



# FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

---

### MEETING MINUTES

Friday, February 28, 2025  
10:00 AM

Florida State University  
Student Union, Ballroom D  
75 North Woodward Avenue  
Tallahassee, FL 32306

**Attended in Person:** Bridgett Birmingham, Jackson Boisvert, Peter Collins, Vivian de las Cuevas-Diaz, Jorge Gonzalez, Jim Henderson, Peter Jones, Justin Roth, Deborah Sargeant, John Thiel, and Drew Weatherford

**Attended via Zoom:** Maximo Alvarez, John Thiel

**Absent:** None

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

*Mr. Peter Collins, Chair*

Chair Collins welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:01 am.

Heather Mayo called the roll and a quorum was confirmed.

#### **II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chair Collins asked for everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **III. MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION**

Chair Collins asked for everyone to take a moment of silent reflection.

#### **IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*November 21, 2024, meeting minutes*

***Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz moved to approve the November 21, 2024, board meeting minutes. Trustee Weatherford seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously by all present at the meeting.***

#### **V. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no public comments.

#### **VI. PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

*Dr. Richard McCullough, President*

President McCullough began his report by welcoming the Board's newest trustee, Peter Jones. He also acknowledged that it was the last in-person meeting for Trustees Birmingham and Boisvert.

President McCullough continued his report by highlighting key updates related to the goals he presented to the Board last fall. He announced that research expenditures reached a record high of nearly \$461 million in 2024, reflecting an 11.2 percent increase from the previous year and exceeding FSU's goal of 10 percent. Since taking office, overall research funding has increased by 42 percent. President McCullough emphasized that university research expenditures support over 4,000 jobs and play a vital role in driving economic growth.

He acknowledged the changes in the federal landscape and credited Vice President Patterson for keeping everyone at the university informed. President McCullough remarked that the university views these changes as opportunities. He emphasized that scientific research drives innovation, discovery, and economic growth. He highlighted the work being done at FSU's Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases as an excellent example of this type of research.

President McCullough provided an update on the Academic Health Center located on the TMH Campus, stating that construction is expected to be completed in 2026. He highlighted that the Academic Health Center continues to attract faculty to the university. Additionally, he mentioned that they are finalizing plans for a new 180-bed hospital at the Panama City Beach medical campus, with TMH serving as an operating partner.

President McCullough commented on the recent Motor, Drive Systems, and Magnetics Conference and Exhibition held at the Donald L. Tucker Civic Center, organized by the City of Tallahassee and Florida State University (FSU). The conference was attended by 250 industry leaders and provided an excellent opportunity to showcase the MagLab's advancements in developing quantum materials, advancing fusion energy, harnessing rare earth minerals, and improving life-saving medical imaging technologies. The MagLab continues to be an economic powerhouse, generating \$709 million in economic output nationwide, with \$325 million in Florida and \$221 million specifically in Tallahassee.

President McCullough commented on expanding the university's reputation and FSU's improvement in rankings; specifically, 30 in 40 graduate departments' rankings improved.

President McCullough commented that FSU wouldn't be able to do all the things we are doing without the support of Florida, giving thanks to the Governor and the Legislature.

President McCullough highlighted the success of students at FSU, noting that 99 percent of freshmen who began their studies in the summer or fall returned for the spring semester. This achievement positions FSU to maintain an impressive 96 percent freshman-to-sophomore retention rate, one of the highest in the country. Additionally, President McCullough announced that FSU received over 82,000 applications for the upcoming summer and fall semesters, setting a record.

The academic profile of these admitted students is:

- 90% were ranked in the Top 10 percent of their high school class
- Average GPA was 4.4
- Average ACT score was 31
- Average SAT score was 1390.

President McCullough commented on he and the First Lady's recent trip to the FSU - Panama in the Republic of Panama

He also commented that FSU was just recognized by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs as one of the nation's top producers of Fulbright Scholars.

President McCullough discussed fundraising efforts and recent travels. The focus has been on six priorities: FSU Health, student success, faculty and research excellence, culture of entrepreneurship, athletics excellence, and artistic accomplishments.

President McCullough provided an update on the national search for a successor to Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement Janet Kistner. He expressed his thanks to VP Kistner for all she has done at the university. He also commented that the search for a new Vice President for Health Affairs is underway.

President McCullough noted that FSU has received written confirmation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) that the university's accreditation has been reaffirmed through 2034, with "no findings of non-compliance." He commented that this provides FSU the freedom to choose a new institutional accreditor, which will be discussed later in the meeting agenda. President McCullough recognized Dr. Ruth Storm, Associate Provost and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs for her work in FSU's reaccreditation.

President McCullough commented on athletics excellence at the university.

President McCullough expressed his gratitude to the Board for their leadership and acknowledged his senior leadership team, deans, department chairs, faculty, students, and staff. He commented on how wonderful it is to be at a university that is loved by everyone. He also thanked the First Lady for her support and recognized the Chairman for his contributions and partnership.

Chair Collins read the Ethics Conduct Policy.

## VII. CONSENT ITEMS

- A. Request for Approval:** Amendment of FSU Regulation 5.077 International Programs (Academic Affairs)
- B. Request for Approval:** Amendment of FSU Regulation 5.097 Deletion of Courses (Academic Affairs)
- C. Request for Approval:** Repeal of FSU Regulation 2.02413 Florida Prepaid College Program (Academic Affairs)
- D. Request for Approval:** Amendment of FSU Regulation 5.098 Textbook Adoption and Affordability (Academic Affairs)
- E. Request for Approval:** The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Foundation, Inc. Bylaw Revision (Advancement & Governance)
- F. Request for Approval:** Nominations to the Board of Directors of the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Foundation, Inc. (Advancement & Governance)
- G. Request for Approval:** State University System Performance Audits: Performance Based Funding Metrics (Audit & Compliance)
- H. Request for Approval:** State University System Performance Audits: Preeminent Research University Funding Metrics (Audit & Compliance)
- I. Request for Approval:** Revised Office of Audit and Advisory Services Charter as per the Institute of Internal Auditors Standards Revisions – effective Jan. 9, 2025 (Audit & Compliance)
- J. Request for Approval:** Revised Audit & Compliance Committee Charter as per Institute of Internal Auditors Standards Revisions – effective Jan. 9, 2025 (Audit & Compliance)
- K. Request for Approval:** 2025-2026 Budget Projections for Auxiliaries with Outstanding Revenue Bonds (Finance & Business)
- L. Request for Approval:** Institutional Risk Management Charter (Governance)
- M. Request for Approval:** Repeal of University Regulation FSU-3.006, The University Defender (Student Affairs)

Chair Collins noted that if any Trustee would like to move an item off the consent agenda to the regular agenda, they may do so. Hearing none, Chair Collins requested a motion to approve Consent Items A-M.

*Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz made the motion to approve, the motion was seconded and was unanimously approved by all present at the meeting.*

## VIII. NEW BUSINESS AND UPDATES

### A. Athletics Update

*Mr. Michael Alford, Vice President and Director of Athletics*

#### **Information Item:**

*Coach and Student Athlete Highlight*

Mr. Michael Alford, Vice President and Director of Athletics, introduced FSU's new women's lacrosse coach, Sarah Tisdale. Sarah Tisdale provided an overview of the new program and expressed what an honor it is to be at FSU and noted the team's core values.

Coach Tisdale introduced Ms. Gabby Cleveland, a member of the lacrosse team. Ms. Cleveland provided an overview of her student-athlete experience and expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to be at FSU.

Vice President Alford began his report by noting the Fall 2024 Academic Results, highlighting the department's new highest overall semester GPA, surpassing the previous record from Fall 2023. Additionally, Vice President Alford provided updates on stadium renovation sales, capital improvements, the house settlement, and governance.

## **B. Faculty Senate Steering Committee**

*Dr. Roxanne Hughes, Vice Chair, Faculty Senate Steering Committee*

Dr. Roxanne Hughes, Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate Steering Committee, began her report by addressing the concerns of faculty and students regarding recent changes in the federal landscape. She acknowledged the Vice President of Research for keeping everyone well-informed about funding updates. In closing, she highlighted recent accomplishments of the faculty.

## **C. Student Government Association**

*Mr. Anthony Benn, Vice President, Student Government Association*

Mr. Anthony Benn, Vice President of the Student Government Association (SGA), began his report by discussing the overall "student experience" at FSU and highlighted several key student initiatives on campus. Mr. Benn noted a recent proclamation from the Leon County Board of Commissioners, commending SGA for developing an interactive budget training program called "Let's Balance!" This program aims to equip student leaders with essential financial literacy and budgeting skills. Additionally, he provided an update on initiatives regarding student representation and support.

In closing, Mr. Benn expressed his gratitude to university leadership, the Florida State University Police Department, the Student Affairs team, and his fellow colleagues.

This report marked Mr. Benn's final address as Vice President of SGA. Trustee Birmingham thanked the current SGA leadership and the Student Affairs staff for their efforts. Chair Collins, Trustee Boisvert, and Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz also extended their appreciation.

## **D. Legislative Affairs**

*Mr. Clay Ingram, Chief Legislative Affairs Officer*

*Mr. Josh Duncan, Director of Federal Relations*

Mr. Clay Ingram, Chief Legislative Affairs Officer, provided an overview of the Florida Legislative special sessions and the 2025-2026 Session. He highlighted recent presentations by FSU faculty and staff to the Florida Legislature. Mr. Josh Duncan provided a federal update. He discussed involvement in FSU's recent Careers in Public Service conference and noted that FSU students are eager to intern in DC.

President McCullough requested that Senior Vice President Clark and Dr. Hecht provide an update on the search for student housing for FSU in Washington, D.C. Senior Vice

President Clark reported on the progress of the search, confirming that developments with securing properties are moving forward.

**E. Academic Affairs Committee**

*Trustee Vivian de las Cuevas-Diaz, Chair*

*Dr. James Clark, Provost, and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz, Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee, began her report with an update on the Promotion and Tenure and Social Media policy review. She noted that a steering committee has been formed, and an external consultant has been hired to assist with this review. Phase 1 focused on information gathering with the external consultant conducting interviews with Trustees and senior university leadership. Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz advised that FSU is now in Phase 2, which will involve interviewing other universities on their processes. Once the information gathering is complete, there will be a presentation to the Board.

**Action Item I: Request for Approval: Tenure Report (Academic Affairs)**

*Dr. Janet Kistner, Vice President, Faculty Development and Advancement*

Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz welcomed Dr. Janet Kistner, Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement, and Provost Clark to present an overview of the Tenure Report. They provided a detailed description of the process and highlighted members of the 2025 Tenure Cohort and those hired for Tenure Upon Appointment in 2025.

Trustee Sargeant commended the high quality of those being hired and attributed the success to the university's leadership.

***Chair Collins requested a motion to approve the Tenure Report. Trustee Weatherford made the motion to approve, Trustee Henderson seconded, and it was unanimously approved by all present at the meeting.***

Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz introduced Dr. Ryan Owens, Director of the Florida Institute for Governance and Civics.

**Information Item:**

*Dr. Ryan Owens, Director, Florida Institute for Governance and Civics*

Dr. Owens provided an overview of the Florida Institute for Governance and Civics, starting with a review of its mission and purpose. He then highlighted faculty offers, faculty and staff hires, undergraduate education, graduate training and grants, and programming, including Spring 2025 speakers.

Trustee Roth encouraged Dr. Owens to look for individuals with practical experience when hiring institute faculty and staff. Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz echoed this.

Chair Collins thanked Dr. Owens for his hard work. President McCullough also thanked Dr. Owens and thanked Chair Collins for his role in getting the institute started.

**F. Advancement Committee**

*Trustee John Thiel, Chair*

*Dr. Marla Vickers, Vice President for University Advancement and President, FSU Foundation, Inc.*

Trustee John Thiel, Chair of the Advancement Committee, introduced the two action items for their committee.

Due to technical difficulties, Action Item II was introduced first by Dr. Todd Queen, the dean of the College of Music at FSU. Dean Queen provided an overview of the request to name the Stella Cottrell Chamber Music Hall.

**Action Item II: Request for Approval:** Naming of the Stella Cottrell Chamber Music Hall (Advancement)

*Chair Collins requested a motion to approve the Naming of the Stella Cottrell Chamber Music Hall. Trustee Henderson made the motion to approve, Trustee Birmingham seconded, and it was unanimously approved by all present at the meeting.*

Mr. Steven High, the executive director of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, presented an overview of the naming request for the Charles M. and Robyn L. Citrin Gallery. Trustee Henderson inquired about the appraisal process, and Mr. High provided an explanation.

**Action Item I: Request for Approval:** Naming of the Charles M. and Robyn L. Citrin Gallery (Advancement)

*Chair Collins requested a motion to approve the Naming of the Charles M. and Robyn L. Citrin Gallery. Trustee Birmingham made the motion to approve, Trustee Henderson seconded, and it was unanimously approved by all present at the meeting.*

Trustee Thiel provided a summary of their committee meeting. He shared an update on the university's fundraising progress for the current fiscal year, including the status of the university endowment. He also addressed alumni engagement and the work of the annual leadership giving officers.

Trustee Thiel introduced a new staff member, Mr. Brad Hastings, associate vice president of advancement for Principal Gifts & Gift and Estate Planning and discussed recent hires and existing vacancies in the Advancement division. He provided updates on the comprehensive campaign, noting that the university has hired a national marketing firm to help tell its story. Trustee Thiel previewed the new gift acceptance and counting policy, which is expected to be an action item at the June Board meeting. He highlighted the upcoming Great Give, the university's annual day of giving on Wednesday, March 5.

The Board discussed the university's marketing. Dr. Marla Vickers, vice president for advancement and president of the FSU Foundation, provided an overview of the upcoming process the marketing firm will implement with the forthcoming campaign.

## **G. Audit and Compliance Committee**

*Trustee Peter Jones, Chair*

*Mr. Undra Baldwin, Chief Audit Officer*

*Mr. Robert Large, Chief Compliance & Ethics Officer*

Trustee Peter Jones, the Chair of the Audit and Compliance Committee, began his report by expressing his excitement about joining the Board and his gratitude for everyone's welcome.

Trustee Jones provided an overview of the recent committee meeting, which included five informational items presented by Mr. Robert Large from the Office of Compliance and Ethics. The items discussed were as follows:

1. The biannual report on foreign gifts and contracts.
2. A reminder that annual financial disclosures (Form 1) are due by July 1, 2025, to avoid penalties.
3. An update on the conflict of interest and commitment disclosure process.
4. A general operational update.
5. A planned external review.

Trustee Jones reported that the Office of Advisory and Audit Services (OAAS) presented four action items that were included in today's consent agenda, all of which were approved by the committee. Mr. Undra Baldwin, Chief Audit Officer also provided two informational items: a status update on the OAAS audits and an institutional risk management update.

Trustee Jones expressed his appreciation to Mr. Large and Mr. Baldwin for their assistance in preparing him for his first committee meeting.

## **H. Finance and Business Committee**

*Trustee Jim Henderson, Chair*

*Mr. Kyle Clark, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration*

Trustee Jim Henderson, Chair of the Finance and Business Committee, began his report by recognizing and thanking the entire Finance and Administration staff. He provided an overview of their committee meeting giving an overview of their item on today's consent agenda and their action item.

Mr. Kyle Clark, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration provided an introduction of the action item.

**Action Item I: Request for Approval:** Amend the 2023 FSU Athletic Association, Inc. Debt Resolution (Finance & Business)

***Chair Collins requested a motion to approve the Amendment to the 2023 FSU Athletic Association, Inc. Debt Resolution. Trustee Weatherford made the motion to approve, Trustee Jones seconded, and it was unanimously approved by all present at the meeting.***

Senior Vice President Clark gave an overview of the finance and business initiatives of the new State University System Strategic Plan recently approved by the Florida Board of



Governors: Financial Health and Integrity and Optimizing Funds. He also provided updates on university capital projects, facility repairs and deferred maintenance.

Trustee Weatherford requested an update on the new university student housing from Senior Vice President Clark. In response, Senior Vice President Clark provided an update. Dr. Amy Hecht also shared information with the Board regarding the status and timeline of the project. The Board expressed interest in expediting the timeline and would like to have further discussions on housing.

## **I. Governance Committee**

*Trustee Maximo Alvarez, Chair*

*Ms. Carolyn Egan, Vice President for Legal Affairs and General Counsel*

**Action Item I: Request for Approval:** To Seek a New Institutional Accreditor (Governance)

Trustee Maximo Alvarez, Chair of the Governance Committee, gave an overview of the governance committee meeting. He provided a summary of their four committee action items, with three being on today's meeting consent agenda. He noted that Chief Audit Officer, Mr. Undra Baldwin gave a presentation on risk management efforts.

Trustee Alvarez introduced Chair Collins to present on the Governance Committee action item. Chair Collins introduced the Governance Committee Action Item, regarding institutional accreditation, stating:

FSU has been accredited by SACSCOC since 1915. Accrediting bodies used to be determined solely by geography. The Florida Legislature in 2022 changed the law instructing state universities to take advantage of the opportunity to consider other accreditors.

In December 2024, FSU received its ten-year reaffirmation from SACSOC. FSU is now in the window of time to consider membership with another federally recognized accreditor. FSU's goal in changing institutional accrediting bodies is to move to an organization that will strengthen institutional quality in alignment with the goals of the Board and President McCullough. The staff have researched which of the five accrediting bodies would best support and challenge our institution and have recommended seeking accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

HLC has more public institutions in the Association of American Universities (AAU) and highly ranked in U.S. News & World Report than any of the other institutional accrediting bodies. Membership in HLC will provide FSU with an expanded pool of peer reviewers. Peer reviewers from these aspirational and similarly accomplished institutions could provide FSU with a more comprehensive and varied assessment of our institutional performance.

HLC also has a strong cooperative process in which member institutions actively engage in the development and vetting of policies and standards. FSU staff have attended HLC meetings and accreditation workshops and found them to be of very high quality. Finally, HLC has the administrative capacity to support our change in accrediting bodies. They have demonstrated a willingness to support the state universities in Florida.

If the Board approves this request, the next step will be for President McCullough to submit a letter to the U.S. Department of Education requesting permission to change accreditors. If approval is received from the U.S. Department of Education, the process for applying for membership with HLC will begin. The application process consists of three steps, including an on-site visit.

Given the complexity of this process, we anticipate that it may take at least 2 years to gain initial membership with HLC. Until the institution is approved for membership with HLC, we must continue to comply with SACSCOC standards.

With that background, I request that the full Board authorize President McCullough to seek approval from the United States Department of Education to apply for membership with the Higher Learning Commission.

Trustee Weatherford asked a question regarding the timeline. Chair Collins advised further on the process.

***Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz made the motion to approve the request to Seek a New Institutional Accreditor, Trustee Gonzalez seconded, and it was unanimously approved by all present at the meeting.***

Trustee Alvarez concluded the Governance report by encouraging the Board to attend the upcoming Seminole Evening Reception and FSU Day at the Capitol.

Due to the timing of the meeting, Chair Collins moved the election of the Vice Chair up in the agenda, shifting it from his Chair's report. After the departure of Trustee Bob Sasser in January, Chair Collins noted that the Board needed to elect a Vice Chair to fill the vacancy.

**Request for Approval: Election of Vice Chair**

Trustee Alvarez nominated Trustee Gonzalez for the position of Vice Chair.

Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz also expressed her interest in serving as Vice Chair.

Trustee Gonzalez thanked Trustee Alvarez for the nomination but respectfully declined.

***Chair Collins nominated Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz to serve as Vice Chair of the FSU Board of Trustees. Trustee Weatherford seconded her nomination, and Trustee de las Cuevas-Diaz was unanimously approved as Vice Chair of the FSU Board of Trustees by all present at the meeting.***

**J. University Research Committee<sup>1</sup>**

*Trustee Jorge Gonzalez, Chair*

*Dr. Stacey Patterson, Vice President for Research*

Trustee Jorge Gonzalez, Chair of the University Research Committee, provided an overview of their committee meeting. He mentioned that the meeting was both engaging and thorough.

Trustee Gonzalez noted that Dr. Patterson provided an overview of the university's research progress. He highlighted that research activities reached an all-time high in fiscal year 2024, reflecting an 11.2 percent increase compared to the previous year and a 42 percent increase over the past three years. He emphasized the importance of the ASPIRE plan and strategic faculty hires, including the hiring of six new National Academy members in 2024.

Trustee Gonzalez also highlighted the importance of alignment among the university's leadership team, noting that this has significantly contributed to success in university research. He noted a presentation on the College of Medicine and that Dr. Farrukh Alvi presentation on the ASPIRE program.

In conclusion, Trustee Gonzalez highlighted that the committee discussed the changing landscape of federal funding in research. He acknowledged the uncertainties but also emphasized that the university leadership team sees opportunities amid these changes.

**K. Student Affairs Committee**

*Trustee Drew Weatherford, Chair*

*Dr. Amy Hecht, Vice President for Student Affairs*

Trustee Drew Weatherford, Chair of the Student Affairs Committee, provided an overview of their committee meeting. He highlighted discussions on housing and mentioned that fraternity and sorority life continues to thrive. Additionally, he noted that there was a discussion on the Career Center and the new software tools being implemented.

Trustee Weatherford commented that the university is in the process of hiring a new dean of students. Chair Collins requested that Trustee Weatherford participate in the final stages of interviews for the dean of students.

**IX. CHAIR'S REPORT**

*Mr. Peter Collins, Chair*

Chair Collins requested that the new admissions video, presented during the Academic Affairs committee meeting, be shown to the Board. After the video, he invited Mr. John Barnhill, associate vice president for enrollment management to share comments.

Chair Collins then asked Ms. Susannah Wesley-Ahlschwede, the university's chief marketing officer, to provide an update on the university's marketing efforts.

Trustee Ballard thanked Ms. Wesley-Ahlschwede for her work.

---

<sup>1</sup> Chair Collins moved the University Research report up in the agenda.

**X. OPEN FORUM FOR BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

*Mr. Peter Collins, Chair*

Chair Collins discussed upcoming important dates for the Board.

Chair Collins recognized Trustee Birmingham and Trustee Boisvert, thanking them for their work on the Board. In gratitude for their service, the Board presented them with two framed university seals.

Trustee Birmingham and Trustee Boisvert both expressed their appreciation.

Chair Collins thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting and thanked the staff for their work.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

*Mr. Peter Collins, Chair*

Chair Collins adjourned the meeting at 2:02 pm.