

**MINUTES
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
University of West Florida
Full Board
July 1, 2026**

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

<https://thefloridachannel.org/videos/7-1-26-florida-board-of-governors-special-meeting/>

1. Call to Order

Chair Levine called the meeting to order. Amanda Gay called the roll. Governors Levine, Cerio, Bell-Barnett, Edge, Good, Haddock, Jones, Kamoutsas, Lukis, Lydecker, Okaty, Perry, Siebert, and Sinatra were in attendance; with this, a quorum was met.

2. Chair Opening Remarks and Public Comment

Chair Levine reiterated the reasoning for the special meeting: University of Florida (UF) facility approval, Florida Gulf Coast University's presidential contract extension, and the confirmation of the UF presidential elect.

Chair Levine asked Amanda Gay if there were any requests for public comment. Mrs. Gay announced that there were no requests for public comment.

3. Confirmation of UF President-Elect

Chair Levine turned the board's direction to UF Trustee Chair Mori Hosseini for the presentation of the president-elect, Dr. Stuart Bell. Chair Hosseini gave a presentation on Dr. Bell and UF's mission. The floor was then given to Dr. Bell to speak with the board. After Bell's remarks, Chair Levine turned to the Board for questions directed to the candidate. Vice Chair Cerio asked Dr. Bell if he had the State University System (SUS) statement of free expression. Dr. Bell stated he did not, but planned to review it. Vice Chair Cerio then asked what Dr. Bell's first steps would be as UF president. Dr. Bell responded that he planned to launch several searches to fill numerous staff vacancies on campus.

Following this, Governor Haddock stated that he believes Dr. Bell is the best candidate for the job and that he deserves to be the next leader of UF.

Governor Jones asked what UF undergraduate students will experience under Dr. Bell's leadership. In response, Dr. Bell emphasized commitment to student engagement.

Governor Jones proceeded to ask what Dr. Bell sees as UF's biggest challenge at this point in time. Dr. Bell explained that a universal plan for the university is necessary and will be prepared under his leadership.

Governor Good asked what founding principle of America resonates with Dr. Bell, and how he would tie those principles into education. Dr. Bell compared "We the People" as a principle and connected it to UF's goals and values.

Governor Good also asked for Dr. Bell's perspective on free speech. Dr. Bell expressed strong support for student civil discourse but emphasized the need for guardrails, stating that disruptions to classes would not be tolerated.

Governor Good then asked Dr. Bell for his opinion on critical race theory. Dr. Bell responded that universities should be neutral but would allow for the theory to be studied on an individual basis. Finally, Governor Good asked about artificial intelligence. Dr. Bell noted that while strict academic standards must be maintained, AI should be leveraged as a tool to enhance productivity.

Governor Sinatra asked Dr. Bell how he planned to use his presidential position to promote patriotism. Dr. Bell stated that he hopes to utilize the Hamilton Center to educate students about American history and hopes his own patriotism will serve as a proper representation for students.

Governor Edge asked about the decline in academic standards during Dr. Bell's tenure at the University of Alabama (UA). In response, Dr. Bell clarified that Governor Edge was referring to the university's decrease in national ranking. Dr. Bell ensured that the University of Florida would not have a similar issue to UA's because the University has most of its academic branches in the same place.

Governor Edge asked about Dr. Bell's opinion on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives. Dr. Bell made it clear that he doesn't plan to bring DEI initiatives to UF's campus.

Governor Kamoutsas asked Dr. Bell how he handled the COVID-19 pandemic at UA. Dr. Bell reminisced on UA administration's adaptation to the pandemic and explained how he'd incorporate what he learned from that period into his tenure at the University of Florida.

Governor Kamoutsas asked Dr. Bell whether he was committed to partnering with Florida Colleges, and Dr. Bell confirmed his intention to collaborate.

Chair Levine asked Dr. Bell about how he plans to manage UF Health. Dr. Bell let Chair Levine know that he plans to work closely with UF Health leadership.

Governor Broxson praised Dr. Bell's career and explained he is confident that he'll do a good job as president at the University of Florida. In this, Governor Broxson moved to confirm Dr. Stuart Bell as the 14th President of the University of Florida. The motion was seconded by Governor Dunn. A roll call vote was made; Governors Levine, Bell Barnett, Broxson, Dunn, Good, Haddock, Jones, Kamoutsas, Lukis, Lydecker, Mateer, Okaty, Perry, and Sinatra voted in favor of the motion. Governor Edge opposed the motion. The motion carried.

4. Consent Agenda and Adjournment

Chair Levine continued to the next agenda item, the adoption of the consent agenda. Governor Lydecker moved to adopt the agenda, and Governor Jones seconded. There was no discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Chair Levine then adjourned the meeting.