



**Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee**  
**November 20, 2025**  
**FIU, Modesto A. Maidique Campus, Graham Center Ballrooms**

**MINUTES**

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**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 Dean C. Colson on Thursday, November 20, 2025, at 10:32 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 Dean C. Colson, *Committee Chair*; Alberto R. Taño, *Committee Vice Chair*; Noël C. Barengo; Francesca Casanova; George Heisel; and Alexander M. Peraza.

The following Board members were also in attendance: Trustees Carlos A. Duarte, Board Chair; Alan Gonzalez; Jesus Lebeña; Yaffa Popack; and Marc D. Sarnoff, Board Vice Chair.

Provost, Executive Vice President, and Chief Operating Officer, Elizabeth M. Bejar provided updates related to research and academic accomplishments of FIU faculty spanning cybersecurity, health, environmental resilience, space policy, and the arts. She highlighted faculty research and academic accomplishments including: Professor Mohammad Ashiqur Rahman and his team building SHIELD, a system that protects drones from cyber-attacks; Dr. Joshua Hutcheson and Dr. Valentina Dargam developing artificial intelligence (AI) powered tools to help detect heart disease early; Dr. Navid Tahvildari utilizing AI to improve hurricane forecasting and emergency response through advanced storm surge models; Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy Senior Fellow Laura Delgado López leading research on space policy, boosting Florida's role in said field. She also highlighted Senior Vice President for Health Affairs and Dean of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, Dr. Juan C. Cendan being elected to the Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine of Florida, enhancing FIU's reputation in health and scientific innovation; and Dr. Makoto Hashimoto directing Florida's busiest robotic heart surgery program at Baptist Health Miami Cardiac and Vascular Institute, surpassing 100 procedures in 2025 and demonstrating the success of the FIU-Baptist Health partnership.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Committee Chair Colson asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes of the Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee meeting held on September 18, 2025. 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 18, 2025.

### **3. Action Items**

#### **AP1. Tenure as a Condition of Employment Nomination**

Committee Chair Colson commented on the Tenure as a Condition of Employment (TACOE) process. Provost Bejar commented on the TACOE candidates: Dr. Abdel-Hameed Badawy, who will be joining the Knight Foundation School of Computing and Information Sciences in the College of Engineering and Computing and is recommended for hire at the rank of Associate Professor; and Dr. Jennifer Lynn Martin, who will be joining the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine and is recommended for hire at the rank of Professor.

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 of the candidates for Tenure as a Condition of Employment as specified in the Board materials.

### **4. Information and Discussion Items: No Action Required**

#### **4.1 Research Update**

Senior Vice President for Research and Economic Development, and Dean of the University Graduate School, Andres G. Gil, presented an update on research. He commented on research growth with FIU's research expenditures having more than doubled from \$110M in 2010 to \$226M in 2020, propelling FIU into the top 15 nationally for growth. He also noted that as a result of the growth in research expenditures, the National Science Foundation Higher Education Research and Development (NSF HERD) report ranking improved from 99th to 69th, with science and engineering comprising 80–83% of total funding. Board Chair Carlos A. Duart and Committee Chair Colson discussed the NSF HERD ranking and Dr. Gil explained that to reach top 50 in NSF rankings, FIU would need approximately \$400–\$600M in research expenditures. He mentioned that research-funded staff and faculty increased from 1,200 to 5,000 in 2025. Dr. Gil commented on recent federal terminations of grants which impacted 62 projects and \$31M in future funding. He noted that over 50 students were supported by terminated grants, and the University is now supporting said students. He added that efforts by University President Jeanette M. Nuñez in Washington DC led to the reinstatement of a terminated NSF Center grant (\$9M) and ensured the continuation of an National Institutes of Health (NIH) endowment grant (\$6M).

Dr. Gil stated that the first quarter saw an increase in grant awards (\$96M versus \$79M in the previous year), though the overall number of funding opportunities and proposals is declining. He commented on the federal budget outlook noting proposed federal cuts to NIH and NSF were not supported by Congress, suggesting only minor reductions. He added that the Department of Defense also remains a significant funder. Dr. Gil provided a historical overview of Facilities and Administration (F&A) funding, noting that there have been proposals from the Federal Government to set the F&A rate to a flat 15%. He presented a diagram detailing the differences between direct costs and indirect or F&A costs. He mentioned that the proposed 15% F&A rate would be significantly below the current 47.5% thus reducing funds available for research infrastructure and administration, necessitating operational adjustments, increased industry partnerships, and greater use of AI for efficiency related to regulatory compliance.0

#### **4.2 Student Government Updates**

Trustee Francesca Casanova highlighted the FIU Athletics. She mentioned Homecoming Week, which concluded with a win for the FIU Football team. She thanked the Homecoming Council and Student Experiences teams for their efforts in engaging over 5,000 students throughout various Homecoming events including: Jungle Fest, Roary's Rocking 5k Run, Clash of the Panthers, Taste at the Bay, and Uncaging.

Trustee Casanova highlighted special projects supported through the management of the Activity and Service fee. She noted that the first project includes upgrades to the Modesto A. Maidique Campus Recreation Center entailing (1) allocating approximately \$185,000 for the purchase of new cardio equipment—including treadmills, bikes, and uprights; and (2) approving \$233,000 for the installation and purchase of new strength machines. She commented on the second project which includes an investment in the FIU Children's Creative Learning Center of approximately \$40,000 for the installation and purchase of a new outdoor playground and toddler play area. Trustee Casanova detailed the final project consisting of an allocation of approximately \$6,000 to purchase bike locks for students who rely on electric scooters or bikes as their mode of transportation. She noted that this project is in partnership with the FIU Police Department and will include an educational campaign for students.

#### **4.3 Faculty Senate Updates**

Trustee Noël C. Barengo stated that four (4) meetings of the Faculty Senate were held in the fall 2025 semester addressing governance, accreditation, faculty support, academic freedom, student success, and policy developments. He commented that the Faculty Senate received regular reports from Provost Bejar on academic operations and faculty hiring challenges. He mentioned ongoing monitoring of the potential transition to a Commissioner of Public Higher Education and discussed related governance issues. He added Faculty Senate adopted a resolution opposing the National Compact Statement for Excellence in Higher Education due to concerns over autonomy and academic freedom.

Trustee Barengo advised that the Faculty Senate approved summer research proposals to enhance faculty productivity and scholarly advancement. He shared that the Faculty Senate received an update on FIU's AI initiatives and integration into teaching and research from Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer, Robert Grillo. He noted that there were reoccurring themes throughout the Faculty Senate meetings including emphasis on protecting academic freedom, supporting faculty during transitions, and maintaining transparent communication. Committee Chair Colson requested further information on the discussion of workforce housing for young faculty and graduate students. Trustee Barengo advised that he would bring said topic before the Faculty Senate.

#### **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**

No new business was raised.

## **7. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment**

With no other business, Committee Chair Dean C. Colson adjourned the meeting of the Florida International University Board of Trustees Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee on Thursday, November 20, 2025, at 11:19 AM.

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