

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

**NO.:** BHE 26-49

**BOARD DATE:** April 7, 2026

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**APPROVAL OF WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN**

**MOVED:** The Board of Higher Education (Board) hereby approves the **Westfield State University Strategic Plan 2026-2030**, subject to the institution ensuring that all strategies within the plan will be implemented consistent with relevant state and federal laws as well as guidance issued by the Massachusetts Attorney General; and provided further that the institution is authorized to make revisions to the document as needed from time to time to maintain compliance. The Board further authorizes the Commissioner to forward the strategic plan to the Secretary of Education for final approval pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 9(l) and 22(l).

**VOTED:** Motion adopted by the BHE on 4/7/2026.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Sections 7, 9(f), 9(l) and 22(l); BHE By-Laws, Article I, Section 3 and Article III.

Contact: Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

## **Background**

A fundamental responsibility of the Board of Higher Education (BHE) is to provide overall direction to the state's system of public higher education. The BHE enacts this responsibility by establishing statewide goals and by regularly measuring and reporting progress toward these goals. Articulating statewide goals has no impact in the public higher education system unless these goals and performance metrics are embraced by the individual colleges and universities and incorporated into their strategic plans. Massachusetts state law therefore charges the BHE and the Secretary of Education with reviewing and approving campus strategic plans. M.G.L. c. 15A, §§9(f), 9(l) and 22(l).

### **Westfield State University Planning Process**

*Touch Point I:* On May 30, 2024, DHE staff met with members of the Strategic Planning Committee to review the strategic planning process and to review initial progress made in anticipation for the first Touch Point. Co-Chairs Hearn and Klein led the discussion, which included a review of goals and actions that would frame the rest of the strategic planning process. DHE staff were presented with a timeline and an outline detailing the groundwork that had been accomplished, which included a visioning session with Westfield's Board of Trustees, multiple internal and external stakeholder interviews, visioning sessions, and nine campus surveys. A 3-day goal setting retreat with the Strategic Planning Committee had already occurred in February 2024 and the plan was for the group to meet bi-weekly and continue to gather feedback through town halls and stakeholder meetings. DHE staff answered questions concerning the strategic planning process from the DHE's and BHE's perspective, clarifying expectations and roles of the Department and the Board of Higher Education. Multiple feedback sessions and town halls were held throughout academic year 2024-2025 to ensure that the strategic planning process was inclusive and transparent.

*Touch Point II:* An initial draft was submitted to DHE staff by Chief of Staff Freeman on August 15, 2025. After modifications by campus constituents, a subsequent and more formative draft was submitted to DHE staff on October 7, 2025. DHE staff met with Chief of Staff Freeman and noted the tactical nature of the plan and how well the specific goals and objectives were tied to clear and measurable outcomes. DHE staff also noted the intentional nature of aligning Westfield's strategic priorities with statewide system initiatives, highlighted by its own separate section in the plan. Finally, DHE staff noted how inclusive the strategic planning process was throughout the timeline and how inclusiveness is a cornerstone of the

touchpoint strategic planning process and was truly embraced by Westfield. Minor editorial modifications were suggested by DHE staff and were incorporated into the final plan.

*Touch Point III:* The draft plan was approved by Westfield State University's Board of Trustees on October 1, 2025. Westfield submitted the final plan to DHE staff on January 19, 2026. The plan was distributed to the members of the Board of Higher Education prior to the April meeting.

### **STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION**

Staff thoroughly reviewed all documentation submitted by Westfield State University at Touch Point II and Touch Point III. Staff recommendation is for BHE approval of the proposed **Westfield State University Strategic Plan 2026-2030**.