



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

BOARD MEETING ■ MAY 6, 2026, 6:30 PM ■ McCarthy Center, Alumni Room & REMOTE

DRAFT – MINUTES

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

Roll Call In-Person Attendance: Anthony Hubbard – present; Claire Ramsbottom – present; Dennis Giombetti – present; Luke Yubeta – present
Antonia Soares Thompson – absent at roll call and joined the meeting at 6:41 PM

Roll Call Remote Attendance: Cheri Comeau – present; Lino Covarrubias – present; Kristen Daly – present; Bonnie Mitchell – present; Mariel Freve – present
Susan Puryear was not present

I. Chair's Report

A. Consent agenda

- Approval of March 25, 2026, BOT Meeting Minutes; May 6, 2026, Personnel Actions; May 6, 2026, Community Sponsorships

A motion to approve the consent agenda was moved by Trustee Dennis Giombetti, and Trustee Claire Ramsbottom seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Anthony Hubbard – aye; Claire Ramsbottom – aye; Dennis Giombetti – aye; Luke Yubeta – aye; Cheri Comeau – aye; Lino Covarrubias – aye; Kristen Daly – aye; Mariel Freve – aye; Bonnie Mitchell – aye
Antonia Soares Thompson was not present at the time of the vote.
— Motion approved

B. BOT Retreat Reminder

Chair Hubbard reminded trustees that the annual Board Retreat will be held at the Warren Conference Center and Inn on Monday, June 1, 2026.

C. Executive Committee

1. Committee Report

Chair Hubbard summarized discussions the committee held regarding the advocacy for the preservation of the Pell Grant. He shared the following information:

- Of the 658 students receiving financial aid offers, 50% are Pell Grant eligible.
- The Pell Grant has not kept up with the rising cost of higher education.
- There is uncertainty surrounding future federal funding levels

Conversation ensued in response to questions raised about future funding and whether other state universities are advocating for the continued funding of Pell Grant. Trustees were informed of the following:

- There is active participation in statewide and national advocacy groups and coordination with both public and private higher education organizations;
- Advocacy efforts will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Board of Trustees;
- The Chair and Vice Chair plan to sign a letter addressed to the congressional delegation to advocate on behalf of the Board in support of the Pell Grant.

II. President's Report

President Niemi reported a strong sense of momentum and engagement on campus as the academic year is drawing to a close. She invited Jeffrey Coleman to continue with his report.

A. Updates

1. Reports

a. Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement Report

Jeffrey Coleman, Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion, Community Engagement, reported the following:

- Higher education is navigating a shifting federal landscape impacting DEI initiatives
- The University remains committed to its strategic goals focused on inclusive excellence
- Key outcomes for students participating in Center for Inclusive Excellence (CIE) programming:
 - 94% retention rate among students engaged in inclusion programming
 - 86% reported increased sense of belonging
 - 89% reported improved cultural competency
- CIE is collaborating with Center for Excellence in Learning, Teaching, Scholarship, and Service (CELTSS) for professional development opportunities for faculty.

In conversations that followed, trustees inquired about external support and collaboration, the impact of the political climate on applicants, and the number of students who participated in programs offered. Responses included the following:

- Jeffrey Coleman informed trustees that he finds support and resources by way of the National Association of Chief Diversity Officers in Higher Education.
- There has been a continued increase in student diversity, including students of color
 - There seems to have been no negative impact observed from national DEI-related policy changes

- Approximately 500–600 students participated in programming.
- b. University Advancement Report
- Eric Gustafson, Vice President of University Advancement provided the following updates:
- Fundraising
 - Year-to-date fundraising has surpassed \$6M, exceeding prior report figures.
 - May and June are peak months for giving; strong momentum expected through fiscal year-end (June 30).
 - Laboratory Dedication and College of STEM Events
 - Successful dedication of the Professor Thomas and Joan Eames Laboratories and second annual *Brilliance in Bloom* event, showcasing student and faculty in the College of STEM.
 - Appreciation was extended to Trustee participation.
 - Summer Engagement Opportunities
 - A full schedule of summer events is shared in the report included in the Board of Trustees meeting book.
 - Grants and Sponsored Programs Assessment
 - A joint initiative has been launched with the Provost's Office to assess Advancement and the Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs.
 - Challenges have been significant due to changes in the federal grants landscape (reduced opportunities, altered requirements) and increased competition within private foundation funding.
 - A consultant has been enlisted to review and assist with a campus-wide survey which will lead to focus groups and interviews during the summer months.
 - The final report is expected by the end of the summer with results to be presented to the Board at the September BOT meeting.
- c. Foundation and Alumni Board Update
- Michael Gatin, chair of the Foundation and Alumni Board, reported the following:
- Annual financial contributions total \$1.17M:
 - \$780K in scholarships and financial aid
 - \$108K in paid internships
 - \$50K in emergency student support
 - \$35K in mini-grants
 - Recognition of evolving student financial needs, and shift in strategic direction
 - Expanding financial aid beyond tuition support to include:
 - Living expenses
 - Income opportunities (internships)

B. Commencement Speaker: Sheena Collier

President Niemi introduced the motion, informing trustees of the customary offering of the honorary degree to the commencement speaker.

A motion to approve the awarding of the honorary degree was moved by Trustee Antonia Soares Thompson, and Trustee Bonnie Mitchell seconded the motion.

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

C. Student-in-the-Spotlight: Bianca Furtado

President Niemi introduced Dr. Jen Lin, Professor of Psychology. Dr. Lin introduced Bianca Furtado, a Psychology major pursuing a career in clinical psychology, with a goal of supporting mental health in minoritized communities.

Bianca Furtado highlighted her academic experience and career focus. Bianca is a Research Assistant in the Emotion and Memory Lab, and serves as an intern at Call2Talk, supporting community mental health services.

Bianca is also president, Psychology Club, a former Executive Board member, and an officer in Psi Chi (International Honor Society in Psychology). She organized mental health awareness events, workshops, and student engagement activities.

As a first-generation student from the City of Framingham, Bianca intentionally embraced campus life and involvement to build confidence. With faculty mentorship and involvement in campus life, she transformed early challenges into academic success.

Bianca concluded by encouraging her student peers to “say yes” to opportunities, take risks, and support one another’s growth.

III. Student Trustee’s Report

Trustee Luke Yubeta reported on the following:

A. Updates

1. Administrator’s Forum was a success
 - Strong student participation
 - Productive dialogue between students and administration
 - Positive feedback on transparency and responsiveness of University administrators
2. Student Government Association (SGA) Election Results
 - Election of seven senators and new members of the E-Board:
 - Publicist, Cierra Rosado; Diversity and Inclusion Officer Merlin Clive; Events Coordinator, Kaitlyn Eller; Treasurer, Jobe Murphy; Secretary; Kimberly Martinez Salvatierra; Vice President, Nathan Piette; President Shubham Valand
 - Introduction of the Student Trustee-elect: Jamie Kuenzel
 - Jamie Kuenzel is currently a junior at FSU, double majoring in Spanish and Political Science.

- Jamie shared her enthusiasm for her new role as student trustee and expressed eagerness to work alongside fellow trustees.

In conclusion, Trustee Yubeta thanked the trustees and University administrators for the opportunity to serve on the board and said he is proud to be part of the FSU community for life.

IV. Administration, Finance, and Technology Committee

Trustee Mariel Freve began by informing trustees that there will be a special extended Committee meeting on May 19 and encouraged all trustees to participate. She added that the meeting would provide further information and allow for additional time to engage in a more detailed conversation.

Trustee Freve invited Robert (Bob) Totino, Chief Financial Officer and Vice President, Administration, Finance, and Technology, to continue the presentation.

A. Committee Report

Bob Totino highlighted the following information:

1. FY26 Budget Update College Operations Trust Fund Budget, p 26
 - The College Operations Trust Fund, representing approximately 70% of the University's budget, remains on track, maintaining the approved \$650K deficit.
 - The remaining 14 trust funds are projected to generate a combined \$650K surplus.
 - Overall, the University is expected to reach a break-even position by fiscal year-end (June 30).
 - State Financial Context
 - Tax collections exceed projections, reducing risk of cuts to state funding.
2. FY27 Budget – Preliminary, p 27
 - Initial projected deficit: \$2.6M reduced to \$1.75M through revenue adjustments and cost controls.
 - Ongoing efforts to close the deficit gap while preserving the student experience.
 - Highlighted proposed \$2.89M capital investment, partially funded from reserves.
 - Campus master plan initiatives and deferred maintenance.
 - The State appropriations of \$46M and \$20M in benefits, approximately \$66M total state support, or about 50% of the budget.
 - Senate proposal includes a \$700K increase to the budget.
 - Budget remains fluid pending legislative and gubernatorial action.

An inquiry was made regarding whether reserves were used in the previous year.

Bob Totino informed trustees that reserves were not used and that the last time they were used was five years ago when \$1M in reserves were used to support enrollment and retention efforts.

Trustees engaged in additional conversation which included concerns about the timing of the board meetings, as they do not align with budget finalization:

- A suggestion was made to revisit the bylaws and meeting schedule.

Additional conversation led to the recommendation to consider earlier strategic discussions:

- Focus on budget narrative and priorities, allowing the numbers to follow strategy.
- Increase year-round financial oversight.

A motion to approve the FY27 Trust Fund Budgets and Associated Fees and Delegation to the Finance Committee for the approval of any adjustment to the College Operations Trust Fund, all other Trust Funds, and its associated student fee schedule was moved by Trustee Anthony Hubbard, and Trustee Dennis Giombetti seconded the motion.

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

V. Governance Committee

Trustee Antonia Soares Thompson reported the following:

A. Committee Report

The Governance Committee reviewed and suggested changes to the BOT Bylaws. Key updates included:

- Clarification to reporting structure for Human Resources and Public Safety
- Refined language for quorum

In accordance with Article IV, section 2, of the bylaws, the amendments were circulated for review fifteen days prior to the full BOT meeting.

Trustees returned to previously held conversations regarding the Board of Trustees meeting schedule, as outlined in Article II, section 1 of the Bylaws. Clarification was made that the concerns were not brought up when the Governance Committee met to review the bylaws.

- Trustee Dennis Giombetti requested that the Board defer the item to the Governance Committee to address the issue.

A motion to approve the amendments to the Board of Trustees Bylaws was moved by Trustee Claire Ramsbottom and Trustee Dennis Giombetti seconded the motion.

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

VI. Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management Committee

Trustee Claire Ramsbottom highlighted the following:

A. Committee Report

- Reviewed outcomes of prior investment of \$1M from reserves in enrollment and marketing efforts: the investment contributed to the improvement of both enrollment and retention.

- The committee addressed the need for continued adaptation to the rapidly changing recruitment and marketing trends.

B. Enrollment Update

Iris Godes, Vice President of Enrollment reported the following:

- As of early May (post “Decision Day”):
 - Deposits increased 9–10% year-over-year
 - Approximately 677 deposited students
 - Enrollment is currently at 75% of target, compared to a typical 66% at this stage
- Enrollment goal: approximately 790 new students
- Student demographics and trends:
 - First-generation students: +6%; Financial aid recipients: +18%; Pell-eligible students: +4%; Massachusetts residents: +7%
 - STEM programs: +30% growth, driven largely by pre-health and science pathways
- Enhanced recruitment strategies:
 - Personalized communications tied to applicant stage
 - Assigned admissions counselors for each prospective student

VII. Student Experience Committee

Trustee Cherie Comeau reported that the committee focused on Career Development initiatives. She reviewed the following information:

A. Committee Report

- An overview of Career Development efforts was provided. The initiatives include individual counseling, workshops and programming, and employer engagement opportunities.
- Strategic goal: to ensure that every student participates in at least one experiential learning opportunity before graduation.
- Over \$200K distributed to more than 60 students for internship stipends, transportation assistance, and experiential learning support.
- Key initiatives included faculty and staff engagement and employer partnerships.
- The biology-focused co-op pilot was highlighted
- The committee discussed ways in which the BOT can help: Share internship/job opportunities; participate in “Intern for a Day” program; support expansion of experiential opportunities.

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

Trustee Lino Covarrubias reported the following:

A. Committee Report

- Noncompliant access points were reduced
- Prioritization focused on: Emergency egress accessibility, door functionality, and campus safety systems.
- Strong training compliance for cybersecurity training
 - 100% staff and 90% trustees have completed the training
- Growing concerns about AI-enabled cyber threats
 - Continued emphasis on ongoing training and vigilance.

- The General Counsel’s Report addressed accreditation concerns related to off-campus programs and agreements, leading to a review of the creation and maintenance of MOUs.
 - Inventory established of approximately 232 MOUs
 - Developed of a centralized database system; standardized request, tracking, and renewal processes; internal resources and training tools for departments.

IX. New Business

A. Delegation of Authority: Summer 2026

1. Motion to approve the delegation of authority to the President

A motion to approve the consent agenda was moved by Trustee Antonia Soares Thompson, and Trustee Bonnie Mitchell seconded the motion.

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

Trustee Hubbard was formally recognized for his 10 years of service, including leadership roles and extensive committee work. He was commended for his contributions, leadership, and commitment to the University.

Trustee Hubbard expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve and reflected on the University’s impact.

X. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

XI. Adjourn Open Meeting

A motion to adjourn the open meeting was moved by Trustee Dennis Giombetti, and Trustee Luke Yubeta seconded the motion.

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

The meeting ended at 8:36 p.m.