



# Fitchburg State University

## Board of Trustees

### Board of Trustees Meeting

Published on January 23, 2026 at 6:27 PM EST

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#### Date and Time

Thursday January 29, 2026 at 1:00 PM EST

#### Location

This meeting will be held at Fitchburg State University Main Lounge and will also be livestreamed

#### Public Live Stream:

<https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/live>

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#### Agenda

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
<b>I. Opening Items</b>			<b>1:00 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Call the Meeting to Order		Michael Fiorentino, Jr.	1 m
<b>B.</b> Record Attendance		Michael Fiorentino, Jr.	1 m
<b>C.</b> Public Comments	Discuss	Michael Fiorentino, Jr.	10 m
<b>D.</b> Approval of Minutes from the October 30, 2025 meeting	Approve Minutes	Michael Fiorentino, Jr.	1 m

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
<b>E.</b> Trustee Update		Michael Fiorentino, Jr.	7 m
<b>II. Enrollment Management</b>			<b>1:20 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Enrollment Management and Student Success Committee Update	FYI	Eric Gregoire	5 m
<b>III. Academic Affairs Committee</b>			<b>1:25 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Academic Affairs Committee Update	FYI	Jennifer Flanagan	5 m
<b>IV. President's Report</b>			<b>1:30 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Presented by Dr. Donna Hodge, President	FYI	Donna Hodge	15 m
<b>B.</b> Student Affairs Update	FYI	Tim St. John	10 m
<b>C.</b> Acting Vice President/Provost, Dr. Franca Barricelli	FYI	Franca Barricelli	20 m
<b>D.</b> VP of Enrollment Management & Student Success	FYI	Pam McCafferty	15 m
<b>V. Break</b>			<b>2:30 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Break	FYI		10 m
<b>VI. Student Trustee Report</b>			<b>2:40 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Presented by M. Gill	FYI	Matthew Gill	10 m
<b>VII. Operations and Safety</b>			<b>2:50 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Operations and Safety Committee Update	FYI	Michael Fiorentino, Jr.	5 m
<b>VIII. Student Experience</b>			<b>2:55 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Student Experience Committee Update	FYI	Shane Rodriguez	5 m

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
<b>IX. Finance Committee Update</b>			<b>3:00 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Presented by Karen Spinelli	FYI	Karen Spinelli	5 m
<b>B.</b> FY26 Budget Update	Discuss	Travis Chambers and President Hodge	30 m
<b>X. Closing Items</b>			<b>3:35 PM</b>
<b>A.</b> Chair Fiorentino and President Hodge	FYI	Michael Fiorentino and Donna Hodge	5 m
<b>B.</b> Special Presentation	FYI	Michael Fiorentino, Jr.	20 m
<b>C.</b> Adjourn Meeting	FYI	Michael Fiorentino, Jr.	

# Coversheet

## Approval of Minutes from the October 30, 2025 meeting

**Section:** I. Opening Items  
**Item:** D. Approval of Minutes from the October 30, 2025 meeting  
**Purpose:** Approve Minutes  
**Submitted by:**  
**Related Material:**  
Minutes for Board of Trustees Joint Meeting (Foundation/Supporting Org) on October 30, 2025

APPROVED



## Fitchburg State University

### Minutes

#### Board of Trustees Joint Meeting (Foundation/Supporting Org)

Board of Trustees

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#### Date and Time

Thursday October 30, 2025 at 1:00 PM

#### Location

This meeting will be held at Fitchburg State University Main Lounge and will also be livestreamed

#### Public Live Stream:

<https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/live>

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#### Trustees Present

C. Stimpson, D. Tiernan, E. Gregoire, J. Flanagan (remote), K. Spinelli, L. Barrieau, M. Fiorentino, Jr., M. Gill, M. Morris, S. Rodriguez

#### Trustees Absent

S. King-Goodwin

#### Ex Officio Members Present

D. Hodge

#### Non Voting Members Present

D. Hodge

#### Guests Present

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Barbara Mahoney, John Garten (remote), K. Lundgren, Karina Calvo, M. Bruun, Marc Dohan (remote), Mary Beth Jokela, Michael Mahan (remote), Nathan Robichaud, Rick Healey (remote), Stacey Luster, Stefan Dodd, Tony Mercadante (remote)

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## I. Opening Items

### A. Call the Meeting to Order

M. Fiorentino, Jr. called a meeting of the board of trustees of Fitchburg State University to order on Thursday Oct 30, 2025 at 1:01 PM.

### B. Record Attendance - Board of Trustees

### C. Call the Meeting to Order

The Meeting of the Foundation Board was called to order by Dr. Donna Hodge at 1:03pm

### D. Record Attendance - Foundation Board

In attendance for the Foundation Board was:

Dr. Donna Hodge - in person

Dr. Patricia Marshall - In person

Eric Gregoire - In person

Tony Mercadante - Remote

John Garten - Remote

Mary Beth Jokela - In person

Marc Dohan - Remote

Barbara Mahoney - In person

In attendance from the Supporting Org:

Michael Mahan - Remote

Rick Healey - Remote

### E. Public Comments

Matt Bruun, Chief of Staff reported there were no public comments.

### F. Approve Minutes - 5/19/2025

L. Barrieau made a motion to Approve the minutes of the May 19, 2025 meeting.

E. Gregoire seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

#### Roll Call

M. Fiorentino, Jr. Aye

J. Flanagan Aye

M. Morris Aye

**Roll Call**

- E. Gregoire Aye
- K. Spinelli Aye
- C. Stimpson Aye
- S. King-Goodwin Absent
- D. Tiernan Aye
- S. Rodriguez Aye
- M. Gill Aye
- L. Barrieau Aye

L. Barrieau made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees on 05-19-25.

E. Gregoire seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

- K. Spinelli Aye
- D. Tiernan Aye
- C. Stimpson Aye
- L. Barrieau Aye
- M. Fiorentino, Jr. Aye
- M. Morris Aye
- E. Gregoire Aye
- S. King-Goodwin Absent
- S. Rodriguez Aye
- M. Gill Aye
- J. Flanagan Aye

**G. Approve Minutes - August 12, 2025**

K. Spinelli made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Board of Trustees Meeting on 08-12-25.

L. Barrieau seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

- C. Stimpson Aye
- M. Gill Aye
- E. Gregoire Aye
- M. Morris Aye
- J. Flanagan Aye
- S. Rodriguez Aye
- K. Spinelli Aye
- L. Barrieau Aye
- S. King-Goodwin Absent
- M. Fiorentino, Jr. Aye
- D. Tiernan Aye

**II. Finance Committee Update**

#### A. Presented by Karen Spinelli

**Trustee Karen Spinelli** reported the Finance Committee met on October 17th to preview the audit.

- **Jim Johnston, Audit Partner at Bollus Lynch**, presented the audit for FSU, the FSU Foundation, and the FSU Supporting Org.
  - All three entities received **clean, unmodified opinions**.
  - No findings were reported for the audit of the university's federal funding (student financial aid).

#### B. Audit Report (joined virtually by Foundation Board)

**Jim Johnston, Audit Partner at Bollus Lynch**, presented the audit for FSU, the FSU Foundation, and the FSU Supporting Org.

- All three entities received **clean, unmodified opinions**.
- No findings were reported for the audit of the university's federal funding (student financial aid).
- **Consolidated University Financials:**
  - Net position decreased by approximately **\$2.4 million**.
  - Total assets: \$290 million (decrease attributed mostly to **depreciation**).
  - Operating revenues were down about \$2 million, attributed to a decline in **enrollment**.
  - Operating expenses increased by about \$3.5 million to \$128 million (mostly **payroll related**).
  - State appropriations increased by about \$3.3 million.
- **Foundation Financials:** Investment portfolio was up about **\$2.6 million**. Noted an increase in **scholarships and awards** provided to the university.

#### C. Audit Context, FY25 Final Budget & Working FY26 Budget

**Bob Labonte (Acting CFO)** provided financial context and translation, explaining the \$2.434 million net deficit:

- The core **Unrestricted Budgeted Funds** for FY25 ended with a **\$545,000 surplus**.
- The deficit number is a result of **Fund Accounting**, primarily driven by **\$13.6 million in depreciation expense** and large state-mandated accrual adjustments (e.g., pension liability).
- **FY25 Actuals:** The University did not pull from reserves for FY25 operations and ended with a net positive operational result.

- **Revised FY26 Budget:** The budget has been fine-tuned to align with state standards and now projects using **\$2 million of reserves**, down from the preliminary estimate of \$3.5 million.
- **Q1 FY26 Trend:** The first quarter statement shows the budget is on track, with expenses generally at or below 25%.

**D. VOTE: Approve FY25 Audit (Foundation Board)**

On a motion made by Michael Mahan and seconded by Eric Gregoire, it was voted to approve the FY25 audit as presented.

- Donna Hodge - Aye
- Patricia Marshall - Aye
- Eric Gregoire - Aye
- Tony Mercadante - Aye
- John Garten - Aye
- Mary Beth Jokela - Aye
- Marc Dohan - Aye
- Barbara Mahoney - Aye
- Michael Mahan - Aye
- Rick Healey - Aye

**E. Adjourn Foundation Board Meeting**

With no further business to discuss, the Foundation Board meeting was adjourned at 1:34pm.

- Donna Hodge - Aye
- Patricia Marshall - Aye
- Eric Gregoire - Aye
- Tony Mercadante - Aye
- John Garten - Aye
- Mary Beth Jokela - Aye
- March Dohan - Aye
- Barbara Mahoney - Aye
- Michael Mahan - Aye
- Rick Healey - Aye

**F. VOTE: Approve FY25 Audit (Board of Trustees)**

K. Spinelli made a motion to Approve the FY25 Audit.

L. Barrieau seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

- K. Spinelli       Aye
- S. King-Goodwin Absent
- E. Gregoire       Aye
- M. Fiorentino, Jr. Aye

**Roll Call**

L. Barrieau	Aye
M. Gill	Aye
M. Morris	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
S. Rodriguez	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye

**III. Academic Affairs Committee**

**A. Academic Affairs Committee Update**

Trustee Flanagan reported on the Academic Affairs Subcommittee meeting held on October 15th.

Key information presented by Provost Pat Marshall included:

- Updates on the work of Academic Affairs, covering staffing changes, curricular reforms, and innovative efforts being discussed at the state level.
- Information on the programmatic assessment currently being conducted by EduVentures.

Provost Marshall was then invited to provide an overview of her report to the full body.

**B. Provost and Executive Vice President, Dr. Patricia Marshall**

**Staffing and Personnel Updates**

- **New Dean of Business and Technology:** Welcomed **Dr. Mahmoud Al-Odeh** in July. Dr. Al-Odeh previously served as Chair of the School of Technology at Eastern Illinois University and is recognized for his commitment to industry engagement and innovation.
- **Faculty Hires:** Welcomed **10 new full-time faculty** members and **8 visiting assistant professors/instructors** (one-year temporary positions). All are replacement positions due to retirements or resignations.
- **Ongoing Searches:** Currently conducting **five approved searches** for full-time faculty to start in Fall 2026, and reposting **two failed tenure track searches** and one failed one-year temporary position.
- **Resource Management:** All vacant faculty lines return to Academic Affairs for recommendation (eliminate, fill, or reallocate) based on **enrollment numbers** and curricular needs, supporting **cost containment**. Strategies include:
  - Hiring one-year temporary and adjunct faculty.
  - Replacing two faculty departures with **one line**.

- Restructuring staffing for efficiencies.
- **Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (OSP) Restructure:** Due to the shift of Institutional Research, retirement of the Director of Assessment, and a resignation, OSP was restructured:
  - **Drew Goodwin** was elevated to **Executive Director of Accreditation, Grants, and Sponsored Programs** (and congratulated on recently defending his dissertation).
  - The new structure includes an Associate Director of Grants (currently posted), the Director of Early College, and a newly created **Director of Accreditation and Assessment** (currently posted).
  - The Director of Accreditation and Assessment will also serve as the **Accreditation Liaison Officer**.
- **Dean of the Library Retirement: Jackie Kremer** announced her retirement after seven or eight years of service.
  - The search for her replacement is progressing well, attracting a **robust pool of 33 applicants**.
  - The goal is to have a new Library Dean in place before the start of the **Spring semester**.

### Divisional Priorities and Curricular Reform

- The Academic Affairs leadership team held its annual retreat in July to develop and refine divisional priorities, which were shared with chairs and faculty to ensure the division is "rowing in the same direction."
- **Key Curricular Reform Needs:**
  1. **Reduce the size and complexity of the General Education (Gen Ed) program:** It is currently at **51 credits**. Typically, Gen Ed programs are approximately one-third of a student's total credits.
  2. **Reduce the size of majors:** FSU's majors are very large, which prevents students from pursuing **minors or double majors** (e.g., Nursing and Spanish, Business and Spanish) that would better prepare them for the job market.
  3. **Revamp the First Year Experience (FYE) program:** The goal is to transform the five-year-old FYE into an **extended orientation experience** that embeds elements of college success.
- **FYE Discussion:** The Provost met with FYE directors to plan a transformation, noting that the program is a crucial **retention tool** on campus. CSI data indicates that about **20%** of students enter FSU intending to transfer out.
- Faculty (who drive curriculum) have been charged with discussing the future of FYE, including whether it should remain embedded in the Gen Ed program or become an introduction to a major.

### Innovative State-Level Initiatives

- Faculty Development Day focused on two Department of Higher Education (DHE) initiatives driven by the national conversation about **Return on Investment (ROI)** and student success:
  1. New DHE **innovation regulations** related to the **three-year degree movement**.
  2. The statewide **Co-op initiative**.
- **Discussion on 3-Year Degrees:**
- Massachusetts currently lacks a clear statutory path for institutions to offer three-year baccalaureate degrees.
- The DHE is working on regulations, which are out for public comment, with a **formal vote anticipated soon (likely December)**.
- Both the Provost and President agreed that the three-year degree model is complex, controversial (especially regarding the role of community colleges), but **imminent**.
- FSU is proactively engaged in discussions to ensure the institution is **ahead of the curve** and helps the state create necessary **guard rails** to maintain the **integrity of the bachelor's degree**.

### **New Interdisciplinary Finance Major**

- A new interdisciplinary **Finance major** (between Economics and Business Administration) was approved by campus governance in the spring.
- A feasibility study by **EAB** indicated **strong demand** and many career opportunities for students.
- Academic Affairs is finalizing the **Letter of Intent** for submission to the Board of Higher Education (BHE) staff.
- The Provost expects to share the LOI with President Hodge for consideration before the end of the semester.
- Pending Presidential approval, the program will be brought before the **Board of Trustees for a formal vote in the spring**.
- Target launch date for offering the program is **Fall 2026**.

### **Programmatic Assessment with Eduventures**

- The **combined report** from **Eduventures** assessing **53 bachelor's programs** was received earlier this month.
- **Contextualizing the Report:** The Provost emphasized that the Programmatic Assessment (PSA) is **only one tool** in a multi-pronged approach used to assess and strengthen the academic portfolio. Decision-making for programs and faculty hires must be grounded in:
  - Mission.
  - Periodic program reviews and action plans.
  - Accreditation (e.g., ABET for Computer Science, CCNE for Nursing).
  - Academic Department Trend Data (**number of majors**).

- Admissions data (from Slate).
- Market analysis and alignment with regional workforce needs.
- Enrollment in departments that support the **School of Graduate and Continuing Education (SGOCE)**, as FSU has the **largest graduate program** in the state university segment.

• **Four Quadrants for Programs:**

1. **Maintain:** Above average in both external and internal performance (e.g., Police, Game Design). Needs continued support.
2. **Monitor:** Above average in internal performance but in a challenging regional environment. Needs monitoring of regional trends.
3. **Invest/Focus:** Above average in external health but underperforming in internal success metrics. Needs cross-divisional, collaborative effort to boost **retention efforts**.
4. **Evaluate:** Below average in both external and internal health metrics. Typically programs critical to mission that can benefit from attention to internal metrics (e.g., retention).

### **Program Assessment Timeline and Strategy**

- **Next Steps:** The Provost shared the combined report with Deans this week and charged them with identifying points of **alignment and divergence** between the report and current/recent departmental efforts.
- **Goal:** To have an analysis and list of these items by the **end of the semester** for review in the spring. This will ensure **Eduventures** data is used in conjunction with other key metrics, notably **SGOCE enrollments**.

## **IV. President's Report**

### **A. Presented by Dr. Donna Hodge, President**

**President Hodge** allowed the **30-page written report** in the packet to stand as presented, using her time to highlight key themes and activities.

#### **Theme and Purpose**

- **Theme: "Building Momentum."**
- **Goal:** To stabilize, heal, and transform Fitchburg State University into a growing and stable campus that knows its mission and is not trying to be "all things to all people."

- **Clarity of Purpose:** The President affirmed the commitment to ensuring FSU stands as the **premier state university** and a leader in North Central Massachusetts.

### Engagements and Leadership Updates

- **Board Retreat (August 12th):** Held at the **Fitchburg Art Museum**, embedding the Board in the cultural life of the community. A full **bylaws revision** is launching this year, led by Stacy Luster.
- **Cabinet Retreat:** Held at **Mass Maritime Academy**, touring the training ship *Patriot State*. The focus was on **alignment, accountability**, and the **six presidential priorities** (Enrollment, Financial Sustainability, Campus Culture, Partnerships, Housing, Strategic Vision, all wrapped in Academic Mission).
- **New Chief Financial Officer (CFO):** After a national search, **Dr. Travis Chambers** was hired, starting **December 1st**. His expertise is in higher education finance and strengthening sustainability.
- **Advancement Oversight:** Vice President Jeffrey Wolfman retired on October 7th. Chief of Staff **Matt Bruun** is overseeing Advancement in the interim while a full assessment of fundraising operations is conducted.
- **Civic Visibility:** The President joined local leaders for a walking tour of downtown Fitchburg (focusing on investments like the **Theater Block**), keynoted a **Chronicle of Higher Education webinar** (1,000+ participants), and testified at the State House in support of a **Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) designation** for Massachusetts.
- **Leadership Pipeline (Special Assistants):**
  - **Dr. Josh Spero:** Returned part-time as Special Assistant to the President to advance discussions on **international recruitment**.
  - **Dr. Christine Dee:** Stepped into a Special Assistant role, leading the successful **Presidential Ambassadors Program**.
  - **Dr. David Weiss:** Stepped into a Special Assistant role, leading the **Presidential Fellows Program** (supporting faculty and librarians in broader institutional contributions).
- **State Funding:** The University received a special **\$100,000 earmark** specifically for **recruitment to its Police Academy**.

### State Budget and Policy Update

The President detailed several key provisions in the Senate's fiscal year 2025 closeout supplemental budget that significantly benefit higher education and noted the progress of the BRIGHT Act.

- **Mass Grant Funding: \$18.3 million** was included to ensure Fiscal Year 2026 allocations are **level** with the past year, with increases for Mass Grant and Pell recipients. It also includes the restoration of a **\$1,200 allowance for books and supplies** for low-income community college students—a move that supports the pathway from community colleges to state universities like FSU.

- **Deficiency Reserve Fund:** A new **\$100 million** fund was established to cover unanticipated financial obligations, such as aid shortfalls.
- **Student Support Fund:** A new **Public Higher Education Student Support Fund**, seeded with over **\$100 million** in sales tax revenue, was created to prevent year-over-year reductions in financial aid or allocations.
- **Student Opportunity Act Investment: \$200 million** was transferred to the Student Opportunity Act investment funds, viewed as a legislative response to the Governor's DRIVE Act proposal.
- **BRIGHT Act Bond Bill:** The Joint Committee on Higher Education is advancing the **BRIGHT Act bond bill**, which is anticipated to pass near Thanksgiving.
  - The committee increased the bond authorization to **\$3 billion**, a very significant investment that includes sections specifically helpful to campuses like Fitchburg State.
  - The bill is expected to be reported favorably soon, moving next to the Joint Committee on Bonding.
- **Overall Signal:** These moves signal a **strong priority for higher education** in the Commonwealth and provide FSU with a degree of stability amidst demographic and fiscal pressures.

### Semester Engagement and Upcoming Events

The semester has been marked by rich community engagement and visibility efforts:

- **Fitchburg Resident Guarantee:** Launched a program guaranteeing **direct, tuition- and fee-free admission** to Fitchburg residents who graduate from one of the five local high schools. This strategy acknowledges that most of these students already qualify for significant federal and state aid (PEL eligibility).
- **Academic and Programmatic Success:** The Early College program welcomed its **largest class** (including the first bilingual course). **Computer Science and Nursing** both completed rigorous accreditation reviews.
- **Campus Events:** Homecoming, the community's Latino festival, the Diwali celebration, and the P20 education forum have increased campus energy and visibility.
- **Athletics and Student Engagement:** Athletics introduced **mandatory study halls** for student-athletes and increased community engagement. The **Presidential Ambassadors** program has ensured student presence at various community events.

### Upcoming November Events

- Hockey Home Opener & Ring Ceremony for MASCAC Champion hockey players.
- Bolton PD Visit - Chief Cloutier and President Hodge will spend time with the Bolton Police Department to offer support following the loss of their Chief.
- Field Hockey Playoffs - FSU hosts first-round playoffs
- Library Dean Search
- Zoom interviews begin for the **Library Dean search**.

- First Gen Day - Upward Bound hosts; Dustin Hodge (an Upward Bound graduate) will be a speaker.
- Guidance Counselors Breakfast & Congressional Luncheon
- Enrollment Management/Student Success event; FSU is a premier sponsor at the Congressional Luncheon.
- **Nov 10 (1:00 PM)** - Veterans Day Observance
- **Nov 12 - Nov 22** - *Stop Kiss* Theater Production - Fall production in McKay Auditorium.
- **Nov 13** - Lighting of Campus - The annual campus tradition begins.
- AASCU Meeting - President travels to the Presidents and Chancellors meeting to give two presentations.
- New Art Exhibit Opening - Featuring local artist Ricardo Barros on the first floor of the library.
- **Nov 21 - Nov 22** - Moot Court Tournament - Eastern Regional Tournament and group reunion held on campus.

## B. Associate Vice President of Capital Planning and Maintenance

**Matt Lechter, AVP of Capital Planning and Maintenance**, presented updates on summer projects, deferred maintenance strategy, and housing.

### Summer Achievements and Recognition

- **Scope:** The CPM team completed **50–60 projects** over the summer, including roof repairs, steam line upgrades, painting, and gym floor replacements.
- **Civic Center:** Completed much-needed exterior maintenance and improvements, including painting and signage, and hosted the Bruins Fanfest.
- **McKay Theater:** Completed a **small but meaningful project** improving the dressing rooms for the theater program. This was done **completely in-house** by CPM personnel.
- **Presidential Thanks:** President Hodge recognized Matt Lechter and the CPM team for taking on the interim role and successfully managing approximately **50 projects** that were significantly behind schedule, specifically citing the complex, state-funded **Conlon Hall project**, restoring confidence in the operation.

### Major Projects and Infrastructure

- **Conlon Hall and Fine Arts:** Phase 1 (window replacement, IT suite, faculty/staff break room) is ongoing, with window delays. **Demolition work is paused until after commencement in May** to minimize academic disruption. The third-floor ADA restroom renovation is expected to finish in late November.
- **Housing Portfolio / Herlihy Hall:** The **reimagining of Herlihy Hall** (completing the second and third floors this summer) added **74 new studio premium units**, which are now **sold out**. Currently, **78 students** reside in Herlihy Hall, proving that

local, targeted investments can transform spaces with "strong bones" that were previously "mothballed."

- **MSCBA Projects:** \$850,000 in capital projects were completed this summer (e.g., LED lighting in Aubuchon, lounge refresh in Townhouse 5). **\$1.2 million** is planned for Summer 2026, including **boiler replacements** in Townhouses 3 and 7 and Phase II lighting upgrades in Aubuchon student rooms (sustainability focus).

### Sustainability and Campus Access

- **EV Chargers:** Four new EV chargers are being installed on Highland Avenue and two at **Conlon Hall**, increasing the campus total from two to eight.
  - **Conlon Hall** will be **closed access** (primarily for FSU community members).
  - **Highland Avenue** will be **open to the community** and critical for campus visitors/Admissions. Any EV is authorized to park and charge in the designated spots.
- **Parking Discussion:** In response to a student question, the AVP confirmed that the team is reviewing the **entire parking portfolio** to address concerns about staff lots that were once student lots (pre-Herlihy closure). He emphasized that the campus still has **enough overall parking**.
- **Mt. Wachusett Partnership:** The successful Herlihy Hall renovation enabled **10 Mount Wachusett student partners** to live on campus this year, furthering the community college pipeline.

### BRIGHT Act and Deferred Maintenance Strategy

- **Priorities:** FSU was asked to submit its priority projects for the potential **\$3 billion BRIGHT Act** bond bill, identifying **Conlon Hall** and **McKay Auditorium** due to infrastructure issues combined with growing program needs.
- **Edgerly Hall:** An RFI was submitted for a study of **Edgerly Hall** (with a potential **\$5 million investment** contingent on the BRIGHT Act) to focus on applied learning, workforce development space upgrades, and deferred maintenance. The study will begin in the spring.
- **Deferred Maintenance Roadmap:** The University is working with NESCO and DCAMM on a **decarbonization study** that is generating a **200-page building-by-building roadmap** to accurately prioritize deferred maintenance needs. This roadmap will guide future investment decisions, ensuring capital is spent on critical infrastructure (like elevators) rather than just transformative cosmetic upgrades.

### C. VP of Enrollment Management & Student Success

Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Success, **Pam McCaffrey**, presented a detailed analysis of FSU's five-year enrollment trends compared to state university peers, focusing on opportunities to reverse undergraduate decline.

## Five-Year Enrollment Overview (Ending Last Year)

### Overall Trends

**Total Headcount:** FSU's **8% decline** was better than the **13% decline** seen across peer institutions.

**Total Credits:** FSU saw a **14% decline** (over 125,000 credits), but this decline was **less severe** than the implied worse decline experienced by peers.

### Graduate vs. Undergraduate Enrollment

VP McCaffrey specifically praised Dean Becky Copper-Glenn and the SGOCE team for maintaining a strong and stable graduate enrollment, which differentiates FSU.

**Graduate Enrollment:** Remained **Flat/Stable** at approximately **5,700 students**, contrasting sharply with the **18% reduction** peers experienced. Graduate students represent **61% of total students** and **40% of all graduate enrollment** in the state system.

**Undergraduate Enrollment:** This is the primary source of decline. **Undergraduate Headcount** saw an **18% reduction**, a larger decline than the **12% reduction** peers experienced.

**Undergraduate Credits:** Also declined by **18%**, but FSU had a smaller decline in credits than peers, suggesting **undergraduate students are taking more credits** on average.

### Day vs. Evening/Online (SGO) Enrollment

**Day Students:** This population (73% of students/80% of credits) saw a **20% decline** in both headcount and registered credits over five years.

**Evening/Online (SGO):** This adult and online population saw a less severe decline: **12% decline in headcount** and only a **3% decline in credits**.

### Undergraduate Day Admissions Data (5-Year Trend)

Application numbers are up, but yield is down, presenting the main opportunity for improvement.

**First-Year Applications:** Up 53% (largely due to Common Application adoption); **Enrollments are Down 20%**.

**Transfer Applications:** Up 26% (strong performance); **Enrollments are Up 13%** (very strong performance).

**Yield Rate Focus:** The **First-Year Yield Rate of 14.1%** was 2.4 percentage points lower than the peer average of 16%. VP McCaffrey noted that matching the peer yield rate could have reduced the 5-year decline from 20% to only 5%, and stated that **focusing on yield rate is the significant opportunity to reverse the undergraduate decline**.

### Current Year Snapshot: Fall 2025 Enrollment

**Returning Students:** The population behaved as expected, with a slight positive variance, validating projection methods.

**New Student Enrollment (Day):** Ended **20% down** from the previous year across the entire funnel (freshmen and transfers). Unofficial feedback suggests **FSU's decline is greater than its sister institutions**, suggesting FSU has an opportunity to rebound relative to its peers.

**Summer Enrollment (SGOCE): Graduate enrollment remained level** (very positive) and **Undergraduate online enrollment went up 8%** (very positive).

**International Students:** Declining due to post-pandemic visa issuance issues; FSU is working to diversify international markets.

#### Key Initiatives and Student Success

**Retention Rate:** Increased significantly to **73.8%**, representing a gain of 23 students and a financial impact of nearly a quarter of a million dollars. The VP stressed that **retention is as important as recruitment**.

**Grant Funding:** FSU is slated to receive **\$1.3 million** in state grant funds, earmarked for a **case management model for student retention**.

**Admissions Initiatives:** Current efforts focus on yield and local partnerships, including **Direct Admissions** (guaranteed, tuition-free admission for local high school students), placement of an **Assistant Director in Fitchburg High School**, and intensive marketing of the **New England Regional Program** tuition discount.

**Technology & Data:** Faculty participation in **Attendance Reporting** increased from 64% to **80%**, and **Deficient Midterm Grades reporting** increased from 55% to **64%**. The **SSC Navigate** advising and communication platform will be relaunched in January to connect students to resources and provide embedded analytics.

#### Strategic Priorities and Commitments

Key goals moving forward include:

**Stabilizing enrollments** and establishing a holistic approach to the student life cycle.

Reviewing **financial aid, scholarships, and tuition discounting**.

Refining the **Direct Admissions** program and expanding the **New England Regional** tuition discount.

Advancing a framework for a possible **Student Success Center**.

Working to **differentiate FSU** to become the number one school of choice in the region and beyond.

The President thanked the VP, emphasizing that enrollment and student success is an **ecosystem** where every member of the campus community contributes.

## V. Student Trustee Report

### A. Presented by M. Gill

Student Trustee, Matthew Gill opened his report by noting it was his last year as Student Trustee, as he is graduating a year early and planning to enroll in a master's program.

#### Campus Engagement and Visibility

- **Rock the Block & Homecoming:** Thanked Trustees Shane Rodriguez and Lynn Barrieau for attending **Rock the Block**, which led to students asking "**Who are the board of trustees?**" and increased awareness of the Board's role. Homecoming featured a large turnout for events including a pep rally, casino night, semi-formal dance, sporting events, a tailgate, and a carnival.
- **Student Trustee Goals:** One of the main goals for the year is to **increase student awareness** of the Board's activities.

#### International Education and Engagement

The Student Trustee met with Nelly Wadsworth from International Education to discuss the purpose and services of the office:

- **Workforce Competitiveness:** Discussed how **study abroad experiences** (such as the Trustee's recent trip to Rome for education studies) make students more competitive and how to teach students to leverage these experiences in interviews.
- **Peer Pal Program:** Exploring a program to connect students who cannot study abroad with students currently studying or living internationally to share experiences and teach about **global perspectives**.
- **Recruiting Agents:** Discussed potentially using recruiting agents to **expand FSU's brand** in other countries.
- **Immigration/Visa Issues:** Discussed the need to combat **misinformation and fear** spreading among students both locally and abroad regarding studying in the U.S. and abroad, with plans to host informational events.
- **Faculty Course Design:** Encouraging faculty to design courses that incorporate **study abroad aspects** where currently none exist.

#### Student Government Association (SGA) Updates

- **Graduate Student Representation:** Met with Peter August, Assistant Dean of Enrollment (SGO), regarding creating **representative roles for graduate students** within the SGA Senate, which is currently undergoing a constitution review.
- **UPD Training:** University Police Department is offering **CRASE training** (Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events) to the SGA to gauge interest in safety programs and eventually highlight them for broader student participation.

- **Full Senate Achieved:** The SGA, which initially had only four senators after the election cycle, now has a **full Senate of 26 senators** thanks to the focused efforts of Michael Burns.
- **New Public Relations Officer:** Created a new Executive Board position for a **Public Relations Officer** (Lily Hallahan elected) to manage social media and **better connect SGA's purpose and activities** with the student body.
- **Streamlined Print Services:** The PR role is essential in a **new streamlined process** for clubs requesting print services, which previously required the Student Trustee to **individually sign every piece of paper**.

### Student Success and Resources

- **Office of Student Engagement (OSE):** The office name was recently changed from 'Student Development' to better reflect its purpose. The OSE supported **over 100 events** held by 55 clubs so far this year (a 23% increase).
- **Falcon Bazaar (Food Pantry) and Clothing Closet:**
  - **Falcon Bazaar Visits:** 232 visits in September; 155 visits in October (still active).
  - **Clothing Closet Checkouts:** 20 visits in September; 6 checkouts in October.
  - The Student Trustee took a First Year Experience class to the Clothing Closet for reorganization, completing "a month's work in an hour."
  - **Donation Need Clarification:** The Trustee clarified that while the initial focus was **professional clothing** (for interviews), the clothing closet has a need for **regular clothing** as well.

### Food Insecurity Concern and Partnership

- **Bagels with the Board:** Proposed reviving the **"Bagels with the Board"** event, suggested by past Student Trustee Stephanie Infante, to facilitate casual communication between students and Trustees. A **TikTok** collaboration with the Board was also recalled and noted.
- **Fitchburg High School Food Insecurity:** The Student Trustee raised a critical, unscripted issue: **food insecurity rates at Fitchburg High School have significantly increased**. One teacher is currently paying out of pocket for a meal program. The Trustee plans to engage SGA and the Student Educators Association for support (food drives, etc.).
- **President's Response:** The President acknowledged the concern, noting she is in regular contact with Fitchburg Public Schools Superintendent Jon Thompson. She highlighted the ongoing work on a **joint Welcome Center** (Fitchburg Public Schools and FSU, located downtown through a Workers Credit Union partnership). This new center is envisioned as a space to coordinate support, including cycling items from the FSU Career Closet and addressing food insecurity needs using resources like the **Falcon Bazaar**.

## VI. Enrollment Management

### A. Enrollment Management and Student Success Committee Update

#### Enrollment Management Committee (Eric Gregoire)

- **Meeting Date:** October 21st.
- **Summary:** The committee reviewed the same **historic enrollment trends and recent strategic initiatives** presented by VP McCaffrey today.
- **Key Initiatives Highlighted:** Direct Admissions, Fitchburg High School Admissions Center (FASFA support), better marketing of the New England tuition discount, positive open house responses, and the upcoming Guidance Counselors Breakfast.
- **Overall Goal:** Stabilize enrollment and establish a holistic student experience, collaborating across all departments.

## VII. Operations and Safety

### A. Operations and Safety Committee Update

#### Operations and Safety Committee (Lynn Barrieau)

- **Meeting Date:** October 14th.
- **Bookstore Transition:** The transition is largely successful, with a **near-perfect 98% faculty adoption rate** for fall textbook information, which is well ahead of industry standards.
- **Technology:** Improved **cabling infrastructure** (upgraded wiring system in residential areas) and enhanced **cyber security** (encryption of the student information system). Technology is also working hard to achieve **ADA compliance with digital accessibility**.
- **Police Chief Cloutier:** Unable to attend; the report on **Clery Act compliance** and the **2025 Annual Security Report** will be heard at a later meeting.

## VIII. Student Experience

### A. Student Experience Committee Update

#### Student Experience Committee (Lynn Barrieau)

- **Meeting Date:** October 20th.
- **Key Updates:** Discussed divisional restructuring under CSO/Dean of Students Tim St. John.
- **Housing:** Herlihy Hall is near **90% occupancy** (or full); the Mount Wachusett Community College collaboration has **10 students** living on campus. Active discussions with MSCBA are ongoing to optimize housing for all student needs, including graduate and international populations.

- **Care and Case Management:** The reconfigured office is managing a **significant increase in referrals** year-over-year, indicating greater awareness of support systems.
- **Student Clubs:** The 55 clubs have held **over 100 events** (a 23% increase) this year, with OSE promoting collaboration to enhance the student experience.
- **Athletics:** Athletics continues to create **vibrancy and excitement** on campus.

## IX. Special Presentation: Women's Ice Hockey

### A. Presented by Matt Burke, Pam McCafferty and Tim St. John

The Trustees moved to a special presentation and proposal led by Matt Burke, Pam McCaffrey, and Tim St. John.

- **Matt Burke, Executive Director of Athletics and Recreation:** Presented an opportunity to add **Women's Ice Hockey as FSU's 18th varsity sport**.
- **Pam McCaffrey, VP of EMSS:** Requested support, noting the proposal is an **amazing opportunity** that checks all the boxes by recruiting new populations of students who will live in residence halls, eat on campus, and be active alumni, while also **differentiating FSU** in a competitive market.
- **Tim St. John, Chief Student Affairs Officer and Dean of Students:** Advocated for the proposal as a way to ensure a vibrant student experience built through connection. He stated that winning strengthens campus pride and community. The program will not only advance **equity and opportunity** but also **further energize** campus culture.

The presentation concluded with the introduction of the proposal for the Trustees' consideration.

### The Opportunity: Growth, Competition, and Recruitment

Matt Burke framed the opportunity by highlighting the historical context and the current explosive growth of the sport:

- **Historical Context:** Prior to FSU's choice of Women's Volleyball in 2017, Women's Ice Hockey was one of two sports seriously considered for addition.
- **Collegiate Growth:** Women's Ice Hockey has grown **39%** over the last 10 years, with almost **3,000 students** participating nationally at the collegiate level (78 Division III institutions sponsor the sport).
- **MASCAC Competition:** FSU's direct competitors in the MASCAC—Salem, Worcester, Framingham, and MCLA—are **already sponsoring the sport**, providing a conference with plenty of ready rivals.
- **High School Growth:** Massachusetts has seen significant growth, adding **86 girls' hockey teams** in 10 years (now over 200 teams). This is a strong indicator of **immediate recruiting success**, as Women's Ice Hockey players are almost always **direct high school to college athletes** (unlike the Men's program, where athletes often play junior hockey first).

- **Youth Participation:** Girls playing youth hockey is up **21% in Massachusetts** and **15% in New England** over the last 10 years, creating a healthy recruitment funnel.
- **Timing:** Burke stressed that the **time is now** to add the sport to avoid falling behind competitors and missing the time of significant growth.

### Strategic and Compliance Advantages

The proposal outlined how the addition benefits the entire institution and region:

- **Facility Advantage:** The University already owns the **Wallace Civic Center**, providing a **ready and willing home ice advantage** when many competitors must rent ice time in neighboring towns.
- **Conference Advantage:** The MASCAC began sponsoring the sport in the 2025 season and is continuing to grow, with NCAA tournament **automatic bid status coming in the 2028 season**. FSU's addition would strengthen the conference's bid.
- **Campus Momentum:** The existing championship-level Men's Ice Hockey team brings **increased notoriety** to Fitchburg State Hockey.
- **Student Initiative:** A **club hockey program** was started last year by young women on campus with the goal of elevating the sport to varsity status.
- **Title IX Compliance:** Adding Women's Ice Hockey would significantly help address **Title IX gender equity compliance**, particularly by relying on **Prongs Two and Three** (showing a history of expanding opportunities for female students and meeting the needs of the underrepresented population).

### Enrollment and Financial Impact

**Pam McCaffrey (VP of EMSS)** and **Tim St. John (CSO/Dean of Students)** detailed the positive impact on enrollment and student life:

- **Enrollment Driver:** FSU's overall full-time undergraduate population declined 20% over five years, but the **student-athlete population increased by 8%** and now represents **16%** of the full-time undergraduate enrollment (up from 11%).
- **High Performance:** Women athletes are retained at a higher rate (almost **82%** retention vs. 70% for non-women athletes) and have a **higher GPA** than non-women athletes. This is a population that persists, performs academically, and becomes engaged alumni.
- **Campus Pride and Engagement:** Men's Ice Hockey has the **highest and most consistent fan engagement**. Adding the women's team will enhance the student experience, increase campus pride, and provide additional marquee destination events.
- **Regional Impact:** The addition demonstrates that FSU is **"growing, being bold, and investing in our campus,"** giving young women in the region a chance to attend FSU and play the sport they love.

### Logistics and Budget Projections

- **Launch Timeline:** A recommended **18-month runway** is needed, starting the launch process now to begin the search for a **full-time Head Coach** and start recruiting immediately. The target for full varsity launch would be **Fall 2027**.
- **Budget (FY27):** The proposal recommends phasing in expenses. The total estimated annual operating cost for a full varsity program is approximately **\$200,000** (including coaching staff).
  - **FY27 expenses** would primarily cover increased coaching staff salary and additional ice time to elevate the current club program for the year prior to varsity launch.
- **Revenue Neutrality:** The projected revenue generated by 25 new students (at roughly **\$10,000 per student**) is **\$250,000**, meaning the sport is expected to be **cost-neutral** and potentially **revenue-positive** from the outset.
- **Residence Halls: 70% of freshman women athletes live in residence halls**, providing a significant financial impact and adding much-needed campus life.

### Trustee Discussion and Capital Needs

- **MASCAC Automatic Bid Status:** Burke clarified that the MASCAC is strengthening its number of core members with the sport (along with affiliate member Rivier) to support achieving the **NCAA automatic bid status in 2028**.
- **Facilities and Ice Time:**
  - The primary challenge is managing the **one sheet of ice** at the Wallace Civic Center with multiple users.
  - The need for a **full-time coach** is critical to provide the flexibility required to work in practice time.
  - **Locker Room Space is the Biggest Need:** The current Civic Center footprint presents challenges. This is the **number one check mark on the Title IX list** for equity. The University will pursue temporary facilities initially while developing longer-term plans, acknowledging that **capital investment is needed** in the Civic Center.

**President's Comment:** The President noted that bringing the proposal to a vote allows the University to move forward with planning and **leverage fundraising opportunities** around the popular sport. She emphasized that intentional investment is needed in the Civic Center, which has seen too much deferred maintenance, and reaffirmed the need for a **full-time coach** to ensure the new sport is started correctly and safely.

### B. Discussion

### C. VOTE: Women's Ice Hockey

L. Barrieau made a motion to Vote to add women's ice hockey as the 18th varsity sport at Fitchburg State University.

C. Stimpson seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

K. Spinelli	Aye
M. Morris	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
M. Gill	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Absent
S. Rodriguez	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye

**X. Closing Items**

**A. Chair Fiorentino and President Hodge**

**B. Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 4:46 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
M. Fiorentino, Jr.

# Coversheet

Presented by Dr. Donna Hodge, President

**Section:** IV. President's Report  
**Item:** A. Presented by Dr. Donna Hodge, President  
**Purpose:** FYI  
**Submitted by:**  
**Related Material:** President's Report, BOT Jan 2026.pdf  
Sabbatical Leave Approval to BOT Chair AY26\_27.pdf  
President's Report, BOT Jan 2026.pdf

## **President's Report to the Board of Trustees**

**October 28, 2025 - January 23, 2026** | Dr. Donna Hodge, President

### **Introduction: Sustaining Momentum Through Transition and Winter Work**

The close of the fall semester and the opening of the spring term have been marked by steady progress, visible leadership, and disciplined follow-through on the priorities we set together. This period has required both pace and patience. We are sustaining momentum while tending carefully to culture, finances, and trust, especially as the institution moves through leadership transitions, winter operations, and a demanding external environment for public higher education.

Across campus and throughout the region, Fitchburg State continues to show up as a serious, engaged, and reliable partner. We are stabilizing where stability is required, healing where repair is overdue, and preparing for the next phase of transformation with intention and care.

### **Governance and Board Engagement**

Since our fall retreat, I have remained in close communication with the Board Chair and trustees as we advanced key leadership appointments, budget transparency efforts, and external engagement. Several trustees joined campus and community events during this period, reinforcing the Board's visible stewardship of the institution and its mission.

Preparation for the January meeting has focused on providing clearer budget narratives, sharper alignment between strategy and resources, and a more transparent view of institutional risk and opportunity as we enter the second half of the fiscal year.

### **Leadership and Organizational Updates**

#### **Advancement and External Assessment**

Following Vice President Wolfman's retirement in mid-October, Chief of Staff Matt Bruun has continued to provide interim oversight of Institutional Advancement and Alumni Affairs. During this period, we are launching a comprehensive external assessment of our fundraising and advancement operations, which will begin with onboarding an external partner to assist the team and provide additional capacity until a plan is in place for leadership of the division of Advancement. This 360-degree review is examining structure, staffing, performance, and alignment with institutional priorities.

The goal is not simply to fill roles, but to ensure that our advancement strategy is realistic, accountable, and capable of supporting Fitchburg State's long-term ambitions. Findings and recommendations will inform decisions later this spring.

### **Chief Financial Officer Onboarding**

Dr. Travis Chambers officially began his role as Chief Financial Officer on December 1. His first weeks have focused on listening, assessment, and stabilization. He has met extensively with Cabinet members, budget and finance staff, and campus partners to understand historical context, current pressures, and opportunities for improved financial practices.

Together, we have begun laying the groundwork for clearer budget categories, more consistent reporting, and stronger internal controls. Many thanks to Heidi Swift and Bob Labonte for their stabilizing and supportive work for FSU for the past year. While Travis's early assessment work and discussion of the next iteration of our campus budgeting process is ongoing, early progress has already improved confidence and clarity across cabinet leadership.

### **Academic Affairs**

With Dr. Patricia Marshall's announcement of an unexpected leave on November 28, 2025, Academic Affairs entered a period requiring immediate stability, clearly defined authority, and experienced leadership during a critical point in the academic year. From the outset, my priority was to ensure continuity of instruction, safeguard shared governance and accreditation responsibilities, and maintain an unwavering focus on student success.

To support this work, Dr. Franca Barricelli was asked to assume senior academic leadership responsibilities during this period. In this capacity, Dr. Barricelli has provided oversight and coordination across Academic Affairs and has served as my primary designee for day-to-day academic operational matters requiring executive-level review, decision-making, or cross-divisional alignment. She brings deep institutional knowledge, extensive experience in academic policy, labor relations, and faculty governance, and long-standing credibility with faculty and staff. These qualifications have been essential in maintaining stability, consistency, and trust across the division.

Dr. Barricelli has worked closely with Cabinet colleagues, academic leadership, and faculty governance bodies to ensure that instructional delivery, academic policy implementation, and time-sensitive academic decisions continue without disruption. Her leadership has been particularly important in sustaining continuity in areas requiring careful coordination, including accreditation-related responsibilities, academic personnel matters, and divisional operations.

In addition, Dr. Jannette McMenemy stepped into the role of Acting Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, while continuing, for this moment, to serve concurrently as Dean of the School of Health and Natural Sciences. This dual role reflects both her demonstrated leadership capacity and her operational understanding of complex academic programs, faculty needs, and student-facing priorities. Dr. McMenemy has provided steady leadership, clear communication, and strong operational oversight during a demanding period, and I am grateful for her willingness to assume this additional responsibility.

Despite this leadership transition, Academic Affairs has continued to function smoothly and effectively. The fall semester concluded successfully, winter session offerings were delivered as planned, and preparations for the spring semester were completed on schedule. Faculty and staff across the division have remained focused on instruction, advising, accreditation-related work, program oversight, and the daily academic operations that support student success.

At the same time, longer-term academic priorities have continued to advance. Work remains underway on program review, enrollment-aligned scheduling, and curricular planning informed by workforce needs and student demand. As part of this work, we will undertake a careful assessment and review of the university's Eduventures contract, including the scope, process, and use of any prior analyses. An initial set of findings will be developed in tandem with the deans to ensure appropriate academic leadership engagement, transparency, and shared understanding before any conclusions are relied upon or communicated more broadly. These efforts reflect our broader strategy of aligning academic offerings with institutional sustainability while maintaining the academic rigor and mission-driven focus that define Fitchburg State University.

Looking ahead, my focus remains on ensuring that Academic Affairs is well-supported, clearly structured, and positioned for long-term stability and success. Any future steps will be approached deliberately and in close communication with faculty leadership and governance bodies, with careful attention to both immediate operational needs and the long-term health of the division.

This period has required the division to stabilize systems, support people, and maintain forward momentum. The response from Academic Affairs reflects the strength, professionalism, and shared responsibility of our academic community. Even amid transition, the division has remained steady, student-centered, and aligned with Fitchburg State's long-term goals.

## **Campus Culture, Operations, and the Student Experience**

### **Fall Close and Spring Opening**

The conclusion of the fall semester was marked by strong campus engagement and a smooth transition into winter operations. Our facilities and operations teams performed exceptionally well during several early winter weather events, including move-in activities over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend. Their professionalism ensured that campus remained safe, accessible, and welcoming for students returning to residence halls.

### **MLK Day and Values in Action**

Martin Luther King Jr. Day this year coincided with move-in, offering a quiet but powerful reminder that service, preparation, and collective responsibility are lived values at Fitchburg State. Stacey Luster delivered the keynote address for Fitchburg's powerful MLK Day Celebration and Luncheon, and representing Fitchburg State was Professor, Special Assistant to the President and MLK Day committee member, Dr. Christine Dee (with two Presidential

Ambassadors offering remarks at the event), Dean Tim St. John, Krysta Lopez, and students from the FSU Drumline and Dance Club.

## **Civic Engagement and Regional Leadership**

### **City and Community Partnerships**

At the start of the spring term, Fitchburg State hosted a civic inauguration celebration at Weston Auditorium, welcoming city leaders, regional partners, and community members to campus. The event underscored the university's role as a civic anchor and a place where democratic traditions, education, and community life intersect.

Throughout this period, I also continued regular engagement with municipal, business, and nonprofit leaders, reinforcing the message that Fitchburg State's future is deeply connected to the future of the city and region we serve.

### **Public-Private Partnerships**

Earlier this month, I joined regional partners and state leaders at Wachusett Mountain for the launch of the new Polar Beverages Express Chairlift. This event highlighted not only private investment in North Central Massachusetts, but also the growing partnership between the mountain and Fitchburg State University. Our collaboration centers students and access, and it reflects a broader strategy of aligning regional assets with educational opportunity.

## **Statewide and National Engagement**

### **Higher Education Leadership and Advocacy**

During this period, I represented Fitchburg State at several statewide and national gatherings focused on the future of public higher education, including meetings connected to national athletics governance and higher education policy conversations. These forums continue to reinforce the importance of Massachusetts institutions being present in national dialogues around access, affordability, student success, and institutional sustainability.

### **Economic and Policy Conversations**

In January, I participated in a regional economic and financial leadership convening that included representation from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and national Federal Reserve leadership. These conversations are critical for ensuring that Massachusetts, and institutions like Fitchburg State, remain connected to broader economic forecasting, workforce planning, and policy development conversations that directly affect our students and communities.

## **Professional Development**

### **All-Campus Development Day**

In January, the university hosted a well-attended All-Campus Development Day, bringing faculty and staff together for learning, dialogue, and reflection. The day featured a strong

opening keynote, robust participation across sessions, and meaningful cross-divisional engagement. While I was representing the university at a national meeting that day, I was pleased to participate through a video message and written remarks included in the program.

The interest in the day reflected both the appetite for professional development on campus and the importance of creating shared spaces for inquiry, connection, and renewal. More discussion about future possibilities to come.

## Looking Ahead

As we move deeper into the spring semester, our focus remains clear: continue strengthening financial stewardship, support our people through change, deepen regional partnerships, and keep students at the center of every decision. The work ahead is not without challenge, but it is purposeful and aligned.

Fitchburg State still stands. More importantly, we are standing with intention, discipline, and momentum.

## Highlights: Events, Engagements, and Sponsorships

*\* This list reflects a representative selection of high-level presidential engagements and is not intended to be exhaustive. Activities were selected to illustrate the depth and breadth of engagement in support of the University's mission.*

Nov. 1 - Delivered remarks at the Hockey Ring Ceremony, engaging community members, Cabinet colleagues, student-athletes, and families and friends of players

Nov. 3 - Visited the Bolton Police Department alongside UPD Chief of Police Michael Cloutier and personally delivered lunch, engaging officers and staff in support following the loss of their Chief

Nov. 7 - Hosted and spoke at the Guidance Counselor Breakfast on campus

Nov. 7 - Sponsored, participated in, and spoke at the Chamber Congressional Luncheon featuring Congressman Jim McGovern and Congresswoman Lori Trahan, joined by Cabinet members and students

Nov. 10 - Met with and recognized Alumni Award Winner Jennifer Curran

Nov. 10 - Delivered remarks at the Veterans Day Ceremony on the Quad

Nov. 13 - Participated in the Joint Committee on Bonding Hearing at the State House, Boston, representing Fitchburg State University

Nov. 13 - Spoke at and participated in the Campus Lighting Ceremony

Nov. 14-18 - Represented Fitchburg State University at the AASCU Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, engaging with national higher education leaders

Nov. 19 - Participated in and engaged with state leaders at the Healey-Driscoll Administration Higher Education Announcement at the State House

Nov. 19 - Supported and engaged with students and faculty at the production of *Stop Kiss* at McKay Elementary School

Nov. 20 - Supported the FSU Concert Band and Community Orchestra performance through attendance and engagement with performers and audience members

Nov. 22 - Engaged with students, faculty, alumni, and supporters at the Moot Court Reception

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Dec. 3 - Hosted the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) reception at the President's House

Dec. 4 - Served as a panelist for the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce Community Leadership Institute

Dec. 4 - Participated in the Humanities Department Meeting

Dec. 4 - Served appetizers and engaged directly with students alongside Cabinet members during the Christmahanakwanzaking celebration

Dec. 5 - Met with and recognized Linda Alvarez '22, Vermont Teacher of the Year

Dec. 5 - Participated in the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts Board Orientation and began service as a new board member

Dec. 5 - Supported student performers at the Winter Dance Club Show, Weston Auditorium

Dec. 8-9 - Hosted Dr. Basden Arnold, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Kutztown University, for presidential shadowing and engagement in key campus meetings

Dec. 8 - Hosted and spoke at the Presidential Fellows Reception at the President's House

Dec. 9 - Met with Judy Cockerton and Steve Adams to advance discussion of the 100% MA program

Dec. 9 - Supported student musicians and engaged with the campus community at the Choral Kaleidoscope Concert, Weston Auditorium

Dec. 10 - Hosted and engaged with students at a breakfast with the Presidential Ambassadors

Dec. 11 - Hosted and led a Chartwells partnership meeting on campus

Dec. 11 - Engaged with staff at the Annual Staff Holiday Party

Dec. 12 - Delivered the keynote address at the Upward Bound Future Educator Academy College Bound Session

Dec. 12 - Hosted the Cabinet Holiday Gathering at Third Space Kitchen, Groton, MA

Dec. 13 - Supported campus and regional arts partners at the holiday concert featuring Fitchburg State Choirs, Worcester Children's Chorus, and Gateway City Orchestra

Dec. 18 - Met with Wellpoint representatives Michael Morris and David Morales

Dec. 18 - Hosted the Holiday Open House at the President's House, welcoming campus and community partners

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Jan. 7 - Met with Amy Jolly and Leonardo Hiertz to advance discussion of the Applewild School Civic-Minded Scholarship

Jan. 7 - Dinner meeting with Tom and Joanne Donnelly at their home

Jan. 8 - Lunch meeting with State Representative Michael Kushmerek

Jan. 8 - Hosted Fitchburg State University's inauguration ceremony for the Mayor of Fitchburg

Jan. 9 - Lunch meeting with former Trustee Deb Phillips

Jan. 9 - Participated in Board of Trustees Student Experience Committee and Operations and Safety Committee meetings

Jan. 12 - Participated in Dinner with Women Leaders in Public Higher Education with Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, UMass Club, Boston

Jan. 13-15 - Represented Fitchburg State University at the NCAA Conference, Washington, DC

Jan. 16 - Participated in the New England Economic Forum at Gillette Stadium

Jan. 20 - Participated in Board of Trustees Finance Committee and Enrollment Management Committee meetings

Jan. 21 - Served as a panelist in the Ellucian Webinar on 2026 Higher Education Trends

Jan. 21 - Hosted and facilitated the ALFA Advisory Council at the President's House

Jan. 22 - Hosted Rick Healey for lunch

Jan. 22 - Participated in the Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee meeting

Jan. 23 - Morning with new Trustee, Joe Byrne, for Board Orientation

## **Cabinet Highlights**

### **Academic Affairs**

Over the past weeks, Academic Affairs experienced a significant challenge with Provost Marshall taking an unexpected personal leave of unknown duration. Under the leadership of President Hodge, our team has quickly come together to stabilize the division and seek opportunities for innovation. Standing with President Hodge, Acting Provost Barricelli and Acting AVP McMenamy look to the future with hope while sending well wishes to Provost Marshall.

In this spirit, we highlight below a few of the many recent successes in our Schools. Last month, our renowned Moot Court program, led by Dr. Paul Weizer, was again victorious. After winning the American Collegiate Moot Court Association tournament at Fitchburg State, Amanda Deleon Guimaraes and Christiane Rodrigues qualified for nationals. We updated our 3+3 agreement with the Massachusetts School of Law (MSLAW), an agreement that provides scholarships for FSU students with a GPA >3.0. Also in development is a 50% tuition scholarship to honor Dean Sullivan, an FSU alumnus who has devoted 30+ years to MSLAW and its students.

Academic Affairs is looking outward to strengthen connections to the community, increasing institutional visibility, and maximizing opportunities for students. All academic deans visited Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical High School with our VP for Enrollment Management to explore new articulation agreements. Numerous industry partnerships are also being explored and developed. Business and Technology collaborated with Career Services and Academic Advising on an Employer Roundtable with local companies specializing in manufacturing, construction management, and architecture. In December, local high school students participated in the Future Educator Academy, a key recruitment initiative hosted by the School of Education.

In SGOCE, the RN-to-BSN program celebrated over 50% enrollment growth, expanding from 71 to 109 new students in between Fall 2024 and Fall 2025. The Center for Professional Studies launched an AI-Enhanced Educator badge as a leader in professional workforce development. To reduce cost barriers for students, the library has increased its audio-book holdings to more than 150,000 titles. Our Office of Grants, Special Programs and Assessment, in collaboration with academic departments, has nearly \$1.5 million in grant submissions to support student success, increase institutional visibility, and promote enrollment growth.

Each of these achievements underscores what we believe is essential at this moment: Academic Affairs must continue to innovate, and we must deepen our connections with

community partners to enhance the visibility of the institution while promoting enrollment growth and student retention.

Three examples that capture this emphasis focus the remainder of this report.

In Arts and Sciences, work continues to develop an interdisciplinary major in Finance, a collaboration between the Departments of Economics, History, and Political Science and Business Administration. The proposal passed successfully through governance and was signed by President Hodge in Spring 2025. The interdisciplinary nature of the program, with a range of technical courses (e.g., Econometrics) and sector-specific study (e.g., Business Law), differentiate our major from others in the region. The program will prepare students for a variety of careers in the financial sector, including market analysis, corporate finance, or financial advising. The EAB Program Feasibility Report indicates a monthly average of 8,300 job postings in Massachusetts and New Hampshire for those with degrees in Finance, and a key goal is also to build co-ops into the program to provide students with high-impact, pre-professional experiences. The proposal will be shared for consideration by the BOT at an upcoming meeting.

Also in Arts and Sciences, our new History 4+1 program will launch in Fall 2026. The program will allow students to earn their bachelor's and master's degrees in history in five years. This innovative design will save time and advance the careers of students interested in education, law, policy, public history, or media content, allowing them to develop expertise in analysis and interpretation while gaining advanced skills that employers and graduate programs value.

Faculty in the School of Health and Natural Sciences are developing a Middle School Mathematics Education Major (5-8). Currently, students interested in teaching middle school mathematics must complete a full Math major, including at least thirteen 2000- and 3000-level courses. This requirement exceeds DESE's licensure requirements for Middle School Mathematics teachers, and our graduation rates for this program are historically low (20%). Relying solely on existing resources and courses, the new program is the first of its kind in the state. It tailors requirements specifically to the needs of middle school mathematics teachers, reducing barriers to retention and meeting a key market need. The governance proposals for the major are ready for submission. DESE has signaled that it could serve as a model program for others in the state.

Through curricular innovation, we are striving to provide academic programs that are differentiators for the university, industry-aligned, and created with an eye toward student retention.

### **Vice President, Personnel Services & General Counsel**

Fitchburg State University is committed to nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and providing educational, working, and living environments that value the diverse backgrounds of

all people. This commitment is strengthened by its core values of accessibility, affordability, community, enrichment, and excellence.

The University's equal opportunity efforts emphasize anti-discrimination, student engagement and professional development. Anti-discrimination is coordinated by the Director of Title IX and Equal Opportunity, student engagement is coordinated by the Director for the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, and professional development is coordinated by multiple committees of faculty and staff.

On January 6, 2025, President Hodge established the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), to provide legal advice and representation to the President, and University officials on various issues affecting the University. The OGC oversees litigation, Human Resources, Payroll, Title IX and Equal Opportunity.

The January 20, 2025, Executive Order 13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.", was followed by continuing attacks by the federal government on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies and programming in schools, including FSU's efforts to advance equity, in alignment with its mission and core values. The Massachusetts Attorney General issued the following guidance, confirming the validity of longstanding legal precedent, which established that educational institutions may take steps to foster diversity across numerous dimensions, including geography, socioeconomic status, race, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity:

- [Updated Joint Guidance on Race Neutral School Programs](#) (opens in a new tab), Massachusetts Governor and Attorney General, Sept. 23, 2025 (PDF)
- [Joint Guidance on Race Neutral School Programs](#) (opens in a new tab), Massachusetts Governor and Attorney General, Feb. 26, 2025 (PDF)
- [Multi-State Guidance Concerning Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Employment Initiatives](#) (opens in a new tab), Massachusetts Attorney General, Feb. 13, 2025 (PDF)

In December 2025, President Hodge reconstituted FSU's Leading for Change. The new Leading for Change Committee combines the Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Committee, the Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI) Team and the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) to prevent redundancy, reduce silos and improve the retention of students, faculty and staff. The Leading for Change Committee is comprised of 3 AFSCME, 3 APA, 3MSCA, and 3 NUPs, including the Director of Title IX and Equal Opportunity, who serves as Chair, the Director for the Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness who serves as the Vice-Chair, and the Vice President for Personnel Services and General Counsel who provides leadership as an ex-officio voting member. Leading For Change will champion FSU's Core Values, serve as the steering committee for the multistate Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI) <https://reji-bsu.org/members/>, making recommendations to the President regarding

diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging as well as bias incidents. Such recommendations may include student programming and professional development. An example of such recommendation is the January 15, 2026 Campus Development Day. Campus Development Day was conceived by the DEIB Committee and brought to life by President Hodge and a core group of the Leading for Change Committee, Personnel Services, Academic Affairs, and the Center for Teaching and Learning.

### **Vice President, Enrollment Management and Student Success**

The offices of TRIO SSS, Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math & Science have been moved into the division of EMSS and now report to the Executive Director of Grant Funded Student Success Programs. This new position has been filled by Dr. Beth Swartz, who has been with the University for ten years and has served as the Director of TRIO SSS since 2020. Dr. Swartz is also responsible for managing our \$1.3M State University (SU) Success Grant, which is intended to fund a TRIO-like model of high-touch success coaches capable of supporting our population of low-income and first-generation incoming students not currently served by TRIO SSS. Overall, this funding should allow us the opportunity to begin building our vision of a holistic, accountable and data-informed approach to student retention and success. Note the position of Assistant Dean of Student Success, which was vacated by a resignation in November, is on hold at this time.

Spring Day enrollments are trending as expected, with new students rebounding to prior levels and returning students enrolling as planned, which includes an expected decline in second-semester students due to the smaller Fall 2025 incoming class. SGOCE numbers also continue to perform as expected, with undergraduate enrollments trending up and graduate enrollments trending down.

For Fall 2026 Day, admission applications have rebounded to Fall 2024 numbers in almost all recruitment territories, including New England, which is positive. Applications from Direct Admission schools are up. (Note that Fall 2024 is serving as our benchmark for Fall 2026, due to the decline in numbers that we experienced in Fall 2025.)

It is still early in the new student enrollment cycle as we begin to shift our main focus to yield activities. We have added Saturday Information Sessions to the calendar and are planning our Spring Future Falcon Days, designed to increase yield of our accepted student population. Additionally, we will be leveraging Yield IQ, a new component of our Enroll 360 platform, provided at no cost by EAB, in an effort to provide more targeted, personal outreach to our accepted/non-deposited students.

The Fitchburg High School Admissions Office, as well as the Direct Admission Program, continue to provide real opportunities for us to make stronger connections with the students and staff at FHS, St. Bernard's, Sizer and Monty Tech. Through increased admission and financial aid activities, we are engaging these students at a much higher level and expect to realize increased enrollments as a result.

The Director of Financial Aid position, vacated in September, is currently on hold as we conduct assessments and leverage professional consulting services to make immediate improvements in policies and operations.

We plan to contract a Marketing and Communications professional to assess our current marketing and brand efforts, with an eye to identifying strengths and opportunities, as well as possible redundancies, that exist across University Marketing, Admissions and SGOCE. We look forward to receiving a report in the spring.

### **Chief Financial Officer**

As CFO, Dr. Travis Chambers joined the university in December. President Hodge and CFO Chambers extend the sincerest of gratitude to Heidi Swift, Bob Labonte, and Summer Fetteroll for their leadership in stabilizing the university's financial resources. Their tireless efforts in leading the university's financial picture through the leadership transition and in establishing the FY26 budget were invaluable. As Travis gets up to speed, Bob and Summer continue to provide purposeful leadership. Bob has graciously agreed to continue serving as Interim Controller as the focus shifts from stabilization to strategic prioritization and growth of fiscal resources. Summer Fetteroll now serves as the Executive Director of Finance, overseeing critical functions in the financial services team.

#### *Budget Status and Ongoing Approach*

The university's financial picture remains promising. Quarter 2 actual expenditures relative to the budget are in line. In addition, overall revenue collected thus far in the fiscal year is 71% of projections. The status of the FY26 budget is a testament to the leadership's work. For the remainder of the fiscal year, Finance will monitor for abnormalities and improvements. As the CFO becomes more informed about the university's overall fiscal status, there will be a commitment to increased transparency and collaboration across campus. Fiscal transparency to the broader community will take the form of regular updates to various constituencies. The expanded community, consisting of students, faculty, staff, and the Board of Trustees, will receive regular financial reporting. The reports will vary by group, but there will be a commitment to a shared understanding of the university's performance. The intended purpose of increased transparency is to reduce silos across the university and drive incremental improvements, which should yield increases in student success metrics.

#### *FY27 Budget Prep*

Financial Services and budgeting will initiate a new process of working with units to understand complex budget needs. Cabinet members, along with their downward line units, will assist in formulating budgets. This fiscal year, there will be an emphasis on strategic zero-based budgeting to understand the short- and long-term needs of internal organizations. Budget prep meetings will serve as a listening tour and a learning experience for the CFO. Financial resources will be aligned to support current and ongoing strategic priorities. FY27 budget allocations may mirror FY26 allocations while carving out funding for strategic priorities. The goal will be to improve incremental alignment for future years. President Hodge, along with the cabinet, will provide input on reallocations within their respective areas as we collaboratively seek a funding model that will yield quality education outcomes. Once the budget process concludes, units will be empowered to utilize funding based on priorities and requests. Financial services will provide transparent support to the university

once the budget is finalized. The new budget process will allow for future efficiencies. Funding realignment will aid enrollment growth (recruitment and admissions), success (emphasizing support for academic unit resources), and retention (success grants, support, and career planning).

### *Revenue Projections*

Concerns about flat or declining enrollment necessitate frequent monitoring of credit-hour generation in addition to enrollment. Revenue projections will be based on actual enrollment data and will consider the various revenue structures for Day, Evening, Graduate, and Professional learners. Revenue projection is pivotal while understanding the impact of fee increases on the overall net position. A hybrid revenue approach will allow ample time to adjust to fluctuations and the agility to adjust operations as needed. Matriculation and increased enrollment while being agile to continue to stabilize the financial picture.

Financial services plan to be at the forefront of alternative revenue development. We will partner with the SGOCE, the University Foundation, and the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs to diversify the university's portfolio. The changing demographics in the region and nationally require a strategic emphasis on non-traditional revenue streams.

### *Process Improvement*

Within the first few weeks of the CFO's appointment, there has been feedback that process improvements can increase margins. Improvements in procurement processes are necessary for proper fiscal controls. Financial services will implement procurement processes aimed at increasing efficiency, easing bottlenecks, and increasing compliance. The procedures and processes are necessary to aid in proper expenditure controls. Emphasis on internal procedures will yield an adequate margin while the university improves revenue optimization.

The Financial Services will reimplement training for the university (budget, accounts payable, and procurement). Training will aid in a financially astute university, efficient processes, and connections with central finance. Improvements in new procedures and processes are necessary to decrease liability. Procurement will train on proper use and steer towards purchasing procedures to control university assets.

## **Chief Information Officer**

### *Advancing Infrastructure, Accessibility, and Student Support*

The Technology Department continues to support Fitchburg State's mission by enhancing infrastructure, modernizing learning environments, advancing digital accessibility, and bolstering cybersecurity. These initiatives are designed not only to meet compliance and operational standards but to create a secure, inclusive, and adaptable technology environment that supports student success, teaching excellence, and institutional sustainability.

One of the most important efforts this year has been our preparation for ADA Title II digital accessibility compliance. We are creating a more inclusive digital environment through several key initiatives. These include requiring Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates (VPATs) from vendors, offering campus-wide accessibility training, partnering with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) on workshops, developing a wide array of online resources, and implementing new accessibility tools. These include document remediation software and enhanced Google Workspace capabilities that support universal design. These efforts go beyond compliance; they directly impact student achievement by ensuring all users can navigate, access, and benefit from digital content.

To continue supporting student success and maintaining operational excellence, we have made key personnel changes. Glendal Franco, a 2025 graduate and former student technician, has joined the Help Desk team as a full-time EDP Systems Analyst. Additionally, Matilda Goad, a recent spring 2025 Fitchburg State graduate, has filled the OneCard Systems Analyst position, replacing the recently retired Ted Godin. She was also a former student employee in the OneCard Office. We are also actively working to fill a critical Systems Analyst role within the telecom division. This position is vital for managing campus telecom and low-voltage infrastructure, ensuring service continuity, and addressing growing operational demands.

Allison Bunnell has officially transitioned to a full-time role within the Technology team. In her new full-time capacity, Allison will dedicate her skills to strategic initiatives, with a specific focus on assisting with the submission process for developing personalized digital portfolios and leading accessibility training on Grackle and other digital accessibility platforms, as needed.

Significant progress has also been made in modernizing learning spaces. Classroom technology upgrades were implemented over the summer, including a complete refresh of Ellis White Lecture Hall and podium upgrades across campus. Video conferencing capabilities were enhanced in multiple conference rooms, improving virtual engagement. In specialized labs, we installed high-performance GPU computers for Computer Science students learning CUDA programming, and new monitors in Game Design labs to enrich student project work. These upgrades ensure that our physical and digital learning environments remain responsive to faculty innovation and the evolving needs of students.

At the infrastructure level, we completed the migration of all Horizon virtual desktops to Windows 11, updated NVIDIA GPU drivers, and upgraded VMware vSphere and ESXi to version 8.x. These efforts collectively improve system performance, security, and scalability.

The Networking and Telecommunications team continues to fortify campus infrastructure. This summer, we advanced our multi-year residence hall cabling project by installing CAT6A cabling in several Townhouse units and Mara 1, replacing outdated phone wiring to provide faster, more reliable internet access. We also upgraded network firmware and implemented a secure, segmented network to support mobile payments for the new university bookstore.

Additional infrastructure improvements included refreshing the University Police recorder system, upgrading campus security cameras, and repairing fiber-optic lines to ensure resilient connectivity across campus.

We have significantly strengthened our partnership with FATV, our city partner, by enhancing network access throughout the campus and at the Wallace Civic Center. This enhancement allows for quicker setup and broadcasting of both community and campus events, demonstrating Fitchburg State's strong commitment to outreach and civic engagement.

Support for Athletics and student success was strengthened through the deployment of a mobile Chromebook cart configured for proctored study hours. These devices provide secure, mobile access to academic platforms like Blackboard, Google Workspace, and virtual desktops, helping student-athletes balance their academic and athletic commitments.

Professional development and user empowerment remain key departmental priorities. The Help Desk team launched the “Level Up Your Work” series for faculty and staff, as well as the “Get Google Savvy” series for students. These sessions support digital fluency across campus and encourage deeper engagement with core productivity tools.

The Information Security team has implemented robust measures to safeguard the university's data and systems. We successfully deployed Google Data Labels to enhance data classification and protection, completed ROI analysis for our Web Application Firewall service, and implemented firmware and security updates on key systems. Internally, we implemented a password manager solution across the department to enhance credential management and mitigate security risks. We also completed annual compliance assessments for NIST, PCI, and GLBA, maintaining our commitment to regulatory excellence.

Cybersecurity awareness and incident preparedness remain top priorities. Our 2025 Cybersecurity Awareness Training has launched, and we have completed our internal tabletop exercises for disaster recovery and incident response. The team demonstrated effective incident response this fall by mitigating a targeted phishing attack affecting students, identifying and securing compromised accounts before significant damage occurred.

Core Services has led several major initiatives to modernize and secure our technology foundation. Data protection was strengthened by fully encrypting the Ellucian Banner database and masking personally identifiable information, ensuring that users only access the data necessary to perform their roles. Additionally, we migrated our student information systems to new servers, which improved performance and redundancy.

In partnership with state-contracted vendors, we are exploring a ‘Minimum Viable Cloud’ option through a pilot program with Microsoft Azure. This initiative will assess the long-term benefits of shifting critical systems to the cloud, including improved scalability, fault tolerance, and disaster recovery capabilities, an essential step toward financial and operational sustainability.

We completed the replacement of our aging fiber channel switches that connect servers to storage systems, and deployed a new enterprise directory service to replace an unsupported legacy platform. These upgrades significantly improve system stability, data integrity, and support scalability for future needs.

A notable achievement was the launch of a campus-wide initiative to streamline and coordinate all automated communications sent to new students. This work supports institutional goals related to student belonging and communication clarity, reducing redundancy and enhancing the student onboarding experience.

Several legacy systems have also been decommissioned, including the retirement of the last remaining Banner Self-Service (WEB4) workflow and the replacement of our automated account provisioning tool. Working closely with HR and other departments, the Core Services team introduced a NexGen Identity Management (NIM) system that automates real-time account creation and deactivation, ensuring secure, efficient user access across systems.

Lastly, the redesigned Faculty/Staff Directory has been completed. This new resource enhances data accuracy, incorporates functional titles and pronouns, and now features photographs, all of which facilitate easier connections between students, employees, faculty, and support services. This project reflects our ongoing commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and service excellence.

Taken together, these initiatives reflect the Technology Department's continued alignment with institutional goals, fostering student success, enhancing operational resilience, and positioning Fitchburg State as a forward-looking and responsive institution.

## **Student Affairs**

The following highlights reflect the Division of Student Affairs' work over the past several months to enhance the student experience and deliver services that promote student wellness, success, and retention.

### *Housing - Future Planning*

In collaboration with AVP of Capital Planning and Maintenance Matt Lechter and with the support of President Hodge, the following changes have been made to the current housing portfolio for academic year 26-27 to maximize occupancy and to broaden the student housing experience:

**Graduate Housing:** Transition graduate housing from its current location at 185 North St. to a floor in Simonds Hall. This proposed change will allow for year-round housing, including air conditioning, and will offer single bedrooms in an apartment-style living experience. We believe that the above will be an attractive option to the off-campus housing our graduate students are typically choosing.

Family Housing: With the above change, a Family Housing program can be piloted. We have received inquiries from both undergraduate and graduate students regarding such, and a Family Housing Agreement and marketing plans are currently being drafted.

MWCC Partnership Program: We currently house 10 MWCC students on campus with three additional deposits for Spring 2026. We have 7 others in the eligibility verification process. Inquiries regarding this program continue, and we are working with colleagues at MWCC to verify eligibility and offer housing, accordingly.

Cedar Street: Coming offline for AY 26-27 given its low occupancy. We will review its use for AY 27-28.

### *Student Support*

Our teams in the student support services areas continue to see an increase in both volume and acuity. Despite a 13% decrease in available appointments due to clinical capacity, the Counseling Center team saw 216 students for a total of 751 individual sessions, 73 of which were classified as urgent appointments. We remain proud of our commitment to serve the clinical needs of students without waitlists or session limits. The CARE team has received a 34% increase in referrals compared to fall 2024. Notably, the number of cases objectively assessed through our process at the “elevated” level (61) has already surpassed the total number of elevated cases from AY24-25 (51), signaling an increase both in acuity and complexity. While the majority of referrals last fall came at the mid/end of the semester, this fall saw the majority of referrals coming at the beginning/middle of the semester. This seems to be further evidence of a strong culture of referral and faculty/staff trust of the process - referring earlier when indications of student concerns are first present, which allows for earlier intervention and support.

As a part of a divisional realignment, Dr. Robert Hynes has taken on the elevated role of Associate Dean for Student Support Services. Under his leadership, the teams in Counseling Services, Care and Case Management, Disability Services, and Health Services will be able to capitalize on synergies to holistically and efficiently support students as well as the increased acuity and volume of concerns. This will also allow us to focus efforts on wellness education more broadly.

As of this writing, there were 949 visits to the Falcon Bazaar food pantry, an increase of 96% compared to fall 2024. Noteworthy during this most recent semester was the federal government suspension of SNAP benefits. Multi-divisional teams worked together to ensure student access to food during the Thanksgiving break and the upcoming Winter break with extended Bazaar hours, expanded dining options, to-go bags for food and hygiene products in accessible locations, and a Thanksgiving meal. The operations of the Bazaar and management of the grants that fund it were transitioned to the Office of Care and Case Management who can directly and holistically support student needs when they are co-occurring with food insecurity.

### *Student Experience*

The student engagement units have worked to support 199 student events as of this writing, a 40% increase from fall 2024. Notably, the student engagement team has focused efforts on weekend programming to ensure an active campus throughout the week. Plans are being developed to pilot online or hybrid events for online learners beginning in the spring semester. Five new clubs and organizations were chartered this fall - Alpha Alpha Alpha (first generation student honor society), It's On Us (sexual violence awareness, education, prevention), Associated General Contractors, American Institute of Architects Society, Computer Science and Mathematics Club, and the Christian Student Athlete Association. The Hammond Campus Center staff have supported a 27% increase in events in the building throughout the semester. All of the above indicates a robust offering of opportunities for students to engage and connect with a robust and diverse offering of events. As an example, our Student Veterans Association traveled to Colorado Springs in January 2026 for the national association meeting for the first time.

### **Athletics and Recreation Services**

The Fall 2025 season has been a period of both historic achievement and renewed excitement for Fitchburg State Athletics. Freshman Paulino Guevara Mateo delivered a performance for the ages, becoming the 2025 NCAA Division III East Regional Champion for men's cross country. Paulino also won the MASCAC individual championship and was named Runner and Rookie of the Year for the conference. As the first runner in Fitchburg State history to claim a regional title, he represented the university at the NCAA National Championships in Spartanburg, South Carolina, where he finished in the top third of the nation's premier distance athletes.

Success extended to our team sports as well. The field hockey program concluded its strongest season in nearly a decade, finishing with an 11-8 record. This marks the first time the team has reached the 11-win threshold since 2016, a testament to the revitalized team culture fostered by Head Coach Kayla Quinn. Similarly, the football program achieved its highest win total since 2017. This upward trajectory, highlighted by a dominant 49-14 season-opening victory, has had a measurable impact on weekend campus life and student engagement.

To translate this competitive success into broader campus spirit, the department recently hosted its first winter sports pep rally. Designed to unify the student body and increase visibility for our winter programs, the event featured a half-court shot competition offering one lucky student the chance to win free tuition for the spring semester. This momentum has carried onto the ice and the court, with both Men's Basketball and Men's Ice Hockey currently leading the MASCAC in early-season standings.

The department is currently executing several high-impact initiatives to deepen our support for student-athletes. One area of continued focus is the mental health and wellness of our student-athletes. While we have initiated several team-by-team initiatives in the past, this fall we brought all coaches together for Mental Health First Aid training. Funded by an NCAA Division III grant, our head coaches and athletic trainers participated in this specialized training to gain a concrete action plan for identifying and responding to mental health or substance use challenges. This program empowers our staff to recognize warning signs early, provide immediate support through a step-by-step intervention approach, and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. Additionally, our athletic conference (the MASCAC) has provided all student-athletes with access to the ZAMA Health app, which offers self-guided modules which aim to maximize performance goals and improve mental health.

Parallel to these wellness efforts, we continue to see a lot of early success with our significantly expanded Student-Athlete Academic Success and Study Hall initiative. A major milestone was the recruitment of 12 student-athletes to serve as peer tutors specifically within our Athletics Study Halls. This “athletes-helping-athletes” model is bolstered by proactive faculty outreach and early interventions regarding attendance alerts and midterm deficiency grades. Our communication strategy has also expanded with a dedicated Instagram account for academic success and a successful pre-advising campaign that yielded 90 individual student-athlete meetings this fall.

Following the historic decision to add Women’s Ice Hockey to our varsity roster, we are proud to announce the enrollment of our first recruit for the upcoming spring semester. The daughter of a Fitchburg State alumnus recently visited campus and chose to transfer here from an out-of-state institution specifically to join the inaugural Falcon squad. This early commitment underscores the immediate demand for the program. As we prepare for our head coaching search, Women’s Ice Hockey remains a primary driver of our 2027 enrollment growth strategy.

In addition to our varsity expansions, the recreation department is actively responding to the evolving interests of the general student body. Following expressed student interest, we will pilot a women’s flag football league during the spring semester. This initiative provides a recreational outlet for both non-athletes and out-of-season varsity athletes to compete in a high-energy environment. Women’s flag football is a growing sport, highlighted by its recent designation as an NCAA Emerging Sport and its inclusion in the 2028 Olympic Games. By piloting this program, we aim to provide a low-barrier-to-entry opportunity for female students to engage with the department and build lasting connections on campus.

## **Operations: University Police Department and Capital Planning and Maintenance**

### *University Police Department*

Our core mission centers on maintaining a safe, secure, and welcoming campus. We actively partner across the institution and broader community to promote student success, enhance

institutional reputation and participate in community engagement events with the intent to foster positive, healthy relationships.

Included in this report we discuss recruitment and retention challenges, a multi-agency effort to establish a family reunification plan, an overview of the new Clery Act hazing requirements, and select data covering August 1 through December 18, 2025.

### ***Recruitment and Retention Efforts***

The University Police Department is currently managing significant staffing challenges that are impacting our operational capacity. This situation, however, is not unique to our institution, as law enforcement agencies across the country are facing a widespread workforce crisis.

The National Policing Institute stated in a recent publication that workforce challenges are escalating rather than stabilizing. They highlight that thin recruitment pipelines and burnout-driven attrition are collectively accelerating the loss of crucial experience and institutional knowledge.

We wish to provide the Board with an update on our local personnel issues in the context of this national trend:

- **Recent Attrition:** A serious loss of personnel has occurred since late July. Seven of our twenty-one sworn police officers resigned (most transitioned to municipal agencies). This translates to a one-third attrition rate (33.33%) overall, and a particularly severe 41% loss from the Patrolman and Sergeant ranks. This results in a diminished pool of institutional experience, wider gaps in professional competencies among new staff, and a significant administrative and financial demands to recruit, hire, and train new officers.
- **Current Vacancy Rate:** Out of twenty-six full-time positions, we currently have four full-time vacancies, resulting in a 15.38% staffing gap.

This challenge reflects a nationwide crisis in law enforcement recruitment and retention, driven by four key factors:

- **Public Scrutiny:** Increased media scrutiny and negative public sentiment have diminished the appeal of policing, limiting the applicant pool.
- **Occupational Stress:** High job stress, risk, and burnout contribute significantly to increased resignations and early retirements.
- **Wage Competition:** We routinely lose experienced staff to municipal agencies offering superior compensation and benefit packages.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Generational shifts prioritize a stronger work-life balance, making the demanding schedules of 24/7 policing less desirable than other careers.

In an effort to counter these national trends, we previously worked with Human Resources and AFSCME to implement two key mitigation strategies, including the adoption of an alternative 4-day on, 3-day off schedule and elevating compensation. We have also worked with Human Resources to streamline hiring processes, when possible. Despite these proactive institutional efforts, the staffing challenges driven by these factors continue to persist.

*Emergency Preparedness - Family Reunification & TEEX - MGT 315 Risk Assessments to Critical Community Assets*

Family Reunification Plan

The University is collaborating closely with Fitchburg Public Schools, the City's Fire Department, Police Department, and Emergency Management Agency to develop and implement a Family Reunification Plan. This essential planning establishes clear, coordinated protocols for the safe and efficient process of uniting families following a significant community emergency or critical incident. A core contribution to this partnership is the University's designation of the Wallace Civic Center and the Landry Arena to function as the primary, secure, and accessible reunification site, significantly strengthening the city's and region's overall emergency response capacity.

Upcoming Risk Assessment Training

Further bolstering our proactive security measures, Fitchburg State University will host the TEEX MGT 315: Risk Assessments to Critical Community Assets course in February 2026. This specialized training will equip key university and community personnel with the necessary methodologies to systematically identify, analyze, and prioritize risks facing our critical infrastructure, assets, and operational systems. By formally applying the MGT 315 framework, the University can develop more precise, data-driven security strategies and resource allocation plans, ensuring the sustained protection and operational continuity of essential campus functions.

*The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security and Campus Crime Statistics Act - Hazing Transparency Report*

Demonstrating the institution's commitment to safety and full federal compliance, Fitchburg State University has proactively published its inaugural Campus Hazing Transparency Report. This critical document, mandated by recent amendments to the Clery Act, was the result of a coordinated effort by the University Police Department, the Dean of Students and the Title IX Office. Completing this transparency measure well in advance of the required December 23, 2025, federal deadline highlights the University's dedication to accountability and student well-being.

The report serves as a public resource detailing findings of hazing violations by any student organization. The University's initial transparency report documented no findings of responsibility for hazing incidents during the reporting period.

Fitchburg State University’s Hazing webpage, to include the inaugural report can be found here: [www.fitchburgstate.edu/about/university-police/clery-act-and-annual-security-report/hazing](http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/about/university-police/clery-act-and-annual-security-report/hazing)

**Fall 25 Data (August 1 through December 18, 2025)**

Category	2025	2024	% Change
<b>Personal Safety Course Offerings</b>			
Total # of Sessions / # of Attendees	16/736	12/693	33%/6.2%
Campus Safety Overview	4/298	3/277	33%/7.5%
CPR / First Aid	4/37	2/27	100%/37%
C.R.A.S.E (Community Response to an Active Shooter Event)	6/326	3/314	100%/3.8%
De-escalation Training	2/75	3/57	-33%/31%
<b>Select Data</b>			
Total Calls for Service	13,719	16,592	-17%
Offense Reports	404	386	5%
Motor Vehicle Accidents	18	21	-14%
Physical Arrests (Criminal Offenses)	1	3	-67%
Criminal Complaints (Criminal Complaint Applications)	1	3	-67%
Clery Act Crimes	3	5	-40%
Mental Health & Well-being Checks	44	40	+10%
Resulting Involuntary Hospitalizations	4	5	-20%
Care Team Referrals (CARE and Case Management)	69	41	+68%
Judicial Referrals (Violations of Student Conduct)	24	49	-51%
Safety Escorts	221	278	-20%

**Conclusion**

In summary, while the University Police Department continues to navigate staffing challenges, our commitment to a safe and welcoming campus environment remains steadfast.

The data from the Fall 2025 semester reflects a proactive department that has successfully addressed safety training and intensified support for student well-being, as evidenced by the 68% increase in Care Team referrals.

By achieving early compliance with Clery Act hazing transparency and spearheading critical regional initiatives like the Family Reunification Plan, we continue to demonstrate that institutional resilience is built on strong community partnerships.

We remain dedicated to navigating the evolving issues facing higher education, while continuing to focus on the success and safety of every member of the Fitchburg State University community.

### *Capital Planning and Maintenance*

During the fall semester, the CPM team worked to ensure the campus was prepared to support daily operations, including maintaining clean academic spaces, setting up events, and managing safety and appearance through changing weather.

Recruitment and retention in the skilled trades remain challenging, leaving some positions unfilled. These challenges have also created opportunities for internal promotions, helping staff grow and strengthening the department. Continued turnover within the maintainer team brings new energy but requires additional training and support. Despite a few vacancies, we have been able to offer employees opportunities across different areas, creating development while meeting campus needs. CPM leadership continues to explore ways to enhance the team and ensure work is recognized and the team has the resources needed to fulfill the requirements.

We have also focused on reviewing and expanding the materials and tools available to the team. Even small investments in this area have delivered significant benefits for staff and in turn, the campus community.

Throughout the semester, CPM has been planning for both current projects and larger initiatives in the near and long term, including potential Bright Act funding and the Applied Learning Modernization Initiative through DCAMM. In addition to long-term capital planning, we continue to evaluate our trades and vendor partnerships to act proactively, establish contracts that benefit the university, and ensure on-site vendors supporting daily operations are effectively managed.

While many projects are currently underway at various stages of study, design, procurement, and production, I wanted to highlight a few updates:

In December, we completed the first phase of our EV charger program, increasing the number of campuswide chargers from two to eight. Usage has continued to rise, with November marking our highest month of charging sessions. We continue to look at other EV charging programs and partnerships.

Sustainability efforts continue, with several CPM members serving on the reestablished Sustainability Committee. According to data from E.L. Harvey, campus recycling increased from 122.06 tons in FY24 to 227 tons in FY25—an 86% increase. We are exploring additional

recycling options for maintainers and collaborating with consultants and state vendors to expand solar installations.

We are conducting a comprehensive campuswide elevator study to guide long-term maintenance and service planning.

In collaboration with DCAMM, we are also conducting a decarbonization study to guide replacement decisions and major project planning, helping us prioritize sustainability, make informed investments, and position the university for long-term efficiency. This roadmap will be completed in Spring 2026 and referred to future projects and bright act opportunities.

During the fall semester work continued at Conlon Hall, including the window replacement project, which will resume in May 2026 after commencement to complete remaining items and the Fine Arts wing. The third-floor Conlon restroom passed its final inspection in early December, providing a fully ADA-compliant facility and supporting phase one of the Communication Media renovations funded through DCAMM, planning for the redevelopment of the Com Media classroom spaces continues.

Continued planning for Summer 2026 residence hall projects, representing an estimated \$1.2 million MSCBA investment. Planned work includes heating and water boiler replacements in Townhouses 3 and 7, updated flooring in Herlihy Hall and select Townhouses, and LED lighting upgrades in Aubuchon student rooms.

The CPM team as a whole, is working to ensure that the campus is well-maintained, responsive to daily operational needs, and positioned to support both current and future academic and community activities.

### *Auxiliary Services*

#### *Falcon Bookstore & Gear Shop*

With our bookstore partner E-Campus, we have fully transitioned to an online textbook purchasing model. We achieved a 100% adoption rate in the fall, have again reached 100% for the winter session as of December 8, and are currently at 75% for spring. E-Campus continues to note that we are ahead of our peer institutions. We are also hosting our first holiday shopping event, offering 20% off in-store apparel and accessories.

Key data from our November fall semester review:

- Total orders: 1,669
- 44% placed before the academic year
- 20% used student book vouchers
- Units sold: New 797 (30%), Used 193 (7%), Rental 429 (16%), Digital 1,157 (44%), Marketplace 55 (2%)

I want to recognize Academic Affairs for their assistance in this transition, and Amber Deschenes, for their role in managing the adoption process. Our first full semester has been successful, and while improvements in user experience and pricing remain, Amber's work and faculty support have been essential.

In January, we will meet with the Provost Council to review the mid-year E-Campus report and further strengthen the adoption process to ensure we continue providing the best resources for our students.

### *Dining Services*

In November, we finalized a fully negotiated five-year extension of our existing agreement with Chartwells. The new terms will bring nearly \$5 million in capital investments to the facility. Planning for improvements to both the front-of-house and back-of-house (kitchen) areas is already underway.

We have continued to expand programming and dining options, increasing both variety and availability for the campus. Additionally, dining services will open on January 2 to support campus operations and our athletes during the break.

### *Parking Services*

Parking Services has seen increased traffic since the move, with more students and community members seeking support on parking regulations. We updated signage to reflect new EV charging stations and lifted parking holds so students can register without barriers. Parking rules and regulations have also been updated to include EV charging.

### *Housing MSCBA Budget*

In October and November, the MSCBA budgeting process occurs with Financial Services, Student Affairs, and MSCBA to review occupancy trends, strategic planning, and rate recommendations. Through collaboration with the Dean of Students and the Housing & Residential Services team, we continue to strengthen our approach to supporting residential students.

### *Future Planning*

To advance Housing & Residential Services while balancing student needs and revenue goals, the following initiatives will guide future planning:

- Graduate Housing: Transition graduate housing to Simonds Hall with single bedrooms in an apartment setting and encourage 12-month availability. Integrate these students into MSCBA-reported occupancy and expand marketing through online platforms and Admissions outreach.

- Family Housing: Explore designating 4-5 units at 185 North St. for family housing. Establish a single-rate housing agreement that ensures enrollment continuity and appropriate support for participants.
- MWCC Housing Program: Continue the partnership with MWCC to house their students starting Fall 2025. Strengthen connections between both campuses' Dean of Students offices and expand outreach to support program growth.
- Cedar Street: Use the 2026-2027 academic year to review Cedar Street's setup, condition, and purpose. Remove it from everyday housing selection (currently under 50% occupancy) but maintain it within the portfolio for activation as needed.

### Chief of Staff

It has been a busy Fall for the Chief of Staff, who has taken on additional oversight responsibilities since the retirement in October of the university's vice president for institutional advancement.

The Chief of Staff works closely with the university president on a variety of initiatives, meeting with community stakeholders and external partners. These efforts included serving as moderator of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce's annual Congressional Luncheon on Nov. 7, at which Congressman Jim McGovern and Congresswoman Lori Trahan discussed issues of local, regional and national concern. The university was the premier sponsor of this well-attended program.

The Associate Director of Communications has also continued to support the university's promotional efforts through storytelling in mainstream media as well as on its [news](#) page and digital magazine site. Since October, more than a dozen feature articles have been [posted](#) on the magazine site, celebrating accomplishments of students, alumni, and faculty. These stories are shared with internal and external audiences on the university's social media platforms.

This office also oversees the Director of Presidential Events, which organized several high-profile programs during the fall term, including the holiday gathering in Hammond Hall for university faculty, librarians and staff; special receptions for invited guests at varied athletic events; and celebrations at the presidential residence. These high-visibility programs represent opportunities to engage key constituents and foster relationships with valued community partners.

While the Advancement office is navigating a leadership transition with the departure of the vice president in October, the team continues to support events and fundraising efforts. Noteworthy events this fall included a reunion celebrating the 25th anniversary of the university's moot court program, which was complemented by a targeted print and digital

fundraising appeal to support the team. More than \$7,000 was raised from that appeal, with a major gift anticipated in the new year.

The Advancement office relaunched its athletics-themed Go Falcons Challenge this fall, inviting current members of its varsity teams to reach out to former players for a targeted fundraising appeal. This year there were 589 gifts, totaling \$23,998 (up from 516 gifts and \$20,462 in 2024). In addition to dollars raised, the program engages current students and demonstrates the importance of giving back in the future.

A year-end appeal was also launched in December, including print and digital elements that highlighted an individual student's journey and the role that philanthropy had played in their continued success at Fitchburg State. As of early January, the appeal had brought in more than \$89,000 (up from \$52,000 for calendar year 2024).

The Chief of Staff is also the university's primary records access officer, continuing to process and log public records requests from a variety of sources, from news outlets to data research firms. There were 47 such requests during the calendar year (and several had already been received for 2026 as of this writing).

#### Media Links for October 2025 - January 2026:

- Miami Hurricanes defense the catalyst to postseason success. The Palm Beach Post. January 4, 2026. (Story includes Fitchburg State alum Corey Heatherman, the defensive coordinator at the University of Miami.)  
<https://www.palmbeachpost.com/story/sports/college/football/2026/01/04/cfp-semifinal-miami-hurricanes-ole-miss-rebels/88016579007/>
- Op-Ed: The quiet eldercare crisis. Dec. 31, 2025. Canadian Affairs.  
<https://www.canadianaffairs.news/2025/12/31/op-ed-the-quiet-eldercare-crisis/>
- Ricardo Barros captures the heart of Fitchburg through the camera eye. Worcester Magazine. Dec. 31, 2025.  
<https://www.worcestermag.com/story/lifestyle/columns/2025/12/31/last-call-ricardo-barros-photographer/87921525007/>
- Behind the Bylines: Less outrage, more agency – a New Year's approach to the news. Dec. 29, Lowell Sun. <https://www.lowellsun.com/2025/12/26/behind-the-bylines-less-outrage-more-agency-a-new-years-approach-to-the-news/>
- Students helping save lives. December 17, 2025. Sentinel & Enterprise.  
<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/12/17/students-helping-save-lives/>
- Behind the Bylines: Meeting them where they don't want to be. Lowell Sun. December 12, 2025. <https://www.lowellsun.com/2025/12/12/behind-the-bylines-meeting-them-where-they-dont-want-to-be/>
- A 'huge goal and big vision' Sentinel & Enterprise, Dec. 10, 2025.  
<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/12/10/a-huge-goal-and-a-big-vision/>

- Worcester Bravehearts get new leadership. Dec. 5, 2025. Patch.  
<https://patch.com/massachusetts/worcester/worcester-bravehearts-get-new-leadership>.
- NCDC Commitment Profile: Boston Jr. Bruins Foyle commits to Fitchburg State University. Dec 5, 2025. USPHL. <https://usphl.com/ncdc-commitment-profile-boston-jr-bruins-foyle-commits-to-fitchburg-state-university/>
- Behind the Bylines: Teaching reporters to question the record, not repeat it. Dec. 5, 2025. Sentinel & Enterprise.  
<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/12/05/behind-the-bylines-teaching-reporters-to-question-the-record-not-repeat-it/>
- Healey-Driscoll Administration Launches Statewide Pilot Program to Support Students Returning to College. [Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-launches-statewide-pilot-program-to-support-students-returning-to-college). December 2, 2025.  
<https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-launches-statewide-pilot-program-to-support-students-returning-to-college>.
- Falcon freshman runs right into history. Sentinel & Enterprise. Dec. 2, 2025.  
<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/12/01/falcon-freshman-runs-right-into-history/>
- Reason to give thanks. We have ample material. Lowell Sun. Nov. 28, 2025.  
<https://www.lowellsun.com/2025/11/27/editorial-reasons-to-give-thanks-we-have-ample-area-material/>
- FSU students compete in College Fed Challenge. Nov. 26, 2025. Sentinel & Enterprise.  
<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/11/25/fsu-students-compete-in-college-fed-challenge/>
- Beyond the bylines: Reading corrections the right way. Sentinel & Enterprise. Nov. 22, 2025. <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/11/21/behind-the-bylines-reading-corrections-the-right-way/>
- College Radio Keeps Its Cool. Professor Katherine Jewell quoted in this article. The New York Times. November 20, 2025.  
[https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/20/style/college-radio-kxlu.html?unlocked\\_article\\_code=1.2k8.Tdv4.rkol3DklqrZA&smid=url-share](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/20/style/college-radio-kxlu.html?unlocked_article_code=1.2k8.Tdv4.rkol3DklqrZA&smid=url-share)
- FSU adjunct instructor recognized as MAssCUE Pathfinder: Sentinel & Enterprise, 17 2025. <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/11/16/fsu-adjunct-instructor-recognized-as-a-masscue-pathfinder/>
- Beyond the bylines: Beyond awareness, news we can use. Sentinel & Enterprise. Nov., 14, 2025. <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/11/14/behind-the-bylines-beyond-awareness-news-we-can-use/>
- Some Mass. public universities enroll fewer international students, citing visa restrictions, WBUR, Nov. 10, 2025:  
<https://www.wbur.org/news/2025/11/10/massachusetts-public-universities-trump-international-enrollment-decline>
- Fitchburg State's women's ice hockey team offers new opportunity for Gardner-area athletes, Gardner News, Nov. 10, 2025:  
<https://www.thegardnernews.com/story/sports/college/2025/11/10/fitchburg-state-university-adds-womens-ice-hockey/87010190007/>

- VPCC's new cheerleading coach driven by love of sport. Nov. 8, 2025. Williamsburg Yorktown Daily. <https://wydaily.com/sports/2025/11/08/vpccs-new-cheerleading-coach-driven-by-love-of-sport/>
- Falcons rewarded with new hardware. Sentinel & Enterprise. Nov. 2, 2025. <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/11/01/falcons-rewarded-with-new-hardware/>
- Banner night for Fitchburg State. Nov. 2, 2025. Sentinel & Enterprise. <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/10/31/banner-night-for-fitchburg-state/>
- Fitchburg State to launch women's varsity ice hockey. Worcester Business Journal. Oct., 31, 2025. [https://wbjournal.com/article/fitchburg-state-to-launch-womens-varsity-ice-hockey-team/?cache\\_busting=1761933236](https://wbjournal.com/article/fitchburg-state-to-launch-womens-varsity-ice-hockey-team/?cache_busting=1761933236)
- Behind the Bylines: When the news isn't new, it still belongs to you. Sentinel & Enterprise. Oct. 31, 2025. <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/10/30/a-new-game-in-town-fitchburg-state-adding-womens-hockey/>
- A new game in town: Fitchburg State adding women's ice hockey. Sentinel & Enterprise. Oct. 31, 2025. <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/10/30/a-new-game-in-town-fitchburg-state-adding-womens-hockey/>
- Fitchburg State announces the addition of women's ice hockey. MASACAC. Oct., 31, 2025. [https://www.mascac.com/sports/wice/2025-26/releases/FIT\\_WIH](https://www.mascac.com/sports/wice/2025-26/releases/FIT_WIH)
- After Trump ends funding for Hispanic-serving colleges, local leaders call for change, Telegram & Gazette, Oct. 29, 2025: <https://www.telegram.com/story/news/education/2025/10/29/hispanic-serving-colleges-trump-massachusetts/86928745007/>
- Behind the Bylines: From the feed to the forum, why it matters where we speak. Oct. 24, 2025. Lowell Sun. <https://www.lowellsun.com/2025/10/24/behind-the-bylines-from-the-feed-to-the-forum-why-it-matters-where-we-speak/>
- Officer receives Commendation for helping juvenile in need of assistance. Oct., 22, 2025. Sentinel & Enterprise: <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/10/22/officer-receives-commendation-for-helping-juvenile-in-need-of-assistance/>
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- The Trump administration is affecting Mass. higher ed – and it's not just Harvard. Oct., 18, 2025. MassLive. <https://www.masslive.com/news/2025/10/the-trump-administration-is-affecting-mass-higher-ed-and-its-not-just-harvard.html>

- A perfect pace for Falcons. Sentinel & Enterprise. Oct. 17:  
<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/10/16/a-perfect-pace-for-falcons/>
- Brattleboro teacher named 2026 Vermont Teacher of the Year. Vermont Biz. Oct. 15, 2025. <https://vermontbiz.com/news/2025/october/14/brattleboro-teacher-named-2026-vermont-teacher-year>

## **SPECIAL Updates, Special Assistants to the President**

### **Dr. David Weiss: Presidential Fellows**

Dr. David P. Weiss is professor of criminal justice and in his eighteenth year with Fitchburg State University. He was an inaugural presidential fellow in 2024-25 and was asked to serve as special assistance to the president in 2025-26 to oversee and coordinate the Presidential Fellows Program.

Under the leadership of President Donna Hodge, the Presidential Fellows Program was first introduced in 2024 “with the goal of fostering leadership growth among faculty and librarians by providing a unique professional development opportunity.” Fellows exemplify the kind of leadership that inspires progress rooted in purpose, driven by curiosity, and with a commitment to making a lasting impact on our campus and beyond.

This year’s nine fellows include professors DeMisty Bellinger-Delfeld (English Studies), Jonathan Harvey (Humanities), Denise Sargent (Education), Deborah Stone (Nursing), Katy Covino (English Studies), Laura Garofoli (Psychological Science), Dustin Halterman (Education), Lindsay Parisi (Exercise and Sports Science), and librarian Connie Strittmatter.

Throughout this past semester, fellows attended brown bag luncheons arranged by Dr. Weiss wherein President Hodge and other cabinet-level administrators discussed their professional role within the university. President Hodge hosted a welcome luncheon for the fellows in October, laying out her vision for the program. Stacey Luster, VP for Personnel Services & General Counsel, is serving in her first year with us here at Fitchburg State and in November shared that much of her time is spent reviewing a variety of contracts as general counsel. Stacey and fellows were able to place faces with names, helping to better establish professional relationships which had already been initiated through email conversations. In December, Tim St. John, Dean of Student Affairs, also joined the fellows for the monthly brown bag luncheon to discuss his expanded role within the university. Much falls under Tim’s purview, with fellows requesting an organizational chart to help better understand Student Affairs, to know what student resources might be available to faculty and librarians through his office, and to think about how faculty and librarians might better collaborate with Student Affairs.

Fellows also focused on their individual projects, ranging from: identifying space unique to faculty and librarians to be used for both social occasions and intellectual conversations; expanding and coordinating the university’s community-engaged arts initiatives and programming, and revitalizing cultural life at Fitchburg State; bringing to life a university-

based mentorship initiative for new teachers; establishing a *Death Café* program that would provide a structured space for reflection and conversation on death and dying, promote holistic well-being and foster empathy; and, increasing Open Educational Resource (OER) opportunities for university students, faculty and librarians.

To better assess and improve upon the value of the program for participating fellows, Dr. Weiss reached out virtually to top university administrators at Western Carolina University to discuss how their Senior Leadership Fellows Program is structured and to further review their programming opportunities. Like Fitchburg State, WCU is relatively new to offer a fellows program, with theirs beginning in January 2022.

Dr. Weiss and other fellows attended, teaching schedule permitting, Board of Trustees meetings throughout the fall semester as well.

The semester wrapped up with a hosted holiday dinner and collegial conversation at the home of President Hodge and Dustin Hodge, with guest Dr. Lorin Basden Arnold, Provost & VP, of Kutztown University of Pennsylvania attending the dinner.

#### **Dr. Christine Dee: Presidential Ambassadors**

It is my great pleasure to serve as a Special Assistant to the President. In 2025, President Hodge allowed me to build upon what she began: empowering students to imagine, plan and execute projects that support her administration and advance the university's mission. The Ambassadors' achievements to date reflect the quality of our students and the support of this administration. The program enables students to employ their academic skills across university divisions, leading on campus and in the larger Fitchburg community.

The program's theme, Academics Change Lives, highlights higher education's transformative power; disciplinary inquiry inspiring change; educators making a difference. Beginning with feedback from inaugural Ambassadors, I devised a program structure using project management principles within the context of higher education. I organized resources on higher education operations and project management theory on the university's CMS. The President's Office, the Ambassadors and the campus community are linked through Google for event management. Ambassadors utilize project charters to track progress. In bi-monthly breakfast meetings Ambassadors workshop ideas, learn from university officials, structure projects and organize events. For example, in December the Ambassadors hosted a festive breakfast with leaders in Academic Affairs and Finance to ask questions about career-building, sources of inspiration, and gain leadership advice. Ambassadors support the Office of the President weekly, through front-facing events and in performing tasks behind the scenes, gaining first-hand cross-departmental experience in higher education operations.

Since the introduction of the Ambassadors at the President's State of the University Address and the Presidential Ambassador Showcase, the Ambassadors have shaped university culture through their enthusiasm and commitment. They supported the Office of Advancement at the Gold Key Ceremony, Alumni Awards, and the 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Luncheon, building on these opportunities. Connections with alumni and advancement resulted in a recent campaign

featuring an ambassador. Conversations between alumni and ambassadors inspired a project between the ambassadors, the Office of Advancement and the Dean of the School of Business, Technology and Engineering to develop an alumni mentoring program.

Ambassadors support the Office of Admission. In the 2025 admissions cycle, Ambassadors assisted at college fairs. They took part in high-impact outreach events. Most recently, four ambassadors met with high school students at “Future Falcons Educator Day” at the McKay School, fielding questions and connecting with prospective students. The visibility of the Presidential Ambassador Program on university websites and media supports strategic enrollment efforts as a concrete example of how leadership, innovation, and academics are supported through President Hodge’s leadership.

The Ambassadors celebrate academic excellence at campus events, including the Police Academy Graduation, the Moot Court Regional competition, and 2025 Constitution Week. The Ambassadors foster initiatives to unite the university with individuals and organizations. Ambassadors assist in planning the Montachusett Martin Luther King Coalition’s 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Luncheon scheduled for January 19, 2026. The theme, “Building Community through Higher Education,” celebrates the university’s work affirming diversity and inclusion, including the direct admission initiative. Fitchburg State Vice President for Personnel Services and General Counsel Stacey Luster will keynote the event. The Ambassadors facilitated a partnership between the MLK Coalition and the Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness to host “Wrestling with Racism” on campus during Black History Month. Ambassadors support Women’s History Month and assist in the planning of the March 2 celebration featuring Olympic gold medalist and Professional Women’s Hockey League alumna and current broadcaster Gigi Marvin, who will speak about Title IX, the history of women’s ice hockey and women’s leadership on and off the ice.

Presidential Ambassadors execute individual projects that align with their academic interests, demonstrate skills managing projects, and produce results. Beyond emeriti ambassadors’ contributions in sustainability and peer mentoring, ambassadors are working on innovative projects that drive the university’s progress. Currently, Ambassadors work with the Career and Advising Center to measure the impact of study halls. With IRB approval an ambassador project measures graduate school intentions against outcomes to enhance student satisfaction and support strategic enrollment initiatives. Another project analyzes the value proposition of standardized placement tests. Ambassadors reviewed the Academic Integrity Policy prior to its approval. That process inspired a project that researches the normalization of cheating and AI practices on campus. An ambassador project addresses family loss with an inaugural event for the Students Thriving in Love and Loss project in February.

As this overview indicates, President Hodge’s Ambassador Program is a powerful initiative that fosters spirit and academic excellence across campus and beyond Fitchburg State.

#### **Dr. Josh Spero: International Engagement**

The honor of serving FSU's President, at her initiative, as her Special Assistant (International Enrollment & Campus-to-Campus Partnership Building) provides exciting opportunities to support and influence and help advance FSU's international communities on-campus and abroad.

I consistently sought and received guidance from FSU's President and VP/EMSS during numerous meetings, and worked with their FSU colleagues to gather information, insight, and understanding.

During the past several months, I coordinated with FSU's leadership to help create or expand a range of goals, particularly two key projects:

1. New outreach of international students online, working with the School of Graduate, Online, and Continuing Education (SGOCE) Dean/her team - VP/EMSS tasked:

I closely coordinated with the SGOCE by designing research and analysis regarding: "FY26-FY28 Assessment for Expanding SGOCE Online Programs to International Students."

To gather information, documentation, and data sets, I met several key times throughout September in-person/online with the SGOCE Dean/team to understand their objectives about challenges facing international student enrollment, particularly several factors impacting key SGOCE online programs.

Accordingly, SGOCE wanted a methodical analysis for where SGOCE might head, strategizing from a fall 2025 international student enrollment data baseline.

I requested weekly in-person SGOCE staff meeting (September-November) to brainstorm notions, approaches, and goals, inclusive of updates for/further guidance from VP/EMSS.

The monthly online "international group" meetings also proved extremely helpful to accelerate my grasp of the University's international enrollment challenges, with: Associate VP/Academic Affairs; VP/EMSS; SGOCE Dean/staff; International Education Office Executive Director; Admissions Director.

On 17 December 2025, I submitted my first Memo (6 pages, with 3 pages of endnotes) to FSU's President, VP/EMSS, and SGOCE Dean, integrated my analysis with keen feedback and follow-up from VP/EMSS and SGOCE Dean/team.

The memo's assessment focuses on how SGOCE face enrollment challenges worsened by the U.S. Government's ever-changing visa policies since January 2025, already proving detrimental toward international students studying in the U.S.

However, FSU remains determined to maintain - and, hopefully, expand - FSU's online international enrollment over the next two academic years to counter difficult, likely declining in-person international student enrollments.

The memo elaborates follow-up projects in conjunction with SGOCE, centered on its notable, affordable, and asynchronous online programs, appealing to international students abroad and particularly in new countries/cities - for potential outreach and recruitment.

After the President/her team review the memo and provide guidance on the next steps, I eagerly await what might unfold in 2026 for international enrollment ongoing projects and initiatives.

2. First-time university travel overseas by an athletic team - men's basketball - to play in Germany's league, building from a former FSU Coach's long-time network, generously supported by his FSU basketball scholarship - FSU President/Athletic Director tasked.

After meeting with FSU President, Athletic Director, and President's Chief of Staff at the semester's outset about, I began to follow-up guidance for this unique opportunity for an athletic team's first travel overseas, strategizing with Athletic Director and former FSU Basketball Coach.

Given my professorial experiences since 2015 in creating, planning, and leading my course's students to Europe six times (The Netherlands, Germany, Poland), FSU's President asked me both to travel with the basketball team and support planning, especially designing pre-trip team academic/travel prep.

During the fall-winter 2025, I got to know Coach Todd, whose generous basketball scholarship makes this 15-23 August 2026 travel to Germany possible (including a day's journey to Luxembourg), and both FSU's Athletic and Associate Athletic Directors.

During many interactions, I started working closely with Coach Todd and close US coaching colleague, Don Beck (Germany). Both Coaches have worked together to visit/host US collegiate teams to Germany (Coach Todd/Salem State University) and his various long-time assistant-coached NBA teams.

As this overseas planning/travel coordination progressed, I worked more closely with this FSU/coaching leadership group to determine the eligible FSU player's (15) roster, including FSU Coach/staff, Associate Athletic Director, Coach Todd, myself. FOCUS: passport status, application requirements, and plane reservations (FSU's Executive Director of International Education key).

By early December, Coaches Todd and Beck, and I coordinated to reserve room/board at Trier, Germany's Hostel. FSU's President then approved/signed the hostel's contract for rooms and meals.

As 2026 nears, coordination focuses on securing passports and plane tickets, and preparing team for this path-breaking journey representing FSU.

In conclusion, I'm truly grateful for this wonderful opportunity to serve both the President and the greater FSU community, particularly as I maintain my adjunct Full Professorship and, especially, as part of an alumni family with my youngest son enrolled in his second FSU degree program: MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.



160 Pearl Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420-2697  
 Tel 978.665.3101  
 dhodge@fitchburgstate.edu  
 www.fitchburgstate.edu

**Donna Hodge, Ph.D.**  
 PRESIDENT

**MEMO**

TO: Dr. Michael Fiorentino, Jr. | Chair, Board of Trustees  
 FROM: Dr. Donna Hodge | President *Donna Hodge*  
 RE: Sabbatical Leave Requests, AY2026-2027  
 DATE: November 4, 2025

The following faculty have submitted requests for sabbatical leaves. I have reviewed and approved the requests on the basis of the academic quality in their proposals. I have made these approvals under the authority delegated by the Board of Trustees, confirmed by you, in your role as Chairman. These approved sabbatical request summaries will be included in my President’s report on January 29, 2026, and will require no additional action.

Next steps: courses typically taught by these faculty will be covered while they are on sabbatical in one of the following three ways: 1) other full-time faculty will teach some of the courses, 2) some of the courses will not be offered during the sabbatical semester, and 3) adjunct faculty will be hired to teach some of the courses. Under the supervision of the provost, deans will work with department chairs to prioritize coverage through options 1 and 2 to minimize the number of adjunct hires. It is anticipated that between 43-45 sections will require adjunct faculty.

**Fall Semester 2026 —09/01/26-01/13/27**

Michael McCutcheon	Behavioral Sciences
Elizabeth Kilpatrick	Biology/Chemistry
Collin Syfert	English Studies
David Heikkinen	Exercise and Sports Science
Peter Staab	Mathematics

**Spring Semester 2027—01/14/27-05/31/27**

Daniel Welsh	Biology/Chemistry
Kevin McCarthy	Communications Media
Jared Vanasse	Environmental, Geographic and Public Health Sciences
Paul Weizer	Economics, History and Political Science
Jescah Apamo-Gannon	Education
Joann Nichols	Education
Soumitra Basu	Engineering Technology
Irene Martyniuk	English Studies
Heather Urbanski	English Studies
Amy Wehe	Mathematics
Christine Devine	Nursing
Amy Kendrick	Nursing

While the proposals in their entirety are attached, please find a brief description from the faculty member for each proposal below:

## **Fall 2026**

### **Michael McCutcheon**

### **Behavioral Sciences**

The purpose of his sabbatical is to pursue professional development in the field of policing and cultural immersion through an international study program in Thailand. The focus of this sabbatical will be a comparative examination of policing practices in Thailand and the United States, with particular attention to organizational structure, community engagement, and the role of cultural norms in shaping law enforcement policy. He plans to meet with law enforcement officials, policy makers, and community stakeholders in Thailand, as well as review existing training methodologies. This will allow him to evaluate alternative approaches to issues such as public trust, officer accountability, and community-police relations. In addition to this policy-oriented study, he plans to engage in two key cultural and professional development activities: Language Acquisition, and Muay Thai Training. These are two critical pieces needed to understand Thai culture fully.

### **Elizabeth Kilpatrick**

### **Biology/Chemistry**

In this sabbatical project, she will expand upon a collaboration she has with the Loon Preservation Committee in Moultonborough, New Hampshire, a non-profit organization with a mission to preserve loons and their habitats. The project will involve collecting and analyzing data on loon nesting behaviors to better understand current threats to their health and habitats. As an immunologist, she is particularly interested in analyses that provide insights into infection with diseases that threaten loons such as avian malaria, avian influenza, eastern equine encephalitis, and aspergillosis. The data already collected has been key to providing a potential explanation for the recent death of a male loon from avian malaria, a disease typically only seen in female loons. The results from her sabbatical project will be used to help educate the public and inform future conservation efforts.

### **Collin Syfert**

### **English Studies**

During his sabbatical semester, he will pursue two connected projects: designing a new interdisciplinary science communication course and developing a proposal for a campus-wide speaking center. The course will equip students with rhetorical skills to analyze and produce science communication that is both interpersonal and cross-media, addressing challenges such as uncertainty and trust in expertise, and engaging in applied projects on topics like climate change and public health. The course is cross listed in Biology and Chemistry to foster collaboration. Concurrently, he will research models of speaking centers at peer institutions to propose one for Fitchburg State, including a mission statement, staffing and training framework, and phased implementation plan to support oral communication across disciplines. Together, these initiatives will advance his scholarship in the rhetoric of science while addressing institutional needs in curriculum development, student support, and community engagement.

### **David Heikkinen**

### **Exercise and Sports Science**

Dr. Heikkinen proposes to use the time of a sabbatical to perform two projects. One is to develop a new course titled *Practicum in Personal Fitness Training*. This project will involve designing all facets of the course, and going through the proper channels of university governance to have it officially approved. The purpose of this course is to provide our students with a hands-on educational opportunity to bridge the gap between the scientific foundations they learn in class all the way to practical application of this knowledge. As a part of this plan, he would also study for and earn an additional professional certification in the National Strength & Conditioning Association's Certified Personal Trainer (CPT) certification, which is widely acknowledged as the gold standard in our field. His second project is to continue to pursue his scholarship agenda. He is currently in the author pool for the publisher Human Kinetics, one of the largest publishers in the field of Exercise Science. Recently, Human Kinetics has asked him to be in educational videos for continuing education units (CEUs) in areas of his expertise. These CEUs are required for professionals in this field in order to maintain professional certifications. He would provide a 55-minute presentation and write an exam that would need to be passed in order to earn the CEUs. If given this sabbatical leave, it is his belief that he can enhance our course offerings, and wellness opportunities for the campus community, and make meaningful contributions to his own scholarship and contributions to the discipline.

### **Peter Staab**

### **Math**

Many students entering Fitchburg State University need to take a placement test to determine their readiness for college-level mathematics class. Currently this is done with the ETS Accuplacer exam (there are actually two, which causes confusion). Because of this 1) this costs the university money and 2) ETS will not release question-level data that would be useful for FSU to assess the placement test and determine its effectiveness. His project would study the replacement of Accuplacer with a possible faculty-designed placement test that would replace both existing assessments. Some of our sister universities do this and he would have conversations with each of those that do it, as well as all constituents (departments, deans, provost, and the testing center) for input.

**SPRING 2027****Daniel Welsh-****Biology/Chemistry**

In order for evolution by natural selection to happen, there needs to be variation in traits. This variation can exist within an individual and/or across populations. Fish species differ in their scales (and this information has been used to identify species of fish), but variation in size and shape between populations of the same species or even variation within an individual is not well studied. The purpose of this sabbatical leave is the cumulation of a long-running project designed to explore fish scale size and shape variation. During the sabbatical, he will analyze data, perform a deep dive into the scientific literature on this topic, and work toward completion of a manuscript for eventual publication in a scientific journal. This work is designed to address a lot of shortcomings of past research on this topic and contribute to the larger scientific understanding of variation in biological traits.

**Kevin McCarthy****Communications Media**

During his sabbatical semester, Professor McCarthy plans to research and develop a short documentary film or limited series documentary-style audio podcast and prepare extensively for its production. The development process is an essential stage that is a key predictor of the potential success of a creative project. As an educator in the Film/Video Production concentration - who also teaches podcasting and audio production - engaging in this process on his own work will help strengthen his own approach in the classroom as a mentor to his students.

**Jared Vanasse****Environmental, Geographic, and Public Health Sciences**

Professor Vanasse would like to calculate and publish a manuscript for an important physical process in nuclear physics that is of interest to the physics community and, in particular, experimentalists who are interested in performing a future experiment of this process. He would also like to write online homework problems in WeBWork for Astronomy that currently do not exist for use in Astronomy courses at Fitchburg State. He also plans to share this work with other institutions.

**Paul Weizer****Economics, History, and Political Science**

Professor Weizer is requesting sabbatical leave to completely redesign his online United States Government course to address the challenges and opportunities presented by artificial intelligence. After teaching POLS 1000 for over 25 years, he recognizes that his current course design and assessment methods are no longer effective in an era where students routinely use AI tools like ChatGPT for assignments. His goal is to create new pedagogical approaches that maintain academic rigor while requiring genuine student engagement with complex political concepts. Rather than traditional assignments that AI can easily complete, he will develop activities that foster the critical thinking skills essential for democratic citizenship. This project will produce completely-revised curricula for his introductory U.S. Government course, which he plans to offer in multiple online sections upon completing his term as department chair. He will also share his findings with colleagues, as this challenge affects faculty across all disciplines. This sabbatical addresses both a practical necessity and an opportunity for pedagogical innovation. By creating an AI-responsive course design, he aims to ensure our students develop the analytical skills needed for meaningful participation in democratic society, regardless of emerging technologies.

**Jescah Apamo-Gannon****Education**

This sabbatical project aims to design, pilot, and evaluate a culturally-responsive professional development program for teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) at Acts of Hope Academy in Kisumu, Kenya. Acts of Hope Academy is a small, under-resourced school serving children with special needs, making this work both timely and impactful. The initiative focuses on training teachers to improve student outcomes through effective teaching strategies for students with EBD, and effective family collaboration. An informal needs assessment conducted in June 2024 identified classroom management and culturally-responsive strategies as urgent training priorities. The sabbatical semester will allow her time to refine the curriculum, deliver in-person training, and disseminate findings, with the full commitment and partnership of Acts of Hope Academy. The program will be adapted to the Kenyan context to ensure cultural relevance and sustainability.

**Joann Nichols****Education**

Dr. Nichols' sabbatical proposal is to create a program of discovery in non-traditional educational settings and make use of a bounty of possible community partnerships. The work over the sabbatical semester would create avenues for internship in our Educational Studies program and then lead to a three-credit course benefiting both the non-licensure exploration of careers, as well as the classroom teacher's knowledge of resources available in area museums and alternative educational settings. In addition, the community connections would offer our teaching students authentic experience with educational design and new perspectives on learning theory and format.

**Soumitra Basu****Engineering Technology**

Current manufacturing technology has progressed beyond "internet-enabled smart manufacturing" (or Industry 4.0) to "sustainable, resilient and socially-responsible automation in manufacturing" (or Industry 5.0). The focus during the sabbatical

will be on gaining an understanding of how automation is currently used and what changes are expected in the future by interacting with professional contacts in academia and industry. This information will then be compiled into foundational STEM content, and scaffolded to generate a sequence of competencies appropriate for 4-year academic programs.

**Irene Martyniuk**

**English Studies**

Dr. Martyniuk is proposing to study the literature and attendant ephemera related to Niagara Falls and the Khyber Pass. What brings these two places together is the idea that both are seen as sublimely beautiful but one is coded almost exclusively (and until very recently) as a natural sublime (the Falls) while the other has almost always been coded as exclusively political (the Pass). While there are many obvious geopolitical reasons for this, what she is interested in fully exploring is the culture around these areas. She is interested in the stories. She wants to consider how natural landscapes and artificial political borders both create and reflect the stories we tell about ourselves and how we identify ourselves, whether we are tourists, travelers, or residents of these places. These stories not only create community and community identification, but also lead to ecological policies and geopolitical decisions.

**Heather Urbanski**

**English Studies**

For her sabbatical project, she will revise a series of science fiction novels in the space opera subgenre and prepare to send the first novel in the sequence (Legacies: Raiders) to literary agents in pursuit of publication. She will also participate in online writing workshops. This will not only contribute to her own Continuing Scholarship/Creative Work, but also connect with her teaching at the undergraduate and graduate levels. In particular, she will have the opportunity to directly practice many of the exercises she assigns to students while also testing out new activities for that course. She will also develop experience in the agent-query process, which will help her to assist students in the English Studies major as they work to position themselves as professional writers.

**Amy Wehe**

**Math**

For this sabbatical, she will conduct a literature review and, along with a colleague, analyze data on the success of students transferring from community colleges to state colleges in Massachusetts. This will involve data on students' course completion and repetition of mathematics courses, etc. This project will inform the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Fitchburg State University mathematics department about the effectiveness of the Mass Transfer Pathways project that faculty across the state engaged in for many years. It will also inform all constituents involved on what improvements can still be made in student transfer, highlighting conversations that still need to be undertaken between the various state colleges and community colleges in Massachusetts.

**Christine Devine**

**Nursing**

Professionalism in nursing students: How to assess competency? As the Department of Nursing transitions to competency-based assessments, skills check lists are being designed to ensure all students are taught the same information, can practice skills with consistent guidelines, and be evaluated for competency through skill demonstration. The first checklists were designed for safe medication administration, and for a sterile procedure: both requiring specific assessments, manual dexterity, knowledge of sterile technique, and mathematical calculations. With this sabbatical, she will focus on (1) a review of the literature to research professional behaviors in nursing students and nursing faculty, and their impact on learning; (2) collaboration with other disciplines, who also evaluate student professionalism (Human Services and Education); and (3) the development of a new instrument, or adaptation of an existing instrument to measure nursing students' professionalism. Professional behavior includes personal comportment, legal and ethical decision making, and personal accountability. In order for students to demonstrate competence in professionalism, a consistent assessment tool needs to be identified as the standard for introducing professionalism concepts, reinforcing professional behaviors, and assessing attainment of competency. Nursing students are often referred to as committed and hard working. This project will give value to professionalism and will provide an instrument to promote growth and competence.

**Amy Kendrick**

**Nursing**

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are living longer and are increasingly present in acute-care settings with complex health needs. Nurses often report feeling underprepared to care for this population. Her sabbatical would be devoted to: 1. Engaging stakeholders to gather their perspectives on acute-care needs for adults with IDD. 2. Documenting stakeholder insights to identify themes related to nursing education and preparation. 3. Reporting findings and recommendations to Fitchburg State University nursing faculty upon return. The final outcome will be a report and presentation to faculty summarizing stakeholder perspectives and recommendations for strengthening nursing student preparation

## **President's Report to the Board of Trustees**

October 28, 2025 - January 23, 2026 | Dr. Donna Hodge, President

### **Introduction: Sustaining Momentum Through Transition and Winter Work**

The close of the fall semester and the opening of the spring term have been marked by steady progress, visible leadership, and disciplined follow-through on the priorities we set together. This period has required both pace and patience. We are sustaining momentum while tending carefully to culture, finances, and trust, especially as the institution moves through leadership transitions, winter operations, and a demanding external environment for public higher education.

Across campus and throughout the region, Fitchburg State continues to show up as a serious, engaged, and reliable partner. We are stabilizing where stability is required, healing where repair is overdue, and preparing for the next phase of transformation with intention and care.

### **Governance and Board Engagement**

Since our fall retreat, I have remained in close communication with the Board Chair and trustees as we advanced key leadership appointments, budget transparency efforts, and external engagement. Several trustees joined campus and community events during this period, reinforcing the Board's visible stewardship of the institution and its mission.

Preparation for the January meeting has focused on providing clearer budget narratives, sharper alignment between strategy and resources, and a more transparent view of institutional risk and opportunity as we enter the second half of the fiscal year.

### **Leadership and Organizational Updates**

#### **Advancement and External Assessment**

Following Vice President Wolfman's retirement in mid-October, Chief of Staff Matt Bruun has continued to provide interim oversight of Institutional Advancement and Alumni Affairs. During this period, we are launching a comprehensive external assessment of our fundraising and advancement operations, which will begin with onboarding an external partner to assist the team and provide additional capacity until a plan is in place for leadership of the division of Advancement. This 360-degree review is examining structure, staffing, performance, and alignment with institutional priorities.

The goal is not simply to fill roles, but to ensure that our advancement strategy is realistic, accountable, and capable of supporting Fitchburg State's long-term ambitions. Findings and recommendations will inform decisions later this spring.

### **Chief Financial Officer Onboarding**

Dr. Travis Chambers officially began his role as Chief Financial Officer on December 1. His first weeks have focused on listening, assessment, and stabilization. He has met extensively with Cabinet members, budget and finance staff, and campus partners to understand historical context, current pressures, and opportunities for improved financial practices.

Together, we have begun laying the groundwork for clearer budget categories, more consistent reporting, and stronger internal controls. Many thanks to Heidi Swift and Bob Labonte for their stabilizing and supportive work for FSU for the past year. While Travis's early assessment work and discussion of the next iteration of our campus budgeting process is ongoing, early progress has already improved confidence and clarity across cabinet leadership.

### **Academic Affairs**

With Dr. Patricia Marshall's announcement of an unexpected leave on November 28, 2025, Academic Affairs entered a period requiring immediate stability, clearly defined authority, and experienced leadership during a critical point in the academic year. From the outset, my priority was to ensure continuity of instruction, safeguard shared governance and accreditation responsibilities, and maintain an unwavering focus on student success.

To support this work, Dr. Franca Barricelli was asked to assume senior academic leadership responsibilities during this period. In this capacity, Dr. Barricelli has provided oversight and coordination across Academic Affairs and has served as my primary designee for day-to-day academic operational matters requiring executive-level review, decision-making, or cross-divisional alignment. She brings deep institutional knowledge, extensive experience in academic policy, labor relations, and faculty governance, and long-standing credibility with faculty and staff. These qualifications have been essential in maintaining stability, consistency, and trust across the division.

Dr. Barricelli has worked closely with Cabinet colleagues, academic leadership, and faculty governance bodies to ensure that instructional delivery, academic policy implementation, and time-sensitive academic decisions continue without disruption. Her leadership has been particularly important in sustaining continuity in areas requiring careful coordination, including accreditation-related responsibilities, academic personnel matters, and divisional operations.

In addition, Dr. Jannette McMenemy stepped into the role of Acting Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, while continuing, for this moment, to serve concurrently as Dean of the School of Health and Natural Sciences. This dual role reflects both her demonstrated leadership capacity and her operational understanding of complex academic programs, faculty needs, and student-facing priorities. Dr. McMenemy has provided steady leadership, clear communication, and strong operational oversight during a demanding period, and I am grateful for her willingness to assume this additional responsibility.

Despite this leadership transition, Academic Affairs has continued to function smoothly and effectively. The fall semester concluded successfully, winter session offerings were delivered as planned, and preparations for the spring semester were completed on schedule. Faculty and staff across the division have remained focused on instruction, advising, accreditation-related work, program oversight, and the daily academic operations that support student success.

At the same time, longer-term academic priorities have continued to advance. Work remains underway on program review, enrollment-aligned scheduling, and curricular planning informed by workforce needs and student demand. As part of this work, we will undertake a careful assessment and review of the university's Eduventures contract, including the scope, process, and use of any prior analyses. An initial set of findings will be developed in tandem with the deans to ensure appropriate academic leadership engagement, transparency, and shared understanding before any conclusions are relied upon or communicated more broadly. These efforts reflect our broader strategy of aligning academic offerings with institutional sustainability while maintaining the academic rigor and mission-driven focus that define Fitchburg State University.

Looking ahead, my focus remains on ensuring that Academic Affairs is well-supported, clearly structured, and positioned for long-term stability and success. Any future steps will be approached deliberately and in close communication with faculty leadership and governance bodies, with careful attention to both immediate operational needs and the long-term health of the division.

This period has required the division to stabilize systems, support people, and maintain forward momentum. The response from Academic Affairs reflects the strength, professionalism, and shared responsibility of our academic community. Even amid transition, the division has remained steady, student-centered, and aligned with Fitchburg State's long-term goals.

## **Campus Culture, Operations, and the Student Experience**

### **Fall Close and Spring Opening**

The conclusion of the fall semester was marked by strong campus engagement and a smooth transition into winter operations. Our facilities and operations teams performed exceptionally well during several early winter weather events, including move-in activities over the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend. Their professionalism ensured that campus remained safe, accessible, and welcoming for students returning to residence halls.

### **MLK Day and Values in Action**

Martin Luther King Jr. Day this year coincided with move-in, offering a quiet but powerful reminder that service, preparation, and collective responsibility are lived values at Fitchburg State. Stacey Luster delivered the keynote address for Fitchburg's powerful MLK Day Celebration and Luncheon, and representing Fitchburg State was Professor, Special Assistant to the President and MLK Day committee member, Dr. Christine Dee (with two Presidential

Ambassadors offering remarks at the event), Dean Tim St. John, Krysta Lopez, and students from the FSU Drumline and Dance Club.

## **Civic Engagement and Regional Leadership**

### **City and Community Partnerships**

At the start of the spring term, Fitchburg State hosted a civic inauguration celebration at Weston Auditorium, welcoming city leaders, regional partners, and community members to campus. The event underscored the university's role as a civic anchor and a place where democratic traditions, education, and community life intersect.

Throughout this period, I also continued regular engagement with municipal, business, and nonprofit leaders, reinforcing the message that Fitchburg State's future is deeply connected to the future of the city and region we serve.

### **Public-Private Partnerships**

Earlier this month, I joined regional partners and state leaders at Wachusett Mountain for the launch of the new Polar Beverages Express Chairlift. This event highlighted not only private investment in North Central Massachusetts, but also the growing partnership between the mountain and Fitchburg State University. Our collaboration centers students and access, and it reflects a broader strategy of aligning regional assets with educational opportunity.

## **Statewide and National Engagement**

### **Higher Education Leadership and Advocacy**

During this period, I represented Fitchburg State at several statewide and national gatherings focused on the future of public higher education, including meetings connected to national athletics governance and higher education policy conversations. These forums continue to reinforce the importance of Massachusetts institutions being present in national dialogues around access, affordability, student success, and institutional sustainability.

### **Economic and Policy Conversations**

In January, I participated in a regional economic and financial leadership convening that included representation from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and national Federal Reserve leadership. These conversations are critical for ensuring that Massachusetts, and institutions like Fitchburg State, remain connected to broader economic forecasting, workforce planning, and policy development conversations that directly affect our students and communities.

## **Professional Development**

### **All-Campus Development Day**

In January, the university hosted a well-attended All-Campus Development Day, bringing faculty and staff together for learning, dialogue, and reflection. The day featured a strong

opening keynote, robust participation across sessions, and meaningful cross-divisional engagement. While I was representing the university at a national meeting that day, I was pleased to participate through a video message and written remarks included in the program.

The interest in the day reflected both the appetite for professional development on campus and the importance of creating shared spaces for inquiry, connection, and renewal. More discussion about future possibilities to come.

## Looking Ahead

As we move deeper into the spring semester, our focus remains clear: continue strengthening financial stewardship, support our people through change, deepen regional partnerships, and keep students at the center of every decision. The work ahead is not without challenge, but it is purposeful and aligned.

Fitchburg State still stands. More importantly, we are standing with intention, discipline, and momentum.

## Highlights: Events, Engagements, and Sponsorships

*\* This list reflects a representative selection of high-level presidential engagements and is not intended to be exhaustive. Activities were selected to illustrate the depth and breadth of engagement in support of the University's mission.*

Nov. 1 - Delivered remarks at the Hockey Ring Ceremony, engaging community members, Cabinet colleagues, student-athletes, and families and friends of players

Nov. 3 - Visited the Bolton Police Department alongside UPD Chief of Police Michael Cloutier and personally delivered lunch, engaging officers and staff in support following the loss of their Chief

Nov. 7 - Hosted and spoke at the Guidance Counselor Breakfast on campus

Nov. 7 - Sponsored, participated in, and spoke at the Chamber Congressional Luncheon featuring Congressman Jim McGovern and Congresswoman Lori Trahan, joined by Cabinet members and students

Nov. 10 - Met with and recognized Alumni Award Winner Jennifer Curran

Nov. 10 - Delivered remarks at the Veterans Day Ceremony on the Quad

Nov. 13 - Participated in the Joint Committee on Bonding Hearing at the State House, Boston, representing Fitchburg State University

Nov. 13 - Spoke at and participated in the Campus Lighting Ceremony

Nov. 14-18 - Represented Fitchburg State University at the AASCU Annual Conference, Nashville, TN, engaging with national higher education leaders

Nov. 19 - Participated in and engaged with state leaders at the Healey-Driscoll Administration Higher Education Announcement at the State House

Nov. 19 - Supported and engaged with students and faculty at the production of *Stop Kiss* at McKay Elementary School

Nov. 20 - Supported the FSU Concert Band and Community Orchestra performance through attendance and engagement with performers and audience members

Nov. 22 - Engaged with students, faculty, alumni, and supporters at the Moot Court Reception

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Dec. 3 - Hosted the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) reception at the President's House

Dec. 4 - Served as a panelist for the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce Community Leadership Institute

Dec. 4 - Participated in the Humanities Department Meeting

Dec. 4 - Served appetizers and engaged directly with students alongside Cabinet members during the Christmahanakwanzaking celebration

Dec. 5 - Met with and recognized Linda Alvarez '22, Vermont Teacher of the Year

Dec. 5 - Participated in the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts Board Orientation and began service as a new board member

Dec. 5 - Supported student performers at the Winter Dance Club Show, Weston Auditorium

Dec. 8-9 - Hosted Dr. Basden Arnold, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Kutztown University, for presidential shadowing and engagement in key campus meetings

Dec. 8 - Hosted and spoke at the Presidential Fellows Reception at the President's House

Dec. 9 - Met with Judy Cockerton and Steve Adams to advance discussion of the 100% MA program

Dec. 9 - Supported student musicians and engaged with the campus community at the Choral Kaleidoscope Concert, Weston Auditorium

Dec. 10 - Hosted and engaged with students at a breakfast with the Presidential Ambassadors

Dec. 11 - Hosted and led a Chartwells partnership meeting on campus

Dec. 11 - Engaged with staff at the Annual Staff Holiday Party

Dec. 12 - Delivered the keynote address at the Upward Bound Future Educator Academy College Bound Session

Dec. 12 - Hosted the Cabinet Holiday Gathering at Third Space Kitchen, Groton, MA

Dec. 13 - Supported campus and regional arts partners at the holiday concert featuring Fitchburg State Choirs, Worcester Children's Chorus, and Gateway City Orchestra

Dec. 18 - Met with Wellpoint representatives Michael Morris and David Morales

Dec. 18 - Hosted the Holiday Open House at the President's House, welcoming campus and community partners

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Jan. 7 - Met with Amy Jolly and Leonardo Hiertz to advance discussion of the Applewild School Civic-Minded Scholarship

Jan. 7 - Dinner meeting with Tom and Joanne Donnelly at their home

Jan. 8 - Lunch meeting with State Representative Michael Kushmerek

Jan. 8 - Hosted Fitchburg State University's inauguration ceremony for the Mayor of Fitchburg

Jan. 9 - Lunch meeting with former Trustee Deb Phillips

Jan. 9 - Participated in Board of Trustees Student Experience Committee and Operations and Safety Committee meetings

Jan. 12 - Participated in Dinner with Women Leaders in Public Higher Education with Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, UMass Club, Boston

Jan. 13-15 - Represented Fitchburg State University at the NCAA Conference, Washington, DC

Jan. 16 - Participated in the New England Economic Forum at Gillette Stadium

Jan. 20 - Participated in Board of Trustees Finance Committee and Enrollment Management Committee meetings

Jan. 21 - Served as a panelist in the Ellucian Webinar on 2026 Higher Education Trends

Jan. 21 - Hosted and facilitated the ALFA Advisory Council at the President's House

Jan. 22 - Hosted Rick Healey for lunch

Jan. 22 - Participated in the Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee meeting

Jan. 23 - Morning with new Trustee, Joe Byrne, for Board Orientation

## **Cabinet Highlights**

### **Academic Affairs**

Over the past weeks, Academic Affairs experienced a significant challenge with Provost Marshall taking an unexpected personal leave of unknown duration. Under the leadership of President Hodge, our team has quickly come together to stabilize the division and seek opportunities for innovation. Standing with President Hodge, Acting Provost Barricelli and Acting AVP McMenamy look to the future with hope while sending well wishes to Provost Marshall.

In this spirit, we highlight below a few of the many recent successes in our Schools. Last month, our renowned Moot Court program, led by Dr. Paul Weizer, was again victorious. After winning the American Collegiate Moot Court Association tournament at Fitchburg State, Amanda Deleon Guimaraes and Christiane Rodrigues qualified for nationals. We updated our 3+3 agreement with the Massachusetts School of Law (MSLAW), an agreement that provides scholarships for FSU students with a GPA >3.0. Also in development is a 50% tuition scholarship to honor Dean Sullivan, an FSU alumnus who has devoted 30+ years to MSLAW and its students.

Academic Affairs is looking outward to strengthen connections to the community, increasing institutional visibility, and maximizing opportunities for students. All academic deans visited Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical High School with our VP for Enrollment Management to explore new articulation agreements. Numerous industry partnerships are also being explored and developed. Business and Technology collaborated with Career Services and Academic Advising on an Employer Roundtable with local companies specializing in manufacturing, construction management, and architecture. In December, local high school students participated in the Future Educator Academy, a key recruitment initiative hosted by the School of Education.

In SGOCE, the RN-to-BSN program celebrated over 50% enrollment growth, expanding from 71 to 109 new students in between Fall 2024 and Fall 2025. The Center for Professional Studies launched an AI-Enhanced Educator badge as a leader in professional workforce development. To reduce cost barriers for students, the library has increased its audio-book holdings to more than 150,000 titles. Our Office of Grants, Special Programs and Assessment, in collaboration with academic departments, has nearly \$1.5 million in grant submissions to support student success, increase institutional visibility, and promote enrollment growth.

Each of these achievements underscores what we believe is essential at this moment: Academic Affairs must continue to innovate, and we must deepen our connections with

community partners to enhance the visibility of the institution while promoting enrollment growth and student retention.

Three examples that capture this emphasis focus the remainder of this report.

In Arts and Sciences, work continues to develop an interdisciplinary major in Finance, a collaboration between the Departments of Economics, History, and Political Science and Business Administration. The proposal passed successfully through governance and was signed by President Hodge in Spring 2025. The interdisciplinary nature of the program, with a range of technical courses (e.g., Econometrics) and sector-specific study (e.g., Business Law), differentiate our major from others in the region. The program will prepare students for a variety of careers in the financial sector, including market analysis, corporate finance, or financial advising. The EAB Program Feasibility Report indicates a monthly average of 8,300 job postings in Massachusetts and New Hampshire for those with degrees in Finance, and a key goal is also to build co-ops into the program to provide students with high-impact, pre-professional experiences. The proposal will be shared for consideration by the BOT at an upcoming meeting.

Also in Arts and Sciences, our new History 4+1 program will launch in Fall 2026. The program will allow students to earn their bachelor's and master's degrees in history in five years. This innovative design will save time and advance the careers of students interested in education, law, policy, public history, or media content, allowing them to develop expertise in analysis and interpretation while gaining advanced skills that employers and graduate programs value.

Faculty in the School of Health and Natural Sciences are developing a Middle School Mathematics Education Major (5-8). Currently, students interested in teaching middle school mathematics must complete a full Math major, including at least thirteen 2000- and 3000-level courses. This requirement exceeds DESE's licensure requirements for Middle School Mathematics teachers, and our graduation rates for this program are historically low (20%). Relying solely on existing resources and courses, the new program is the first of its kind in the state. It tailors requirements specifically to the needs of middle school mathematics teachers, reducing barriers to retention and meeting a key market need. The governance proposals for the major are ready for submission. DESE has signaled that it could serve as a model program for others in the state.

Through curricular innovation, we are striving to provide academic programs that are differentiators for the university, industry-aligned, and created with an eye toward student retention.

### **Vice President, Personnel Services & General Counsel**

Fitchburg State University is committed to nondiscrimination, equal opportunity, and providing educational, working, and living environments that value the diverse backgrounds of

all people. This commitment is strengthened by its core values of accessibility, affordability, community, enrichment, and excellence.

The University's equal opportunity efforts emphasize anti-discrimination, student engagement and professional development. Anti-discrimination is coordinated by the Director of Title IX and Equal Opportunity, student engagement is coordinated by the Director for the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, and professional development is coordinated by multiple committees of faculty and staff.

On January 6, 2025, President Hodge established the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), to provide legal advice and representation to the President, and University officials on various issues affecting the University. The OGC oversees litigation, Human Resources, Payroll, Title IX and Equal Opportunity.

The January 20, 2025, Executive Order 13985, "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.", was followed by continuing attacks by the federal government on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility policies and programming in schools, including FSU's efforts to advance equity, in alignment with its mission and core values. The Massachusetts Attorney General issued the following guidance, confirming the validity of longstanding legal precedent, which established that educational institutions may take steps to foster diversity across numerous dimensions, including geography, socioeconomic status, race, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity:

- [Updated Joint Guidance on Race Neutral School Programs](#) (opens in a new tab), Massachusetts Governor and Attorney General, Sept. 23, 2025 (PDF)
- [Joint Guidance on Race Neutral School Programs](#) (opens in a new tab), Massachusetts Governor and Attorney General, Feb. 26, 2025 (PDF)
- [Multi-State Guidance Concerning Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Employment Initiatives](#) (opens in a new tab), Massachusetts Attorney General, Feb. 13, 2025 (PDF)

In December 2025, President Hodge reconstituted FSU's Leading for Change. The new Leading for Change Committee combines the Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Committee, the Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI) Team and the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) to prevent redundancy, reduce silos and improve the retention of students, faculty and staff. The Leading for Change Committee is comprised of 3 AFSCME, 3 APA, 3MSCA, and 3 NUPs, including the Director of Title IX and Equal Opportunity, who serves as Chair, the Director for the Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness who serves as the Vice-Chair, and the Vice President for Personnel Services and General Counsel who provides leadership as an ex-officio voting member. Leading For Change will champion FSU's Core Values, serve as the steering committee for the multistate Racial Equity and Justice Institute (REJI) <https://reji-bsu.org/members/>, making recommendations to the President regarding

diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging as well as bias incidents. Such recommendations may include student programming and professional development. An example of such recommendation is the January 15, 2026 Campus Development Day. Campus Development Day was conceived by the DEIB Committee and brought to life by President Hodge and a core group of the Leading for Change Committee, Personnel Services, Academic Affairs, and the Center for Teaching and Learning.

### **Vice President, Enrollment Management and Student Success**

The offices of TRIO SSS, Upward Bound and Upward Bound Math & Science have been moved into the division of EMSS and now report to the Executive Director of Grant Funded Student Success Programs. This new position has been filled by Dr. Beth Swartz, who has been with the University for ten years and has served as the Director of TRIO SSS since 2020. Dr. Swartz is also responsible for managing our \$1.3M State University (SU) Success Grant, which is intended to fund a TRIO-like model of high-touch success coaches capable of supporting our population of low-income and first-generation incoming students not currently served by TRIO SSS. Overall, this funding should allow us the opportunity to begin building our vision of a holistic, accountable and data-informed approach to student retention and success. Note the position of Assistant Dean of Student Success, which was vacated by a resignation in November, is on hold at this time.

Spring Day enrollments are trending as expected, with new students rebounding to prior levels and returning students enrolling as planned, which includes an expected decline in second-semester students due to the smaller Fall 2025 incoming class. SGOCE numbers also continue to perform as expected, with undergraduate enrollments trending up and graduate enrollments trending down.

For Fall 2026 Day, admission applications have rebounded to Fall 2024 numbers in almost all recruitment territories, including New England, which is positive. Applications from Direct Admission schools are up. (Note that Fall 2024 is serving as our benchmark for Fall 2026, due to the decline in numbers that we experienced in Fall 2025.)

It is still early in the new student enrollment cycle as we begin to shift our main focus to yield activities. We have added Saturday Information Sessions to the calendar and are planning our Spring Future Falcon Days, designed to increase yield of our accepted student population. Additionally, we will be leveraging Yield IQ, a new component of our Enroll 360 platform, provided at no cost by EAB, in an effort to provide more targeted, personal outreach to our accepted/non-deposited students.

The Fitchburg High School Admissions Office, as well as the Direct Admission Program, continue to provide real opportunities for us to make stronger connections with the students and staff at FHS, St. Bernard's, Sizer and Monty Tech. Through increased admission and financial aid activities, we are engaging these students at a much higher level and expect to realize increased enrollments as a result.

The Director of Financial Aid position, vacated in September, is currently on hold as we conduct assessments and leverage professional consulting services to make immediate improvements in policies and operations.

We plan to contract a Marketing and Communications professional to assess our current marketing and brand efforts, with an eye to identifying strengths and opportunities, as well as possible redundancies, that exist across University Marketing, Admissions and SGOCE. We look forward to receiving a report in the spring.

### **Chief Financial Officer**

As CFO, Dr. Travis Chambers joined the university in December. President Hodge and CFO Chambers extend the sincerest of gratitude to Heidi Swift, Bob Labonte, and Summer Fetteroll for their leadership in stabilizing the university's financial resources. Their tireless efforts in leading the university's financial picture through the leadership transition and in establishing the FY26 budget were invaluable. As Travis gets up to speed, Bob and Summer continue to provide purposeful leadership. Bob has graciously agreed to continue serving as Interim Controller as the focus shifts from stabilization to strategic prioritization and growth of fiscal resources. Summer Fetteroll now serves as the Executive Director of Finance, overseeing critical functions in the financial services team.

#### *Budget Status and Ongoing Approach*

The university's financial picture remains promising. Quarter 2 actual expenditures relative to the budget are in line. In addition, overall revenue collected thus far in the fiscal year is 71% of projections. The status of the FY26 budget is a testament to the leadership's work. For the remainder of the fiscal year, Finance will monitor for abnormalities and improvements. As the CFO becomes more informed about the university's overall fiscal status, there will be a commitment to increased transparency and collaboration across campus. Fiscal transparency to the broader community will take the form of regular updates to various constituencies. The expanded community, consisting of students, faculty, staff, and the Board of Trustees, will receive regular financial reporting. The reports will vary by group, but there will be a commitment to a shared understanding of the university's performance. The intended purpose of increased transparency is to reduce silos across the university and drive incremental improvements, which should yield increases in student success metrics.

#### *FY27 Budget Prep*

Financial Services and budgeting will initiate a new process of working with units to understand complex budget needs. Cabinet members, along with their downward line units, will assist in formulating budgets. This fiscal year, there will be an emphasis on strategic zero-based budgeting to understand the short- and long-term needs of internal organizations. Budget prep meetings will serve as a listening tour and a learning experience for the CFO. Financial resources will be aligned to support current and ongoing strategic priorities. FY27 budget allocations may mirror FY26 allocations while carving out funding for strategic priorities. The goal will be to improve incremental alignment for future years. President Hodge, along with the cabinet, will provide input on reallocations within their respective areas as we collaboratively seek a funding model that will yield quality education outcomes. Once the budget process concludes, units will be empowered to utilize funding based on priorities and requests. Financial services will provide transparent support to the university

once the budget is finalized. The new budget process will allow for future efficiencies. Funding realignment will aid enrollment growth (recruitment and admissions), success (emphasizing support for academic unit resources), and retention (success grants, support, and career planning).

### *Revenue Projections*

Concerns about flat or declining enrollment necessitate frequent monitoring of credit-hour generation in addition to enrollment. Revenue projections will be based on actual enrollment data and will consider the various revenue structures for Day, Evening, Graduate, and Professional learners. Revenue projection is pivotal while understanding the impact of fee increases on the overall net position. A hybrid revenue approach will allow ample time to adjust to fluctuations and the agility to adjust operations as needed. Matriculation and increased enrollment while being agile to continue to stabilize the financial picture.

Financial services plan to be at the forefront of alternative revenue development. We will partner with the SGOCE, the University Foundation, and the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs to diversify the university's portfolio. The changing demographics in the region and nationally require a strategic emphasis on non-traditional revenue streams.

### *Process Improvement*

Within the first few weeks of the CFO's appointment, there has been feedback that process improvements can increase margins. Improvements in procurement processes are necessary for proper fiscal controls. Financial services will implement procurement processes aimed at increasing efficiency, easing bottlenecks, and increasing compliance. The procedures and processes are necessary to aid in proper expenditure controls. Emphasis on internal procedures will yield an adequate margin while the university improves revenue optimization.

The Financial Services will reimplement training for the university (budget, accounts payable, and procurement). Training will aid in a financially astute university, efficient processes, and connections with central finance. Improvements in new procedures and processes are necessary to decrease liability. Procurement will train on proper use and steer towards purchasing procedures to control university assets.

## **Chief Information Officer**

### *Advancing Infrastructure, Accessibility, and Student Support*

The Technology Department continues to support Fitchburg State's mission by enhancing infrastructure, modernizing learning environments, advancing digital accessibility, and bolstering cybersecurity. These initiatives are designed not only to meet compliance and operational standards but to create a secure, inclusive, and adaptable technology environment that supports student success, teaching excellence, and institutional sustainability.

One of the most important efforts this year has been our preparation for ADA Title II digital accessibility compliance. We are creating a more inclusive digital environment through several key initiatives. These include requiring Voluntary Product Accessibility Templates (VPATs) from vendors, offering campus-wide accessibility training, partnering with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) on workshops, developing a wide array of online resources, and implementing new accessibility tools. These include document remediation software and enhanced Google Workspace capabilities that support universal design. These efforts go beyond compliance; they directly impact student achievement by ensuring all users can navigate, access, and benefit from digital content.

To continue supporting student success and maintaining operational excellence, we have made key personnel changes. Glendal Franco, a 2025 graduate and former student technician, has joined the Help Desk team as a full-time EDP Systems Analyst. Additionally, Matilda Goad, a recent spring 2025 Fitchburg State graduate, has filled the OneCard Systems Analyst position, replacing the recently retired Ted Godin. She was also a former student employee in the OneCard Office. We are also actively working to fill a critical Systems Analyst role within the telecom division. This position is vital for managing campus telecom and low-voltage infrastructure, ensuring service continuity, and addressing growing operational demands.

Allison Bunnell has officially transitioned to a full-time role within the Technology team. In her new full-time capacity, Allison will dedicate her skills to strategic initiatives, with a specific focus on assisting with the submission process for developing personalized digital portfolios and leading accessibility training on Grackle and other digital accessibility platforms, as needed.

Significant progress has also been made in modernizing learning spaces. Classroom technology upgrades were implemented over the summer, including a complete refresh of Ellis White Lecture Hall and podium upgrades across campus. Video conferencing capabilities were enhanced in multiple conference rooms, improving virtual engagement. In specialized labs, we installed high-performance GPU computers for Computer Science students learning CUDA programming, and new monitors in Game Design labs to enrich student project work. These upgrades ensure that our physical and digital learning environments remain responsive to faculty innovation and the evolving needs of students.

At the infrastructure level, we completed the migration of all Horizon virtual desktops to Windows 11, updated NVIDIA GPU drivers, and upgraded VMware vSphere and ESXi to version 8.x. These efforts collectively improve system performance, security, and scalability.

The Networking and Telecommunications team continues to fortify campus infrastructure. This summer, we advanced our multi-year residence hall cabling project by installing CAT6A cabling in several Townhouse units and Mara 1, replacing outdated phone wiring to provide faster, more reliable internet access. We also upgraded network firmware and implemented a secure, segmented network to support mobile payments for the new university bookstore.

Additional infrastructure improvements included refreshing the University Police recorder system, upgrading campus security cameras, and repairing fiber-optic lines to ensure resilient connectivity across campus.

We have significantly strengthened our partnership with FATV, our city partner, by enhancing network access throughout the campus and at the Wallace Civic Center. This enhancement allows for quicker setup and broadcasting of both community and campus events, demonstrating Fitchburg State's strong commitment to outreach and civic engagement.

Support for Athletics and student success was strengthened through the deployment of a mobile Chromebook cart configured for proctored study hours. These devices provide secure, mobile access to academic platforms like Blackboard, Google Workspace, and virtual desktops, helping student-athletes balance their academic and athletic commitments.

Professional development and user empowerment remain key departmental priorities. The Help Desk team launched the “Level Up Your Work” series for faculty and staff, as well as the “Get Google Savvy” series for students. These sessions support digital fluency across campus and encourage deeper engagement with core productivity tools.

The Information Security team has implemented robust measures to safeguard the university's data and systems. We successfully deployed Google Data Labels to enhance data classification and protection, completed ROI analysis for our Web Application Firewall service, and implemented firmware and security updates on key systems. Internally, we implemented a password manager solution across the department to enhance credential management and mitigate security risks. We also completed annual compliance assessments for NIST, PCI, and GLBA, maintaining our commitment to regulatory excellence.

Cybersecurity awareness and incident preparedness remain top priorities. Our 2025 Cybersecurity Awareness Training has launched, and we have completed our internal tabletop exercises for disaster recovery and incident response. The team demonstrated effective incident response this fall by mitigating a targeted phishing attack affecting students, identifying and securing compromised accounts before significant damage occurred.

Core Services has led several major initiatives to modernize and secure our technology foundation. Data protection was strengthened by fully encrypting the Ellucian Banner database and masking personally identifiable information, ensuring that users only access the data necessary to perform their roles. Additionally, we migrated our student information systems to new servers, which improved performance and redundancy.

In partnership with state-contracted vendors, we are exploring a ‘Minimum Viable Cloud’ option through a pilot program with Microsoft Azure. This initiative will assess the long-term benefits of shifting critical systems to the cloud, including improved scalability, fault tolerance, and disaster recovery capabilities, an essential step toward financial and operational sustainability.

We completed the replacement of our aging fiber channel switches that connect servers to storage systems, and deployed a new enterprise directory service to replace an unsupported legacy platform. These upgrades significantly improve system stability, data integrity, and support scalability for future needs.

A notable achievement was the launch of a campus-wide initiative to streamline and coordinate all automated communications sent to new students. This work supports institutional goals related to student belonging and communication clarity, reducing redundancy and enhancing the student onboarding experience.

Several legacy systems have also been decommissioned, including the retirement of the last remaining Banner Self-Service (WEB4) workflow and the replacement of our automated account provisioning tool. Working closely with HR and other departments, the Core Services team introduced a NexGen Identity Management (NIM) system that automates real-time account creation and deactivation, ensuring secure, efficient user access across systems.

Lastly, the redesigned Faculty/Staff Directory has been completed. This new resource enhances data accuracy, incorporates functional titles and pronouns, and now features photographs, all of which facilitate easier connections between students, employees, faculty, and support services. This project reflects our ongoing commitment to accessibility, inclusion, and service excellence.

Taken together, these initiatives reflect the Technology Department's continued alignment with institutional goals, fostering student success, enhancing operational resilience, and positioning Fitchburg State as a forward-looking and responsive institution.

## **Student Affairs**

The following highlights reflect the Division of Student Affairs' work over the past several months to enhance the student experience and deliver services that promote student wellness, success, and retention.

### *Housing - Future Planning*

In collaboration with AVP of Capital Planning and Maintenance Matt Lechter and with the support of President Hodge, the following changes have been made to the current housing portfolio for academic year 26-27 to maximize occupancy and to broaden the student housing experience:

**Graduate Housing:** Transition graduate housing from its current location at 185 North St. to a floor in Simonds Hall. This proposed change will allow for year-round housing, including air conditioning, and will offer single bedrooms in an apartment-style living experience. We believe that the above will be an attractive option to the off-campus housing our graduate students are typically choosing.

Family Housing: With the above change, a Family Housing program can be piloted. We have received inquiries from both undergraduate and graduate students regarding such, and a Family Housing Agreement and marketing plans are currently being drafted.

MWCC Partnership Program: We currently house 10 MWCC students on campus with three additional deposits for Spring 2026. We have 7 others in the eligibility verification process. Inquiries regarding this program continue, and we are working with colleagues at MWCC to verify eligibility and offer housing, accordingly.

Cedar Street: Coming offline for AY 26-27 given its low occupancy. We will review its use for AY 27-28.

### *Student Support*

Our teams in the student support services areas continue to see an increase in both volume and acuity. Despite a 13% decrease in available appointments due to clinical capacity, the Counseling Center team saw 216 students for a total of 751 individual sessions, 73 of which were classified as urgent appointments. We remain proud of our commitment to serve the clinical needs of students without waitlists or session limits. The CARE team has received a 34% increase in referrals compared to fall 2024. Notably, the number of cases objectively assessed through our process at the “elevated” level (61) has already surpassed the total number of elevated cases from AY24-25 (51), signaling an increase both in acuity and complexity. While the majority of referrals last fall came at the mid/end of the semester, this fall saw the majority of referrals coming at the beginning/middle of the semester. This seems to be further evidence of a strong culture of referral and faculty/staff trust of the process - referring earlier when indications of student concerns are first present, which allows for earlier intervention and support.

As a part of a divisional realignment, Dr. Robert Hynes has taken on the elevated role of Associate Dean for Student Support Services. Under his leadership, the teams in Counseling Services, Care and Case Management, Disability Services, and Health Services will be able to capitalize on synergies to holistically and efficiently support students as well as the increased acuity and volume of concerns. This will also allow us to focus efforts on wellness education more broadly.

As of this writing, there were 949 visits to the Falcon Bazaar food pantry, an increase of 96% compared to fall 2024. Noteworthy during this most recent semester was the federal government suspension of SNAP benefits. Multi-divisional teams worked together to ensure student access to food during the Thanksgiving break and the upcoming Winter break with extended Bazaar hours, expanded dining options, to-go bags for food and hygiene products in accessible locations, and a Thanksgiving meal. The operations of the Bazaar and management of the grants that fund it were transitioned to the Office of Care and Case Management who can directly and holistically support student needs when they are co-occurring with food insecurity.

### *Student Experience*

The student engagement units have worked to support 199 student events as of this writing, a 40% increase from fall 2024. Notably, the student engagement team has focused efforts on weekend programming to ensure an active campus throughout the week. Plans are being developed to pilot online or hybrid events for online learners beginning in the spring semester. Five new clubs and organizations were chartered this fall - Alpha Alpha Alpha (first generation student honor society), It's On Us (sexual violence awareness, education, prevention), Associated General Contractors, American Institute of Architects Society, Computer Science and Mathematics Club, and the Christian Student Athlete Association. The Hammond Campus Center staff have supported a 27% increase in events in the building throughout the semester. All of the above indicates a robust offering of opportunities for students to engage and connect with a robust and diverse offering of events. As an example, our Student Veterans Association traveled to Colorado Springs in January 2026 for the national association meeting for the first time.

### **Athletics and Recreation Services**

The Fall 2025 season has been a period of both historic achievement and renewed excitement for Fitchburg State Athletics. Freshman Paulino Guevara Mateo delivered a performance for the ages, becoming the 2025 NCAA Division III East Regional Champion for men's cross country. Paulino also won the MASCAC individual championship and was named Runner and Rookie of the Year for the conference. As the first runner in Fitchburg State history to claim a regional title, he represented the university at the NCAA National Championships in Spartanburg, South Carolina, where he finished in the top third of the nation's premier distance athletes.

Success extended to our team sports as well. The field hockey program concluded its strongest season in nearly a decade, finishing with an 11-8 record. This marks the first time the team has reached the 11-win threshold since 2016, a testament to the revitalized team culture fostered by Head Coach Kayla Quinn. Similarly, the football program achieved its highest win total since 2017. This upward trajectory, highlighted by a dominant 49-14 season-opening victory, has had a measurable impact on weekend campus life and student engagement.

To translate this competitive success into broader campus spirit, the department recently hosted its first winter sports pep rally. Designed to unify the student body and increase visibility for our winter programs, the event featured a half-court shot competition offering one lucky student the chance to win free tuition for the spring semester. This momentum has carried onto the ice and the court, with both Men's Basketball and Men's Ice Hockey currently leading the MASCAC in early-season standings.

The department is currently executing several high-impact initiatives to deepen our support for student-athletes. One area of continued focus is the mental health and wellness of our student-athletes. While we have initiated several team-by-team initiatives in the past, this fall we brought all coaches together for Mental Health First Aid training. Funded by an NCAA Division III grant, our head coaches and athletic trainers participated in this specialized training to gain a concrete action plan for identifying and responding to mental health or substance use challenges. This program empowers our staff to recognize warning signs early, provide immediate support through a step-by-step intervention approach, and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health. Additionally, our athletic conference (the MASCAC) has provided all student-athletes with access to the ZAMA Health app, which offers self-guided modules which aim to maximize performance goals and improve mental health.

Parallel to these wellness efforts, we continue to see a lot of early success with our significantly expanded Student-Athlete Academic Success and Study Hall initiative. A major milestone was the recruitment of 12 student-athletes to serve as peer tutors specifically within our Athletics Study Halls. This “athletes-helping-athletes” model is bolstered by proactive faculty outreach and early interventions regarding attendance alerts and midterm deficiency grades. Our communication strategy has also expanded with a dedicated Instagram account for academic success and a successful pre-advising campaign that yielded 90 individual student-athlete meetings this fall.

Following the historic decision to add Women’s Ice Hockey to our varsity roster, we are proud to announce the enrollment of our first recruit for the upcoming spring semester. The daughter of a Fitchburg State alumnus recently visited campus and chose to transfer here from an out-of-state institution specifically to join the inaugural Falcon squad. This early commitment underscores the immediate demand for the program. As we prepare for our head coaching search, Women’s Ice Hockey remains a primary driver of our 2027 enrollment growth strategy.

In addition to our varsity expansions, the recreation department is actively responding to the evolving interests of the general student body. Following expressed student interest, we will pilot a women’s flag football league during the spring semester. This initiative provides a recreational outlet for both non-athletes and out-of-season varsity athletes to compete in a high-energy environment. Women’s flag football is a growing sport, highlighted by its recent designation as an NCAA Emerging Sport and its inclusion in the 2028 Olympic Games. By piloting this program, we aim to provide a low-barrier-to-entry opportunity for female students to engage with the department and build lasting connections on campus.

## **Operations: University Police Department and Capital Planning and Maintenance**

### *University Police Department*

Our core mission centers on maintaining a safe, secure, and welcoming campus. We actively partner across the institution and broader community to promote student success, enhance

institutional reputation and participate in community engagement events with the intent to foster positive, healthy relationships.

Included in this report we discuss recruitment and retention challenges, a multi-agency effort to establish a family reunification plan, an overview of the new Clery Act hazing requirements, and select data covering August 1 through December 18, 2025.

### ***Recruitment and Retention Efforts***

The University Police Department is currently managing significant staffing challenges that are impacting our operational capacity. This situation, however, is not unique to our institution, as law enforcement agencies across the country are facing a widespread workforce crisis.

The National Policing Institute stated in a recent publication that workforce challenges are escalating rather than stabilizing. They highlight that thin recruitment pipelines and burnout-driven attrition are collectively accelerating the loss of crucial experience and institutional knowledge.

We wish to provide the Board with an update on our local personnel issues in the context of this national trend:

- **Recent Attrition:** A serious loss of personnel has occurred since late July. Seven of our twenty-one sworn police officers resigned (most transitioned to municipal agencies). This translates to a one-third attrition rate (33.33%) overall, and a particularly severe 41% loss from the Patrolman and Sergeant ranks. This results in a diminished pool of institutional experience, wider gaps in professional competencies among new staff, and a significant administrative and financial demands to recruit, hire, and train new officers.
- **Current Vacancy Rate:** Out of twenty-six full-time positions, we currently have four full-time vacancies, resulting in a 15.38% staffing gap.

This challenge reflects a nationwide crisis in law enforcement recruitment and retention, driven by four key factors:

- **Public Scrutiny:** Increased media scrutiny and negative public sentiment have diminished the appeal of policing, limiting the applicant pool.
- **Occupational Stress:** High job stress, risk, and burnout contribute significantly to increased resignations and early retirements.
- **Wage Competition:** We routinely lose experienced staff to municipal agencies offering superior compensation and benefit packages.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Generational shifts prioritize a stronger work-life balance, making the demanding schedules of 24/7 policing less desirable than other careers.

In an effort to counter these national trends, we previously worked with Human Resources and AFSCME to implement two key mitigation strategies, including the adoption of an alternative 4-day on, 3-day off schedule and elevating compensation. We have also worked with Human Resources to streamline hiring processes, when possible. Despite these proactive institutional efforts, the staffing challenges driven by these factors continue to persist.

*Emergency Preparedness - Family Reunification & TEEX - MGT 315 Risk Assessments to Critical Community Assets*

Family Reunification Plan

The University is collaborating closely with Fitchburg Public Schools, the City's Fire Department, Police Department, and Emergency Management Agency to develop and implement a Family Reunification Plan. This essential planning establishes clear, coordinated protocols for the safe and efficient process of uniting families following a significant community emergency or critical incident. A core contribution to this partnership is the University's designation of the Wallace Civic Center and the Landry Arena to function as the primary, secure, and accessible reunification site, significantly strengthening the city's and region's overall emergency response capacity.

Upcoming Risk Assessment Training

Further bolstering our proactive security measures, Fitchburg State University will host the TEEX MGT 315: Risk Assessments to Critical Community Assets course in February 2026. This specialized training will equip key university and community personnel with the necessary methodologies to systematically identify, analyze, and prioritize risks facing our critical infrastructure, assets, and operational systems. By formally applying the MGT 315 framework, the University can develop more precise, data-driven security strategies and resource allocation plans, ensuring the sustained protection and operational continuity of essential campus functions.

*The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security and Campus Crime Statistics Act - Hazing Transparency Report*

Demonstrating the institution's commitment to safety and full federal compliance, Fitchburg State University has proactively published its inaugural Campus Hazing Transparency Report. This critical document, mandated by recent amendments to the Clery Act, was the result of a coordinated effort by the University Police Department, the Dean of Students and the Title IX Office. Completing this transparency measure well in advance of the required December 23, 2025, federal deadline highlights the University's dedication to accountability and student well-being.

The report serves as a public resource detailing findings of hazing violations by any student organization. The University's initial transparency report documented no findings of responsibility for hazing incidents during the reporting period.

Fitchburg State University’s Hazing webpage, to include the inaugural report can be found here: [www.fitchburgstate.edu/about/university-police/clery-act-and-annual-security-report/hazing](http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/about/university-police/clery-act-and-annual-security-report/hazing)

**Fall 25 Data (August 1 through December 18, 2025)**

Category	2025	2024	% Change
<b>Personal Safety Course Offerings</b>			
Total # of Sessions / # of Attendees	16/736	12/693	33%/6.2%
Campus Safety Overview	4/298	3/277	33%/7.5%
CPR / First Aid	4/37	2/27	100%/37%
C.R.A.S.E (Community Response to an Active Shooter Event)	6/326	3/314	100%/3.8%
De-escalation Training	2/75	3/57	-33%/31%
<b>Select Data</b>			
Total Calls for Service	13,719	16,592	-17%
Offense Reports	404	386	5%
Motor Vehicle Accidents	18	21	-14%
Physical Arrests (Criminal Offenses)	1	3	-67%
Criminal Complaints (Criminal Complaint Applications)	1	3	-67%
Clery Act Crimes	3	5	-40%
Mental Health & Well-being Checks	44	40	+10%
Resulting Involuntary Hospitalizations	4	5	-20%
Care Team Referrals (CARE and Case Management)	69	41	+68%
Judicial Referrals (Violations of Student Conduct)	24	49	-51%
Safety Escorts	221	278	-20%

**Conclusion**

In summary, while the University Police Department continues to navigate staffing challenges, our commitment to a safe and welcoming campus environment remains steadfast.

The data from the Fall 2025 semester reflects a proactive department that has successfully addressed safety training and intensified support for student well-being, as evidenced by the 68% increase in Care Team referrals.

By achieving early compliance with Clery Act hazing transparency and spearheading critical regional initiatives like the Family Reunification Plan, we continue to demonstrate that institutional resilience is built on strong community partnerships.

We remain dedicated to navigating the evolving issues facing higher education, while continuing to focus on the success and safety of every member of the Fitchburg State University community.

### *Capital Planning and Maintenance*

During the fall semester, the CPM team worked to ensure the campus was prepared to support daily operations, including maintaining clean academic spaces, setting up events, and managing safety and appearance through changing weather.

Recruitment and retention in the skilled trades remain challenging, leaving some positions unfilled. These challenges have also created opportunities for internal promotions, helping staff grow and strengthening the department. Continued turnover within the maintainer team brings new energy but requires additional training and support. Despite a few vacancies, we have been able to offer employees opportunities across different areas, creating development while meeting campus needs. CPM leadership continues to explore ways to enhance the team and ensure work is recognized and the team has the resources needed to fulfill the requirements.

We have also focused on reviewing and expanding the materials and tools available to the team. Even small investments in this area have delivered significant benefits for staff and in turn, the campus community.

Throughout the semester, CPM has been planning for both current projects and larger initiatives in the near and long term, including potential Bright Act funding and the Applied Learning Modernization Initiative through DCAMM. In addition to long-term capital planning, we continue to evaluate our trades and vendor partnerships to act proactively, establish contracts that benefit the university, and ensure on-site vendors supporting daily operations are effectively managed.

While many projects are currently underway at various stages of study, design, procurement, and production, I wanted to highlight a few updates:

In December, we completed the first phase of our EV charger program, increasing the number of campuswide chargers from two to eight. Usage has continued to rise, with November marking our highest month of charging sessions. We continue to look at other EV charging programs and partnerships.

Sustainability efforts continue, with several CPM members serving on the reestablished Sustainability Committee. According to data from E.L. Harvey, campus recycling increased from 122.06 tons in FY24 to 227 tons in FY25—an 86% increase. We are exploring additional

recycling options for maintainers and collaborating with consultants and state vendors to expand solar installations.

We are conducting a comprehensive campuswide elevator study to guide long-term maintenance and service planning.

In collaboration with DCAMM, we are also conducting a decarbonization study to guide replacement decisions and major project planning, helping us prioritize sustainability, make informed investments, and position the university for long-term efficiency. This roadmap will be completed in Spring 2026 and referred to future projects and bright act opportunities.

During the fall semester work continued at Conlon Hall, including the window replacement project, which will resume in May 2026 after commencement to complete remaining items and the Fine Arts wing. The third-floor Conlon restroom passed its final inspection in early December, providing a fully ADA-compliant facility and supporting phase one of the Communication Media renovations funded through DCAMM, planning for the redevelopment of the Com Media classroom spaces continues.

Continued planning for Summer 2026 residence hall projects, representing an estimated \$1.2 million MSCBA investment. Planned work includes heating and water boiler replacements in Townhouses 3 and 7, updated flooring in Herlihy Hall and select Townhouses, and LED lighting upgrades in Aubuchon student rooms.

The CPM team as a whole, is working to ensure that the campus is well-maintained, responsive to daily operational needs, and positioned to support both current and future academic and community activities.

### *Auxiliary Services*

#### *Falcon Bookstore & Gear Shop*

With our bookstore partner E-Campus, we have fully transitioned to an online textbook purchasing model. We achieved a 100% adoption rate in the fall, have again reached 100% for the winter session as of December 8, and are currently at 75% for spring. E-Campus continues to note that we are ahead of our peer institutions. We are also hosting our first holiday shopping event, offering 20% off in-store apparel and accessories.

Key data from our November fall semester review:

- Total orders: 1,669
- 44% placed before the academic year
- 20% used student book vouchers
- Units sold: New 797 (30%), Used 193 (7%), Rental 429 (16%), Digital 1,157 (44%), Marketplace 55 (2%)

I want to recognize Academic Affairs for their assistance in this transition, and Amber Deschenes, for their role in managing the adoption process. Our first full semester has been successful, and while improvements in user experience and pricing remain, Amber's work and faculty support have been essential.

In January, we will meet with the Provost Council to review the mid-year E-Campus report and further strengthen the adoption process to ensure we continue providing the best resources for our students.

### *Dining Services*

In November, we finalized a fully negotiated five-year extension of our existing agreement with Chartwells. The new terms will bring nearly \$5 million in capital investments to the facility. Planning for improvements to both the front-of-house and back-of-house (kitchen) areas is already underway.

We have continued to expand programming and dining options, increasing both variety and availability for the campus. Additionally, dining services will open on January 2 to support campus operations and our athletes during the break.

### *Parking Services*

Parking Services has seen increased traffic since the move, with more students and community members seeking support on parking regulations. We updated signage to reflect new EV charging stations and lifted parking holds so students can register without barriers. Parking rules and regulations have also been updated to include EV charging.

### *Housing MSCBA Budget*

In October and November, the MSCBA budgeting process occurs with Financial Services, Student Affairs, and MSCBA to review occupancy trends, strategic planning, and rate recommendations. Through collaboration with the Dean of Students and the Housing & Residential Services team, we continue to strengthen our approach to supporting residential students.

### *Future Planning*

To advance Housing & Residential Services while balancing student needs and revenue goals, the following initiatives will guide future planning:

- Graduate Housing: Transition graduate housing to Simonds Hall with single bedrooms in an apartment setting and encourage 12-month availability. Integrate these students into MSCBA-reported occupancy and expand marketing through online platforms and Admissions outreach.

- Family Housing: Explore designating 4-5 units at 185 North St. for family housing. Establish a single-rate housing agreement that ensures enrollment continuity and appropriate support for participants.
- MWCC Housing Program: Continue the partnership with MWCC to house their students starting Fall 2025. Strengthen connections between both campuses' Dean of Students offices and expand outreach to support program growth.
- Cedar Street: Use the 2026-2027 academic year to review Cedar Street's setup, condition, and purpose. Remove it from everyday housing selection (currently under 50% occupancy) but maintain it within the portfolio for activation as needed.

### Chief of Staff

It has been a busy Fall for the Chief of Staff, who has taken on additional oversight responsibilities since the retirement in October of the university's vice president for institutional advancement.

The Chief of Staff works closely with the university president on a variety of initiatives, meeting with community stakeholders and external partners. These efforts included serving as moderator of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce's annual Congressional Luncheon on Nov. 7, at which Congressman Jim McGovern and Congresswoman Lori Trahan discussed issues of local, regional and national concern. The university was the premier sponsor of this well-attended program.

The Associate Director of Communications has also continued to support the university's promotional efforts through storytelling in mainstream media as well as on its [news](#) page and digital magazine site. Since October, more than a dozen feature articles have been [posted](#) on the magazine site, celebrating accomplishments of students, alumni, and faculty. These stories are shared with internal and external audiences on the university's social media platforms.

This office also oversees the Director of Presidential Events, which organized several high-profile programs during the fall term, including the holiday gathering in Hammond Hall for university faculty, librarians and staff; special receptions for invited guests at varied athletic events; and celebrations at the presidential residence. These high-visibility programs represent opportunities to engage key constituents and foster relationships with valued community partners.

While the Advancement office is navigating a leadership transition with the departure of the vice president in October, the team continues to support events and fundraising efforts. Noteworthy events this fall included a reunion celebrating the 25th anniversary of the university's moot court program, which was complemented by a targeted print and digital

fundraising appeal to support the team. More than \$7,000 was raised from that appeal, with a major gift anticipated in the new year.

The Advancement office relaunched its athletics-themed Go Falcons Challenge this fall, inviting current members of its varsity teams to reach out to former players for a targeted fundraising appeal. This year there were 589 gifts, totaling \$23,998 (up from 516 gifts and \$20,462 in 2024). In addition to dollars raised, the program engages current students and demonstrates the importance of giving back in the future.

A year-end appeal was also launched in December, including print and digital elements that highlighted an individual student's journey and the role that philanthropy had played in their continued success at Fitchburg State. As of early January, the appeal had brought in more than \$89,000 (up from \$52,000 for calendar year 2024).

The Chief of Staff is also the university's primary records access officer, continuing to process and log public records requests from a variety of sources, from news outlets to data research firms. There were 47 such requests during the calendar year (and several had already been received for 2026 as of this writing).

#### Media Links for October 2025 - January 2026:

- Miami Hurricanes defense the catalyst to postseason success. The Palm Beach Post. January 4, 2026. (Story includes Fitchburg State alum Corey Heatherman, the defensive coordinator at the University of Miami.)  
<https://www.palmbeachpost.com/story/sports/college/football/2026/01/04/cfp-semifinal-miami-hurricanes-ole-miss-rebels/88016579007/>
- Op-Ed: The quiet eldercare crisis. Dec. 31, 2025. Canadian Affairs.  
<https://www.canadianaffairs.news/2025/12/31/op-ed-the-quiet-eldercare-crisis/>
- Ricardo Barros captures the heart of Fitchburg through the camera eye. Worcester Magazine. Dec. 31, 2025.  
<https://www.worcestermag.com/story/lifestyle/columns/2025/12/31/last-call-ricardo-barros-photographer/87921525007/>
- Behind the Bylines: Less outrage, more agency – a New Year's approach to the news. Dec. 29, Lowell Sun. <https://www.lowellsun.com/2025/12/26/behind-the-bylines-less-outrage-more-agency-a-new-years-approach-to-the-news/>
- Students helping save lives. December 17, 2025. Sentinel & Enterprise.  
<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/12/17/students-helping-save-lives/>
- Behind the Bylines: Meeting them where they don't want to be. Lowell Sun. December 12, 2025. <https://www.lowellsun.com/2025/12/12/behind-the-bylines-meeting-them-where-they-dont-want-to-be/>
- A 'huge goal and big vision' Sentinel & Enterprise, Dec. 10, 2025.  
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- Worcester Bravehearts get new leadership. Dec. 5, 2025. Patch.  
<https://patch.com/massachusetts/worcester/worcester-bravehearts-get-new-leadership>.
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<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/12/05/behind-the-bylines-teaching-reporters-to-question-the-record-not-repeat-it/>
- Healey-Driscoll Administration Launches Statewide Pilot Program to Support Students Returning to College. [Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-launches-statewide-pilot-program-to-support-students-returning-to-college). December 2, 2025.  
<https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-launches-statewide-pilot-program-to-support-students-returning-to-college>.
- Falcon freshman runs right into history. Sentinel & Enterprise. Dec. 2, 2025.  
<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/12/01/falcon-freshman-runs-right-into-history/>
- Reason to give thanks. We have ample material. Lowell Sun. Nov. 28, 2025.  
<https://www.lowellsun.com/2025/11/27/editorial-reasons-to-give-thanks-we-have-ample-area-material/>
- FSU students compete in College Fed Challenge. Nov. 26, 2025. Sentinel & Enterprise.  
<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/11/25/fsu-students-compete-in-college-fed-challenge/>
- Beyond the bylines: Reading corrections the right way. Sentinel & Enterprise. Nov. 22, 2025. <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/11/21/behind-the-bylines-reading-corrections-the-right-way/>
- College Radio Keeps Its Cool. Professor Katherine Jewell quoted in this article. The New York Times. November 20, 2025.  
[https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/20/style/college-radio-kxlu.html?unlocked\\_article\\_code=1.2k8.Tdv4.rkol3DklqrZA&smid=url-share](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/20/style/college-radio-kxlu.html?unlocked_article_code=1.2k8.Tdv4.rkol3DklqrZA&smid=url-share)
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- Some Mass. public universities enroll fewer international students, citing visa restrictions, WBUR, Nov. 10, 2025:  
<https://www.wbur.org/news/2025/11/10/massachusetts-public-universities-trump-international-enrollment-decline>
- Fitchburg State's women's ice hockey team offers new opportunity for Gardner-area athletes, Gardner News, Nov. 10, 2025:  
<https://www.thegardnernews.com/story/sports/college/2025/11/10/fitchburg-state-university-adds-womens-ice-hockey/87010190007/>

- VPCC's new cheerleading coach driven by love of sport. Nov. 8, 2025. Williamsburg Yorktown Daily. <https://wydaily.com/sports/2025/11/08/vpccs-new-cheerleading-coach-driven-by-love-of-sport/>
- Falcons rewarded with new hardware. Sentinel & Enterprise. Nov. 2, 2025. <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/11/01/falcons-rewarded-with-new-hardware/>
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- Behind the Bylines: When the news isn't new, it still belongs to you. Sentinel & Enterprise. Oct. 31, 2025. <https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/10/30/a-new-game-in-town-fitchburg-state-adding-womens-hockey/>
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- After Trump ends funding for Hispanic-serving colleges, local leaders call for change, Telegram & Gazette, Oct. 29, 2025: <https://www.telegram.com/story/news/education/2025/10/29/hispanic-serving-colleges-trump-massachusetts/86928745007/>
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- The Trump administration is affecting Mass. higher ed – and it's not just Harvard. Oct., 18, 2025. MassLive. <https://www.masslive.com/news/2025/10/the-trump-administration-is-affecting-mass-higher-ed-and-its-not-just-harvard.html>

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<https://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/2025/10/16/a-perfect-pace-for-falcons/>
- Brattleboro teacher named 2026 Vermont Teacher of the Year. Vermont Biz. Oct. 15, 2025. <https://vermontbiz.com/news/2025/october/14/brattleboro-teacher-named-2026-vermont-teacher-year>

## **SPECIAL Updates, Special Assistants to the President**

### **Dr. David Weiss: Presidential Fellows**

Dr. David P. Weiss is professor of criminal justice and in his eighteenth year with Fitchburg State University. He was an inaugural presidential fellow in 2024-25 and was asked to serve as special assistance to the president in 2025-26 to oversee and coordinate the Presidential Fellows Program.

Under the leadership of President Donna Hodge, the Presidential Fellows Program was first introduced in 2024 “with the goal of fostering leadership growth among faculty and librarians by providing a unique professional development opportunity.” Fellows exemplify the kind of leadership that inspires progress rooted in purpose, driven by curiosity, and with a commitment to making a lasting impact on our campus and beyond.

This year’s nine fellows include professors DeMisty Bellinger-Delfeld (English Studies), Jonathan Harvey (Humanities), Denise Sargent (Education), Deborah Stone (Nursing), Katy Covino (English Studies), Laura Garofoli (Psychological Science), Dustin Halterman (Education), Lindsay Parisi (Exercise and Sports Science), and librarian Connie Strittmatter.

Throughout this past semester, fellows attended brown bag luncheons arranged by Dr. Weiss wherein President Hodge and other cabinet-level administrators discussed their professional role within the university. President Hodge hosted a welcome luncheon for the fellows in October, laying out her vision for the program. Stacey Luster, VP for Personnel Services & General Counsel, is serving in her first year with us here at Fitchburg State and in November shared that much of her time is spent reviewing a variety of contracts as general counsel. Stacey and fellows were able to place faces with names, helping to better establish professional relationships which had already been initiated through email conversations. In December, Tim St. John, Dean of Student Affairs, also joined the fellows for the monthly brown bag luncheon to discuss his expanded role within the university. Much falls under Tim’s purview, with fellows requesting an organizational chart to help better understand Student Affairs, to know what student resources might be available to faculty and librarians through his office, and to think about how faculty and librarians might better collaborate with Student Affairs.

Fellows also focused on their individual projects, ranging from: identifying space unique to faculty and librarians to be used for both social occasions and intellectual conversations; expanding and coordinating the university’s community-engaged arts initiatives and programming, and revitalizing cultural life at Fitchburg State; bringing to life a university-

based mentorship initiative for new teachers; establishing a *Death Café* program that would provide a structured space for reflection and conversation on death and dying, promote holistic well-being and foster empathy; and, increasing Open Educational Resource (OER) opportunities for university students, faculty and librarians.

To better assess and improve upon the value of the program for participating fellows, Dr. Weiss reached out virtually to top university administrators at Western Carolina University to discuss how their Senior Leadership Fellows Program is structured and to further review their programming opportunities. Like Fitchburg State, WCU is relatively new to offer a fellows program, with theirs beginning in January 2022.

Dr. Weiss and other fellows attended, teaching schedule permitting, Board of Trustees meetings throughout the fall semester as well.

The semester wrapped up with a hosted holiday dinner and collegial conversation at the home of President Hodge and Dustin Hodge, with guest Dr. Lorin Basden Arnold, Provost & VP, of Kutztown University of Pennsylvania attending the dinner.

#### **Dr. Christine Dee: Presidential Ambassadors**

It is my great pleasure to serve as a Special Assistant to the President. In 2025, President Hodge allowed me to build upon what she began: empowering students to imagine, plan and execute projects that support her administration and advance the university's mission. The Ambassadors' achievements to date reflect the quality of our students and the support of this administration. The program enables students to employ their academic skills across university divisions, leading on campus and in the larger Fitchburg community.

The program's theme, Academics Change Lives, highlights higher education's transformative power; disciplinary inquiry inspiring change; educators making a difference. Beginning with feedback from inaugural Ambassadors, I devised a program structure using project management principles within the context of higher education. I organized resources on higher education operations and project management theory on the university's CMS. The President's Office, the Ambassadors and the campus community are linked through Google for event management. Ambassadors utilize project charters to track progress. In bi-monthly breakfast meetings Ambassadors workshop ideas, learn from university officials, structure projects and organize events. For example, in December the Ambassadors hosted a festive breakfast with leaders in Academic Affairs and Finance to ask questions about career-building, sources of inspiration, and gain leadership advice. Ambassadors support the Office of the President weekly, through front-facing events and in performing tasks behind the scenes, gaining first-hand cross-departmental experience in higher education operations.

Since the introduction of the Ambassadors at the President's State of the University Address and the Presidential Ambassador Showcase, the Ambassadors have shaped university culture through their enthusiasm and commitment. They supported the Office of Advancement at the Gold Key Ceremony, Alumni Awards, and the 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion Luncheon, building on these opportunities. Connections with alumni and advancement resulted in a recent campaign

featuring an ambassador. Conversations between alumni and ambassadors inspired a project between the ambassadors, the Office of Advancement and the Dean of the School of Business, Technology and Engineering to develop an alumni mentoring program.

Ambassadors support the Office of Admission. In the 2025 admissions cycle, Ambassadors assisted at college fairs. They took part in high-impact outreach events. Most recently, four ambassadors met with high school students at “Future Falcons Educator Day” at the McKay School, fielding questions and connecting with prospective students. The visibility of the Presidential Ambassador Program on university websites and media supports strategic enrollment efforts as a concrete example of how leadership, innovation, and academics are supported through President Hodge’s leadership.

The Ambassadors celebrate academic excellence at campus events, including the Police Academy Graduation, the Moot Court Regional competition, and 2025 Constitution Week. The Ambassadors foster initiatives to unite the university with individuals and organizations. Ambassadors assist in planning the Montachusett Martin Luther King Coalition’s 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Luncheon scheduled for January 19, 2026. The theme, “Building Community through Higher Education,” celebrates the university’s work affirming diversity and inclusion, including the direct admission initiative. Fitchburg State Vice President for Personnel Services and General Counsel Stacey Luster will keynote the event. The Ambassadors facilitated a partnership between the MLK Coalition and the Center for Diversity and Inclusiveness to host “Wrestling with Racism” on campus during Black History Month. Ambassadors support Women’s History Month and assist in the planning of the March 2 celebration featuring Olympic gold medalist and Professional Women’s Hockey League alumna and current broadcaster Gigi Marvin, who will speak about Title IX, the history of women’s ice hockey and women’s leadership on and off the ice.

Presidential Ambassadors execute individual projects that align with their academic interests, demonstrate skills managing projects, and produce results. Beyond emeriti ambassadors’ contributions in sustainability and peer mentoring, ambassadors are working on innovative projects that drive the university’s progress. Currently, Ambassadors work with the Career and Advising Center to measure the impact of study halls. With IRB approval an ambassador project measures graduate school intentions against outcomes to enhance student satisfaction and support strategic enrollment initiatives. Another project analyzes the value proposition of standardized placement tests. Ambassadors reviewed the Academic Integrity Policy prior to its approval. That process inspired a project that researches the normalization of cheating and AI practices on campus. An ambassador project addresses family loss with an inaugural event for the Students Thriving in Love and Loss project in February.

As this overview indicates, President Hodge’s Ambassador Program is a powerful initiative that fosters spirit and academic excellence across campus and beyond Fitchburg State.

#### **Dr. Josh Spero: International Engagement**

The honor of serving FSU's President, at her initiative, as her Special Assistant (International Enrollment & Campus-to-Campus Partnership Building) provides exciting opportunities to support and influence and help advance FSU's international communities on-campus and abroad.

I consistently sought and received guidance from FSU's President and VP/EMSS during numerous meetings, and worked with their FSU colleagues to gather information, insight, and understanding.

During the past several months, I coordinated with FSU's leadership to help create or expand a range of goals, particularly two key projects:

1. New outreach of international students online, working with the School of Graduate, Online, and Continuing Education (SGOCE) Dean/her team - VP/EMSS tasked:

I closely coordinated with the SGOCE by designing research and analysis regarding: "FY26-FY28 Assessment for Expanding SGOCE Online Programs to International Students."

To gather information, documentation, and data sets, I met several key times throughout September in-person/online with the SGOCE Dean/team to understand their objectives about challenges facing international student enrollment, particularly several factors impacting key SGOCE online programs.

Accordingly, SGOCE wanted a methodical analysis for where SGOCE might head, strategizing from a fall 2025 international student enrollment data baseline.

I requested weekly in-person SGOCE staff meeting (September-November) to brainstorm notions, approaches, and goals, inclusive of updates for/further guidance from VP/EMSS.

The monthly online "international group" meetings also proved extremely helpful to accelerate my grasp of the University's international enrollment challenges, with: Associate VP/Academic Affairs; VP/EMSS; SGOCE Dean/staff; International Education Office Executive Director; Admissions Director.

On 17 December 2025, I submitted my first Memo (6 pages, with 3 pages of endnotes) to FSU's President, VP/EMSS, and SGOCE Dean, integrated my analysis with keen feedback and follow-up from VP/EMSS and SGOCE Dean/team.

The memo's assessment focuses on how SGOCE face enrollment challenges worsened by the U.S. Government's ever-changing visa policies since January 2025, already proving detrimental toward international students studying in the U.S.

However, FSU remains determined to maintain - and, hopefully, expand - FSU's online international enrollment over the next two academic years to counter difficult, likely declining in-person international student enrollments.

The memo elaborates follow-up projects in conjunction with SGOCE, centered on its notable, affordable, and asynchronous online programs, appealing to international students abroad and particularly in new countries/cities - for potential outreach and recruitment.

After the President/her team review the memo and provide guidance on the next steps, I eagerly await what might unfold in 2026 for international enrollment ongoing projects and initiatives.

2. First-time university travel overseas by an athletic team - men's basketball - to play in Germany's league, building from a former FSU Coach's long-time network, generously supported by his FSU basketball scholarship - FSU President/Athletic Director tasked.

After meeting with FSU President, Athletic Director, and President's Chief of Staff at the semester's outset about, I began to follow-up guidance for this unique opportunity for an athletic team's first travel overseas, strategizing with Athletic Director and former FSU Basketball Coach.

Given my professorial experiences since 2015 in creating, planning, and leading my course's students to Europe six times (The Netherlands, Germany, Poland), FSU's President asked me both to travel with the basketball team and support planning, especially designing pre-trip team academic/travel prep.

During the fall-winter 2025, I got to know Coach Todd, whose generous basketball scholarship makes this 15-23 August 2026 travel to Germany possible (including a day's journey to Luxembourg), and both FSU's Athletic and Associate Athletic Directors.

During many interactions, I started working closely with Coach Todd and close US coaching colleague, Don Beck (Germany). Both Coaches have worked together to visit/host US collegiate teams to Germany (Coach Todd/Salem State University) and his various long-time assistant-coached NBA teams.

As this overseas planning/travel coordination progressed, I worked more closely with this FSU/coaching leadership group to determine the eligible FSU player's (15) roster, including FSU Coach/staff, Associate Athletic Director, Coach Todd, myself. FOCUS: passport status, application requirements, and plane reservations (FSU's Executive Director of International Education key).

By early December, Coaches Todd and Beck, and I coordinated to reserve room/board at Trier, Germany's Hostel. FSU's President then approved/signed the hostel's contract for rooms and meals.

As 2026 nears, coordination focuses on securing passports and plane tickets, and preparing team for this path-breaking journey representing FSU.

In conclusion, I'm truly grateful for this wonderful opportunity to serve both the President and the greater FSU community, particularly as I maintain my adjunct Full Professorship and, especially, as part of an alumni family with my youngest son enrolled in his second FSU degree program: MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

# Coversheet

Presented by M. Gill

**Section:** VI. Student Trustee Report  
**Item:** A. Presented by M. Gill  
**Purpose:** FYI  
**Submitted by:**  
**Related Material:** Student Trustee Report.pdf

## **Student Trustee's Report to the Board of Trustees**

October 31, 2025 - January 29, 2026 | Matthew Gill, Student Trustee

### **Introduction: Student Trustee Updates**

As the Fall 2025 semester has come to an end, I am happy to have the honor of recapping some of the highlights from the first half of our academic year, as well as the exciting things to come.

First off, I'd like to give some personal updates about what I've been doing on behalf of serving the role of Student Trustee, as well as how I've been serving in other leadership roles on campus.

As part of my Presidential Ambassador role, I partnered with Presidential Fellow Dr. Katharine Covino and have been conducting research with her on the impacts that community engagement and sense of belonging have on college student success. As part of this ambassador/fellow project, I was able to serve as her Teaching Intern in a First-Year Experience course. Even though this project stemmed from the Presidential Ambassador role, I have connected it to my work as Student Trustee, and was able to interact with first-year students who were able to bring campus issues to my attention that I would have never been able to experience myself. So far, this research and teaching internship experience has helped me realize the importance that a sense of belonging and community has, especially here at Fitchburg State University.

I am also excited to announce that I am entering my Practicum, the full-time student teaching phase that is required in our Educator's Licensure Program. I won't be taking classes here because the Practicum involves me taking on the role of a classroom teacher, which is where I will be every day of the week.

As my experience has always been unique at Fitchburg State University, I have been offered a paid position as a full-time English teacher at Ayer-Shirley Regional High School during my Practicum, and I will be taking on the full weight of a full-time classroom teacher.

Even with adding this extra role in my life, I want to ensure to you and to the student body that I will still be able to fulfill my duties as Student Trustee.

### **Student Government Association**

Since our October Board of Trustees meeting, our Student Government Association (SGA) has been reaching out to our student body to identify specific issues and concerns that are prevalent on our campus.

The Advocacy Committee, led by the Vice President of SGA, began to digitize these reported concerns and issues that we were receiving from the student body in order to categorize them in a way that allowed for us to create sustainable solutions.

## Categorized Issues:

### *Fall Graduate Reception*

One of the concerns was that since there was no longer a Winter commencement, there may not be any activities for our graduating students at the end of this semester. The Senior Committee, composed of senior-year senators on SGA, as well as other senior-year students outside of SGA, created the “Fall 2025 Graduation Reception” event that involved the idea students coming in to sit down and eat light refreshments in our Falcon Hub in Hammond Hall and sign a banner for their graduating class.

### *Student Relations with the University Police Department*

One category involved student relations with the University Police Department, and their presence on our campus. As we have a liaison on SGA that directly meets with Chief Cloutier, we’ve been working on increasing the positive relationship that our students have with university police.

Some students have also reported concerns about the safety of our campus at night, and are looking for more UPD patrolling at night time hours.

SGA has completed their C.R.A.S.E. training, and we are willing to attend more of these trainings so we can share these services with the rest of the student body. Thank you again to Chief Cloutier for providing us with this opportunity.

All of these student concerns regarding the University Police Department are brought up in our liaisons’ bi-weekly meetings with Chief Cloutier.

### *Parking Services*

As parking is always an ongoing issue across campus, I realize that it can become tiring when this topic is continuously brought up. I want to recognize that the issue of parking is not just about students wanting to park wherever they want, but about the accessibility of parking on campus.

One of the most popular reports that we are getting is that there is a giant hole in the Upper Cedar Lot that prevents students from driving normally through the parking lot. From my experience, I know that this hole has been there for at least two years now, and truly needs to be fixed.

We realize that the Civic Center provides a numerous amount of parking spaces for our students, but accessibility to campus has become an issue. When students are parking there at night, there are reports that the shuttles are constantly delayed or canceled, and students have to either walk or call UPD. We are working on coming up with solutions to fix these issues.

### *Chartwells / Holmes Dining Hall*

Once again, I know that the concerns and issues regarding the Holmes Dining Hall are always present in day-to-day discussions, but there are some recurring themes that keep presenting themselves through these reports we are getting from students.

One main concern is that the dining hall hours do not always fit the schedules of our students. Students often have to go to the North Street Bistro in Hammond Hall for their meals or find an off-campus option. The North Street Bistro has been a solution as a second option for when the dining hall is closed, but students would rather have the dining hall open for later hours for a real sit-down meal.

This heavily impacts our student-athlete population on campus, the largest section of the student body that we have received a majority of our concerns from that regard this issue.

The quality of food is also still an ongoing issue, where students are noticing that the food being provided in the Dining Hall has been getting worse as the year progresses. These students would also like to see even more diversity in the food options being offered each day.

Once again, SGA's liaison is continuously working with Chartwells and setting up meetings to ensure that there are going to be solutions to these issues.

### *Sustainable Initiatives on Fitchburg State University's Campus*

With the guidance of our Student Government Association's "Sustainability Committee," we have been identifying issues on campus that pertain to our sustainability efforts at Fitchburg State University.

One of our main goals that stem from this committee is to increase the education on recycling across the dorms on our campus. Through multiple student complaints, we have come to the conclusion that not every dorm room has a recycling bin, and only offer small recycling bins for an entire suite. These bins are too small, and once filled, students tend to throw their recycling in the trash.

We hope to create presentations to include in our orientation programs about the importance of recycling, especially with those students who are living in our dorm buildings.

We also hope to allow a student representative to sit on the Faculty / Staff Sustainability Committee on our campus, so we can express our concerns, as well as relay concerns from this committee back to the student body.

This Student Sustainability Committee through SGA is also focusing on other achievable sustainable initiatives that we can incorporate onto our campus.

## The Office of Student Engagement

I met with Ben Kadamus, the Assistant Dean for Student Engagement, to discuss the summary of events that took place on behalf of our clubs and organizations on campus.

I have attached a full copy of the list below that you can review, but I'd like to highlight a few key points from this document.

### *Key Points from the Fall 2025 Semester:*

- 173 Student Club and Organization Events
- 494 Student Club and Organization Meetings/Practices
- 36 Office-Based Events
  - 33 from the Office of Student Engagement (OSE)
  - 3 from the Center of Diversity and Inclusion (CDI)

We also approved four new Student Clubs and Organizations through the Student Government Association and the Office of Student Engagement.

### *List of Newly Approved Clubs in the Fall 2025 Semester:*

- It's On Us
  - A club focused on sexual violence awareness, education, and programming.
- Alpha Alpha Alpha
  - An honor society for first-generation college students.
- Associated General Contractors Club
  - This is a newly reactivated club that creates professional connections between students entering the contracting profession with those already working in the field.
- American Institute of Architects Society
  - Currently working on their reactivation with SGA and are just waiting for final approval from the senate.

## The Falcon Community Outreach Center (FCOC)

As I continue to report out the statistics of the use of the Falcon Bazaar and Professional Clothing Closet at each Board of Trustees meeting, I want us to reflect on what the increased use of these services mean for the students at our university.

### *Comparing the Use from Fall 2024 to Fall 2025*

- Falcon Bazaar
  - Fall 2024 - 482 total visits
  - Fall 2025 - 949 total visits

- Professional Clothing Closet
  - Fall 2024 - 52 total visits (does not include the drop-in event where visits/items could not be tracked)
  - Fall 2025 - 68 total visits (does not include the two drop-in events where visits/items could not be tracked)

### *A Deeper Month-by-Month Breakdown of the Use of the FCOC*

#### September

- Total Bazaar Checkouts: 232
- Total Closet Checkouts: 15
- Unique Student Visitors to Bazaar: 134
- Unique Student Visitors to Closet: 11

#### October

- Total Bazaar Checkouts: 313
- Total Closet Checkouts: 19
- Unique Student Visitors to Bazaar: 180
- Unique Student Visitors to Closet: 15

#### November

- Total Bazaar Checkouts: 253
- Total Closet Checkouts: 20
- Unique Student Visitors to Bazaar: 173
- Unique Student Visitors to Closet: 16
- Students who received a crockpot or rice cooker from event: 34

#### December

- Total Bazaar Checkouts: 153
- Total Closet Checkouts: 12
- Unique Student Visitors to Bazaar: 113
- Unique Student Visitors to Closet: 9

### **Donating to the Fitchburg High School Food Bank**

As previously mentioned in our last meeting, teachers from Fitchburg High School reached out to me requesting for help in some way to support their students who are facing food insecurity. They gave reports about their food pantry being almost empty, and that teachers were paying for students to have “take-home meals” in the evenings and on weekends.

In response to their request for help, I turned to our Student Government Association and asked for their help. As an immediate solution to this issue, the Senate voted to donate \$2,000 to the Fitchburg High School Food bank.

However, we ran into some issues about the logistics of donating and hit a road block. With the help of President Hodge, we were able to find the money to help the students at Fitchburg High School.

I was able to sit down with Kelli Lundgren and create a plan to support these students. With her help, we decided that we would spend this money in increments of \$500 at a time, and pick up these food orders at BJ's and deliver the food directly to the high school.

On December 3rd, Kelli and I were able to order the first quarter of the donated food, and on December 4th, I dropped off the food at the high school.

Our ability to find a solution for our community partners shows how invested Fitchburg State University is with our surrounding community, its current students, and the students we hope to serve in the future.

I want to once again thank President Hodge for her willingness to support this community need.

### **Bagels with the Board Event (Board of Trustees)**

As a reminder, I am excited for the proposed event, "Bagels with the Board" that we have now discussed a few times. This is a simple event that hopes to increase our conversations with the student body with a side of refreshments.

I am continuously working with the Chair of our Advocacy Committee to complete the design of the event before I propose any calendar dates to you all.

I'll be reaching out soon with tentative dates that will attempt to align with your schedules as best as possible.

## Event Calendar Provided by the Office of Student Engagement

### CURRENT EVENT CALENDAR

December 2025				
<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Organization(s)</i>	<i>Location</i>
Monday 12/1	12:00-5:00pm	Blood Drive	Bio Chem	Main Lounge
Monday 12/1	2:00-3:00pm	Photography Club Weekly Meeting	Photography Club	Conlon 222
Monday 12/1	3:00-6:00pm	Greek Council Study Hours	Greek Council	Perc 107
Monday 12/1	3:30-5:00pm	GSA Weekly Meeting	GSA	Hammond S08
Monday 12/1	4:00-5:30pm	FAB Weekly Meetings	FAB	Main Lounge
Monday 12/1	5:00-10:00pm	Dance Club Time Slots and Run Throughs	Dance Club	Weston
Monday 12/1	6:00-7:00pm	Sigma Pi Weekly Meeting	Sigma Pi	Percival Hall
Monday 12/1	6:00-7:00pm	Salvation Youth Meeting	Salvation International Prayer Youth Ministry	Hammond S06 Conference Room
Monday 12/1	6:00-8:00pm	AST Weekly Meeting	AST	Hammond 314
Monday 12/1	6:00-8:30pm	Phi Sigma Sigma Chapter Meeting	Phi Sigma Sigma	Percival 103
Monday 12/1	6:30-9:00pm	Tri Sigma Chapter Meeting	Tri Sigma	Thompson Hall
Tuesday, 12/2	10:00-11:00am	Food Drive Raffle	Greek Council	S-Lobby
Tuesday, 12/2	11:00am-2:00pm	CACF Table	CACF	S-Lobby
Tuesday, 12/2	3:30-4:30pm	Institute of Electronics and Electrical Engineering Build Session	IEEE	Colon Hall 110
Tuesday, 12/2	4:30-6:30pm	Improv Club Rehearsal	Improv Club	Antonucci 211
Tuesday, 12/2	4:00-6:00pm	Falcons Lead: Discover Student Leadership	OSE and Housing	Main Lounge
Tuesday, 12/2	4:00-5:00pm	Billiards Club Meeting	Billiards	Game Room
Tuesday, 12/2	5:00-6:30pm	Christmas Cookie Decorating	BSU and Cheer	Falcon Hub
Tuesday, 12/2	5:30-6:30pm	RPGuild Weekly Meeting	Role Players Guild	Percival 103/106
Tuesday, 12/2	5:30-7:30pm	Crafter's Club Meeting	Crafter's Club	Hammond 314
Tuesday, 12/2	6:30-7:30pm	SGA Weekly Meeting	SGA	Hammond G19
Wednesday, 12/3	1:00-4:00pm	Wild Walk Through (Animal Adventures)	FAB	Main Lounge
Wednesday, 12/3	3:00-6:30pm	AST Hot Coco, Movies and Christmas Coloring	AST	Hammond G19
Wednesday, 12/3	4:00-5:00pm	EMS Club Meeting	EMS	Percival 107

Wednesday, 12/3	4:30-5:30pm	SNA Meeting	Student Nurses Association	Thompson 214
Wednesday, 12/3	5:00-6:00pm	Card Game Club Meeting	Card Game Club	Thompson 310
Wednesday, 12/3	5:00-6:00pm	Panhellenic Council Meeting	Panhellenic	Hammond S08
Wednesday, 12/3	5:00-6:00pm	CACF Open Group Discussion	CACF	Hammond G01/G01B
Wednesday, 12/3	6:00-8:00pm	Sigma Pi Study Hours	Sigma Pi	Percival Hall
Wednesday, 12/3	6:00-9:00pm	Minecraft Club Jeopardy	Minecraft	Falcon Hub
Wednesday, 12/3	5:00-10:00pm	Dance Club Time Slots and Run Throughs	Dance Club	Weston
Wednesday, 12/3	6:00-9:00pm	Pokemon Society Monthly Tournament	Pokemon Society	Perc 108
Wednesday, 12/3	7:00-9:00pm	Jazz Concert	Falcon Bands	Kent
Thursday, 12/4	8:30-9:30am	E-Board Meetings	Fitchburg State Choir	CNFA 157
Thursday, 12/4	3:30-5:00pm	GSA Weekly Meeting	GSA	Hammond S08
Thursday, 12/4	3:45-4:45pm	GDSA Weekly Meeting	GDSA	CNIC 329
Thursday, 12/4	3:30-5:00pm	Pokemon Society Weekly Meeting	Pokemon Society	Percival 108
Thursday, 12/4	4:00-7:00pm	Last Billiards Tournament	Billiards	Game Room
Thursday, 12/4	7:00-8:00pm	First Love Bible Study	First Love	Ellis White Lecture Hall
Thursday, 12/4	4:30-8:30pm	ChriSMahanakwanzakings	FAB	Holmes
Friday, 12/5	10:45am-12:15pm	Falcon Friends (Intramural)	Falcon Friends	REC
Friday, 12/5	4:30-5:30pm	SDS Weekly Meeting	SDS	Perc 105
Friday, 12/5	6:00-9:00pm	HoliGays	GSA	Main Lounge
Friday, 12/5	5:00-10:00pm	Dance Club Winter Showcase	Dance Club	Weston
Saturday, 12/6	1:30-4:30pm	Dance Club Winter Showcase	Dance Club	Weston
Saturday, 12/6	6:00am-11:00pm	FAB New York Trip	FAB	New York City
Sunday, 12/7	6:00-8:00pm	Improv Club Rehearsal	Improv Club	Ellis White Lecture Hall
Monday, 12/8	11:00am-2:00pm	CACF Table	CACF	S-Lobby
Monday, 12/8	3:30-5:00pm	GSA Weekly Meeting	GSA	Hammond S08
Monday, 12/8	3:00-5:00pm	Finals De-Stress Event!	K-Pop	Falcon Hub
Monday, 12/8	4:00-5:30pm	FAB Weekly Meetings	FAB	Main Lounge
Monday, 12/8	2:00-3:00pm	Photography Club Weekly Meeting	Photography Club	Conlon 222
Monday, 12/8	4:00-6:00pm	Greek Council Meeting	Greek Council	Hammond G01
Monday, 12/8	5:00-6:30pm	Minecraft Club Meeting	Minecraft	Perc 107

Monday, 12/8	5:30-8:30pm	Phi Sigma Sigma Chapter Meeting	Phi Sigma Sigma	Percival 103
Monday, 12/8	6:00-7:00pm	Salvation Youth Meeting	Salvation International Prayer Youth Ministry	Hammond S06 Conference Room
Monday, 12/8	6:00-7:00pm	Sigma Pi Weekly Meeting	Sigma Pi	Percival Hall
Monday, 12/8	6:00-8:00pm	AST Weekly Meeting	AST	Hammond 314
Monday, 12/8	6:00-9:00pm	Grinchmas Game Night	ASA	Main Lounge
Monday, 12/8	6:30-9:00pm	Tri Sigma Chapter Meeting	Sigma Sigma Sigma	Thompson Hall
Monday, 12/8	7:00-9:00pm	Card Game Club Presents: Holiday Commander Tournament Bracket	Card Game	Falcon Hub
Tuesday, 12/9	3:30-4:30pm	Institute of Electronics and Electrical Engineering Build Session	IEEE	Colon Hall 110
Tuesday, 12/9	4:00-5:00pm	Entrepreneurship Club Weekly Meeting	Entrepreneurship Club	Percival 108
Tuesday, 12/9	4:00-5:00pm	Billiards Club Meeting	Billiards	Game Room
Tuesday, 12/9	3:30-6:00pm	Fall 25' Graduate Student Celebration	SGA	Falcon Hub
Tuesday, 12/9	4:30-6:30pm	Improv Club Rehearsal	Improv Club	Antonucci 211
Tuesday, 12/9	5:30-6:30pm	RPGuild Weekly Meeting	Role Players Guild	Percival 103/106
Tuesday, 12/9	5:30-7:30pm	Crafter's Club Meeting	Crafter's Club	Hammond 314
Tuesday, 12/9	5:00-7:00pm	Tri Sigma Initiation	Tri Sigma	Thompson
Tuesday, 12/9	6:30-7:30pm	SGA Weekly Meeting	SGA	G19
Tuesday, 12/9	6:30-8:30	Mingle All the Way- CASA x OSE	CASA and OSE	Main Lounge
Tuesday, 12/9	7:00-9:30pm	Choral Kaleidoscope	Fitchburg State Choirs	Weston
Tuesday, 12/9	8:00-10:00pm	How Improv Stole Christmas: An Improv Show	Improv	Falcon Hub
Wednesday, 12/10	2:00-5:00pm	Relaxation Lounge	FAB	G-Lobby
Wednesday, 12/10	4:00-5:00pm	EMS Club Meeting	EMS	Percival 107
Wednesday, 12/10	5:00-6:00pm	Card Game Club Meeting	Card Game Club	Thompson 310
Wednesday, 12/10	5:00-6:00pm	CACF Open Group Discussion	CACF	Hammond G01/G01B
Thursday, 12/11	3:45-4:45pm	GDSA Weekly Meeting	GDSA	CNIC 329
Saturday, 12/13	12:45-1:00pm	Musical Theatre Club Rehearsals	Musical Theatre Club	Kent Recital Hall
Monday, 12/15	1:00-3:00pm	Finals Frenzy- Alumni Hot Chocolate	Alumni	G-Lobby
Tuesday, 12/16	1:00-3:00pm	Finals Frenzy- Counseling Services Ice Cream Bar	Counseling Services	G-Lobby
Wednesday, 12/17	11:00am-3:00pm	OSE Walking Tacos & Game Room	OSE	G-Lobby

Thursday, 12/18	10:00am-2:00pm	Finals Frenzy- CARE Cookie Decorating and Activity	CARE	G-Lobby
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**November 2025**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Organization(s)</i>	<i>Location</i>
Saturday, 11/1	9:00pm-1:00am	Friday Night Fete	BSU and CASA	Main Lounge
Sunday, 11/2	6:00-8:00pm	Improv Club Rehearsal	Improv Club	Ellis White Lecture Hall
Monday, 11/3	3:30-4:30pm	GSA E-Board Meeting	GSA	Hammond G11
Monday, 11/3	4:00-5:30pm	FAB Weekly Meetings	FAB	Hammond 314
Monday, 11/3	5:30-8:30pm	Phi Sigma Sigma Chapter Meeting	Phi Sigma Sigma	Percival 103
Monday, 11/3	6:00-7:00pm	Salvation Youth Meeting	Salvation International Prayer Youth Ministry	Hammond S06 Conference Room
Monday, 11/3	6:00-7:00pm	Sigma Pi Weekly Meeting	Sigma Pi	Percival Hall
Monday, 11/3	6:00-8:00pm	AST Weekly Meeting	AST	Hammond 314
Monday, 11/3	6:30-9:00pm	Tri Sigma Chapter Meeting	Sigma Sigma Sigma	Thompson Hall
Monday, 11/3	4:30-5:30pm	Photography Club Weekly Meeting	Photography Club	Colon 222
Monday, 11/3	7:00-8:30pm	Rolling with Disadvantage	Improv and RPG	Main Lounge
Tuesday, 11/4	4:00-5:00pm	Entrepreneurship Club Weekly Meeting	Entrepreneurship Club	Percival 108
Tuesday, 11/4	4:00-5:00pm	Billiards Club Meeting	Billiards Club	Game Room
Tuesday, 11/4	5:00-6:30pm	Greek Council President's Meeting	Greek Council	G11
Tuesday, 11/4	5:30-6:30pm	RPGuild Weekly Meeting	Role Players Guild	Percival 103/106
Tuesday, 11/4	6:30-7:30pm	SGA Weekly Meeting	SGA	Hammond G19
Tuesday, 11/4	4:30-7:00pm	Candy Apples for Campus Connections	SGA	S-Lobby
Tuesday, 11/4	5:00-7:00pm	Crafter's Club-Coaster Making	Crafter's Club	Hammond 314
Wednesday, 11/5	3:30-4:30pm	Writing Club Weekly Meeting	Writing Club	Miller Hal Oval Room
Wednesday, 11/5	4:00-5:00pm	EMS Club Meeting	EMS	Percival 107
Wednesday, 11/5	4:30-5:30pm	SNA Meeting	Student Nurses Association	Thompson 214
Wednesday, 11/5	5:00-6:00pm	CACF Open Group Discussion	CACF	Hammond G01/G01B
Wednesday, 11/5	5:00-6:00pm	Card Game Club Meeting	Card Game Club	Thompson 310



Wednesday, 11/5	5:00-6:00pm	Panhellenic Meeting	Panhellenic	S08
Wednesday, 11/5	4:00-6:30pm	AST Mug Painting	AST	Hammond 314
Wednesday, 11/5	6:00-8:00pm	Sigma Pi Study Hours	Sigma Pi	Percival Hall
Wednesday, 11/5	7:00-9:00pm	Karaoke Night	Fitchburg Choir	Main Lounge
Thursday, 11/6	8:50-9:50pm	E-Board Meeting	Falcons Band	CNFA 157
Thursday, 11/6	11:00am-3:30pm	USB Raffle for Girls Who Code	AST	G-Lobby
Thursday, 11/6	3:30-5:00pm	CACF E-Board Meeting	CACF	Hammond S06
Thursday, 11/6	3:30-5:00pm	GSA Weekly Meeting	GSA	Hammond S08
Thursday, 11/6	3:30-5:00pm	Pokemon Society Weekly Meeting	Pokemon Society	Percival 108
Thursday, 11/6	3:45-4:45pm	GDSA Weekly Meeting	GDSA	CNIC 329
Thursday, 11/6	5:00-7:00pm	Together We Care	BSU, Greek Council, ASA	GO1B
Thursday, 11/6	9:00-10:30pm	FAB Music Bingo	FAB	Holmes Dining Hall
Friday, 11/7	7:30-8:30am	Tai Chi and Tea	Commuter Affairs	Hammond Hall
Friday, 11/7	10:00-1:00pm	National Hug-A-Bear Day	FAB	G-Lobby
Friday, 11/7	1:00-2:00pm	SGA Open Office Hours	SGA	SGA Office
Sunday, 11/9	6:00-8:00pm	Improv Club Rehearsal	Improv Club	Ellis White Lecture Hall
Monday, 11/10	2:00-3:00pm	Photography Club Weekly Meeting	Photography Club	Conlon 222
Monday, 11/10	3:30-5:00pm	GSA Weekly Meeting	GSA	Hammond S08
Monday, 11/10	4:00-5:30pm	FAB Weekly Meetings	FAB	Hammond 314
Monday, 11/10	4:00-6:00pm	Greek Council Meeting	Greek Council	Hammond G01
Monday, 11/10	5:00-6:00pm	In-Service Training: Communication	OSE	Main Lounge
Monday, 11/10	5:00-6:30pm	Minecraft Club Meeting	Minecraft	Perc 107
Monday, 11/10	6:00-7:00pm	Sigma Pi Weekly Meeting	Sigma Pi	Percival Hall
Monday, 11/10	6:00-7:00pm	Salvation Youth Meeting	Salvation International Prayer Youth Ministry	Hammond S06 Conference Room
Monday, 11/10	6:00-8:00pm	AST Weekly Meeting	AST	Hammond 314
Monday, 11/10	6:00-8:30pm	Phi Sigma Sigma Chapter Meeting	Phi Sigma Sigma	Percival 103
Tuesday, 11/11	4:30-6:30pm	Improv Club Rehearsal	Improv Club	Antonucci 211
Wednesday, 11/12	10:00am-4:00pm	Tabling for Evansons	FAB	G-Lobby

Wednesday, 11/12	3:30-4:30pm	Writing Club Weekly Meetings	Writing Club	Miller Hall Oval Room
Wednesday, 11/12	4:00-5:00pm	EMS Club Meeting	EMS	Percival 107
Wednesday, 11/12	5:00-6:00pm	CACF Open Group Discussion	CACF	Hammond G01/G01B
Wednesday, 11/12	5:00-6:00pm	Card Game Club Meeting	Card Game Club	Thompson 310
Wednesday, 11/12	6:00-8:00pm	Sigma Pi Study Hours	Sigma Pi	Percival Hall
Wednesday, 11/12	6:00-10:00pm	Mug Paint N' Sip	FAB	Falcon Hub
Wednesday, 11/12	8:00-10:30pm	Improv Club's Open Mic Night	Improv	Main Lounge
Thursday, 11/13	8:30-9:30am	E-Board Meetings	Fitchburg State Choir	CNFA 157
Thursday, 11/13	10:00am-4:00pm	Tabling for Evansons	FAB	G-Lobby
Thursday, 11/13	3:30-5:00pm	CACF E-Board Meeting	CACF	Hammond S06
Thursday, 11/13	3:30-5:00pm	GSA Weekly Meeting	GSA	Hammond S08
Thursday, 11/13	3:30-5:00pm	Pokemon Society Weekly Meeting	Pokemon Society	Percival 108
Thursday, 11/13	5:00-6:00pm	K-Pop Club Trinket Box Decor	K-Pop	Hammond 314
Thursday, 11/13	4:00-7:00pm	Billiards Tournament x Game Room	Billiards Club	Game Room
Thursday, 11/13	5:00-10:00pm	The Evansons Show	FAB	Kent
Thursday, 11/13	6:30-8:30pm	CDI Friendsgiving	CDI	Main Lounge
Thursday, 11/13	7:00-8:00pm	First Love Bible Study	First Love	Ellis White Lecture Hall
Friday, 11/14	1:00-2:00pm	SGA Open Office Hours	SGA	SGA Office
Saturday, 11/15	12:00-2:00pm	Improv Workshop	Improv Club	Main Lounge
Saturday, 11/15	10:00am-5:00pm	Fitchburg State Volleyball Club Preseason Tournament	Volleyball Club	Rec
Sunday, 11/16	6:00-8:00pm	Improv Club Rehearsal	Improv Club	Ellis White Lecture Hall
Monday, 11/17	11:00am-2:00pm	CACF Table	CACF	S-Lobby
Monday, 11/17	2:00-3:00pm	Photography Club Weekly Meeting	Photography Club	Conlon 222
Monday, 11/17	3:30-5:00pm	GSA Weekly Meeting	GSA	Hammond S08
Monday, 11/17	4:00-5:30pm	FAB Weekly Meetings	FAB	Main Lounge
Monday, 11/17	3:00-6:00pm	Greek Council Study Hours	Greek Council	Perc 107
Monday, 11/17	6:00-7:00pm	Sigma Pi Weekly Meeting	Sigma Pi	Percival Hall
Monday, 11/17	6:00-7:00pm	Salvation Youth Meeting	Salvation International Prayer Youth Ministry	Hammond S06 Conference Room

Monday, 11/17	6:00-8:00pm	AST Weekly Meeting	AST	Hammond 314
Monday, 11/17	6:00-8:30pm	Phi Sigma Sigma Chapter Meeting	Phi Sigma Sigma	Percival 103
Monday, 11/17	6:30-9:00pm	Tri Sigma Chapter Meeting	Tri Sigma	Thompson Hall
Monday, 11/17	4:00-10:00pm	Bruins Game Trip	FAB	TD Garden
Monday, 11/17	5:00-10:00pm	Dance Club Time Slots and Run Throughs	Dance Club	Weston
Tuesday, 11/18	12:30-3:00pm	Amor con Azucar Bake Sale	LASO	G-Lobby
Tuesday, 11/18	4:00-5:00pm	Entrepreneurship Club Weekly Meeting	Entrepreneurship Club	Percival 108
Tuesday, 11/18	4:00-5:00pm	Dance Club Meeting	Dance Club	Thompson 111
Tuesday, 11/18	4:30-6:30pm	Improv Club Rehearsal	Improv Club	Antonucci 211
Tuesday, 11/18	5:30-6:30pm	RPGuild Weekly Meeting	Role Players Guild	Percival 103/106
Tuesday, 11/18	5:30-7:30pm	Crafter's Club Meeting	Crafter's Club	Hammond 314
Tuesday, 11/18	4:00-5:00pm	Billiards Club Meeting	Billiards	Game Room
Wednesday, 11/19	11:00am-3:00pm	Blooms for Babies: March of Dimes Fundraiser	Tri Sigma Sigma	S-Lobby
Wednesday, 11/19	3:30-4:30	Gobble Up Growth Club Training	OSE	Main Lounge
Wednesday, 11/19	3:30-4:30pm	Writing Club Weekly Meetings	Writing Club	Miller Hall Oval Room
Wednesday, 11/19	4:00-5:00pm	EMS Club Meeting	EMS	Percival 107
Wednesday, 11/19	5:00-6:00pm	Card Game Club Meeting	Card Game Club	Thompson 310
Wednesday, 11/19	5:00-6:00pm	Panhellenic Council Meeting	Panhellenic	Hammond S08
Wednesday, 11/19	5:00-6:00pm	CACF Open Group Discussion	CACF	Hammond G01/G01B
Wednesday, 11/19	6:00-8:00pm	Sigma Pi Study Hours	Sigma Pi	Percival Hall
Wednesday, 11/19	6:00-9:00pm	Minecraft Club Jeopardy	Minecraft	Falcon Hub
Wednesday, 11/19	5:00-10:00pm	Dance Club Time Slots and Run Throughs	Dance Club	Weston
Thursday, 11/20	8:30-9:30am	E-Board Meetings	Fitchburg State Choir	CNFA 157
Thursday, 11/20	11:00am-2:00pm	Notes of Gratitude	K-POP	S-Lobby
Thursday, 11/20	2:00-6:00pm	Fall Festival	FAB	Main Lounge & Main Quad
Thursday, 11/20	3:30-5:00pm	CACF E-Board Meeting	CACF	Hammond S06
Thursday, 11/20	3:30-5:00pm	GSA Weekly Meeting	GSA	Hammond S08

# Coversheet

## FY26 Budget Update

**Section:** IX. Finance Committee Update  
**Item:** B. FY26 Budget Update  
**Purpose:** Discuss  
**Submitted by:**  
**Related Material:** FY26\_Budget\_Summary\_with\_qtrly\_actuals.pdf



	FY25 Budget	FY26 Budget	YTD Total
<b>REVENUES</b>			
State Appropriation	44,243,285	47,216,223	28,638,877
Tuition and Fees	24,646,867	24,721,857	23,555,618
Housing	9,281,270	9,310,765	9,156,877
GCE	9,284,798	9,308,530	7,441,544
Accelerated Programs	9,111,250	8,914,935	6,804,416
Food Service	3,630,584	3,540,000	3,655,114
Sales & Service & Other Income	2,389,778	2,231,100	3,887,498
Investment Income	3,218,690	3,302,500	307,882
CPS	596,227	528,037	273,715
Foundation Support	338,000	338,000	57,619
Reserves		2,000,000	0
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>106,740,749</b>	<b>111,411,947</b>	<b>83,779,158</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
A Regular Employee Compensation	46,353,986	49,053,298	24,139,732
B Regular Employee Related Expenses	411,549	448,257	170,538
C Special Employee/Contracted Services	8,522,735	8,423,474	4,353,201
D Pension & Insurance Related Expenditures	2,015,951	2,287,034	1,043,792
E Administrative Expenses	2,030,850	2,118,612	1,604,265
F Facility Operational Supplies	1,430,448	1,440,569	1,106,049
G Energy Costs and Space Rental Expenses	6,981,125	7,121,272	2,873,645
H Consultant Services	1,498,845	1,426,682	898,295
J Operational Services	5,827,411	5,845,480	2,878,750
K Equipment Purchase	1,004,942	1,025,123	329,503
L Equipment Lease Rental Maint & Repair	979,746	1,007,361	434,436
M Student Related Travel Reimbursements	262,316	255,387	110,029
N Construction and Improvements Building	4,187,292	4,147,406	2,883,059
P Grants and External Subsidies		-	0
R Benefit Programs	3,570,822	3,873,742	1,786,766
T Loans and Special Payments	15,901,522	16,739,164	4,521,432
U Information Technology Expenses	5,215,399	5,621,826	3,688,514
ER90 Interdepartmental Expenditures			1,755
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>106,194,939</b>	<b>110,834,687</b>	<b>52,823,760</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>545,810</b>	<b>577,260</b>	<b>30,955,398</b>