



**External Relations Committee**  
**September 14, 2023**  
**FIU, Modesto A. Maidique Campus, Tamiami Hall, Multipurpose Room**

**MINUTES**

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**1. Call to Order and Chair's Remarks**

The Florida International University Board of Trustees' External Relations Committee meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Francis A. Hondal at 1:40 PM on Thursday, September 14, 2023.

General Counsel Carlos B. Castillo conducted roll call of the External Relations Committee members and verified a quorum. Present were Francis A. Hondal, *Committee Chair*; Gene Prescott, *Committee Vice Chair*; Chanel T. Rowe (*Zoom*); and Roger Tovar, *Board Chair*.

The following Board members were also in attendance: Board Vice Chair Carlos A. Duart and Trustees Cesar L. Alvarez, Noël C. Barengo, Dean C. Colson, Alan Gonzalez, and Alexander P. Sutton.

Committee Chair Hondal welcomed all Trustees and members of the University administration. She also welcomed Trustees attending via the virtual environment and the University community and general public accessing the meeting via the University's webcast.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Committee Chair Hondal asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the External Relations Committee meeting held on December 6, 2022. Hearing none, a motion was made and unanimously passed to approve the minutes of the External Relations Committee meeting held on December 6, 2022.

**3. Information/Discussion Items**

**3.1 Strategic Communications, Government and External Affairs Update**

- **Strategic Communications Update**
- **Governmental and Community Affairs Update**

Senior Vice President, Strategic Communications, Government and External Affairs Michelle L. Palacio thanked Trustee Gene Prescott for his service, support, and dedication as the Committee's prior Chair. Sr. VP Palacio commented that the last year has been a celebration of the University's many accomplishments, including new rankings and recognitions. She remarked on a new preeminent mindset approach as the University ends its first half-century and looks to the next 50 years. She added that said new mindset is focused on working intentionally and strategically as a

whole, leveraging every resource and opportunity to speak with one voice from every college and unit to promote FIU. Sr. VP Palacio commented that strategies have been organized around four campaigns focused on affinity, admissions, peers, and advocacy. She mentioned that, while the new strategy is focused on sharing FIU's accomplishments, it will also highlight what makes the University unique, including high economic and social mobility, high research, career readiness, and return on investment. She presented a video created to introduce the refreshed brand concept to internal FIU audiences.

Sr. VP Palacio commented on the brand, forward thinking – innovative – and unstoppable. She added that while said words capture the spirit, authenticity, and belief of what FIU is in a succinct form, they also happen to spell FIU. She added that the University's new brand style guide will help all FIU areas focus and speak with one voice, look, and feel. She indicated that, working with athletics and other key stakeholders, spirit marks have been simplified and can begin to become synonymous with each other and are at the center of increasing brand affinity and visibility. Sr. VP Palacio mentioned that FIU is building affinity through communications, activations, events, and other tactics. She highlighted several examples, such as the Jane Goodall event on FIU's Modesto A. Maidique Campus, the FIU Sunblazer beer, F1rst Night, new on-campus signage, and viral video by Athletics of FIU's Miami Vice uniforms. She presented a video also aimed at increasing brand affinity, which features Roary and is titled How to: Paws Up.

Sr. VP Palacio presented several examples pertaining to executions of the University's brand and spirit marks in action to promote recruitment, reputation, and advocacy. She added that recruitment and enrollment marketing/communications are at the center of the messaging structure. She commented on focused efforts aimed at helping prospective students have clear guidance on the opportunities available to them at FIU. Sr. VP Palacio indicated that FIU's commercial, "Moments", was produced and filmed in-house and was recently recognized with the Gold award [from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)]. She noted that data from the commercial showed it performed in the top 1% of placements via the University's digital and social marketing campaign in 2022-23.

Sr. VP Palacio remarked that FIU actively aims to inform and educate colleagues around the country, through campaigns and initiatives, about the University's incredible work on student success, research excellence and community impact. She provided several examples in publications, including the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Florida Trend*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and *City Beautiful*. She indicated that another video developed in-house regarding FIU's role in protecting and restoring the Everglades received CASE's highest recognition and won the Grand Gold award. Sr. VP Palacio pointed out that last month FIU had two (2) stories on the cover of the site of a leading publication, supported by dozens of the nation's leading foundations and universities, *The Conversation*.

Sr. VP Palacio commented on amplifying reach to peer audiences with over 1.5M views in *The Conversation*, *Scientific American*, and *Fortune*, among others. She stated that on October 12, 2023, FIU will host the first science communications conference with approximately 100 faculty members to discuss effective strategies in communicating science, working with media, and launch FIU's inaugural research magazine. Sr. VP Palacio indicated that Amy L. Aines, co-author of the *Championing Science: Communicating Your Ideas to Decision Makers* book, will be speaking at said

conference. She added that students participating in FIU's Washington D.C. science communications fly-in are also using the book to enhance their learning and experience.

Sr. VP Palacio commented on FIU's continued reputational growth among peers. She indicated that that the division's \$2.5M Board of Trustees-approved marketing budget is focused on supporting media buys, production of content, and supports peer, affinity, admissions, and advocacy communication campaigns. She noted that, in addition to admissions and peer campaigns, FIU is actively focused on raising its profile and expanding awareness of its accomplishments, and strategic initiatives with decision-makers. She highlighted several examples of ads and pieces in the *Miami Herald*, *Sayfe Review*, *The Capitolist* and *the Floridian*. Sr. VP Palacio mentioned the importance of sharing FIU's accomplishments with the tens of thousands of alumni, students, current and prospective and their parents, who live and work in Miami-Dade.

Sr. VP Palacio commented on year one (1) of the new FIU in D.C. center. She indicated that, in the 2023 federal budget, FIU's D.C. advocacy helped secure more than \$64M in congressional appropriations to support FIU research, including \$24M in direct earmarks. She commented on FIU in D.C.'s integrated advocacy strategy, which focuses on students and faculty researchers and engages and builds community with events, internships, and "drop-ins".

Sr. VP Palacio commented on the next steps related to the brand refresh.

Board Chair Roger Tovar commented on the importance of sharing the FIU story and commended the work of the University's Strategic Communications division. Trustee Chanel T. Rowe also commended the work of the division and recognized FIU in D.C. as pivotal. Trustee Dean C. Colson remarked that it is critical to share the University's recent accomplishments.

Committee Chair Hondal Committee Chair Hondal commended the internal alignment and collaboration across the University and commented on plans to review a revised marketing budget and scope of the Committee's role and responsibilities.

#### **4. New Business**

No new business was raised.

#### **5. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment**

With no other business, Committee Chair Francis A. Hondal adjourned the meeting of the Florida International University Board of Trustees External Relations Committee on Thursday, September 14, 2023 at 2:05 PM.