FRAMINGHAM STATE UNIVERSITY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD MEETING ■ SEPTEMBER 16, 2026, 6:30 PM ■ MCCARTHY CENTER, ALUMNI ROOM & REMOTE

MINUTES

Chair Claire Ramsbottom called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call In-Person Attendance: Claire Ramsbottom – present; Cherie Comeau – present; Kristen Daly – present; Jamie Kuenzel– present; Bonnie Mitchell – present; Mariel Freve – present* Dennis Giombetti, Susan Puryear, Antonia Soares Thompson, and Kurt Steinberg were not in attendance.

I. Chair's Report

A. Consent agenda

- Approval of May 6, 2026, BOT Meeting Minutes
- Approval of June 1, 2026, BOT Retreat Minutes
- Approval of September 2026 Personnel Actions
- Approval of September 2026 Community Sponsorships

A motion was moved by Trustee Bonnie Mitchell, and Trustee Kristen Daly seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Cherie Comeau – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Jamie Kuenzel – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Mariel Freve – aye
— Motion approved

B. Updates

Chair Ramsbottom welcomed trustees to the first Board meeting of the academic year. She noted that Trustee Kurt Steinberg was unable to attend because of a prior commitment and welcomed Student Trustee Jamie Kuenzel to her first regular Board meeting.

Trustee Kuenzel introduced herself as a senior double majoring in Spanish and Political Science and expressed enthusiasm for working with the Board.

* Remote attendance.

Chair Ramsbottom reported that Framingham State University has joined the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). She encouraged trustees to use AGB's webinars and resources on effective trusteeship, committee roles, and board practices., and suggested that these resources will help inform the Board's winter training retreat and future governance discussions.

C. Presidential Review Committee

Chair Ramsbottom reported that the Presidential Review Committee completed the three-year comprehensive review of President Nancy Niemi's performance. Trustees received the evaluation and supporting materials in advance of the meeting.

1. Motion: Presidential Review

The resolution presented the approval the Presidential Review Committee's recommendation to submit the evaluation and accompanying compensation recommendations for President Niemi to Commissioner Noe Ortega of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and to grant President Niemi the maximum compensation increase authorized by the Department of Higher Education.

A motion was moved by Trustee Bonnie Mitchell, and Trustee Cherie Comeau seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Cherie Comeau – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Jamie Kuenzel – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Mariel Freve – aye
— Motion approved

Chair Ramsbottom concluded her report with thanks to the Presidential Review Committee members--Trustees Comeau, Giombetti, and Puryear--for their work on behalf of the Board.

II. President's Report

President Niemi thanked the Presidential Review Committee and the Board. She described the opening of the academic year as engaged and energetic and shared the following updates.

A. State of the University and New Academic Year Updates

- The University welcomed 855 new students, exceeding its enrollment goal. First-year enrollment increased by 11%.
- Of the incoming students, 62% are first-generation students, 59% identify as students of color, 61% are Pell eligible, and 90% receive financial aid.
- Sixty-three percent of incoming students met the eligibility criteria for the Framingham State Tuition Promise, which covers tuition and fees, after financial aid and grants, for eligible admitted students with household incomes of $85,000 or less.
- First-year retention reached 76%, reflecting coordinated work across academic departments, advising, financial aid, and student support services.
- Student course registration, used as one measure of persistence, was reported at 86.4%.

- Housing is at 93.9% of adjusted capacity, with 1,514 available beds. Linsley Hall is excluded from adjusted capacity, as it is not being used during the academic year. It is being repositioned for faculty, staff, graduate student, and area educator housing.

President Niemi connected these outcomes to the University's strategic priorities: improving undergraduate and graduate enrollment and persistence; developing the infrastructure needed for 100% student participation in career-related workforce experiences; and strengthening community integration through partnerships with the City of Framingham, the region, the Commonwealth, and prospective employers.

She noted that more than 300 students participated in the part-time job and internship fair and emphasized the University's continued work to connect learning with internships, co-ops, faculty-led research, and other career-related experiences.

President Niemi also reported continued progress on the Linsley Hall adaptive reuse project and said the initiative has attracted interest from higher education leaders beyond the University.

B. Summer Delegation of Authority
President Niemi reported that no decisions required use of the authority delegated to the President for summer 2026.

C. Reports and Vice President Search
President Niemi reported that the position formerly titled Vice President for Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement has been renamed Vice President for Equity and Inclusion. The position was posted as a national search and had received more than 50 applications. A campus search committee will be formed, and the review process will begin after the application deadline in early October.

Trustees were also directed to the University Advancement and Alumni Relations report included in the meeting book.

D. Student-in-the-Spotlight
President Niemi introduced Maura Kelly, Director of the Accelerate the Future Cohort Program. Maura Kelly explained the program is a worksite-based part of the Master's in Counseling Psychology program. Its goals are to expand access to the degree for the licensed mental health counseling workforce. She introduced LaToya Lewis, a graduate of the Open Sky/Seven Hills cohort and recognized her academic achievement and professional commitment.

LaToya Lewis shared her personal and educational journey, reflecting on adversity, recovery, family, advocacy, and the experiences that led her to the mental health counseling profession.

Ms. Lewis explained that the program's financial support, hybrid structure, evening schedule, and accessible location made graduate education possible while she balanced

employment and family responsibilities. She credited faculty, program staff, family members, and peers for supporting her persistence through the program.

Ms. Lewis emphasized the importance of programs that create access for working adults and individuals from underserved communities. She told trustees that their decisions and support for such opportunities can change students' lives and concluded by expressing her commitment to using her education in service to others.

III. Student Trustee's Report

Trustee Jamie Kuenzel reported on the following:

A. Updates

- SGA held two meetings at the start of the semester, including an interest meeting for prospective senators and a candidate night. Nineteen students were running for Senate, and committees will begin their work following the elections.
- Trustee Kuenzel plans to hold periodic office hours to hear a broader range of student perspectives and concerns.
- Trustee Kuenzel attended the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education Student Advisory Council meeting in August with student trustees and student government leaders from the state universities, community colleges, and University of Massachusetts campuses. The council will meet virtually every other month.
- The Student Organization Fair reflected strong student interest and growth in student organizations. Student organization officer training also provided opportunities for collaboration among campus groups.
- Trustee Kuenzel noted the successful internship and job fair and the strong level of student engagement early in the academic year.

IV. Administration, Finance, and Technology Committee

Trustee Mariel Freve introduced Dr. Robert Totino, Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Administration, Finance, and Technology, to present the FY2027 operating budget update and planned debt issue.

- FY27 Operating Budget Update
- Undergraduate fall enrollment was approximately 3% above budget after the add/drop period, representing approximately 72 additional students. Fall enrollment in the Division of Graduate and Continuing Education was slightly below budget, but annual revenue projections remained on target.
- The final FY2027 state appropriation was approximately $46.7 million, about $700,000 above the amount included in the Board-approved budget. The additional funding will assist with collective bargaining increases for the University's three unions.
- Need-based financial aid was generally funded at the budgeted level. A reduction in MASSGrant funding created an approximately $140,000 shortfall affecting more than 660 students. The University elected to cover the reduction with College Operations funds so student aid packages would not be reduced.
- The statewide Endowment Incentive Program continued with $5 million for the state university segment; Framingham State's share was reported as $555,000.

- The University received capital support for critical repairs and plans to use approximately $825,000 annually through June 30, 2028, for deferred maintenance projects, including elevators.
- The SUCCESS program supports coaching, retention, and persistence initiatives. Framingham State was awarded $1.24 million, although a subsequent $70,000 reduction remained under discussion with the state.
- The BRIGHT Act remains in conference committee. If enacted and funded, it will provide additional capital support for deferred maintenance across public higher education.

President Niemi emphasized that reductions announced after the University had made commitments to students created difficult budget choices. Trustees were advised that the University will continue to evaluate the relationship between institutional aid, student outcomes, and future state funding levels.

B. 2027 Planned Debt Issue and Residence Hall Project
    - Linsley Hall has not been used as an academic-year residence hall for approximately four years, although it has supported summer students and limited conference activity.
    - The University secured approximately $6.6 million in state funding to reposition Linsley Hall for faculty, staff, graduate student, and area educator housing. The Massachusetts State College Building Authority began working with the University in February 2026, and the architectural study was completed in June 2026.
    - The study identified additional project costs, including asbestos abatement and upgrades to electrical, HVAC, and plumbing systems. Approximately $4 million in additional funding is needed to complete the desired Linsley Hall project scope.
    - Because Linsley Hall currently supports summer programming, the University is also considering air conditioning in Miles Bibb Hall so that summer programming can continue. This work is estimated at slightly more than $3 million.
    - A tax-exempt revenue bond issue of approximately $7 million was identified as the most direct funding option for both projects. Potential state funding through the BRIGHT Act's adaptive reuse provisions may also be available but would not align with the desired project schedule.
    - The Finance Committee will continue its review at its October 27, 2026, meeting. Potential approvals would subsequently be considered by the full Board, the Massachusetts State College Building Authority, and the Board of Higher Education.
    - Trustee Freve and Chair Ramsbottom encouraged all trustees to attend the October Finance Committee meeting. Trustees requested a one-page glossary of debt and public higher education finance terms to support the Board's review and fiduciary oversight.

C. Delegation to Approve the Audit of the FY26 Financial Statements
The proposed resolution delegated authority to the Finance Committee and the Compliance, Audit, and Risk Committee to review and approve the FY2026 independent

audit of financial statements in order to meet the Office of the State Comptroller's October 31, 2026, submission deadline. A joint committee meeting was scheduled for October 30, 2026, and the final approved statements will be provided to the full Board at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

A motion was moved by Trustee Claire Ramsbottom, and Trustee Cherie Comeau seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Cherie Comeau – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Jamie Kuenzel – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Mariel Freve – aye
— Motion approved

V. New Business

There was no new business.

VI. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

VII. Adjourn Open Meeting

A motion to adjourn the open meeting was moved by Trustee Cherie Comeau, and Trustee Kristen Daly seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Cherie Comeau – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Jamie Kuenzel – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Mariel Freve – aye
— Motion approved

The meeting ended at 8:00 p.m.