

**New College of Florida Board of Trustees  
Sudakoff Conference Center  
Minutes for January 31, 2023**

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m. and a quorum was established.

**Trustees Present:** Mary Ruiz (Chair), Ron Christaldi (Vice Chair), Ryan Anderson, Mark Bauerlein, Debra Jenks, Lance Karp, Grace Keenan, Charles Kesler, Matthew Lepinski, Sarah Mackie, Christopher Rufo, Matthew Spalding, and Eddie Speir

**Acknowledgment of Notice of Meeting**

Associate Vice President of Government Relations Christie Fitz-Patrick confirmed the meeting had been duly noticed.

**Prayer**

Reverend Dwight Henry conducted the prayer.

**Call for Public Comment**

Public comment process ensued. The following members of the public provided comments: Alisa Mitchell, Robin Williams, Kristen Miller, Sonia Howman, Elizabeth Leininger, Betsy Braden, Tracy Fero, Eliana Salzhauer, Ruth Beltran, Tamara Solum, Carol Lerner, Sam Sharf, Jack Wallace, Queen Zabriskie, Chris Kottke, Garin Hoover, Ron Silver, Diego Villada, Ayleen Perez, Michael Sanderson, Karla Correa, Amanda Gillialand, Patrick McDonald, Lisa Schurr

**Chair Ruiz moved announcements to after the consent agenda.**

**Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda was presented and a request was made by Chair Ruiz that it be approved.

Following discussion, a motion to move the following items to discussion was made, seconded and approved by unanimous vote.

- Approve Student Success Plan Completion: Program Proposals for Research and Experimental Psychology & Econometrics and Quantitative Economics
- Approve 22-23 Direct Support Organization's (DSO) Budgets for New College Development Corp. Budget and New College Foundation Inc. Budget

Following discussion, a motion was made to defer the Student Success Plan Completion: Program Proposals for Research and Experimental Psychology & Econometrics and Quantitative Economics to the next meeting, seconded and a roll call vote proceeded with 1 voting yes and 12 voting no.

Following discussion, a motion was made to approve the Student Success Plan Completion: Program Proposals for Research and Experimental Psychology & Econometrics and Quantitative, seconded and a roll call vote proceeded with 12 voting yes and 1 voting no.

Following discussion, a motion was made to defer the Approval of the 22-23 Direct Support Organization's (DSO) Budgets for New College Development Corp. Budget and New College Foundation Inc. Budget to the next meeting, seconded and approved by unanimous vote.

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made, seconded and approved by unanimous vote.

Consent agenda action items approved were as follows:

- Approve Minutes of the October 18, 2022, BOT meeting
- Approve Minutes of the December 6, 2022, Special BOT meeting

Informational Items provided to the Board for their review as part of the Consent Agenda include:

- Review – New College of Florida – Audited Financial Statements

### **Announcements**

Chair Ruiz stated the Board of Governors would be attending the next Board of Trustees meeting in February to provide the board with board/governance education.

Trustee Spalding moved to adopt a resolution to reaffirm the commitment of the Board of Trustees to support 1004.32, F.S. by supporting the mission outlined. Chair Ruiz suggested the Board take up this item at the next Board meeting. All trustees agreed.

Chair Ruiz provided comments regarding the successes and needs for New College.

### **President's Report**

President Patricia Okker provided comments regarding the overall status and accomplishments of New College.

### **Student Trustee Report**

New College Student Association President and Trustee Grace Keenan provided comments regarding the students' perspective of the status of New College.

### **Legislative Priorities**

Associate Vice President of Government Relations Christie Fitz-Patrick explains the three legislative priorities for this upcoming session as provided to the Board of Governors.

### **Finance and Administration Committee**

Vice Chair (and Finance and Administration Committee Chair) Christaldi welcomed Vice President of Finance & Administration Chris Kinsley and Chief Human Resources Officer Erika Worthy to explain the Ratification of the New College of Florida United Faculty of Florida Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Following discussion, a motion was made to defer the Ratification of the New College of Florida United Faculty of Florida Collective Bargaining Agreement to the next meeting, seconded and approved by unanimous vote.

### **Role of Office of Outreach & Inclusive Excellence**

Trustee Christopher Rufo explained the points outlined in the issue brief called "Abolish DEI Bureaucracies and Restore Colorblind Equality in Public Universities".

Following discussion, a motion was made to direct staff to draft a policy based on the materials in packet and present draft policy, including existing policy at the next Board meeting, seconded and approved by unanimous vote.

**Chair Ruiz moved Board of Trustees Committee Assignments before Other business.**

**Board of Trustees Committee Assignments 2022-23**

Chair Ruiz explained the different committees as outlined by the board regulation and the document provided in the packet. She noted to provide AVP Christie Fitz-Patrick with their preferred committee assignments within a week.

**Other Business**

**President Okker's Employment Agreement**

Following discussion, a motion was made to terminate President Okker's agreement based on the terms outlined in the amendment as included in the board packet, seconded and a roll call vote proceeded with 11 voting yes and 2 voting no.

Trustee Spalding made a motion to select Brad Thiessen as the Interim President until an agreement could be entered into with Richard Corcoran, seconded and a roll call vote proceeded with 12 voting yes and 1 voting no.

**Election of Board Chair and Vice Chair**

Chair Ruiz stated she would resign as Chair at the end of the meeting and wanted to open it up to the Board for the election of a new Board Chair.

Trustee Spalding made a motion to elect Debra Jenks to the position, seconded and approved by unanimous vote.

Vice Chair Christaldi stated he would like to continue to serve in the Vice Chair position. All trustees agreed.

**General Counsel to Board of Trustees**

Following discussion, a motion was made to direct the Interim President to engage with Bill Galvano to be the Counsel for the Board, seconded and approved by unanimous vote.

**Adjournment**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned 6:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christie Fitz-Patrick  
*AVP Government Relations and BOT Liaison*

## Former Chair Ruiz Comments from January 31, 2023 Meeting

Welcome everyone to the first New College of Florida meeting of the Board of Trustees for 2023. New College is at the crossroads of change. Change has two components. One component of change is what should be preserved and left unchanged. The other component is what should change to fully realize the potential of New College as a residential, public liberal arts honors college.

Across the generations of students, faculty and staff, there are consistent themes about the academic traditions that should be preserved at New College.

- The Convening of First Class Minds
- Academic Excellence and Rigor
- The New College Contract System
- Narrative Evaluation of Student Work in Place of Grades
- Faculty student ratios of no more than 1:10
- Experiential Learning that includes Career Exploration and Service to Community
- Undergraduate Research supported by Intensive Study Periods and the Senior Thesis

There are also consistent themes of what needs to change at New College.

- Student residential life which is marked by \$38.8 million in overdue maintenance of dorms, insufficient technology and limited food options.
- Enrollment numbers which limit the full scope of the New College residential and academic experience
- Faculty salaries which rank in the bottom quartile of the State University System
- An overtaxed staff paid at below market rates who must meet the same institutional requirements as Florida's largest colleges
- Deferred maintenance of non-residence buildings of \$ \$22.6 million.
- Insufficient resilience for natural disasters such as rising water and hurricanes

Change can bring success or failure. Successful change at New College is achievable only if we honor academic traditions that have made New College the number five top public liberal arts college. We might aim our sites higher but be advised the Naval and Air Force Academies and West Point set a high bar of competition for the top three.

While New College students do not receive grades, the New College Board of Trustees does receive what might be described as a report card. These are metrics to which the Governor, Legislature and the Board of Governors hold us as a board accountable. At the end of a year, we will know whether this Board of Trustees has improved, maintained or

worsened our performance on these metrics. To succeed, we cannot lose sight of these outcomes in every decision we make.

I am happy to report there are many success factors where New College handily achieves excellence.

- Average Cost to Student is among the lowest in a state that is lowest in the country resulting in the majority of Novo Collegians graduating with no debt.
- Average Time to Degree for first time in college students is less than 4 years
- 100% of students engage in research
- 93% of students engage in at least three high impact educational endeavors.

There are additional success factors where New College cannot yet declare victory but has achieved impressive gains.

- A more than 30% annual increase in fall 2022 of first time in college students compared to a state increase of 1% with higher average GPA and SAT than 2021.
- Almost 100% annual increase in fall 2022 of state college transfers compared to a state decline of 17%
- Our nationally award winning career education effort holds great promise in advancing the number of students employed or in graduate school one year after graduation. Ten years after graduation, New College alumni salaries rank near the top of all state universities demonstrating that a New College education offers alumni a successful career and not just a job.

There are other success factors which require the focused attention of this board.

- Four year graduation rates at 55% and six year graduation rates at 66% are among the lowest in the state
- Retention of first year students at less than 80%

The last two measures in addition to enrollment are the ones most at risk in a time of change. This Board of Trustees can play a big role in welcoming new students, encouraging current students to persist in their education and in conducting change in a manner that seeks to engage and reassure students, parents and faculty and staff.

Let's get to work.

Mary Ruiz, Chair  
New College Board of Trustees  
January 31, 2023