APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Academic Affairs Committee Meeting

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Wednesday October 15, 2025 at 10:00 AM

Location
This is a virtual only meeting and it will be livestreamed

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

Committee Members Present
J. Flanagan (remote), M. Morris (remote)

Committee Members Absent
E. Gregoire, S. King-Goodwin

Guests Present
K. Lundgren (remote), M. Fiorentino, Jr. (remote)

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

B. Call the Meeting to Order

J. Flanagan called a meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee of Fitchburg State University to order on Wednesday Oct 15, 2025 at 10:02 AM.

C.

Approve Minutes

M. Morris made a motion to approve the minutes from Academic Affairs Committee Meeting on 04-10-25.
J. Flanagan seconded the motion.
The committee **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call	
S. King-Goodwin	Absent
E. Gregoire	Absent
J. Flanagan	Aye
M. Morris	Aye

D. Committee Charge by BOT Chair and President

BOT Chair Fiorentino noted that he and the president developed the charge for each BOT committee this year, along with an additional section of expectations for each. The goal is to align committee work with the priorities established for the current academic year at the Cabinet retreat in August and to identify priorities and direction for each committee. The hope with this approach is to share information across committees and to create a clear operational structure.

President Hodge added that her goal is to create consistency across the schedules of the committees and that her office will schedule committee meetings going forward. She and Chair Fiorentino will establish committee agendas. She emphasized that all Cabinet members are encouraged to come to all committee meetings. Two Cabinet members will be assigned to each committee, with the primary liaison tasked with taking committee notes. Notes will be turned around in 48 hours for review. The goal is to create a more consistent, neater, cleaner process.

BOT Chair Fiorentino added that each Trustee is free to attend any committee, which offers an opportunity for Trustees to interact and get to know each other better.

II. Academic Affairs

A. Academic Affairs

Provost Marshall began her report with staffing updates in the Division, which included the Dean of Business and Technology, ten full-time, and eight visiting assistant professors. She also reported on the restructuring of the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs. She stated that we have elevated the Director of the ORSP to the position of Executive Director of Accreditation, Grants, and Sponsored Programs, with three direct reports: an Associate Director of Grants (currently posted due to resignation), a Director of Accreditation and Assessment (currently posted due to retirement), and the Director of Early College. Provost Marshall also provided an update on the Dean of the Library search.

Provost Marshall presented the goals developed at the Division's summer retreat, including her charge to reduce the size and complexity of the 51-credit General Education program, the NECHE projection to reduce the size of majors to allow students more room to incorporate high-impact practices such as internships, co-ops and electives into their curricula, and collaborations with Enrollment Management and Student Success to integrate student success components into the FYE as part of an extended orientation to college life. She also updated the committee on the focus of September Development Day: the new DHE innovation regulations developed in response to the "three-year degree" movement and the statewide co-op initiative, with the invitation of leaders of each as keynote speakers: Rae Perry (UMass Lowell, considered the exemplar of co-ops among public universities in Massachusetts), and Dr. Lori Carrell (Chancellor of the University of Minnesota Rochester), the co-architect of the "College in Three" national movement.

Provost Marshall reported that, in response to the DHE's "Innovation Strategic Priority," Fitchburg State was not selected to be part of the "First Mover" cohort for the development of co-ops. However, she noted that Academic Affairs is poised to pursue external grant funding to support their development on our campus. President Hodge indicated that BHE Chair Gabrieli made a visit to campus last summer to discuss co-ops and that our campus submitted an overview of our intention which received favorable feedback. She added that there is clear interest in the development of co-ops on our campus. Mike Morris indicated that his firm has collaborated with Northeastern's co-ops for years and that he would welcome the opportunity to be involved in their development at Fitchburg State. Chair Flanagan echoed her interest in supporting this initiative, her own internship in college having been foundational for her subsequent career.

Provost Marshall then provided the national context for the "three-year degree" conversation, indicating that the BHE is establishing regulations that will allow Massachusetts institutions under its purview to offer them. She spoke to the concern that the conversation has generated, with at least one community college having submitted Letters of Intent to offer three-year baccalaureate degrees – a development that would raise enormous questions for the state university segment. President Hodge shared that the CoP has dedicated much energy to discussions of what in Massachusetts is called the "sub-120" degrees and affirmed Provost Marshall's cautious approach. Chair Flanagan indicated that the Academic Affairs and Enrollment committees should collaborate on this conversation and BOT Chair Fiorentino agreed that these two committees must work closely together. He noted that the Trustees have been discussing three-year degrees at length, and he expressed serious concerns about mission creep if community colleges offer baccalaureate degrees. President Hodge noted that that the CoP has expressed a similar concern. She emphasized that it is not just about protecting the state university sector, but also about ensuring that the community colleges can meet their own mission. BOT Chair Fiorentino added that there is ample opportunity for community colleges and state universities to continue to collaborate on seamless transfer

so both sectors win. Chair Flanagan suggested that the Academic Affairs committee keep the three-year degree on their agenda going forward.

Provost Marshall then provided a brief update on the new interdisciplinary major in Finance, between Economics and Business Administration. Having passed through governance last spring, and with the LOI nearly complete, she will share the proposal with President Hodge for her consideration before the end of the fall semester and, with her approval, to the BOT in the spring.

B. Update on EduVentures

Provost Marshall provided an update on Eduventures, including the high-level outcomes of the combined Program Strengths Assessment (PSA). She reminded the committee that the analysis places programs in one of four quadrants based on internal and external metrics and that the PSA is part of a multi-pronged approach that will be used to strengthen our overall academic portfolio and to determine the best pathway for success for every program. She reiterated that recommendations about academic programs will be grounded in our mission, our program review process, departmental trend data, admissions data (Slate), market analysis, and alignment with workforce needs. She shared the following high-level outcomes of the combined report:

- More than half of our programs are performing above average on external metrics, 30 of the 53 assessed bachelor's market scores are above 5.5
- When it comes to internal metrics, 6 of the 53 assessed programs received an internal score greater than 5.5 (Eduventure’s threshold for more versus less healthy program performance). These are factors on which we can have the most influence by doubling down on student success efforts.
- Ten of our programs are in the maintain category, 20 are in the invest (what we refer to as “focus”) category, 2 are in the monitor category, and 22 are in the evaluate category.
- The overall efficiency score in comparison to all 4-year public and private institutions in the region offering Bachelor’s degree programs is 7. A high score indicates high program efficiency and a score of 7 means that Fitchburg State is in the 70th percentile.

BOT Chair Fiorentino asked about timeline, as the information will have an impact on budgetary discussions as the Board makes long-term plans. Provost Marshall shared her intention to review the combined PSA with the Provost’s Council in the remainder of the fall semester to determine the best approach for leveraging the data to create action plans in conjunction with the faculty. She also stated that she would provide an update on the progress of this work at an upcoming meeting. She briefly discussed a series of potential components that might be included in action plans: program name changes, CIP code changes, scheduling analyses, a closer look at web presence, curricular analysis and revision, doubling down on retention efforts, and segmented/tailored program marketing.

C. Aligning Academic Affairs goals to institutional priorities

Provost Marshall then presented Divisional goals and accomplishments as they align with institutional priorities, including:

- Improve enrollment and student success (Eduventures, work on FYE as a retention tool, embedded tutoring in gateway courses, summer professional development for faculty to support inclusive learning environments for diverse learners)
- Increase institutional visibility and reputation (School of Education's second annual Breakfast with Legislators, the Perseverantia podcast network with its increasing number of downloads, successful academic accreditations of our professional programs, and a digital repository of faculty and librarian research and creative activity)
- Enhance financial sustainability (anonymous gift of $125,000 for unpaid internships for the third year in a row, $225,000 MAIPSE grant, $30,000 in scholarships from the North Central Chamber to support paraprofessionals entering our licensure programs, $45,000 Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program grant, staffing reductions with organizational change in Academic Affairs)
- Expand community outreach and partnerships (articulation agreements involving 12 academic programs, Early College welcomed its largest-ever class, with 236 students in 13 courses at 7 high schools, including our first bilingual course at Fitchburg High, SGOCE began promoting our online programs globally for potential international student enrollments, increased industry partnerships for student internships, etc.)
- Enhance campus culture and empower leadership (transparent communication with the academic community about our divisional priorities, and collaboration with Athletics on the Faculty Athletic Representative and turning the Athletics Study Hall into a fully expanded program.

III. 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 10:58 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
J. Flanagan