



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

June 30, 2025
12:00 – 1:00 P

Florida Polytechnic University
Virtual via Microsoft Teams

I. Call to Order

Chair Beth Kigel called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 12:00 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 Cliff Otto, Trustee Sam Neelam, Trustee Eliot Peace, Trustee Colby Manrodt, and Trustee Edwar Romero were present (Quorum).

Board Trustees not present: N/A

Staff Present: President Devin Stephenson, Provost Brad Thiessen, Dr. Tanner McKnight, Bryan Brooks, Cole Allen, Kelli Stargel, David Calhoun, Melaine Schmiz, and Kristen Wharton

III. Public Comment

There were no requests received for public comment.

IV. Resolution 2025-006 Signature Authority on Depository Accounts

Melaine Schmiz, Associate General Counsel, presented *Resolution 2025-006: Signature Authority on Depository Accounts* for Board approval. The resolution seeks to remove Dr. Allen Bottorff and add Dr. Tanner McKnight as authorized signatories on all University deposit accounts. No questions were raised regarding the resolution.

A motion was made by Trustee Patrick Hagen to approve Resolution 2025-006 Signature Authority on Depository Accounts. The motion was seconded by Trustee Lyn Stanfield; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

V. University Operating Budget FY26

President Devin Stephenson introduced Dr. Tanner McKnight, Interim Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, describing him as an outstanding accountant and an excellent financial forecaster with prior experience serving as a VP and CFO in higher education.

Dr. McKnight then presented the University's Education and General (E&G) operating budget, broken down by division. He noted a line item for non-recurring expenses totaling \$19,504,509, representing non-recurring funds the University will receive, which are designated for special projects to be discussed later in the meeting. He also highlighted that Florida Poly allocates 54% of its budget to personnel and 46% to operational expenses, compared to the industry average of 60% for personnel and 40% for operations.

Dr. McKnight then presented a slide highlighting expense variance between FY25 and FY26, noting that budgets have been reduced across nearly every division for FY26. He also shared the total operating budget requests, including "other funds expense," bringing the total FY26 expense budget request to \$111,961,685. Finally, he reviewed Florida Poly's revenue sources, which include non-recurring funds for FY26, also totaling \$111,961,685, thereby presenting a balanced budget.

Following the budget review, five vice presidents provided tangible examples of how their divisions plan to utilize allocated funds. Provost Brad Thiessen began by outlining the goals for Academic Affairs, emphasizing that the largest investment is in faculty. He announced the addition of 25 new faculty members for the upcoming academic year and shared his plans to:

1. Build new industry-responsive academic programs and refreshed curriculum
2. Build a Faculty Center for Teaching and Innovation
3. Implement intrusive advising and success coaching

Bryan Brooks, vice president, student affairs, enrollment management, and strategic communications stated his division will:

1. Update Florida Poly's website
2. Add enhanced digital signage across campus
3. Add high-definitions screens in IST and BARC
4. Build a state-of-the-art esports arena
5. Establish a NAIA athletics program

Trustee Ilya Shapiro asked whether the University's charter prohibits professional sports. President Stephenson responded that it does not.

Trustee Cliff Otto inquired about dorm occupancy. Brooks reported that dorms are expected to be 85–90% occupied in Fall 2025 but noted that Fall 2026 may present challenges. Chair Kigel added that further discussion on this topic is necessary.

Kelli Stargel, vice president of strategic initiatives, development, and external relations, reviewed her division's goals:

1. Participate more actively in regional development efforts
2. Expand opportunities for faculty to engage in global academic partnerships, research collaborations, and work alongside experienced international colleagues
3. Manage alumni more efficiently through a centralized platform that streamlines communication and outreach

Cole Allen, interim vice president and CIO, reviewed his division's projects:

1. Install Next-Gen outdoor wireless network
2. Complete cloud telephony migration
3. Digitize workflows and documents

To address Trustee Otto's concern about housing capacity, Dr. McKnight noted that he met with Brailsford & Dunlavey last week and plans to meet with representatives from the Division of Bond Finance to discuss the University's need for additional residential housing. He stated that if the University were to proceed with a plan right now, the new facility would not be completed until Fall 2028.

Dr. McKnight then shared the goals of his division:

1. Enhance the fiscal transparency of the University
2. Further develop DOGE mentality in daily operations
3. Conduct a funds-maximization study

Chair Kigel stated that she feels confident in the budget as presented. She commended Dr. Stephenson and his team for consistently aligning each budget item with both the University's strategic plan and the President's FY26 Administrative Action Plan.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio to approve the University Operating Budget for fiscal year 2026. The motion was seconded by Trustee Sid Theis; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

VI. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) FY27

David Calhoun, Assistant Vice President of Facilities and Safety Services, presented the FY27 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He identified three priorities, two of which were recommended through the educational plant survey: the Student Achievement Center (StAC) with a budget of \$84.7 million; the Campus Relocation Project budgeted at \$10 million; and Academic Building Three, allocated \$66.5 million.

A motion was made by Trustee Ilya Shapiro to approve the University's Capital Improvement Plan for fiscal year 2027. The motion was seconded by Trustee Patrick Hagen; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

VII. Legislative Budget Request (LBR) FY27

Kelli Stargel introduced the Legislative Budget Request (LBR) to the Board. The request includes an operations request in the amount of \$15M to support the "Rising to 3,000: Expanding Florida Poly's Impact" initiative. The LBR also includes a \$42.4M PECO fund request for the construction of the StAC.

Trustee Otto asked when Stargel expects to receive news about the PECO funding. Stargel responded that she anticipates hearing an update very soon.

Trustee Shapiro inquired about the effectiveness of Florida Poly Day. Stargel replied that the event, along with ongoing efforts by the strategic communications team following Florida Poly Day, has been greatly beneficial in maintaining Florida Poly's visibility with legislators.

A motion was made by Trustee Sid Theis to approve the fiscal year 2027 Legislative Budget Request. The motion was seconded by Trustee Ilya Shapiro; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Strategic Plan 25|30 Initiatives

President Stephenson asked three vice presidents to highlight key initiatives designed to expand the institution's capacity and foster additional partnerships:

1. **Engineering Forward**

Presented by Bryan Brooks

This initiative focuses on revamping the Career Services Department to significantly expand industry partnerships. The goal is to double the number of industry partners, creating more direct employment pathways for Florida Poly students.

2. **P-Sail**

Presented by Cole Allen

P-Sail is part of a federally funded collaboration with the Polk County Sheriff's Office. It integrates AI-focused research with a student-run security operations center. Additional funding is being requested to support and sustain this important work.

3. **Florida Institute for STEM Teaching and Learning**

Presented by Brad Thiessen

This initiative aims to partner with collegiate schools to establish clear pathways for students to transition to Florida Poly. It will also provide instruction for K-12 and state college STEM educators through online and/or in-person programs.

IX. Board of Trustees Meeting Dates: 2026-2027

Chair Kigel referenced the proposed committee and Board meeting dates through the academic year 2027. Trustee Patrick Hagen expressed appreciation for the updated meeting schedule but requested that staff also review the November meeting dates and provide alternative options. Corporate Secretary Kristen Wharton agreed to review the dates and welcomed input from Trustees.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio to approve the proposed committee and board meeting dates through academic year 2027. The motion was seconded by Trustee Sumanth Neelam; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

IX. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kristen Wharton
Corporate Secretary