

FLORIDA **A&M** UNIVERSITY  
**Board of Trustees**

**Meeting Minutes**  
**June 24, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

*Kristin Harper, Chair*

Chair Harper called the meeting to order. Trustees Aly, Cliatt, Crossman, Gibbons, Harper, Lawson, Perry, Reed, Stone, and White established a quorum.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No individuals signed up for public comments.

**REGULATION 3.017, TUITION AND FEES**

Trustee Reed introduced the amendment. Afterwards, Sr. VP/CFO Rebecca Brown stated the University requirement to update Regulation 3.017, the Schedule of Tuition and Fees, to align with the Florida statutes and the Board of Governors regulations. The amendment is a proposal to streamline this practice that allows the institution to immediately apply the changes mandated by law, and to initiate the technical or substantive amendments to the regulation, as appropriate. VP Brown advised the board will be notified of changes and that the University's Policy Office had conducted a comprehensive review of the marked-up version of the regulation that was provided in their materials. She recommended the board's approval of the amendment to Regulation 3.017, Schedule of Tuition and Fees. Trustee Lawson moved approval of the motion and it was seconded by Trustee Cliatt. The motion carried unanimously.

**EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT – PATRICK CRAREY**

Vice President/AD Tiffani-Dawn Sykes announced on April 16, 2024, with more than 50 applicants vying for the position, Patrick Crarey was introduced as FAMU's 15<sup>th</sup> head men's basketball coach. She then provided an overview of the search process and highlighted Mr. Crarey's coaching career. In closing, VP/AD Sykes provided notable accomplishments of coaches, student-athletes and national championship programs within the athletics department. Afterwards, Attorney David Self presented the proposed contract.

Trustee Lawson began the discussion by addressing concerns raised from "reputable local officials" concerning the dismissal of student-athletes from the men's basketball team, requested the coach's salary, which reportedly tripled, be addressed, and requested university administrators to explain the legality of the coach reportedly being on campus and working prior to an approved employment agreement. Prior to providing a response, Attorney Iris Elijah

advised all to be mindful of federal and state privacy laws known as FERPA and requested that no information that could identify a specific student be disclosed.

AD Sykes responses to Trustee Lawson's requests by stating:

- A volunteer employment agreement had been properly executed in April, which allowed the coach to conduct business on campus.
- The coach's salary did not triple from his salary at his previous institution.
- A copy of one letter concerning a walk-on student athlete has been received in her office, which she supposed was the letter referenced. She explained that, prior to the transition, the previous head men's basketball coach was requested to reduce the roster to 16 players, which would include 13 full-scholarship athletes and 3 walk-ons, to align with NCAA Division I team rosters. Due to the reduction to meet the new roster total, the student-athlete referenced in the letter was affected. She informed the board that roster maximums were discussed with all team coaches and previously shared in a previous board meeting as a cost-saving measure for the athletics department.

For clarification, Trustee Lawson asked if the statement made that all 16 players were dismissed from the team was true? AD Sykes replied, all students were not dismissed from the team. She further clarified that all students are no longer on scholarship due to some choosing to enter the transfer portal and/or NIL opportunities.

Trustee Gibbons requested the following:

- What other universities have a head coach under a volunteer employee agreement?
- A copy of the volunteer employment agreement be provided.

He then recommended that the employment agreement vote be pushed back or the coach not be hired due to limited information.

Trustee Cliatt expressed deep concerns with matters coming before the board for a vote that trustees have not had the opportunity to be properly briefed on prior to the vote and the contentious atmosphere of the meeting. Going forward, he requested Dr. Robinson to meet with university employees to ensure that respective trustees are notified and briefed prior to the meeting.

President Robinson stated that this matter coming before the full board is a common practice where a multi-year contract comes before the board for consideration. If it was a regular one-year contract, it would not have required board consideration. AD Sykes also verified the coach's salary from his previous institution from correspondence received from the AD of the previous institution.

Chair Harper requested clarification on the number of student athletes that were on the men's basketball roster prior to the voluntary agreement in April and how many remain today. She also wanted verification of when the materials were sent to the board to ensure sufficient time for

trustee briefing. AD Sykes responded by stating that, at the time the volunteer agreement was executed, there were 19 people on the roster to include 13 scholarship athletes. Of the 13 scholarship athletes, 3 are still on the team and, to her knowledge, there's an opportunity for 3 of the 6 walk-ons, or some combination thereof, to be added to the roster. She further clarified that the 10 athletes no longer on the roster either entered the transfer portal, graduated or were dismissed. After much discussion between Trustees Gibbons, Lawson and Chair Harper regarding the contract processes, timelines and other concerns, Trustee Lawson recommended that the decision on the coach's employment agreement be delayed until the following questions were answered:

- What is the outcome of the 16 young men, excluding names?
- What is the exact date the coach was brought on campus in a non-salary capacity?
- Have any specific Title IX or NCAA violations been incurred?

Ms. Linda Barge-Miles, Chief of Staff and Board Liaison, updated Chair Harper on her request to provide the date information was sent to the board. She reported that the coach's contract and employment agreement was sent to Trustee Lawson on June 4, 2024 and that Mrs. Kimberly Taylor posted the information to the board's website and the link notice sent to board members at least two weeks prior the board meeting to meet the required deadline. Chair Harper then requested the volunteer agreement be sent to the full board. Afterwards, she reiterated that administration follow up with one-on-one briefing calls to trustees prior to board meetings.

Trustee Perry suggested that Processes be an agenda item added to upcoming board retreat schedule. Afterwards, Trustee Cliatt provided a summarization of the previous discussions and urged all to make every effort to fix the concerns expressed. President Robinson assured the board of the university willingness to work with them by providing insights on the processes to continue being consistent in its practices.

Trustee Gibbons requested Dr. Robinson to provide the following information:

- Whether or not the basketball coach has been compensated?
- Is the volunteer coach designation a legal document or is it a violation of the NCAA Division I Council vote to eliminate it?

VP/AD Sykes provided further insight on the Division I council vote on the elimination of the volunteer designation, which does not eliminate volunteer coaches but modernizes the rule to allow people who are operating, whether they are compensated or not, to have the same scope of responsibilities as those that are paid coaches. She was thankful of the reminder to bring the coach's employment agreement before the board and took full responsibility for not presenting it earlier. Going forward, when there are Athletics action items, she will schedule one-on-one briefings with trustees in advance of the board meetings. She also mentioned that the coach has not been on campus consistently and have only visited, on his own time, to complete advisement and order equipment prior to the closing deadlines for the upcoming year.

Attorney Elijah addressed the trustees' contracts concerns and referenced paragraph 2.6 of the contract, which stated the board's need to approve the employment contract before it is effective and that the board has the authority to amend or alter the terms of the agreement after it has been presented to the coach at any duly authorized university board of trustees meeting. The aforementioned language is in the agreement and is standard for all of the university's athletic department agreements.

Trustee Lawson moved that discussion be tabled until further notice from the chair of the appropriate date, after facts are reviewed and process breaks addressed, this action item will come before the board for approval.

Trustee Gibbons seconded.

Trustee Cliatt expressed his concerns on the scheduling of a special meeting with no resolution and requested that a specific date be determined to bring the agenda item before the board.

The motion carried.

President Robinson suggested adding the agenda item to the scheduled August board retreat. He also expressed his concerns of not having a basketball coach in place at the start of the academic year and reminded the board that he does have the authority to hire a coach for a single-year contract and wanted to make sure they recognize this, absent of any anxiety, in the event that he makes that decision. Trustee Claitt again addressed the urgent need to resolve the coach's contract.

Trustee Perry asked what action(s) needs to occur regarding men's basketball between now and the board retreat? AD Sykes called attention to the need to have coaches on board to assist student-athletes during summer term B, which is typically the semester most student athletes enroll in summer school to begin their training and to get a jump start on their education for the academic year. She also mentioned during this time, coaches are scheduling, securing travel contracts, ordering equipment, and awarding scholarships, etc., and currently the men's basketball is without a head coach. President Robinson re-emphasized his intentions to enter into a one-year agreement with the coach, if agreed, with a proposed start date of July 1, 2024. By doing so, the coach will be allowed the opportunity to complete some of the required tasks to avoid any larger problems that may arise when it comes to the fall and spring semesters.

#### **APPROVAL OF FAMU NAMING COMMITTEE ACTION ITEM**

COO Donald Palm requested to move the approval of the honorary naming of the Fogg Planetarium at the Challenger Learning Center to the August board retreat then presented a summary of the request to include the following:

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- The FAMU Naming Committee met and approved the honorary naming of the planetarium at the June 18, 2024 meeting.
- The Edward and Lizabeth Fogg charitable trust pledged \$750,000.00 to the Challenger Learning Center Fund through the FSU Foundation, with the first pledge payment made on November 28, 2023.
- Supporting documents to include the initial gift deposit, the income statement, general ledger transaction report, and the fully-executed gift agreement was provided for board review.
- The honorary naming has been approved by the FSU Board of Trustees.
- The honorary naming affects the planetarium only, and not the entire challenger learning center.

Chair Harper inquired on the reasoning for recommending this action item be moved. COO Palm informed the board that the actual naming would not take place this summer and the move allows additional time for trustees to review the material and to have any questions answered that may arise from their review.

The agenda item was approved to be moved to the board retreat.

Prior to adjourning the meeting, President Robinson provided the following updates:

- FEMA made a major disaster declaration for FAMU and surrounding counties regarding the May 10<sup>th</sup> tornadoes, which made funds available for the university to continue its recovery efforts.
- We are on track to have another record year in fundraising, surpassing the \$25 million raised last year.
- Faculty are closing in on garnering research funds in the vicinity of \$110 million for the year.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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