

**THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, RESEARCH AND STUDENT LIFE
MINUTES OF MEETING
VOLUME AARSL 48**

March 21, 2024

A meeting of the Committee on Academic Affairs, Research and Student Life of the Board of Trustees was held via video conference call at 9:15 a.m. on Thursday, March 21, 2024.

The following members, constituting a quorum, were present: Chair Wagman, Dietrich, Krieger, Lynch, Mumin, Paterno, Riegel, and Schuyler. Also attending were Board Chair Schuyler (*Ex Officio*), President Bendapudi (*Ex Officio*), the Governor's non-voting representative Myers, Emeriti Trustees Doran and Pope, and Constituent Representative Stine and Wede. Also present were staff members Bieschke, DelliCarpini, Dowhower, Harlow, Harvey, Melvin, Oman, Pell, Read, Schwartz, Smith, and Thorndike.

Chair Wagman called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. Harvey confirmed a quorum was present. Chair Wagman welcomed all attendees and reminded those attending via Microsoft Livestream the agenda and supporting materials was available at <https://trustees.psu.edu/>.

Chair Wagman called for a motion for the Committee to approve January 18, 2024, committee *Meeting Minutes*, which was forwarded by Trustee Riegel, seconded by Trustee Lynch, and unanimously approved.

Chair Wagman welcomed Matt Melvin, Vice President for Enrollment Management, who provided the Committee with an update on financial aid and admission strategies and the impact on retention rates for Commonwealth Campus students from the first year to the second year. The overall retention rate at the Commonwealth Campuses is 77.3%. Melvin noted retention and graduation rates are largely a factor of a student's academic profile and financial profile, and that goals and targets need to be set within the context of Commonwealth Campuses' market position and profile. He acknowledged that the availability and effective use of financial aid and scholarship support plays a critical role in recruitment, retention, and graduation. Data analysis confirms that academic performance more than affordability has a greater impact on retention. Nearly 18% of the entering F22 CWC first year/full-time entering cohort completed the first year with <2.0 or with no earned Penn State GPA, of those, only 30% continued to term three compared to 86% of those earning a first-year Penn State GPA of 2.0 or higher.

Improving academic performance and progress must be the primary focus of first-year programs, advising, curriculum and support systems. In addition, revised aid packaging regimens targeting CWC entering first-year cohort will be implemented for the Fall 2024 cycle and revised/adjusted to optimize the aid spend, stay within fixed-aid budget allocation for the in-state portion of the aid spend and ensure continued alignment with enrollment goals and priorities.

Chair Wagman also greeted Dr. Margo DelliCarpini, Vice President for Commonwealth Campuses and Executive Chancellor, who highlighted various commonwealth campus programs and services aimed at increasing retention and graduation rates. She noted that successful retention and progression starts before students arrive on campus, through key engagements such as the Summer Bridge and Jump Start programs and New Student Orientation. As students progress in their academic journey, continued support and resources through advising, tutoring and peer mentoring is critical, as is proactively identifying at-risk students and intervening early.

DelliCarpini noted that student success and retention efforts at the Commonwealth Campuses are centered on high-impact practices inside and outside the classroom; holistic student support services and strategies; strategic external partnerships to provide access to internships, co-ops and service learning; and an institutional focus on student success. She highlighted several successful programs and initiatives at individual Commonwealth Campuses as examples, including academic coaches and “Lion Guidez” peer mentors at Penn State Hazleton and a first-year bridge program for underrepresented engineering students at Penn State Berks, the FirstGen Living Learning Community at Penn State Abington; the WE cARE Pantry at Penn State Harrisburg; and the Chancellor’s Commission for Student Success by Design at Penn State Brandywine.

Dr. Andrew Read, Senior Vice President for Research, provided an update on the continued growth of Penn State’s research enterprise, focusing on areas where the institution is or can be a leader in higher education. He addressed key strategic questions previously raised by the committee, including partnerships with other leading universities, leveraging ongoing success with research in specific areas, such as government and agriculture, by making investments in retaining top faculty and selective recruiting; plant growth facilities; facilities around semiconductors and the CHIPS and Science Act; and additional well-trained staff to support awards and operations. He also highlighted key approaches currently underway to build a pipeline of historically marginalized and underrepresented researchers and scholars, including relationships with minority-serving institutions; leveraging the Provost’s Postdoctoral Fellowship Program; and beginning discussions on cluster hiring faculty in broad thematic areas that are likely to attract strong scholars from underrepresented groups.

Read noted the great synergy that exists between Penn State’s 67 extension offices and the research enterprise. He highlighted several examples of researchers and extension officers collaborating to tackle community problems, including researching blight control on mushroom farms and investigating tick-borne diseases. In addition, he highlighted an extensive project led by the College of Engineering, the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research and the Office of Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research (OPAIR) to quantify undergraduate research at Penn State.

The meeting is available in its entirety [here](#).

Chair Wagman noted the next meeting of the Committee on AARSL is scheduled for Thursday, April 18, 224 at 11:30 a.m., agenda topics for that meeting will specifically focus on the most impactful programs that are currently in place for first year students and a discussion on how to leverage these programs to have greater impact for incoming and current students. The Committee will also hear an update and status report on the Student HUB project to centralize resources.

With no other business coming before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:16 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Harvey
University Secretary
Office of the Board of Trustees