



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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

May 22, 2026
9:45 A – 10:30 A

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

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Beth Kigel called the Strategic Initiatives and External Relations Committee meeting to order at 9:45 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, Trustee Rob Kincart, and Trustee Jesse Panuccio were present (Quorum).

Committee members not present: n/a

Other Trustees Present: Trustee Sid Theis, Trustee Christie Bassett, Trustee Patrick Hagen, Trustee Ilya Shapiro, Trustee Derek Henderson, and Trustee Jack Harrell III

Staff Present: President Devin Stephenson, Provost Brad Thiessen, Dr. Tanner McKnight, David Blanton, Dr. Cole Allen, Kelli Stargel, Katie Daniel, and Kristen Wharton

III. Public Comment

There were no requests received for public comment.

IV. Approval of the November 10, 2025, Minutes

Trustee Jesse Panuccio made a motion to approve the Strategic Initiatives and External Relations Committee meeting minutes for November 10, 2025. Trustee Colby Manrodt 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 provided an update on the University's legislative budget status and industry partnerships.

The University is currently in the middle of a legislative budget conference. While the budget process is ongoing in Tallahassee, Stargel expressed cautious optimism regarding Florida Poly's funding, despite a broader environment of state budget cuts. A final update will be sent to the Board once the budget is finalized.

Stargel highlighted several key partnerships and engagements including Advanced Air Mobility; International Flavors and Fragrances (IFF); Alaki Defense System (MOU signed), Greater Orlando Airport Authority (GOAA); Publix (new IT campus); and a faculty collaboration with the Detroit Tigers. She also reviewed ongoing work in the healthcare industry, including strategic outreach to Lakeland Regional Health, Orlando Health, BayCare, Advent Health, and Moffitt Cancer Center to support the new Biomedical Sciences program.

VII. International Relations

Mustapha Achoubane, Senior Advisor for International Relationships, presented the University's global strategy, emphasizing its alignment with the Board of Governors' strategic plan and the state's economic priorities.

Achoubane shared key international highlights including activities with Fulbright and recent agreements established with ITS Korea, Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology, and institutions in Taiwan and Ecuador. He also emphasized the importance of connecting with companies from Japan, Germany, and Brazil, given their significant economic footprint in Florida.

Achoubane noted over 80 high-level delegates, including representatives from Japan and Germany and 25 scientists from Brazil, are scheduled to visit the campus within the next week. These visits aim to elevate the University's brand and institutional reputation.

VIII. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kristen Wharton

Corporate Secretary to the Board of Trustees