



Framingham State University

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD MEETING ■ NOVEMBER 17, 2021 7:15 P.M. ■ REMOTE & ALUMNI ROOM, MCCARTHY CENTER

In Attendance: Hope Lozano Bielat*, Nancy Budwig, Beth Casavant, Kevin Foley, Mike Grilli, Brian Herr*, Anthony Hubbard, Hillary Nna*, Claire Ramsbottom*

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m.

1.0 Chair's Report

Chair Foley asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda:

- Minutes (September 21, 2021)
- Personnel Actions Report

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On a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to approve the consent agenda including the minutes from the September 21, 2021 Board of Trustees meeting minutes and the personnel actions report.

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Chair Foley continued his report on the following:

Department of Higher Education Remote Convening

- Trustees Hope Bielat, Beth Casavant, Mike Grilli, and Chair Foley were in attendance. All reported they found the sessions to be helpful in providing information on emerging issues in higher education.
- Trustee Casavant participated in a breakout session addressing student housing insecurity and creative solutions to prevent it from becoming a barrier to completing educational goals.
- Trustee Bielat attended a session addressing public policy, Obama-era/Biden policies for higher education, federal student aid to Dreamers, and Title IX.

Presidential Search

- Chair Foley provided a summary of the search committee's schedule and requested in person Trustee representation for BOT interviews of the finalist candidates.
- Counsel Ann McDonald provided updates of the finalist candidate campus visit schedules, and the dates, times, and location of the Trustee interviews.

* Notates remote attendance.

- Trustee Brian Herr and Chair Foley both voiced their appreciation for the commitment and time that members of the committee have put into the search. Chair Foley thanked Trustees Antony Hubbard and Nancy Budwig in particular, for their support as members of the search committee.

Trustee Vacancies

- One current vacancy exists. Trustee Foley and President Cevallos are scheduled to meet with a prospective nominee.

2.0 President's Report

President Cevallos welcomed Dr. Suzanne Smith, Provost at Georgia Southwestern State University. Dr. Smith has been visiting the FSU campus as part of the Millennium Leadership Initiative which provides leadership development and training for the next generation of university presidents,

President Cevallos continued with the following updates:

University Sports Teams

- Women's volleyball team has won the division conference title.
- The football team also won the conference title and will heading to Pennsylvania to play against Muhlenberg College.

AY 2020-2021 Annual Report

- This summary document is included in the BOT packets.

Faculty Accomplishments

- Dr. Bartholomew Brinkman was awarded a \$192K grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to launch a digital humanities center in the Library.
- Dr. Vandana Singh, a professor of Physics, also a science fiction writer, was selected as one of four global scholars to write a piece of fiction with a climate positive future and attended COP26 in Glasgow.

Danforth Museum

- The new exhibits have been receiving good press.

Swiacki Children's Literature Festival

- The festival was held last week as a hybrid event. It was well attended and successful.
- Two authors attended in person, one attended virtually.

Labor Contracts

- All contracts have been settled.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement (DICE) Report

Dr. Lorretta Holloway provided the following DICE update:

Leadership in community engagement work group

- Anna Cross has volunteered to co-lead the group with Dr. Chris Latimer.

Center for Inclusive Excellence

- Director of the Center for Inclusive Excellence met with SEALS Peer Health Educators to discuss racial health disparities and how to share this information with the student body through their upcoming tabling and campus education events.
- Launch of *iRAMS: Foundations of Social Justice*, a program for undergraduate students, addressing how students can advocate for themselves and become active in their communities.
- Collaborating with the Veterans and Military Services Office, Pride Alliance, and local veterans' organizations to host events focused on the ten-year anniversary of the repeal of the US Military's Don't Ask Don't Tell Policy.

Development and Alumni Relations Report

Eric Gustafson provided the following updates:

Fundraising

- Reported fundraising \$760K for the current fiscal year
- Notable new gifts include \$140K for scholarships, \$20K for the Danforth Art Museum.

Alumni Engagement, hybrid/in-person events

- Excellent attendance for the Swiacki Children's Literature Festival; will continue with hybrid format.
- Next major alumni event will be held at the Museum of Science.
- Virtual engagements include the virtual alumni book club, which is currently reading and discussing "Libertie" by Kaitlyn Greenidge.
- Great press coverage and opening for Danforth Art Museum event.
- "Drop into Art" monthly program for children and families. The Art School is seeing good attendance anticipating a strong enrollment during the school vacation week (December) in full-day/half-day programs.

Student-in-the-Spotlight – Gabriela Mendez-Acevedo

Dr. Hae Won Ju, Department Chair, Fashion Design and Retailing introduced Gabriela Mendez-Acevedo.

Gabriela is a major in Fashion Design and Retailing with a concentration in Merchandising and a minor in Diversity Studies. In choosing this course of study she is showcasing how fashion and diversity can be interconnected.

Gabriela recalled, she was not a good student during her first year at FSU. However, someone saw her potential and recommended that she become a peer mentor. To her, the recommendation meant that someone saw her as a leader. She has since held several student leadership roles, including as a Foundations intern with the New Student and Families Program, peer mentor for CASA, and student co-chair for Council on Diversity and Inclusion.

Early in her time at FSU Gabriela became interested in becoming a stylist, focusing on minorities and the LGBTQ community. While she would like to pursue a career as a stylist in the future, it was during her junior year that her career vision solidified. Gabriela recalled her junior year as being the most challenging year of her life. While she dealt with painful and challenging experiences, it was also the year she grew the most. She received straight A's for both semesters and was on the Dean's and President's Lists.

During this time, she cut off all of her hair to embrace her natural curls. This inspired a business plan proposal project for her class. The business was called the "Curl Factory", which would create products and accessories specifically for individuals like her, with "curly, coily and kinky" hair. The success of this project encouraged her to excel. It was through her projects and case studies that she was able to obtain an internship at Puma. Gabriela remained connected to the director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) at Puma and is now her intern. Gabriela will be working for the company full-time in January, after she graduates from FSU.

She thanked FSU for providing her with the opportunities, for both personal and professional growth, and for being open to conversations of how to implement DEI into the fashion department. She will be pursuing positions that will focus on promoting DEI in aspects of race, gender, disability, and body shape/size, in the fashion industry.

Now in her final year, she is graduating a semester early. As giving back to the community has always been important to her, Gabriela is currently working on a community upcycling project. As for the future, Gabriela hopes to continue her education and someday return to FSU as a professor in the fashion department, and one day starting a fashion school of her own.

3.0 Student Trustee Report

Student Trustee Hillary Nna presented the following updates.

SGA Administrator's Forum

- Wi-Fi access was a primary issue.
- Other issues addressed included: extension of Library hours and the changes to the course registration platform.

Safety Walk Outcomes

- Discussion about relocation of a blue light and more lighting near the gym
- Crosswalk signage on Maynard and State Streets.

Senate Meetings

- One of the September SGA meetings had featured an open forum with WittKieffer the presidential search firm, to provide student feedback and inform the search process.
- The SGA is concerned about the racial climate on campus due to recent incidents.

4.0 Academic Affairs Committee

Trustee Nancy Budwig presented the following updates:

Discussion of enrollment figures for undergraduate programs

- Analysis of faculty, programs, and academic staffing addressed small adjustments that can be made to address decline in enrollment:
 - Review of MOU for the Nursing program as these agreements directly impact enrollment from feeder institutions.
 - Increase program visibility by updating program titles, e.g. Political Science adding Law and Global Studies, and showcasing programs with high student interest, such as the cyber security program.

Graduate programs

- Thorough review of how quality is assessed:
 - Defining program goals, what are sources of data, dashboard with key indicators, using data analytic approach.
- Review and recommendations from Program Coordinators.
- Using working groups to evaluate in-house strategies for enrollment enhancements.
- Tools and processes for ongoing analysis of graduate programs.

Open House

- First FSU cross-unit Academic Affairs/Admissions open house with over 300 in attendance.

Sabbatical leaves

- There was an increase in sabbaticals last year due to the pandemic. The number of sabbaticals have now returned to an average range.

Other updates

- Grant report included the percent of women and BIPOC awarded grants: 50% of women are PI's, 20% are BIPOC.
- CELTSS Award for faculty
 - Trustee Budwig was able to join the event remotely. She was impressed by the conversations and work being done by faculty.

In closing, Dr. Ellen Zimmerman added that it was important that the Board recognize that investments in the future also include investments in the people that are providing the support systems that students need to improve student retention.

5.0 Enrollment and Student Development Committee

Trustee Brian Herr discussed the perception study findings.

- Found the information to reaffirm his thoughts about the University and highlighted areas where improvements could be made.
- Suggested a conversation regarding presenting the study to the presidential finalist candidates for their response.

Trustee Herr invited Dr. Lorretta Holloway to continue with the committee update.

Dr. Holloway presented an update on the following:

- Highlighted division updates included in the Enrollment and Student Development packet. These included update on antiracism and retention efforts, enrollment data and initial response to the perception study.
- COVID mitigation work and search for a Police Chief
 - Currently hosting Police Chief finalists on campus.

Perception Study: *Elevate* (outside consulting firm), presented a summary of their findings in the committee meeting.

- Students want to feel like they are being wooed.
- The University is not standing out enough, in comparison to other state universities.
 - How do we compare to our sister institutions; determining and promoting the things that make FSU unique.
 - Highlighting these within our materials, marketing and outreach was suggested.
- Questions raised during the *Elevate* presentation:
 - Why was there was an emphasis on the Education program, as it's no longer a growing market?
 - If the perception study was conducted at one of our sister institutions, would the results of the perception study be that much different given that all of the state universities are dealing with similar issues and are all trying to differentiate ourselves from each other?
- Responses from the departments were included in the report.
 - Chair Foley asked Dr. Holloway, about Buyer Advertising, FSU's current media/marketing group. He wanted to know what their reaction to this study was and whether they saw any actionable items to build brand?
 - Dr. Holloway responded that they will be scheduling a follow up meeting with Buyer, as they continue to perform a deep data review due to FSU's concerns about the size of the subgroups used in the analysis provided by *Elevate*. Averil Capers will be meeting with them in the coming weeks regarding data collecting.

A larger conversation regarding the *Elevate* presentation and report took place. Concerns were raised in the conversation.

Chair Foley commented that he was concerned with loss of momentum on the efforts, and strongly suggested a swift response by the university administration. He continued in asking Dr. Holloway, how do we continue to develop a strategy?

- Dr. Holloway responded that we should address how to leverage the institution's positives. Having conversations with enrollment data group, and the admissions and enrollment planning group. The All University Committee (AUC) has also reviewed report.

Trustee Herr asked the Trustees for their thoughts about sharing the information from the perception study with the finalist presidential candidates. Comments included the following:

- Would be less interested in showing the candidate this information and more interested in having the candidates do their own homework.
- It would be a good way to challenge candidates to demonstrate their ideas with a plan or strategy. Would like the candidates to be able to discuss their approach.

Trustee Robert Richards asked if there was any research or information on the students we are losing and why?

- Dr. Holloway responded that the enrollment data team is currently reviewing this information. Traditionally, our enrollment comes from local students (within a 62-mile radius) the economic status of the students in the region has significantly increased compared to other areas of the state. This may be a significant factor.

Trustee Richards continued in asking if there are demographic or social reason, for the loss? Is there anything FSU can do to retain these students?

- Dr. Zimmerman responded the student population we are losing are white females. How much we identify as an institution for Education may play into this. It may not be the right/current market.

Trustee Anthony Hubbard asked for further clarification; what is the profile of students that is leaving FSU, do we know why they are leaving and, are they going to other institutions? If so, are they going to other institutions to study in the program they were enrolled in at FSU?

- Dr. Holloway responded that the Education students are leaving, and are not going to other institutions for the same program. All education programs are losing students. This is a crisis in the area of education.

Trustee Beth Casavant asked if there is someone who will take ownership of the near, mid- and long-term goals as we move forward?

- Dr. Holloway responded that this is the next step for the division.

Chair Foley requested to see the guidelines produced by the division, including the short, medium, and long-term goals for the January 2022 BOT meeting.

Trustee Hope Bielat redirected the conversation to Trustee Herr's suggestion of releasing the *Elevate* perception report to the candidates in preparation for their interviews, asking, if there was a decision made in response?

- Chair Foley responded that he preferred the candidates be prompted to address these issues and be able to respond to questions involving branding and enrollment during their interviews with the Trustees. Stating that he believes that their ideas, if they have previously driven a marketing plan, and how/if it was successful, could be explored at that time.

6.0 Compliance Audit and Risk Committee

Trustee Anthony Hubbard provided the following update:

CAR committee held a joint meeting to review the annual audit and financial statements.

- Results were good and audit was clean.
- The University had a good financial year in spite of the pandemic.
 - Negative financial impacts of COVID were offset by government funding.
- Auditors, O'Connor and Drew, successfully answered questions.
- Board had delegated authority to the Finance Committee to approve the report.
 - The October 15th deadline was met.

7.0 Governance Committee

Trustee Casavant provided the following updates:

Trustee Vacancies & Anticipated Vacancies

- Positives steps taken to fill the vacancy.
 - Chair Foley and President Cevallos to meet the prospective trustee in the coming days.
- Succession planning
 - Review of roles that will be open in the near future and filling vacancies on the committee level.
 - Beth would welcome a text, email, or phone call from those interested in taking on a leadership role, to be reviewed during the next Governance committee meeting scheduled for February 2022.

Assessments – Self- & External

- The most recent self-assessment was conducted in 2020. In February 2022 a new assessment will be conducted.
 - The self- assessment will be shortened and redundant questions will be eliminated.
- External assessment will take place later in the academic year, spring 2022.

8.0 Administration, Finance, and Information Technology Committee

Trustee Grilli presented the following updates:

- During the November Finance Committee meeting, discussions were held to determine the distribution of \$5M surplus cash reserves.
- In keeping with the context of conversation surrounding enrollment, the Finance Committee has put forth a resolution to commit \$1M toward strategic enrollment management initiatives and investing an additional \$4M.

Trustee Herr asked how the \$1M was determined.

- Dr. Dale Hamel responded that it was specific to planned projects; the scope of plan to include website redesign and an all-in effort to support enrollment initiatives.

The Trustees had additional conversation addressing the following:

- If by enrollment, this includes retention, which may involve recurring and/or staffing cost, is \$1M enough?
 - Trustee Grilli responded that it was.

- Although meant to be one-time funding, if fixed costs are required, funding will need to be associated in the budget to sustain the efforts. Most of the short and midterm goals will be met by the one-time funding.
- Additional conversations will continue to be held by the Finance Committee to oversee the use of the funds.
- If the scope of work exceeds the \$1M budget, investments may be accessed to meet those needs.
- Dr. Hamel reminded the Trustees that the \$5M in cash reserves was previously approved by the Board for investing in February 2020. While originally designated for quasi-endowment and investment, the funds were held as a precautionary measure due to the uncertainty of the impact of the pandemic.

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On a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to approve the designation of the quasi-endowment funds and dedicated support for enrollment initiatives.

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Trustee Claire Ramsbottom asked, what is the timing on these initiatives?

- Dr. Holloway responded that the initiatives are already underway. Conversations are underway with companies to develop strategic enrollment management plans. Website RFI are currently being written. Reporting in January 2022 will include an updates on progress for RFI/RFQ.

9.0 General Counsel, Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Board of Trustees

Counsel McDonald provided the following updates:

Self-Assessment – February 2022 Launch

- The Governance Committee will review a draft of the instrument prior to launch in February 2022
- The external assessment to be discussed with other state university chiefs of staff (COS). Tentative April 2022 COS retreat to review both assessments.

BOT Retreat

- Tentatively scheduled for April 2022 at the Warren Conference Center and Inn

10.0 New Business

There was no new business to report.

11.0 Public Comment

There was no public comment to report.

12.0 Adjourn Open Meeting

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On a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to approve adjourn the open meeting.

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Meeting ended at 9:07 p.m.