**METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY of DENVER**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**

**Friday, September 4, 2020**

**MINUTES**

**Executive Session: 7:30 a.m. – 8:55 a.m. (Suite 440A – Trustees’ Boardroom)**

**Public/Full Board Meeting: 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**Full Board Zoom Meeting**

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairwoman Barb Grogan read the Trustees into Executive Session at 7:30 a.m., and asked for a motion. The motion was made and seconded, and unanimously approved.

**II. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The Board of Trustees business meeting was called to order at approximately 7:30 a.m. by Chairwoman Grogan. Vice Chairman Russell Noles, Trustee Albus Brooks, Trustee Mario Carrera, Trustee Kristin Hultquist, Trustee Mike Johnston, Trustee Marissa Molina, Trustee Jim Mulligan, Faculty Trustee Katia Campbell, Student Trustee Alaura Ward, Alumni Association Trustee Joe Rice, and Student Government Assembly President Braeden Weart were also in attendance, along with President Janine Davidson, Board Secretary David Fine, Vice President/Chief Operating Officer Larry Sampler, Treasurer/CEO George Middlemist, Assistant Secretary Melinda Olivarez, various faculty, administrators, and staff.

Absent and Excused: Trustee Emily Renwick Garnett

**III. CHAIR'S WELCOME & REPORT**

Chair Grogan opened the meeting and asked for approval of the Consent Agenda.

**IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

A. Approval of June 6, 2020, Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

B. Office of Human Resources report of personnel actions for the Board's information which have occurred since the last Board meeting on Friday, June 6, 2020

Trustee Carrera **moved for approval** of the Consent Agenda, with a **second** by Trustee Brooks. The motion was **unanimously approved**.

**V. PRESENTATIONS**

A. Roadrunner Safe Return (RSR) and Roadrunner Athletics Schedule Update – *Leone Dick, Chief of Staff to the Vice President for Administration and Finance/COO and Todd Thurman, Director of Athletics*

Vice President/Chief Operating Officer Larry Sampler reviewed the Timeline of Events which governed the University’s Roadrunner Safe Return. Courses requiring in-person teaching and those required for graduation were considered Tier 1 or Tier 2 courses, and the remainder were designated Tier 3.

The number of students on campus in Fall 2020 was approximately half that of Fall 2019. This reduction was an intentional measure in response to the pandemic, as only Tier 1 courses were offered on campus for Fall 2020.

Student support services are nearly 100% online. The Health Center is responsible for handling notification of students and faculty in the event of a possible exposure to COVID-19.

In Spring 2021, some Tier 2 courses, including lower division General Studies courses, will be offered on campus.

President Davidson stated that the University made the decision early on to focus on its online courses as being the optimal method of ensuring that MSU Denver could continue to offer a high-quality educational experience, instead of squeezing students into the limited classroom space available on campus. The CARES Act dollars received by the University were invested in online technology. By comparison, other universities put more money into bringing students back to campus, and they are now reversing their actions.

Todd Thurman, Director of Athletics, stated that MSU Denver Spring athletic competitions will be at 50% student-athlete participation.

B. Statewide Advocacy Program/Hart Center – *Elaine Berman, Hart Center Board Chair*

Former Trustee Elaine Berman spoke about the Statewide Advocacy Program which advocates for more equitable funding on behalf of public institutions of higher education. In August, a letter was sent from trustees representing several institutions to Angie Paccione asking for her office’s help in organizing. Ms. Paccione responded quickly and offered assistance through her chief of staff.

Trustee Grogan thanked Ms. Berman for the initiative and several trustees offered to help. Trustee Johnston suggested that getting agreement from the other partners is an important factor in seeking more equitable funding of public higher education.

The Hart Center was created to honor the exemplary public service carried out over many years by Gary Hart. Ms. Berman read the stated goal of the Hart Center, which is “to build an innovative center dedicated to diversifying the ranks of America’s public service leaders by serving students drawn to service and elevating the conversation about public service in our community and our country. We want to become a nationally recognized leader on advancing the spirit and practice of public service leadership.” The Center has established a board which includes President Davidson and Ms. Berman. It is a separate 501c(3) located on the MSU Denver campus. After reaching its initial fundraising goal, the Center hired Paula Hertzmark as CEO.

**VI. REPORTS and ACTION ITEMS**

A. President’s Report – *President Janine Davidson*

President Davidson thanked Teresa Kostenbauer who was recently appointed commissioner on the Colorado Commission for Higher Education. Ms. Kostenbauer is Senior Manager, University Relations, at Arrow Electronics.

President Davidson reiterated that students are the University’s top priority. Because of the proactive measures the University took when it became clear that courses would have to be held online, the University is facing an enrollment decline of only 6% instead of the 12% that was anticipated in June. The University operates on a shared governance model and many of the decisions that were made when the pandemic first appeared were made cooperatively and were informed and shared by faculty. The decision to offer a majority of courses online was made early, in the hopes of giving students truth in advertising and allowing faculty time to plan for online teaching. The University invested significantly in online technology and training.

The University made the decision to pause the rollout of its Strategic Plan. Cathy Lucas’s team is generating an economic impact letter which reflects that the University generated an economic impact of $703 million; it supported and sustained 7,250 jobs; generated $35.5 million in state and local taxes, giving back $6.5 million to the community in donation and volunteer hours; and the direct impact given by MSU Denver alumni through the course of their careers is approximately $135 billion.

President Davidson thanked faculty and staff for their tenacity during these unprecedented times. The University and its Board of Trustees have leaned into, instead of shying away from, the elevated racial tensions throughout the country.

President Davidson congratulated Political Science Professor David Weiden on the release of his novel, *Winter Counts*. Dr. Weiden is an expert on Native American Studies, and the book is one of the first crime novels written by a Native American author to be published by one of the five largest publishing houses in the country. Dr. Weiden is a fine example of MSU Denver’s outstanding faculty, President Davidson noted.

Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Bill Henry has been instrumental in developing a memorandum of understanding between MSU Denver and Johnson and Wales University whereby Johnson and Wales students will be able to transfer to MSU Denver, as Johnson and Wales closes down this year.

Two searches, one for dean in the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, and another for dean in the College of Professional Studies, will begin mid-October. Another search is underway for the President’s chief of staff, and that position will be responsible for the Government Affairs portfolio.

B. Futures Team Plan – *Cathy Lucas, VP of Strategy*

Vice President Cathy Lucas provided an update on the Strategic Plan process.

In December 2018, President Davidson tasked Ms. Lucas to work on the 2025 Strategic Plan through an inclusive leadership process. The process was broken down into six phases. At that time, the entire process was expected to take 18 months. A team was announced at the March 2019 meeting of the Board. That team collected more than 5,000 ideas anticipated to help shape the future of MSU Denver, taken from a variety of sources including focus groups and responses to digital surveys engaging more than 2,000 people.

The Strategic Planning Team held a retreat in August 2019 to synthesize those 5,000 ideas and develop concept papers based on themes which were then shared with the community for feedback. Out of this, a Mission Statement was developed that was supported by five essential pillars approved at the February Board of Trustees meeting. Following that, a Goals Conference was held, organized by the five pillars. Teams were tasked with creating three to six goals for their pillar and those were voted on.

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the 2025 Strategic Plan was going to go live on July 1, 2020. In April, President Davidson asked the team to pause its efforts of writing the plan and to shift its process to consider alternative post-pandemic scenarios and frame big ideas which would then be presented to senior leadership.

C. State Legislative Update – *Christine Staberg, Founding Partner of The Capstone Group*

Ms. Staberg said that a federal and state higher education advocacy panel for the Champions grassroots network will be held September 9. MSU Denver alumni who are serving in the state legislature will be on the panel, providing suggestions and advice. This will be a great opportunity to touch base with legislators.

There will be significant turnover in the legislature, Ms. Staberg said, and following the November election, as many as four of the six members of the Joint Budget Committee could be new.

Ms. Staberg reviewed the following ballot measures:

* Repeal of the Gallagher Amendment, which is supported by the CDHE
* Proposition EE, which would increase taxes on tobacco products and place a new tax on vaping products. The revenue would be allocated to K-12 and preschool initiatives
* A mandatory vote on the creation of enterprises, or fees, that generate over $100 million in five years. This measure would not impact higher education, which was long ago established as an enterprise, but would require voters statewide to vote on the creation of new enterprises going forward which could have significant implications in terms of the tools available to legislators with regard to budget efforts

The next quarterly forecasts will be released on September 18, and legislators anticipate an additional shortfall of between $1.7 and $2.5 billion. The Department of Higher Education has submitted their initial numbers to the Office of State Planning and Budgeting, which required all agencies to submit for a 10% reduction. It will then assemble the Governor’s proposal. The Commission stated yesterday that the guiding principle for FY’21-‘22 is to ensure that all public institutions can operate, indicating a very barebones approach. Without additional federal funding, higher education is at significant risk. On November 1, OSPB will submit its budget to the general assembly and JBC, and JBC will begin meeting daily following the election.

At its recent meeting the Colorado Commission for Higher Education discussed equity in funding public institutions of higher education, as opposed to simply dividing up the available funding.

D. Governance Committee Report – *Trustee Jim Mulligan*

1. Approval of Revision to Board of Trustees Bylaws Creating a Board of Trustees Sustained Racial Justice (SRJ) Committee

Trustee Mulligan stated that the Board of Trustees is committed to making the University an agent of change regarding issues of racial justice. A resolution was drafted earlier this year intended to reflect the seriousness with which the Board regards the matter and to position the University as a leader in this regard in the community.

Trustee Mulligan stated that the Governance Committee recommends the establishment of a standing Sustained Racial Justice Committee. He asked for a motion to approve a proposed amendment to Article 7 of the Board of Trustees Bylaws, creating a Board of Trustees Sustained Racial Justice Committee, which will be a standing committee.

Trustee Noles **moved to approve** the revision to the Board of Trustees Bylaws creating a Board of Trustees Sustained Racial Justice (SRJ) Committee, with a **second** by Trustee Carrera. The motion was **unanimously approved**.

2. Approval of Proposed Academic Freedom Policy Revision

Faculty Trustee Katia Campbell stated that Faculty Senate followed AAUP guidelines in drafting this policy and ensured it followed the needs of the community. The revision expands academic freedom for faculty and students. It won the approval of 99% of faculty, and was approved by the President’s board. Governance Committee recommends approval of the proposed revision to the Academic Freedom Policy sponsored by Faculty Senate.

Trustee Hultquist **moved to approve** the Academic Freedom Policy Revision, with a **second** by Trustee Molina. The motion was **unanimously approved**.

3. Approval of New Title IX Board Policy

David Fine stated that the University is modifying its policy to comply with new rules issued by the federal Department of Education.

Trustee Brooks **moved to approve** the New Title IX Board Policy, with a **second** by Trustee Molina. The motion was **unanimously approved**.

E. ASA Committee Report – *Trustee Marissa Molina*

1. Approval of Faculty Emeritus Recommendation

Trustee Molina requested Board approval of faculty emeritus status for Robert Amend, former professor of Journalism and Media Production at MSU Denver. Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Bill Henry stated that Dr. Amend was unanimously supported by the faculty, the chair and the dean in his department, and by the provost. He was an exemplary faculty member and outstanding colleague.

Trustee Carrera **moved to approve** the faculty emeritus recommendation, with a **second** by Trustee Hultquist. The motion was **unanimously approved**.

F. Finance Committee Report – *Trustee Russell Noles*

1. Approval of Fiscal Year 2020-21 Spring & Summer Tuition and Fee Rates

Vice Chair Noles stated that although Fall enrollment is down by approximately 6%, the decrease is better than projected and MSU Denver’s enrollment trends are mirroring the trends of other schools in the state.

The University budget was required to be reduced overall by $16 million due to the expected loss of $14 million in revenues and $2 million in additional mandatory expenses. To balance the budget reduction, staff worked with leadership to make $9.4 million in base reductions to their budgets, which included the elimination of nearly 36 positions, of which ten were layoffs. The University realized nearly $2.3 million through voluntary and mandatory furlough actions. Staff recommends using existing reserves of the University, which total approximately $16.5 million, to cover the remaining $4 million deficit, leaving $12.8 million in reserves. Fiscal Year 2021-’22 is expected to be even more challenging fiscally.

The University received $14.4 million in direct aid through the CARES Act, one-half of which was allocated to students and the other half to COVID-related issues.

The University received a $1 million grant through its HSI status. It also received $33.7 million directly from the state to compensate for the significant reduction in state funding. The majority of these funds will be spent in the current fiscal year.

With regard to FY’20-‘21 budget-to-actual spending, staff reported that revenues, tuition, and fees exceeded estimates by more than $2 million, primarily attributable to students maintaining credit hour production in the tuition window, even though the window was closed by 50% last year.

The University’s Budget Recommendation Committee worked through the Summer to understand the impact of increasing tuition by 3% for the Spring semester, considering the impact on students, on their learning environment and their finances, as well as the long-term impact on the University’s financial health. Student Trustee Alaura Ward strongly advocated for students, explaining that many may not be able to attend Spring semester at MSU Denver if tuition is increased by 3%. Committee members discussed helping those students with targeted funding through financial aid, leveraging CARES Act moneys and the HSI grant, and working with Faculty Senate to use more Open Educational Resources to mitigate the high cost of textbooks. The committee determined that a 3% increase in tuition would mean that a resident student taking 15 credit hours would pay an additional $108; a non-resident student would pay an additional $330.50.

It was recommended that the fee structure for Fall 2020 be maintained for the Spring semester due to the high likelihood that a significant number of classes will only be offered online. Some on-campus fees are being waived, such as Athletic/Campus Recreation and the Auraria Bond fee. By keeping the same fee structure, and despite a 3% tuition increase, total tuition and fees will be lower than the prior year’s. Vice Chair Noles asked for a motion to approve the FY’20-‘21 Spring and Summer tuition and fee rates.

Trustee Mulligan **moved to approve** the Fiscal Year 2020-‘21 Spring & Summer Tuition and Fee Rates, with a **second** by Trustee Hultquist. The motion was **unanimously approved**.

Trustee Johnston noted that the City of Denver has raised its minimum wage requirement to $15 per hour, and the state’s requirement will increase to $15 per hour. As a statewide institution, Trustee Johnston suggested that MSU Denver work toward meeting the state’s standard. Many of the employees who would receive this wage are student-employees, and Committee members agreed that even though other institutions are not mirroring the state requirement, it is important that MSU Denver become the leader in increasing the minimum wage paid by the institution.

Trustee Johnston said that beginning in January 2020 MSU Denver will be paying $15 per hour whereas other state-supported institutions will be paying $12.

2. Approval of Fiscal Year 2020-‘21 Phase II Budget

Vice Chair Noles stated that staff recommends the allocation of $673,000 for contract increases, which is primarily the Auraria Library allocation; $1.1 million for faculty promotions and post-tenure reviews; $680,000 for scholarships for students struggling during these challenging times; a $12 million reduction to the overall base budget for FY’20-’21; and the use of $3 million in University reserves to balance this year’s budget.

Trustee Mulligan **moved to approve** the Fiscal Year 2020-21 Phase II Budget Allocations, with a **second** by Trustee Molina. The motion was **unanimously approved**.

3. Approval of Interest Rate Swap Board Resolution

The University is completing the forward-starting swap refinancing that the Board approved at its February 2018 meeting, which will change the interest charged from a floating rate to a fixed rate.

Trustee Mulligan **moved to approve** the Interest Rate Swap Board Resolution, with a **second** by Trustee Carrera. The motion was **unanimously approved**.

Chair Grogan said that Finance Committee discussed the inequitable funding of MSU Denver. The Committee and the Board intend to expose this reality and its impact on students and enlighten and educate legislators and the Commission on Higher Education as to how this inequity must be remedied.

G. Hotel/HLC Report – *Larry Sampler, VP of Administration/COO*

George Middlemist stated that the board of directors of HLC has not met since the Board’s last meeting. The Hotel continues to struggle with occupancy, making the $1.3 million refinancing much more important by lowering debt service payments and improving cash-flow.

H. Foundation Report – Christine Márquez-Hudson, VP University Advancement & MSU Denver Foundation

Ms. Katie Biscoe provided an update as of June 30. The Foundation achieved 106% of its fundraising goal, a 119% increase in total fundraising over the last five years.

Retained donors were down slightly. Engaged alumni were at 109%, the largest number ever and a 279% increase over the past five years.

An RFP for a new investment manager for the Foundation endowment will be sent out. BNY Mellon is unable to provide apples-to-apples benchmarking. Vice Chair Noles applauded the Foundation for taking action with the RFP.

$137,000 has been raised to date specifically for the DREAMers Emergency Fund.

Gifts include a $100,000 commitment received from Stu Urquhart for the Laura McCall Endowed Scholarship; $272,000 from an anonymous donor for UndocuHub, a centralized hub that consolidates resources within the Denver Metro Area and for which MSU Denver serves as anchor institution; $50,000 from Fred, Lauren, and Sam Sternberg to create the David Sternberg Memorial Scholarship.

Jamie Hurst said that approximately $22,000 has been raised this year from sales of MSU Denver face masks. More than 500 members of the MSU Denver community have participated. Other colleges have asked MSU Denver how to undertake similar campaigns. The amounts raised have been given to the Student Emergency Fund and the DREAMers Emergency Fund.

For FY2021 the Foundation’s total fundraising goal is $5.5 million, less than the amount raised last year, primarily due to the impact of the pandemic.

I. AHEC Board Report – *Trustee Albus Brooks*

Trustee Brooks reported that the AHEC board will meet at the end of this month.

Dr. Michelle Marks has joined UC Denver as its new chancellor. Dr. Marks was VP of Innovation at George Mason University.

CCD has a search underway for its new president. Dr. Everette Freeman will step down at the end of December.

AHEC is facing a financial cliff in FY2020-’21, and Trustee Brooks stressed the importance of strategically framing this in communications with legislators.

J. Alumni Representative Report – *Joe Rice, Alumni Trustee*

Alumni Trustee Rice reported that the Alumni Association board members assisted with student recruiting and retention over the summer by engaging in outreach efforts to prospective and newly enrolled students, helping them with enrollment and welcoming them to the University.

K. Faculty Trustee Report – *Bethany Fleck, Faculty Trustee*

Faculty Trustee Bethany Fleck stated that faculty made a quick pivot to online teaching in the Spring. Some faculty had extensive experience and others had none. The transition was difficult but the work that colleagues have done was outstanding.

This summer, faculty underwent training in the new online learning management system, Canvas. In addition to course preparation, faculty continued their work on committees, participated in discussions across campus on various topics including online education, advising on the CLAS reorganization, the budget, the importance of the Liberal Arts, the importance of academic freedom, on CUPA salary increases, student ratings of instruction, ensuring a diverse faculty, and made contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Many faculty members personally called students to help them with registration.

Under the leadership of Dr. Katia Campbell and Dr. Elizabeth Goodnick, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee met over the summer. Dr. Fleck said that faculty members expressed the most concern about workload, the current financial crisis including furloughs, increasing class sizes, and social justice for faculty and students alike. Dr. Fleck and Dr. Chris Garris had a manuscript accepted for publication titled *Student Evaluations of Transition to Online Courses During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, and a second manuscript is forthcoming in terms of the transition. A large percentage of their participants were students and faculty from MSU Denver. Dr. Fleck encouraged an emphasis this semester on civic and community engagement among students.

L. Student Trustee Report – Alaura Ward, Student Trustee

Student Trustee Alaura Ward stated that SGA is writing its goals to align with the results of a consulting report it received over the summer with the goal of making SGA more accessible and a more inclusive space for students.

SGA is also finding practical resources for students, including information on the mobile food bank and food pantry, so that students know when those will be on campus.

M. Student Government Report – Braeden Weart, Student Government Assembly President

SGA President Braeden Weart said that SGA is a representative liaison that bridges the gap between students and the administration so that student voices are heard. The SAB is chaired by Stephanie Braun and its mission is to create informed program funding decisions through the Student Affairs Fee. SAB allocated approximately $2 million across 14 different prograMs.

The SGA website will ensure a consistent message; support connectivity through virtual events; and promote familiarity by operating as closely as possible to pre-pandemic SGA standards. Chair Grogan suggested collaborating with UCD, CCD and the Student Advisory Committee to the Auraria Board (SACAB), as an opportunity for all the institutions to meet and talk about unifying ideas and projects on campus such as recycling and parking.

N. Faculty Senate Report – Katia Campbell, Faculty Senate President

Dr. Katia Campbell, Faculty Senate President, stated that the Faculty Senate Executive Committee worked over the summer on issues related to COVID-19. On Wednesday Faculty Senate passed its Ensuring A Diverse Faculty Resolution which dovetails with the Board of Trustees’ June 16, 2020 Resolution stating the University’s commitment to engage in the anti-racism work necessary to create systemic change. Faculty reductions will affect the racial and ethnic diversity of the institution’s faculty, with Cat II and III faculty likely being the most impacted..

Faculty Senate also passed a voter resolution which recognizes that voter suppression is real, especially in BIPOC communities. The resolution asks faculty to be cognizant of this and avoid tests or major assignments on Election Day in order to support civic engagement and voting.

**VII. INFORMATION ITEMS**

A. Human Resources report of personnel actions for the Board’s information, which have occurred since the last Board meeting on Friday, June 6, 2020.

**VII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The Board of Trustees meeting was duly adjourned at approximately 12:30 p.m.