APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees with the Foundation Board of Directors

Date and Time
Tuesday January 26, 2021 at 8:00 AM

Location
This meeting will be held remotely.

Notice of a Meeting of the Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees on Tuesday, January 26, 2021, at 8:00 a.m.

This meeting will be a joint remote meeting with the Fitchburg State University Foundation Board of Directors.

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

Public streaming: https://stream.meet.google.com/stream/f5de5f1c-51cf-49e0-9fa3-bf76efdf55fc

Trustees Present
D. Irving (remote), D. Phillips (remote), D. Tiernan (remote), F. O'Donnell (remote), K. Spinelli (remote), L. Barrieau (remote), M. Nicholson (remote), S. Olson (remote)

Trustees Absent
C. Stimpson, D. Nieto

Ex Officio Members Present
R. Lapidus (remote)

Guests Present

A. Cardelle (remote), A. Mercadante (remote), C. Canney (remote), C. Carroll (remote), G. Doiron (remote), J. Bry (remote), J. Mahan (remote), J. Walsh (remote), J. Wolfman (remote), J. Yang (remote), L. Bayless (remote), M. Connors (remote), M. McKenzie (remote), N. Smith (remote), P. McCafferty (remote), S. Swartz (remote)

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 Tuesday Jan 26, 2021 at 8:01 AM.

C. Welcome Karen Spinelli

D. Phillips officially welcomed Karen Spinelli to the Board. K. Spinelli expressed her pleasure and enthusiasm to serve. She looks forward to working with everyone.

D. Public Comments

D. Phillips opened the meeting by expressing her appreciation to everyone for their help and assistance as she takes on the new role as Board Chair. She especially thanked former Chairs, Mr. Donald Irving, Mr. Martin F. Connors, Jr., and Ms. Carol Vittorioso for being wonderful role models.
She next provided a few reminders regarding the Open Meeting Law. She indicated that the board should not discuss anything that is not formally on the agenda. She recognized that some boards end meetings by asking for additional commentary on matters, but that this board will not continue that practice moving forward. Also, she indicated that board sub-committees will start meeting more regularly to provide additional support to the President and the institution.

There were no public comments.

E. Approve Minutes from the Board of Trustees Meeting on November 10, 2021- VOTE (13-20/21)

D. Irving made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees on 11-10-20.
D. Tiernan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

L. Barrieau	Aye
S. Olson	Aye

Roll Call

D. Phillips	Aye
F. O'Donnell	Aye
D. Nieto	Absent
D. Tiernan	Aye
C. Stimpson	Absent
D. Irving	Aye
M. Nicholson	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye

F. Approve Minutes from the Board of Trustees meeting on November 18, 2020 - VOTE (14-2021)

D. Irving made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees on 11-18-20.
D. Tiernan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

K. Spinelli	Aye
D. Irving	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye
S. Olson	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
M. Nicholson	Aye
C. Stimpson	Absent
D. Nieto	Absent
F. O'Donnell	Aye

G. Approve minutes from the Fitchburg State Foundation Meeting on October 9, 2020 (FB-01-210126)

President Lapidus welcomed the Foundation Board and Trustees. He extended his best wishes for a Happy New Year.

He next presented the minutes for approval from the Foundation Board meeting on Oct. 9, 2020 for approval.

M. Connors made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees on 11-18- 20.
A. Mercadante seconded the motion.

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

II. Foundation Report

A. Foundation Year End Report

J. Wolfman welcomed everyone. He informed the boards that the university was working with the Donahue Institute to develop an economic impact statement to help with fund raising for the theater. He next provided an update on giving to date which he indicated was on par with last year despite what is going on in the world.

B. Planned Giving Initiative

J. Wolfman stated that the university has many promotions that focus on giving. He explained the planned giving initiative which focuses on bequests.

C. Grants Update

J. Wolfman reported on the various grants in process. He highlighted a significant grant for the Upward Bound program. He stated the Alden Trust awarded money is for our Nursing simulation. He emphasized that The Alden Trust, like many other Trusts and Foundations, asks about board giving. They like to see 100% participation from the Boards as an indication of participation and support. He stated that many organizations have indicated to us that Board giving is a criterion for leveraging grants. He added that the university is in the process of adding an additional staff member to the Grants Office. He concluded this section of his presentation by thanking Foundation Board member Cynthia Carroll for facilitating a donation from Until that will sponsor a capstone project in Industrial Technology.

D. Alumni Update

J. Wolfman explained that the Alumni Office operation is in transition. Ms. Emily Austin-Bruns has resigned her position to take care of her family due to the pandemic. He commended her for her work and years of service.

He reported on the new Alumni Directory which is organized by class year. He stated that the Alumni Association has been very active. The alumni webpages have been updated on the website. He explained the donor links on the various pages. He updated the boards on the alumni electronic newsletters, and virtual events designed to maintain alumni engagement.

There was an enthusiastic discussion on the importance of board giving.

III. Enrollment and Finance

A. Enrollment and Finance presentation

President Lapidus introduced this section of the presentation and conversation. He started by explaining changes in student demographics within the state and the region and its impact on enrollment and financial health. He noted that in prior years enrollment and financial information had been presented in yearly snapshots. This year he asked that the finance team present the information in a longitudinal fashion so that historical changes could be more easily seen and that anticipated future activity better represented.

He indicated that J. Bry had presented this information to union leadership to gain some insight and input from their perspective before presenting to the broader campus community. The president indicated that the administration has always been transparent of these topics with the campus, but wanted to further present the information so that there would be no surprises as the conversation about enrollment and finances continues.

J. Bry next presented a PowerPoint that focused on enrollment and finances (presentation attached). He noted the competitive nature of student enrollment in the northeast and highlighted the nationwide decline of college age students. The university has seen a decline in student prospects from feeder schools (high schools and community college) in recent years. Admissions criteria, trends in enrollment and projections were discussed.

He next discussed the university's online programs and the positive impact graduate and accelerated programs. The relationship between the decline in undergraduate enrollment and the increase in graduate enrollment was highlighted. He concluded the presentation with a discussion of funding sources, investment account balances, state funding, and the implication of decreased residence hall occupancy.

There was a discussion.

The president thanked J. Bry for the detailed presentation. The Chair recognized the challenges ahead and thanked J. Bry for the presentation. She stated that continued focus and discussion on these issues would take place with the Finance Sub-committee and the Fitchburg State administrative team.

B. Finance Dashboard

J. Bry presented a slightly modified financial dashboard. D. Irving commented that the dashboard has evolved into a useful document.

There was a discussion on faculty ratio, financial aid, Pell grants and the traditional student melt that occurs during the spring semester.

IV. University Fee Policy Proposal

A. University Fee Policy Proposal - VOTE (15-20/21)

The president presented a University Fee Policy Proposal. He suggested that given the financial conversation that just took place, and the challenging position that students and their families might find themselves in given the pandemic, that the university consider holding the University Fee flat for the coming academic year. He noted that the University Fee is the largest fee of all fees assessed. He continued that there are other fees yet to be addressed, but hoped that any proposed fee increases for the coming year be modest.

S. Olson stated that he supported this policy and anything we can do to lessen the burden to students is appreciated.

There was a discussion.
D. Irving made a motion to approve the President's recommendation to adopt a one-time policy to not raise the University Fee for FY22.
S. Olson seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

M. Nicholson	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
S. Olson	Aye
D. Irving	Aye
C. Stimpson	Absent
L. Barrieau	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
D. Nieto	Absent
F. O'Donnell	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye

V. Notifications

A. Personnel Actions (N03-20/21)

The personnel actions were presented for informational purposes.

B. Financial Statements (N04-20/21)

The Financial Statements were presented for informational purposes.

VI. Student Trustee Report

A. Update from Student Trustee

S. Olson reported that the students appreciated the delay in the start of the spring semester. The Student Government Association will hold their first meeting this evening. He invited all board members to join an SGA meeting. D. Phillips suggested that S. Olson send the meeting link to all Trustees. S. Olson will provide the Board with the appropriate links.

VII. Chair's report

A. Update from the Chair

D. Phillips stated that J. Bry’s report was rather sobering and she proposed that the board increase the frequency meetings to provide more assistance to the university. She

recommended adding two additional full Board meetings next year, and encouraged greater activity within sub-committees. She further stated that the meetings would be enhanced through the utilization of sub-committees reporting. She informed the board that the Executive Committee was scheduled to meet and would focus on the review of the by-laws, and trustee self-assessment instrument. She reported that one trustee has not completed the self-assessment and encouraged the completion of the form.

She discussed scheduling a board retreat in summer and potentially making a retreat an annual occurrence. If the pandemic prohibits an in-person board retreat, she still thought that a virtual meeting of the board would be valuable. She commented on the Trustee Conference which she found valuable and enjoyable. There were several take-aways that will be shared in the future. She wanted everyone to keep in mind the Commissioner's Equity Agenda initiative and how its focus will benefit students.

VIII. President's Report

A. Commencements (May & December 2020)

President reported on the virtual commencements held in December for the May, August and December 2020 graduates. He thanked those that participated. The events were well viewed and he was pleased with the outcome. He expressed his sincere appreciation to the Co-Chairs of the Commencement committee, Dr. Cathy Canney and Mr. Frank Campo as well as the rest of the committee for their great work. He indicated that while hopeful that the end of the pandemic is insight, realistically, he anticipates that the May 2021 commencement may be need to be virtual. The Commencement Committee is already meeting to solicit input from the various constituencies and assess options.

B. Opening of the Spring Semester

The President reported on the opening of the spring semester.
He stated, that the university did meet its enrollment target relative to the spring budget. He did note that the target set was reduced and conservative and he emphasized that enrollment overall was down approximately 400 students. He also indicated that residence halls occupancy was down, partially by design due to COVID and partially due to reduced enrollment. Work continues on strategies designed to attract students to repopulate the campus when possible to do so.

The President reported that out of state students arrived last Friday to be tested and quarantined. On Sunday, other students arrived to be tested. He indicated that the first two days of classes were held remotely to allow time for test results to come back. The percentage of positive cases were low and the university outperformed state averages. The university will continue to monitor the campus community and believes that it has strong health and safety protocols in place. This semester, testing will be conducted five days a week. All residential students and commuters on campus three or more times per week must test at least once per week. Additionally, higher risk populations (athletes and

nurses) will test more frequently. All others will be tested randomly, but anyone can be tested anytime. Testing is open to all faculty, staff, and students There are consequences for those students that refuse to test by way of fees and other sanctions. The President said our students, faculty and staff have been good about wearing masks and adhering to other safety requirements.

He next reported that the state is no longer requiring a mandatory flu shot. He explained the different teaching modalities. He stated that the university is trying to give students interaction opportunities when safe to do so.

C. Fall Admissions Update

The President reported that the university made significant investments in the enrollment process and that he is cautiously optimistic about fall enrollment. He indicated that application numbers are up and the work now is to convert applicants to yield. More students have been accepted this year than last and to date, there is a small positive increase in the number of deposits. There are many opportunities for virtual engagement with potential students. He noted the increase in alumni involvement in making calls and willing to make presentations to prospective students. He will keep the Board informed on the fall enrollment numbers as they continue to formalize.

D. Black History Month

The President noted the various Black History month events that were scheduled. He sent a notice to the campus that included a 15-minute presentation and a whole series of Black History month programming. He will send the memo to the Board. All are welcome to participate. He expressed his appreciation to the Newman Center gift for the speaker series. He thanked Mr. Martin F. Connors, Jr. for facilitating that gift. He noted the Black History month events were following the footprint of the Latinx events.

E. Strategic Plan

The President informed the Board that the Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Higher Education in December. The Commissioner was positive in his feedback regarding the plan. He thanked D. Phillips and others that participated in the process. The university has a good plan that the campus is enthused about.

F. Campus Infrastructure Project

The President updated the Board on the major campus construction project. The project is an update to the electrical infrastructure and will have a positive impact to the campus when completed. The project is fully funded by the state. The project is scheduled to run through fall of next year.

G. Housing and Econimic Development Bill

The President thanked Representative Stephan Hay and Senator Dean Tran for the initiating earmark funds for the theater project. The earmarked moved forward to conference from $1,000,000 to $750,000. New legislators, Representative Michael Kushmerek and Senator John Cronin have committed their support of the earmark. He thanked all that were involved in writing the proposal.

H. Leading By Example Award

The President announced the Leading by Example Award received by the campus. This state-wide award recognizes efforts involving environmentalism and sustainability. He thanked J. Bry, M. McKenzie and L. Fernandez.

I. News Articles

The news articles were presented for informational purposes.

IX. 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 9:54 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Tiernan