APPROVED

Fitchburg State University

Minutes

Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees Meeting

Date and Time
Thursday January 29, 2026 at 1:00 PM

Location
This meeting will be held at Fitchburg State University Main Lounge and will also be livestreamed

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

Trustees Present
C. Stimpson, D. Tiernan, E. Gregoire, J. Byrne, J. Flanagan, K. Spinelli, L. Barrieau, M. Fiorentino, Jr., M. Gill, M. Morris (remote), S. Rodriguez (remote)

Trustees Absent
S. King-Goodwin

Guests Present
K. Lundgren

I. Opening Items

A. Call the Meeting to Order

M. Fiorentino, Jr. called a meeting of the board of trustees of Fitchburg State University to order on Thursday Jan 29, 2026 at 1:02 PM.

B.

Record Attendance

C. Public Comments

There were no public comments

D. Approval of Minutes from the October 30, 2025 meeting

J. Byrne made a motion to approve the minutes from Board of Trustees Joint Meeting (Foundation/Supporting Org) on 10-30-25.
E. Gregoire seconded the motion.
The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Roll Call

M. Morris	Aye
J. Byrne	Aye
C. Stimpson	Aye
M. Fiorentino, Jr.	Aye
E. Gregoire	Aye
L. Barrieau	Aye
J. Flanagan	Aye
S. Rodriguez	Aye
D. Tiernan	Aye
S. King-Goodwin	Absent
K. Spinelli	Aye
M. Gill	Aye

E. Trustee Update

The Board welcomed new Trustee Joe Byrne (US Army veteran/alumnus)

II. Enrollment Management

A. Enrollment Management and Student Success Committee Update

Enrollment & Student Success

- Recruitment Trends: Freshman applications are up 20% year-over-year. The "Fitchburg Promise" (direct admissions) saw a 113% surge in local applications.
- Retention Success: Academic separations dropped significantly (from 74 to 24), resulting in a $600,000 positive financial impact.
- Student Support: * Fitchburg remains the only state university with no session limits or waitlists for counseling.
    - A $1.3M SUCCESS grant is being implemented to fund student success coaches.
    - Ineligibility among student-athletes was reduced by 50%.

III. Academic Affairs Committee

A. Academic Affairs Committee Update

- New Programs: A B.S. in Finance is proposed for Fall 2026, pending state approval.
- Curriculum Reform: * The Middle School Math Education major is being streamlined (removing 13 unnecessary courses) to address the teacher shortage.
    - GenEd Reform: A proposal is underway to reduce GenEd requirements from 51 to 42 credits to improve affordability and retention.
- Honors: The History MA program was recognized by *Forbes* for its affordability and quality.

IV. President's Report

A. Presented by Dr. Donna Hodge, President

- Storm Response: President Hodge commended the maintenance and safety teams for their work during a recent historic 2-foot snowstorm.
- Student Achievements:
    - Moot Court: Won the Eastern Regional Championship.
    - Theater: Students advanced to the national semifinals for the Irene Ryan acting scholarship.
- Upcoming Dates: President’s Gala (April 25) and Commencement (May 16).

B. Student Affairs Update

Matt Burke and Tim St. John
Tim - Academic standing policy changes.
Academic standing - determines who is not in good AS. Key problems with process. New policy went thru AUC. We were losing too many students. old policy was complicated. New is easier to understand. Old left little forgiveness to 1st year students.

Matt Burke - Old impacted student athletes. Athletes must be in good AS to practice or play sports. New policy students that take summer classes can request review to see if they are in good AS.

Tim - Care referrals are up in the beginning of the year. Thanked faculty and Dr. Hynes for his many years of support. Faculty care of students are a key .

Burke - Invested in staffing for athletes. Led by Laura pierce. Study hall program and hands on assistance to student athletes. Dramatic improvement. 21 ineligible compared to 43 last year. Attributed to this program.

Tim - Hands on approach to students whos apeal was denigned. Pam and Tim working with those students up to 10 years ago. Invited them a path back to us to complete their degree.

Positive about results.

Questions - Michael F. What is the role of the NCAA role for AS. Division III..... we define academic standing (Autonomy). Includes off season and on season.

C. Acting Vice President/Provost, Dr. Franca Barricelli

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D. VP of Enrollment Management & Student Success

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V. Student Trustee Report

A. Presented by M. Gill

- Advocacy: SGA is shifting to "solution-based advocacy."
- Campus Issues: Students flagged concerns regarding shuttle reliability, parking lot maintenance (Upper Cedar Lot), and dining hall hours/quality.

- Community Impact: SGA coordinated a $2,000 donation to the Fitchburg High School food bank.

VI. Operations and Safety

A. Operations and Safety Committee Update

- Campus Safety: Despite staffing challenges, Clery Act crimes decreased by 40%.
- Infrastructure: A new Level 3 EV fast charger was installed; $1.2M is secured for Summer 2026 residence hall upgrades.
- Theater Block: The administration is developing a formal plan to address the maintenance liabilities of the Theater Block property.

VII. Student Experience

A. Student Experience Committee Update

Deferred Suspension: The university redesigned its academic standing policy to prioritize "deferred suspension," giving struggling students more time to recover.
Frequent Reviews: Adding academic reviews after winter and summer sessions provides more opportunities for students to regain eligibility.
Results: Academic separations dropped from **103 to 28** year-over-year.

Financial & Athletic Impact
Budget Savings: Reducing student "melt" (attrition) resulted in a **$900,000** budget saving.
Athletic Success: A new academic coach helped cut spring sports ineligibility by **50%**.
Expansion: The university is growing its footprint with the addition of **Women's Ice Hockey** for the Fall 2026 season.

VIII. Finance Committee Update

A. Presented by Karen Spinelli

- Fiscal Status: * The university has realized $83M of its $111M budget.
  - Revenues from housing and food are exceeding conservative estimates.
  - New CFO Dr. Travis Chambers is reviewing procurement policies to move away from "spend it or lose it" budgeting.

B. FY26 Budget Update

Introduced Dr. Travis Chambers as the CFO.
President Hodge and Travis presented the budget.

Reviewed the finance budget document.

IX. Closing Items

A. Chair Fiorentino and President Hodge

B. Special Presentation

Presented by President Hodge and Chairman Fiorentino
The meeting concluded with a special recognition of Trustee Carolyn Crowley Stimpson, marking the end of her distinguished ten-year tenure on the Board of Trustees.

- Service Milestone: Trustee Stimpson completed ten years and five months of service, the maximum allowable tenure under Commonwealth of Massachusetts regulations (two five-year terms).
- Citation of Appreciation: President Hodge presented a citation honoring her "tireless advocacy," "honoring insight," and the "stewardship that strengthened the bond between the institution and the Commonwealth."
- Closing Remarks: Chairman Fiorentino expressed deep personal and professional gratitude for her contributions, emphasizing her unwavering focus on the best interests of the students.

C. Adjourn Meeting

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 4:11 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
M. Fiorentino, Jr.