



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Special Meeting

Minutes

May 12, 2026 3:00 p.m.

Zoom

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Ali Salehi, Vice Chair Melissa Alvarado, and Trustees, Barney Garcia, George Gilmer, Tessa Lucey, Chris Montemayor, Michael O'Rourke, William Reichelt and Gloria Williams.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Theresa Jasmin, Jason Queenin.

Also present and participating was Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson; Vice President of Administration & Finance, Stephen Taksar; and Assistant Vice President of Information and Instructional Technology, Alan Blair.

Board Chair Salehi called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. He announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

Initiative Request

- The request aligns with a strategic plan for optimized stewardship of campus resources.
- The cost of IT equipment (servers, routers, etc.) is increasing daily, and lead times are getting longer.

Technology Investment

- The University hasn't been able to invest in residence halls to improve/replace outdated equipment.
- MSCBA (owns the residence halls) doesn't fund technology replacement; the campus must replace outdated tech.
 - Structural needs, HVAC, and roofs take priority.
- Students expect robust Wi-Fi, and the current arrangement is lacking compared to what they have at home.
- Deferred maintenance exists for technology infrastructure, similar to facilities and is approximately \$3 million.
- Replacing end-of-life equipment and modernizing technology infrastructure will create an integrated academic and living environment.
- This will provide a reliable, high-capacity digital infrastructure essential for student engagement, retention, and enrollment competitiveness.
- Aging systems pose operational, safety, and reputational risks.
- The \$2 million investment will upgrade high-impact residence facilities, including:
 - University Hall, New Hall, Courtney Hall, Scanlon Hall, Dickinson Hall, Davis Hall, and residential apartments.

Network Segregation & Campus-Wide Impact

- Networks for administrative and residential sides are segregated.
 - This prevents breaches on the residential side from affecting the academic side.

- Investment will improve connectivity, resilience, safety, and digital equity across the entire campus.
- Even a modest gain in student retention and enrollment will offset the project's cost.
- This will preserve campus capital funds for other administrative priorities.
- Modernizing residence halls is a planned, strategic investment supporting:
 - Student success
 - Institutional reputation
 - Long-term financial stability
 - Future investment

Proposal Details

- Seeking \$2 million through the MSCBA with a 10-year amortization schedule.
- The true interest cost was around 3%.
- Plan to capitalize interest for the first year for the lowest debt payment, averaging about \$260,000 a year over 10 years.
- Funding will come from future capital investments, with Alan agreeing to a shorter annual allocation.
- Immediate and positive impact on residence halls within 12-18 months.
- The Board of Higher Ed is meeting next Tuesday. This is a critical step before it can be added to the agenda, part of a larger bond offering by the MSCBA in June.

Discussion

- Question about shorter annual allocation: Alan Blair gets about a million dollars annually for capital investments.
 - The payment will come out of that million-dollar allocation.
 - Allocation will be reduced to about \$800,000 to \$750,000 annually starting in FY28.
 - The additional \$250,000 will cover the bond repayment.

Technology Advancements

- Question about the risk of technology becoming outdated quickly.
 - Technology changes rapidly, with obsolescence occurring in as little as six months.
- Networking gear is supported for 10 years, with free replacements if it breaks.
- Current equipment is already past its end of life, some for over a year.
- The environment is Cisco, known for reliable equipment that can be used beyond its end of life.

MOTION made by Trustee Williams, and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to authorize the President to seek a \$2 million bond borrowing from the MSCBA to support residence hall information technology improvements. The funding source for the bond payments will be the annual budget allocation from the Information Technology Capital Budget. The amortization period will be 10 years, beginning in FY27. The proceeds will also be used to pay capitalized interest and cost of issuance. Refer to supporting documentation for specific details on this initiative. This request is in alignment with the Strategic Plan Goal 3, Optimize Stewardship of Campus Resources.

There being no further business,

MOTION made by Trustee Williams, and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to adjourn. A roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 4:18 p.m..

Attachments:

- a. Motion – Funding for Residence Hall Technology Upgrades
- b. Funding for Residence Hall Technology Upgrades

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 May 12, 2026.

Dr. Gloria Williams, Secretary

Date