

FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

Board of Trustees Retreat Meeting Minutes

August 6 - 7, 2025

DAY 1 - AUGUST 6, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kristin Harper officially called the meeting to order. A quorum was established with Trustees Brown, Bryant, Dopson-Rodriguez, Figgers, Gainey, Gibbons, Harper, Perry, Vazquez and White present.

Chair Harper then convened the Florida A&M University Board of Trustees' retreat by welcoming President Johnson and the new trustees, Jocelyn Dopson-Rodriguez and Raphael Vazquez, to their first in-person meeting. Prior to providing an overview of the two-day retreat, President Johnson was provided the opportunity to bring greetings. She also introduced new members of her leadership team that included COO Kelvin Lawson, Vice President for Government Relations, Michelle Robinson, and chief-of-staff hopeful, Vincent Evans. The overview consisted of information, presentations and discussions on the Board's self-evaluation, Dr. Bread's evaluation, board relations in a time of transition, all facilitated by Dr. Joseph Silver, Sr., as well as strategic planning implementation updates and PBF metric methodology, the Board's vision of the University President, the Board of Trustees operating procedures, a budget workshop followed by Academic and Student Affairs update, presentation of the 2026-2027 legislative budget request and communication and media relation representation concluding with the Board of Trustees meeting.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES SELF-ASSESSMENT

Dr. Joseph Silver facilitated discussions on board self-evaluation and the interim president's evaluation. He emphasized the importance of objective and constructive evaluations, highlighting that boards often struggle with being frank and objective in their assessments. The Board discussed the need for clear goals and values to guide their evaluations, with suggestions to incorporate external feedback and 360 evaluations. They also touched on the challenges of managing perceptions and chaos while staying focused on institutional goals.

The Board discussed their self-evaluation results, which showed decreases in several key areas including board cohesions, committee effectiveness, and understanding of institutional roles. The discussion revealed that the board is not operating as a cohesive unit and has gaps in understanding the roles of various stakeholders, including faculty and staff. The Board was advised to focus more on policy-making, academic affairs, and student success, while also building trust among Board members. Recommendations included having an open conversation about the purpose of evaluations, reviewing results together, and using board retreats for goal-setting and training.

Dr. Silver also led a discussion on board evaluation practices, emphasizing the need for clear communication channels and structured information flows between boards and presidents. He highlighted that boards should collaboratively set annual priorities and goals with presidents, while also addressing the importance of board members holding each other accountable. The group discussed challenges with information access and agreed that establishing sustainable, repeatable business processes for information sharing would improve board effectiveness. Dr. Silver also noted that board members should determine their information needs and decision-making intervals in advance, rather than making individual requests that could overwhelm administration.

DR. BEARD'S EVALUATION

The Board discussed the evaluation process for the interim president, focusing on the fairness and objectivity of the assessments. They debated whether the evaluations should be based on personal opinion or objective data, and whether interim presidents should be held to the same standards as permanent presidents. The Board agreed that the evaluation

process needs improvement, particularly for interim presidents serving short-term roles. They discussed the need for more clearly defined goals, regular midpoint evaluations, and a balance between quantitative metrics and qualitative measures of leadership. The board acknowledged that while some progress was made in certain areas, there were ongoing issues with shared governance, communication and faculty engagement that need to be addressed in future evaluations.

Dr. Beard was provided an opportunity to give feedback to the discussion and reported strong passage rates across multiple programs, including 100% for pharmacy students and 94% for nursing students, while also noting that VP Jamal Sowell had successfully secured a \$10.5 million increase in funding over the previous year's request. He also noted the only shortfall in achieving his goals was the annual fundraising goal.

BOARD RELATIONS IN A TIME OF TRANSITION

Dr. Silver presented on board responsibilities and expectations, emphasizing that serving on a University board is distinct from serving on a community non-profit board. He outlined key issues in higher education that boards should focus on, including graduation and retention rates, affordability and access, quality accountability, finance, public trust, governance, curriculum, and graduate placement. Dr. Silver recommended that boards set aside time to discuss these issues with experts, both internal and external, to better prepare for future challenges.

The presentation focused on the roles and responsibilities of board members at Florida A&M University (FAMU). The discussion emphasized the importance of understanding the institution's mission, history, and culture, as well as knowing the stakeholders and being able to articulate the University's value. Board members were advised to engage in professional development, set strategic priorities, and hold the institution accountable. The conversation also covered fundraising expectations, with emphasis on the need for a structured approach and sufficient staff resources to meet ambitious goals.

The leadership transition strategies focused on strategies for a smooth transition of leadership at FAMU, particularly emphasizing the roles of the Board and the new president. The discussion highlighted the importance of maintaining open and honest communication, facilitating a proper orientation for new board members, and ensuring a clear understanding of the University's mission and strategic plan. Key recommendations included rebuilding trust among board members and stakeholders, focusing on governance rather than day-to-day operations, prioritizing student success, and enhancing funding through improved relationships with state and federal governments, as well as donors. Those in attendance agreed on the necessity of these actions to ensure the success of both the Board and the institution.

Dr. Silver presented key findings from board member interviews and surveys, emphasizing the need for board unity, accountability, and focus on student success at the University. He highlighted concerns about external influences shaping the University and the importance of protecting its legacy while adapting to current needs. He recommended building trust among board members, supporting the new president, raising funds, recruiting quality faculty, and maintaining strategic messaging to enhance FAMU's national posture. He also stressed the need for board members to be committed, well-prepared, and focused on the institution's mission, while avoiding common pitfalls such as over-promising or failing to evaluate the president.

STRATEGIC PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE AND PBF METRIC METHODOLOGY

Dr. Rodrick Jones, VP of Strategic Planning, Analysis and Institutional Effectiveness, presented an analysis of how well FAMU's current strategic plan aligns with SUS 30 priorities, highlighting areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement. Key discussion points included experiential learning, reducing student debt, transfer student outcomes, and research initiatives. The University has made progress in research funding but faces challenges with faculty workload and compensation. A proposed timeline for developing the next strategic plan was presented, aiming for a soft launch in spring 2027. The conversation ended with a reminder for trustees to access the President's goals dashboard and provide feedback on data needs.

BOARD VISION FOR THE UNIVERSITY AND PRESIDENT

Dr. Silver was scheduled to lead a discussion on the board's vision for the University, but the session was truncated due to time constraints, however the group engaged in a fun exercise led by Dr. Silver, reminiscent of a kindergarten activity, to encourage participation and focus. The session ended with an interactive puzzle-building activity, which was part of a larger project with a potential reward of \$50 million if completed within the hour. The Board engaged in a strategic planning exercise involving a puzzle activity, which Dr. Silver designed to demonstrate teamwork, vision alignment, and problem-solving skills. Participants worked in groups to complete a puzzle, highlighting the importance of clear goals, strategic thinking, and adaptability. The exercise emphasized the value of leveraging individual strengths, effective communication, and trust in achieving shared objectives. Moving forward, the Board discussed establishing norms for future meetings, including respect, preparedness, measurable goals, accountability, and stewardship. Dr. Silver encouraged the Board to continue building on the collaborative spirit developed during the session and to integrate the mission into future planning and decision-making processes.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OPERATING PROCEDURES

The board discussed proposed changes to the operating procedures regarding athletic contracts, with a motion to strike two clauses in 4.2 (vi and vii) that would give the University President sole authority over athletic employment agreements. The updates address NCAA and SACS accreditation concerns, with a recommendation for board approval of multi-year coaching contracts. President Johnson will notify the Board of Governors (BOG) about these changes and implement them only after the September Board meeting, giving time for BOG input. The discussion highlighted concerns about shared governance, with Trustee Brown calling for more advance notice of such significant policy changes.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for the Board, the meeting adjourned.

DAY 2 - AUGUST 7, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kristin Harper officially called the meeting to order. A quorum was established with Trustees Brown, Bryant, Crossman, Dopson-Rodriguez, Gainey, Gibbons, Harper, Perry and White present.

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Acting VP Nichole Murry presented the budget workshop and outline various components of the University's budget, including E&G funds, contracts and grants, auxiliary enterprises, local funds, and financial aid. She explained the sources of revenue for each component, emphasizing the importance of student tuition and various fees. The presentation aimed to provide a baseline understanding of the budget process and the FY 2026 operating budget previously approved in June.

The session included the University's budget planning process, focusing on aligning institutional goals and budget allocations. The institution currently uses an incremental budget approach, but plans to transition to a zero-based budgeting meeting for FY 2026-2027, starting the process earlier to avoid previous delays. The discussion also covered the distribution of student fees across different campus locations, with particular attention to how fees are allocated and spent at off-site campuses, including a specific focus on the College of Law and pharmacy programs.

The presentation also focused on the University's budget trends, financial processes, and ongoing improvements. Acting VP Murry highlighted significant increases in the education and general budget, with plans to shift to a zero-based

budgeting approach to ensure transparency and accountability. Trustee White and Chair Harper were thanked for their efforts in implementing financial reforms and improving accounting practices. The team is working on corrective actions to address discrepancies in financial reporting, with a focus on tracking progress and maintaining accountability across the University.

The Board discussed financial reporting issues and the need for improved transparency and control over financial processes. They emphasized the importance of understanding of the current financial status and making informed decision about budget allocations. The Board also reviewed the University's operating budget, including funding from the state legislature and performance-based funding metrics. They discussed the difference between lottery and general revenue funding, as well as the University's nursing education pipeline program.

The Board discussed University rankings and research funding, with Dr. Weatherford explaining that while the University is second in R&D spending among HBCUs after Howard, due to their medical school, they are not classified as R1 because we fall short of the Carnegie criteria of 70+ research PhDs granted per year. The Board reviewed auxiliary revenue streams, including student activities funding of \$3.6 million for clubs and organizations, and discussed athletic department finances, noting that while most universities run deficits in athletics, the University's department has maintained balanced budget for seven years. The Board also addressed concerns about faculty workloads, with Trustee Brown highlighting that faculty teach more courses than peers at other institutions, and President Johnson agreed to review vendor contracts for concessions and vending machines on campus.

ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS UPDATE

Provost Watson presented the Academic and Student Affairs Update, highlighting new areas of expertise and a proposed Center of Distinction for Florida A&M University. She outlined three key areas: health professions and workforce readiness, business innovation, and architecture and environmental design. Provost Watson emphasized the importance of these areas in aligning with the State University System's goals and increasing the University's competitive edge. The Board of Governors granted an extension for FAMU to develop its Center of Distinction, which will focus on health professions and research. She also discussed plans to improve performance metrics, including graduation rate and median graduate wages, to meet SUS 30 goals.

The meeting focused on developing governmental affairs and public policy programs at Florida A&M University to compete with Florida State University for student internships and career opportunities in Tallahassee. Provost Watson and President Johnson discussed FAMU's potential in healthcare education and the strategic importance of the Crestview campus in northwest Florida. The group agreed to explore creating policy-focused programs and internships, with Trustee Brown suggesting a faculty engagement session to develop these initiatives. The discussion concluded with plans to submit a proposal for programs of strategic emphasis by August 11th, incorporating input from faculty and staff.

Provost Watson presented updates on program consolidation efforts at FAMU, explaining how certain programs are being terminated or combined to improve efficiency and align with best practices. She introduced a new PBF metric focused on the percentage of bachelor's degree graduates completing in two or more high-impact practices, which will be submitted to the Board of Governors by August 20th. The Board discussed the need to include salary data and job placement metrics in future presentations to better assess the impact of high-impact practices. Dr. Watson also shared updates on changes to Programs of Strategic Emphasis (PSEs) and their effect on FAMU's performance-based funding, highlighting potential improvements through simple changes like adjusting zip codes and degree names. The conversation ended with a discussion on math readiness, noting that only 19% of incoming students are college math ready, and exploring potential summer programs to improve student preparedness.

Provost Watson discussed FAMU's strategic growth plan, focusing on increasing enrollment through targeted recruitment of Florida College System transfer students and expanding graduate programs. She highlighted a new partnership with Broward State College for pharmacy students and a restructured approach to PhD completion and graduate recruitment. Dr. Watson also presented FAMU Developmental Research School's progress, including improvements in student performance and infrastructure, and outlined plans to improve the school grade from a C to an A or B. She presented an

overview of the development research school's achievements and challenges, highlighting successful partnerships, strategic initiatives, and the need for facility upgrades. She addressed concerns about teacher salaries, explaining that while they are competitive within the university system, they are lower than those at other lab schools due to funding constraints. Trustee Brown raised questions about the accuracy of facility information and the need for a clear board goal regarding the school's grade, which currently stands at a C. The Board discussed the possibility of holding a workshop to address these issues and align on policies and procedures to improve the school's performance and facilities.

2026-2027 LEGISLATIVE BUDGET REQUEST

VP Jamal Sowell's presentation focused on the Legislative Budget Request (LBR), where the University is seeking \$65 million, up from \$55 million last year, with \$20 million allocated for recurring employee support. Provost Watson presented updates on student integration and mentorship initiatives, including plans for a research foundation to support commercialization and innovation, with every student being trained as a guide and mentor. Trustee White inquired about historical state funding for research foundations, prompting a discussion about the need to gather evidence of similar funding in other states to support the request. The group also discussed affordability and degree completion strategies, with Trustee White suggesting the need for financial planning training to help students manage loan debt, particularly those pursuing further education.

The meeting focused on faculty excellence and research initiatives at the University. Provost Watson discussed the need to adjust teaching loads to allow faculty to focus more on research, with plans to hire 40-50 new faculty members. The group also addressed the need to increase class minimums from 25 to a more feasible number to accommodate student demand. President Johnson emphasized the importance of highlighting existing partnerships with companies like Microsoft and Nvidia when seeking funding. The conversation ended with a discussion on expanding doctoral programs and partnerships with various organizations, as well as plans to increase budget funding for faculty and employee salaries to \$25 million.

The Board discussed several key initiatives at the University. They reviewed plans for a \$75 million athletics and academic complex, with suggestions to increase the budget funding to \$25 million and include academic facilities. The Board discussed the 2026-27 budget request pending approval, with Trustee Perry adding three items: increasing faculty salaries, constructing an athletic and academic complex, and establishing a center for real estate, generational wealth, and family offices.

COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA RELATIONS

Dr. Alonda Thomas, VP, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, presented the University's communication strategy, highlighting a new "Best of Both Worlds" branding campaign and various efforts to enhance the institution's reputation. The Board also discussed the need to increase the budget for marketing and social media efforts to better compete with peer institutions.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kristin Harper officially called the meeting to order. A quorum was established with Trustees Brown, Bryant, Crossman, Dopson-Rodriguez, Figgers, Gainey, Gibbons, Harper, Perry and White present. Trustee Reed was excused. Afterwards, Chair Harper welcomed Trustee Dopson-Rodriguez and President Johnson to their first official Board meeting following a productive retreat. A moment of silence was observed for fallen Rattlers, Ronnie Burns and Jayden Fleming.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. William Youmans, a proud alumnus and Florida region Vice President of the FAMU National Alumni Association, shared the region's key accomplishments, including a \$100,000 endowment and innovative student recruitment programs.

PRESIDENT'S GREETING

President Johnson provided an update on her first 100 days in office, highlighting her engagement with various stakeholders including students, faculty, alumni, and community leaders. She outlined her priorities, which include addressing the University's finances, leveraging its legacy for growth, and enhancing student success. President Johnson emphasized her commitment to listening to stakeholders and implementing a detailed 100-day plan focused on organizational efficiencies, faculty support and workforce-ready programs.

2026-27 GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENT MODIFICATIONS

Dr. Sundra Kinsey presented the completed list of 2026-27 general education requirement modifications and announced the Office of the Provost will be submitting it to the Board of Governors on September 1st. The list includes 109 courses for the 2025-2026 academic year, with 10 courses removed and one new course, College algebra, added. Twelve courses were updated to align student learning objectives and course descriptions.

2025-2026 FAMU FOUNDATION BUDGET

Upon the request of Acting VP Brandi Tatum-Fedrick and Foundation Board President Kenneth Neighbors, the 2025-26 FAMU Foundation budget was tabled to allow the finance committee time to review and make revisions before presenting it to the board again.

CONSENT AGENDA

Chair Harper read the Consent Agenda:

- BT1: July 21, 2025 Minutes
- ASA1: General Education Requirement Modifications
- GC1: President's Evaluation
- GC2: 2026-27 Legislative Budget Request
- GC3: Board of Trustees Operating Procedures

DSOA1: 2025-206 FAMU Foundation Budget was removed from the consent agenda. Trustee Gibbons moved approval of the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Trustee Perry and was approved with a unanimous vote.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for the Board, the meeting adjourned.