APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday October 18, 2022 at 10:00 AM

Location
Presidents' Hall, Mazzaferro Center, 291 Highland Ave., Fitchburg, MA 01420

Notice of a meeting of the Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees on Tuesday, October 18, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting will take place in Presidents' Hall, Mazzaferro Center, 291 Highland Ave., Fitchburg, MA 01420

Trustees Present
A. Turner, C. Stimpson, D. Phillips, D. Tiernan (remote), E. Gregoire, J. Flanagan, K. Spinelli, L. Barrieau, M. Fiorentino, Jr., S. King-Goodwin

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
R. Lapidus

Guests Present

A. Tourigny, C, Estrella, F. Barricelli, G. Doiron, G. Doiron, J. Bry, J. Hanselman, J. Murdoch, J. Wolfman, L. Bayless, M. Bruun, M. McKenzie, P. Marshall, P. Weizer, R. Diakite, R. Toomey, S. Levine, S. Swartz, Y. Malcolm

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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 Oct 18, 2022 at 10:03 AM.

C. Public Comments

There were none.

The Chair welcomed newest Trustee, Sheila King-Goodwin.

S. King-Goodwin introduced herself. She is the senior vice president and chief community banking officer at Fidelity Bank. She has over 30 years of banking experience and looks forward to serving on the board and working with everyone.

D. Approve Minutes from the September 13, 2022 meeting - VOTE (08-22/23)

J. Flanagan made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 09-13-22.
E. Gregoire seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
A. Turner	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye

II. Finance and Administration

A. Presentation by the auditors

The President introduced the two sets of auditors in attendance. They are as follows:

Cohn Reznick, University Audit – Melissa Ferrucci, Audit Partner, Mark Snyder, Audit Director, Maryellen Scarselli, Senior Audit Manager

Bollus Lynch, Foundation and Supporting Org. Audit – Jim Johnston, Partner, Laura Pizzimenti, Audit Senior Manager

The university is transitioning from Cohn Reznick to Bollus Lynch. He thanked the team from Cohn Reznick for their years of service. He also extended his thanks and appreciation to Jay Bry, Yvonnie Malcolm, and Denise Brindle.

D. Phillips formerly thanked Cohn Resnick, and recognized they are no longer working in the Higher Education realm. She welcomed Bollus Lynch as the new audit firm that will be working with the university, and looks forward to the smooth transition.

M. Ferrucci thanked the team for all the years that they have partnered together. From their perspective, the audit has gone extremely well.

The audits are being presented with a clean unmodified opinion. There is emphasis on GASB 87. She discussed the audit results. A letter attached to the audit which is required communication stating they have had no disagreements with management. There are significant disclosures.

M. Scarselli discussed the Statements of Net Position and Cash Flows.

M. Snyder discussed the footnotes at a high level. The residence halls, which have been on the MSCBA books, are now on the university statements. They are now presented as an asset and a liability. He next discussed the footnotes and disclosures. The summation of financial statements were presented.

M. Ferrucci discussed the GASB Accounting Pronouncements. Not all will be applicable but management must decide how to implement these changes and how to report them going forward. There is no separate management letter for this year.

E. Gregoire summarized that the Board is presented with a lot of detail in forming their review of the information. He noted enrollment challenges and their impact on revenue and the increasing need for scholarship allowance. The headline for him is enrollment and the capital program and how debt will be filtering through the financials.

M. Fiorentino commented that capital projects, and deferred maintenance are important and that they will need to be monitored closely. He also noted that there are continued expenses associated with the pandemic.

A discussion ensued.

D. Phillips stated that the Finance Committee recommends the full Board vote to accept the audit.

B. FY2022 Audit - VOTE (9-22/23)

C. Stimpson made a motion to approve the FY2022 audit.
K. Spinelli seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

D. Phillips	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
A. Turner	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye

III. Notifications

A. Personnel Actions (N02-22/23)

The personnel actions were submitted for informational purposes.

M. Fiorentino asked about the Interim Dean of Education and the departments that fall under that umbrella. The President acknowledged that it was unusual having the Business Department report to the Interim Dean of Education. He is working with Academic Affairs to review the dean structure to find a more appropriate placement for business. He provided a brief background on the current configuration.

There was a discussion.

The President clarified that the heading of “new hire” referred, in most cases, to a new employee not a new position. There have been, on occasion, new positions added. Existing positions are only replaced as needed.

A. Turner questioned the “out of title” heading. The president indicated that some employees have been asked to perform duties beyond their contractual job description. A. Turner responded that the students do not support the increases in pay.

A discussion ensued.

IV. Student Trustee Report

A. Allison Turner will provide the Student Trustee report.

A. Turner provided a few updates. She informed the Board on the identity months and the variety of different events and activities surrounding them. She spoke about student engagement. She reported an increase in student participation and attendance at events. The Student Government Association will be holding a townhall on October 26 in the evening to address campus concerns.

V. Chair's Report

A. Debbie Phillips will provide the Chair's report.

She had no official report.

B. Information Request Policy

The Chair stated that board members should not make information requests to employees, but rather work through her or the President. If additional information is required, that is not covered at a meeting, to go through them. M. Fiorentino responded that protocol makes good sense.

The President suggested the Board consider a better-established subcommittee culture to provide opportunities to dig deeper and to use that structure to get information. Alternatively, allow for ad hoc committee assignments as well.

M. Fiorentino said with the committee structure approach, some of us will need to participate more. He did think there is still opportunities when a question needs to be addressed, to have both of those protocols working at the same time.

VI. President's Report

A. COVID Update

The President provided a COVID update. He stated that positivity rates are very low and that only a limited number of students have needed to be isolated or quarantined on campus. He reminded the board that there is a COVID Health and Safety Committee that is scheduled to meet. He mentioned a couple of clinics coming up to provide booster and flu vaccines. D. Phillips said she is proud of how the student body, faculty and staff

handled the pandemic. E. Gregoire stated kudos for extending clinics for the campus community.

B. NECHE

The President informed the Board of the NECHE Commission meeting he attended on September 22. At the meeting, the Commission asked questions and feedback was positive. A formal response from the Commission has still not arrived. It is anticipated that the institution will be fully accredited for the next ten years.

The President again thanked the campus NECHE Committee co-chairs and others that were active participants. He noted that NECHE had asked Ms. Pamela McCafferty and Dr. Daneen Deptula to attend a NECHE Workshop and share with campuses beginning the process best practices.

C. Enrollment Management Update

The President provided data on enrollment. He clarified the difference between head count and full-time enrollment (FTE) and tied the numbers to the fall budget. The campus is off by 246 FTE students. He noted this equates to approximately 1.4 million dollars. In the Residence Halls, we had a target of 66% occupancy and we are currently at 57%. He noted that loses on occupancy would have been more pronounced if doubles had not been converted into premium singles. The School of Graduate, Online, and Continuing Education is also experiencing some losses in enrollment. Overall, the university is operating at an aggregate loss of $2.2 million based on the fall budget. The University continues to aggressively study why students did not return to campus this fall.

The retention numbers (freshman to sophomore) were briefly discussed.

M. Fiorentino asked what are the freshmen saying about how they feel and why are they not continuing at Fitchburg State. The President responded that the classes are coming in with increased life challenges. Further, students appear to be coming to campus less prepared.

There was a discussion about wrap-around services students need especially after the pandemic. There are going to be ramifications for the next 5-10 years. Focusing on the main purpose of education is hard.

D. Phillips suggested to have this as a topic for a committee meeting.

M. Fiorentino stated this goes hand in hand with overall student success. If you don’t have the services and are accepting students, there is not a realistic chance of success, then the school looks bad. The President stated student success services are receiving

increased funding. Additionally, financially challenged students are receiving increased aid which will hopefully allow for greater focus on academics.

At the November meeting, the Board will discuss the spring 2023 and fall 2023 enrollment efforts.

D. Open House update

The enrollment process has started for fall 2023. The University has joined the Common Application. This should result in an increased number of applications, but the focus must be on yield. EAB Naviance has been employed. Increased recruiting efforts are being focused on New Hampshire residents. Overall much more recruitment travel is scheduled now that high schools have opened their doors this year. Unfortunately, it appears that students are slow to complete and file applications. The University is making admission decisions sooner. A variety of new marketing techniques are being employed. The first open house numbers were smaller than prior years.

A discussion ensued.

E. Homecoming

The President reported on the Homecoming events for the upcoming weekend.

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 11:18 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Tiernan