

MINUTES
POLK STATE COLLEGE
District Board of Trustees Capital Campaign Workshop
Monday, August 25, 2025 – 3:00 p.m.
Polk State Center for Public Safety, CPS 267

Ms. Cindy Hartly Ross welcomed everyone to the August 25, 2025, District Board of Trustees Capital Campaign Workshop at 3:00 p.m.

Members Present: Ms. Ann Barnhart, Ms. Ashley Bell Barnett, Mr. Greg Littleton, Ms. Teresa Martinez, Ms. Cindy Hartley Ross, and Mr. Ashley Troutman

Members Absent:

Statement from Board Chair

Chair Ross announced that Carter Consulting, who was hired by the Polk State College Foundation Board of Directors to assist the Foundation in embarking on a capital campaign, was present this afternoon. She noted that she had the pleasure of listening to the progress made by Carter and the Foundation staff during the Foundation's recent Board meeting, as she represented the District Board of Trustees. She then emphasized that it was important to note, as a Board, that they do not have oversight over the Foundation. As a 5013c, the Foundation is led by its Board of Directors with the mission of supporting the College's mission and students.

Chair Ross requested Dr. Steve Warner, Vice President for Resource Development & Executive Director of the Polk State College Foundation, to introduce the representatives from Carter: President & CEO Steve Higgins, CFRE; Managing Director Kerry Bartlett, CFRE; and Managing Director Stephen Sokany, MBA.

Mr. Higgins shared that Carter has been engaged for 4-5 months with a planning (feasibility) study.

Planning Study Findings and Recommendations

- **Study Overview & Purpose**

- **Study Goals**

- Ensure the five campaign essentials are in place for Polk State College Foundation's campaign
 - Leadership
 - Compelling and emotional case for support
 - Adequate internal resources
 - A great plan
 - Access to contributable dollars
- Assess receptivity and support for the initiatives proposed by Polk State College Foundation
- Identify potential obstacles to overcome and internal preparation requirements
- Recommend a pathway forward of immediate next steps
- Determine likelihood for volunteering, giving and feasibility of goal

- **Interview Sample**

- 18 individuals participated in interviews
 - 3 current or former Board members
 - 7 potential Top 10 donors (perceived capable of investing \$500,000 or more)
 - 9 potential Next Tier donors (perceived capable of investing \$100,000 to \$250,000)

- 2 potential Community donors (perceived capable of investing \$10,000 to \$50,000)
- 2 Suggested Leaders
- **Stakeholder Feedback**
 - Public image and reputation
 - Polk State College regarded as a valued and respected institution
 - Strong partner with workforce development
 - Enhancing its reputation as a four-year degree-granting institution
 - Opinion of the plan – 87% support the overall summary
 - Endorsed need for a new campus in a rapidly growing area of county
 - Understand opportunity to meet educational and workforce needs
 - Project summary feedback
 - Health sciences program seen as the most important component of the campus
 - Hospitals will benefit the most from this campus
 - Increased clarity is needed to demonstrate how this new campus aligns with and impacts the College's vision
 - Attainability of financial goal
 - Cautious optimism about achieving goal
 - Emergence of strong leadership and strategic corporate partnerships will be critical
 - Cultural and geographical divide between east and west may impact private philanthropy
 - Priority and financial support
 - 85% of participants said they would financially support the campaign
 - No participant cited Polk State College Foundation as a top philanthropic priority
 - Only one Top 10 prospect would consider a gift at that level
 - Nearly 60% did not respond when asked if they would consider a gift at a specific level
 - Leadership and volunteering
 - No participants said they would consider a campaign chair position
 - Half of participants indicate a willingness to consider volunteering at some level
 - Board engagement
 - The participants who knew Polk State College Foundation Board members believe they could manage a \$20 million campaign
 - While the Board has experience with special events, a capital campaign requires training and strategic engagement
 - Readiness to proceed
 - An update addressing the recent story in the media needs to be communicated before many participants will consider a gift
 - Early and strategic stakeholder engagement must be a priority
 - Representation from all areas of the county is essential
- **Recommendations: Planning & Launching a Campaign**
 - Secure Polk State College Foundation Board approval for the campaign and launch a campaign planning initiative
 - Execute a focused leadership phase with a provisional \$10 million goal
 - Identify the Top 20 prospects with a giving capacity of \$250,000 or more
 - Enlist a small volunteer group for focused prospect review
 - Design customized engagement strategies

- 1:1 solicitation strategies required for all leadership donor prospects
- Recruit a Strategic Advisory Council for the campaign
 - Four to six recognized community leaders with influence and connections
 - Time-limited commitment to campaign planning
 - Polk State College President and Foundation Executive Director will jointly support the Council
 - Members may transition to the Campaign Steering Committee
- Define and formalize the Board's role in building a culture of philanthropy through this campaign
 - Leadership group identified to create and implement a plan to personally solicit each Board member in partnership with Foundation Executive Director
 - 100% participation
 - Orientation around comfortable campaign conversations
 - Assist with identifying additional prospects
- Transform the initial case summary into a case for support
 - Vision for being a key driver of the region's economic engine
 - Project details well defined
 - Emotionally compelling student success stories
 - Move impact from Haines City/Davenport to entire region
 - Greater clarity on project details, timeline and funding
- Develop an annual fund and major gifts acquisition strategy
 - Model a philanthropy-focused culture for all members of the college community
 - Create a case for recurring, sustainable annual support
 - Increase unrestricted operational fundraising by \$1.5 million over next three years
 - Build a major gift pipeline for phase 2 of the capital campaign
- Invest in intensive campaign training for the internal Polk State College community
 - All administrators, faculty and staff gain a basic understanding of campaign best practices and story telling
- Build the fundraising infrastructure
 - Policies
 - Campaign Coordinator
 - Campaign budget
 - Donor stewardship plan
 - Development team job descriptions
 - Strategic planning
 - Donor database optimization
- Develop a plan to update key donors and prospects on recent Polk State College media story
 - Develop a communication plan for future matters that may impact philanthropy
 - Communication to donors and prospects from the Polk State College and Foundation leadership
 - Polk State College Foundation and Polk State College OCPA continue to be viewed as equal partners when creating donor communications
 - Optimize opportunities to align Polk State College messaging with fundraising efforts
- Assess outcomes of leadership phase and develop strategies for Phase 2 of the campaign
 - Launch thorough evaluation process to validate institution's ability and donor interest in Phase 2 to complete the campaign
- Immediate next steps

- Polk State College Foundation Board approves capital campaign and launches of campaign planning initiative
- District Board of Trustees endorses Foundation Board's approval of the capital campaign
- Foundation leadership, with campaign counsel, develops and executes plan for the focused leadership phase with a provisional \$10 million goal

Discussion:

Ms. Barnett

- Ms. Barnett asked Carter's representatives if they have experienced foundations that are "autonomous" from their colleges. Mr. Higgins stated that he has seen operations both ways; 50/50. Attorney Wilson added that direct report organizations are subject to statute to report to the president.
- Ms. Barnett suggested tapping into GiveWell Community Foundation.
- Ms. Barnett encouraged ongoing giving via the annual fund developed by Carter.

Mr. Troutman

- Mr. Troutman questioned how recent media articles may pause campaign development. Mr. Higgins stated that he does not see a need for a pause.
- Mr. Troutman stated that from a leadership standpoint, there is a divide.

Ms. Ross


- Ms. Ross clarified that the Polk State Foundation has embarked on a previous capital campaign, but it has been a long time.

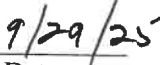
Adjournment:

Having no further business, the workshop adjourned at 4:00 p.m.


Ms. Ann Barnhart
DBOT Chair


Date


Dr. Angela M. Garcia Falconetti
President


Date