

Bridgewater State University  
Board of Trustees Meeting  
October 15, 2020  
Virtual Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Trustees Durgin, Alexander, Caulfield, Benson, Denterlein, Longo, Murphy, MacCormack, Oliari, Turchon

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: President Clark; Provost Ismaili; Chief of Staff Leuenberger; Vice Presidents Gentlewarrior, Jason, Jean, Powers, Oravec, Shropshire, Moline, Zuromski

Under the order suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law of the Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 30A, as declared on March 12, 2020 by Governor Baker, having been complied with, and a quorum of the Board virtually present, the Board of Trustees held a conference call meeting on October 15, 2020 with Chairman Durgin presiding.

Chairman Durgin called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

VOTED  
FOR: Unanimous  
CARRIED

On motion duly made and seconded (MacCormack, Caulfield) it was to approve the minutes from the Board of Trustees meeting held on September 24, 2020.  
(Attachment)

**Chairman's  
Message**

Chairman Durgin welcomed everyone. He noted the roll call vote is implicit on all unanimous votes for this meeting. If the vote is not unanimous, a roll call will take place.

As a reminder, the Statewide Trustee meeting will be held on October 27. This is an annual forum and he is hopeful where it is a virtual format Trustees will be able to attend. Most importantly, from here on out, Trustees serving on Boards will be required to submit education credits in order to continue service on a Board. There will be presentations by higher ed experts, meeting information, etc.

Trustee Benson reported, from a student perspective, the semester has been good overall. Academically, SGA has worked with Provost Ismaili and Vice President Oravec. Students are enjoying SGA and they almost have a full senate which is terrific. There is a big focus on students' mental health and trying to find a balance to keep students

together. There has been discussion about the spring and minimizing risk going into the spring semester.

MSCA Chapter President, Irina Seceleanu, was present. She thanked the Trustees for voting to approve resolution at the last meeting. BSU is the model in the state and other higher ed institutions will soon vote on the resolution. She reported that the UMass system has over 500 layoffs and furloughs. The heart of any institution is the people. They are currently organizing a letter campaign to be sent to state legislators; over 1,750 emails have been sent to state representatives; a scheduled teach-in is scheduled next week where teachers will talk to their students; lastly, a car rally next week at BSU. The event is capped at 50 cars and there will be a zoom event as well. They have partnered with students and educators. Three confirmed legislators will participate. She recently learned there is movement at the State House for level funding. They will continue to put pressure on the legislators.

### **President's Report**

President Clark thanked Vice President Shropshire, Amy Beaulieu and Rachel Goodwin for the hard work that went into the audits; it is a powerful team. Next Tuesday the BHE will have a hearing and preliminary enrollment reports will be presented. For the state universities, the average enrollment reduction is 9%. BSU is minus 4%. Community college reduction average is 12%. UMass overall is down .5%. A recent stress test will reveal one community college with troubles. He is grateful for partnerships with MSCA, MTA and our students. Possible good news that the Governor's budget will be level funded. Regarding COVID testing, 6,500 tests have been completed; 9 positive cases; 8 have recovered; 1 in isolation and recovering off campus. Testing has been moved indoors and CVS is administering flu shots on campus. Emergency funding is still available for our students; almost \$2M has been provided. Student mental health is extremely important and is a high priority. They are considering a delay in spring opening by one week and eliminate the spring break. The plan is to repeat the online format for the spring and hopeful to decrease asynchronous classes. They are encouraging people to vote. Indigenous conference is moving along. One of the 3 Plymouth properties was sold, resulting in \$2.4M net. They are hopeful to sell 2 additional properties. Over 130 staff participated in a Leadership Council meeting to talk about what BSU will look like in 2023 in a post pandemic era as we won't ever return to 'normal'.

### **ACTION/ INFORMATION ITEMS**

Draft Independent Audited Financial Statements (O'Connor & Drew)  
Committee Chair Oliari noted the Audit Committee met and received a thorough report from O'Connor & Drew representatives. There is no reason to issue a report for concern. An unmodified

opinion was issued. Chairman Durgin noted the auditors were highly complementary of Vice President Shropshire, Amy Beaulieu and Rachel Goodwin in leading them through the audit.

Trustee Longo commented the auditors noted the divisions moved smoothly to working online and it did not affect anything.

VOTED

FOR: Unanimous

CARRIED

On motion duly made and seconded (Alexander, MacCormack) it was that the Board of Trustees approves the draft independent audited financial statements for FY2020 prepared by the Finance Division and audited by O'Connor & Drew as recommended by the Audit Committee and described in the memorandum from President Clark dated October 9, 2020.

(Attachment)

President's Budget for FY2021

VOTED

FOR: Unanimous

CARRIED

On motion duly made and seconded (MacCormack, Turchon) it was that the Board of Trustees accepts and approves the President's Budget for FY2021 as outlined in the memorandum from President Clark dated October 9, 2020.

(Attachment)

President's Goals and Objectives for 2020-2021

President Clark spoke about his goals and objectives. The institutional divisional initiatives stand at 20. There is a high-energy effort to make progress. A few of the main efforts taking place right now are COVID planning, racial justice and students' mental health.

(Attachment)

President's Expenses and Upcoming Travel (February-July, 2020)

The report was provided as an information item.

(Attachment)

Update on Divisional Initiatives 2020-2021 (Ismaili)

Provost Ismaili reviewed his goals. Many are aligned with President Clark's initiatives. His division is mostly focused on the upcoming NECHE accreditation. A site visit is scheduled for Fall 2022. They are moving along according to the timetable that was set. Self-study chairs have been selected and committees will soon be charged. Many people on campus will participate and be involved in this process. Currently, so much of their work is around adapting to the corona virus. Other initiatives/goals are: virtual internships, symposiums for students, global engagement, academic innovation, etc. He is proud of the great work of the faculty in supporting racial justice. Activities, workshops and faculty development initiatives are taking place to advance conversations around racial justice. Also, work is taking place in: civic learning, working cross divisionally to continue development on a strategic enrollment plan, conflict management, governance reform, investing in retention, developing academic

programs (hopeful to bring a letter of intent for Childhood Studies and also for Biology and Public Relations). They continue to think about Health Sciences and opportunities. Continue with APRs, which are projects that are linked to specific goals for faculty. He appreciates the faculty, librarians and staff who are focused on providing the best opportunities.

#### Fall Admissions and Enrollment Reports

Vice President Oravec reviewed admissions and enrollment reports. Undergraduate admissions is down by 206 new students. Transfers also decreased by 181. New first year applications were our highest with an increase of 8%. There was a 3.6% increase in admissions; 7.1% increase in admitted students of color. Quality of incoming class remained stable. This year the average GPA was 3.22. Yield rate is slightly less. Graduate students head count is up by 13.31%. Dean Boehm commented students may have enrolled at BSU due to COVID as well as due to the growth in new programs offered. Social work has 30 new students. Dean Crane, Continuing Studies, noted course enrollments are up 7%. There is a strong incoming class and an increase in dual enrollment students. Areas of interest are: management, communication studies, and photonics technician certificate. Hopeful 25% of the senior high school students will be new students for next fall. He was pleased with a strong summer enrollment. There was a 16.8% increase for out-of-state students. Dean Meyer noted there was a concerted effort to recruit out-of-state students. They offered a Horace Mann scholarship which added a \$3,000 grant for out-of-state students and a \$2,000 housing grant, which was marketed to them.  
(Attachment)

Trustee MacCormack commented that losing 209 freshman students will carry forward. It's important to be creative in attracting even more students, focus on students of color and focus on retention.

#### Financial Aid Report

Vice President Oravec talked about the financial aid report. Student loans are the main source in paying for college; alternative borrowing decreased slightly. 8,357 students used some form of financial aid. Stafford loans and state resources increased by about 1% and private loans increased by 1% from last year. Federal work study is level funded.  
(Attachment)

Vice President Gentlewarrior noted they set enrollment and retention goals for the year and they met those goals. Last year, the retention rate was 76.6%; this year, it stands at 76.3%. There was a slight down tick for low income students and down almost 3% for students of color. She thanked faculty volunteers who called students over the summer and acknowledged the incredible work of Financial Aid staff.

Fall Residence Hall Occupancy Report

Vice President Oravec noted there are 1,296 students currently in housing which represents a 39.2% occupancy rate. They are working on a marketing plan for spring occupancy. The campus has been safe which is good news for students. Trustee MacCormack reminded everyone of the debt service for the long-term needs.

(Attachment)

Update on Divisional Initiatives for 2020-2021 (Oravec)

Vice President Oravec commented since March, the amount of work his team has done is significant. In looking at divisional priorities, racial justice is at the top as well as service to the students. We want a safe student experience. It takes a village to reach out to students both on and off campus. Mental health is another top priority and a committee is in place. Student engagement, recruitment and retention efforts are a focal point as well. Work continues with Marcomm to focus on how students communicate.

Trustee Alexander stated this has been a challenging and difficult time, and acknowledged staff are putting themselves in harm's way. As a Board, it is important to recognize the Cabinet and staff who have worked through this very difficult situation. And with the upcoming election, this will cause more difficulties which everyone will have to watch out for. Trustee MacCormack stated it's important to pay attention to the mental health of faculty and staff as well as they are under the same stressors.

FY2021 Budget

Committee Chair Murphy noted the FY20 budget ended slightly better than anticipated which is a credit to administration. FY21 budget is underway and may end better than what was anticipated.

Vice President Shropshire commented they unfortunately had to dip into the reserves. Revenues are significantly lower. They are prudent in spending. Building Authority debt has been refinanced and they will be conservative moving forward. Enrollment is down 3.7% and the occupancy rate has been significantly impacted as well. There are good efforts to save through the hiring pause and savings in divisional budgets through the hard work of staff.

On motion duly made and seconded (Murphy, MacCormack) it was that the Board of Trustees approves the FY2021 Budget of \$179,572,209 including utilization of up to \$7,500,000 of operating reserve funds to balance the budget as outlined in the memorandum from President Clark dated October 9, 2020.

(Attachment)

VOTED

FOR: Unanimous

CARRIED

FY2020 Year-End Trust Funds Report

Vice President Shropshire commented there is a significant revenue loss due to occupancy which affected multiple trust funds. There are some savings in the Dining Trust Fund.

VOTED

FOR: Unanimous

CARRIED

On motion duly made and seconded (Murphy, MacCormack) it was that the Board of Trustees approves the FY2020 Year-End Trust Funds Report as recommended and outlined in the memorandum from President Clark dated October 9, 2020.

(Attachment)

FY2020 Year-End Budget Report

Vice President Shropshire commented the year ended slightly better than expected.

(Attachment)

FY2020/Q3 and Q4 Contracts Report

Quarters 3 and 4 contract reports were provided for information.

(Attachment)

Update on Divisional Initiatives for 2020-2021 (Shropshire)

Vice President Shropshire provided a brief report on his divisional initiatives. Priorities for this coming year are: internal control priorities; working on fundraising opportunities; transition of university events to a virtual environment; racial justice and focusing on events to diverse groups in our community; travel and expense system implemented this fall; and finally, he is leading a CFO group to look at common technology needs to share services.

Capital Projects Update

Vice President Jason provided a summary of projects on campus. Highlights of the report: she received notice from her director of capital planning that he is moving on. Mr. Jay Davis will serve as the interim director. She heard today that the west campus primary electric project was noted by DCAMM as the best with the most coordinated effort. One solar canopy is now complete. Additional canopies will be installed on campus. The Photonics project is continuing and the Wyatt Sculpture Garden is underway. The Bear Paw Pavilion is underway. They experienced four delays due to manufacturing but hopeful that it will be complete by the end of November.

(Attachment)

Update on Divisional Initiatives for 2020-2021 (Jason)

Vice President Jason reviewed her goals. Each department has a set of goals that she is confident will be completed. They are very focused on delivery of service to keep the campus safe during this pandemic

which is their number one priority. Beautification continues to be a priority as this is important for potential students. University Services completed an assessment to be more effective. Environmental Health and Safety department is providing proper disinfecting and cleaning services. Regarding Capital Planning, they are pursuing additional money from DCAMM to continue on projects.  
(Attachment)

Honorary Degree Committee Update

Committee Chair Denterlein noted the committee recently met and discussed the upcoming commencements in the spring. Graduate commencement ceremony will combine the class of 2020 and 2021. Invitations that were offered last spring will be extended to Congressman Lynch, Therese Murray, President Emerita Mohler-Faria and Gary Maestas.

OTHER  
BUSINESS

Chairman Durgin stated this Board appreciates the skill and efforts from administration in keeping the Board informed. He is very proud to serve with everyone.

VOTED  
FOR: Unanimous  
CARRIED

On motion duly made and seconded (Longo, Alexander) it was that the meeting be adjourned (5:50 pm).

Respectfully submitted,

*Margaret A. Caulfield, Esq.*

Margaret A. Caulfield, Esq.  
Secretary

Minutes prepared by:  
Tracey Keif