

MINUTES  
STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

October 30, 2024

*Video or audio archives of the meetings of the Board of Governors and its committees are accessible at:*

<https://thefloridachannel.org/videos/10-30-24-florida-board-of-governors-meeting-part-1-2/>

1. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Strategic Planning Committee Chair Ken Jones convened the meeting at 12:34 p.m. on October 30, 2024, with the following Governors present: Governors Jones, Oliva, Brinkman, Diaz, Frost, Good, and Phalin. A quorum was established.

2. Minutes of Committee Meeting

Chair Jones requested a motion to approve the Strategic Planning Committee meeting minutes from September 18, 2024. Governor Oliva moved to approve, Governor Diaz seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

3. Accreditation Update

Chair Jones recognized Dr. Moez Limayem, President of the University of North Florida (UNF), and Dr. Alexander Cartwright, President of the University of Central Florida (UCF), to provide updates on accreditation.

President Limayem reported that on September 10, 2024, he met with the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education to discuss UNF's primary accreditor transition. President Limayem stated that UNF received a letter from the U.S. Department of Education asking for further clarification on the accreditation transition. He reported that UNF responded to all requests for clarification on October 29, 2024.

Governor Diaz asked President Limayem about the specific clarifications the U.S. Department of Education requested.

President Limayem responded that the U.S. Department of Education requested evidence of any research and independent analysis conducted to determine which agency was best positioned to assist the university in reaching its accreditation goals. Additionally, UNF was asked to provide minutes from all Board of Trustee meetings and include documentation of all communication between UNF and the Board of Governors involving changes in UNF's accreditation.

Governor Diaz asked Chancellor Rodrigues if stipulations were included that required UNF to provide clarifications.

Chancellor Rodrigues responded that no language states what specific data the U.S. Department of Education must review within this process. He noted that the UCF was also tasked with providing additional data.

Governor Levine expressed concern about the amount of additional information that has been requested by the U.S. Department of Education relating to an institution's decision to transition to another accreditor. Governor Levine commented that the Board should issue a statement of support for UNF and encourage the U.S. Department of Education not to interfere with the approved transition process of an institution.

President Limayem commented that UNF had made it clear from the beginning that changing accreditors was very important for achieving UNF's mission and strategic goals.

Chair Jones recognized President Cartwright and asked for an update on UCF's accreditation process.

President Cartwright stated that UCF has submitted all the documentation for step two of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) application process. He noted that UCF should receive feedback in approximately four to six weeks following the completion of a peer review process conducted by HLC. President Cartwright added that upon receiving the feedback from HLC, UCF will commence with step three and host an on-campus visit from HLC in late spring 2025. He also mentioned that UCF is preparing to complete the HLC side of the process by late fall 2025. The next step would be for UCF to meet with the U.S. Department of Education to make the final accreditation changes in the financial aid system. President Cartwright added that UCF must still submit all the required materials for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in their reaffirmation process.

Chair Jones remarked on the difficulties that institutions experience while undertaking the task of changing accreditors. He encouraged institutions to reach out to one another to gain insight into the challenges of the transition process. Chair Jones thanked the institutions for their hard work and continued effort to work through the process.

Governor Levine asked about the U.S. Department of Education's reasoning for their increased involvement in the accreditation process. He commented that once an institution has decided to change accreditors, the U.S. Department of Education should respect the decision. Governor Levine stated that an institution should be able to decide about accreditation based on what the institution feels is best for its student population.

#### 4. Strategic Plan Update

Chair Jones recognized Ms. Emily Sikes, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, to provide an update on the 2030 Strategic Plan.

Ms. Sikes reported that the Board, the Steering Committee, and university leadership have made significant progress since the May 2024 Board meeting.

Ms. Sikes commented on receiving questions regarding strategic plans in other states from members and university partners. She provided insight into the strategic areas of the four states that are ranked directly behind Florida's State University System (SUS) for higher education. The states included were Wyoming, Washington, Colorado, and Utah. Although each state is governed differently, common strategic areas found within the strategic plans of the aforementioned states included "Fiscal Health & Operations," "Student Success," "Access," "Research & Economic Development," and "Service," "Faculty," and "Return on Investment." Ms. Sikes also included North Carolina, as she received specific questions about the state's strategic plan. In her presentation, Ms. Sikes cited that North Carolina included all six of the previous strategic areas within their strategic plan. She noted that the proposed strategic areas included in Florida's strategic plan closely align with those included by the states mentioned in the presentation.

Ms. Sikes presented six proposed strategic areas for the State University System. The proposed strategic areas are One SUS, Operational Excellence, Elevating Student Success, World-Class Talent, Capitalizing on Areas of Expertise, and Innovative Research and Economic Development.

Ms. Sikes explained that the first strategic area of the strategic plan highlights the need for the State University System to be recognized as one system that encompasses twelve distinct universities. She emphasized the potential positive impact of this idea on the state of Florida regarding economic development and student success. Ms. Sikes also mentioned that Florida was the only state that outlined this idea in its strategic plan and that Florida could establish the foundation for this strategic area.

Ms. Sikes stated that the objective of this strategic area is to observe the economic impact of the State University System and the individual universities. Ms. Sikes emphasized the importance of collaboratively identifying and reviewing different return-on-investment metrics with university representatives to generate ideas for the System.

Ms. Sikes presented that the second strategic area of the plan was the area of operational excellence. She commented that this area is not included in the current strategic plan but was included in most of the universities' strategic plans. Ms. Sikes emphasized the importance of the System's ability to demonstrate to the legislature, the Governor, and others how efficiently and effectively the System utilizes state resources.

Ms. Sikes continued by reporting initiatives within the second strategic area, including maintaining quality financial ratings and principles, establishing a task force to identify

best practices for reducing costs and optimizing funds, and looking at innovative approaches to identify efficiencies and prioritize resources.

Chair Jones stated that universities should always think about utilizing resources to ensure these resources are being employed to the fullest capacity.

Board Chair Lamb commented that there is an element of financial health in the System that should be observed and protected. He emphasized the need to keep moving forward and avoid complacency around having a sound, financially healthy System through good and bad times.

Ms. Sikes highlighted key initiatives within the third strategic area of the strategic plan surrounding student success. She mentioned that this area would be supported by many of the existing accountability plan metrics, such as the four-year graduation rate and post-graduation outcomes. She touched on the potential of Florida possessing the best four-year graduation rate in the nation by identifying the most efficient path for students to finish their degree, addressing student retention, elevating the System's 2+2 commitment, and improving student success in the workforce.

Chair Jones commented on the Board's focus regarding workforce alignment, emphasizing the importance of the university presidents' partnership with community leaders to ensure students are provided with internship and employment opportunities. He encouraged the universities to communicate with Ms. Sikes and the Board to provide feedback and ask questions relating to internship opportunities facilitated by their institution.

Ms. Sikes mentioned the fourth strategic area of the strategic plan, emphasizing the need for each institution to capitalize on its areas of expertise in order to receive recognition in the top quartile.

Ms. Sikes presented the fifth strategic area of the strategic plan by addressing the Board's goal of recruiting and retaining top-level faculty and staff to propel Florida's universities to the next echelon. She also commented on the Board's goal of ensuring that the system is the top producer of world-class talent for Florida, ensuring that university programs align with Florida's workforce needs.

Chair Jones emphasized the need to become more engaged with the private business sector and measure student opportunities at graduation, as well as when they have been active workforce members for five years.

Governor Phalin stated that there is a need to recognize and understand that each university has a unique mission, and faculty excellence will be measured differently at each institution. She noted that while it is understood that each university is required to meet specific requirements, faculty members want to ensure that a level of flexibility exists to allow each institution to demonstrate excellence in a way that aligns with its institutional mission.

Board Chair Lamb expressed his desire to ensure that the best companies worldwide have an insatiable appetite for recruiting Florida's top talent. He highlighted that JPMorgan Chase currently employs approximately 650 alumni from the University of Florida and approximately 400 alumni from Florida International University. Board Chair Lamb emphasized that the System must use this strategic plan focus area to provide these major companies with opportunities to engage with students and university leadership. He stated that ensuring Florida students are placed in positions to gain employment with the top companies should be a top priority of the Board and the universities. Board Chair Lamb commented that while Florida has shown growth in this area, there are still opportunities to improve and move into being an elite force in this category.

Ms. Sikes stated that the sixth area of the strategic plan relates to innovative research and economic development. She emphasized the need to review the return on investment of university research and develop research partnerships with industry leaders in Florida.

Ms. Sikes reported that many of the metrics from the current accountability plan will be included in the new plan. She mentioned that a lot of time and effort has been spent on the strategic plan process and requested permission to begin working with university representatives over the next 30 days to identify metrics and goals for the next meeting in December.

Chair Jones commented that he agreed with Ms. Sikes' proposal and would look forward to hearing the report at the December meeting.

## 5. Florida International University 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

Chair Jones recognized Dr. Kenneth Jessell, President of Florida International University (FIU), to provide an update on FIU's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.

President Jessell presented that FIU titled its strategic plan Experience Impact 2030 to recognize the university's impact on its students, the state of Florida, the nation, and global communities. He emphasized that the university's strategic plan will lay the foundation for the institution's centennial in 2072.

President Jessell reported that FIU's strategic planning process has received consistent, broad-based engagement and input from students, university faculty and staff, and stakeholders since the plan's inception in 2023. He noted that the faculty senate approved the strategic plan on September 10, 2024, and the Board of Trustees approved it on September 12, 2024.

President Jessell emphasized FIU's commitment to growing its educational and economic impact, becoming a destination university and a model for 21st-century public higher education. He commented that the university's presence in Miami will provide substantial opportunities for institutional growth in the years ahead.

President Jessell stated that FIU's strategic plan will fully align with the State University System's strategic plan and capitalize on its existing areas of expertise. He noted that the university selected environment and environmental resilience, health, and technology and innovation as its three strategic focus areas. President Jessell reaffirmed the university's commitment to encourage inter-institutional collaboration, develop industry-focused partnerships, and build upon existing strengths to improve the well-being of its university population.

President Jessell stated that the plan would allow the university to use health economics and environmental finance to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative health and environmental solutions while leveraging Miami's growth as a hub for the technological industry. He also highlighted the institution's commitment to investing in top-level faculty and staff and expanding strategic alliances with industry agencies and educational institutions to enhance teaching and research programs within its areas of strength and focus.

Chair Jones requested a motion to approve FIU's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. Governor Oliva moved to approve, Governor Diaz seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

#### 6. 2024-25 Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Fund Proposals

Chair Jones recognized Ms. Emily Sikes to provide an overview of the second round of Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) fund proposals.

Ms. Sikes stated that four universities submitted LINE funding proposals for the second round of proposals. Florida Atlantic University (FAU) and Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU) were submitting proposals for the first time due to their ability to achieve passage rates that met the established eligibility requirements. Ms. Sikes added that FIU and Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) submitted secondary proposals for the second round. She noted that both universities had received approval for their full proposals in the first round. Ms. Sikes recommended prorating the FIU and FGCU requests to 80 percent of their ask and fully funding the proposals for FAU and FAMU.

Chair Jones requested a motion to approve the second round of LINE fund proposals. Governor Frost moved to approve, Governor Diaz seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

#### 7. Financial Aid Update

Chair Jones recognized Mr. Troy Miller, Chief Data Officer, to provide an update on financial aid.

Mr. Miller explained that significant changes were made by the federal government that impacted students and institutions within the State University System. Mr. Miller noted that the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) had been shortened for students and that the access to Federal Pell Grants had been expanded. He commented that the rollout of the new FAFSA had experienced issues.

Mr. Miller noted that the System had an increase of 7,000 more Pell grant recipients in fall 2024 from fall 2023. He commented that the System will likely see an increase in student eligibility for Pell Grants as the changes in accessibility begin to take effect.

#### 8. Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Board Chair Lamb recognized Ms. Rhea Law, President of the University of South Florida (USF), and Mr. Richard Corcoran, President of New College of Florida (NCF), to provide an update on institutional collaboration.

President Law commented that USF and NCF have a long-standing collaboration and partnership history. President Law highlighted that the two institutions currently share library access, a unified police department, and fitness facilities. She continued by mentioning that USF has assisted NCF by providing housing to students, and NCF has made lab space available to USF students following the recent hurricanes.

President Corcoran emphasized that working as a cohesive State University System will allow the universities to provide improved service and create greater outcomes for students, ultimately saving the taxpayers tens of millions of dollars.

Hearing no further business, Chair Jones adjourned the meeting at 1:31 p.m.

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Ken Jones, Chair

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Tyler Aldinger,  
Assistant Director, ASA