



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Strategic Initiatives and External Relations **DRAFT** Meeting Minutes

November 10, 2025
11:00 A – 11:45 A

Florida Polytechnic University
Virtual via Microsoft Teams

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Beth Kigel called the Strategic Initiatives and External Relations Committee meeting to order at 11:01 a.m.

II. Roll Call

Kristen Wharton called the roll: Committee Chair Beth Kigel, Committee Vice Chair Sumanth Neelam, Trustee Eliot Peace, Trustee Colby Manrodt, and Trustee Jesse Panuccio were present (Quorum).

Committee members not present: n/a

Other Trustees Present: Trustee Sid Theis

Staff Present: Provost Brad Thiessen, Dr. Tanner McKnight, David Blanton, Cole Allen, Kelli Stargel, Joshua Millican, and Kristen Wharton

III. Public Comment

There were no requests received for public comment.

IV. Approval of the September 18, 2025, Minutes

Trustee Colby Manrodt made a motion to approve the Strategic Initiatives and External Relations Committee meeting minutes for September 18, 2025. Trustee Jesse Panuccio seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

V. 2025-2026 Strategic Initiatives and External Relations Work Plan

Committee Chair Kigel reviewed the Strategic Initiatives and External Relations Committee Work Plan. There was no discussion on this item.

VI. External Relations and Economic Development

Vice President Kelli Stargel briefed the Committee on the University's engagement levels with corporate and industry partners: partnership, engagement, exploration, and introduction. She also announced a new initial level of engagement, "pursuing," for organizations at the earliest stage of relationship development. Stargel then provided updates on current partnerships.

Chair Beth Kigel noted that one company had been referred to Florida Poly by Florida Commerce, which—along with Select Florida—continues to keep the University top of mind for collaborative opportunities. She added that the upcoming Board Retreat will help shape priorities and identify which industry partners the University should actively pursue.

Stargel concluded with an overview of additional companies currently engaged with Florida Poly, as well as those in the exploration, introduction, and pursuing stages.

VII. Government Relations

Committee Chair Kigel prefaced Stargel's presentation by noting that the Florida Legislature is currently in Committee Weeks in Tallahassee, with Session scheduled to begin on January 13, 2026.

Stargel outlined the ongoing work of her team during Committee Weeks and provided an update on the University's Legislative Budget Request (LBR). She reported that Senator Burton will shepherd both of Florida Poly's legislative budget requests through the Senate, while Representative Canady will present the operational request and Representative Tomkow will present the Student Achievement Center (StAC) request in the House. Stargel noted that talking points will be provided to each trustee, and her team can schedule legislative appointments for anyone planning to be in Tallahassee in the coming months.

While no date has been set for Florida Poly Day at the Capitol, Stargel aims to hold the event early in Session. Potential dates will be shared with trustees interested in participating. Chair Kigel asked about the funding outlook for the coming year. Stargel responded that the Legislature intends to reduce the state budget by \$2 billion, signaling a potentially tight budget year.

Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio encouraged continuing to make the full request for the University's needs while also beginning conversations about longer-term priorities for the coming years. Chair Kigel emphasized the importance of demonstrating return on investment and outcomes. She suggested that Stargel's team invite companies, industry partners, and Foundation Board Directors who may be willing to advocate alongside the University and the Board of Trustees.

Federal Update: Congressman Franklin has submitted a funding request for Florida Poly to establish a Public Service Applied Innovation Laboratory (PSAIL). The program would support the creation of a high-impact experiential learning initiative focused on cybersecurity and artificial intelligence (AI). Stargel is awaiting final confirmation from the Congressman's office regarding the request.

VIII. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kristen Wharton

Corporate Secretary to the Board of Trustees