

MINUTES
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Florida A&M University
March 26, 2025
Full Board

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<https://thefloridachannel.org/videos/3-26-25-florida-board-of-governors-meeting/>

1. Call to Order.

Chair Brian Lamb called to order the Full Board portion of the meeting. Rachel Kamoutsas called the roll. Chair Lamb, Vice Chair Levine, Governors Bell Barnett, Brinkman, Cerio, Diaz, Frost, Haddock, Good, Jones, Oliva, and Silagy were present, and a quorum was met.

2. Chair's Remarks to the Board.

Chair Lamb reflected on meetings at the Capitol in light of legislative session and energy focused on higher education. He discussed that the Board's strategic plan has a lot of momentum at each of the system's institutions and complimented Florida Poly on where they were headed in their strategic plan. Chair Lamb recognized a \$45 million donation to the University of South Florida from the Bellini Family for the Bellini College of Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity, & Computing, and allowed President Law to provide a brief overview of the mission of the college.

3. Chancellor's Report.

Chancellor Rodrigues shared that since the last in-person meeting in January, activity in the world of higher education has increased. After the inauguration of President Trump, announcements were made regarding grants that were frozen, and at the NIH, the indirect cost rates would be lowered to 15% unilaterally. He recounted layoffs and funding freezes at various federal entities. This has led to uncertainty in higher education and the correlating hiring freezes across the country at various institutions and in state systems.

The Chancellor shared that he met with Florida's Congressional delegation and leaders of key committees, to make Florida's case to them on the importance of the research that is being done and the impact of the changes that are being made. He acknowledged that the current system is broken since there are instances where schools that are getting the highest amount of research funding also have the highest amount of indirect cost reimbursement rates, which is a concerning practice. He noted various efforts that have been made to devise solutions and to advocate for a more precise and surgical solution to address the imbalances in current federal research funding and the freezing of the funding.

The Chancellor the provided an update on the Legislative session, where the budget for the House of Representatives was released, and the anticipated Senate Budget would be

released soon. There is information coming on what the appropriations will be. He repeated that the economic forecast for Florida would be slower and that this has been communicated to the university presidents.

Chancellor Rodrigues reported that he has sent a study to the Board members on dental workforce demands in Florida. He shared that the report showed a deficit of dentists in Florida and the report provided a number of recommendations that ranged from the fastest impact and most affordable but lowest yield would have been expanding residency programs and the next more costly but yields more dentists would be expanding capacity at dental schools, and then the next most costly but greatest impact to increase dentists, would be establishing a new dental school. The report identified the panhandle and northcentral Florida as areas of the highest need. This report was forwarded to the Legislature for their consideration, and we will see if they have an interest in the conclusions of that report.

The Chancellor concluded with an expected forecast for the second half of the legislative session, which included both budgets being released, negotiations that would take place between the two chambers, and finally, a conference on the budget.

4. Public Comment.

There were four members of the public who offered comments.

The first to make a comment was on Mr. Mike Sanderson regarding strategic plan metrics, the data integrity audit, and other New College of Florida issues.

The second to make a comment was Mr. Benjamin Brown regarding the OIGC Strategic Plan and the NCF Foundation. He raised concerns that the Foundation has been tasked with too many expenses, resulting in limiting the alumni giving that it could engage in.

There was a pause in this portion of the meeting, and a special guest, Governor DeSantis, appeared to address the Board. Governor DeSantis thanked the Board and the Trustees for their work and dedication to the State University System and to the state of Florida as a whole. He spoke on the DOGE Effort, which is seeking to ensure the system is implementing the state policies well; he noted there is room for improvement in terms of administrative bloat. He also praised how the universities upheld standards of conduct for the universities during prior political campus unrest. He shared a testament to Florida maintaining rigor and excellent programs, is demonstrated by constituents consistently choosing to send their children to Florida schools.

Public comment resumed. The third to make a comment was Mr. Bruce Bennett regarding the New College of Florida, mismanagement of this institution is harming the reputation of the State University System as a whole.

The fourth to make a comment was Ms. Ginger Lyon, who wished for more oversight from a regulatory body in the case of New College of Florida. She expressed that the reasons are based on the weak financial situation of the school, and she is willing to work with OIGC to prevent further deterioration.

Rachel Kamoutsas concluded this portion of the meeting.

5. Board of Governors Self Evaluation Survey

The Chancellor reported the results of Self-Evaluations Survey of Board members and shared the findings. The common strengths included that the board: understands the fiscal conditions of the SUS institutions, is knowledgeable about state/regional higher education needs, recognizes the accomplishments of the SUS institutions, acknowledges that the goals of the SUS are aligned and effective, and the Board staff are responsive to members' needs. He reported that the most common points of improvement begin with the need to communicate board member responsibilities and foster an environment where members feel engaged, respected, and empowered. There was also a desire for more engagement with various committees and engaging in a Board retreat. The Chancellor concluded his remarks.

6. Approval of Contract Extension for University of South Florida President

Chair Weatherford presented the contract extension for President Rhea Law of the University of South Florida. He highlighted that under her tenure, they have enjoyed record-high fundraising and admission into the AAU. While President Law announced her resignation earlier in the year, they are engaging in a presidential search and expressed that her extension would be for up to 1 year, but if a permanent president is hired before that, then her tenure would end prior to that year. Chair Lamb opened the floor for discussion. The extension was moved by Governor Jones and seconded by Governor Silagy. The motion carried. Chair Lamb opened the Floor to President Law to address the board.

7. Presidential Search Reports

Chair Lamb gave the floor to Governor Jones, who reported that Mike Griffin will help lead the search committee and will use SPNA as the search firm. They will help assist in the USF search once they conclude their services with the University of Florida's search.

Governor Levine then praised Vice Chair Gibbons who has focused on obtaining input from alumni and students. Several virtual and in-person listening sessions were held, and Governor Levine was grateful that the Chair of the search committee ensured everyone had a chance to be heard, so he extended the listening sessions to account for that. He announced upcoming search committee meetings and the timeline.

Governor Oliva then reported that Florida International University has recently approved the marketing plan, the Presidential position criteria, and the range of compensation. Future updates on the search will be forthcoming.

Governor Lydecker then reported that the search for the University of Florida president is moving at a deliberate and thoughtful pace. The compensation analysis, qualifications, and marketing plan have been recommended to the UF BOT, and the committee is now considering applicants.

8. Consent Agenda.

Chair Lamb reported that a motion and vote were not completed in the audit and compliance committee. Chair Lamb made the first motion, Rachel Kamoutsas announced the motion to

approve the OIGC Strategic plan, which would be taken up by the entire full board, not reverting to being re-heard by the audit and compliance committee. Governor Jones seconded, and the vote carried, and the motion was adopted.

An item was pulled from the consent agenda and is now being pulled for consideration by the full board as an individual item, which is the approval of the Public Notice of Intent to Amend Board of Governors, Regulation 7.008- Waivers and Exemptions of Tuition and Fees. Governor Levine moved, Governor Jones seconded, no further discussion was had, present members voted in favor except for Governor Phalin, who voted nay. The motion carried.

Finally, Chair Lamb asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda, which was so moved by Governor Cerio, and seconded by Governor Phalin; no further discussion was had, and the motion carried.

9. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment.

Chair Lamb adjourned the meeting.