



## **Board of Trustees Minutes**

Monday, March 18, 2024  
Marshall Student Center

### **Call to Order and Comments**

Chair Will Weatherford welcomed everyone and convened the full Board of Trustees meeting. The Chair welcomed the student protestors and commented on the university's position as it relates to our investments being guided by responsibilities, our mission, state, and federal laws.

The Chair commented that they will allow a few students to make statements later during the meeting. It is important that everyone remains respectful and acknowledge the fact that the Board of Trustees have business to conduct and a meeting to uphold.

Chair Weatherford provided an update on the following:

- USF Athletics Success
- The great Legislative session in Tallahassee -The Legislative Budget for 2024- 2025 included an increase for reoccurring operational funding for significant projects for USF.
  - \$50 million recurring increase to our operational budget to support each of our three campuses and USF Health, as well as to expand cybersecurity research and the cyber workforce
  - \$35 million nonrecurring operational support increase to fund strategic projects for the institution, including completing the major clinical trial underway at USF Health to measure the effectiveness of hyperbaric oxygen therapy on alleviating the symptoms of PTSD/TBI in military veterans, an initiative that was funded by the state last year.
  - \$31 million for critical infrastructure and safety improvements to ensure present needs and future growth of the USF Tampa campus.
  - \$10 million to upgrade our facilities and services offered to student-veterans, military families and first responders on all three campuses.
  - \$7.2 million to invest in campus life facility projects funded through the state's Capital Improvement Trust Fund.
  - \$3.9 million for a joint project between the College of Nursing and the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences designed to both lower opioids use statewide and to assist counties to better plan for and respond to opioid overdoses.
  - \$750,000 for the USF Trafficking in Persons Risk to Resilience Research Lab that will go toward the development and operation of a statewide human trafficking data repository.

The Chair commented that these funds are important to our state, community and to our students. The budget is still pending signature from the Governor.

Chair Weatherford recognized Trustee Cesar Esmeraldi and announced that he's finishing his last year as a student and today will be his last meeting as a member of the Board of Trustees. Chair Weatherford commented that Trustee Esmeraldi has had a real impact and an incredible influence at this university and on this Board. He has a very bright future ahead. The Chair thanked him for his service and presented him with a special gift on behalf of the Board.

Trustee Jasinski Schneider commented on Trustee Esmeraldi's talented ability to navigate his student life while interacting and communicating with the Board, faculty, and students. She stated that he's been wonderful to work with and that USF is in a better place because of his leadership as student body president.

Trustee Horton commented that Trustee Esmeraldi has had an impact on him personally and has hopes that they can continue to stay in touch. He's been a pleasure to work with.

Trustee Carrere commented on the pleasure of working with Trustee Esmeraldi in Brazil. He has high caliber intelligence and displays a great representation of the students and as a trustee member. He wished him the best of luck for the future.

Vice Chair Mike Griffin stated that Trustee Esmeraldi has been a fantastic representative for the student body under one USF. He has inclusive leadership and passion and has been instrumental in many important decisions at USF. One day he will be able to look back fondly at what he has helped build. Vice Chair Griffin asked that he stays involved as an alum and give back to the university that has given so much to him. He's thrilled to see what happens next for Trustee Esmeraldi.

Trustee Callahan stated that she suspects Trustee Esmeraldi will serve on more Boards at USF in the future. She wished him the best of luck.

Trustee Piccolo commented that he's always been impressed by Trustee Esmeraldi's maturity, eloquence, and thoughtful comments. He's truly a shining star.

President Law said that it was a pleasure working with Trustee Esmeraldi. She was taken by his energy from the start. The conversations between them were mostly focused on the student experience on USF campuses. He started the job as a Trustee with a vision for what he wanted to accomplish. He prioritized those goals and successfully achieved them. He had the ability to work with everyone as well as the talent to bridge gaps during differences. The President thanked him for his service to USF and looks forward to seeing what he does in the future.

Trustee Esmeraldi commented that serving as President of the Student Government and as a Trustee member on the Board has really changed his life. He felt welcomed by everyone from the very beginning. He's had the opportunity of being a part of many great accomplishments at USF and stated that it's been an honor to serve. He thanked everyone for their leadership.

Chair Weatherford asked Kiara Gayle to call the roll.

**Kiara Gayle called the Roll**

Trustee Sandy Callahan  
Trustee Mike Carrere  
Trustee Rogan Donnelly – Did not participate.  
Trustee Cesar Esmeraldi  
Trustee Mike Griffin  
Trustee Oscar Horton  
Trustee Jenifer Jasinski Schneider  
Trustee Lauran Monbarren  
Trustee Melissa Seixas - Did not participate.  
Trustee Shilen Patel  
Trustee Fredrick Piccolo  
Trustee Will Weatherford

## **Student Presentation – Georgia Brown**

USF student Georgia Brown shared her story. A video was provided.

Georgia Brown, a junior from Highworth England studying biomedical sciences, grew up playing soccer, or football as it's known in her home country. Excelling in the sport throughout high school, Brown maintained a balance between athletics and academics.

While her short-term aspiration is to play professional soccer, her long-term ambition is to pursue a career in medicine. Following her high school graduation in 2021, she relocated to the United States, seeing more opportunities for her goals. After a year in New York, she transferred to the University of South Florida.

In 2023, boasting a 4.0 GPA, Brown made history as the first women's soccer player at USF to receive the College Sports Communicators (CSC) Academic All-America honor. According to the CSC, the title Academic All-American is reserved for college student-athletes who excel both in their sport and in the classroom. This distinction reaffirmed to Brown that she is achieving her goals on and off the field. She's studying biomedical sciences, grew up playing soccer, or football as it's known in her home country. Excelling in the sport throughout high school, Brown maintained a balance between athletics and academics.

Chair Weatherford commended Georgia on her notable achievements in athletics and her strong desire to pursue and maintain academic excellence. She is a great representation of her country and of USF.

Trustee Piccolo commented that Georgia could possibly become a team member and a team doctor all at the same time.

Trustee Esmeraldi congratulated Georgia on her success and achievements as a fellow international student.

President Law congratulated Georgia on being the first USF woman soccer player to win the Academic All-American Honor award.

## **The President's Report**

President Law provided an update on the following:

- Significant growth in Research Enterprise – USF reached an all-time high of \$692 million for Fiscal year 2023. This includes all DSO's and affiliates, as well as Moffitt hospital.
- For the 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive year USF is in the top 15 for American Public Research Universities.  
-We were 14th among public research universities.  
  
-USF was 34th among universities across the world and we continue to make an impact. We outshine the University of Texas and North Carolina with a total of 287 patents last year.
- We've recently learned last year that our application to be designated as a Purple Star Campus has been approved. We are one of the first in the State University System of Florida to receive the designation because of the many things that we do with our veterans and our Office of Veterans Success.
- We received \$10 million to support our veterans' initiatives.

President Law gave special thanks to Mark Walsh, Casey Welch, Lauren Hartman and Jaida Abbas for their dedication and hard work with the Florida Legislature.

- Federal Funding - The package approved by Congress and signed in to law by President Biden had \$5 million for USF. That includes \$3 million for the Trafficking In Person Risk to Resilience Research Lab in St. Pete, a human dynamics research project collaboration that involves our Global and National Security Institute.
- College of Arts and Sciences - \$1.6 million
- The College of Marine Science will receive 1,000,000 to create a state of the art data visualization laboratory in its existing space.

President Law gave special thanks to US Representatives Scott Franklin, Cathy Castor, Gus Bilirakis and our own representative in Washington Monica McClanahan for all of their efforts.

## **USF Athletics**

- President Law was happy to report on the exciting turn around with the USF men's basketball team. She congratulated them on winning the conference championship for the regular season. She encouraged everyone to support by viewing or attending the upcoming game.
- Head Coach for the USF Men's Basketball team Abdur-Rahim was recognized as the AAC Coach of the Year and nominated as the National Coach of the Year. USF Athletes have worked very hard and have earned many achievements.

- The USF Track and field team won the AAC indoor title for the first time ever. Coach Eric Jenkins and his staff were named The Men’s Coaching Staff of the Year.
- Abdul Rasheed Saminu was named the Team All American. He is the first male sprinter from USF to achieve this distinction in over a decade.
- The USF all-girl cheer team celebrated winning the UCA Division 1A College National Championship for the second time in a row. They are the first ever to win both the game day and the traditional divisions in the same year.
- USF celebrated the first Bull Fest. The campus was filled with activities and excitement.
- The Nelson Poynter Memorial Library located on the USFSP campus and the Florida Holocaust Museum will house the papers and personal collections of Holocaust survivor and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel. The donations for those papers will be used for the new Elie Visual Center for Humanitarian Ethics here at USF. An archive working group was formed to review the paperwork to interface with the Foundation and the Florida Holocaust Museum.
- Congratulations to all who were named in the Tampa Bay Journals Power 100: Chair Will Weatherford, Vice Chair Mike Griffin, Trustee Oscar Horton, Trustee Seixas, Executive President for USF Health Dr. Charlie Lockwood and President Rhea Law.
- Jennifer Condon has been with USF for 18 years. For the past 5 months Ms. Condon has done an outstanding job bringing her expertise to the table while serving as the acting CFO in the office of Business and Finance. President Law has offered Ms. Condon the position permanently. We are thankful for what Ms. Condon has done in the past and look forward to exciting things she will do in the future.
- Later this week there will be a ribbon cutting for the USF Institute for Applied Engineering Rapid Experimental Lab. Planning for this lab began four years ago when USF received an \$85 million contract from the U.S. Special Operations. This new lab will be capable of rapid phototyping and expediting the development of new technologies.

The President concluded her report. Chair Weatherford proceeded with the meeting.

### **New Business – Action Items (Minutes and Consent Agenda)**

#### **FL 101 – Approval of Minutes**

December 5, 2023

January 19, 2024

Chair Weatherford requested a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was given by Trustee Horton and seconded by Trustee Esmeraldi. The December 5, 2023, and the January 19, 2024 minutes were approved.

## **Consent Agenda (FL 102 – FL 104)**

Chair Weatherford called on Trustee Horton to present on behalf of the ACE Committee.

Trustee Horton reported that the item was thoroughly reviewed by the ACE Committee and recommended for approval.

Chair Weatherford called on UFF President Steve Lang for comments. Dr. Lang's comments were on the following:

- Bulls Athletics Excitement
- The USF Sailing Team hosted and placed 1<sup>st</sup>. in the Fall South Atlantic Intercollegiate Sailing Association. USF is Ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Supports the fact that School Psychology is on the list for Degree Program
- Public Unions – Re-certification
- UFF Applications
- Independent Contract Negotiations
- Social Engineering, Values and Policies
- AAUP- Political Interference and Academic Freedom in Florida's Higher Education System

## **Public Comments**

Several students made public comments concerning the genocide against the people of Gaza and USF's investments with corporations that manufacture hellfire missiles for a profit.

Chair Weatherford thanked the students for voicing their concerns and acknowledged that they're entitled to their opinions, and they are respected. This is a very complex issue that's not being driven or debated by anyone on this Board. USF does not invest directly into stocks.

The Chair warned students of the dangers of a hunger strike and the fact that it could ultimately lead to severe bodily harm. The chair said that we should all have more empathy for each other's position, especially when it comes to war in the Middle East. This has affected many and there's suffering on multiple sides.

Chair Weatherford thanked the students for attending without disruption and proceeded on with the meeting. He requested a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion was given by Trustee Esmeraldi, seconded by Trustee Horton and the consent agenda items FL 102 – FL 104 were approved.

**FL 102** – New Degree Proposal: Ed.S. School Psychology

**FL 103** – Florida Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement

**FL 104** – Regulation 6.0021 – Student Code of Conduct

Chair Weatherford proceeded on with the agenda to New Business.

## **New Business – Action Items**

**FL 105** – Expenditure Authorization Requests

The USF CFO Jennifer Condon presented item FL 105 Expenditure Authorization Request.

This is to request the approval of two expenditure authorization requests, related to the relocation of the fields on the Tampa campus pursuant to our spending authorities' guidelines. This project has been thoroughly discussed during the Finance Committee meetings over the past year. This has received partial approval for a total of \$9 million, while more complete project estimates were gathered.

Located in the northeast section of the Tampa Campus, the Sycamore Fields are a set of recreation spaces comprised of 4 multipurpose fields, 2 softball fields and a restroom building due to the site location of the on-campus stadium the fields will be relocated to Research Foundation land. On the southwest side of campus and will be in place until such future date (estimated 7-10 years) when the Foundation is prepared to develop the land for research- related purposes.

This request is for approval for an increase of \$3,625,000 for a total project value of \$8,125,000. The plans are to have these plans completed by Thanksgiving of this year to enable access and use for the Spring of 2025 semester. The project is funded by a combination of carrying over funds and auxiliary resources.

Chair Weatherford requested a motion to approve. The motion was given by Trustee Griffin, seconded by Trustee Piccolo and approved.

The second request is for the second expenditure authorization for an additional \$ 2,550,000, for a total project value of \$7,050, 000.

The Chair requested a motion to approve. The motion was given by Trustee Horton, seconded by Trustee Piccolo and approved.

#### **FL 106 – 2023-24 Fixed Capital Outlay Budget Update & 2023-24 University E&G Carryforward Spending Plan Update**

Vice President and CFO Jennifer Condon presented FL 106. She provided an update on the amended changes.

1. Approve the changes to the 2023-2024 Fixed Capital Outlay Budget
2. Approve the related changes to the 2023-2024 University E &G Carryforward Spending Plan

The USF Board of Trustees approved the 2023-24 Fixed Capital Outlay Budget and the 2023-24 University E&G Carryforward Spending Plan at the August 22, 2023 Board of Trustees meeting. Since that date, there have been additional recommended changes to the Plan.

Vice President Condon requested the Boards approval on the two amended agenda items. Chair Weatherford requested a motion to approve. The motion was given by Trustee Horton, seconded by Trustee Piccolo and item FL106 was approved.

#### **BOT Roundtable Discussion**

Chair Weatherford opened the roundtable discussion to the Board members.

Trustee Esmeraldi expressed his gratitude to the Board members and to USF. He plans to continue to be an advocate for the University of South Florida.

Trustee Jasinski Schneider comments concerned the DEI prohibited expenses and the foreign influence are impacting faculty members and students. She also commented on the fact that the NAACP is warning African American athletes not to choose Florida public schools to attend. This will affect students as well as faculty recruitment.

Trustee Jasinski Schneider thanked General Counsel Gerard Solis and his team for their support and legal guidance.

Trustee Horton commented that he is certain that USF will continue to do what's right and stay on course. He said that there was an awesome display of diversity during today's meeting.

Chair Weatherford commented that we can only control what we can control. He commented on the commitment to having a diverse population at USF and that we will continue to abide by the laws and statutes that we must follow.

Trustee Carrere commented on the disbandment of the DEI program.

President Law commented on not having a DEI Office and the fact that USF still has its mission and values, which will not change. We are supportive of access and opportunity for everyone.

Chair Weatherford's comments concerned the student protestors who are entitled to their opinions but not their own set of facts. We respect all sides; however, the Chair stated that he does not support the threat of students initiating a dangerous hunger strike and encouraged notifying their parents. USF cannot and will not get involved in the political outcomes.

The Chair thanked President Law and her team for their hard work and success. USF is an exciting and fun place to be with many great things occurring.

Having no further business Chair Weatherford thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the Board meeting.