

The 287th meeting of the Board of Trustees
Mount Wachusett Community College
Thursday, April 9, 2026
Murphy Room
Meeting Minutes

A. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairperson Freda called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

B. **ROLL CALL:**

Present: Claire Freda, Rick Walton, Denise Gosselin, Lawrence NFOR, Patti Bergstrom, Beckett Caisse, and Sharmese Gunn

Present via Zoom: Doug Petersen, Irene Hernandez, and Tricia Pistone

Also, present from the College: President Vander Hooven, many members of the Leadership Team, and Executive Assistant Laurie Snoonian

Unable to Attend: Rozanna Penney

Many others joined via live stream on Vimeo.

C. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the minutes of February 19, 2026. Ms. Gosselin made a motion to approve, and Mr. Walton seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.

D. **CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT** – Claire Freda

- a. Chairperson Freda discussed the recently launched college climate survey conducted through the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). Approximately 5,500 emails were sent, resulting in 293 responses, for an overall survey response rate of 5.3%. This low response prompted a two-week extension to gather more feedback. Claire expressed her disappointment with these numbers, as did Trustee NFOR. They reiterated the survey was designed to be fully anonymous and administered by a third party to ensure honest feedback. The purpose of the survey is to identify areas where the college is doing well, highlight areas needing improvement and provide guidance for future planning. They encouraged faculty, staff and students to complete the survey, noting that it takes approximately five minutes to complete.

E. **PRESIDENT'S REPORT** – President Vander Hooven

- a. President Vander Hooven thanked the college community for their understanding during a recent illness that required rescheduling several meetings.
- b. Updates were provided about upcoming commencement ceremonies. There will be one ceremony for Health sciences program and a second one for all other programs. Pinnings will take place in between. Faculty and staff will receive communications regarding attendance, schedules and participation in the coming weeks.
- c. Jason Zelesky also provided a few updates regarding commencement. Four out of five student information sessions have already taken place, student attendance and student feedback has been positive. Beginning on May 1, regular communications will be sent regarding graduation events leading up to May 20 commencement activities.

- d. The president discussed concerns regarding changes to federal grant funding. The federal government is modifying grant requirements and eligibility criteria for several programs: TRIO, GEAR UP and CCAMPIS are a few that could be affected.
- e. Next week the president plans to travel to Capitol Hill to meet with federal representatives to advocate for continue funding of student support programs.

F. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM – Nia Carigan and Kathy Matson – New Student Portal (see attached)

- a. The presenters introduced the updated iConnect student portal, which serves as a central digital hub where students can access important services and campus resources.
- b. This portal allows students to access the following: financial aid services, course registration, digital documents, learning management systems and student organization resources.
- c. Key features include notifications and communications, department and student organization groups, event registration and attendance tracking and personalized student experiences.
- d. The new system was launched in December and has received positive feedback from students and staff. Student trustee, Caisse, had positive things to say about the platform and of the three used, that this one helps students connect like personal Instagram for school.
- e. The president recognized Nia and Kathy as nationally award-winning professionals.

G. MISSION/STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE – None

H. ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS OF THE DAY

- a. **AD 1346 – Approval of FY27 Proposed Fees** –Trustee NFOR reported that at our recent finance and audit meeting a 2.7% aggregate increase was approved. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the FY27 Proposed Fees. Ms. Hernandez made a motion to approve and seconded by Mr. Walton. All approved. Motion carried.
- b. **AD 1347 – Authority to Confer Degrees** – Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to grant President Vander Hooven the Authority to Confer Degrees. Ms. Bergstrom made a motion to approve and seconded by Ms. Hernandez. All approved. Motion carried.
- c. **AD 1348 – Approval of Tenure Recommendations** – Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the Tenure Recommendations. Mr. Walton made a motion to approve and seconded by Ms. Hernandez. All approved. Motion carried.
- d. **AD 1349 – Approval of Rank Change Recommendations** – Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the Rank Change Recommendations. Ms. Hernandez made a motion to approve and seconded by Mr. Walton. All approved. Motion carried.
- e. **AD 1350 – Approval of Bylaws** – Trustee Gosselin explained the purpose of bylaws is not to restrict the Board, but rather to provide clarity, structure, and guidance for the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees. She noted that the committee carefully reviewed the document to ensure it reflects the current operations of the institution and complies with the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Trustee Gosselin also mentioned the bylaws had not been updated since 2013. President Vander Hooven clarified how

the quorum requirement works under state rules. The board is authorized to have 11 members, so a simple majority is 6 members. A quorum is a simple majority of the full board. After speaking to legal counsel, they noted that the wording does not need to be changed in the bylaws. Chairperson Freda made a motion to approve the Bylaws. Mr. NFOR made a motion to approve and seconded by Mx. Caisse. All approved. Motion carried.

- f. **AD 1351 – Approval of FY25 Single Audit and Corrective Action Plan** – Trustee NFOR mentioned the audit was clean except for one finding related to the North Central Talent Search Program. Fidelity Bank was selected as our new bank and the transition will begin on July 1. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the FY25 Single Audit and Corrective Action Plan. Ms. Gosselin made a motion to approve and seconded by Ms. Pistone. All approved. Motion carried.

I. NEW BUSINESS

- a. 5 Year Review – BIO/CHE/PHA – Dr. Carrie Arnold (see attached)
- Dr. Arnold discussed recent changes including the introduction of night courses, field trips for students, and addition of Anatomage machines.
 - Key challenges discussed included the need for research opportunities, online learning options, and better tracking of alumni career paths.
- b. 5 Year Review – ENG/PHY – Dr. Peter Olszak (see attached)
- Dr. Olszak highlighted strengths in faculty, curriculum, and facilities while identifying areas for improvement in assessment, marketing, and articulation agreements with four-year institutions.
 - Successful partnerships with WPI were noted along with potential opportunities with other institutions like UMass Lowell.

- J. **ADJOURNMENT** – Chair Freda asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Bergstrom and seconded by Mr. NFOR. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 4:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Snoonian