



Oregon State
University

The Board of Trustees of Oregon State University

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

March 17, 2021
12:30 pm – 5:00 pm
Remote Meeting

MINUTES

Trustees Present: F. King Alexander (*ex officio*), Mike Bailey, Patty Bedient, Rani Borkar (*chair*), Julia Brim-Edwards, Darry Callahan, Michele Longo Eder, Lamar Hurd, Khawater Hussein, Paul Kelly, Julie Manning, Preston Pulliams, Kirk Schueler (*vice chair*), Stephanie Smith, and Mike Thorne

University Staff Present: Charlene Alexander, Jennifer Almquist, Steve Clark, Debbie Colbert, Ed Feser, Katie Fast, Becca Gose, Mike Green, and Lauren Skousen

1. Call to Order/Roll/Declaration of a Quorum

Board Chair Rani Borkar called the meeting to order at 12:33 p.m., asked the board secretary to call the roll, and noted a quorum. Borkar then made a land acknowledgement statement.

2. Consent Agenda

a. Minutes of the January 29, 2021 Board Meeting

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the January 29, 2021, Board Meeting. The motion carried.

3. Opening Comments

Borkar began by acknowledging the importance of the meeting topic to the Board and the university, and she recognized the impact on those who have experienced sexual violence and for survivor advocates. She emphasized the Board's commitment to accountability and openness and acknowledged the questions that had been raised about the Board's presidential search and selection process. Borkar discussed the Board's decision to conduct a confidential search and said it supported their goal of gathering a diverse and talented pool of candidates. She added that while the names of candidates were confidential, the process involved engagement by students, staff, faculty, and community members. Borkar acknowledged that questions have been raised in the past several weeks about whether the Board had advance knowledge of Title IX issues at Louisiana State University and the university's response to sexual violence during the time that President F. King Alexander served as LSU president and chancellor. Borkar said that the due diligence conducted by the Board during the selection process did not find any evidence of mishandling of reports of sexual violence, any evidence of a systemic issue of improper management of sexual misconduct, or evidence about the conduct of former LSU head football coach Les Miles. Borkar added that she would like to separately consider a proposal to have an independent evaluation of the Board's due diligence process in the presidential search.

Borkar said the focus of the meeting should be Oregon State University's leadership. She summarized events leading to the meeting, beginning on March 5, 2021, when LSU's Board of Supervisors issued its review of the university's Title IX programs.

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She said that when reading the report she experienced profound sadness for the students at LSU, and she added that sexual violence or misconduct of any type is not acceptable. She expressed the importance of engaging in prevention efforts and in providing compassion and a range of support resources and options for survivors. Borkar said the Board had a responsibility to determine how to move forward given the LSU report, and she emphasized the importance of doing so in a way that would be consistent with the core values of OSU and the OSU community. She outlined a process based on listening, informing, discussing, and then deliberating in public session a course of action. Borkar shared her thinking for how the agenda would inform the Board in setting a course of action, noting that it would provide for public input, offer an opportunity for Alexander to lay out his perspective on the information in the LSU report, and allow trustees to ask him questions. She added that she included an executive session in the agenda to provide an opportunity to discuss what the Board observed about President F. King Alexander's leadership performance at OSU in terms of its alignment with values and expectations of the university, especially with regard to Title IX; what the LSU report and subsequent information shared publically about Title IX matters at LSU indicate about Alexander's ability to lead OSU in ways that are consistent with values and expectations of the university; and what the community's response indicates in terms of Alexander's ability to lead OSU in a way that is consistent with the values and expectations of the university. Borkar said that she envisioned following the executive session with a public session to deliberate and set a path forward. She then invited any discussion from trustees that might propose a different course.

Trustee Paul Kelly made a motion to change the order of the agenda. He suggested moving the public comment segment to occur after an initial board conversation about the process and information needed to inform the Board's decision. Trustee Julia Brim-Edwards seconded the motion and expressed an interest in first hearing what trustees are thinking about a path forward. During discussion, several trustees expressed concern that adjusting the agenda would negatively affect those signed up to comment who had likely arranged their schedules to match the scheduled agenda promoted by public notice. Borkar asked the board secretary to take a roll call vote. On a 12-2 vote, the motion did not carry.

4. Public Comments

The following individuals provided public comment:

Tali Ilkovitch: expressed concerns about the Board's leadership and presidential hiring process and called for increased resources and programs to support survivors of sexual violence.

Kelly McElroy: expressed concern about Alexander's handling of Title IX and sexual misconduct at LSU and raised questions about the OSU Board's presidential hiring process.

Fiona Smith: Called for increased funding for support resources and the expansion of programs and services to support survivors of sexual violence.

Ann Rasmussen: expressed concern about Alexander's handling of Title IX and sexual misconduct at LSU and spoke about the need for accountability at OSU.

Kathleen Stanley: expressed concern about Alexander's leadership and raised questions about the Board's presidential hiring process.

Brenda Tracy: expressed concern about Alexander's leadership, raised questions about the process that led to his hiring, and called on OSU to take action to support survivors of sexual violence.

Daniel Rockwell: expressed concern about Alexander's leadership, raised questions about the process that led to his hiring, and emphasized the need to regain trust.

Erin Rook: expressed concern about Alexander's leadership and spoke about the importance of support resources and actions to support survivors of sexual violence.

Megan Ward: called for structural changes to support survivors and raised questions about the Board's presidential hiring process.

Dorina Waters: expressed support for survivors and called on OSU to provide support resources for survivors of sexual violence.

Aurora Sherman: reflected on past-president Ed Ray's 2014 apology to sexual assault survivors, noted the need for restorative justice and expressed concerns about Alexander's leadership ability to support survivors of sexual violence.

Sagan Wallace: expressed concerns about Alexander's accountability of previous actions and his understanding of and commitment to an adequate response to gender-based violence.

Colin Cole: expressed concerns about Alexander's willingness to learn and be held accountable and noted a lack of trust in the Board.

Jenna Riccolo: spoke on behalf of SEIU 503 and expressed concerns about the priorities of OSU's leaders and the allocation of resources at OSU.

Mark Baldwin: expressed the need for Alexander's public contrition and an increase in commitment to supporting survivors of sexual violence. He also expressed confidence in the Board to protect the institutional reputation of Oregon State.

Sahana Prasad: expressed concern about Alexander's leadership, raised questions about the Board's presidential hiring process, and emphasized the need to build trust.

Jo O' Harrow: expressed concern about Alexander's leadership and emphasized the importance of offering survivor-centered responses and resources.

Isabel Nuñez Pérez: shared a message on behalf of current and former representatives of the Associated Students of ASOSU expressing concern about Alexander's leadership.

5. Discussion

Borkar asked Alexander to provide an overview of his leadership of Title IX at LSU and his approach to preventing sexual misconduct and addressing it when it occurs.

She asked that he also share information and thoughts on his leadership at OSU on these matters. Alexander provided an opening statement addressing his leadership at LSU and OSU as it regards Title IX and sexual misconduct. During discussion, trustees asked questions about details in the LSU report and subsequent information shared publically, including questions about former LSU football coach Les Miles, the establishment of the Title IX office at LSU and its funding and staffing levels, and his actions to address recommendations following internal audits and internal and external assessments conducted at LSU.

6. Executive Session

At 4:11 p.m. Borkar announced that the Board was moving to an executive session pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(b) to consider the dismissal or disciplining of, or to hear complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual agent who does not request an open hearing and pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(i) to review and evaluate the employment-related performance of the chief executive officer of any public body, a public officer, employee or staff member who does not request an open hearing. Borkar stated that members of the news media and designated university staff would be allowed to attend the executive session. Other members of the audience were not allowed to attend the session. Borkar noted that no decisions would be made in executive session.

Borkar closed the executive session at 6:39 p.m. and trustees returned to the public session of the meeting.

7. Discussion/Action Item

Following executive session, Board members returned to public session for discussion and consideration of next steps and potential action. Borkar summarized the Board's discussion in executive session, which she said had covered a broad range of topics. Kelly expressed concerns about not having enough information to make an informed decision at this time. Trustee Patty Bedient noted that the discussion considered asking Alexander to come back with a plan, and Trustee Darry Callahan added that it would be important to consider what is best for the university. Trustee Michele Longo Eder acknowledged that questions had been raised about trust and leadership values.

Schueler made a motion to establish a probationary period for President Alexander to run through July 1, 2021, during which time:

1. The Board would conduct an evaluation to gather feedback to help inform President Alexander's success, address some of the leadership feedback received by community, and address issues informed by the LSU report.
2. President Alexander would bring a concrete plan to rebuild trust and relationships in the university, and a concrete plan to evaluate and improve policies, procedures, and meeting funding needs for Title IX reporting and survivors support services by July 2021, based on the investigation findings and through input from EOA, SARC, CAPS, SHS, as well as university student, faculty and staff affinity groups.

The motion was seconded. There was discussion of the motion, and several friendly amendments were offered. Following discussion, Schueler withdrew his motion, and Kelly withdrew his second.

Schueler then made a motion to set a probationary period for President Alexander through June 1, 2021, during which time:

1. The Board would conduct an evaluation to gather feedback to help inform President Alexander's success and to address leadership feedback received by the community.
2. The Board will direct the Executive & Audit Committee (EAC) to engage an independent outside consultant to review recommendations of the LSU report and follow up on any outstanding questions as identified by the EAC. Any report would be provided to the public, and the EAC would designate a point person to oversee the work of the consultant.
3. The Board will direct the president to review the recommendations of the LSU report and evaluate and identify opportunities to improve OSU's policies and procedures to assess funding needs for Title IX and survivor services.
4. The president will bring a concrete plan to rebuild trust and relationships in the university and address the feedback from the community received.

The motion was seconded. Borkar asked the board secretary to take a roll call vote. On a 12-2 vote, the motion carried. Following the vote, Alexander said he heard the concerns and would work diligently to move forward.

8. Adjournment

With no further business proposed, Chair Rani Borkar adjourned the meeting at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer M. Almquist
Assistant Board Secretary