APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday March 28, 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 to be held on Tuesday, March 28, 2023 at 8:15 a.m. in Presidents' Hall, Mazzaferro Center, 291 Highland Ave., Fitchburg, MA 01420

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

Trustees Absent
None

Ex Officio Members Present
R. Lapidus

Guests Present
A. Pereira, A. Tourigny, C. Estrella, F. Barricelli, G. Doiron, G. Doiron, J. Bry, J. Murdoch, J.Hanselman, M. Bruun, N. Mani, P. Marshall, P. McCafferty, R. Diakite, R. Hynes, R. Toomey, S. Levine, S. Swartz

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 28, 2023 at 8:16 AM.

C. Public Comments

Dr. Rala Diakite, MSCA Chapter President addressed the Board. She thanked the Trustees for the opportunity to speak. She referred to the votes and notifications in the packet that are the results of the dedicated teaching and service of the faculty. She asked the Board to acknowledge their dedication to Public Higher Education. She spoke about the rise in the cost of living and low pay that teachers are receiving. She advocated strongly for the Board to contact Governor Healey to support pay increases for faculty, staff and librarians in Public Higher Education. “Your voice, your support can make a difference.” She said the time is now to publicly recognize the faculty, librarians, and staff and equality wages is important.

D. Approve Minutes from the Board of Trustees February 7, 2023 meeting - VOTE (25-22/23)

L. Barrieau made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 02-07-23.
E. Gregoire seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Tenure

A. Tenure- VOTE (26-22/23)

The President next presented the candidates for tenure and tenure with promotion. He highlighted 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 the recommended faculty for tenure and tenure with promotion effective September 1, 2023.
J. Flanagan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

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

III. Student Affairs Update

A. Laura Bayless and Robert Hynes will present.

The President said the topic of health services and mental health was being presented today at the request of the Board. There are rising concerns around mental health and the university is taking proactive steps to try and address these issues.

Dr. Laura Bayless, Vice President of Student Affairs and Dr. Robert Hynes, Assistant Dean for Student Support Services provided a PowerPoint presentation.

L. Bayless started the presentation by apologizing for being late to the meeting as there was a student, prior to the start of the workday, in her area requiring assistance. She provided the student with the appropriate support before attending this meeting.

L. Bayless discussed the physical health and mental health survey in detail.

D. Phillips asked that L. Bayless provide background on CHC and how they became a provider for Fitchburg State University.

L. Bayless explained that a number of our clinicians left in 2020 which brought us to a place of next steps within the Health Services Department. Prior to that time, there had been some discussions on the services provided and how to meet the changing needs of students. We formed a partnership with CHC (Community Health Connections) where their mission is to offer various kinds of health care, physical, mental and behavioral. They are as passionate about health care as we are about education.

J. Flanagan asked if students get prioritized when contacting CHC regarding mental health issues. L. Bayless stated that service is not prioritized like physical health issues. Students can see a counselor on campus faster than an off-site partner.

L. Bayless talked about how students get to CHC and stated that the largest obstacle is that students have to switch their health care provider. Many students choose not to switch and remain with their primary care provider. The takeaway from the survey is that there were few criticisms but we need to do better with communication regarding the services offered. We will continue to survey the students in the future.
There was a discussion.

R. Hynes talked about the care that Counseling Services provides to students, which includes unlimited sessions. He noted although there has been a decline in student enrollment, however, Counseling Services is still seeing the same number of students as they have in past years. He noted that during COVID, the office needed to be innovative with remote sessions. Students could email to initiate care and with that, the department could gather a great deal of information. The university has become incredibly nimble. He recognized the need for students to be seen immediately. Students are struggling. They are also bothered by financial concerns. The university has also seen increases in Disability Services; students are registering for mental health disabilities. He talked about the advances in technology that have assisted with students' needs in Disability Services. The campus has made great strides with ramps, elevators and other physical modifications. Students are now dealing with anxiety, panic attacks and other challenges that are difficult to accommodate, especially in the classroom. He talked about the CARE (Community Assessment and Risk Evaluation) team with the wraparound approach taken. There are increased reports to the CARE team.

There was a discussion on the stigma being reduced for those seeking mental health support, funding, and new positions within Counseling Services. There is an effort to educate the campus on how to help students receive health
care and wellness information.

J. Flanagan thanked them for the presentation, she noted the data looks astounding, the numbers are rising. She mentioned the Dr. Conroy speaker series that might be beneficial to our students.

There was a discussion around how employees avail themselves to mental health services.

IV. Academic Affairs Committee Report

A. New Academic Program: M.S. in Construction Management - VOTE (27-22/23)

P. Marshall informed the Board of the Academic Affairs Committee's approval of the M.S. Construction Management Program. The following introductions were made:

Dr. Jennifer Hanselman, Dean of Health and Natural Sciences
Dr. Becky Copper-Glenz, Dean of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education
Dr. Nirajan Mani, Department Chair, Engineering Technology
Dr. Sara Levine, Dean of Arts and Sciences

P. Marshall expressed her appreciation to those that worked on putting the new program together. There is a high demand for this program. Construction managers coordinate complex structures and this program will provide them with the necessary skills. The program aligns with the University Strategic Plan. If approved by the Board and the BHE, the university will be the first in the state offering this program and it will help to further differentiate Fitchburg State. The program is completely online. The university has various partnerships that represent distinguished companies. There is an advisory board in place and one of the charges is to eventually offer a 4+1 program.

J. Hanselman expressed her gratitude to the Engineering Technology department, it takes a great deal of work to put a new program together.

J. Flanagan thanked the provost, and commented on the robust conversation that took place at the Academic Affairs Committee Meeting. She is proud of Fitchburg State, and the work outside this institution is well recognized.
J. Flanagan made a motion to approve the proposal to offer a M.S. Construction Management Program for submission to the State Board of Higher Education.
K. Spinelli seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

V. Budget, Finance and Facilities Committee Report

A. FY24 Budget Summary

J. Bry discussed the budget summary and provided the Budget, Finance and Facilities Committee highlights. He stated that a couple of months ago, the university had reported

to the committee that the university might expect an $8 to $9 million shortfall. He talked about fringe benefits and the goal of transitioning more employees onto state maintenance. He reported that expenses for central services have increased mainly due to rising utility costs. He discussed performance funding, the fair share act and the additional funds that state universities might be receiving. At this point, based on the Governor's budget proposal, he felt comfortable that the university would be receiving a $2.5 million infusion plus $1 million to the base appropriation. Although this is good news, he expressed caution regarding future years indication that it was not clear this level of funding would be on-going.

There was a discussion on the proposed tuition lock and its implementation. There are more questions than answers on this subject at the moment.

B. Preventing and Reporting Fraud, Waste and Abuse

This was presented for informational purposes.

C. Internal Control Plan 2023 - VOTE (28-22/23)

J. Bry stated that the university has not asked for this document to be adopted in a while, although many offices have their own internal controls that are reviewed annually. During COVID, many policies were adapted to meet the changing needs of the institution.

K. Spinelli stated both reports are good to have. She noted how the management is taking care to keep these documents up-to-date. Internal procedures updated annually is a great practice and bringing these policies to the board is appreciated.

There was a discussion.
K. Spinelli made a motion to to adopt the 2023 Internal Control Plan.
J. Flanagan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

D. Higher Education - Surtax Spending

J. Bry commented that the largest portion of the surtax will be appropriated to Financial Aid and $30 million for support services. He discussed the different pools of money that will be given to the various schools including Community Colleges.

VI. Notifications

A. Promotions (N08-22/23)

The promotions were presented for informational purposes.

B. Personnel Notifications- (N09-22/23)

The personnel notifications were presented for informational purposes.

VII. Student Trustee Report

A. Update from Student Trustee Allison Turner

A. Turner recognized the women working and associated with Fitchburg State in positions of power in a male dominated society in relation to Woman's History Month and thanked them for being an inspiration. She next reported the complaints she received from several students regarding the delay in the start of school on March 15 as opposed to a cancellation due to inclement weather. Despite this one negative issue, she stated that the overall commuter experience is a 9 out of 10. She next listed the variety of events taking place including the Women's Leadership Conference and Drag Show.

VIII. Chair's Report

A. Update from Chair Debbie Phillips

D. Phillips mentioned an article concerning enrollment that she thought was of interest and will send it to the Board. She noted the June 6 Trustee Retreat and asked that Board members submit any topics for consideration. The President said it would be great to have the topics in advance to get ready, especially data or requests for presentations. He suggested within the next two weeks would be ideal.

IX. President's Report

A. COVID-19 Campus Update

The President reported that COVID is starting to wind down, our numbers are modest and currently, we have no students in isolation. He did note that the Board needs to be aware that the next topic of conversation for this administration, is how to address COVID next year. He stated that most schools in our system are not going to requiring vaccinations, and that the university will have to make a decision on the issue shortly. He noted the bargaining units are going into contract negotiations.

B. Enrollment Update

The President reported that both applications and accepts are significantly up. Currently the use of the Common Application is being reviewed to determine its contributed to this process. The university has a variety of application sources that it is tracking. He stated that enrollments continue to be delayed and students are waiting longer before making decisions.

C. Future Falcon Day

There are two Future Falcon Days, one was on March 18 with 150 respondents although 102 attended, which is a typical show rate. There is a second event scheduled on April 1 where 170 indicated that they will attend. There seems to be a great interest in the Honor's program, less interest in big events and more interest in segmented events around a particular topic. The university continues to learn how people would like to receive information.

D. Financial Sustainability Committee

The Financial Sustainability Task Force had a positive kick-off meeting. Each of the bargaining units were enthused about the exercise. The committee will aggregate the information received from the campus and then share with the Board. There is a website which provides information about the taskforce and an opportunity for campus members to make suggestions. Over the summer work will begin with regard to the committees' recommendations. The president noted the five areas that are to be focused on:

- Student Services
- Administrative Efficiencies
- Academic Efficiencies
- Property & Infrastructure
- Entrepreneurship & Revenue

E. News Articles

The news articles were submitted for informational purposes.

X. 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 9:59 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Tiernan