



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Special Meeting

Minutes

April 8, 2021

Meeting held in person and virtually via Zoom

In accordance with Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, § 20 dated March 12, 2020.

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

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN PERSON: Chair Kevin Queenin, Vice Chair Edward Sullivan, and Trustees Melissa Alvarado, Paul Boudreau, Madeline Landrau, Robert Magovern, Dr. Robert Martin, Thalita Neves, Ali Salehi, and Dr. Gloria Williams

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Secretary Lydia Martinez-Alvarez and Trustee Madeline Landrau

Dr. Kristin G. Esterberg was also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 PM by Chair Queenin, and a roll call identified the members participating as listed above. It was announced that the meeting is being livestreamed, and, as a result, will be captured as recorded.

Dr. Esterberg gave an overview of her career, spent mostly in higher education and in Massachusetts. She believes deeply in public education, is a native of Massachusetts, and believes in the Horace Mann principles. Throughout her professional and personal life she has sought to make institutions more equitable, inclusive, and to serve students better. Westfield has had challenges in leadership and her background and training would be helpful in using her ability to work well with people of different viewpoints and trying to understand everyone's needs. These are some very critical imperatives for the next presidency and both her professional training as a sociologist and the work done elsewhere would contribute well towards that effort. She uses her training every day in her role as a leader and president and would like to use those skills at Westfield State.

Questions were posed by the Board of Trustees on six areas highlighted in presidential profile.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY AND BUILDING TRUST

Dr. Esterberg stated she has made decisions that have not always been popular and has worked with a system instead of a board. In the move to remote learning, she created focus groups on academics, student life, and the health and wellbeing of employees to develop shared understanding of risks and opportunities. This move needed in-depth stakeholder meetings with considerable communication. The diversity of her current university changed dramatically in the first years of her presidency and she knew they needed to

make sure all students felt welcome. There were challenging hate crimes and she met frequently with students to listen to and get to know them. They created a diversity strategic plan and a division of equity, diversion, and inclusion for employees. There is still much work to be done and the gaps are clear, but the commitment to the work is ongoing. The campus has worked hard to build trust around equity and inclusion.

VISION, GOALS, STRATEGY

The Strategic Plan is a huge process to complete and focuses on enrollment, recruitment, and culture, creating a vision and roadmap of where Westfield State University (WSU) needs to go. The institution needs people who are champions for that. Determine the gap between the vision and where the campus is and who is responsible for making sure it is enacted. You need to ask how the pandemic has affected the goals of the Plan. We need champions to ensure their part of the Plan is successful and living and breathing through their daily work. We need to assess if the goals are still the same and we do that in our summer retreats, asking what has been accomplished and what needs to be done going forward in the next year. The University Efficiency Analysis Advisory Committee (UEAAC) report is an impressive piece of shared governance, ensuring the entire campus understands exactly how campus is running and spending its money. She would want to understand the intent better and determine if there are unintended consequences in any of the recommendations.

FINANCES AND ENROLLMENT

The most critical action is retention. Every student lost is lost revenue. Once they come to campus, you have a duty to keep them here. Every student has the opportunity for success. Westfield has some opportunities for improvement in the first year and needs to close the equity gaps. The institution needs to find out how to reach those non-traditional students and to work closely with k-12 schools and community colleges. Campuses can share services to retain distinctive identities and reduce costs through partnerships with other institutions. The first role of the president is finding and keeping students. Look at students who have not been well served. Draw from outside the region and the state for the Criminal Justice and Physician's Assistant programs. There are many people within a few hundred miles who haven't been served, such as adults with some education but no degree. Adult learners are looking for shorter classes to obtain certificates to stack and you can reach more students by offering distance learning.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The president needs to make sure First Amendment rights are protected even for those that we disagree with. Public campuses allow for expression of free speech and inclusivity for all. If she had a disagreement with the Board of Trustees, she would ask what the disagreement is about and what the goal of a public institution is. Knowing when to speak out and when to remain quiet is important to understand. Public campuses have to take a stand on issues of racial injustices. For students to leave campuses fully equipped to live and work in a diverse community, we need to teach them to take a stand on matters of the day.

EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS AND VISIBILITY

In the first year, she would listen deeply to concerns of the constituencies and build trust. She would try to help the campus understand how to move forward together to share the vision for the next step. She would need to keep the business of the University going while working on the UEAAC recommendations and Strategic Plan. She would ask where the alumni are in terms of connection to the campus. She would be fully engaged and a visible face to students and all constituencies. Fundraising is the work of the entire campus. If you are getting a very large gift from a donor, you should know them enough to steward that gift.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

In a short period of time her entire campus was able to go virtual, providing lessons on what we can look like in the future. We are more skillful now and there are more possibilities for hybrid learning, changing how we teach. For the next 3-5 years, we can utilize online and remote models, making financial aid, registration, and student accounts much more efficient through the use of technology. There is increased opportunity for collaboration, with business functions being done between campuses. Take racial equity seriously and think about how to transform yourselves to serve a more diverse population and their families. UEAAC will be a helpful motivation for faculty so they know what the University is doing. All faculty teach a full load. Envision what change will look like and then support them in that. Communication is important. Understand the risks of not changing and then support them in changing. Understand the barriers, remove where possible, and work with them to help understand that change is better than present circumstance. Bring them into the vision so they are part of the change.

The Latinx population is a good source of new blood but are mostly first generation students. A connection between campus and community based organizations is critical. Admissions counselors and recruiters need to speak Spanish, and materials and website language need to be in Spanish. Reach deep to middle and high schoolers having positive experiences on your campus. Families learn how to navigate the college experience and students earn a little bit of credit. Bring sports camps, geology rock gardens, petting zoos or musical instrument events to get them on campus

To think outside the box, you would first need to protect the institution. She has worked very hard with the faculty senate to work together. The institution is best served with collaboration, which she is not scared to do.

MOTION made by Trustee Magovern, seconded by Trustee Williams, to adjourn.

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** taken:

Trustee Alvarado	Yes
Trustee Boudreau	Yes
Trustee Magovern	Yes
Trustee Martin	Yes
Thalita Neves	Yes
Trustee Salehi	Yes
Trustee Sullivan	Yes
Trustee Williams	Yes
Trustee Queenin	Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:03 PM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Kristin G. Esterberg, Ph.D. Letter of Application
- b. Kristin G. Esterberg, Ph.D. Curriculum Vitae
- c. Kristin G. Esterberg, Ph.D. Bio
- d. Suggested Interview Questions