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# Fitchburg State University

## Minutes

### Board of Trustees Meeting

Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees

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#### Date and Time

Thursday May 9, 2024 at 4:00 PM

#### Location

Presidents' Hall, Mazzaferro Center, 291 Highland Ave., Fitchburg, MA 01420

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Notice of a meeting of the Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees, Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 4:00 p.m.

The meeting will take place in Presidents' Hall, Mazzaferro Center, 291 Highland Ave., Fitchburg, MA 01420

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#### Trustees Present

A. Turner, C. Stimpson (remote), D. Phillips, D. Tiernan, E. Gregoire (remote), J. Flanagan, K. Spinelli, L. Barrieau, M. Fiorentino, Jr., S. King-Goodwin

#### Trustees Absent

*None*

#### Guests Present

A. Marini, B. Copper Glenz, B. Levy, C. Bullis, C. Dee, Campus Community, D. Svolba, E. Rehrig, F. Barricelli, G. Doiron, G. Doiron, J. Bry, J. Giles, J. Hanselman, J. Harvey, J. McMenemy, J. Murdoch, J. Wolfman, K. Jewell, K. Lundgren, K. Page, L. Bayless, M. Bruun, M. Gill, M. Kennedy, M. McKenzie, P. Marshall, P. McCafferty, P. Weizer, R. Diakite, R. Lapidus, S. Dodd

## **I. Opening Items**

### **A. Record Attendance and Guests**

### **B. Call the Meeting to Order**

D. Phillips called a meeting of the board of trustees of Fitchburg State University to order on Thursday May 9, 2024 at 4:03 PM.

### **C. Public Comments**

Three students read prepared statements opposed to the mandatory commuter meal plan to be voted on this afternoon. The consensus was why should students have to pay for something that they don't need, and many may not use. They expressed their dissatisfaction on the quality of the food served and the hours that the dining hall is open.

Mr. Matthew Gill, student trustee elect and commuter affairs liaison, spoke in opposition of the mandatory commuter meal plan. He said the commuter perspective is being ignored.

Dr. Ben Levy read a prepared statement regarding a vote in the packet to reconsider his request to waive his sabbatical pay back. He stated the presentation that the board heard was incomplete, and inaccurate information was relayed to the Board and he has submitted multiple complaints about this situation. He respectfully asked the board to allow him another opportunity to provide all the information relating to his situation.

Ms. Linda LeBlanc, MSCA Chapter President addressed the board on the 1 million position elimination vote tied to the budget. She talked about the lack of a plan and was very concerned on how the staff cuts were going to be done. There will be more demands on faculty, and waiting for faculty to leave and not refill the positions is poor planning. She also expressed her concerns with a new President being burdened with the staff cuts without her vision included. She hoped the board would take a real look at the Fiscal Sustainability Task Force efforts and utilize the hard work that the campus community put into this exercise. She also said there is no such thing as free money in regards to Financial Aid covering the mandatory commuter meal plan.

Dr. Paul Weizer addressed the board. He noted the split vote on the new president, and as we turn the page to set the new president for success and support, to that end, he was very pleased to see on the slate of officers that Dr. Michael Fiorentino, Jr. will be voted as the next chair. We are really fortunate to have a chair that has been a president, and has the strength, and resources to foster the new president.

He reminded the board of why the Financial Task Force was created, which was due to a petition by the faculty. He encouraged the board to look at the task force data, which members of the campus community have spent dozens of hours working on this. The spreadsheet the campus received from the President that was cherry picked was really disappointing. He hopes at a future board meeting; the Financial Task Force data is evaluated completely. There are lots of places to find money besides cutting positions.

**D. Approve Minutes from the Board of Trustees April 2, 2024 - VOTE (39-22/23)**

L. Barrieau made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 04-02-24.

J. Flanagan seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

L. Barrieau	Aye
A. Turner	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
C. Stimpson	Absent
E. Gregoire	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye

M. Fiorentino asked if the board has been presented all the minutes for approval.

D. Phillips responded, I don't know.

P. Marshall next spoke in support of rehiring Dr. Christopher Adams with tenure. She provided his background. Dr. Adams resigned and took another position, he realized he made a mistake. The faculty, department chair and the dean are in support of this action.

**II. Personnel Matters**

**A. Consideration of tenure rank for returning faculty member - VOTE (50-23/24)**

J. Flanagan made a motion to grant tenure to Dr. Christopher Adams upon his appointment to position of Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology Science, pursuant to G.L. c. 15A, 22, and in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement entered into between the University and the Massachusetts State College Association.

L. Barrieau seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

A. Turner	Aye
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**Roll Call**

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

**B. Reconsideration of sabbatical pay back decision - VOTE (46-23/24)**

D. Phillips presented the vote to reconsider a sabbatical pay back decision. She shared Dr. Levy's email and explained his reasons. Dr. Levy was concerned that board members did not have enough time to review his materials and he does have new information.

The sabbatical process was discussed.

J. Flanagan made a motion to vote to not excuse Associate Professor Benjamin Levy from repaying the Commonwealth in the amount equal to the portion of the salary received by him while on sabbatical leave for the 2023/2024 academic year.

There was no second, and no action was taken.

**C. Executive Session to review Executive Session Minutes from Sept. 13, 2022, June 6, 2023, and April 2, 2024 - VOTE (47-23/24)**

L. Barrieau made a motion to enter into executive session in accordance with MGL c. 30A, Section 21(a) (7) to comply with, or act under the authority of any general or special law, and MGL c. 30A, Section 22 (f) to review executive session minutes from Sept. 13, 2022, June 6, 2023, April 2, 2024 meetings and determine whether publication may defeat the lawful purposes of the executive sessions.

D. Tiernan seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

D. Tiernan Aye  
K. Spinelli Aye  
M. Fiorentino, Jr. Aye  
C. Stimpson Absent  
A. Turner Aye  
L. Barrieau Aye  
E. Gregoire Aye  
J. Flanagan Aye  
S. King-Goodwin Aye  
D. Phillips Aye

Open session reconvened at 5:23 p.m.

**D. Executive Session to Discuss Open Meeting Law Complaint - VOTE (48-23/24)**

L. Barrieau made a motion to enter into executive session in accordance with MGL c. 30A, Section 23 (a) (1) and (b) to discuss an open meeting law complaint made against members of a public body.

D. Tiernan seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

A. Turner	Aye
C. Stimpson	Absent
D. Phillips	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Aye

Open session reconvened at 5:23 p.m.

**E. Executive Session to Review Complaint - VOTE (49-23/24)**

L. Barrieau made a motion to enter into executive session in accordance with MGL c. 30A, Section 21 (a)(1) to discuss a complaint made against an employee (other information withheld under MGL c. 214, Section 1B right to privacy).

J. Flanagan seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

E. Gregoire	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Aye
C. Stimpson	Absent
D. Phillips	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
A. Turner	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye

Open session reconvened at 5:31 p.m.

There was a 5-minute break.

The meeting reconvened at 5:37 p.m.

### III. Moving expenses for incoming President

#### A. VOTE (51-23/24)

The meeting reconvened at 5:37 p.m.

J. Flanagan made a motion to table the vote regarding moving expenses for the new president.

M. Fiorentino, Jr. seconded the motion.

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

#### Roll Call

C. Stimpson	Absent
K. Spinelli	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
A. Turner	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye

### IV. Budget, Finance and Facilities Committee Report

#### A. FY25 Proposed Budget

K. Spinelli presented the Budget, Finance and Facilities Committee Report. She provided background on the budget that includes \$1 million in personnel cuts.

J. Bry provided an overview of the budget. He talked about state appropriations, performance funding, housing, repurposing housing, tuition and fees, SGOCE, and accelerated programs. He also talked about day salaries, staff reductions, and operating costs.

A discussion ensued.

L. Barrieau asked if we could approve the budget without the personal cuts, she worried about the new president inheriting this challenging task, and could we provide her with more time to make these decisions.

The president responded yes. J. Bry stated that it would change the bottom line.

K. Spinelli stated the finance committee recommended this to the full board.

There was a discussion.

## **B. FY25 Proposed Fee Presentation and Discussion**

### **V. FY25 Budget Votes**

#### **A. FY25 Budget - VOTE (40-23/24)**

J. Flanagan made a motion to approve the FY2025 Budget as presented by the President and to remove the reduction of \$1 million in personnel cuts to the projected deficit.

A. Turner seconded the motion.

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

#### **Roll Call**

D. Tiernan	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye
A. Turner	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye

#### **B. Day Undergrad Fee Increase - VOTE (41-23/24)**

K. Spinelli discussed the day undergraduate fee increase of \$150.00 which is to help offset the cost of doing business. Fitchburg State continues to be the least expensive in the system. She expressed the opinion that if this fee increase is not approved, we are just kicking the can down the road. The committee voted in support of the proposed fee increase.

A. Turner read a prepared statement in opposition of the fee increase. Students continue to feel food insecurities, have challenges buying books, and can barely afford caps and gowns when they graduate. She talked about students who receive Financial Aid and the intention for those dollars. Not all students receive Financial Aid.

J. Flanagan responded that it's important to understand that there is a point where no one is immune to cost increases. She noted just because the board votes on these increases does not mean they don't care about students. These are difficult decisions, and this is a vote that we must take.

E. Gregoire expressed the need for better planning so students and parents are equipped to handle the actual costs of going to school here. There needs to be a better way of anticipating fee increases.

M. Fiorentino agreed with what was discussed by J. Flanagan and E. Gregoire. We need to do a better job of setting the tone and agenda ahead of time for students are negatively impacted by these late decisions.

A discussion ensued.

K. Spinelli made a motion to approve the following day undergraduate fee increase. • Day Undergraduate University Fee \$150 per semester This fee increase represents a three percent (3.0%) increase across all undergraduate day mandatory fees. This fee increase will be effective for the fall semester 2024.

C. Stimpson seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

C. Stimpson	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
A. Turner	No

**C. Optional Practical Training (OPT) Fee - VOTE (42-23/24)**

K. Spinelli presented the OPT fee to offset tracking of post graduate international students. This fee would be the lowest in the system, and this is a new fee.

F. Barricelli stated this is a common practice. We are the host institution when students apply for visas. The institution is responsible for tracking post graduate students three years after graduation.

There was a discussion.

J. Flanagan made a motion to approve the creation of the Optional Practical Training (OPT) fee. • Optional Practical Training (OPT) fee - \$250 per semester This new fee will be effective for the fall semester 2024 for both day and SGOCE International students.

M. Fiorentino, Jr. seconded the motion.

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

**Roll Call**

D. Phillips	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye



**Roll Call**

A. Turner No  
M. Fiorentino, Jr. Aye  
J. Flanagan Aye  
E. Gregoire Aye  
L. Barrieau Aye

**D. Roll Forward of Funds - VOTE (43-23/24)**

L. Barrieau made a motion to approve that ongoing capital projects roll forward into the FY2025 University Budget.

D. Tiernan seconded the motion.

J. Bry stated this simply allows construction projects to cross over to the next fiscal year, and doesn't hold up projects.

E. Gregoire asked if we are maximizing state funds from the state. J. Bry responded yes. The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

**Roll Call**

D. Tiernan Aye  
E. Gregoire Aye  
J. Flanagan Aye  
M. Fiorentino, Jr. Aye  
L. Barrieau Aye  
A. Turner Aye  
C. Stimpson Aye  
S. King-Goodwin Aye  
D. Phillips Aye  
K. Spinelli Aye

**VI. Food Service Discussion**

**A. Required Commuter Meal Plan - VOTE (44-23/24)**

K. Spinelli reported that at the committee meeting, there was a detailed presentation by Dr. Laura Bayless. The feedback from the students was positive.

There was a discussion on the renovation start time and how would Financial Aid cover the commuter required meal plan if implemented. K. Spinelli reported that we can approve the proposal with or without the required commuter meal plan. The standard meal plan would apply but not the required meal plan and vote to recommend the \$4.8 renovation with a one-year extension on the contract and to enter negotiations into another ten-year contract.

There was a discussion regarding the renovation specifics, whether it is for maintenance or cosmetic.

The president stated that the mandatory fee increase is necessary to offer a version that is more than a splashy design, it is more the design of customization, and focusing on small batch orders instead of food sitting under heat lamps.

Mr. James Giles, Regional Vice President of Chartwells spoke about the entire infrastructure in the kitchen and that the equipment would be replaced. It's at the end of its life. The new proposal would feature more food customization and be more flexible. The new proposal would have expanded hours.

A. Turner reported the outcomes from a recent Student Government Association meeting. She stated that her hands are tied and is being forced to vote yes for the required meal plan. SGA voted that they are in support of the project and have instructed A. Turner to vote yes.

J. Flanagan stated this is another one of those situations where costs are going up on projects, and we need update the dining hall, which have not been done in 20 years.

M. Fiorentino said the contract would need to come back to the board for approval.

There was a discussion.

President Lapidus offered the perspective that the project is more that a renovation of space but longer range. Over the years of COVID, which did a great deal of damage in regards to socialization. He would like the board to think of Residence Life more broadly, and provide students with more opportunities to gather and form a sense of community. He reiterated that the survey results were positive.

The perception of the food quality was discussed.

J. Flanagan made a motion to authorize negotiations of a ten-year contract renewal with Chartwells, Inc. Included as part of the renewal investment package, Chartwells will invest 4.8 million dollars toward the renovation of Holmes Dining Hall.

M. Fiorentino, Jr. seconded the motion.

There was a discussion on why is there a gap on the bottom line, and the revenue generated that is going into the operations as well. This vote does not include a mandatory required meal plan.

M. Fiorentino called to question.

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

**Roll Call**

D. Phillips	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye

**Roll Call**

A. Turner           Aye  
S. King-Goodwin   Aye  
C. Stimpson       Absent  
L. Barrieau        Aye  
M. Fiorentino, Jr.   Aye  
J. Flanagan        Aye

**B. Chartwell's Contract Renewal - VOTE (45-23/24)**

**VII. Nominating Committee Report**

**A. VOTE (46-23/24)**

L. Barrieau presented the slate of officers. She indicated that she had spoken with everyone except for Trustee Stimpson, on whether or not anyone would like to serve in an officer role. There did not seem to be an interest.

E. Gregoire made a motion to recommend the following slate of officers effective July 1, 2024: Chairman – Michael Fiorentino, Jr. Vice Chairman – Lynn Barrieau Clerk – David Tiernan.

A. Turner seconded the motion.

There was a contentious discussion on the term start date, ramifications of not approving the current slate, and what the bylaws state regarding this annual vote.

A. Turner called to question.

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

**Roll Call**

D. Phillips        No  
S. King-Goodwin   Aye  
E. Gregoire        Aye  
K. Spinelli        No  
D. Tiernan         No  
M. Fiorentino, Jr.   Aye  
A. Turner          Aye  
C. Stimpson        Absent  
L. Barrieau        Aye  
J. Flanagan        No

**VIII. Notifications**

**A. Personnel Actions (N11-23/24)**

The personnel actions were submitted for informational purposes.

**B.**

### **Financial Statements (N12-23/24)**

The financial statement were submitted for informational purposes.

### **IX. Student Trustee Report**

#### **A. Allison Turner will provide the Student Trustee Report**

A. Turner provided the Student Trustee report. She said that being a trustee has been very rewarding. She thanked her fellow board members for being so supportive. She announced the new student trustee, Matthew Gill.

### **X. Chair's Report**

#### **A. C. Deborah Phillips will provide the Chair's Report**

D. Phillips did not provide a report.

### **XI. President's Report**

#### **A. FAFSA Update - Enrollment**

The president provided an update on enrollment and the numbers for the fall. The FAFSA situation has delayed decisions, and has caused a great deal of confusion. We have been able to send out financial aid packages and are trying to fill the gap.

#### **B. End of the Year Activities**

#### **C. Nursing Pinning Ceremony on May 15 at 6 p.m. in Weston**

#### **D. Graduate Commencement Ceremony on May 16 at 6:30 p.m. - Recreation Center**

The president reported that this will be the largest graduate class in the university's history.

The president recognized Student Trustee Allison Turner with a certificate, and gift, and thanked her for her dedicated service to the board.

J. Flanagan echoed the president sentiments, and appreciated A. Turner's work on the Presidential Search Committee.

#### **E. Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony on May 18, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. - Campus Quadrangle**

#### **F. News Articles**

## **XII. Closing Items**

### **A. Adjourn Meeting**

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 6:57 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
D. Tiernan