APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday October 17, 2023 at 10:00 AM

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

Notice of a meeting of the Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees on Tuesday, October 17, 2023 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, E. Gregoire (remote), J. Flanagan (remote), K. Spinelli, L. Barrieau, M. Fiorentino, Jr.

Trustees Absent
S. King-Goodwin

Guests Present
A. Tourigny, C. Estrella, F. Barricelli, G. Doiron, G. Doiron, G. Peterson, J. Bourgeois, J. Hanselman, J. Johnston, J. Murdoch, J. Wolfman, L, Moulton, L. Bayless, L. Lee, L. Pizzimenti, M. McKenzie, P. Marshall, P. McCafferty, P. Snouffer, P. Weizer, R. Diakite, R. Lapidus, R. Toomey, S. Dodd, S. Levine, Y. Malcolm

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 17, 2023 at 10:02 AM.

C. Public Comments

There were none.

D. Approve Minutes from the September 12, 2023 meeting - VOTE (06-23/24)

D. Tiernan made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 09-12-23.
E. Gregoire seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Budget, Finance & Facilities Report

A. Presentation by the auditors

D. Phillips reported that the Budget, Finance and Facilities Committee voted to accept the FY2023 audit.

The auditors from Bollus Lynch were introduced:
Jim Johnston, Partner
Laura Pizzimenti, Partner

J. Johnston reported the high points of the audits and the conclusion is that all three audits are being presented with a clean unmodified opinion. Over the years, the university has received clean audits which he stated reflects positively on the institution. He reported on a new pronouncement on subscription-based technology agreements, GASB

96, which is very similar to the last year's leasing licenses, which was completed. There will also be a requirement for supplementary information related to pensions. There is still a component of federal funds reporting and a financial aid report that are not yet complete, but the audit firm does not anticipate any problems. The statement of net position, statement of changes in net position and statement of cash flows were discussed. The footnotes and disclosures were presented. There is nothing new in the footnotes and disclosures.

He next talked about the Foundation and Supporting Organization audits. The revenue has increased as the result of a bequest and donations, along with significant grant increases. He discussed the Foundation and Supporting Organization footnotes and disclosures. All is similar information and has been presented in the past.

A discussion ensued.

E. Gregoire commented that the debt portfolio is taking on expenses, and with the reduction of cash and state programs, the debt, even if it's not growing, creates pressure and eliminates an opportunity to focus on other things that may be important. The Board needs to pay attention to the continuation of using reserves to fill in the budget gap.

D. Phillips asked what the fiscal health is of the institution. J. Johnston responded that with these combined financials, it is very difficult to see what is happening with all the rules. He stated that if you look at day-to-day operations, there is $60 million in current assets and plenty of reserves to cover what is coming with anticipated expenses. He stated that finances are relatively healthy and the institution is moving toward the performance it was experiencing in 2019 and 2020. He could not specifically say that the institution is financially healthy, but it appears that the institution is in a good place.

M. Fiorentino noted that returning back to 2019/2020 finances, with the continued declining enrollment, and the impact on the reserves, we are not returning, but we are making progress.

B. FY2023 Audit - VOTE (7-23/24)

D. Tiernan made a motion to accept the FY2023 audit.
C. Stimpson seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

L. Barrieau	Aye
K. Spinelli	Absent
C. Stimpson	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
A. Turner	Aye

Roll Call

D. Tiernan	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Absent
D. Phillips	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Abstain

The President thanked the auditors for their work and he also thanked the university finance team and acknowledged that the exercise represents a stressful time for them. D. Phillips assumed that the auditors received cooperation from the finance team. J. Johnston responded that there were no disagreements, the team was cooperative and he had no concerns regarding financial performance. He did state that there is a big learning curve and anticipates next year things will go a lot smoother.

J. Bry thanked the finance team and introduced them by name:

Yvonne Malcolm, Comptroller
Patricia Snouffer, Accountant III
Lisa Moulton, Assistant Comptroller
Joseph Bourgeois, Accountant V
Gene Peterson, Accountant
Lucy Lee, Accountant

III. Budget Update

A. Jay Bry will provide the Budget Update

J. Bry discussed the budget summary in detail. He noted several changes since the last presentation. The process of collective bargaining is ongoing in regards to funding the negotiated raises. The Board of Higher Education was going to approve performance funding but their meeting was cancelled. He discussed the fair share money. He anticipates our budget shortfall at $1.3 million.

There was a discussion regarding the anticipated decline in students around 2026 and the impact on employment.

E. Gregoire asked outside of the personnel adjustment savings and hiring freeze, what other plans are in place to reduce or help with the shortfall. J. Bry responded that in FY2025 we are looking at ways that we can take other operational cuts. He said we have a good amount of reserves, but in 2025 and 2026 we will need to make some hard decisions.

E. Gregoire suggested starting the process sooner rather than later, and as a Board, what are the next steps and how ideas are being developed and what is the process when the Board has to make these decisions. He suggested the need for more robust conversations with the task forces already in place.

There was a discussion.

IV. Student Life Committee Update

A. Sheila King Goodwin will provide an update.

Dr. Laura Bayless, Vice President for Student Affairs, provided the Student Life report in the absence of Trustee Goodwin. The presentation at the committee meeting focused on the student residential life survey via Skyfactor, a reputable company that other institutions utilize. At the meeting, they talked about the “good, the bad and the ugly.” Overall, the students feel safe, and reflect a positive sense of community. They had concerns with the cleanliness of the residence halls and the food quality in the dining hall. She indicated that we need to work on customer service and be more visible. The status of activity in the work order-process needs to be more clearly communicated. The dissatisfaction with the dining hall came out clearly in the survey. The university continues to collect data and gather more information with commuter students regarding the dining hall and is putting together more clearly defined financials involving a possible renovation of the dining hall.

V. Academic Planning Update

A. Pat Marshall will provide an update

P. Marshall thanked the Board for the opportunity to provide an update regarding the Academic Plan. She provided a PowerPoint that she discussed in detail (attached). The established priorities for the year have been started. She discussed the short, medium and long-term goals for the next few years. She reported on the makeup of the Provost’s Council. They are as follows:

Franca Barricelli, Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs
Becky Copper-Glenz, Dean, School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education
Barbara Cormier, Registrar
Jennifer Hanselman, Dean of Health and Natural Sciences
Jacalyn Kremer, Dean, Library
Sara Levine, Dean of Arts and Sciences
Pamela McCafferty, Associate Vice President, Institutional Research and Planning
Nancy Murray, Dean, Center for Excellence in Education
Jason Smith, Assistant Dean, Academic Affairs

P. Marshall stated she went on a listening tour during her first year. She took the feedback she learned and used it to work on a variety of initiatives. She discussed the various priorities. She recognized the members of the Leading for Change team that she is a member of:

Laura Bayless, Vice President, Student Affairs

Pamela McCafferty, Associate Vice President, Institutional Research and Planning
Jessica Murdoch, Vice President, Vice President, Human Resources and Payroll Services

P. Marshall next discussed the three-year faculty hiring plan that was put together after meeting with the Department Chairs. Every request needs to be weighed carefully and we need to be cautious on how the decisions are made. She talked about faculty specializations and the diversity that is needed when hiring faculty and that includes tenure track, adjunct, and one-year temps. One of the questions added to the hiring plan were the department goals. She discussed the faculty positions that are requested from the Chairs, then reviewed by the Deans, the Provost then reviews and discusses with the President. Then they are discussed and approved at the Vice President level. She talked about how one-year temps provide flexibility. She discussed trends in enrollment. We need to be mindful on how we reduce our faculty numbers. We need to look at both the day school and the School of Graduate Online and Continuing Education and the sustainability as an institution.

There was a discussion on the replacing and hiring of faculty.

P. Marshall next informed the Board that the Dean of Education is stepping down at the end of the academic year, and the police academy director has resigned. We are hoping for an interim police academy director to be appointed soon until a thorough search can be conducted. The M.S. in Construction Management has been officially approved. In November, at the Academic Affairs Committee meeting, there will be two new programs presented for consideration, Creative Arts Enterprise and Expressive Arts Enterprise.

There was a discussion on one-years temps and adjunct faculty.

The President commented that the Nov. 7 committee meeting has a robust agenda. If there are additional topics to discuss, please let him know so that if information needs to be gathered there is ample time to do so. He noted that also applies for the main Board meetings as well.

VI. Strategic Planning Update

A. Pam McCafferty will provide the Strategic Planning Update

P. McCafferty provided the strategic plan update. She circulated brochures with the main content which is also posted on the website. The university plan covers the 2020-2025 academic years. She noted that Chair Phillips represented the Trustees on the committee. The plan was approved by the Board of Higher Education. The plan has goals which drives the strategic plan. The campus measures progress by the metrics that are specified in the back of the document and tracked annually. We capture a great deal of

information in our annual reporting process. The activities in the annual plans are linked to the strategic plan and future plans need to be reported back. There is an electronic system to collect data that allows people to go into the system and record updates. This is also used for our NECHE self-study projections. The system will send reminders and alerts to keep us on track. She noted that next year, we go back to another 5-year new strategic planning process. The assessment webpage has all the reports and our accomplishments related to the strategic plan.

VII. Notifications

A. Personnel Actions (N02-23/24)

The personnel actions were submitted for informational purposes.

VIII. Student Trustee Report

A. Allison Turner will provide the Student Trustee report.

A. Turner provided the student trustee report. She talked about the recent sexual assault reported in the library and the other recent off-campus assault. She expressed concerns that students do not feel safe on campus. She did meet with the Chief and understands there was limited information that could be shared. Increased police visibly has been noted on campus. She talked about the student vigil that took place the following week after the assault. The Student Government Association will be putting together a safety committee.

The President responded that he did not want to minimize the situation but this incident was an anomaly. The Clery Report demonstrates that this campus has historically been safe with relatively little crime of all types. He stated that we all need to be vigilant when it comes to safety and noted the challenges of a public campus. He talked about the student forums he held on campus regarding safety and that he is more than willing to talk about additional ideas to enhance safety. He concluded that police practices need to remain confidential during investigations.

There was a discussion.

IX. Chair's Report

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

D. Phillips reminded the Board that President Lapidus received the 2023 Distinguished Citizen Award at a dinner on September 28. She noted that past Board chairs had attended and thanked the Fitchburg State staff that was also present. It was a great night she said. She reminded the Board to submit their availability for the trustee retreat in

June. The date will be selected by the next Board meeting. Please send in any topics that you would like to be addressed.

X. President's Report

A. Enrollment Management Update

The President reported that he would get the final results on fall enrollment to the Board. It was an interesting year, students that are enrolled accepted later than usual. He sensed that students have turned the corner on COVID and that there is an increased sense of normalcy on campus. This year, in his opinion, students are operating as they had prior to COVID. We have started our new season of recruiting.

B. Open House update

The President discussed the first Open House held last Saturday. It was a nice day and the good weather might have worked against us in regards to attendance. There were also at least two other state universities that held their Open House events on the same day. There will be another Open House later in the month (10/28). Faculty and staff were active participants and parents were particularly interested in student support services (Disability Services and Mental Health Services.) The admissions staff are out on the road for travel season with 450 visits scheduled. He next talked about the changes in the FAFSA filing procedures which will cause a delay in the admissions process. Normally, we would be having students starting the process in October, now it will most likely be pushed out to January or February.

C. Homecoming

The President talked about Homecoming that will be held on November 3-5 with a variety of activities that includes a carnival and casino night. There will be some alumni events including Gold Key that will be held earlier this fall due to the lateness of homecoming and the need for many to migrate to Florida for the winter.

D. News Articles

The news articles were presented for informational purposes.

XI. 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 12:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Tiernan

Documents used during the meeting

- VOTE Minutes.pdf
- Attachment C FSU No Material Weakness Letter 2023 Draft.pdf
- Attachment F FSU Foundation No Material Weakness Letter 2023 Draft.pdf
- Attachment B FSU Governance Letter - Final 2023 Draft.pdf
- Attachment J FSU Executive Summary 2023.pdf
- Attachment E FSU Foundation Governance Letter - Final 2023 Draft.pdf
- Attachment L Executive Summary Foundation Supporting Org June 2023.pdf
- Attachment I FSU Supporting Org No Material Weakness Letter 2023 Draft.pdf
- Attachment K Executive Summary Foundation 2023.pdf
- Attachment H FSU Supporting Org Governance Letter - Final 2023 Draft.pdf
- Attachment G FSU Foundation Supporting Org Draft 10.13.23.pdf
- Attachment D Fitchburg State Foundation Draft.pdf
- Attachment A Fitchburg State University 2023 - DRAFT.pdf
- FSU FY 2023 Board Presentation 2 (1).pptx
- VOTE FY2023 Audit 10-17-23.pdf
- FY24 BOT Budget Summary - FY24 Board Summary (1).pdf
- BOT Academic Affairs Update Oct 2023.pptx
- Report 10172023 Notifications.pdf
- Oct 2023 News Clips.pdf