Financial Sustainability Task Force
Working Group for Property and Infrastructure
Interim Report, 7 August, 2023

<u>Overview:</u>

Following the 14 June kickoff meeting for Phase II of the Financial Sustainability Task Force, the working group for property and infrastructure held seven weekly meetings from 21 June through 2 August, 2023. The group was initially co-chaired by a staff and faculty member – respectively Stefan Dodd and Sean C. Goodlett – but due to shifting responsibilities at the University, Stefan joined another working group, and on 26 July J.D. Head, the Assoc. Vice President for Capital Planning and Maintenance, became the staff co-chair. The working group members also included Mary Beth McKenzie (*ex officio*, as the executive cabinet's representative), Bradley Cohrs, Mike Desmarais, Cheryl Johnston, Matthew Letcher, Michael Letziesen, Diane Lucas, Nirajan Mani, and Angela Marini. (Ms. Lucas resigned from the committee in mid-July.)

In our weekly meetings, the group carried out a multitude of tasks with an eye toward fulfilling the charge of "developing specific and actionable recommendations to realize cost savings, increase revenues, and achieve greater efficiencies" (memo from Dr. Lapidus, 14 June, 2023). We first reviewed the Phase II charge and expected summer outcomes and then revisited the eight relevant bullet points in the Phase I report (on pp. 19-20) and three consolidated bullet points proposed by the executive cabinet. Working group members were also encouraged to consult the 2007 Fitchburg State Master Plan, 2020-2025 strategic plan, 2022 NECHE self-study, and Worcester State's 2022 Phase I financial sustainability task force report. In the ensuing weeks, we assembled data on physical or built structures as well as lands owned, occupied, or leased, software contracts, and hardware refresh cycles. We then utilized this data to determine our fall-term priorities (below). In the end, the group focused heavily on built structures, believing that most cost savings are to be achieved here, but we have agreed to continue our review of unoccupied lands for potential sale or future use, and we will return to the software contracts and hardware refresh rates – although these last two are admittedly lower priorities.

<u>Working Group Priorities:</u>

After a careful review of the Phase I recommendations and the consolidated recommendations by the E.C., the group settled on three priorities to focus on during the fall term and beyond:
- Review the current portfolio of University properties (i.e., built structures and lands) for highest and best use and fiscal and financial implications. Our preliminary review turned up roughly a dozen built structures in addition to select lands that will be our particular focus; the built structures we will focus on include (in alphabetic, not ranked, order):
  - Conlon IA and FA
  - 66 Day Street
  - Herlihy Hall
  - 164-174 Highland
  - 150 and 152 Main Street
  - Mara 6 and 7
  - 185 North Street
  - McKay A and B Wings
  - The Recreation Center
  - The Service Center
  - The Theater Block
  - Weston Hall
- Develop an inclusive planning process that annually reviews the portfolio of built structures and lands and makes recommendations for development, renovation, and sale or lease; such recommendations should comport with any strategic plan, the institutional vision, and the University's mission.
- Review select software contracts and hardware refresh rates for usage, redundancy, and fiscal and financial implications. Hardware refresh rates should take into consideration the lifecycle

efficiency of devices and how often the Technology department encounters repairs and hardware deficiencies.

Data/Information:

The working group examined a large amount of data. Where we encountered gaps were in deferred maintenance and future renovation costs (particularly on Foundation-owned properties), as well as potential debt loads and therefore the burden that ensues in student fees. As much as possible, we are requesting data that fills these gaps in our knowledge and understanding.