



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes Approved 11.20.24

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

September 30, 2024
1:00 – 2:00 P

Florida Polytechnic University
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 Sidney Theis, Trustee Christos Tsetsekas, and Trustee Brad Towle were present (Quorum).

Board Trustees not present: Trustee Cliff Otto

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

III. Public Comment

There were no requests received for public comment.

IV. Strategic Planning Summit Report

Dr. Stephenson gave a report on activities since the Strategic Planning Summit was held on September 7, 2024. He reviewed the three priorities Dr. Craig Collins, facilitator at the Summit, recommended the University focus on based on the information gathered that day:

1. Comprehensive Institutional Growth
2. Advancement through Intentional Resource Development
3. Academic and Industry Collaborative Partnerships

Dr. Stephenson then reviewed a tentative timeline for completion of a draft of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.

Trustee Sidney Theis asked for further clarification on priority #2. Dr. Stephenson responded that the University will be intentional, measured, and focused when soliciting fundraising dollars. Trustee Dorian Abbot inquired if someone oversees sponsored research for faculty to which

Provost Brad Thiessen replied in the affirmative. Trustee Brad Towle asked about the status of engaging a firm to do a feasibility study on the University-owned property off of University Blvd. Dr. Allen Bottorff replied that a firm has been engaged to conduct the study and results will be forthcoming.

V. Academic and Student Affairs

A. Accreditation Update

Provost Thiessen reviewed the recently published USNWR rankings before providing his update on accreditation. He stated that he received a letter from the Department of Education on September 11, 2024, which approved Florida Poly to make the change in accreditors from SACSCOC to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Florida Poly's "best case" scenario for initial accreditation has HLC making their accreditation decision by February 2026. The maximum allowable time to complete this process has HLC making their decision by February 2027.

When asked by Trustee Sid Theis why the University wanted to change accreditors, Thiessen replied that HLC is more efficient and more responsive to innovative programs. Trustee Taki Tsetsekas asked if moving to HLC would change curriculum, course flows, or Capstone. Thiessen said HLC does not require the University to change anything that is currently in place.

B. Online Master's Degree Program

After reviewing current market trends for online engineering programs, Provost Thiessen presented several pathways for Florida Poly to move forward with an online Graduate program. He asked trustees if offering an online master's degree program is consistent with the mission and goals of Florida Poly.

Trustee Brad Towle responded that as long as it's not a "blanket" policy, there are cases where having an online degree could be useful and appropriate. He discouraged making computer science an online degree as he felt it would dilute the quality of the program.

Trustee Patrick Hagen believed having an online degree program would assist with market recognition, as well as assist the commuter student who would have to travel a great distance to attend in-person classes.

Trustee Ilya Shapiro recommended surveying the faculty to find out what degree programs might be feasible, as well as researching what our peer institutions are doing in this arena.

Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio was not in favor of an online degree program. He believes while the University is still building the campus culture, it is important for students to be on campus and to work together in person. It is not time for Florida Poly to offer an online degree yet.

Provost Thiessen responded to trustees stating Florida Poly will conduct additional market research and draft a proposal for the Board to review and approve. The intent is to offer a quality program online, not just "any" program online.

C. Faculty Hiring

Provost Thiessen quickly reported that he met with Faculty Department Chairs and together, they developed three focused steps on how to improve faculty hiring and retention.

VI. Governance: Regulations

A. FPU-3.006 Student Code of Conduct

David Fugett, Vice President and General Counsel, presented four amendments to regulations that put the University ahead of illegal activities other campuses experienced with protests this past year. These changes will keep Florida Poly in line with the other SUS institutions throughout Florida.

This regulation is being amended to update position titles, clarify that the student code of conduct extends to student teams and groups, and add that wearing a face covering with the intent to conceal one's identity or while engaging in other forms of misconduct as a form of misconduct.

Trustee Brad Towle made a motion to approve amended regulation FPU-3.006 Student Code of Conduct. Trustee Sid Theis seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

B. FPU-1.009 Commercial Solicitation on University Property

Fugett stated that this regulation is being amended to clarify restrictions on temporary signage and the distribution of materials on University property. Trustee Towle inquired what is meant by "materials." Fugett responded it refers to printed materials that are physically handed out.

Trustee Sid Theis made a motion to approve amended regulation FPU-1.009 Commercial Solicitation on University Property. Trustee Lyn Stanfield seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

C. FPU-1.007 Campus Free Expression

Fugett shared that this regulation is being amended to clarify the use of outdoor space for expression activities, place time restrictions on certain expressive activities to ensure the safety and welfare of the University community, to allow the President to identify additional restricted access areas of campus, and to clarify that violation of the regulation may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Trustee Shapiro noted that the time period for this policy says, "sunset to 8am." He inquired if the regulation needs to state a "time certain" for sunset. Fugett replied that he would like to have this regulation amended today; however, he will change the wording to include "time certain" according to the Florida Agricultural Department. The additional revision will require Board approval again at its meeting in November.

Vice Chair Panuccio asked about subsection C regarding the president's ability to identify additional restricted access areas of campus. He is concerned about the open-ended nature of the language of this provision. Fugett responded that this provision gives the president some

leeway for making decisions for the health, safety, and welfare of the campus community; however, he is willing to seek better language.

Trustee Abbot recommended adding language regarding using speech amplification when classes are in session under item 4.D. Fugett noted that amplification is already noted in the regulation under item 4.F.

President Stephenson confirmed the importance of having these regulations updated now, given discussion at the Florida Board of Governors level.

Trustee Ilya Shapiro made a motion to approve amended regulation FPU-1.007 Campus Free Expression with proviso that comments by Trustees be considered and further amended at an upcoming Board of Trustees meeting. Trustee Brad Towle seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed, with one dissenting vote.

D. FPU-1.003 Use of University Facilities and Property

Fugett continued, stating that this regulation is being amended to clarify restrictions on the use of tents and other similar structures on campus, and to clarify that camping is prohibited on campus.

Vice Chair Panuccio inquired if there are definitions for “tent,” “temporary structure,” etc. Fugett clarified the difference between a tent set up for shade versus a sleeping tent. Trustee Towle clarified that a shade tent is fine as long as it is not standing overnight; Fugett confirmed.

Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio made a motion to approve amended regulation FPU-1.003 Use of University Facilities and Property. Trustee Ilya Shapiro seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

VII. University Foundation

A. Foundation Board of Directors Reappointments and Appointments

Kathy Bowman presented a slate of candidates for re-appointment and appointment to the Foundation Board of Directors. Each candidate was confirmed by the Foundation Board of Directors on September 13, 2024, and now come to the University Board of Trustees for final confirmation.

Trustee Christos Tsetsekas made a motion to approve the following reappointments and appointments to the Florida Polytechnic University Foundation Board of Directors:

Reappointments

- **Phillipa Greenberg**
- **Jack Harrell, III**
- **Kristen Lowers**
- **Joshua McCoy**
- **Ivette O’Doski**
- **Don Wilson**

Appointments

- **Nicholas (Nick) Barnett**
- **Randall (Randy) Knapp**
- **Lang Towl – SGA Vice President**

Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

VIII. FY24 Employee Bonus Plan Certification

Dr. Allen Bottorff quickly noted that by Board of Governors regulation, the university president certifies the previous years' bonus plan before submission to the BOG. In FY24, five bonuses for work performance were awarded to five employees.

IX. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 2:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kristen J. Wharton
Corporate Secretary