



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Academic Affairs Committee

June 11, 2025, 9:30 a.m.

Minutes

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: 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; and Dean of Graduate and Continuing Education, Nora Padykula.

Committee Chair Montemayor called the meeting to order at 9:30 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 O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Queenin to approve the minutes of the April 22, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

SUCCESS Money update:

- Charge: Reorganize and modernize student academic support offices under academic affairs.
- Goal: Improve retention and other KPIs (persistence, time to completion, progress in accumulating credits).
- Plan to have everything in place by the fall.

Three Major Actions This Summer

- Reorganizing the support offices.
- Working with the Strategic Enrollment Committee.
- Creating a three-year retention model.

Reorganization of Existing Offices

- Existing offices are scattered across Academic Affairs.
- Offices serving distinct populations (Banacos, Military Services) will be under one umbrella.

- Likely changing the name of the Center for Student Success and Engagement (CSSE) to Opportunity Programs.
- Moving the advising center out of CSSE to serve all students.
- Adopting a dual advising model (faculty advisor and professional advisor for first and second-year students).
- Offering tutoring and success coaching.
- Expanding the Center for Belonging, including training and an emerging leader's institute.
- Embedding belonging and inclusion within all curriculums.

Data-Driven Retention Efforts

- Creating retention models using three methods to identify students likely to succeed or struggle.
- Goal: Intervene before students start to struggle.
- Focusing resources on students who will benefit most.
- Moving away from a "one size fits all" approach.

Modeling Student Success

- Using a journey mapping model to identify barriers students face.
- Using Starfish 360 data to predict student success as first-year students arrive.
 - Identify students at low, medium, and high risk.
 - Focus resources on high-risk students.
- Running logistic regression models using data not in Starfish to predict success.

Fall Data and Initiatives

- Observed 156 students needing withdrawal in their first year.
- Addressing this through:
 - Faculty development for FY instructors.
 - Putting peer mentors in every section.
- Peer mentors are available to help students with their problems.

College 101 Workshop

- Beverly Army Williams is creating a College 101 workshop.
- Workshop to clarify expectations for college students.
- Addressing basic things like attending class, doing homework, and turning in work.
- Following up with other workshops throughout the fall semester.
- Embedding peer writing mentors within the exploring complex issues.

Financial Affairs Materials

- There's a substantial increase in retention projected for the fall.
- Dr. Hillary Sackett-Taylor worked with success money this spring had a significant impact.
 - She accomplished more in two weeks than the speaker did in the eight months prior to her hiring.

Board KPIs

- The board appreciates the focus on KPIs.
- Retention is a major factor, and significant improvements are being seen.
- The environment is changing, with students entering college with a different mentality than in the past.
 - Adaptation is necessary to remain relevant.
- Priorities for academic affairs:
 - Ensuring the curriculum and majors attract students and provide necessary skills.
 - Retention.

Completers by Major

- Completers refers to the number of graduates from each major this year (August, December, and May).
- There are some very large programs on criminal justice and psychology.
- One of the main priorities is to meet with every department to determine what makes their major unattractive and suggest improvements.
- Traditional majors are declining nationally, because students and parents don't see a clear path to employment.
 - Example: English degrees.
- Lightcast, a labor market software, will be used to identify skills and jobs for each major.
 - The University can also analyze alumni data to see what jobs graduates are getting.
 - Departments can then adjust their curriculum to teach these skills and highlight career paths to students.
- This issue is most common in arts and sciences.

Professional Studies Programs

- Numbers are better in professional studies, but some programs still have fewer graduates.
- The same analysis will be done for every program.
- Many programs in professional studies are accredited with curriculum set by international bodies.

Measuring Student Success

- The key is to use software to tie information together and paint a broader picture of student success after graduation.
- Success is defined as obtaining a job that provides a good living.
- This is the first time they're attempting to tie these things together.

Rethinking Teaching

- Need to rethink how we teach and shift the focus from content to skills development.
- "The content of the discipline is not as important as it was 20 years ago because everybody's got a computer."
- Focus on critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and writing skills.

Connecting with Industries

- Chemistry departments can combine environmental sciences to become more robust.
- Baystate Health and Cooley Dickinson are desperate for certain types of people.
- Increase the Spanish program, because doctors and nurses want to communicate with patients.

Certificates in DGCE

- Develop certificates that provide the skills that employers are asking for.

National Trends Affecting Majors

- There's a lack of love for math, affecting majors like accounting and finance.
- Accounting and finance have many jobs available, but marketing and management are gaining traction.
- Professional organizations are discussing pipeline issues for students not going into certain majors.

Internships and Externships

- Discuss with departments how to incorporate required internships or externships to market majors.
- English has a required internship that is very good for marketing the major.

- The information presented includes job placement percentages and further education enrollment.
- 38 graduates with 100% job placement success.
- Data may differ from what was previously loaded into the software.

Graduate Programs

- Successful master's programs include social work, counseling, criminal justice, and physician assistant.
- Smaller programs may not have enough students to run a course (minimum 10 students), which impacts the quality of training.
- Many low-enrolled programs are fully on-ground, which is not ideal for graduate students who need online, asynchronous options.
- New graduate programs in Master of Business Administration and Nurse Practitioner are being considered.
- Athletic training master's and athletic training programs will go into the form this fall.
- Students are finishing capstones or counseling hours and will be in the next cycle looking at them gradually.
- Some programs have in-person requirements like orientation, but others like criminal justice offer fully online options.

Emeritus Status

- Dr. Volker Ecke, Professor Emeritus in Mathematics:
 - Served as elementary education coordinator.
 - Developed and supervised the Advanced Mathematics in Elementary Education Major program.
- Dr. Katherine Walsh, Professor Emerita in Social Work:
 - Left a tenured professorship to come to Westfield State University.
 - Demonstrated commitment to student education and advising.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee O'Rourke to The Academic Affairs Committee recommends to the Full Board of Trustees: 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.

There being no further discussion.

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:08 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Minutes of April 22, 2025
- b. Success Grant Presentation
- c. Motion Faculty Emeritus

d. Faculty Emeritus Approval Letter

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 June 11, 2025.

Barney Garcia, Secretary

Date