

Full Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Quinsigamond Community College Board of Trustees

Monday, October 5, 2026, at 5:00 PM

Administration Building Room 107A, 670 West Boylston Street, Worcester, MA 01606

- Trustees Present:** Chair Linda Maykel, Max German (remote), Mari Gonzalez (remote), Jorgo Gushi, Flo LeClair, Satya Mitra (*arrived at 5:07 PM and departed at 5:50 PM*), Raj Rajeshkumar, Dawit Quilty
- Trustees Absent:** Eric Goodwine, Lynn Keeley, Jessica Mandes
- Cabinet Present:** President Luis Pedraja, John Holloway, Karen Hutner (remote), Deb LaFlash, Becky Lindley, Sean Nelson, Luis Pedraja, Kathy Rentsch, Sara Simms, Deb Spotts (remote), Michelle Tufau Afriyie, Allison Vickstrom, Jess Ahrens Montecalvo – Board Secretary
- Others Present:** Approximately 30 staff and faculty members, including Michaela Almeida, Amy Beaudry, Gaelan Benway, Caitlin Bogue, James Brennan, Della Burke, Judy Colson, Lisa Cook, Geovanni Cruz, Mallory Dutton, Sydney Goldman, Stacey Kadish, Nathan Kozach, James Lincoln, Meghan Martin, Jean McLean, MaryEllen Nietupski, Patricia Pope, Eric Saczawa, Byron Thomas, Emma Wedell, Anthony Yeulenski, Margaret Yoder, Jen Arner Welsh (remote), Amy Both - Manager at Withum (remote), Rose D'Errico (remote), Edouard (remote), Pat Schmohl (remote), Xavier Thomas Morin (remote)

Meeting called to order at 5:00 PM by Board Chair Maykel and roll call attendance noted.

The Board of Trustees of Quinsigamond Community College, at its regular meeting held at Quinsigamond Community College on Monday, October 5, 2026, took the following actions:

- I. Consent Agenda:** *The purpose of the Consent Agenda is to expedite business by grouping routine agenda items together to be dealt with by one Board motion without discussion. Any member of the Board or staff may ask that any item on the Consent Agenda be removed and placed later on the agenda for full discussion. Such requests will be automatically respected. If any item is not removed from the Consent Agenda, the action on the agenda is approved/accepted by single Board action adopting the Consent Agenda.*
- A. Minutes from the September 10, 2026 Regular Board Meeting (approve)
 - B. Trust Fund Reports – FY26 and FY27 (accept)
 - C. Informational Personnel Items (accept)
 - D. President's Out-of-State Travel (accept)
 - E. President's Leave Time (accept)

Motion: Chair Maykel moved that the Board of Trustees of Quinsigamond Community College approve the Consent Agenda (A-E) as presented. **Second:** Trustee LeClair seconded the motion. **Roll Call Vote:** Max German – Yes; Mari Gonzalez – Yes; Jorgo Gushi – Yes; Flo LeClair – Yes; Linda Maykel – Yes; Raj Rajeshkumar – Yes; Dawit Quilty – Yes. **Result:** Motion carried unanimously.

II. Chair Updates

Dr. Linda Maykel, Board Chair

A. Presidential Search Committee Update

- Chair Linda Maykel provided an update on the presidential search process. In accordance with the MA BHE Presidential Search Guidelines and the authority previously delegated by the Board, Chair Maykel and Vice Chair Eric Goodwine reviewed submissions received through the Presidential Search Committee Interest Form and selected members for the Presidential Search Committee. Trustees were presented with the proposed committee membership for approval.
- Chair Maykel reported that she has begun meeting with search consultants Fred Moore and Jeanne Jacobs from AGB Search to begin planning the next phases of the search. In the coming weeks, students, faculty, staff, trustees, alumni, and community members will be invited to participate in listening sessions and complete a survey to help inform the development of the presidential profile and to nominate potential candidates.
- Chair Maykel reiterated the Board's commitment to conducting a transparent and inclusive search process. She noted that updates will continue to be shared regularly with the campus community and that she and search consultant Fred Moore will provide an update on the presidential search process at the All-College Forum on October 6, 2026.

Motion: Chair Maykel moved that the Board of Trustees approve the membership of the Presidential Search Committee as selected by Chair Linda Maykel and Vice Chair Eric Goodwine pursuant to authority previously delegated by the Board and as presented to the Board on October 5, 2026. Consistent with the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Guidelines, that the Board of Trustees charges the Presidential Search committee with 1) developing the Presidential Profile in collaboration with the selected search firm and subject to the Board's approval; 2) conducting the preliminary screening of applicants, and; 3) recommending an unranked slate of finalists to the Board. **Second:** Trustee Gushi seconded the motion. **Roll Call Vote:** Max German – Yes; Mari Gonzalez – Yes; Jorgo Gushi – Yes; Flo LeClair – Yes; Linda Maykel – Yes; Raj Rajeshkumar – Yes; Dawit Quilty – Yes. **Result:** Motion carried unanimously.

III. Standing Committee Reports

A. Audit and Oversight Committee – September 21, 2026

Trustees: Mitra (Chair), German, Gonzalez, Goodwine, and Gushi

1. FY26 Audit Update

- Amy Booth, Manager at Withum, provided an update regarding the FY26 audit. The auditors reported delays in receiving required information from the state, including pension and OPEB data and information related to DCAMM-funded capital projects. Despite these delays, the auditors indicated that progress on the audit continues and that submission of a draft audit report by the end of October would allow the College to remain within required reporting timelines. Interim Vice President Sean Nelson noted that these delays are affecting public higher education institutions statewide.

2. FY26 Trustee Budget Report – Final

- Sean Nelson, Interim Vice President of Finance and Administration, and Deb LaFlash, Associate Vice President of Finance, presented the College's FY26 year-end financial results. They reported that strong enrollment growth contributed to tuition and fee revenue exceeding budget projections, with gross tuition and fee revenue reaching 107% of budget and net tuition and fee revenue, including institutional financial aid and waivers, finishing at 108% of budget. Overall revenue closed at 102.7% of budget. As a result of the College's positive financial performance, the \$1 million operating reserve budgeted for FY26 was not needed. On the expenditure side, Academic Affairs spending increased by approximately \$4 million over the prior year, primarily due to contractual faculty salary increases. Total expenditures ended the fiscal year at approximately \$79.6 million, or 101% of budget. The College concluded FY26 with an unrestricted operating balance of approximately \$1.277 million, which will be carried forward into reserves.

3. FY27 Trustee Budget Report

- Interim VP Nelson and AVP LaFlash reviewed the FY27 budget report through August 2026. They introduced a revised reporting format intended to provide greater transparency regarding expenditures. Future reports will separate personnel expenses by employee category and provide additional detail regarding major expense categories, such as personnel costs, energy, information technology, leases, travel, food and hospitality, and other supplies and services.

B. Strategic Planning, Education, and Student Success Committee – September 21, 2026 *Trustees: Rajeshkumar (Chair), LeClair, Mandes, Maykel, Keeley, and Quilty*

1. Strategic Planning Metrics

- Trustee Raj Rajeshkumar, Chair of the SPESS Committee, shared a summary of the strategic planning metrics that Stacey Kadish, Interim Dean of Institutional Research and Planning, presented at the SPESS Committee meeting on September 21, 2026. He reported that the College continues to make strong progress toward achieving the goals outlined in its strategic plan, noting that 16 of the College's 34 performance measures have already met or exceeded their 2027 targets. He highlighted particularly strong enrollment performance and continued improvements in student outcomes, while emphasizing that student retention, course success, and completion rates remain key areas for ongoing focus and improvement.
- Interim Dean Kadish noted that QCC's graduation rate is the highest it has been in ten years and that the combined measure of graduation, retention, and students remaining enrolled has also reached a ten-year high. Overall, the report reflected positive momentum, with enrollment growth accompanied by improving student success outcomes across the institution.

2. Fall 2026 Enrollment Update

- Trustee Raj Rajeshkumar also shared a summary of the Fall 2026 enrollment update presented by Michelle Tufau Afriyie, Vice President for Strategic Enrollment and Student Engagement. At the time of the SPESS Committee meeting on September

21, 2026, the College had enrolled 9,146 students, representing the second-highest enrollment in QCC's history and a 26% increase over pre-pandemic enrollment levels in 2019. Trustee Rajeshkumar noted that students are registering earlier than in previous years and that student credit hours reached a new institutional record, reflecting strong student demand, improvements in onboarding and advising, and the continued impact of the Commonwealth's MassEducate and MassReconnect initiatives.

- VP Tufau Afriyie reported that, following the enrollment freeze date, official enrollment stood at 8,848 students after non-attending students were removed from enrollment counts. Despite the adjustment, student credit hours remained approximately 2% above budgeted targets, placing the College in a strong enrollment position and exceeding the FY27 credit-hour growth assumption of 1%.

3. Professor Emeritus Award – Dadbeh Bigonahy

- Kathy Rentsch, Vice President of Academic Affairs, presented a recommendation for professor emeritus status for Professor Dadbeh Bigonahy following his retirement after 44 years of service to QCC. VP Rentsch highlighted Professor Bigonahy's exceptional contributions to engineering education, including the development and leadership of the engineering and biomedical engineering programs, establishment of a longstanding partnership with Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), continuous support of students pursuing transfer and scholarship opportunities, and extraordinary dedication to teaching and student success throughout his career.
- Professor Bigonahy was recommended for professor emeritus by the Emeritus Selection Committee, Vice President Kathy Rentsch, and President Luis Pedraja.

Motion: Trustee Jorgo Gushi moved that the Board of Trustees of Quinsigamond Community College confer the honorary title of Professor Emeritus upon Professor Dadbeh Bigonahy following his retirement from Quinsigamond Community College .

Second: Trustee LeClair seconded the motion. **Roll Call Vote:** Max German – Yes; Mari Gonzalez – Yes; Jorgo Gushi – Yes; Flo LeClair – Yes; Linda Maykel – Yes; Satya Mitra - Yes; Raj Rajeshkumar – Yes; Dawit Quilty – Yes. **Result:** Motion carried unanimously.

C. Executive Committee – Canceled

Trustees: Maykel, Goodwine, Mitra, and Rajeshkumar

- The Executive Committee meeting scheduled for September 21, 2026 was canceled due to a Special Board of Trustees meeting, so there were no updates to report.

IV. QCC Foundation Report

Jorgo Gushi, QCC Foundation President

A. QCC Foundation YTD Fundraising Report

- Deb Spotts, Chief Advancement Officer and Executive Director of Development, provided an update on QCC Foundation and advancement activities. She reported that the College was recently awarded a \$2 million federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant after several years of pursuing the funding. The four-year grant will expand childcare and support services for approximately 70 parenting students annually, serving more than 280 students over the life of the grant. The

program will include drop-in childcare services through the QCC Children's School and is designed to improve the retention, graduation, and transfer outcomes of parenting students.

- CAO Spotts also reported that approximately \$3 million in additional grant applications remain pending, including proposals related to quantum research, the Home Plate Food Pantry, healthcare training equipment, apprenticeship degree programs, the Entrepreneurship Center, and athletic field improvements.
- She highlighted the success of QCC's second annual Giving Day, which raised \$3,554 from 22 donors, including alumni, faculty and staff, and community supporters, with proceeds benefiting the Auxilium Center, healthcare completion ceremonies, the Home Plate Food Pantry, the Student Emergency Fund, and scholarships.
- She further reported on the Advancement Office's extensive community engagement and alumni outreach efforts, including participation in community recognition events, alumni networking and mentoring programs, AI workshops, an upcoming Alumni Success Panel, and the planned Alumni Athletics Hall of Fame celebration.
- QCC Foundation President and Trustee Jorgo Gushi reported that the QCC Foundation has begun a strategic planning process that will align with the College's strategic planning efforts and is continuing work to strengthen committee structures, recruitment efforts, and overall board engagement.

V. Student Trustee Report

Dawit Quilty, Student Trustee

- Student Trustee Dawit Quilty reported that the Student Government Association (SGA) continues to advance initiatives aimed at increasing student engagement and participation across campus. Current efforts include evaluating alternative meeting locations and formats to improve accessibility and encourage broader student participation, developing informational materials highlighting SGA and available campus resources, and encouraging greater use of Wyvern Connect as a tool for connecting students with organizations, activities, and upcoming campus events.
- Student Trustee Quilty also shared updates from the Entrepreneurship, Business, and Marketing Club, including a stock market game that allows students to learn about investing and financial markets. The club is working to bring a professional stock trader and a Boston-area real estate developer to campus as guest speakers and is collaborating with the Business Honor Society and the Nursing Department on a program focused on entrepreneurship in healthcare for nurses interested in starting home-care businesses.

VI. President's Report

Dr. Luis Pedraja, QCC President

A. Ongoing Initiatives & Campus Updates

- President Luis Pedraja reflected on the beginning of his final academic year before retirement, expressing appreciation for the dedication of the faculty, staff, students, administrators, and trustees who have contributed to the College's success. He reported that transition planning is underway in collaboration with the Board of Trustees and the College's Cabinet and noted that, while preparatory work for the next strategic planning cycle will continue, including data analysis and SWOT activities,

Cabinet members have recommended that the formal strategic planning process begin after the College's next president is in place so that the new leader can help shape the institution's future direction.

- President Pedraja highlighted several positive developments, including continued enrollment growth, record student credit hours, improving retention and student success outcomes, and the recent award of the nearly \$2 million CCAMPIS grant to support parenting students. He also recognized the accomplishments of members of the QCC community, including Sean Harris who was recently honored at the Black Excellence Celebration, and noted the College's ongoing engagement with community organizations and events throughout Worcester.
- President Pedraja also spoke about the importance of supporting educators and advocated for addressing compensation disparities affecting community college faculty and staff across Massachusetts. He encouraged continued engagement with state policymakers to ensure equitable support for community colleges and the employees who serve their students.

VII. Public Participation

The Board may reserve one-half hour at the end of the agenda of its regular meetings for public participation. Individuals seeking to speak to the Board should so inform the President's Office in writing, setting forth the purpose for which they seek to speak, at least 24 hours before the relevant meeting. The Chairperson shall determine whether said individuals shall be permitted to speak and, if so, for how long they may speak on the designated topic. The Chairperson may exercise discretion to waive the notice requirement set forth above and invite an individual(s) present at the meeting to address the Board.

A. Amy Beaudry – Proposed Online Class Size (5 Minutes)

- Dr. Amy Beaudry, Professor of English and Academic Technology Facilitator in the Center for Academic Excellence, addressed the Board regarding the administration's planned increase in online course enrollment caps. Dr. Beaudry explained that she and several colleagues were requesting that the Board intervene to maintain the College's current online class size limits.
- Dr. Beaudry noted that QCC currently limits online enrollment to 16 students in English Composition, English as a Second Language, introductory foreign language, and developmental courses, and 20 students in most other online courses. She stated that these limits originated from a memorandum of agreement established when the College first implemented online learning and were intended to preserve instructional quality and individualized student support.
- According to Dr. Beaudry, the proposed change would increase online enrollment caps significantly, in some cases raising course enrollments from 16 students to 25 students. She argued that the current enrollment limits have contributed to QCC's reputation for high-quality online instruction and support services, including faculty training, individualized technology assistance, proactive outreach to students who are not engaging in coursework, and opportunities for meaningful faculty-student interaction.
- Dr. Beaudry expressed concern that larger class sizes would diminish opportunities for individualized attention, negatively affect student success, and undermine the College's longstanding commitment to quality online education. She urged the Board

to preserve existing online class-size limits and maintain what she characterized as an important component of student success.

B. Michaela Almeida – Proposed Online Class Size (5 Minutes)

- Michaela Almeida, Professor of Elementary Education, Elementary Education Coordinator, and Vice President of the QCC Professional Association, spoke in opposition to the proposed increase in online class sizes. She emphasized that faculty and administrators share a common commitment to student success and stated that her concerns were rooted in supporting student achievement rather than opposing institutional change. She discussed the importance of relationship-building, personalized support, and direct interaction between students and faculty, particularly for first-generation students, low-income students, and students facing barriers to college completion.
- As an example, Ms. Almeida described working individually with a student who was struggling to navigate course registration and online learning systems. She explained that faculty intervention enabled the student to remain enrolled and continue pursuing academic goals. She stated that similar interventions occur regularly across the institution and are possible because faculty have sufficient time to identify and assist students who encounter challenges.
- Ms. Almeida argued that larger online class sizes could reduce opportunities for faculty to provide this level of support, potentially resulting in more students disengaging from coursework without intervention. She also expressed concern that expanding online enrollments could disproportionately affect students from traditionally underserved populations. Citing research on student success and engagement, she urged the Board to prioritize educational quality, retention, equity, and meaningful student-faculty relationships when evaluating the proposal. She concluded by asking the Board to reject the proposed increase and seek alternative solutions that preserve the support structures currently available to students.

C. James Lincoln – Proposed Online Class Size (5 Minutes)

- James Lincoln, Enrollment Counselor and President of the QCC Professional Association, thanked the Board and President Pedraja for their continued advocacy regarding community college employee compensation before addressing concerns related to online class-size increases. Mr. Lincoln stated that faculty and staff routinely assist students in addressing academic, technological, financial, and personal barriers to success. He explained that during discussions regarding implementation of increased online class sizes, union representatives inquired whether additional investments would be made in online learning support services, such as online learning coaches, peer technology support, and laptop loan programs. He stated that faculty were informed that significant new investments were unlikely because of budget considerations.
- Mr. Lincoln expressed concern that increasing online enrollment without corresponding investments in support services could negatively affect students who already face significant challenges, including financial insecurity, housing instability, transportation difficulties, limited access to technology, and competing work and family obligations. He noted that many students choose online courses because they

accommodate complex schedules rather than because the format is ideally suited to their learning needs.

- He described situations in which students encounter difficulties related to internet access, computer availability, educational expenses, and other resource limitations. He argued that community college students often require substantial individualized support and that increasing online course enrollments could make it more difficult to identify and assist students who are struggling.
- Mr. Lincoln stated that QCC's strengths include accessible services, personalized attention, and small class sizes. He expressed concern that a focus on increasing enrollment capacity could undermine those strengths and urged the Board to maintain existing online class-size limits in support of student success.

D. MaryEllen Nietupski – Proposed Online Class Size (5 Minutes)

- Dr. MaryEllen Nietupski, Professor of Nurse Education and President of the Faculty Senate, addressed the Board in support of maintaining current online enrollment limits. Dr. Nietupski stated that the request was motivated by concerns regarding both educational quality and the integrity of agreements negotiated between the College and faculty. She explained that faculty strongly support the institution's goal of 100 percent student success and noted that recent improvements in online learning outcomes have resulted from years of faculty effort devoted to course development, redesign, assessment, and continuous improvement.
- Dr. Nietupski cited research regarding online education and class size, indicating that effective online learning environments often require smaller enrollments, particularly in courses involving substantial interaction, critical thinking, communication, skill development, and individualized feedback. She emphasized that QCC serves many students who balance academic studies with work, family obligations, financial pressures, and other responsibilities and that these students benefit from meaningful engagement with faculty. She stated that faculty members regularly identify students experiencing academic difficulties and intervene before students withdraw or fail courses. She expressed concern that larger online class sizes could reduce the amount of individualized feedback, communication, and engagement faculty are able to provide.
- Dr. Nietupski also raised concerns regarding the College's decision to move away from a previously negotiated memorandum of agreement governing online class sizes. She emphasized the importance of maintaining trust in collective bargaining agreements and honoring commitments reached through the negotiation process. She urged the Board to halt implementation of the proposed increase in online class sizes and maintain existing enrollment limits in order to support student success and preserve the quality of online instruction.

E. Xavier Thomas Morin – Practical Nursing Matter (5 Minutes)

- Former student Xavier Thomas Marin was unable to attend due to technical difficulties. Mr. Morin submitted a written statement via email, which was provided to Chair Maykel for the Board's review.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:06 PM.

Upcoming Meetings:

- **Executive Committee** – Monday, November 16, 2026, at 3:00 PM, Zoom
- **Strategic Planning, Education & Student Success Committee** – Monday, November 16, 2026, at 4:00 PM, Zoom
- **Audit & Oversight Committee** – Monday, November 16, 2026, at 5:00 PM, Zoom
- **Regular Board Meeting** – Monday, December 14, 2026, at 5:00 PM, Room 107A, 670 West Boylston Street, Worcester, MA

Respectfully submitted,

Jess Ahrens Montecalvo, Executive Assistant to the President & Secretary to the Board

DRAFT