



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Academic Affairs Committee

**February 8, 2024**

**Minutes**

Presidents Boardroom, Horace Mann Building

A live stream of the meeting for public viewing also took place on YouTube.

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Committee Chair Dr. Robert Martin, Vice Chair Dr. Gloria Williams, Secretary William Reichelt, and Trustees Daniel Currier, George Gilmer, Madeline Landrau and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

Also, present were Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson, Provost Dr. David Caruso, and Dean of the School of Health, Natural Sciences and Human Services, Dr. Ziblim Abukari and Dean of the School of Business, Mathematics, Computing & Sustainability, Dr. Rebecca Morris, Associate Provost, Brian Jennings, Interim Dean, DGCE Dr. Nora Padykula and Assistant Dean, Jessica Tansey.

Committee Chair Martin called the meeting to order at 11:11 AM and a roll call was taken of the committee members participating as listed above. It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Daniel Currier seconded by Vice Chair Dr. Gloria Williams to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2023, meeting.

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** passed motion unanimously with Trustees voting in the affirmative: Williams, Reichelt, Currier, Gilmer, Landrau and Martin.

### Spring 2024 Enrollment

A snapshot on retention was presented by Provost Dr. David Caruso for Fall 2023-Spring 2024. Typically, there is a fall off in the total student body size between Fall and Spring and we budget for that. In total undergraduate full-time students, we are down about 11%. That is a predictable number and nationally you would see that between 8-13%. Part-time undergraduate is down about 10% and Graduate student enrollment is up from Fall to Spring. Those students will continue to the Fall '24 and Spring '25 semester. Provost Caruso will bring updates on the year-over-year retention data. Efforts were made by staff to reach out to students who were having academic challenges in the Fall semester to help them get over that hurdle while keeping in mind the federal standards that must be met to make satisfactory academic progress.

## Recent Dean appointments

We are reverting back to Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE) which is in line with all the other state universities within our system. There is also a separate faculty contract for DGCE. Provost Caruso feels that it is important to align our terminology with what is accepted around the system and at the state government and with the Department of Higher Education.

Upon the request from President Linda Thompson, the Provost was asked to reestablish the Dean's office for DGCE, which the board had been briefed on by the provost previously. The DGCE office was abolished, and the functions of graduate and continuing education were disseminated widely across campus. President Thompson had a thorough evaluation done over the summer by two long serving faculty members (Dr. Robert Hayes and Dr. Kim Tobin). Their evaluation as well as what was learned on campus by others was that the disbursement of graduate and continuing education functions such as admissions, billing and student accounts made sense to have it be under the Enrollment Management Division. The challenge was the abolishment of leadership and therefore accountability was gone. This abolishment occurred approximately three years ago.

Provost Caruso introduced the leadership appointments for DGCE: Dr. Nora Padykula as the Interim Dean and Jessica Tansey as the Assistant Dean, Brandon Fredette (not present) will also be leading the Lifelong Education (non-credit courses). Academic Affairs is in the process of hiring two Administrative Assistants to be added to support the staff. It will be a team of five people. The admission staff will work collaboratively with the academic leadership office, Dean's office, as well as the Enrollment Management Division and DGCE.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Reichelt, seconded by Trustee Landrau to approve the Master of Arts in History. **Motion passed unanimously.**

**MOTION** made by Trustee Landrau, seconded by Trustee Gilmer in the granting of the Honorary Degree to Mary Lou McDonald. **Motion passed unanimously.**

## Academic Advising:

Three people offered information regarding their areas of advising/support:

1. Robert Thorton, Director Academic Advising and Transfer Transition shared the office's approach in advising to the Explorer (undeclared major) students, transfer students (full time and part time) that have not been assigned to a faculty advisor and students that are on academic warning.
2. Nick Aieta, History & Philosophy Chair and History Secondary Education Program Coordinator offered information on academic advising from the department in which he chairs.
3. Beverly Army-Williams, Executive Director, General Education and High Impact Practices spoke about the General Education Program that offers some courses relating to the well-being of a student which provides information about campus resources that will support the mental health of a student and ultimately help with retention.

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Trustee Currier, seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 12:19 PM

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Draft Minutes of December 13, 2023
- b. Spring 2024 Enrollment supporting documents.
- c. Motion: Master of Arts in History and supporting documents.
- d. Motion: Honorary Degree Recipient, Mary Lou McDonald and supporting documents.

**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 Academic Affairs Committee meeting held on February 8, 2024.

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William Reichelt, Secretary

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Date