APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday February 7, 2023 at 8:15 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, February 7, 2023 at 8:15 a.m.
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 (remote), K. Spinelli, L. Barrieau (remote), 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, H. Parkinson, J. Bry, J. Hanselman, J. Murdoch, J. Wolfman, M. Bruun, M. McKenzie, N. Robichaud, P. Marshall, P. McCafferty, R. Toomey (remote), S. Levine, S. Swartz

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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 Feb 7, 2023 at 8:18 AM.

C. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

D. Approve Minutes from the November 8, 2022 meeting - VOTE (19-22/23)

C. Stimpson made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 11-08-22.
E. Gregoire seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Update on Theater Project

A. President Lapidus will make a presentation.

The President noted the PowerPoint in the packet and that it had been presented at a recent legislative luncheon. He said, that we are starting to think about this project regionally. We invited the entire Montachusett region legislative delegation and there was representation from all offices and much enthusiasm around the project. There are some opportunities for grant money and legislative dollars.

He discussed the PowerPoint in detail and noted the various areas where the legislative delegation came from. He talked about the history of the project and the research conducted by various external consultants. He noted the PowerPoint presentation made by the Chamber of Commerce at the legislative luncheon and said it will be sent to the Trustees. The completed project will include two performance venues, one smaller black box space and a larger theatre. We have no theatres on campus, just auditoriums.

The project is designed in three phases. The first phase, which is complete, is the ideaLab and Game Design Studio. A. Tourigny spoke about the revenue that has been generated out of the ideaLab. There was a brief discussion on how entrepreneurs access the ideaLab.

The President talked about the final space rendering. He noted the historic building is still well intact despite its age. He talked about ADA compliance. The City of Fitchburg is a great partner on this project and it is hoped that there will be shared parking. He noted that there are currently some retail storefront spaces at the theatre block that will be incorporated into the larger theatre in the final stages of the project. Phase 2 is the Black Box which will be a modifiable space and Phase 3, the final phase, is the renovation of the main historic theatre. The president stated that the theatre is an impressive space. He said that all that have lived in the area for a while seem to have a theatre story.

There was a discussion on the project schedule, funding, steering committee and the budget. The Theatre will be an anchor and assist other businesses to establish themselves on Main St.

III. Budget and Enrollment Update

A. Jay Bry will make a presentation

J. Bry discussed various slides in detail.

B. FY2023 Budget Update

J. Bry provided an update on enrollment and how it relates to the budget. The spring enrollment numbers are still being finalized. The past fiscal years we have been on an enrollment decline and have been missing the budgeted target number. We were off budget by approximately $1.2m in the fall and approximately $1m off in the spring. He talked about the losses in housing of approximately $1.8m as the result of lower occupancy. Overall, it is anticipated that the day shortfall will be approximately $5.7m.

The SGOCE (School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education) enrollment numbers have been relatively steady and, in some areas, have experienced growth. Overall, the accelerated programs are slowing down and traditional SGOCE programs are growing. The positive SGOCE revenue surplus of approximately $ 1.1m will be used to assist with

undergraduate losses. We are anticipating finishing FY23 with a loss of approximately $4.5m. From an enrollment perspective, we continue to yield about the same percentage of students that we have in the past, however the pool of students continues to decrease.

C. FY24 Dashboard

J. Bry talked about the various progress in the SGOCE programs. He did mention the declines in the accelerated programs. He also talked about the relationship between enrollment and housing. The loss in enrollment impacts the loss of revenue needed to pay the debt service on the Residence Halls. We are thinking of converting some of the properties and transitioning them over to DCAMM. He stated that we need to think long term on what to do with the excess properties. Our investments have shown declines consistent with the market downturn. He talked about collective bargaining's impact on the budget. He talked about utilities and that contracts are coming up for renewal along with expected increases. At the state level, we are not sure what is going to happen. He thinks it is realistic to assume there may be some increases, but there is great uncertainty on what the number will be making it difficult to generate projections. The FY24 budget uses the 2193 FTE for budgeting purposes.

D. FY25 Dashboard

J. Bry explained that FY25 predictions will be very similar to FY24 with a slightly smaller FTE. The same scenarios will be taking place in this fiscal year with less of an incremental loss.

M. Fiorentino asked about new student projections for the fall and occupancy? J. Bry responded that he is hoping for slightly increased enrollment from last year’s freshman class and that in regard to housing, we are hoping for 60%, occupancy as compared to this year’s 50% occupancy.

M. Fiorentino asked what cost cutting measures are being looked at and is there a concern in going to deep into the reserves?

J. Bry responded that we are not backfilling positions in the Residence Halls. The departments will submit level funded budgets for FY24 and FY25.

There was a discussion on level funding and the personnel budget.

M. Fiorentino stated we can’t operate with reserves to balance the budget long term.

J. Bry explained occupancy in the Residence Halls and how debt is to be paid down on the buildings that have remaining debt. He also talked about the losses accrued due to COVID.

E. Cash Flow Analysis

J. Bry discussed the cash flow analysis, and that we still need to see where we land with state appropriations.

R. Toomey provided an update on where we stand now and the direction we are headed with regard to admissions. We have reason to be cautiously optimistic with much of the tactical actions taking place. He talked about increased applications by 700 which is primarily attributed to the Common Application program that we now participate in. He talked about the review process that has been accelerated to communicate decisions to students sooner. He stated that the entire process has been revamped and we have added more levels of communication at earlier stages. We are now also awarding scholarship opportunities in decision letters. We have operated this cycle with a full staff which has not happened in recent years. He highlighted various successful ways students are being notified.

There was a discussion on retention and student success.

IV. Update on Contact Magazine

A. Matt Bruun will make a presentation.

M. Brunn, presented a PowerPoint on Contact Magazine. He provided the history and background on the publication. He talked about the current hard copy magazine and moving towards a digital magazine. He talked about the story telling aspect. With a digital model, we can add more dynamic content. We still plan to print a condensed version to go out that will have a code driving traffic to the complete digital magazine.

He next discussed other schools that have implemented a digital magazine. The team is reviewing the roll out phases and the next issue will be digital with a hardcopy reader’s digest version to be mailed to homes. He emphasized that printed magazine costs are going up. The digital magazine will have social media icons to share which is an added benefit.

E. Gregoire, who also sits on the Alumni Board, indicated that there is not a broad concern for not having a hardcopy. The digital magazine could tell the story a different way.

There was a discussion.

V. Notifications

A.

Personnel Actions (N04-22/23)

The personnel actions were presented for informational purposes.

B. September Quarterly Statement (N05-22/23)

The September quarterly statements were submitted for informational purposes.

C. December Quarterly Statement (N07-22/23)

The December quarterly statements were submitted for informational purposes.

D. 990's (N06-22/23)

The 990's were submitted for informational purposes.

VI. Student Trustee Report

A. Allison Turner will provide the Student Trustee report.

A. Turner had nothing to report.

VII. Chair's Report

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

D. Phillips discussed the bylaw changes. They were updated and the most significant item added was the Chair will appoint the committee chairs at the first fall meeting. Also added was a statement about the Equity Agenda which is a theme that runs throughout our Strategic Plan and the Department of Higher Education.

B. By Laws - VOTE (20-22/23)

K. Spinelli made a motion to approve the revised by-laws.
S. King-Goodwin seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

C.

Outcomes of the faculty petition

D. Phillips next reported the outcomes from both the Personnel subcommittee and Finance subcommittee meetings held on January 25, 2023 and January 27, 2023 respectively. She provided background on the faculty petition that was referred to the Executive Committee, and then referred to both the Finance and Personnel subcommittees. In addition to the petition, the MSCA union sent a PowerPoint from one of their meetings with questions. The two committees met along with other Trustees and the President's Executive Cabinet. She was surprised, despite the communication of the meetings, that no members of the faculty or other staff attended were present.

She informed the Board of what happened at each meeting. The discussions included hiring practices, salary reviews, institutional debt, enrollment challenges, Residence Hall occupancy, the process on how open positions are evaluated, data on each of the unions and non-unit members, and financial data. At both committee meetings, the discussion was exhaustive. She also noted that it's clear the entire community can find information on various Fitchburg State webpages and that Open Forum financial presentations are on the finance webpage. The Trustees did not identify any irregularities with university processes or practices, and she is thoroughly satisfied with the data.

The action items were the following:

1. Implement a hiring freeze on new senior (non-unit) administrators.

The President responded that this has been done.

2. Commit funds to hiring staff dedicated to retention and recruitment.

The process had been ongoing and has been evaluated, funds have been committed and will be continued.

3. Allocate funds to hiring new faculty, preserving faculty lines, and building academic excellence at the University.

The faculty hiring process is well established and efforts are underway to better communicate the hiring or the not hiring of a new faculty member. Resources will be continued to be allocated.

4. Increase transparency regarding the fiscal and financial state of the University by holding a series of town halls specifically on these issues.

D. Phillips indicated that she was not sure what more could be done and she believed it has been transparent. There will be an effort for increased communications. There have

been opportunities for campus members to ask questions. Given it's an academic environment, questions are expected.

5. Create a task force with representatives from administration, faculty, staff, and students to develop a financial strategic plan for the next 5 years.

This taskforce is being formed and will be commenced very soon.
D. Phillips commended the faculty, staff and students and encouraged everyone to participate in the process. She reiterated that she had hoped the faculty and staff would have attended the committee meetings.

VIII. President's Report

A. Opening of school

The President reported that the opening of the spring semester went smoothly. The Residence Hall move in went well, classes began and the campus is in good shape despite the most recent cold snap. All is going well.

B. COVID

The President provided an update on COVID and positive cases on campus which remains extremely low.

C. News Articles

The news articles were submitted 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 10:11 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
C. Stimpson