

# YSU Board of Trustees Summary, Dec. 8 and 9, 2022

DECEMBER 9, 2022

---

*The YSU Board of Trustees took action on the construction of a new student center and heard a positive report from its external auditors during meetings Thursday and Friday, Dec. 8 and 9, on campus. It was Jim Tressel's final board meetings as president. Tressel is leaving the position on Jan. 31. The board approved a contract for his interim replacement, Helen K. Lafferty. For the full resolutions, and other background materials, visit the [Board of Trustees website](https://ysu.edu/board-of-trustees/board-committee-agendas). (<https://ysu.edu/board-of-trustees/board-committee-agendas>) Here's a summary.*



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Tressel, noting that this is his last board meeting before his departure on Jan. 31, reflected on first coming to YSU 37 years ago, spending 15 “wonderful years” in the Athletics department, and having the blessing to return in 2014 to further serve the university as president. He said he has a long list of thanks, including board members, administrators, faculty, staff, deans, provosts, department chairs and students. He reflected on the many accomplishments over the past nine years, including accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission; the largest graduating classes in the university's history; increasing the graduation rate from the mid-30s to

nearly 50 percent; raising the student retention rate from the mid-60s to nearly 80 percent; increasing enrollment in the Sokolov Honors College from about 300 to about 1,200; improvements in academic efficiencies and IT; increased online courses; creation of the Office of the Dean of Students; growing international programs; the physical transformation of the campus; new housing options; installation of several classrooms of the future; increasing number of student-athletes from about 350 to 500; successful student academic competition teams like moot court, Ethics, Bowl, concrete canoe and steel bridge; fundraising totaling about \$150 million in eight years; increasing the value of the YSU Foundation endowment from \$224 million to its highest mark of \$350 million; millions of dollars in additional student scholarship support; lowering student debt; creation of 23 alumni groups across the nation; participation of more than 1,000 alumni and others in Pete's Pride; dozens of community, regional partnerships with business and industry; and an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. "I can't thank this team enough because they've worked, they've rolled their sleeves up and they wanted to make a difference for our students," he said.

## **INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS COMMITTEE**

### **Reports**

Ron Strollo, executive director of Intercollegiate Athletics, reported on several personnel actions, including eight separations, seven appointments, four salary adjustments, one promotion and two reclassifications/position adjustments.

Tory Lindley, deputy Athletics director for Performance Excellence, and Nicole Kent-Strollo, dean of Students and Ombudsperson, reported on strategies to help assure student health and wellness. Performance Excellence includes six areas: Academic Success, Performance Psychology, Sports Medicine, Sports Performance, Performance Nutrition and Performance Science.

Lindley also reported on Independent Medical Care + Healthcare Accreditation, risk management strategies, student

athlete centered care and wellness, and student athlete performance enhancement and support.

Ross Miltner, associate general counsel, updated the committee on NCAA campus sexual violence policy compliance.

## **INVESTMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Reports**

John Colla from Clearstead reviewed the university's quarterly portfolio asset allocation and investment performance. Colla recommended no changes to the university's investment pools at this time.

Colla also responded to a request from the committee made at its last meeting in September to explore allowing more discretion in investment actions, in turn allowing the university to react to market changes more quickly. Colla said the so-called "outsourced chief investment officer" model has gained momentum in the past five to seven years as organizations have been more receptive to giving some level of investment decision-making to its investment partners. "It can be more nimble and flexible," he said. He reviewed the pros and cons of such an approach. Colla said he will follow up with more information at future meetings. "We will continue to explore," said Neal McNally, vice president of Finance and Business Operations.

## **AUDIT SUBCOMMITTEE**

### **Actions**

Approved a Resolution to Approve the FY2023 Internal Audit Plan. Michelle DiLullo, staff auditor, said there are four projects in the plan: Banner user access; student billing, collections and accounts receivable; external funding related to the Division of Workforce Education and Innovation; and facilities and building access.

### **Reports**

Keith Martinez and Sadie Mayle of Plante & Moran, the university's external auditors, reported a clean opinion for the

audit of the university's FY 2022 financial statements, which Martinez said is the highest level of assurance that the auditors can provide. There were no identified material weaknesses, significant deficiencies or non-compliances. He also said they audited two major federal programs, the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Martinez noted that several institutions are facing auditing challenges regarding the use of HEERF funds. "We did not have that issue" in YSU's audit, he said.

McNally presented YSU's Audited Financial Report for fiscal years 2022 and 2021. He reiterated that the report resulted in a clean audit.

McNally also reported on Senate Bill 6 ratios, one measure the state of Ohio uses to evaluate the financial health of public universities. The ratios, which include measures of net income, viability and primary reserve, run on a scale where 5.0 is the highest score possible. YSU's composite score in fiscal year 2022 was 3.4, tied for fifth best among the state's 14 public schools. YSU's ratio was the same as Ohio University, Bowling Green and Toledo. McNally said the ratios, combined with the Financial Report, show that YSU is financially sound and managed responsibly. At the same time, they show that YSU is not flush with cash, is not without financial challenges and needs to remain fiscally cautious, especially given continued enrollment declines.

Michelle DiLullo, staff auditor, updated the board on the Anonymous Reporting Hotline and the internal audit matrix.

Julie Gentile, director of Environmental Occupational Health and Safety, provided an update on enterprise risk management.

## **FINANCE AND FACILITIES COMMITTEE**

### **Actions**

Approved a Resolution to Approve a new Supplier Diversity Policy, designed to ensure opportunities for socially and economically disadvantaged business enterprises and to ultimately improve the university's performance as measured by spending reported through YSU's participation in the state of

## Ohio's diversity programs.

Approved a Resolution to Approve the State Required 2022 Affordability and Efficiency Report. McNally said the report is filed annually with the Ohio Department of Higher Education to identify examples of affordability and efficiency in various categories. The 16-page YSU report includes several examples, including increased collaboration with other universities in Northeast Ohio, increased efficiency in academic program offerings, the Excellence Training Center and initiatives that have saved students more than \$750,000 in textbook costs.

Approved a Resolution to Approve Interfund Transfers, namely the transfer of \$1.34 million from debt service reserve funds (unrestricted plant funds) to bond funds (restricted debt service funds) to fund a portion of the \$3.3 million FY2023 bond debt service obligation. McNally called the action a "bookkeeping exercise," but also a "sober reminder" of the cost of borrowing money.

Approved a Resolution to Approve a Plan to Renovate the Student Center. The committee approval came after a discussion led by McNally and Joy Polkabila Byers, associate vice president for Student Experience. The board previously heard plans for an approximately \$40 million overhaul of Kilcawley Center. McNally said the university's existing debt obligations, totaling \$79.3 million through 2038, are going to get increasingly difficult to handle, without adding to it. He provided three financing scenarios for the student center project that include a combination of private gifts and bond issues. McNally said he was not comfortable recommending any of the scenarios. Polkabila Byers, however, said something needs done to address the student center, noting \$20 million in deferred maintenance alone in the current facility. "We have put a lot of Band-Aids on that building," she said. Trustees Mike Peterson and Joe Kerola said a student center is important for student recruitment. "We have to take some chances here" and "find a way," Kerola said. McNally, President Jim Tressel, John Hyden, associate vice president for Facilities, and trustees discussed various funding options, including gifts, debt and

state capital dollars. Trustee Chuck George moved and Trustee Kerola seconded a motion for the university to move forward with a \$40 million student center project that would include at least \$15 million in private gifts.

## **Reports**

McNally updated the board on the university's FY2023 operating budget, indicating that most revenue and expense categories are on or above target through the first quarter of the fiscal year.

He also reported that S&P Global Ratings have affirmed its "A+" long-term rating and underlying rating on YSU's existing debt obligations (series 2016 and 2021 general receipt bonds). S&P also listed the university's outlook as "negative," which it said "reflects our view of the university's continued enrollment challenges, which, if unabated, will likely make stabilizing operations difficult." S&P also said, "We view the numerous expense-reduction measures implemented by management favorably and believe that these measures, coupled with stabilized enrollment, could lead to improved operations over the next few years."

Hyden and Rich White, director of Planning and Construction, updated the board on several capital projects, including elevator safety repairs and replacements, utility distribution upgrades and expansion, renovations to Moser and Fok Halls, completion of the Watson Team Center, emergency generator upgrades, campus roof replacements, and renovations to STEM science labs.

Hyden and White also updated the board on deferred maintenance projects for each university building.

President Tressel said the university is considering a full campus safety summit possibly sometime in January, to provide training and awareness of emergency response and risk.

## **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

### **Actions**

Approved on second reading a change to the Board of Trustees

bylaws to create a new Workforce Education and Innovation Committee of the board.

Approved a Resolution to Modify and Retitle Development and Authorization of Administrative Procedures Policy.

### **Reports**

Mike Sherman, vice president for Institutional Effectiveness and Board Professional, reported on Future State Conversations and the Plan for Strategic Actions to Take Charge of Our Future. He presented a series of charts on YSU's enrollment trends compared to other public universities in the state. He also shared data showing that YSU's out-of-pocket student costs are \$26,413 lower than at other northern Ohio universities, while grant and scholarship support is \$6,900 higher. Sherman also said that the university will present to the board in September 2023 a revised strategic plan that focuses on a sustainability framework, academic master plan, student experience and success, marketing and communication, and workforce education and innovation linked to community engagement.

Chair John Jakubek discussed with the board about identifying a national/global trustee to fill the spot left by Helen Lafferty, a national/global trustee who will be leaving her position to assume the interim presidency of the university.

## **INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Reports**

Paul McFadden, president of the YSU Foundation, said the falling stock market caught up with the Foundation's fundraising in the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2023, with \$3.19 million in new gifts and pledges, down from \$5.19 million in fiscal year 2022. He also indicated, however, that the trend appears to be turning up, specifically mentioning a couple significant possible gifts for a proposed new student center on campus.

Jennifer Oddo, executive director of Strategic Workforce Education and Innovation, updated the committee on various activities in the division, including a \$1.25 million Appalachia

Regional Commission Power Grant to support 5G/Broadband training. Oddo also updated the committee on the work of six training centers in the WEI: Excellence Training Center at Kohli Hall, National EV Training and Innovation Center, IT Workforce Accelerator, The Data Mine, Williamson Innovation Park and the Tressel Institute of Leadership and Teamwork.

Amy Cossentino, associate provost and dean of the Sokolov Honors College, updated the committee on the PenguinPulse community engagement initiative with the goal for YSU to be recognized as a community-engaged campus by the Carnegie Foundation.

## UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### Actions

Approved a Resolution to Modify Leave of Absence Without Pay, Extended Childcare, Excluded Professional/Administrative Staff Policy.

Approved a Resolution to Modify Leave Without Pay for Extended Serious Health Condition Policy. The policy is for excluded professional administrative staff who have exhausted all accrued paid sick and vacation leave and unpaid leave. The policy is modified to allow for up to six months of leave from the previous one year, to emphasize the need for supervisory input and to require the final approval of the chief human resources officer.

Approved a Resolution to Approve the Appointment of Mike Sherman as vice president of Student Affairs, Institutional Effectiveness and Board Professional. He will now additionally oversee the Office of Student Enrollment and Business Services and the Office of Student Experience, while current oversight includes University Relations, International Programs, Institutional Research and Analytics and liaison to the Governmental Relations Committee of the InterUniversity Council. Meanwhile, the Office of the Dean of Students will now report through the Office of Academic Affairs.

Approved a Resolution to Approve the Appointment of Jennifer



Oddo as vice president for the Division of Workforce Education and Innovation. Oddo has been leading workforce education initiatives at the university since October 2020 under the title of executive director.

Approved a Resolution to Ratify Personnel Appointments, including the following faculty actions: nine separations, 16 appointments, three position adjustments, 10 tenure with promotion, 16 promotions only and two transfers.

### **Reports**

Cindy Kravitz, associate vice president and chief human resources officer, provided an overview of the university's medical and prescription insurance costs.

Kent-Strollo presented a Support Area Assessment on the Office of Dean of Students and Ombudsperson, and Claire Berardini, associate provost, presented a Support Area Assessment on the Division of Student Success.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **Actions**

Approved a Resolution to Ratify and Approve the Letter of Appointment for Interim President Helen Lafferty. Lafferty will take the position Feb. 1 when President Tressel leaves. The appointment will continue until a permanent successor is selected and installed, or until terminated by either Lafferty or the university. She will reside in the Pollock House.

## **MEMORIALS**

President Tressel recognized the following passings:

- Desiree N. Bramer, student studying towards a master's degree in Business.
- James R. Smith, graduate and Liberty police officer who influenced the law related to the retirement of a police K9.
- Jo Anne Haas, mother of YSU employee Bill Haas.

- Jillian M. Marian, graduate.
- Warren P. “Bud” Williamson, retired chair of WKBN Broadcasting Corp. and major donor to YSU.
- Samuel F. Barger, retired faculty.
- Bradley Boerio, student due to graduate in December.
- Bruce Palmer, former university photographer.
- Donald Smaltz, graduate and father of YSU employee Cindy Shields.
- Kevin Sobnosky, student in the YSU Sokolov Honors College.
- Gloria Tribble, former faculty, first African American woman, chair and professor of Education at YSU.
- Thomas Odle, father of YSU employee Laura Calcagni.

## NEW BUSINESS

Approved a Resolution Recognizing Significant and Distinctive Contributions - President James P. and First Lady Ellen J. Tressel

## BOARD CHAIR’S REMARKS

Chair Jakubek, noting that the board had an excellent series of committee meetings on Thursday, emphasized the importance of upcoming YSU Future State conversations associated with updating the plan for Strategic Actions to Take Charge of Our Future. He also reported on the excellent result of the audit of fiscal year 2022. But he noted that FY 2022 was an anomalous year, given the influx of federal funding to the university. “We must turn the corner in strategic ways with YSU as an institution of choice to optimize enrollment to support the long-term sustainability and vitality of YSU that is so essential to regional prosperity,” he said. YSU is proud, he added, of its position as an access institution with an increasingly unique educational experience that is amongst the best values in the state and region.

As for the Resolution of Appreciation for the Tressels, Chair Jakubek said he was honored to be on the board when Tressel was named president in 2014, and that he has been doubly

honored to serve alongside him over the past nearly nine years. Jakubek said all of the accolades in the Resolution, and all of the accomplishments Tressel mentioned in his comments earlier in the meeting, were because of Tressel's initiative and leadership. While many boards spend a lot of time directing the chief executive, "we didn't have to do much directing of President Tressel." Jakubek recalled that, in his interview for the position, Tressel said work is "more fun than fun," and that showed in his work as president. Tressel's passion, Jakubek said, is for YSU, the community, the Mahoning Valley and the state of Ohio. He also recognized Ellen Tressel for her support of the university and the community. "I can't find words to express my gratitude, other than to say, thank you," he added.

Trustee Peterson said Tressel "is a servant to this community and has been from the first day he set foot on this campus." Trustee Hackstedde called Tressel a "selfless visionary."

## UPCOMING REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE BOARD

Thursday, March 2, 2023 - 10 am

Thursday, June 22, 2023 - 10 am

Wednesday, September 22, 2023 - 10 am

## ADJOURNMENT