APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Tuesday February 6, 2024 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 6, 2024 at 8:15 a.m.

The meeting will take place 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 (remote), K. Spinelli (remote), L. Barrieau (remote), M. Fiorentino, Jr.

Trustees Absent
S. King-Goodwin

Ex Officio Members Present
R. Lapidus

Guests Present

C. Bullis, F. Barricelli, G. Doiron, G. Doiron, J. Bry, J. Hanselman, J. Murdoch, J. Wolfman, L. Bayless, M. Bruun, P. Marshall, P. McCafferty, R. Toomey, S. Dodd, S. Levine

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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 6, 2024 at 8:15 AM.

C. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

D. Approve Minutes from the November 14, 2023 meeting - VOTE (25-23/24)

C. Stimpson made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 11-14-23.
D. Tiernan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

E. Approve minutes from the November 16, 2023 meeting. (26-23/24)

M. Fiorentino, Jr. made a motion to approve the minutes from Special Board of Trustees Meeting on 11-16-23.
C. Stimpson seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

L. Barrieau	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
D. Phillips	Aye
A. Turner	Aye

Roll Call

S. King-Goodwin	Absent
C. Stimpson	Aye
K. Spinelli	Aye
J. Flanagan	Absent
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye

F. Approve minutes from the December 7, 2023 meeting. (27-23/24)

A. Turner made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 12-07-23.
D. Tiernan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

G. Approve minutes from the December 19, 2023 meeting. (28-23/24)

A. Turner made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 12-19-23.
D. Tiernan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Financial Sustainability Report Discussion

A.

Academic Efficiencies Final Report

D. Phillips stated the reports in the packet are presented for discussion purposes and that there are no votes to be taken. There is no particular presentation and she asked for questions and comments.

President Lapidus stated that this was a good exercise for the campus community, it was taken seriously, there were interesting ideas presented. He thought it gave the campus an opportunity to look at areas in a holistic way to learn about the complexities of the university. Also, it was a chance for members of the campus community to work with others that they normally don't interact with in their everyday work life. He stated that we are trying to synthesize all of this information down to a spreadsheet so we can look at the information in a more digestible fashion.

M. Fiorentino commented that it's going to be extremely important to have an opportunity to review the spreadsheet once it's put together and identify what needs to be worked on. He thanked all of those that participated, they have spent a great deal of time with the intent to help the institution move forward.

The President responded that the spreadsheet will document a number of items in the reports that are already completed or in various states of process.

There was a discussion on the process of assessing and potentially acting on items.

The President acknowledged that he is in a tricky position given he is retiring. He wants to leave the next person with the pros and cons and possible next steps. The board agreed with this assessment.

The President reported on a meeting that he had with Vice President Marshall and Dr. Richard Riccardi, Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs & Student Success, Mass Department of Higher Education, regarding the extension of our strategic plan to 2028. The mission statement is currently being reviewed and if changes are proposed it would be best to have them completed before moving into the strategic planning process. The extension will also better align with the NECHE review cycle.

D. Phillips asked about the proposed elimination of specific contracts, and consultant services suggested in the report. The President responded that EAB is the one that drew the greatest focus and produces the largest expense. Some of their services have been well received, and other have not.

There was a discussion on the services that EAB offered and other contracted services.

J. Flanagan joined the meeting at 8:41 a.m.

There was a conversation around the systems used and how they support the institution.

E. Gregoire noted that data is a central piece of how we operate and getting the right data for our needs is important. The systems need to work in the most efficient means to make the crucial decisions necessary as we move ahead. Figuring out what the needs are, and how they are being met is a conversation that needs to be held.

M. Fiorentino stated looking at what we can do in-house needs to be evaluated. These are difficult conversations, and we have a loosely defined system.

There was a lively conversation regarding commencement being held on campus as opposed to an off-site venue.

B. Administrative Efficiencies Final Report

C. Entrepreneurship and Revenue Final Report

A. Turner suggested expanding opportunities with conferences over the summer.

E. Gregoire noted that an important takeaway from the report is that resources for advancement are lean.

The President stated that it is not clear how much the items mentioned in this report represent the campus broadly or just the members of the committee working on the specific topics.

D. Property and Infrastructure Final Report

The President reported that many of the items suggested in this report are already in process. He talked about some of the properties and current activities pertaining to them.

M. Fiorentino noted that this document talks about a number of things such as our campus physical plant in general and how they are currently used. He thought it was critical that we make decisions on what we need, and don’t need. All of this needs to be a part of the capital plan. All campuses have a back log of deferred maintenance.

E. Gregoire echoed the statement of having a capital plan that considers what is needed, and also, a capital plan with priorities.

A. Turner asked what is the next academic building to be renovated?

The President responded that the Conlon Building is next to be worked on. Part of the challenge is funding. Financial resources are provided incrementally and he noted there will be many phases to this particular project given the size of the building.

E. Student Services Final Report

The President reported that the Chartwells proposal presented earlier in the year, has been worked on. Focus groups led by an outside group have been conducted and a survey will be going to all students in the next few days. A comprehensive report will be presented to the Board for consideration and approval.

There was a discussion on the renovation timeline should this proposal be approved, it would be the fall of 2025.

M. Fiorentino said it's important for the Board to have the opportunity to review the proposal and have a proper discussion before making any decisions on this major project. He reiterated there are so many recommendations around the facilities, we need to have priorities.

III. Theater Update

A. The President will provide an update on the Theater Project.

President Lapidus discussed the new strategy for the Theater Project. He talked about the escalation in pricing around labor, materials, and the impact of new energy efficient building codes. He discussed a re-costing of the original project that reflected tremendous escalation on all costs. He indicated that a new architect was asked to look at the project from a right-sizing perspective with a focus on meeting the needs of the academic departments first and the broader community in a later phase. They came back with a new configuration using just the existing historic building. The new drawings present two smaller theaters inside the original building with a significant cost reduction. The academic group continues to be excited about a black box option and they had no concerns with the proposal moving forward. The proposal is to split the building in half and remove the balcony and use that space for a two-story black box space. It's a great space to teach technical theater, and we are going to continue to have more conversations with faculty now that we know that the space will meet their needs. The president also noted that the university had received to two large grants that are on a short timelines. He proposed to have an intermediate phase (enabling phase) in which the roof and other building envelop issues are addressed.

M. Fiorentino asked what the cost of the enable phase would be? J. Bry indicated it would be approximately $7.5 million. The board indicated the project should move forward. They stated that it is important that we show some activity soon and reengage the community with this exciting project. Approximately $16 million will be needed to complete the black box construction.

E. Gregoire asked if this new method will impact historic tax credits? J. Bry responded that there will be no more tax credits.

There was a brief discussion on federal funding options.

The President will show the revised plan to the faculty and staff in the Theater Department for further input. The board will also have an opportunity to review construction plans as they become available.

IV. Student Life Committee Report

A. Dr. Laura Bayless will provide the Student Life report.

L. Bayless provided the Student Life Committee report. She stated herself and Chief Michael Cloutier presented to the committee on January 23 about safety and what campus safety entails. It is a shared approach and there are key offices involved. We are creating a climate that all can be trained in campus safety and we have specific training for students and new employees. We have a robust emergency management plan, we have many policies and procedures in place. We do hold people accountable and we do train and try to share information as much as possible.

D. Phillips commented that it was a really great presentation. Campus Police takes all of this very seriously which provides a comfort to the campus community.

L. Barrieau thought it was a remarkable presentation and it was incredibly comprehensive.

V. Notifications

A. Personnel Actions (N04-23/24)

The personnel actions were presented for informational purposes.

M. Fiorentino asked about the three resignations in the School of Graduate, Online and Continuing Education. J. Murdoch responded that there is no correlation between them and that it was just a coincidence.

E. Gregoire asked about the cost savings regarding the three-month hiring freeze and vacant positions. J. Bry responded that we are running on target on vacant and lapsed positions. We will have a detailed report at the Personnel Committee meeting.

B.

Financial Statements (N05-23/24)

The Financial Statements were presented for informational purposes.

VI. Brief discussion and vote for a new Trustee Retreat date.

A. VOTE (29-23/24)

D. Phillips stated given we are going to have a new President that the Trustee Retreat needs to be rescheduled. There was a discussion.

M. Fiorentino, Jr. made a motion to postpone the Trustee retreat scheduled in June to sometime in August.
D. Tiernan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

VII. Student Trustee Report

A. Allison Turner will provide the Student Trustee report.

A. Turner commented that she would send along the student report later in the week. She was waiting for some data. The semester is going well. She noted some events taking place during Black History Month. She did mention that there were some concerns from students around accessibility on campus after a recent snow storm.

VIII. Presidential Search Update

A. Eric Gregoire will provide an update.

E. Gregoire reported that the committee held exhaustive meetings in developing the Presidential Profile at a rapid pace. He is appreciative of all involved in taking these steps. He expressed his appreciation to Witt Kieffer for their guidance. Immediately after the profile was completed, Witt Kieffer started their recruitment efforts. They are currently performing individual recruitment efforts to gauge interest. There are submitted applications. The priority deadline is February 6 and the committee will review

applications in a secure location. There are two scheduled search committee meetings and we have narrowed down some candidate questions, and how they relate to the profile. The committee is very focused on interview questions and over the meetings, we discussed how to do this when we have in person interviews. The interview sessions with the committee will be held in executive session. Once finalists are identified, there will be public announcements. We have tentative plans to open candidate campus visits at the end of March and the first week of April.

E. Gregoire requested that the Trustees block out this timeframe and try to make yourself available. This will be the time when the Board will have the opportunity to interview the finalists. We are entering into a quieter phase, and as we receive these nominations, if there are additional comments or suggestions to please let him know. Keeping open communication during this process is important.

D. Phillips reminded the Board that questions, comments or concerns on the Presidential Search process, go through E. Gregoire.

IX. Chair's Report

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

D. Phillips stated that we met our goal of 100% participation from each Trustee in regards to annual giving. She received the annual memo from the Commissioner concerning the presidential evaluation which includes state wide priorities and procedures. The document was sent to Vice Chair Barrieau as she is the Chair of the Personnel Committee. The committee has an interest in recommending changes. She noted that we are excused from performing the Presidential Evaluation process this year given a new president will begin on July 1, 2024.

L. Barrieau informed the Board that the Personnel Committee scheduled in March will be rescheduled to accommodate Presidential Search activities.

D. Phillips announced that a Nominating Committee will be established to discuss a slate of officers for the next year. The committee will consist of the following Trustees:

Lynn Barrieau, Chair
Michael Fiorentino, Jr.
Sheila King- Goodwin
C. Deborah Phillips, ex-officio

The committee will meet before the May meeting to present a new slate of officers for consideration. She next asked if anyone would like to serve on any additional

committees or if we need to add a committee, to please let her know. Another item to consider are the meetings times for committee and board meetings.

X. President's Report

A. Enrollment Update

The President reported that we closed the spring semester with a few more students than we budgeted for, not a large number, but we are trending in the right direction. We also have additional students in the Residence Halls. The fall 2024 applications are slightly up from last year, which we take as a positive and the impact of the Common Application has helped. The deposits are up slightly, but it is too early to provide real numbers. One area that remains flat is transfer students. The FAFSA process is a challenge with its delays, and the launch date has been postponed from January to March. This means that financial aid packages most likely will not be sent to students until the end of April. There is concern regarding the impact to our events such as Future Falcon Day. He expressed his concern that there may be consequences to enrollment, particularly with underrepresented populations opting out. All schools are struggling with the same situation.

B. New Program Approval Update

The President stated that the new two new programs, Creative Arts Enterprise and Expressive Arts Therapy, have moved through the subcommittees and will be voted on this morning at the Board of Higher Education meeting. He announced that the recent graduates from the Nursing Program have passed the NCLEX exam with a 98% pass rate. We took a dip during COVID and we are pleased to report this good news. Also, we received a one million-dollar NSF grant targeted at underserved populations and STEM. He thanked Dean Jennifer Hanselman and her team for their great work.

C. News Articles

The news articles were submitted 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 10:08 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Tiernan