



# Academic Enterprise, Research, and Student Success Committee Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2026  
11:15 A – 12:00 P

Florida Polytechnic University  
Virtual via Microsoft Teams

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Sidney Theis called the Academic and Student Affairs Committee meeting to order at 11:16 a.m.

II. Roll Call

Kristen Wharton called the roll: Committee Chair Sidney Theis, Vice Chair Patrick Hagen, Trustee Sumanth Neelam, Trustee Christie Bassett, and Trustee Edwar Romero-Ramirez were present (Quorum)

Committee members not present: Trustee Colby Manrodt

Other Trustees Present: Board Chair Beth Kigel, Trustee Jeff Beelaert, Trustee Rob Kincart, Trustee Ilya Shapiro

Staff Present: Provost Brad Thiessen, Dr. Tanner McKnight, Bryan Brooks, David Blanton, Cole Allen, Kelli Stargel, Joshua Millikin, Dr. Tom Dvorske, Dr. Jon Pawlecki, Kevin Calkins, and Kristen Wharton

III. Public Comment

There were no requests received for public comment.

IV. Approval of September 18, 2025, Minutes

**Trustee Patrick Hagen motioned to approve the Academic Enterprise, Research, and Student Success Committee meeting minutes of September 18, 2025. Trustee Sumanth Neelam seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.**

V. 2024-2026 Academic and Student Affairs Committee Work Plan

Committee Chair Theis reviewed the Academic Enterprise, Research, and Student Success (AERSS) Committee Work Plan. There were no questions about the Work Plan.

VI. Academic Enterprise and Research Report

Dr. Brad Thiessen, Vice President and Provost, presented data on earned grades at Florida Poly. He reported no evidence of grade inflation but has asked Board of Governors staff to review

comparable data from other SUS institutions to confirm this finding.

He also shared early indicators of improvement in the University's Academic Progress Rate (APR). Replacing the FLAME course with "introduction to major" courses has increased student engagement and satisfaction. However, the projected APR for 2025-26 is currently 74%. The University is working closely with students who have one or more D, F, or W grades (DFWs). There is still time during the spring term to improve these grades, with additional support planned for the summer.

Provost Thiessen also reported that the University is analyzing admissions data to better identify students who may struggle academically and to strengthen preparation for Florida Poly's rigorous curriculum.

He updated the Committee on newly awarded faculty research grants and shared that twenty-three faculty members will be hired for fall 2026, including ten new positions. Additionally, 17 faculty members are up for reappointment and/or promotion this spring.

Comprehensive curriculum revisions are underway across all academic programs. Faculty have been asked to take ownership of the curriculum and benchmark against aspirational peer institutions. The Provost encouraged freeing up elective credits to provide greater flexibility for transfer students and to allow four-year students to pursue certificates or minors. These efforts support the University's goal of offering three-year degree pathways and four-year combined bachelor's and master's degree programs.

Finally, Provost Thiessen noted that Florida Poly's preliminary peer review was submitted to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) on January 16. The University remains on track to complete accreditation by spring 2027.

Trustee Sumanth Neelam commended the Provost for the positive report and asked whether measurable improvements in retention have been observed since identifying root causes. Provost Thiessen responded that, compared to last year, the University can now identify struggling students earlier and provide targeted support to help them succeed.

## VII. National Robotics Engineering Center (NREC) Tour Report

Committee Chair Theis reported on the recent visit to the National Robotics Engineering Center (NREC) in Pittsburgh. Attendees included Committee Chair Theis; Dr. Devin Stephenson, President; Dr. Brad Thiessen, Vice President, and Provost; Dr. Tanner McKnight, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; Cole Allen, Vice President and Chief Information Officer; and Steve Scuggs, President of the Lakeland Economic Development Council (LEDC).

NREC is part of the Carnegie Mellon University Robotics Institute. Chair Theis highlighted the industries supported by NREC, many of which align with Florida Poly's academic programs and Strategic Plan. Provost Thiessen noted that the model appears scalable and adaptable to Florida Poly.

Additional information will be shared with trustees in the coming weeks. Trustees engaged in discussion and expressed enthusiasm about the potential opportunities.

VIII. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kristen J. Wharton  
Corporate Secretary