

New Jersey City University  
Board of Trustees Public Meeting  
Date: May 2, 2024  
Time: 4:00pm  
Location: Room 317 and Gothic Lounge

**Public Session Minutes**

**ATTENDING:**

- Mr. Luke Visconti, Chair (In-Person)
- Dr. Steven Chang (Zoom)
- Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris (Zoom)
- Dr. Edward Whittaker (Zoom)
- Mr. Edward Fowlkes (Zoom)
- Mr. David Valica – *Student Trustee, Non-Voting* (In-Person)
- Ms. Ashley Pottinger – *Student Trustee, Voting Member* (In-Person)
- Dr. Meriem Bendaoud – *Ex Officio* (In-Person)
- Dr. Helen Dao – *Ex Officio* (Zoom)
- Mr. Carlos Lejniaks (Zoom – left meeting at 5:30PM)
- Mr. Peter Hernandez (In-Person)
- Mr. Ralph Salerno (In-Person)
- Mr. Andrés Acebo, Interim President – *Ex Officio* (In-Person)
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- Ms. Monica de los Rios – *Secretary to the Board of Trustees and Interim University Counsel* (In-Person)
- Mr. Henry Amoroso – *State Appointed Monitor* (In-Person)

**ABSENT:**

None

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The Public Meeting opened in Room 317 and was called to order by Ms. de los Rios at approximately 4:00pm. Upon completion of Executive Session, which began at approximately 4:20, the Public Meeting resumed at 6:04pm in the Gothic Lounge.

**NOTICE OF MEETING**

Ms. de los Rios noted that the time, date, location, and agenda for this meeting were mailed to the Jersey Journal, the Star-Ledger, Office of the Secretary of State, Senate Majority Office, Council of New Jersey State College Locals and the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities on April 23, 2024. Notice of this meeting was also posted on the University’s email system and website.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Visconti requested a motion to approve the Minutes from the December 4, 2023, Board Meeting. The motion was made by Chair Visconti and seconded by Ms. Pottinger. (Yes – Mr. Visconti, Dr. Chang, Dr.

Whittaker, Dr. Trowell-Harris, Mr. Fowlkes, Ms. Pottinger, Mr. Lejniaks, Mr. Hernandez; Mr. Salerno; No – None; Abstention – None; Absent – None). The motion passed.

**MOVE TO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Mr. Visconti requested a motion to move to executive session. The motion was made by Mr. Salerno and seconded by Mr. Lejniaks. (Yes – Mr. Visconti, Dr. Chang, Dr. Whittaker, Dr. Trowell-Harris, Mr. Fowlkes, Ms. Pottinger, Mr. Lejniaks, Mr. Hernandez; Mr. Salerno; No – None; Abstention – None; Absent – none). The motion passed.

**BOARD CHAIR’S REPORT**

Chair Visconti welcomed recently appointed Board of Trustee member Ralph Salerno.

**PRESIDENT’S REPORT**  
**UNIVERSITY UPDATE**

Interim President Acebo began by stating that NJCU is in far stronger shape than it was this time last year - and that is a consequence of, and the result of, the dedicated stewardship of stakeholders on campus, students that have been engaged and honored, as well as due to the commitment of board service and collaborative stewardship that has met the Institution’s mission.

President Acebo explained that NJCU recently unveiled a refreshed mission for the Institution. The refreshed mission speaks in no uncertain terms about who the institution serves: a community of historically underserved and underrepresented individuals, first generation students and adult learners.

This is an institution that will soon be celebrating and entering its 2<sup>nd</sup> century of existence in the community.

President Acebo went on to state that the Institution’s work has been recognized externally by way of an improved financial outlook. And while there is more work to do, the stability that has been cemented onto the campus by anchoring into community and mission, through shared governance and sound Labor Relations, NJCU has been able to bring about reforms academically and financially that are no easy feat to accomplish. NJCU has overhauled its general education curriculum, and is now as transfer-friendly as possible, and it also launched the Hudson County Community College Connect Program. It is anticipated this program will be replicated with other Community Colleges, such as Mercer and Middlesex.

NJCU is doing more with less - and will work with the State Monitor to change that. NJCU has changed its academic affairs unit and enrollment management saw significant gains. For the first time in more than six years, NJCU saw double digit new enrollment for graduate and undergraduate students, as well as transfer students. The institution is poised to weather the sometimes overstated “enrollment cliff”. NJCU is leveraging its market and its regional focus.

Also, NJCU now has an academic master plan and a strategic enrollment plan that was unveiled a few weeks ago - and it has been published for some time. NJCU is also a public anchor institution, and it has an obligation to also be stewards of the community. To that end, NJCU has partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of Hudson County, as well as with the Jersey City chapter of the NAACP to mentor students in the community.

President Acebo closed his remarks by adding that he hopes to be boastful about these initiatives at the next Board of Trustees meeting in June 2024, and aims for a University culture of continuous improvement.

**STUDENT UPDATE**  
**ASHLEY POTTINGER**

Ms. Pottinger introduced herself as a junior at NJCU, with a major in biology. She stated she serves as the Student Representative on the Board of Trustees and that serving in this capacity has been a privilege and a responsibility she approached with dedication. She stated she had the opportunity to represent the student body and advocate for their interests, concerns and needs at the highest level of decision making. She added it has been a humbling experience to be entrusted with such a crucial role and was grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the government and advancement of the institution. One of the highlights of her tenure was the opportunity to engage with fellow trustees, administrators, faculty, staff and community members. Public board meetings provided the platform for constructive dialogue, collaboration and decision making on matters of strategic importance to NJCU. Ms. Pottinger expressed her gratitude to President Acebo for his hard work, dedication and leadership throughout his tenure. She also stated that she was inspired by her fellow board members and the collective efforts to ensure the success and well-being of students. Also, the student leaders on campus have demonstrated exceptional dedication, passion and initiative making a profound impact on the university community from organizing events and initiatives to advocating for student interests and fostering a sense of belonging. Ms. Pottinger finished by stating she was proud of the progress that has been made as an Institution and the positive impact made on the lives of students – and also recognized there are areas for improvement.

**CFO UPDATE**  
**BRIAN FITZPATRICK**

CFO Fitzpatrick began by stating that NJCU has had a good year and has done some amazing things. Items discussed included:

- Decarbonization Grant
- Energy Audit
- Fixing the Chiller
- Tuition increase (between 0 and 3.5%)
- Stabilization Funding
- Absorbing Cost of Books

**See Attachment 1.**

**PROVOST UPDATE**  
**DONNA BREault**

Dr. Breault provided a detailed overview of the University’s academic master plan and shared governance and community engaged development of the key performance indicators and institutional goals. **See Attachment 2.**

**Action Items:**

The Chair called for a motion to pass the following resolutions by unanimous consent:

- Resolution Ratifying Academic Department Merger and Renaming
- Resolution Authorizing Certificate in Behavioral Management
- Resolution Authorizing Conferral of Degrees
- Resolution Ratifying Conferral of Honorary Degree
- Resolution Awarding Professor Emeritus Designations

The motion was made by Mr. Salerno and seconded by Mr. Whittaker. (Yes – Mr. Visconti, Dr. Chang, Dr. Whittaker, Dr. Trowell-Harris, Mr. Fowlkes, Ms. Pottinger, Mr. Hernandez; Mr. Salerno; No – None; Abstention – None; Absent – none). The motion passed.

The Chair called for a motion to pass the last resolutions:

- Resolution Reauthorizing the West Campus Housing LLC Budget (2023)
- Resolution Reauthorizing the West Campus Housing LLC Budget (2024)
- Resolution Authorizing the Red Bull Arena Commencement Contract

The motion was made by Mr. Whittaker and seconded by Mr. Salerno (Yes – Mr. Visconti, Dr. Chang, Dr. Whittaker, Dr. Trowell-Harris, Mr. Fowlkes, Ms. Pottinger, Mr. Hernandez; Mr. Salerno; No – None; Abstention – None; Absent – none). The motion passed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Dr. Joe Moscowitz

Mr. Moscowitz stated there is trust in the administration and applauded having student and faculty representation. He also stated that he hopes for other opportunities to speak with the State Monitor directly.

Also, Mr. Moscowitz read into the record a statement by Dr. Bill Calathes, incoming local union president, stating his concern over a merger and how that will impact students and the University. He also stated that certain real estate transactions have left the institution financially distressed. Nevertheless, solace has been found in the administration and President Acebo's resilience and how they have navigated out of the financial issues. Also, the union has stood steadfast to safeguard the University's faculty and staff, and nevertheless stressed prioritizing jobs.

2. Dr. Gloria Boseman

Ms. Bozman stated that she had not planned on attending the meeting but she is present because she is committed to representing her community.

She also expressed concern over the nursing program. She addressed the new academic plan and stated she is going to read it, but is concerned she only saw two (2) nursing programs addressed therein. She went on to address the significant future need for nurses.

3. Dr. Barbara Hildner

Dr. Hildner welcomed the newest board member and expressed thankfulness over Chair Visconti's leadership.

Dr. Hildner traced the early beginnings of the University in the days of the Depression and how it survived and opened a nursing program. Over time, the population grew, and the school became a valued University. She further stated that NJCU is recovering and will continue to recover, and hopes it remains independent.

She addressed the Union's consultant, that addressed the State Monitor's report, and suggested the consultant's response be explored and addressed.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on June 24, 2024. The Board moved to reconvene on June 24, 2024 in executive session first in accordance with New Jersey law.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:15PM.