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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD MEETING ■ MARCH 25, 2026, 6:30 PM ■ McCarthy Center, Alumni Room & REMOTE

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Chair Anthony Hubbard called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. As he was attending remotely, he asked Vice Chair Claire Ramsbottom to preside over the meeting.

Roll Call In-person Attendance: Claire Ramsbottom – present; Cheri Comeau– present; Kristen Daly – present; Bonnie Mitchell – present; Antonia Soares Thompson – present; Luke Yubeta – present

Roll Call Remote Attendance: Anthony Hubbard – present; Mariel Freve – present; Dennis Giombetti – present; Susan Puryear – present  
Lino Covarrubias – was not present

I. Chair’s Report

A. Consent agenda

1. Approval of the January 28, 2026 BOT Meeting Minutes; March 25, 2026 Personnel Actions; March 25, 2026 Community Sponsorships

A motion to approve the consent agenda was moved by Trustee Antonia Soares Thompson, and Trustee Cherie Comeau seconded the motion.

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

II. President’s Report

President Nancy Niemi reported the following:

A. Updates

1. Facilities and Campus Development

- Approaching the completion of the primary phase of the Campus Master Plan (CMP).
  - Initial engagement with the Framingham City Council was positive. The presentation of the CMP was well received, with constructive dialogue and questions.
  - Plan approval by the Board of Higher Education is currently in process.
- Other Facilities and Infrastructure Updates

- \$6.6M arrived at the Massachusetts State College Building Authority (MSCBA) on behalf of the University in February 2026 to fund the repurposing of Linsley Hall. Occupancy is expected by mid-to-late 2027.
  - Planning and internal coordination are in progress for the Learning Lab modernization project. The initial \$500K is being funded through the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). If the upcoming BRIGHT Act passes, each public higher education institution will receive an additional \$4.5M.
2. Internship, Work Experience, and Co-op Program Development
- The development of internship and co-op programs continue as part of one of the University's major strategic goals; a comprehensive update to be provided at a future meeting.
    - Emphasis is on enhancing student retention and persistence through applied learning opportunities.
  - Participation in the state's *first-mover co-op program*, with initial implementation in the Biology program.
    - Institutional representatives are scheduled to participate in a state panel discussing the initiative on Monday, April 6th.
    - Students are currently enrolled in a pre-co-op course, with anticipated placement in co-op roles beginning summer or fall.
  - Career development activities include the upcoming job and internship fair and "Dress for Success" initiative supporting student access to professional attire through donations.

B. Honorary Degree: Nelson Peña

President Niemi introduced the motion, informing trustees of the customary offering of the honorary degree to the commencement speaker.

A motion to approve the consent agenda was moved by Trustee Claire Ramsbottom, and Trustee Antonia Soares Thompson seconded the motion.

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

C. Student-in-the-Spotlight: Lorraine Oliveira

President Niemi introduced Dr. Shelli Waetzig, Professor of Chemistry. Dr. Waetzig introduced Lorraine Oliveira and commended her as the embodiment of dedication, resilience, and genuine commitment to helping others.

Lorraine Oliveira, is a second-year Biology major with a Biochemistry minor, pursuing a career in healthcare. Lorraine is a first-generation college student, a member of the Commonwealth Honors Program, and her academic standing has earned recognition on the President's List.

She recently obtained her EMT certification and previously earned a dental assistant certification, demonstrating strong commitment to healthcare professions.

Lorraine is trilingual (Portuguese, Spanish, and English) and has applied these skills in patient advocacy roles. She shared her personal journey, including immigrating from Brazil, overcoming financial and language barriers, and supporting herself independently during high school.

Lorraine highlighted her positive experience at the University, including engaging in student activities, and benefiting from reduced work commitments to focus on academics. She emphasized the significant impact of faculty mentorship and support on her academic success and personal development. Lorraine also discussed her academic involvement, including participation in an independent study focused on laboratory techniques.

Trustees commended and engaged further with Lorraine through questions, in which she reflected on her passion for science, family support, and the meaningful role faculty have played in guiding her educational and career path.

### III. Student Trustee's Report

Trustee Luke Yubeta reported on the following:

#### A. Updates

##### 1. Administrators' Forum

- Planning is underway for the Spring Administrators' Forum, scheduled for April 7, with strong participation anticipated from faculty and administration.

##### 2. Commencement

- Reminded trustees of the upcoming undergraduate and graduate commencement dates and locations.
  - Undergraduate Commencement: Saturday, May 23 at the DCU Center, Worcester; Graduate Commencement: Thursday, May 21, Dwight Hall

##### 3. Student Government Association (SGA) Elections

- SGA elections will take place next week; all executive board positions have candidates, reflecting improved engagement.

### IV. Student Experience Committees

#### A. Committee Report

Trustee Cherie Comeau discussed campus accessibility efforts, including both digital and physical accessibility initiatives, as presented at the March 4, Student Experience Committee Meeting. She highlighted the following:

- The extensive scope and ongoing nature of accessibility work, including continuous updates to course materials and campus infrastructure.
  - Examples of completed and upcoming physical accessibility projects were reviewed, emphasizing attention to both large and small improvements across campus.
  - Requirement for all digital content (e.g., courses, videos, podcasts) to be accessible, involving training stakeholders, and technology resources.
- Collaboration between accessibility services and facilities to ensure classroom and campus mobility access, including proactive classroom assessments each semester.

- Acknowledged that accessibility improvements require ongoing financial investment and should remain a consideration in board decision-making.
- Recognized that accessibility benefits extend beyond students to faculty, staff, and campus visitors, contributing to a positive campus experience and reputation.

Conversation held in relation to the presentation focused on the following:

- The volume of projects remains a key challenge.
- Student feedback has helped identify unmet accessibility needs.
- Accessibility issues of all kinds affect course access and delivery.
- Safety walks throughout campus, held twice a year, support continuous improvement and serve as ongoing review of accessibility efforts.
- Dedicated funding for accessibility remains a need.

B. Introduction of the Chief of Police, Philip Di Blasi

Meg Nowak, Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students, recognized the recently hired, Chief of Police, Philip Di Blasi. She highlighted his background and credentials. Chief Di Blasi was unable to attend the meeting but met several trustees at the BOT Dinner prior to the meeting. Dean Nowak welcomed him to the university community.

C. Athletics Report

Carey Eggen, Deputy Director of Athletics, reported the following:

- Highlights from a strong athletic performance so far this year:
  - Women’s basketball won the 2026 MASCAC Championship.
  - Football captured the regular season title and hosted a playoff game.
  - Women’s ice hockey reached semifinals in its second varsity year.
- Participation exceeds 400 student-athletes across 15 varsity teams.
- Student-athlete graduation rate (62%) surpasses overall rate (46%).
- Key needs include field space, locker rooms, and additional staff.
- Fitness center upgrades and new performance staff underway.
- Recent athletic trainer hire has strengthened support services.

In response to questions from trustees, discussions were held regarding the following topics:

- Facility limitations at Loring Arena, including temporary trailer use and need for a more equitable locker space for women’s ice hockey.
- Limited role of sponsorships in Division III athletics.
- Student interest in expanding club sports, with constraints related to participation numbers and budget.
  - Current offerings include co-ed cheerleading and men’s lacrosse.
- Indicated athletic recruitment is a shared responsibility between admissions and head coaches.

V. Administration, Finance, and Technology Committee

Trustee Mariel Freve invited Robert (Bob) Totino, Chief Financial Officer and Vice President, Administration, Finance & Technology, to provide an update to trustees from the March 17, 2026, Finance Committee meeting.

A. Committee Report

Bob Totino highlighted the following information (p 40):

1. FY26 Operating Budget Update

- Reviewed the FY26 college operations budget, which represents approximately 70% of university operations; noted that the overall FY26 university budget, including trust funds, remains balanced.
- FY26 Budget deficit projections of \$650,000 with updates through February 28.
  - Impacts include personnel expenditures, slightly lower undergraduate enrollment, and financial aid awards.
  - Current projections show a modestly higher deficit trend of approximately \$780,000, with efforts underway to return to budget by year-end.
  - Federal funding (non-financial aid) monitoring six grants to ensure revenues and expenses align.

Clarification was made in response to questions reaffirming the following:

- Financial aid variance reflects increased institutional aid, not federal grants.
- FY27 budget models will be updated to reflect retention-related aid needs.
- Potential offsetting measures discussed included delaying projects, reducing consultant use, and trimming operational expenses.
- Increased institutional financial aid investment reflects broader higher education trends.

2. FSU Investment Policy

- Working in conjunction with CAP Trust, the University reviewed the previous investment policy, which had been in place since 2015.
- Modifications were made to align with industry standards as well as other CAP Truste clients.
  - All roles and responsibilities have been more delineated and better defined in the current policy.
  - The spending policy is directly included in the policy.
  - Asset allocations have been clearly outlined and defined.
  - The new policy took effect March 17, 2026.

A discussion continued in defining the performance evaluation metrics for CAP Trust and highlighted the following:

- Metrics are measured against a multi-weighted benchmark tied to portfolio asset classes and reviewed monthly, quarterly, and annually.
- Oversight of spending policy, compliance, and liquidity requirements ensure funds remain available for the University's annual spending needs.
- CAP Trust coordinates with the Finance Committee to address additional institutional funding needs, such as capital projects or financial aid support.

VI. Governance Committee

A. Committee Report

Trustee Antonia Soares Thompson reported the following:

1. Presidential Review Committee

- Thanked Trustees Puryear, Giombetti, and Comeau for their commitment to the important work of the committee.

2. Board Retreat

- Reminded trustees to respond to the poll for the proposed dates: Monday, June 1 or Wednesday, June 10.
- The retreat will be held at the Warren Conference Center

3. AY 2026 – 2027 Meeting Schedule

A motion to approve the AY 2026 – 2027 BOT meeting schedule was moved by Trustee Claire Ramsbottom, and Trustee Cherie Comeau seconded the motion.

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

4. Slate of Officers

A motion to approve the AY 2026 – 2027 Slate of Officers: Claire Ramsbottom, Chair and Antonia Soares Thompson, Vice Chair, was moved by Trustee Bonnie Mitchell, and Trustee Kristen Daly seconded the motion.

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

B. Trustee Emerita: Dana Neshe

A motion to approve the appointment of Dana Neshe as trustee emerita for AY 2026 – 2027 was moved by Trustee Cherie Comeau, and Trustee Bonnie Mitchell seconded the motion.

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

Chair Hubbard noted his experience serving on the Board with Dana Neshe, commending her dedication to the University and the breadth of experience she brings. He added that he thought that trustees would find her to be helpful and that they would find her to be a great resource to them. He welcomed Dana’s return to the board.

VII. New Business

There was no new business.

VIII. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

IX. Adjourn Open Meeting

A motion to adjourn the public meeting was moved by Trustee Antonia Soares Thompson, and Trustee Kristen Daly 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 7:50 p.m.