



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Academic Enterprise, Research, and Student Success Committee **DRAFT** Meeting Minutes

September 18, 2026
1:00 P – 2:00 P

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Patrick Hagen called the Academic Enterprise, Research, and Student Success Committee meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Kristen Wharton called the roll: Committee Chair Patrick Hagen, Vice Chair Christie Bassett, Trustee Sumanth Neelam, Trustee Sid Theis, Trustee Colby Manrodt, and Trustee Derek Henderson were present (Quorum)

Committee members not present: N/A

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

Staff Present: President Devin Stephenson, Provost Brad Thiessen, Dr. Tanner McKnight, Bryan Brooks, David Blanton, Cole Allen, Kelli Stargel, Katie Daniel, 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 the May 21, 2026, Meeting Minutes

Trustee Derek Henderson motioned to approve the Academic Enterprise, Research, and Student Success Committee meeting minutes of May 21, 2026. Trustee Sid Theis seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

V. 2026-2028 AERSS Committee Charter Review and Approval

Committee Chair Hagen presented the draft revision of the 2026–2028 Committee Charter, which separated purpose and responsibilities into two separate sections and added clarifying language under composition and meetings.

Trustee Sumanth Neelam motioned to approve the revised 2026–2028 Committee Charter as presented. Trustee Christie Bassett seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

VI. 2026-2027 AERSS Committee Annual Work Plan Review and Approval

Trustees reviewed the Committee Work Plan for fiscal year 2027. There was no discussion on this item.

Trustee Sumanth Neelam motioned to approve the FY2027 Committee Work Plan as presented. Trustee Derek Henderson seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

VII. Academic Affairs and Research

A. Academic Affairs Report

Provost Brad Thiessen presented the Academic Affairs update, highlighting key accomplishments, performance metrics, and the following strategic priorities:

- **Accomplishments & Performance-Based Funding (PBF):** Florida Poly achieved a record PBF score of 87 (a 13-point increase), securing full funding. Major accomplishments included comprehensive undergraduate program redesigns (adding 30 minors/certificates), the launch of new degree programs in Aerospace Engineering and Biomedical Sciences, the six-year BS-to-DO pathway with OCOM, institutional accreditation progress, and external research partnerships.
- **Student Success & Metrics:** While graduation rates saw double-digit percentage improvements, post-graduation employment, median starting salaries, and the Academic Progress Rate (APR) saw slight declines. Florida Poly remains #1 in the State University System (SUS) for graduate median starting salary. The projected APR improved to 76% (up from 70%), which would earn 10 PBF improvement points, though it remains below the Board's 83% target. Addressing DFW (Drop/Fail/Withdraw) course rates remains the primary focus for APR improvement.
- **Faculty Excellence:** The University hired 32 new faculty members, promoted seven, and brought the faculty rank distribution in line with national norms. Ongoing initiatives include the upcoming Faculty Exchange Summit, redesigning the Student Assessment of Instruction (SAI), streamlining faculty committees from 29 to five, and expanding the campus research infrastructure.
- **Academic Quality:** Focus areas include graduate and professional studies enhancement (incorporating co-ops and industry projects), AI curriculum integration (including a physics AI tutor), exploration of reduced-credit-hour programs pending Board of Governors (BOG) regulation, and preliminary planning for a Doctor of Engineering degree. Research activity at FIPR and the upcoming NanoFlorida conference were also highlighted.
- **Organizational Effectiveness & Accreditation:** The University is transitioning to managed growth and maintaining multi-agency accreditation efforts, including ABET, SACSCOC (in good standing; fifth-year report due in 2028), CPHE (awaiting USDOE recognition), and HLC (self-study submission planned by January 2027).

Trustees inquired about industry advisory boards, the viability of 3-year reduced credit programs paired with fourth-year co-ops, strategies to enhance starting salaries, and methods for assessing the quality and value of student internships. Vice President Brooks and Provost Thiessen noted plans to implement employer/student feedback dashboards and explore structured graduate certificates and capstones.

B. Annual Textbook and Instructional Materials Report

Provost Thiessen presented the annual compliance report required by state statute:

- **Posting Compliance:** 99.6% of non-exempt course sections (738 of 741) posted required syllabi and materials at least 45 days prior to the first day of class, surpassing the 95% state threshold.

- **Cost & Attestation:** Approximately 50% of courses utilized zero-cost materials, and 16% utilized low-cost materials (under \$20/credit hour). 100% of instructors completed the required textbook review attestations.

Trustee Christie Bassett motioned to approve the Annual Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability Report for Fiscal Year 2025–26 to the Board of Trustees. Trustee Sumanth Neelam seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

C. Foreign Influence Annual Report

Provost Thiessen presented the Foreign Influence Report, confirming that Florida Polytechnic University has no grants, agreements, partnerships, or contracts with institutions based in foreign countries of concern.

VIII. Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Strategic Communications Report

Vice President Bryan Brooks presented the Student Affairs and Enrollment update:

- **Admissions & Articulation:** Fall enrollment reached a record 2,342 students (a 35% increase since Summer 2024), with strong growth across FTIC and local counties (Polk, Orange, Hillsborough, Osceola). Transfer enrollment increased significantly, supported by the "Eagle to Phoenix" pathway articulation with Polk State College (26 incoming transfers). Net transfer deposits rose by 86%.
- **Compliance & Housing:** The University successfully cleared the State Auditor General Bright Futures and Florida Student Assistance Grant Audit with zero findings. Campus housing operated at near 100% capacity with an extensive summer waitlist.
- **Campus Life & Athletics:** Student engagement highlights included Purple Fire Week (over 1,750 participants), the Presidential Welcome BBQ (serving ~1,200 students), the launch of the First-Year Phoenix leadership program, and the inaugural men's soccer match.

In response to trustee inquiries, Brooks confirmed that detailed transfer origin data, GPA comparisons (noting strong academic profiles among student-athletes, averaging a 3.87 incoming GPA), and athletic academic support resources will be presented at the full Board meeting.

IX. Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Hagen expressed appreciation to former Committee Chair Sidney Theis for his past leadership and welcomed Vice Chair Bassett. With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 1:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Kristen J. Wharton
Corporate Secretary