



Board of Trustees

Audit Committee

April 13, 2026

4:30 p.m.

Zoom

Committee Members: Chair Theresa Jasmin, Vice Chair Melissa Alvarado, Secretary Jay Queenin, Tessa Lucey, and Michael O'Rourke

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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| 1. Call to Order | Committee Chair Jasmin |
| 2. Approval of Minutes | |
| a. February 19, 2026 | Committee Chair Jasmin |
| 3. Items for Action | |
| a. Motion – Engagement of Financial Audit Services for FY26 | Lisa Freeman |
| 4. Items for Information | |
| a. Internal Audit Update: Clery Act | Stephen Taksar |
| 5. Adjournment | Committee Chair Jasmin |

Attachment(s):

- a. Minutes 2-19-26 (Draft)
- b. Motion – Engagement of Financial Audit Services for FY26
- c. Engagement of Financial Audit Services for FY26



Board of Trustees

Audit Committee

February 19, 2026, 1:45 p.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>

Committee Members Present: Committee Chair Theresa Jasmin, Secretary Jay Queenin, Members Tessa Lucey and Michael O'Rourke.

Committee Members Absent: Vice Chair melissa Alvarado

Also present and participating were Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Vice President for Administration and Finance, Stephen Taksar; and Assistant Vice President for Information and Instructional Technology, Alan Blair. Also participating was Kate Jun and Ryan Sheehan of WithumSmith and Brown P.C. and Samantha Spezeski and Michael Santolucito of Boston Consortium.

Committee Chair Theresa Jasmin called the meeting to order at 1:46 p.m., conducted a roll call of committee members, and stated the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Lucey to approve the meeting minutes of October 21, 2025. A roll call was completed. **Motion passed.**

Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Aid Report

Kate Jun and Ryan Sheehan of WithumSmith and Brown P.C. reported the following:

- The review occurs every three years if no issues are found.
- No issues were found at this time.
- The auditors look for at least one recipient of each type of Massachusetts aid the University provides.

Single Audit

- Required for any entity (nonprofit, governmental agency) that spends over \$750,000 on federal aid.
- The University is subject to this audit due to the amount of student financial aid it gives out.
- One finding related to NSLDS (National Student Loan Data System) reporting was identified.
 - The University has a 60-day window to report changes in student status (graduation, dropping out, dropping below halftime). Three students who dropped out were not reported at the time. This is a repeat finding from last year. Classified as a "significant deficiency," the lesser of two types of findings. Continued issues could lead to elevation to "material weakness" of internal controls.
 - There is a risk of the DOE putting the University on heightened cash management, though this has not been seen due to NSLDS findings.

Corrective Action

- Corrective action for repeat finding: Additional reports to understand missing information. Registrar's office to send communication to the provost verifying all data that has been submitted.
- Single audit findings are the most common and relatively insignificant.
- Corrective action plan is detailed and will be reviewed next year to ensure implementation and effectiveness.
- Audit Opinion -Ryan Sheehan states the audit has a clean opinion.

MOTION made by Trustee Lucey seconded by Trustee Queenin, the Audit Committee recommends approval to the full Board: to accept the agreed upon procedures report pursuant to the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance attestation guide for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, as prepared by the firm of WithumSmith and Brown P.C., and to authorize the submission of this report to the State Comptroller's Office and the Department of Higher Education. A **roll call** was completed. **Motion passed.**

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Queenin, the Audit Committee recommends approval to the full Board: to accept the audit report on the audit procedures required pursuant to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Uniform Guidance for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, as prepared by the firm of WithumSmith and Brown P.C., and to authorize the submission of this report to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse and to other parties as required by OMB Uniform Guidance and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. A **roll call** was completed. **Motion passed.**

Internal Audit Update

Samantha Spezeski and Michael Santolucito of Boston Consortium provide an update.

- Vice President Steve Taksar provided context, mentioning the budget adjustment for the upcoming year concerning the number of audits that can be performed annually.

New Strategy

- The proposed strategy involves an 18-month participation agreement. This allows for execution with reduced hours, with the following year's hours capturing a larger project.
- Samantha Spezeski uses white papers from ACUA and IIA on the top internal audit areas to consider. She presents these papers to management and works with Steve Taksar and Trustee Theresa Jasmine to create the audit list presented to the committee.

Clery Act Review

- The Clery Act concerns student safety and crime reporting on campus.
 - It involves public reporting to families and students.
 - There have been recent updates have been made to the Clery Act.
 - The Clery Act review can be done largely off-site because it focuses on compliance regarding where information is reported, such as websites and student handbooks. The Clery Act review is estimated to take about 125 hours.

Institutional Advancement Review

- If the next review starts around June, 125 hours from the next budget could be used, providing 250 hours for a review of institutional advancements.
 - Institutional advancement is a good area to review during this time of year. There will be change in leadership at the vice-presidential level in advancement so it's a good time to ensure everything is running smoothly and identify areas for improvement.
- The internal audits not only look at compliance but also understand best practices. There is hope to find opportunities for efficiency or ways to strengthen operations in that area of the University.

Clery Act

- If approved, the Clery Act can be completed and presented before the next committee meeting.

Internal Audit Tracker

- Progress has been made in some areas, but some audits are more complicated and take more time due to coordination with other departments.
 - Accounts Payable have made the most progress, completing two out of three findings.
 - Building security and access has progressed, primarily in procuring new software programs for key inventory and tracking.
 - Grant progress has taken a back seat due to vacant positions but will ramp up again once staffed.
 - Student accounts have been slower than planned, with one of five findings completed, but actively working on the others.

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Queenin, the Audit Committee recommends approval to the full Board: to approve the internal audit plan as recommended by the Boston Consortium group in the February 2026 memorandum. A **roll call** was completed. **Motion passed.**

External audit of PCI-DSS

Assistant Vice President for Information and Instructional Technology, Alan Blair reported the following:

- The University had a clean audit.
- Cybersecurity is a strategic risk management plan and always in the top three IT concerns, according to Educause.
- The University only procures software and hardware that is part of the visa registry and certified by PCI DSS.

Security Measures

- The University continuously monitors and tests its systems, scanning everything monthly and having an annual external audit.
- They recently replaced their firewall without downtime, ensuring all doors were properly secured through internal and external scans.
- Technical modernization includes enhanced encryption, multi-factor authentication, and password changes.
- Critical or high-priority patches and vulnerability management are addressed within 48 hours, especially before long weekends and holidays.

Collaboration & Compliance

- Regular meetings with Emergency Management Director, Sam Lemanski focus on risk management and cybersecurity.
- Finance and Dining departments are diligent in following merchant provider requirements.
- Facilities addressed a blip in their new parking system promptly.
- SGA is also compliant in their ticket sales. There is a lot of collaboration across campus when it comes to PCI.

PCI Compliance

- If a company does absolutely nothing to maintain PCI compliance, the worst case scenario is losing the ability to accept credit cards and process transactions. This typically only happens if there is a habitual problem or ignoring critical issues for years.
- The average cost of a data breach is around \$5 million. One institution paid \$35 million to get their data back because they didn't have a valid backup. Besides the financial cost, there is also a breach of trust and reputation.
- Data backup procedures:

- Some systems are backed up hourly using a differential method, copying changes to files.
 - A full backup is performed weekly and stored locally, then moved offsite weekly.
- The number of attempted attacks per day is very high. It was 88 million at one point. Recently, 115 million attacks were forwarded in one day.

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Trustee Lucey and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke to adjourn the meeting. There being no discussion, **motion passed unanimously**. Meeting adjourned at 2:16 p.m.

Attachment(s):

- a. Minutes 10-21-25 (Draft)
- b. Motion – Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Aid Report (OSFA)
- c. Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Aid Report (Draft)
- d. Motion – Uniform Guidance Report
- e. Uniform Guidance Report (Draft)
- f. Motion – Internal Audit Plan
- g. Internal Audit Plan (Memo)
- h. External Audit Update – Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard
- i. Internal Audit Tracker (Summary)
- j. Internal Audit Tracker

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, Audit Committee meeting held on February 19, 2026.

Jay Queenin, Secretary

Date



Board of Trustees

April 13, 2026

MOTION

The Audit Committee recommends approval to the full Board:

To appoint WithumSmith & Brown PC, as the University's auditors and to engage their services for FY26 in response to the state-wide request for proposal with Bridgewater State University (RFP-0026). The contract is for three years with a possibility of two, one-year extensions.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTING

MEMORANDUM

TO: Steve Taksar, Vice President, Administration and Finance
FROM: Lisa Freeman, Associate Vice President, Finance
DATE: March 23, 2026
SUBJECT: Financial Auditing Services RFP and Recommendation

The University recently participated in a state-wide RRP process for auditing services (Bridgewater State RFP-0026-2026 financial auditing services). The contract award period is through June 30, 2029, with two additional one-year extension options.

The four firms who submitted proposals were BerryDunn, CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP, Withum Smith & Brown P.C., and CBIZ CPA P.C. The RFP review committee awarded all participants an award through this RFP process. Each participating college and university will be executing contracts with the firm of their choice.

After a review of the evaluation and pricing proposals, I recommend the selection of Withum Smith & Brown P.C., one of only two firms receiving an 'A' grade in the committee's evaluation.

Some of the reasons for the recommendation are as follows:

- Withum Smith & Brown has the most experience with Massachusetts Higher Education. As of FY25, they audited 7 out of 9 state universities and 15 out of 15 of the state community colleges.
- There is significant value in continuing with Withum Smith & Brown based on their experience with Massachusetts Higher Ed, our systems, and our policies and procedures. A significant example of this is their experience and thorough understanding of HR/CMS, the state payroll system. Payroll costs account for almost 50% of the University's total annual expenditures. Deep institutional knowledge leads to more efficient audits.
- Withum Smith & Brown is very responsive to our calls and emails throughout the year.
- Withum Smith & Brown has been calculating our GASB 87 and GASB 96 liabilities as non-attest services. If we were to change audit firms, we are not sure if they would perform these services and the University would have to investigate buying software to allow us to calculate these liabilities on our own.
- The price differential, for the base audit only, between CBIZ \$89,000 (for 0-3 schools) and \$90,000 for Withum Smith & Brown (7+ schools) is \$1,000 and we believe the added staff-time needed to provide training for a new audit team would more than make up the difference. As stated earlier, there is also considerable value in having an experienced firm. The base audit fees charged by Withum for FY25 were \$88,500 vs. \$90,000 proposed for FY26 (a \$1,500 or 2% increase over prior year). Overall, our fees will be approximately \$10,000 lower since we are not required to have an audit of our state financial aid (MOSFA) for FY26.

In a recent meeting with the state universities involved in the RFP, it appears that only 1 or 2 of them will change to CBIZ, although they are all still in various stages of the review and approval process. We do not have any information on what the community colleges are doing.

While best practice considers changing audit firms every 5-7 years, partner rotation every 5 years is often sufficient for maintaining independence without the disruption of changing firms. Westfield's audit partner has been the lead on our engagement for 3 years.