APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday March 29, 2022 at 8:15 AM

Location
This meeting will be held remotely.

Notice of a Meeting of the Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees to be held on Tuesday, March 29, 2022 at 8:15 a.m.

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

For public comments only:
978-665-3698

For public listening and viewing:

Live stream
stream.meet.google.com/stream/b51858ba-3bc0-46ac-b5e0-020a9cbb21d8

Trustees Present
C. Stimpson (remote), D. Phillips (remote), E. Gregoire (remote), J. Cautela III (remote), J. Flanagan (remote), K. Spinelli (remote), L. Barrieau (remote), M. Fiorentino, Jr. (remote), M. Nicholson (remote)

Trustees Absent
D. Tiernan

Ex Officio Members Present
R. Lapidus (remote)

Guests Present
C. Canney (remote), E. Takehana (remote), F. Barricelli (remote), G. Doiron, G. Doiron (remote), J. Bry (remote), J. Murdoch (remote), J. Wolfman (remote), J.J. Sylvia (remote), K. Moody (remote), L. Bayless (remote), R. Toomey (remote), S. Levine (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 Mar 29, 2022 at 8:16 AM.

C. Public Comments

There were none.

D. Phillips formally welcomed and introduced former State Senator, and Fitchburg State alum, Jennifer Flanagan to the board. She provided her extensive background and said her experience and perspective will be highly beneficial to the Board.

D. Approve Minutes from the Board of Trustees February 15, 2022 meeting - VOTE (16-21/22)

M. Fiorentino, Jr. made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 02-15-22.
L. Barrieau seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

J. Cautela III	Aye
J. Flanagan	Abstain
E. Gregoire	Absent
D. Phillips	Abstain
K. Spinelli	Aye
M. Nicholson	Aye

Roll Call

D. Tiernan	Absent
C. Stimpson	Absent
L. Barrieau	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye

II. Tenure

A. Tenure- VOTE (17-21/22)

The President next presented the candidates for tenure. He indicated that there is a formal process for candidate review. All candidates are recommended and supported by the candidate's respective department, Department Chair, Dean and Provost before presidential review.
M. Fiorentino, Jr. made a motion to approve.
M. Nicholson seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

D. Phillips	Aye
D. Tiernan	Absent
M. Nicholson	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
C. Stimpson	Absent
L. Barrieau	Aye
J. Cautela III	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
E. Gregoire	Absent
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye

III. New Degree Proposal: Digital Media Innovation

A. VOTE (18-21/22)

D. Phillips informed the Board that the Academic Affairs Committee met to hear about the Digital Media Innovation program. The committee supports the new program and recommends approval by the full Board.

The following faculty members were introduced:

Dr. Kyle Moody, Associate Professor, Communications Media
Dr. J.J. Sylvia, Assistant Professor, Communications Media
Dr. Elisabet Takehana, Associate Professor, English Studies

J.J. Sylvia, Professor of Communications Media, thanked the Board for their time.
He shared the aspects of the new program which include how it will prepare students for today’s jobs, while also preparing them for tomorrow’s jobs. There is an increasing need

for data science in the marketplace. He highlighted a variety of jobs that this new program would serve. He stated that digital storytelling is a very important skill. He talked about curriculum. He provided the history of the Game Design program and its success and growth. He expressed the opinion that there is a big opportunity for the university to be a leader in this category, and that the curriculum is designed to be flexible. He explained the credits required to complete the degree. He talked about community partners that will be included to get hands-on experience. He spoke about interns and keeping on the pulse of these emerging trends. This new program helps with the Strategic Plan goals, Capstone projects, and the Theater Block. Finally, he highlighted the benefits to our institution.

M. Nicholson noted the discussion in the committee meeting about inclusivity with K-12.

There was a discussion.

M. Nicholson made a motion to approve the proposal to offer a BS/BA in Digital Media Innovation for submission to the State Board of Higher Education.
C. Stimpson seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

L. Barrieau	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
J. Cautela III	Aye
M. Nicholson	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
D. Tiernan	Absent

C. Phillips next officially welcomed the new Alumni Trustee, Eric Gregoire. He works at UMASS and his experience will be a valued addition to the Board.

The President thanked the faculty for the presentation and for explaining this cutting-edge, exciting program. He presented the next steps in moving the new program forward. He anticipates full approval by the Board of Higher Education.

D. Phillips acknowledged the work to be completed and anticipates many students will be signing up for this.

IV. Notifications

A. Personnel Actions (N08-21/22)

The personnel actions were submitted for informational purposes.

M. Fiorentino asked about the new hires, and if vacancies were being filled and whether there were new positions. R. Lapidus responded that the new hires were filling vacancies. There was a brief discussion on the Special Assistant to the President for Community & Government Relations.

B. Promotions - (N09-21/22)

The promotions were submitted for informational purposes.

V. Student Trustee Report

A. Update from Student Trustee Joseph Cautela

J. Cautela reported that he has received a dozen student emails regarding the lack of support for the Theater Program. The students perceived that there are sub-par resources for Theater students such as technical needs and fewer teaching faculty. He stated that faculty are forced to work in labs that are out of date and this is embarrassing for students. He also stated that students have received zero communication regarding the Theater Block. He read a list of major concerns.
D. Phillips interrupted to state that personnel matters were not be discussed in this forum.

J. Cautela acknowledged the Chair's warning. He continued his report by saying the overall tone is that the students feel their major is not valued at the institution.

He called for better communication to the faculty and students. He planned to worked directly with the Provost.

D. Phillips reminded the Board that there has been an ongoing budget process and that the process is formalized. She said those issues about allocation of resources should be taken up within the budget process.

The President expressed his gratitude to J. Cautela for having the opportunity to meet with the provost. He talked about equipment requests, and staff line replacements, and the faculty lines to be considered for allocation. He noted that there is fulltime tenure track, adjunct and other types of faculty that teach in the Theater Program. He also stated the budget cycle is on-going and all requests are given fair consideration. There is no intention to alienate any department or major.

D. Phillips reminded everyone that the Finance Committee meeting taking place on April 26, 2022 is an open meeting. All Board members are invited to attend and participate.

VI. Chair's Report

A. Update from Chair Debbie Phillips

C. Phillips talked about the NECHE accreditation visit. She acknowledged the hard work by everyone by going through the intense process. She expressed her appreciation to everyone for their efforts. She mentioned the Trustee meeting with the team and that there was rich and meaningful discussion. We learned a great deal about their issues. She came away after the exit review with the expectation that there will be no problems with Fitchburg State's continued accreditation.

C. Phillips reminded the Board that the next full board meeting will be the budget meeting and the meeting will be in-person.

VII. President's Report

A. COVID-19 Campus Actions

The President brought the board up-to-date on the COVID protocols. After spring break, the decision was to have a mask flexible model. The model allows for the campus community to move around campus mask free except for classrooms and the Library. There were some who wanted stricter mask protocols and others wanting a more relaxed policy, but we need to compromise given the number of constituencies and their needs on campus.

The university continues to test and our COVID positivity rates continue to be low. Conversation is underway with regard to the fall semester COVID policy and protocol. There may be rules associated with vaccinations. We have a new incoming class and we are going to have to decide what we are going to do. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health will not be providing guidance on this issue. Secretary Peyser has not taken a position on the matter either. The University may add the COVID vaccination to the mandatory vaccines already required by the university. We need to think about this as well as our employees. It is currently too early to make a decision. There are summer programs to consider. He said he would keep the Board informed.

B. NECHE

The President stated that it was an extremely good visit and the outcome was positive. He mentioned that he spoke with the team Chair prior to the exit report. He was very positive and affirmative. He next provided a couple of highlights. The process always starts with the mission. The team thought the mission and its strategic plan are consistent with who we are as an institution. Fitchburg State is a very student-centered campus

which was heard from faculty, staff and students. They noted the strength of online efforts and how they fit into our portfolio and how they broaden our reach and diversity of populations. They highlighted a number of times the importance of creating our institutional research area. They noted the reconfiguration of the welcome center and marketing area. They liked the modernization of the new hires in marketing around social media and visual imagery. They talked about the diversity and the efforts made since the last visit. We need more diverse students, faculty and staff, which we continue to work on. There was a theme that ran throughout the visit regarding assessment and learning outcomes. The team noted the need for more student services, trio programs, counseling and mental health programs. They made a comment regarding deferred maintenance and we will continue to work on those items. It's a challenge given our budget to meet all the needs that we know exist. The team walked away giving the university high marks.

The President provided the next steps in the process. We will receive a copy of the team's draft report to be analyzed for factual errors which we can correct. We will then receive a final copy of the report to be shared with the campus community. In the fall, we will meet with the NECHE Board on the final portion of the accreditation approval process. He expressed his appreciation to L. Barrieau for serving on the Steering Committee.

There was a discussion.

C. Future Falcon Day

The President reported on the first Future Falcon Day. The university had about 130 students and their families attend. It was a nice day and a positive event. There is another Future Falcon Day scheduled. The Enrollment Management division noted that 2100 students have applied but had not signed up to participate in Future Falcon Day and would receive a call and be individually invited to campus. Prospective students continue to be prompted to make their final decision.

D. Provost Search/Dean Search

The President provided updates on the Provost and the Dean searches.

The Provost search is going well, and there is a strong candidate pool. The Trustees have received the vitas of the finalists. The on-campus visits are taking place this week. We will have a similar process for the Dean search. The Board will be updated on the progress of both searches.

E. Commencement

The President informed the Board that a commencement speaker has been secured and there are well deserving students for the Student Graduate Leadership Award and

Valedictorian. He provided some background on the speaker who will be formally announced as we get closer to commencement.

F. State Audit - Pandemic Relief Funds/Cyber Security Training

The President announced that the State Auditors will be doing an audit regarding the pandemic relief funds and cyber security education. He noted that some of our sister schools have been through this already. The Fitchburg State team is prepared for the audit.

G. May 3, 2022 Board Meeting at 4:00 p.m. (In-person)

The annual meeting regarding the budget, finances, and fee recommendations will be held in person on May 3, 2022 at 4 p.m.

D. Phillips reiterated that the Finance Committee is meeting on April 26 and all board members are welcome to attend.

The President announced that Trustee Martha Nicholson will be resigning in June. He thanked her publicly for her service and extended his best wishes.

H. News Articles

The news articles were submitted for informational purposes.

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 9:18 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Phillips