APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees

Date and Time
Thursday December 12, 2024 at 1:00 PM

Location
Hammond Hall - Main Lounge

Notice of a meeting of the Fitchburg State University Board of Trustees on Tuesday, December 12, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting will take place in the Main Lounge, Hammond Hall, Fitchburg, MA 01420

Public Live Stream:
https://www.fitchburgstate.edu/live

Trustees Present
C. Stimpson, E. Gregoire, J. Flanagan, K. Spinelli, L. Barrieau, M. Fiorentino, Jr., M. Gill, M. Morris, S. King-Goodwin

Trustees Absent
D. Phillips, D. Tiernan

Ex Officio Members Present
D. Hodge

Guests Present

Carin Bullis, K. Lundgren, M. Bruun, Matthew Lechter, Michael Cloutier

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance and Guests

B. Call the Meeting to Order

M. Fiorentino, Jr. called a meeting of the board of trustees of Fitchburg State University to order on Thursday Dec 12, 2024 at 1:04 PM.

C. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

II. Board Chair's Report

A. Approval of Minutes, October 17, 2024 VOTE (04.2024-2025)

L. Barrieau made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees on 10-17-24.
S. King-Goodwin seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Approval of minutes, October 28, 2024 VOTE (05.2024-2025)

J. Flanagan made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees on 10-28-24.
L. Barrieau seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

III. Academic Affairs Committee Update

A. Update from Jennifer Flanagan, Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee

The academic affairs committee met on Monday, December 2nd. There was an informative presentation by Connie Strittmatter from the library about Open Educational Resources known as OERs. The university has been active in this effort for several years involving the creation and distribution of free teaching, learning and research materials. on this campus, the project aims to reduce the cost of textbooks for students and to promote innovative teaching practices.

Over the past several years, grants spanning every academic department have been awarded to faculty to adopt open educational resources and workshops have been held to educate faculty about the OERs and open pedagogy. the university has seen significant cost savings for students through the adoption of OERs with over three million saved since 2022. The committee overseeing this work is also exploring the impact of OERs on student learning outcomes particularly for the underrepresented groups. there

was also a discussion of the committee's role in reviewing new academic programs, faculty evaluations, and academic planning.

IV. President's Report

A. From the President

Key Discussion Points:

1. **New Vice President of Personnel Services and General Counsel:**
    - Stacy Luster was introduced as the new Vice President of Personnel Services and General Counsel.
2. **Campus Updates:**
    - The university is focused on improving the student experience and engagement.
    - Recent events, such as homecoming and the winter dance showcase, were successful.
    - The university is preparing for the upcoming winter commencement ceremony.
3. **Enrollment Update:**
    - The university experienced a slight decline in total headcount for fall 2024.
    - The university is working to develop a unified enrollment management strategy to address enrollment challenges.
    - The university is focusing on retention and persistence efforts to improve student success.
4. **Enrollment Challenges and Opportunities:**
    - The university is working to develop a unified enrollment management strategy to address enrollment challenges.
    - The university is focusing on retention and persistence efforts to improve student success.
5. **Financial Update:**
    - The university is working to develop a more transparent and accurate budget and address financial challenges.
    - The university is closely monitoring expenses and revenues.
    - The university is exploring opportunities to increase revenue and reduce costs while remaining committed to providing a high-quality education.
6. **Student Experience and Support:**
    - The university is focused on improving the overall student experience.
    - The university is investing in student support services, such as mental health and academic advising.
    - The university is working to create a more inclusive and welcoming campus environment.

Action Items:

- Continue to implement a unified enrollment management strategy.
- Develop a transparent budgeting process.
- Prioritize retention and persistence efforts.
- Leverage opportunities for growth.
- Implement strategies to improve student retention and persistence through student success.

Next Steps:

- The university will continue to work towards its strategic goals.
- The university will continue to focus on student success and engagement.
- The university will monitor enrollment trends and adjust its strategy as needed.
- The university will continue to prioritize fiscal responsibility and financial sustainability.

Upcoming Events:

- Commencement Ceremony on December 20th
- Winter Orientation on January 6th
- Investiture Week planning is underway. Week of April 14.

B. Chief of Police, Michael Cloutier: Annual Fire & Safety Report

Key Discussion Points:

1. **Clery Act Compliance:**
    - The university is compliant with the Clery Act by reporting crime statistics, alerting the campus community of imminent dangers, and publishing an annual security report.
    - The reporting of sexual assault incidents has increased, indicating a positive shift in reporting culture.
2. **Campus Safety Initiatives:**
    - The university has a comprehensive approach to campus safety, including:
        - Emergency management planning and drills
        - Training and education for students, faculty, and staff
        - Community policing strategies
        - Partnerships with local law enforcement agencies
    - The university police department is committed to building relationships with the campus community to foster trust and encourage reporting.
3. **Active Shooter Preparedness:**
    - The university has implemented active shooter response training for both staff and students.
    - The police department is equipped with necessary tools and training to respond to such incidents.

Action Items:

- Continue to promote awareness of campus safety resources and initiatives.
- Review and update emergency response plans as needed.
- Strengthen partnerships with local law enforcement agencies.
- Explore opportunities for further collaboration with the community.

Next Steps:

- The university will continue to prioritize campus safety and work to create a safe and secure environment for all.

C. Executive Director of Housing and Residential Services/Special Assignment to President, Matt Lechter: Real Estate

Key Discussion Points:

1. **Housing Challenges and Opportunities:**
    - The university is facing challenges in maintaining and optimizing its housing portfolio, including budgetary constraints and occupancy rates.
    - The university is working to increase occupancy rates and generate more revenue from housing operations.
    - The university is exploring opportunities to develop new housing options, such as graduate and family housing.
2. **Herlihy Hall Reopening:**
    - Herlihy Hall is being renovated and will reopen in January 2025 with 14 student beds.
    - The renovated hall will offer modern amenities, including wall mounted smart TVs, high-speed internet, and updated common areas.
3. **Real Estate Portfolio:**
    - The university owns a significant amount of real estate, including residential and commercial properties.
    - The university is developing a strategic plan to optimize the use of its real estate assets.
    - The university is exploring partnerships with external organizations to develop and manage its properties.

Action Items:

- Continue to implement strategies to increase occupancy rates and generate revenue from housing operations.
- Complete the renovation of Herlihy Hall.
- Develop a strategic plan for the university's real estate portfolio.
- Explore opportunities for partnerships and collaborations to optimize the use of real estate assets.
- Continue to work with MSCBA to optimize housing rates and occupancy.

- Improve communication about the value of on-campus housing.

Next Steps:

- The university will continue to monitor housing trends and adjust its strategies as needed.
- The university will work to improve the overall student housing experience.
- The university will explore opportunities to expand its housing offerings to meet the needs of a diverse student population.
- The university will work to create a more attractive and affordable housing experience for students.

Key Discussion Points:

1. **University Real Estate Portfolio:**

- There is a need to balance the preservation of historic buildings with the need for modern, functional facilities.

1. **Housing Costs and Occupancy Rates:**

- MSCBA sets housing rates for state universities, including Fitchburg State.
- The university is working to increase occupancy rates and generate more revenue from housing operations.
- The university needs to effectively communicate the value of on-campus housing to potential students.

1. **Future Plans:**

- The university will continue to develop a comprehensive real estate strategy.
- The university will prioritize the needs of students and faculty in its decision-making process.
- The university will explore innovative solutions to address housing challenges and opportunities.

V. Student Trustee Report

A. Student Trustee Report

Key Discussion Points:

1. **Election Results Party:**
    - SGA hosted a successful election results party, which was well-attended by students. Students were respectful of each other's political opinions.
    - The event featured election trivia, food, and live updates.
2. **Student Engagement:**

- SGA has seen increased student engagement in various campus activities and organizations.
- Over 468 events and meetings were held by student organizations.

3. **Homecoming Weekend:**
   - Homecoming weekend was a success, with a variety of events attracting a large number of students.
   - Events included a pep rally, carnival, tailgate, athletic competitions, and a dance/ casino night.
4. **Student Performances and Activities:**
   - The university has hosted successful dance and theater performances.
   - SGA is working to increase engagement among graduate students.
5. **SGA Initiatives:**
   - SGA is reviewing budgeting processes for clubs and organizations.
   - SGA is working to increase the representation of graduate students.

Action Items:

- Continue to promote student engagement and participation in campus activities.
- Explore opportunities to further support graduate students.
- Review and refine budgeting processes for student organizations.

Next Steps:

- SGA will continue to work with the administration to address student concerns and improve the overall campus experience.
- SGA will focus on building stronger relationships with graduate students and other student groups.
- SGA will continue to advocate for the needs of all students.

VI. Budget Report/Updates

A. Presented by Dr. Hodge

Key Discussion Points:

1. **Fiscal Year 25 Working Budget:**
   - The university has made significant progress in developing a more accurate and transparent budget.
   - The budget includes a detailed view of revenues and expenses, including SGOCE.
   - The budget is based on historical data and audited financials.
   - The university is closely monitoring enrollment, expenses, and revenue.
2. **Personnel Costs and Salary Savings:**
   - The university is closely monitoring personnel costs and salary savings.
   - The university is working to balance the need to fill vacant positions with the need to maintain fiscal responsibility.

- The university is committed to addressing equity issues and bringing employee compensation to market rates.

Action Items:

- Continue to monitor the fiscal year 25 budget and make adjustments as needed.
- Develop a comprehensive plan for addressing personnel costs and salary savings.
- Prepare a working draft of the fiscal year 26 budget for review at the February board meeting.

Next Steps:

- The university will continue to work towards financial sustainability.
- The university will prioritize investments in areas that support student success and institutional goals.
- The university will maintain transparency and accountability in its financial operations.

Key Discussion Points:

1. **Sabbatical Approvals:**
   - The board was informed of faculty sabbatical approvals.
   - Sabbatical approvals are now handled at the presidential level, with the chair's review.
2. **Personnel Changes:**
   - The board was informed of personnel changes within the university.
3. **Student Experience and Engagement:**
   - The university is focused on improving the student experience and engagement.
   - Recent initiatives, such as the renovation of Herlihy Hall and improvements to student billing practices, are aimed at enhancing the student experience.

Next Steps:

- The university will continue to prioritize student success and engagement.
- The university will continue to improve its financial operations and budgeting processes.
- The university will continue to invest in faculty development and research.

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Next Steps:

- The university will continue to prioritize student success and engagement.
- The university will continue to improve its financial operations and budgeting processes.

• The university will continue to invest in faculty development and research.

VII. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Next Board of Trustees Meeting: February 18, 2025, Fitchburg State University | Hammond Hall
Chair Fiorentino adjourned Board Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
M. Fiorentino, Jr.