Minutes Approved: August 20, 2026

The 288th meeting of the Board of Trustees
Mount Wachusett Community College
Thursday, June 11, 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, Tricia Pistone, Lawrence NFOR, Patti Bergstrom, Samuel Nieves, and Sharmese Gunn

Present via Zoom: Doug Petersen, Rozanna Penney, Irene Hernandez, Betty-Jo Caisse and several members of the Leadership Team

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

Unable to Attend: Denise Gosselin

Many others joined via live stream on Vimeo.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES –Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the minutes of April 9, 2026. Ms. Pistone made a motion to approve, and Ms. Bergstrom seconded the motion. All approved. Motion passed.

D. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – Claire Freda

a. Chairperson Freda congratulated faculty, staff, and volunteers for the successful commencement ceremony, noting that the event ran smoothly and reflected the dedication and preparation of the college community. She also recognized President Vander Hooven for his recent recognition by the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce for his years of leadership and service. Chairperson Freda thanked outgoing student trustee Betty-Jo for her service to the Board and welcomed incoming Student Trustee Samuel Nieves. Although the climate survey is on the agenda for later in the meeting, Chairperson Freda provided some background on why the survey was done in the first place. She initiated it in response to feedback received from various stakeholders and was designed to gather broad input regarding institutional strengths and opportunities for improvement. The survey was developed in partnership with the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) and administered anonymously to encourage honest feedback. She emphasized that the purpose of the survey was to gauge the overall climate and perception of the college among students, faculty, staff, leadership, community partners in the area.

E. PRESIDENT'S REPORT – President Vander Hooven

a. President Vander Hooven congratulated and thanked Chairperson Freda for her leadership in the Leominster community and acknowledged her recognition at the North Central Chamber of Commerce event.
b. Reflected on the passing of Boston firefighter and MWCC Fire Science student Robert Kilduff Jr. and spoke of attending the funeral services and noted the emotional tributes and the deeply moving experience. The college will award him a posthumous Fire Science degree at next year's commencement ceremony.

c. Thanked outgoing student trustee Betty-Jo Caisse for her leadership and contributions and welcomed incoming student trustee Samuel Nieves. Samuel expressed his enthusiasm about serving on the board and the opportunity to learn through his role as student trustee.
d. Introduced Dr. Pat Marshall and the new leader of Workforce Development and Lifelong Learning. Dr. Marshall previously served as Provost at Fitchburg State University. She said she was excited to be part of the college and President Vander Hooven's team, particularly because of the innovative work happening in workforce development and lifelong learning.
e. Expressed appreciation to the many employees and volunteers who contributed to a highly successful commencement ceremony. It is likely that we will do commencement the same next year and maintain our strong commitment to holding this event on campus.
f. Enrollment continues to remain strong. Summer enrollment reached 122% of goal. Fall enrollment is up 9% overall and Leominster campus fall enrollment is up approximately 24%.
g. Shared observations from the recent MA community college Presidents' retreat, noting that 7 of the 15 community colleges are currently experiencing presidential transitions. A big focus of the time was spent on discussing mentoring programs and the current federal grant situation.
h. The college recently held the annual Service Awards for employees. We had one employee celebrating 30 years of service and fourteen celebrating 5 years.
i. There are 107 students enrolled in the Summer Adventures Program, including 21 children of student parents and many children of employees and families from across the region.

F. REPORTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM – None

G. MISSION/STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE –

a. Heather Layton provided an update on the college's strategic planning process.
b. Key activities completed during the spring semester included:
   - More than 20 engagement sessions with faculty, staff, and leadership
   - SWOT, STEEP, and competitive analyses.
   - Student engagement through surveys, campus feedback boards, and focus groups.
   - Collection and review of institutional data and stakeholder input
c. Trustee Pistone inquired about the strategy for external stakeholder engagement in the strategic planning process. Heather mentioned the next phase will involve formation of a cross-campus planning team and outreach to external stakeholders, including employers, educational partners and community organizations. The planning process will also include a review of the college's mission, vision, and values.

H. ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS OF THE DAY

a. AD 1352 – Approval of Third Quarter Trust Report FY26 –Finance Committee Chair Pistone mentioned continue payroll reporting challenges related to the state's Mosaic system transition. Study abroad expenses exceeded budgeted amounts and will be budgeted separately in future years. Investment performance remained positive despite market volatility. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the FY26 Third Quarter Trust Report. Mr. Walton made a motion to approve and seconded by Ms. Bergstrom. All approved. Motion carried.

b. AD 1353 – Approval of Provisional Budget FY27 – There is a balanced budget with no use of reserves and allocation of $1M to reserves. Enrollment projections assume stabilization in FY27 with modest declines in future years. The major expense drivers include collective bargaining increases, professional development investments, fringe benefit increases and utility cost increases. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the Provisional Budget FY27. Ms. Bergstrom made a motion to approve and seconded by Mr. Walton All approved. Motion carried.

c. **AD 1354 – Approval of Capital Roll Forward into FY27 Budget –** Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the Capital Roll Forward into FY27 Budget. Mr. Walton made a motion to approve and seconded by Ms. Bergstrom. All approved. Motion carried.

d. **AD 1355 – Approval of Fitness Center Trust Fund, AD 1356 – Approval of Student Activity Fee Trust Fund and AD 1357 – Approval of Technology Fee Trust Fund –** These funds will segregate revenues generated through related fees and memberships and allow balances to accumulate for future program needs. Trustee Freda initially had some concerns, but the Board retains authority to modify or discontinue the funds if necessary. Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the establishment of these three trust funds. Ms. Bergstrom made a motion to approve and seconded by Mr. Walton. All approved. Motion carried.

e. **AD 1358 – Approval of Fund Balance Transfer Request** – This request is to transfer balances from obsolete agency funds, including the Student Health Insurance Fund and Bookstore Fund, into the college's general fund. Chairperson Freda made a motion to approve the Fund Balance Transfer Request. Ms. Bergstrom made a motion to approve and seconded by Mr. Walton. All approved. Motion carried.

f. **AD 1359 – Approval of Tenure Recommendations** – Chairperson Freda asked for a motion to approve the Tenure Recommendations. Mr. NFOR made a motion to approve and seconded by Ms. Bergstrom. All approved. Motion carried.

I. NEW BUSINESS

a. Climate Survey Results

- Trustee NFOR, on behalf of the Presidential Committee, presented findings from the recently completed campus climate survey.
- Institutional strengths – The college is highly regarded by students, community partners, and external stakeholders. Respondents consistently described MWCC as welcoming, supportive, and impactful.
- Opportunities for Improvement – Improved communication and transparency, strengthened shared governance processes, better alignment between institutional priorities and resources and reduction of organizational silos and improved coordination across departments.
- Approximately 5500 surveys were distributed. A total of 444 responses were received. A targeted follow-up survey among employees and trustees yielded approximately 30% participation.
- The committee recommended several areas of focus. These include improving transparency, strengthening institutional priorities, communication, shared governance and resource alignment. Also recommended protecting student centered practices, community partnerships, inclusion and financial stewardship.
- Trustee Freda noted that one of the themes reflected in the survey related to morale and the challenges associated with remote work. She said the college needs to get more people back on campus and the importance of leadership visibility.

J. OLD BUSINESS

a. Trustee Bergstrom informed the board of the passing of Jeff Williams, founding member of the Theatre of the Mount. Calling hours and a celebration of life were announced, and donations in his memory were encouraged to support Theatre at the Mount.

K. <u>ADJOURNMENT</u> – Chair Freda asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Bergstrom and seconded by Ms. Pistone. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 3:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Snoonian