



**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 Academic Policy and Affairs Committee.

Committee Chair Lowell introduced Provost and Executive Vice President Elizabeth M. Bejar to provide Academic Policy and Student Affairs updates.

Provost Bejar shared that Dr. Bridgette Cram was appointed and has accepted the role of Vice President for Academic Affairs: Student Success Operations and Integrated Planning. She added that Dr. 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 mentioned that prior to her interim appointment, Dr. Cram led multiple initiatives as Assistant Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs with her FIU beginnings stemming from educational assessment work in the Office of Academic Planning and Accountability. She added that Dr. Cram also serves as an instructor for the Department of Public Policy and Administration. She explained 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. She also mentioned that under Dr. Cram's leadership over the past 18 months as Interim Vice President, she has solidified the infrastructure needed to sustain the momentum as FIU

continues to be recognized for its student success. Provost Bejar explained that Dr. Cram's priorities include building a collective vision for the student success experience at FIU from admission to graduation and alumni, focusing on achieving this through integrated planning and co-creating initiatives and solutions. Provost Bejar asked that Dr. Cram stand to be recognized and congratulated. Committee Chair Lowell thanked Dr. Cram.

Next, Provost Bejar recognized Dr. John Volakis, who has led the College of Engineering and Computing and has now transitioned his role to return to faculty to focus on his research. Provost Bejar added that Dr. Ines Triay has agreed to serve as Interim Dean. She mentioned that Dr. Triay has the Executive Director of the Applied Research Center (ARC) at FIU for 11 years, and she is an Associate Dean for Research Innovation and Technology at the College of Engineering and Computing where she has worked closely with the Knight Foundation to maximize the impact of resources on the growth of computing and information science at FIU. Provost Bejar added that Dr. Triay has been widely recognized for her accomplishments in science and engineering. Provost Bejar explained that Dr. Triay will remain as Executive Director of the ARC, and a national search for the next dean will begin in spring 2024. Provost Bejar asked that Dr. Triay stand to be recognized.

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 on October 25, 2023, 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 on November 28, 2023, included a debate on Foreign Policy titled "Wars of the World and the White House" 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 mentioned that two additional events will be held in the spring 2024 semester on the topics of Climate, and The Role of Media.

Provost Bejar acknowledged the Baptist Health signing agreement that took place on November 28, 2023, and expressed her gratitude towards the Board of Trustees, university leadership, staff members across academic affairs and the colleges, and the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine team for their support in the transformational event. She shared that she expects to deliver future updates on the success of the partnership to 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

Committee Chair Lowell introduced the Tenure as a Condition of Employment (TACOE) nomination Action Item and asked that Provost Bejar please comment on the candidate. Provost

Bejar explained that Tenure as a Condition of Employment 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; and 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 candidates.

Provost Bejar introduced Saurabh 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 (UAB) and that he earned his Doctorate of Medicine from Odessa State Medical University, Odessa, Ukraine, and his PhD from the Medical College of Georgia. She asked that he please stand and be recognized.

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

AP2. Proposed Amendment to Regulation FIU-412 Undergraduate Admissions

Provost Bejar detailed that the revised Regulation FIU-412 outlines undergraduate admission requirements for first-time-in-college (FTIC) students and includes changes due to Board of Governors (BOG) Regulation. She added that the revised regulation allows for the use of the Classic Learning Test (CLT) scores from Classic Learning Initiatives LLC for the standardized test scores and adds a new section for admission of high school students with an associate in arts (A.A.) degree. Provost Bejar mentioned that the new section explains that high school students participating in dual enrollment and other acceleration programs, who are on track to earn an A.A. degree from a member of the Florida College System or SUS institution, may be considered as either a FTIC freshman or as a potential A.A. transfer student. She commented that additional small editorial corrections are included in the revised FIU-412 regulation. Provost Bejar pointed out that Jody Glassman, Assistant Vice President, Enrollment & University Admissions, was in attendance to answer any questions on this item.

A motion was made and unanimously passed to 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 explained that FIU is a member of the National Association of the College Admissions Counseling, the College Board, and the Association of Chief Admissions Officers of

Public Universities and that each of these organizations provide 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 the requirements and allow for exceptions. She mentioned that in accordance with these regulations there is an Admission Petition and Appeals Committee which utilizes holistic review admissions as a best practice standard.

Provost Bejar detailed that regulation FIU-412 delegates authority to the provost to establish the total number of FTIC students admissible through the alternative admission process. She added 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 the holistic review process as a use of academic, non-academic and contextualized attributes of an applicant that does not fall within the quantitative standards of the FIU requirements to assess whether the applicant has the potential to succeed at FIU.

Provost Bejar 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 detailed that of the 129 students 120 are first time in college (FTIC) and nine (9) are transfer students; totaling less than 1% of students admitted going through the exceptions process. She added that there was a retention rate of 87.5% of FTIC students in their second year at FIU for the 2022-2023 academic year. Provost Bejar mentioned that the FTIC and transfer students' graduation rates are being monitored as there are less years of data which makes it challenging to assess the impact. Provost Bejar asked that AVP Jodi Glassman please stand to be recognized for her work in the Alternative Admissions process.

4.2 Student Government Updates

Trustee Sutton explained that the Student Government Association (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 shared that SGA has supported athletics through hosting watch parties on campus, a tailgate and funding students' tickets to the NCAA tournament FIU men's soccer game. He reported that SGA is supporting and funding upgrades to the Modesto A. Maidique Campus, Wellness and Recreation Center and for the revitalization of student spaces at the College of Law building. Trustee Sutton mentioned 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 until January 2024. Trustee Sutton emphasized that he is committed to letting the legislative process unfold.

Trustee Sutton added that the engagement of the student 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, who have communicated concerns to the FIU administration. 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 the statement led to responses from student groups including the Muslim Student Association, Young Democratic Socialists of America, and the Pride Student Union. He referenced the *PantherNOW* editorial titled, “Student organizations value their autonomy – administrators should too.” 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 referenced the State University System Statement on Free Expression.

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 Board of Trustees is not attempting to silence anyone or interfere with their 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 Board of Trustees is not looking to interfere with SGA but must defend FIU, what FIU stands for, and what FIU means 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 shared 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 added that he is proud of President Jessell and Board Chair Tovar and the way that they have handled the challenge of providing a safe and respectful environment for the exchange of ideas.

4.3 Faculty Senate Updates

Trustee Barengo commented that the Faculty Senate met four times during the fall semester and will meet six 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 the members of the Faculty Senate at the Reagan House in October. Trustee Barengo explained that the Faculty Senate approved motions to recommend Honorary Degrees.

Trustee Barengo mentioned that a working group comprised of FIU administration, United Faculty of Florida (UFF) and the Faculty Senate is developing the Post Tenure Review procedures in accordance with the BOG regulation. He commented on the formation of a new subcommittee of the Ad-Hoc Governmental Relations committee that will provide input on draft regulations and policies. Trustee Barengo stated that he met with FIU administration and General Counsel to discuss comments from the Faculty Senate regarding BOG Regulation 9.016 on Prohibited Expenditures noting that the comments were included in the institutional feedback that FIU administration provided to the BOG. Trustee Barengo remarked that the Faculty Senate strongly objects to the motion made to remove Principles of Sociology (SYG 2000) from the Core Curriculum regarding BOG Regulation 8.005 on General Education Core Course Options. He added that there are approximately 6,000 currently active students with transfer credits and nearly 300 students with test credits for SYG 2000; noting a concern from the Faculty Senate that removing SYG 2000 may negatively impact 4-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 3 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 both BOG Regulation 9.016 and BOG Regulation 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.

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 reaching out to Representative Marie Woodson regarding student homelessness in South Florida for potential collaboration. President Jessell noted that he has discussed student housing issues 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.