



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

April 22, 2025

Minutes

3:15 p.m.

President's Boardroom, Horace Mann Center

A live stream of the meeting for public viewing will also take place at the following link: <https://www.westfield.ma.edu/live>

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Ali Salehi, Vice Chair Melissa Alvarado, and Trustees, Daniel Currier, George Gilmer, Theresa Jasmin, Chris Montemayor, Michael O'Rourke, Jason Queenin, and William Reichelt.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Trustees Tessa Lucey and Gloria Williams.

MEMBER(S) EXCUSED: Trustee George Gilmer

Also present and participating was Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson.

Board Chair Salehi called the meeting to order at 3:15 PM. He announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded. Board Chair Salehi made the following opening remarks:

- Attended Association Governing Board (AGB) conference with Trustee Montemayor, noting that universities face similar challenges nationwide, including uncertainties in Washington D.C., funding issues, and academic freedom.
- Reviewing the number of committees and consent motions, with Melinda Phelps to ensure legal and ethical compliance.
- Considering the number of board committees, aiming for around six, to be discussed over the summer.
- Plans to maintain a strong equity, belonging, and inclusion subcommittee.
- Discussing board evaluation with Trustee Alvarado, considering an external review in the future.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to approve the meeting minutes of February 20, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

President's Report

- Thanked the Board for their participation and contributions.
- This time of year is a favorite, celebrating achievements with students as the semester ends.
- Students celebrate connections, acknowledge achievements, and overcome challenges, guided by faculty, staff, and librarians.
- The commencement team, led by Chris Hirtle, is organizing graduation.

- Recognizing the work behind the scenes to make graduation memorable, thanking the commencement team for their dedication.
- Mayor Quinton Lucas of Kansas City will be the undergraduate commencement speaker.
- Shannon Brown, a long-time executive from FedEx, will be the graduate program speaker.

Kappa Delta Pi Education Honor Society program

- Motto: "so to serve, so to teach, so to live"
- Westfield State University inspires future educators to be innovators, confident decision makers and thought leaders.
- Graduates of the Westfield State University Education Program are sought after and teach in school districts throughout the state, region, and other parts of the country.
- Education alumni continue to receive recognition in forums such as the Grinspoon Teaching Award.

Criminal Justice Alumni Hall of Fame Program

- Honored those who have maintained excellence in their respective fields.
- The Criminal Justice program has a long standing reputation for producing leaders in the law enforcement community and has over 5000 alumni actively working in the field.
- Honored Dr. Alice Perry, and Westfield Mayor Mike McCabe.
 - Mayor McCabe graduated from Westfield State University with a B.S. in criminology in 1984 and earned a master's degree in criminal justice in 1990.

Institutional Advancement

- Traveled with Institutional Advancement and engaged with alums.
- Day of giving, Give-A-Hoot, on March 26 and 27 enabling them to engage 460 donors and raise \$104,000.
- Institutional Advancement has been engaged to assist in campaign planning.

Women's History Month

- Hosted the second annual Dora Robinson Speaker Series.
- Invited author Victoria Christopher Murray to campus to speak of her role as a writer of historical fiction.

Congressional correspondents

- Hosted two national Congressional correspondents for the Washington Post and the New York Times, Carl Hulse and Paul Kane.
- The Q and A sessions were well attended and vibrant.

Strategic Plan

- Working very closely with administration and finance to realistically address the cost of implementing.
- "It would take the entire campus to work collaboratively to ensure Westfield State University moves forward and is successful within our economic climate."
- The Strategic Plan was initially projected to be submitted this month, but due to some federal actions and other circumstances, they have been given an extension by the Board of Education.

Massachusetts K12 Statewide Graduation Council

- Dr. Thompson was asked and accepted to serve on the newly established Massachusetts K12 Statewide Graduation Council led by Secretary Patrick Tutwiler.
- The Council is tasked with making recommendations on how Massachusetts can ensure that all students graduate with the skills necessary to succeed in college, careers, and civic life, regardless of their background or location.

Three-year 90 credit Bachelor's degrees

- Three-year 90 credit Bachelor's degrees are starting to gain traction around the country as a more affordable option for students in certain designated areas of study.

- Merrimack College in North Andover was recently given the green light by the New England Commission of Higher Education to pilot a three-year degree program focused on non-licensure majors like business, health sciences, physics and liberal arts degrees.
- Dr. Thompson has serious concerns about the measure and mentioned this during a recent meeting of the Council of Presidents within the Board of Higher Education.
 - She perceives this initiative as more of a marketing campaign than an honest pathway to solid education.
 - The State University segment of education is already one of the most affordable to a bachelor's degree.
 - Employer needs: Employers prioritize the skills that are earned due to liberal arts.

Current Happenings in Washington D.C.

- There is a great deal of fear, confusion, anger and uncertainty not only on campuses, but across the Commonwealth, the nation and the world.
- Concerns about financial aid, scholarships and grants since the state will be unable to backfill these cuts as cuts in funding and grants directly and detrimentally impact on students, faculty, staff and librarians.
- Concerns about taking away the visas from international students without notice or reasonable due process.
- Westfield State University is committed to protecting the rights and freedoms of all students, faculty, librarian, librarians and staff, including academic freedom, which is a cornerstone of higher education.

Athletic Update

Director of Athletics, Richard Lenfest, introduced current successful athletes to the Board.

Kenny Rogers

- A first-year student studying business and marketing.
- He was named rookie of the year and player of the year and averaged 18 points, rebounds, and four assists. He scored over 500 points and had 250 rebounds in one year.

Ali Warsame

- Is a sophomore from Chelsea, Massachusetts, majoring in sports management.
- He is a track athlete. Including sprinter and long jumper. Jumping 44 ft in the triple jump qualifying him for all New England Conference and has the MASCAT championships this weekend.

Eric Johnson

- Is from Houston, Texas, and is a business administration major.
- He is a four-year player on the varsity men's basketball team and a captain. As a senior, Eric was first team all-conference and defensive player of the year.
- In the championship game against Salem, Eric scored 18 points, had 10 rebounds, three steals, and three blocks.

Eliza Lee

- Is from Walpole, Massachusetts, is a dancer, does cross-country and track and field.
- She was all conference in cross country, indoor track, and outdoor track. She qualified for New England's Conference in the 400, 400 hurdles, long jump, and triple jump with 11.47 meters (over 37ft).

Athlete Academics

- 66% of student athletes (314 out of 474) had a 3.0 GPA or better last semester.
- 3% have a cumulative GPA of over 3.0.

Owl Club Golf Tournament

- The Owl Club Golf Tournament will be held on Monday, June 23, 2025 at the Ranch in Southwick, Massachusetts.
- It is a fundraiser to finance the uniforms that the athletes wear.

Student Trustee Report

SGA Update

- SGA wants to ensure that registered student organizations that celebrate diverse faith, traditions, and cultural identities can thrive.

Note Card-A-Thon

- Students, faculty, staff, and community members wrote over 1,000 note cards to potential donors.
- The Give Campus platform listed 468 gifts that totaled \$103,286.

SGA Endowment Program

- SGA seeks to endow a program that will provide an annual allocation in perpetuity to organizations.
 - Nearly \$4,000 has been raised thus far, including a \$1,000 donation.
 - SGA will contribute \$5,000 in the next fiscal year and continue annual \$5,000 contributions.

Student Athlete Advocacy

- Student athletes are advocating for changes to the student attendance policy.
 - The Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAC), proposed revisions to allow excused absences for university-sponsored events.
 - SAC submitted a letter signed by over 200 student athletes.
 - The Academic Policies Committee is reviewing the policy.

Senior Celebrations

- Class of 2025 Council organized senior celebrations.
 - Seniors gathered at Westfield River Brewing Company on March 27, 2025.
 - A trip to Foxwoods was held on April 4, 2025.
 - Academic Achievement awards were celebrated on April 8, 2025.
 - A Senior Send Off Celebration is scheduled for May 2, 2025.

Senior Gift

- The Senior Class Council partnered with Institutional Advancement to raise funds for a Senior Gift.
 - 31 seniors have donated \$20.25, totaling approximately \$680.

Introduction of New Student Trustee

- Barney Garcia of the Class of 2026 was elected as student trustee for the 2025-2026 academic year.
 - Barney is a transfer student from Holyoke Community College majoring in Political Science.
 - He was also a Student Trustee at Holyoke Community College.
 - He hopes to assist with deferred maintenance issues.
- Barney Garcia: "I hope to follow on the issue of deferred maintenance as it is a systemic issue that all of the ten community colleges and universities are facing at this moment. On top of that, I also hope to further the student experience into what really makes Westfield State University stand out as the premier university."

Upcoming Events

- End-of-year celebrations are being hosted by departments and support service offices.
- Sankofa was held on April 24, 2025, celebrating graduating students.
- The annual Spring Concert will be held on April 26, 2025, featuring Paul Russell.

- The Second Annual Outstanding Westfield Leaders Celebration will be on April 28, 2025.
- SGA's annual banquet will be on April 29, 2025.
- Last day of classes is May 5, 2025 with finals from May 6-9.

Governance and Nomination Committee

Committee Chair Melissa Alvarado updated the Board:

- The committee discussed required training, recent events, and the Board self-evaluation.
- The Board self-evaluation will be debriefed on at the June 11, 2025, Board of Trustee meeting.

Academic Affairs Committee

Committee Chair Chris Montemayor updated the Board:

- Discussed information regarding Dr. Hillary Sacket-Taylor's presentation on the SUCCESS Money program.
 - Offers wraparound services to support student retention, on-time credit accumulation, or transformation grants.
 - Program addresses barriers to student success:
 - Academic challenges, financial obstacles, work-life-school balance, language, college preparation, institutional processes, credit enrollment, and student preferences.

MOTION made by Trustee Montemayor seconded by Trustee Currier: To approve granting promotions to the rank of Professor, effective September 1, 2025, Dr. Shirley Acquah, Communication; Dr. Leonardo Andrade, Psychology; Dr. Erol Bailey, Education; Dr. Maria Farina de Parada, Social Work; Dr. Jesse Johnson, Mathematics; Dr. Kelly Anne McKeown, Biology; Dr. Dristi Neog, Geography & Regional Planning; Ms. Leah Nielsen, English; Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor, Economics; Dr. Miriam Tage, Education.

To approve the granting of promotion to the rank of Associate Professor, effective September 1, 2025, to: Dr. Subramarian Vaitheeswaran, Chemical & Physical Science; Dr. Kathryn Weglarz, Biology. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

MOTION made by Trustee Alvarado seconded by Trustee Montemayor: To approve granting of tenure effective September 1, 2025 to: Dr. Arne Christensen, Biology; Dr. Charles Distefano, Political Science; Mr. Anthony Furnelli, Marketing & Management; Dr. Princy Mennella, Psychology; Dr. Mao-Lun Weng, Biology.

To approve granting of tenure effective September 1, 2025 to: Dr. Jennifer Pappas, Nursing; Mr. George Ramirez, Art; Dr. Brian Selgrade, Sports Medicine & Human Performance. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, Trustee Currier abstaining, **motion passed**.

Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Committee

Committee Vice Chair Tessa Lucey updated the Board:

- Dr. Hearn introduced a new Student Affairs Key Performance Indicators (KPI) report.
 - It includes data on counseling conduct, residential life, and health services.
- Residential life: Dr. Hearn and his team focused on tabling and outreach, providing information sessions, and held roommate meet and greet events.
- Health and counseling: Directors attended professional development training sessions on complex PTSD, diversity in health care, and the Narcan opioid crisis.

- Marketing update: Marketing contracts are underway, reinvesting in projects such as website redesign, creation of a new digital suite of assets, and doing a branding study.
- Spring 2025 undergraduate events: Daily tours, individual visits, and Saturday tours were discussed.
 - Daily tours are down at Westfield State and other institutions.
 - Director of Admissions, Mike Mazika and his team started doing Saturday visits, which has made up for the reduction in daily tours.
- Fall 2025 Undergraduate Admissions Preview: Projections and data for prospects, inquiries, applications, etc. were discussed.

Enrollment and Recruitment

- Relationships are being built with Holyoke Community College and Springfield Technical Community College.
- Free community college's impact is still unknown, but increased community college enrollment seems to be from non-traditional students (over 25) who may not be interested in Westfield State University.
- Recruitment efforts are looking outside of Springfield, including areas such as Harvard, while still focusing on Springfield.

Free Speech and Demonstration Policy

MOTION made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee Reichelt, to approve the revised Free Speech, Demonstration, and Picketing Policy (2030) as presented. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed**.

- Melinda Phelps provided the Board a summary of the updates, which align Westfield State University's policy with peer institutions and best practices.

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey updated the Board:

- Provost Dr. William Salka introduced Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola, who presented a summary of efforts since the last meeting.
- The report included highlights in programming, campus engagement recap, a summary of upcoming events, and summer planning.
 - Increased communication across campus with newsletters and staff training.
 - Work around faith-based observances.
 - Celebrations for Black History Month with speakers.
 - International Women's Day involved a day of service at Christina's House.
- Unity Fest 2025 included events hosted by various student organizations throughout the week.
- Upcoming events and summer planning include Sankofa student group ceremonies, Student Government Association banquet, and 413 summer planning, focusing on advancing belonging, equity, and preparedness for fall 2025.
- The Board requested clarity around the connection between the efforts from this office and other campus efforts.
- Vice Chair Alvarado updated the committee on a possible name change, and the Board of Trustees will review that while looking at the overarching structure.

Audit Committee

Committee Chair Theresa Jasmin updated the Board:

- Update on enterprise risk management efforts.

- Launched a couple of years ago with President Thompson's support.
- Involves the Cabinet in identifying, assessing, and responding to risks.
- Top three risk areas identified: cybersecurity, deferred maintenance, and enrollment and retention.
- A full report will be presented at the June meeting.
- Update on internal audit efforts.
 - Engaged an external firm to complete internal audit programs.
 - An audit tracker is used to track findings and progress.
 - Two internal audits currently in progress: safety and security on campus, and accounts payable.

MOTION made by Trustee Alvarado second by Trustee O'Rourke, to engage the financial audit services of WithumSmith & Brown, PC, for FY25. A roll call was completed. Trustee Currier abstained, **Motion passed.**

Financial Affairs Committee

Committee Vice Chair Jay Queenin updated the Board on:

- Update on the FY25 budget after quarter 3.
 - Spending is expected to be in the range of \$135 million, up from \$122 million in FY24.
 - Three main areas linked to spending: challenges in residential life, changes needed in financial aid, and other investments.

Budget and Enrollment

- Cabinet is working on the budget for next year, with the goal of consistency with the education plan for FY26.
- Enrollment numbers are positive, with clearer figures expected in the coming months as the budget is worked on into July.

Investment Manager Report

- The Fund Evaluation Group discussed investment performance amid market volatility.
- "We're staying the course with our investments," and the fund evaluation growth has done a good job so far.

Motions

- Four motions are recommended: travel policy, FY26 vehicle repurchase, authorizing preliminary capital budget, and changes to office policies from the Fund Evaluation Group.

MOTION made by Trustee Montemayor and seconded by Trustee Reichelt, to approve the revised Travel Policy (0390), as presented. A roll call was taken and there being no discussion, **motion passed unanimously.**

MOTION made by Trustee Queenin and seconded by Trustee Currier, to approve the Motor Vehicle Acquisitions and Replacements Policy (0280) which requires that any new or replacement vehicle is approved by the board of trustees. Early approvals are requested for the procurement of seven replacement vehicles to allow the university to place the orders now for delivery in FY26 due to the long lead time and potential cost increases. This motion is to approve the replacement of six university vehicles and include those vehicles in the leasing program. No additional funds are requested as existing savings in the vehicle leasing budget will cover these expenses as described in the supporting details. Further, to approve the purchase of a replacement police cruiser as requested by the Chief of University Police and approved by the Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs. The estimated purchase price for a new police cruiser with escalation is \$70,991.00. Funding source for this vehicle is from parking fines revenue. A roll call was taken and

there being no discussion, **motion passed unanimously**.

MOTION made by Trustee Queenin and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to approve a preliminary and partial capital projects budget of \$976,500.00, which will enable the University to begin the procurement process to bid the proposed work for this summer. The projects are listed on the FY26 Preliminary Capital Budget Plan with a brief description. Early approval of these specific projects is critical to solicit competitive bids and award these projects as soon as possible. The full capital budget, including all projects and Information Technology requests, will be provided in June 2025 with the FY26 Provisional Campus Budget. A roll call was taken and there being no discussion, **motion passed unanimously**.

MOTION made by Trustee Queenin and seconded by Trustee Currier, to approve the revised Investment Policy (0430), as presented. A roll call was taken and there being no discussion, **motion passed unanimously**.

There being no further business,

MOTION made by Trustee Currier, and seconded by Trustee Montemayor, to adjourn. A roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously**.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.

Attachments:

- a. Meeting minutes for February 20, 2025
- b. President's Presentation
- c. Student Trustee's presentation

Governance and Nomination Committee

- a. Meeting minutes December 9, 2024

Academic Affairs Committee

- a. Minutes of February 20, 2025
- b. Success money Presentation
- b. Promotion Candidate Summaries
- c. Promotion Personnel Action
- d. Motion for Faculty Promotion
- e. Tenure Candidate Summaries
- f. Tenure Personnel Action
- g. Motion for Tenure Promotion

Enrollment Management and Student Affairs Committee

- a. Minutes February 20, 2025
- b. BOT Powerpoint
- c. March 2025 KPI Report
- d. Free Speech Demonstration and Picketing Policy (2030) CLEAN
- e. Free Speech Demonstration and Picketing Policy (2030) TRACK CHANGES

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee

- a. Draft Minutes of February 20, 2025
- b. Belonging, Inclusion and Learning Presentation

Audit Committee

- a. Minutes 2-20-25 (Draft)

- b. Motion – Engagement of Financial Audit Services for FY25
- c. Engagement of Financial Audit Services (Financial Statements)
- d. Engagement of Financial Audit Services (MOSFA Audit)
- e. Enterprise Risk Management Update
- f. Audit Tracker
- g. Audit Committee Charter

Financial Affairs:

- a. Minutes 2-20-25 (Draft)
- b. FY25 3Q Update (Narrative)
- c. FY25 3Q Update (Consolidated Report)
- d. FY25 3Q Update (YOY Narrative)
- e. FY25 3Q Update (YOY Actuals)
- f. Cash Summary (Graph)
- g. Cash Summary (Balance)
- h. Motion – Travel Policy (0390)
- i. Policy – Travel (0390) CLEAN
- j. Policy – Travel (0390) TRACK CHANGES
- k. Motion – FY26 Vehicle Lease/Purchase
- l. FY26 Vehicle Lease/Purchase (Leases)
- m. FY26 Vehicle Lease/Purchase
- n. FY26 Vehicle Lease/Purchase (Public Safety)
- o. Motion – FY26 Preliminary Capital Budget
- p. FY26 Preliminary Capital Budget (Narrative)
- q. FY26 Preliminary Capital Budget (Capital Plan)
- r. FY26 Preliminary Capital Budget (Water Main)
- s. Motion – Investment Policy (0430)
- t. Policy – Investment (0430) CLEAN
- u. Policy – Investment (0430) TRACK CHANGES
- v. First Quarter Review (Investments)

Secretary's Certificate

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the approved minutes of the Westfield State University Board of Trustees meeting held on April 22, 2025.

Dr. Gloria Williams, Secretary

Date