APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees

Date and Time
Tuesday November 10, 2020 at 10:00 AM

Location
This meeting will be held remotely.

Notice of a meeting of the Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

This meeting will be held via teleconference as approved by Governor Baker.

For public comments dial (when announced in the meeting): 978.665.3698
Public streaming:

stream.meet.google.com/stream/3e797815-a713-480a-8c1c-32674d2d8149

Trustees Present
A. Clementi (remote), C. Stimpson (remote), D. Irving (remote), D. Nieto (remote), D. Phillips (remote), D. Tiernan (remote), F. O'Donnell (remote), L. Barrieau (remote), M. Nicholson (remote), S. Olson (remote)

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
R. Lapidus (remote)

Guests Present

A. Cardelle (remote), C. Canney (remote), G. Doiron (remote), J. Bry (remote), J. Murdoch (remote), J. Wolfman (remote), K. Smith (remote), L. Bayless (remote), M. McKenzie (remote), M. Scarselli (remote), M. Scott (remote), M. Snyder (remote), S. Swartz (remote), Y. Malcolm (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance and Guests

B. Call the Meeting to Order

D. Irving called a meeting of the board of trustees of Fitchburg State University to order on Tuesday Nov 10, 2020 at 10:04 AM.

C. Public Comments

There were none.

D. Approve Minutes from the September 15, 2020 meeting - VOTE (08/20-21)

L. Barrieau made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees on 09-15-20.
D. Tiernan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
L. Barrieau	Aye
C. Stimpson	Absent
D. Phillips	Aye
S. Olson	Aye
D. Irving	Aye
M. Nicholson	Aye
D. Nieto	Aye
A. Clementi	Aye
F. O'Donnell	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye

II. Finance and Administration

A. Presentation by the auditors

Introductions were made. The following auditors from CohnReznick discussed the audit PowerPoint presentation:

Ms. Karen Smith, Audit Partner
Mr. Mark Snyder, Audit Senior Manager
Ms. Maryellen Scarselli, Audit Manager
Ms. Michelle Scott, Audit Senior

K. Smith presented the University audit results. She stated the financial statements are being issued with a “clean” unmodified opinion. The report on internal controls states that there were no findings. She thanked Jay Bry, Yvonnie Malcolm, Denise Brindle and the financial services staff for their hard work given the unique circumstances with compiling the audit.

M. Snyder provided the financial statements overview. He said some modifications were made after the draft was distributed but there were no changes to the bottom line.

M. Snyder reviewed the university statements of net position and the statements of revenues, expenses, and changes in net position.

C. Stimpson joined the meeting at 10:11 a.m.

M. Snyder explained the statements of cash flows, footnotes and disclosures. He asked the president to discuss the current impact of COVID-19 and anticipated impact moving forward.

The president briefly discussed COVID-19 related expenses. He started by talking about the rapid departure from campus last spring and the need to refund students for the unused portion of their residence hall fees, dining service fees and parking fees. A significant amount of money has also been expended related to PPE, cleaning, signage, technology and other items. He also discussed the other major expense involving COVID-19 testing. This included the expenses associated with hiring trained personnel to administer the test. Moving forward the university anticipates increased expenses associated with testing as the Commonwealth’s is planning to introduce more rigorous testing requirements for spring semester. The university has already committed to an increased number of tests from the Broad Institute and is currently working on securing additional personnel to administer the tests which will most likely require five days per week.

J. Bry stated that other big challenges include enrollment and residence hall occupancy. He noted that the university has been making significant investments in admissions to assist with recruiting. The reconfiguring of the debt by the Mass State College Building Authority (MSCBA) has helped tremendously for this year. The restructuring of the debt does not change our long-term debt curve. The decline in residence hall occupancy will begin to be felt by the university in FY22 and beyond.

M. Snyder announced the upcoming GASB accounting pronouncements as they relate to the deferment of leases.

There is no separate management letter being issued related to the audit.

There was a discussion that included the CARES money, and the residence halls.

D. Phillips informed the Board that the Administration and Finance Committee met and reviewed the materials. The committee voted to accept the audit and recommend acceptance by the full Board.

D. Irving thanked the team for a great job.

The complete audit can be found in the Board packet.

B. FY2020 Audit - VOTE (09/20-21)

A. Clementi made a motion to accept the FY2020 audit as presented.
C. Stimpson seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

L. Barrieau	Aye
A. Clementi	Aye
D. Nieto	Aye
D. Irving	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
S. Olson	Aye
F. O'Donnell	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
M. Nicholson	Aye

D. Phillips reinforced the idea that when residence halls occupancy is down, so is income needed to supplement the overall university budget. J. Bry responded that is a simple way to summarize. D. Phillips additionally commented that is important that our student trustee know that deferred maintenance and services within the residence halls will continue to operate at their specified level whether the halls are full or not. The president noted that we do not own the buildings and that failure to pay debt service could result in the MSCBA intercepting a portion of the university annual appropriation.

III. Sabbatical Requests

A. Act on President's recommendation for faculty sabbatical requests - VOTE (10/20-21)

The President presented the 21 sabbaticals. He indicated that they were all strong proposals. He indicated that there is a formal process before recommendations are sent to him. He recommended that the proposals be approved by the board. He stated that the university will back fill the positions with adjunct faculty as needed. He did indicate that the university has the ability to defer sabbaticals if it did not have the funds, but felt that funding would be available for the coming year. There was a discussion. Additionally,

there was a question regarding the soon to be vacant Dean of Business and Technology position. The position will not be replaced and the duties will be split between the other Deans.

A. Clementi made a motion to grant the faculty sabbatical leaves for the academic year 2021-2022.

M. Nicholson seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

F. O'Donnell	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
A. Clementi	Aye
D. Nieto	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
D. Irving	Aye
S. Olson	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
M. Nicholson	Aye

IV. Slate of Officers

A. Act on Board Officers

D. Irving said we normally vote on the slate of officers in May, but given that his official term expires in March. He felt as this was a good time for a change in the officers. He reported that the Executive/Nominating Committee met and recommend the following slate of officers beginning Nov. 11, 2020.

Chair – C. Deborah Phillips
Vice Chair – Lynn Barrieau
Clerk – David Tiernan

C. Stimpson made a motion to approve the slate of officers.

A. Clementi seconded the motion.

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

Roll Call

A. Clementi	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
M. Nicholson	Aye
S. Olson	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
D. Nieto	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye
F. O'Donnell	Aye
D. Irving	Aye

The President extended his appreciation and thanks to C. Deborah Phillips, Lynn Barrieau, and David Tiernan for accepting the responsibility of their new roles and willingness to continue the work that needs to be done. He thanked Don Irving for his leadership and guidance during his time as Board Chair.

V. Notifications

A. Personnel Actions (N02-20/21)

The personnel actions were presented for informational purposes.

VI. Student Trustee Report

A. Update from Student Trustee

S. Olson stated he hoped board members would attend a Student Government Association (SGA) meeting. All are invited to SGA board meetings. He said the last couple of weeks he has been talking with students about Health Services no longer being on campus especially in regards to testing. He has also inquired as to what other schools are doing with routine testing. He said, in his opinion, there is very little testing at this campus and that he believes everyone should be required to test regularly. He has met with local Representative Elect Michael Kushmerek to assist in getting Health Services back on campus and to help with funding.

D. Irving asked what was S. Olson's experience with testing. S. Olson responded that he has not been tested. D. Irving was surprised that as the student representative, he had not been tested. A question and answer ensued. S. Olson has said students don't know where to get tested.

The president responded that the university is using what is considered the gold standard for COVID testing with the test kits provided and analyzed by the Broad Institute. The test is self-administered under the supervision of a registered nurse along with trained personnel. The process is specified by the state and public health officials. He indicated the testing site and location have been well publicized and student invitations for random testing provide clear email instructions as to the location of testing and the process for testing. All students have been selected for random testing. There was a discussion of testing process, cost, tracing and logistics.

D. Phillips asked why students don't know where the new location for health services is? The President responded that communication has gone out to students and information can be found on the website. He did indicate the unusual nature of the semester and that it might be possible, in this very transactional semester, that students were not keeping up with changes. He noted that additional communication and advertising was in process that will help to better communicate the availability of health services, if in fact, students are unaware.

VII. Chair's Report

A. Conflict of Interest

D. Irving asked who had not turned in their conflict of interest form. S. Olson is the only Trustee that is non-compliant and he indicated that he would promptly submit the document.

B. Board Assessment

D. Irving encouraged the Trustees to turn in their self-evaluations as soon as possible. He noted that this is an important tool for assessment.

C. Board Giving

The chair expressed the importance of board giving. He stressed that it is not about the amount given, but rather the number of people that contribute. He stated that he was hoping for 100% board giving. He noted the importance of 100% giving as it relates to the application of grants.

D. Strategic Planning - Board meeting on Nov. 18 at 11:00 a.m.

The chair reminded the board that there will be a meeting on Nov. 18 to review the strategic plan proposal. If approved it will be submitted to the Board of Higher Education for final approval at their Dec. 15 BHE meeting.

The president reviewed the strategic plan process to date. The Department of Higher Education had recommended a few modifications. After making those changes, the plan and DHE recommendations was sent out to the campus community for feedback. There were few substantive comments as of yesterday that would require additional changes to be to made to the plan. Upon the board’s approval, the plan would go back to the BHE for final approval. The president thanked those that participated in the process, especially Trustee Phillips and Pam McCafferty. He stated he was excited about the plan and that he felt that it is moving the university in the right direction.

D. Phillips said she enjoyed participating and found the experience to be very informative. She encouraged any board member to volunteer to serve in the future. You get to meet people you have not met and get to know the people better that you already have a relationship with. You get to see firsthand how highly dedicated the faculty, staff and students are to the process. On behalf of the board, she thanked everyone that was involved.

VIII. President's Report

A.

COVID Testing

The President informed the board on the administration and results of COVID-19 testing. He indicated that the university is prioritizing residential students. There is also randomized testing as well. He also reiterated that convenience testing is readily available to any faculty, staff and students who walks in. He explained the process for testing and indicated that testing strategies were highly variable across the state's higher education institutions. The president indicated that the state has recently modified its testing control plan specifying the frequency required for testing. The campus will most likely move to a 5-day a week schedule. M. McKenzie explained our campus population testing protocol.

With the change in testing to be implemented for the spring semester, the president stated that conversations were taking place with regard to consequences for those that failed to participate in testing. He briefly discussed the challenges associated with a testing mandate testing and its enforcement. S. Olson suggested putting holds on accounts. There was a discussion.

B. NECHE Committee Representation

The President announce the upcoming NECHE ten-year study and the review team visit scheduled for next year.

C. Canney said that the university is a member of a regional accreditation agency known as New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). Every ten years she stated that the university must go through a full formal review, and prior to the visit we go through a process of self-study. At the end of that process and evaluation, we must submit a detailed report. The process began last fall. We have committees assigned to report on activities around each of the standards. The co-chairs of the university steering committee are herself and Dr. Daneen Deptula. She asked for a member of the board to join indicating the commitment would be approximately 18-months. Currently, 90+ campus community members are actively participating in the process.

The President extended a formal invitation for a board member to sit on the Steering Committee. L. Barrieau and A. Clementi expressed interest in participating. There was a discussion.

C. DHE Trustee Convening Meeting

The president reported on the DHE Trustee Conference. For those that have attended in the past, this conference was much more formal and structured with a focus on board governance. He discussed the upcoming training sessions now required of all trustees. He indicated that he anticipated increased formality moving forward as the fiscal health of higher education institutions moves more to the forefront of conversation. re was a brief discussion on Board of Higher Education oversight, three – year degrees and shared resources.

D. Phillips left the meeting at 11:25 a.m.

D. Academic Calendar

The President informed the Board of an approved shift in the spring Academic Calendar that was recommended by the All University Committee. The shift involves delaying the start of the spring semester by one week and the elimination of spring break. Additionally, four wellness days were added to the calendar. The change was made in response to ongoing COVID concerns. S. Olson commented that he sits on the All University Committee and was part of the discussion.

E. Open House update

The president indicated that all Open Houses were virtual and seemed to have gone well. Self-guided tours are also being offered for those that want to visit campus. A range of strategies are being employed as a means to recruit students during these unusual times.

F. Virtual Commencement Ceremonies

There will be two virtual commencement ceremonies.

- May 2020 Virtual Ceremony: 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 17
- December 2020 Virtual Ceremony: 6:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 18

G. National Latinx Heritage Month Fall 2020

The President reported on the nice array of programming presented around Latinx Heritage month. Events ranged from formal presentation to cooking demonstrations.

H. News Articles

The new articles were submitted for informational purposes.

IX. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

The trustees collectively thanked Don Irving for his leadership, and for being a wonderful role model as chair. They also expressed appreciation for the faculty, staff and students for all the good work taking place during these extremely challenging times. They also thanked the president for his leadership and he in turn thanked the work of his leadership team and the effort put forth by all members of the campus community.
There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 11:56 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Tiernan