

MINUTES  
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

March 26, 2025

*Video or audio archives of the meetings of the Board of Governors and its committees  
are accessible at:*

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

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Chair Ken Jones convened the meeting at 9:17 a.m., with the following Governors present: Jones, Oliva, Brinkman, Diaz, Frost, Good, and Phalin. A quorum was established.

2. Approval of Minutes

Chair Jones requested a motion to approve the Strategic Planning Committee meeting minutes from January 30, 2025. Governor Frost moved to approve, Governor Oliva seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

3. Accreditation Updates

Chair Jones shared that almost half of the universities in the System are going through the process of changing accreditors. He recognized several university presidents for an update.

Dr. Alexander Cartwright, President of the University of Central Florida, stated that the university was preparing for a campus site visit by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) on June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Dr. Moez Limayem, President of the University of North Florida, reported that on March 21<sup>st</sup>, the university received approval from the U.S. Department of Education to change accreditors. He shared that the university would begin the process of moving to HLC and anticipates completing the process in 2026.

Dr. Devin Stephenson, President of Florida Polytechnic University, shared that the university would submit its HLC application in August and start the process of the site visit and review soon after.

Dr. Richard McCullough, President of Florida State University, announced that the university received reaffirmation of accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission of Colleges (SACSCOC) through 2034 with no findings of noncompliance. The university's board of trustees approved pursuing accreditation from HLC and is preparing to submit documentation to the U.S. Department of Education. The university will send representatives to HLC's annual conference and has convened a campus workgroup to begin the accreditation transition process.

Ms. Jeanette Nunez, President of Florida International University, shared that the university would seek approval from its board of trustees in April to transition to HLC ahead of schedule. She noted that the university is accredited by SACSCOC through 2027.

Mr. Adam Hasner, President of Florida Atlantic University, reported that the university received reaffirmation of accreditation from SACSCOC through 2034. In February, the university board of trustees approved a change in accreditors to HLC with the intention to submit a request letter to the U.S. Department of Education in May 2025. The university will host the State University System accreditation liaisons' summer meeting, with participation from HLC representatives.

Board Vice Chair Levine raised concerns about a report released by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) regarding the accreditation competencies that include diversity, equity, and inclusion to be infused into medical education training. Board Vice Chair Levine noted that this accrediting agency sets the standard in medical education and may not reflect the focus of medical curriculum in Florida. He requested that the Board staff examine accreditation standards issued by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education and the related curricular impact at Florida's medical schools. The Chancellor agreed to have staff review this issue.

#### 4. Florida Polytechnic University Strategic Plan 2025–2030

Chair Jones recognized President Stephenson of Florida Polytechnic University and Ms. Beth Kigel, Chair of Florida Polytechnic University's Board of Trustees, to present the 2025-30 strategic plan.

Florida Polytechnic University's Board of Trustees Chair Kigel emphasized the collaboration across the System and thanked the Board's leadership in shaping excellence in our state. She expressed that Florida Polytechnic is stronger because of that shared success.

President Stephenson presented the 2025-30 Strategic Plan for Florida Polytechnic University. He highlighted the university's STEM focus, strategic growth goals, academic rigor, and economic development opportunities through research with company partners. President Stephenson elaborated that the plan outlines three strategic priorities with associated metrics and initiatives aligned with the goals of the Board of Governors' Strategic Plan, SUS 30. The priorities include comprehensive growth, strengthening operational efficiency, and fostering relationships with industry and other academic institutions, in part through the development of a research park and center for innovation to support collaboration. He noted that each Board member received a copy of the plan and crosswalk to track key metrics. President Stephenson then presented a video that included details supporting the plan.

Chair Jones commented on the plan's thoroughness and asked about the support needed from the Board and the state to ensure that goals are met.

President Stephenson described the plan as aggressive but achievable. The plan will allow enrollment growth from approximately 1,500 to 3,000 students, with the goal to increase first-to-second-year retention rates by over 80%, hiring 70 new faculty members, implementing new academic programs, and addressing infrastructure needs. He also discussed expanded academic support services, career-readiness programming, student life enhancements, and the possibility for athletics. President Stephenson stated that online education could allow for growth in graduate education. President Stephenson assured that the university will maintain rigor in the curriculum and deliver a high-quality education. He commented that the investment needed for infrastructure, student support services, and faculty is part of the university's legislative budget request for the upcoming year.

Chair Jones asked about how the university plans to improve its four-year graduation rate while increasing enrollment.

President Stephenson shared that the university's plan is to improve graduation rates to 60% within five years, which is aggressive but achievable. The university plans to strengthen academic support, stabilize the curriculum, and improve recruitment.

Governor Bell Barnett thanked President Stephenson for his leadership and vision for Florida Polytechnic University and emphasized the university's importance to Polk County and central Florida. She noted the region's rapid growth and stressed the need for the university to support the workforce needs of cybersecurity and engineering in the area.

Board Vice Chair Levine commended the university's progress and stated that the current growth projection may be too modest, citing the demand for engineering graduates and the governor's initiative to attract NASA to Florida. Board Vice Chair Levine encouraged Florida Poly to leverage its strengths in engineering as a key selling point in statewide efforts to boost the aerospace workforce.

Governor Cerio applauded the strategic plan's alignment with the SUS 30 metrics. He commented on Florida Poly's survey results, which demonstrated a strong culture of free speech on campus. He asked President Stephenson to elaborate on the Office of Public Policy Events. President Stephenson explained that the office regularly holds meetings and events where opposing ideologies and thoughts are shared with a civil discourse structure. He noted that civil discourse is embedded in strategic priority three.

Board Chair Lamb commented that Florida Poly's strategic priorities are strongly connected to SUS 30, and he noted the plan should be reflected in the accountability plan, presidential goals and evaluation, and legislative budget requests. Board Chair Lamb emphasized the importance of a continuous internal review of progress.

Chair Jones requested a motion to approve the Florida Polytechnic University's 2025-30 Strategic Plan. Governor Diaz moved to approve, Governor Brinkman seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

## 5. SUS 30 Implementation

Chair Jones recognized Ms. Emily Sikes, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, to present an update on the implementation timeline and deliverables for the State University System Strategic Plan for 2025–2030, SUS 30.

Ms. Sikes began her update with a timeline and noted that while the new strategic plan was adopted in January, the current cycle of university accountability plans lags a year with data. Therefore, the 2025 accountability plans will come to the Board in June using the previous framework. Ms. Sikes reported that Board staff developed a crosswalk to assist with metrics from the SUS 30 plan and included it in communication to the universities for the 2025 accountability plans. She shared that metrics from the SUS 30 plan will be fully integrated into the 2026 accountability plans, with a draft template to be shared with the Board in fall 2025.

Next, Ms. Sikes outlined key initiatives under the strategic plan's five priority areas.

The One SUS priority is focused on collaboration across the System. Ms. Sikes reported that the Board office launched studies on the System's economic impact and return on investment for select academic programs, with results expected by June. She stated that a System-wide working group will be established to take on big ideas, identify business partnerships, and other initiatives before the June meeting. Ms. Sikes highlighted that collaborations of distinction is an initiative to elevate and focus on collaborating as a System. The Board will need to establish the minimum criteria for these collaborations so that they can be highlighted at upcoming meetings. Another initiative under this priority is areas of expertise. Ms. Sikes mentioned that the universities will identify up to three areas of expertise. Board staff will establish a template for reporting these, and the universities will bring these to the Strategic Planning Committee for approval in September.

Ms. Sikes provided the committee with an overview of the metrics for the One SUS priority and outlined an implementation timeline for each. Ms. Sikes explained that a metric for federal research collaborations had been established through the Board's existing research dashboard. She shared that the System collaborated on over 200 federal research grants last year, an increase from the previous year.

Under the next priority, Elevating Student Success, Ms. Sikes shared initiatives around innovative paths to degrees, targeted pathways for transfer students, and non-degree credentials. She noted that Board staff will work with the universities to collect information and build a baseline on current System activities and identify any best practices. Ms. Sikes mentioned that Board staff have been working with staff from the Florida College System on targeted pathways to determine how effective these pathways are in student success.

Ms. Sikes provided an overview of the status and timeline for the metrics for Elevating Student Success. She explained that the cost to the student metric needs to clearly communicate the return on investment of the System to students and consumers. For the internship metric, Ms. Sikes reported that the Board staff plans to discuss the best ways to capture student completions for students who complete internships for credit and those who complete an internship for no credit. Ms. Sikes added that information on Pell student wages would be shared at the June meeting. She also mentioned that the data for the new list of Programs of Strategic Emphasis will be complete at the end of the 2024-25 Academic Year.

For the priority, Operational Excellence, Ms. Sikes stated that Governor Levine and the Board of Governors' Chief Financial Officer, Tim Jones, have been working with university staff to develop metrics for this priority and plan to report recommendations at the June Board meeting.

Under the priority of World-Class Talent, Ms. Sikes reported that Board staff were reviewing national data sources to support the World-Class Faculty metrics. She added that Board staff had been working to compile an initial list of iconic companies that would be presented in June. This list is part one of implementation, and the next step would be to build out metrics to track progress in this area.

In the final priority area, Innovative Research and Economic Development, Ms. Sikes shared that an economic impact study focused on research would follow the completion of the System-wide study. Ms. Sikes reported that the university technology transfer staff had convened and are working to identify best practices in this area.

Ms. Sikes concluded with a high-level timeline, outlining deliverables for the remainder of 2025.

Chair Jones and Board Chair Lamb commended the thoroughness of the implementation effort and stressed the importance of aligning university actions with the goals of SUS 30.

## 6. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Jones adjourned the meeting at 10:18 a.m.

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Ken Jones, Chair

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Mandi Young,  
Director of Innovation and Strategic Initiatives