



Board of Trustees

Advancement, Marketing, and External Relations Committee

December 9, 2024

Minutes

11:15 AM – 12:15 AM

Loughman Living Room, Scanlon Hall

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Committee Chair Dr. Gloria Williams, Vice Chair Chris Montemayor, Secretary Daniel Currier, Trustees Michael O'Rourke, Jason Queenin, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member

Also present and participating were Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Lisa McMahon; Executive Director, Communications, Marketing and Branding, Dr. Leslie Rice and special guest, Kathy Howrigan of Howrigan Consulting.

The meeting was called to order at 11:20 AM by Committee Chair Dr. Gloria Williams and it was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier, seconded by Trustee Montemayor, to accept the minutes from the October 23, 2024 meeting. There being no discussion, **a roll call was conducted**, all in favor, the **Motion passed**.

University Rebrand and Marketing Initiatives Update

- Dr. Leslie Rice provided an update on the University rebrand and marketing initiatives.
 - The rebrand process began a year ago with a partner, BVK, a national firm known for working with institutions like Michigan State, University of Mobile, and University of Florida.
- The planning, discovery, and research phases have been completed.
 - Research included stakeholder interviews, focus groups, online surveys of faculty, staff, and students, and a market scan and competitive analysis.
- Focus groups provided insights into student perceptions and values.
 - For example, students expressed that they "stay on campus to have fun."
 - The owl mascot is recognized as a component of the brand that evokes emotional response.
- Research also involved surveying prospects, current students, and faculty/staff to identify important values and whether Westfield State delivers on those values.
 - 25% of faculty and staff who completed the survey were alumni.
- BVK presented three central concepts as a foundation for the brand: inquisitive and wisdom, heroism and service, convergence and innovation.

- The consensus was that "inquisitive" was the best fit.
 - "The pursuit of knowledge and new understanding gained through lived experiences and the convergence of people, opportunities and ideas, actively learning."
- While the other two concepts were liked, "inquisitive" emerged as the frontrunner.
 - Convergence and innovation may be incorporated into the strategic plan or fundraising initiatives.
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- Advertising and Athletics
 - Advertising redesign is built into current contracts for out-of-home advertising.
 - The athletics logo is not planned to change at this time to avoid the expense of ordering new uniforms.
 - Uniforms will have slight changes over time as they are cycled through.
- Rebranding Timeline
 - Some work was done in 2016 for a small rebrand.
 - Most schools do this about every 10 years.

Advancement/Fundraising/Engagement/Alumni/Campaign

Ms. Lisa McMahon provided the following information:

Blue Diamond Ball

- The Blue Diamond Ball was a huge success, with about 350 guests.
- It brought in close to \$320,000 in pledges, gifts, tickets, and sponsors.
- It allowed for two new scholarships and the closing on the naming of the softball field.
- Approximately \$100,000 will be earmarked for initiatives around student success and access.

Alumni Engagement

- Alumni events elevate the University.
- Alums from the 1978 soccer team were brought back and honored.
- The University went to Cape Cod, Washington D.C., Boston, Florida, and New York.
- Homecoming continues to grow year after year.
- February 13th: Keeper of the Dream event.
- Trip to Georgia with alums:
 - Nettie Washington Douglas, great granddaughter of Booker T. Washington and great great granddaughter of Frederick Douglass, will be the keynote speaker.
- March 19th: Dora Robinson Speaker Series in honor of Women's History Month.
 - Victoria Christopher Murray, author of "The First Ladies" and "The Personal Librarian," will be the speaker.
- Golf tournament in Naples, Florida on March 17 at Pelican Bay.

Situational Assessment conducted by Howrigan Consulting:

- Review of the 2019-2020 report and current status.
- The 2019-2020 study included:
 - Qualitative interviews.
 - Benchmarking with institutions.
 - Data screening and analytics.
 - Development of a case for support.
- Covid-19 and shifts in leadership impacted progress.
- The team has focused on building relationships and connections.

Key Findings from the 2020 Report

- External narrative needed transformation to one of vision and aspiration.
- Institutional Advancement was insufficiently resourced for a campaign.
- Issues with the database and data.
- Need for a comprehensive operational and strategic plan for advancement.

Current Status

- Progress has been made with President Thompson's strategic plan and vision.
- Westfield State University is not ready to articulate the "why and how" of a comprehensive campaign.
- Advancement continues to be insufficiently resourced for a campaign.
- Improvement in the culture within Advancement.
- Integration of fundraising and alumni engagement has effectively come together.
- Data quality issues persist, despite improvements. This is a critical area of concern, partly due to staffing issues.
- The team executes well but must focus on building a comprehensive, multi-year plan that would benefit the advancement office and the University.

Campaign Readiness

- A campaign is daunting, scary, and overwhelming, but Westfield State University needs to be bold and aim high.
- Steps to get a campaign going ASAP (ideally this fiscal year):
 - Optimize major giving:
 - Major giving involves long-term relationship building, multi-year pledges, and assets, not just immediate checkbook gifts.
 - Move towards a robust, high-functioning major giving operation with more staff.
- Work with an external firm to identify the top 50-100 prospects and build a strategy for them.
- Segment the remaining prospects.
- Identify unifying priorities for a bridge campaign while preparing for a comprehensive campaign (e.g., student access and success, health).
- Develop a case for support:
 - The branding is who are we, a case for support for a campaign is who do we intend to become and why should people care and why should people invest in us.
- Establish metrics and performance dashboards for gift officers (e.g., 12-15 visits a month, closing 12 major gifts a year).

Operational Needs This Year

- Multi-year plan for advancement is still needed, but staffing issues must be addressed first.
- Develop a roadmap to address data quality issues.
 - Data quality issues are illustrated when reports require multiple reviews before being presentable.
- Ensure volunteer boards understand their fundraising roles (expanding networks, etc.).
- Increase advancement staff focus on major fundraising, donor retention, and cultivation, and less on organizing fundraising events.
- Assess the campaign goal after deciding on priorities and testing the case for support with top prospects.

Staffing Needs

- Three immediate positions are needed:

- Advancement Services Role: Address the current shortage of staff handling business officer duties, prospect research/management, analytics, reporting, and gift entry.
- Donor Relations Officer: Fill the void left when Lisa (VP) previously served as the primary donor relations person.
- Campaign Director: Someone dedicated to the campaign's success, working with Lisa, the foundation, the president, and the chief of staff.
- Additional positions are recommended for calendar year 2026, but their specific roles need further evaluation (e.g., gift officers for planned giving, major giving, or leadership annual giving; communication staff).

Campaign Investment

- Preliminary investment breakdown: staffing and programming/operations.
- Initial investment of around \$350,000 to get started.
- Fully staffing the three key positions over three years would cost close to \$2 million.
- A campaign will raise more money than is currently being raised.
- Investment leads to increased giving.
- The model is you invest, you ramp up giving in a campaign and now instead of raising the \$1.7 to \$2 million a year, you are bringing in an additional \$2M-3M over 5 years, then your run rate is \$10-12M,, but you just can't do it without investment.

Mitigation Fund & Data-Informed Decisions

- Dr. Thompson and the speaker agreed to start a \$350 mitigation fund to gather data.
- The goal is to provide data for informed decision-making regarding responsibilities.
- The speaker notes that they are not asking for money at this time due to Dr. Thompson's belief in their fundraising ability.

Alumni Engagement

- Alumni responses are generally positive, expressing fondness for their experiences and a willingness to reconnect. Success will come in identifying and expanding the number of alumni we engage with.

FY25 & FY26 Spending Plans

- Working with A&F a FY25 spending plan will be created.
- The FY26 plan will take a more holistic approach, aligning goals with institutional objectives.
- Updates on the campaign's progress will be presented at each spring meeting.
- The board understands the need to invest money to generate returns.
- The board will review the data during the FY26 fall semester to understand the expected return on investment.

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke, seconded by Trustee Montemayor, The Advancement, Marketing, and External Relations Committee recommends approval to the full Board: To approve the granting of staff emeriti status, effective December 9, 2024, to the following individuals: Karen Canary, Rudy Hebert and Mark St. Jean. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **Motion passed unanimously**

Staff Emeriti Nominations

- Three staff members are recommended for Staff emeritus status: Karen Canary, Rudy Hubert, and Mark St. Jean.
- Karen Canary:
 - Worked at the University for 22 years, primarily as an archivist in the library.

- Instrumental in acquiring the oldest document in the archives, a letter from Horace Mann to Samuel Newman from 1842.
- Rudy Hubert:
 - Worked at the University for over 37 years, starting in 1982.
 - Played a pivotal role in shaping the technology landscape at the university.
- Mark St. Jean:
 - Worked at the University for over 31 years.
 - Served as the original lab technician for the Department of Communication.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier, seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to adjourn the meeting. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **Motion passed unanimously**

Meeting adjourned at 12:21 PM.

Attachments:

- a. Draft Minutes of October 23, 2024
- b. MarCom PowerPoint
- c. Advancement Fundraising and Alumni Engagement PowerPoint
- d. Westfield State Situational Assessment Board Presentation
- e. Motion – Staff Emeriti
- f. Staff Emeriti Biographies

Secretary's Certificate

I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and correct copy of the approved minutes of the Westfield State University Board of Trustees Advancement, Marketing, and External Affairs Committee meeting held on December 9, 2024.

Daniel Currier, Secretary

Date