

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
AMHERST•BOSTON•DARTMOUTH•LOWELL•MEDICAL•LAW**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS**

Tuesday, April 1, 2025; 10:00 a.m.

Remote Meeting via Zoom

**Pursuant to Sections 20 and 30A of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021,
as most recently amended by Section 1 of Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025,
as signed by the Governor on March 28, 2025**

Committee Members Present: Chair Paris Jeffries; Vice Chair Ramos Gagliardi; Trustees Delgado, Epstein, Haviari, Maguire Keches, Nicum, Osa-Agbontaen, Raymond and Scheibel; Mr. Moreau (representing Trustee Tutwiler)

Committee Members Absent: Trustees Okwara and Tutwiler

University Administration: President Meehan; General Counsel Lowy; Senior Vice Presidents Calise and Walker; Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research Weaver; Chancellors Reyes, Suárez-Orozco, Fuller, Chen and Collins; Provosts Abd-El-Khalick, Berger, Balasubramanian, Hartman and Flotte

Faculty Representatives: Professors Hoagland, UMass Amherst; Walker, UMass Chan Medical School

Documents Used:

- Meeting Minutes: November 20, 2024 (Open & Executive Session)
- Appointment to Endowed Chair, UMass Amherst, Doc. T25-009
- Faculty-led Undergraduate Student Research at UMass, Doc. T25-010

Chair Paris Jeffries convened the meeting at 10:01 a.m. and welcomed everyone. He stated that the Committee continues to meet remotely pursuant to Sections 20 and 30A of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, as most recently amended by Section 1 of Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025, as signed by the Governor on March 28, 2025.

Any member of the public wishing to address the Committee regarding an agenda item or issue related to the agenda, or to make an audio or video recording of the open public session of the Committee meeting, was provided notice by the Secretary of the Board through a posting indicating that such written requests needed to be received no later than 24 hours prior to the Committee meeting. Under the law, the Chair has complete discretion in granting or denying the request to speak and may limit the duration that the public has to address the Committee.

Committee on Academic and Student Affairs
April 1, 2025

Chair Paris Jeffries announced that he granted a request by Senior Vice President Walker to record audio and video of the discussion item only. Participants have consented to be recorded and the attendees are hereby informed.

He reminded the Committee members to unmute themselves and state their name when moving or seconding the action items.

Consideration of Minutes of the prior meeting of the Committee

Chair Paris Jeffries stated that the Committee was provided with the draft minutes of the November 20, 2024 meeting's Open and Executive Session and asked for any corrections. With no corrections, the minutes were approved.

Chair Paris Jeffries announced the meeting's agenda: one action item, one discussion item and three items for action in Executive Session.

President's Report

President Meehan acknowledged the significant challenges currently facing the University. In February, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced a cap on indirect costs—also known as Facilities and Administrative costs—at 15%, regardless of previously negotiated rates. This policy change alone would have resulted in a loss of over \$60M for the System and threaten the inability to sustain the life-saving research that is taking place at our campuses. In response, UMass provided evidentiary support to Attorney General Andrea Campbell, who co-led a group of 22 state attorneys general in a lawsuit challenging the NIH's decision. Although a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order against the change, UMass has already experienced a significant slowdown in grant awards from the NIH and other federal agencies. Numerous grants have been canceled, leading to millions of dollars in lost revenue.

President Meehan further reported that in FY24, UMass received a total of \$961M from the federal government, including \$285M from the NIH, \$92M of which was allocated to facilities and administrative costs, \$423M in federally funded student financial aid, \$64M from the National Science Foundation, and \$189M from other federal agencies. Approximately 10,000 of the University's employees have salaries that are at least partially supported by these funds. The reduction in research funding not only jeopardizes the University's mission but also significantly impacts faculty, staff, and students. As a result, UMass is implementing cost-control measures; including the difficult decision to reduce funding for graduate programs, lower the number of graduate students admitted, and in some cases, rescind previously extended offers to PhD applicants. He noted these changes have broader implications, weakening the pipeline of highly skilled graduates essential to key Massachusetts industries such as life sciences, defense, advanced manufacturing, and climate technology. This situation diminishes the state's competitiveness, both nationally and globally. President Meehan confirmed he is committed to forcefully advocating for the value of research and higher education, emphasizing their roles in advancing public health, innovation, and societal progress.

Additionally, recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education suggests abandoning long-standing university values that have fostered safety, inclusivity, and a welcoming environment.

Committee on Academic and Student Affairs
April 1, 2025

President Meehan reiterated that while the University will continue to adhere to the relevant federal and state laws, UMass will do so in ways that align with its values as an institution. Support for international students and faculty, who are experiencing heightened uncertainty, remains a priority. The Office of the General Counsel continues to offer guidance to ensure that campuses navigate these evolving policies appropriately. President Meehan remains optimistic about UMass's future and urges students, faculty, and staff to persist in their important work and continue advocating for its value. He also recognized the efforts of Senior Vice President Walker and Deputy General Counsel Barton, who have led system-wide working groups tasked with preparing the University for potential new policies and legislation. Their leadership has positioned UMass to respond quickly and effectively to unprecedented circumstances.

Despite these headwinds, UMass has continued to advance key strategic priorities. UMass has strengthened partnerships with Massachusetts community colleges and hosted a summit between the Community College Presidents, campus Chancellors, and Provosts to discuss improvements to the student transfer process and ways to enhance overall student success. Additionally, UMass Lowell and UMass Boston both achieved R1 research university designation, joining UMass Amherst in this prestigious category. Only 7% of four-year universities nationwide hold this designation, which reflects years of dedicated work by campus leadership, faculty, and staff.

Senior Vice President's Report

Senior Vice President Walker discussed the impacts of shifting federal administration policies, particularly regarding research, grant funding, and immigration, which have had both financial and strategic effects on campus communities. The University is supporting litigation for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to ensure the sustainability of our research enterprise, student affordability and access, and the fulfillment of our mission and values. To address these challenges, the UMass President's Office led by the Office of General Counsel, in collaboration with all five campuses, established system-wide working groups to convene, educate, and prepare the University for new federal policy or legislation. The working groups represent all five campuses and include university leaders, chief research officers, chief academic officers, student affairs and campus life leaders, chief equity and inclusion officers, and leaders from international and global affairs. Representatives from administration and finance, communications, and government affairs are also involved in the process and are included in daily meetings on this issue. Their primary goals are to identify the impacts of proposed or potential federal policies and legislation, develop the infrastructure to quickly convene on topics and share information and best practices as they emerge, provide opportunities to understand campus perspectives and ensure the university has mechanisms in place to support and address campus concerns promptly and effectively and provide opportunities to educate and inform university leadership on the most current issues as they arise. Senior Vice President Walker acknowledged the leadership of General Counsel Lowy and Deputy Counsel Barton.

Despite these challenges, UMass continues to make strides particularly with Massachusetts Community Colleges. President Meehan, along with the Chancellors and Provosts from each campus, hosted the Community College Presidents, Chief Academic Officers, and colleagues from the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges. The meeting highlighted ongoing efforts to support the success of transfer students, including the UMass Community College Advantage

Committee on Academic and Student Affairs
April 1, 2025

Scholarship, which offers \$10,000 to top transfer students, and the importance of continued collaboration and dialogue to ensure transfer students' success.

Senior Vice President Walker noted that UMass Lowell and UMass Boston joined UMass Amherst in earning R1 research institution status, a top-tier national ranking by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education that recognizes universities with the highest levels of research activity and doctoral degrees awarded. This designation places the University of Massachusetts in elite territory, as there are only 187 R1 institutions in the United States, and UMass has three.

She then stated that the Committee will hear from students on each campus who will present their research projects. Faculty-led research provides students the opportunity to engage in meaningful inquiry, develop confidence in their critical thinking skills, and enhance their overall academic experience. Dr. Gabriela Weaver, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research, will introduce the Discussion Item. Dr. Weaver has worked in higher education for nearly three decades, 10 of which have been at the Amherst campus, where she's held roles such as Assistant Dean for Student Success and Professor of Chemistry.

Action Item #1: Appointment to Endowed Chair, UMass Amherst, Doc. T25-009

Chair Paris Jeffries asked for a motion to approve the Appointment to Endowed Chair at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The motion was moved by Vice Chair Ramos Gagliardi and seconded by Trustee Scheibel.

To recommend that the Board take the following action:

To concur with the President in the appointment of Professor Elsbeth Neil to the Rudd Family Endowed Chair in Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Chair Paris Jeffries asked for questions or comments. With none, the Secretary called the roll with each Trustee asked to vote yes or no. Chair Paris Jeffries and Vice Chair Ramos Gagliardi voted for the motion as did Trustees Delgado, Epstein, Maguire Keches, Nicum, Osa-Agbontaen, Scheibel and Mr. Moreau (representing Trustee Tutwiler).

Consent Agenda

Chair Paris Jeffries asked for a motion to place Action Item 1 on a Consent Agenda for the Board Meeting on April 9, 2025. The motion was moved by Trustee Scheibel and seconded by Trustee Delgado.

Chair Paris Jeffries asked for questions or comments. With none, the Secretary called the roll with each Trustee asked to vote yes or no. Chair Paris Jeffries and Vice Chair Ramos Gagliardi voted for the motion as did Trustees Delgado, Epstein, Maguire Keches, Nicum, Osa-Agbontaen, Scheibel and Mr. Moreau (representing Trustee Tutwiler).

Discussion Item: Faculty-led Undergraduate Student Research at UMass, Doc. T25-010

Assistant Vice President Weaver introduced the discussion item which highlighted faculty-led undergraduate student research, emphasizing the University's distinctiveness as a public research

Committee on Academic and Student Affairs
April 1, 2025

university. The presentation demonstrated just how faculty-led research provides students the opportunity to engage in meaningful inquiry, develop confidence in their critical thinking skills, and enhance their overall academic experience.

Wouter Hoogkamer, Assistant Professor of Kinesiology at UMass Amherst, introduced Elena Schell '26 who highlighted her research on the impact of assistive devices on gait in chronic stroke populations. Jill Macoska, Distinguished University Professor of Biology at UMass Boston, introduced Jason Lu '26 who discussed his research on the role of regulatory RNAs in IL-4/IL-13 induced prostatic fibrosis. Rachel Sirianni, Professor of Neurological Surgery at UMass Chan Medical School, introduced Lily Bigelow '25 who shared new research tools that will enable a better understanding of cancer cell biology in the central nervous system. Nefeli Bompoti, Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at UMass Dartmouth, introduced Alberto Palanco '25 who discussed his research on environmental justice and policy solutions that contribute to advancing equity in the Commonwealth. Pradeep Kurup, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at UMass Lowell, introduced Tieren Adams '26 and Alex Jacquart '25 who shared their Smart and Connected Communities project.

Executive Session Announcement

Chair Paris Jeffries asked the Committee for a roll call vote to enter into Executive Session to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law necessitating confidentiality, as permitted under Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30, Section 21a, Purpose (7), See Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 75, Section 4, subsection (2) regarding awards of tenure since an open meeting may compromise the purpose for which the executive session is being called and have a detrimental effect on the University; and to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law necessitating confidentiality, as permitted under Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30, Section 21a, Purpose (7), See Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 75, Section 4, subsection (1) regarding awards of honorary degrees since an open meeting may compromise the purpose for which the executive session is being called and have a detrimental effect on the University. Chair Paris Jeffries stated that the Committee meeting would not reconvene in open session and asked for a motion. It was moved by Trustee Scheibel and seconded by Vice Chair Ramos Gagliardi.

Chair Paris Jeffries asked for questions or comments. With none, the Secretary called the roll with each Trustee asked to vote yes or no. Chair Paris Jeffries and Vice Chair Ramos Gagliardi voted for the motion as did Trustees Delgado, Maguire Keches, Nicum, Osa-Agbontaen, Scheibel and Mr. Moreau (representing Trustee Tutwiler). Trustee Epstein's vote was not heard.

Chair Paris Jeffries announced that the Zoom meeting will be closed by the host and instructed those participating in the Executive Session to join that Zoom meeting with the specific link that was provided.

The time was 11:08 a.m.

Chelsey L. Burke
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees