



## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Student Success and Learning Committee

**April 28, 2026, 12:45 p.m.**

**Minutes**

Loughman Living Room, Scanlon Hall

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Committee Chair Chris Montemayor, Vice Chair Barney Garcia, Secretary Michael O'Rourke, Trustee Melissa Alvarado, Trustee William Reichelt, Trustee Gloria Williams, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Trustee Theresa Jasmin.

Also, present and participating are Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. William Salka; Associate Director of Student Affairs, Stefanie Santaniello; and Assistant Director of Student Success Analytics, Melanie Gaudet.

Committee Chair Montemayor called the meeting to order at 12:45 p.m. and a rollcall was taken of the committee members participating as listed above. It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Williams and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke to approve the Academic Affairs Committee minutes of the February 19, 2026, meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

### **Tenure and Promotion Ceremony**

- The April meeting is a celebratory event for faculty earning tenure and promotion.
- Tenure is described as the pinnacle for academics, with promotion to full professor being the highest achievement.

### **Faculty Seeking Promotion to Full Professor**

- Paul Cacolice, Department of Sports Medicine and Human Performance
  - Joined in 2016, promoted to Associate Professor in 2021, and tenured in 2022.
  - Described as a rigorous teacher and committed mentor.
- Andrew Hafner, Department of Education
  - Joined in 2013, was promoted to Associate Professor in 2018, and tenured in 2019.
  - Noted for substantial accomplishments in scholarship and engagement.
- Tracy McLeod, Department of Education
  - Joined in 2017, promoted to Associate Professor in 2020, tenured in 2023.
  - Effective teacher focused on preparing educators for students with disabilities.
- Edward Orgill, Department of Music

- Dr. Orgill has established himself as an exceptional teacher whose work covers every major segment of the music curriculum.
- Was tenured in 2017 and promoted to Associate Professor in 2018.
- Jamie Rivera, Department of Nursing
  - Her record reflects contributions in teaching, grant activity, and service to both the Nursing Department and the broader university.
  - She was hired as an Assistant Professor in 2017, tenured in 2019 and promoted to Associate Professor in 2021
- Amanda Salacinski, Department of Sports Medicine and Human Performance
  - She was promoted to Associate Professor in 2021 and tenured in 2024.
  - Her teaching philosophy is grounded in mentorship, clarity and application.
- Susan Scott, Department of Nursing
  - She was hired as an Assistant Professor in 2019, tenured and promoted to Associate Professor in 2021
  - Dr. Scott's work demonstrates a strong blend of teaching excellence, student advising, clinical expertise, scholarship, and service
- Francesca Spina, Department of Criminal Justice
  - Professor Spina joined Westfield State in 2025 at the rank of Associate Professor.
  - Her record of teaching effectiveness, student advising, contributions to the content of your discipline, participation in professional organizations as well as your research activity, public service, effectiveness as Chairperson of an extremely large department, and service to the Westfield State University community are all richly documented and have been praised by your colleagues and your college Dean.

### **Faculty Seeking Promotion to Associate Professor**

- Timothy Honig, Department of Music
  - Joined in 2019 as a temporary instructor, hired as Assistant Professor in 2022.
  - Created the Bachelor of Music Therapy program, recognized for its potential.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Garcia and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke; the Student Success and Learning Committee recommends to the full Board: to approve the granting of promotion to the rank of Professor, effective September 1, 2026, to: Dr. Paul Cacolice, Sports Medicine and Human Performance; Dr. Andrew Hafner, Education; Dr. Tracy McLeod, Education; Dr. Edward Orgill, Music; Dr. Jamie Rivera, Nursing; Dr. Amanda Salacinski, Sports Medicine and Human Performance; Dr. Susan Scott, Nursing; Dr. Francesca Spina, Criminal Justice. To approve the granting of promotion to the rank of Associate Professor, effective September 1, 2026, to: Dr. Timothy Honig, Music. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed by majority.

### **Faculty Seeking Tenure**

- Ashley Evanoski-Cole, Department of Chemistry
  - Joined in 2020, promoted to Associate Professor in 2024.
  - Described as an innovative educator with successful grant acquisitions.
- Beverly St. Pierre, Health Sciences
  - Joined in 2020, promoted to Associate Professor in 2020.
  - Commended for her commitment to scholarship and community.

- Francesca Spina, Criminal Justice
  - Joined in 2022 as Associate Professor and Chair of the Criminal Justice Department.
  - Recognized for her engaging teaching style and published works.
- Kathryn Weglarz, Department of Biology
  - Joined Westfield State in 2020 at the rank of Assistant Professor and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2025.
  - Her teaching was described as outstanding, as evidenced by her receipt of the Early Career Teaching and Mentoring Award as well as the Teaching Showcase Award.

### **Tenure with Automatic Promotion to Associate Professor**

- Michelle Duffelmeyer, Health Sciences
  - Joined in 2020, noted for substantial contributions to physician's assistant education.
  - Dr. Duffelmeyer has made substantial contributions to Physicians Assistant education through her role as course coordinator and lecturer for six major medical modules.
- Juliet Lee, Education Department
  - Joined in 2020, recognized for her learner-centered approach and curriculum redesign efforts.
- Nicholas Morrison, Psychology
  - Joined in 2020, noted for high teaching standards and active scholarship.
- Jessica Stephens, Biology
  - Joined in 2020, described as an exemplary teacher with a focus on inclusion and collaborative learning.

**MOTION** made by Trustee Garcia and seconded by Trustee O'Rourke; the Student Success and Learning Committee recommends to the full Board: to approve the granting of promotion to the rank of Professor, effective September 1, 2026, to: Professor Ashley Evanoski-Cole, Chemistry & Physical Science; Professor Beverly St. Pierre, Health Sciences; Professor Francesca Spina, Criminal Justice; Professor Kathryn Weglarz, Biology. To approve the granting of tenure with automatic promotion, effective September 1, 2026, to: Professor Michelle Duffelmeyer, Health Sciences; Professor Juliet Lee, Education; Professor Nicholas Morrison, Psychology; Professor Jessica Stephens, Biology. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed by majority.

### **Academic Excellence Awards**

- Presentation of the Academic Excellence Awards list for board information.
- Awards recognize exceptional students within their majors for academic performance and contributions.
- List of departments, award names, and recipients included in the board packet for review.

### **Student Success Data Demonstration**

- Introduction of Melanie Gaudette and Stephanie Santinello from the institutional research team.
- Overview of the Huron Project: to capture, clean, verify, and utilize data effectively.

- Creation of a Data Lake House in partnership with Huron and housed in Amazon cloud.
- Data includes financial aid and student success KPIs, cleaned and stored for reliability.
- Historical data will improve over time, allowing trend analysis.

#### **Focus on Student Success**

- Emphasis on using data to improve student experience and success.
- Goals to increase retention and graduation rates.
- Commitment to supporting students in completing their degrees.

#### **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

- Definition of KPIs for multi-level analysis to respond to student needs.
- Ability to produce specific KPIs on request for board review.
- Enrollment data will help understand changes in the student population and inform responses.

#### **Enrollment Data Overview**

- The enrollment data can be broken down by various variables including:
  - Year, major, gender, first generation status, race, ethnicity, and age.
- Geographic dispersal of students is also analyzed, focusing on:
  - New England, primarily the Commonwealth.
  - National distribution.

#### **Data Access and Usage**

- Access to data is being limited to ensure clarity and consistency:
  - "We will not use any data that does not come from this data set."
  - This approach aims to eliminate discrepancies in data interpretation during discussions.
- Institutional research will handle all data requests to ensure proper understanding and interpretation of the data.

#### **Data Quality and Historical Context**

- Data is frozen at specific points in time to maintain consistency:
  - Data is frozen early in the fall and spring semesters.
  - Huron cleans and stores the data for reliability.
- Currently, historical data spans three to four years, with plans to expand in the future.

#### **Future Directions and Funding**

- The institution has received funding for student success initiatives:
  - "The state is giving us a million and a half hours a year to support student success."
- The data will help in setting goals and understanding student retention:
  - Focus on characteristics of students who do not continue to their second year or semester.

#### **Data Access and Security**

- Access to the dashboard is limited to Deans, the IR team, and a few others, including the President and Chair.
- Individual faculty members must go through Institutional Research for data access.
- Data can be exported and de-identified for faculty research purposes.

#### **Retention Rates by Major**

- Retention rates for the 2024 cohort show an overall rate of 72.6%.
- Nursing program has a higher retention rate due to direct admission standards and faculty support.

- Criminal Justice major retention rate is around 70.12%, consistent with expectations for large majors.
- Management major has a lower-than-average retention rate, attributed to rapid growth and insufficient faculty support.

### **Financial Aid and Student Retention**

- Financial aid can significantly impact students' persistence.
- There is a modest performance gap for students of color that widens from year one to year two.
- Equity gaps tend to compound over time, indicating a need for deeper intervention.

### **Data Reporting and Retention**

- Current reporting focuses on fall-to-fall retention but misses students who do not return after their sophomore year.
- Data shows that if students return for their junior year, their likelihood of graduating increases significantly.
- Targeting resources towards first-year students is essential for improving retention rates.

### **High School GPA and Retention**

- High school GPA is a strong predictor of retention rates.
  - Students with a GPA of 2.0 to 2.49 have a retention rate that drops significantly in their second year.
  - More than half of these students do not return after their sophomore year.
- Early support is crucial for at-risk groups starting from the first week of classes.

### **Importance of Early Intervention**

- Persistence measures show that students struggling in their first semester are unlikely to return.
- There is a direct correlation between high school GPA and first-semester performance.
- Midterm grades are critical for identifying struggling students and mobilizing support before it's too late.

### **Retention Data**

- Low band students show improvement in retention but struggle in the Spring semester.
- Graduation indicators for first-time full-time students show a six-year graduation rate of about 50%.
  - 2019 cohort data indicate 49% retention.
  - Only 50% of students graduated within the six-year term.

### **Graduation Rate Insights**

- The six-year graduation rate is a key metric; four-year graduation rates are also available.
- Concerns raised about the low graduation rate of 50%.
  - "Half the students who start don't complete."
  - Importance of understanding student debt and time spent without a degree.
- Future assessments will include the earnings of Pell Grant recipients' post-graduation.
- Institutions will be penalized if graduates do not earn a living wage.

### **Tracking Student Outcomes**

- Discussion on tracking students who transfer to other institutions.
- Data analysis shows high school GPA influences transfer rates.
  - Students with higher GPAs tend to leave early if they transfer.
- Ideal outcome is for students to attend community college, upskill, and return.

### **Student KPIs and Dashboard**

- Main student KPIs include financial outcomes and health status.
  - Metrics available: total grants received, average debt amount.
- Degree completion metrics include:
  - Graduation rates and total degrees awarded.
  - Credit accumulation as an additional indicator.

### **Predictive Model for Student Success**

- Model predicts likelihood of retention for first-time, full-time students.
  - Uses historical data to generate predictions and test against actual outcomes.
  - Achieves an 85% accuracy rate in predicting retention.
- The model incorporates multiple variables influencing student success.
  - High school GPA identified as a significant predictor.

### **Targeting Student Support**

- Information from the model will be used to identify students who are likely to struggle.
  - Example: Out of 804 first-year students, 200 identified as needing support.
- Resources will be allocated to students with a high likelihood of struggling, rather than those likely to succeed.

### **Strategic Planning and Upward Mobility**

- Emphasis on developing programs that support student success and upward mobility.
- Encouragement for students to pursue additional credentials for job opportunities.
- Current statistics: 80% of students graduate within five years, with many earning over \$80,000.

There being no further discussion,

**MOTION** made by Trustee Williams and seconded by Trustee Garcia to adjourn the meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed by majority.

Meeting adjourned at 2:09 p.m.

### **Attachments presented at this meeting:**

- a. Minutes of February 19, 2026
- b. Motion for Faculty Promotion
- c. Promotion Candidate Summaries
- d. Promotion Personnel Action
- e. Motion for Tenure
- f. Tenure Candidate Summaries
- g. Tenure Personnel Action
- h. Academic Excellence Awards List

### **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 Student Success and Learning Committee meeting held on April 28, 2026.

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Michael O'Rourke, Secretary

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Date