

SUBJECT: Presidential Review Committee – January 30, 2026

The committee met remotely in accordance with the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Chapter 30A and An Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations, which among other things, extended the expiration of the provisions pertaining to the Open Meeting Law to 2027. All votes taken during this meeting were by roll call.

Present for the Committee: Trustees Cabral, Morales and Lampassi (chair).
Also, present and participating: Board Secretary Montague

Absent: Trustee Davis

I. Call to Order

Chair Lampassi called the meeting to order at 10:01 am and reviewed the committee's one agenda item, to review and act on the Presidential Review Report. In accordance with MA Board of Higher Education Compensation and Evaluation Guidelines for State University and Community College Presidents, the board of trustees must conduct annual evaluations of presidents. The evaluations must include:

- A submission of the president's self-evaluation
- An executive summary based on the BHE's template from the Presidential Review Committee which includes:
- A review of the institutional goals, state goals, and a recommendation for compensation adjustment should be included on a merit increase if any is available in that year.

The chair recalled that the committee began its review upon receipt of the president's annual report. A committee writer was selected to produce the executive summary report, the members reviewed the summary, and their edits were incorporated by the board secretary. The executive summary is attached.

Chair Morales and Trustee Cabral strongly supported President Keenan. Trustee Cabral highlighted positive feedback from LaVida Scholars staff about Salem State's programs.

Trustee Lampassi read the motion, which was moved by Trustee Cabral, seconded by Trustee Morales and by a roll call it was,

Voted: The Board of Trustees hereby accepts and submits, as presented, the AY 2024-2025 annual report of President John D. Keenan as approved at its February 4, 2026, meeting. Included in the Board's approval of the review is a recommendation, based on President Keenan's evaluation that he be given the maximum merit-based compensation adjustment consistent with the Department of Higher Education (DHE) Guidelines.

There being no further business to come before the committee, Trustee Cabral moved, and Trustee Morales seconded a motion to adjourn. By a roll call it was,

VOTED: to adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 am.

Respectfully submitted: L. Montague, Board Secretary and Special Assistant to the President

REQUEST FOR TRUSTEE ACTION

Date: January 30, 2026
To: Board of Trustees
Subject: Presidential Review and Compensation
Requested Action: Approval

An accomplished leader, President Keenan exemplifies an unwavering dedication to academic excellence, student achievement, and meaningful civic engagement. His dynamic leadership sets a powerful tone for the entire administration, inspiring those around him to strive for the highest standards and create lasting positive impacts within the university and the broader community. He has put in place the organization and processes necessary to move the university forward to meet the needs of Salem State today and in the future. President Keenan has a strong vision for the university that is community and regionally focused – and with the support of his board and campus, he will achieve it.

Per the Department of Higher Education’s Presidential Evaluation Guidelines, the presidential review committee (“PRC”) of the board of trustees has completed its report of President John Keenan’s performance for the academic year 2024-2025 and has deemed his performance to be exemplary.

Board of Trustees approval is requested for the following motion:

Recommended motion

MOTION: The Board of Trustees hereby accepts and submits, as presented the AY 2024-2025 annual report of President John D. Keenan as approved at its February 4, 2026, meeting. Included in the Board’s approval of the review is a recommendation, based on President Keenan’s evaluation that he be given the maximum merit-based compensation adjustment consistent with the Department of Higher Education (DHE) Guidelines.

Committee: Presidential Review Committee
Committee Action: Approved
Date of Action: January 30, 2026

Trustee Action:

Trustee Approval Date:

Effective Date:

Signed: Lynne Montague
Title: Secretary of Board of Trustees
Date: _January 30, 2026

2024-2025 Executive Summary

Presidential Review: Salem State University, President John D. Keenan

Presidential Review Committee

Jim Lampassi, Chair

Elizabeth Cabral

Alyce Davis

Samanda Morales, Ex Officio

I. The Review Process

The 2024-2025 Presidential Review Committee (PRC) was established earlier this year, and the annual review process was initiated with a charge from the Board Chair to the PRC to produce a report to be considered for a vote by the Board of Trustees on February 4, 2026. The PRC established the criteria for review, clarified the protocol for completion of the review, and determined the timeline of meetings required to submit a report to the Board of Higher Education.

As part of the annual evaluation process, the president prepares a self-evaluation (See Appendix 1).

The president's self-evaluation (PSE) is organized using statewide objectives, the University's Strategic Plan, and mutually established goals as a framework. The report is comprehensive and describes initiatives, planning, achievements, and challenges during the last academic year.

The Committee considered the president's performance in two broad areas: performance of Salem State in the context of statewide objectives, specific goals set forth by Salem State University, and advances made by focusing on the essential elements of student success and life readiness as set forth by the universities strategic plan.

II. The Performance Data to Support Conclusions and Recommendations

Performance data are embedded within each section of this document.

III. Summary Statement

President Keenan's commitment to the mission of Salem State University and its students remains evident in his leadership and the strategic direction he has set for the university. From fostering academic excellence, to a laser focus on student success and social mobility and the advancement of Salem State as a leader in the region, his unwavering optimism and proactive approach allow him to tackle any challenge that might hinder the university's progress. Achieving milestones like reaching the eligibility requirements to become a federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution, receiving national recognition for social mobility, launching innovative academic and workforce development programs, and breaking ground on a transformational

capital project underscore a dedication to advancing the university's mission and supporting its diverse community.

FY25 marked a pivotal year for Salem State University. The institution co-hosted the inaugural New England Hispanic and Minority Serving Institution Conference, welcoming over 400 participants and national leaders. SSU achieved a significant milestone by surpassing the 25% Hispanic student enrollment threshold, positioning itself to become Massachusetts' first four-year public HSI. Additionally, the university earned national recognition as the highest-ranking Massachusetts public university for social mobility by U.S. News & World Report and was named a top producer of Fulbright Scholars for the fourth time.

The opening of a state-of-the-art Cybersecurity Range enhanced hands-on learning and workforce development opportunities. Faculty and students received numerous awards and grants, including support for open educational resources and behavioral health internships. SSU was also recognized for excellence in student voter registration and turnout during the 2022 midterm elections and hosted Earth Days 2025, focusing on climate change impacts and biodiversity.

In 2024-2025, President Keenan maintained a strong focus on capital improvements and sustainability. In April 2025, SSU broke ground on two major capital projects—SSU BOLD, and North Campus Decarbonization. BOLD is the university's campus unification and modernization initiative, which includes significant renovations to the Horace Mann and an addition to Meier Hall. Decarbonization efforts will provide geothermal heating/cooling for the entire North Campus (eventually) alongside energy-efficient building upgrades (over \$150 million). The North Campus decarbonization project stands out as one of only two in the state university system and is intended to serve as a model for other campuses in the Commonwealth.

President Keenan has consistently prioritized equity, access, and support for underserved students. SSU expanded need-based and targeted financial support, increased the enrollment and retention of diverse and Pell-eligible students, implemented multilingual outreach, and developed comprehensive wraparound support services. These initiatives include persistence grants and programs tailored for first-generation and transfer students, designed to close opportunity gaps and promote student success.

To further enhance student success and life readiness, President Keenan and the academic affairs team revamped the General Education program, introduced workforce-aligned initiatives such as the Cyber Range and a cybersecurity minor, and expanded internship policies and opportunities. SSU also increased access to credentials, including Academic Seals in areas like sustainability and global awareness. The university is proactively preparing students to be ethical and active users of AI technology in the workplace by fostering critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills, ensuring that graduates are equipped to adapt and thrive in a rapidly evolving professional environment.

President Keenan and his advancement team have advanced the university toward 72% of its \$75 million campaign goal. The student financial assistance target of \$20 million was surpassed with

\$29.5 million raised, benefiting 1,790 students through various awards and grants, including 252 Viking Completion Grants and 902 awards from the Student Emergency Fund, which supports food and housing-insecure students. In FY25, two new scholarships were established, and SSU joined the Fidelity Foundation's Invest in My Education program, securing \$1 million in grants over three years (PSE 37).

President Keenan's leadership prioritizes both institutional advancement and the well-being of the campus community, as evidenced by investments in academic distinction, support for underserved populations, and engagement with civic and social justice initiatives. Civic and community engagement are central to Salem State University's identity. The university has pursued reclassification for the Carnegie Community Engagement designation, forged substantial partnerships with local organizations, integrated experiential learning and service events, and supported regional workforce development needs.

Thanks to President Keenan's leadership and the work of his financial team, the university restructured its debt to maintain student affordability by limiting tuition and fee increases and boosting financial aid. Over five years, financial aid grants as a proportion of tuition and fees rose from 39.1% to 61.9%, mainly due to increased state funding. Tuition and fees revenue decreased from \$80.4M (FY2021) to \$73.2M (FY25), while financial aid grew from \$31.5M to \$45.2M. The university ended FY25 with a positive net income of about \$9.8M.

President Keenan is an innovative, equity-minded leader who is responsive to both student and community needs. He is adept at securing resources and building partnerships to advance the university's mission, and champions bold strategic growth. President Keenan has positioned Salem State as a forward-thinking institution responsive to the evolving needs of its students and society. In summary, the Board of Trustees is confident that President Keenan is the leader that the Salem State wants right now.

A. Institutional Goals

AY2024-2025 Goals and Priorities by Division

Academic Affairs

- Academic Excellence and Active Learning
 - Assess and revise SSU's General Education (Gen Ed) curriculum, focusing on First Year Seminars.
 - Strengthen the "Culture of Assessment" by ensuring student learning outcomes for degree programs and establishing a plan for institutional outcomes assessment.
- Experiential Learning and Engagement
 - Create a consolidated inventory of courses with experiential learning elements.
 - Apply for recertification as a Civically Engaged Campus by the Carnegie Foundation.
- Student Engagement and Success
 - Increase faculty use of Navigate for advising.
 - Build capacity for Global Engagement in preparation for incoming cohorts from China, India, and the Philippines.

- Faculty Support and Growth
 - Implement an early-career faculty mentoring program (September 2025), focusing on universal design for faculty of color.
 - Revise the university's approach to supporting faculty in continuing scholarship.

Advancement

- Raise \$10 million towards Meet the Moment campaign.
- Create and implement an engagement strategy to strengthen connections with high-potential prospects and alumni, building a pipeline for future leadership donors

Finance And Facilities

- SSU BOLD
 - Develop strategies to mitigate parking challenges resulting from both the BOLD and Decarbonization initiatives.
 - Secure funding, progress through design phase, and initiate construction.
- Strategic Budget/Financial Management
 - Achieve a balanced budget within three years while managing reserves during deficits.
 - Train departments on fund utilization and improve Financial Aid reporting.
 - Revise templates and collaborate on 5-year proformas for strategic plan proposals.
- Dining Improvements
 - Enhance dining through program and financial improvements, including re-establishing food options.
 - Implement strategies to reduce the campus dining subsidy, ensuring sustainability.

General Counsel & Human Resources

Human Resources

- Implement new Human Capital Management (HCM) system PageUp across university.
- Ensure policies and practices promote collaboration among employees to support engagement and effective across on-campus, hybrid, and remote work models.
- Ongoing recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce in partnership with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion

ITS

- Refresh employee computers, many of which are outdated and unable to support new Microsoft applications
- Implement "Take-A-Class" to help both matriculated and non-matriculated students easily find available courses

Inclusive Excellence

- Steward SSU's transition to HSI-MSI status
- Reconstitute DEI Council as Inclusive Excellence Council (formerly PAC/D) to foster institutional transformation
- Strengthen Employee Resource and Affinity Groups (ERGs)
- Continue collaboration with SRS to prepare for equity audit in fall 2025

Student Success

- Admissions
 - Streamline and expand Direct Admissions to the Lynn school district and onboard the Common Application tool. Increase partnerships with P12 districts and community organizations, promoting affordable, barrier-free transfer pathways.
 - Collaborate with faculty, administrators, and students to share Salem State stories, raise public awareness, and define SSU's identity and value in the marketplace.

- Supports and Wraparound Services
 - Highlight the importance of advising in student success by utilizing technology, especially the Academic Planner/Navigator, to ensure accessible, equitable, and integrated advising.
 - Build strategic partnerships to increase student engagement with career services.
 - Guarantee the successful launch of the Center for Accessible Academic Resources (CAAR).
 - Build comprehensive training and support structures to equip staff with the knowledge needed to guide and coach students effectively.
 - Continue developing assessments to meet student needs (e.g., LOA reasons, post-appointment surveys).
 - Create programs that foster social and community connections.

- Enrollment Management
 - Complete campus-wide rollout of the Academic Planner to support advisors, administration, and students in course planning, boosting retention and degree completion.
 - Align Enrollment Management with the current and future needs of the student population.
 - Clearly communicate student rights and responsibilities, setting expectations for both staff and students during "business of being a student" activities with Enrollment Management and the Student Navigation Center.
 - Expand outreach and partnerships with local high schools.
 - Increase undergraduate Direct Admissions through the Common App program, targeting first-generation and marginalized students to eliminate barriers.
 - Streamline transfer credit processing with data automation to enhance efficiency and strengthen community college pathways.
 - Revise financial aid policies to remove barriers by maximizing Federal and State grants and institutional-based grants to reduce student debt.
 - Update campus tours to feature Salem State's sustainability efforts.
 - Emphasize student rights and responsibilities to foster engagement, empowerment, and progress toward goals.
 - Provide training opportunities for staff on addressing the evolving needs of students, including topics like crisis management, student trauma, and de-escalation techniques.
 - Partner with Decision Support, IT, and campus data stewards to identify data gaps and update Power BI reports.

- Marketing and Communications
 - Align student social media content with trends in student needs, including mental health, diversity, sustainability, and student life.
 - Continue to advocate for intuitive, straightforward communications in key areas, like student accounts, financial aid, housing, and registration, to help students and their families better understand this information.
 - Work to make campus-wide content more accessible to first generation students and their families, with a particular focus on the Hispanic and minority populations.
 - Enhance paid social media strategy—to help us reach a broader, more diverse audience and drive higher engagement rates.
 - Redevelop brand presence on third-party sites—identify new ways to assess, score and redevelop our brand presence on third-party sites, such as Google and college search results. This will involve optimizing our online presence to ensure accurate and positive representations of Salem State University to our wider marketplace.

- Student Life
 - Collaborate and implement programs to foster student involvement and community building.
 - Launch initiatives to enhance Student Life facilities including the Ellison Campus Center 5 Residence Halls, fitness center, athletic center, and fields.
 - Improve housing selection with new software and enhance resident student programming to increase housing retention.
 - Hire full-time directors for Orientation, Student Wellness, and the Center for Justice & Liberation.
 - Update policies and procedures to comply with the latest Title IX regulations.

The PRC has reviewed the metrics set last fall and found that the president had successfully exhibited outstanding leadership and management during the 2024-2025 academic year. The AY2025-2026 goals and priorities are set forth below, and we believe these goals are in keeping with the system-wide priority objectives set forth by the Board of Higher Education.

Academic Affairs

- Achieve full approval status from the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Nursing by ensuring timely compliance with all directives, revised policies, evaluation plans, and documentation standards.
- Revise the First Year Seminar (FYS) program—set clear learning outcomes, standardized templates, faculty training, and clarify leadership roles with a memorandum.
- Ensure all academic units define student learning outcomes and implement assessment plans using technology.
- Assess online programs to identify and address gaps and create a flexible three-year expansion plan targeting adult learners.

- Complete the second phase of the experiential learning study to improve integration, sense of belonging, and student retention.
- Develop a collaborative three-year strategy for international student recruitment, admission, and enrollment, engaging multiple university units.
- In collaboration with HSI-MSI leadership, launch a pilot faculty mentoring program for early-career faculty, modeled after the North Star Collective.
- Create and pilot a process for reviewing general education categories (excluding FYS), with a suggested review schedule.
- Enhance and market curricular offerings to differentiate SSU, including establishing clear academic pathways.
- Increase faculty engagement with the Navigate platform by 10% by June 2026, expand to more departments, and raise the number of submitted cases, progress grades, and advising campaigns.
- Educate about AI's impact, update policies for ethics and equity, mandate AI guidelines in syllabi, and encourage ongoing discussion of AI's role in academic programs.

Advancement

- Engagement & Community: Launch strategic outreach across New England and the eastern seaboard to achieve at least 40% new attendees at in-person events. Grow digital engagement by increasing social media followers by 10%. Foster an inclusive, collaborative team culture.
- Donor Relations: Enhance communications and stewardship with impact stories, annual reports, and data-driven strategies to improve donor effectiveness.
- Operational Excellence: Successfully transition to Raiser's Edge NXT and automate data imports. Ensure a timely, error-free FY25 audit. Manage board leadership transitions and recruit new committee members.
- Financial Sustainability: Raise \$10M toward the \$75M Meet the Moment® Campaign and \$375,000 in unrestricted support. Launch an integrated fundraising plan focused on science and healthcare, build partnerships, and enhance donor retention from 44% to 50%.

Finance & Facilities

- Advance BOLD, Decarbonization, and other major capital projects, including construction, space planning, budgeting, debt issuance, and facility upgrades.
- Utilize Commonwealth SUCCESS grant funding to support strategic goals through coordinated budget management.
- Enhance business processes for students, faculty, and staff by improving bookstore, dining, Clipper Card system, package lockers, and housing systems.
- Modernize financial operations by upgrading budget and accounts payable systems, automating workflows, increasing electronic payments, and streamlining purchasing and space planning processes.
- Address staffing needs by supporting transitions, planning for retirements, and hiring new facilities staff.

Human Resources & General Counsel

- Implement the new HCM system with PageUp, launching the talent management module and providing campus-wide training.
- Promote proactive, positive labor relations with unions for mutual benefit.
- Ongoing analysis of labor costs and hiring trends, including MEPA review, to optimize staffing levels.
- Ensure strong policies and practices to support employee engagement and morale across on-campus, hybrid, and remote work models.
- Conduct an HR satisfaction survey (separate from the campus climate survey) and consider an external review for recommendations.

Inclusive Excellence

- Office Reorganization: Update structures for Inclusive Excellence and Equal Opportunity Compliance, aligning with Student Success and streamlining workflows, roles, and communications.
- Inclusive Excellence Council (IEC): Activate subcommittees, set an annual work plan, and establish regular meetings for campus-wide progress.
- Unified Training Model: Integrate bias response education, EO compliance, and state-mandated training for consistency and transparency.
- Campus Climate Survey: Collaborate with Institutional Research and IEC to conduct and analyze a climate survey in Spring 2026, guiding improvements for AY26–27.
- Communications Strategy: Launch coordinated communications to increase visibility and engagement with Inclusive Excellence initiatives across campus platforms and events.
- Education & Training: Expand faculty/staff development in equity, inclusion, and pedagogy, with recurring, mission-aligned training series and CTI collaboration.
- Bias Response: Refine reporting protocols, promote restorative practices, and increase transparency through quarterly campus summaries.
- HSI–MSI Initiatives: Deepen collaboration to align equity goals, support culturally responsive programming, and benchmark institutional data.
- Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): Grow and support ERGs to enhance community-building and inclusion for faculty and staff.
- Equity-Focused Audits: IEC subcommittees will audit key campus systems and deliver recommendations to advance equity by May 2026.

ITS

User Services:

Prepare for Windows 10 support ending by replacing over 200 systems and 90 podiums with thin clients. Upgrade staff to laptops, with over 100 outdated Macs addressed. Nearly 50 campus display systems will be installed for university information and events. The Viking Connect

project will replace Polaris Launchpad and Posts, including migration and training. The Jira Change Management System will be implemented to formalize approvals and reduce downtime. Six Meier Hall classrooms will receive new AV equipment, with possible expansion. Around 50 conferencing systems will be upgraded to Logitech hardware for improved performance.

Core Services:

Evaluate single sign-on and MFA for PeopleSoft to reduce costs and support needs. New wireless access points will update campus connectivity. Replace Stanley building datacenter cooling units and fire suppression will be reviewed for better equipment protection. Disaster recovery planning includes migrating critical systems to Azure cloud. A dedicated hire will lead the digitization of paper forms through workflow automation.

Information Security:

Launch a multi-year Data Loss Prevention project starting with tool selection. Automate Identity Access Management to replace unreliable scripts. Enhance email security with AI-based protection and mandatory employee training resuming in October for compliance.

Student Success

- Develop and implement a Strategic Retention and Enrollment Management Plan with clear KPIs, focusing on retention strategies (assessment of FYS, advising improvements, N360 interventions, faculty-in-residence expansion, coaching/mentoring review) and expanding enrollment markets for all student types, including increased campus housing.
- Annually increase enrollment by a minimum of 25 undergraduate and 25 graduate students over the FY25 total, for each of the next five years.
- Pursue the Seal of Excelencia and Federal HSI designation; lead the MA State Consortium for HSI's and MSI's.
- Achieve federal accessibility compliance (WCAG 2.1 AA) for all digital platforms by 04/24/2026, including stakeholder training and ongoing review.
- Effectively manage the State SUCCESS funding program.
- Conduct a campus climate survey.
- Increase awareness of student services and resources within the campus community.
- Track and assess experiential learning, enhancing student development through career services, internships, and leadership opportunities.
- Grow conference and event services to boost programming and revenue.
- Expand AI education and integration across campus.
- Launch an ad campaign showcasing new lab and nursing patient spaces once available.

B. System-Level Goals

Salem State University continues to be guided by the system-wide goals set forth by the Board of Higher Education. Under President Keenan's leadership, the university implemented the following campus-level efforts to further the BHE's Equity Agenda and improve success rates for

all students with an emphasis on affordability and implementation of new financial aid.

Affordability and New Financial Aid Implementation

SSU prioritizes financial aid to ensure higher education is accessible for all students. Among state universities in Massachusetts, SSU stands out as having the second most diverse and third largest undergraduate population, with students hailing from 11 of the 26 Gateway Cities. The incoming class of 2024 was among the most racially and ethnically varied in SSU's history: 49.7% of first-year students and 45% of transfer students identified as non-white, up from 43.1% and 36.2% the previous year. Enrollment for Pell-eligible students climbed to 46% for the 2024-2025 academic year (a 7% increase) primarily due to expanded need-based financial aid and adjustments to the aid formula (PSE 15).

SSU advanced statewide affordability priorities through a comprehensive set of initiatives designed to reduce financial barriers and support student persistence. The university expanded financial counseling, literacy programming, and personalized aid outreach, contributing to increased enrollment of Pell-eligible students and historically underserved students. Targeted financial support, including completion grants for at risk seniors, persistence grants that boosted retention by more than 6 percentage points, and substantial external awards such as the Frieze Family Fund's Grad Last Mile grant further strengthened affordability.

SSU continued funding for undocumented DACA students through The Dream US and MassGrant Plus Expansion, while maintaining tuition burden lower than the national average (Table 17, PSE). These efforts demonstrate SSU's strong commitment to making higher education accessible and financially attainable for all students.

Wraparound Support Services:

Salem State University provides robust wraparound support services to ensure student success and well-being. The Student Navigation Center (SNC) centralizes key services like financial aid, billing, and registration, and leverages coaching and digital platforms to offer coordinated academic, financial, wellness, and co-curricular support. Academic Affairs collaborates with the Division of Student Success to proactively assist academically at-risk students through initiatives such as College Completion Coaches, Persistence Grants, and early intervention strategies. Career Services, the Gasset Fitness Center, and Campus Life further enrich the student experience by fostering career readiness, community engagement, and holistic wellness.

Additional support includes the Center for Accessible Academic Resources (CAAR), which brings together Disability Services, Peer Tutoring, and Supplemental Instruction, and works with other centers to strengthen foundational skills. Counseling and Health Services provides comprehensive mental health and wellness resources, including expanded counseling staff, a 24/7 support line, and accessible wellness products. Residence Life promotes accessibility and inclusion through accommodation requests, targeted initiatives for international and commuter students, and revised policies to improve access for those with assistance animals. These

wraparound services reflect SSU's commitment to equity, engagement, and achievement for all students.

IV. Recommendation for Compensation Adjustment

See Motion attached.

V. Supporting materials: charts, graphs, and/or data

1. John D. Keenan's Presidential Self Evaluation 2024-2025