



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD MEETING ■ March 26, 2025, 6:30 PM ■ MCCARTHY CENTER, ALUMNI ROOM & REMOTE

MINUTES

Chair Anthony E. Hubbard called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Roll Call Attendance

Cheri Comeau – present; Lino Covarrubias – present*; Kristen Daly – present*; Mariel Freve – present* ; Dennis Giombetti – present; Anthony Hubbard – present; Jeremy McDonald – present; Bonnie Mitchell – present; Susan Puryear – present*; Claire Ramsbottom – present; Antonia Soares Thompson – present.

1. Chair's Report

A. Consent agenda, page 3

- BOT Meeting Minutes: January 29, 2025, pages 4 – 10
- Personnel Actions, pages 11 – 14
- Community Sponsorships, page 15

A motion to approve the consent agenda was moved by Antonia Soares Thompson, Mariel Freve seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau – aye; Lino Covarrubias – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Mariel Freve – aye; Dennis Giombetti – aye; Anthony Hubbard – aye; Jeremy McDonald – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Susan Puryear – aye; Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Antonia Soares Thompson – aye

—Motion approved

B. Updates

Chair Hubbard presented the following information:

- Committee Report-outs
 - Chair Hubbard reminded committee chairs, in response to trustee requests for more time efficient board meetings, each chair or presenter will have five minutes to report on their committee's work.
 - Future discussions will take place to determine whether committees will be required to report to the full board if there are no voting or work actions presented.
- Trustee Appointment Updates
 - Counsel Ann McDonald reported that the only outstanding appointment is for Trustee Mariel Freve, who is currently in overstay.

* Indicates remote attendance.

- AY25-26 Committee Chairs and President Evaluation Committee:
 - Chair Hubbard discussed the idea of appointing a committee “vice chair” for purposes of succession planning. This opportunity will assist in determining the structure of our committees in the future.
 - Trustees Susan Puryear, Cherie Comeau, in addition to Anthony Hubbard, have agreed to become members of the Presidential evaluation committee and will begin work on the that review in the summer months and in accordance with directions yet to be received from the Board of Higher Education (BHE).
 - Counsel McDonald informed trustees that the Department of Higher Education (DHE) Commissioner provides the schedule and requirements for the presidential review. In preparation, the committee is assembled, with public meetings planned for May to begin the work and August to finalize the report for BOT approval before submission to the DHE in September.
- Follow-up: Presidential Compensation
 - Chair Hubbard reported a productive discussion with the DHE Commissioner and the Director of Legislative and Trustee Relations regarding the next steps for the DHE to evaluate an equitable adjustment to the President’s compensation.
 - We understand that several other public state university chairs have requested equitable adjustments for their presidents. A response to these requests is anticipated in the near future.

2. President’s Report

President Nancy Niemi reported the following:

A. Updates

- In the interest of time, the vice presidents of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement (DICE) and Development and Alumni Relations will not present under the President’s Report. However, their full updates are included in the meeting materials for review.
- Federal Actions
 - The Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office has filed for an injunction in response to the Trump administration’s executive order and then subsequent actions calling for the dismantling of the federal Department of Education. Possible impacts if these directives are not overturned by the Court include:
 - Federal student loans overseen by the Small Business Administration
 - Redirected civil rights enforcement
 - Less data collection being conducted at the federal level and/or less data transparency

To date, the University has not felt any impact from the executive order but we are paying close attention to these issues.
- Stearns Reservoir Project Update
 - After assessing the risks and benefits associated with the Stearns Reservoir Project, the University has concluded that it is not in our best interest to be the lead partner on the proposed Stearns Reservoir Property Use Agreement.
 - The President and Jeffrey Coleman, Vice President of DICE, met with representatives from the Nipmuck Tribe to inform them of the decision.
 - The City of Framingham has informed the University they will take a “wait-and-see” approach in how the federal implications may impact this project.
- International Education Program (IEP) Update

- The University is moving forward with the decision to close the academic programs associated with the Cedrone Center, operated through IEP.
 - The University will be teaching out the M.Ed. concentrations in TESOL and Special Education.
 - An articulation agreement that outlines a teach out plan for the M.Ed. in International Teaching and Educational Leadership has been signed with Fitchburg State University.
 - 75 students will be completing the program this spring '25; 79 have the option to complete their programs at Fitchburg State University, and 21 at Framingham State University.
 - NECHE and the DHE are fully informed of the University's plans to close the program.

- Assignment and Amendment to the Danforth Founding Agreement

President Niemi provided context for the motion:

- The merger of the Danforth Art Museum and School into Framingham State was completed in 2017, which was governed through the creation of a Founding Agreement with three parties – Framingham State University, the Framingham State University Foundation, Inc., and the Danforth Museum Corporation (DMC).
- The DMC adopted a new name, Danforth Art Alliance (DAA), still a Massachusetts 501(c)(3).
- The merger established a separate governing board, which over time, had become increasingly complex and difficult to manage. A solution was proposed that requires amending the Founding Agreement.

President Niemi outlined the amendment:

- The DAA's responsibilities would be assigned to the FSU Foundation.
- The DAA Board members will become voting members of the DACAB (Danforth Art Center Association Board).
- Funds greater than \$5K held by the DAA once they are dissolved will be distributed to Framingham State University Foundation for DAA use.

The DAA, DACAB, and Framingham State University Foundation, Inc., have all voted to approve the changes to the Founding Agreement.

Trustee Lino Covarrubias asked for clarification regarding whether the other parties have agreed to the changes. Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations, Eric Gustafson confirmed that all have voted to approve the changes and that the FSU Board of Trustees vote of approval is the final step in concluding this process.

A motion to approve the assignment and amendment to the Danforth Founding Agreement was moved by Dennis Giombetti, Antonia Soares Thompson seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau – aye; Lino Covarrubias – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Mariel Freve – aye; Dennis Giombetti – aye; Anthony Hubbard – aye; Jeremy McDonald – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Susan Puryear – aye; Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Antonia Soares Thompson - aye

—Motion approved

Before moving to the next agenda item, President Niemi took the opportunity to thank Trustee Covarrubias for his participation in the *Food Access Summit* and thanked the trustees and University members that will be participating in the *Careers in Law* panel discussion.

B. Student-in-the- Spotlight: Marlee Griffin

President Niemi introduced Dr. Kelly Matthews, Professor and Secondary Education Coordinator of the English Department, and Liberal Studies Advisor and Coordinator.

Marlee Griffin, having transferred to FSU in the fall of 2021, is a senior in Liberal Studies with a Spanish minor. She currently works at the Danforth Art Center and the Center for Inclusive Excellence.

Marlee shared her experiences at the FSU highlighting her academic journey, overcoming personal challenges, and discovering her passions in filmmaking, writing, and love of the Spanish language. She contributed to launching FSU's first Spanish-language newspaper, "La FRAMilia," and was inducted into Sigma Delta Pi, the Spanish Honor Society.

In the future Marlee hopes to become fluent in Spanish, and work on writing a novel. She also plans on pursuing a master's degree in film Directing in Spain or another Spanish-speaking country.

C. Honorary Degree: LaToyia Edwards

A motion to approve the awarding of Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to LaToyia Edwards was moved by Dennis Giombetti, Antonia Soares Thompson seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau—aye; Lino Covarrubias — aye; Kristen Daly — aye; Mariel Freve — aye; Dennis Giombetti — aye; Anthony Hubbard — aye; Jeremy McDonald — aye; Bonnie Mitchell — aye; Susan Puryear — aye; Claire Ramsbottom — aye; Antonia Soares Thompson - aye
—Motion approved

2. Student Trustee's Report

Trustee Jeremy McDonald reported on the following:

A. Updates

- April 8, 2025, Student-Administrator's Forum
The forum is a key point of dialogue between students and administrators. Topics are varied but impactful in it offers accessibility for the students to speak with University Administrators.
- April 1, 2025 Careers in Law Panel Discussion
In the spirit of this upcoming event, Trustee McDonald encouraged fellow trustees to share their expertise with the students, as it allows of an opportunity for trustees to engage with and provide invaluable information to the students.
- May 6, 2025, Student Leaders BOT Dinner
Student club leaders will join the trustees at the final Board of Trustees dinner to engage in conversation.

3. Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee

A. Committee Report

Trustee Claire Ramsbottom asked Iris Godes, Vice President of Enrollment Management, to present an enrollment update. Iris Godes informed trustees of the following:

- Applications are still up, deposits are ahead of last year with 187 deposits, which is an average of 5 per day
- Accepted Students Days are scheduled to take place this upcoming and the following Saturday.

Trustee Ramsbottom reported that the March 12, 2025 Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee meeting discussed the process of acclimating transfer students as they entered the

University from outside institutions, strengthening institutional data structure, and aligning institutional practices to ensure strongest educational outcomes.

4. Administration, Finance, and Technology Committee

A. Committee Report

Vice President of Finance, Technology, and Administration, Robert Totino provided a summary of the items addressed at the March 18, 2025 Finance Committee meeting, including the following:

- FY25 Budget Projected Bottom-Line Update – College Operations Budget, page 37
 - \$400K deficit is at a break-even point.
 - Federal funding FY25 (non-financial aid): Awarded: \$5.6M/Drawn down through January 2025: \$2.1M/Monitoring each grant independently if future spending should continue or not for remainder of fiscal year.
- Pro Forma Budget Key Assumptions: FY'25 and FY'26 budget assumptions were compared, page 28. The following items were highlighted:
 - Thirteen new personnel positions; 10 of which are funded by the Supporting Urgent Community College Equity through Student Services (SUCCESS) grant.
 - FY'26: Governor's budget is pending House and Senate approval. Both are anticipated to meet in April 2025.
 - FY'26 Formula Funding anticipates the use of \$800K in reserves
 - A projected 1.25% increase in enrollment is anticipated for FY'26
 - Student charges are expected to increase by 2.9%
 - Personnel salary increases and changes
- Investment Manager RFP Discussion, page 40
 - 18 submissions were received; 11 met quality minimum requirements
 - The meeting schedule was reviewed
 - 5 groups have been named finalists: Brown Advisory, Captrust Financial Advisors, Common Fund, Fiducient Advisors, and Russell Investments.
 - A final decision is anticipated to be brought forward to the May 6, 2025 BOT meeting; contract negotiations to follow.
- Investment Manager RFP Discussion (continued), page 41
 - Evaluation Committee: appreciation was expressed for trustees serving on the committee.
 - Preferred criteria were reviewed
- Campus Master Plan Update, page 42
 - The last Campus Master Plan was performed in 2007, with updates in 2012 and 2014.
 - Selection of House Doctor/Architect: STUDIO ENEE
 - STUDIO ENEE, is a Boston firm with 45 architects.
 - The firm has extensive experience working with institutions of higher education including facilities on the FSU campus.
 - The team will be led by principal, Natasha Espada.
 - Steering Committee formed
 - Timeline: March through September 2025; the final plan will be brought forward for the Board's approval in the Fall 2025.

Trustee Kristen Daly asked if a student was represented in the Steering Committee; Robert Totino confirmed that there is.

In conclusion, Robert Totino commented on the federal grants and possible impacts from recent federal government actions. Productive conversations have been held regularly with all stakeholders. Further review will determine how changes may impact future budget concerns.

Trustee Ramsbottom commented that she attended a DHE meeting with the Commissioner for Board Chairs and Vice Chairs. The meeting included discussions and assessments of possible impacts on higher education.

5. Governance Committee

Trustee Ramsbottom brought forth the following motions:

A. Slate of Officers:

- AY 2025 – 2026: Chair, Anthony Hubbard, Vice Chair Claire Ramsbottom

A motion to approve the slate of officers was moved by Antonia Soares Thompson, Mariel Freve seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau—aye; Lino Covarrubias — aye; Mariel Freve — aye; Dennis Giombetti — aye; Anthony Hubbard — aye; Jeremy McDonald — aye; Bonnie Mitchell — aye; Susan Puryear — aye; Claire Ramsbottom — aye; Antonia Soares Thompson - aye

—Motion approved

B. AY 2025 – 2026 Meeting Schedule:

- Wednesday, September 17, 2025; Wednesday, November 12, 2025; Wednesday, January 28, 2026; Wednesday, March 25, 2026; Wednesday, May 6, 2026

A motion to approve the meeting schedule was moved by Cherie Comeau, Antonia Soares Thompson seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau—aye; Lino Covarrubias — aye; Mariel Freve — aye; Dennis Giombetti — aye; Anthony Hubbard — aye; Jeremy McDonald — aye; Bonnie Mitchell — aye; Susan Puryear — aye; Claire Ramsbottom — aye; Antonia Soares Thompson - aye

—Motion approved

6. Student Experience Committee

A. Committee Report

Trustee Covarrubias summarized the three areas reviewed during the March 11, 2025 Student Experience Committee meeting: mental health, food insecurity, and ways to address student needs in the future, as declines in community or public services are anticipated.

Chair Hubbard asked if SUCCESS funding may assist these areas of student need.

Lorretta Holloway, Vice President, Division of Student Success, responded that mental health and basic needs funding are separate from SUCCESS funding, which is focused on academic support.

7. New Business

There was no new business to report.

8. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

9. Adjourn Open Meeting

A motion to adjourn the public meeting was moved by Dennis Giombetti, Susan Puryear seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau—aye; Lino Covarrubias—aye; Mariel Freve—aye; Dennis Giombetti—aye; Anthony Hubbard—aye; Jeremy McDonald—aye; Bonnie Mitchell—aye; Susan Puryear—aye; Claire Ramsbottom—aye; Antonia Soares Thompson - aye

—Motion approved

The meeting ended at 7:54 p.m.