# Attendance

## Trustees Present

James Beasley, Jack Boyle, Jay Demetree, Amelia Dyal, John Gol, Kevin Hyde (ex officio), Allison Korman Shelton, Christopher Lazzara, Paul McElroy, Steve Moore, Nik Patel

## Trustees Absent

Jason Barrett, Jill Davis

## Call to Order

Chair Hyde called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

## Public Comment

Chair Hyde confirmed with Vice President and General Counsel, Karen Stone, if there were any requests for public comment. There were no requests.

## Student Presentation

Damien Jackson, a senior transfer student from FSCJ and a Gilman Scholarship recipient, shared his UNF journey.

## Chair's Remarks

Chair Hyde welcomed the new Student Government President, Amelia Dyal, to the Board. He noted that Trustee Dyal will bring a unique perspective with valuable input. Trustee Dyal thanked the Board and expressed excitement to begin her term.

## President's Remarks

President Limayem provided a brief report on various accomplishments across campus.

UNF achieved record-breaking success on Giving Day, with 4,513 donors contributing over $2.4 million. He thanked Vice President of University Development and Alumnae Engagement, Teresa Nichols, and her team for their successful efforts.

While it may be a bit early to confirm, President Limayem announced that Fall 2024 retention to Fall 2025 is exceeding the previous cohort by 3.6 percentage points, highlighting the UNF team's direct engagement with cohorts. He emphasized that retention is foundational to UNF's mission. Trustee McElroy noted this improvement reflects a significant cultural shift, with the entire University team contributing to these results. The President added that changes in processes and IT have also enhanced student success.

The Jacksonville City Council approved $3 million for a new Esports & Innovation Arena at UNF. Mayor Donna Deegan attended the bill signing on April 22, 2025. President Limayem thanked the local government, Councilman Lahnen, and Trustee Patel for their support, stating this is just the beginning of further investments.

UNF has retained the River City Rumble barrel for the 7th year in a row, dominating JU in the points total. Athletic Director, Nick Morrow, shared that UNF is up 14 to 5 points in total, with more points available to earn.

For the second time in UNF history, the softball team secured the ASUN Division Title after sweeping JU twice this season. UNF is likely to be the #1 seed in the ASUN Tournament from May 6-10 in Oxford, AL. Alison Benning broke the program’s single-season and career home run records, and Head Coach Jeff Conrad achieved his 100th win, the fastest in program history. President Limayem acknowledged the team's accomplishments and welcomed them to the podium.

Coach Conrad praised the players' determination and unity, highlighting Hadlee Reichert as a strong leader. Team members introduced themselves, sharing their names, hometowns, and class years, with some noting if they were transfer students.

Trustee Korman Shelton commended Coach Conrad for the team's depth, noting many players are from out of state. She thanked the team for their introductions and congratulated them on their achievements. President Limayem announced UNF Softball Senior Day on April 26, 2025, at 1:30 PM and encouraged attendance.

President Limayem also shared that Smilla Kolbe finished 5th in the 800m at the NCAA Indoor Track & Field Championships, becoming UNF’s first first-team All-American in track history. Kolbe is one of 16 student-athletes nationwide to qualify for the NCAA Indoor Championships. She has beaten athletes who competed in the Olympics and nearly qualified for the German Olympic team last year. Despite an opportunity to go professional in Germany, Kolbe chose to return to UNF due to her positive experience.

Kolbe expressed gratitude for attending UNF and being surrounded by amazing people. President Limayem shared his pride in Kolbe and thanked her for her accomplishments on behalf of the UNF community.

Dr. Mike Binder, Interim Assistant Vice President of Faculty Relations, presented a video of Trustee Moore and Trustee Patel engaging with UNF softball and track athletes.

President Limayem announced that UNF received an information request from the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) on April 18, 2025, and has submitted the required information. He assured that all requests and submissions are transparently communicated to faculty and staff. Trustee Beasley confirmed UNF's transparency based on discussions with other faculty presidents statewide.

Regarding the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed by the Chief of Police with ICE, President Limayem clarified that the university was instructed to sign it, but it is not currently in effect and has no implementation timeline. He confirmed no ICE activity on campus and no revocations of J-1 or F-1 student visas, urging the community to disregard rumors.

President Limayem shared his experience as a former international student, having held multiple visa types and undergone the green card and naturalization process. He emphasized UNF's genuine and action-driven culture of care for students, faculty, and staff.

The President reported that up to four federal grants had been paused or canceled and assured the Board that each case was being addressed individually. He emphasized the university's efforts to support affected faculty, staff, and students. He noted that one major grant impacted the Silverfield College of Education and Human Services (SCOEHS) and invited Dr. Steve Dittmore, Dean of SCOEHS, and Dr. John Kantner, Senior Associate Provost for Faculty Success, to share additional information.

Dean Dittmore shared that the Teacher Quality Partnership grant with the Department of Education, known as Project PREP and in partnership with Clay County, was canceled in mid-February. He emphasized the university’s immediate focus on minimizing impact to affected students and thanked the Provost’s Office for their support. The five-component grant supported high school students in a virtual teaching academy through to graduate-level educational leadership programs. Efforts were made to transition student teachers into another residency program within the college.

Of the four staff employed under the grant, one was placed in a vacant college position, two are being considered for other roles, and one postdoc accepted a tenure-track position at Boise State. Dean Dittmore expressed appreciation for the administration’s commitment to supporting students, faculty, and staff, and noted ongoing conversations about securing alternative funding and continuing the partnership with Clay County.

Dean Dittmore shared he was traveling to Colorado to attend the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference, the largest annual academic gathering in the field. He noted that UNF had a record number of accepted presentations this year, with 20 students and faculty participating. He highlighted the positive momentum surrounding recent initiatives.

Dr. Kantner reported that five federal grants had been terminated: the Project PREP grant from the Department of Education, a biomedical sciences training grant from the National Institutes of Health, two National Endowment for the Humanities grants, and one subaward from the National Science Foundation. He acknowledged the significant impact of these losses and emphasized the importance of such funding to the university.

He expressed appreciation for the support from the Provost, the President, and the Board of Trustees, noting that for the first time, resources were available to help support affected students, faculty, and staff. The university committed to honoring summer commitments and continuing work with current cohorts, though full funding through the original grant periods would not be possible. He stressed the goal of minimizing disruption while acknowledging the limits of institutional support if further cancellations occur.

President Limayem highlighted his authority to extend the tenure clock for affected faculty, reflecting the university's commitment to its culture of care. Chair Hyde acknowledged the challenges and opportunities, emphasizing UNF's strong position and the President's reputation with the Board of Governors and lawmakers. He thanked everyone for their continued efforts and dedication.

## Faculty Association Update

Dr. James Beasley, Faculty Association President, thanked the Trustees who attended the Faculty Association Meeting in March and extended the invite for future meetings and Faculty and Staff Mixers. He also thanked Trustee Korman Shelton for her availability over the last few months for consultations.

Faculty Association (FA), in conjunction with the Provost’s Executive Leadership Team (PELT), hosted two listening circles on Federal Grants and Department of Education Policy with Dr. Kantner and Heather Duncan, Vice President of Government Relations. Trustee Beasley stated that FA will help sponsor the Government Relations department with a special faculty panel to help facilitate concerns about governmental policy.

The Provost hosted a lunch with non-tenure track faculty, which involved heartfelt conversations from Provost Patterson, and she listened to concerns about how the non-tenure track faculty can be more involved in making UNF a better place.

Trustee Beasley reported that UNF faculty were represented at the Board of Governors meeting in March, where federal grant cuts were discussed. He noted that a key concern raised by Congressional leaders and Board members was the continuity of the talent pipeline impacted by these cancellations. He highlighted UNF’s extensive grant activity in education and science as a vital part of that pipeline.

Trustee Beasley shared information about two talent pipeline grants: PREP (Partnering to Renew the Educator Pipeline) and U-RISE (Undergraduate Research Training Initiative for Student Enhancement). PREP focuses on educator pathways, including high school dual enrollment, teacher preparation, new teacher induction, and leadership certificates for MA or M.Ed. degrees. U-RISE provides undergraduate research training in biomedical fields through inter-institutional collaboration (Mayo, UCF, USF, etc.), utilizing early student recruitment, academic preparedness programs, research intensives, and individualized mentoring.

Several grants have been canceled, including the PREP grant cohort in February 2025, the U-RISE grant cohort in April 2025, and the NEH Archivists in Training (AIT) grant on April 22, 2025. The NEH AIT grant would have provided paid internships for 30 students, supported community organizations in preserving archives, and helped the library develop 21st-century curation skills. Trustee Beasley emphasized the importance of these grants to UNF’s strategic goals and their role in providing essential experiential learning opportunities.

He expressed concern over the long-term loss of talent pipelines into high-paying careers and recognized the strong support from the Provost and President in addressing these disruptions. He thanked VP Nichols and the UDAE team for developing new foundation grants to help fund internships and support affected students moving forward.

President Limayem acknowledged Trustee Beasley as a valued partner, noting their frequent communication and shared commitment to supporting faculty. He expressed appreciation for Trustee Beasley’s understanding of the university’s efforts to empower, protect, and uplift its faculty, and thanked him on behalf of the administration.

## Approval Items

### BOT-1: Ratification of Amendments to Collective Bargaining Agreement with Coastal Florida Police Benevolent Association, Inc.

Mike Mattimore, Outside Labor Counsel and Chief Negotiator, explained that university police officers accrue annual leave at a different rate than other university staff, creating a disparity. To address this, the university entered a memorandum of understanding with the Police Benevolent Association to amend the collective bargaining agreement. The proposed amendment was presented to the Board of Trustees for ratification. Chair Hyde confirmed that the Police Benevolent Association ratified the memorandum on April 17, 2025.

Chair Hyde offered the opportunity for questions. There being none, Chair Hyde asked for a MOTION to approve the collective bargaining agreement. Trustee Demetree made a MOTION to APPROVE, and Trustee Boyle SECONDED. The ratification of the collective bargaining agreement with the Coastal Florida Police Benevolent Association, Inc. was unanimously approved.

### BOT-2: Revised 2024-25 Fixed Capital Outlay Budget

Scott Bennett, Vice President of Administration & Finance, presented a revised 2024–25 fixed capital outlay budget to account for additional costs associated with the Arena Locker Room Remodel Project. The original budget allocated approximately $3 million; however, the project is now estimated at $4 million. Nick Morrow, Athletics Director, secured additional funding through a loan from the UNF Foundation. VP Bennett noted that any changes to the fixed capital outlay budget require Board of Governors approval and that the university is seeking approval for a $1.5 million line of credit from the UNF Foundation to cover the additional costs.

Trustee Demetree asked if the scope of work was changed. Athletics Director Morrow clarified that the project initially came in at about $5.5 million, based on the original estimates. He stated that reductions were made to the scope, and after full engineering, the cost was brought down to approximately $4.5 million, focusing solely on the construction costs. VP Bennett added that this project has been in discussion for about 2 years.

Trustee Korman Shelton asked whether, given current events involving government actions and tariffs, the project budget would need to be revisited again. Athletics Director Morrow responded that no further revisions were anticipated, stating that the university has a contract ready with Stellar and plans to proceed immediately upon approval by issuing a purchase order to lock in the current pricing.

Chair Hyde asked if there were any questions. There being none, he asked for a MOTION to approve the fixed capital outlay budget revisions. Trustee Patel made a MOTION to APPROVE, and Trustee Demetree SECONDED. The Board unanimously approved the revised 2024-2025 fixed capital outlay budget.

### BOT-3: Educational Plant Survey

VP Bennett presented the Educational Plant Survey (EPS) for Board approval. Conducting an EPS is statutorily required every five years. The EPS evaluates a university’s existing E&G space and its projected needs for additional space based on projected enrollment. The results are in an approved list of projects that the Board of Governors will consider in their approved recommended list to the State.

VP Bennett shared a space needs analysis from the EPS and highlighted that 62% of space needs are met based on the final assessment of projected needs. The goal is to work closely with the Deans and the Provost to identify additional project requests and prioritize the university’s most pressing needs.

VP Bennett shared the previously approved remodel projects: the ADT Building and the John E. Matthews Jr. Computer Science Building (Building 15), both on the main campus. He also outlined the approved new construction projects: Hicks Honors College (Main Campus), the GTM-NERR Research Facility (C. Webb Coastal Research Station), and the Sports Performance Center – Phase 2 (Main Campus). All these projects are already included on the Board of Governors’ list.

Based on the EPS, a Behavioral Sciences Building and a Computing Building on the main campus have been approved but are awaiting placement on the Board of Governors’ list. John Hale, Associate Vice President of Administration & Finance, and Chris Wainwright, Director of Campus Planning, Design and Construction were present to answer any questions. VP Bennett reiterated that the university is asking for approval for the EPS with these two additional projects for possible inclusion on the Board of Governors list.

VP Bennett stated that each year, the Board of Governors reviews all PECO requests from state universities, ranks them, and submits the prioritized list to the state. While universities can still submit independent requests, participation in this process is statutorily required.

Trustee Korman Shelton asked whether there had been discussion about repurposing available space to address university needs, specifically suggesting the consolidation of the nursing program, which is currently housed in two separate locations.

VP Bennett noted that the university is in ongoing communication with FSCJ regarding current and potential future use of the space. VP Bennett deferred to the Dean and AVP of MedNexus to address nursing. VP Bennett also shared that all state universities are evaluating space utilization as part of the Board of Governors' SUS 30 strategic plan. UNF previously completed a space utilization study and is exploring ways to keep that data updated more frequently than every five years to assess potential improvements across all facilities.

Chair Hyde asked for a MOTION to approve. Trustee Demetree made a MOTION to APPROVE, and Trustee McElroy SECONDED. The Board unanimously approved the Educational Plant Survey.

Chair Hyde noted that space utilization is a recurring topic at Board of Governors meetings. Not only is it a statutory requirement, but it is also under close review, and he thanked the Board for their continued participation in these efforts.

Trustee Korman Shelton inquired about receiving an update or response regarding a previous question related to nursing, emphasizing that while it's not strictly about MedNexus, it is relevant. Chair Hyde confirmed that VP Bennett will work with the team to provide a follow-up.

### BOT-4: 2025 UNF Accountability Plan including Endorsement of the Board of Governors Statement of Free Expression

Dr. Abby Willcox, Associate Vice President of Institutional Research, presented UNF’s 2025 Accountability Plan, including the endorsement of the Board of Governors Statement of Free Expression. She provided background, noting it includes performance-based funding metrics, key performance indicators, and enrollment projections tied to UNF’s 25,000-student growth goal. Dr. Willcox shared that minimal changes were made this year, and her focus would be on performance-based funding.

Dr. Willcox announced that UNF has achieved 81 points this year, which will remove the university from the Board of Governors’ watchlist and secure its full funding allocation. She showed the comparison between UNF’s historical performance-based funding points and the current 81 points. Last year, UNF received just over $17 million in funding. The final funding amount for this year will depend on the legislature’s allocation, which has been $350 million for the State University System (SUS) each of the past two years.

UNF will earn full excellence points on four metrics and show improvement on six others. Dr. Willcox explained that points are earned through either excellence or improvement. Excellence points are based on a common benchmark across all institutions, while improvement points are awarded based on an institution’s year-over-year performance. Excellence points make up 93% of UNF’s 2025–26 performance-based funding score.

Dr. Willcox shared a performance-based funding metrics update and showed a chart which lists each performance funding metric and shows how UNF’s results changed year over year, the anticipated points earned this year, and whether points were earned through excellence or improvement. The chart also includes the benchmark needed for full points and the SUS 30 goal for each metric.

* **Metric 1 (Percent of Bachelor’s Graduates Enrolled or Employed [$40,000+]):** UNF improved to 72.8%, maintaining 7 points.
* **Metric 2 (Median Wages of Bachelor’s Graduates Employed Full-time):** UNF saw a 4.2% increase to $50,100, earning the full 10 excellence points.
* **Metric 3 (Average cost to the Student):** UNF earned 10 excellence points with a decrease in cost to $4,380 for four years. This is the only metric where a decrease is positive as it represents less costs to students where students are receiving more scholarships and waivers.
* **Metric 4 (FTIC Four-Year Graduation Rate):** UNF's graduation rate dropped to 45%, but the university still earned 3 excellence points.
* **Metric 5 (Academic Progress Rate – retention with a 2.0 GPA):** UNF improved by 5 percentage points, reaching 82.7%, earning the full 10 points for improvement, marking the highest performance in this area.
* **Metric 6 (Bachelor’s Degrees Awarded within Programs of Strategic Emphasis):** UNF remained flat in performance but earned 10 points. This is the last year the metric will use its current methodology, as the list of strategic disciplines is changing next year. New benchmarks are yet to be established.
* **Metric 7 (University Access Rate):** Performance remained flat at 32.4% for 4 excellence points.
* **Metric 8 (Graduate Degrees Awarded within Programs of Strategic Emphasis):** UNF showed improvement, rising to 65.8%. Like Metric 6, this will be the last year it is presented in its current form as the list of disciplines will change.
* **Metric 9a (BOG Choice:** **FCS AA Transfer Three-Year Graduation Rate):** UNF reached a historic high of 64.5%, the highest in the university's history.
* **Metric9b (BOG Choice: FTIC Pell Recipient Six-Year Graduation Rate):** The rate dropped slightly to 61.3%, which is attributed to retention challenges. The university aims to improve retention to keep Pell recipients in the completion pipeline.
* **Metric 10 (BOT Choice: Percent of Undergraduate FTE in Online Courses):** UNF dropped slightly to 41.8%, a decrease that is intentional as the university moves toward pre-pandemic levels of face-to-face instruction.

Dr. Willcox provided further detail on the decline in the FTIC 4-year graduation rate (Metric 4) to 45%. She explained that this outcome was anticipated, as it reflects the cohort impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had the lowest retention and academic progress rates in 12 years. While the pandemic’s disruption is not presented as an excuse, it is acknowledged as a major factor affecting performance. Dr. Willcox noted that continued tracking of this cohort showed that 30% enrolled at other institutions, with 11% enrolling at other SUS institutions and 6% ultimately earning a bachelor's degree within the four-year timeframe.

Dr. Willcox reviewed a chart showing the trends in UNF’s 4-year graduation rates. She showed the overall graduation rate and the Pell recipient 4-year graduation rate. She noted that the Board of Governors is shifting from tracking a 6-year Pell graduation rate to a 4-year metric. Dr. Willcox emphasized that, unlike at many institutions, UNF’s Pell and overall graduation rates remain very close, with Pell rates even exceeding the overall rate in some years. She stated that UNF intentionally sets graduation goals to ensure Pell recipients are held to the same standards as the broader student population.

Dr. Willcox showed the anticipated 4-year graduation rate for the Fall 2021 cohort and the anticipated 4-year Pell graduation rate, projected at 48%. She added that the university should begin to see the downward trend reverse.

Trustee Korman Shelton asked whether UNF is recruiting the right students, noting that the graduation rate challenges raise questions about whether some students are viewing UNF primarily as a one-year transfer option rather than staying to complete their degrees.

President Limayem responded that it is UNF’s responsibility to create an experience compelling enough that students choose to stay. He shared that the university has implemented additional strategies, such as offering return scholarships to encourage retention and monitoring transcript requests as an early warning sign for personal outreach. This outreach involves faculty, department chairs, deans, the Provost, and the President himself. President Limayem added that as UNF’s reputation strengthens and it attracts stronger students, retention rates should continue to improve. He noted positive early signs, with a fall-to-spring retention rate of approximately 96%, a significant improvement over previous year’s trends.

Trustee Korman Shelton noted that in addition to improving the student experience, it may be beneficial to enhance marketing efforts. She suggested that positioning UNF this way could help attract and retain students, including targeting out-of-state, full-paying students, as part of a larger strategic effort.

Trustee Korman Shelton presented Metric 5: UNF’s Academic Progress Rate (APR) and overall retention. She noted that the Fall 2021 cohort, impacted by COVID-19, resulted in the lowest APR in the State University System; however, UNF has now achieved its historic highest APR at 82.7% and retention at 84.5%, representing increases of 5 and 3.3 percentage points, respectively.

For performance-based funding, UNF will receive the full 10 improvement points for this metric. Trustee Korman Shelton explained that to achieve full excellence points in the future, APR would need to reach 90% or higher. She credited initiatives such as the Osprey First Summer Pathway, the MyNest student success platform, and proactive data-driven interventions for the improvement. She added that the gap between APR and retention has narrowed from 5.4 percentage points to 1.8 percentage points. Early fall registration data shows UNF trending ahead by 3.6 percentage points compared to last year. Trustee Korman Shelton emphasized that improving the APR is critical to advancing graduation rates. She thanked Dr. Willcox and the UNF team for their continued hardworking efforts.

Trustee Patel echoed Trustee Korman Shelton’s gratitude towards the UNF team and their dedication. Trustee Patel reviewed Metric 7, which measures Pell Grant student access and performance. He noted that UNF has historically averaged 7 points on this metric but is now trending upward. Trustee Patel showed the percentage of Pell students in the total population and new first-time-in-college students, with the incoming classes for Fall 2023 and 2024 outperforming prior cohorts and raising overall averages. Trustee Patel shared that UNF anticipates earning 9 points next year — one additional point from hitting a higher sustainable performance level and another from improvement.

Trustee Gol provided an overview of Metric 9A: Transfer Three-Year Graduation Rate, noting that many students come from two main feeder colleges: St. Johns River State College and Florida State College at Jacksonville. He explained that the total points available for this metric are five excellence points; currently, UNF is at three points. He presented historical data compared to the target goal, with the university aiming for a 70% rate to achieve the full five excellence points. Trustee Gol reported that UNF is on track and performing well in this area. He emphasized the importance of removing barriers for transfer students, highlighting efforts across the university system to eliminate duplicative coursework requirements.

Trustee Gol also noted that UNF currently ranks fifth in the State University System for this metric. He echoed the appreciation expressed by other trustees for the team’s efforts, stating that the increase from 76 to 81 total points reflects the team's focused work and that the trends should continue to improve.

* + 1. **Review and Endorsement of the Board of Governors Statement of Free** **Expression**

Dr. Willcox presented the Board of Governors' Statement of Free Expression, explaining that as part of the annual Accountability Plan process, the Board of Trustees is required to re-endorse the statement. Trustees were provided with copies of the full statement at their seats. Dr. Willcox noted that UNF’s endorsement is included on page 4 of the Accountability Plan, stating: *"UNF is fully committed to the principles of open-minded and tolerant civil discourse throughout its campus community and endorses the Florida Board of Governors’ Statement of Free Expression."*

Trustee Beasley asked about the placement of the Board of Governors' Statement of Free Expression within the Accountability Plan, noting that the statement has generated significant discussion at the Faculty Senate level. He highlighted that, per the guidelines on page 3 of the Accountability Plan, the statement may appear in any of the narrative sections. Trustee Beasley inquired whether there had been any discussion or consideration regarding placing the statement specifically within the mission portion. Dr. Willcox stated that the statement was originally placed in the mission section and, as the endorsement is now recurring, the university is open to relocating it if a better placement is identified.

Trustee Beasley stated that it opened options for viewing free expression as both a means of improvement and a strength to be celebrated. The President agreed and noted that the mission had evolved. He stated that if the statement was not already included, it could be incorporated into the strategic plan and should be reviewed further within their respective departments. Trustee Beasley stated that he was checking with other institutions to determine whether all of them included it in their mission or if there was any variability. The President responded that any insights would be helpful and suggested continuing the discussion.

Chair Hyde asked if there were any questions pertaining to this item. There being none, Trustee Lazzara made a MOTION TO ENDORSE the Florida Board of Governors’ Statement of Free Expression and commit to the principles of civil discourse and Trustee McElroy SECONDED. The Board unanimously approved the Board of Governors Statement of Free Expression

* + 1. **2025 UNF Accountability Plan**

Dr. Willcox presented the 2025 Accountability Plan for potential approval, and all Board members were provided with a copy at their seats.

Chair Hyde asked for a MOTION TO APPROVE. Trustee McElroy made a MOTION TO APPROVE the 2025 Accountability Plan and Trustee Demetree SECONDED. The Board unanimously approved UNF’s 2025 Accountability Plan.

## DISC-1: STRATEGIC DISCUSSION: Alignment of UNF's Strategic Plan and SUS 30

President Limayem praised the team's dedication to student care and thanked the trustees for their ongoing support of UNF’s strategic plan, Soaring Higher Together. He emphasized the importance of strategic and engaging Board of Trustees meetings, ensuring each includes a significant segment for strategic discussions. The President was part of the committee that shaped the Board of Governors' (BOG) 2030 strategic plan, SUS 30, and acknowledged its thoughtful design.

The President called on the trustees for insights to enhance the alignment of Soaring Higher Together and SUS 30, emphasizing the aim to be a model for other SUS institutions.

Dr. Paul Eason, Vice President of Strategy and Innovation, provided a crosswalk between Soaring Higher Together and SUS 30, sharing the existing alignment and opportunities for alignment.

In the mission and vision statements, both strategic plans reference research, talent, and economic prosperity. Within the priority areas, there are multiple existing alignments: student success, faculty success, and research. Dr. Eason highlighted the distinction between the BOG’s SUS 30 priority, *Innovative Research and Economic Development*, and UNF’s *Soaring Higher Together* priority, *Inspire Relevant, Impactful Research*. He emphasized that while the terminology between the two may differ, the core objectives are closely aligned.

Dr. Eason elaborated on the nature of applied research conducted at UNF, underscoring its dual benefit to both industry and the community. This positions UNF on the receiving end of meaningful partnerships and outcomes that reflect the type of economic impact emphasized in the BOG’s strategic plan.

In BOG’s SUS 30 priority areas, there are two opportunities for alignment with *System Coordination: One SUS* and *Operational Excellence*. While these areas aren’t named as priorities in UNF’s plan, related efforts are evident and may help guide future discussion. These topics will be revisited during the forthcoming crosswalk summary, with the hope that they can help spark a broader conversation among the trustees.

*Operational Excellence* is reflected in UNF’s strategic priority of *Expanding Community Partnerships*. The idea of each institution having a “superpower,” as mentioned in a recent BOG meeting, was also referenced. For UNF, this includes community engagement, its Carnegie classification, and experiential learning—key strengths that may be elevated as priorities moving forward.

Dr. Eason reviewed areas of alignment between UNF’s plan and the SUS 30 priorities:

**Student Success**

Dr. Eason emphasized that metrics remain integral to the plan, with some revisions and potential additions expected. UNF is already addressing these challenges.

He highlighted the alignment between UNF’s degrees, workforce needs, internships, and experiential learning with SUS 30, noting that non-degree credentials, while mentioned in the SUS 30 plan, are already included as a metric in UNF’s strategy. He suggested elevating their importance, but confirmed they were not overlooked.

On access and affordability, Dr. Eason affirmed UNF’s focus on Pell Grants, first-generation students, and social mobility. While a new social mobility index from the State is still to be determined, UNF will continue aligning its efforts with any future metrics.

**Research and Economic Development / Research, Scholarly, and Creative Activity**

Dr. Eason presented research and economic development, aligning with SUS 30 terminology. He noted that while UNF typically uses “research, scholarly, and creative activity,” the SUS includes economic impact and tech transfer, which UNF addresses through its role in the regional innovation ecosystem. He reviewed UNF’s research focus areas—transportation, advanced manufacturing, biomedical, workforce development, and coastal resilience—and noted efforts to increase faculty engagement, funding, and collaboration to support future Ph.D. programs. He also highlighted ongoing coordination with UF through a joint task force and discussions on seed funding for collaborative research.

**World- Class Talent / Faculty and Staff**

Dr. Eason addressed the topic of world-class talent, noting that UNF’s language closely aligns with SUS 3.0. He acknowledged the challenges of recruiting and retaining top faculty and staff in a competitive job market. He highlighted UNF’s efforts to improve position descriptions and enhance support structures to attract and retain talent. While not explicitly outlined in the SUS plan, he noted that UNF was ahead in addressing how this could be achieved.

Dr. Eason briefly addressed metrics, noting that Dr. Willcox had already covered the details in the Accountability Plan. He emphasized that the Board of Governors will continue to raise performance targets and acknowledged UNF’s recent cultural shift toward tracking and prioritizing these numbers. He noted that this work is ongoing and necessary to stay aligned with state expectations. He also discussed access and affordability, referencing a potential new social mobility index in development. He explained that, beyond that, the existing performance-based funding metrics—such as Pell eligibility and cost to degree—remain unchanged. He added that the SUS has set a goal of increasing the number of top 100 public universities in the state from six to eight, suggesting that UNF is likely one of the two institutions expected to rise, which aligns with the university’s stated goals in its strategic plan.

Trustee Boyle asked which other institutions in the 100–150 ranking range within the SUS might have the opportunity to move up. Dr. Eason stated that it would be UNF and Florida Atlantic University. President Limayem noted that UNF is actively modeling the variables needed to move into the top 100. He explained that the university is closely tracking the factors that can be influenced internally, while also working to strengthen its reputation, which plays a significant role in rankings. He noted that a large portion of the *U.S. News & World Report* ranking is based on reputation, which can be inconsistent, but that UNF is focused on all controllable factors and monitoring peer institutions as it works toward this goal.

Trustee Boyle asked which SUS institutions are behind UNF in ranking. Dr. Willcox indicated that University of West Florida, Florida Polytechnic University, and New College of Florida are not currently included in the ranking.

Trustee Demetree asked if the E-Sports Arena will assist with the ranking. President Limayem confirmed that it will absolutely assist UNF become a destination of choice to attract more students with higher scholarship achievements.

Dr. Eason explained that most of the *U.S. News & World Report* ranking criteria align with UNF’s performance-based funding metrics. While research is a key focus, these efforts are part of the university’s broader strategic goals. He highlighted that UNF’s marketing initiatives aim to raise awareness of its strengths but noted that all universities are competing for the top 100, making it a highly competitive challenge.

Dr. Eason discussed *Operational Excellence* as an opportunity for future alignment. He noted that UNF’s plan includes stated financial measures and controls, with specific metrics for this area still to be developed. The President requested insights on better aligning with other SUS institutions. He identified collaboration with University of Florida (UF) as a significant opportunity, though there is uncertainty due to leadership changes. Discussions with UF's interim President included setting aside funds for joint faculty grants and creating a space branded with UNF and UF on the new campus to support startups and entrepreneurs. He emphasized the importance of entrepreneurship and innovation for the region.

VP Bennett reported that the CFO groups from the SUS have been working with Governor Adam Levine from the Board of Governors. They proposed using existing metrics similar to those reviewed quarterly in finance meetings, such as cash to debt days, cash on hand, operating revenues, age of plant, and return on net assets. These metrics are already used by rating agencies annually. VP Bennett noted that while some metrics are strong, others need improvement. This approach would simplify data collection since the information is already gathered annually for rating agencies.

Trustee McElroy emphasized that operational excellence is critical to success, whether evaluated through financial ratios, structural processes, or knowledge transfer. He suggested that the SUS may move toward a more centralized model, with the Board of Governors overseeing systemwide operations similar to a corporate holding company. He pointed to challenges like multiple labor agreements and IT systems that create inefficiencies and anticipated a stronger push for shared procurement, operational efficiencies, and coordinated academic growth across the universities.

President Limayem provided an example of the benefits of greater systemwide coordination, referencing the transition to Workday. He noted that while some universities negotiated individually, a unified approach would have strengthened negotiating power and reduced costs, particularly for modules like the student system. He emphasized that similar opportunities exist in areas such as marketing and communications, where central efforts could better promote the SUS’s national ranking with an eight-year streak as the top-ranked state for higher education. President Limayem stressed the importance of balancing institutional distinctiveness with system unity and highlighted UNF’s efforts to remain streamlined and efficient while acknowledging opportunities for continued improvement.

VP Bennett added that procurement directors from all SUS institutions are collaborating to identify opportunities for joint contracts and shared procurement efforts, with a report expected before the June Board of Governors meeting.

Trustee McElroy noted that while greater system coordination sounds straightforward in discussion, it is extraordinarily difficult in practice due to the unique needs of each institution. He stressed that efforts to create efficiencies must not detract from service quality but instead free up resources to reinvest in success.

Trustee Korman Shelton highlighted the challenges of strategic alignment, referencing past difficulties with city procurement. She stressed the need for UNF to become a preferred partner in areas like entrepreneurship and innovation, suggesting leveraging the new UF campus to create a platform for startups and entrepreneurs. She urged UNF leadership to identify strengths that differentiate the university from other SUS institutions and recommended exploring partnerships with Jacksonville University (JU) to support their students and faculty.

President Limayem shared that discussions are ongoing regarding JU’s recent faculty layoffs and their impact on students. He met with President Cost to explore ways UNF might assist, particularly by reviewing open faculty positions. Vice President for Marketing and Communications, Andrea Jones, is also reaching out to JU to explore collaboration opportunities.

Trustee Korman Shelton acknowledged the media coverage of JU’s challenges and suggested UNF should position itself as a supportive alternative. She emphasized the importance of a public message highlighting UNF’s willingness to help JU students and stressed the need for a broader PR effort to showcase UNF’s leadership and support.

President Limayem noted the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with JU while underscoring UNF’s commitment to the local community. He highlighted UNF’s highest level of international recruitment to date and efforts to recruit in other states. He acknowledged progress but emphasized there is always room for improvement.

VP Jones discussed the launch of a comprehensive out-of-state recruitment campaign, a strategy UNF had not extensively pursued before. Historically, UNF had one of the lowest out-of-state enrollment rates, but this is changing significantly. She emphasized the need to align marketing and enrollment strategies, ensuring effective promotional efforts. While UNF has the right product and price, it previously lacked promotion, especially outside Florida. VP Jones highlighted a more sophisticated approach, combining student fairs, recruiters, and thorough data analysis to boost out-of-state enrollment.

Trustee Beasley emphasized that one of UNF’s strengths is its welcoming character, which he believes distinguishes it from other universities within the SUS. Regarding the Board of Governors meeting hosted at UNF in January, he shared positive feedback from the Advisory Council of Faculty Senates (ACFS) President about UNF’s accessibility and noted that President Limayem’s willingness to engage with faculty for an extended period was unmatched by other institutions. Trustee Beasley described this welcoming nature as a non-tangible asset that positions UNF as a desirable choice for students and partners within the system.

President Limayem agreed, highlighting three key strengths: UNF’s culture of care, demonstrated by guaranteeing at least one internship or equivalent experiential learning opportunity for every student; its location in one of the fastest-growing regions and the second hottest job market in the country; and the need for consistent communication about these strengths. He emphasized that clearly conveying these factors will help position UNF as a destination of choice.

Dr. Paul Eason made a final point about the opportunity for alignment and noted that UNF has a strong reputation for working well with industrial partners on applied research, particularly non-basic science research. He suggested that as the state focuses on its growing job market, UNF should take the lead in fostering relationships with companies like Crowley, CSX, and Mayo Clinic. He highlighted the importance of establishing these partnerships now to position UNF as a key player in applied research moving forward.

Trustee McElroy expressed concern about the balance between addressing industry needs through curriculum and ensuring that graduates are prepared as critical thinkers and lifelong learners. He emphasized that while it's important to equip students for the early stages of their careers, it's even more crucial to prepare them for the unpredictable challenges that will arise in the future. He stressed the need to maintain a strong foundation in critical thinking, as well as the essential skills that allow graduates to adapt and grow in a changing world, alongside the more industry-focused education.

Trustee Beasley noted that the Faculty Association had sent a letter to JU faculty in support the previous week. He inquired about the potential impact of federal budget cuts on the Board of Governors' strategic plan and whether there had been any discussions or shifts to accommodate these changes. Dr. Eason responded that no such discussions had occurred yet, as people are still processing the information.

Trustee Beasley mentioned that the ACFS is working with Emily Sikes, the BOG Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs, to explore how grant cancellations may impact postdocs and faculty recruitment. Dr. Beasley stated he would keep Dr. Eason informed as the situation becomes clearer.

## Adjournment

Chair Hyde reminded the Board that there will be a short virtual Board of Trustees meeting on May 16, 2025 to seek approval for the proposed housing rate increase. A super majority vote is required for this action item, so he expressed that Trustee attendance is essential.

An assessment of leadership is being conducted by an outside consultant, with Trustee McElroy leading the efforts. Trustees will be asked to be available for these important discussions with the consultant. Chair Hyde clarified that the leadership assessment was anticipated during the discussions to hire President Limayem. He emphasized that the assessment is not critical but rather an opportunity to reflect on where UNF stands and identify ways to move the university forward.

With no further comments, Chair Hyde adjourned the meeting at 11:49 AM.