



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD MEETING ■ MARCH 27, 2024 6:30 PM ■ MCCARTHY CENTER, ALUMNI ROOM & REMOTE

MINUTES

Chair Beth Casavant called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call

Nancy Budwig – present; Beth Casavant – present; Diane Finch – present; Mariel Freve – present; Kevin Foley – present; Anthony Hubbard – present; Ryan Mikelis – present; Claire Ramsbottom – present; Lino Covarrubias was not present at the time of roll call

1.0 Chair's Report

- A. Consent agenda, pages 3 – 4
 - BOT Meeting Minutes: January 24, 2024, pages 5 – 12
 - Personnel Actions, pages 13 – 15

A motion to approve the consent agenda was moved by Diane Finch; Claire Ramsbottom seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Nancy Budwig – yes; Beth Casavant – yes; Lino Covarrubias – yes; Mariel Freve – yes; Diane Finch – yes; Kevin Foley – yes; Anthony Hubbard – yes; Ryan Mikelis – yes; Claire Ramsbottom – yes

—Motion approved

Chair Casavant continued her report.

- B. Confirmation of the Retreat Date
 - The Board of Trustees 2024 Retreat will be held on Monday, May 20, 2024 at the Warren Conference Center and Inn.
- C. Commencement Reminder
 - Chair Casavant reminded the trustees that the Graduate commencement will be held on Friday, May 17, in the Richard C. Logan Gymnasium; the Undergraduate commencement will be held on Sunday, May 19, at the DCU Center in Worcester.

2.0 President's Report

A. Updates

1. Strategic Planning Update

President Nancy Niemi invited Linda Campanella, SOS Consulting, LLC, to provide an update on Strategic Planning.

Linda Campanella presented the information included on page 16.

Additionally, she provided the following key points regarding the draft framework document:

- The "Framework" has been vetted and incorporates feedback, but is not yet a completed draft of the strategic plan.
- Review of the key audience for the Strategic Plan and their designed reaction(s)
- The aspirational vision of FSU in 2029
- Strategic Imperatives, Mission-Central Goals, and Mission Enabling Goals
- Review of the planning timeline

Trustees briefly discussed and commented on the draft. Comments included:

- Enthusiasm for the connections being made with the greater Framingham/MetroWest region. The connections showcase the opportunities for student success after graduation, extending beyond the campus, whether it be in the MetroWest area or elsewhere.
- Trustees seeking to provide additional feedback may do so by emailing the information to Counsel McDonald or Kim Dexter.
- Concern regarding the use of the terms "town and gown" (of the Framework, included on page 20 of the BOT Meeting book); the suggestion was made to remove the term.

President Niemi continued, inviting Counsel Ann McDonald to report on the following:

2. NECHE Accreditation Visit

- NECHE Standards on the BOT, pages 24 – 26
 - Standard Three: Organization and Governance – The Governing Board
 - Areas for emphasis from 2013 Self-Study
 - BOT Self Evaluation with external perspective/assessment (conducted in AY '21 – '22)

Trustees discussed what may be expected of them at the meeting with visiting NECHE team.

- Counsel McDonald provided general information, adding that they will be addressing questions and will provide feedback related to Standard Three of the self-study.
- Trustee Kevin Foley asked if there was enough representation by the Board; Counsel McDonald confirmed that 6 or 7 trustees that will be in attendance.
- Several trustees shared their experiences with accreditation visits.

B. Student-in-the-Spotlight: Basma Hassanin

Basma Hassanin was introduced by Dr. Anne Roberti, Director of the English Language Programs

and Community Education. Dr. Roberti is also a Visiting Associate Professor in the Division of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education.

Basma was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt, where she earned a BA in Pharmaceutical Sciences at Ain Shams University. Basma spoke of her grandmother and aunt, and how their passing significantly impacted decisions on her career and educational endeavors. She began her professional journey while earning her undergraduate degree and working in a community pharmacy. After graduating, she joined Sigma-Tec as a quality assurance specialist.

Basma began studying in the Masters in Health Administration program at FSU in the Spring of 2022. Initially, her decision to attend FSU was influenced by the location – her brother lives in Massachusetts. However, the affordability, the welcome she felt as being part of the fRAMily, and the faculty, with their first-hand field experience, are qualities that she also attributes to her decision to study at the University.

Basma thanked her professors, Claudine Guild, for being so wonderful and supportive, and Stephen Lemire, for pushing her to get the best work out of her. Basma noted, that for her, attending FSU wasn't just about getting a degree, but rather her education would allow her to foster innovation, as well as to promote and inspire change. After completing her degree, Basma is planning to work in Quality Assurance in hospitals or drug manufacturing.

Basma continued by speaking about her life on campus. She noted that life can be lonely for international students, and thus she immersed herself in the community by searching for jobs on campus. Basma began by working for the University Police Department, where she still works, and serves as a Student Worker Team Leader. She worked in the ESL program, where she was able to meet students like herself. She has served on hiring committees, and continues to serve on the graduate student counsel, allowing her to focus on helping other graduate students succeed. Basma was the “face of FSU”. You may see her on new promotional materials for the University.

Basma is also currently serving as a graduate assistant to the Center for Inclusive Excellence (CIE). She noted that she connects strongly with the CIE's mission to foster an environment of safety and inclusivity, where everyone feels a sense of belonging. She stated that when thinking of inclusivity, Jerome Burke and Emma Laurie's images immediately come to mind. That their embodiment of diversity and acceptance serves as a testament to the values upheld by FSU.

In closing Basma stated, in each of these roles, that her goal has been to make a positive impact on the lives of others, and to be remembered as a kind person.

C. Approval of an honorary degree for Dr. Alisha Moreland-Capula, page 19

A motion to approve the honorary degree to Dr. Alisha Moreland-Capula was moved by Beth Casavant, Diane Finch seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Nancy Budwig – yes; Beth Casavant – yes; Lino Covarrubias – yes; Mariel Freve – yes; Diane Finch – yes; Kevin Foley – yes; Anthony Hubbard – yes; Ryan Mikelis – yes; Claire Ramsbottom – yes

—Motion approved

D. Reports

Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement Report

Jeffrey Coleman provided the following highlights from his report, pages 20 – 22:

- Presentation to the BOT Student Experience Committee on the FSU student experience from a DEI perspective
- Events held in collaboration with other departments:
 - Screening on Chinonye Chikwu's *Till* with Arts & Ideas
 - Hosted the panel discussion, with Academic Affairs, *Israel/Palestine: A Historical Context*, the first in a series focusing on peace and justice in Israel and Palestine.
- Inclusive Excellence Funding Committee has awarded \$13,195.40 in support of initiatives related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism
- DICE has awarded \$15,700 for Community Sponsorships
- Center for Inclusive Excellence events

Trustee Diane Finch asked, regarding the community sponsorships, if there are individuals that the University collaborates with for community partnerships. Secondly, if there is any external communications or information included on a website, detailing the events that are offered to the community.

- Jeffrey Coleman clarified that the community sponsorships are individual agencies that request sponsorships for events that are beneficial to the University and provide an opportunity for the University to strengthen their presence in the community. The Office of Communications regularly sends messages to the University Community regarding events on campus.

Development and Alumni Relations Report

Eric Gustafson provided the following highlights from his report, pages 23 – 25:

- Year-to-date, Development has raised \$2.17M
 - Notable new gifts received include \$100,000 gift to establish an unrestricted endowment fund for the Danforth, a \$26,000 gift towards student scholarships, a \$15,000 gift to the Danforth, and a \$10,000 gift to an endowed scholarship fund. In addition, two generous gifts of equipment for the biology and chemistry departments were made.
- Alumni Engagement: relaunch of the "Refer a Ram" program, which provides a \$1000 scholarship, per year, for any student referred by an alumnus/a.
 - Alumni events included the Alumni Business Coaching Night and alumni "happy hour" at FSU with Dr. Coleman.
- Grants and Sponsored Programs have secured \$3.3M in grants, and just under \$1.3M in applications pending.

- The Danforth Art Museum: three new temporary exhibits are in place, and the permanent collection has been refurbished with new exhibits curated with assistance from Curatorial Fellow, AJ Green, a current undergraduate student.
 - The Danforth Art School's Summer Arts program is nearly full; spring classes are currently underway with strong enrollment.
 - The Art School's Adult Student Winter Exhibition will be held this Saturday, March 30.
- Bilingual programming at the Museum and Art School: promoting programs in Spanish and Portuguese will be premiered during the spring months.

Trustee Lino Covarrubias asked Eric Gustafson for an update on donor advice fund development strategies.

- Eric Gustafson responded that they are continuing to encourage donors to use allocations of donor advise funds and have promoted the practice in the University's publication.

3.0 Student Trustee Report

Trustee Ryan Mikelis reported the following:

- Recent events included the Spring Open House. Rams Rising event will be forthcoming.
- Administrators Forum
 - Held on March 13th, Trustee Mikelis thanked all of the University Administrators who attended the forum.
 - Summarized accomplishments and discussed concerns.
- Student Elections will be held during the first week of April.
 - Executive-board openings include, Secretary, Vice President, and Student Trustee.
 - Jeremy McDonald, candidate for Student Trustee was in attendance.
 - New senators are currently being sought.

4.0 Governance Committee

Chair Casavant brought forth the following motion.

- A. Slate of Officers for 2024-2025, page 27
 - Chair, Anthony Hubbard
 - Vice Chair, Claire Ramsbottom

A motion to approve the slate of officers for the 2024 -2025 Academic Year was made by Diane Finch, Mariel Freve seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Nancy Budwig – yes; Beth Casavant – yes; Lino Covarrubias – yes; Mariel Freve – yes; Diane Finch – yes; Kevin Foley – yes; Anthony Hubbard – abstain; Ryan Mikelis – yes; Claire Ramsbottom – abstain

—Motion approved

B. Trustee Nominations

Chair Casavant continued her report by updating the Board on the status of the current trustee vacancies.

- There are currently two vacancies and three terms that are officially expired.
- Trustees Budwig, Casavant, and Foley have agreed to serve in overstay until the vacancies are filled.
- Chair Casavant continued by summarizing the new trustee nomination procedure.
- Nominees were determined and will be brought forth to the Public Education Nominating Council (PENC) and Boards and Commissions for review.
 - Submissions were completed on Friday, March 22, 2024.
 - Boards and Commissions will meet April 25 to review submissions.

Conversation ensued regarding whether the newly appointed trustees would be in attendance of the Retreat; they most likely will not. Other comments included that with five new trustees, and a new student trustee, that the Board will be made up of predominantly new trustees. Chair Casavant commented, a subject of discussion at the Retreat may be ways to best manage a young board.

In conclusion, Chair Casavant brought forth the following motion:

C. Approval of the AY 2024 – 2025 Board of Trustee Meeting Dates

A motion to approve the proposed meeting dates was made by Claire Ramsbottom, Kevin Foley seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Nancy Budwig – yes; Beth Casavant – yes; Lino Covarrubias – yes; Mariel Freve – yes; Diane Finch – yes; Kevin Foley – yes; Anthony Hubbard – yes; Ryan Mikelis – yes; Claire Ramsbottom – yes

—Motion approved

5.0 Student Experience Committee

Trustee Claire Ramsbottom presented the following information for the March 6 committee meeting:

- The meeting focused on DEI, seeking to understand the student experience of being on an antiracist campus.
- Reviewed the changing student demographics, page 29.
 - Demographics at FSU are changing more quickly than the overall state demographic, but are in alignment with how the population is shifting.
 - The second largest demographic population in the state is Hispanic/Latino
- Strengths of DEI at FSU, page 38
 - Institutional statement on antiracism is supported by the Commonwealth's Department of Higher Education Racial Equity Agenda.

- FSU's enrollment demographic is close to reaching the threshold to become a Hispanic Serving Institution, when we reach a 25% Hispanic student body, and Minority Serving Institution, when over 50% of students are non-white.
- Identifying Student Success Gaps, page 39
 - Working to identify and collect robust data to help the University assess interventions required to reach goals for student success.
- Highlights from the report by Student Affairs and the Division of Student Success included:
 - The offering of translation and interpretation support for Spanish and Portuguese speaking families.
 - "Campus Safety Series" training
 - The creation of the GBTQIA+ Living Learning Community
 - New students took part in a workshop designed for looking at layers of self, not just what is on the surface. The workshop also explored perceptions of race, identity and culture through social media.

Trustee Ramsbottom invited Lorretta Holloway to provide additional information on policy impacts and development with an equity lens.

- Dr. Holloway provided information regarding the review of policies, and shared examples in which she described the original intent of the policy and their unintended outcomes. Additionally, she shared ways to resolve issues that were created unintentionally with approaches that correct for unintended inequities.

A larger discussion was held regarding the data included on page 39. Trustee Ramsbottom concluded that she sees the information as an opportunity for the University, as it redefines what the institution is, and how we want to define our identity.

6.0 Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee

Trustee Nancy Budwig presented the following information from the March 5 committee meeting, pages 34 – 35:

- Updates from Enrollment Management included an update on the status of the FAFSA, new student enrollment data, and some challenges faced by external vendors in regard to the launch of the new FSU website.
- Current enrollment data was reviewed, page 42
 - Applications and admits are ahead of 2023; the deposits are 21% behind the 2023 figures.
 - In review of open house and other recruitment schedules, the timing does not align with last year and are approximately two weeks behind and hence the data is not aligned completely with last year.
 - FAFSA applications are a nationwide issue impacting all institutions of higher education.
 - The week of April 22, financial aid packets are expected to be sent out.
 - The Committee will review updated enrollment data during the May meeting.
- Focus on Retention

- Retention strategies in Academic Affairs included a review of:
- First-year writing programs: Composition with co-requisite Writing Studio
- Preparing students for the next steps in their careers: Whittemore Library and several Colleges at the University offered programming to support career readiness and trajectory

Conversation ensued regarding the number of FAFSA awards and the impact on deposits. Iris Godes reported that our numbers are not that far behind. The Commonwealth as a whole is down 29 percent. She also shared promotional items with messaging directed to families. The yield piece is being distributed as students are admitted.

7.0 Administration, Finance, and Technology Committee

Trustee Anthony Hubbard summarized topics covered in the March 12, committee meeting. Topics discussed included:

- Budget development update: although the news was optimistic, the information remains dynamic.
- Bond restructuring implemented in January with positive results.
- Response to an expression of interest in property at Stearns Reservoir; the opportunity would offer access to the community and usage for academic programs.

Trustee Hubbard asked Dale Hamel to continue the report with a budget update. Dale Hamel reported on the following, pages 37 – 44:

- Assumptions driven by state support:
 - Funding for collective bargaining rate increases. ANF has provided parameters for the current contracts that are under negotiation. They were made at a higher rate than what we had originally assumed, but begins in January, ultimately resulting in less cost than anticipated.
 - Base case scenario for the FY'25 budget will use a 2% assumption for formula funding; the House budget is anticipated to be released prior to the April 23 BOT Finance Committee meeting.
 - Enrollment projections, considering the new figures, will still result in 2% aggregate decline in enrollment; increases to come in the out years.
 - Adjusting base case scenarios at net income results at a 1% and 3% state funding were reviewed, page 43:
 - Revised collective bargaining and enrollment projections will impact planning based on these items.

Trustee Hubbard added that there is a line item included in the budget for strategic initiatives and the committee was presented with several scenarios, but the use of reserve funding which was considered for FY'24, has been significantly reduced. Less favorable scenarios were also presented, and the Executive Team are considering several steps to reduce the deficit.

Dale Hamel clarified that the impact will be more significant in the out years, FY26 and beyond.

A larger conversation regarding state funding for higher education was held. Dale Hamel commented that he anticipates that there will be funding from the Fair Share Act. Although it will not impact the operating budget, but will be beneficial for student aid and capital support.

Dale Hamel concluded his report by discussing the following:

- Bond restructuring impact will reduce debt service for FY '24 and largely eliminated deficit in residence halls and, reduce and normalizing costs in FY '25.
- Update on the proposal for the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) property: a meeting with the mayor of Framingham has been scheduled. DCR has also requested a meeting.

8.0 New Business

No new business was reported.

9.0 Public Comment

There was no public comment.

10.0 Adjourn Open Meeting

A motion to adjourn the public meeting was moved by Diane Finch, Kevin Foley seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Nancy Budwig – yes; Beth Casavant – yes; Lino Covarrubias – yes; Diane Finch – yes; Mariel Freve – yes; Kevin Foley – yes; Anthony Hubbard – yes; Ryan Mikelis – yes; Claire Ramsbottom – yes
—Motion approved

The meeting ended at 8:56 p.m.