

MINUTES
POLK STATE COLLEGE
District Board of Trustees Meeting
Monday, September 29, 2025 – 4:00 p.m.
Polk State Lakeland Campus, LTB 1100

Dr. Angela M. Garcia Falconetti called September 29, 2025, District Board of Trustees meeting to order at approximately 4:00 p.m.

Members Present: Ms. Ann Barnhart, Ms. Ashley Bell Barnett, Mr. Steve Lester, Ms. Teresa Martinez, and Mr. Ashley Troutman

Members Absent: Mr. Greg Littleton and Ms. Cindy Hartley Ross

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Chair Barnhart introduced and welcomed the newest member of the Polk State District Board of Trustees member, Mr. Lester.

Special Recognitions

a. Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School and Aerospace Student Raija Fiskum

- Ms. Patrice Bryant-Thigpen, Principal of Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School, introduced student Raija Fiskum to be recognized. Ms. Fiskum is a James C. Riley Scholarship recipient through the Aerospace Center for Excellence and aspires to serve as a missionary pilot. Ms. Fiskum briefly addressed the board.

b. Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) Program Director Annette Bullard

- OTA Program Director Annette Bullard and OTA Coordinator Lucerito Gonzalez briefly addressed the Board to share some OTA Program highlights including, its 10-year reaccreditation and the recent publicity of its powerful partnership with The Mission of Winter Haven to bring occupational therapy to those in need.

Public Comment

None.

Adoption of Agenda

Ms. Martinez moved, seconded by Ms. Bell Barnett, to approve the agenda for September 29, 2025. All members voted affirmatively.

President Garcia Falconetti requested approval to add item 4. f. Enrollment Report Update to today's agenda which was granted by Chair Barnhart.

Approval of Board Minutes

a. August 25, 2025, Board Capital Campaign Workshop Minutes

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Ms. Martinez, to approve August 25, 2025, Board Capital Campaign Workshop minutes. All members voted affirmatively.

b. August 25, 2025, Regular Board Meeting Minutes

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Ms. Martinez, to approve August 25, 2025, Regular Board Meeting minutes. All members voted affirmatively.

Unfinished Business:

a. Board Meeting Site Rotation

- President Garcia Falconetti noted that it was a recommendation of Ms. Bell Barnett and the Board agreed that locations should rotate for upcoming DBOT meetings. She then distributed an updated DBOT meeting schedule with rotating meeting location sites and President's Report topics for each meeting of the 2025-2026 year. A request was made to receive the document electronically. Ms. Christine Lee will send it to the Board members following today's meeting.

b. Virtual Link for Public Attendance

- Chair Barnhart provided context on this item as a prior request that was made to determine if a virtual link to DBOT meetings could be provided for public attendance. She requested President Garcia Falconetti to provide an update on this request. President Garcia Falconetti confirmed that research is being done on what the capacity is to implement this. She then asked the Board for clarification on the parameters of the request. Ms. Bell Barnett shared her experience with other governing boards in which an "internal" live stream video link is made available for faculty, staff, and Board members who cannot attend the meeting. The public would be provided a "view only" link 7 days prior to the meeting, when the meeting is publicly noticed. The virtual meetings would then be archived on the website for anyone who wants to view the meeting at a later date.
- President Garcia Falconetti shared that the newly hired VP for Institutional Technology will be joining the College on October 13. Upon his arrival, she will have him research this request and make a recommendation to bring back to the Board for its consideration during the next regular Board meeting on December 8. Ms. Bell Barnett requested this to occur sooner rather than later, so that the virtual link is implemented for the December 8 meeting.
- Chair Barnhart recommended that a technology plan be developed soon after the new VP's arrival and a notice be sent to the Board outlining the plan.

c. Employee Satisfaction Survey Update

- President Garcia Falconetti introduced Faculty Senate President and Professor Anthony Cornett to provide an update regarding the employee satisfaction survey feedback from Faculty Senate. Mr. Cornett confirmed that three prospective survey firms were reviewed during the August 19 meeting of President's Staff. He then shared this information with Senate seeking input but only received 1-2 responses. Dr. Mary Clark, VP for Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation, and Research, was then invited to present the information to Senate during its September 8

meeting. Senate is interested in two of the prospective firms: Hanover Research, if the College is to conduct multiple customizable surveys, and PACE-NC State, if the College is to conduct only a single survey. PACE-NC State has a lower cost compared to Hanover Research.

- President Garcia Falconetti shared that President's Staff would meet again to come to a conclusion and that she will email the board what President's Staff has determined.
- Discussion ensued regarding the timeline for rolling out the survey. Dr. Clark noted that it could be deployed in spring 2026.

d. Endorsement of Polk State Foundation Board Approval of Capital Campaign

- The Polk State Foundation Board approved to proceed with the capital campaign at its August 15 meeting. Chair Barnhart explained that this agenda item is to endorse and support what the Foundation Board approved.
- Mr. Troutman expressed concern about timing of the capital campaign in light of recent media events.
- Chair Barnhart requested VP for Resource Development & Executive Director of the Foundation Dr. Steve Warner to come to the podium. Dr. Warner noted that within the capital campaign planning study, some of the concerns in the media will be addressed, as it is now part of how the campaign will move forward. The research and feasibility components of the planning study have been completed, and the next steps are to identify what the campaign will look like. Development of solicitation strategies for the top 10 organizations and individuals is underway in collaboration with putting together a strategic advisory council. A Strategic Visioning Retreat will be held on October 7 to develop a 3–5-year plan and to further drive not only the capital campaign but to increase endowments, enhance programs, and boost overall donations.
- Chair Barnhart asked Dr. Warner to clarify that the Foundation Board has already approved the direction of the capital campaign, which he confirmed was correct. She further emphasized that the purpose of this Board is to approve an endorsement for what the Foundation Board has already approved, which he also confirmed was correct. Dr. Warner stressed the importance of having this Board support the Foundation and its staff to move forward with the capital campaign that will support the College.
- Ms. Bell Barnett stated that the August 15 Foundation Board approval of the capital campaign occurred prior to recent allegations made by Foundation staff. She asked Dr. Warner if he had any Foundation Board members rescind their votes of approval. He confirmed that he had not heard back directly with a request to rescind, although there has been discussion about “is this the right time to move forward with the capital campaign.” He elaborated this more so for the solicitation aspect but stressed that they are still 4-5 months away from this phase.
- Ms. Bell Barnett asked for confirmation on the scope of campaign. Dr. Warner answered that there are two phases: phase one (the “silent phase”) has a goal of \$10 million and is expected to run for 12 months where they assess the top 10 individuals and organizations; and the second phase also has an anticipated goal of

\$10 million but it is a moving target that consists of multiple mid and entry level donations as part of an annual fund.

- Ms. Bell Barnett inquired about the new position that Carter recommended would be needed to process all the donations coming in. Dr. Warner confirmed that the position would be identified as a “campaign coordinator” with the role to keep the campaign moving forward. This role would be filled with a reorganization of existing Foundation staff roles.
- Ms. Bell Barnett stated that given the current climate of things, she would vote down this motion to approve until the current investigation is complete. She would first like to see restoration within the Foundation to demonstrate that it can effectively take on this capital campaign.
- Chair Barnhart emphasized that the Foundation recognizes the need to put strategies in place now to build a framework, and that allegations are just that.

Chair Barnhart requested a motion to approve the support of the Foundation Board Approval of the Capital Campaign.

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Ms. Martinez, to approve the support of the Foundation Board Approval of the Capital Campaign. All members voted affirmatively, with one objection from Ms. Bell Barnett. Motion carried.

e. Foundation Check Presentation

- Chair Barnhart asked Dr. Warner to follow up on a prior business request to make a recommendation on the frequency of Foundation check presentations during District Board of Trustees meetings.
- Dr. Warner met with Foundation Board Chair Bo Boyte to develop a suggested calendar. It was recommended that a Foundation year-end update occur during the December 8 DBOT meeting as the Foundation-year end occurs on December 30. The goal would be to provide year-end Foundation numbers; recaps of three major fall events (Basketball Tip-Off Social, Golf Tournament, and the Clays Tournament); and previews of the spring events (the new Distinguished Alumni Dinner and A Night of Legacy). Another update would occur in May to provide an academic year-end recap.
- Dr. Warner stressed that when a significant donation comes in, a special recognition in the form of a check presentation would occur. He does anticipate a check presentation to also take place during the December 8 DBOT meeting to highlight a recent donation to the Aerospace Program.

f. Enrollment Report Update

- President Garcia Falconetti introduced Dr. Mary Clark, VP for Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation, and Research, to provide an update on the status of a new and improved enrollment report format. Dr. Clark shared that the new format has been agreed upon and they are now working on constraints due to the Banner transition.

- Discussion was had regarding the timeframe to bring enrollment updates to the Board. The next update on enrollment and retention will occur during the next regular Board meeting on December 8.
- Discussion ensued regarding when the College would receive preliminary enrollment numbers from the state. Dr. Clark shared that she had reached out to the Florida College System office and was informed that they have no public calendar on the receipt of internal reports, but that once enrollment numbers are received she would share with President Garcia Falconetti who would then share with the Board. President Garcia Falconetti stated that she would respond on the timeline once she meets with the enrollment team.
- Ms. Bell Barnett previously provided handouts for the Board members and Attorney Wilson. The handouts contained a document with several questions and a copy of Hillsborough Community College's (HCC) daily enrollment report for the Board's information. Ms. Bell Barnett asked Dr. Clark if the Banner system could produce something similar at this time. Dr. Clark noted that HCC uses a different system than us.

Consent Agenda Items:

- a. Tangible Personal Property Deletions for September 2025** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- b. Polk State College Personnel Actions Report for August 2025** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- c. Polk State College Collegiate High Schools Personnel Actions Report for August 2025** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- d. Polk State College Salary Schedule Changes for September 2025** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- e. Financial Statement for August 2025** – Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.
- f. 2025-2026 Polk State College Carryforward Spending Plan** - Approved on consent agenda. Board action is required.

Chair Barnhart requested a motion and a second to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Bell Barnett requested to remove Consent Agenda item "d" (not "b" as misstated), Polk State College Salary Schedule Changes for September 2025. Item d. was moved off the consent agenda and was voted on separately after discussion.

Ms. Martinez moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve consent agenda items a., b., c., e., and f. All members voted affirmatively.

As a separate vote, Chair Barnhart requested a motion and a second to approve the Consent Agenda item d., Polk State College Salary Schedule Changes for September 2025.

Ms. Martinez moved, seconded by Mr. Troutman, to approve consent agenda item d. Polk State College Salary Schedule Changes for September 2025. All members voted affirmatively. She then opened the item up for discussion.

Ms. Bell Barnett requested a breakdown on the new job title, Executive Vice President, to be added to the salary schedule. President Garcia Falconetti shared that the new position would have oversight of Human Resources, and preferably have a Juris Doctorate (JD) or Masters in Law or Masters in Human Resources.

Ms. Bell Barnett asked if the new position would replace the current labor attorney. Chair Barnhart responded that while the current labor attorney would not be replaced, the College would be utilizing external consulting services much less. She emphasized that for an institution of this size, a position with this elevated level of education and experiences could manage more internally.

Ms. Bell Barnett suggested looking at the Office of Inspector General (OIG) rather than bringing in-house counsel. Chair Barnhart requested Ms. Bell Barnett to provide the names of other comparable institutions utilizing the OIG. Ms. Bell Barnett indicated that she would provide this at a later date. Attorney Wilson stressed that the personnel attorney's services are generally paid by the Florida College System Risk Management Consortium.

Ms. Bell Barnett asked how long the VP for Human Resources position has been open. Chair Barnhart requested a representative from Human Resources to address the question. Ms. Traci Hamm stated that the position has been open since April when Stacey Cary vacated the position. She further provided a summary of the VPHR search in which there were 22 eligible applicants. Applicants with JD's or law based Master's degrees were moved to the top. There was a search committee that selected five candidates to be interviewed and three moved forward to College-wide town hall sessions. After the town halls, they determined that two candidates were suitable to move forward for campus visits, but unfortunately one candidate withdrew their application leaving only one candidate. It is not the HR office's normal practice for an executive-level position to put forward only one candidate. However, the remaining candidate is in the hopper as a finalist for the position depending on the parameters of the new position.

President Garcia Falconetti emphasized the critical importance of hiring a strong HR leader with a Masters in HR, or related degrees, required and JD preferred. Ms. Bell Barnett requested a breakdown of how other Florida College System institutions oversee HR. Ms. Hamm stated that she has already researched this but would like to take it a step further by pulling the respective job descriptions to make a better comparison. Ms. Hamm's research will be provided to the Board at a later date. President Garcia Falconetti stated that the draft job description for the new Executive Vice President position could be sent electronically to the Board.

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

Consent agenda item d. Polk State College Salary Schedule Changes for September 2025 was removed from the consent agenda and was voted on separately after discussion.

Business Services Action Items:

a. RFQ 25-01 Construction Management at Risk Continuing Services Contract – Mr. Reggie Webb

Mr. Webb presented and recommended for approval the ranking list for RFQ 25-01 Construction Management at Risk Continuing Services Contract.

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Ms. Bell Barnett, to approve RFQ 25-01 Construction Management at Risk Continuing Services Contract. All members voted affirmatively.

b. RFQ 25-02 Architect & Engineering Continuing Services Contract – Mr. Reggie Webb

Mr. Webb presented and recommended for approval the ranking list for RFQ 25-02 Architect & Engineering Continuing Services Contract.

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Ms. Bell Barnett, to approve RFQ 25-02 Architect & Engineering Continuing Services Contract. All members voted affirmatively.

Board Rule Review (No action required)

None.

- Chair Barnhart stated that several College Rules will come forward for a first reading review, with no action required, during the December 8, 2025, DBOT meeting. She asked if 7 days prior to the Board meeting was adequate time to review.
- A suggestion was made to review the upcoming Rules during the October 14 DBOT Retreat. President Garcia Falconetti requested Ms. Cindy Baker and Professor Anthony Cornett to address this request. Discussion ensued about the timeline to review Rules and to push them through the pipeline for review by Faculty Senate, District Campus Group, and President's Staff. Mr. Cornett stated that if Faculty Senate could receive the rules in October, this could give them more time to review and approve.
- Chair Barnhart suggested getting the rules that will be reviewed during December 8 DBOT meeting to the Board in November, once they have been approved by each of the respective College groups. Ms. Christine Lee will send the Rules to Board members in November, once approved internally. Chair Barnhart emphasized that the rules presented during the December 8 DBOT meeting would be for review only and that they would not be voted for approval by the Board until its subsequent meeting (in January). It was confirmed that each rule would be listed out separately under item 8. Board Rule Review (No Action Required).

a. Board Rule Approval (Final Approval):

None.

Board Chair's Remarks

a. Retreat Overview

- Chair Barnhart thanked the Board for their patience while the date of the retreat was finalized for October 14 and for making plans to attend. Ms. Christine Lee disseminated the retreat agenda for the Board's review. Dr. Keith Miller, Consultant with the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) will serve as the facilitator for the retreat. Dr. Miller has met virtually with each Board member to better prepare for the October 14 Retreat.

b. New Agenda Items

- Following up on a previous request made by Ms. Bell Barnett to add a category for "new agenda items," Chair Barnhart shared that in consult with general counsel, a request to add a new agenda item must be made two weeks prior to the Board meeting date. The rationale is that if the item is an actionable item, it must be included on the agenda in order for it to be voted on. Attorney Wilson stated that the President sets the agenda in consult with the Board Chair.
- Ms. Bell Barnett stated that since this protocol is not established for the current meeting, she will reserve some items for Board Member Final Remarks. She expressed concern about the timeline to find out if a requested agenda item was accepted or denied. Ms. Bell Barnett suggested a "clause" that once the request to add an agenda item is received by Chair Barnhart and President Garcia Falconetti, they will respond with a determination to accept or deny the addition of the new business agenda item within three days.
- Chair Barnhart stated her criteria to determine if a proposed agenda item would be approved would be if it was appropriate depending on the situation, and if she had any concerns, she would consult the attorney.
- President Garcia Falconetti asked if Ms. Bell Barnett was aware of other models at institutions under the Board of Governors that would be helpful in this regard. Ms. Bell Barnett confirmed that there is a "new business" item on the agendas of other organizations that she serves in which Governors are given the opportunity to speak.
- Chair Barnhart looked for consensus that three days was a reasonable timeframe and requested some leniency with the three-day turnaround should she or the President not be readily available.
- Ms. Bell Barnett referred the Board members to another handout she provided that outlined Florida Statute 1001.64(3) regarding the powers of a board of trustees. Ms. Bell Barnett requested a vote and made a motion to approve the three-day turnaround on agenda item requests.

Ms. Bell Barnett moved, seconded by Ms. Martinez, to approve a three-day turnaround on new business agenda item requests. All members voted affirmatively.

President's Report

a. 2026 Legislative Priorities

- President Garcia Falconetti distributed the Polk State College 2026 Legislative Agenda for the Board's information. She highlighted the College's three main priorities:

- \$7.5 million in PECO funds to complete Phase I construction of the Haines City-Davenport Campus. She added that Project Manager Carla Harvey will provide a construction update during the December 8 DBOT meeting.
- \$25.3 million to renovate Building #3 (LLC) on the Lakeland Campus, serving students since 1991.
- \$3 million in recurring operational support to expand its Education Program. Funds will support the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood and Elementary Education, the Teacher Apprenticeship Program, and the Empower to Employ Program.
- President Garcia Falconetti has begun meeting with members of the Polk County Legislative Delegation to discuss legislative priorities.

b. Federal and State Grants Awarded to the College: Six Month Update – Dr. Mary Clark

- President Garcia Falconetti requested Dr. Mary Clark, VP for Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation, and Research, and Ms. Erin Martinez, Director of Grants Development and Administration, to provide a six-month update on federal and state grants awarded to the College. Another update will be provided in six months.
- Dr. Clark presented a PowerPoint presentation for the Board’s information.
 - From April 1, 2025 – September 19, 2025
 - \$3,559,968 in first-time funding awarded to the College
 - \$4,602,011 in renewed funding (5% increase), including:
 - Grants awarded via competitive proposals (\$2,280,723)
 - Grants awarded as a continuation (\$2,321,288)
 - \$8,161,979 awarded or renewed in the past six months
 - FloridaCommerce’s Florida Job Growth Grant
 - Awarded June 2025
 - \$2,819,656 over three years
 - A workforce education project expanding the Computer Numerical Control (CNC) program and launching a Welding program
 - National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Innovation in Two-Year College Stem Education
 - Awarded June 2025
 - \$494,795 over three years
 - An interdisciplinary, experiential learning project which will deepen student’s STEM education and engagement through hands-on field training, faculty mentoring, and extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities.

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Portfolio Overview	Dollar Value	Grant Count
Active Portfolio (as of June 30, 2025)	\$9,009,132	30
Renewal Increases	\$188,995	n/a
New Awards	\$3,559,968	3
Grants Closed	\$2,411,840	2

(July 1 – Sept. 19, 2025)		
Current Portfolio	\$10,346,245 15% increase	31

- Dr. Clark highlighted that, excluding Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), this is the first time the College has maintained a portfolio this large.
- President Garcia Falconetti thanked Ms. Martinez, the Grants Office, and all faculty who were intricately involved in writing the NSF grant.
- Ms. Bell Barnett requested an update on how HEERF dollars were spent. President Garcia Falconetti requested VP for Finance Cindy Baker to join Dr. Clark to provide a HEERF breakdown. Ms. Baker provided an update as follows:
 - HEERF funds were finalized and had to be spent by June 30. The funds are now completely depleted and are not recurring.
 - Polk State received two pots of money:
 - Student Services/Financial Aid
 - Institutional Funds – used on air quality/HVAC work, new College website, IT-related items, My Brother’s Keeper pantry. Once the institutional funds were finalized, approximately \$5 million in residual institutional funds were able to be moved over to the student side for financial aid.

c. Adjunct Faculty Compensation

- President Garcia Falconetti stated that adjunct faculty compensation is an informational item that arose from discussion with Faculty Senate President Anthony Cornett. The last time an increase in adjunct faculty compensation was approved by the Board was in June of 2024.
- An increase in adjunct faculty compensation will also increase full-time faculty overload pay. President Garcia Falconetti will rely on the Finance team as the budget is prepared for next year. An update on this item and budget prep will be provided in the spring.
- President Garcia Falconetti distributed a written “President’s Report” highlighting events and happenings occurring around the College for the Board’s information.
 - The College will host a State Benefits Fair on October 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Winter Haven Health Center (WHC) Gym.
 - Open enrollment for State healthcare benefits will take place from October 13 through October 31, 2025.
- President Garcia Falconetti also distributed the Fall 2025 Arts Schedule and encouraged Board members to attend events.

Attorney’s Report:

a. Board Self-Evaluation

Attorney Wilson shared that the Board’s Self-Evaluation Summary will be tabled until the next Board meeting (on December 8). The survey results have not yet been compiled.

b. Approval and granting to Duke Energy an easement for utility facilities as part of the Polk State Haines City-Davenport Campus development

Attorney Wilson presented and recommended for approval, granting to Duke Energy an easement for utility facilities as part of the Polk State Haines City-Davenport Campus development.

Mr. Troutman moved, seconded by Ms. Martinez, to approve, granting to Duke Energy an easement for utility facilities as part of the Polk State Haines City-Davenport Campus development. All members voted affirmatively.

Informational Items:

a. Capital Project Status Report for September 2025 – Mr. Reggie Webb

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

b. Employment Vacancy Update for September 2025 – Ms. Traci Hamm on behalf of Ms. Tamara Sakagawa

Ms. Traci Hamm presented and reviewed the Employment Vacancy Update for September 2025 for the Board's information. No Board action required.

Collegiate High School Report:

a. Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School Enrollment/Demographic Information for AY 2025-2026 – Ms. Patrice Bryant-Thigpen

Ms. Bryant-Thigpen presented and reviewed the Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate High School Enrollment/Demographic Information for AY 2025-2026 for the Board's information. No Board action required.

Board Member Final Remarks:

Mr. Troutman shared a recent experience he had while attending a retreat for another non-profit he serves. The topic was the responsibility of governance vs. operations, and the responsibilities board members have to set "guardrails" for executives. He looks forward to discussing this topic during the October 14 retreat.

Ms. Martinez welcomed new Board member Steve Lester and celebrated the success of all programs at Polk State College, including the OTA program that presented today.

Ms. Bell Barnett thanked faculty and staff for their support and dedication for the well-being of students. She made a request of Ms. Christine Lee to ensure any "unfinished business" stemming from today's meeting be placed on the next meeting's agenda. Ms. Bell Barnett again directed her fellow Board members to FS 1001.64 (3) as it pertains to pathway options to the investigation.

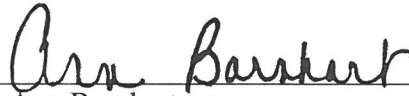
Chair Barnhart responded that she consulted with the Commissioner of Education to discuss the options for the investigation, and the option for investigative research is the option that she selected. She confirmed that the Department of Education will share this in writing with the investigating attorney, and it will then be shared with everyone once the results of the investigation are finalized.

Mr. Lester, attending his first meeting, expressed his love for Polk State and described it as a rock for the community. He emphasized that it is his duty and everyone's duty to find ways to support the President, the College, and each other as Board members. He looks forward to all that they can accomplish together.

Chair Barnhart thanked everyone for all that they do for the College every day.

Adjournment:

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:48 p.m.

 12/8/2025

Ms. Ann Barnhart Date
DBOT Chair

 12/8/2025

Dr. Angela M. Garcia Falconetti Date
President