



Retreat
March 22 – 24, 2026
FIU in Washington, D.C.

MINUTES

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Trustee arrival and FIU Washington D.C. tour

Monday, March 23, 2026

Board members present

Carlos A. Duarte, *Board Chair*; Alan Gonzalez, *Board Vice Chair*; Francesca Casanova; Tila Falic-Levi; George Heisel; Jesus Lebeña; Alexander M. Peraza; Nestor Plana; and Yaffa Popack.

Welcome

Board Chair Duarte welcomed Trustees, members of the University administration, and Dr. Dario Gil, Under Secretary for Science, U.S. Department of Energy and Director of the Genesis Mission. The Retreat began at 8:00 AM.

Energy | Genesis Mission

Dr. Gil discussed the work of the Genesis Mission, which launched in November 2025 and is a U.S. national initiative spearheaded by the Department of Energy to accelerate scientific discovery using Artificial Intelligence.

Experience Impact 2030 Strategic Plan

Board Chair Duarte noted that the selection of FIU in Washington, D.C. as the Retreat location underscores the University's expanding national footprint and its strategic role in federal discourse.

President Jeanette M. Nuñez emphasized that the primary objective of the Retreat was to align leadership efforts toward the University's ambitious goal of becoming a Top 30 public university in the national rankings. President Nuñez and Executive Vice President and Provost Elizabeth M. Béjar led a session focused on the University's three strategic pillars:

- Pillar I: Student Success and Workforce Readiness
- Pillar II: Research and Innovation Excellence
- Pillar III: Sustainable Regional and Global Impact

Senior Associate Vice President for Federal Relations Carlos A. Becerra affirmed that FIU in D.C. serves as the university's critical hub for the strategic plan pillars.

Trustees met and interacted with students participating in FIU's DC Fly-In on the Future of Artificial Intelligence. Dr. Michelle M. Castro, Director of the Student Experience and Impact commented on the Fly-Ins, which are three-day experiential seminars focused on exploring how policies are made, and what

career opportunities exist in the capital for students passionate about a variety of issues. Dr. Castro remarked that the itineraries consist of engaging conversations and experiences with experts across government, academia and industry.

Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy

Board Chair Duart extended a welcome to Vice Provost for Defense and National Security Research and Director of the Jack D. Gordon Institute for Public Policy, Dr. Brian Fonseca. Dr. Fonseca provided an overview of the Gordon Institute's efforts in preparing students for successful careers within the intelligence community. He highlighted the Security Research Hub, which functions as a virtual platform featuring dashboards that address key challenges in the Western Hemisphere and provide tracking updates. Additionally, he discussed the Institute's role in hosting and managing various cybersecurity initiatives, including the annual NICE Conference, professional education programs for government officials, and the Cyber Policy Advisory Board.

Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom

Board Chair Duart welcomed:

- Founding Director, FIU Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom, Dr. Carlos Diaz-Rosillo.
- Distinguished World Leadership Fellow, his Excellency Iván Duque Márquez, Colombian politician, statesman, and author who served as President of the Republic of Colombia from 2018 to 2022 (*Zoom*)
- Senior Leadership Fellow fall 2022, the Honorable Paula J. Dobriansky, Ambassador, Foreign Policy Expert, and Former Diplomat
- Senior Leadership Fellow fall 2021, the Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Former United States Congresswoman

His Excellency Iván Duque Márquez, the Honorable Paula J. Dobriansky, and the Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen shared their individual perspectives and experiences regarding the Adam Smith Center.

Dr. Diaz-Rosillo commented on the Senior Leadership Fellows program, which brings distinguished public sector leaders who have worked at the highest levels of government and promoted, during their time in office, creative and innovative public policies that strengthened the free enterprise system and enhanced individual freedom and human prosperity. He remarked on the research, thought leadership, and publications produced by the Center's Distinguished World Leadership Fellows, Senior Leadership Fellows, and research team - in-depth articles, reports, and analyses spanning a range of topics that reflect the expertise and diverse perspectives of our contributors. Dr. Diaz-Rosillo provided an overview of the Bachelor of Science in Business and Government Leadership - an interdisciplinary undergraduate degree program designed for aspiring leaders to explore the challenges of leadership in free-market societies. He also commented on past and upcoming events.

Health

Board Chair Duart welcomed Juan C. Cendan, M.D., SVP for Health Affairs and Dean, FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine. Dr. Cendan commented on the growth and momentum for FIU Medicine, strategic alliances with Baptist Health South Florida and Nicklaus Children's Health System, the new state-of-the-art on-campus medical center.

Reception: Salute to Alumni and Friends in Federal Government

An evening gathering honoring alumni and partners serving across federal agencies, bringing together leaders in public service for connection and recognition.

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

Board members present

Carlos A. Duart, *Board Chair*; Alan Gonzalez, *Board Vice Chair*; Francesca Casanova; Tila Falic-Levi; George Heisel; Jesus Lebeña; Alexander M. Peraza; and Yaffa Popack.

Briefing Event: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Health

One of 70 events that are hosted at the FIU in D.C. briefing center, the event brought together a select group of leaders from government, academia, and the technology sector for a conversation on the rapidly evolving role of artificial intelligence in healthcare and biomedical discovery, while featuring our own research leadership in pediatric cancer.

Welcome

Board Chair Duart welcomed Trustees and members of the University administration. The Retreat began at 10:30 AM.

Environment

Board Chair Duart welcomed Michael Heithaus, Executive Dean of the College of Arts, Sciences and Education and Vice Provost of Environmental Resilience and the Biscayne Bay Campus. Dr. Heithaus commented on Aquarius, the only underwater laboratory in the world enabling scientists to conduct research on water quality, coral reefs, and climate change, while also preparing astronauts for space exploration. He remarked on research areas, including coral reefs, water contamination, and endangered wildlife.

Wrap-up

President Nuñez concluded the Retreat by synthesizing the key themes discussed. Board Chair Duart emphasized that FIU in Washington, D.C. is not merely a satellite office, but a strategic accelerator for the University's national ambitions. The Retreat concluded at 1:00 PM.