WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Academic and Student Development Meeting

Thursday, November 19, 2026

3:00 P.M.

Wellness Center, Room 204

Meeting Called By: Maureen Power (Chair) **Minutes**: Nikki Kapurch

Board Members: Maureen Power (Chair), Kelly Brissette (Vice Chair), Kristen Garvey, Maria Caires

WSU Staff: Barry Maloney; Lois Wims; Ashlynn Allain; Carl Herrin; Nikki Kapurch

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All documents are considered to be **drafts** until discussed and/or approved by the Board

AGENDA

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE	ACTION
1. Administrative Business A. Call to Order	Maureen Power	
2. Academic and Student Development Committee Report A. President's memo to BOT* B. Provost memo to President* C. Sabbatical Summary and Proposal Summaries PowerPoint* D. Approval of AY 2027-2028 Sabbatical Leave Proposals	Maureen Power Lois Wims	A. Informational B. Informational C. Informational **D. vote required**
3. *Administrative Updates* A. Other Business	Maureen Power	
4. *Adjournment*	Maureen Power	4. **vote required**

*Attachments

WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY

President's Office
Phone: 508-929-8020
Fax: 508-929-8191
Email: bmaloney@worcester.edu

TO: Members, WSU Board of Trustees

FROM: Barry M. Maloney, President

RE: Sabbatical Leaves AY 2027 - 2028

DATE: November 2, 2026

I am pleased to support Provost Wims' recommendation and forward a total of nineteen (19) sabbatical leave proposals (ten for the fall of 2027 and nine for the spring of 2028).

The department chairs have confirmed that the individual study plans for each candidate will enhance their respective departments' course offerings. I also concur with Dr. Wims that each area of study will significantly contribute to the professional development of the scholars and educators involved, ultimately benefiting Worcester State University and its students.

Attached is a copy of Dr. Wims' recommendation and a summary of the proposed sabbatical projects.

WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Phone: 508-929-8038
Fax: 508-929-8187

TO: President Barry Maloney

FROM: Lois A. Wims, Provost

DATE: October 29, 2026

RE: Sabbatical Recommendations for 2027-2028

After determining eligibility and the support of the department chair, the following individual faculty are recommended to you and to the Board of Trustees for sabbaticals during the 2027-2028 Academic Year:

Fall Semester 2027:

Kyle Allaire	Mathematics
Erika Briesacher	History and Political Science
Kristine Camacho	Education
Amy Cota-McKinley	Psychology
LJ Dawson	Psychology
Aimée Delaney	Criminal Justice
Julie Frechette	Communication
Tanya Mears	History and Political Science
Sebastián Vélez	Biology
Francisco Vivoni	Sociology

Spring Semester 2028:

Mary Clay	Business Administration and Economics

Siri Colom	Sociology
Sarah DiMeo	Occupational Therapy
Charles Fox	Psychology
Aldo Garcia-Guevera	History and Political Science
Susan Mitroka-Batsford	Chemistry
Stacey Parker	Visual and Performing Arts
Seth Surgan	Psychology
Heidi Wojcik	Education

2027-2028 Sabbaticals

WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY

Sabbatical Process at WSU

- Sabbatical leave provides an opportunity for a period of study and research for full-time faculty after every six full years of faculty service to WSU.
- Sabbaticals serve as an important component of faculty professional development, ensuring that faculty members stay current in their fields and advance their scholarship, enhancing their contribution to the students and the university.
- Eligibility for sabbatical leave is explained in the collective bargaining agreement (Article XV, A-F.)
- Sabbatical proposals are submitted by eligible faculty members to their department chairs each October 1st. Those who are department chairs submit their applications to chairs from cognate departments.
- Chairs forward their recommendation to the Provost. The Provost then reviews the proposals and recommends approval or denial to the President, who submits those recommended to the Board of Trustees for approval at the November Board meeting.
- If approved, faculty may also choose to defer to a later semester by notifying the President in writing of their intention to defer. Deferral is possible for six semesters from the award.

Review of Sabbatical Applications

- Faculty on sabbatical leave for one semester receive their full salary during the period of the leave.
- Those on full year sabbatical leave, receive one-half salary for the full year.
- The cost to the institution for awarding sabbatical leave is for hiring part time, adjunct faculty to teach some of the courses that the faculty member on leave would have taught. Typically, not every course that would have been taught is offered during the sabbatical semester because some elective courses can be postponed and taught during a later semester. Chairs are asked to certify that the department can sustain the courses needed in the absence of the faculty member.
- Recipients of a sabbatical commit in writing to return to the institution for a period equal to twice the length of their leave and are responsible for reimbursing the university should they not return for the required timeframe.
- Recipients also must report on the sabbatical activities upon their return.

Estimated Cost for 2027-2028

- Approximately 67 course sections will need to be covered by adjuncts for the sabbaticals.
- Sections are offered based on student demand, not on faculty availability.
- A conservative average cost of $6.5K per section, this equals $435,500
- Funds to cover this expense will be included in the adjunct line of the FY 27 budget.

Fall Semester 2027

- Kyle Allaire, Mathematics
- Erika Briesacher, History & Political Science
- Kristine Camacho, Education
- Amy Cota-McKinley, Psychology
- LJ Dawson, Psychology
- Aimée Delaney, Criminal Justice
- Julie Frechette, Communication
- Tanya Mears, History & Political Science
- Sebastián Vélez, Biology
- Francisco Vivoni, Sociology

Spring Semester 2028

- Mary Clay, Business Administration & Economics
- Siri Colom, Sociology
- Sarah DiMeo, Occupational Therapy
- Charles Fox, Psychology
- Aldo Garcia-Guevara, History & Political Science
- Susan Mitroka-Batsford, Chemistry
- Stacey Parker, Visual & Performing Arts
- Seth Surgan, Psychology
- Heidi Wojcik, Education

Kyle Allaire

- Department: Mathematics
- Sabbatical Term: Fall 2027

- Project: *Data Science and Sports Analytics*
  - Take graduate courses to address gaps in data science education, including Bayesian statistics and machine learning
  - Pursue a data analysis project using data from professional sports leagues
  - Work will support WSU mathematical students and will be used to mentor students in independent studies or undergraduate research projects involving data science

Erika Briesacher

- Department: History & Political Science
- Sabbatical Term: Fall 2027

- Project: *Make Me a Mask: Material/Culture of a Pandemic* Manuscript Completion **and** *Plots, Scandals, and Villains: A View of World History*
  - Finish book manuscript on historical context of facemasks during Covid-19 and two in-progress scholarly articles
  - Begin working on a preliminary manuscript and proposal for a popular history text organized around plots, scandals, and villains

Kristine Camacho

- Department: Education
- Sabbatical Term: Fall 2027

- Project: *Understanding Workforce Capacity Issues in Rural School Districts*
  - Examine the ways that the rural context shapes districts' ability to provide comprehensive school psychological services
  - Raise awareness of the issues that rural districts face while advocating for access to more equitable services for students in these locations

Amy Cota-McKinley

- Department: Psychology
- Sabbatical Term: Fall 2027

- Project: From Experience to Practice: A Reflective Inquiry into Developing an Academic Leadership Identity
  - Critically examine and synthesize development as an academic leader in the transition from faculty member to department chair
  - Culminate in a scholarly manuscript for submission to a peer-reviewed journal and a presentation or conference proposal

LJ Dawson

- Department: Psychology
- Sabbatical Term: Fall 2027

- Project: *Critical Participatory Action Research with LGBTQ+ students*
  - Conduct Critical Participatory Action Research with WSU LGBTQ+ students to qualitatively examine their lived experiences as college students
  - Findings would then be shared with queer health conferences, college student affairs administrators, and conferences focusing on the scholarship of teaching and learning

Aimée Delaney

- Department: Criminal Justice
- Sabbatical Term: Fall 2027

- Project: Research and Book Proposal on Multi-Disciplinary Issues surrounding Family Violence
  - Conduct research and submit final book proposal to publisher by Jan. 2028
  - Book is intended to be used by academics and practitioners and will offer evidence-based material that serve to prevent violence within families

Julie Frechette

- Department: Communication
- Sabbatical Term: Fall 2027

- Project: *Broadcasting #MeToo: Institutional Power, Survivor Justice, and Workplace Complicity on Apple TV's "The Morning Show"*
  - Complete manuscript draft and identify opportunities for conference and publication
  - Research findings will be incorporated into WSU courses addressing Media Criticism, Literacy. & Ethics, Gender and Media, Communication Theory, and Organizational Communication

Tanya Mears

- Department: History & Political Science
- Sabbatical Term: Fall 2027

- Project: *Happy the Youth Who Very Shortly Dies: A Study of New England Execution Literature Featuring People of African Descent*
  - Extend scholarly article on early colonial literature and Puritans' attitudes towards race
  - Identify publishers and submit for publication

Sebastián Vélez

- Department: Biology
- Sabbatical Term: Fall 2027

- Project: *Invertebrates of Hispaniola, Harvard Museum of Natural History*
  - Advance research on the terrestrial macroinvertebrates of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico and produce an illustrated field guide expanding on existing arthropod checklists
  - The collected specimens be used to create a sustainable pipeline of feasible research opportunities in organismal biology at WSU

Francisco Vivoni

- Department: Sociology
- Sabbatical Term: Fall 2027

- Project: *Cobblestone Streets and the Right to the City: Informal Urbanism in Worcester, MA and San Juan, Puerto Rico*
  - Conduct an extensive literature review of current informal urbanism scholarship and qualitative data collection and analysis through community-based participatory methods
  - Prepare a manuscript for presentation in a regional academic conference and the publication of findings in a peer-reviewed edited volume
  - Support the continued growth of an ongoing research agenda on skateboarding and informal urbanism

Mary Clay

- Department: Business Administration & Economics
- Sabbatical Term: Spring 2028

- Project: *AI and the Future of Accounting Education: Adapting Accounting Curricula for an Evolving Profession*
  - Produce a survey-based study of accounting faculty adoption of AI tools
  - Provide current research and practical information that can be used to evaluate and enhance WSU's Business and Accounting curriculum

Siri Colom

- Department: Sociology
- Sabbatical Term: Spring 2028

- Project: Audio Production & Return to Essay Writing
  - Complete manuscript for peer-review on music in communities to carry grief, defiance, and hope
  - Begin production on three-part audio story on chosen kin and what care looks like when families of origin and public institutions fails
  - Revise manuscript on Re-Engineering Democracy project focused on post-Katrina New Orleans

Sarah DiMeo

- Department: Occupational Therapy
- Sabbatical Term: Spring 2028

- Project: *Occupational Therapy Students' Perceptions of Using Popular Music Videos to Learn Occupational Therapy Models: A Qualitative Reflection Study; Evidence-Based Handwriting Workshop*
  - Conduct qualitative analysis and begin preparation of a manuscript on how OT students perceive music videos to learn OT models
  - Findings could be used to inform future WSU OT courses

Charles Fox

- Department: Psychology
- Sabbatical Term: Spring 2028

- Project: The Psychophysics of Consciousness (or The New-Enchantment of Humankind)
  - Develop a proposal for a transdisciplinary book targeted toward a public audience on a new 21st-century framework for understanding consciousness by exploring the continual human experience of transcendence
  - Develop a book description, outline, and two chapter sample to submit to publishers

Aldo Garcia-Guevara

- Department: History & Political Science
- Sabbatical Term: Spring 2028

- Project: *Military Justice and Social Control in El Salvador*
  - Draft two scholarly articles, one on crime and policing in El Salvador from 1930-1960 and one on gender, politics, and power in El Salvador from 1910-1960
  - Present findings at Central American conferences and to the UCA Press for possible future collaborations

Susan Mitroka-Batsford

- Department: Chemistry
- Sabbatical Term: Spring 2028

- Project: *Investigation of Protein Inhibition Strategies and Structure Activity Relationships*
  - Conduct research to design and synthesize new and efficient nitroxyl (HNO) donors, utilize more complex systems to see the effects of HNO on given proteins and increase the scope of drug targets for HNO

Stacey Parker

- Department: Visual & Performing Arts
- Sabbatical Term: Spring 2028

- Project: *The Meeting of Endangered Species and Humans*
  - Conduct research on critically endangered species with the help of zoo, conservation, and rescue organizations
  - Create mix-media visual series of hand-thrown ceramic bowls and plates and layered images relating to images of endangered species and human groups that live alongside them
  - Series will present as a call to action to halt the decline of the species and educate others on how to be better stewards of the environment

Seth Surgan

- Department: Psychology
- Sabbatical Term: Spring 2028

- Project: *You Are What You See: The Cultural Psychology of Birdwatching*
  - Investigate and research the cultural dynamics of birdwatching and semiotic mediation, meaning-making, and connection to the natural world
  - Present analyzed data at two conferences and develop a manuscript to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal

Heidi Wojcik

- Department: Education
- Sabbatical Term: Spring 2028

- Project: *Bridging the Science of Reading and the Science of Writing: Researching Evidence-Based Writing Instruction and Demonstration-School Models to Strengthen Preservice Teacher Preparation*
  - Synthesize current frameworks for writing instructions and examine how frameworks can be integrated into preservice teaching preparation at WSU
  - Work will directly inform revisions to ED 306 Methods of Coursework for Preservice Teachers