

**METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY of DENVER
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 12, 2025

1:45 p.m. – 3:05 p.m.

Jordan Student Success Building
890 Auraria Pkwy., Room 400 (*University Advancement Boardroom*)

Academic & Student Affairs Committee Chair Marissa Molina introduced the new Faculty Trustee, Mona Mocanasu, and new Student Trustee, Maria Garcia. Mocanasu and Garcia each spoke for several minutes.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Marissa Molina called the committee meeting to order at **1:59pm**.

Board of Trustees Present: Chair Kristin Hultquist, Vice Chair Jerry Glick, Olivia Mendoza, Rachel Kaygi, Laura Pinnie, Ryan Frazier (virtual), Alumni Representative Amber Mozet; Marissa Molina; Emily Garnett; Russell Noles; Faculty Trustee Mocanasu; Student Trustee Maria Garcia,

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of March 20, 2025, Academic and Student Affairs Committee Meeting Minutes. It was **moved by** Vice Chair Glick and **seconded by** Trustee Noles to recommend approval of the meeting minutes. The motion was **approved unanimously**.

II. ACTION ITEMS

A. Provost Makley provided a brief presentation of faculty recommended for Tenure and Promotion.

There are 17 candidates for Tenure and Promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. Provost Makley highlighted one in particular, Dr. Sung Hee Joo, as an example of the caliber of faculty at MSU Denver.

There are 20 candidates for promotion to the rank of Professor. Provost Makley highlighted Dr. Ann Obermann as an example among this pool of strong candidates.

Committee Chair Molina expressed gratitude for MSU faculty, and to our Deans for the hiring and retention of great faculty.

It was **moved by** Vice Chair Glick and **seconded by** Trustee Noles to recommend these faculty for tenure and promotion. The motion was **approved unanimously**.

B. Associate Vice President Shaun Schafer provided a presentation about four new programs:

- Master of Science in Business Intelligence (MSBI)
- Bachelor of Science in Computer Security
- Secondary Teacher Licensure in Theatre
- Minor in Museum Studies and Heritage Management

AVP Schafer provided several highlights about each of these four new programs

Trustee Noles asked, "How do we monitor and measure the scale of new programs? ...and under what timeline?"

- AVP Schafer responded that, typically, we look at what is coming in every year in terms of enrollment. We figure at least three years to determine whether a new program is trending toward goals; if it is not, then we assess whether to sunset the program or make adjustments (is it serving the market, is there sustained student interest, etc.).
- Trustee Noles asked a follow-up question, wanting to know how modality is determined for new programs.
 - AVP Schafer answered that factors used to determine modality include: (a) target student population, (b) where/how will they learn well, and (c) can we deliver the content well online? For example, asynchronous online modality is not the best format for some General Studies courses.

Committee Chair Molina asked, relatedly, if we've started to factor in Artificial Intelligence for modalities.

- AVP Schafer affirmed we have. He explained that a taskforce was launched in July 2023, "GAIT" – [Generative Artificial Intelligence Taskforce](#). Over the past two years, GAIT has geared its efforts specifically toward this topic. A lot of the work, however, is reactive rather than proactive because it's difficult to know what Generative AI will do next (constantly evolving as well as a growing list of pros and cons about AI)
- Trustee Kaygi asked if there is a notion of creating a course or major to educate students about using AI.
 - AVP Schafer answered "yes". For example, a digital literacy component is incorporated to each course. But, as stated before, the difficulty is that AI changes so rapidly. (Exciting potential but frightening in all the ways it can be mis-used or mis-applied).
 - President Davidson added that AI is a salient topic on her radar; it is necessary to prepare students for the world of AI. She also emphasized that it is important with respect to how we (MSU Denver) can use AI in our administrative enterprise.
 - AI will be a topic be on the docket for September 2025's Board of Trustees Meetings.

Trustee Mendoza asked about the data regarding Industry Demands and Income Projections: Is that data from federal sources or state sources?

- AVP Schafer stated that the data is drawn from the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Colorado Department of Labor, and a third-party provider *Lightcast*, which scours data on hiring information and which skills individuals are being hired for. The data does include salary projections.

It was **moved by** Vice Chair Jerry Glick and **seconded by** Trustee Russell Noles to recommend the approval of these four new programs. The motion was **approved unanimously**.

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. AVP Schafer presented about the 2024-2025 cycle of Academic Program Review which included four programs:

- Department of Africana Studies
- Department of Art
- Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences
- Department of Industrial Design

AVP Schafer introduced Lou Moss, Director of Academic Program Review, to present on this topic.

Ms. Moss provided background about the Academic Review Process and then spoke about key highlights from the review of each of the four programs in the seven-year cycle for review for 2024-2025.

- Six areas comprise the Academic Program Review process: Curriculum, Assessment, Faculty, Students and Student Satisfaction, Resources, and Online Presence.
- The review process is comprised of four steps: Self-study, Data Analysis, External Review, and Stakeholder Meetings.

Ms. Moss showed several slides about the strengths and challenges for each of the four reviewed programs, along with the outcomes of the review for each program.

- Trustee Pinnie stated that she was impressed by the 4:1 student-to-faculty ratio for the Department of Africana Studies. She asked whether that ratio is in opposition to the Faculty Workload issue.
 - AVP Schafer answered the 4:1 ratio reflects Majors only. He shared the external reviewer noted that the African Studies faculty often meet with student-of-color who are not among the department's majors or minors (have a high volume of walk-in students coming to the Africana Studies faculty looking for solutions).
 - AVP Schafer further shared that the external reviewer was not surprised by this fact because she has observed this same trend at her home institution (Loyola Marymount).

Among the array of highlights she provided, Ms. Moss noted in particular:

- The Department of Art had recently completed a successful site visit with NASAD (National Association of Schools of Art & Design) as part of the department's reaccreditation.
- The Department of Industrial Design is the only NASAD-accredited program in the state of Colorado (as well as one of only a few affordable options nationwide).

Ms. Moss concluded her remarks by stating that, overall, all four programs received strong, positive reviews.

Committee Chair Molina thanked Ms. Moss for presenting at the meeting.

Before pivoting to questions and comments, Provost Makley took a moment to let the Trustees know that two of the four department chairs whose programs had been reviewed were present in the room, as well as all six Deans, to field questions from the trustees. (All four department chairs were invited' the Chair of Industrial Design and the Chair of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences were available to attend the meeting.)

Trustee Garnett asked, "What are next steps?" Having received the recommendations from the external reviewers, how do we (department chairs, deans, the university) move forward with identifying how to proceed with actions or changes associated with those recommendations, while recognizing that cost is a key factor in determining which recommendations can be pursued or prioritized.

- AVP Schafer answered: Once the report has been delivered to the Board of Trustees, the hope is that consideration will be given by the Board to those recommendations, when the Board makes decisions on what we should be supporting or not supporting.
- Per standard process for Academic Program Review, following the seven-year cycle of review (as with these four programs), three two-year mini-reviews will occur to look at a multitude of factors.

With respect to how to invest, where to invest (particularly when some recommendations may be cost prohibitive in the current budget environment): AVP Schafer said department chairs have good sense semester-to-semester how their respective programs are doing, where they are struggling.

- (MSU Denver currently has 42 departments across Academic Affairs)

Trustee Garnett asked a follow-up question about if/how to implement any given recommendation, with the Department of Art as an example: How would we implement the recommendation related to its faculty working extended hours? AVP Schafer responded that, for any recommendation which comes forth from the Academic Program Review process, a core challenge is the high-cost-of-being-high-value "equation". He explained that we provide a high-value education, but we do not always have funds to have additional people to cover lab times, for example. So, it becomes a matter of the department having to ask, "What do we sacrifice in that space so that we can do this other thing?" AVP Schafer said that is a constant question for all of our programs.

- AVP Schafer spoke further about the Art Department specifically, in addressing Trustee Garnett's question.

Board Chair Hulquist asked two questions.

(1) Part of the process for Academic Program Review is to dig into the metrics – what other metrics are considered (at the institutional level as well as at the program level) in addition to Enrollment? Hulquist further asked, for the template that is used for Academic Program Review process, what would it take for that template to evolve to align with strategy. Ms. Moss affirmed that there is a template for aspects of the review process, including data and metrics assessment (time to completion; faculty profiles; student headcount; credit hour production; graduation rates; etc.). She mentioned that data is gathered through the Enterprise Data Warehouse (“EDW”) and Business Intelligence (“BI”).

- Ms. Moss also emphasized that within the structure of the seven-year cycle of review, in 2019, her team added a two-year ‘program progress reporting’ (Year 2, Year 4, Year 6) into the seven-year structure to help chairs better track data, rather than just via a seven year snapshot. It is of great benefit for chairs to receive data every-other-year (up through when the program is ready for its seven-year review), with the aim for chairs to use that data to help set goals for their programs on a semesterly basis.
- Provost Makley shared about his experience, previously as Chair of the History Department, which completed its seven-year Academic Program Review process 2023-2024. He explained that, as chair, he partnered closely with the CLAS Dean, John Masserini, to look at all the metrics in that process (including mapping them to the KPIs for the 2030 Strategic Plan).
- Board Chair Hulquist expressed her appreciation for the details Ms. Moss and Provost Makley provided in their answers. She offered feedback that it would have been very helpful to have those kinds of details included in the reports provided to the Board. The reports they received primarily emphasized enrollment. AVP Schafer thanked Board Chair Hulquist for the feedback, stating that it will help inform what will be included in future reports prepared for the Trustees.

(2) Board Chair Hulquist’s second question pertained to enrollment, specifically, “At what point do changes in enrollment.... prompt Chairs and Deans to ask ‘what is sustainable?’ and ‘what are we cross-subsidizing?’” And, she asked, “Are we elevating with transparency that that is an intentional process?” Looking at the contrast of enrollments among Art, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences, and Industrial Design, Board Chair Hulquist wanted to know whether it is sustainable. Dr. Schafer responded that the existential question we ask all the time – for the institution and for every department and program – ‘Who are we, and who do we want to be?... Can we continue to do (provide) what we do?’ He went on to explain the types of nuances inherent to consideration of each program’s enrollment and sustainability.

- Committee Chair Molina gave the Deans the opportunity to respond to Board Chair Hulquist’s question.
 - Given that three of the four departments included in this cycle of Academic Program Review are housed in the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, Dean John Masserini shared his observations. He stated that majors only tell part of the story, of the snapshot provided to the Board in the reports. He then gave an example in real-time for Africana Studies across a range of metrics, couched in the mission of the university.
- Committee Chair Molina commented on the thoughtful discussion and expressed appreciation for the process, and the work done by AVP Schafer, Ms. Moss, the Department Chairs and the Deans. She also shared several observations, related to the balance of considering quantitative and qualitative aspects in program review.

Due to time constraints, Committee Chair Molina asked the Trustees to send her any additional questions they may have.

B. Dr. Meredith Jeffers and Vice President Will Simpkins presented to the committee members about Student Success.

Dr. Jeffers spoke about Student Success Dashboards and Spotlights, specifically how we are investing in student success, toward the ultimate goal of student mobility.

- Regarding the Dashboard, Vice Chair Glick asked whether 5-year Graduates are folded into 6-year Graduates? Dr. Jeffers affirmed that is the case. Vice Chair Glick recalled from

prior information from Dr. Buffy Ribble that the data about 5-year graduates is rather intriguing and that in the future he would be interested in looking at that data again.

Trustee Noles asked Dr. Jeffers to remind the Board how we determine (calculate) social mobility for our students. Dr. Jeffers stated that matter would be addressed in-detail later in the presentation.

Trustee Kaygi asked how/why we set the retention goal at 80%. Dr. Jeffers stated that too would be addressed later in the presentation.

Board Chair Hulquist highlighted the importance that we have 'stopped the drop' and rebounded.

Dr. Jeffers next presented about Retention Momentum Metrics, which include such categories as: Meeting with an advisor; Being on an Academic Plan; Completing 30 credit hours in the first year; Passing three particular General Studies classes: MTH 120 *Introduction to Statistics*, ENG 1020 *Research & Argument Writing*, and PSY 1001 *Introductory Psychology*. She explained why these particular categories are indicative of successfully retaining students. Dr. Jeffers mentioned to the Board strategies within each of these momentum metrics categories.

- Trustee Kaygi asked how the 80% retention goal is set. Dr. Jeffers stated that value was set in 2020, when the university's strategic plan was originally launched, and has been validated since then via other metrics and benchmark data.
- Vice Chair Glick asked, given that these are all tied to goals for 2030, "have we looked at the resources required to get there?" Dr. Jeffers answered in the affirmative. For example, 'meeting with an advisor' is free while factoring in resources of staffing and time/scheduling. Academic Plan is also free, in that we already have that tool in place; it's just a matter of using it and prioritizing its use with first-year students. She provided several other examples.
- Committee Chair Molina asked Dean Masserini to provide some additional thoughts. He spoke to DFW rates and trends in two General Studies courses (PSY 1001 and ENG 1020) and related OKRs.
- Committee Chair Molina mentioned data from Denver Public Schools pertaining to students' academic readiness for college; she encouraged the Trustees to partner, early on, with our feeder high schools/districts in those "readiness" efforts.
- Dr. Jeffers noted that MSU Denver is distinguished for taking proactive measures to mitigate DFW rates in three common General Studies courses (in the context of typical DFW trends for most U.S. universities).

Dr. Jeffers then presented about Drivers of Social Mobility. MSU Denver's goal is to be ranked in the Top 10 of [CollegeNET's Social Mobility Index](#). We are currently ranked 121st nationally, but are No. 1 in the state of Colorado.

- She reminded the Board that she and Dr. Ribble previously presented to the Board in September 2024 about Social Mobility Indexing, about the metrics and resources we use and why, as well as why we have structured our goals around the variables CollegeNET provides. She said that she'd provide a synopsis of that September presentation to the Board following this June's Board meetings.
- Social Mobility is our institution's "north star".

For MSU Denver, Drivers of Social Mobility include: (a) Undergraduate resident tuition & fees and coverage; (b) Post-Graduate goal of 90% of our students being placed, within 6-12 months of graduating, into employment, a graduate school program, or a national service program; (c) Average debt of graduates; (d) Earnings 5-years post-grad; and (e) SMI graduation score (not our graduation rate but rather a specific variable defined by CollegeNET related to several factors including graduation rates and Pell-grant recipients).

- Dr. Jeffers noted that the method for collecting data was recently updated, which has elevated student/graduate survey respondent data.

VP Simpkins presented about student success investments, particularly initiatives supporting retention metrics, and how we are remaining affordable to support social mobility.

- He shared six key takeaways in his presentation: (a) Affordability is a key part of our mission, (b) ~64% of undergraduate tuition and fees are covered via grant and scholarship aid, as of 2024-2025, (c) Nearly half of our students graduate with no debt from MSU Denver, (d) Student success interventions are fiscally incorporated into the General Fund or Student Fee funds, (e) Our university uses one-time funding to scale or accelerate interventions (via philanthropy or budget underspend), and (f) We are able to re-invest staff capacity in higher-level needs using technology.
- VP Simpkins highlighted that just over a third of our students pay zero fees to the university. And that the average out-of-pocket tuition and fees (2023-2024) was \$1,007 per year.
- Board Chair Hulquist asked about the nuance between Gross vs. Net Price for long term strategy (what does unmet need look like). The figures presented by VP Simpkins reflect Gross Averages rather than Net Values. He responded that he can get that net data, with Dr. Ribble and her team, and provide it to the Board post-meeting.
 - Board Chair Hulquist went on to explain that disaggregation is needed of what students are actually paying, not just the average, because it helps us see how well we are 'targeting' to meet our retention objectives. VP Simpkins shared that $\frac{3}{4}$ of our students fill out the FAFSA or CAFSA, meaning $\frac{1}{4}$ of students do not - and thus $\frac{1}{4}$ are paying full-fare. He provided several other figures as well.
- Vice Chair Glick recalled that last year the average out-of-pocket tuition and fees was over \$2,000 and asked how is the figure now below that, at \$1,007. VP Simpkins answered that the figure from last year only represented students who borrowed, whereas the figure presented here (\$1,007) represents all students.
- Vice Chair Glick then asked about the average debt a student graduates with: If half graduate with no debt (based on a prior slide in the presentation), does that mean the other half of students graduate with ~\$46,000 in debt? VP Simpkins responded "no". The average figure for students who do graduate with loan debt (in 2025) is \$26,804.
- Lastly, VP Simpkins presented about where funds are being invested in student success initiatives.
 - Academic Plans
 - Student Success Assignments
 - Bursar's Grant (example of direct-to-student-aid)
 - Earn & Learn Program
 - Mainstay AI Platform

Committee Chair Molina spoke to Board Chair Hulquist's prior question about Net Price. She stated that she would circulate a document via email to the Trustees about Net Price.

Due to time constraints in the meeting, Committee Chair Molina asked the Trustees to send any remaining questions to her, to be addressed post-meeting. She then thanked Dr. Jeffers, VP Simpkins, and Dr. Ribble for their work on this presentation.

IV. ADJOURNMENT: 3:37pm