



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

**November 19, 2025
8:30 A – 12:00 P**

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 8:31 a.m.

II. Roll Call

Kristen Wharton called the roll: Chair Beth Kigel, Trustee Ilya Shapiro, Trustee Patrick Hagen, Trustee Sam Neelam, Trustee Eliot Peace, Trustee Sidney Theis, Trustee Colby Manrodt, and Trustee Edwar Romero-Ramirez were present (Quorum).

Board Trustees not present: Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio

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

III. Public Comment

There were no requests received for public comment.

IV. 2025-2026 Board of Trustees Work Plan

Chair Beth Kigel reviewed the Board of Trustees Annual Work Plan. She drew trustees' attention to the Code of Ethics compliance form which all trustees must review and sign annually. There were no other comments or questions on this item.

V. Chair's Remarks

Chair Kigel highlighted the ribbon cutting for the Gary C. Wendt Engineering Center and expressed appreciation for Mr. Wendt's generosity. She also thanked President Stephenson, staff, and trustees for a productive Board retreat and announced the formation of an ad hoc committee, led by Vice Chair Panuccio, to collaborate with staff on development strategies for areas surrounding the University. She noted that the retreat produced strong alignment on academic priorities, partnership approaches, and future fundraising direction for the Foundation. Chair Kigel also reported on last week's Board of Governors' meeting, encouraging trustees to review the SUS System Efficiency Study and noting several areas where the University performed exceptionally well.

VI. President's Remarks

President Devin Stephenson reviewed key activities since the last University Board meeting. He noted that Florida Poly hosted the Higher Education Innovation President's Conference, an MOU signing with Sittadel, and Representative Scott Franklin's "Capture the Flag" cybersecurity competition for high-school students. The admissions team also hosted Phoenix Discovery Day with 145 prospective students and families. Additional highlights include progress from the Fulbright cohort and participation in the Select Florida Trade Mission, where Secretary Kelly has already provided two promising global trade leads. Finally, Florida Poly senior, Valerie Fontanez, received recognition for her campus-parking analysis, which enabled the cancellation of a \$120,000 contract, a significant cost-savings to the University.

VII. Faculty Senate President's Report

Trustee Edwar Romero presented his faculty report. He highlighted Florida Poly's recent USNWR rankings and recognized the notable achievements of several mechanical and environmental engineering faculty, students, and alumni. Trustee Romero commended the faculty's dedication to student success and the University's rising reputation in STEM.

VIII. Student Government Association President's Report

Trustee Colby Manrodt reported that he has tasked his SGA officers with creating a Shark Tank-style pitch night for the spring semester. They are also exploring a maker's fair and establishing a future homecoming tradition. He noted collaboration with Facilities on revitalizing the Oak Grove outdoor space and highlighted the upcoming "Rally in Tally," where he and other SUS SGA presidents will advocate for university student priorities.

Trustee Manrodt shared that overall student sentiment and campus culture is positive, crediting Dr. Stephenson for his leadership. He concluded by announcing plans for Florida Poly's SGA to pursue the Florida Student Association chair position, noting that serving as FSA Chair would mark a significant milestone for the university.

IX. Faculty Presentation: Dr. Chris Kelley

Dr. Chris Kelley, Assistant Professor in Mechanical Engineering, provided an overview of his current research on human movement using engineering control theory, with a focus on applications in Parkinson's disease (PD). Supported in part by an NSF grant, his work investigates how the brain generates and sends signals that produce movement, and how disruptions in these signals contribute to PD symptoms.

X. Economic Impact Study

Dr. Rick Harper presented the latest analysis of Florida Polytechnic University's economic impact on the state of Florida. His findings show that the University generates \$523 million in annual GDP at both the local and state levels and supports 6,168 jobs. These figures represent a threefold increase since the previous economic impact study conducted in 2019.

Dr. Harper also highlighted that Florida Poly delivers the highest return on investment (ROI) among SUS institutions, combining the highest graduate earnings one year after graduation with the lowest net tuition and fees. He shared a series of charts and graphs illustrating economic trends and providing trustees with broader context on both state and national economic conditions.

XI. Consent Agenda

Chair Kigel brought forward the consent agenda for trustee approval.

A. Finance and Facilities Committee

- 1. Approve the Student Achievement Center Construction Manager at Risk Request for Qualifications (RFQu)**

B. Board of Trustees

- 1. Approve Board of Trustees Meeting minutes from September 26, 2025**

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.

XII. Committee Reports

A. Strategic Initiatives and External Relations Committee

Committee Chair Beth Kigel reported that on November 10, the Committee received two updates from Kelli Stargel, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Development and External Relations. Stargel presented a report on Corporate and Industry Partnerships, highlighting current engagement activity and announcing the addition of a new “pursuing” stage within the partnership engagement strategy.

Stargel also provided an update on Government Relations, covering recent legislative committee meetings, plans for Florida Poly Day, and developments related to federal funding and the appropriations process.

The Committee had no items requiring action by the full Board.

B. Finance and Facilities Committee

Committee Vice Chair Eliot Peace reported that the University ended the first quarter of FY25 with strong finances, showing \$9.6 million in revenues over expenditures and a \$8.6 million increase in net position.

Updates on capital projects included progress on the Public Safety & Operations Center, Parking Lot 6 Expansion, and planning for the Student Achievement Center, along with several smaller facility upgrades.

The Committee also received an Advancement and Foundation update, including the formation of a special Campaign Committee and plans for a January retreat. Finally, in today’s consent agenda, the Board approved the Committee’s recommendation of the two-step process for selecting a construction management firm for the Student Achievement Center.

C. Governance, Audit, and Compliance Committee

Committee Chair Ilya Shapiro reported that David Blanton, CAE and CCO, provided an update on current and upcoming University and Foundation audits. Blanton also confirmed compliance with Fall 2025 Textbook Affordability and Transparency requirements and noted that all corrective actions from the Auditor General’s IT audit have been completed or appropriately addressed.

Chair Shapiro presented two items requiring Board action: (1) approval of the Composite of

Trustees' Evaluation of President Stephenson, and (2) approval of the President's compensation adjustment and bonus.

1. Composite of the Trustees' Evaluation. Chair Shapiro reported that all nine trustees participated in the President's Annual Review. The Committee recommended approval of the Composite of the Trustees' Evaluations as the President's 2024–25 evaluation. Chair Kigel shared positive feedback on the president's performance from Board of Governors Chair Lamb.

As this item, approval of the “President’s Annual Review, July 2024 to June 2025, Composite of the Trustees’ Evaluations” as the document reflecting the President’s Evaluation, comes before the Board with unanimous approval from the Governance, Audit, and Compliance Committee, there is no need for a second. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. Compensation and Bonus. At the Committee's recommendation, the Board of Trustees quickly reached consensus to award the President a 3.5% base salary increase. Discussion regarding the President's bonus ranged from 25% to 28% of his current base salary. Some trustees favored the lower percentage given that this was the President's first year, while others supported a higher percentage in recognition of his strong performance and foundational accomplishments. Chair Kigel emphasized several key achievements—including the development of a new strategic plan, legislative successes, administrative and academic improvements, enhanced faculty recruitment, positive student engagement, and record enrollment—as reasons to support a higher bonus percentage.

Rather than voting on both the compensation adjustment and bonus in the same motion, Chair Kigel chose to separate them into two motions:

Trustee Eliot Peace motioned to award President Devin Stephenson a 3.5% increase to his base salary. Trustee Sid Theis seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Trustee Ilya Shapiro motioned to award a performance compensation bonus in the amount of 27.5% of the President's current annual base salary. Trustee Patrick Hagen seconded the motion; after additional discussion, a vote was taken, and the motion failed to pass, 5-3.

Additional, yet brief, discussion occurred before a second motion was made:

Trustee Sumanth Neelam motioned to award a performance compensation bonus in the amount of 28% of the President's current annual base salary. Trustee Colby Manrodt seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

XIII. 2025-2030 Strategic Plan: Progress 2025

Dr. Tom Dvorske, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, provided an update on the progress of the 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, noting that most initiatives remain on schedule for completion. He highlighted several key areas of advancement, including the development of specialized alumni networks, the expansion of academic programming, and the modernization of information systems. He also outlined ongoing efforts to increase resources that support research, strengthen faculty retention, and expand collaboration with industry and academic partners.

XIV. Legislative Advocacy Plan

Kelli Stargel reviewed the goals and objectives for the upcoming legislative session. She noted that the year is expected to bring a tighter state budget and increased competition for available funding.

Florida Poly's 2026 legislative priorities include requesting \$15 million in operational support, and \$42.4 million in capital outlay for the Student Achievement Center (StAC), as well as the advancement of initiatives that further the University's mission. Stargel also outlined the key messages to share with legislators and invited trustees to participate in Florida Poly Day at the Capitol, encouraging them to help deliver these messages alongside students. Trustee Patrick Hagen remarked that the students were the "stars" of last year's Florida Poly Day.

XV. Faculty Presentation: Dr. Jun Kim

Dr. Jun Kim, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, presented his students' work in water research, including sample collection, laboratory analysis, and development of a solution for a water issue in the city of Winter Haven. Their efforts received "impressive" feedback, and the contract has been extended for another year. Dr. Kim is also collaborating with FIPR on phosphate mining process water treatment, aiming to treat the water while extracting rare earth elements.

He highlighted his student team—students who already hold job offers with environmental engineering firms, have partnered with national labs, and have earned scholarships to continue their education.

Trustee Sidney Theis asked whether the research focuses on surface or ground water. Dr. Kim explained that it centers on drinking-water plant operations, which use groundwater. The team is conducting a pilot test with Winter Haven to address odor issues in the city's water, with plans to scale up if successful.

XVI. Board of Trustees Meeting Calendar

Chair Kigel reviewed the upcoming Board calendar, noting that the next round of Committee and Board meetings will take place in February 2025.

XVII. Board of Governors Meeting Calendar

Chair Kigel announced that the next Board of Governors meeting is scheduled for January 29–30, 2025, at Florida State University in Tallahassee.

XVIII. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 11:49 a.m.