

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

June 18, 2025

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

<https://thefloridachannel.org/videos/6-18-25-florida-board-of-governors-meeting/>

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Chair Ken Jones convened the meeting at 8:15 a.m., with the following Governors present: Jones, Diaz, Frost, Good, Dunn, and Renner. A quorum was established.

2. Minutes of Committee Meeting

Chair Jones requested a motion to approve the Strategic Planning Committee meeting minutes from March 26, 2025. Governor Dunn moved to approve, Governor Diaz seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

3. Accreditation Update

Chair Jones recognized university presidents to provide updates on accreditation changes across the System.

Dr. Moez Limayem, President of the University of North Florida, reported that the university passed its fifth-year interim report to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) with no required additional reporting. He added that the university completed its first step in changing its accreditor to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

Dr. Devin Stephenson, President of Florida Polytechnic University, reported that the university is developing preliminary review materials for HLC to be submitted in the fall. In the six months that follow, the university intends to submit a comprehensive review to HLC and host an on-site visit within the next year.

Dr. Michael Johnson, Provost of the University of Central Florida, provided an update on behalf of President Alexander Cartwright. He shared that the university submitted its documents to HLC for the third step in the accreditation change process. An on-site visit was conducted in June 2025 by HLC. The university expects to receive a final report from HLC by the end of June and to attend a hearing for the second-to-last step of the accreditation change process.

4. 2025 University Accountability Plans

Chair Jones recognized Ms. Emily Sikes, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, to present an overview of the 2025 University Accountability Plans.

Ms. Sikes highlighted the role of accountability plans in elevating student success across the System. Over the past five years, four-year graduation rates for first-time-in-college (FTIC) students have risen by seven percentage points to 64%, four-year graduation rates for Pell students have risen by eight percentage points to 60%, and the median graduate salary one year after graduation has risen by more than \$9,000 to \$51,000.

Ms. Sikes introduced a crosswalk of SUS 30 metric goals, from the System's 2030 strategic plan, and performance on those metrics as of 2025.

Ms. Sikes presented an overview of Performance-Based Funding metric 1, the percentage of bachelor's graduates continuing their education or employed with salaries above \$40,000. She reported that the System-wide rate was 74.4%, with ten universities improving over the previous year and New College improving by the largest margin. Florida Poly and the University of West Florida exceeded 80%, now within five percentage points of the 85% SUS 30 goal. Ms. Sikes noted that median wages for graduates also increased at ten universities last year. She attributed this growth to the focused efforts of universities, including the work of career centers and university staff working diligently to connect students with internships and other post-graduation opportunities.

Ms. Sikes presented the System's academic progress rate, or first-year retention of students with at least a 2.0 GPA. All 12 institutions improved, driving the System to a rate of 89.8% and bringing it closer to the SUS 30 goal of 92%. Ms. Sikes recognized New College, the University of North Florida, and Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University for achieving the largest growth in the System.

Ms. Sikes provided an overview of FTIC four-year graduation rates. The System rate increased from 39% when the 2025 Strategic Plan was developed to 64% for the 2020-24 cohort. Ms. Sikes noted that nine institutions improved in the past year, and four institutions improved in each of the past five years. She added that three universities surpassed the SUS 30 goal of 70%.

Board Chair Lamb commented on the effect of Board-approved 120+ credit hour programs on four-year graduation rates. He suggested devising a method to not penalize schools that disproportionately award degrees for such programs, such as Florida Poly offering engineering degrees that are not meant to be completed within four years. Governor Lydecker agreed and requested that Board staff develop a method to account for 120+ credit hour programs when assessing graduation rates.

Chair Jones asked how New College and the University of North Florida plan to address declining four-year graduation rates. Mr. Richard Corcoran, President of New College, noted that the institution experienced declines in retention and graduation rates following its change in leadership, but that those rates should stabilize after the following year. Dr. Moez Limayem, President of the University of North Florida, explained that the university has streamlined course curricula and added that rising retention rates indicate the success of those efforts in keeping more students on track.

Ms. Sikes noted that Board staff have begun looking at engineering programs to address how they affect graduation rates. The Board has worked to significantly reduce the number of programs that exceed the 120-credit-hour threshold, and the data is expected to reflect those changes after a couple of years.

Next, Ms. Sikes presented on Pell Grant recipient graduation rates. Systemwide, the four-year graduation rate for Pell Grant recipients is 60%. Seven institutions improved from the previous year, bringing the System within 10 percentage points of the SUS 30 goal of 70%. Ms. Sikes recognized Florida Atlantic University and the University of North Florida for closing the gap between Pell and overall FTIC graduation rates.

Governor Lydecker asked how universities have managed to improve Pell graduation rates at such a significant rate. Mr. Adam Hasner, President of Florida Atlantic University, noted that many Pell students are resistant to taking student loans and are at risk of needing additional time to complete their degree. He explained that the university has made a robust effort to provide additional financial resources and support services for Pell students who are not recipients of other merit scholarships.

Ms. Sikes elaborated on the gap between Pell and non-Pell graduation rates in the System. She presented a graph illustrating how the gap has narrowed. The goal for Pell graduation rates set in the SUS 30 strategic plan is 70%, the same as for FTIC graduation rates.

Ms. Sikes highlighted the three-year graduation rates for 2+2 transfer students from the Florida College System. Following a decline in transfer student enrollment due to COVID-19, transfer enrollment and graduation rates have begun increasing again across the System. Ten universities improved from the previous year, and two are above the SUS 30 goal of 72%.

Governor Dunn noted that while three-year transfer graduation rates are helpful for assessing universities, a deeper dive into students with longer graduation times may offer more insight into where universities are succeeding or have room for improvement.

Ms. Sikes presented the total research expenditures for the System. She reported that the System hit its goal of \$3.1 billion this past year. Though uncertainty is expected with research grants going forward, Ms. Sikes stated that Vice Presidents of Research at the universities have been planning and collaborating to continue research growth.

Ms. Sikes provided an overview of the System's licensure exam passage rates. Governor Lydecker asked about the scores at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, three of which were below their respective benchmarks. Ms. Sikes noted that the university improved its passage rate for law by 20 percentage points from the previous year. Dr. Timothy Beard, Interim President of FAMU, explained that a greater emphasis has been placed on preparing students for the bar exam. Ms. Kristin Harper, Chair of the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University Board of Trustees, provided more information on the university's recent improvement in law licensure pass rates. She explained that the university established a special committee and implemented a

writing center that ensured every student had access to courses that would help prepare them for the bar exam. She added that teaching pedagogy has improved and prepared students for multi-state bar exams, which are growing in popularity.

Board Vice Chair Levine stated that nursing scores at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University have improved substantially, and then asked about nursing scores at Florida Atlantic University. President Hasner explained that the Davie nursing campus is currently in teach-out and that new leadership is in place at the university's Boca Raton campus with strategies to improve NCLEX nursing exam scores.

Ms. Sikes highlighted excellent performance in licensure exams across the System. She reported that Florida Gulf Coast University achieved a 100% pass rate in nursing, the University of Florida achieved a 100% pass rate in dentistry, and Florida International University, Florida Atlantic University, and the University of South Florida achieved a 100% pass rate in medicine.

Ms. Sikes presented on the enrollment of students transferring from the Florida College System, which declined from the previous year. She explained that some of the decline in Associates of the Arts degrees awarded in Florida can be attributed to COVID-19, but that the enrollment of Florida College System transfers is expected to increase.

Ms. Sikes highlighted Preeminent Research University benchmarks. She noted that four institutions met at least 12 of the 13 benchmarks required to earn the Preeminent designation, and that the University of Central Florida only needed a small increase in graduation rates to earn the designation as well.

Ms. Sikes presented highlights from the accountability plans of each institution and provided an opportunity for questions after each slide in the presentation. Board Vice Chair Levine asked about declining passage rates for the physical therapy licensure exam at Florida International University. Ms. Jeanette Nuñez, President of Florida International University, stated that the university has shortened the gap in time between completion of the physical therapy degree and the licensure exam, which led to improved performance in 2024. Ms. Sikes noted that the pass rates calculated for this metric are an average of performance across three years, and that Board staff have looked at using pass rates for one year to align with other licensure metrics.

Chair Jones noted that Florida Polytechnic University's four-year graduation rate may not compare fairly to other institutions in the System due to the rigor of the degrees offered at the university. President Stephenson added that fewer than 40% of students who enter college intending to major in a STEM field complete their degrees. He stated that the university is looking to retool the first-year experience for students to streamline the first year of coursework and potentially establish a three-year path to an engineering degree. He also noted that the university has created a peer tutoring service and has been more proactive in providing support services for students.

Governor Dunn asked President Stephenson to elaborate on changes to the first-year curriculum, and he clarified that some courses have been replaced with modern

introductory courses that immerse students in applied sciences, technology, engineering, and math. Governor Bell Barnett noted that Florida Polytechnic University may benefit from taking in more students of an older age who are in the workforce. President Stephenson noted that medicine and health programs are being expanded at the university, as are data science and artificial intelligence programs. He also stated that the university has established a faculty teaching center to train faculty with a more research-focused background.

Ms. Sikes presented the enrollment trends for the System. Despite a nationwide drop in undergraduate enrollment, the System increased in that metric by two percentage points from the previous year and increased by three percentage points in returning students.

Ms. Sikes provided an overview of non-resident enrollment in the System. In 2024, the System rate was 12%, which includes fully online students who are not in the state of Florida. Governor Silagy expressed concern about individual universities enrolling non-resident students at a rate significantly higher than 10%. Governor Dunn also expressed concern that many universities set future goals for this metric that are higher than 10%.

Chair Jones requested a motion to approve the 2025 University Accountability Plans. Governor Diaz moved, Governor Dunn seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chair Jones requested a motion to approve the 2025 Preeminent Research University designations for Florida International University, Florida State University, the University of Florida, and the University of South Florida. Governor Diaz moved, Governor Dunn seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

5. 2025 System Accountability Plan

Chair Jones noted that the highlights of the 2025 System Accountability Plan were discussed in the presentation given by Ms. Sikes. He requested a motion to approve the 2025 System Accountability Plans. Governor Diaz moved, Governor Dunn seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

6. SUS 30 Update

Chair Jones recognized Ms. Sikes to present an update on the System Strategic Plan for 2030.

Ms. Sikes mentioned that the Board staff will be developing a new template for the 2026 accountability plans that will reflect the goals and priorities of the SUS 30 plan.

Ms. Sikes provided an overview of the progress made regarding the five key priorities that are included within the SUS 30 plan. The Board office has been working closely with different university groups and chief data officers across the System to discuss metrics, the definitions of the metrics, and where the System is headed in the plan's

priority areas. For the One SUS priority, Board staff are working on a template for the universities to select and describe areas of expertise. For the Elevating Student Success priority, Board staff have made progress standardizing the reporting of internship placement data, wages for students who graduated with a Pell grant, and an affordability metric.

Ms. Sikes mentioned that the Board office reviewed some of the top publications across various industries to identify top companies that have appeared on multiple industry lists and have direct ties to Florida's economic development. She noted that the Board office has compiled a proposed list that contains approximately 140 companies, ranging across 10 key areas, that would be ideal to develop partnerships with. Ms. Sikes stated that the potential partnerships with these leading companies could create opportunities for student internships, faculty research opportunities, and for System graduates to be competitive in the employment marketplace.

7. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Jones adjourned the meeting at 9:47 a.m.

Ken Jones, Chair

Vincent Scuteri,
Policy Associate