

**EASTERN FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES REGULAR MEETING**

August 3, 2026
10:30 a.m.

Public Safety Institute – Building 8
3rd Floor – Board Room 301
Melbourne Campus

Present: Ronald Howse, Chair; Dr. Edgar Figueroa, Vice Chair; Dr. Kristine Zonka; Michael DeMorat; and Dr. James H. Richey, Secretary

Absent: Bruce Deardoff

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Howse called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m., acknowledged a quorum, and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Mr. Howse asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Dr. Figueroa so moved. Dr. Zonka seconded the motion. **Action:** motion carried unanimously. Those voting in favor: Figueroa, Zonka, DeMorat and Howse.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A. Minutes, Board of Trustees Meeting – June 8, 2026

Mr. Howse inquired if anyone had any questions, comments, or changes to the minutes. Hearing none, Mr. Howse asked for a formal motion to approve the Board of Trustees minutes dated June 8, 2026. Dr. Figueroa motioned for approval. Mr. DeMorat seconded the motion. **Action:** motion carried unanimously. Those voting in favor: Figueroa, DeMorat, Zonka, and Howse.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Howse reported there were no public comments.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Approval of Summary of Income and Expenditures through May 2026
- B. Approval of 2026-2027 Carry Forward Spending Plan
- C. Approval of Amendment to 2027-2028 Approved General Education List
- D. Approval of Revised 2024-27 EFSC/UFF Collective Bargaining Agreement
- E. Approval of Revision to the Board Governance Manual
- F. Approval of EFSC Foundation Executive Committee and Board of Directors

Mr. Howse inquired whether anyone wished to discuss or remove any consent agenda items. Hearing no requests, Mr. Howse asked for a motion to approve items A – F listed. A motion was made by Dr. Figueroa and seconded by Dr. Zonka. **Action:** motion carried unanimously. Those voting in favor: Figueroa, Zonka, DeMorat, and Howse.

Mr. Howse introduced new board member, Mr. Michael DeMorat, to the EFSC Board of Trustees. Mr. DeMorat expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve, noting his more than 35 years with the Brevard County Sheriff's Office, his longstanding residency in Brevard County, and his connection to EFSC through his son who attended the college. Mr. DeMorat thanked Dr. Richey along with the Board and stated that he looked forward to contributing and assisting in any way he could. All board members welcomed him to the position.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of Officers of the Board of Trustees FY 2026-27

Mr. Howse stated that the next item was the election of officers and asked Dr. Richey to introduce the item. Dr. Richey summarized the election of officers that is required statutorily, and particularly to be held in August each year. Dr. Richey further explained that the Board determine its leadership through nominations and a vote.

Mr. Howse opened the floor for nominations for officers of the Board of Trustees. Dr. Figueroa nominated Mr. Howse to continue serving as chair, and Dr. Zonka seconded the nomination. During the discussion, Mr. Howse expressed appreciation for the support of fellow board members, particularly Dr. Figueroa, and indicated his willingness to continue serving. The board agreed to retain the current slate of officers being Mr. Howse, chairman and Dr. Figueroa, vice-chairman for the upcoming year. **Action:** motion carried unanimously. Those voting in favor: Figueroa, Zonka, DeMorat, and Howse.

Following the vote, Mr. Howse thanked the Board for its confidence. He also acknowledged the college's leadership, staff, and mission, noting that their dedication and service make it rewarding to serve as chair.

B. Direct Support Organization Trustee Appointments FY 2026-27

The board addressed appointments to the college's Direct Support Organizations (DSOs), which include the EFSC Foundation Board, the King Center for the Performing Arts Board, and the EFSC Student Housing Corporation Board. Dr. Richey explained that, pursuant to governing statutes, DSO appointments are made by the board chair in consultation with the trustees, rather than through the standard motion and vote process. Dr. Richey clarified the appointment procedure and noted that the chair is responsible for making these selections.

Mr. Howse acknowledged Dr. Figueroa's long-term service on the EFSC Foundation Board and, citing ongoing transitions at the King Center and changes in leadership and management, appointed Dr. Figueroa to serve on the King Center for the Performing Arts Board. Dr. Figueroa accepted the appointment. With Dr. Figueroa's reassignment creating a vacancy on the EFSC Foundation Board, Chair Howse appointed Dr. Zonka to serve as the board's representative on the EFSC Foundation Board. Dr. Zonka accepted the appointment. Mr. Howse then addressed the Student Housing Corporation Board appointment and appointed Mr. DeMorat to serve in that role. Mr. DeMorat accepted the appointment. Chairman Howse noted the Housing Board's success in supporting the college's housing initiatives and expressed confidence that Mr. DeMorat would find the work rewarding.

VI. PRESENTATIONS

A. HLC Accreditation Site Visit

Dr. Richey invited Dr. Phil Simpson, VP of Academic and Student Affairs, to give the presentation on the HLC Accreditation Site Visit. Dr. Simpson began with an update on EFSC's transition to accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and noted that the college was successfully reaffirmed by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in 2024 for a full 10-year term with no findings, reflecting the institution's strong performance and commitment to quality.

Next, Dr. Simpson explained that Florida law now requires post-secondary institutions to change accrediting agencies after each accreditation cycle. Following Board approval and a review of available options, EFSC selected HLC as its future accreditor. Dr. Simpson noted that HLC was determined to be the best fit for the college due to its cost-effectiveness and its accelerated pathway for institutions with strong accreditation histories.

An overview of the accreditation transition timeline was provided. Key milestones completed to date include notification to the Federal Student Aid program, approval to proceed with a change in accreditors, acceptance of the college's application by HLC, and successful completion of the preliminary review phase. The college has now entered the final comprehensive evaluation phase, which will include submission of an Assurance Argument and an on-site evaluation scheduled for March 15-16, 2027. Dr. Simpson reported that the college remains on schedule and in compliance with all required timelines while continuing to meet its obligations to SACSCOC.

Dr. Simpson outlined ongoing preparations for the HLC review, including campus-wide awareness efforts, communication initiatives, and development of the Assurance Argument demonstrating compliance with HLC standards. A communications campaign titled "Titan Up" will be used to promote engagement and awareness among faculty, staff, and stakeholders throughout the accreditation process. Dr. Simpson also highlighted the importance of trustee involvement, noting that board governance is a specific HLC evaluation criterion. Documentation demonstrating effective governance, including board policies, meeting records, trustee biographies, orientation procedures, and approval of institutional planning and budgeting documents, will be provided as evidence during the review process.

Dr. Simpson concluded by expressing confidence in the college's progress and readiness for the final evaluation. Based on the successful completion of previous milestones, he indicated that the college is well-positioned to achieve full HLC accreditation following the comprehensive review and site visit. Dr. Simpson then invited questions from the board.

Dr. Figueroa commented on the presentation's branding materials, prompting discussion of the college's new accreditation awareness campaign slogan, "Titan Up." Dr. Richey commended Dr. Simpson and the accreditation team for their work to date, noting the significance of the accreditation transition and praising the team's ability to successfully manage the process while maintaining compliance with existing accreditation requirements. Dr. Richey emphasized the importance of completing the process successfully and expressed confidence in the College's efforts.

Dr. Zonka asked about the transition from SACSCOC to HLC and whether there would be a period of dual accreditation. Dr. Simpson explained that the college will remain accredited by SACSCOC until HLC formally grants accreditation and the college notifies SACSCOC of the change.

At that point, accreditation will transition fully to HLC, with only a brief administrative overlap during the process.

Dr. Zonka also inquired about the factors considered in selecting HLC as the college's new accreditor. Dr. Simpson explained that state law required the college to change accreditors and that HLC was selected after evaluating the available options. He stated that HLC was determined to be the best organizational fit for EFSC, due in part to similarities in accreditation standards and the college's ability to build upon the successful work completed during its recent SACSCOC reaffirmation process. Dr. Richey added that the decision was based on an evaluation of the available accrediting agencies and that HLC emerged as the most appropriate option for the college. Dr. Zonka thanked both Dr. Simpson and Dr. Richey for the clarification, and the discussion concluded.

B. STEM Building Cocoa Campus Update

Dr. Phil Simpson, VP of Academic and Student Affairs and Mr. Russ DeGraw, AVP of Facilities and Special Projects, provided an update on the renovation of the second floor of Building 20 on the Cocoa Campus, a project designed to modernize and expand instructional space for STEM-related programs.

Dr. Simpson explained that the renovation will create updated classrooms, laboratories, and support spaces for biology, chemistry, microbiology, environmental science, and anatomy and physiology. He noted that these disciplines represent a significant portion of the college's academic offerings and faculty resources and serve as foundational coursework for numerous healthcare, laboratory science, workforce-focused and transfer programs.

The board was informed that the upgraded facility will support students pursuing degrees and career pathways in biotechnology, chemical technology, healthcare, environmental science, laboratory sciences, and related fields. Dr. Simpson highlighted the strong enrollment demand in these disciplines, noting that more than 3,100 student enrollments were recorded in the affected subject areas on the Cocoa Campus during the most recent academic year. He emphasized that the improved facilities would enhance hands-on learning opportunities, laboratory instruction, student safety, scientific inquiry, critical thinking, collaboration, and workforce readiness. Dr. Simpson also noted that the renovation will increase the college's capacity to offer laboratory-based courses in microbiology, biology, chemistry, and anatomy and physiology, helping to meet regional workforce demands and expand educational opportunities for students.

Mr. DeGraw provided an overview of the construction project, explaining that the renovation encompasses approximately 12,000 square feet on the second floor of Building 20. The renovated space will include four new classrooms, five laboratories, three preparation rooms, and utilize existing classrooms and office space to meet instructional and faculty needs. He described the facility layout and noted that academic disciplines would be organized into dedicated instructional areas.

Mr. DeGraw reported that construction began on March 2, 2026, and is scheduled for completion by December 31, 2026, with the project at approximately 60 percent complete to date. He stated that the project remains on budget at approximately \$8.3 million and is progressing according to schedule. Following construction, time will be allotted for equipment installation, warranty items, and transition activities before classes begin in the renovated facility in Fall 2027.

During board discussion, Dr. Figueroa asked about enrollment trends and the anticipated impact of the renovation. Dr. Simpson indicated that the project is expected not only to support current enrollment levels but also to accommodate future growth.

Dr. Figueroa commended the project's status for being both on schedule and on budget. Dr. Richey remarked that the new facilities represent a significant improvement in the existing laboratories and classrooms, and described the renovation as a much-needed upgrade that will better prepare students for university transfer and workforce opportunities. Board members expressed their appreciation for the project's progress and thanked Dr. Simpson and Mr. DeGraw for the update.

C. Athletics Update

Dr. Richey invited Mr. Jeff Carr, Athletic Director, to present the athletics department updates. Mr. Carr reported record-setting academic performance across the athletic program, emphasizing the college's commitment to developing student-athletes both in the classroom and in competition. He noted that 21 student-athletes achieved a 4.0 GPA and were recognized by both the Florida College System Activities Association and the National Junior College Athletic Association for academic excellence. The overall cumulative GPA for the college's 13 athletic teams reached 3.22, with men's soccer posting the highest men's team GPA at 3.35 and women's golf leading the women's programs with a 3.55 GPA. Nine athletic teams received national academic recognition, and more than 96 student-athletes were honored by the state for maintaining GPAs of 3.3 or higher.

Mr. Carr reported another highly successful year, announcing 12 of the College's 13 teams qualified for postseason competition, and seven teams advanced to national championship events. National finishes included third place for men's tennis, sixth place for women's golf and men's soccer, and tenth place for men's golf. The college also produced 10 All-Americans during the year.

Mr. Carr highlighted the accomplishments of several former Titans, including Drew Cavanaugh, former baseball player who was recently promoted to the major leagues by the San Francisco Giants; Bunny Shaw, a former soccer player who is now one of the most prominent players in international women's soccer; and Esthefany Barreras, former soccer player who serves as the starting goalkeeper for the Mexican National Team. Mr. Carr expressed optimism for the upcoming athletic season, noting that the men's soccer team was ranked fifth nationally in preseason polls and that all fall sports programs had begun preparations for competition.

Mr. Carr then recognized student-athlete Filip Sormaz, a member of the men's tennis team that won the NJCAA National Championship in doubles competition. He congratulated Mr. Sormaz on the achievement and highlighted his leadership, academic success, and representation of the college. The Board and audience recognized Mr. Sormaz with applause.

Dr. Richey commended Mr. Carr for his leadership of the athletics department, praising his commitment to integrity, student success, and sustained excellence across athletic programs. Dr. Figueroa also praised the academic accomplishments of the student athletes and acknowledged the important role faculty and staff play in supporting their success. He noted that the combination of academic and athletic achievement reflects the strength of the college's mission and culture. Mr. Howse echoed those sentiments and thanked Mr. Carr for his leadership and contributions to the college.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Howse stated there was no old business.

VIII. DIRECT SUPPORT ORGANIZATION TRUSTEE REPORTS

A. EFSC Student Housing Corporation

Mr. Howse invited Mr. Jack Parker, VP of External Affairs, to give the report for the Student Housing Corporation. Mr. Parker reported that student housing was effectively at 100% occupancy, except for one suite which was temporarily unavailable due to damage from an unexpected fire sprinkler system activation in the original residence hall. Repairs were nearing completion, insurance approval was received, and the suite was expected to be ready for occupancy. Next, Mr. Parker reported that housing included 60 returning students. During the summer, maintenance staff completed significant refurbishment work in the original residence hall, which included painting and general upgrades. Residents were temporarily relocated to the newer building to allow renovations to be completed efficiently.

Mr. Parker gave an update on the recreation building, stating the amenities continue to experience strong usage. A summer intern was assigned to the facility, and the college found value in having an on-site presence to assist with communication and operations. Future use of interns or volunteers is being explored. Security personnel continue to monitor the recreation area due to its proximity to Wickham Park while maintaining a student-friendly environment. Mr. Parker emphasized that the recreation facilities, including pickleball courts, sand volleyball courts, basketball courts, and sports fields, are available to all EFSC students, not just housing residents.

Lastly, Mr. Parker reported that Student Services has partnered with housing staff to increase student engagement through events, including a Back-to-School Bash on August 25th featuring snacks, goody bags, and social opportunities. Also planned is an upcoming Halloween event on October 29th featuring seasonal refreshments and activities. Additional events are planned throughout September and November, with the goal of hosting at least one major community-building event each month. Overall, housing operations were progressing positively, and leadership expressed optimism about continued success in the coming months. No questions were asked following the report.

B. EFSC Foundation

Dr. Figueroa invited Ms. Victoria Jones, Interim Executive Director for the EFSC Foundation, to give an update on the Foundation. Ms. Jones announced that the Foundation had awarded more than \$1.3 million in scholarships for the 2025-2026 academic year, exceeding its goal and continuing a trend of annual growth in student support. She thanked the Foundation Board, College leadership, and campus departments for their collective role in achieving this milestone.

Next, Ms. Jones reported that the annual Foundation Golf Classic will be held on November 6th at Rockledge Country Club. Community Credit Union and Glover, Orndorf & Flanagan have committed as sponsors, and sponsorship and team registration remains open. Sterling Automotive will provide a hole-in-one vehicle prize. Planning is underway for the annual Backyard Barbeque, scheduled for February 27, 2027, on the Melbourne Campus. Barbeque team registration has begun, and sponsorship opportunities remain available. Ms. Jones announced that nominations were being accepted year-round for the Distinguished Alumni Award, which recognizes EFSC graduates who have made significant professional and community contributions. The Alumni Friends and Family volunteer event is being planned for November 12th in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank, which will provide alumni and supporters with an opportunity to serve the community.

Ms. Jones also announced that the Foundation recently established three new scholarships. The Troy Fretham Memorial Scholarship is a non-endowed scholarship supporting students in Engineering Technology. The Lang Family Scholarship is a non-endowed scholarship supporting students who demonstrate a commitment to community service. The Dr. Charles Albert Gillespie Endowed Scholarship supports students studying Veterinary Technology. Ms. Jones expressed enthusiasm for the Foundation's continued growth and scholarship initiatives in the coming year. Dr. Zonka commended Ms. Jones for her leadership and the Foundation's accomplishments during her tenure. Dr. Figueroa congratulated the Foundation on surpassing its scholarship goals and noted the positive impact on students.

C. King Center for the Performing Arts

Mr. Howse invited Nick Palmiotti, Executive Director for the King Center, to give the report for the King Center. Mr. Palmiotti provided an update on his first three months as Executive Director, noting that he had met with staff, patrons, volunteers, and community partners and reviewed overall operations. He stated that the King Center has a strong community reputation, dedicated staff, and significant opportunities for future growth. Mr. Palmiotti highlighted opportunities to increase revenue, expand community engagement, and enhance the guest experience while maintaining the high standards expected by the college, board, and patrons.

Next, Mr. Palmiotti reported that financially, the King Center expects to conclude the fiscal year with a net profit, representing a significant improvement over the previous year. Mr. Palmiotti stated that the venue previously achieved an increase of \$223,000 in ticket revenue, along with a 6% increase in membership revenue, and approximately \$400,000 in facility fee revenue generated for the college. He recognized the King Center staff for their financial discipline and operational performance.

Mr. Palmiotti highlighted recent performances which included shows by Travis Tritt, Stewart Copeland, and Classic Albums Live: Abbey Road. Newly announced events include Mannheim Steamroller, Joe Bonamassa, Hotel California, and the Space Coast Ballet's production of The Nutcracker. Due to high demand, a second performance by comedian Matt Mathews was added after the initial show sold out. The 2026-2027 season will open with country music artists Josh Turner and Ashley McBryde. The King Center currently has 81 confirmed events scheduled for the upcoming season, exceeding the number booked at the same time last year, with an additional 50 events anticipated to be added during the year.

Mr. Palmiotti reported continued progress on the new Lexus vehicle display at the front of the facility, with concrete pads completed and additional site improvements underway. He also outlined priority capital improvement projects, including: a new projection system, sound and lighting upgrades for the Studio Theater, and the purchase of a new Genie lift designed to protect the recently installed rotunda flooring. Mr. Palmiotti stated that management remains focused on improving internal processes, strengthening financial reporting, supporting staff development, and identifying new growth opportunities for the organization. Dr. Richey and Mr. Howse complimented Mr. Palmiotti on his report and expressed appreciation for his leadership and early contributions to the King Center. No questions were asked by the board.

IX. TRUSTEE'S CLOSING COMMENTS

Dr. Figueroa thanked the board, administration, and college staff and expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming year. He acknowledged that the college faces challenges but noted confidence in the institution's leadership and team to successfully address them.

Dr. Figueroa also stated that it was an honor to serve on the board and looked forward to contributing to its work. Mr. Howse agreed with Dr. Figueroa's remarks and expressed his appreciation for the comments.

X. PRESIDENT'S CLOSING COMMENTS

Dr. Richey remarked that the start of the upcoming semester is an exciting time for both the college and its students. He reported that enrollment had increased again and emphasized the institution's commitment to providing students with high-quality educational experiences. Dr. Richey expressed his optimism about the semester ahead and thanked those in attendance for their continued support.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 p.m.

APPROVED: _____

Chair, District Board of Trustees

APPROVED: _____

Secretary, District Board of Trustees