

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING & PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS  
MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021  
9:00 AM  
AUGUSTUS B. TURNBULL III CONFERENCE CENTER  
ROOM 208  
555 W PENSACOLA STREET  
TALLAHASSEE FL  
  
MEETING MINUTES

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Attendees: Max Alvarez, Kathryn Ballard\*, Ed Burr, Peter Collins, Eric Chicken, June Duda, Jorge Gonzalez, Jim Henderson, Nastassia Janvier, Craig Mateer, Deborah Sargeant, Bob Sasser, and John Thiel

\*Attended virtually via ZOOM Video Conferencing

Note: Trustee Alvarez attended in person and moved to virtual attendance

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

*Mr. Ed Burr, Chair*

Chair Burr called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM. Lynna Sands conducted the roll call and confirmed a quorum.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (ACTION)**

- April 1, 2021, Board Meeting

The April 1, 2021, General Board Meeting Minutes were approved as presented.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Public Comments were provided by the following:

Will Handley, Faculty, commented regarding the presidential search and referenced his op-ed about searching for funding elsewhere. Thirty-five percent of FSU's revenue is from state allocations and the average is 15%. FSU should search for new revenue streams. Complimented the search committee on finding three candidates that are excellent experience in the area.

Gary Tyson, Todd Adams, and Matthew Lata, all faculty, provided comments regarding the presidential search and were complimentary of the Presidential Search Committee's efforts and the candidates that were brought forth for the final round of interviews.

Michael Buchler, faculty, commented regarding the SACS letter regarding and concern regarding the Board derailing the search process. He commented that he is supportive of the three candidates brought forth by the Presidential Search Committee.

Nancy Rogers, faculty, commented on the faculty senate resolution and presidential search.

Robin Goodman, faculty, commented on the presidential search. Supports the faculty senate resolution.

#### **IV. REPORT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY SEARCH COMMITTEE**

Chair Burr opened the Presidential Search Committee (PSC) report by reviewing the process of today's Trustee meeting and addressing concerns of the process that were brought forth by Trustee Craig Mateer. The expected process is to interview each candidate for an hour to an hour and a half. The candidates will be asked a series of scripted questions by the Trustees and if time is available, Trustees can ask individual questions. Chair Burr reiterated that one of the most important charge of the Board of Trustees is to ensure the board selects a president that brings the right mix of qualifications and qualities to lead FSU and inspire greatness. He is confident that the three candidates brought forth by the PSC are talented candidates. Chair Burr thanked the PSC and Chair Bob Sasser for their extensive time and efforts through this tireless process.

Chair Burr asked Governor Eric Silagy, FLBOG representative on the Presidential Search Advisory Committee, to provide an initial report on the PSC's work. Governor Silagy provided insight into the PSC process. He recognized the Committee as well as the consultant for doing a nice job at scouring the universe for strong candidates. He acknowledged the very open and transparent process, and discussions by the search committee. He was very pleased with the three strong candidates that were moved forward.

Chair Burr continued the discussion with addressing questions and concerns raised by Trustee Mateer and Governor Levine regarding the propriety of the presidential search process.

The initial concern addressed was a question asked by Governor Levine (FLBOG) regarding a potential violation for the Sunshine Laws during the PSC meeting on May 15, 2021. General Counsel Carolyn Egan read her response to the Board of Governor's General Counsel, Vikki Shirley. Trustee Duda asked how the PSC arrived at a 9-3 vote. Chair Burr responded that there were 14 members available that day. Mr. Alberto Pimentel, search firm consultant, spoke to each member individually and private during the lunch break and asked for feedback regarding the candidates. Trustee Mateer chose not to provide his feedback regarding the candidates. Mr. Pimentel also recounted his recollection that he spoke to each committee member individually and privately. General Counsels Egan and Shirley both agree that there was no violation. Trustee Peter Collins recapped that the only discussion prior to the PSC meeting was with Mr. Pimentel and each individual member except Mr. Mateer and the member that wasn't available, and that no Sunshine laws were broken. Governor Silagy also reiterated that the General Counsel for the Florida Board of Governors has reviewed this and concluded that there has been no violation.

Trustee Mateer addressed additional concerns regarding the propriety of the search and committee process. Trustee Mateer had concern with the control of information and votes in private. Trustee Mateer stated that the Sunshine Law requires votes be made in public, and it was brought back to the meeting with a 9-3, but don't know how/who anyone voted. Chair Burr made a point of clarification that the 9-3 vote he was speaking of was the selection of the search firm. Trustee Mateer addressed that there were two specific times that a "private" vote was taken - when the search firm was selected and when Alberto took everybody's vote in the lunchroom individually. The second issue of concern was the changing of the rules on Saturday, May 15, 2021. The third issue is the

control and change of process. According to Trustee Mateer, the process was set on May 11 and emailed on May 12 and 13. He indicates that on May 15 everything was changed at the PSC meeting. Trustee Mateer referenced an email that he read through that indicates that the campus would have an opportunity to meet the candidates on May 17 and then the search committee would meet and discuss the relevant feedback on May 24 (which is today). Chair Burr addressed his concerns and General Counsel Egan provided information from the past meetings. General Counsel Egan went back and reviewed the Presidential Search Committee meeting on November 10<sup>th</sup>. During the November 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, the PSC interviewed the four potential search firms. Following the interviews, the PSC agreed to do their due diligence and research on each firm and come back to the next meeting on a decision. On November 18<sup>th</sup>, the PSC members shared their concerns, references, and discussion regarding each firm. It was confirmed and on record that the PSC voted unanimously on December 10, 2020, to secure Storbeck/Pimentel to lead the presidential search.

Chair Burr addressed the concern regarding the date changes. Once the PSC voted to move forward with only three candidates and the regulations of the FLBOG is no less than two candidates should be put forward, there wasn't a need for the PSC to reconvene and the PSC agreed. Chair Burr requested the FSU Board of Trustees meeting be moved up to May 24<sup>th</sup>.

Chair Burr requested General Counsel Egan to seek outside counsel to review the minutes and videos. General Counsel Egan secured Greenberg Traurig to review the information. General Counsel Egan shared the correspondence provided by Greenberg Traurig that states the Presidential Search Committee meetings on May 14 & 15, 2021, followed the Florida's Government-In-The-Sunshine Law and fully complied. Additionally, the correspondence concluded with "the meeting that commenced on May 14<sup>th</sup> was timely notices, the names and background information on the nine were given an opportunity to be heard at the meeting, and the Committee had a full and open discussion of the candidates before holding a public vote."

Trustee Janvier reemphasized that during the (PSC) meeting there were motions for candidates to be discussed and a vote to move forward with more than three candidates and failed by a majority. There wasn't enough momentum to carry more than three candidates forward.

Moving forward following the discussion, Vice Chair Bob Sasser addressed the PSC members. He thanked the Committee for their participating in the lengthy process. The Committee conducted an open and transparent national search, according to the Florida Laws and Regulations. He commended Alberto Pimentel and his colleagues at SPN Executive Search for recruiting an outstanding slate of candidates that reflect the University's preeminence. The Committee received and reviewed 35 applicants, narrowed the appeal to nine excellent candidates who were invited to campus for in person interviews. The nine candidates were interviewed on May 14 & 15 and advanced three of the candidates to the FSU Board of Trustees. He was confident that these three finalists were exceptional candidates. He thanked Vice President Kyle Clark and staff for the support they gave during the process.

## **V. CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS**

The following candidates were interviewed by the FSU Board of Trustees:

Dr. Richard McCullough  
Dr. Robert Blouin  
Dr. Giovanni Piedimonte

## **VI. DISCUSSION AND SELECTION**

Chair Burr provided opportunity for each Trustee to provide feedback regarding each candidate. Following the discussion, a motion was made by Trustee Peter Collins to select Dr. Richard McCullough as the next president of Florida State University. Trustee June Duda seconded the motion. Chair Burr clarified the voting process moving forward. He indicated that a hand vote would take place with seven votes being the majority. He opened the motion for discussion. Trustee Chicken commented that although the faculty like all the candidates, they do prefer Dr. Blouin. Dr. Blouin would be able to lead the university into the top 10. Trustee Gonzalez commented that although all three would be a good hire, Dr. McCullough would be a better fit for FSU with his background and he indicated his support for the motion for Dr. McCullough. Trustee Thiel commented that he supports Dr. McCullough due to his experience in the areas that we need to continue to develop and excel to the level that we all want. Trustee Mateer commented that Dr. McCullough's style fits FSU and he supports the motion. Vice Chair Sasser recognized that is a tough decision between the three candidates, but the difference with Dr. McCullough is his passion, vision and sets a high bar with confidence that we will get there. Trustee Ballard liked the fire in the belly that Dr. McCullough showed for the university. Trustee Janvier provided her perspective viewing the university 5-10 years from now and pushing the boundary, she believes Dr. Piedimonte would provide what the university needs to move forward. Trustees Thiel and Collins feel that Dr. McCullough could provide what is needed to move the university forward. Chair Burr reiterated that all three candidates were truly great candidates. Many have asked how we have such a great pool of candidates. This is all due to what President Thrasher and this University have accomplished over the past few years. This has inspired each one of them and sparked interest in the job. Following the discussion, Chair Burr asked for a hand vote in favor of selection Dr. Richard McCullough as the next president of Florida State University and the FSU Board of Trustees voted unanimously to select Dr. McCullough as the

No further business or discussion.

## **VII. CHAIR'S REPORT**

## **VIII. OPEN FORUM FOR BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

## **IX. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:21 pm.