



## Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

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Carlos E. Santiago, *Commissioner*  
Chris Gabrieli, *Chairman*  
*Massachusetts Board of Higher Education*

December 15, 2017

Mr. Donald R. Irving.  
Chair, Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees  
Fitchburg State University  
160 Pearl Street  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Dear Chair Irving:

Thank you for providing me with the FY17 evaluation of President Richard Lapidus. I appreciate the Executive Summary of the board on President Lapidus' performance and goals. I also acknowledge that the evaluation process was informed by President Lapidus' report on goal performance for the 2016-17 academic year.

I have had the opportunity to discuss the results of the evaluation in depth with President Lapidus. I appreciate his openness to presenting the challenges and opportunities as well as the accomplishments of Fitchburg State University over the last year.

It seems to me that President Lapidus has now entered a phase of his presidency where his goals and initiatives are clearly understood by the campus to be his own. He succeeded a long-serving president that highly touted FSU's accomplishments. I believe that President Lapidus brings a fresh perspective that seeks to realistically appraise the institution's challenges and to arrive at workable long-term solutions to address them.

I believe that President Lapidus fully understands that diversity among the FSU student body has been changing and that ensuring student success is a priority. There is certainly evidence that efforts to reduce achievement gaps between white and African-American students seems to be working although continued efforts will be necessary. FSU has also focused on student retention and I believe these initiatives will pay off over time.

President Lapidus is quite aware that enrollment challenges will continue to occupy his time and effort as well as that of his staff in the years to come. His focus on online learning and bringing new populations of students into the fold will be important in the years to come.

I am satisfied that President Lapidus brings a strong and steady hand to the management of Fitchburg State University's affairs. While he has only been at the helm for a few years, I would characterize his leadership as that of a careful and prudent steward of the institution. I value his perspective and counsel.

At this time, the Department of Higher Education has not received the necessary salary parameters for campus presidents. When these guidelines are announced, the maximum increase will be split evenly between the respective recommendations of the Board and the Commissioner as we have done in the past. Once I receive guidance from the Department of Administration and Finance I will ask for you to verify a specific salary increase recommendation for President Lapidus. Nonetheless, I am pleased to join the Board in recommending the maximum allowable increase based on President Lapidus' performance for FY17.

I commend and thank the Board of Trustees for assisting me in this important review process.

Sincerely,

Carlos E. Santiago  
Commissioner

c. Richard Lapidus, President, Fitchburg State University  
Chris Gabrieli, Chair, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education