

Otterbein University

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Board of Trustees

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4-2021

### April 2021 Board of Trustees Meeting Report

Board of Trustees

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Otterbein University  
Board of Trustees Meeting Report  
April 30, 2021

**Chair's Report**

Board Chair Mark Thresher welcomed the Board of Trustees and Emeriti Trustees to the annual spring meeting on Friday, April 30. Chair Thresher indicated he was looking forward to seeing the students at the commencement ceremonies. Chair Thresher expressed his thanks to the faculty, staff and students for a great job this year in a difficult environment noting Otterbein has come out of the year in a strong position.

**President's Report**

President Comerford shared the FY22 budget will be provided for Board approval in late summer or early fall. President Comerford made a motion to accept the graduating Class of 2021 which was unanimously approved by the Board of Trustees, noting a total of 698 undergraduate and graduate degrees will be awarded. President Comerford recognized the Class of 2020 noting a total of 653 undergraduate and graduate degrees with 210 graduates attending Saturday's commencement ceremony. President Comerford shared the names of the five commencement speakers.

President Comerford identified the many successes from this past year which included the strategic planning process, recovering from the cyberattack, a new innovative partnership with Columbus State Community College, designing the *Every Student Will* program, *For the Love of Otterbein* engagement and fundraising initiative, a proactive academic program review, and launching Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) and Advantage Partnership Programs. President Comerford expressed his appreciation to the trustees, faculty, staff and students.

**Board Committee Reports**

**Audit and Risk Management Committee**

Trustee and Committee Chair Kaiser shared the Audit and Risk Management Committee met on April 22. They were joined by Officer Rick Tiburzio, from the Otterbein Police Department, who reviewed the mission of the department. The committee reviewed the University's 990 tax return, received an update from the Protect the Nest Committee, and a summary of the cyber attack after-action review conducted by Trustee Francis with the Cabinet.

**Enrollment and Advancement Committee**

Trustee and Committee Chair Fisher shared continued support for the work done by the Enrollment and Advancement Divisions. Vice President Blackburn-Smith provided an update on the FY22 enrollment with 513 confirmed students as of April 30, 2021. Counselors and athletic coaches are continuing to communicate with prospective students to confirm enrollment. Vice President McGreevey expressed appreciation for 20 faculty who have been partners with the Advancement staff through virtual alumni engagement and the *For the Love of Otterbein* fundraising initiative. He also noted the positive momentum we are experiencing in all areas of engagement and fundraising this year. A video of alumni congratulations to the Class of 2021 was presented.

**Financial Resources Committee**

Trustee and Committee Chair Bible reviewed the investment performance as of March 31, 2021. The investment has gained \$10 million and is out performing the benchmark. A slide deck was presented of

pandemic-related grant funding received, FY 2021 projections reflecting a deficit, and FY 2022 enrollment with tuition, room & board scenarios.

### **Student Success Committee**

Trustee and Committee Chair Herbert noted the complete Student Success Committee materials were in the board packet. The committee agenda topics included the 2020 graduate report, marketing status survey, *Every Student Will* preview, and the ongoing academic program review process. Trustee Herbert stated her support with the progress being made in the program review and with the future review timeline.

### **Governance Committee**

Trustee and Committee Chair Harrell shared the Governance Committee met several times in March and April to hold interviews for faculty, student and alumni trustees and conduct several items of business. The committee reviewed the Code of Regulations (COR) and offered adjustments to reflect changes to the period noted for the annual meeting and changes to the executive officers of the Board, specifically making the change from two vice-chairs to one and provisions for terms of three years with the possible addition of one year for the Chair and Vice Chair.

Trustee Harrell indicated the committee discussed the annual meeting structure and calendar. He noted the addition of a virtual meeting in the late fall with the possibility of additional shorter virtual meetings as needed. The committee is reviewing the possibility of aligning a fall and spring in-person meeting each year with University events e.g., Homecoming/Family Weekend and Commencement and adjusting the meeting schedule for the majority of Board business to be conducted on Friday.

### **Constituency Reports**

#### **Alumni Trustee Report**

Trustee Gifford shared the Alumni Council is reviewing the council structure to include ex-officio network representatives. Icilda Dickerson '88 will complete her term as council chair and Sonya Higginbotham '98 will serve as the new council chair starting July 1. In the fall, the Council will review a new affinity network which will be forwarded for Board approval. The alumni office has undertaken an alumni oral history project for the 175<sup>th</sup> celebration and has already received 300 alumni stories which will be available in a book and audio version in April 2022. Virtual engagement has connected alumni through 845 minutes of programming, 2,200 attendees to virtual events, and 220 volunteers presenting virtual programs. Great success has been seen during the lunch time program offerings.

#### **Faculty Trustee Report**

Trustee Rocks recognized outstanding scholarship of faculty through the year, the course work being done in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion, and the intense work to enhance the program review process. Trustee Esson shared some faculty concerns related to two faculty terminations and the Governance Committee of the Board's selection process of the faculty trustee. There is a faculty working group to review faculty tenure against best practices provided by American Association for University Professors. The faculty are reviewing the *Faculty Manual* to examine and align the Board faculty trustee selection process.

#### **Student Trustee Report**

Trustee Marshall and Trustee McCutcheon shared the names of new officers of the Otterbein University Student Government and welcomed the new student trustee, Hannah Spurgeon '23. Trustee Marshall

indicated the year was tough going straight through with no breaks and the students are looking forward to return to a normal academic schedule. Trustees Marshall and McCutcheon expressed pride in their fellow cardinals. Chair Thresher thanked Trustee Marshall for her service on the Board and congratulated her as a member of the graduating Class of 2021.

### **Board Presentations**

The *Every Student Will* program was showcased by Vice President Blackburn-Smith, Provost and Senior VP Sherman Heckler, Assistant Dean for Student Success Jennifer Bechtold, and Senior Director of Brand and Content Strategy Gina Calcamuggio.

Vice President Stewart and Provost Sherman Heckler shared ways Otterbein serves students to minimize and overcome barriers to enhance student success. Vice President McGreevey added the current and possible funding opportunities to support students, programs and initiatives. Chair Thresher asked to keep mental health issues and emergency funding needs in front of the Board.

The Class of 2021 Senior Panel was moderated by Dean of Students Julie Saker. The panelists were Angel Banks, Chase Collins, Tate Eppard, Gabrielle McGeorge and Harold Walston. Chair Thresher, followed by other members of the Board, expressed gratitude to the student panelists and wished the students success.

### **Board Action**

The following actions were taken by the Board of Trustees:

- **Resolution to Accept the Graduating Class of 2021**  
The Board of Trustees approved a motion to accept the graduating class of 2021 as presented by President Comerford. It was noted that a total of 698 degrees would be awarded including 561 bachelor's, 132 master's, and 5 doctorate degrees.
- **Resolution to Renew Trustee Terms**  
The Board of Trustees approved a motion to renew trustee terms as follows:
  - **David Fisher** (3<sup>rd</sup> four-year term)
  - **James Francis** (2<sup>nd</sup> four-year term)
  - **Theresa Harris** (2<sup>nd</sup> four-year term)
  - **Dr. Melinda Phinney** (2<sup>nd</sup> four-year term)
- **Resolution to Appoint at-large trustees for 3-year terms**  
The Board of Trustees approved a motion to appoint at-large trustee terms as follows:
  - **Dr. Talisa Dixon** (Columbus City Schools)
  - **Gregory Jordan** (Nationwide)
  - **April Jones Casperson '03** (United Methodist Church)
  - **Dan Gifford '88** (current Alumni Council trustee, completing term)
- **Resolution to Appoint Constituent Trustees**  
The Board of Trustees approved a motion to appoint constituent trustee terms as follows:
  - **Hannah Sturgeon '23**, (student trustee for 2-year term)
  - **Dr. John Tansey**, (faculty trustee for 3-year term)
  - **Kathryn Stephens '97**, (alumni council trustee for 3-year term)

- **Resolution to Appoint Board officers for 2021-22**

The Board of Trustees approved a motion to appoint the Board officers for 2021-22 as follows:

- Cheryl Herbert, Chair
- Eddie Harrell, Vice Chair
- Alan Waterhouse, Secretary
- Theresa Harris, Assistant Secretary

### **Board Special Recognition**

- The Board of Trustees concluded the meeting by recognizing retiring board members: Rev. Larry Brown '80, Jocelyn Curry '78 MBA '09, Dr. Joan Esson, and Meredith Marshall '21.
- The Board of Trustees approved a proclamation honoring the service of Chair Mark R. Thresher to Otterbein University:

*Whereas, Mark R. Thresher has served Otterbein University's students as a member of the Board of Trustees since 2000, sitting on the executive, advancement, and investment committees and chairing the audit committee before becoming board chair in 2013; and*

*Whereas, his life and work embody the value of independent higher education through advocacy, fundraising, engagement, and service to his alma mater, Otterbein University, and to the Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges; and*

*Whereas, his and his wife Deb's experience as a student, alumnus, and parent in the Otterbein community provided unique insight into the components of a successful comprehensive fundraising campaign, resulting in the Where We Stand Matters campaign finishing ahead of schedule and exceeding its \$50 million goal by raising \$52,774,1.80; and*

*Whereas, his role as a leader in the central Ohio business community helped facilitate the development of The Point, a first-of-its-kind innovation center built on business, government, and educational partnerships, which transformed the University's ability to recruit and retain students, establish a robust Engineering Department and curriculum, and provide on-campus experiential learning opportunities; and*

*Whereas, Thresher has been a champion of intentional expansion and improvement of University facilities, serving on the steering committee for the Clements Recreation and Fitness Center, and supporting building and renovation projects for The Point, the Art and Communications Building, Shear-McFadden Science Center, Knowlton Center for Equine Science, Memorial Stadium, track and turf, and two student residence halls; and*

*Whereas, Thresher has been key to aligning Otterbein's academic offerings with evolving market demands through the introduction of new programs, including the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), Zoo and Conservation Science, and Engineering; and*

*Whereas, as a member of the Board of Trustees, he leveraged his extensive financial expertise to navigate the University through the recession of 2008 and the pandemic of 2020; and*

*Whereas, he led two presidential searches, resulting in the hiring of Otterbein’s first woman president, Kathy A. Krendl, and current president, John Comerford; and*

*Whereas he has been described by President Emeritus C. Brent DeVore as “a strong leader who puts his ego in his pocket and provides guidance on the side of helping all to achieve the ultimate goal of student success” and by President Emerita Kathy A. Krendl as “a champion for new ideas and possibilities;” and*

*Whereas, his leadership, philanthropic support, and commitment to Otterbein has cemented a legacy that will continue to impact future generations of students.*

***NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED*** that in recognition of his leadership in advancing excellence and opportunity at Otterbein, the Otterbein University Board of Trustees recognizes Mark R. Thresher for his outstanding service and contributions to Otterbein University and the Board of Trustees.

**Future Board of Trustees Meeting Dates**

August 6, 2021

October 8, 2021

December 3, 2021

February 4, 2022

April 29, 2022 (Commencement Weekend)

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