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 STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA  
 BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
 UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA  
 JACKSONVILLE, FL  
 November 5, 2020

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 and its Committees are accessible at <http://www.flbog.edu/>.*

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1. Call to Order

On November 5, 2020, Chair Sydney Kitson convened the meeting at 2:23 p.m. with the following members present and answering roll call: Vice Chair Brian Lamb; Tim Cerio; Richard Corcoran, Aubrey Edge; Patricia Frost; Darlene Jordan; Alan Levine; Charles Lydecker; Ally Schneider; Dr. Steve Scott; William Self; Eric Silagy; Kent Stermon and Norman Tripp.

2. Chair's Report to the Board of Governors

Chair Kitson thanked President Szymanski, University of North Florida Board of Trustee Chair Kevin Hyde, and the University of North Florida staff for hosting the meeting. He then called on President Szymanski and Chair Hyde for comments.

President Szymanski said it was an honor to host the Board meeting and thanked everyone who was able to join in person or virtually. He commented on the university's improvement on the performance-based funding metrics: specifically the increase in the number of Pell grants awarded to students; the increase in retention rates; and the anticipated 1400 point increase in graduation rates by the end of the year. President Szymanski said he is proud of the increases in the rankings and thanked the Board of Governors for their continued support. He also thanked the Board for the guidance it has provided during the pandemic and Chancellor Criser and Chair Kitson for their support.

Chair Kitson stated when the Board met in September, the institutions had just reopened and were faced with logistical challenges. The universities welcomed back a full enrollment of residential and non-residential students, along with new and returning faculty and staff. During this time, new health and safety policies and procedures were being implemented to deal with COVID-19. Chair Kitson remarked on the countless hours of planning and preparation that went into the fall reopening by university leaders, faculty, and staff. He said the Reopening Task Force, which included all university presidents and Boards of Trustees chairs, had been a game changer. The Task Force gathered information, discussed problems, and shared solutions. Witnessing the System unite and collaborate has been gratifying. Similarly, creating the Blueprint to reopen the campuses and having each university develop their plan to meet their own unique circumstances was the right formula.

Chair Kitson noted from the beginning, the universities stressed the need for all members of their campus communities to take responsibility and ownership of the reopening process. He recognized students for their acceptance of a shared responsibility for making the semester successful. Across the System, students have been taking the lead in enforcing mask and social distancing policies.

Chair Kitson acknowledged there have been pockets of positive virus cases, but each university is following its reopening strategy and responding to each affected student with both a medical plan and an educational plan to meet the student's needs. Because the pandemic is not over, he stressed vigilance in following policies and protocols that are designed to limit the impacts of the virus on the campuses. Chair Kitson said the System has been fortunate to have Surgeon General Scott Rivkees available to provide advice on the pandemic during the weekly Task Force calls.

Chair Kitson briefly addressed the ongoing preparation to provide as many in-person classes in the upcoming spring semester as the CDC guidelines will allow. Presidents and provosts have been working tirelessly to schedule "face-to-face" classes for the spring semester to meet the needs of students. This involves much planning with faculty and deans, and is being balanced by the continuing student demand for online classes.

Chair Kitson acknowledged higher education will never be the same. As we learn to control the virus, and life returns to a more normal rhythm, we must reflect on what we have learned. We must ask ourselves, what can we take away from this tragic time and what can be implemented post-COVID-19 to improve student success? He said we need to gain something positive from this past year, determine what has been successful, and take that with us going forward. As the Task Force begins to shift its purpose from preparing for the pandemic, it needs to have a renewed focus on improving and innovating higher education.

Chair Kitson remarked he was looking forward to hearing from Vice Chair Lamb, who chaired the Workgroup on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, that was established in June. He expressed his appreciation to Vice Chair Lamb for leading the initiative and offering his extensive knowledge and understanding of the issues. He also thanked the Governor and Legislature for their ongoing support of the State University System. In closing, Chair Kitson said it has been rewarding to witness the commitment and hard work of the university presidents, their faculty and staff, to safely deliver in-person and online classes. While we have a long way to go, he is confident that we will be prepared for the next chapter.

### 3. Chancellor's Report

Chancellor Criser discussed how the comparison of the Florida story to national headlines exemplifies the manner in which higher education should perform. For

example, a recent national headline indicated enrollment in postsecondary education is down. By contrast, enrollment for the fall semester in the State University System is up almost 2%. Further, despite the pandemic, Florida universities have continued to serve students and promote high quality education, notwithstanding that Florida has the second-lowest tuition in the country. Recent revisions to the Bright Futures scholarship program has increased the number of the best and brightest students staying in Florida by 87%, which demonstrates the importance of investing in students.

Chancellor Criser explained the Board office receives updates on the status of standardized testing across the state. The next administration of the SAT will be Saturday, November 7, 2020. Based on a recent update, over 31,000 students are registered to sit for the test in Florida on Saturday.

He then addressed the importance of campus communications. As campuses reopened, university leadership recognized the need to enhance communications with students and the communities they serve. Social media campaigns have been running since July 22, 2020. "Campus Countdown" was the first campaign launched in preparation for bringing students back to campus. Weekly impressions on Twitter have increased from 11,000 to 45,000 and the weekly social media reach on Facebook has risen from 5,500 to 26,000. Campus Countdown was followed by another campaign called "Responsibly on Campus" to emphasize how students and faculty were acting responsibly on campus. During that time, the monthly social media impressions on Twitter went from 123,000 to 150,000. The current social media campaign is called "Fall Happenings," which highlights student activities on campus.

In closing, Chancellor Criser applauded what the System has been able to accomplish this fall semester, which underscores why Florida is the number one state for postsecondary education.

Chair Kitson next called on Surgeon General Scott Rivkees for remarks. Dr. Rivkees thanked Chair Kitson and Chancellor Criser, stating it was an honor to appear before the Board. He then thanked President Szymanski for hosting the meeting and making participants feel safe. He said the state's response to COVID-19 has been a multi-agency collaboration. He congratulated the universities on how they have adapted their talents to deal with the 100-year pandemic; referencing the earlier university presentations on COVID-19 research in the Academic and Research Excellence Committee.

Before the semester started there were many unknowns, but Dr. Rivkees noted the impact of the university plans and advance preparations are paying off as evidenced by the low number of COVID-19 cases at the universities. He thanked the universities, their faculty, staff, and students for their incredible efforts to keep COVID-19 off of the campuses. The pandemic has been ongoing for over 300 days,

and he attributed part of the success experienced by the universities to working collaboratively with local health departments on contact tracing and containing the spread. He thanked the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for providing rapid tests and kits, stating that over 18,000 rapid test kits will be distributed to HBCUs in Florida. Dr. Rivkees emphasized that strategies such as testing and isolation, along with the other evidence-based guidelines, are paying off and he looks forward to continuing to work with the Board and the universities to maintain healthy campus environments.

4. Public Comment

No requests for public comment were received.

5. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Strategic Priorities

Chair Kitson explained the State University System Workgroup on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was established in June 2020 as a subcommittee of the SUS Task Force for the fall semester reopening. The workgroup has been working diligently under the leadership of Vice Chair Lamb, and alongside leaders in the SUS, to prioritize and support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the System. He called on Vice Chair Lamb to present the report on the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Strategic Priorities.

Vice Chair Lamb began by remarking how challenging this year has been for everyone, but noted the State University System continues to be resilient. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workgroup was formed during summer and since then, Vice Chair Lamb has been working with Chancellor Criser and key leaders across the System to make sure that essential conversations about diversity, equity and inclusion are occurring within the universities. As a result of this effort, a memo was recently distributed to all of the university system leaders with important key components.

At the outset, he explained there was an intentional focus by the workgroup around process and bringing the right equity opportunities into the State University System that build on work done in the past. Some of the key components include self-enabled training to ensure that universities are delivering the right experience for students, faculty, and staff. There was also discussion surrounding the processes for recruiting, hiring, and developing diverse talent throughout the System and working with businesses and local communities to enhance supplier diversity across the State University System. Vice Chair Lamb said there has been a concerted effort to reach out to businesses, vendors, and suppliers in the local markets.

Another component focuses on the importance of governance and leadership. Discussions were held about best practices and actions the workgroup would like to

see universities undertake. Vice Chair Lamb stressed there was no mandate in the memo, but indicated they will be looking at the progress to see how well the universities execute on driving diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives through the System. The same thing will be done within the Board of Governors, under the leadership of Chancellor Criser, regarding ways to improve and be more culturally inclusive across the System. With regard to governance, Vice Chair Lamb emphasized that the university trustees should be involved in providing further insight on how to include diversity, equity, and inclusion as a strategic priorities for their respective universities. As trustees, there is a great opportunity to include this as a priority and inspect the progress made toward the priorities at their institutions.

Vice Chair Lamb also emphasized that leadership is to be called upon during this process. There is an opportunity for accountability in regards to leadership's role in driving these strategies, and having someone responsible for waking up every day thinking about the progress, direction, execution, and measurable results, with the end goal of being transparent about the diversity, equity, and inclusion taking place at each institution. He reiterated that while there is no mandate, these are the types of best practices that should be considered by each institution. Vice Chair Lamb concluded that not only do we want to be the very best System in the country because of our student success, research, economic impact and prosperity, but also because there are no different standards around the diversity, equity, and inclusion. He expressed confidence that working together, we will create the right experience for our students, faculty and staff. He pledged to continue working with Chancellor Criser and the Board over the course of the year to bring insight and the right thought leaders together to achieve these objectives.

#### 6. Confirmation of Reappointment of the President for the University of West Florida

Chair Kitson stated Mr. David Cleveland, Chair of the University of West Florida Board of Trustees, submitted a request for confirmation of Dr. Martha Saunders as the next president of the University of West Florida. Chair Kitson then recognized Mr. Cleveland.

Mr. Cleveland stated on September 9, 2020, the University of West Florida Board of Trustees unanimously approved the extension of president's employment agreement to December 31, 2021. Mr. Cleveland stated that Dr. Saunders continues to enhance opportunities for UWF and increase its visibility through innovative programs. Dr. Saunders' relentless focus on excellence has resulted in the university ranking among the three top-performing public universities in the Board of Governors performance-based funding metrics for three out of the four years of her presidency, to date. The university also ranked among the best public regional universities by U.S. News & World Reports for 2020 and 2021, and received the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award from Insight into Diversity Magazine,

three out of the last four years. UWF was also named a great college to work for in 2019 and 2020.

Mr. Cleveland said Dr. Saunders has showcased her strength, resiliency, and leadership this year in effectively navigating the university through the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Saunders' ability to capitalize on UWF's assets and determine new areas of growth continues to improve. In light of budget cuts brought on by the pandemic, Dr. Saunders declined a salary increase for this year. She also requested that any performance bonus she may have earned instead go to the Universities Employee Emergency Assistance Fund. The Board is confident that Dr. Saunders will continue to carry out her vision of making UWF a place of limitless opportunity over the next year and beyond. With that, Chair Cleveland presented the extension of Dr. Saunders' 2021 employment agreement for the Board's consideration and approval.

Hearing no questions, Mr. Tripp moved approval of the confirmation of Dr. Martha Saunders as the President of the University of West Florida. Ms. Schneider seconded the motion, and the members concurred unanimously.

Chair Kitson congratulated Dr. Saunders on her reappointment and asked if she'd like to make any remarks. Dr. Saunders thanked the Board for their trust and said she was honored to serve another year doing meaningful work at the University of West Florida and for being a part of the State University System.

## 7. Presidential Search Update

### A. Florida State University

Chair Kitson called on Mr. Eric Silagy to provide an update of the presidential search for Florida State University. Mr. Silagy said in early October, the Chair of the Florida State University Board of Trustees appointed a 15 member search committee, as required by the Board of Governors regulation, to commence the national search for FSU's 16<sup>th</sup> president. Mr. Silagy stated that Mr. William Buzzett, Vice Chair of the FSU Board of Trustees, was appointed as the Chair and Ms. Renisha Gibbs was appointed as Vice Chair of the search committee.

The Board of Trustees also approved the committee charge which includes selecting an executive search firm, developing a position description, reviewing all potential candidates, and presenting the most qualified candidates to the Board of Trustees. A website landing page was also developed as part of Florida State University's website that includes a wealth of information about the process and the individuals who are serving on the search committee. A request for proposals was sent out nationally to locate an executive search firm and responses were due on November 4<sup>th</sup>. The responses will be reviewed by the committee at the upcoming meeting scheduled for November 10<sup>th</sup>.

## B. New College of Florida

Chair Kitson called on Mr. Alan Levine to provide an update on the New College of Florida presidential search. Mr. Levine thanked Chair Kitson for the opportunity to serve on the New College Presidential Search Committee. The committee had its first meeting the week of November 3<sup>rd</sup>, and is following similar steps as mentioned by Mr. Silagy. Mr. Levine said the Chair of the New College Board of Trustees has done a lot of work to study the previously successful processes and will deploy similar processes moving forward. Mr. Levine said the goal is to have a candidate to present to the Board of Governors at the June 2021 board meeting. He acknowledged that it is an aggressive time table, but is confident in the very diverse search committee that Chair Ruiz has assembled.

Chair Kitson thanked Mr. Silagy and Mr. Levine for their time and effort in serving on these presidential search committees.

## 8. Consent Agenda Items

Mr. Lydecker moved approval of the slate of items on the Consent Agenda. Mr. Silagy seconded the motion, and the members concurred unanimously.

## 9. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Chair Kitson announced the next meeting of the Board will be held on January 26-27 2020, at New College of Florida. The plan is for the meeting to be conducted in-person and for members who are unable to attend in-person to use a virtual platform, with more information to follow. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:52 p.m. on November 5, 2020.

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Sydney Kitson, Chair

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Vikki Shirley,  
Corporate Secretary