APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday September 14, 2021 at 8:15 AM

Location
This meeting will be held remotely.

Notice of a meeting of the Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees on Tuesday, September 14, 2021 at 8:15 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 viewing:
Live stream
stream.meet.google.com/stream/80f67a47-6c6a-403c-8962-a80eda969142

Trustees Present
C. Stimpson (remote), D. Irving (remote), D. Phillips (remote), D. Tiernan (remote), F. O'Donnell (remote), J. Cautela III (remote), K. Spinelli (remote), L. Barrieau (remote), M. Fiorentino, Jr. (remote)

Trustees Absent
M. Nicholson

Ex Officio Members Present
R. Lapidus (remote)

Guests Present
C. Canney (remote), C. Estrella, F. Barricelli (remote), G. Doiron (remote), J. Bry (remote), J. Murdoch (remote), J. Wolfman (remote), L. Bayless (remote), P. McCafferty (remote), R. Toomey (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 Sep 14, 2021 at 8:15 AM.

C. Public Comments

There were none.

D. Approve Minutes from the May 4, 2021 Meeting - VOTE (01-21/22)

L. Barrieau made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees on 05-04-21.
D. Irving seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

M. Nicholson	Absent
J. Cautela III	Abstain
K. Spinelli	Absent
D. Irving	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
F. O'Donnell	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
D. Tiernan	Abstain
C. Stimpson	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye

II. President's Assessment and Goals

A. President's Goal Performance 2020-2021 Academic Year

The President opened the meeting by stating that the University performed at a high-level last year despite the impact of COVID. He indicated that the students that were on campus did a great job self-monitoring and honoring the COVID protocols that were in place. Those that lived on campus observed a restricted life style. Over the course of the year the university administered over 22,000 COVID tests with a positivity rate of approximately .5%. He stated that faculty did an outstanding job in delivering academic

content. The university is currently in session and operating in primarily a fully face-to-face format. He noted the clean audit. In terms of technology, the university loaned a large number of laptops to students and provided hot spots to positively assist students with their academic progress. The University continues to strengthen its security given the high number of cyber hack attempts. The Board of Higher Education approved the university 2020-2025 strategic plan. He stated the university continues to work on increasing support services in an effort to improve student retention. He also indicated that students are having more life problems and mental health issues necessitating increased counseling services.

Karen Spinelli joined the meeting at 8:27 a.m.

The President noted that COVID taught the university it needed to do a better job communicating with parents. He commented on the Early Retirement Incentive Program last year. With regard to capital projects, the biggest projects underway are the electrical infrastructure project and the final phase of McKay. He concluded his comments by saying that his team worked harder last year than ever before. He asked for questions on his submitted materials.
The president introduced Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management, Richard Toomey.

The Board Chair informed everyone that the President and her talk frequently. She has been updated on all activities taking place at the University.

The Chair next provided an opportunity to discuss the goal assessment.

The President discussed the NECHE process. Dr. Canney explained the timeline.

B. Accept the President's Goal Assessment for AY2020-2021- VOTE (02-21/22)

C. Stimpson made a motion to accept the President's Goal Assessment for AY2020-2021.
D. Tiernan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

L. Barrieau	Aye
M. Nicholson	Absent
D. Phillips	Aye
F. O'Donnell	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
J. Cautela III	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye

Roll Call

D. Irving	Aye

C. President's Goals AY2021-2022

The President presented and discussed a summary of his goals for the upcoming year. The main one is successfully completing the NECHE accreditation exercise.

Dr. Fiorentino asked about enrollment numbers. The President discussed the challenges with enrollment and the strategies taking place to correct the decline. There was a discussion.

D. Accept the President's Goals for AY2021-2022 - VOTE (03-21/22)

D. Irving made a motion to accept the President's Goals for AY2021-2022.
M. Fiorentino, Jr. seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

D. Irving	Aye
J. Cautela III	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
F. O'Donnell	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
M. Nicholson	Absent
L. Barrieau	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye

III. Budget Update

A. Jay Bry will provide a budget update.

The president said that the budget conversation would be tied to an historical perspective of enrollment trends. He extended an invitation to the Board to ask R. Toomey questions about enrollment moving forward.

J. Bry shared documents that included enrollment and budget numbers. He explained them in detail. He noted the slow but steady decline in enrollment. The numbers are consistent with what the university has been reporting and what demographers have been predicting. He indicated that COVID appears to have accelerated the decline this year. It is not yet known how much of an impact the pandemic will have on enrollment moving forward. A review of the budget was presented on a line by line basis with explanations as to the change from what was anticipated.

The School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education is slowing down in their growth as well. Given enrollment timelines it is not yet clear whether the university will meet it projections. By the next time the Board meets, enrollments in this area will be better understood.

J. Bry stated that on the expense side of the equation, notable changes are reflected by the impact of collective bargaining. While housing occupancy is significantly down the university was able to meet its budget goal in this area. The university is expecting to carry significant expenses related to COVID this year.

The SGOCE contract is still being finalized as well as that AFSCME. There will be additional labor costs at the conclusion of those negotiations.

J. Bry announced that the net loss is around $8 million dollars.

The audit is underway and on track. We should close FY2021 in the black. The Chair asked for questions.

Dr. Fiorentino asked about the Residence Hall occupancies. J. Bry responded that we are at 60%. He noted the closed buildings are due to the decrease in occupancy. A couple of the buildings are being used for COVID isolation. The MSCBA is looking at ways to explore if there is a debt relief opportunity with alternative housing initiatives. Many of our sister schools are in a similar situation.

There was a discussion.

F. O'Donnell asked when do we start talking about shrinking staff and other remedies. J. Bry responded that we are being intentional with staffing.

There was a discussion.

The Chair talked about committee assignments. She asked Board members to let her know what committees they would like to serve on. There was a discussion.

L. Barrieau expressed her thanks for the good job done by all with limited resources.

J. Cautela asked if with the decline in resident population is more is being invested in the commuter students on campus. J. Bry responded that the commuter population is not going up, we are going down across the board.

Dr. Bayless stated that over the last couple of years, the Student Development team has been putting together a commuter strategic plan to ensure the university is connecting students with services. The President responded to J. Cautela that it was an excellent opportunity to see if there are things that student government is hearing from students to

learn if there are differences between commuter and residential students' needs. There was a discussion.

There was a discussion surrounding the Theater Block.

The Chair announced the importance of trustee giving. She indicated that if every Trustee contributed to the University, regardless of the amount, having 100% participation is important to show leadership support. She also noted that for many grant opportunities, leadership giving is an important application criterion. She reiterated that is was not the dollar amount but participation was the important component. She further stated that our traditional relationship with the Foundation Board is to have the Trustee Chair sit on the Foundation Board, she formally asked that Dr. Fiorentino to represent the Board of Trustees on the Foundation Board. He officially accepted. She asked if anyone else would like to sit on the Foundation Board, to let her know.

There was a discussion on contributions.

IV. Notifications

A. Personnel Actions (N01-21/22)

The personnel actions were presented for informational purposes.

V. Student Trustee Report

A. Joseph Cautela will provide the Student Trustee Report

J. Cautela introduced himself and provided his background. He is in his senior year, majoring in History with a minor in Education. He has served on SGA since the first week of school in his freshman year. He has worked on committees including the All University Committee. He wanted to emphasize his accomplishments and is ready to take on the task of being Student Trustee. He recognized, after doing research, that most students do not know what the Board of Trustees does. His goal is to change that perspective by making the students aware of what the function is of the Board and its role is at the University.

He said there have been no real issues coming from students at this point. The campus is vibrant and there are signs that we are getting back to some kind of normal. He informed the Board that the recent football game was packed. He firmly stated “ I am ready to get to work”.

VI. Chair's Report

A.

Debbie Phillips will provide the Chair's Report.

D. Phillips provided her report. She read a prepared statement thanking the students, faculty, librarians, and staff for their hard work and dedication for keeping the campus up and running. She commended the President for his quiet inspiration and his actions too numerous to list. She formally and warmly welcomed everyone to the new academic year.

VII. President's Report

A. Opening of the university

The President thanked the Chair for her kind words. He noted the departure of Dr. Alberto Cardelle, who assumed a presidency in New York. He reintroduced Dr. Cathy Canney, the new Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. He next introduced Dr. Franca Barricelli, as the new Interim Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. He informed the Board that Dr. Sara Levine will serve as the Interim Dean of Arts and Sciences. There is a great team in place. He will keep the Board informed of the details for the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs search.

The President stated that the academic year started smoothly with move-in and that there were only a few minor problems. The campus is vibrant and classes and activities are going well. Rock the Block was robust and many students attended. He noted the Police Academy graduation with 15 new officers sworn in; most of which have jobs. He provided more background on the program.

B. COVID

The President informed the Board of COVID protocols on campus. The University is requiring face-coverings in all indoor locations whether vaccinated or not. There are penalties associated for those that do not comply. Vaccinations are required of all with the exception of those that have a medical or religious exemption. Those that are not vaccinated are required to test once a week. Testing is available five days a week. Anyone that would like to be tested can do so.

Students have been informed if they are not compliant with the vaccination mandate by Oct. 15, they will be administratively withdrawn from the institution. Students have been communicated with multiple times and in a variety of ways. Students that test positive for COVID-19 or considered to be a close contact will either quarantine or isolate given their situation. Residential students will have the option to remain on campus or return to their homes until able to return to class. The state has disassembled its tracing services requiring the university to absorb more of the responsibility. Additional staff has been hired for this purpose.

The president noted that the university has a full agenda of activities lined up, large and small for the semester. He noted the Open House dates, CenterStage events, and Latinx

programs. Also coming up is LGBTQ+ history month. All Board members are invited to attend these programs.

There was a discussion on programs, internships and the academic plan.

F. O'Donnell asked that at the next meeting, a brief update on Health Services be made.

C. Conflict of Interest

D. News Articles

VIII. 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 9:55 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Tiernan

Documents used during the meeting

- VOTE Minutes.doc.pdf
- President's - Goal Results 2020-21 FINAL .pdf
- VOTE Accept the President's Goal Performance for 2020-2021.pdf
- President's - Goals 2021-22 FINAL.pdf
- VOTE President's 2021-2022 Goals.pdf
- BoT FY22 Enrollment Day Undergrad (1).pdf
- FY22 BOT Budget Summary Draft 1 (2).pdf
- Notifications 091421.pdf
- Conflict of Interest Policy.pdf
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement.pdf
- News Clips for Sept 2021.pdf