

MINUTES
POLK STATE COLLEGE
District Board of Trustees Meeting
Monday, August 25, 2025 – 4:00 p.m.
Polk State Center for Public Safety, CPS 267

Dr. Angela M. Garcia Falconetti called the August 25, 2025, District Board of Trustees meeting to order at approximately 4:15 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:

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Special Recognitions

President Garcia Falconetti briefly recognized student M'kiyah Rucker who serves as Vice President for the Lakeland Student Government Association. Ms. Rucker briefly addressed the Board to share her educational and personal journey at Polk State.

Public Comment

Chair Ross asked Melissa LaRock if there were any public comments. Ms. LaRock provided the public comment sign-in sheet to Chair Ross and Attorney Wilson. Professor Jennifer Shaw read a written statement on behalf of Holly Arnaud, who was not in attendance. Ms. Shaw then requested permission to distribute copies of the statement to members of the Board. Christine Lee disseminated the statement copies to each of the board members.

Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve the agenda for August 25, 2025. All members voted affirmatively.

District Board of Trustees Reorganization

a. Election of 2025-2026 Chair and Vice Chair

Ms. Martinez moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve the election of Ms. Barnhart as 2025-2026 Chair. All members voted affirmatively.

Ms. Ross moved, seconded by Ms. Martinez, to approve the election of Mr. Littleton as 2025-2026 Vice Chair. All members voted affirmatively.

b. Resolution #792 – Signature Facsimile (FY 2025-2026)

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Littleton, to approve Resolution #792 Signature Facsimile (FY 2025-2026). All members voted affirmatively.

c. Resolution #793 – Signature Facsimile Personnel (FY 2025-2026)

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Ms. Ross, to approve Resolution #793 Signature Facsimile Personnel (FY 2025-2026). All members voted affirmatively.

d. Proposed 2025-2026 DBOT Meeting Schedule

President Garcia Falconetti emphasized that the 2025-2026 meeting schedule can be modified as needed. She reminded the group that the Winter Haven Student Center (WST 126) will not be available for District Board of Trustees or any other meetings until 2027, due to it being temporarily repurposed for nursing classes. Ms. Bell Barnett inquired about rotating meeting locations among more Polk State sites. There was general consensus to modify some meeting locations as appropriate. A revised 2025-2026 DBOT meeting schedule will be provided to Board members once finalized.

Mr. Littleton moved, seconded by Ms. Barnhart, to approve the Proposed 2025-2026 DBOT Meeting Schedule with a modification that some meeting locations may change. All members voted affirmatively.

President Garcia Falconetti then handed the meeting over to new Board Chair, Ms. Barnhart. Ms. Bell Barnett inquired about the adding a “new business” item to the agenda. Chair Barnhart stated there would be time for new business discussion during the existing agenda.

Approval of Board Minutes

a. June 23, 2025, Regular Board Minutes

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Ms. Ross, to approve the June 23, 2025, Regular Board minutes. All members voted affirmatively.

Consent Agenda Items:

- a. Tangible Personal Property Deletions for August 2025** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- b. Polk State College Personnel Actions Report for June and July 2025** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- c. Polk State College Collegiate High Schools Personnel Actions Report for June and July 2025** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- d. Polk State College Salary Schedule Changes for August 2025** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- e. Financial Statements for July 2025** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.

Mr. Littleton moved, seconded by Ms. Martinez, to approve the consent agenda items for June, July, and August 2025. All members voted affirmatively.

Those items included under the Consent section are self-explanatory and are not expected to require discussion before action. Items will be enacted by one motion. If discussion is desired by any Board member on any item, the item should be identified and removed from the Consent agenda for separate action.

Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

None.

Business Services Action Items:

a. Facilities: Revised Capital Improvement Program (CIP): FY 2026-27 through FY 2028-29 – Mr. Reggie Webb

Mr. Webb presented and recommended for approval the Revised Capital Improvement Program (CIP): FY 2026-27 through FY 2028-29.

Ms. Ross moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve the Revised Capital Improvement Program (CIP): FY 2026-27 through FY 2028-29. All members voted affirmatively.

b. Academic Affairs: General Education Review After FLDOE Feedback – Dr. Amy Bratten

Dr. Bratten presented and recommended for approval the General Education Review After FLDOE Feedback.

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve the General Education Review After FLDOE Feedback. All members voted affirmatively.

Board Rule Review

a. First Reading Board Rules (No action required):

None.

b. Second Reading Board Rules (Final Approval):

None.

Board Chair's Remarks

Chair Barnhart thanked fellow Board members for their confidence in her as chair and said that she looks forward to working with them. She then shared several requests regarding meeting etiquette.

a. Meeting conduct: She expressed a shared responsibility to guide discussions and keep on topic. She suggested a “parking lot” to table notable topics that are not on the current agenda for future meetings. She requested a focus on ideas rather than personal attacks, and to consider solutions together. She stressed that once a vote is taken, members should support the Board’s decision.

b. Cell phone use: She emphasized the minimal use of cell phones during the short time they are together.

- c. Foundation representation:** Ms. Ross agreed to serve for one year as the District Board of Trustees representative during Polk State College Foundation Board meetings.

President's Report

President Garcia Falconetti distributed a "President's Report" that highlighted activities occurring around the College to the Board members for their information.

- a. Florida College System August 8, 2025, Estimating Conference – Dr. Mary Clark**

President Garcia Falconetti requested Dr. Mary Clark, Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation, and Research, to reaffirm the final published results of the August 8, 2025, Florida College System (FCS) Estimating Conference and to provide a timeline of when the Board will receive the published public reports that provide snapshots throughout the year of the College's fundable full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment per the State's process. Dr. Clark distributed a reporting timeline for 2025-2026 for the Board's information. It highlighted FTE report names, open dates, load dates, close dates, and Board meeting dates on which estimates would be provided to the Board. In addition, Dr. Clark provided a copy of the final published 2024-2025 FTE-3 report for the FCS. Discussion was had regarding the Board meeting FTE estimate reporting dates. A request was made to be informed of FTE estimates prior to estimates being made public by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). Dr. Clark will inquire with the FDOE to learn when estimates will be posted publicly, to inform the DBOT prior to the public. Chair Barnhart emphasized that the College needs time to determine an estimate delivery platform.

- b. President Garcia Falconetti read a statement to the Board:**

President Garcia Falconetti provided details regarding a \$125,000 request by the College of the Foundation to financially support students. The statement read as follows:

It is important to underscore that the respective executive team members and I have worked directly with the Department of Education to ensure the accuracy of data submitted and to rely on the correct resources per state statute, that are legally sound to apply to support students. The Department of Education has guided the process and through a thorough review, endorses the College's submission of the fundable FTE and the measures employed to ensure the accuracy of the data. The Department of Education verified that the College's data and actions to assist students financially are in accordance with Florida statutes and State Board of Education rules.

I will now take a moment to address the \$125,000 request by the College of the Foundation to financially support students.

Let's take a moment to recap - I want to remind you, as shared during the June 23, District Board of Trustees meeting, the fall of 2024 and spring of 2025 semesters were the first timeframes in which the College pulled data from the Banner SASS system only. The data was migrated from the old legacy dos base Genesis system to the 21st century Banner SASS cloud-based system – while all of the data was transferred, not all of the data migrated into the correct categories. Dr. Clark, during the June 23, Board meeting, provided an example of this – several Florida resident students were included in the non-resident category.

The report for the March 7, 2025, estimating conference reflecting a decline was primarily due the mis-categorization of data migration and staff changes. The institutional technology, institutional effectiveness, and student services teams worked diligently to filter out these anomalies.

As published during the August 8, Florida College System Estimating Conference, Polk State's fundable FTE reflects an increase of 2.49% for 2024-2025 - that included fall 2024 and spring 2025 semester students along with summer of 2024. I could not be more proud of the staff and administrators who worked weekends and long hours to ensure the integrity of the College's data and to position Polk State as one of the first colleges in the State to transition to Banner Sass.

Now, an update on where matters stand today.

Trustee Bell Barnett, I did not provide an immediate response to your questions because we needed additional information and it was my intention to respond to your questions with the Board today.

Respectfully trustees, time was needed to further evaluate state statute and to work with the Florida Department of Education to identify the appropriate next steps as requested by the Department.

Trustee Bell Barnett's questions regarding the request for scholarships were:

"Knowing that the foundation did not cover the \$38,446.94 balance needed to reconcile 51 students from fall of 2024...will the college be responsible for this debt? If so, what fund will be used to cover this expense?"

To answer the questions – 1. Yes and No. The college could assist with funding the students or No – the notifications on student accounts stating that their balances were cleared could be removed - and 2. We needed to coordinate with the Department of Education to ensure that if the College supported the students financially, all was done in accordance with state statute.

It is critical to note that the determination was made with Ellucian Banner NOT to drop fall of 2024 and spring of 2025 students who had balances on their accounts until the data in the new system was validated.

Now, I will transition to the request made of the Foundation.

The Polk State College Foundation Board of Directors Executive Committee held a special meeting on Monday, May 19 at 1:30pm. Vice President of Resource Development and Foundation Executive Director Dr. Steve Warner presented the College's request to its Executive Committee.

The DRAFT minutes from the May 19, Executive Committee meeting state the following:

"Dr. Warner explained to the Executive Committee that the college had made a request to the Foundation for funds to help students whose accounts had not been paid for the Spring 2025 semester. Dr. Warner described that due to the transition of the college's ERP system to Ellucian

Banner SaaS, there were student accounts that had not been paid, and those students had not been dropped from the system.

The college requested for the Foundation to gift funds to help cover these account balances to allow for these students to be able to complete their certificate and degree programs.

Dr. Warner mentioned that the Foundation team looked at our available scholarship funds and determined that we could provide [UP TO] \$125,000 to help cover student balances if the Executive Committee chose to move forward with this request. Any eligible students would need to meet the Foundation's scholarship criteria."

This request was unanimously approved.

Why was \$125,000 requested?

It was a projected amount to rely on UP TO \$125,000 to assist students through unrestricted emergency funds with the goal of supporting students to continue their education. As you are aware, the Foundation's mission is to support our students. In clearing their account balances for this one-time-only situation, would allow students to reenroll, and not to have to deal with a credit agency in which their credit scores would be impacted. Most of these students are economically disadvantaged.

What was the scholarship needs-based criteria?

Students needed to have a minimum grade point average of 2.0

They could not have repeated a course a third time

They could not fail a course.

They could not withdraw from a class.

Tuition, fees, and bookstore charges were eligible.

Operating in good faith

I assure you that throughout this process, we operated in good faith. There was a misunderstanding between the College and the Foundation in which the Finance Office informed the students per their student accounts that they received financial support fall 2024 and spring 2025.

2nd request of Foundation

The Foundation's Executive Committee met during its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, August 5, 2025, at 2pm.

The DRAFT minutes from this August 5, meeting state the following:

"Dr. Warner explained that the Foundation was recently billed by the college and the Foundation team reviewed the list of students and identified that some students were from fall and some from spring. Dr. Warner mentioned that the Foundation has yet to cover this cost due to this discovery.

Further discussion took place regarding that the original request was only for the spring semester. Dr. Falconetti explained that there was a miscommunication between the college and the Foundation regarding which semesters were eligible to cover student accounts. The Foundation shared the criteria of the spring semester with the college, but the college did not have written record of this.”

The Executive Committee unanimously approved \$89,403.39 to help cover remaining student account balances from the fall 2024 and spring 2025 semesters. This equated to \$38,446.94 to financially support 51 fall of 2024 students and \$50,956.45 to support 84 students for the spring 2025 semester – which was \$35,957 lower than the approved UP TO \$125,000 in financial support for spring 2025 semester students only.

Private meeting of Foundation

The Foundation’s Executive Committee held a **private meeting** on August 7, 2025. The DRAFT minutes from the meeting state:

“The Committee reconvened to further discuss the motion approved on August 5, 2025, related to funding support for student accounts affected by a college software upgrade.

After reviewing the original May 19, 2025, approval and discussing the implications of including Fall 2024 students, the committee expressed concern over deviating from the original intent, which was to assist Spring 2025 students only.”

Now to discuss the College’s support of the fall 2024 students.

In accordance with state statute and the Florida College System’s annual financial aid fee report, the College will utilize exemptions and financial aid need based funding to ensure the fall of 2024 students receive the respective financial support to continue their education.

It is important to underscore once again...the Department of Education verified the College’s data and actions to assist students financially is in accordance with Florida statutes and State Board of Education rules.

In summary, first, I am pleased to report that this situation is behind us.

Second, it may take two to three years to optimize our performance with this advanced new system. Keep in mind that most institutions have taken as much as three years to complete and fully integrate such major ERP transitions. So...we are mostly through phase 1.

Third, it is critical to underscore that College money was never applied to student accounts.

Fourth, a total of 60 students who benefited from financial support are currently enrolled in the current semester, reflecting a 45% return on investment to date. Student services continues to work

with these students to encourage them to continue their education. As a reminder, students are still registering for a 12 week fall term that begins on September 6, and Fast Track 2 begins on October 8.

In conclusion and moving forward, a team has been assembled to review enrollment data on a weekly basis. These leaders will work to validate that data continues to be categorized correctly. In addition and as stated, students who have not paid for their tuition and fees are now being dropped for nonpayment.

We will also join forces with the three other colleges that underwent a transition to Banner Saas to learn from each other as we progress to eliminate barriers for students and continue to determine the best path forward.

Trustees, I assure you that the staff and administrators working on this transition are unquestionably focused on student success. We have positioned ourselves well and we are moving forward. And the Department of Education is pleased with the progress and direction in which we are moving.

Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity to address the Board.

Discussion ensued. President Garcia Falconetti requested Dr. Steve Warner, Vice President for Resource Development and Executive Director of the Polk State College Foundation, and Ms. Joanie Malone, Chief Financial Officer for the Polk State College Foundation to respond to questions and discussion.

President Garcia Falconetti shared that this was a one-time situation because of the transition to Banner. She did not override processes of the Foundation, and the Executive Committee of the Foundation Board approved the original request.

Dr. Warner addressed the question of what the normal protocol or procedure for the Foundation is to apply scholarship funding. He shared that typically it happens internally with the Foundation's Scholarship Specialist who would take student or College requests and begin applying to the student accounts. In this case, that did not happen – the Foundation did not see the money or invoice until June 30, when the Foundation received the list of students who were submitted by Financial Aid. He added that Ms. Malone went through that list to ensure those students met the criteria approved by the Foundation's Executive Board.

Discussion continued.

Chair Barnhart recommended tabling the discussion for a future meeting when more information is available. President Garcia Falconetti recommended that Chair Barnhart and Attorney Wilson contact the Chancellor of the Florida College System on this matter. She emphasized that she has

worked alongside the Chancellor and the system's Financial Officer, and that state statute was followed throughout this process.

Ms. Bell Barnett distributed a document with questions to the Board and Attorney Wilson.

Attorney Wilson shared that state statute outlines that requests for information should come from the Board, not individual members. He said that Chair Barnhart and President Garcia Falconetti will review Ms. Bell Barnett's request and provide a recommendation on an appropriate response.

Discussion continued.

Chair Barnhart asked all Board members to refrain from accusatory comments.

Attorney's Report:

a. Annual Conflict of Interest Statements

Mr. Wilson distributed an annual Conflict of Interest Statement for the Board's review. He asked them to please reach out to him with any questions. He requested that each Board member sign the statement and return it to Christine Lee.

b. Board Self-Evaluation

Mr. Wilson announced that the DBOT's self-evaluation instrument will be sent electronically to the Board members following today's meetings. A deadline for completion will be provided in the email. The results summary of the self-evaluation will be presented during the next Board meeting on September 29, 2025.

Informational Items:

a. Investment Interest Comparison for June 2025 – Ms. Cindy Baker

Ms. Baker presented and reviewed the Investment Interest Comparison for June 2025 for the Board's information. No Board action required.

b. Investment Interest Comparison for July 2025 – Ms. Cindy Baker

Ms. Baker presented and reviewed the Investment Interest Comparison for July 2025 for the Board's information. No Board action required.

c. Capital Project Status Report for August 2025 – Mr. Reggie Webb

Mr. Webb presented and reviewed the Capital Project Status Report for August 2025 for the Board's information. No Board action required.

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

Dr. Bratten presented and reviewed the Future Education Abroad/Away Experiences for the Board's information. No Board action required.

Collegiate High School Report:

a. Polk State Lakeland Collegiate High School Enrollment/Demographic Information for AY 2025-2026 – Mr. Rick Jeffries

Mr. Jeffries presented and reviewed the Polk State Lakeland Collegiate High School Enrollment/Demographic Information for AY 2025-2026 for the Board's information. No Board action required.

Board Member Final Remarks:

Ms. Ross encouraged Board members to support the new Florida College System Council of Trustees, which was formally the Association of Florida Colleges Trustees Commission. Gulf Coast State College District Board of Trustees member Bill Cramer will serve as its Chair. She noted that going forward, Chair Barnhart will bring some information to the Board as the new chair.

Ms. Bell Barnett reiterated the need to add "new business" to the agenda. She also inquired about whether the Board has a direct link for members of the public to listen to the Board meetings. Chair Barnhart said this will be considered with support from legal counsel.

Mr. Littleton suggested a third-party mediator to help navigate through the recent challenges. President Garcia Falconetti, in coordination with Chair Barnhart and Attorney Wilson, will bring back some ideas on mediation. Mr. Littleton also emphasized the need for an external satisfaction survey to be conducted. President Garcia Falconetti shared that the College is currently evaluating three satisfaction survey firms. The firms will be presented during the September 8 meeting of Faculty Senate to garner input.

Mr. Troutman shared that he had sent several "parking lot" type questions to Attorney Wilson to be brought forward to future meetings.

Chair Barnhart thanked all for their efforts and announced that the next Board meeting will take place on Monday, September 29, 2025, at the Polk State Lakeland Campus in LTB 1100.

Adjournment:

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:45 p.m.



Ms. Ann Barnhart
DBOT Chair

9/29/25

Date

 9/29/25

Dr. Angela M. Garcia Falconetti Date
President