



## Board of Trustees

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

October 23, 2024

Minutes

President's Boardroom, Hoace Mann Center

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

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Committee Chair Tessa Lucey, Vice Chair Michael O'Rourke, Secretary Melissa Alvarado, and Trustees Dr. Gloria Williams, George Gilmer, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

**TRUSTEE GUESTS PRESENT:** Trustee Daniel Currier, Trustee Montemayor and Trustee Reichelt.

Also present were Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Special Assistant to the President on University Strategies and Chief of Staff, Dr. Michael Freeman; Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost, Dr. William Salka; Vice President of Administration & Finance, Stephen Taksar; Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Dr. Kevin Hearn; Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Lisa McMahan; and General Counsel, Melinda Phelps.

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM and a roll call 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 Alvarado seconded by Trustee Gilmer, to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2023 meeting.

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** passed motion with majority with Trustees Lucey and O'Rourke abstaining.

### President's direction: Belonging, Inclusion and Learning

- Change in the Jedi Division noted in January 2024.
  - President Thompson consulted with experts in equity and inclusion.
  - New direction includes the concept of belonging.
- Gwendolyn VanSant's role:
  - Working on strategic planning for principles of belonging and inclusion.
  - Collaborating with HR and the Values Working Group on standards of practice.
- Training initiatives:
  - Discussed characteristics of dominant culture and cultural stewardship.
  - Engaged a Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from Lesley University for strategic direction.
- Equity Audit

- Consultant hired to conduct an equity audit.
- Engagement for the rest of the academic year, completion anticipated by the end of the year.
- Consultant details:
  - Currently the VP for Diversity and Equity at Lesley University.
- Importance of integration:
  - Need for diversity initiatives to enter the academic core of the institution.

Introduction of Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola, Director of Belonging, Inclusion and Learning

- Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola was introduced as a dedicated community educator.
  - Over a decade of experience in social justice and diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging.
  - Expertise in restorative practice.
- Educational background:
  - Bachelor's degree from UMass Dartmouth.
  - Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies with a concentration in organizational leadership from UMass Lowell.
  - Currently pursuing a Doctor of Education in Higher Ed, Leadership and Organizational Studies at Bay Path University.
- Previous role:
  - Served as D.E.I. manager and ADA coordinator at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.
  - Focused on diversity programming, affirmative action, compliance, and workforce equity initiatives.

There being no further business,

**MOTION** made by Trustee O'Rourke, and seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to adjourn.

**ROLL CALL VOTE** passed motion unanimously with Trustees voting in the affirmative: Alvarado, Gilmer, O'Rourke, Williams, Lucey and Salehi.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Draft Minutes of December 13, 2023, Meeting

**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 Governance and Nomination Committee meeting held on October 23, 2024.

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Melissa Alvarado, Secretary

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Date