



**Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee
December 7, 2023
FIU, Modesto A. Maidique Campus, Graham Center Ballrooms**

MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Chair's Remarks

The Florida International University Board of Trustees' Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Natasha Lowell on Thursday, December 7, 2023, at 11:00 AM.

General Counsel Carlos B. Castillo conducted roll call of the Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee members and verified a quorum. Present were Trustees Natasha Lowell, *Committee Chair*; Dean C. Colson, *Committee Vice Chair*; Cesar L. Alvarez; Noël C. Barengo; Yaffa Popack; Marc D. Sarnoff; Alexander P. Sutton; and Roger Tovar, *Board Chair and Athletics Liaison*.

The following Board members were also in attendance: Board Vice Chair Carlos A. Duarte, and Trustees Alan Gonzalez, Francis A. Hondal, and Gene Prescott.

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

Committee Chair Lowell welcomed Trustee Yaffa Popack as a member of the Committee.

Provost and Executive Vice President Elizabeth M. Bejar announced that Dr. Bridgette Cram was appointed as Vice President for Academic Affairs: Student Success Operations and Integrated Planning. Provost Bejar indicated that VP Cram has been with FIU since 2012 and most recently served as Interim Vice President for Innovative Education and Student Success since March 2022. Provost Bejar added that Dr. Cram has focused on student success since 2014, guiding FIU through the development of initiatives and interventions to ensure students can remain enrolled and achieve their goal of earning a university degree.

Provost Bejar recognized Dr. John L. Volakis, who served as the Dean of FIU's College of Engineering and Computing and has now transitioned his role to return to faculty to focus on his research. Provost Bejar announced that Dr. Ines Triay previously served as Associate Dean for Research Innovation and Technology until her appointment as the College's Interim Dean. Provost Bejar commented that Dr. Triay will continue to serve as the Executive Director of the Applied Research Center (ARC) at FIU. Provost Bejar added that Dr. Triay has been widely recognized for

her accomplishments in science and engineering. Provost Bejar remarked that discussions to launch a national search for the next dean will begin in spring 2024.

Provost Bejar stated that the Office of Public Policy and Events, led by Dr. Mireya Mayor, hosted two events in the fall 2023 semester. She added that the first event was held on October 25, 2023 and focused on immigration, and drew in 70 attendees. She mentioned that the debate was moderated by Fragomen Co-Chair Enrique Gonzalez and included expert panelists from divergent perspectives. Provost Bejar mentioned that the second event, held on November 28, 2023, was a debate on foreign policy and was moderated by six-time Emmy award winning journalist, and FIU alumnus, Willard Shepard. Provost Bejar highlighted that nearly 100 students, faculty, and staff attended the event. She noted that said events are recorded and available for on-demand viewing on the University's library website. She mentioned that two additional events on topics related to climate and the role of media will be held in the spring 2024 semester.

Provost Bejar commented on the affiliation agreement with Baptist Health. She added that future updates on the success of the partnership will be shared with the Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee. Provost Bejar mentioned that nearly 5,800 students will graduate and about 4,400 will participate in the commencement ceremonies during the fall 2023 semester.

2. Approval of Minutes

Committee Chair Lowell asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes of the Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee meeting held on September 14, 2023. Hearing none, a motion was made and unanimously passed to approve the minutes of the Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee meeting held on September 14, 2023.

3. Action Items

AP1. Tenure as a Condition of Employment Nomination

Provost Bejar explained that Tenure as a Condition of Employment (TACOE) is reserved for individuals who have achieved highly prestigious academic careers prior to their becoming FIU faculty. She added that TACOE candidates have either received or are eligible for tenure at their previous institution. She indicated that, at the time of hire, the faculty candidate understands the expectation that the tenure and rank appointment will be granted upon review of the candidate's materials by the department, the college, the Provost, the President and Board of Trustees. She mentioned that the FIU department and college have vetted the scholarly qualifications and completed the required expedited tenure review for the candidate, Dr. Saurabh Aggarwal.

Provost Bejar introduced Dr. Aggarwal, who will be joining the Department of Cellular Biology & Pharmacology in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine as an associate professor. Provost Bejar explained that Dr. Aggarwal is currently an associate professor in the Department of Anesthesiology and Perioperative Medicine at The University of Alabama at Birmingham and that he earned his Doctorate of Medicine from Odessa State Medical University, and his PhD from the Medical College of Georgia.

A motion was made and unanimously passed that the FIU Board of Trustees Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee recommend that the FIU Board of Trustees approve the Tenure as a Condition of Employment nomination as specified in the Board materials.

AP2. Proposed Amendment to Regulation FIU-412 Undergraduate Admissions

Provost Bejar presented the proposed amendment to Regulation FIU-412 Undergraduate Admissions for Committee review. She indicated that the revised Regulation FIU-412 details undergraduate admission requirements for first-time-in-college (FTIC) students and also includes required changes due to Florida Board of Governors (BOG) regulatory changes. She added that the revised regulation allows for the use of the Classic Learning Test (CLT) scores from the Classic Learning Initiatives LLC to be included as admissible standardized test scores for consideration. Provost Bejar indicated that the proposed amendments to FIU-412 include a new section for admission of high school students with an associate in arts (A.A.) degree. Provost Bejar mentioned that said new section explains that high school students participating in accelerated programs and dual enrollment, who are on track to earn an A.A. degree from a member of the Florida College System or other State University System (SUS) institution, may select to be considered as either a FTIC freshman or as a potential transfer student. She commented that additional editorial corrections are included in the revised FIU-412 regulation.

A motion was made and unanimously passed that the FIU Board of Trustees Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee recommend that the Florida International University Board of Trustees approve the proposed revisions to Regulation FIU-412 Undergraduate Admissions and delegate authority to the University President to approve any subsequent nonmaterial amendments based on comments to the Regulation received from the Florida Board of Governors or as a result of the regulation-making process.

4. Discussion Items

4.1 Alternative Admissions

Provost Bejar noted that FIU is a member of the National Association for College Admissions Counseling, the College Board, and the Association of Chief Admissions Officers of Public Universities. She added that said organizations have a code of ethics and conduct that FIU, its leaders, and individuals in the admissions profession agree to follow. She stated that the BOG has regulations requiring university boards to develop regulations that comport with admissions requirements and allow for exceptions. Provost Bejar pointed out that the authority for exceptions is outlined in regulations adopted by the BOG. She added that the BOG also provides the authority to grant exceptions under an appropriate University committee.

Provost Bejar pointed out that Regulation FIU-412 delegates authority to the provost to establish the total number of FTIC students admissible through an alternative admissions process. She added that FIU-412 further stipulates that the rates of retention, academic success, and graduation rates of students admitted to FIU through an alternative admissions process must be annually reviewed and presented to the Board of Trustees. Provost Bejar explained that FIU refers its alternative admissions process under the framework of holistic review. She added that said review is considered an evidence-based practice, whereby, if an applicant does not fall within the quantitative standards of

FIU's requirements, the University can utilize academic, non-academic, and contextualized attributes to assess whether the applicant has the potential to succeed at FIU.

Provost Bejar highlighted five years of data related to alternative admissions. She explained that FIU admitted and enrolled a total of 14,405 students in the 2022-2023 academic year with 129 students having utilized the exception standard. She pointed out that of said 129 students, 120 were FTIC and nine (9) were transfer students, which represent less than 1% of the total students admitted. She commented that, among FTIC students admitted utilizing the exception standard, there was a retention rate of 87.5% in their second year at FIU for the 2022-2023 academic year. Provost Bejar mentioned that while the population sizes were small and not necessarily statistically significant, the University is building a robust model to monitor the success of students admitted utilizing the exception standard. In terms of graduation rates, she noted that the University is not able to provide initial assessments at this time given that there are less years of data available when looking four and six years out.

4.2 Student Government Updates

Trustee Alexander P. Sutton, Student Government Association (SGA) President, explained that the SGA Constitution was amended to streamline the process of passing future amendments and that a constitutional convention has been formed to finalize a revised constitution by the spring 2024 semester. He mentioned that SGA has supported athletics through hosting watch parties on campus, tailgates, and funding students' tickets to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) tournament FIU men's soccer game. He reported that SGA is supporting and funding upgrades to the Wellness and Recreation Center and for the revitalization of student spaces in the College of Law building. Trustee Sutton remarked that the Student Senate approved the creation of the Disabled Student Union. He added that the Student Senate passed a resolution in response to a recent change by the FIU housing office that prioritizes FTIC students living on campus. He clarified that he is supportive of following best practices for on-campus housing, also mentioning that he believes it is important to strengthen the partnerships between FIU and the off-campus housing facilities.

Trustee Sutton explained that the draft resolution titled "*Ceasefire Now*," concerning Israel and Palestine, is under consideration by the Student Senate. He added that the draft resolution has passed in one Senate committee but has not been considered on the Senate floor and will not be voted on before January 2024. Trustee Sutton emphasized that he is committed to letting the legislative process unfold. Trustee Sutton added that the engagement of students has been inspiring to him and that he believes academia is meant for learning, critical thinking, and debate. Trustee Sutton explained that the resolution has attracted attention from local news outlets and community stakeholders. He added that this is the first time that FIU has ever released a public statement regarding SGA business, and that he understands why it was deemed necessary as he has been advised that there is concern from community leaders and elected officials about the resolution and whether it represented the views of the University administration. Trustee Sutton shared that said statement led to responses from student groups including the Muslim Student Association, Young Democratic Socialists of America, and the Pride Student Union. He referenced to the *PantherNOW* editorial titled, "Student organizations value their autonomy – administrators should too" and read an excerpt of said editorial: "While we understand the intent of the email, we at PantherNOW

believe it may have unintended consequences for the independence of student organizations. ... First, it heavily discourages meaningful discussion on important issues like this. Students will feel as though they cannot engage within their own community without heavy oversight from administrators. Secondly – and perhaps even more importantly – it removes autonomy from student organizations. Students who are active in their university community aren't children who need to be parented.” Trustee Sutton emphasized that the resolution is a draft and that he would like there to be a prioritization of the freedom of students to engage in debate when clarifying the position of the University. He read an excerpt from the State University System Statement on Free Expression: “It is equally important not to stifle the dissemination of any ideas, even if other members of our community may find those ideas abhorrent. Individuals wishing to express ideas with which others may disagree must be free to do so, without fear of being bullied, threatened or silenced. This does not mean that such ideas should go unchallenged, as that is part of the learning process. ... We should empower and enable one another to speak and listen, rather than interfere with or silence the open expression of ideas.”

Trustee Cesar L. Alvarez explained that on his personal behalf, he opposes any extent to which the “*Ceasefire Now*” draft resolution deviated from President Kenneth A. Jessell and Board Chair Roger Tovar’s statement. Board Chair Tovar commented that the FIU Board of Trustees is not attempting to silence anyone or interfere with student governance matters. Board Chair Tovar added that it is important to distinguish that the draft resolution cannot be distributed amongst the community as the stance of FIU as this is an important time in history. He added that the FIU Board of Trustees must defend FIU, what FIU stands for, and what FIU represents to the community. Board Chair Tovar further clarified that there are 57,000 students at FIU and that not all of them agree with the sentiments of the draft resolution. In response to Board Chair Tovar, Trustee Sutton mentioned that he believes it was important to assuage the concerns of community members. Trustee Marc D. Sarnoff relayed a personal account related to freedom of speech and its protection under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. He commented on the citations of references used in the “*Ceasefire Now*” draft and emphasized the importance of using reliable sources of information. Trustee Sutton concurred with the comments made by Trustee Sarnoff and added that he will share them with the members of SGA. Trustee Dean C. Colson commended President Jessell and Board Chair Tovar’s statement condemning the terrorist actions against Israel on October 7, 2023 and how they have handled the challenge of providing a safe and respectful environment for the exchange of ideas.

4.3 Faculty Senate Updates

Trustee Noël C. Barengo commented that the Faculty Senate met four (4) times during the fall semester and will meet six (6) times in the spring 2024 semester with a plan to return to in-person meetings beginning in the fall 2024 semester. He added that three “Faculty-Get-Togethers” were hosted, one (1) at the FIU Biscayne Bay Campus and two (2) at the Modesto A. Maidique Campus. He thanked President Jessell for hosting members of the Faculty Senate at the Reagan House. Trustee Barengo noted that the Faculty Senate approved recommendations for Honorary Degrees from the Faculty Senate’s Honorary Degree and Awards Committee. He mentioned that a working group comprised of FIU administration, United Faculty of Florida (UFF), and the Faculty Senate is developing Post Tenure Review procedures in accordance with BOG regulation. He commented on the formation of a new subcommittee of the Faculty Senate’s Ad-Hoc Governmental Relations

committee that will provide input on draft regulations and policies. Trustee Barengo stated that he met with members of the administration, including the University's General Counsel to discuss comments from the Faculty Senate relating to BOG Regulation 9.016 Prohibited Expenditures. He added that comments from the Faculty Senate were included in the institutional feedback that FIU administration provided to the BOG. In terms of BOG Regulation 8.005 General Education Core Course Options, Trustee Barengo remarked that the Faculty Senate strongly objects to the BOG's motion to remove Principles of Sociology, SYG 2000, from the Core Curriculum. He added that at FIU, there are approximately 6,000 currently active students with transfer credits for the introduction to sociology course and approximately 300 currently active students with test credit for the course. He remarked on the Faculty Senate's concerns that removing SYG 2000 may negatively impact four-year graduation rates. He added that the removal of courses without faculty oversight violates academic freedom and contravenes traditional academic norms that ensure subject matter expertise is an integral part of the process for determining the minimum requirements for a general liberal studies education.

In response to Committee Chair Lowell, Trustee Barengo explained that there was a State-wide committee created to review the core curriculum courses leading to the addition of three courses and that at the November 2023 BOG meeting a motion was made and passed to remove SYG 2000. He also stated that faculty members were asked to provide comments on BOG Regulations 9.016 and 8.005. Trustee Barengo shared that FIU faculty members were tasked with reviewing core curriculum courses, and identifying courses that require modification to adhere to the newly adopted standards with final recommendations being due on November 17, 2023. Trustee Barengo added that the Faculty Senate would like to express general support of both Israeli and Palestinian faculty members and students who may be experiencing alienation, or fear of hate crimes given to political circumstances. He thanked the FIU Board of Trustees and the University's administration for considering faculty concerns, maintaining open dialogue, and defining solutions together.

5. Academic Affairs Regular Reports

There were no questions from the Committee members in terms of the Academic Affairs regular reports included as part of the agenda materials.

6. New Business

Board Vice Chair Carlos A. Duarte inquired about FIU students facing homelessness and asked that it be included in the student housing report update that is forthcoming. In response to Board Vice Chair Duarte, Board Chair Tovar recommended that Board Vice Chair Tovar reach out to Florida House Representative Marie Woodson regarding student homelessness in South Florida for potential collaboration. President Jessell noted that he has been in communication with Representative Woodson.

7. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

With no other business, Committee Chair Natasha Lowell adjourned the meeting of the Florida International University Board of Trustees Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee on Thursday, December 7, 2023, at 11:50 AM.