APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees Meeting

Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees

Date and Time
Tuesday April 2, 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 to be held on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 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, E. Gregoire, J. Flanagan (remote), K. Spinelli (remote), L. Barrieau (remote), M. Fiorentino, Jr. (remote), S. King-Goodwin (remote)

Trustees Absent
D. Tiernan

Guests Present
B. Levy, C. Bullis, C. Hughes, G. Doiron, G. Doiron, J. Bry, J. Murdoch, J. Wolfman, K. Lundgren, L. Bayless, M. Bruun, M. McKenzie, P. Marshall, P. McCafferty, P. Weizer, R. Lapidus, R. Toomey, S. Levine

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 Apr 2, 2024 at 8:15 AM.

C. Public Comments

There were none.

D. Approve Minutes from the Board of Trustees February 6, 2024 meeting - VOTE (27-23/24)

C. Stimpson made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Meeting on 02-06-24.
J. Flanagan seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

II. Presidential Search Committee Report

A. Committee's Recommended Finalists for Trustee Interviews

E. Gregoire read a prepared statement:

Good morning, I’m pleased to provide an update on the presidential search on behalf of the Presidential Search Committee.

I would like to begin by taking a few moments to reflect on the search committee’s work and acknowledge the substantial contribution made by its members to Fitchburg State.

Each committee member approached their work with seriousness and dedication befitting the task charged to us. It was clear from the start that members were putting countless hours into their work and contributing to our discussions in meaningful ways to advance our efforts. The passion for Fitchburg State resonated as a common bond for all members and demonstrated everyone’s commitment to hear the perspective shared by each other to better understand and inform our decision-making. Many of us met each

other for the first time when we gathered for our first meeting back in early December. Since then, I have been proud to witness the synergy developed among the committee to collaborate, listen to each other's perspectives and strive to reach consensus on our decisions whenever possible. Committee members understood the significance of their work as a milestone for our University and worked diligently to find a leader who will work with us all to advance our mission and forge a bright future.

I honestly wish that I could take the time to provide individual accolades for each member of this committee due to their impressive contributions. But we'd be here for a long while. Everyone deserves to be acknowledged for the time committed to this weighty endeavor and for your focus on representing key stakeholders from our campus community and for doing it exceedingly well and for your willingness to listen and learn from one another in a respectful and professional manner. I am so fortunate to call you all colleagues and to have collaborated with you all. I do want to genuinely say thank you for harnessing your passion for our University and its community to positively contribute in such a meaningful way to its future.

Jessica & Kelli have worked tirelessly to support the committee even over nights and weekends. Personally, and on behalf of the search committee, I want to thank you for your support and hard work at each step of the process which required substantial details to be addressed behind the scenes and ensuring we remain in compliance with DHE guidance and applicable laws. We deeply appreciate your work to prepare for our meetings, (even anticipating our needs) supporting the process overall, and for your dedication to Fitchburg State.

We understood early in the search process that it was a competitive atmosphere for hiring senior leaders in higher education. The partnership with the WittKieffer team throughout this process has been invaluable both for their expert advice on best practices in the search and for their substantial contributions to developing a well-qualified and diverse pool of candidates on our behalf; all while working to meet our ambitious timelines. I want to thank on behalf of the committee and Board, Greg, Ryan, Randi, and the entire WittKieffer team for their collaboration with us thus far in the process.
I'm pleased to report that our recruitment efforts and the content in our Presidential Profile generated substantial interest resulting in nearly 80 applicants for the presidency. Through WittKieffer the opportunity at Fitchburg State described via the profile was shared nationally to approximately 4,000 individuals seeking nominations and applications. These recruitment efforts were focused on individuals working with regional comprehensive universities and included targeted outreach to professional organizations and publications for women and minority groups in higher education. WittKieffer conducted outreach about the position to approximately 1,000 individuals to gauge interest and spread awareness. I'm pleased to share that these efforts yielded a diverse pool of well-qualified nominees and applicants based on various attributes including gender, ethnic/racial identification, and other classifications. Following the application deadline, the Search Committee was provided access to candidate materials

utilizing a secure web portal to maintain the highest level of confidentiality. The committee was able to evaluate candidates based upon the qualifications & qualities defined as “must have” and “should have” in the presidential profile. The Search Committee deliberated and identified ten semi-finalist candidates to invite for first round in-person interviews. The semi-finalist pool continued to be diverse based on professional experiences and along gender, racial, and other identifications. The ten semifinalists self-identified as: 4 women, 6 men, 1 identified as Asian, 1 as Black/African American, 2 as Hispanic/Latino, 6 as White. Two identified as veterans and one as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

The Presidential Search committee met with the ten semi-finalist candidates for in-person interviews over two days. The committee subsequently deliberated to determine the finalist recommendations to the Board of Trustees. I am pleased to announce today that the Search Committee recommends the following individuals, in unranked, alphabetical order who best embody the preferred characteristics of the next president of Fitchburg State:

- Dr. Michael Godard

Currently serving as Provost at Southeast Missouri State University

- Dr. Donna Souder Hodge

Currently serving as Vice President of Operations & Advancement at Colorado State University Pueblo

- Dr. Karim Ismaili

Currently serving as Executive Vice President & Provost at Bridgewater State University

- Dr. Mark Overmyer-Velazquez

Currently serving as Dean & Chief Administrative Officer at the University of Connecticut Hartford

I am excited to share some brief observations describing each of the recommended candidates and their backgrounds in the unranked order.

Dr. Godard has served as Provost at Southeast Missouri State University for the past five years and previously served at the University of Central Missouri in several roles including as a faculty member, department chair, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, and Interim Provost. He has held various faculty appointments in exercise

physiology spanning a twelve-year period at four institutions. Dr. Godard has demonstrated success in academic prioritization and innovation to improve curriculum while aligning with regional and workforce needs. His experience in enrollment management & student success is a key strength as he has sought to minimize barriers for students in genuine ways. He has a willingness to engage with innovative approaches including implementing changes to financial models to spur revenue generation.

Dr. Souder Hodge has served as Vice President of Operations and Advancement at Colorado State University Pueblo for the past three years. She has held a variety of administrative posts over six years including Director for the Center for Teaching & Learning, Special Advisor to the President, and Chief Strategy Officer. Prior to these posts at CSU Pueblo she held various faculty appointments in English and Women's & Chicano Studies over seven years. Dr. Souder Hodge has unique strengths due to her faculty background and administrative experience overseeing day-to-day operations of her campus including facilities management, auxiliaries, marketing, and advancement areas. Her experiences as a strong "connector" of others across the campus to address challenges and maintain focus that every area of the institutions contributes to student success. Her command of complex financial & operational issues, ability to execute on prioritized actions, and approach to building relationships on & off campus are compelling strengths.

Dr. Ismaili has served as Provost at Bridgewater State University for over six years including the past three years as Executive Vice President & Provost. Over a three-year period, he previously held other roles at Bridgewater State including as a faculty member, Dean of the College of Graduate Studies, Vice Provost, and special advisor to the president. He has held academic administrative positions at two other institutions and held various faculty appointments in criminal justice spanning 28 years at five institutions. Additionally, he has held policy advisor positions in two ministries of the Canadian government. Dr. Ismaili has deep leadership experience across several areas at Bridgewater State and has an intimate understanding of the Massachusetts public higher education system. He has a track record of active engagement across functional areas to prioritize innovation and support the academic mission including building relationships with external groups and advancement experience. He displays an empathetic philosophy to his work and is passionate about the role Fitchburg State plays in the region and Commonwealth.

Dr. Overmyer-Velazquez has served as Dean and Chief Administrative Officer at University of Connecticut Hartford for the past six years. He previously served as Director of El Instiuto: Institute of Latina/o, Caribbean, and Latin American Studies for nine years. He has previously held various faculty appointments in history, specializing in US Latinx and Latin American history for the past 20 years at UConn. Additionally, he has served as an elected member & Chair of the West Hartford Board of Education for six years. Dr. Overmyer-Velazquez's experience leading UConn Hartford demonstrates his

ability to be an effective leader and cultivate strong community relationships tied to the mission of the campus. He has experience working with students and creating student support initiatives driven by a sense of equity for all student to realize their potential and be successful. His commitment to transparency and accountability in financial management, experience creating efficiencies as part of his work within a system, and communication style to advocate for necessary resources as additional key strengths. In compliance with the DHE's Guidance on Presidential Searches and for your convenience, the finalists curriculum vitae and letter of interest will be shared with the Board and the Department of Higher Education this morning. Chair Phillips will provide official notification of the announced finalist candidates to Commissioner Ortega this morning as well. I would also note that these materials will be publicly available on the Presidential Search website for members of the campus community to reference.

As we now look forward and advance the search to the next phase of the on-campus visits with our finalists, I want to underscore the importance of our engagement in those visits both by the Board and by every member of the campus community. We have prepared robust schedules for the candidates which facilitates conversations with a wide swath of campus constituencies. As you are aware that includes dedicated interview time with the Board to learn more about each candidate's background and their vision for Fitchburg State. The appointment of a new president will be the most consequential action we will take during our tenure as trustees. I encourage everyone to participate fully in these Board sessions and to spend time on campus to attend other sessions if your schedule allows. The candidates will be visiting campus on the following dates: April 10 & 11 – Dr. Ismaili; April 16 & 17 – Dr. Overmyer-Velazquez; April 22 & 23 – Dr. Souder Hodge; April 29 & 30 – Dr. Godard. Following the candidate visits the campus community will be encouraged to respond to a survey to collect as much insight from the campus community on the candidates. These survey results would then be shared with the Trustees to help inform our decision-making process.

In closing, personally it has been a tremendously enriching experience to partner with so many wonderful colleagues across the University community and endeavor to find the right person to lead Fitchburg State at this critical moment. I am left with a palpable feeling of enthusiasm for our mission to transform the lives of our students and the commitment of our campus community to tackle our challenges together. I'm an optimist, especially about Fitchburg State, and feel confident that we're able to meet our challenges and those on the horizon when we work together as a community.

I am deeply grateful to Chair Phillips and the Board for the opportunity to lead the presidential search and contribute to the University in such a meaningful way. I'm humbled by the opportunity and appreciate the confidence placed in my leadership of this process. I'm excited about the leadership potential that each of our finalists possess and look forward to welcoming them to campus in the coming weeks.

Thank you again, that concludes my remarks, but I am happy to answer any questions from Board members.

M. Fiorentino joined at 8:16 a.m.

K. Spinelli joined at 8:29 a.m.

III. Tenure

A. Tenure- VOTE (28-23/24)

The President next presented the candidates for 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 faculty presented for tenure with promotion effective September 1, 2024.
C. Stimpson seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

IV. Personnel

A. Short Term Educational Leave Request - VOTE (30-23/24)

President Lapidus presented a staff member requesting a short-term educational leave. Ms. Nicole Salerno, Assistant Director, International Education would like to take a leave to better familiarize herself with Italy. In her position, she coordinates student trips and this leave would provide her with first hand experience.

There was a discussion.
M. Fiorentino, Jr. made a motion to approve the short term educational leave request.
E. Gregoire seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

V. Executive Session - Sabbatical Waiver Request

A. VOTE (31-23/24)

M. Fiorentino, Jr. made a motion to enter into executive session in accordance with MGL c. 30A, Section 21 (a)(1) to discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual in relation to the sabbatical leave provision within the terms of Article XV, Section C of the MSCA and BHE collective bargaining agreement. (other information withheld under MGL c. 214, Section 1B right to privacy) The Board will return to open session.
E. Gregoire seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

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

The meeting reconvened at 9:03 a.m.

VI. Executive Session Discussion

A. VOTE (29-23/24)

E. Gregoire made a motion to vote that it has been presented with reasons satisfactory to excuse a faculty member from the requirements of Article XV, Section C of the MSCA

and BHE collective bargaining agreement relative to the completion of service following a sabbatical and approves the request.
A. Turner seconded the motion.
The motion did not carry.

Roll Call	
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	No
E. Gregoire	No
D. Phillips	No
J. Flanagan	No
K. Spinelli	No
L. Barrieau	No
A. Turner	No
S. King-Goodwin	No
D. Tiernan	Absent
C. Stimpson	No

VII. Budget, Finance and Facilities Committee Report

A. Update from Karen Spinelli, Chair of the Budget, Finance and Facilities Committee

K. Spinelli updated the Board on the committee meeting last week where the draft budget was reviewed.

J. Bry provided a summary of the meeting that discussed the budget in detail which included collective bargaining, performance funding, staff reductions, personnel, enrollment projections, performance funding, graduate enrollments, housing occupancy, fund balances, fee history, fee increases and the dining hall renovations.

VIII. Notifications

A. Promotions (N06-23/24)

The promotion notifications were submitted for informational purposes.

B. Personnel Notifications- (N07-23/24)

The personnel notifications were submitted for informational purposes.

C. 990's Foundation (N08-23/24)

The Foundation 990's were submitted for informational purposes.

D. 990's Supporting Org. (N09-23/24)

The Supporting Org. 990's were submitted for informational purposes.

IX. Student Trustee Report

A. Update from Student Trustee Allison Turner

A. Turner reported on the various student events taking place. She said it's great to see people participating in all the programs including the student town hall that would be taking place later in the evening. SGA is implementing mandatory participation for all members to attend the Presidential Search student sessions.

X. Chair's Report

A. Update from Chair Debbie Phillips

D. Phillips will provide her report later in the meeting.

XI. President's Report

A. Enrollment Update

The president reported that not a lot has changed since the last time he reported as it relates to enrollment. We have been doing a great deal of outreach to perspective students. In review of applications, they are up slightly from last year. The Enrollment Management division is being very aggressive in finding ways to increase enrollment.

B. Future Falcon Day

There were two Future Falcon days scheduled this semester. The first event, the weather was not nice resulting in a 65% show rate of students. Those that did attend reported a meaningful experience. There has been strong interest in the Honor's program.

C. AAQEP Accreditation

The president informed the Board of the AAQEP Accreditation for the Education Department. The AAQEP team was impressed with the department. He talked about the Future Educators program as an area they were impressed with on the campus.

D. Academic Calendar 2024-2025

The 2024 - 2025 Academic Calendar was presented for informational purposes.

E. News Articles

The news articles were submitted for informational purposes.

XII. Events for Consideration

A.

Going Away Events on April 25 at 3:30 p.m. and May 2 at 3 p.m.

B. Convocation - April 18 at 2:00 p.m. - Weston Auditorium

C. Nurse Pinning Ceremony on May 15 at 6:00 p.m. - Weston Auditorium

D. Graduate Commencement Ceremony on May 16 at 6:30 p.m. - Recreation Center

The president reported that this will probably be the largest class in the history of the school, and that a ticketing system will be used. The next president will have to make decisions on possibly moving to a different location or changing the format.

As a final item not on the agenda he reported the unexpected resignation of the football coach. The coach cited personal reasons. This announcement has serious implications for the team and current recruit given the timing. The coach has notified the team. The university is talking with the assistant coaches and others to work through the situation and identify a coach for the upcoming season.

E. Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony on May 18 at 10:00 a.m. - Campus Quadrangle

XIII. Candidate Interviews

A. Format/Develop Questions

D. Phillips presented the last item for discussion, the format and questions for the presidential interviews. She suggested doing it similar to the search committee.

The sample questions were discussed and refined to include all sectors of managing the university. Specific questions were assigned to a board member. It was stressed that time management at the meeting will be important.

There was a discussion on the approach of what to ask, how to ask, and follow-up questions. Board members should be prepared to be asked questions as well.

The Board will meet on Friday, April 5 at 8:30 a.m. to continue the discussion.

XIV. 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 10:06 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
D. Tiernan