

**MINUTES**  
**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**MEETING**

March 22, 2023  
Tallahassee Community College  
Student Union Ballroom  
444 Appleyard Dr.  
Tallahassee, FL 32304

Chair Tom Grady called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m., the following members were present: Vice Chair Ben Gibson, Monesia Brown, Esther Byrd, Joe York, Ryan Petty with member Grazie Christie via conference phone. Chair Grady then asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Grady recognized Dr. Jim Murdaugh, President, Tallahassee Community College (TCC) to welcome the board. Dr. Murdaugh started by thanking the board for coming to TCC and provided an update on the progress of the charter school authorized by TCC, with 248 applications received and the possibility of increasing the target enrollment from 100 to 200 students. Continuing, Dr. Murdaugh highlighted the success of TCC's men's basketball team in the Nationals, and recent recognitions received, including being named one of the best companies to work for in America, the first community or state college to receive such an honor. Concluding, Dr. Murdaugh extended an invitation to anyone interested in throwing out the first pitch at one of TCC's baseball games.

Chair Grady then amended the agenda, moving Action Item 9 and recognized Dr. Jonathan Gueverra, President, College of the Florida Keys to provide an overview of the new bachelor degree program.

**New Bachelor Degree Program - The College of the Florida Keys Proposal for a Bachelor of Science in Exceptional Student Education**

Dr. Gueverra, thanked the board for the opportunity to present and began by mentioning the board's previous visit to their charter school construction site and the demand for career-technical education among students. However, he expressed concern about the need to ensure an adequate supply of labor for the workforce opportunities created by their institutions. Continuing, Dr. Gueverra mentioned the "Grow our Own Program" with the school district, which aims to train paraprofessionals to become teachers in the public school system. He noted that despite offering appointments to become teachers, they had 50 people turn them down, indicating the ongoing need for qualified educators in their region. Dr. Gueverra then recognized Lana Gaspari, Dean of Arts and Hospitality.

Ms. Gaspari thanked the board and highlighted the estimated statewide shortage of special education teachers and the lack of teacher programs in Monroe County, which is part of Region 23. She emphasized that the College of the Florida Keys already offers lower-level education courses and has the administrative support necessary to offer this program, making it both affordable and sustainable. Continuing, Ms. Gaspari shared that the college already has a pipeline of 71 paraprofessionals from the Monroe County School District who are interested in pursuing a bachelor's degree in education, and many have already begun taking courses in anticipation of the program's launch. Ms. Gaspari also shared a statement from Superintendent Teresa Axford expressing gratitude for the approval of the program and the positive impact it will have on addressing the shortage of special education teachers in Monroe County. Chair Grady called for a motion to approve The College of the Florida Keys Proposal for

a Bachelor of Science in Exceptional Student Education. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Mr. York. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Commissioners Report**

Chair Grady recognized Manny Diaz Jr., Commissioner, Department of Education to present the Commissioner's Report. Commissioner Diaz thanked Dr. Murdaugh and TCC for hosting the State Board of Education and discussed various initiatives and updates from the Department since the last meeting in January. Providing an update on the celebration of Literacy Week and the importance of reading in students' daily routines, expressing gratitude to the Just Read, Florida! team for their work on this initiative. Commissioner Diaz highlighted the Commissioner's Book of the Month, which promotes critical thinking skills and deeper understanding through recommended books for different grade levels. Commissioner Diaz also mentioned the Governor's Framework for Freedom Budget, which includes historic investments in education and teacher salaries, with an additional \$200 million allocated for teacher pay increase. Emphasizing the budget's focus on school safety, teacher recruitment and retention, workforce education, and per-student funding.

Commissioner Diaz highlighted the Department's efforts in math professional development, specifically the initiative, Finding the Right Angle for Math, that provides learning opportunities for middle school teachers to leverage progress-monitoring data for informed instructional decisions. Commissioner Diaz acknowledged that Florida received the highest rankings in state history on the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), but noted a dip in 8th-grade math scores. He emphasized the Department's urgency in addressing this issue through professional learning opportunities for educators to ensure student success and the importance of math skills in the future workforce and the need for continuous improvement.

Continuing, Commissioner Diaz expressed his gratitude to Chair Tom Grady and member Joe York for their leadership and service on the board, acknowledging their dedication during challenging times and support for expanding educational choices in Florida. Commissioner Diaz then recognizes Michael Norwood, a registered nursing student at North Florida College, who is a single father working a full-time job with aspirations to be a positive example for his children. Mr. Norwood was accepted into the college's nursing program in spring 2022 and plans to complete his Bachelor of Science in Nursing with a long-term goal of becoming a nurse practitioner specializing in psychiatry.

Chair Grady opened the board for questions. Vice Chair Gibson asked how long the statute regarding criminal penalties for providing sexually explicit material to minors has been signed into law. Chair Grady called for a motion to approve the Commissioner's Report. Vice Chair Gibson made the motion with a second by Mr. York. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Minutes**

#### **Minutes from December 14, 2022, January 18, 2023, and March 2, 2023 meetings**

Chair Grady called for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 14, 2022, January 18, 2023, and March 2, 2023 SBE meetings. Ms. Byrd made the motion with a second by Mr. York. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Updates**

## **Florida College System – President Williams on behalf of the Council of Presidents**

Chair Grady recognized Dr. Tonjua Williams, President, St. Petersburg College for an update on behalf of the Council of Presidents. Dr. Williams thanked the State Board of Education for the opportunity to provide an update on the FCS's progress since the last state board meeting in January. She began by sharing that the FCS was tasked with developing a brand new funding model formula at the end of the 2022 legislative session, and in September, they unanimously put together and sent the model to the legislature. Dr. Williams announced that the FCS's number one legislative priority was to gain \$150 million in recurring funding in the program fund, using the model that they created. As of yesterday, the FCS was successful in gaining \$100 million in recurring funding in both chambers. Dr. Williams shares that the Council of Presidents is very pleased with this new funding and explains that the FCS will increase its workforce by continuing to focus on job placement through rapid credentialing, expanding career dual-enrollment courses, and serving the workforce community. Dr. Williams also mentions that the FCS is working with insurance consultants and experts to explore potential inclusion in the state health group insurance plan.

Continuing, Dr. Williams shared that the FCS and the Great 28 serve nearly 640,000 students and award 119,000 certificates and degrees annually. Concentrating on areas of high need, such as nursing, law enforcement, and first responders, and partnering with their workforce teams on cybersecurity and other fields to help make Florida great. Highlighting the importance of manufacturing, electric vehicles, and automation to the FCS, and notes that 90% of their graduates who earned workforce credentials in 2021 were either employed or furthering their education in 2021-2022, and they all live in Florida.

Dr. Williams also mentioned the importance of Senate Bill 750, which strengthens FCS students' ability to transfer to state universities. She thanked Commissioner Diaz for his leadership in pulling them together with the State University System (SUS) to work on streamlining and strengthening transfer policies and processes. Noting that the bill addresses solutions to articulation challenges and a unique component of this bill includes not only Associate in Arts degrees but also transfers for Associate in Science degrees. The bill also strengthens the existing 2+2 agreement to ensure that FCS graduates matriculate smoothly to SUS institutions.

## **K-12 Public Schools – Superintendent Taylor on behalf of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents**

Chair Grady recognized Joe Taylor, Superintendent, Washington County for a brief update on behalf of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents. Superintendent Taylor thanked the board and discussed the challenges faced by school districts, particularly in regards to school start times and the Florida Education Financing Program (FEFP). Stating that school start times is particularly complicated as each of the 67 school districts in Florida has its own unique start times. Superintendent Taylor emphasized the importance of having high school students back at home before elementary students arrive, and notes that his own county has a single bus route covering over 600 square miles. Adding that while the idea of a single start time seems appealing, it is not feasible for all districts. Similarly, changes to the FEFP pose a challenge for districts as they are heavily dependent on this program for funding. The proposed changes to collapse categorical funding, which were originally created as baselines to benefit smaller districts, could have unintended consequences and leave districts scrambling to adjust budgets and plans.

Continuing, Superintendent Taylor emphasized the importance of understanding the impact of these changes on school districts, and noted that while he has confidence in the legislature and the State Board of Education, there is always the potential for unintended consequences. Adding that, as a business model, school districts have an important product to offer in the form of a high school diploma, but diplomas can vary between schools and may not meet certain requirements for college or the military and it is crucial for school districts to have a seamless and efficient system in place to ensure that all students have access to a quality education, and for policymakers to consider the implications of their decisions on school districts and the students they serve.

### **Teacher Salary Increase Allocation**

Chair Grady recognized Adam Miller, Senior Chancellor for an update on teacher salary increase allocation. Sr. Chancellor Miller thanked the board and provided a status update, stating that the goal is to raise the starting teacher salary to at least \$47,500 in every district in the State of Florida with the Governor and legislature appropriating \$800 million during the 2022 legislative session, and \$1 billion in the Governor's recommended budget for this upcoming school year. Adding that, while most school districts have fully-approved plans, three remain at impasse Hillsborough County, St. Johns County, and Seminole County with Gadsden County being the only district still negotiating the plan with their union.

Sr. Chancellor Miller then recognized Elijah Key, Superintendent, Gadsden County to provide the board an update on the Gadsden County teacher salary increase. Superintendent Key thanked the board and provided a brief history of teacher salaries in Gadsden, stating that the starting salary in 2001 was \$26,000 and moved up to \$38,115 in 2020-21 and through a year of negotiating the salary was moved to \$45,000 in 2021-22 with the board open to providing further salary increases. Continuing, Superintendent Key noted that negotiations are being held up by the union, who initially proposed a \$2,500 increase across the board for every teacher. The board proposed a starting salary of \$46,500, and negotiations continued with proposals for veteran and beginning teachers. Superintendent Key added that despite their best efforts, Gadsden County is still negotiating with their union to finalize the teacher salary increase allocation plan with proposals from both sides and that he would be pushing for impasse at their next board meeting. Chair Grady asked what the board can do to help Gadsden County. Ms. Byrd commented that she would like to have the union president answer questions from the board. Mr. Petty asked if there was a miscommunication between the board and union about the amount of funds available.

### **Action Items**

#### **Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-1.09401, Student Performance Standards**

Chair Grady recognized Dr. Paul Burns, Chancellor, Division of Public Schools to provide the board a brief overview of the proposed amendment to rule 6A-1.09401, Student Performance Standards. Dr. Burns thanked the board and provided an overview of the amendment to rule 6A-1.09401, which addresses standards in Florida's education system. Stating that the first set of proposed standards is for health education and includes changing character education to resiliency education and adding new topics such as fentanyl and vaping to the substance use and abuse standards. The second set of standards is for social studies and was amended to include instruction on victims of communism due to a change in statutory language. And the last set of proposed standards is for mathematics access points and includes the addition of the financial literacy strand to further support students with significant cognitive disabilities. Dr. Burns added, these standards were developed and modified through a rigorous process

that involves expert work with group members and public comment. The aim is to provide high-quality education standards for Florida's students, helping them learn skills that can be used to overcome adversity and develop resiliency. Chair Grady called for a motion to approve the amendment to Rule 6A-1.09401, Student Performance Standards. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Diaz added that, he would be remiss if we didn't mention the leadership of First Lady Casey DeSantis on this resiliency-building initiative, where we're dramatically shifting the paradigm of our standards and the way we look at building resiliency amongst our students.

#### **Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-1.0018, School Safety Requirements and Monitoring**

Chair Grady recognized Sr. Chancellor Miller to provide an overview of the amendment to Rule 6A-1.0018, School Safety Requirements and Monitoring. Sr. Chancellor Miller thanked the board and stated that the proposed amendment is related to emergency drill requirements that were included in the 2022 school safety legislation, House Bill 1421. The amendment includes requiring each school to develop an after-action report following every emergency and fire drill, requiring all occupants of the buildings to participate in emergency drills, requiring plain language during drills and actual emergencies, varying the condition and timing of drills throughout the school year, conducting at least six emergency drills during the year, four of which must be active assailant, and coordinating with the local sheriff office to have law enforcement present and involved in all emergency drills. Other proposed amendments include expanding safe school options for charter schools and removing outdated references. Chair Grady opened the board for questions. Ms. Byrd asked where the reports exist and who will have access to the reports. Chair Grady called for a motion to approve the amendment to Rule 6A-1.0018, School Safety Requirements and Monitoring. Mr. Petty made the motion with a second by Mr. York. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-6.09091, Accommodations of the Statewide Assessment Program Instruments and Procedures for English Language Learners**

Chair Grady recognized Dr. Peggy Aune, Vice Chancellor, Strategic Improvement to provide an overview of the amendment to Rule 6A-6.09091, Accommodations of the Statewide Assessment Program Instruments and Procedures for English Language Learners. Dr. Aune thanked the board and stated that the amendment will update descriptions of approved dictionaries and glossaries in various formats, including print, electronic, and digital. Adding that, the use of internet access word-to-word glossaries and dictionaries will be allowed, but districts must ensure that only approved tools are accessible during test administration. Continuing, Dr. Aune added that for statewide progress-monitoring assessments, students in grades K-2 identified as ELLs will be provided with a picture translation dictionary or glossary and that the Florida Department of Education will update its accommodations guidance and technical assistance for ELL accommodations accordingly. Concluding, Dr. Aune stated that the Department also provides professional learning to support English language proficiency and has distributed over \$48 million to districts for English language learners. Chair Grady called for a motion to approve the amendment to Rule 6A-6.09091, Accommodations of the Statewide Assessment Program Instruments and Procedures for English Language Learners. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Mr. York. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Approval of New Rule 6A-10.087, Postsecondary Education Benefits and Services for Students Who Have Been or are in Foster Care or are Experiencing Homelessness**

Chair Grady recognized Kathy Hebda, Chancellor, Florida College System to provide an overview of the amendment to Rule 6A-10.087, Postsecondary Education Benefits and Services for Students Who Have Been or are in Foster Care or are Experiencing Homelessness. Chancellor Hebda thanked the board and stated that this new rule would streamline the process for students who qualify for benefits under the statute because they were in foster care, or were previously or currently experiencing homelessness. Adding that this rule is similar to one passed a year-and-a-half ago for military veterans and dependents. With three different bills passed in the '22 legislative session affecting waivers and opportunities for students, while providing additional services that colleges should provide to support their learning and success. Continuing, Chancellor Hebda added that the rule provides a standardized form, a set of definitions, and defines the types of individuals who can officially verify student eligibility for all of these benefits. With the Department of Education and the Department of Children and Families collaborating to implement all of these statutes. Chair Grady called for a motion to approve new Rule 6A-10.087, Postsecondary Education Benefits and Services for Students Who Have Been or are in Foster Care or are Experiencing Homelessness. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Dr. Christie. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Grady recognized public speaker, Dr. Steve Rios, who thanked the board and spoke in support of the rule.

#### **New Bachelor Degree Program - St. Petersburg College Proposal for a Bachelor of Science in Human Services**

Chair Grady recognized Dr. Matthew Liao-Troth, Vice President of Academic Affairs, St. Petersburg College and Dr. Diane Clark, Chair, Human Services Program Advisory Board to propose the New Bachelor Degree Program in Human Services. Dr. Liao-Troth thanked the board and introduced the proposal to offer a Bachelor of Science in Human Services, which was identified as a vitally needed workforce-focused degree in the community. Stating that the degree would prepare graduates for careers in various fields, such as social community service managers, substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors, community health workers, community and social service specialists, and health educators. Dr. Liao-Troth added that the need for this degree was brought to the attention of the college's advisory board in 2013 and since then, the college has been offering an Associate of Science in Human Services. Dr. Liao-Troth also mentioned that the University of South Florida supports the addition of this degree with research showing a need for approximately 290 graduates every year in this field. Dr. Liao-Troth then recognized Dr. Diane Clark, to provide the board industry perspective on this degree and why it is vital.

Dr. Clark explained that the Community Advisory Committee is made up of professionals from various sectors of the human service field, including child welfare, mental health, juvenile justice, the K-12 system, adult corrections programming, veterans programming, and more. Adding that they all face a severe workforce challenge at a time when the community needs them the most and the demand for qualified professionals in the human service sector has never been higher. Dr. Clark added that by granting St. Petersburg College the four-year bachelor degree designation, the college can ensure that it is providing the best education and training possible for future professionals. Chair Grady called for a motion to approve new Bachelor Degree Program at St. Petersburg College in Human Services. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Mr. York. The motion passed unanimously.

## **New Bachelor Degree Programs - Tallahassee Community College Proposal for a Bachelor of Applied Science in Business Administration**

Chair Grady recognized Dr. Murdaugh to present the next three items pertaining to Tallahassee Community Colleges request for new bachelor degree programs. Dr. Murdaugh thanked the board and began by explaining that Flagler College had a presence on the TCC campus for over 20 years, but due to operational difficulties, they were shutting down their Tallahassee facilities. Dr. Murdaugh added that the new baccalaureate program has the support of Flagler College's President Delaney. Dr. Murdaugh then recognized Dr. Calandria Stringer, TCC Provost to provide the board a program overview.

Dr. Stringer thanked the board and presented the proposed program, stating that the goal was to meet the demand for 880 job openings in the TCC service area, with an unmet need of 680. Dr. Stringer explained that approximately 1,400 associate-degree-seeking students were all wanting to major in Business Administration, but FSU and FAMU's business programs were limited access. Adding that this program would provide a pathway for TCC students to attain their degrees and help local businesses, such as Carol and Company, meet their staffing needs. Dr. Stringer then recognized Matt Thompson, a local business owner and former department chair for Flagler College's business program to speak about the program from the perspective of the business community.

Mr. Thompson emphasized the importance of having a program that allowed students to get real, pragmatic experience in the workforce during the day and attend classes at night, enabling them to raise their families and meet other obligations. He also highlighted the fact that many of the students stayed in the area to work after graduating, benefiting the Leon County community. Chair Grady called for a motion to approve new Bachelor Degree Program at Tallahassee Community College in Business Administration. Vice Chair Gibson made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

## **New Bachelor Degree Programs - Tallahassee Community College Proposal for a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and Bachelor of Science in Exceptional Student Education**

Dr. Murdaugh thanked the board and asked if he may present the remaining bachelor degree programs together as they pertain to the same subject. Dr. Murdaugh started by expressing concerns about the decision to close two teacher education programs at Flagler College and cited the critical need for talented individuals in the field of education. Dr. Murdaugh then introduced Dr. Stringer, who elaborated on the two degree programs, Elementary Education and Exceptional Student Education. Dr. Stringer thanked the board and added that these programs were designed to address the teacher shortage in the local community, with 89 or more openings annually in the service district and an unmet need of 57. Dr. Stringer mentioned that a new pipeline program was established with Wakulla County School District, offering intro to education courses dual-enrollment on the campus, and this would be extended to other high schools in the fall. Dr. Murdaugh also highlighted the importance of these programs in the education landscape in the community, given that Florida State only offers a master's degree in teaching.

Chair Grady opened the board for questions about Elementary Education. Ms. Brown asked how long it will take a student to receive a bachelor's degree. Chair Grady then called for a motion to approve the new bachelor degree program for TCC in Elementary Education. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Mr. York. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Grady then called for a motion to approve the new bachelor degree program for TCC in Exceptional Student Education. Ms. Byrd made the motion with a second by Mr. Petty. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Consent Items**

Chair Grady called for a motion to approve the Consent Items. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Mr. York. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Member Comments**

Chair Grady opened the board for member comments. Mr. York thanked Governor Scott and Governor DeSantis for the opportunity to serve and expressed gratitude to the three Commissioners he worked with. Praising their leadership, thoughtfulness, and strength, while acknowledging the importance of hiring great staff. He also recognized the hard work of the school system and the board members' dedication in traveling all over the state to make tough decisions. Ms. Brown thanked everyone in attendance and remarked that Chair Grady and Member York will be missed. Mr. Petty expressed his gratitude towards Chair Grady and Member York for their service and leadership during a difficult period in the state's history. He thanked the other board members and acknowledged the hard work of the staff at the department in preparing for the meetings and defining rules that serve the students and communities. Dr. Christie echoed the comments of Member Petty. Ms. Byrd conveyed a message from parents thanking Commissioner Diaz and the Governor for their work and leadership, as well as expressing gratitude for the dedication of the staff in protecting parents' rights. She also expressed her appreciation for the professionalism and leadership of Chair Grady and Member York. Vice Chair Gibson thanked both Chair Grady and Member York for their leadership and contributions to the board. Adding that he appreciates Member York's perspective as a parent and his dedication to serving the students. While also acknowledging Chair Grady's courage and tenacity in tackling complex issues facing Florida's education system, and his sense of urgency to address them without delay. Chair Grady thanked everyone in attendance and discussed the importance of keeping children's interests in mind when making decisions. He spoke about how empowering parents and individuals to make decisions that are best for students is crucial. He also expressed concern over the concept of "woke," which he believes is a war on excellence, as it promotes the idea of everyone being the same instead of striving for individual excellence. Grady believes that America's success is built on individual excellence and competition, and he opposes the idea of eliminating advanced courses in schools to achieve equity.

Ms. Byrd then reported that she has been receiving numerous messages from concerned parents regarding a drag show that is scheduled to take place at Boone High School in Orlando on Thursday and asked if the Commissioner would be allowing that do take place or not.

Commissioner Diaz thanked Ms. Byrd and expressed concern over the appropriateness of such an event for minors and stated that he would contact the district to gather more information and report back to the board. He emphasized the board's responsibility to ensure the well-being of students and expressed a commitment to doing what is best for them.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Having no further business, Chair Grady adjourned the meeting of the State Board of Education at 12:42 P.M. EST.



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Chris Emerson, Corporate Secretary

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Tom Grady, Chair