

INDEX OF MINUTES
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
CHANCELLOR SEARCH COMMITTEE
TALLAHASSEE, FL
August 26, 2022

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1. Call to Order

On August 26, 2022, Chair Brian Lamb convened the meeting at 11:30 a.m. with the following members of the search committee present and answering roll call: Vice Chair Eric Silagy; Tim Cerio; Patricia Frost, and Charles Lydecker. In addition, Mr. Richard Corcoran, Commissioner Manny Diaz, Mr. Ken Jones, Ms. Darlene Jordan, Mr. Alan Levine, Mr. Craig Mateer, and Ms. Deanna Michael attended the meeting.

2. Opening Remarks

Chair Lamb thanked the Board members for agreeing to serve on the search committee. He stated that the task today was to further explore the qualifications of the two candidates who were invited for interviews.

3. Public Comment

There were no requests for public comment.

4. Minutes of Committee Meeting

Mr. Cerio moved to approve the minutes of the Chancellor Search Committee meeting held on August 17, 2022. Ms. Frost seconded the motion, and the members concurred unanimously.

5. Interviews

A. Dr. Lori Cromwell

Chair Lamb introduced the first candidate, Dr. Lori Cromwell. Dr. Cromwell is the Chief Business Officer at the Emory University Candler School of Theology and has served in that capacity since 2019. She's been employed in other capacities at Emory since 2006, including as the Director of Financial Operations, a Senior Associate Director of Compliance and Financial Operations for the university's Office of Financial Aid, as the Associate Director for Financial Operations in the Office of Financial Aid, and as a Senior Analyst in that office from 2006 to 2010. She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Mercer University and a Bachelor of Science in Finance from Tuskegee University.

Dr. Cromwell thanked Chair Lamb and the Board for the opportunity to interview for the position. Dr. Cromwell described education as transforming and evolving and believes those who work in higher education are motivated by the success of students and the larger impact of that success. She characterized her leadership style as highly collaborative and flexible, although on the operational side, she tends to be more granular and moves from traditional to situational leadership models, based on the person, team, or community. Professional development is

important and she believes in the power of mentoring and coaching, participating in special interest groups, and finding ways to adapt changing circumstances. This position was of particular interest given her career in higher education and her strengths. She noted it is an art to balance students' needs and regulatory compliance issues, along with individual and institutional success. Acknowledging that the System has benefited from strong leadership and is not in crisis, she believes it's a great time for a leadership change, to build on student success, focus on efficiencies and meet the changing needs of students in the state. She indicated she connects with the guiding principles of the Board that focus on student success and development, and would look forward to partnering with local institutional boards. Dr. Cromwell said she also teaches part-time which enables her to keep her pulse on students, and consider how institutions must align their resources and support for students.

Chair Lamb asked about Dr. Cromwell's leadership style. Dr. Cromwell said she is collaborative and trusts and enables leaders to be autonomous, especially those who are specialists in their fields. She likes to have open communication and employs a situational leadership strategy, which she has found to be effective for managing people who are managing others. She is a great listener and uses her skills to determine where to focus emphasis or attention. She then referenced her experience at Emory and said the Board of Governors could expect transparency and honesty, and someone who would ask for help if she did not know something or needed assistance. She stated the Board could also expect a partnership; she leads by example, but also relies on colleagues for collaboration and decision-making.

Mr. Silagy said that the System and the state have embraced a system of performance-based funding that incentivizes universities to focus on areas to improve student outcomes. He asked for her thoughts about the performance-based funding model and how the System can improve student outcomes. Dr. Cromwell commended Florida for instituting and implementing criteria to measure the institutions. She noted one of the guiding principles of the model is to be transparent and clear. But as with any model, there are pros and cons, and if selected for the position, she would undertake a review to assess any unintentional consequences to students and universities that are struggling under the model. She also mentioned looking at the market more closely in terms of the workforce and how to prepare students to meet those needs. Dr. Cromwell said much of her research focus has been on institutional variables that support student success, which aligns well with the performance-based funding model. She indicated one model might not fit every student or every institution; therefore institutions should take charge of protocols that can lead to student success. Mr. Silagy inquired if she would be interested in seeking more money tied to performance-based funding or if it should be reduced. Dr. Cromwell stated it is at the level it should be but as circumstances change, the funding allowances should be revisited.

Mr. Cerio asked Dr. Cromwell to describe how she would work with the universities, boards, and presidents to communicate and implement the Board of Governors' objectives. Dr. Cromwell said the first step would be to establish relationships and understand the perspectives of the different universities, their needs, and how the Board of Governors can help with those needs. Open communication is key to furthering the purpose and goals of any policy, particularly as a new chancellor to ensure the policy is implemented.

Mr. Lydecker stated Dr. Cromwell's resume was impressive, but noted her background did not include exposure inside of Florida and asked how this would impact her role as chancellor. Dr. Cromwell indicated she did not see it as a shortcoming. She studied Florida's Bright Futures in a research and policy course and has used Florida's data and outcomes regarding student

financial aid in her research as well. She also has some experience and knowledge of the legislative success of Florida's higher education institutions. Coming from outside of Florida, she feels she can bring different perspectives and a fresh set of eyes to the System, which can encourage diversity of thought and more objective views. Mr. Lydecker asked if she had any experience with state government given that a part of the chancellor's role is to communicate effectively with the executive and legislative branches of the state. Dr. Cromwell said she did not have experience on this level, but said she was poised to be successful on that front and has had experience with implementing policy.

Chair Lamb asked Dr. Cromwell what her thoughts were on workforce and job creation, and what the System should be doing differently. Dr. Cromwell said job creation and workforce development are important for any higher education system. Florida's investments in research, technology and STEM have enabled students to engage in opportunities they may not otherwise have. Dr. Cromwell also believes Florida is on a great path to creating and identifying areas of significant change across industries and is creating opportunities for students to gain more experience. That said, she believes the Board of Governors could still do more to implement more practical job experiences for students.

Mr. Lydecker asked about her leadership lessons learned during the pandemic. Dr. Cromwell described the pandemic as a crash course in crisis leadership. Transitioning students online with little to no time was a challenge. At the same time, engaging professors and helping them to transition their classes online was equally a challenge. She was focused on student needs and tried to be as flexible as possible when providing support for students. She said the lessons learned was to always be prepared for the unknown, to keep an eye on faculty, students and staff, and to have a backup plan.

Mr. Cerio asked Dr. Cromwell what she thought of the role of free speech in a university setting, and what, if anything, the Board of Governors should be doing with respect to free speech issues. Dr. Cromwell said free speech has become an issue in higher education, particularly in academics, teaching, and research. Dr. Cromwell said free speech should be protected unless there is a specific student or population that is being harmed. She believes it is the administrator's job to create a space in which intellectual development can occur. Dr. Cromwell said we should not censor people, but people should have the ability to communicate without specific harm being done to students or a population.

Ms. Frost thanked Dr. Cromwell for sharing her experiences. She asked Dr. Cromwell if there was anything they hadn't asked that they should have. In her view, a critical issue that wasn't explored is the interdependent relationship between access, affordability, sustainability and accountability. She said managing the intersection of access to higher education and affordability while maintaining long-term sustainability and accountability is about managing relationships and will be a key issue to grapple with moving forward.

Chair Lamb asked Dr. Cromwell if she had any questions. She inquired about challenges the new chancellor might face. Chair Lamb said one of the challenges is with Florida being ranked the No. 1 higher education system in the country, the bar will continue to be raised in terms of faculty excellence, student success, metric opportunities, and efficiencies, while making sure the cost to students remains affordable. Chair Lamb said the new chancellor will need to be an outstanding leader who can manage the complexity of the System, partners, and stakeholders who are invested in the success of students.

Dr. Cromwell next asked what the Board does well. Chair Lamb said the Board has specific committees that handle certain topics, which works well, and that the level of engagement within the committees allows the Board to operate at a scale across the System. The Board also has complete trust in the chancellor and there is no lack of transparency on what the expectations are.

Dr. Cromwell acknowledged these are large shoes to fill. She asked what aspects of Chancellor Criser's leadership should be translated to the next chancellor. Mr. Cerio described Chancellor Criser as a strong leader who is very professional in executing a plan, managing his staff, and empowering the Board. Mr. Cerio said Chancellor Criser is informed and gives the Board the tools needed to embrace the role of policy-setting. Mr. Silagy concurred and added that Chancellor Criser has great experience and knowledge that is invaluable for new members who might not know the processes in the System, as well as wisdom in working with the legislative and executive branches.

Mr. Silagy asked her to articulate her experience around budget-setting legislative and appropriations processes. Dr. Cromwell said her experiences in that arena have been more related to processes connected with financial aid as a Compliance Director. She said as far as the budgeting aspect, she understands what support units need along with regulatory challenges that could be faced. She does have experience with pulling resources together to create a long-term plan.

Chair Lamb thanked Dr. Cromwell for her time and dialogue with the Board and for applying for the position.

B. Mr. Ray Rodrigues

Senator Rodrigues thanked Chair Lamb and the Board for this opportunity. He began his opening statement by talking about his family and his work experience at Florida Gulf Coast University over the past 16 years, alongside his wife, who has also worked at FGCU for the past 22 years. He explained he is a first-generation college student and his parents saw a college degree as an economic ladder to a more prosperous life. College degrees have opened up doors for him that would have never been open for his parents, therefore he has witnessed firsthand the power of higher education. Senator Rodrigues said a healthy State University System is critical to the overall success of Florida. He believes the chancellor's role is to protect the System and the institutions, to promote and advocate for the institutions, and to hold the schools accountable for the taxpayer dollars that have been spent and the results that have been produced.

Senator Rodrigues commended Florida as a national leader in higher education, but noted from a national perspective, Florida is in trouble. He stated there is less state support now financially than there was 20 years ago. Tuition has gone up faster than any other segment of the economy, including healthcare. Student debt exploded at the beginning of the Great Recession, and it has tripled in the last 12-15 years. Senator Rodrigues said public opinion on higher education has gone down as a result of the struggles, and the state is seeing a partisan divide emerging between Republicans and Democrats over the value of higher education. He said enrollment nationally has been at a steady decline. This is why the position of chancellor is so important.

During the Great Recession, Florida saw higher education get off track and start to decline. Previous to the Great Recession, the state funded about 66% of the cost of a college education, and students and families were responsible for the rest. He said Florida was among the other states making the same decisions and choices, but the Board of Governors recognized the path and changed it by partnering with the Legislature and the Governor to create performance-based and preeminence funding, which transformed higher education. He said performance-based funding moved from an input process of funding based on enrollment, to an output process based on student success. Preeminence funding provided the means for premier research universities to receive the investments needed to become successful and to continue to rise in the rankings. He noted the Board of Governors has proven to be visionary and honest in the guidance and stewardship of the State University System. He has worked with many members during his time as a legislator, hearing bills that implemented policy objectives. He views this as an opportunity to work for the Board in a new role as chancellor to improve higher education in Florida.

Chair Lamb asked Senator Rodrigues about his leadership style and what the Board can expect from him as a chancellor. Senator Rodrigues explained after obtaining his degree, he originally worked in the private sector at General Electric (GE). He took an entry-level job and worked his way up, over a five-year period, to a management position. As a manager, GE sent him to a leadership workshop to learn how to lead in the GE way. He described his leadership style as being grounded in transparency and collaboration. Transparency involves communicating the goals to be accomplished and determining what the individual contributions and achievements should be; monitoring the progress and putting metrics around the goals to ensure progress is being made; and providing feedback to the team as a whole and individually to the Board members. He was a leader in the Import and Compliance team at GE and was successful in this role. In higher education, he was on a budget team at FGCU and used the same skills there and in the Legislature. During his term in the House of Representatives, the Speaker appointed him to be the Majority Leader where he led 74 members to carry out the Speaker's agenda. He said the key is to build relationships, communicate, support, and invest in the team. He believes Board staff is talented and should be empowered to the extent of their responsibilities. He also discussed collaborating with external stakeholders who are important to the success of the System, such as the Legislature, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, and the Florida Council of 100.

Mr. Silagy asked if Senator Rodrigues would support an approach where universities that are performing well based on objective measurements have a way of being recognized financially. Senator Rodrigues said he is a firm believer in performance-based funding. Previously, when the metrics were around enrollment, the key objective was to enroll as many students as possible to maximize funding. When it switched to performance-based funding based on student outcomes, student retention rose, along with graduation rates. Students are now employed at a higher rate and entering the workforce at a higher salary. He noted in the original performance-based funding model, universities that enrolled students in key areas of strategic emphasis for the state were rewarded. Senator Rodrigues said the Legislature partnered with the Board of Governors to review performance-based funding metrics to encourage institutions to improve yearly. He indicated we should always be looking for other ways to improve.

Mr. Lydecker asked how Senator Rodrigues viewed the Board of Governors' relationship with the chancellor, along with the chancellor's relationships with trustees and presidents. Senator

Rodrigues said the Board members are policymakers; the chancellor is the chief executive who executes the policy and works with the universities and trustees to make sure the policies are implemented. He remarked this was not the model that was always used. During the Board of Control, there was a strong chancellor and a weak Board. He explained we should be leveraging the knowledge and expertise of the Board members when creating policy. He then touched on the importance of collaboration between the Board, the chancellor, and the universities to understand the challenges and create policies that can be readily implemented.

Mr. Cerio asked Senator Rodrigues about his viewpoint on free speech and academia and what the Board of Governors should do on this topic. Senator Rodrigues reflected on when the university presidents signed the statement endorsing freedom of speech on university campuses. He said constitutionally protected speech should be allowed on university campuses, but previously, some universities were restricting speakers to free speech zones. He commended Governor DeSantis, the Board of Governors, and the universities for championing this statement and related it to the Campus Free Expression Act that was enacted by the Legislature.

Mr. Lydecker asked Senator Rodrigues if he had a view of the Board staff and how he would work with them to carry out goals. Senator Rodrigues acknowledged there is a strong team in the Chancellor's office, stating he has always had positive experiences with staff interactions. He said the staff is very knowledgeable and focused on customer service. His goal would be to retain as much of the team as possible since they have proven themselves. He reiterated that his leadership style is grounded in transparency and collaboration; therefore he will work with the team to ensure the goals are clear and are being carried out. Senator Rodrigues said he believes in investing in and developing staff.

Mr. Cerio asked Senator Rodrigues what his priorities would be for the first 90 days. Senator Rodrigues said the first thing he would do is to meet individually with each Board member and understand what their priorities are. The next step would be to create a relationship with each university president and chair of the Boards of Trustees. The first 90 days would be building relationships with constituents, and then focusing on outside stakeholders of the Board of Governors. He indicated he has a strong relationship with the Commissioner of Education, which he feels will help him to develop a closer relationship with the Chancellor of the Florida College System, as well as other groups. Additionally, he would like to focus on the legislative budget request for the upcoming legislative session.

Ms. Frost thanked Senator Rodrigues for the overview of his past and current work experience. She noted he is bringing management and business experience through his work at General Electric, and higher education experience as an educator at FGCU, along with experience as a legislator. Ms. Frost asked if there was anything else the Board should know. Senator Rodrigues said he views the chancellor's role to serve as the eyes and ears for the Board of Governors, to ensure the members are up to date on occurrences. He indicated Florida has been a leader for the past 20 years in terms of K-12 education and empowering parents to break the mold to find options and choices for their students that fit their particular learning styles. He said incoming students are still entering a higher education system that is largely one size fits all. He said higher education hasn't changed much, but he sees an emerging trend developing to reflect a more personalized education in the future.

Senator Rodrigues inquired about issues that could be critical or at risk in the System strategic plan. Chair Lamb said that the strategic plan is a living document that is constantly being edited based on outside key elements. He said he would expect the chancellor to be intimately involved to make sure the strategic plan continues to be carried out appropriately. In terms of key elements of the plan, the Board will not lose sight of student success, the need for affordability, and the progression of student graduation rates, while keeping in mind student debt. Additionally, Chair Lamb said there have been continued efforts to invest in faculty, especially in key areas that the state needs, such as nursing, cyber, and STEM. Mr. Silagy said he is concerned about the dynamic nature of Florida and migration patterns, along with its growing economy and how children are being educated. He identified the need to make the System more resilient in the face of economic or climate challenges.

Senator Rodrigues asked if there were any other expectations the Board would like the next chancellor to meet. Chair Lamb said the System has been fortunate to have Chancellor Criser lead throughout the years. He noted Chancellor Criser goes above and beyond the job description and keeps an eye out for the Board. He said the next chancellor should bring new ideas to the Board of Governors and identify risks proactively. Chair Lamb also said it's critical to have a high-performing team. He stated the Board relies on the strength and acumen of the Board staff and that is something he would like to see elevated. Mr. Lydecker said it was worth noting the ability to communicate without looking extremely political while trying to administer a great education to students. Mr. Silagy said one of the things he found invaluable about Chancellor Criser was that he was never afraid to push back. The Board of Governors members, with their diverse backgrounds, bring a lot to the table and having someone to push back has been powerful.

6. Consideration of Applicants

Chair Lamb thanked the candidates for their time and then asked each committee member to give their recommendation. Mr. Silagy said both candidates brought a number of skills and experience to the table for consideration, but when looking at the candidates, there was daylight between the two. He said Dr. Cromwell has good experience, but Senator Rodrigues brings a different level of experience that would benefit the System, especially given his 16 years of experience in the System, knowledge of the budget process, interactions with the Board of Governors and staff, and interaction with legislative members, etc., all of which demonstrates a deep knowledge of the educational and appropriations systems. Mr. Silagy said the private sector experience and the training Senator Rodrigues received was invaluable, along with his passion for education and his experience as a first generation college student, which creates a deep appreciation for opportunities that can come from education. Mr. Silagy recommended Senator Rodrigues as his choice for chancellor.

Mr. Lydecker said that Senator Rodrigues was a stronger candidate in terms of what the Board of Governors is looking for in Florida. Mr. Lydecker said he appreciated the Senator's commitment to the thought process behind partnerships, collaborations, metrics, performance funding, and his institutional knowledge. Mr. Lydecker said he thought highly of Dr. Cromwell but felt that Senator Rodrigues is a better fit. Mr. Lydecker recommended Senator Rodrigues for chancellor.

Mr. Cerio echoed the comments of Mr. Silagy and Mr. Lydecker. Mr. Cerio said Dr. Cromwell had a great interview and background, however he felt that the new chancellor needed to be more experienced in Florida's higher education system and legislative process. He feels the new

chancellor should have knowledge about the higher education issues the Legislature has wrestled with, along with the relationships that come with it. Mr. Cerio recommended Senator Rodrigues.

Ms. Frost said her recommendation is Senator Rodrigues. She said Senator Rodrigues understands the System, the Board, the role of the next chancellor for the System. Ms. Frost said Dr. Cromwell presented herself well and came with some qualifications for the position, but not for the chancellor of our System. Ms. Frost said when the Board chose Chancellor Criser, he had come with academic and business experience, along with experience and knowledge in the public arena. She said we have done well with Chancellor Criser, and feels that we will do equally as well with Senator Rodrigues. Ms. Frost then gave her vote of Senator Rodrigues as next chancellor.

Commissioner Diaz thanked the committee for the work that had been done and for Chair Lamb's leadership. He stated he has had the opportunity to serve alongside Senator Rodrigues in both the Florida House and the Senate, and has worked collaboratively with him on higher education policy. Commissioner Diaz said Senator Rodrigues is a very thoughtful, methodical, and well-read leader who has been a practitioner at the university level and comes from a corporate background. He said Senator Rodrigues has been a part of all facets of higher education from the policy perspective and feels that Senator Rodrigues is the right person to help take the System to the next level.

Chair Lamb complimented both candidates on their interviews noting they both have great track records and expertise. He felt that Senator Rodrigues stood out in a number of key areas such as workforce, leadership, legislative experience, etc. He said the chancellor needs to work closely and successfully with the Board and Senator Rodrigues has already demonstrated his ability to do so. He also appreciated his view on the importance of teamwork. Chair Lamb then asked for a motion to recommend Mr. Rodrigues as next chancellor.

Mr. Lydecker made a motion to recommend Mr. Ray Rodrigues to the Board of Governors for consideration to fill the position of Chancellor. Ms. Frost seconded the motion and the members concurred unanimously.

7. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Lamb thanked Dr. Cromwell, Senator Rodrigues, and fellow committee members for their work.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m. on August 26, 2022.

Brian Lamb, Chair

Vikki Shirley,
Corporate Secretary