

The 275th meeting of the Board of Trustees
Mount Wachusett Community College
Thursday, August 15, 2024
Murphy Conference Room
Meeting Minutes

A. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairperson Freda called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

B. **ROLL CALL:**

Present: Claire Freda, Patti Bergstrom, Rick Walton, Tricia Pistone, Denise Gosselin, Sheila Murphy, and Oren Cohen

Present via zoom: Doug Petersen and Irene Hernandez

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

Many others joined via live stream on Vimeo.

C. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the minutes of June 6, 2024. Mr. Walton made a motion to approve, and Mr. Cohen seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.

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

- a. Claire stated her excitement to be chair of the board and looks forward to moving ahead with some new ideas.
- b. One item of high importance is having a board retreat in the fall. This would be an opportunity for members to get to know each other better and discuss priorities and responsibilities as board members. An email will go out to discuss the best dates and times for everyone.
- c. Claire would like to create a committee to review the by-laws as they haven’t been updated in many years and should match more closely to Massachusetts general law.
- d. Need to be looking at the president’s evaluation.
- e. Claire asked the board if our current meeting time works for everyone. After a brief discussion it was decided to remain as is for now but could discuss more at the board retreat.
- f. In the future, Claire would like to hold a board meeting at our off-site campus in Leominster. Having an open house prior would be good exposure to introduce students to staff and trustees.

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

- a. Jim mentioned there is no formal financial update in part due to the transition of staff.
- b. Governor Healey signed the final budget three weeks ago which includes \$93.5M for the creation of MassEducate. It is a little too early to know what the bottom line will be in relation to MassReconnect and MassEducate but should have a clear sense by September or early October.
- c. Jim thanked Sheila Murphy for her years of service and input as Academic representative to the board. Sharmese Gunn will be taking over this role beginning in the fall.
- d. Jim provided a brief explanation of MassEducate. This program will provide free community college for all students who do not currently have a bachelor’s degree, regardless of age. An allowance for books and supplies is also included. The state has been meeting regularly with many individuals from enrollment

management, financial aid, and other areas to put together the procedures and policies around the implementation.

- e. MassReconnect is for students 25 and older with no previously earned associate or bachelor's degree.
- f. Although we are seeing an increase in fall enrollment, we expect to see a bigger impact in spring once we can market these programs.
- g. Jim offered his appreciation for the significant work from our staff to get these programs in place.
- h. Currently we are up 22% from fall of last year in headcount and 16% increase in credits. We are in the range now of where we were in 2019, although the stress is greater on food, housing, and childcare needs. These issues were always of concern, but there is a more dedicated commitment now as the need is greater.
- i. Deans are monitoring that there are enough sections for classes to accommodate more students.
- j. Jim reintroduced Bob Labonte who is the interim CFO.
- k. Jay Bry will be taking on the position of CFO at the end of September. He joins us from Fitchburg State with many years of experience.
- l. Jim also introduced Dee Legrand, the new comptroller and Mary Sayers, the new assistant comptroller. Business office is currently in a search for the other vacant positions.
- m. Heather Layton was scheduled to do a strategic plan presentation today, but due to a death in her family, this will be presented at the October meeting.
- n. Jim mentioned the board retreat would be preferable during the week (particularly a Friday). He is hoping to get some new members on the board and would like them included in this retreat. After some discussion, a doodle poll will go out soon to schedule something for later in the fall.

F. **ADJOURNMENT** – Chair Freda asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Cohen and seconded by Ms. Gosselin. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 9:22 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Snoonian