. Motion – Restructuring of Academic Affairs

- e. UEAAC Final Report – Recommendation 1: Academic Affairs and School Structure
- f. Academic Affairs Restructure Plan – Financial Validation
- g. UEAAC Recommendation 1 PowerPoint presented at Aug. 25, 2021, Meeting
- h. Motion – Keeping the Campus Safe Policy (2210)
- i. Safe Return to the Campus, now known as Keeping the Campus Safe Policy (2210) Tracked Changes
- j. Keeping the Campus Safe Policy (2210) Final