

MINUTES
POLK STATE COLLEGE
District Board of Trustees Meeting
Monday, August 24, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.
Polk State Center for Public Safety– Room 267

Chair Ann Barnhart called the August 24, 2026, District Board of Trustees meeting to order at approximately 4:00 p.m.

Members Present: Ms. Ann Barnhart, Ms. Ashley Bell Barnett, Mr. Kyle Davis, Mr. Steve Lester, Mr. Greg Littleton, Ms. Cindy Hartley Ross, and Mr. John Webb

Members Absent:

1. Meeting Called to Order

a. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

b. Special Recognitions

- **Student Spotlight:** President Kamoutsas introduced Professor April Potter, a faculty member in the College's Supply Chain Management concentration within the Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management Program. Professor Potter introduced Peter Tong, who is a May 2026 graduate from the first cohort of the Supply Chain Management concentration. Mr. Tong provided remarks about the support he received during his time at Polk State College and how everyone was so accommodating and welcoming to his service dog, Ren. Ren provided the support and confidence he needed to succeed. An honorary certificate was awarded to Ren for her support and service to Mr. Tong.

Public Comment

None.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Kyle Davis, to approve the August 24, 2026, agenda. All members voted affirmatively.

3. Approval of Board Minutes

a. June 29, 2026, Budget Workshop Minutes

Mr. Littleton moved, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve June 29, 2026, Budget Workshop minutes. All members voted affirmatively.

b. June 29, 2026, Regular Board Meeting Minutes

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Lester, to approve June 29, 2026, Regular Board meeting minutes. All members voted affirmatively.

4. Unfinished Business

None.

5. Consent Agenda Items: Information

- a. **Tangible Personal Property Deletions for August 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- b. **Investment Interest Comparison for June 2026 and FY 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- c. **Capital Project Status Report for August 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.

6. Consent Agenda Items: Action

- a. **Polk State College Salary Schedule Changes for August 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- b. ~~**First Amendment to Polk State President Employment Agreement and President's Goals**~~

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Davis, to remove item 6.b. First Amendment to Polk State President Employment Agreement and President's Goals from the Consent Agenda to provide President Kamoutsas the ability to present it to the Board. All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve all consent agenda items, without item 6.b. First Amendment to Polk State President Employment Agreement and President's Goals, under one motion. All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

Ms. Barnhart handed the next item to President Kamoutsas to present.

7. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

- a. **First Amendment to Polk State President Employment Agreement and President's Goals**

President Kamoutsas stated that he wants to be deliberate in sharing with the public the priorities that have been established and the types of meaningful steps taken to move the institution forward.

Goal #1: Engage in student-focused activities that will increase enrollment, retention, and completion. (Strategic Plan Goal 1)

This goal aligns with the strategic goal of enriching the student experience through excellence and innovative academic and student support programs. At its core, this is about student success – ensuring that students can easily access a world class education and receive the support, service, and opportunities they need to achieve their educational goals.

We can advance excellence in the student experience by providing exceptional customer service to students and their families in every interaction. This includes simplifying the admission and

registration processes, offering smaller orientation sessions earlier in the summer, and providing clear, consistent communication throughout the student experience. We will also be more deliberate in connecting students with support services available to them through regular service fairs, information sessions, and other student-focused events.

We will promote innovative academic and support programs and opportunities by creating additional articulation pathways, expanding on the robustness of our workforce education programs focusing hands-on learning experiences, exploring new academic programs and creating opportunities for students to observe and engage in civil discourse.

Goal #2: Create community service opportunities for students and develop baseline data with the goal of increasing student participation in the 2027-2028 Academic Year. (Strategic Plan Goal 4)

This goal aligns with the strategic goal to enhance and expand the College's regional and community engagement. It reflects our commitment to encouraging students to engage in community service and civic life. Because we want our graduates to remain in Polk County, preparing students to become active and engaged citizens directly strengthens the community we serve.

While students already have opportunities to engage in community service, the idea is to build on our partnerships with community organizations and expand on those opportunities and experiences. Moreover, while we have been capturing these activities in various ways, we do not track them consistently and in a centralized location. This year, we will begin documenting these activities through a software to establish a baseline, create more opportunities for student-community engagement and measure our progress moving forward.

Goal #3: Create new apprenticeships, internships, or other experiential learning opportunities within workforce programs for students and develop baseline data with the goal of increasing student participation in the 2027-2028 Academic Year. (Strategic Plan Goal 2)

This goal is in keeping with the strategic goal to align graduate competencies to meet the needs of labor markets. The strength of a Polk State education is the opportunity to apply learning through hands-on, practical experience. These experiences make education more meaningful while giving students a direct pathway to employment and strengthening the College's connection to the industries and the community we serve.

The College currently supports minimal apprenticeship efforts along with some internships and experiential learning opportunities in and out of the classroom. However, we do not currently have a formal way to track these opportunities. We will similarly use software to establish a baseline, with the goal of creating more opportunities for students. With that baseline data in-hand the goal is also to increase student participation in the next school year.

Goal #4: Increase fundraising efforts and philanthropic support by 5% which is just over \$525,000 by the end of the 2026–2027 Fiscal Year. (Strategic Plan Goal 3)

This goal aligns with the strategic goal to increase institutional resources and efficiency to drive operational excellence. Strong philanthropic support allows the College to expand opportunities

for students and invest in academic programs and facilities. Increasing fundraising efforts and outcomes is a critical part of being good stewards of the College and ensuring that there are resources available to support the needs of the institution and our students.

President Kamoutsas has already begun this effort, meeting with Foundation Board members and dozens of community members, building relationships and sharing the story of the College and, most importantly, our students.

These goals, taken as a whole, are intended to be eclectic, rigorous, and practical in their intended impact, which is to increase the student experience, increase industry partnerships, increase our impact on the community and increase the prestige of the institution. It is for these reasons that he respectfully asks that the Board vote in favor of these goals for the 2026-2027 Academic Year.

Mr. Webb moved, seconded by Mr. Lester, to approve the First Amendment to Polk State President Employment Agreement and President's Goals.

Ms. Barnhart shared that she thinks this Board is aligned with these goals. It feels very coherent and steadfast and she appreciates that. President Kamoutsas added that Dr. Mary Clark, Dr. Amy Bratten, and Tamara Sakagawa worked very diligently with him to ensure these goals aligned with the College's strategic plan.

All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

8. Action Items

a. Finance: Financial Statements for July 2026 – Ms. Cindy Baker

Ms. Baker presented and recommended for approval the Financial Statements for July 2026.

- Financial Statements for July 2026 reflect the last summer term tuition and fees which are up from this time last year. Even though registration began in June for the current academic year, the fall tuition and fees will be reflected once classes begin in August.
- For the first month of Fiscal Year 2027, overall expenses are slightly lower than the same time last year primarily due to services line item which reflected the last year of payment for the Genesis system ending in Fiscal Year 2026.

Mr. Davis moved, seconded by Ms. Bell Barnett, to approve the Financial Statements for July 2026. All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

b. Approval of RFQ #26-01 to solicit for Design-Build Services for a designated area at Clear Springs Advance Technology Center to add a welding program – Ms. Cindy Baker

Mr. Littleton moved, seconded by Ms. Ross, to approve RFQ #26-01 to solicit for Design-Build Services for a designated area at Clear Springs Advance Technology Center to add a welding program. All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

c. Contract for Legal Services for Attorney David Carmichael – Mr. Anastasios Kamoutsas

President Kamoutsas presented the Contract for Legal Services with Boswell & Dunlap LLP which states that Attorney David Carmichael will serve as the primary attorney. Attorney Carmichael will be present at District Board of Trustees meetings.

Mr. Lester moved, seconded by Ms. Ross, to approve the Contract for Legal Services for Attorney David Carmichael. All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

d. Contract for Legal Services for DownsAaron – Mr. Anastasios Kamoutsas

President Kamoutsas presented the Contract for Legal Services with DownsAaron. This firm will serve as a legal advisor as requested for specific matters. The primary contact is Attorney Brande Smith.

Attorney Smith stated that she will be moving ahead at an aggressive pace with reviewing and updating the College's rules and procedures. She will make the sure the rules are legally compliant and that they actively reflect what's going on at the College now. If there is anything that's not legally required to be in a rule, it may be moved to a procedure. She hopes that the procedures will become known as policies and will go through a shared governance process. Due to an upcoming accreditation, there are some rules and procedures that need to be reviewed first to be compliant.

Ms. Barnett asked Attorney Smith what the timeline would be for this process. Attorney Smith stated that because of the lengthy rule-making process, she cannot give an accurate timeline. They will be as aggressive as they can. There will be check-in at future board meetings.

Mr. Lester moved, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve the Contract for Legal Services for DownsAaron. All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

9. Board Rule First Reading
None

10. Board Chair Remarks

Chair Barnhart personally thanked each Board member for the support they gave her as they worked through some very difficult times as a Board and difficult issues. A lot was accomplished together, and she expects that will continue. At the outmost, they seated a very capable new president for the College and she is very grateful.

11. President's Report
a. Institutional Neutrality Statement

President Kamoutsas presented a proposed statement of institutional neutrality for Polk State College which aims to reinforce our mission as an institution of higher education. The statement affirms that the College will remain neutral on matters unrelated to its operations and core mission while encouraging intellectual diversity, freedom of inquiry, and civil discourse.

This statement is inspired by the vision that he outlined when he began his tenure at Polk State College, to ensure that every student is prepared for a meaningful career, has the opportunity to achieve greatness, and will be a responsible citizen in their community when they leave the College.

It also reflects a broader national recognition of the important role colleges play in preparing students to become thoughtful citizens. Earlier this month, U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon called on university presidents and their governing boards to reaffirm their commitment to rigorous teaching, research, and national service, while emphasizing the value of open dialogue and academic excellence.

Institutional neutrality allows the College to stay focused on its core mission: education. Our role is to create an environment where students, faculty, staff, and community members with different viewpoints can learn from each other, engage in meaningful debate and freely express themselves. That kind of open exchange not only strengthens Polk State College but also helps prepare graduates to build a more informed, responsible, and effective society.

President Kamoutsas thanked Commissioner Henry Mack and Governor Ron DeSantis who hosted a roundtable last week calling on the colleges and universities to rally behind this idea and announcing that all 12 of the universities and all 28 of the colleges signed off on a letter in support of what's coming out of the United States Department of Education. President Kamoutsas respectfully asked the Board vote to support this Institutional Neutrality Statement.

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Ms. Ross to approve the Institutional Neutrality Statement. All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

President Kamoutsas then shared some other highlights for his report.

Registration

- The Fall 2026 Semester has started at Polk State College with 16-week and eight-week Fastrack 1 classes. Registration continues for 12-week classes that will start on September 8 and eight-week Fastrack 2 classes that will start on October 6.
- Polk State hosted 942 first-time-in-college students and approximately 125 of their parents or guardians during First Flight Freshman Welcome events on the Winter Haven Campus on July 31 and on the Lakeland Campus on August 7. These events aim to introduce students to campus, faculty and staff, resources and wraparound services so they can familiarize themselves with College expectations, student life and more. There are many opportunities to enhance the student experience, especially for these first-time-in-college students, which we intend to implement.

Ellucian Banner

- Banner Finance is stable and well-positioned for further optimization; Banner Student is progressing toward greater stability and automation readiness; and Banner Human Resources is awaiting completion. Across departments, business processes and institutional definitions can be better aligned and the IT department is working toward a clean integration of

platforms like Slate admissions, Watermark advising, and Sharpen to create a more connected ecosystem and avoid new silos. While there is still much work to be done, the team is working diligently to successfully integrate into all Banner features.

Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) Climate Survey for Community Colleges

The College engaged the Belk Center for Community College Research and Leadership to administer the Personal Assessment of the College Environment, or PACE, Climate Survey for Community Colleges to all full-time employees in April 2026.

- The Belk Center is part of North Carolina State University's College of Education and focuses on strengthening community colleges through leadership development and applied research. The Center works with institutions across the country on initiatives such as the PACE employee climate survey, helping colleges better understand the employee experience and identifying opportunities for improvement.
- The survey was distributed to 567 employees and achieved a 56.6% response rate. Of the 321 Polk State employees who completed the PACE survey, 77.6% also provided written comments. This is significantly higher than the typical 50% response rate for open-ended questions.
- Survey respondents included 176 staff members, 100 faculty members, 32 administrators, and 13 respondents who did not identify their position.
- The survey included 46 five-point Likert-type questions, with responses ranging from 1 to 5. The questions were organized around four climate factors
 - Institutional Structure
 - Student Focus
 - Supervisory Relationships, and
 - Teamwork
- Polk State's results were compared with those of other institutions similar in size and geographic location.
- The overall mean score was 3.743, with Teamwork receiving the highest mean score at 4.137 and Institutional Structure receiving the lowest at 3.289.
- The College is continuing to examine the quantitative data and qualitative responses. The preliminary assessment indicates that the primary areas for improvement generally center on transparency, communication, and compensation concerns.
- President Kamoutsas shared that the work he has engaged in since day one, and has encouraged throughout the institution, is already helping address some of these concerns. Being present, listening, and engaging directly with faculty and staff are central to his leadership approach. He is taking a purposeful and deliberate approach to changing the

culture, encouraging and demonstrating the importance of collaboration across departments to strengthen operational effectiveness and support student success.

- He added that he is also committed to exploring opportunities to address compensation concerns while identifying efficiencies and remaining fiscally responsible. Retaining and recruiting an outstanding workforce is essential to providing students with the highest-quality educational experience.
- President Kamoutsas said that he looks forward to reporting back on progress as this work continues. He shared appreciation for the incredible work being done by every employee at Polk State College. He thanked Anthony Cornett, the Faculty Senate President, who had the idea of being able to communicate to all faculty. A video was filmed before this meeting that will be emailed to all employees to be able to capture what President Kamoutsas just presented to the Board with more detail on the survey findings.

Spotlights

Governor Ron DeSantis and the Florida Department of Transportation named Polk State as a preferred partner in supporting workforce development for the future of transportation in Florida. President Kamoutsas thanked the Board members that were able to attend that day.

Polk State and Florida Polytechnic University entered into an articulation agreement, establishing the Eagle to Phoenix Pathway program for students. Under the agreement, Polk State students can complete their Associate in Arts (AA) degree and all required prerequisites on the College's campuses before seamlessly transferring to one of 10 targeted bachelor's degree programs at Florida Poly – the state's only public university exclusively dedicated to STEM.

12. Attorney's Report

a. Annual Conflict of Interest Statements

Mr. Carmichael reviewed the **Annual Conflict of Interest Statement** and distributed copies to all Board members, requesting that they sign and return their completed forms to Melissa LaRock at the conclusion of the meeting.

13. Informational Items

a. Future Education Abroad/Away Experiences – Dr. Amy Bratten

Dr. Bratten presented the planned student study abroad/away experiences for the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 academic years to the Board.

b. Student Services Enrollment Strategy: From Recruitment to Registration – Mr. Jay Culver

Mr. Culver presented a Student Services Enrollment Strategy which involves engaging with students throughout the process rather than waiting for them to ask for help. The Fall 2026 Term showed there was a larger applicant pool and a higher application-to-registration conversion rate. Student Services added additional outreach events to increase Polk State's visibility which allowed

more students and families to receive personalized assistance. Application activity accelerated significantly during late spring and summer, and Student Services responded through several targeted strategies.

The next steps in this strategy will be to have weekly completion workshops/orientations earlier, begin caseload outreach earlier, build enrollment at the centers and high schools, and be proactive with students' hold clearance. To provide continuous improvement, Student Services will review results throughout the enrollment cycle instead of waiting until the end of the semester.

In closing Mr. Culver stated that Student Services will strive to deliver Publix-like customer service and become known as the Publix of state colleges. Employees will stand to greet students and visitors, smile, shake hands, and make personal connections. Snacks and water will be provided when registration lines and waiting periods become long. Employees will go above and beyond so every student who walks through the doors feels seen, heard, and valued.

President Kamoutsas expressed that he has had meetings with all Student Services staff members and has been very clear in what the expectations are. Ms. Barnhart thanked Mr. Culver for his efforts and that of Student Services. She reminded him that these touchpoint efforts are what will bring a student from a prospective student to a graduate of Polk State College. Ms. Bell Barnett responded that she's very thankful for these strides that are being made because students are our business. She also encouraged reviewing the social platforms and taking into consideration their issues and comments. Ms. Ross asked the board to join her in holding them accountable to do this every semester and offered the board's help, if needed, and encouragement. Mr. Davis shared that he's heard in the community what the College's breakdowns are, and the steps outlined from Mr. Culver will take care of some of those. He also told Mr. Culver to let the Board know if they don't have the tools they need to follow this plan.

14. Faculty Spotlight

Noted: Mr. Kyle Davis left the meeting at this time.

President Kamoutsas introduced Ms. Jaime Selph, Associate Dean of Health Sciences, who introduced Angel Martinez, EMS Clinical Coordinator and alumnus of the program. Mr. Martinez spoke very highly of his time at the College as a student and about how proud he is now as a coordinator. He said that there is one thing he hopes every student takes away from their time in the EMS Program. "Take the first step. Put in the work. Stay Committed. And never underestimate where that first step can take you."

Ms. Barnhart thanked Mr. Martinez for sharing his story. She then turned the meeting over to President Kamoutsas to complete the organization portion of the meeting.

15. District Board of Trustees Elections, Resolutions, and Meeting Schedule

a. Election of 2026-2027 Chair and Vice Chair

Ms. Ross moved, seconded by Ms. Barnhart, to approve of the election of Mr. Littleton as Chair 2026-2027. All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Ms. Ross, to approve of the election of Mr. Lester as Vice Chair 2026-2027. All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

b. Resolution #795 Signature Facsimile (FY 2026-2027)

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Ms. Barnhart, to approve Resolution #795 Signature Facsimile (FY 2026-2027). All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

c. Resolution #796 Signature Facsimile Personnel (FY 2026-2027)

Ms. Barnhart moved, seconded by Mr. Lester, to approve Resolution #796 Signature Facsimile Personnel (FY 2026-2027). All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

d. Proposed 2026-2027 DBOT Meeting Schedule

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Ms. Barnhart, to approve the Proposed 2026-2027 DBOT Meeting Schedule. All members voted affirmatively. Motion carries.

16. Board Member Final Remarks

Mr. Littleton welcomed Mr. Webb to the Board. He thanked Ms. Barnhart for her service this past year and he acknowledged how thankful he is to have President Kamoutsas at Polk State College.

Mr. Webb shared a little about his work experience and his business. He stated he is honored and was overwhelmed when he got the call to serve on this Board. But, he feels that the Board members, the president, and College community are great.

Mr. Lester thanked Ms. Barnhart for her service this past year and spoke about her work ethic. He also congratulated President Kamoutsas on his first days at Polk State. He congratulated Attorneys Carmichael and Smith on their new contracts and how grateful he is to have them.

Ms. Ross thanked Ms. Barnhart for her service and welcomed President Kamoutsas and his wife, Rachel, to Polk County.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:24 p.m.

	9/28/2026
Mr. Greg Littleton	Date
DBOT Chair	
	9/28/2026
Anastasios Kamoutsas	Date
President	