

**MINUTES**  
**POLK STATE COLLEGE**  
**District Board of Trustees Meeting**  
**Monday, February 23, 2026 – 4:00 p.m.**  
**Polk State Airside West Center – Room 150**

Chair Ann Barnhart called the February 23, 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. Ashley Troutman

**Members Absent:** None

**1. Meeting Called to Order**

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

**b. Student Spotlight**

- Interim President Dr. Anne Kerr introduced Principal of Polk State College Lakeland Collegiate High School Mr. Rick Jeffries to introduce student Ms. Alana Coombs.
  - Ms. Coombs briefly addressed the Board and shared that she was part of the inaugural 10th grade class last year. She is currently enrolled full time in college courses in her 11th grade year and will be part of the first graduating group of 10th graders next year. Ms. Coombs was recently invited to be a part of the Disney Dreamers program this spring.

**c. Special Recognition**

- Chair Barnhart presented a Polk State College Proclamation honoring outgoing Board Attorney Don Wilson for 35 years of distinguished service to the Polk State College District Board of Trustees. Through his longstanding role with Boswell & Dunlap, LLP and as General Counsel to the District Board of Trustees, Mr. Wilson has upheld and advanced this tradition of commitment, providing trusted legal guidance that has supported the College's governance, growth, and evolution from Polk Junior College to Polk Community College and now Polk State College. Mr. Wilson expressed gratitude and reflected on some of the highlights of his tenure.

Chair Barnhart announced that Dean of Health Professions Beth Luckett will offer an optional tour of the Airside Center West imaging labs immediately following the conclusion of today's DBOT meeting.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Carl Fish, Editor of the Daily Ridge, requested to make a public comment related to agenda item 4. a. Virtual Link for Public Attendance. He advocated for the streaming and archiving of DBOT meetings for more access to the important work the College is doing. He stated that it would “embolden public confidence.”

## **2. Adoption of Agenda**

Chair Barnhart announced that there was an item added to today’s agenda: item a. Resolution #794, Signature Facsimile (FY 2025-2026) under item 12. Attorney’s Report. This item ensures that Dr. Kerr can sign for the College – specifically checks which have two signatures for the Chair and the President.

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve the agenda, with the addition of agenda item 12. a. Resolution #794, Signature Facsimile (FY2025-2026). All members voted affirmatively.

## **3. Approval of Board Minutes**

### **a. November 17, 2025, Special Board Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Ross moved, seconded by Ms. Bell Barnett, to approve November 17, 2025, Special Board Meeting minutes. All members voted affirmatively. Mr. Davis abstained from the vote as he was not a member of the Board at that time.

### **b. January 26, 2026, Regular Board Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Littleton moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve January 26, 2026, Regular Board Meeting minutes. All members voted affirmatively.

### **c. February 5, 2026, Special Board Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve February 5, 2026, Special Board Meeting minutes. All members voted affirmatively.

## **4. Unfinished Business:**

### **a. Virtual Link for Public Attendance – Mr. David Fugett**

Chair Barnhart requested Mr. David Fugett provide an update on this unfinished business item. Mr. Fugett shared that he was requested to research this item from a budgetary, personnel, and security standpoint. He also enlisted the support of Vice President for Institutional Technology and Chief Information Officer Mr. Marty Gang and emphasized that they both came to the same conclusion separately. The conclusion was that this is not a good time to pursue this for the College, but it could be revisited in the future.

Some of the reasons are as follows:

- Due to the rotating site schedule for DBOT meetings, IT staff would need to set up new equipment (different microphones and cameras) at each location. Additional personnel would also be needed. As a public institution, the College might not be in a position due to budget constraints.

- Some legal concerns stem from potential inadvertent offline comments being captured and the need for ADA compliance with captioning. Meta data being exposed on camera is a concern as well. Mr. Fugett emphasized that all of this would require training of staff, time, effort, and money that the College is not prepared for at this time.
- Chair Barnhart asked Mr. Fugett for data on how many of the 28 institutions in the Florida College System (FCS) are currently using this level of technology. Mr. Fugett stated that fewer than five currently offer this.
- Chair Barnhart reminded the Board that during its last meeting there was a revised motion to wait for more details and information regarding a virtual link for public attendance. Before additional discussion, Chair Barnhart called for a motion to move forward as a College to provide a virtual link for public attendance. Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Ms. Bell Barnett, to approve moving forward with a virtual link for public attendance. Chair Barnhart then opened the floor for discussion from each Board member.
  - Ms. Ross asked for clarification on how many Colleges were polled. Chair Barnhart stated that all 28 FCS institutions were polled, with 17 responding. Of the 17 who responded, three stated “yes” to providing a virtual link.
  - Mr. Davis asked for an approximate cost to provide this. Mr. Fugett stated that he would need to get exact costs from Mr. Gang, but that it would be substantial and has not been budgeted at this time.
  - Mr. Littleton asked whether it was better for the Board to continue to rotate meeting sites all around the County or to stay put if this meant equipment and personnel costs would be less. He suggested piloting the virtual link for three to six months to determine the level of interest, and to test it at one stationary meeting location.
  - Ms. Bell Barnett stated that perhaps the site rotation could be reduced to a quarterly frequency. She inquired about utilizing the Owl system. Mr. Fugett stated that he has used this system frequently and it is better suited for panels. It frequently “looks” at the wrong thing. It could be done but is not the best solution. Ms. Bell Barnett suggested that archiving the audio recording made by AV staff online might be the first step.
  - Mr. Troutman echoed Ms. Bell Barnett’s suggestion to begin with posting the audio recording and Mr. Littleton’s suggestion to pilot video recording for a few months.
  - Discussion ensued about the approximate cost of an Owl and testing its use for the pilot.
- Chair Barnhart recommended an amendment to the prior motion: Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Ms. Bell Barnett, to approve the modified motion of posting the audio recordings (after research has been done) and then get the exact costs and the personnel needed before there is a recommendation.
- Ms. Bell Barnett made an amendment to the motion, seconded by Mr. Troutman that the audio that is recorded today is archived and put on the

website for access and establishing a timeline with costs and resources associated with providing a virtual option. Chair Barnhart emphasized that if the College moves in the direction of having a virtual option, this will drive the reasonableness of rotating DBOT sites all around the County. If so, the College would need to focus meeting sites on the Winter Haven and Lakeland campuses only. In addition, research and work will need to be done before posting audio recordings can occur. All but two members voted affirmatively. Chair Barnhart opposed it due to the timing not being right for the College with staffing constraints, and many major things going on including a presidential transition. Mr. Davis echoed the same sentiments with concerns of time over energy. Chair Barnhart stated that the ayes have it and the motion carries.

**b. Longitudinal Data for 2025-26 College Goals 1 and 2**

Chair Barnhart noted that the Longitudinal Data for 2025-26 College Goals 1 and 2 was included in the Board packet for member review.

**c. Florida College System/Polk State College Legislative Priority One-Pager**

Chair Barnhart noted the Florida College System/Polk State College Legislative Priority One-Pager was included in the Board packet for member review.

**d. Personal Assessment of Campus Environment (PACE) Climate Survey Update**

- The Personal Assessment of Campus Environment (PACE) Survey will be administered for over a three (3) week period from March 23 through April 10, 2026.
- The survey consists of 46 standardized questions along with three open-ended questions. It will be administered and the results compiled by the representatives at North Carolina State University.
- The survey will be distributed to all full-time regular, part-time regular, and grant-funded employees, consistent with the employee population surveyed in 2021.
- The Polk State team is aware that this Board would like to see an increase in the number of participants. Then the team will bring back how they are going to distribute the results to the Board, faculty and staff.

**5. Consent Agenda Items: Information**

- a. Polk State College Personnel Actions Report for January 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- b. Polk State College Collegiate High Schools Personnel Actions Report for January 2026**– Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- c. Employment Vacancy Update for February 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.

- d. Capital Project Status Report for February 2026** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.

**6. Consent Agenda Items: Action**

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

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, 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 January 2026 – Ms. Tamara Sakagawa on behalf of Ms. Cindy Baker**

Ms. Sakagawa presented and recommended for approval the Financial Statements for January 2026. Student Fees (Tuition) are approximately 66% of budget and approximately \$1 million higher than this time in 2024-25. Student Fees include the Spring 16-Week, 12-Week, and Fastrack 1 sessions, and reflect the most significant portion of Spring Student Fees for the current fiscal year. The final Spring session, Fastrack 2, begins March 5 with the final day to drop on March 11.

On the expense side, Salary expenditures are approximately \$27.5 million. This is 48% of the College's year-to-date budget and slightly less than this time last year due to enrollment management efforts. Additionally, Current Expense, which includes repairs and maintenance and contracted services, is in line at 62% of budget. Expenses continue to be monitored to ensure that planned projects are adequately funded, and other expenses are managed so that costs stay within budget. Capital Outlay includes PIPELINE (Nursing) grant expenditures that were budgeted in the 2024-25 budget year but didn't come through until the current year.

Mr. Littleton moved, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve Financial Statements for January 2026. All members voted affirmatively.

**9. Board Rule First Reading**

**a. DBOT Rule 1.03, Duties and Powers of the Board**

- In a prior Board meeting it was suggested that Rule 1.03, Powers and Duties of the Board, be strengthened by including some of the responsibilities of the Board members that are specifically listed in Florida Statute 1001.64. The edits accomplish this by:
  - Selectively listing certain critical responsibilities of the Board that are specifically listed in the statute.
  - Citing to the actual statute, emphasizing that all of the powers and duties set forth in the statute must be complied with.
  - The edits are not merely a 'cut and paste' of the entire lengthy statutes. Instead, they highlight the more important responsibilities

and duties of the Board while also directing the reader to the actual statute if more information is desired.

- Chair Barnhart reminded the group that this is the third time Rule 1.03 has been presented to this Board for a first reading. She then opened it up for discussion.
  - Ms. Bell Barnett referred to II. C. 1. – “the College President must indicate in writing the reason that a requested document should be executed prior to the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.” In particular, she asked for specific circumstances, the timeline for the written notification, and if the notification would be sent to the entire Board. Mr. Fugett defined this as an emergency provision that protects both the College and the authority of the Board. Mr. Wilson provided an example such as emergency repairs.
  - Mr. Troutman inquired about the specificity of the rule. Mr. Fugett stated that he is happy with the way it is written.
  - With no additional comments or questions, Chair Barnhart announced that Rule 1.03, Duties and Powers of the Board will now move forward to the next Board meeting (on March 30) for a second reading and final approval.

**b. DBOT Rule 1.10, Selection and Appointment of College President – Mr. David Carmichael**

- Mr. Carmichael emphasized that this is a critical time for this rule to be addressed as the Board is embarking on a presidential selection process. The existing rule has some issues with it such that the College needs to make some changes to.
  - The revisions include the elimination of the former paragraph number 6 which had a very job specific description which is not best suited for a general rule. He emphasized that rules need to be only as specific as necessary and as general as possible. The criteria previously stated that the president must have a doctorate. He further added that when the criteria are established in the job description, they can be specific and include the doctorate, but this is not applicable in a general rule.
  - The other primary change relates to some changes in the law and an Attorney General opinion about the presidential selection process operating “in the shade.” Rule 1.10, as it is currently structured, tends to violate this rule. We do everything in the “sunshine” but one of the exceptions is presidential selection can be partially done “in the shade.” For example, the shade would allow a candidate for this presidency to apply and not have their name and personal information relayed to the public initially. Once the search committee has a final slate of candidates, the candidates’ names do become subject to the “sunshine.” The idea of the rule is to encourage the finest candidates possible, and some candidates may not want their current boss to learn that they are looking for a new

job. He stressed that this Board would need to discuss a “shade meeting” and lay out some specific criteria of how to move forward. If existing rule is used, it requires setting up a screening committee and having details on who’s on the committee and how it operates. Mr. Carmichael and Mr. Fugett agree that the College does not need that kind of detail in this rule.

- The proposed revisions follow the first several paragraphs of the existing rule.
- It eliminates the previous paragraph that addressed a screening committee that potentially, according to the Attorney General, somebody other than the group could be making an initial decision on candidates.
- Streamline paragraph 3. to state that the Board Chair shall appoint members of the Search Committee.
- Paragraph 4. That the Board Chair shall provide a charge to the Search Committee that outlines the scope of the search, the estimated timeline for the search, and the Committee’s responsibilities.
- Paragraph 5. will remain as is.
- Paragraph 6. has the addition per the statue that all persons with access to confidential applicant information must sign a non-disclosure agreement for the “shade” portion of this process.
- Mr. Carmichael stressed that the “shade” meeting ends the moment finalists are selected and then their names become public.
- Chair Barnhart opened it up for questions.
  - Ms. Bell Barnett referred to paragraph 3 pertaining to the Board Chair appointing the members of the Search Committee. Chair Barnhart confirmed that the process behind the composition of the committee would still be defined by the Board.
  - Ms. Ross recommended asking the candidates one last time before becoming a finalist and going public. Chair Barnhart confirmed that this again is part of the process that will develop off the rule.
- With no additional comments or questions, Chair Barnhart announced that Rule 1.10, Selection and Appointment of the College President will now move forward to the next Board meeting (on March 30) for a second reading and final approval.
- Chair Barnhart emphasized that the College cannot move forward with the posting of the presidential position until the Board fully vets and approves Rule 1.10 at its next meeting (on March 30).

## **10. Board Chair’s Remarks**

### **a. “Becker’s Clinical Leadership” article**

- Highlighted that the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) annual pass rate declined to 69.1% of nursing candidates passing the exam in 2025.
- Chair Barnhart recognized AdventHealth Dean of Nursing Dr. Deleise Wilson and faculty for Polk State's Nursing Program's 100% pass rate in 2025.

**b. American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) "green sheet"**

- Highlighted the 2026 Community College Federal Legislative Priorities that were talked about at length during the recent ACCT National Legislative Summit and with the appropriate legislators who they met with while in Washington, D.C. - Congressman Darren Soto, Congressman Scott Franklin, Congressman Byron Donalds, and Senator Rick Scott.
- She reflected on how proud she was of the three Student Government Association presidents who also traveled to Washington, D.C.: Sebastian Cardenas, SGA president for the Polk State Winter Haven Campus, Mi'Kiyah Rucker, SGA president for the Polk State Lakeland Campus, and Subrina Akter, SGA president for the Polk State JD Alexander Center.

**11. President's Report**

Chair Barnhart turned the meeting over to Dr. Kerr in her first meeting as Polk State's interim president. Dr. Kerr briefly addressed the Board and thanked them for the opportunity to serve. She noted that one of her top priorities, if not her top priority, is that the SACSCOC submission is excellent and achieves the same level of success as the decennial submission. She then called upon Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation, and Research Dr. Mary Clark to provide an update on the SACSCOC 5<sup>th</sup> Year Report process.

**a. SACSCOC 5th Year Report Update – Dr. Mary Clark**

- Dr. Clark shared that it is her goal to keep the Board regularly updated through the process.
- The SACSCOC 5th Year Report is due on September 8, 2026. She confirmed that the College is on track with the timeline that was shared with the Board previously.
- Dr. Clark's office is currently reviewing all the narratives to ensure that the data is accurate and correct. She expects to have all 22 narratives read and ready for review by the end of March.
- The month of April will be spent working with stakeholders around the College to obtain all the supporting documentation needed to demonstrate compliance.
- In May, the leadership team will review the report before sending to the Office of Communications & Public Affairs for branding, final editing, and to ensure that everything is in the same voice.
- In July, the president will review with final edits in August.
- Dr. Clark stated that it is the goal to submit the final report before the September 8 deadline as the deadline is the day after Labor Day. Everything will be submitted in a portal rather than mailing this time.

- Chair Barnhart opened up for comments.
  - Ms. Ross inquired about getting feedback from SACSCOC. Dr. Clark confirmed that unlike the decennial reaffirmation where you have an off-site and on-site review prior to submission, the 5th year report is a one and done. She further highlighted that they have a goal of 0 non-compliances in the 22 core requirements to avoid being put on probation. However, there is an overarching goal to have no non-compliances not just with the core requirements.
  - Ms. Bell Barnett inquired if this was the time during the process when Board members would be interviewed. Dr. Clark confirmed that this does not occur during the 5th Year Report. The 5th year is a scaled-back version of the decennial review with only 22 core requirements as opposed to the full 76. The September 8 submission will be reviewed in November by SACSCOC and the College will get the results during the December annual meeting.
  - Ms. Bell Barnett requested Dr. Clark to provide an email with high level updates as we go through the process to provide as much support as possible.

## **12. Attorney's Report**

### **a. Resolution #794, Signature Facsimile (FY2025-2026)**

Mr. Littleton moved, seconded by Mr. Davis, to approve Resolution #794, Signature Facsimile (FY2025-2026). All members voted affirmatively.

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

### **a. Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School Accountability Plan Performance Targets and 2024-2025 Academic Year Performance – Ms. Patrice Bryant-Thigpen**

Ms. Bryant-Thigpen presented and reviewed the Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School Accountability Plan Performance Targets and 2024-2025 Academic Year Performance for the Board's Information.

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

Mr. Lester had no final remarks.

Ms. Bell Barnett enjoyed the testimony from the student, looked forward to A Night of Legacy event on April 23, and looked forward to working with Dr. Kerr.

Mr. Littleton thanked Attorney Wilson for his years of service and Dr. Kerr for the role she is serving for the College.

Ms. Ross thanked Attorney Wilson for his service, guidance, and support, and welcomed Dr. Kerr. She then requested Dr. Steve Warner to provide an update on sponsorship levels for A Night of Legacy. Dr. Warner confirmed that there are 45 total sponsorships, which equates to 200 attendees

and \$197,400 with pending requests for another 100 attendees and an additional \$60,000 to \$70,000. They will be touring the Chihuly Museum this week to garner more inspiration for what the event will look like inside. He added that profit goal for the event is \$100,000 for the Haines City-Davenport Campus but it really hinges upon the success of the silent auction that evening.

Mr. Davis echoed Mr. Ross' sentiments about rotating the DBOT meetings around the County, noting that it is challenging due to the size of the County, but the access is important.

Mr. Troutman commended the student speaker, Attorney Wilson, and Dr. Kerr's first meeting. He reflected on Black History Month and how it gives a sense of capacity both negative and positive and encouraged all to attend SALO's BHM event.

Chair Barnhart thanked Mr. Fish for his comments, welcomed Mr. Carmichael and Dr. Kerr in their new roles, and thanked Attorney Wilson.

**Adjournment:**

Having no further business, Chair Barnhart requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was moved by Ms. Ross, and seconded by Ms. Bell Barnett. The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:18 p.m.

Ann Barnhart 3/30/2026  
Ms. Ann Barnhart Date  
DBOT Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Anne B. Kerr Date  
Interim President

Anne B Kerr 3/30/2026