

# BENNINGTON COLLEGE

Dear Bennington Community,

Greetings! On Friday, the Board of Trustees held its December board meeting at trustee Bill Derrough's offices in Manhattan.

## Faculty Appointments

The Board formally approved all of the below Spring 2022 visiting faculty appointments submitted by President Walker:

- **CAPA:** *Christopher Barsotti, Dana Caspersen, and Joe Donahue*
- **Cultural Studies and Languages:** *Jingsheng Zhang*
- **Music:** *Kyoko Kitamura, William Parker, and Cecilia Lopez*

## President's Report

President Walker briefed the board on recent College news, including updates on COVID, our FY22 institutional goals, and an enrollment report. Dean of Student Life Li-Chen Chin provided observations on her first two months at the College, and Vice President for Facilities Management and Planning Andy Schlatter spoke about the Barn renovation which is estimated to be completed next month!

## Conversation with Faculty Member Chip Schoonmaker & (Michael) Sylvan Robinson '89

Provost Maurice Hall led a wonderful discussion with Sylvan Robinson '89 and faculty member Chip Schoonmaker around art and social justice and the teacher-practitioner model. The guests shared their work and how they bring their Bennington experiences and pedagogy to their life's passions.

## Committee Meetings

Several board committees reported on recent work, including Budget & Finance, Campus Planning, Investment, Audit & Risk, Education & Community Life, and Campaign Design. Primary areas of focus were enrollment, housing, Title IX, recent fundraising successes, shared governance, and our emerging strategic planning process. The board took action on initial planning and work to accommodate our increased enrollment numbers and additional students on campus.

## **Mental Health & Wellness initiative**

Our consultant Dr. Michael Cohen briefed the group on our Mental Health & Wellness initiative, including the current national and global landscape and the goals of the project; to create a unique model that is organic to Bennington, meets the needs of our students going forward, and instills a wellness mindset. The idea of taking responsibility for your own human development and mental health issues—and taking a 360 degree approach—will be a huge component of this project. Dr. Cohen described his recent visits to campus and research thus far, which has consisted of hundreds of interviews with individuals across constituencies. Trustee Gabriela Yadegari '21 has worked on the project alongside Dr. Cohen.

## **Shared Governance**

Chair Stephens and Trustee Kate Stimpson, one of the four co-chairs of our [Shared Governance Task Force](#), updated the Trustees on its progress and anticipated final report of the task force which we look forward to sharing upon its completion in early 2022. The Board unanimously approved their policy statement which will be included in this final document. The group was then joined by faculty members Hugh Crawl, John Hultgren, Dana Reitz, and Liz White, student members Muhammad Ammar and Samuel Henriquez, and staff members Chris Adams, Audry Herbig, Marie Leahy, and Carly Rudzinski, who provided overviews of their proposed self governance structures and answered questions from the Board.

## **Strategic Planning**

Members of the cabinet and senior staff reported out on the work of five subcommittees exploring early elements of the coming year's strategic planning process. These committees looked at the following areas: Campaign & Signature Programs; Campus Planning & Enrollment; Hyperconnected Digitized World; Mission, Values, & Core; and Process & Charge. A steering committee, which will involve all of our campus constituencies and be chaired by Provost Hall, will soon launch with an anticipated completion date of December 2022.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we want to wish you a happy holidays, and thank all of you for your passion for Bennington and empathy for one another during this prolonged pandemic. Our next Board meeting will be

Friday, March 4, and we look forward to continuing to update you on our work in the new year.

Warmly,

Nicholas A. Stephens '77

*Chair, Board of Trustees*

Laura R. Walker

*President*