



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Academic Affairs Committee

**February 20, 2025**

**Minutes**

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Owl's Nest, Ely Campus 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 Daniel Currier, 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; Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. William Salka; Dean of Graduate and Continuing Education, Nora Padykula; and Professors Dr. Holly Noun and Dr. Paul Higgins.

Committee Chair Montemayor called the meeting to order at 9:02 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 Currier seconded by Trustee O'Rourke to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

### **Academic Affairs Plan for SUCCESS Pilot Money**

- Westfield State University is receiving \$1.5 million from the State for student success initiatives.
- The money must be spent on new initiatives and cannot be used to backfill existing programs.
- A spending plan was submitted to the Department of Higher Education (DHE) in January and the money needs to be spent by September.
- Two new positions will be funded:
  - Assistant Provost of Education for Educational Excellence and Retention:
    - Will oversee how the money is being spent and manage student support areas.
    - Must be capable of gathering and analyzing data and creating assessment plans.
  - Assistant Director of Retention and Analytics:
    - Will work with the Assistant Provost to track at-risk students using the EAB Starfish product.
    - Will help connect students with tutoring, advising, and counseling services.

- The search for the Assistant Provost position is underway, but there are difficulties forming a search committee.
  - The position is grant-funded, allowing the person to retreat to their previous position if the grant runs out.
- An ad for the analytics position is about to be posted.
  - The goal is to bring them on board quickly.
- Other programs under consideration.
  - Peer mentors in every First Year Journey course.
  - Peer mentor coaches in student support offices.
  - Increased use of graduate assistants.
  - Professional development for faculty and staff on best practices for identifying and addressing student mental health issues.
  - Extension of the Huron contract to improve data analytics capabilities.
  - Financial aid awards for at-risk students to help them re-enroll.
- The \$1.5 million funding is likely to be renewed for at least two more years.
- The Huron contract extension will focus on creating a data warehouse.
  - The data warehouse will pull data from Banner, clean it, and make it accessible to campus users.
  - Live data from production is currently being used. Two people ran the same query and got different numbers for student enrollment projections. This indicates problems with the current system. A new data warehouse should correct these issues.
    - The need for this was identified a few years ago. There were difficulties managing data, requiring outside industrial groups. Setting up an in-house data warehouse would take 2-3 years and burden the IT staff.
  - Decisions should be based on clean data.
  - Question about synergy between data analytics and the information security team, especially regarding student privacy policies.
  - Huron is a world-class corporation.
    - Other provosts use external data warehouses for quicker access to clean data.

### **Master's Programs: Athletic Training**

- Dean Nora Padykula discussed the master's program below;
- The plan is to merge Master of Science in Athletic Training with the undergraduate curriculum to create a 3+2 program.
  - Students complete three years at the undergraduate level and begin graduate courses in the fourth year, completing the degree in their fifth year.
- There are two budgets: one as a standalone master's degree and one as a 3+2 program.
  - The standalone program would generate net revenue by year five.
  - The 3+2 program is anticipated to generate about \$124,000 a year by year four.

### **Accreditation and Program Structure**

- The accrediting body now requires a master's degree for certified athletic trainers.
  - A standalone master's degree will generate some enrollment.
  - The majority of enrollments will come from the 3+2 program.
- Synergy in Sports Medicine track allows students to decide by junior year if they want to pursue the track.
- The program is designed so that students can attend part-time.

### **Program Benefits and Need**

- The undergraduate program draws 40-60 students to the university.
  - 95% of them stay at the university.

- The dual degree allows for post-baccalaureate students to join.
- There is an expected 24% growth in the need for athletic trainers.
  - Athletic trainers are needed in various settings, including industry, police, fire, and the military.
- Master's level athletic trainers will learn suturing, fracture casting, and MRI/X-ray interpretation.

#### Historical Context

- Athletic trainers were the first credentialed healthcare practitioners to graduate from the University.
- Graduates have served at every level of athletic training.
  - One graduate was elected president of the state association.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee Reichelt: The Academic Affairs committee recommends approval to the full Board: The granting of a Master of Science in Athletic Training. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

#### **Master of Arts in History**

- The board has already considered this program as a name change, but it is a change in the degree.
- The History department wants to keep the Masters of Education in History but create this Masters of Arts where students don't have to take the education courses.
  - These will likely be history teachers who are already certified.
  - The curriculum is the same for both the Masters of Arts and Masters of Education programs.
- The pro forma statement shows that it will generate net revenue of about \$10,000 in year three, growing to about \$85,000 in year five.
- There will be a shift in the way that the curriculum is delivered, with a hybrid format of online and on-campus learning.

#### Program Evaluation

- Trustee Montemayor asked about how the University is evaluating programs and classes to understand where there are opportunities to not offer them based on attendance or student interest.
- Every academic program has to go through academic program requirements every five years per accreditation standards.
  - The department that houses the major does a self-study of the major, which includes enrollment.
  - An external reviewer looks at the curriculum and makes sure that it's up to date.
- President Thompson hired someone to go through the curriculum of each major over the next year and a half to determine if the curriculum is relevant and attracting students.
  - The first step would be to update the curriculum of smaller majors to attract more students.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee Reichelt: The Academic Affairs committee recommends approval to the full Board: The granting of a Master of Arts in History. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

#### **Master of Science in Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner**

- Expecting modest revenue in year two, but by year four, \$181,000 a year and in year five, \$233,000 a year.
- This program will bring revenue to the University and address a workforce need in the commonwealth.

- Nurse practitioners are needed in Western Massachusetts, especially for mental health issues.
  - There is a need for people who can prescribe psychiatric medication, especially for children and adolescents.
- The program is a two-year program.
  - The first year is a foundation curriculum.
  - The second year allows for specialization in mental health.
- The program can add other specialties as market demand is seen.
- Nurse practitioners are in high demand because they can conduct treatment.
- Pre-licensed students have been asking for an extended pathway to earn graduate degrees at Westfield State University.
- The program is online to increase access.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee O'Rourke: The Academic Affairs committee recommends approval to the full Board: The granting of Master of Science Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

### **Honorary Degree Recipients**

- The first honorary degree recipient is Mr. Quinton Lucas, the mayor of Kansas City, Missouri.
  - He has launched initiatives to support residents of Kansas City.
  - This includes a zero-fare transit system and a housing trust fund for affordable housing.
  - He is considered a rising star within the Democratic Party.
- The second honorary degree recipient is Mr. Shannon Brown.
  - He is the President and CEO of BCS Consulting Services and the retired Senior Vice President of Eastern Division US operations and chief diversity officer for FedEx Express.
  - He spent 40 years with FedEx, starting as a package handler and rising to Senior Vice President.
  - He founded BCS Consulting Services after retirement.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee O'Rourke: The Academic Affairs committee recommends approval to the full Board: The granting of the Honorary Degree to Shannon A. Brown and Quinton Lucas effective February 20, 2025. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

There being no further discussion;

**MOTION** made by Trustee O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Currier to adjourn the meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed by majority.

Meeting adjourned at 9:39 AM.

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

- Draft Minutes of December 9, 2024
- Plan for Success Pilot Money presentation
- DHE Letter of Intent for Master of Science in Athletic Training
- DHE Letter of Intent for Master of Science Occupation Overview Analytics
- DHE Letter of Intent for Master of Arts in History
- Master in History Program Overviews
- DHE Letter of Intent Master of Science in Nursing: Psychiatric Mental Health Practitioner

- h. Motion. Master of Science in Athletic Training
- i. Motion. Master of Arts in History
- j. Motion. Master of Science in Nursing: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
- k. Supporting documents: Quinton Lucas
- l. Supporting documents: Shannon A. Brown
- m. Motion. Honorary Degree Recipient, Quinton Lucas
- n. Motion. Honorary Degree Recipient, Shannon A. Brown

**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 20, 2025.

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Daniel Currier, Secretary

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Date