



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

# Board of Trustees **DRAFT** Meeting Minutes

**May 22, 2026  
10:45 A – 12:15 P**

Barnett Applied Research Center (BARC) Room 2200 and  
Virtual via Microsoft Teams

### I. Call to Order

Chair Beth Kigel called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 10:46 a.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 Derek Henderson, Trustee Colby Manrodt, Trustee Christie Bassett, Trustee Ilya Shapiro, Trustee Rob Kincart, 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, Dr. Cole Allen, Kelli Stargel, Katie Daniel, Kristen Wharton, and David Blanton

### III. Public Comment

There were two requests received for public comment. Students Wilson Hendershot and Lillian Lambert addressed agenda item XI. Out-of-State Fee Increase.

### IV. Chair's Remarks

Chair Beth Kigel began her report by reflecting on the first two years of the current administration, noting that the University has successfully launched its strategic plan and achieved significant growth. She highlighted several key performance indicators, specifically noting the University's remarkable return on investment (ROI) for students at over 500% and a record-breaking Performance-Based Funding (PBF) score of 87. The Chair commended the leadership team for their innovative and accountable approach to institutional challenges, particularly regarding the creative use of existing facilities and the investigation into temporary housing solutions to support the "Rise to 3,000" enrollment initiative. She emphasized that as the University expands its footprint and student body, continued support for infrastructure will be vital to maintaining this momentum and furthering Florida Poly's contribution to the state's economic vitality.

The Chair also emphasized the "palpable energy" on campus, attributing the University's success to the high level of engagement and alignment between the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty, and students. She noted several strategic milestones, including the rise in industry partnerships, advancements in applied research and commercialization, the launch of new initiatives such as "STEM plus M," and high faculty retention rates. Looking ahead, Chair Kigel reaffirmed that the strategic plan remains the University's "North Star" and a living document that will be reviewed and adjusted during upcoming retreats to ensure continued accountability. She concluded by welcoming the new trustees and

expressing her gratitude to the entire Florida Poly community for the collaborative efforts that have led to these extraordinary institution-wide outcomes.

V. President's Remarks

President Devin Stephenson updated the Board on key fiscal and operational milestones, including a \$2.5 million congressional appropriation and the University's receipt of the Ellucian "Student First Experience Award" for its successful implementation of the Banner system. He highlighted the success of major campus events like Research Day and a scholarship dinner honoring high-achieving incoming students. The President also emphasized the University's growing regional influence, bolstered by the new "Different by Design" branding and a record-breaking commencement ceremony for 430 graduates.

Strategic partnerships remain a primary focus, with the President detailing a foundational collaboration with IMSA (NASCAR) for on-campus engineering labs and ongoing engagement with industry leaders in the aerospace and technology sectors. He noted that Florida Poly was recently cited by state and national leaders as a model for institutional efficiency and workforce relevance. President Stephenson concluded by reaffirming the University's commitment to high-wage, high-demand career pathways through its robust applied research and industry-aligned academic programs.

VI. Faculty Senate President's Report

Trustee Derek Henderson reported on the strengthening of shared governance, noting that faculty recently participated in department chair evaluations for the first time. He expressed the faculty's gratitude for the University's positive student culture and the administration's leadership in shaping a collaborative environment. While acknowledging the challenges of rapid growth, specifically regarding parking and classroom space, he noted that the completion of the Gary C. Wendt Engineering Center's second floor and new staff hiring will provide critical support for the upcoming academic year.

Dr. Henderson also highlighted the faculty's enthusiasm for the expansion of graduate programs, emphasizing that graduate students are essential for both research productivity and instructional support. He concluded by affirming the faculty's commitment to the University's evolving strategic vision. The Senate remains eager to partner with the administration in achieving the institution's long-term goals and maintaining the high standards of academic excellence that define Florida Poly.

VII. Student Government Association President's Report

Trustee Colby Manrodt reported that the student body is highly optimistic regarding the University's trajectory, specifically citing increased engagement with President Stephenson and the impact of professional development initiatives. He commended the administration's accessibility and the expansion of campus activities, including the growth of the athletics program and preparation for the upcoming sports season. Manrodt highlighted that student leaders successfully participated in legislative advocacy in Tallahassee and have worked closely with University officials to ensure student concerns are addressed proactively.

The report detailed a productive year focused on operational efficiency and community building. Key achievements included the rebranding of SGA, a significant reduction in organizational waste, and the completion of the student-led SGA Garden project. Looking toward the next academic year, the SGA is planning a large-scale "Engineering Week" to highlight student ingenuity and has earmarked funds to support outdoor recreational spaces for new athletic teams. Manrodt concluded by emphasizing that improved transparency and efficient event planning have led to record-breaking turnout, reinforcing a strong sense of community and pride across the student body.

VIII. Consent Agenda

**Chair Kigel brought forward the consent agenda for trustee approval.**

**A. Academic Enterprise, Research, and Student Success Committee**

1. Approve the 2027-28 General Education Course List

**B. Governance, Audit, and Compliance Committee**

1. Approve the (1) proposed audit and compliance plan changes and (2) external reviewers for both audit and compliance programs
2. Approve the President's Administrative Action Plan for FY27

**C. Finance and Facilities Committee**

1. Approve advancing with the drafting of ground lease documents between the Florida Polytechnic University Board of Trustees and Strategic Facility Partners, a 501(c)(3) partner of Gilbane Development Company, to construct 2 new student housing buildings (approximately 500 beds each, not to exceed 6 floors each) and a new all-you-care-to-eat dining facility
2. Approve the final ranking of firms for Construction Manager at Risk Services for the Florida Polytechnic University Student Achievement Center (StAC) project. This recommended ranking is as follows:
  1. Skanska USA Building Inc.
  2. Charles Perry Partners, Inc.
  3. Gilbane Building Company
3. Approve authorization for the President to sign instruments, documents, and contracts as necessary to effectuate the design and preconstruction services for the Student Achievement Center project within a budget not to exceed \$34,900,000, the amount of project-specific funding currently on hand
4. Approve advancing the design, construction, and furnishing of the second floor of the Gary C. Wendt Engineering Center, within the total project budget of \$22,587,090, while granting the President authority to sign instruments, documents, and contracts as necessary to effectuate the remodel/buildout
5. Approve the following appointments and reappointments to the Florida Polytechnic University Foundation Board of Directors by the Board of Trustees:

**Reappointments**

- John Curts, Jr.
- Travis Hills
- Kristen Lowers
- Ryan Perez
- Alen Tomczak

**New Appointments**

- Larry Arndt – Vice President, South Region – Barton Malow Builders
- Kathy Killingsworth - Consultant
- Curtis Pease – General Manager, Fields BMW - Lakeland
- Kyle Story – Vice President, The Story Companies
- Lea Ann Thomas – Retired, Deputy County Manager (Polk County)

6. Approve the Foundation's planned uses of university personnel and property for the fiscal year 2026-27 for \$483,659

**D. Board of Trustees**

1. Approve the Board of Trustees Meeting minutes from February 13, 2026
2. Approve the Board of Trustees Meeting minutes from March 4, 2026

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.**

IX. Committee Reports

A. Academic Enterprise, Research, and Student Success (AERSS) Committee

Committee Chair Sidney Theis reported on several key academic and operational updates, including the exploration of new academic programs and reduced-credit bachelor's degrees. He noted that the Provost briefed the Committee on the upcoming accreditation review timelines for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and the Council on Postsecondary Higher Education (CPHE). Additionally, Vice President Bryan Brooks provided an update on strategic priorities for student affairs and enrollment, which included a review of the coaching staff for the University's new NAIA athletic program and positive enrollment projections for the fall 2026 semester.

The Committee also reviewed and recommended approval for the 2027-28 General Education Course List which was approved by the Board as part of the day's consent agenda.

B. Finance and Facilities Committee

Committee Chair Jesse Panuccio reported that the University maintained a strong fiscal position through the third quarter of 2026, ending the period with a \$22.7M dollar net surplus and an 11.3% increase in net position over the previous year. The Committee also reviewed several completed construction projects, including the University Safety and Operations Center and the expansion of Parking Lot 6. Updates were also provided on the planning phases for the Student Achievement Center (StAC) and other minor ongoing campus improvements.

Panuccio noted the Board approved several key recommendations from the committee in today's Consent Agenda, including the selection of Gilbane Development Company as the partner for the housing and dining expansion project. Additionally, the Board authorized the University to begin contract negotiations with Skanska USA Building for the Student Achievement Center and approved a \$35 million budget for its design and pre-construction services. Finally, a budget increase of approximately \$3.6M was approved for the Gary C. Wendt Engineering Center to complete the full build-out of the building's second floor.

C. Strategic Initiatives and External Relations Committee

Chair Kigel reported that the Committee received an update from Vice President Kelli Stargel regarding a high level of engagement with corporate and industry partners. Additionally, Senior Global Affairs Officer Mustapha Achoubane presented a report on the University's international relations strategy, highlighting performance in prestigious international fellowships, global collaborations, and overall engagement initiatives. The Committee had no items requiring action by the full Board.

D. Governance, Audit, and Compliance Committee

Committee Chair Ilya Shapiro reported that the University received a clean financial audit from the Auditor General for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, with no internal control deficiencies or non-compliance issues cited. The Committee approved a reprioritization of the five-year compliance and audit reviews and received updates on the Foundation's IRS Form 990, which showed activities consistent with University expectations. Additionally, monitoring reviews confirmed that the University remains in full compliance with statutory requirements for textbook affordability and transparency. A review of the anti-fraud framework resulted in a recommendation for periodic fraud training for all employees to further strengthen institutional oversight.

Shapiro also reported that the Committee voted to recommend retaining the current Chair and Vice Chair for the upcoming two-year term. Furthermore, President Stephenson presented his Administrative Action Plan for the next fiscal year, outlining the University's strategic priorities and

operational goals; this item was approved in today's Consent Agenda.

X. Officer Elections

Trustee Ilya Shapiro reported that the Governance, Audit, and Compliance Committee recommended a proposed slate of officers for the term beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2028. With no further nominations or discussion,

**Trustee Sidney Theis made a motion to approve for a second term Chair Beth Kigel as the 2026-2028 Board of Trustees Chair and Vice Chair Jesse Panuccio as the 2026-2028 Board of Trustees Vice Chair. Trustee Jack Harrell, III, seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.**

XI. Out of State Fee Increase

Provost Brad Thiessen presented a detailed follow-up to the previously tabled proposal regarding a 15% increase in out-of-state fees. This measure was necessitated by a June 2025 determination that the University was out of compliance with state statutes requiring out-of-state tuition and fees to cover 100% of instructional costs. Data indicated that the University was undercharging undergraduate out-of-state students by approximately 17% and graduate students by 29% in 2023-24. While rapid enrollment growth has helped lower the per-student cost of instruction for 2026-27, the Provost explained that the current fee structure remains insufficient to meet the legal threshold.

The Board engaged in a robust discussion regarding the balance between statutory compliance and the financial impact on students. Trustees reviewed various options, including the potential for a lower increase (6.8%) for undergraduates, but noted that such a figure might not guarantee future compliance if inflation outpaces enrollment. Concerns were raised regarding the expectations of current students who enrolled under a lower advertised rate. To address this, the administration recommended a "grandfathering" approach where the 15% increase would only apply to students admitted or readmitted after the Fall 2026 semester, ensuring that all currently enrolled and incoming Fall 2026 students maintain their existing fee structure throughout their tenure.

The Board expressed strong support for this revised recommendation, noting it effectively balanced the University's legal obligations with its commitment to the student body. Trustees specifically commended the students for their professional and productive engagement during the process. After clarifying that the measure would allow for individual review in cases of medical emergencies, trustees passed the following:

**Trustee Colby Manrodt made a motion to approve and authorize a 15% increase in out-of-state fees to apply to students admitted or readmitted after fall 2026. Trustee Sumanth Neelam seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.**

XII. 2025-2030 Strategic Plan Progress Report

Bryan Brooks, Vice President, Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Strategic Communications presented a comprehensive update on the University's strategic plan through a highlight video featuring several members of the Strategy Circle. The video highlighted significant milestones in the new NAIA athletics program, noting that all coaching positions have been filled and recruitment is nearly complete for the upcoming season, which includes men's and women's basketball, soccer, cross country, baseball, and softball. Enrollment efforts have also yielded historic results, with the University reaching two to three times more prospective students than in previous years, positioning Florida Poly for its largest-ever incoming class.

Technological and academic advancements were central to the update. Vice President Cole Allen detailed the successful implementation of the Ellucian Banner enterprise system, for which Florida Poly received the 2026 Impact Award for its student-centered portal design. Provost Brad Thiessen highlighted the

launch of several new academic programs, including a bachelor's in biomedical sciences in partnership with OCOM and a full major in Aerospace Engineering. Additionally, a new online master's in engineering management and thirty certificates and minors have been introduced as part of a curriculum redesign intended to allow students to earn multiple credentials, increasing their marketability.

The report concluded with a focus on campus innovation and community engagement. Vice President Tanner McKnight highlighted the successful rollout of the Starship robot delivery service, which provides accessible dining options across campus and offers students hands-on experience through robot maintenance and repair roles. The University is also launching its first STEM summer camps for K-12 students, led by faculty and staff to foster local interest in engineering. The Board commended the new reporting format and expressed strong support for the continued alignment of these initiatives with the University's long-term strategic goals.

XIII. Legislative Session Report

Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Development, and External Relations Kelli Stargel provided a brief update on the ongoing Florida legislative session. She noted that while the state budget was expected to pass later in the day, specific university figures had not yet been released. Stargel emphasized that the administration is closely monitoring the process and will quickly move forward with the University's Legislative Budget Request (LBR) and internal operating budget as soon as the final legislative numbers are confirmed.

XIV. Board of Trustees Meeting Calendar

Chair Beth Kigel announced that the Board of Governors has reinstated the Annual Trustee Summit starting this November, which is highly encouraged for all Trustees. To avoid year-end scheduling conflicts and to begin the next academic year with a Board retreat to review the Strategic Plan at its two-year mark, the Chair proposed moving the annual Board Retreat from November to September. In light of trustee concerns regarding consecutive work-day travel, the Board discussed optimizing the schedule to a single overnight stay.

**Trustee Ilya Shapiro made a motion to amend the Board of Trustees' meeting calendar, scheduling the full Board meeting for the afternoon of Thursday, September 24, followed by the annual retreat on Friday, September 25. Trustee Derek Henderson seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.**

XV. Board of Governors Meeting Calendar

Chair Kigel shared that the next Board of Governors meeting will be held June 24-25, 2026, at Florida Atlantic University.

XVI. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kristen Wharton

Corporate Secretary