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## Board of Trustees Regular Meeting

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Agency: University of Akron

Date: Sept. 18, 2024

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### Summary

- The university expects to experience significant benefits from partnerships with the Polymer Industry Cluster and Cleveland Browns.
- For the 12-month period ending on June 30, 2024, the university overall sustained a \$22.3 million budget deficit. The 2025 fiscal year budget approved by the board envisions a budget deficit of \$27.1 million.

Fall enrollment decreased slightly from 2023 (14,813 students enrolled in undergraduate, graduate and law programs.)

### Follow-Up Questions

- How many semesters of enrollment growth are needed before UA is confident it has “turned the corner” in relation to student numbers?
- Will the activities of the Polymer Industry Cluster involve locating research programs on the UA campus, for instance in a new building?
- For what length of time are budget deficits of the size incurred in fiscal year 2024, and anticipated in fiscal year 2025, sustainable? Might UA be forced to implement cutbacks on the scale implemented in 2020?

A regular quarterly meeting of the [University of Akron Board of Trustees](#) was held on Sept. 18, in Room 339 of the [Jean Hower Taber Student Union](#) on the University of Akron campus. The meeting agenda and materials are available [here](#).

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. All nine members of the board were

present, along with the two non-voting student trustees and two non-voting advisory trustees.

Board Chair Lewis W. Adkins Jr. introduced new trustee Rick Fedorovich, appointed by Ohio Gov. Mike Dewine for a nine-year term ending in 2033, and new student trustee Max Pastoria, appointed by Dewine for a two-year term ending in 2026. Both took the oath of office and briefly addressed trustees.

University president [R.J. Nemer](#) presented a report which highlighted:

- The kickoff of the university's [partnership with the Cleveland Browns](#) at the start of the fall semester
- The launch of activities toward a new "Vision 2030" strategic plan. Six working groups will conduct SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analyses of university's operations
- The involvement of UA in the [Polymer Industry Cluster](#), for which nearly \$100 million of federal and state funding has been earmarked. The university will receive \$7.1 million for the project, Workforce Initiative for Sustainable Environment, which focuses on a lifecycle assessment of polymer products.

Student trustee Nicholas Campana reported on start-of-semester student activities. Pastoria introduced [Grace Nuhfer](#), a UA student who won a silver medal in swimming at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. She spoke to the board about her education journey and support received from her teammates.

## **Consent agenda**

The Board of Trustees operates using a consent agenda, under which items are considered by board committees and brought forward to the full board meeting as a package. Board members vote on the consent agenda as a whole rather than individual items. The consent agenda included the following action items:

- 1) Minutes of board of trustees meetings held on May 1; May 15 (at which the [retirement of President Gary Miller](#) and the [appointment of Nemer as his successor](#) were approved); and June 12.
- 2) **Recommendations of the Finance and Administrative Committee.** Nine items were included, highlighted by:
  - a) Receiving a consolidated budget statement for the 12-month period that

ended June 30,, which shows an overall net deficit of \$22.3 million, less than the budgeted deficit of \$27 million.

- b) Ratification of a four-year partnership agreement with the Cleveland Browns at a [cost to the university of \\$1.35 million](#).
- c) Authorizing receipt of bids and entering into contracts for Buchtel Common renovations, not exceeding \$7.6 million, to be funded with state capital funds.

- 3) **Recommendations of the Academic Affairs Committee.** Two items were included concerning curriculum changes (two new programs, one name change and one discontinuation) and approval of 370 Summer 2024 graduates.

Provost [John Wiencek](#) and two colleagues presented reports to the board concerning research activities, enrollment, and student affairs activities. The highlight of this report was a summary of UA's enrollment census for the Fall semester. The enrollment census indicated that:

- New transfer student enrollment increased by 15.4% compared to the previous year.
- New master's student enrollment increased by 7.8% compared with the previous year.
- Continuing student enrollment declined. This was due in large part to the small size of the third-year and fourth-year cohorts, which were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The university has doubled the number of international students since Fall 2022.

Officials said 94% of Spring 2023 bachelor's degree graduates had found employment — at an average starting salary of \$63,806 — or were continuing their education.

- 4) **Recommendations of the Rules Committee.** One item was included —a rewriting of the university policy statement relating to affirmative action.

The consent agenda passed unanimously.

### **Special Committee report**

Trustee Thomas Waltermire reported the activities of the Special Committee on Facilities and Safety. At his invitation, University Chief of Police [Jim Gilbride](#) addressed the board,

discussing initiatives underway to improve safety on and around campus with particular focus on off-campus student housing south of Exchange Street. These measures include installing and monitoring security cameras, operating weekend bar patrols and addressing trespassing on university-owned vacant land.

## **New Business**

Adkins introduced two items of new business.

- 1) *Employment agreement for President R.J. Nemer.* This closely follows the Term Sheet, a document outlining terms of an agreement, which the board received at the May 15 meeting. The term of appointment is four years through May 14, 2028, and the annual base salary is \$484,500. The employment agreement was approved unanimously.
  
- 2) *Budget for Fiscal Year 2025.* The budget document included a consolidated university budget along with separate budgets for the General Fund, Auxiliary Funds (e.g., Residence Life and Housing, Parking, Student Union, E.J. Thomas Hall) and Departmental Sales and Services Funds (e.g., noncredit classes, executive education). The budgeted overall deficit for the school year is \$27.1 million. It was noted that a \$5 million reduction in state support was expected. The budget document was approved unanimously.

The board moved to executive session at 9:35 a.m. to discuss items relating to personnel matters and real estate transactions. Executive sessions are not open to the public.

The next board meeting is on Dec. 11.

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**Notes to reader:** Unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at [documenters@signalakron.org](mailto:documenters@signalakron.org) with "Correction Request" in the subject line.