



FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

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

The Florida International University Board of Trustees' Strategic Planning Committee meeting was called to order by Committee Chair Roger Tovar at 10:17 am on Wednesday, September 9, 2020 via Zoom.

General Counsel Carlos B. Castillo conducted roll call of the Strategic Planning Committee members and verified a quorum. Present were Trustees Roger Tovar, *Chair*; Cesar L. Alvarez, *Vice Chair*; Leonard Board; Gene Prescott; Joerg Reinhold; and Alexandra Valdes.

Trustee Donna J. Hrinak was excused.

Board Chair Dean C. Colson, Trustees Jose J. Armas, Gerald C. Grant, Jr., Natasha Lowell, Claudia Puig, and Marc D. Sarnoff and University President Mark B. Rosenberg also were in attendance.

**2. Welcome and Introduction**

Committee Chair Tovar commented on Board Chair Colson's vision for the Board's Strategic Planning Committee, specifically, that it will be a Committee focused on FIU's goal of achieving recognition as a Top-50 public university in *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, concentrating on the Florida Board of Governors (BOG) performance-based funding metrics, in addition to the goals and objectives delineated in the University's strategic plan. Vice Chair Tovar indicated that the Committee also will serve as the venue for discussions with the administration on future items of a substantive nature.

Committee Chair Tovar mentioned that the founding of FIU began with Senator Ernest Graham, who presented the initial proposal to the Florida legislature in 1943, and that it was not until over 20 years later that FIU was founded in 1965. Committee Chair Tovar commented on the many accomplishments that the University has achieved since its opening in 1972, indicating that FIU is one of the largest U.S. universities by enrollment, has earned and retained its Carnegie Classification of Highest Research Activity, and has 18 programs ranked Top-50 by *U.S. News & World Report*. He remarked on student-athlete academic success, specifically, that men's soccer and women's swimming and diving led the league in highest term grade point average (GPA) for their respective sports. Committee Chair Tovar pointed out that FIU is a top performer nationally in terms of social mobility rankings and commended President Mark B. Rosenberg and the University's administration.

Committee Chair Tovar pointed out that the purpose of the recurring \$32M investment by the legislature is to provide funding support to the University in its pursuit of achieving recognition as a Top-50 public university, adding that effectively investing the allocation will be a priority for the Committee. He recognized the University's Governmental Relations team and Vice President Michelle L. Palacio and expressed his gratitude to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives Jose Oliva, and the Florida legislature. He commented that while the University continues to make strides towards achieving recognition as a Top-50 public university, FIU remains focused on its mission of serving its students and the diverse population of South Florida. He stated that expanding diversity and inclusion is an added priority for the Committee.

### **3. Informational and Discussion Items**

#### **3.1 Strategic Planning Update**

Provost and Executive Vice President Kenneth G. Furton provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the Academic Policy and Student Affairs Committee and that of the newly created Strategic Planning Committee. He reiterated the University's vision statement, "Florida International University will achieve exceptional student-centered learning and upward economic mobility, produce meaningful research and creative activities, and lead transformative innovations locally and globally, resulting in recognition as a Top-50 public university." He delineated the Next Horizon 2025 Strategic Plan pillars, namely, amplifying learner success and institutional affinity, accelerating preeminence and research and innovation impact, and assuring responsible stewardship.

#### **3.2 Rankings Update**

Provost Furton indicated that FIU had three (3) Top-50 rankings during the time that the Next Horizon 2025 Strategic Plan was approved, adding that the University now has five (5) Top-50 rankings. He stated that in *Washington Monthly's* 2020 National Universities Rankings, FIU moved up 25 spots to No. 18 among public universities and explained that while *Washington Monthly* has similar metrics to that of *U.S. News & World Report*, *Washington Monthly* also includes metrics relating to promoting social mobility, research, and public service. Provost Furton remarked that FIU climbed 17 spots from No. 75 to No. 58 among public universities in the nation in the *Times Higher Education* World University rankings. He pointed out that FIU is ranked No. 10 in Social Mobility, No. 30 Most Innovative, and No. 40 Best Online Programs by *U.S. News & World Report*. He highlighted University programs that are ranked top-50 by *U.S. News & World Report*, described preeminent programs and emerging preeminent programs in relation to the respective *U.S. News & World Report* rankings, and provided an overview of the 20 strategic plan goals and their respective alignment with BOG performance-based funding, preeminent research university funding, and *U.S. News & World Report* metrics. Provost Furton also referred to additional performance indicators that, while tracked by the BOG, are not measured by the aforementioned metrics.

Provost Furton remarked on the Next Horizon 2025 Strategic Plan Steering Committee, noting that 14 strategic execution teams are tasked with implementing a number of priorities and that Committee Chair Tovar will join Trustees Joerg Reinhold and Alexandra Valdes on the Steering Committee. Provost Furton commented on the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) March 2021 site visit, noting that as part of the University's reaffirmation process, SACSCOC reviewers will be evaluating FIU's institutional planning process.

In response to Trustee Leonard Boord, Committee Chair Tovar commented on ongoing discussions regarding opportunities where, with only minimum investment, significant gains can be achieved and that, moving forward, the Committee will hold workshops in order to engage in focused discussions relating to the strategic allocation of resources relative to BOG performance-based funding metrics and *U.S. News & World Report* rankings.

Provost Furton described *U.S. News & World Report* metrics and the related weighing indicators, and in terms of the University's performance, he indicated that 2021 estimates reflect improvement over the prior year in all but two areas. He indicated that the metric with the highest weighting indicator is the peer assessment score and commented on a targeted marketing and branding strategy.

In response to Committee Chair Tovar's inquiry regarding the \$15M appropriation in 2019, Provost Furton explained that investments are tracked and the impact of said investment to each metric is evaluated. Provost Furton commented that a listing of initiatives, impacts, and measurable outcomes will be provided to the Committee.

### **3.3 Possum Trot**

Provost Furton referred Trustees to the Board materials, which include the appraisal report, licensing agreement, and financial summary, for "Possum Trot", as nicknamed by its owner. He commented that the use of Possum Trot as a field site supports cutting-edge research and innovative education in a range of disciplines with a focus on tropical botany. He remarked that Possum Trot has an extremely valuable collection of hundreds of different species and thousands of plants, many of which are not present in other botanical collections. He described how the use of the gift aligns with the strategic priorities of the University, namely, nurturing a culture with values centered on effective teaching and enhanced learning in support of continuously improving student success, preparing graduates at all levels for seamless career integration, and fostering a campus culture where innovation thrives and contributes to real-world solutions for real-world issues, and in the process making a significant, positive impact on the Miami and Florida economies.

Provost Furton explained that the item is for discussion only and will be presented for approval at an upcoming meeting. He commented on the gift, noting that the real estate comprises 28.15 acres of land, improvements, natural forest and variety of trees and plants. He added that a life estate, in the name of the donor, is reserved for five (5) acres of the property, which contains a residential building, that the donor will continue to be the land steward for the duration of his life and employed by FIU, and that the portion reserved as the donor's life estate will be maintained by FIU. Provost Furton indicated that Possum Trot is adjacent to Monkey Jungle and presented an aerial view of the property. He explained that the land and structure appraised at \$2,575,000, that no significant issues were found as part of the title work, and that no pending liens or judgements have been identified. Provost Furton remarked that while pesticides were detected in the groundwater samples, further groundwater testing did not identify groundwater exceedances. He added that if the current usage does not change, no additional assessment and/or remediation will be required.

Provost Furton explained that while negative cash flows will be experienced in the first year, positive cash flows should follow in year 2 and beyond, noting that after the first year, the property will be maintained with no additional investment. Provost Furton pointed out that the property is permitted

to operate and manage organic fruit and vegetable farm planting operation for the production of plants, fruits, vegetables and other products. Provost Furton commented on license agreement key terms, namely, that the term is for five (5) years with one additional five-year renewal upon mutual agreement, that the licensee will carry farm liability insurance, that either party may terminate for any reason with 180 days' notice, and that FIU will continue to use the premises as a research site for agroecology, botany, or any other use. He described the Board approval process, including that the Board's Finance and Facilities Committee will review and recommend Full Board approval of the property gift and the delegation of authority to the University President or designee to negotiate and execute all agreements for the transfer of the gift. He added that following Full Board approval, the University will submit the request to the Board of Governors (BOG) for approval to operate the Possum Trot property as a Special Purpose Center and that upon securing BOG approval, the University may proceed to accept the Possum Trot property gift from Robert J. Barnum, and transfer of title.

Committee Chair Tovar commented on fencing and that, upon the transfer of title, the property's appearance should be an appropriate representation of FIU.

#### **4. New Business**

No new business was raised.

#### **5. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment**

With no other business, Committee Chair Roger Tovar adjourned the meeting of the Florida International University Board of Trustees Strategic Planning Committee on Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at 11:07 a.m.