



**Strategic Planning Committee Workshop**  
**April 12, 2024**  
**FIU, Modesto A. Maidique Campus**  
**Management and Advances Research Center (MARC)**  
**Room 290, Earlene and Albert Dotson Pavilion**

**MINUTES**

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

The Florida International University Board of Trustees' Strategic Planning Committee workshop was called to order by Committee Chair Marc D. Sarnoff at 9:01 AM on Friday, April 12, 2024.

General Counsel Carlos B. Castillo conducted roll call of the Strategic Planning Committee members and verified a quorum. Present were Trustees Marc D. Sarnoff, *Committee Chair*; Francis A. Hondal, *Committee Vice Chair*; Noël C. Barengo; Alan Gonzalez (*Zoom*); Gene Prescott (*Arrived after roll call*); and Alexander P. Sutton.

The following Board members were also in attendance: Board Chair Roger Tovar, and Trustee Dean C. Colson.

Committee Chair Sarnoff explained that the workshop will focus on FIU's 2030 Strategic Plan, which will serve as a roadmap for the next five (5) years. He mentioned that the final stages of the plan that will be approved includes the involvement and input of the FIU Board of Trustees. He added that the University administration would provide information regarding the development of the plan and the progress to-date as well as the implementation plan and discussion during the workshop.

**2. Discussion Item** (*No Action Required*)

**2.1 Strategic Plan 2030 Update**

University President Kenneth A. Jessell shared that FIU is just into the second 50 years of a century of growth and commented on FIU being in the "maturity phase" of its lifecycle as a university. He added that there is an opportunity to show what FIU will be doing over the next 50 years, and that adjustments will be made to the plan as time passes. He pointed out that the university administration had lofty goals which have been achieved, namely the recent designation of FIU as a preeminent university. He added that the mission, vision, and values for the University have served FIU well and be re-opened for changes. He added that they are the right components to lead the direction of the strategic plan. He provided an overview of the framework of the strategic plan including that FIU will be a destination university, be top-ranked, and be an employer of choice. He pointed out the areas of emphasis for the plan where FIU will lead in environment and environmental resilience, health, and technology and innovation. He pointed out the significance of the relationship between health and the environment. He noted that there are no programs in the University that are void of the areas of environment and environmental resilience, health, and

technology and innovation. He mentioned that the visual and performing arts programs involve health and can positively impact the wellbeing of the community. He added that by improving the environment, individuals will be healthier. He noted that sea-level rise and global warming not only affect South Florida and that technology and innovation will be the solution to many of these problems. He reminded the committee members that the plan would not be developed during the workshop but would be evolving during the coming months; noting that the university administration will be taking into account the Board of Governors (BOG) 2030 State University System (SUS) Strategic Plan to ensure that FIU is in alignment with the state system.

Vice President for Academic Affairs: Student Success Operations and Integrated Planning, Bridgette Cram provided an overview of the strategic plan pillar-framework: the FIU experience, research excellence and mission-aligned engagement and partnerships. VP Cram shared that several listening sessions were held on campus which were well attended, and had over 1,500 RSVPs followed by a survey which received over 800 responses. She added that there were several leadership meetings held to ensure that the feedback received from the listening sessions was understood as it was incorporated into the presentation for the strategic planning committee workshop. She added that there will be a visioning session on April 17, 2024, to go through the strategic areas of focus. She also mentioned that additional workshops with the strategic planning committee will be held as needed. She added that the feedback received from the listening session included clear articulation of the vision through defining and communicating the mission, values, and commitment of FIU to economic and social mobility. She added that feedback also included being clear about who FIU is and serves and focusing on the achievements of the university over the past five (5) years. She mentioned the feedback that was received based on each pillar. VP Cram explained that the plan will initially consist of a five-to-seven-page document paired with an implementation plan. She detailed that the plan would begin with an introduction, followed by the context setting, pillars, strategic areas of focus, and then the implementation of the plan. VP Cram defined the three (3) strategic plan pillars which include the FIU experience, research excellence and mission-aligned engagement and partnerships. She then delineated the goals, objectives, example initiatives, and example supporting metrics associated with each of the strategic plan pillars. Trustee Francis A. Hondal inquired about the potential for collaboration with private enterprise regarding research to expand funding and power. In response to Trustee Hondal, Senior Vice President, Research & Economic Development and Dean, University Graduate School Andres G. Gil shared that the university is seeking partnerships.

Provost and Executive Vice President Elizabeth M. Bejar acknowledged the pillar committee leaders and co-chairs present at the meeting who have worked together to gather the information and compile it effectively for the FIU 2030 Strategic Plan. She emphasized the importance of deciding where the focus will be to catalyze, elevate, and move the needle in the next five years to set the foundation for subsequent 50 years. She touched upon various areas of strength at FIU including health, innovation and technology, and environment and environmental resilience which are under the strategic areas of focus for the strategic plan. Provost Bejar encouraged the committee members to attend the visioning session taking place on April 17<sup>th</sup> to continue to be part of the conversation. She provided an overview of the anticipated timeline and explained that between April and May 2024 there will be complete writing of the plan and then internal reviews and final edits. She added that in the fall 2024 semester the plan will be taken to the FIU Board of Trustees for review and

approval and subsequently to the BOG for review and approval in October. She explained that the development of the strategic plan takes into account the human, physical, and financial considerations and investments. She shared that a core strength of FIU is that it is a young institution which provides for a greater ability to innovate and respond in a strategic way. Provost Bejar shared sample questions that were developed through meetings with deans and key institution leaders. She opened the floor for discussion and questions from the strategic planning committee members.

Committee Chair Sarnoff proposed questions regarding what technology and health will look like in 2035. He commented that Universities are very insulated within society. Trustee Dean C. Colson mentioned that five (5) years ago an initial strategic planning committee meeting was held without having a standing committee on the board. He added that the strategic planning process has improved. He emphasized that it is important to approach the process with the understanding that FIU is working under the umbrella of the BOG strategic plan and performance funding metrics and as a result FIU will need to adapt. Trustee Colson mentioned that the BOG will likely increase focus in research funding. He noted that the FIU and Baptist partnership with the FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOM) will also lead to an increase in research funding. He added that having faculty, students, staff, and administrators engaged in the strategic planning process is important and that the strategic plan pillars will align with the BOG strategic plan. Trustee Colson suggested that trustees should be provided with copies of the BOG strategic plan and recent strategic plans of other universities in the SUS. Trustee Hondal thanked the university leadership for the summary presentation at the workshop. She commented that context is very important, and that university leadership should be trying to anticipate the future context that FIU will be in. She added that a relative competitive assessment of the rankings is a rich part of the strategic planning conversation. She pointed out that areas where FIU has distinguished itself in should be built upon. She emphasized the idea of understanding where the university leadership wants FIU to be in the future, and how to implement a plan to get there.

Board Chair Roger Tovar pointed out the importance of FIU being located in Miami and how individuals, other universities, and companies want to be there. He encouraged thinking outside of the box to be relevant and impactful. He mentioned athletics and a focus on what can be done to be more relevant. He emphasized the importance of having a sense of urgency with goals that are being set for the University. Chair Tovar mentioned the work of Dr. Diana Azzam and commented on how impressed he was by the Azzam lab and its impact on the community. He encouraged finding ways to invest in more projects like the work of Dr. Azzam. He mentioned assessing the return on investment for positions currently filled in the University prior to hiring to fill open positions. He also encouraged compensating employees when they are doing a great job. He stressed the idea of being collaborative and listening to the needs of different departments. He mentioned FIU Law and the opportunity for investment to push it forward since the law school is already doing well in the rankings. He encouraged delegating tasks and being surrounded with individuals that help facilitate that. Chair Tovar touched upon the concept of environmental resilience and commented on pythons in the everglades and the environmental impact they are having as a potential research project that FIU can focus on to solve the problem.

Trustee Alexander P. Sutton mentioned undergraduate research and increasing preparation and opportunities for undergraduate students. He asked if there was a focus on undergraduate research in the strategic plan. Provost Bejar explained that it is part of the conversation under the FIU experience pillar. She added that university leadership is considering having faculty fellows focus on undergraduate research. Trustee Noël C. Barengo commented on the FIU experience pillar and the importance of creating easily identifiable recognition for the University. He mentioned recent local and international efforts to promote FIU at community events. Trustee Alan Gonzalez expressed that sports can impact university affinity. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a focus on academics. Trustee Gonzalez mentioned business partnerships and the impact that paid program internships for students has on their education and future careers.

Committee Chair Sarnoff supported the idea mentioned by Board Chair Tovar regarding eliminating the pythons that are invading the Florida Everglades. He touched upon the concept of hiring individuals that are smart and creating that succession plan as a result of these choices. Committee Chair Sarnoff expressed that the university administration has done a great job at capturing and telling the story of FIU over the past two (2) years. He reinforced the idea mentioned by Trustee Gonzalez regarding paid internships for undergraduate students to ensure that they are able to graduate on time.

Board Chair Tovar suggested having a designated person that knows how to connect with businesses and individuals in the community. He added that there should be greater efforts to connect with business moving to Miami and telling the story of FIU and why the University is so important to the community. Trustee Hondal concurred. She mentioned articulating core competencies that FIU currently does not have and what it looks like to be a partner facing institution. Senior Vice President, University Advancement Kenneth C. Hall mentioned philanthropy and corporate engagement as part of the implementation of the strategic plan. Board Chair Tovar shared that prior to philanthropy it is important to look at the community impact of the University. Provost Bejar provided context in comparison to other institutions regarding partnerships and philanthropy and explained that the framing of the conversation should be different as individuals are now questioning the value of higher education overall. In response to the comments made by Provost Bejar, Board Chair Tovar asked that a pamphlet highlighting what FIU has to offer be developed and used as a potential marketing tool. He noted that individuals might be more willing to work with FIU if they can quickly understand the work that FIU is doing. Trustee Sutton shared that he served on the mission-aligned partnerships pillar committee and commented that partnerships can also come to FIU and that the University brings value to the table. He suggested having a role where an individual actively seeks out engagement for partnerships.

Dr. Gil commented on the challenges researchers face as they can be isolated from the world because of the challenges associated with keeping up with the science and opportunities that are present. He provided a personal account regarding a research proposal. He shared that many grant applications to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are not reviewed or funded. He advised that it is important to make it easier for researchers to conduct their research and to reduce bureaucracy to help facilitate it. He pointed out that the strategic plan provides guardrails around research. He added that research is very competitive and that it is important to create an environment for researchers to be successful. Dean and Sr. VP Cendan touched upon the FIU experience and how

schools have arts or athletics as their affinity piece for students, which can also be seen in the field of healthcare. He added that in healthcare there is an opportunity to amplify affinity even for community members that have not attended the HWC. Committee Chair Sarnoff commented that the FIU medical school has strengthened and pointed out that there will be changes as a result of the partnership with Baptist. Dean and Sr. VP Cendan commented on the capacity of the partnership with Baptist health and provided a comparison to the University of South Florida and their partnership with Tampa General Hospital. Committee Chair Sarnoff shared a personal account regarding the University of Tampa and the growth of their hospital partnership with Tampa General Hospital.

Trustee Sutton commented on the usage of the FIU Biscayne Bay Campus (BBC). He added that he would like to see a plan for increasing the number of individuals at BBC or using the campus for a more specific focus; including a clearer plan for how it will be administratively run. Board Chair Tovar pointed out that Dean and Sr. VP Gil mentioned that we should not tell researchers what to focus on. He mentioned that if FIU wants to be relevant, it is important to need assess what the pressing issues are and how FIU can make an impact. Board Chair Tovar asked the university leadership to consider the comments made during the workshop. He mentioned the issue of pythons in the Florida Everglades as a start for collaboration and focusing on other issues that are going on in the community and Dean and Sr. VP Gil concurred. Provost Bejar mentioned that environmental resilience is very broad and that she wants to find out how FIU can contribute and elevate a national conversation on it. President Jessell pointed out that the significance of ensuring that the FIU curriculum and research are truly aligned with community needs. He noted that the location of FIU is a strength, and that collaboration is essential within the topic of the environment and environmental resilience. He also mentioned additional investments for FIU Law to set the University apart from other institutions through collaboration. President Jessell commented on potential and current uses of Artificial Intelligence to find solutions. He mentioned ensuring that the University is focusing on the right themes. He added that now, when students graduate, they are equipped with knowledge across multiple disciplines. He concurred with the idea shared by Board Chair Tovar of an informational storybook telling the story of FIU. Committee Chair Sarnoff highlighted that the *Wall Street Journal* ranked FIU the No. 4 Public University and that this should be the front-page story on marketing materials used by the University.

### **3. New Business**

No new business was raised.

### **4. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment**

With no other new business, Committee Chair Marc D. Sarnoff adjourned the meeting of the Florida International University Board of Trustees Strategic Planning Committee on Friday, April 12, 2024, at 11:19 AM.