



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Board of Trustees **DRAFT** Meeting Minutes

April 30, 2026
3:00 P – 4:30 P

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

I. Call to Order

Chair Beth Kigel called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Kristen Wharton called the roll: Chair Beth Kigel, Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio, Trustee Patrick Hagen, Trustee Eliot Peace, Trustee Sumanth Neelam, Trustee Colby Manrodt, Trustee Edwar Romero, Trustee Ilya Shapiro, Trustee Christie Bassett, Trustee Rob Kincart, Trustee Jeff Beelaert, Trustee Jack Harrell, III, and Trustee Sid Theis were present (Quorum).

Trustees not present: N/A

Staff Present: President Devin Stephenson, Provost Brad Thiessen, Bryan Brooks, Dr. Tanner McKnight, Kelli Stargel, Kristen Wharton, David Blanton, Kevin Calkins

III. Public Comment

There were five requests received for public comment. Students Lillian Lambert, Matthew Bornder, Wilson Hendershot, and Addison Givens spoke to agenda item VII. Out-of-State Fee Increase. Mr. Mike Sanderson spoke to agenda item V. University Accountability Plan FY26.

IV. Recognition of Service: Trustee Edwar Romero

Chair Beth Kigel recognized Trustee Edwar Romero whose term ends May 5, 2026. Kristen Wharton read Resolution 2026-001, a proclamation honoring Trustee Romero's service, which is attached to these minutes. Trustee Romero then expressed his appreciation to the Board for their support and for the knowledge he gained in his year of Board service.

Trustee Rob Kincart made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-001 in recognition of and in profound appreciation for the distinguished service of Trustee Edwar Romero. Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chair Kigel also commended Trustee Colby Manrodt who was re-elected for a second term as SGA President and will continue to serve on the Board of Trustees for an additional year.

V. University Accountability Plan FY26

Vice President and Provost Brad Thiessen presented the University Accountability Plan for fiscal year 2026. He outlined that the plan is built upon three pillars: short-term strategic alignment, current performance metrics, and future goal setting.

Provost Thiessen reported a record-breaking year for the University, noting the following performance highlights:

- **Performance-Based Funding (PBF):** The University is projected to earn eighty-seven points, the highest score in its history.
- **Graduation Rates:** Significant improvements were noted, including a 19% increase in the four-year graduation rate, a 17% increase in the three-year transfer graduation rate, and a 4% increase in the Pell transfer student graduation rate.
- **Areas for Improvement:** The Academic Progress Rate (APR) currently stands at 70%. Strategies to bolster this include increased utilization of the early alert system, student success coaches, and the Center for Teaching and Learning.
- **Market Trends:** The University continues to monitor graduate outcomes, specifically starting salaries and employment rates, in response to shifting market conditions.

Provost Thiessen then presented a comparison between previously approved goals and proposed targets, asking the Board to consider whether to maintain high aspirational goals or adjust them to meet more conservative projections. President Devin Stephenson advocated for an "aim high" philosophy, emphasizing that the University should strive for excellence rather than lowering bars to ensure targets are met. Chair Beth Kigel and Trustee Jack Harrell, III, expressed their concurrence, agreeing that the University should hold itself to a higher standard.

Trustee Sumanth Neelam inquired about the transition plan for improving APR. Provost Thiessen confirmed that investments in success coaches and a Tutoring Center (which saw over five hundred visits in the spring) are expected to show measurable impact in the coming year. Vice President Bryan Brooks added that Student Success Director Kelly Morgan is developing a scorecard to track individual student progress more effectively.

In response to Trustee Neelam's inquiry regarding the projected increase in graduate degrees (from 29 to 72), Provost Thiessen attributed the jump to the success of the 4+1 program.

The Board expressed consensus in favor of maintaining high-reaching goals for the FY26 Accountability Plan to drive institutional growth and student success.

Trustee Sumanth Neelam moved to approve the FY26 University Accountability Plan, with the condition that the higher value between the previous and proposed targets be adopted as the goal for each metric. Trustee Ilya Shapiro seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

VI. Amendment to General Education Course List for 2026-27

Provost Thiessen presented proposed amendments to the General Education course list for the 2026-27 academic year, specifically highlighting the expansion of the writing curriculum and a course reclassification. The proposal adds ENC 1102 (Rhetoric and Academic Research Writing

Skills) as a follow-up to the existing ENC 1101 (Fundamental Writing Skills) and requests a change in the level of a biology course and lab from the 1000-level to the 2000-level.

In response to an inquiry from Trustee Sumanth Neelam regarding the impact of course renumbering on transfer students, Provost Thiessen confirmed that student transfers would not be affected as long as the courses remain categorized appropriately within the lower-division framework. Trustee Ilya Shapiro raised a question concerning the University's policy on Artificial Intelligence in these courses. Provost Thiessen explained that the University's approach has evolved toward embracing AI as a tool within the curriculum, a strategy being supported by the recruitment of new communications faculty who will assist the University in this effort.

Trustee Patrick Hagen made a motion to approve the amendment to Florida Polytechnic University's 2026-27 General Education course list to:

- **add ENC 1102: English Composition 2 – Rhetoric and Academic Research, and**
- **list BSC 1010/L as a 2000-level course: BSC 2010/L – Biology 1 with Lab**

Trustee Sumanth Neelam seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

VII. Out-of-State Fee Increase

Vice President and CFO Tanner McKnight opened the discussion by acknowledging the professional conduct of the students who provided public comments and proceeded to explain the necessity of increasing out-of-state fees. Following this introduction, Trustee Shapiro inquired about the context of the proposed 15% increase relative to other State University System (SUS) institutions. McKnight noted that although the administration proposed the maximum increase, the Board could approve a different amount at its discretion, and that the institution would remain one of the lowest-cost universities in the SUS.

The Board engaged in discussion regarding the impact of the fee increase on current students. Trustee Colby Manrodt suggested the possibility of grandfathering in currently enrolled students to exempt them from the new rates. In response, McKnight and Katie McDaniel, General Counsel, discussed potential mitigation strategies, including the strategic use of waivers or a phased-in approach, noting that the latter would require annual approval from both the Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors over the coming four years. Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio requested a more rigorous justification for the 15% figure and sought clarity on the statutory limitations regarding multi-year phase-ins. He further emphasized the need to understand the true financial impact on students, including their current loan burdens and available avenues for bridging the funding gap.

Vice President Brooks informed the Board that a detailed profile of the affected student population is being developed, noting that out-of-state students comprise approximately 7% of the student body and typically maintain the lowest debt levels in the system. Addressing the drivers of the proposal, Vice President McKnight cited a 40% increase in inflation and the necessity of bringing the University into regulatory compliance. Provost Brad Thiessen corroborated that an increase is required to align with state statute and to support the growth necessary to lower the overall cost of instruction.

Further inquiries were made regarding the timing and legal standing of the proposal. Trustee Rob Kincart asked about the participation of other SUS schools and the consequences of delaying the decision. McKnight clarified that other institutions are anticipated to announce their rates

shortly and that missing the current window could preclude increases in subsequent years without further Board of Governors approval. President Devin Stephenson noted that the University intentionally deferred an increase last year to ensure students received proper notice.

In response to concerns raised by Trustee Shapiro regarding the specific state statute, Katie Daniel offered to conduct a formal review and provide that information to the Board. Chair Kigel noted that the BOG had previously identified the University as being out of compliance regarding its fee structure. Trustee Neelam advocated for establishing support programs for currently enrolled students, and Brooks committed to presenting a plan for utilizing various funding sources to assist those students at the next meeting. At the recommendation of President Stephenson, Chair Kigel tabled the discussion to the May Board meeting to allow staff additional time to gather the data and legal clarifications requested by the Board.

VIII. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Kristen Wharton
Corporate Secretary