



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD MEETING ■ SEPTEMBER 17, 2025, 6:30 PM ■ MCCARTHY CENTER, ALUMNI ROOM & REMOTE

MINUTES

Chair Anthony Hubbard called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call Attendance

Cheri Comeau– present; Kristen Daly – present; Mariel Freve – present* ; Dennis Giombetti – present; Anthony Hubbard – present; Bonnie Mitchell – present; Susan Puryear– present*; Claire Ramsbottom – present*; Antonia Soares Thompson – present; Luke Yubeta – present
Lino Covarrubias was absent from the meeting.

1. Chair's Report

A. Consent agenda, page 3

- BOT Meeting Minutes: May 6, 2025, pp. 4 – 1
- BOT Retreat Minutes: May 28, 2025, pp. 11 – 12
- Personnel Actions, pp. 13 – 18
- Community Sponsorships, p. 19

A motion to approve the consent agenda was moved by Dennis Giombetti, Antonia Soares Thompson seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau– aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Mariel Freve – aye; Dennis Giombetti – aye; Anthony Hubbard – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Susan Puryear – aye; Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Antonia Soares Thompson – aye; Luke Yubeta – aye
—Motion approved

B. Public Comment

Chair Hubbard noted that a faculty member and the MSCA union have filed the required actions to address their concerns regarding this matter as defined in the controlling collective bargaining agreement. As these proceedings are underway, the Board will not comment at this time.

* Indicates remote attendance.

Dr. Benjamin Alberti, Chapter President of the MSCA, addressed the Board in support of Dr. Mehrdad (Mike) Nourai.

C. Recommendation of Denial of Tenure and Promotion

A motion to approve the recommendation of President Niemi for the denial of tenure and promotion for Dr. Mehrdad (Mike) Nourai was moved by Antonia Soares Thompson, Dennis Giombetti seconded the motion.

Following a brief discussion describing the process for promotion and tenure, Chair Hubbard called the question for a vote.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau – abstain; Kristen Daly – abstain; Mariel Freve – abstain; Dennis Giombetti – abstain; Anthony Hubbard – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – abstain; Susan Puryear – aye; Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Antonia Soares Thompson – abstain; Luke Yubeta – abstain

Counsel Ann McDonald announced the vote count and indicated that the motion had not passed.

Trustee Dennis Giombetti challenged the outcome, noting that quorum has been met and with three votes, that it was his understanding that the motion had prevailed as those abstaining were not counted as votes against the motion.

Counsel McDonald agreed to review the matter in consultation with the Board's by-laws and inform the trustees of the final determination.[†]

D. Updates

Chair Hubbard presented the following information:

- Introduction of New Student Trustee for AY 2025 – 2026: Luke Yubeta
 - Luke is a senior, majoring in Finance, with a minor in Media, Culture, and Society, and in Economics. He is a student athlete from Arizona.
- Board of Trustees Winter Retreat
 - Chair Hubbard informed trustees that a winter retreat will be scheduled. Polling will take place to determine a date within the first two weeks of December.

E. Presidential Review Committee

Chair Hubbard summarized the work that he, along with Trustees Comeau and Puryear completed over the summer months on the Presidential review. The report was completed and is being brought forth to the Board for a vote to approve its submission to the DHE.

A motion to approve the recommendation of the Board of Trustees Presidential Review Committee for the submission of the evaluation of President Nancy Niemi to Commissioner Noe Ortega of the Department of Higher Education with the accompanying compensation recommendations was moved by Antonia Soares Thompson, Mariel Freve seconded the motion.

[†] See the attached opinion dated September 18, 2025.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Mariel Freve – aye; Dennis Giombetti – aye; Anthony Hubbard – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Susan Puryear – aye; Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Antonia Soares Thompson – aye; Luke Yubeta – aye
—Motion approved

2. President's Report

President Nancy Niemi reported the following:

A. Updates

- Transitions: In October with Ann McDonald's retirement, Akiko Takamori will be taking on the role of Secretary to the Board of Trustees.
- Start of the Academic Year: Engaged and energized start to the new year included new clubs and a job fair; "Week of Wow"; FSU Black and Gold Beginnings; athletics women's cross country and a football game with Anna Maria College were highlighted.
- Student services: Focused administrative departments have improved communications to better serve students.
- Enrollment and persistence: Overall numbers are stable; graduate degree programs are up 12%.
- Resident halls are at 91% capacity.

B. Summer Delegation

- No actions to report to the Board.

C. Student-in-the- Spotlight: Tharushi Fernando

President Niemi introduced Professor Laura Lamontagne who introduced FSU student Tharushi Fernando.

Tharushi Fernando, an international student from Italy, enrolled at FSU in Spring 2024 and is pursuing majors in Finance and Economics. Although she initially questioned her decision to study abroad, she soon found FSU to be a supportive community that would help her succeed both academically and professionally.

She reported that internship opportunities with the College of Business led to a position with the City of Framingham's Finance Department, where she currently works in the Finance, Accounting, and Treasury divisions. She expressed appreciation for the academic preparation and practical experience she has received at FSU, which she believes will support her career goal of becoming a financial analyst in the MetroWest or Boston area.

Ms. Fernando concluded by thanking President Niemi for her leadership, and the faculty for their support throughout her studies at FSU.

D. Reports

Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement Report, pp. 24 – 26

Vice President of the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, Community Engagement, Jeffrey Coleman, highlighted the following from his report:

- 2024-2025 annual report highlights initiatives implemented in alignment with the University's strategic plan.

- Resources provided to the University community for strategies to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive campus environment.
- Guides and tools focusing on equity and diverse recruitment and hiring practices.
- Professional development opportunities for faculty and staff
- FSU received national recognition with 2025 Excellence and Distinction Award for work in equity and inclusion.

Division of University Advancement

Vice President of Development and Alumni Relations, Eric Gustafson, reported on the recently completed Comprehensive Fundraising Campaign.

- Campaign history: the campaign launched on July 1, 2017; the campaign finished ahead of schedule with a grand total of \$39,052,879.
- Totals by campaign priorities were reviewed. Priorities included: Facilities, Equipment and Technology, Access and Affordability, Unrestricted Support, Centers and Institutes, Empowering Students Beyond the Classroom, and Strengthening Academic Success.
- Campaign highlights included: the establishment of 64 new permanently endowed funds through the FSU Foundation; the creation of the Mancuso Scholars Program and the Mancuso Humanities Workforce Preparation Center; significant gifts for the Danforth, including the naming of four galleries and the \$4.6M bequest from Susan Litowitz.
- Preparations for the next campaign: the division is currently in the final stages of an RFP process to hire a consultant to complete both a readiness study and a feasibility study for the next campaign; the campaign will begin July 1, 2025; work is already underway, with two significant gifts already secured, including the \$2M gift from Thomas and Joan Eames.

A motion to rename Hemenway Laboratories to Professor Thomas and Joan Eames Laboratories in accordance with the Board of Higher Education's procedures and as authorized under the Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 15A, section 9(m) was moved by Dennis Giombetti, Kristen Daly seconded the motion.

A brief conversation regarding the Hemenway buildings, as well as the naming of building and the options for removal based on reputational concerns was held.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Mariel Freve – aye; Dennis Giombetti – aye; Anthony Hubbard – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Susan Puryear – aye; Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Antonia Soares Thompson – aye; Luke Yubeta – aye
—Motion approved

3. Student Trustee's Report

Trustee Luke Yubeta reintroduced himself and reported on the following:

A. Updates

- "RamLink" has been updated to better help students navigate campus events and provides updates on scheduled SGA meetings and forthcoming clubs and career

fairs. The platform is also a helpful tool for students to schedule events more efficiently.

- SGA elections: campaign to encourage student engagement was very successful.
- Administrator's Forum will be scheduled in mid-October.

4. Administration, Finance, and Technology Committee

A. Committee Report

Trustee Freve asked Vice President of Finance, Technology, and Administration, Robert Totino to provide information regarding the budget for the next fiscal year.

Robert Totino provided the following information:

- Campus Master Plan (CMP) Update, p. 32
 - The last Campus Master Plan was performed in 2007, with updates in 2012 and 2014; steering committee was formed December 2024
 - Selection of Studio ENEE as House Doctor/Architect was made in February 2025
 - Project phases were reviewed
 - October 22, 2025, meeting has been scheduled to follow a Studio ENEE presentation.
 - The Finance Committee will review the CMP at the November 4, 2025, meeting to then make the recommendation to the Board for approval of the plan to be submitted to the BHE and DCAMM.
 - Clarification was made that the Board would be voting on the plan, not the funding of the plan.
- Update: FY'26 Budget Discussion, p. 33
 - Fall enrollment is on track with the FY'26 budget assumptions
 - Budget aggregated to \$44.67M
 - General appropriation at \$42.09M
 - Formula funding: covered by Fair Share Act is \$21.72M shared between all 9 State Universities
 - MSCA Collective Bargaining contract is currently in negotiation
 - State appropriations "Other Line-Items" includes funding for need-based financial aid which was reduced by about \$800K throughout multiple programs.
 - The Mental Health Supports Program was also affected by cuts in funding.
 - The cuts to funding will be backfilled with the use of SUCCESS funds.
 - Additional state funding for FSU: SUCCESS Program (\$1.3M), and Endowment Incentive Program (\$555K); Persistence and Basic Needs Program to include \$0.5M for community colleges and state university segments.

Conversation was held regarding the types of services provided under the Persistence and Basic Needs program which include food and housing insecurity supports, by way of a food and amenity pantry and scholarships for books and other needs for student success.

- Additional state funding for higher education capital projects will be determined by DCAMM future allocations: \$64M
- Earmarked state appropriation funds for specific capital project: FSU Larnard and Lindsley Residence Halls \$6.6M.

A motion for the delegation of authority to Finance and Compliance, Audit, and Risk Committees for the authority to review and approve the FY2025 Independent Audit of Financial Statements in order to meet Office of the State Comptroller's deadline of October 31, 2025, for submittal was moved by Antonia Soares Thompson, Anthony Hubbard seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Mariel Freve – aye; Dennis Giombetti – aye; Anthony Hubbard – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Susan Puryear – aye; Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Antonia Soares Thompson – aye; Luke Yubeta – aye
—Motion approved

Chair Hubbard noted that the Student Experience and Academic Affairs and Enrollment Committees would not be reporting given changes to the committees' meeting schedules.

5. Compliance, Audit, and Risk (CAR) Committee

A. Committee Report

Trustee Bonnie Mitchell provided the following update:

- Internal Audit and Risk Assessment

Updates from David Sargeant regarding a facilities safety training review:

- The finding reported that there were issues regarding training for the use of equipment
- A new policy and clearer procedures are being put in place to ensure staff are properly trained before using equipment.
- The annual risk assessment survey will be distributed in November, and results will be presented and reviewed during the January 2026 meeting.

- Information Security Updates

Corey Hobbs reported on information security; the updates were positive.

- The PCI audit was clean, and the GLBA review was generally strong with a few improvements already underway.
- The penetration testing flagged few issues, which were addressed right away.
- The University's cybersecurity insurance was also renewed for the coming year with the same coverage at a lower cost.
- Ongoing initiatives included the following:
 - New vendors are now going through formal risk assessments
 - Cybersecurity training for everyone—including trustees—will roll out in October.
 - Projects are underway to improve access management, and processes to clean up and classify institutional data.

B. Cedrone Center Closing – NECHE Teach Out Progress Report

Counsel McDonald reported on NECHE's June correspondence approving FSU's revised teach-out plan for IEP, Inc., partner programs at 10 international locations, while issuing Notices of Concern regarding Standards 4 and 9. A detailed report responding to these concerns is due in mid-October. Chair Hubbard and President Niemi, and the team

charged with producing this report, met with the NECHE President on September 15. Further updates will be provided on the outcome following the submission of the report and further response from NECHE.

6. New Business

Chair Hubbard recognized and thanked Ann McDonald for her many years of service, support, and counsel to the Board. Trustees offered personal remarks and extended best wishes for her retirement.

7. Adjourn Open Meeting

A motion to adjourn the public meeting was moved by Antonia Soares Thompson, Kristen Daly seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Cherie Comeau – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Mariel Freve – aye; Dennis Giombetti – aye; Anthony Hubbard – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye; Susan Puryear – aye; Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Antonia Soares Thompson – aye; Luke Yubeta – aye
—Motion approved

The meeting ended at 8:12 p.m.