APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday February 15, 2022 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, February 15, 2022 at 8:15 a.m.

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

Live stream (view-only): https://stream.meet.google.com/stream/9b534efe-34b5-421e-9b28-b8b94ea693b8

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

Trustees Absent
D. Irving, D. Phillips

Ex Officio Members Present
R. Lapidus (remote)

Guests Present

C. Canney (remote), D. Deptula (remote), F. Barricelli (remote), G. Doiron (remote), G. Doiron (remote), J. Bry (remote), J. Murdoch (remote), J. Wolfman (remote), L. Bayless (remote), M. McKenzie (remote), P. McCafferty (remote), R. Toomey (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance and Guests

B. Call the Meeting to Order

L. Barrieau called a meeting of the board of trustees of Fitchburg State University to order on Tuesday Feb 15, 2022 at 8:17 AM.

C. Public Comments

There were none.

D. Approve Minutes from the January 11, 2022 meeting - VOTE (13-21/22)

M. Fiorentino, Jr. made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 01-11-22.
C. Stimpson seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. NECHE

A. The NECHE Self-Study will be discussed.

Dr. Catherine Canney, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dr. Daneen Deptula, Professor, Psychological Science who serve as Co-Chairs of the NECHE Committee, presented a detailed PowerPoint on the accreditation process.

C. Canney provided background information and noted that the campus visit is five weeks away. She expressed her appreciation to Dr. Deptula and Ms. Pamela McCafferty, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research and Planning for putting together the

accreditation documents and their extreme attention to detail. She also commended and publicly thanked Dr. Benjamin Railton, Professor, English Studies for editing the self-study that created one narrative voice.

D. Deptula stated that the 450-page document, which includes appendices, was successfully submitted to NECHE on February 4, prior to the deadline. The complete document has been shared with the campus community and posted on the Fitchburg State website. As required by NECHE, an invitation for public comments was placed on the website and in the local paper, The Sentinel and Enterprise, on February 10, 2022. The core components of the electronic workroom have been built. The workroom is a repository of every linked resource in the document, as well as additional documents that the visiting team might wish to review. It also includes a sampling of course syllabi and faculty vitas. She acknowledged the work of Ms. Allison Bunnell and other members of the technology staff in helping to develop and launch this website. The self-study was developed using a transparent and inclusive process designed to obtain feedback from the campus community.

D. Deptula mentioned the question of the week campaign, which was designed to keep the upcoming NECHE visit fresh in the campus' mind as well as strengthen the campus' knowledge of the report itself.

C. Canney stated that our accreditation process, is a time for self-reflection. As we appraise our work, we as an institution find areas for continuous improvement. It is also the responsibility of the accrediting body to identify areas for improvement.

C. Canney and D. Deptula explained the upcoming visit details and the follow-up process. The anticipated time for the Board of Trustees to formally meet with the team is on Monday, March 21, from 9:15 a.m. – 10 a.m. An invitation will be sent once the date and time is confirmed.

C. Canney expressed her appreciation and thanks to Trustee Lynn Barrieau for serving on the Steering Committee. It was suggested that the Board take the time to read the self-study, especially standard 3.

L. Barrieau thanked the Co-Chairs and everyone else for being part of the process. She said it was seamless.

M. Fiorentino stated that the report is very comprehensive and appropriately addresses the standards. He noted that there is a considerable amount of good data about the university in the report.

There was a discussion.

The President briefly talked about the comprehensiveness of the process and the final report and believes that it accurately conveys the good work the university is doing. He expressed his extreme appreciation and gratitude to the Co-Chairs, the NECHE committee members and the university as a whole for their engagement.

III. Funding from Reserves

A. VOTE (14-21/22)

The President explained the reason for replacing the turf and track at Elliot Field. The turf and track were originally installed in 2005. The typical life cycle is 10 years, so the field has gone well beyond its expected life cycle.

M. Fiorentino, Jr. made a motion to authorize the President to use up to $1.7 million in reserves from either the N91 or N93 Capital Fee Trust Fund to support the replacement of the turf and track at Elliot Field.
D. Tiernan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

IV. Notifications

A. Personnel Actions (N06-21/22)

The personnel actions were submitted for informational purposes.
There was a discussion.

B. Financial Statement (N07-21/22)

The Financial Statements were submitted for informational purposes.

C. Federal 990's (N08-21/22)

The Federal 990’s were submitted for informational purposes.

V. Student Trustee Report

A. Joseph Cautela will provide the Student Trustee report.

J. Cautela spoke about the current COVID policies as they relate to students. In his meetings with students, he stated that they have changed their perspective and have taken a vote to remove the on-campus mask mandate. He provided rationale of why they felt that way. He indicated that students recognize that this is still a serious health situation.

He next stated that he would like to plan a Trustee networking event this semester. L. Bayless acknowledged that the students were extremely thoughtful and complex in their discussions around COVID policies. She expressed her appreciation to the students in their approach to the COVID situation as a whole.

J. Cautela announced the SGA meeting schedule which meets every Tuesday evening. All board members are invited to attend SGA meetings.

VI. President's Report

A. COVID

The President expanded on the COVID discussion surrounding J. Cautela's comments. He noted the conversation in Higher Education administration is to begin to think about reducing COVID protocols. He stated we have started the conversations on our campus in regards to wearing masks as our positivity numbers continue to remain low. He stated that all indicators are pointing in the right direction. The City of Fitchburg has not stated where they stand on their protocols, but the Governor has announced that the mask mandate will be lifted for K-12 on February 28. He noted that there will be a meeting with the university Health and Safety Committee for their recommendation.

B. Welcome Center

The Admissions Department space has been renamed, and renovated to a Welcome Center. The construction is a cultural shift in how we look at enrollment services. The space was becoming dated and reflected more office space than a place to gather. Under the leadership of Associate Vice President Richard Toomey, a plan to reflect a more inviting living room atmosphere is underway.

R. Toomey noted there will be an Open House in the future where all will be invited to attend and view the changes. There will be a video to showcase the area which will also be circulated.

C. Auditor Change

The President informed the board that Fitchburg State's auditors, CohnReznick, have been indicating for a couple of years that they wanted to exit the higher education market. They have made the decision that next year will be their final engagement with us. We will go out to bid for another auditing firm this coming year. We will confer with our sister schools to inquire which firms they are using. The BOT finance committee will be asked to review possible firms.

D. Spring 2022 Enrollment

The spring undergraduate enrollment is down, but less down than last spring. Enrollment is starting to show some slight signs of trending in a positive direction, but it is too early to be certain. Enrollment continues to be fluid and challenging to understand as a result of demographic changes and the compounding effects of COVID.

There was a discussion regarding having a high school degree versus a college degree. The salaries being offered and bonuses by employers indicate some potential students are going straight to work and foregoing college.

E. Commencement

The President announced that the spring commencement ceremonies will be held in person. The dates are as follows:

Graduate Commencement – May 12, 2022 at 6:30 p.m., Recreation Center
Undergraduate Commencement – May 14, 2022 at 10:00 a.m., Campus Quadrangle
The Nursing Pinning ceremony will be held on May 11 in the evening.

He invited the trustees to attend these celebratory events.

He also reported that the provost search is going well. He said that the candidate pool was robust and diverse, with a good number of highly qualified candidates. The pool will be narrowed down to three or four and they will be asked to visit campus for in-person interviews.

The President expressed his appreciation to Frank O'Donnell for his ten years of service on the board. His term expires on March 1, 2022. He announced that Eric Gregoire, an employee at UMASS Amherst, was elected by the Alumni Board to serve as Trustee.

F. O'Donnell thanked everyone and stated that he has been nominated to serve on the Governor's Board of Registration.

F. News Articles

The news articles were submitted for informational purposes.

VII. 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 9:23 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Tiernan

Documents used during the meeting

- VOTE Minutes.doc.pdf
- VOTE - Funding from Reserves.pdf
- BOT Notifications 02152022.pdf
- Dec 21 Executive Summary.pdf
- FSU_DEC 31 2021 - Financial Statement..pdf
- (2020) Federal-990 Packet.pdf
- Clips for Feb 2022.pdf