



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Approved 11/19/24

# Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

September 6, 2024  
2:30 – 4:00 P

*Or upon the conclusion of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee meeting*

Florida Polytechnic University  
Barnett Applied Research Center (BARC)  
and Virtual via Microsoft Teams

I. Call to Order

Chair Beth Kigel called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Kristen Wharton called the roll: Chair Beth Kigel, Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio, Trustee Ilya Shapiro, Trustee Patrick Hagen, Trustee Dorian Abbott, Trustee Lyn Stanfield, Trustee Cliff Otto, Trustee Sidney Theis, Trustee Christos Tsetsekas, and Trustee Brad Towle were present (Quorum).

Board Trustees not present: n/a

Staff Present: President Devin Stephenson, Interim Provost Brad Thiessen, Dr. Allen Bottorff, David Fugett, Mike Dieckmann, Kathy Bowman, Kelli Stargel, David Blanton, Melaine Schmitz, and Kristen Wharton

III. Public Comment

There were no requests received for public comment.

IV. Chair's Remarks

Chair Beth Kigel expressed her excitement to serve as Florida Poly's new Board Chair. She thanked her fellow trustees for their trust and confidence in her ability to lead and noted that it is an honor for her to serve alongside this group of servant leaders on the Board. Chair Kigel also thanked immediate past chair Cliff Otto for his four years of dedicated service as Board Chair.

Chair Kigel welcomed President Devin Stephenson to his first in-person Board meeting and shared about their consistent communication and collaboration since he took the helm of Florida Poly on July 7, 2024. She announced the date for the president's inauguration event which will take place on January 24, 2025.

V. President's Remarks

President Stephenson gave remarks on his first nine weeks as president, noting that Lakeland is quickly becoming "home" to him. He recalled the 4-L methodology he shared with trustees during his interview: look, listen, learn, launch. He is employing these four steps as he begins his work of moving the University forward. He noted his collaborative style of leadership, introducing staff who are part of the President's

Strategy Circle, and others who have had input in the discussions happening in these meetings. President Stephenson provided a quick review of his interactions with external partners as well as his engagement with faculty, staff, and students on campus.

VI. Florida Poly: A Historical Context to Inform Future Development

Steve Scruggs, President of the Lakeland Economic Development Council (LEDC), provided an in-depth, historical review of the birth and launch of Florida Polytechnic University. He also presented detailed information on current land development in proximity to campus along with recommendations to the Board on next steps for building a research park.

The Board engaged in a robust discussion about the recommendation that Florida Poly take the lead in bringing the cities of Lakeland and Auburndale, Polk County EDCs, investors, the Williams Company and the Board of Trustees together to begin crafting a plan to build a research park. Scruggs addressed the perception that warehouses are something to be avoided; however, many companies who conduct research operate in warehouses. Attracting companies who would have a direct tie-in to the University would be the best option when considering who to court. Scruggs stated firmly that Florida Poly needs to show initiative as all of the external partners are willing to move this project forward.

Board and administration agreed that the first step is to hire a company to conduct environmental testing on the 360 acres of land owned by Florida Poly located just over a mile from campus on University Blvd. Once it is determined to be developable or not, then the next step can be discussed.

VII. Faculty Senate President Report

Trustee Brad Towle, Faculty Senate President, presented his faculty report to the Board. He reported on initial productive meetings between the faculty chairs and Interim Provost Brad Thiessen. Items currently in discussion among faculty and with the Provost include research opportunities and presentations, maintenance of research equipment, faculty retention and hiring, reappointment and promotion processes, and the recently approved Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). Concerns of the faculty include teaching load as the student body increases and research and teaching expectations as the University considers becoming a doctoral university.

Trustee Dorian Abbot stated he is happy to hear the president and provost are listening to and communicating with faculty. He noted that research and teaching skills can be vastly different and might require hiring diverse types of faculties.

VIII. SGA President Report

Trustee Christos “Taki” Tsetsekas noted there is a new energy on campus from the freshmen class, crediting the positive changes in the orientation program. He also stated student engagement in campus activities has increased. Currently, there are 35 Registered Student Organizations (RSO) including four new organizations. Florida Poly gained notoriety when the Phoenix Racing Team placed 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation with their solar car. Parking continues to be an issue for students; however, he hopes that with the addition of parking lot 5 and extended shuttle schedules things will improve. Minor issues with the new residence hall are being resolved. Lastly, he encouraged trustees to not only think about economic development when considering the development of the land surrounding campus, but also think about attracting amenities that would create a better quality of life for students.

IX. 2024-2025 Board of Trustees Work Plan

Chair Kigel reviewed revisions to the Board of Trustees Annual Work Plan, which includes the Board’s work with President Stephenson to develop a new strategic plan for 2025-2030. There were no questions by the Committee on the Work Plan.

**A motion was made by Trustee Cliff Otto to approve the Board of Trustees Work Plan for FY25. Trustee Sidney Theis seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.**

X. Annual Review and Endorsement of Statement of Free Expression

Chair Kigel reminded trustees of the Board of Governors' recommendation that university boards of trustees annually review and endorse the Statement of Free Expression and commit to the principles of civil discourse. This Statement was provided in the Board's materials for their review.

**A motion was made by Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio to approve the Board of Governors' Statement of Free Expression. Trustee Brad Towle seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.**

XI. Consent Agenda

Chair Kigel brought forward the consent agenda for trustee approval.

- A. Governance, Audit, and Compliance Committee
  - 1. Approve the Governance, Audit, and Compliance Committee Charter
  - 2. Approve the UAC Risk Assessment and Audit Plan FY25
  - 3. Approve the UAC Compliance and Ethics Program Plan FY25
  - 4. Approve the Performance Based Funding (PBF) Audit Scope & Objectives 2024 Audit
  - 5. Approve the Trustee Evaluation Instrument for former president Dr. Randy K. Avent
  - 6. Approve the Policy on Public Comments at Board of Trustees Meetings
  - 7. Approve the President's Administrative Action Plan FY25
- B. Finance and Facilities Committee
  - 1. Approve the Finance and Facilities Committee Charter
  - 2. Approve the FY25 University Carryforward Spending Plan and Fixed Capital Outlay Budget
- C. Academic and Student Affairs Committee
  - 1. Approve the Academic and Student Affairs Committee Charter
  - 2. Approve the Annual Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability Report
  - 3. Approve the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)
- D. Board of Trustees
  - 1. Approve Board of Trustees Meeting minutes from July 29, 2024
  - 2. Approve Board of Trustees Meeting minutes from June 5, 2024
  - 3. Approve Board of Trustees Meeting minutes from April 15, 2024

Trustee Patrick Hagen noted a scrivener's error in the title before his name in the attendance section of all minutes. Corporate Secretary Kristen Wharton will correct these errors prior to posting the approved minutes.

**As each of the consent agenda items comes before the Board with unanimous approval from the respective Committees, there is no need for a second. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously with the agreement that the scrivener's error would be corrected.**

XII. Committee Reports

A. Governance, Audit, and Compliance Committee

Committee Chair Cliff Otto reported that David Blanton, CAE and CCO, presented the University Audit and Compliance (UAC) Annual Report. Blanton then presented the following items, all of which were

approved on today's consent agenda: UAC Risk Assessment & Audit Plan FYE 25, UAC Compliance & Ethics Program Plan FYE 25, and the Performance Based Funding Audit, Scope, and Objections FYE 24.

Committee Chair Otto also reported that David Fugett, VP and General Counsel, presented the Trustee Evaluation Instrument which will be used to evaluate former President Avent's performance FYE 2024. This instrument is based on former President Avent's Operational Goals FYE24 and will be sent to the Trustees, along with the former President's accomplishments, in mid-October for completion. The evaluation results will be presented at the November Board of Trustees meeting. Fugett also brought forward the Policy on Public Comments which was updated to remove the reference to the President as Corporate Secretary, in accordance with the BOG's amended Regulation 1.001 University Board of Trustees Powers and Duties.

Lastly, Dr. Stephenson presented the Employment Practices report as required by Florida Statutes. The report includes the results of performance evaluations and annual salaries for evaluated personnel earning over \$200,000. Additionally, the President provided a report and recommendations on employment practices.

#### B. Finance and Facilities Committee

Committee Chair Lyn Stanfield shared that the Committee reviewed the University's current contracts exceeding \$1M. Of the four FY24 contracts, one is an information technology contract, two are auxiliary enterprise contracts related to dining and housing, and one is part of capital construction activities. The Committee also received updates on the four major campus construction projects that are underway and Advancement and Foundation activities which included a review of the actual use of University personnel and property, totaling \$420,763.68 for FY24.

#### C. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Committee Chair Sidney Theis stated their Committee heard Interim Provost Brad Thiessen's report that Florida Poly welcomed its largest-ever incoming class of students, with a total enrollment of 1,774 students this fall. Housing occupancy is 85%, which may allow the University to meet its housing needs for one more year. Twenty-four new full-time faculty were hired; faculty and department chairs are evaluating existing academic programs and investigating new academic programs for growth. Additionally, while Florida Poly waits for the U.S. Department of Education to allow a shift to the Higher Learning Commission as the University's institutional accreditor, ABET will conduct a campus visit in October to evaluate six academic programs.

In addition, the Committee reviewed and approved the Annual Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability Report, which demonstrates Florida Poly's compliance with state requirements and efforts to reduce textbook costs, and the 2024-2027 Collective Bargaining Agreement.

### XIII. Board of Trustees Meeting Calendar

Chair Kigel stated the Board has an updated meeting calendar to approve for the rest of 2024 and 2025. Revisions include changes to the September 2024 meeting schedule, however, no other changes to the calendar have been made.

**A motion was made by Trustee Cliff Otto to approve the revised Board of Trustees meeting calendar for 2024-2025. Trustee Sidney Theis seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.**

XIV. Board of Governors Meeting Calendar

Chair Kigel shared that the next Board of Governors meeting will be held on September 18 at USF in Tampa. This meeting will be Dr. Stephenson's first in-person BOG meeting; as Chair Kigel will be traveling internationally that week, Vice Chair Panuccio will attend the BOG meeting with Dr. Stephenson.

XV. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kristen J. Wharton  
Corporate Secretary