

**MINUTES**  
**POLK STATE COLLEGE**  
**District Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**Monday, April 27, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.**  
**Polk State Center for Public Safety– Room 267**

Chair Ann Barnhart called the April 27, 2026, District Board of Trustees meeting to order at approximately 4:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Ms. Ann Barnhart, Mr. Kyle Davis, Mr. Steve Lester, Mr. Greg Littleton, Ms. Cindy Hartley Ross, and Mr. Ashley Troutman

**Members Absent:** Ms. Ashley Bell Barnett

**1. Meeting Called to Order**

**a. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence**

**b. Special Recognitions**

**1. Student Spotlight**

- Dr. Anne Kerr, Interim President, introduced Kevin Ferrier, Program Director of the Cardiovascular Technology Program, to introduce student Jacqueline Murphy. Ms. Murphy briefly addressed the Board to share her journey as a second-year student in Polk State College's Cardiovascular Technology Program, preparing to begin her career in invasive cardiology with a focus on precision, accountability, and patient-centered care.

**2. Foundation Check Presentation**

- Dr. Kerr introduced Dr. Steve Warner, Executive Director of the Polk State College Foundation, to announce The Cynthia A. Price Revocable Trust in the amount \$115,000. Dr. Warner introduced Ms. Price's husband, Perry Price, and daughter-in-law, Bri Price, to say a few words. Ms. Bonnie Parker and Ms. Tammy Ferrell of Citizen's Bank & Trust were also in attendance.

**2. Adoption of Agenda**

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve the April 27, 2026, agenda. All members voted affirmatively.

**3. Approval of Board Minutes**

**a. March 30, 2026, Regular Board Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Littleton moved, seconded by Mr. Lester, to approve the March 30, 2026, Regular Board Meeting minutes. All members voted affirmatively.

**4. Unfinished Business:**

None.

**5. Consent Agenda Items: Information**

- a. **Polk State College Personnel Actions Report for March 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- b. **Employment Vacancy Update for April 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- c. **Capital Project Status Report for April 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- d. **College-Wide Comprehensive Safety Inspection, FY 2025-26** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.

**6. Consent Agenda Items: Action**

- a. **Polk State College Salary Schedule Changes for May 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Mr. Lester, to approve all consent agenda items under one motion. All members voted affirmatively.

**7. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda**

None.

**8. Action Items:**

- a. **Finance: Financial Statements for March 2026 – Ms. Allison Huggins**

On behalf of Ms. Cindy Baker, Ms. Huggins presented and recommended for approval the Financial Statements for March 2026.

- For the financial statements as of March 31, 2026, Student Tuition and Fees are approximately 70% of budget. Current projected enrollment for summer puts the College on track to meeting the budgeted revenues for June 30.
- Personnel expenses are \$34,425,086, which is 60% of budget. Comparing March 31, 2026, to the same time in the prior fiscal year, the cost of health insurance has increased approximately 9%.
- Current expenses are slightly ahead of budget, although they are \$732,000 less than this time in the prior year. Total expenses as of March 31 are \$14,430,594, which is 78% of budget. The College continues to monitor expenses to ensure that planned projects are adequately funded and other expenses are managed in order to stay within the Fiscal Year 2026 budget.
- Capital Outlay has exceeded budget. This is directly attributable to PIPELINE grant expenditures that had been budgeted in the prior fiscal year. Capital Outlay expenditures are projected to increase prior to the end of the fiscal year due to the purchase of a new chiller and maintenance of existing one.

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Mr. Lester, to approve Financial Statements for March 2026. All members voted affirmatively.

**b. Employment Contracts – College Administrator and Professional Technical Staff for 2026-2027 – Ms. Tamara Sakagawa**

Ms. Sakagawa presented and recommended for approval the Employment Contracts – College Administrator and Professional Technical Staff for 2026-2027. In accordance with Polk State College Board Rule 3.05, full-time administrative personnel as defined by State Board of Education Rules, must sign a contract as a condition of initial and continuing employment. Employment contracts must comply with the provisions of the State Board of Education Rules and must be approved by the District Board of Trustees.

Agenda Item 8.b. is the list of recommendations for administrator contracts. Administrators are at a paygrade P17 (\$63,739 - \$100,533) or higher.

Mr. Littleton moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve Employment Contracts – College Administrator and Professional Technical Staff for 2026-2027. All members voted affirmatively.

**c. Polk State College Faculty Employment Contract Renewals – Ms. Tamara Sakagawa**

Ms. Sakagawa presented and recommended for approval the Polk State College Faculty Employment Contract Renewals. In accordance with Polk State College Board Rule 3.05, full-time Instructional Faculty as defined by State Board of Education Rules, must sign a contract as a condition of initial and continuing employment. Employment contracts must comply with the provisions of the State Board of Education Rules and must be approved by the District Board of Trustees.

Agenda Item 8.c. is the list of recommendations for Instructional Faculty contracts. It includes six (6) continuing contracts and fifty-four (54) annual contracts.

As a point of information, in FY 2025-26, there were 98 faculty on continuing contract, and 75 on annual contract. This page in the packet recommends that we move six (6) College faculty to continuing contract and the remainder will be on annual contract for FY 2026-27.

Ms. Ross moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve Polk State College Faculty Employment Contract Renewals. All members voted affirmatively.

**d. Polk State College Collegiate High Schools Faculty Employment Contract Renewals - Ms. Tamara Sakagawa**

Ms. Sakagawa presented and recommended for approval the Polk State College Collegiate High Schools Faculty Employment Contract Renewals. In accordance with Polk State College Board Rule 3.05, full-time Instructional Faculty as defined by State Board of Education Rules, must sign a contract as a condition of initial and continuing employment. Employment contracts must comply with the provisions of the State Board of Education Rules and must be approved by the District Board of Trustees.

Agenda Item 8.d. is the list of recommendations for Instructional Faculty Employment Contracts for Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School, Polk State Lakeland Gateway to College

Collegiate High School, and Polk State Lakeland Collegiate High School. It includes eighteen (18) annual contracts.

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Mr. Lester, to approve Polk State College Collegiate High Schools Faculty Employment Contract Renewals. All members voted affirmatively.

**e. 2026-2027 Academic Calendar – Mr. Reggie Webb**

Mr. Webb presented and recommended for approval the 2026-2027 Academic Calendar. He highlighted several critical dates contained in the calendar such as December 2, 2026, and May 6, 2027, Commencement ceremonies.

Mr. Littleton moved, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve the 2026-2027 Academic Calendar. All members voted affirmatively.

**9. Board Chair Remarks**

**a. Final Presidential Evaluation Template and DBOT Self-Assessment Template**  
Chair Barnhart directed the Board to the final Presidential Evaluation and DBOT Self-Assessment templates at their seats. She thanked the Board for their efforts in revising the templates.

**10. President's Report**

Interim President Kerr introduced Dr. Mary Clark, Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation & Research, to provide an update on Polk State's Mission & Vision Statements.

**a. Polk Mission and Vision Statements – Dr. Mary Clark**

Dr. Clark referred to SACSCOC standards related to institutional mission and vision statements.

- Standard 2.1 – Mission: The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive and published mission specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. [CR]
- Standard 4.2.a – The governing board ensures the regular review of the institution's mission.
- As a core requirement in the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation, Standard 2.1 ensures the institution has a mission that reflects a clear understanding of the institution conveying a sense of its uniqueness and identifies qualities, characteristics, and values that define the institution's role within its community. Additionally, Standard 4.2.a. requires that the governing board ensures the regular review of the institution's mission.

Dr. Clark shared that in compliance with SACSCOC Standards 2.1 and 4.2.a, a copy of the College's mission and vision statements were provided in the Board packets. She requested review and approval of the College's mission statement.

○ Polk State College – Mission Statement

Polk State College, a quality higher education institution that provides Polk County and beyond with access to affordable associate and baccalaureate degree programs, career certificates, and

workforce employment programs that are delivered to students through various modalities and innovative technologies.

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Mr. Lester, to approve Polk State College's mission statement. All members voted affirmatively.

Dr. Clark then requested the review and approval of the College's vision statement.

- Polk State College – Vision Statement

Polk State College is the leading choice for higher education in Polk County.

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Mr. Littleton, to approve Polk State College's vision statement. All members voted affirmatively.

**b. Higher Learning Commission Update - Dr. Mary Clark**

Dr. Clark presented a timeline of important dates for the College's Fifth Year Interim Report for SACSCOC.

- The report is due on September 8, 2026, and work is being done to ensure the required 22 narratives demonstrate compliance with each standard.
- In November 2026, the College's submission will be reviewed by a Peer Committee Chaired by Dr. Joseph D. Parle. Dr. Parle is the Provost and Senior Professor at the College of Biblical Studies in Houston, Texas.
- The results of the peer review will be announced at the December 2026 SACSCOC Annual meeting on December 5-8, 2026 in Houston.

The accelerated process for membership to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) takes approximately 18 months to complete.

- Transitioning to the HLC Process Overview
  - Send letter to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) requesting permission to change accreditors. (approximately 1 month)
  - Once permission is received from ED and HLC agrees to accept the application:
    - Institution submits an application for HLC membership. (approximately 1 month)
    - Institution submits narrative and evidence regarding HLC's Criteria for Accreditation and other HLC requirements for Preliminary Peer Review. (approximately 8 months)
    - Institution demonstrates that it meets the Criteria and other HLC requirements for the Comprehensive Evaluation for Initial Accreditation and Related Decision Making. (approximately 3 months)

- The accelerated process for membership to the Higher Learning Commission takes approximately 18 months to complete. The times provided here are the amount of time each institution is provided for each step of the process. The overall process is contingent upon the HLC Board of Trustee meetings. They meet three times a year – usually in February, March (annual Conference), and June.
- Application Documentation
  - The institution is regionally accredited, in good standing with its current accreditor and has undergone at least one reaffirmation. All correspondence between the accreditor and the institution for the previous 12 months.
  - Demonstration from Federal Financial Aid indicating the institution has demonstrated reasonable cause for changing its primary accreditor.
  - Complete a Substantial Presence Worksheet.
  - Documentation showing legal status to operate as an institution of higher learning.
  - List of all degree and certificate programs offered including enrollment by program, location, and mode of delivery. Information about current enrollments by program, location, and modality.
  - Letter from DBOT confirming its intention to seek accreditation with HLC.
  - List of other current accreditation relationships, including status, and official interactions within the past five years.
- Estimated Cost to Move Accreditors
  - Total for Year 1: \$193,425
    - These estimated costs are as reported by those sister institutions who have already gone through the transition.
    - It includes some fixed costs such as application fees and costs for each review but it also includes costs for sending a team to the HLC conference each year. The costs also include compensation to employees for the hundreds of hours of work needed to prepare the required documentation.
  - Total for Year 2: \$200,300
  - Grand Total: \$393,725
    - 18-24 month timeline across two fiscal years
- Three Primary differences between SACSCOC and HLC
  - There are many differences between accrediting bodies. There is a misconception that one is easier than the other. While that is not true, there are some significant differences in how accreditation is viewed.
    - SACSCOC's accreditation is based on its Principles of Accreditation, which is focused on institutional obligations. HLC has several requirements including Eligibility Requirements, Criteria for Accreditation, Assumed Practices, Obligations of Membership, and Federal Compliance Requirements, focused on the institution's mission and student success.

- SACSCOC narratives must clearly articulate compliance with a focus on continuous improvement and where supporting documents are used to substantiate the narratives. HLC narratives have specific word counts, requiring succinct storytelling and focuses strongly on evidence that supports long-term use of data to drive continuous improvement.
- While the institution's mission is a core requirement for SACSCOC, HLC requires that the institution demonstrate that all activities and functions are aligned and in support of the institution's mission.

**c. Gramm-Leach-Bliley-Act – Mr. Marty Gang**

Mr. Gang emphasized that the Gramm-Leach-Bliley-Act (GLBA) requires an annual cybersecurity update as part of the statute. As a financial institution, the College must explain its information-sharing practices and safeguard sensitive data.

- Current Status & Progress
  - The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) CSF is a framework that has been developed to help organizations manage and reduce their cybersecurity risk. Through its guidelines, best practices, and standards, it provides organizations with a structured approach to assessing and strengthening cybersecurity posture. The College is currently progressing from Tier 2 to Tier 3 with NIST CSF Maturity.
  - Previously Tier 1 (6 months ago)
  - Moderate institutional risk
  - High-risk areas actively being addressed
  - External risk assessment completed
  - Risk register implemented
  - Data governance framework established
  - Written Information Security Program (WISP) drafted and reviewed
  - Cybersecurity improvement roadmap defined
- Key Risk and Compliance Gaps
  - Mr. Gang outlined some key risks being mitigated this summer.
  - Compliance Gaps
    - Finalize and operationalize WISP
    - Implement continuous vulnerability monitoring
    - Formalize vendor risk management in procurement
    - Expand monitoring and incident response across the enterprise
- Next Steps and Board Role
  - Priorities (next 12 months)
    - Finalize and Implement WISP
    - Expand monitoring and vulnerability management

- Integrate vendor risk into procurement process
- Update and test incident response and business continuity plan
- Expand cybersecurity awareness training
- Investments and Board Role
  - Support targeted investment (funding and staffing) – Estimated investment approximately \$140,000
  - Understand institutional cybersecurity risk
  - Ensure leadership accountability in cybersecurity
  - Requesting periodic progress updates

Discussion ensued about prior audits and resources needed for the estimated investment. Mr. Gang noted a knowledgeable individual is needed to train staff. A statement of work is to be drafted so that a bid can be put out.

### **13. Attorney's Report**

Attorney David Carmichael had nothing to report at this time.

### **14. Collegiate High School Report:**

#### **a. Polk State Lakeland Collegiate High School 2026 Recruitment/Enrollment Plan – Mr. Rick Jeffries**

Mr. Jeffries presented and reviewed the Polk State Lakeland Collegiate High School 2026 Recruitment/Enrollment Plan for the Board's Information.

Dr. Kerr stated that she would like to highlight some of the efforts being made by College faculty. She introduced 21-year English and First Year Seminar Professor Carol Martinson to provide an update on her English 1101 (College Composition I) class's current community-based learning project. The goals of the project are to do something good for the community and for students to benefit from the activities. The 25 students in the class worked with employees at Cardinal Equipment Services who wanted to improve their English-speaking skills. During the first three scheduled sessions, students served as tutors for the employees, helping with terms specific to the factory through guided conversational English. Ms. Martinson emphasized that her long tenure at Polk State is because "we change lives."

### **15. Board Member Final Remarks:**

Mr. Littleton apologized for having to miss his first Night of Legacy event.

Mr. Lester congratulated Dr. Warner and staff on the success of Night of Legacy. He thanked Mr. Gang for the great information regarding the College's cybersecurity enhancements.

Mr. Troutman looks forward to Thursday's Commencement ceremonies.

Mr. Davis commended everyone on the Night of Legacy and appreciated Professor Martinson's presentation.

