



Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

**March 4, 2026
4:00 P – 5:00 P**

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

I. Call to Order

Chair Beth Kigel called the Board of Trustees meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

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

Trustees not present: Trustee Sumanth Neelam

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

III. Public Comment

There were no requests received for public comment.

IV. Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences Degree Program Proposal

Provost Brad Thiessen provided a brief history of the university's relationship with the Orlando College of Osteopathic Medicine (OCOM) and an overview of the proposed Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences. Developed in conjunction with OCOM, the program has already generated strong interest following the public announcement of the MOU, prompting Florida Poly to move forward. If approved, student recruitment will begin for enrollment this fall.

Thiessen outlined the student pathway and emphasized the program's alignment with Florida Poly's mission and the STEM+M concept introduced by President Devin Stephenson. The program is expected to attract students interested in life sciences, create opportunities for partnerships with other medical schools, and support external grant funding. Two faculty members have been hired to begin in the fall, and funding has been allocated for necessary labs and classrooms.

Trustee Sid Theis asked about risks. Provost Thiessen identified two: insufficient enrollment and uncertainty around student outcomes. Andy Oguntola, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, expressed confidence that enrollment targets will be met, citing strong interest. Provost Thiessen added that the program's unique curriculum supports positive outcomes.

In response to Trustee Rob Kincart, Provost Thiessen noted that OCOM views Florida Poly as a feeder institution due to its own limited capacity. The program offers an accelerated pathway that may reduce time to medical training by two years and can attract high-achieving students. Graduates may

pursue medical school, other health science programs, or careers in clinical research and biomedical device development. Accreditation is not currently in place but will be evaluated.

Trustee Ilya Shapiro asked about funding for faculty positions. Provost Thiessen confirmed the two faculty starting this fall are included in the FY27 budget, with future hires dependent on enrollment.

Trustee Rob Kincart motioned to approve Florida Polytechnic University’s proposal to launch the Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences degree program in Fall 2026. Trustee Sidney Theis seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

V. Authorization to Form a Direct Support Organization (DSO) to Support the CMU/NREC Affiliate Initiative

President Devin Stephenson reminded trustees of his January visit to Carnegie Mellon’s National Robotics Engineering Center (NREC) in Pittsburgh, noting the strong alignment with Florida Poly’s mission. NREC is seeking to establish a southeastern U.S. presence and has expressed interest in affiliating with the University. He requested Board approval to form a direct support organization (DSO) to enable efficient operations while maintaining oversight.

Steve Scruggs, President of the Lakeland Economic Development Council (LEDC), emphasized the partnership’s importance to both Florida Poly and the Lakeland community, citing benefits such as support for Department of Defense and other projects, as well as the potential to attract companies from across the country and globally.

Dr. Cole Allen, Vice President and CIO, outlined a phased launch strategy, with the goal of achieving self-sufficiency within five years. The first-year priority is to accelerate the transition from sponsor interest to funded projects. Potential facility locations are currently under review.

Dr. Tanner McKnight, Vice President and CFO, explained that the DSO structure supports operational flexibility, with a projected four-year break-even. President Stephenson added that external funding sources have also been identified to support the launch. Chief of Staff Joshua Millikin clarified the scope of the current request for motion versus future approvals, and Dr. McKnight noted that a CPA firm is already assisting, with formation expected within a few weeks.

Trustee Eliot Peace motioned to authorize and direct the President to take all actions necessary to form a Florida not-for-profit corporation intended to operate as a Direct Support Organization (DSO) to support the University’s CMU/NREC affiliate initiative and return to the Board with proposed Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, proposed board slate, and required agreements for Board certification. Trustee Jack Harrell, III seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

VI. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Kristen Wharton
Corporate Secretary