



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD MEETING ■ JANUARY 28, 2026, 6:30 PM ■ REMOTE

DRAFT

Chair Anthony Hubbard called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call Attendance

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

1. Chair’s Report

A. Consent agenda

- Approval of the November 12, 2025 BOT Meeting Minutes; January 28, 2026 Personnel Actions; January 28, 2026 Community Sponsorships

A motion to approve the consent agenda was moved by Trustee Claire Ramsbottom, and Trustee 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; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Susan Puryear – aye; Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Antonia Soares Thompson – aye; Luke Yubeta – was unable to vote due to issues with his Wi-Fi connection.

— Motion approved

B. Updates

Chair Hubbard presented the following information:

- Trustee Appointment: Claire Ramsbottom will serve a second five-year term on the Board of Trustees pending final approval from the Governor’s Office.
- Commencement Dates: Trustees were advised of the upcoming commencement ceremonies for the academic year:
 - Graduate Commencement will be held on campus, Friday, May 21, 2026.
 - Undergraduate Commencement will be held at the DCU Center in Worcester on Sunday, May 23, 2026.

2. President's Report

President Nancy Niemi reported the following:

A. Updates

- Introduction of the newly appointed Vice President of Legal and Government Affairs and General Counsel.
 - President Niemi welcomed Erin Nechipurenko. The President highlighted Erin's 25-years of experience in public higher education leadership, her JD from Suffolk University Law School, and membership in the Massachusetts Bar. Erin's official start date is Monday, February 2.
 - Erin expressed enthusiasm for the opportunity to return to Framingham State University in this new role.
- Chief of Police Search Update
President Niemi asked Meg Nowak Borrego, Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students, to provide an update on the Chief of Police search. Dean Nowak reported the following:
 - The search process included a diverse committee of faculty, staff, students, and local law enforcement representatives. Six candidates were interviewed virtually, with three finalists participating in on-campus, day-long interviews and community forums.
 - An offer was made to a candidate, and a verbal acceptance has been received, with a proposed start date of March 2.
 - An announcement informing the appointment of the individual to the full University Community will be made once all formal hiring processes have been completed.

Discussion regarding the candidate's qualifications and the vetting process was held. Trustees were informed that all candidates underwent comprehensive state and federal background checks with additional requirements specific to Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) certification standards.

- Meg Nowak announced that the FSU Police Department is now an accredited school police agency. A formal announcement will be made in February.

- Spring Enrollment Updates
President Niemi invited Iris Godes, Vice President for Enrollment Management, and Lorretta Holloway, Vice President of the Office of Student Experience, to present an update on spring enrollment.
 - Iris Godes reported that overall undergraduate enrollment is approximately 2% ahead year-over-year when including all student categories.
 - Spring first-year enrollment declined slightly; transfer and continuing degree enrollments decreased, while non-matriculated enrollment increased significantly due to expanded spring dual enrollment.
 - Graduate Enrollment Update
Iris Godes continued by reporting a 4% increase in graduate degree-seeking enrollment.

- Non-degree graduate enrollment declined following the strategic discontinuation of certain professional development offerings that were not financially sustainable.

Conversation followed the presentation and included the following topics:

- Non-matriculated students and degree-seeking students, the sustainability of dual enrollment growth, and the revenue implications associated with these populations.
- Adult learners, certificate programs, and opportunities for growth in continuing and professional education.

- Legislative Update

President Niemi reminded trustees of the upcoming legislative breakfast scheduled for February 3. She reported a strong anticipated attendance from legislators or their representatives, along with executive staff and students. The agenda will focus on the state budget, financial aid, equity, and the Build Resilient Infrastructure to General Higher-Ed Transformation (BRIGHT) Act bill.

B. Student-in-the-Spotlight: Sarah Hannon

President Niemi introduced Dr. Robert Awkward, Program Coordinator and Advisor, Visiting Professor of the Master of Human Resources program. Dr. Awkward introduced Sarah Hannon, highlighting her academic accomplishments, leadership qualities, and engagement within the graduate program. Dr. Awkward spoke of Sarah's professionalism, commitment to the field of human resources, and the contributions she has made both in and outside the classroom.

Sarah Hannon shared her personal and academic journey at FSU. She discussed her motivation for pursuing graduate studies, her experiences balancing academic, professional, and personal responsibilities, and the ways in which her coursework and faculty mentorship have supported her professional growth. She reflected on the practical and applied nature of her studies and emphasized how her experiences at Framingham State University have prepared her for leadership roles in her chosen field.

Sarah Hannon concluded by expressing appreciation for the support she has received from faculty, advisors, and peers, and described the positive impact of the University's learning environment on her confidence and career aspirations.

3. Student Trustee's Report

Trustee Luke Yubeta reported on the following:

A. Updates

- The Administrators' Forum was held in November and drew strong participation from both students and University administrators.
 - The forum offered students an opportunity for open dialogue on a wide range of topics with University administrators. Discussion areas included the experiences of commuter and residential students, transfer student support, veteran student life, and increased clarity around where students can access campus resources.
- Campus Safety Walk

The Campus Safety Walk was conducted by the Safety and Security Ad Hoc Committee, led by SGA Senator Nathan Pietz. The walk is a collaborative effort between students and administrators to assess campus safety and accessibility.

- Observations included accessibility concerns at O'Connor Hall, as well as emergency blue light stations that were found to be out of service.
 - Campus Police have identified these issues and are in the process of making necessary repairs.
- Recognition of Essential Staff
Trustee Yubeta concluded his report by expressing appreciation for the University's essential staff, particularly emergency services, and facilities personnel, for their extensive efforts during recent snowstorms to ensure campus safety and continuity of operations.

4. Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management

A. Committee Report

Trustee Claire Ramsbottom informed trustees that she would focus on the topic of enrollment in her report but encouraged all to review the presentation by Kristen Porter-Utley and colleagues regarding the tenure and promotion process. The materials for the presentation from the December 10 committee meeting are included in OnBoard. She continued by inviting Iris Godes to present an update on Enrollment.

Iris Godes presented an overview of the undergraduate admissions funnel; registration data was not yet available. She reported the following:

- Prospect counts are approximately 20,000 lower than last year; however, applicant numbers are nearly equivalent, indicating a more productive prospect pool.
- The institution is approximately halfway through the admissions cycle. February 15 is the priority application deadline, though applications are accepted through the summer.
- Admitted student numbers exceed last year's figures. Admissions processing is proceeding efficiently with a fully staffed team.
- Deposits: Gross and net deposits for the Fall 2026 are currently the same Fall 2025.
 - As of the meeting date, deposits totaled 62, compared to 65 at the same time last year.
 - The current melt rate is zero.
- FAFSA submissions have significantly increased.
- Application increases and decreases by demographics, as detailed in the meeting materials were highlighted.

A conversation ensued in response to questions regarding whether the current applicant pool reflects a more targeted recruitment strategy or broader market changes. Discussion focused on the following:

- Targeting applicants: Last year's prospect numbers were inflated by a one-time bonus of approximately 30,000 names from a renewed lead-generation contract, which proved less productive. This year's figures reflect the absence of that bonus, demographic shifts, and

more targeted recruitment. However, an additional lead source has recently been purchased, yielding approximately 16,000 new prospective student names.

- A communications plan is in development to engage these students, with the expectation that outreach is still timely

5. Administration, Finance, and Technology Committee

A. Committee Report

Trustee Mariel Freve noted the committee had a very full agenda, including budget related items, policy discussions, investment policy and review, and a significant focus on the Campus Master Plan. She invited Robert (Bob) Totino, Chief Financial Officer and Vice President, Administration, Finance & Technology, to present information from the January 20th meeting.

- Campus Master Plan (CMP) Update

Bob Totino indicated that the comprehensive plan was developed over approximately 18 months in collaboration with DCAM and STUDIO ENEE, following 137 meetings and extensive stakeholder engagement. The plan updates the prior 2012 plan (with interim updates in 2014, 2018, and 2022) and is required to remain current in order for the University to be eligible for state funding.

He continued by highlighting the following:

- Alignment of facilities planning with the University's mission and the recently approved strategic plan (September 2024).
- Emphasis on creating aspirational and vibrant campus spaces centered on student experience.
- Broad engagement of faculty, staff, students, and trustees through focus groups, listening sessions, walking tours, and workshops.
- Identification of six major campus planning areas and eleven major project recommendations.
- One of the most prominent recommendations discussed was the potential relocation of the Whittemore Library to State Street and the creation of a Library Learning Commons, reducing the footprint from approximately 113,000 square feet to 65,000 square feet. Alternative options, including renovation of the existing library location, were also acknowledged for future analysis.
- The total estimated cost of projects within the Campus Master Plan is approximately \$486M, to be addressed incrementally over a 10-plus year period. Each project will undergo separate feasibility, funding, design, and construction review processes before advancing.

Additional salient points included:

- The potential repurposing of up to 20 of the University's 60 classrooms due to enrollment declines, with flexibility to revert spaces if enrollment increases.
- Planned repurposing of Linsley Hall into faculty, staff, and graduate student housing, supported by a \$6.6 million state appropriation.
- Continued commitment to sustainability, decarbonization, and environmentally responsible practices embedded throughout the plan.

Trustees engaged in a discussion including the following topics:

- Project prioritization criteria and timelines within the plan
- Near-term projects with secured funding, including Linsley Hall
- Process and timing for Board re-engagement on sub-projects
- State funding opportunities under the BRIGHT Act, including Whittemore Library

B. BOT Approval of the Campus Master Plan

A motion to approve the Campus Master Plan was moved by Trustee Susan Puryear, and Trustee Bonnie Mitchell seconded the motion.

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

C. NECHE Financial Screening

Bob Totino reported the following:

- An overview of the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) financial screening process, a pilot for public higher education institutions using FY25 data.
 - The process evaluates eight metrics across financial performance, state appropriations, and enrollment trends.
 - The screening was established following the closure of Mount Ida College to reduce the risk of sudden institutional closures.
- Institutions must submit seven years of data and are assessed against defined benchmarks.
- Failure of three or more metrics, including at least one key financial ratio, would trigger additional reporting and corrective planning.
- Framingham State University passed the screening, with most metrics meeting benchmarks. One ratio, the viability ratio, was noted as a warning but is trending positively and expected to improve in FY26.
 - These results will be shared regularly as part of good governance and early-warning practices.

6. Compliance, Audit, and Risk (CAR) Committee

A. Committee Report

Trustee Lino Covarrubias updated trustees, focusing on an internal assessment of physical accessibility across campus. The assessment, conducted by David Sargeant, Associate Director of Enterprise Risk Management and Internal Assessment, over the summer and fall, reviewed campus accessibility. Four priority areas were identified:

- Doors that were jammed or required excessive force to open.
- ADA-unfriendly door hardware.
- Doors exceeding allowable force requirements.
- Aging elevators and frequent outages.

Immediate maintenance actions are underway, and no funding requests were brought forward at this meeting. Additional accessibility initiatives are expected later in the year.

7. New Business

Trustees raised questions regarding emergency preparedness in light of recent events at Brown University. University leadership described ongoing emergency planning, drills, coordination with regional partners, and communication protocols. Additional discussion addressed immigration-related concerns, and resources available to the campus community.

Updates were also shared regarding accessibility initiatives, land acknowledgment efforts, and ongoing engagement with Indigenous communities.

8. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

9. Adjourn Open Meeting

In closing President Niemi thanked the Board for approving the Campus Master Plan and acknowledged the extensive community effort involved. She also invited trustees to upcoming campus events, including the MLK celebration, and noted the University's observance of the 40th anniversary of the Challenger tragedy.

A motion to adjourn the public meeting was moved by Trustee Claire Ramsbottom, and Trustee Lino Covarrubias seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau – aye; Lino Covarrubias – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Mariel Freve – aye; Dennis Giombetti – aye; Anthony Hubbard – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Antonia Soares Thompson – aye; Luke Yubeta – aye
—Motion approved

The meeting ended at 9:03 p.m.