# MINUTES

# Trustees Present:

Kevin Hyde (Chair), Paul McElroy (Vice Chair), Jason Barrett, Selma Besirevic, Tom Bryan, Jill Davis, John Gol, Stephen Joost, Allison Korman Shelton, Chris Lazzara, Nik Patel, John White

**Trustees Absent:** Annie Egan

## Item 1 Call to Order

Chair Hyde called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. He welcomed and introduced new Trustee Alison Korman Shelton. Ms. Korman Shelton stated that she was honored to serve on the Board and was looking forward with everyone.

## Item 2 Public Comment

Chair Hyde offer the opportunity for public comment. Dr. Nicholas de Villiers, UFF-UNF President and UNF Professor of English and Film; Dr. Sarah Mattice, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies and Director of Interdisciplinary Studies; Dr. Joshua Gellers, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Public Administration and Director of the Master of Arts in International Affairs Program; Mr. Matt Hartley, Associate Director, Interfaith Center; and Dr. Hope Wilson, Associate Professor, College of Education and Human Services made public comments. (Copies of their public comments are attached to these minutes as appendices.) Trustee White also read a statement (that is attached as an appendix).

Chair Hyde thanked everyone for expressing their individual views and stated that the Board of Trustees is obligated to consider all views and to follow the law. He stated that he knows the Board is committed to doing so, and that as the Board continues to approach the challenges associated with the pandemic, this is the spirit in which it will do so. He emphasized that as UNF is part of the State University System, it is required to follow and work together with the Board of Governors, the Executive Office of the Governor, and the Florida Legislature. He thanked everyone again for coming to the meeting and making their comments.

## Item 3 Approval of Newly Appointed and Reappointed Board Members for UNF Direct Support Organizations (DSOs)

Vice President Bennett presented, for the Board’s consideration, the candidates for appointment/reappointment for the boards of the following direct support organizations: the Training and Services Institute and the UNF Financing Corporation. Vice President Bennett certified that each appointee had been selected in accordance with the documented processes established by the direct support organizations and had been approved by the direct support organizations’ boards.

1. **UNF Training and Services Institute (TSI)**

The Trustees had received background materials which referenced that Mr. Tony Marinatos had, at the August 3, 2021 TSI Board of Directors meeting, been elected to serve as a director for a two-year term beginning on August 12, 2021 and expiring on June 30, 2023. Vice President Bennett presented Mr. Marinatos as a candidate for director to the TSI Board of Directors. Chair Hyde asked if there were any questions or comments. There being none, he asked for a MOTION to APPROVE. Vice Chair McElroy made a MOTION to APPROVE, and Trustee Patel SECONDED. The Board unanimously approved Mr. Marinatos’ appointment as a Director on the TSI Board for an August 12, 2021 to June 30, 2023 term.

1. UNF Financing Corporation

The Trustees had received background materials which referenced that Ms. Julie Lamey had, at the August 10, 2021 UNF Financing Corporation Board of Directors meeting, been elected to serve as a director for a two-year term beginning on August 12, 2021 and expiring on June 30, 2023. Vice President Bennett presented Ms. Lamey as a candidate for director to the UNF Financing Corporation. Chair Hyde asked if there were any questions or comments. There being none, he asked for a MOTION to APPROVE. Trustee Bryan made a MOTION to APPROVE, and Trustee Joost SECONDED. The Board unanimously approved Ms. Lamey’s appointment as a Director on the TSI Board for an August 12, 2021 to June 30, 2023 term.

## Item 4 Proposed Amended Regulation – 4.0170 Conflicts of Interest Regulation

In follow-up to her presentation and preview of the updated draft Conflict of Interest Regulation and form, at the March 15, 2021 Board of Trustees Audit and Compliance Committee meeting, Assistant Vice President Guth presented the proposed amended regulation 4.0170 – Conflict of Interest Regulation for the Board’s consideration. Vice President Guth relayed that the amended language included:

* a reference to the State of Florida code of ethics for public officers and employees;
* an expansion of disclosure requirements, including a new annual requirement at the beginning of each fiscal year, indicating the employee has no conflicts or outside employment/activity to disclose;
* a new requirement, from F.S. 1012.977, related to disclosure of activities related to research with the potential to affect the integrity of state universities or entities;
* a section on penalties for failure to disclose, which she noted, reflects F.S. 1012.977 penalties;
* an expansion of the definition of a conflict of interest, incorporating conflicts which arise as referenced in the UNF Amorous or Sexual Relationship Policy and Employment of Relatives Regulation;
* a replacement of duplicative intellectual property language, with a reference to the UNF Policy on Patents, Copyrights, and Other Intellectual Property; (Assistant Vice President Guth noted that the policy had been updated in April 2020.)
* clarifying language in the objective and purpose section of the regulation, describing how UNF’s regulation is relative to the collective bargaining agreements and indicating that any terms of the applicable collective bargaining agreements will govern as long as the bargaining agreement is compliant with Florida law.

Assistant Vice President Guth reminded the Board that the University has three collective bargaining agreements: the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Collective Bargaining Agreement, the Coastal Florida Police Benevolent Association (PBA) Collective Bargaining Agreement, and the United Faculty of Florida (UFF) Collective Bargaining Agreement. She reemphasized that, where those collective bargaining agreements have language about conflicts of interest, those agreements will govern.

Assistant Vice President Guth stated that the AFSCME CBA is silent on conflicts of interest (and therefore, with regard to questions of conflicts of interest, the University would refer back to the regulation for staff affected by the AFSCME CBA). She noted that the PBA CBA has an article (Article 19) dedicated to collective bargaining agreements and that a proposed revision is in progress for this year’s bargaining sessions, to align with the UNF Regulation. Assistant Vice President Guth also stated that the UFF CBA also has a dedicated article (Article 28) related to conflicts of interest and outside employment. She relayed that the University has proposed a revision (which aligns with the proposed changes to the UNF regulation) in progress. It has been prepared for this year’s full-book bargaining. Assistant Vice President Guth stated that the revisions incorporate requirements under F.S. 1012.977 for disclosure by employees engaged in the design, conduct, or reporting of research and penalties for non-disclosure. (Assistant Vice President Guth noted that this could include suspension without pay pending outcome of investigation or it could include termination of employment.) She noted that the collective bargaining agreement with the UFF “is relative at this moment, because the existing agreement contains language which differs from the University’s regulation.” Assistant Vice President Guth stated that, until it gets amended through the negotiation process, that collective bargaining agreement does govern. She added that the University intends to work to bring the collective bargaining agreement article into alignment with the proposed regulation. Assistant Vice President Guth reminded the Board that all collective bargaining agreements come to the Board of Trustees for approval, so the Board would be able to review any changes in these areas of the collective bargaining agreements.

Assistant Vice President Guth advised that the University is in the process of developing reports on completions of the conflict of interest disclosure forms, including a compliance audit (with reminders) for those employees who have failed to submit their annual disclosures. The University is also developing reports to describe the types and trends of conflicts that are disclosed and how the University has mitigated those risks. Assistant Vice President Guth shared that the University is creating the infrastructure to store attachments to the disclosure forms and that it is developing training for Deans, Chairs, supervisors and others on review of the forms. She advised that the University will be offering on-line trainings with interactive sessions.

Vice Chair McElroy thanked Assistant Vice President Guth for addressing and clarifying the collective bargaining language. He suggested creating an addendum to the proposed regulation with F.S. 1012.977, so that the statute is clearly stated and available for review. Chair Hyde stated that he agreed with adding a copy of the statute.

Chair Hyde asked if there were additional comments or questions. There being none, he asked for a MOTION to APPROVE the amended 4.0170 Conflicts of Interest Regulation. Vice Chair McElroy made a MOTION to APPROVE, and Trustee Bryan SECONDED. There was no additional discussion on the proposed amended regulation, and it was approved unanimously by the Board.

## Item 5 Annual Presidential Evaluation

Chair Hyde led a conversation with the Board on the President’s annual performance for the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, including progress on the President’s goals for the year. He reminded the Board that it follows the process as outlined in the Presidential Evaluation Policy that it adopted in January 2019.

Chair Hyde stated that the year had been an unusual year in many respects, most notably because of the existence of the COVID pandemic. Chair Hyde reminded the Board that it is required to conduct the presidential evaluation within 90 days of the completion of the year in review. Chair Hyde noted that he had directed to staff to send to the Board copies of the: Presidential Evaluation Policy; summary of the goals the President had set for the July 1, 2020 - June 20, 2021 year; President’s annual self-report; and a draft of the Chair’s evaluation. Chair Hyde noted that his draft evaluation included a review of not only his evaluation of the President, but also a review of the President’s goals, a review of the President’s self-evaluation and feedback from the Chair Kitson. Chair Hyde opened the matter up for discussion.

Trustee Bryan stated that, under President Szymanski’s leadership, UNF’s One-Stop office had streamlined its services, increasing efficiencies in its operations and better serving students.

Trustee McElroy stated that President Szymanski and his leadership team had done an outstanding job of leading the University during the pandemic, as well as making progress in the metrics. Trustee McElroy emphasized that even during the pandemic, there had been many virtual offerings to students and that the President created a more inclusive campus. He noted that there had been increased engagement between the President and faculty during the year, which had been very valuable.

Trustee White relayed that he had brought up a concern in the previous year about the level of engagement between the faculty and the President. Trustee White stated that he echoed Trustee McElroy’s statements that “the President had reached out tirelessly to the Faculty, in multiple ways, and that the Faculty have appreciated it.”

Chair Hyde stated that he wanted to thank President Szymanski and the team for the University’s COVID response. He stated that he wanted to thank the President and the entire University, as “the COVID response has been a collaborative effort.” Chair Hyde stated that the President had assembled and led a team, under Bob Greenlaw’s direction, that had had an evolving response to the pandemic. Chair Hyde stated that he wanted to compliment President Szymanski on the leadership team that the President had assembled, including new positions such as the Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer and Vice President of Jobs. He stated that the President had assembled a strong team and “had allowed good people to do their jobs.”

Chair Hyde stated that the President had provided a robust presentation on the metrics at the Board of Trustees June 17, 2021 meeting, and that the University has seen improvements on the metrics. Chair Hyde stated that there is still work to do, but he has appreciated the President’s focus and accomplishments on the metrics. Chair Hyde stated that he would appreciate any edits, suggested revisions and/or comments on the draft evaluation that he had shared with the Trustees. He relayed that he would review the draft again, have the opportunity to finalize it, and that the President and he would meet to discuss it. He thanked the Trustees, again, for their review of the materials in advance and again during the meeting. Chair Hyde asked the President if he would like to make some comments.

President Szymanski thanked the Board for its support, especially throughout the pandemic, as the University had worked to keep the University community safe. He stated that UNF has a fantastic team, faculty, students and staff. He also stated that he has appreciated the faculty’s dedication and their perseverance. The President stated that the students, their dedication and their “sense of family, at UNF has been phenomenal.”

## Item 6 Consideration of Incentive Compensation

Chair Hyde turned to Vice President Stone to present the item on the Board’s consideration of incentive compensation for the President. Vice President Stone reminded the Board that the President’s contract provides annually that the Board can consider an award of incentive compensation based on terms that were negotiated at the time the President was selected. Vice President Stone reminded the Board that the matter was a contractual matter. She stated that, this year, President Szymanski was eligible for an incentive award of up to $85K. Vice President Stone reminded the Board that these monies are not paid from any state sources. She emphasized that the monies come from the University’s private direct support organizations and are budgeted annually as part of the President’s overall, annual package. She stated, for the benefit of the new Trustees present, that this was the 3rd time that the University has gone through this process with President Szymanski and that President Szymanski has previously been awarded the full amount of incentive compensation.

Chair Hyde asked if anyone had questions for Vice President Stone. He stated that, there being none, it was his recommendation to the Board that the President receive the full amount of compensation as called for in the contract. Chair Hyde stated that he would like to open the matter up for a discussion or a MOTION. Trustee Joost made a MOTION to award the President the full amount of incentive compensation, and Trustee Patel SECONDED. Chair Hyde asked if the Trustees would like additional discussion. There being none, Chair Hyde asked for a vote. The Board unanimously approved to award the full amount of compensation, $85K, to President Szymanski.

## Item 7 Consideration of Appointment of Interim President

Chair Hyde stated that, with President Szymanski’s upcoming transition to his new role with MEDNexus, the Board would now consider the selection of an Interim President and contract terms. Chair Hyde stated that it was his recommendation that Dr. Pamela (Pam) Chally be appointed as Interim President.

Chair Hyde stated that he based his recommendation on Dr. Chally’s leadership as Dean of the Brooks Colleges of Health and as Interim Provost, as well as her long knowledge of and relationship with UNF. Chair Hyde stated that he also believes that Dr. Chally’s example of servant-leadership is one that the University is accustomed to and will appreciate.

Chair Hyde directed the Trustees attention to the draft contract for the Interim President, which the Trustees had received in their meeting materials. He emphasized that, if the Board were to enter into the contract with Dr. Chally, it would expect Dr. Chally to bring to the Board in the near future, her goals for her tenure as Interim President. Chair Hyde highlighted that the contract states that Dr. Chally would stay in the role of Interim President for up to a year (depending on when the selection of the new President takes place/the new President takes office). He noted that, in terms of compensation, the University had benchmarked against prior Interim President contracts within the State University System. Chair Hyde asked the Trustees if they had any questions regarding his recommendation or suggestions they would like the Board to entertain. He opened the matter for discussion.

Trustee McElroy stated that Dr. Chally has dedicated an enormous amount of her time and career to UNF and has wonderful experience “in both the academic arena and demonstrated administrative leadership.” He also stressed that one of the continuing issues for the University will be dealing with challenges from COVID. Trustee McElroy stated that Dr. Chally’s medical background, should the Board select her as Interim President, would serve her well in dealing with COVID-related issues.

Trustee Bryan stated his support of the recommendation of Dr. Chally. He stated that each time he had previously reached out to Dr. Chally with questions, she had always been extremely helpful, and that he could not “think of anyone better to serve in this role.” Trustee Bryan stated that he agrees with the contract requiring the Interim President to submit a set of goals to the Board, as the University will not “be standing still,” with the transition of presidential leadership.

Trustee White stated that, because of the pandemic, there is a sense of urgency in naming an Interim President. He stated that because of this, he did not feel “there had been quite the time to gain public feedback from the faculty, staff and students as to the appointment of an Interim President.” He also stated that the recommendation of Dr. Chally “has alleviated “many concerns as to whom the appointee might be, as she has been an tireless advocate for the University.

Hearing no other comments, questions or suggestions, Chair Hyde asked if there was a MOTION to APPROVE the appointment of Dr. Pamela Chally as Interim President and the contract terms. Trustee Joost made a MOTION to APPROVE, and Trustee Besirevic SECONDED. The Board unanimously approved Dr. Chally’s appointment as Interim President, starting on September 18, 2021 and the contract terms as presented to the Board. Chair Hyde stated that the matter will be brought to the Board of Governors at its September 1, 2021 meeting, where Dr. Chally’s confirmation as Interim President will be considered by the Board of Governors.

Dr. Chally congratulated President Szymanski on his new role and all of his accomplishments for the University. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve as the UNF Interim President and stated that she was “honored and humbled.” Dr. Chally stated that she is very committed to the University and that she has had many roles during her 28 years with UNF. She stated that she has appreciated her recent two years to serve on the faculty to be able to influence student nurses and future leaders. She stressed that her last two years, in particular, helped her to better understand students’ needs and that, as a faculty member, she saw first-hand how well the faculty had stepped up and pivoted to teach remotely due to the pandemic to support the students. She thanked the Board again for the opportunity and stated that she looks forward to continuing the University’s work in supporting student success.

Trustee Bryan thanked Chair Hyde for his tireless work on behalf of the University and its faculty, students, and staff. Chair Hyde stated that it is a pleasure to work with the University community and in particular its Board of Trustees.

## Item 8 Adjournment

Chair Hyde asked if there were any further items to discuss. There being none, he adjourned the meeting at 10:56 a.m.

### Appendix I

### Public Comment– Dr. de Villiers

### Board of Trustees Meeting

### August 12, 2021

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the agenda items on UNF leadership (President Szymanski’s performance and the future interim president). My name is Nicholas de Villiers, and I am the President of the UNF chapter of United Faculty of Florida. We are hearing from faculty with their urgent concerns about the local COVID-19 pandemic surge and the now outdated pre-Delta variant Board of Governors SUS reopening plan. They are concerned about a perceived lack of leadership in protecting the health and safety of our campus community.

We are hearing that people want UNF leadership to bring us back in alignment with CDC guidelines for institutions of higher education with mixed vaccination populations like UNF. Student vaccination incentives, and statements that we “expect” everyone to wear masks are steps in the right direction but fall short of addressing the concerns we are hearing from faculty. Faculty want to keep their students, their families, and the community safe from infection, illness, and death. Our faculty are asking for the same flexibility to keep everyone safe and ensure continuity of instruction that worked well last year.

In the email about President Szymanski’s transition to CEO of MedNexus, we are told that “President Szymanski helped guide UNF through the COVID-19 crisis, minimizing the impact of the unprecedented pandemic on the University community. … He also created new leadership positions in crisis management/COVID … [along with] diversity and inclusion, all reporting to the president.”

Faculty are indeed grateful for these efforts, but we hope we can all recognize that the pandemic crisis is not over, we’re not “through it,” in fact it is worse than it has ever been right now in northeast Florida. The impacts are still being felt, which is why impact bargaining is so important and urgent, including UFF-UNF’s proposed MOU asking for flexibility for at risk faculty and those who wish to follow UNF’s own health and safety policies to prevent illness.

We are concerned that the Americans with Disabilities Act is being presented as the only option for faculty with concerns about risks to their children who are under 12 and thus not eligible for vaccines, or high-risk family members. The ADA was not designed for this and was not intended to be a hurdle for faculty to clear. It was designed to promote access. We are also disturbed by what we are hearing from faculty regarding uneven, inconsistent responses to their requests. This is a recipe for bias and discrimination, and threatens to undermine the important steps toward diversity, equity, and inclusion celebrated in the letter evaluating President Szymanski’s term at UNF.

Finally, I point you to the urgent calls for action in the [Change.org petition](https://www.change.org/p/university-of-north-florida-unf-board-of-trustees-bot-keep-our-unf-community-safe?utm_content=cl_sharecopy_30250873_en-US%3A7&recruiter=1219721101&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=share_petition&utm_term=psf_combo_share_message) “Keep Our UNF Community Safe,” addressed to the Board of Trustees and upper administration at UNF, which now has over 350 signatures, and the concerned community members peacefully rallying outside this building. We need courageous leadership right now to “minimize the impact” of this pandemic on our faculty, students, and community. Thank you.

### Appendix II

### Public Comment – Dr. Mattice

### Board of Trustees Meeting

### August 12, 2021

Hello, my name is Sarah Mattice. I’m a faculty member in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies. I’m also a faculty excellence scholar for well-being, teaching mindfulness and meditation, and it is because of my experiences with faculty mental health and well-being that I wanted to address you today. As you consider questions of leadership, in these times of crises, I would ask that you think not only of virtues like courage or strength, but also compassion—in particular, compassion for faculty and staff. At the beginning of the pandemic we all hailed teachers’ efforts as extraordinary—that rhetoric quickly faded. But the extraordinary efforts have continued, and have taken a significant toll. Many faculty are exhausted, stressed, worried, anxious, sleepless… and like most of us, until a month or so ago they were hoping that this fall would be better and the pandemic conditions would improve. The let-down has been enormous. For many, there was no time of rest and recharge, and I am concerned for them as we start this new year.

I know faculty who have lost loved ones this last year. Who have dealt with all that this virus has to offer, from sickness or death to long-distance grief and more. Faculty who’ve become third-grade math teachers and elder-care givers, in addition to their full-time jobs. Faculty have learned new technologies, changed their entire way of working, redesigned and reimagined their courses, their scholarship, their creative work, and become the first line of support for students dealing with the various traumas wrought on them by this pandemic. Through all of this, though, I would have said: “we are in this together.” UNF, unlike so many other institutions, did not force us, but worked with us. We were treated as partners, valued industry professionals able to make the appropriate decisions for our own contexts.

Now, in some respects local circumstances are even worse than a year ago. Many faculty are stretched thin, balancing personal, familial, pedagogical, scholarly, and mentoring roles. As you consider questions of leadership, much is uncertain and out of your control—out of all our control. Yet what I hear from colleagues is a small plea for control—for what is possible. A colleague saying, “If only I knew students would all wear masks, I would have no problem being in the classroom, having them do small group exercises together.” Or another, “If I could decide how to use zoom for this class just part of the time for part of the group, it would make all the difference.” Yet that autonomy is no longer in our hands. Faculty mental health is a serious challenge right now, and your compassionate response, working with us in concrete terms—returning to the CDC guidelines for mixed vaccination populations in areas of virus transmission like Jacksonville, and not just allowing but encouraging faculty to use their expertise to flexibly and creatively provide the best possible educational experiences for students—that is the leadership we need. Thank you.

### Appendix III

### Public Comment– Dr. Gellers

### Board of Trustees Meeting

### August 12, 2021

My name is Josh Gellers, and I am an associate professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration here at UNF. I come before you today to speak on

Item 7: Consideration of Appointment of Interim President. During President Szymanski’s tenure, UNF rose to the level of a national university and marketed itself as a leader in medical education and innovation, as evidenced by the creation of UNF Medical Nexus. There is perhaps no better stress test for this new designation and strategic emphasis than our University’s COVID response. Months ago when the University updated its COVID-19 Guidelines, we were in a very different situation compared to where we are now. Currently we are in the midst of a wave of new infections caused largely by the Delta variant, mostly among unvaccinated individuals, in a national epicenter for infection. Some of the very hospitals with which UNF is partnering through MedNexus have reached capacity due to new COVID hospitalizations, including an exponential increase in the number of children being hospitalized with the virus.

Whomever is charged with taking over the responsibilities and duties of President will need to consider these factors as we transition to a fall semester that is completely different from the one we planned for two months ago. In particular, it is vital that this person offer pathways that limit the disruption to our main service—education. This means providing faculty with the flexibility to conduct instruction in the safest manner possible given the constraints under which we are now operating. For example, last year I taught one class with 10 graduate students. At the start of the semester, I wore a faceshield but did not wear a mask underneath. In late January, I tested positive for COVID. Suddenly I was faced with a mandatory quarantine period. Immediately I switched my entirely face-to-face class to remote instruction. Upon my return to class, I learned that 2 students also came down with COVID. I then decided to offer the class in 3 modalities for the remainder of the semester—in-person, live streaming online, and recorded lecture. One student did not return to class. Everyone in her family was infected. Her mother later died from COVID.

My experience is only one of many, but it highlights the severity of our current dilemma. COVID cases are at or approaching an all-time high in this area, and faculty will be entering classes completely unaware of the vaccination status of any of their students. While I applaud the University’s recent announcement that it will offer positive incentives to students in the form of Ozzie bucks to encourage vaccination, I strongly urge the Interim President to consider allowing faculty the flexibility to offer instruction in a manner that reflects their unique circumstances. I have a 1-year-old daughter in day care and a 72-year-old immunocompromised father. My work environment poses considerable risk to their lives. Let’s be “uniquely UNF” for all the right reasons and extend accommodations so that our faculty can continue to provide instruction safely for students and our families. Thank you.

### Appendix IV

### Public Comment– Mr. Hartley

### Board of Trustees Meeting

### August 12, 2021

Good Morning Board of Trustees and guests, I am Matt Hartley, Associate Director of the UNF Interfaith Center. I am here to speak on agenda items 5 and 7, the president’s performance, and the naming of an interim President. I want to congratulate President Szymanski on his new role and thank him for actions his administration has taken to protect our campus during the Covid-19 crisis. And as the President looks out on his last month and the Board of Trustees looks to the appointing of an Interim President, we want to see that strong leadership continue to meet this moment of crisis.

This is the reality we are all facing. You’ve heard from other speakers and you’ve seen the reports from hospitals of how dire the Covid/Delta Variant surge is in our community and of schools reopening during this. We are facing the repopulation of our campus as the virus is spreading worse than before. We are all still committed to providing a world class education and campus experience, but it will only be that if it is safe.

That is why we need strong presidential leadership. I support the Faculty in calling for flexibility, and hope this will be extended to Staff as well. Particularly, I hope we will meet this moment with leave policies and remote flexibility like we had when things were bad before. With the potential of infection so high right now and with many of us sending our kids back to school, we need to know we will have the flexibility while we continue to serve our UNF students.

I hope leadership will also communicate effectively with faculty and staff. I was relieved to see some of UNF’s announcements in recent days regarding incentives for vaccines and expectation of masks, but in the month preceding this announcement, and I felt, and I spoke with other faculty and staff who felt similarly, that the administration was not communicating adequately with the staff and faculty about responding to the local surge of the Delta variant and the oncoming return to campus. We were worried and just did not know whether these circumstances were being taken seriously. I would suggest going froward stronger communication from the President’s office of measures that are being considered and worked on.   With flexibility, with communication, with shared responsibility, strong presidential leadership will help us meet this moment as a UNF community and gather back together safely. Thank you.

### Appendix V

### Public Comment– Dr. Wilson

### Board of Trustees Meeting

### August 12, 2021

Hello, I am Dr. Hope E. Wilson, Associate Professor in the College of Education and Human services, as the Vicki Cornett Caring Award Recipient of this year in COEHS. Today I am speaking on agenda items 5 and 7, and specifically how leadership decisions will affect the Colleges of Education and Nursing, in which UNF provides opportunities for students to go out into our community to learn and practice our learning. Specifically in the college of education, we are sending students out to interact with unvaccinated populations, that is children under the age of 12, across our Northeast Florida community, in various schools and neighborhoods. Then, according to the current plan, these students will then return to campus, share the germs they got from the various schools, then go back out into the community schools, spreading the virus further. Thus, UNF has the real potential to be a super-spreader among our Northeast Florida community. I encourage our leadership and administration, to give us the opportunity to be more flexible, and allow faculty to make smart decisions around the delivery of our course, so that we can continue to be a support and leader within our community, and continue to be a good example.

I also want to share the commitment that faculty have for the health and safety for our students. I could come here with the facts and figures about the spread of the Delta variant, the number of children who are currently hospitalized in Duval County, and the number of deaths we have seen in our community. But instead, I want to share a personal story of a college student—my daughter, who was diagnosed with COVID-induced appendicitis this past May. I don’t want any other family, any other part of our UNF community, to have to endure the heartbreak that I experienced watching my daughter being wheeled away from me into the COVID ward, while she is sobbing, being separated from her mother during her first hospital stay, her first surgery. This was a mild case, the surgery went well, and we all had good outcomes. But the terror, fear, and heartbreak of being apart from my child while she struggled with this disease was terrible, and something that we can work to prevent among our campus community. I know that our current leadership and administration values families, and I hope that as we consider the choices for the future, we consider the impact that COVID has on the families in our UNF Osprey Nest.

### Appendix VI

### Statement – Trustee White

### Board of Trustees Meeting

### August 12, 2021

As the representative of the UNF faculty on the Board of Trustees, I feel compelled to make a statement about our current contexts and about the untenable position in which my colleagues and I have been placed. I fully recognize that members of the Board of Governors or representatives from the office of the governor may be tuned into this meeting. I hope so because it is primarily to them that I direct this message.

Florida is in a state of emergency. The most recent data show that COVID infection rates have surpassed what they had been at the height of the pandemic last year. Our hospitals are at or above capacity and emergency room physicians are warning that the problem will grow significantly worse. And this time around, our citizens are suffering from an even more virulent strain of the virus. To be clear, a wealth of data shows that the Delta variant is far more contagious than the earlier variant and that it can be transmitted both by the vaccinated and unvaccinated alike. In addition, it is also clear from scientific data that there are serious long-term effects from COVID infections for a significant number of people and especially for the children who contract the virus. Yet while real people are getting very sick, suffering from ongoing effects of the disease, and dying, our state government has callously chosen to pretend that this crisis is fabricated and exaggerated. They have mandated—and in some cases codified into law—regressive policies that allow the virus to flourish and that put our citizens in danger.

Fully half of the roughly three million students in our state’s K-12 schools are not yet eligible for the vaccine. And many students in the 12-18 age range remain unvaccinated because their parents have been told by some politicians and some media organizations to distrust science. Despite these data, Governor DeSantis has forbidden school districts from mandating masks—a simple, inexpensive, effective, and proven preventative. Further, he has promised serious financial sanctions for those district leaders brave enough to stand up to protect the children in their charge *and* he has threatened to withhold a percentage of future state funds to any non-compliant district. He has, in other words, promised to *punish students* because their teachers, principals, and superintendents enacted simple measures to protect children.

Here at the state university level, the governor and the board of governors have taken a similar stance. Our faculty have been told that we must return to normal this fall, meaning that most of our courses must be taught face-to-face. At the same time, however, our university, like our eleven sister institutions across the SUS, has been prohibited from mandating COVID vaccinations along with the myriad other vaccinations we require. We have been prohibited from requiring COVID testing for students living in our dormitories. We have been prohibited from requiring mask-wearing in our classrooms and offices. And we have similarly been prohibited from changing the course delivery methods for faculty who may have small children, immunocompromised partners, or elderly parents at home. Through their mandates, the Board of Governors has expressed to our faculty and to our students that a “return to normal” is more important than our health or the health of our families. And much like we have seen in the K-12 realm, our universities have been told to expect serious financial ramifications—retribution if you will—if we attempt to do the ethical and safe thing of ignoring some or all of these mandates. To put it bluntly, educators in the state of Florida are being subjected to a kind of extortion: we can choose do to what is right for our community (and what science advocates) or we can risk a major loss of funding, which in turn means the loss of student opportunities and jobs. Again, this is an example of the worst kind of partisan politics; it puts a political agenda that is decidedly non-data driven above the welfare of our educators and our students.

As a faculty member who loves his students, his colleagues, and his university, I implore the Board of Governors and the governor himself to set aside this political gamesmanship and to do the right thing for our students and their teachers. By the right thing, I mean follow the science. In our current contexts, this means mandating vaccinations, it means requiring masks until the pandemic is under control, and it means promoting scientific data over misleading hyperbole.

Our teachers, whether they be in K-12 schools, our state colleges, or our state universities, deserve better. Even more importantly, our students—the future of our state and the future of our nation—deserve better. It is time for our leaders to do the right thing.

Thank you.