



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Academic Affairs Committee

December 13, 2023

Minutes

Presidents Boardroom, Horace Mann Building

A live stream of the meeting for public viewing also took place on YouTube.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Committee Chair Dr. Robert Martin, Vice Chair Dr. Gloria Williams, Secretary William Reichelt, and Trustees Daniel Currier, and Board Chair Ali Salehi, ex-officio member, Trustee George Gilmer (9:15am)

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING REMOTELY: Trustee Madeline Landrau, Trustee George Gilmer (at start of meeting)

Also, present were Westfield State University President Dr. Linda Thompson, Provost Dr. David Caruso, and Dean of the School of Health, Natural Sciences and Human Services, Dr. Ziblim Abukari and Dean of the School of Business, Mathematics, Computing & Sustainability, Dr. Rebecca Morris.

Committee Chair Martin called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM and a roll call was taken of the committee members participating as listed above. It was announced that the meeting was being livestreamed and recorded.

MOTION made by Trustee Currier seconded by Trustee Reichelt and Trustee George Gilmore to approve the minutes of the October 11, 2023, meeting.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Trustee Williams	Yes
Trustee Reichelt	Yes
Trustee Currier	Yes
Trustee Gilmer	Yes
Trustee Martin	Yes

There being no discussion, **ROLL CALL VOTE** passed motion unanimously.

Provost Remarks: Provost Caruso expressed his appreciation for his colleagues in Student Affairs that create a vast number of activities for the students which provide positive experiences when they are not in the classroom. These experiences enhance their academic achievement.

There are areas that need to be addressed as noted in the NECHE Accreditation report by January 2025. Academic Affairs is working on making improvements in the following areas:

Student Learning and Academic Program Assessment

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) is for undergraduate degree programs (major) only. Outcomes address the key or most important things a graduating student should be expected to know or be able to do in a particular degree program. There should be between 5 and 10 learning outcomes for each program. Each SLO should clearly measure only one aspect of knowledge or behavioral skill. The metric for a successful outcome should be high and we should not expect that 100% of students are successful. For example, “88% of graduates can demonstrate appropriate implementation of a particular skill.” could be an appropriate indicator of student success. The assessment is run by the faculty themselves since it is part of their contract, and the data is turned into the office of Institutional Research and Assessment. The Executive Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, Jeffrey Xavier, recently joined the leadership team of our department and he has a lot of experience and training in program evaluation research, which is what SLO is. He is a support for the faculty as well as the Deans and the Provost office. The faculty have been given the new structure and will be supported during the process.

If the assessment shows that the students did not achieve a standard, the faculty can then go back and make changes such as modifying the curriculum. This step is called “Closing the Loop”. Since we will have record of the steps that we followed and how we improved, we will be able to present this information to NECHE. The focus is really on the program and the effect it has on the students not on the achievement. The model we will be using to obtain this information every year will make it easier to follow each time it is done. It’s a system that is in place to help the faculty with deadlines to ensure the process continues throughout the academic year. NECHE expects the results to be made public.

Concentrations

Over the years the faculty have found it to be advantageous to add concentrations to the majors. It’s a way to lure students to a particular major if they are unsure of their career path. It can be a way of recruiting potential students or even be a reason students remain in school to explore their education options.

Our presentation of the field of studies always lists majors, concentrations and minors, which shows the students that we have lots of programs to offer. Concentrations are typically 2-5 classes that are added to the major or can be an elective for any major and it will be listed on the student’s transcript. Students can show that they have more in-depth knowledge in their major because they have taken certain concentrations. Some students don’t take any concentrations as they may not know what direction they want to take in that field. If a particular concentration is popular, it may lead to the creation of new programs/majors which is then brought to the Board of Higher Education for approval.

NECHE suggested reviewing the list of concentrations since we have so many. If there is low interest in certain concentrations, then a decision in the coming years might need to be made to eliminate courses. This would need to be done by the Deans, faculty working with their department Chairs and the incoming Provost. We would have data to support these decisions.

GCE Restart/Organizations

The elimination of the College of Graduate and Continuing Education (CGCE) has not been effective for several reasons including that graduate and continuing education programs are distributed across the four schools. To establish effective and efficient oversight and management, Provost Caruso proposes to establish a Division of Graduate and Continuing Education (DGCE) which will provide leadership for the core functions. The leadership team will focus on program development and will be held accountable and responsible. This team will consist of a Dean to oversee the Graduate and Continuing Education programs, Administrative Assistant to the Dean, Director/Asst. Dean for Continuing Education and Director/Asst. Dean for Lifelong Education and two Administrative Assistants for Assist. Deans. These positions can be funded from the (DGCE budget) Currently there are Interim Deans in place, and it will be up to the incoming Provost to decide how to make these positions permanent. Funding is available for these positions already.

Certain offices will remain responsible for “back office functions” not only for Undergraduate but for Graduate students such as Student Accounts/billing and Registrar. Admissions for DGCE will be with Enrollment Management. Collaboration with these offices and the DGCE will be important for this to be effective.

A comprehensive study was done by two faculty members of Graduate and Continuing Education which was requested by the President to gather information and feedback from the faculty to see if putting the DGCE back in place would be supported. Their assessment showed the need to bring back DGCE, which is used by many universities throughout the country. The faculty have been asked for feedback on whether this structure and these functions will adequately support the work that they need to do.

MOTION made by Trustee Reichelt, seconded by Trustee Gilmore to approve the granting of Faculty Emeritus effective December 31, 2023, to Mr. David A. Laing, Physical Education. **Motion passed unanimously.**

There being no further business, **MOTION** made by Trustee Reichelt, seconded by Trustee Williams to adjourn. **Motion passed unanimously.**
Meeting adjourned at 10:04 AM.

Attachments presented at this meeting:

- a. Draft Minutes of October 11, 2023
- b. Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Template
- c. Report on Concentrations
- d. Academic Leadership of Graduate & Continuing Education
- e. Motion – Faculty Emeritus
- f. Faculty Emeritus Motion supporting letter

Secretary’s Certificate

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the approved minutes of the Westfield State University Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee meeting held on December 13, 2023.

William Reichelt, Secretary

Date