



Board of Trustees

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

October 23, 2024

Minutes

President's Boardroom, Hoace Mann Center

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Committee Chair Tessa Lucey, Vice Chair Michael O'Rourke, Secretary Melissa Alvarado, and Trustees Dr. Gloria Williams, George Gilmer, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

TRUSTEE GUESTS PRESENT: Trustee Daniel Currier, Trustee Montemayor and Trustee Reichelt.

Also present were Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Special Assistant to the President on University Strategies and Chief of Staff, Dr. Michael Freeman; Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost, Dr. William Salka; Vice President of Administration & Finance, Stephen Taksar; Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Dr. Kevin Hearn; Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Lisa McMahon; and General Counsel, Melinda Phelps.

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey called the meeting to order at 9:01 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 Alvarado seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2023 meeting.

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** passed motion with majority with Trustees Lucey and O'Rourke abstaining.

President's direction: Belonging, Inclusion and Learning

- Change in the Jedi Division noted in January 2024.
 - President Thompson consulted with experts in equity and inclusion.
 - New direction includes the concept of belonging.
- Gwendolyn VanSant's role:
 - Working on strategic planning for principles of belonging and inclusion.
 - Collaborating with HR and the Values Working Group on standards of practice.
- Training initiatives:
 - Discussed characteristics of dominant culture and cultural stewardship.
 - Engaged a Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from Lesley University for strategic direction.
- Equity Audit

- Consultant hired to conduct an equity audit.
- Engagement for the rest of the academic year, completion anticipated by the end of the year.
- Consultant details:
 - Currently the VP for Diversity and Equity at Lesley University.
- Importance of integration:
 - Need for diversity initiatives to enter the academic core of the institution.

Introduction of Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola, Director of Belonging, Inclusion and Learning

- Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola was introduced as a dedicated community educator.
 - Over a decade of experience in social justice and diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging.
 - Expertise in restorative practice.
- Educational background:
 - Bachelor's degree from UMass Dartmouth.
 - Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies with a concentration in organizational leadership from UMass Lowell.
 - Currently pursuing a Doctor of Education in Higher Ed, Leadership and Organizational Studies at Bay Path University.
- Previous role:
 - Served as D.E.I. manager and ADA coordinator at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.
 - Focused on diversity programming, affirmative action, compliance, and workforce equity initiatives.

There being no further business,

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke, and seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to adjourn.

ROLL CALL VOTE passed motion unanimously with Trustees voting in the affirmative: Alvarado, Gilmer, O'Rourke, Williams, Lucey and Salehi.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Draft Minutes of December 13, 2023, Meeting

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 Governance and Nomination Committee meeting held on October 23, 2024.

Melissa Alvarado, Secretary

Date