



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes

June 11, 2025

3:00 p.m.

Conference Rooms A & B, University Hall

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, Tessa Lucey, Chris Montemayor, Michael O'Rourke, Jason Queenin, William Reichelt, and Gloria Williams.

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

Board Chair Salehi called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM. He announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded. Board Chair Salehi made the following opening remarks:

- Board retreat is coming up on August 8, 2025.
 - Dr. Shannon Brown and Mr. JG Staal from ActionLogics will be presenting.
 - Trustee Alvarado will be talking about the Board structure and board meetings times.
 - Certain committee chairs and length of service.
 - The results of the Strategic plan will be presented.

MOTION made by Trustee Reichelt and seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to change the order of the meeting. To have Committee Chair Gilmer present first. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

MOTION made by Trustee Reichelt and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to approve the meeting minutes of April 22, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

President's Report

- Thanked the Board for leadership, participation, voice, council, and enthusiasm.
- Maintaining the financial health of Westfield State University has never been so important.
- Thanked the leadership team for working to develop a balanced budget.
- Concluding first year leading the Council of Presidents for the nine state universities.
 - Charged with working with peers to advocate for collective schools.
 - There are areas in which the Governor's office and the legislature have taken positive strides to support the mission, values and infrastructure of our state universities.
- Advocated for the legislature to prioritize public higher education.
- Appreciates the House of Representatives including funding for endowment match.

- The program provides state matching funds of \$1 for every \$2 raised for endowment experience capital projects.
- In fiscal year 2024, Westfield State University received \$665,000 from the state endowment match.
- Grateful to the Healy Driscoll administration for launching a two-year 25 million scholarship program for Massachusetts graduate students completing degrees or certificates and behavioral health fields.
- Offered testimony to the Joint Committee on Higher Education with other state university presidents regarding the BRIGHT Act.
- The BRIGHT Act will leverage \$125 million in fair share revenue for fiscal year 2026 to support an estimated \$2.5 billion in new borrowing for higher education infrastructure over the next 10 years.
- Westfield State University intends to prioritize this funding in academic learning spaces.
- Many of current teaching environments are rooted in chalkboard realities.
- The Bright Act represents a critical opportunity to modernize learning environments and address long overdue repairs to state owned buildings.
- Key to ensuring we remain competitive, relevant and responsive to the rapidly evolving educational landscape.
- Strategic plan development is coming to a close.

Strategic Plan Update

- The University is incorporating final edits and revisions to the strategic plan after gathering information from the campus community.
- The plan focuses on:
 - Fostering innovative learning.
 - Improving student success.
 - Aligning resources.
 - Enhancing institutional impact.
- Cabinet met to discuss organizational structure related to the new strategic plan.
- Next steps include designing a document to present to the Board in August and the Board of Higher Education this fall.

Partnerships and Outreach

- Delegation to travel to Ireland and Northern Ireland to meet with higher education officials to develop institutional partnerships.

Athletics

- Westfield State won the Smith Cup for the fifth year in a row and the 19th time overall.
 - Athletic Director Dick Lenfest, the athletic staff, and the students were congratulated.

Student Representatives

- Barney Garcia was welcomed as the new student representative to the Board of Trustees.
- Outgoing student trustee Daniel Currier was thanked for his work on the board, student government, and his overall contributions to Westfield State.
 - "You left Westfield State a better place because of your efforts and I will really miss you."

Athletic Report

- The Smith Cup is named after Howard C. Smith, who encouraged the formation of the Massachusetts State Athletic Collegiate Conference in 1970.
- Westfield won the Smith Cup in the first year it was awarded, 1972-73.
- This year marks the 19th time Westfield has won the cup, and the fifth consecutive year, tying them with Salem State University.

Student Trustee Report

- Spring weekend events included a grab and go event for commuters, bingo night, a block party, casino night, and a spring concert featuring Paul Russell.
- The senior class gathered for a senior send off with catering, a DJ, yard games, a photo booth, raffles, and cap decorating.
- Theater arts students put on a production of Into the Woods.

Advocacy for Deferred Maintenance

- Student representatives traveled to Beacon Hill to advocate for deferred maintenance funding.
- Conversations with lawmakers were positive, but the state Legislature did not include funding for deferred maintenance in the supplemental budget.
- Dr. Thompson testified before the Joint Committee on Higher Education in support of the BRIGHT Act.

Commencement and Celebrations

- Celebrated undergraduate and graduate students at commencement.
- The Commencement Working Group was thanked for planning and organizing the ceremonies.
- Congratulations to the undergraduate and graduate classes of 2025.

Athletic Achievements

- Westfield State won the Smith Cup for the ninth time in the last 10 years and the fifth year in a row.
- Five teams won their respective MASCAC Championships.

Recommendations and Concerns

- Encourage the Board to give increased attention to the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE).
- Innovative programs are being developed under Dean Nora Padykula.
- Retention is key to success.
- Commend efforts of Provost Salka, Assistant Provost Hillary Sackett-Taylor, and other faculty and staff.
- Urge the Board to think about retention holistically.
- Ask the Board to continue advocating for funding to address the deferred maintenance crisis.
- Encourage the Board to continuously monitor the ever changing higher education landscape.
- Rising threats include the prospect of 90 credit bachelor's degrees, the rise of free community college, questioning of the value of higher education, and new regulations.

Gratitude

- Thanked the student body for their trust.
- Thanked fellow trustees for their support and guidance.
- Acknowledged former trustees.

Thank You's and Farewell

- Mr. Currier thanked Jean Beal, Brittney Kraus, Dr. Thompson, the Cabinet, faculty, staff, librarians, SGA advisors (Shannon Green, Matt Dallea, and Ryan Meersman), and his parents.
- He expressed gratitude for his time at Westfield State and looked forward to staying engaged as an alum.

Financial Affairs Committee

Committee Chair George Gilmer updated the Board:

- The finance team was thanked for providing information on spending.
- Trustee Alvarado gave recommendations for dashboard-type reporting.
- Spending was up year-over-year by \$10 million due to factors like the end of a "fee holiday" on interest and loan charges, annual raises, rollovers, and higher costs for adjunct professors.

Board Chair Ali Salehi read the following motions:

MOTION made by Trustee Currier and seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to approve the FY26 provisional campus budget, as presented, including, but not limited to the following elements: operating budget, capital budget, vehicle lease/purchase program and sponsorships (\$50,000). Further, to authorize the President and/or the Vice President for Administration and Finance to make budget adjustments to these funds as allowed in the Trust Fund Management Policy (0604). There being no discussion, a roll call was taken, **motion passed unanimously**.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier and seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to transfer \$1,253,444.00 from the University's investment accounts with Fund Evaluation Group LLC, to the University's operating account at Berkshire Bank, consistent with the University's Investment Policy (0430), to support the FY25 operating budget, and verified with the financial analysis presented today. There being no discussion, a roll call was taken, **motion passed unanimously**.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier and seconded by Trustee Lucey, to approve revisions to the Westfield State University, Board of Trustees, Financial Affairs Committee Charter, as presented. There being no discussion, a roll call was taken, **motion passed unanimously**.

Master Plan Overview

Presented by: Adam Mitchell, Justin Crane of CambridgeSeven and Sarah Felton, Ellen Whittemore of the Division of Capital Management and Maintenance (DCAMM)

- The Master plan will guide decision making for the University and send a message to the state of what is important to the university to support our educational programs and activities.
- The state will look at this very carefully as funding, perhaps with the BRIGHT Act comes about to understand and what are the University priorities going forward.
- CambridgeSeven is working on the master plan.

Planning Process and Priorities

- The planning process has been comprehensive, with input from many stakeholders.
- The administration has two priorities: decarbonizing state-owned facilities by 2050 and creating as much housing as possible.
- The master plan articulates a vision that enhances community, builds academic capacities, improves access to technology, and prioritizes accessibility, diversity, and safety.

Campus Planning Principles

- Use space more efficiently, reduce total square footage, increase adjacencies for academic programs and student life, improve athletics on east campus, and modernize outdated structural spaces.
- The master plan recommends co-locating academic departments, reinforcing residential and student life, and improving athletic facilities.

Specific Recommendations

- Projects include a new health hub, a new STEM hub, renovation of the Ely Campus center and library, renovation of Tim and Jean's dining commons, renovate Lammers hall, renovate Courtney hall, upgrading the Woodward center and two new decarbonization plants.
- New buildings: new health hub, new STEM hub, the Dower center.

Master Plan Goals

- The master plan aims to assess solutions for projects with intended outcomes like:
 - Using space more efficiently.

- Creating a new academic quad.
 - Co-locating arts programs.
 - Improving the use of the student center.
 - Making more desirable residential space.
 - Enhancing pedestrian experience and vehicular circulation.
 - Standardizing wayfinding and enhancing landscaping.
- The plan also works towards environmental sustainability, decarbonization, and economic sustainability by addressing deferred maintenance projects.

Key Discussion Questions

- Are there any significant issues or concerns with the current consensus solution?
- Is there anything missing from the plan that needs further discussion or review?
- What are the perspectives on potential surplus property opportunities?

Surplus Property Discussion

- Horace Mann Center is a building that has been discussed as potential surplus property.
- The master plan identifies opportunities but doesn't define them.
- Any opportunity identified would require a larger discussion and study with the real estate department.

Campus Maintenance and Advocacy

- The state owns all the buildings, and the university is responsible for maintaining them.
- There is a need to prioritize deferred maintenance projects.
- The University appreciates any advocacy for capital budget allocation.
- Utility projects and recent grade studies (Lansing Purification Plan, Wayfinding, Utilities Decarbonization) will be acknowledged and integrated into the master plan.

Concerns and Considerations

- There are concerns about the compatibility of new coolant replacements with existing systems, leading to increased operating and replacement costs.
- There are concerns about student safety with alternative modes of transportation (scooters, bikes) if traffic is moved to the outside.
- The master plan will be integrated with the strategic plan.

Key Priorities and Future Steps

- Aligning funding with identified projects is a major focus.
- The goal is to finalize the master plan to logically support the strategic plan and improve the campus when funding becomes available.
- The master plan should coalesce around major issues to ensure support downstream.
- The health hub has been identified as a top priority.

Safety and Security

- There is a need to consider security and safety, such as incorporating key cards instead of physical keys, when addressing deferred maintenance or new buildings.

Master Plan Discussion

- Strategic plan needs to align with the master plan, but funding is an issue.
- The current master plan is the first in 14 years.
- A question was raised about the balance between renovation and new construction, especially for programs like criminal justice and business.
 - New facilities are proposed where existing buildings lack the capacity to meet demands, such as the health Hub.
 - The commonwealth aims to avoid significantly increasing square footage due to equalization, operational costs, and deferred maintenance.
- Preliminary cost comparisons between renovation and new construction revealed surprisingly close figures.

- An MEP study, including echo, indicated a need of \$70 million.
- Trustee Alvarado liked the idea of co-locating the quad and arts, but raised concerns about infrastructure projects like the steam system and paving.
 - These infrastructure projects will be acknowledged in the master plan with breakout pricing.
 - Decarbonization efforts require phasing out steam in a feasible manner.

Governance and Nomination Committee

Committee Chair Melissa Alvarado updated the Board:

- **MOTION** to approve the current slate of officers of the Board of Trustees for the new school year as, Chair Ali Salehi, Vice Chair Melissa Alvarado, and Secretary Gloria Williams. There being no discussion, a roll call was taken, **motion passed unanimously**.
- The Board retreat is scheduled for August 8, focusing on committee structure, board governance, and the board self-evaluation.
- The Board self-evaluation highlighted accomplishments like supporting President Thompson and enhancing relationships with external stakeholders.
 - Areas for improvement include increased board visibility and enhanced knowledge of budgeting and fiscal topics.

Audit Committee

Committee Chair Theresa Jasmin updated the Board:

- External auditors, WithumSmith & Brown P.C., presented the planning for the financial statement audit, single audit, and mass state aid attestation.
- Boston Consortium provided a preliminary report on building security, noting observations related to physical keys.
 - A complete report will be available in October after management review.
 - An audit of accounts payable is also underway.
- The cabinet is working on enterprise risk management, identifying top risks such as cybersecurity, deferred maintenance, and enrollment/retention.
 - Progress is being tracked, and the cabinet will prioritize future risks as completion rates increase.

MOTION made by Trustee Reichelt seconded by Trustee O'Rourke; to approve revisions to the Westfield State University, Board of Trustees, Audit Committee Charter, as presented. A roll call was completed, **motion passed**.

- Discussion of anti-bullying and whistleblower policies was postponed for further review.

Academic Affairs Committee

Committee Chair Chris Montemayor updated the Board:

- The Academic Affairs Committee discussed the strategic retention framework, focusing on reorganizing student support offices, enhancing the course achievement center, and implementing a three-year retention framework.
 - Initiatives include a first-year journey program, peer mentoring, and college one-on-one workshops.
- Data on graduates for 2024-2025 by major and program were shared.

MOTION made by Trustee Reichelt seconded by Trustee Alvarado to approve the granting of Faculty Emeritus, effective June 11, 2025, to the following individuals: Dr. Volker Ecke, Mathematics, and Dr. Katherine Walsh, Social Work There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey updated the Board:

- Recap of 2025 activities, including the Sankofa celebration and Palate to Palate.
- Focused on four key areas: strategic leadership and alignment, education and capacity building, communications and storytelling, design and culture building.
- Provided over 10 trainings, sponsored over 30 events, and brought over 20 external voices to campus.
- Summer plans include reviewing office programming, co-designing Fall 2025 initiatives with student leaders, and refreshing training content.

Advancement, Marketing, & External Relations

- Providing fundraising planning status, developing a case for support, setting a campaign goal, and demonstrating how to achieve it.
- Foster Avenue Company has begun the discovery phase, interviewing various constituent groups.
- Foster Avenue will share their first draft narrative with the Institutional Advancement Team and present to the President and Cabinet on Thursday, June 13th at 1:00 PM.
- Campaign committee is looking for two representatives from each of the volunteer boards to work with the Institutional Advancement consultants.

Fundraising and Engagement

- As of January 4th, 2025, \$1.5 million in gifts and grants had been received.
- The goal for FY25 is \$2.3 million.
- Anticipate a \$600,000 gift coming from a donor trust by 6/16/25.

Enrollment Management & Student Affairs

- Uncovered between 75-100 alumni across the state as prospects for donations.
- Covered undergraduate transfer admissions for the fall, graduate and continuing education, new student orientation overviews, and marketing updates.
- Fall 2025 undergraduate admissions are on track and doing better than last year.
- 75% of deposits were already registered for new student orientation, compared to 35% last year.
- Marketing is now under enrollment management and student affairs, with a focus on social media engagement.
- Encourage everyone to like and follow the university on social media platforms.

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 5:00 p.m..

Attachments:

- a. Meeting minutes 4.22.25

- b. President's Presentation
- c. Student Trustee Presentation
- d. Facilities Master Plan Update
- Audit Committee**
- e. Minutes 4-22-25 (Draft)
- f. Motion – Audit Committee Charter
- g. Audit Committee Charter
- h. Motion – Reporting Violations of Laws, Rules or Regulations (Whistleblower) Policy (0440)
- i. Reporting Violations of Laws, Rules or Regulations (Whistleblower) Policy (0440) TRACK CHANGES
- j. Reporting Violations of Laws, Rules or Regulations (Whistleblower) Policy (0440) CLEAN
- k. Motion – Anti-Bullying, Mobbing and Harassment Policy (1340)
- l. Anti-Bullying, Mobbing and Harassment Policy (1340) TRACK CHANGES & CLEAN VERSIONS
- m. Financial Audit Services for FY25 (Planning Presentation)
- n. Internal Audit Update (Building Security)
- o. Enterprise Risk Management Update
- Academic Affairs Committee**
- p. Minutes of April 22, 2025
- q. Success Grant Presentation
- r. Motion Faculty Emeritus
- s. Faculty Emeritus Approval Letter
- Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee**
- t. Minutes of April 22, 2025
- u. Belonging, Inclusion and Learning Presentation
- Advancement, Marketing, & External Relations Committee**
- v. Draft Minutes of December 9, 2024
- w. Draft Minutes of February 20, 2025
- x. Alumni Relations Update.docx
- y. WSA IA Gifts and Grants FY25 as of 06-04-2025.pdf
- z. RIDE Centre Report
- Financial Affairs Committee**
- aa. Minutes 4-22-25 (Draft)
- bb. University Cash Summary
- cc. FY25 vs. FY24 YTD Spending Report
- dd. Motion – FY26 Provisional Operating Budget
- ee. Motion – Investment Income Drawdown
- ff. Motion – Financial Affairs Committee Charter
- gg. Financial Affairs Committee Charter
- hh. FY25 Sponsorships

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 June 11, 2025.

Dr. Gloria Williams, Secretary

Date