



100 Days — of — Listening

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President

Westfield State University





A Humanistic Approach to Leadership

Dear Friends:

It has been my distinct privilege to accept the opportunity to serve as Westfield State University's 21st president.

Part of what drew me to Westfield State was its origin as one of the first institutions to have an inclusive approach; to welcome students regardless of their race, gender, or economic background.

We need more of that in the world. Here, we aim to develop individuals who are civically engaged. I feel that with competence and confidence, we can all make a difference in society. I'd like every graduate to have a humanistic approach to their chosen field, so they will think critically about how communities flourish and contribute to society in a positive way.

I am coining this approach "Horace Mann 2.0"—taking the honorable mission and values upon which Westfield State was created to *both* instill comparable values in the way we educate, inspire, and support our students and prepare them to serve their communities and profession in a highly humanistic and compassionate way.

Over my first 100 days as president, I have welcomed the opportunity to learn from so many individuals, who have been generous offering their time and perspectives to assist me in my formative days of my influential role with the University.

I am enjoying my entry into the presidency and getting acclimated to Western Massachusetts and in touch with the rich history and legacy of Westfield State's leaders and influencers to date.

Warmly,
Linda



Presidential Transition: Building a Bridge to the Future: Restoring Our Health

“Building a Bridge to the Future: Restoring Our Health,” will serve as a guide to engage the campus community to envision a collective path and direction focused on physical, mental, fiscal, structural, and cultural health. Ensuring the physical, mental, and social-emotional health of the students, faculty, and staff, for example, will be imperative as we navigate challenging times in higher education.

Recognizing and respecting the hard work and successes achieved to date by Westfield State, this theme continues alignment with the 2019–2024 Westfield State University Strategic Plan. As we move forward with Fiscal Year 2022, the strategic priorities of the President’s Office are anchored in its four goals—to enhance the student experience, enrollment, culture, and resources—and collaboration with faculty, librarians, staff, and, most importantly, our students.

As a step toward ensuring transparency and open communication during my first year as president, a Presidential Transition Team has been established. Comprised of a cross-sectional group of individuals from the campus community, this team is led by Board of Trustees Chair Robert Martin. Working groups have been established to focus on external constituents, internal constituents, the Spring 2022 Presidential Investiture, and the main campus relocation for the Office of the President.

Advancing these priorities to ensure the success of Westfield State University will require the collaboration of all of us—the Board, faculty, librarians, staff, and our students.

Presidential Priorities

I look forward to collaborating with the Board of Trustees, University leadership, students, faculty, librarians, staff, alumni, and the broader community to advance these important goals and priorities.

I have shared these goals with the Board of Trustees at a September 15 Board meeting, the Student Government Association at its meeting on October 5, and with the campus community through a Town Hall on October 8. I will continue to communicate these priorities and my progress toward them in the months ahead.

GOAL 1

The Student Experience

Access to a fully integrated and exceptional student experience

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- Realign academic and student affairs to increase student retention and success
- Involve the external community in high-impact practices
- Establish living/learning communities to promote thriving student environments

GOAL 2

Enrollment

Prepare to recruit, welcome, and support students in an increasingly competitive environment

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- Define Westfield State's role in strengthening the K–16 urban pipeline to drive innovation in regional, high-demand job markets
- Solidify school structure to clearly define the University's value proposition
- Develop a plan for "Westfield Worldwide"
- Conduct an enrollment audit to identify and incorporate best practices

GOAL 3

Culture

Consistently live our institutional values

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- Complete a "listening tour" that will inform a process for continuous improvement
- Implement a President's Council
- Recruit and hire a Chief Diversity Officer
- Promote a humanistic approach when educating and inspiring future professionals

GOAL 4

Resources

Expand the institutional resources

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- Implement multi-year budget and planning process
- Build a fundraising case
- Focus on grants acquisition and other external funding
- Stabilize and secure resources through optimization, diversification, technology upgrades, and entrepreneurial activities

A Productive and Insightful Listening Tour

Through the first year of my presidency, it will be critical to lay the groundwork in a highly collaborative manner, thoughtfully achieving buy-in through effective communication via appropriate channels while recognizing the fundamental importance of shared decision-making.

Over the last three months, I have met with constituencies internally and externally to gather overall impressions, concerns, and suggestions to elevating Westfield State University to the next level.

I have learned that areas of opportunity abound here in the Pioneer Valley. Many are untapped. Leaders of businesses; municipal, state, and federal government; K-12 school districts, community colleges, hospitals, and various non-profit and grassroots organizations have shared with me their challenges and we've begun to discuss how Westfield State University can serve as part of the solution.

As one of the anchors in the Western Massachusetts economy and a driver of social mobility for thousands of students and alumni across Massachusetts and throughout New England, Westfield State is poised to play an important part in pathways to improve the quality life for residents and employees of this region.

In my meetings with Bay State Health, Western Mass. Economic Development Council, Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce, Urban League of Springfield, the mayors of Springfield and Westfield, area community college presidents—and other sectors—discussions have centered on pathways to develop employees who understand and excel at what those entities do—STEM, marketing, manufacturing, supply chain, data analysis, etc.



Overall Impressions by Constituent Group

STUDENTS

Feedback from a wide variety of students tells us that we need to find ways to keep students on campus. Students' comments and concerns also indicate that University programming and interactions with staff and faculty should help with their self development and aid them in their journey to becoming an adult. And, we need to find more ways to say "yes" to student-inspired ideas and progress.

FACULTY/STAFF

Feedback from employees consistently indicated that our most important asset and advantage—our people—are overworked and overloaded. We need to find ways to transform our work—to work smarter rather than harder. I look forward to identifying ways in which we can support research and promote meaningful career development and opportunity. We need to build our "bench" and be mindful of succession planning.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The public and individuals with an affiliation to Westfield State want more access to our facilities. We need to work to ensure that our campus and services are part of the fabric of our community. We will work to provide better access to our indoor and outdoor tracks; more heavily promote our cultural events; and make it easier and more appealing to grab a meal in our Dining Commons. Thankfully, there is a strong interest in strengthening town-gown relations.

Meetings by the Numbers

President Thompson has met with a wide variety of internal and external constituents—including the campus community, alumni, union leadership, City of Westfield residents and other individuals and groups listed below—to garner a better understanding of perceptions, opportunities, and potential collaborations to help Westfield State University advance its mission.



18
business
leaders



8
higher
education
leaders



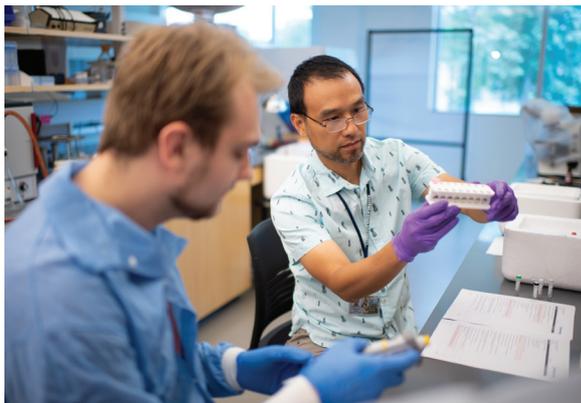
9
elected and
government
officials



11
community
leaders



11
student
leaders/groups



Ensuring Students Thrive

Achieving the next phase of growth at Westfield State University will require community engagement and developing close relationships with external constituents. During my first three months as president, many members of the campus community have reaffirmed the institution's mission and commitment to "offering accessible quality undergraduate and graduate programs..." and a "focus on student engagement and success." Westfield State is primed to develop a systematic path to achieving its vision "to be the premier public comprehensive institution in the Northeast region through its commitment to student engagement and success." Over this coming year, the goal is to lay the appropriate foundation and make significant advances to achieving this vision by focusing on innovative education, collaborative partnerships, and translational research.



Westfield State University's Mission

Westfield State University is a public institution offering accessible quality undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and professional studies. Our welcoming community focuses on student engagement and success. We contribute to the economic, social, and cultural growth of the northeast region by developing the knowledge, skills, and character essential for students to become responsible leaders and engaged citizens.

Presidential Initiatives



1,000 Individuals to Donate \$1,000

President Thompson aims to inspire 1,000 individuals to donate \$1,000 to support student scholarships. This sizable gift can be a significant game changer for many Westfield State students. More than 25 percent of our students are first-generation college students and the majority of our students have jobs and are working to support their attainment of a bachelor's and/or master's degree.



Industry Advisory Groups

As President Thompson works to create and build productive, mutually beneficial relationships with local, regional, and statewide business leaders in the high-demand job markets of health care and manufacturing, among others, she aims to establish advisory groups to help inform University offerings and pave career pathways.



Hispanic Serving Institution Initiative

Westfield State University is working to become a Hispanic-Serving Institution—an initiative that will have a significant impact on the University and its surrounding communities. This federal designation will influence the University's operations—especially recruitment and enrollment, fundraising, and will help to develop stronger relationships with organizations, school districts, and families in Springfield and Holyoke. As part of the process of becoming an HSI, Westfield State will examine its culture, policies, and practices as well as its commitment to serving all its students.



Streamlined Pathways

Building on the success experienced with the University's signature early college program, The Westfield Promise, President Thompson is identifying additional ways to provide early access to the degrees that Westfield State offers. She has also met with the leaders of our local community college partners to continually improve the student-friendly pathways between our institutions—simplifying and streamlining the transfer process and working harder to meet students where they are.





save the date for

The Presidential Investiture
of Dr. Linda Thompson

April 29, 2022



Westfield State University

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