



Board of Trustees

Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee

April 22, 2025

Minutes

12:30 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: Committee Chair Tessa Lucey, Vice Chair Michael O'Rourke, Secretary Melissa Alvarado, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member.

TRUSTEE(S) PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Trustee Gloria Williams

TRUSTEE(S) EXCUSED: Trustee George Gilmer

Also present and participating were Westfield State University President, Dr. Linda Thompson; Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. William Salka; and Director of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning, Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola.

Committee Chair Tessa Lucey called the meeting to order at 12:30 PM 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 O'Rourke seconded by Trustee Alvarado to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2025 meeting. There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE**, motion passed.

Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning Update

Dr. William Salka introduced Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola, the Director of Belonging, Inclusion, and Learning. Ms. Spitz-Gassnola provided a recap of programming and campus engagements since the last meeting.

- A Newsletter was sent out, recap planned instead of a launch to showcase work being done.
- Partnership on inclusive staff training efforts focusing on campus belonging and culture.
- Faith-based observances with intentional acknowledgments of traditions to foster visibility and inclusion.
- Black History Month - Programming around empowerment, storytelling, and critical conversation.
- Women's History Month - Panel centering Muslim women's voices.
 - Spoken word workshop and open mic night.
 - Expressive arts workshop with SGA where students created canvases.
 - Lachesha Berry performed "Tubman" which reimagined Harriet Tubman's life.

- International Women's Day of Service - Event at Christina's House to create community care.
 - Students, staff, and faculty cleaned Christina's House.
 - Students wrote birthday letters to participants.
- Unity Fest - Annual campus-wide celebration of culture, community, and joy.
 - Co-created by affinity groups.
 - Included a boba tea cafe, game night, and "Wild and Out" comedy.
 - Cultural takeover -100 students in attendance.
 - Rep(resent) your flag cookout.
 - Club event in the Owl's Nest with a DJ and diner breakfast.
 - Culminating event with President Thompson, food trucks, spoken word, art, and a 360 photo booth.
 - "We had anywhere between 50 to 100 students at each of the weekday events. And then we served upwards of 400 students on that Sunday at the Unity Fest."

Sankofa

- Community committee review process.
- Awarding 24 student scholars this year.
- Four staff and faculty at Sankofa Sage special awards, including two alumni awards.

Sankofa Ceremony

- Ceremony for graduating seniors that honors the resilience that it took to get through the four years.
- Awards emphasize civic engagement. Nominating students requires filling out what the students have done throughout their four years to contribute to the community.
- Keynote speaker: alumni James Jackson, Jr.
- Post ceremony dinner with African drum and dance performers.
- "Anyone and everyone is welcome."

Future Initiatives: Deepening Work

- Focus is on deepening the work operationally and culturally.
- Goal is to embed this work into the fabric of Westfield State University space cohesively, not just event-based.
- Review programming schedule to assess what worked, who it reached, and where there is room for growth.
- Developing a digital repository to document processes for future sustainability, including vendors and traditions.
- Refreshing training content and launching workshops on inclusive pedagogy and cultural humility.
- Exploring project management tools to boost performance and track student engagement.
- Exploring restorative justice models for student conduct, conflict resolution, community accountability, and engagement.
- Exploring an emerging leaders program to develop students and provide them with skills and tools.
- Building learning modules on cultural awareness and institutional history.
- Supporting the formation of a cross-stakeholder advisory council for collaborative dialogue across the institution.

Discussion: Disconnect and Communication

- Comment about a disconnect despite the amount of activities and events.
- Ensure a unified voice of belonging across the institution.
- Question about how students are finding out about events and activities.

Strategies for Student Outreach

- Reinvigorating social media accounts and tagging affinity groups.
- Posting posters around campus and connecting with SGA.
- Co-sponsoring events with various departments and organizations.

There being no further business,

MOTION made by Trustee O'Rourke, and seconded by Trustee Alvarado, to adjourn. **ROLL CALL VOTE passed motion unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 12:53 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Minutes of February 20, 2025
- b. Belonging, Inclusion and Learning Presentation

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 April 22, 2025.

Melissa Alvarado, Secretary

Date