In Attendance: Trustees (via teleconference): Chair Joseph Morone, Vice Chair Jamie Burnett, Secretary Kassandra Ardinger, Amy Begg, Don Bix, Todd Black, Jim Dean, Jackie Eastwood, Frank Edelblut, Cathy Green, Cailee Griffin, George Hansel, Todd Leach, Scott Mason, Mike Pilot, Chris Pope, Mark Rubinstein, Morgan Rutman, Joe Scala, Marjorie Smith, Wally Stevens, Melinda Treadwell, Alex Walker, and David Westover. Trustees (at the system office): Cailee Griffin and Shawn Jasper. Staff (via teleconference): Paul Dean, Wayne Jones, Chris Clement, Lisa Shawney, Tara Payne, Scott Stanley. Staff (at the system office): Tia Miller, Cathy Provencher, Karen Benincasa, Lisa Thorne, Jim McGrail, and Ron Rodgers.

Call to Order: At 4:00 pm, Chair Morone called the meeting to order and noted the presence of a quorum sufficient for the conduct of business.

Determination of Conditions Necessary for the Conduct of a Telephonic Meeting: Chair Morone made the following findings and declaration, sufficient for the conduct of a telephonic meeting, counting all members toward the quorum requirement whether or not physically present in the meeting location:

Under the NH Right to Know Law, RSA 91-a:2, III (b), a governmental body such as this Board of Trustees is authorized to meet by conference call when “immediate action is imperative and the physical presence of a quorum is not reasonably practical within the period of time requiring action.” In consultation with USNH General Counsel, it is my determination that a meeting by conference call is justified on the basis of the following facts:

- The individual members of this Board live and work in locations remote to any single meeting place;
- The Governor’s declaration of emergency and Executive Order 2020-04, dated March 13, 2020, permits and encourages governmental bodies to conduct public meetings on an emergency basis using telephonic communications;
Given the members’ various professional and personal schedules it is not reasonably practical to gather a quorum of the Board members in a single place for a physical meeting;

The matter to be considered at this meeting developed only very recently;

The interests of USNH, its students, faculty, and staff, and the State of New Hampshire will be best served by Board’s expeditious consideration of and decision on the matter presented; and

The notice of the meeting was posted and members of the public are permitted to observe and listen to the proceedings at the Board Room at the System Office at 5 Chenell Drive in Concord, NH.

Discussion: Chair Morone led the Board in a review of the locus of authority to plan and execute the plans for responding to the coronavirus at the institutions and systemwide. In the end, while under current state law the Board of Trustees has the ultimate authority and responsibility for the virtually all aspects of the management of USNH, close collaboration throughout the USNH governance system and alignment with the state executive and legislative branches will be critical to the success of USNH’s effort to respond to the coronavirus crisis.

The presidents then updated the Board about current conditions at their institutions and the status of response planning efforts. Trustee Chris Pope described his experience in collaboration with the institutional health and safety officials working to prepare for crisis response.

Chancellor Leach updated the Board on systemwide preparation efforts, including continuing contact with the Governor’s Office and legislative leadership as well as the establishment of seven task forces covering the subject matter areas of: academics, research, budget and finance, employment, housing and dining, information technology, and campus safety.

Chair Morone then led the Board in an extensive discussion of whether to extend the current status of teaching all courses online beyond the current April 3, end date. In the end it was decided the situation is so rapidly evolving there would be substantially more information available shortly and, as a result, the Board should recess the meeting and reconvene for a continued meeting tomorrow, March 18, at 4:00 pm. The first question under consideration will be the possible extension of the end date. The Board will then discuss the financial contingency planning process. In the meantime, the Chancellor’s Office will remain in contact with the Governor’s Office and legislative leadership and accomplish the public posting of tomorrow’s continuation of this meeting.

Adjournment: At 6:05 pm, Chair Morone recessed the meeting of the Board of Trustees, to be continued at a special continuation meeting on March 18, beginning at 4:00 pm. The next regularly scheduled Board and committee meetings will be held on April 23 and 24, 2020, at Plymouth State University.