



External Relations Committee

April 21, 2021

FIU, Modesto A. Maidique Campus, Graham Center Ballrooms and via Zoom

MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Chair's Remarks

The Florida International University Board of Trustees' External Relations Committee meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Marc D. Sarnoff at 11:38 a.m. on Wednesday, April 21, 2021.

General Counsel Carlos B. Castillo conducted roll call of the External Relations Committee members and verified a quorum. Present were Marc D. Sarnoff, *Committee Chair*; Leonard Boord (*via Zoom*); Donna J. Hrinak; Chanel T. Rowe; and Roger Tovar, *Board Vice Chair*.

Trustee Jose J. Armas was excused.

Board Chair Dean C. Colson and Trustees Cesar L. Alvarez, Natasha Lowell, Gene Prescott, Joerg Reinhold, and Alexandra Valdes, and University President Mark B. Rosenberg also were in attendance.

Committee Chair Sarnoff welcomed all Trustees and members of the University administration. He also welcomed Trustees, University administrators, and staff attending via the virtual environment and the University community and general public accessing the meeting via the University's webcast.

2. Approval of Minutes

Committee Chair Sarnoff asked that the Committee approve the Minutes of the meeting held on December 3, 2020. A motion was made and unanimously passed to approve the Minutes of the External Relations Committee Meeting held on December 3, 2020.

3. Information/Discussion Item

3.1 External Relations, Strategic Communications and Marketing (ERSCM) Update

Senior Vice President, External Relations, Strategic Communications and Marketing, Sandra B. Gonzalez-Levy referred to the updated marketing initiative summary and the sample mailer that has been distributed to the *U.S. News & World Report* academic peers, noting that said materials were provided as handouts to the Trustees. She commented that, with the funds received, the University is now able to place ads in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Sr. VP Gonzalez-Levy provided an overview of the university-wide marketing initiative in terms of the strategic objectives for years one (1), two (2), and three (3). She commented on investments, which have ultimately led to new platforms and services to support the colleges and units. She remarked that the central media team has been expanded to now include a director and social media manager. She mentioned the execution of an enterprise level agreement for a social media management platform, stating that the

agreement offers data consolidation and negotiated pricing for all units. Sr. VP Gonzalez-Levy indicated that a university-wide social media policy has been drafted and is currently being vetted with the appropriate units. She pointed out that university communicators are participating in monthly training sessions.

Assistant Vice President for Marketing and Branding Eduardo Merille presented the overall media plan summary, highlighting the budget and percent media allocation for the tactics that make up the \$2.5M total marketing budget. He described the University's communications ecosystem. In terms of *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, he mentioned that FIU's average academic reputation rating is a 2.6. Mr. Merille commented that the University is striving to reach a reputation rating of 2.8 by the end of the year, adding that FIU's goal is to surpass a reputation rating of 3 as it continues to pursue top-50 ranking.

Mr. Merille indicated that since the Board's last meeting, nine (9) FIU face-to-face programs have been ranked top-50 by *U.S. News & World Report*. He mentioned top earned media highlights and remarked on increased earned media efforts that target academics and peers. He commented on a sponsored email with the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, indicating that the 26% open rate equated to approximately 4,000 Chronicle users. Mr. Merille pointed out that paid advertising in addition to events such as the COVID-19 Summit and the State of the World Conference that took place in February help to tell a holistic story. He remarked on the collaboration with the Office of Admissions to develop a one-hour college tour episode that would be available through video streaming services. He presented photos of FIU-branded spaces.

Mr. Merille highlighted sample key performance indicators (KPIs) as they pertained to the long, mid, and short-term tracking strategy. He commented on 160over90's academic peer study, noting that the largest and most meaningful difference in ratings of FIU's academic reputation is between those with any connection and those that indicate no connection with FIU and that the difference represents a full half-point in average rating. He illustrated media campaign metrics. In response to Committee Chair Sarnoff, Mr. Merille commented that to establish said connections, the bulk of the marketing budget is designated towards the academic peer campaign. Mr. Merille remarked on rankings that are being tracked, specifically the recently released *Times Higher Education* rankings and the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings to be released in September. In terms of next steps, he presented a timeline for the marketing plan and the brand tracker survey update.

In response to Trustee Natasha Lowell, Sr. VP Gonzalez-Levy indicated that a reputation rating of three (3) points or above is needed in order to be considered a top-50 institution, commenting that it is critical for the University to continue to build recognition through paid media advertisements, FIU stories, and participation in national and international conferences. Responding to Trustee Chanel T. Rowe, Sr. VP Gonzalez-Levy commented that, in response to a local or national event which has garnered media attention, media outlets are provided with a listing of FIU experts available for interviews to discuss said event. Trustee Rowe mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a shift towards virtual events and gatherings, adding that remote participation has allowed for larger national and international audiences at events and/or conferences that would have otherwise drawn largely local audiences. Sr. VP Gonzalez-Levy indicated that the next vaccine conference is scheduled as a hybrid, which will benefit from the in-person aspect while still offering

virtual participation. Trustee Donna J. Hrinak requested additional information regarding the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs' marketing campaign.

Committee Chair Sarnoff indicated that the 2021 Legislative Session is in progress, adding that the Legislature is in the middle of its budget conference, which began on the evening of April 16, 2021. He commented on the likelihood of recurring budget cuts to state universities, including FIU. He remarked that the Senate and House each proposed its own reduction amount and said reductions can increase or decrease as negotiations continue. Committee Chair Sarnoff mentioned that significant advocacy efforts are underway related to mitigating recurring cuts, Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO), and deferred maintenance.

4. New Business

No new business was raised.

5. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

With no other business, Committee Chair Marc D. Sarnoff adjourned the meeting of the Florida International University Board of Trustees External Relations Committee on Wednesday, April 21, 2021 at 12:09 p.m.