



Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee

September 17, 2026

FIU, Modesto A. Maidique Campus, Graham University 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 Albert R. Taño on Thursday, September 17, 2026, at 2:45 PM.

Acting General Counsel Ryan Kelley conducted roll call of the Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee members and verified a quorum. Present were Albert R. Taño, *Committee Chair*; Yaffa Popack, *Committee Vice Chair*; Noël C. Barengo; and Alyssa Mederos.

Trustee Tila Falic-Levi was excused.

The following Board members were also in attendance: Trustees Carlos A. Duarte, *Board Chair*; Alan Gonzalez, *Board Vice Chair*; Jesus Lebeña; Patrick McDowell (Zoom); and Alexander M. Peraza.

Provost, Executive Vice President, and Chief Operating Officer Elizabeth M. Bejar welcomed the Committee to the 2026-27 academic year and provided University updates. She reported fall enrollment of more than 50,600 degree-seeking students, including 5,442 first-time-in-college students, and highlighted the strong academic profiles of the incoming class and entering cohorts in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine and College of Law. Provost Bejar recognized Dr. Daniel Z. Epstein, Interim Dean of the College of Law, and noted the College's recent administrative reorganization. She welcomed 79 new faculty members and reported that FIU now employs 1,696 full-time faculty, a net increase of 44 from the prior year. Provost Bejar highlighted faculty accomplishments in cybersecurity and earthquake engineering, FIU's receipt of the 2026 Florida TaxWatch Government Productivity Award for improving graduation outcomes and maximizing public resources, and recent student achievements. She also provided updates on the Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom's inaugural graduate-level master class and Fall 2026 Senior Leadership Fellows, an Academic Affairs leadership retreat focused on artificial intelligence, and Faculty Convocation Week, scheduled for October 5-9, 2026.

2. Approval of Minutes

Committee Chair Taño asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes of the Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee meeting held on June 18, 2026. Hearing none, a motion was made and unanimously passed to approve the minutes of the Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee meeting held on June 18, 2026.

3. Action Items

AP1. Tenure as a Condition of Employment Nominations

Committee Chair Taño explained that newly hired faculty considered for Tenure as a Condition of Employment (TACOE) must qualify for tenure at FIU based on the caliber of their scholarly work or tenure status at a prior institution. Provost Bejar described the review process and noted that the candidates had been vetted by the applicable departments and colleges through expedited tenure reviews. She presented six nominees: Dr. Jennifer Albert, Associate Professor in the Department of Multidisciplinary Engineering and Computing Education, Systems, and Management, whose work focuses on STEM and computing education; Dr. Mariana Andrade Rojas, Associate Professor in the Department of Information Systems and Business Analytics, whose research addresses innovation, firm performance, digital technologies, and data analytics; Dr. François Billaut, Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning, whose scholarship focuses on exercise physiology and sport science; Dr. Song Fang, Associate Professor in the Knight Foundation School of Computing and Information Sciences, whose research centers on cybersecurity, cyber-physical systems, Internet of Things security and privacy, and artificial intelligence; Dr. Richard Klein, Professor in the Department of Information Systems and Business Analytics, whose research focuses on technology adoption and healthcare information systems; and Dr. Scott Sundvall, Associate Professor in the Department of English, whose scholarship addresses rhetoric, digital writing, new media, and artificial intelligence. Provost Bejar summarized the candidates' academic backgrounds, scholarly accomplishments, research funding, professional leadership, and anticipated contributions to FIU.

A motion was made and unanimously passed that the FIU Board of Trustees Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee recommend to the FIU Board of Trustees approval of the six (6) candidates for Tenure as a Condition of Employment, as specified in the Board materials.

AP2. Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability Annual Report

Vice Provost for Faculty Leadership and Success Heather D. Russell presented the Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability and Transparency Annual Report, as required by Florida Board of Governors Regulation 8.003. She described FIU's compliance practices and ongoing initiatives to reduce the cost of textbooks and instructional materials. Dr. Russell reported that required or recommended course materials cost \$20 or less per credit hour in 60% of course sections and that more than 50% of course sections had no associated textbook cost. She noted that FIU met the 45-day posting requirement established by Board of Governors Regulation 8.003, with 96% compliance for fall 2025 and 97% compliance for spring 2026 across more than

10,000 course sections. She added that syllabi for general education and other nonexempt courses are publicly available through Simple Syllabus. Dr. Russell highlighted FIU's partnership with Barnes & Noble and reported that the Panther Book Pack generated average course-material savings of 42%. She noted that more than 35,000 students participated each semester during the prior academic year and that opt-out rates have continued to decline since the program's inception, reflecting students' increased recognition of the program's value and convenience.

A motion was made and unanimously passed that the FIU Board of Trustees Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee recommend to the FIU Board of Trustees approval of the Textbook and Instructional Materials Affordability and Transparency Annual Report.

4. Information and Discussion Items: No Action Required

4.1 Student Government Updates

Trustee Alyssa Mederos reported on Student Government Association (SGA) initiatives at the start of the fall semester. She highlighted Week of Welcome activities, including Nachos with SGA, Cafecito with Senate, and participation in the Coca-Cola Block Party, as well as Panthers' F1RST NIGHT, which welcomed more than 17,000 attendees. She noted that organization fairs at the Biscayne Bay and Modesto A. Maidique campuses featured more than 300 student organizations and provided updates on student engagement efforts by the Panhellenic Council, Interfraternity Council, Multicultural Greek Council, and National Pan-Hellenic Council. Trustee Mederos also reported that SGA supported student transportation to the football season opener in Tampa and planned to provide transportation and gold T-shirts for students attending the upcoming game against Florida Atlantic University. She announced the launch of the Food for Fines initiative in collaboration with Parking and Transportation, allowing students to resolve eligible parking fines through food donations benefiting the FIU Food Pantry, and noted the continuation of SGA's partnership with IKEA, which provides student transportation, discounts, and special activities each semester. She stated that SGA remains focused on ensuring students feel connected, represented, and supported while expanding opportunities for engagement with the University.

4.2 Faculty Senate Updates

Trustee Noël C. Barengo reported that the Faculty Senate had met once and the Steering Committee twice since the beginning of the academic year. He stated that the Senate would focus on strengthening its standing committees through a review of their roles, responsibilities, charges, procedures, and practices to improve consistency, transparency, efficiency, and continuity, with revisions to the Faculty Senate Constitution and Bylaws proposed as appropriate. Trustee Barengo emphasized the importance of timely communication and early faculty engagement when significant concerns, challenges, or institutional changes are under consideration. He noted that such engagement draws upon faculty expertise, helps identify potential unintended consequences, and reinforces the value of faculty contributions amid the

changing higher education environment. He reported that the Senate approved a statement supporting ICEBreakers' request for a town hall with President Jeanette M. Nuñez and Chief of Police Alexander D. Casas and offered to facilitate constructive dialogue. Trustee Barengo noted that President Nuñez would address the Faculty Senate at its next meeting and that Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer David H. Snider Jr. had accepted the Senate's invitation to provide an overview of the University budget and respond to questions from senators. He also highlighted the September 10 faculty gathering at the Biscayne Bay Campus, hosted by the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management; the David Rabban Workshop organized by the Academic Freedom Committee and sponsored by the Office of the Provost; the second FIU Population Health Conference, scheduled for October 1-2; the Obesity Symposium on October 9; the 2026 Diabetes Awareness Day on November 13; and Faculty Convocation Week, October 5-9, 2026. He concluded by encouraging a culture in which communication occurs early, faculty expertise is actively sought, and differing perspectives are viewed as opportunities to improve decision-making. He emphasized the University community's shared commitment to FIU's future and stated that approaching challenges from common ground can further strengthen shared governance.

5. Academic Affairs Regular Reports: For Information Only

There were no questions from the Committee members regarding the Academic Affairs regular reports included in the agenda materials.

6. New Business

No new business was raised.

7. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

With no other business, Committee Chair Albert R. Taño adjourned the meeting of the Florida International University Board of Trustees Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee on Thursday, September 17, 2026, at 3:15 PM.