

The 285th meeting of the Board of Trustees
Mount Wachusett Community College
Thursday, December 18, 2025
Murphy Room
Meeting Minutes

A. **CALL TO ORDER** – Chairperson Freda called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM.

B. **ROLL CALL:**

Present: Claire Freda, Rick Walton, Tricia Pistone, Lawrence NFOR, Patti Bergstrom, Sharmese Gunn, and Beckett Caisse.

Present via Zoom: Doug Petersen and Denise Gosselin

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

Unable to Attend: Irene Hernandez and 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 October 16, 2025. Mx. Caisse made a motion to approve, and Mr. Walton seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.

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

- a. Chairperson Freda welcomed Sharmese Gunn’s class to the meeting.
- b. She acknowledged the recent tragedy at Brown University and expressed sympathy to the college and parents of students who were lost and injured.

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

- a. President Vander Hooven mentioned the successful holiday party and Yankee swap event. He thanked Rhonda Bettez for all her work on this fun event.
- b. Fall semester enrollment was up over 20%, creating challenges that were well managed.
- c. Jim highlighted the recent pinning ceremonies for Practical Nursing and Paramedic programs.
- d. MWCC was designated as one of America’s best colleges for veteran students with a gold star rating. The president credited Bob Mayer who runs Veteran Student Services and the entire college community for this achievement.
- e. NECHE annual meeting was last week that was attended by himself, Ana Gaillat and Tiffany Parker.
- f. The Department of Public Health site survey resulted in full licensure renewal for the CNA program.
- g. Announced changes to commencement format due to enrollment growth. Jim mentioned that it is most likely to be split into two ceremonies on the same day: morning for health programs and afternoon for all other graduates. This option will work best for catering, facilities and parents who often must come on multiple days for ceremonies.

- h. Lawrence asked for an update on professional development. Jim stated that he would be addressing this at the “All-College” meeting in January.

F. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM – Magnus Carlberg, Executive Director of the Wachusett Incubator will be presenting at our next meeting in February.

G. MISSION/STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE –

- a. Heather Layton provided an update on the upcoming strategic plan process.
- b. The five-year strategic planning process will be launched at the January town hall forum.
- c. Heather mentioned that spring semester will focus on STEEP analysis (trend analysis, competitor analysis, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).
- d. Meetings will be held on all campuses and include faculty, staff and students.
- e. In the fall, integrated planning teams will be formed to develop the actual plan.
- f. The process will include outreach to employer partners through Chambers of Commerce and advisory boards.

H. ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS OF THE DAY

- a. **AD 1341 – Approval of First Quarter Trust Report FY26** –Trustee Pistone reported that the Q1 is slightly ahead of budget for quarter one. About \$39K in turbine revenue reported for Q1 was from the prior fiscal year. The positive finish from FY25 allowed adding \$250K to the long-term reserves. She also mentioned a new format for reporting will be coming soon. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the first quarter trust report FY26. Mr. Walton made a motion to approve and seconded by Ms. Bergstrom. All approved. Motion carried.

I. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Jim Korman – Legal Studies presentation
 - A presentation of the 5-year review of the Legal Studies was presented.
 - The program began as a paralegal certificate and expanded to include a two-year degree.
 - The program is now offered entirely online after previously being available on both Gardner and Leominster campuses.
 - The program includes three tracks: paralegal certificate, legal studies degree and pre-law track.
 - The program now has strong retention rates compared to other programs at the college.
 - A question was asked about the transfer rates to 4-year institutions with the best guess being approximately 30%. Chair Freda expressed support for in-person education.
 - The program is healthy with strong enrollment.
 - Online format has been successful but there may be opportunities to reintroduce some in person classes.
- b. President’s Evaluation
 - Claire mentioned she wanted to do a more comprehensive review, but time got in the way.
 - Trustee Pistone expressed some concern about the timing of goal-setting and evaluation.

- Jim also expressed concerns about vulnerability in the current political environment.
- Trustee NFOR explained plans for a 360-degree review process involving stakeholders.
- Claire stated that the committee has formulated questions that they will discuss with ACCT and work with them for the next evaluation to be completed on time.

Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the President's FY25 evaluation. Mr. NFOR made a motion to approve and seconded by Mr. Walton. All approved. Motion carried.

- c. Claire will contact ACCT about another retreat.
- d. The Bylaw committee (Denise, Doug, Rick) will finalize revisions and bring for a vote to the next meeting.
- e. The police chief will be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on security measures.

J. ADJOURNMENT – Chair Freda asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Pistone and seconded by Mr. Walton. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 4:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Snoonian