

# BENNINGTON COLLEGE

Dear Bennington Community,

Greetings! We have had an amazing week and weekend, with several important and momentous events for the College. As many of you know, we have just concluded our September board meeting, reunion weekend, and our NECHE focused visit concluded yesterday. With this in mind, we would like to highlight key updates from each.

## **Mission Statement**

First, we are delighted to share with you that on Friday, September 16, 2022, the Board of Trustees voted to approve the new mission statement, concluding an eight-month process which began with the formation of the [Strategic Planning Steering Committee](#) in February. We would like to thank all members of the strategic planning steering committee who designed and led our spring community engagement plan, as well as our two mission writers, Dean of the College Brian Michael Murphy, and Director of the Bennington Writing Seminars Mark Wunderlich, as well as the 350+ members of the community that gave input in the process. Our new mission statement is as follows:

**“Bennington liberates and nurtures the individuality and rigorous creativity of its students, supporting them as they forge their own paths and work toward a world more beautiful, sustainable, democratic, and just.”**

This statement begins with words from Bennington’s commencement statement “liberates and nurtures the individuality.” Our new mission will fuel what we do, and give clarity and inspiration to the decisions we make. We congratulate all on this historic moment for the College!

## **Shared Governance**

In a historic first for Bennington College, the Board welcomed non-voting constituent representatives from the faculty, staff, and students to the September Board meeting on Friday and Saturday. Faculty member, Sue Rees; Director of Operations, Angel Kwasniak; and interim student representative, Muhammad Ammar participated in the weekend’s meetings.

## **Reunion Update**

Reunion weekend was filled with stories from the past and excitement for the future. All told, over 300 alumni came back to campus including our very special most long-standing alumna, Rita Fredricks from the class of 1945! Laura Walker presented the 2022 Hudas Liff '47 Volunteer Award which recognizes extraordinary contributions from an alumna to Nick Stephens, the chair of our Board, and announced that we exceeded the \$325k Decades Challenge goal. We would also like to thank the entire Institutional Advancement team for their extraordinary efforts in organizing this successful weekend!

## **NECHE Visit**

The NECHE accreditation team was on campus from Sunday, September 18 through Tuesday, September 20, for a focused visit. Discussions followed in relation to their five areas of focus, including financial stability, adoption of a mission statement, shared governance, student learning assessment, and the transition to a permanent president. Though we will not receive their draft written report for a few weeks, they did share a preliminary team readout on Tuesday, which indicated completion in several categories, progress made on all, yet concerns remain relative to needed continued improvements to achieve financial stability. We would like to thank all of those involved in planning and participating in the visit, but especially [Zeke Bernstein, Dean of Research, Planning, and Assessment](#). Once the final report has been issued, we will relay a more extensive update to the community.

## **Board Meeting Updates**

In addition to the mission and shared governance announcements, We would like to share other board updates and takeaways from the meeting.

## **Faculty Appointments**

The Board formally approved all of the below Faculty Appointments submitted by President Walker:

*Faculty Appointments - effective July 1, 2022 unless otherwise noted*

### **Three-Year Faculty Appointments**

- [Terry Boddie](#), to teach photography
- [Anina Major](#), to teach ceramics

- [Farhad Mirza](#), to teach design and studio practice

## Reappointments

- [Amie McClellan](#) for a 10-year appointment teaching cell biology
- [Allen Shawn](#) for a 10-year half-time appointment teaching music
- [Paul Voice](#) for a 10-year appointment teaching philosophy

## Visiting Faculty Appointments

### Fall 2022

**CAPA:** *Kenneth Bailey*, to teach one 2-credit course; *Casey Bohlen*, to teach one 2-credit course; *Joe Donahue*, to teach one 2-credit course; *Alexis Elton*, to teach four 4-credit courses in food studies

**SCT:** *Leah Pappas*, to teach four 4-credit courses in linguistics for the year

**Dance:** *Maura Gahan*, to teach one 2-credit course

**Music:** *Sergei Tcherepnin*, to teach one 4-credit and one 2-credit courses

**Visual Arts:** *Chelsea Knight*, to teach two 4-credit and one 2-credit course in video

### Spring 2023

**Dance:** *Nicole Daunic*, to teach one 4-credit course

**Drama:** *Frances Cowhig*, to teach three 4-credit courses each spring term through 6/30/2025

**Literature:** *Rachel Lyon*, to teach two 4-credit courses

In addition, the Board formally approved Emeritus recognition for three distinguished faculty members:

- [Thomas Bogdan](#)
- [Kitty Brazelton](#)
- [Marguerite Feitlowitz](#)

## President's Report

President Laura Walker delivered her President's Report, including a celebration of the 90th anniversary of Bennington's founding and of our amazing first-year class and students and reflections on the new year. She welcomed our new VP, Communications and Marketing [Jeffrey Perkins](#), and

Associate Dean of Career Development & Field Work Term [Lisa Noble](#) who discussed their enthusiasm for the Bennington community and some of their priorities. Interim VP, Advancement Lynne Gugenheim previewed reunion weekend, followed by an admissions update by VP, Enrollment [Tony Cabasco](#).

### **Adaptive Framework Plan**

With special funding from a donor, the College has engaged WXY, an award-winning multi-disciplinary practice specializing in the realization of urban design, planning and architectural solutions in challenging contexts to develop a community-driven Campus Planning Adaptive Framework Plan a set of tools to help guide decision-making about use of space in the future. In contrast to a conventional and fixed “master plan,” this planning project focuses on creating a framework that enables a responsive approach to enhancing campus space use, adaptability, accessibility, and sustainability over time. Principal Claire Weisz and Associate Principal Jacob Dugopolski presented the outline of their forthcoming work to the Board including a survey of spatial and temporal utilization of various spaces on campus. Please stay tuned for community engagement opportunities with this work later this term.

### **Committee Meetings**

Reports on board committees were given, including: Budget & Finance, Investment; Education & Community Life; and Nomination & Governance. The Finance and Budget committee discussed the status of revenues, and stressed the importance of ongoing monitoring of costs. The Board also authorized four additional full-time faculty searches for Fall 2023. These searches are in addition to the two authorized in the August board meeting—and one that was previously authorized—and are in support of our overarching goal of increasing the percentage of courses delivered by full-time faculty. The Nomination and Governance committee also relayed enthusiasm for shared governance and discussed the ways they will assess our progress.

### **Strategic Planning**

Provost [Maurice Hall](#) and Chief of Staff and Vice President for Strategic Initiatives [Shelton Walker](#) led a [strategic planning](#) session that focused on emergent ideas from the efforts of the four working groups over the summer as well as emergent ideas relative to new graduate programs. The working groups are: Energize the Core, Innovation & Partnerships, Storytelling, and the Whole Person. The Board was joined by some of the members of the

working groups. We are excited and energized by the work to date and look forward to engaging with campus partners throughout the process as it progresses.

The Board of Trustees also met in executive session.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we want to wish you a happy and safe fall. Our next Board meeting will be on December 9, and we look forward to continuing to update you on our work.

Warmly,

Nicholas A. Stephens '77

*Chair of the Board of Trustees*

Laura R. Walker

*President*