



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes

October 21, 2025 3:00 p.m.

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>

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Ali Salehi, Vice Chair Melissa Alvarado, and Trustees, Barney Garcia, George Gilmer, Theresa Jasmin, Chris Montemayor, Michael O'Rourke, Jason Queenin, and William Reichelt.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Tessa Lucey and Gloria Williams

Also present and participating was Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson.

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

MOTION made by Trustee Jasmin and seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to have a consent agenda to approve the meeting minutes of June 11, 2025, August 8, 2025, October 1, 2025 and October 10, 202. There being no discussion, a roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously.**

President's Report

2025-2029 Strategic Plan

- The plan was submitted to the Board of Higher Education for review.
- The Commonwealth is applying strict scrutiny to all strategic plans.
 - The Commonwealth is adding an Attorney General review to all strategic plans.
- The plan will likely come before the Board of Higher Education early in 2026.
- Fostering innovative learning by aligning institutional resources with innovative and relevant academic programs.
- Advancing student success by creating an environment where every student has access to resources, support and community needed to complete their program.
- Optimizing stewardship of campus resources by strengthening, broadening and enhancing the use of campus resources.
- Amplifying institutional impact and influence by fostering a vibrant community of engaged scholars.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- KPIs will be used to update the board four times a year.
- The strategic plan will be revisited every six months.

- Taking an active role in discussions and communicating the positive impact of investment in Westfield State University can help achieve goals.
- The Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll toured the campus, including Parenzo Hall, the Ride Center, and the Woodward Center.
- Outdated facilities like Bates, and Lammers create roadblocks for technology installation.
- Full support for the passage of the BRIGHT Act, which would help build a modern public higher education infrastructure.

Legislative Advocacy

- High schools are often better equipped than the university's 50-year-old buildings.
- Passage of the BRIGHT Act is key to remaining competitive and responsive.
- Assistance is needed to influence key players to pass this legislation.
- Thanked everyone who advocated for the campus.

University Leadership and Initiatives

- Regularly participating with government agencies to advance learning and student success.
- Serves as Chair of the State Universities of Massachusetts Council of Presidents.
- Member of multiple boards and committees related to education and workforce development.
- Appointed to the Massachusetts K12 Statewide Graduation Council.

DRIVE Initiative

- Invited to serve on the Discovery Research, Research and Innovation for a Vibrant Economy Team Initiative (DRIVE).
- DRIVE aims to grow Massachusetts' research and innovation economy and create jobs.
- The team will explore methods to strengthen the research and innovation ecosystem.
- The Governor has set aside \$400 million for research and innovation.

Homecoming Festivities

- Homecoming festivities will be held from Thursday through Saturday.
- The annual Homecoming Online Auction is live, featuring items donated by faculty, staff, alumni, and the business community.
- Proceeds will benefit students and programs.
- The Athletic Hall of Fame ceremony and dinner will be held on Friday.

Alumni Events

- An Alumni Legacy Breakfast will be held on Saturday morning.
- Tailgating will follow around the Woodward Center.
- Men's soccer, football, and field hockey teams will compete.

Retirements

- Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Lisa McMahon, is retiring. Her contributions have left a lasting impression.
- Vice President for Administration and Finance, Steve Takstar, will conclude his service in July. His level-headedness and commitment will be missed.

Student Trustee Report

- The 2025-2026 academic year is a turning point.
- The Student Government Association is in its 101st year.
- The association intends to implement policies advocated by students.
- Governing philosophy centers around "planting a tree for others to enjoy the shade."

SGA Initiatives

- SGA remains committed to piloting the revised Common Hour policy.
- The goal is to allocate additional class time for club activities and campus events.
- The timeline, dubbed the Courier Timeline, aims to test a new time slot for the 2026-2027 academic year.

Deferred Maintenance

- Trustee Garcia expressed appreciation to Melinda Phelps for her help in advocating for the Bright Act.
- Lt. Governor Crispell's visit to campus marks a crucial point for pushing ahead with the Bright Act.
- Lammers Hall's closure embodies the problems institutions face and the limited options available.

Audit Committee

Committee Chair Theresa Jasmin updated the Board:

- The committee met with external and internal auditors.
- WithumSmith and Brown presented the FY25 financial statements, reporting a clean, unmodified opinion with no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies.
 - Net position improved by nearly \$10 million in FY25 before capital appropriation.
 - Cash position declined by about \$6 million to \$48 million at the end of FY25.

Internal Audits

- Boston Consortium Group presented findings from audits on Building Access and Security and Accounts Payable.
- Building Access and Security audit found issues with physical key management.
 - Recommendations included system upgrades, improved controls, and better reporting.
 - Best practices shared, such as moving to card keys (estimated cost: \$5,000 per door).
- Accounts Payable audit found controls operating as designed, but offered suggestions for strengthening them.
 - Suggestions included how to handle changes in vendor addresses and payments via ACH.

Internal Audit Recommendation

- Samantha Spezeski and Vice President Taksar will provide a recommendation at the next meeting in November regarding the path forward for internal audit.

MOTION made by Trustee Jasmin seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to accept the annual report for fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, as prepared by the university's Administration and Finance Division and to authorize the submission of this report to the State Comptroller's Office, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, and the State Auditor's Office, as required by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. This annual report includes the Westfield State University FY25 Financial Statements, audited by WithumSmith and Brown, P.C. A roll call was completed. **Motion passed.**

Academic Affairs Committee

Committee Chair Chris Montemayor updated the Board:

- SUCCESS Grant: Year one focused on hiring staff, professional development training related to student success and retention, financial aid for students with overdue balances, and student work opportunities. Year two will focus on wraparound support activities like peer mentoring, academic skill workshops, and case management services.
- The committee reviewed faculty ratios and learned about the new professional development director in the faculty center.
- The search for the Dean of College of Professional Studies position has been reopened.
- Attorney Phelps reviewed the university's policies completed by the Academic Policy Committee.

MOTION made by Trustee Alvarado and seconded by Trustee Jasmin, to move the 30 policies as indicated on the attached policy list to the University catalog as policies of the Academic Policy Committee with finalized approval from the President. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

MOTION made by Trustee Alvarado and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to nullify the following as University Policies: University Anti-bullying, Mobbing and Harassment Policy (1340), Conflict of Financial Interest and Research (1370), Core Implementation (1250). There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

MOTION made by Trustee Garcia and seconded by Trustee Montemayor, to approve of the Program for Master of Business Administration. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

MOTION made by Trustee Jasmin seconded by Trustee Montemayor, to approve of the Program for Master of Science in Athletic Training. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

MOTION made by Trustee Montemayor seconded by Trustee O'Rourke, to approve the program Master of Science in Nursing Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed unanimously.

Advancement, Marketing, & External Relations

Committee Vice Chair Chris Montemayor updated the Board:

- Lisa and her team raised a total of \$2.3 million to support university programs and students.
- They are currently working to consolidate the fundraising campaign, including prospect analysis.
- For FY26, they have received a total of \$1.5 million in gifts and grants.

Enrollment Management & Student Affairs

Committee Chair William Reichelt updated the Board on the following:

- There has been an increase in enrollment for fall admission for the first time in over a decade.
- Summer orientation participation increased by 5% over last year, and family weekend attendance doubled.
- Challenges include decreasing high school senior graduating classes and free community college.
- New branding is rolling out in the spring, highlighting the value of a Westfield education for entering the workforce.

Governance and Nomination Committee

Committee Chair Melissa Alvarado updated the Board:

- Strategic plan and KPIs will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.
- A new proposed board committee structure would condense the current structure to four committees: Finance and Audit, Student Success and Learning, University Success, and the Executive Committee.
 - The vote on this will be deferred until December.
- The AGB conference for 2026 will not have trustee representation due to cost.

Financial Affairs Committee

Committee Chair George Gilmer updated the Board on the following:

- FY25 year-to-date actual versus budget came in at break-even due to higher enrollment generating \$5 million in incremental revenue, offset by one-time expenses.
- The use of reserves for capital improvements was around \$4 million, which is more than the investment income generated at that time.
 - Lisa Freeman gave an "orange light" on this.
- The investment portfolio had a gain of \$4.1 million year-to-date, which was about an 11% return.
- FY26 budget versus actuals from the prior year were reviewed, as well as travel expenses for the board to review.
- Two policies were updated: the software and hardware acquisition usage policy 0602 and the information security passphrases policy 0600.
- Vice President Taksar discussed high-level assumptions for the FY27 budget.

MOTION made by Trustee Jasmin and seconded by Trustee Queenin, to approve rebalancing the asset allocation mix, currently at 52.6% equities, 46.6% fixed income, and 0.8% cash and equivalents, to align with the goal in the Investment Policy (0430) of 60% equities, 39.5% fixed income, and 0.5% cash and equivalents. There being no discussion, a roll call was taken, **motion passed unanimously**.

MOTION made by Trustee Jasmin and seconded by Trustee Queenin, to approve the FY26 campus budget, as presented, including, but not limited to the following elements: operating budget, capital budget, vehicle lease/purchase program and sponsorships (\$50,000). Further, to authorize the President and/or the Vice President for Administration and Finance to make budget adjustments to these funds as allowed in the Trust Fund Management Policy (0604). There being no discussion, a roll call was taken, **motion passed unanimously**.

There being no further business,

MOTION made by Trustee Reichelt, and seconded by Trustee Jasmin, to adjourn. A roll call was conducted, **motion passed unanimously**.

Meeting adjourned at 3:58 p.m..

Attachments:

- a. Draft Minutes of June 11, 2025
- b. Draft Minutes of August 8, 2025 – Special Meeting/ Board Retreat
- c. Draft Minutes of October 1, 2025 – Special Meeting
- d. Draft Minutes of October 10, 2025 – Executive Committee Meeting
- e. Draft Minutes of October 10, 2025 – Special Meeting

Audit Committee:

- a. Minutes 6-11-25 (Draft)
- b. Motion – FY25 Financial Statements
- c. FY25 Financial Statements (Required Communication)
- d. FY25 Financial Statements (Draft)

- e. Internal Audit – Building Access and Security
- f. Internal Audit – Accounts Payable

Academic Affairs Committee:

- a. Minutes of June 11, 2025
- b. SUCCESS Grant Year 2 Presentation
- c. Full-Time/Part-Time Faculty Ratio
- d. Motion-Removal of Policies
- e. Policies being removed
- f. University Anti-bullying, mobbing and harassment Policy (1340)
- g. Conflict of Interest in Research Policy (1370)
- h. Core Implementation Policy (1250)
- i. Motion-Program Approval: Master of Business Administration
- j. Proposal Master of Business Administration
- k. Budget: Master of Business Administration
- l. Proposal Master of Science in Athletic Training
- m. Budget: Master of Science in Athletic Training
- n. Motion-Program Approval: Master of Science in Athletic Training
- o. Motion-Program Approval: Master of Science in Nursing: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
- p. Proposal Master of Science in Nursing: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
- q. Budget: Master of Science in Nursing: Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

Advancement, Marketing and External Relations:

- a. Draft Minutes of June 11, 2025
- b. FY25 Thank You successful year
- c. FY25 Q4 IA Dashboard
- d. 2025 Homecoming flyer
- e. Online Auction Notecard 2025
- f. Westfield State University Annual Online Auction Sponsorship (Final)

Enrollment and Student Affairs Committee:

- a. Minutes, June 11, 2025
- b. EMSA BOT PPT

Governance and Nomination Committee:

- a. WSU Revised Committee Structure
- b. Motion – Board Restructure

Financial Affairs Committee:

- a. Minutes 6-11-25 (Draft)
- b. FY24 vs FY25 YOY Actual Comparison (Narrative)
- c. FY24 vs FY25 YOY Actual Comparison
- d. University Cash Summary
- e. Motion – Rebalance Investment Funds
- f. Rebalance Investment Funds (3Q Investment Performance)
- g. Motion – FY26 Operating Budget
- h. FY26 Operating Budget (Narrative)

- i. FY26 Operating Budget (Working Model)
- j. FY26 Operating Budget (Vehicles)
- k. FY26 Operating Budget (Supplemental Spending Schedule)
- l. FY26 Operating Budget (Capital Plan)
- m. FY26 Operating Budget (Enrollment Planning)
- n. FY25 vs FY26 YOY Actual Comparison (Narrative)
- o. FY25 vs FY26 YOY Actual Comparison
- p. Travel Expenses of the President and the President's Direct Reports
- q. Policy - Software and Hardware Acquisition and Usage (0602)
- r. Policy - Information Security Passphrases (0600)
- s. FY27 Budget Planning Assumptions and Timeline

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 October 21, 2025.

Dr. Gloria Williams, Secretary

Date