



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Academic Affairs Committee

**October 21, 2025, 9:30 a.m.**

**Minutes**

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>

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Committee Chair Chris Montemayor, Vice Chair Jason Queenin, Secretary Barney Garcia, Trustee Michael O'Rourke, Trustee William Reichelt, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

**MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY:** Trustee George Gilmer

Also present and participating were Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, Brian Jennings; and Assistant Provost for Educational Excellence, Hillary Sackett-Taylor.

Committee Chair Montemayor called the meeting to order at 9:38 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 Queenin and seconded by Trustee Reichelt to approve the minutes of the June 11, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

### **Success Grant Year 2 Update**

- Year One Review:
  - Funds loaded in March, spent until September covered;
    - Personnel, Huron contract work, professional development for faculty and staff, work opportunities for students (graduate assistantships, student work contracts), direct financial aid to students with overdue balances.
  - Total spent: roughly \$740,000.
  - Remaining balance: \$790,000 (awaiting state decision on accessibility).
- SUCCESS 2.0 in academic year 2025-2026:
  - Non-competitive grant for advising, supplemental grant aid, and wraparound support services.
  - Eligible wraparound services: peer mentoring, academic skills workshops, one-on-one case management, basic needs services.

- State DHE model: CUNY ASAP and SUNY ACE programs.
  - Based off of City University of New York's **Advancing Success in Associate Pathways** program and the State University of New York's **Advancing Completion through Engagement** program (known as CUNY ASAP and SUNY ACE, respectively).
  - Centers on case management services.
  - Focus on low-income students (Pell Grant and MAST Grant eligible).
- CUNY ASAP data:
  - Served over 110,000 students across 18 cohorts.
  - Three-year graduation rate of 53% (more than double the rate before the program).
  - Narrowed graduation gaps for Black and Hispanic males.
- SUNY ACE data:
  - Mirrored the ASAP model.
  - Increase in four-year graduation rates to 59% (compared to 41.5% in the comparison group).
  - Improved student outcomes with higher retention rates.
- State has given two buckets of allowable expenses.

#### Funding Proposal Overview

- The funding is specifically for students from Pell Grant or Master eligible households.
- Allowable expenses are categorized into:
  - Staff salaries and financial assistance for students.
- Expenses outside these categories will be reviewed by the DHE.
- The funding is subject to annual appropriation.

#### Allocation of Funds

- 78% allocated to staff salaries and contracts.
  - Aims for part-time contract hires due to the nature of annual funding.
  - Goal: 150 to 1 participating student to advisor ratio.
- 20% to case management services for Pell Grant and MASS Grant eligible students.
  - Includes financial aid, emergency grants, and access to DGCE courses.
  - Additional career development program called the Pathfinder program.
- 2% to support the innovation of the data ecosystem.

#### Staff Salaries and Contracts

- Funds the Assistant Provost position and the Assistant Director for student success analytics.
- New positions being hired:
  - Assistant Director for the new success coaching initiative.
  - Assistant Director in the academic advising center for dual advising.
  - Additional advisor for transfer and returning students.
  - Additional advisor for continuing education students.
  - Coordinator for basic needs and food pantry.
- Part-time hires:
  - Eight new professional success coaches.
  - Six new professional tutors in disciplines lacking peer tutors.
  - Ten graduate assistants across divisions.
  - Sixty peer mentors embedded across the Gen Ed curriculum.
- Funds allocated for faculty professional development.
  - Stipends for curriculum innovation through the Faculty center.

- Focus on universal design for learning, AI pedagogy, early intervention, and appreciative advising.

#### Success Program Details

- Program name: Success for Underserved Communities, Coaching and Empowerment Strategies for Students (SUCCESS).
- Eligibility: First-time full-time students who are Pell Grant or MASS Grant eligible or have a GPA of 2.0 or lower.
- Estimated 336 initially eligible students this academic year.
- Case management services:
  - Dual advising (professional advisor + faculty advisor).
  - Success coaching (learning strategies, time management, etc.).
  - Professional tutoring and peer mentoring.
- Incentives:
  - Up to \$1,000 of additional need-based financial aid for students meeting monthly with an advisor or success coach.
  - Access to emergency micro-grants for non-tuition expenses.
  - Up to two tuition-free DGCE courses in summer or winter.

#### Goals and Anticipated Outcomes

- Long-term goal: Continuous improvement towards the statewide 2033 benchmarks set by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education.
- Primary metrics:
  - Retention year over year, on-time credit accumulation, transfer completion rates, four-year and six-year graduation rates.
- 2024 baseline numbers (IPEDS data):
  - Retention rate: 71%.
  - On-time credit accumulation rate: 59%.
  - Transfer completion rate: 61%.
  - Four-year graduation: 46%.
  - Six-year graduation: 55%.
- Equity gaps exist for Black and Hispanic students and Pell Grant eligible students.
- 2033 benchmarks (Massachusetts Department of Higher Ed):
  - 80% retention rate, 80% on-time credit accumulation rate, 65% transfer completion rate, 65% four-year graduation rate, 80% six-year graduation rate.
- Year-over-year goals:
  - 1% increase in retention, 3% increase in on-time credit accumulation, 1% increase in transfer completion, 2% increase in four-year graduation, 3% increase in six-year graduation.

#### Data Collection

- The Assistant Director of Student Success analytics reports directly to Dr. Sackett-Taylor
- Helps train departments/programs on maximizing software utilization for data collection (student appointments, interactions, referrals, to-do lists).
- Manages sites, a texting platform where students receive weekly texts from Nestor the Owl regarding academic, engagement, personal well-being, and financial challenges.
- Assists in developing a monthly newsletter for the President and administrative council, gathering data from student support offices to report progress on new initiatives.

- Works with the IR, IT, and grants departments to pull data for new initiatives related to student success and retention.

#### Assessment of Year One Initiatives

- They will gather qualitative data from faculty/staff who participated in professional development to assess its impact on teaching and advising.

#### Data Challenges and Grant Proposal

- The campus has faced data gathering challenges, requiring significant investment.
- The year two grant proposal was submitted on October 14th, with a response expected from the DHE by October 24th.
  - The grant is an annual proposal, and they plan to adjust resource allocation based on assessment results.

#### SUCCESS Grant Details and Future Funding

- The grant runs until September 21st, 2026.
- The DHE indicated that continued funding is anticipated if the model yields expected results.

#### **Faculty Ratio**

- This information was requested from Committee Chair Chris Montemayor.
- The full-time faculty comprises 45% and are responsible for 64% of the coursework.
- The speaker wants to track the faculty ratio and course credits taught over the next 3-5 years.
- The numbers presented only include faculty teaching this semester, excluding those on leave.
- Part-time faculty numbers are affected by workload releases for full-time faculty in roles like department chairs or those managing accredited programs.

#### Faculty Workload and Sabbaticals

- The standard full-time faculty workload is 12 credits per semester, or four 3-credit courses per term.
- Adjunct faculty are on term-by-term contracts, teaching one to three classes.
- The percentage of faculty on sabbatical each year is unknown but can be provided.
- Tenured faculty are eligible for a sabbatical once every seven years.

#### Faculty Center

- Provides professional development to faculty and staff, primarily faculty.
- Starting this fall, Dr. Misty Woodbury is the full-time director.
  - She has experience running these centers at other institutions.
  - She is planning professional development around AI, student success, and inclusive pedagogy.

#### **Dean of the College of Professional Studies**

- The search for a permanent dean is being rerun and has been posted for about a month.
  - There is a better pool of candidates this year, with over 50 candidates compared to under 40 last year.
- The search is being run by Academic Search Firm, the same firm used last year.

#### **Review of Policies to be Removed**

- Attorney Phelps is reviewing university and board policies.
- There is a lack of clarity and clear separation of policies on the Westfield State University website.

- About 15 years ago, someone combined Academic Policy Committee (APC) policies, Board of Trustee policies, department policies, and student affairs policies into one large grouping called University Policies.
  - The website Academic policies haven't been updated since about 2015.
- The University Policies page will be redesigned to provide links to APC policies, Board of Trustee Policies, the University Catalog, and Student Conduct Policies.
- 30 of the 38 current policies listed as Academic policies should be designated to the APC.
  - These policies are created under the collective bargaining agreement.
  - Most of these 30 policies are already in the University Catalog.
- Five policies should be clearly designated as Board of Trustee Policies:
  - Policies that the Board has statutory authority over to award honorary degrees, Faculty Librarian Emeritus status, Staff Emeriti status, and requirements for graduation.
  - The APC has agreed with this motion with the exception of requirements for graduation, they wanted to run it by Union Council.
- Three of the 38 policies should be nullified:
  - Core implementation (outdated).
  - Conflict of interest in research (out of date and not reflective of the State Ethics Law and the Office of Management Budget Grant Conflict of Interest Attestations).
  - Anti-bullying policy (conduct already governed by the recently passed 2024 EO plan).

#### Anti-Bullying Policy

- The current bullying policy addresses abuse unrelated to a protected identity (race, gender, disability) but lacks a due process procedure for complaints.
- Without a specific policy, the university has been using the EO plan's due process, which is lengthy and not designed for non-protected class complaints.
- Attorney Liz Sullivan has advocated for nullifying the anti-bullying policy.
- Nullifying the policy will allow for investigations via the HR fact-finding process, which is more agile for abusive conduct not against a protected class.
  - The campus community will be informed to refer such conduct to the Office of Human Resources.

**MOTION** made by Trustee O'Rourke and seconded by Trustee Queenin, The Academic Affairs Committee recommends to the Full Board of Trustees: To move the 30 policies as indicated on the attached policy list to the University catalog as policies of the Academic Policy Committee with finalized approval from the President. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Queenin and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, The Academic Affairs Committee recommends to the full Board of Trustees: To nullify the following as University Policies: University Anti-bullying, Mobbing and Harassment Policy (1340), Conflict of Financial Interest and Research (1370), Core Implementation (1250). There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

## **Program Approvals**

**MOTION** made by Trustee O'Rourke and seconded by Trustee Queenin, The Academic Affairs Committee recommends approval to the full Board: To approve of the Program for Master of Business Administration. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION** made by Trustee O'Rourke and seconded by Trustee Gilmer, The Academic Affairs Committee recommends approval to the full Board: To approve of the Program for Master of Science in Athletic Training. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION** made by Trustee O'Rourke and seconded by Trustee Garcia, The Academic Affairs Committee recommends approval to the full Board: To approve the program Master of Science in Nursing Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

There being no further discussion,

**MOTION** made by Trustee Reichelt and seconded by Trustee Queenin to adjourn the meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed by majority.

Meeting adjourned at 10:26 AM.

### **Attachments presented at this meeting:**

- a. Minutes of June 11, 2025
- b. SUCCESS Grant Year 2 Presentation
- c. Full-Time/Part-Time Faculty Ratio
- d. Motion-Removal of Policies
- e. Policies being removed
- f. University Anti-bullying, mobbing and harassment Policy (1340)
- g. Conflict of Interest in Research Policy (1370)
- h. Core Implementation Policy (1250)
- i. Motion-Program Approval: Master of Business Administration
- j. Proposal Master of Business Administration
- k. Budget: Master of Business Administration
- l. Proposal Master of Science in Athletic Training
- m. Budget: Master of Science in Athletic Training
- n. Motion-Program Approval: Master of Science in Athletic Training
- o. Motion-Program Approval: Master of Science in Nursing: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
- p. Proposal Master of Science in Nursing: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
- q. Budget: Master of Science in Nursing: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

**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 October 21, 2025.

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Barney Garcia, Secretary

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Date