MINUTES
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
JOINT WORKSHOP OF THE ACADEMIC AFFAIRS &
BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEES
September 2, 2026

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https://thefloridachannel.org/videos/9-2-26-florida-board-of-governors-meeting/

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks.

Chair Cerio convened the meeting at 2:00 p.m. with the following Governors present: Bell Barnett, Broxson, Dunn, Edge, Haddock, Levine, Lukis, Lydecker, Mack, Mateer, Okaty, Perry, Seibert, and Sinatra.

2. Discussion of proposed amendment to Regulation 8.002, Self-Supporting and Market Tuition Rate Program and Course Offerings

Chair Cerio recognized Ms. Emily Sikes, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, to discuss an amendment to Regulation 8.002, Self-Supporting and Market Tuition Rate Program and Course Offerings.

Ms. Sikes reported that Board staff reviewed questions raised during the June workshop and the available data to inform proposed changes to Regulation 8.002. She explained that programs were classified as high- or low-wage by comparing median earnings one year after graduation with the System median for the same degree level, noting that students paying a tuition premium should realize stronger earnings after graduation. She clarified that market tuition rate programs do not affect rankings based on resident undergraduate tuition. Ms. Sikes also reported that 32 market tuition rate programs are Programs of Strategic Emphasis, 27 of which have a comparable state-funded program, and that Florida residents represent nearly two-thirds of graduates. She noted that extending the wage analysis to three years did not materially change the results.

Ms. Sikes stated that Board staff recommend a comprehensive overhaul of Regulation 8.002 to clarify the criteria and approval path for new market tuition rate programs and tuition increases for existing programs. She explained that the goal is to establish clear expectations for universities at the time of submission and through ongoing reporting.

Board Chair Levine stated that higher-performing programs should have an accelerated and clear pathway. Ms. Sikes responded that Board staff recommend allowing high-wage, low-debt programs to bring forward tuition increase requests first, provided they meet the proposed criteria. She outlined the proposed timeline, with consideration of the public notice of intent to amend at the September 30 Board meeting and final approval at the November Board meeting. Ms. Sikes noted that potential consideration of qualifying tuition increase requests may also be included at the November meeting. She added that Board staff are updating the tuition increase request form to align with the proposed criteria and recommendations.

Ms. Sikes reviewed proposed compliance and transparency requirements. She explained that universities are already required to provide students with an accessible comparison of tuition and fees for market tuition rate programs and comparable state-funded options. Ms. Sikes noted that Board staff identified inconsistent implementation with this provision across the System. She stated that compliance with the regulation would be required before a university could bring forward a new request. Ms. Sikes cited Florida International University as an example of providing clear program-level tuition information, allowing students to compare available options.

Governor Bell Barnett asked whether wage outcomes should be evaluated beyond the first year after graduation. Ms. Sikes stated that the analysis compared median earnings one year after graduation with the System median for the same degree level to classify programs as high- or low-wage. She noted that Board staff recommend first considering high-wage, low-debt programs before evaluating other requests after the regulation is adopted.

Ms. Sikes outlined additional proposed criteria. She reported that staff recommends that market tuition rate graduates in Programs of Strategic Emphasis be excluded from Performance-Based Funding Metric 8 unless specifically authorized by the Board. Ms. Sikes stated that universities would need to demonstrate that graduate earnings exceed those of a similar bachelor's degree program, and requests would not be considered if proposed tuition exceeds applicable federal loan limits. She also stated that universities would be required to provide evidence of return on investment to the student and the state, as well as a rationale for proposed tuition increases. Ms. Sikes commented that the regulation would clarify that university-wide tuition increases do not apply to market tuition rate programs and that students remain eligible for authorized tuition waivers. She noted that universities on a Student Success Plan would not be permitted to submit requests.

Chancellor Rodrigues commented on the increasing federal attention to higher education accountability and on the relationship between program costs, debt, and graduate earnings. He cited recent federal policy and a Federal Reserve analysis as support for incorporating return on investment into the Board's review. Chancellor Rodrigues indicated that the MyFloridaFuture tool could be expanded to include market tuition rate programs and longer-term wage and debt information so students can make more informed decisions. He added that the Board could consider how market tuition rate revenues may be transferred among auxiliary accounts under current statutory authority, including potential transfers to athletics.

Governor Mack asked whether the analysis could eventually consider whether graduates work in occupations related to their degree programs rather than focusing primarily on wages. Ms. Sikes stated that Board staff do not currently have data at that level of detail but would welcome the ability to make those linkages. Board Chair Levine commented that career alignment is an important consideration in evaluating whether degree programs produce meaningful career pathways.

Mr. Mori Hosseini, Chair of the University of Florida Board of Trustees, explained that many market tuition rate students are working professionals and that employers often pay for their education. He stated that universities should have the flexibility to design competitive programs for these students, provided the programs respond to market demand and deliver high-quality outcomes. Board Chair Levine identified employer support and students' debt as considerations when evaluating lower-wage, higher-debt programs.

Governor Dunn distinguished between the ability to repay student debt and the broader return on investment of the tuition charged. She noted that the analysis could evaluate the incremental earnings associated with completing a market tuition rate degree and the time required for those earnings to offset the program’s cost. Governor Dunn stated that the current wage-and-debt categories could be used to prioritize the initial group of requests, with later requests reviewed individually based on factors such as debt repayment, job placement, and payback period.

Governor Bell Barnett noted that some professions require graduate credentials for career advancement even when the immediate wage increase is modest. Governor Okaty identified several factors for a case-by-case review, including the size of wage differences, earnings before and after the degree, longer-term outcomes, who pays the tuition, available alternatives, and the broader value of programs that support important state and national workforce needs.

Governor Dunn asked whether graduates of market tuition rate programs should remain in Performance-Based Funding Metric 8 when the program is a Program of Strategic Emphasis. Ms. Sikes explained that Board staff recommend excluding the graduates by default because market tuition rate programs are supported through auxiliary revenues, but the proposed regulation language would give the Board authority to approve their inclusion in Metric 8 when a university provides a convincing rationale. Chancellor Rodrigues noted that this approach is consistent with a prior Board position.

Chair Cerio stated that a consistent methodology should be applied when determining which market tuition rate programs are included in System metrics. Board Chair Levine noted the importance of preserving access to state-funded programs. Ms. Sikes confirmed that the regulation would continue to prohibit a university from discontinuing a state-funded program in favor of a market tuition rate program.

Governor Dunn stated that universities could be permitted to advertise a proposed tuition increase after approval by their boards of trustees. The advertisement would indicate that the increase remains subject to the Board of Governors’ approval, so prospective students understand the potential cost before enrolling. Governor Haddock commented that advanced notice could help protect existing students from unexpected tuition changes after they begin a program. Chancellor Rodrigues added that advanced disclosure could reduce student concerns and improve transparency.

Governor Dunn asked whether market tuition rate programs without a comparable state-funded option should be considered differently for resident and non-resident students. Board Chair Levine stated that the question warrants further discussion, but should not delay establishing a pathway as soon as possible for market tuition rate requests. He noted that the Board will continue to refine the framework.

Chair Cerio stated that the Board should move forward with the staff recommendation as presented while continuing to work through remaining considerations.

3. Concluding Remarks

Having no further business, Chair Cerio adjourned the meeting at 3:13 p.m.

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Timothy M. Cerio, Chair

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Ryan Ford, Preparer of Minutes