

**MINUTES  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
MEETING**

January 17, 2024  
Tallahassee Community College  
Student Union Ballroom  
444 Appleyard Dr.  
Tallahassee, FL

Chair Ben Gibson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed members and guests to the State Board of Education meeting. The following members were present: Vice Chair Ryan Petty, Monesia Brown, Esther Byrd, and Kelly Garcia with Dr. Grazie Christie and MaryLynn Magar attending by phone. Chair Gibson recognized Dean Inserra, Pastor of City Church to deliver the invocation.

**COMMISSIONER'S REPORT**

Chair Gibson recognized Manny Diaz Jr., Commissioner, Department of Education to present his report. Commissioner Diaz commenced by highlighting the 2023 Department achievements: Florida secured the top position for education in the nation according to U.S. News and World Report; maintained its rank as the number one state for higher education for seven consecutive years; led the nation in school choice initiatives; enacted the Teacher Bill of Rights and various programs to attract and retain high-quality educators; designated restrooms and changing facilities based on biological sex at birth; and implemented essential regulations to ensure appropriate instruction on sensitive topics and prevent exposure to adult entertainment during school-sponsored events.

Commissioner Diaz drew attention to the proposed rule before the Board aimed at ending state-sponsored discrimination in Florida colleges by restricting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs from utilizing state or federal funds for activities that classify people by race or sex. He further elaborated on Governor DeSantis's response to provide security and support for the Jewish community in Florida following a violent terrorist attack by Hamas. This response included allocating an additional \$45 million towards the safety of the Jewish community and Jewish day schools, along with issuing an executive order to remove barriers for undergraduate students transferring to Florida universities and colleges due to fear of religious discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or violence.

Commissioner Diaz shared that the Department developed a new Florida Specific Threat Management Model and implemented an aggressive and robust training plan to successfully train 23,400 people before January 1, 2024. He emphasized the governor's objective to position Florida as the leading state for workforce education by 2030, citing significant achievements such as 365,000 rapid credentials earned by Florida students since 2019 and over 235,000 students obtaining industry certificates before graduating high school last year. Florida currently boasts a record-breaking enrollment of 229,000 students in career and technical education programs statewide. Commissioner Diaz thanked the College System for making sure students have options going directly into the workforce.

Commissioner Diaz recognized Carmen Diaz, Tallahassee Collegiate Academy (TCA), for academic achievement. He concluded by expressing appreciation to President Murdaugh and the entire staff at TCA for their dedication in creating an exceptional learning environment for Carmen and her fellow students.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the Commissioner's Report. Ms. Byrd made the motion with a second by Vice Chair Petty. The motion passed unanimously.

## **MINUTES**

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 18, 2023, Board meeting. Vice Chair Petty made the motion with a second by Ms. Brown. The motion passed unanimously.

## **UPDATES**

### **Florida College System – President Ed Meadows, on behalf of the Council of Presidents**

Chair Gibson recognized Ed Meadows, President, Pensacola State College, on behalf of the Council of Presidents (COP). President Meadows provided examples of business partnerships at Florida State College of Jacksonville, Northwest Florida State College, Indian River State College, Valencia College, St. Petersburg College, and Pensacola State College. President Meadows introduced Karen Moore, TCC Trustee and Tony Carvajal, President, Association of Florida Colleges, to present Commissioner Diaz with the James L. Wattenbarger award on behalf of the Council of Presidents for his lifetime of leadership. Concluding his report, President Meadows provided an update on the inclusion of the Florida College System in the state health insurance plan. Chair Gibson requested the system-wide enrollment increase from spring to spring.

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

Chair Gibson recognized Kyle Peddie, Superintendent, Liberty County Public Schools, on behalf of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS). Superintendent Peddie provided an overview of Liberty County, highlighting its continued status as an "A" district since 2018 and its recent designation as high performing by the State Board of Education in 2023. He expressed gratitude to the legislature for their past support and emphasized the importance of potential future appropriations. Superintendent Peddie concluded his remarks by extending heartfelt thanks to Commissioner Diaz for his invaluable assistance during the aftermath of a tornado that struck Hosford last April.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **Approval of the 2024-25 Amended Education Operating and Fixed Capital Outlay Budget Request**

Chair Gibson recognized Suzanne Pridgeon, Deputy Commissioner, Finance and Operations to present the amended budget. Ms. Pridgeon provided an overview and stated that the amended budget reflects the governor's Focus on Florida's Future Budget recommendations.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amended Department of Education FY 2024-25 Budget. Ms. Garcia made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

### **New Bachelor's Degree Program - St. Johns River State College Proposal for a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice**

Chair Gibson recognized President Joe Pickens, St. Johns River State College, to present the

proposed Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice. President Pickens introduced Dr. Melanie Brown, Chief Operating Officer, St. Johns River State College, for an overview of the new degree. Dr. Brown then recognized Michelle Cook, Clay County Sheriff; Gator DeLoach, Putnam County Sheriff; and Rod Hardwick, St Johns County Sheriff, in support of the proposed degree.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the new bachelor's degree program at St. Johns River State College in Criminal Justice. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

### **New Bachelor's Degree Program - Lake-Sumter State College Proposal for a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education**

Chair Gibson recognized President Heather Bigard, Lake-Sumter State College, to present the proposed Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. President Bigard shared the local need for more teachers and recognized Superintendent Diane Kornegay, Lake County, in support of the proposed degree. Superintendent Kornegay shared the importance of the new Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the new bachelor's degree program at Lake-Sumter State College in Elementary Education. Vice Chair Petty made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval of New Rule 6A-14.0718, Prohibited Expenditures for Florida College System (FCS) Institutions**

Chair Gibson recognized Kathy Hebda, Chancellor, Florida College System to present the next two action items. Chancellor Hebda provided an overview of new Rule 6A-14.0718, Prohibited Expenditures for Florida College System (FCS) Institutions. Chancellor Hebda shared that the new rule along with a companion regulation for the State University System prevents Florida College System institutions from spending state or federal funds on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve new Rule 6A-14.0718, Prohibited Expenditures for Florida College System (FCS) Institutions. Ms. Byrd made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-14.0303, General Education Core Course Options**

Chancellor Hebda provided an overview of the amendment to Rule 6A-14.0303, General Education Core Course Options. Chancellor Hebda further explained the proposed changes are in compliance with Senate Bill 266 and Section 1007.55, F.S. Chancellor Hebda confirmed that students can still access sociology courses, but it is no longer a requirement.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to Rule 6A-14.0303, General Education Core Course Options. Ms. Garcia made the motion with a second by Ms. Brown. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval of New Rule 6A-1.09442, Process and Minimum Standards for the Award of High School Credit for Career and Technical Student Organization Participation**

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Kevin O'Farrell, Chancellor, Division of Career and Adult

Education, for an overview of the new rule. Chancellor O'Farrell explained that this will allow students to receive work-based learning or elective credits towards their high school diploma for completing a level of participation in extracurricular activities with a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO). This new rule will allow school districts to adopt policies for the evaluation and awarding of high school credit to students grades 6-12 for work-based learning.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve new Rule 6A-1.09442, Process and Minimum Standards for the Award of High School Credit for Career and Technical Student Organization Participation. Vice Chair Petty made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval of Amendment to Rules 6A-5.069, Professional Learning Systems and 6A-5.071, Professional Learning Catalogs**

Chair Gibson recognized Dr. Paul O. Burns, Chancellor, Division of Public Schools, to present the next two items. Chancellor Burns provided an overview of the amendments regarding the school district professional learning systems and catalogs. He further explained that the amendments were necessitated by the passage of House Bill 1537 and 7039.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to rules 6A-5.069 and 6A-5.071, F.A.C. Ms. Byrd made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval of Amendment to Rule 6A-6.053, District K-12 Comprehensive Evidence-Based Reading Plan**

Chancellor Burns provided an overview of the amendment to Rule 6A-6.053, District K-12 Comprehensive Evidence-Based Reading Plan. The proposed rule outlines the prohibition of three-cueing as the method of teaching word reading and adds a section in rule to define and clarify the requirements of working with students who have and experienced characteristics of dyslexia.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the amendment to rule 6A-6.053, District K-12 Comprehensive Evidence-Based Reading Plan. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Navigator Academy of Leadership H.S. Davenport vs. School Board of Polk County**

Chair Gibson recognized Adam Emerson, Executive Director, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, to present the next three items. Mr. Emerson provided an overview of the charter appeal and the process and recognized Thomas Sternberg, Counsel for Navigator Academy and Wes Bridges, Counsel for the School Board of Polk County to present their evidence.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to uphold the Charter School Appeal Commission's recommendation to grant the appeal. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed 6-1 with Vice Chair Petty in opposition.

### **Approval of A.A.A. Scholarship Foundation- Florida, LLC as a Scholarship Funding Organization for 2024-25**

Mr. Emerson thanked the board and provided a brief overview. Stating that this is the annual renewal of the scholarship funding organization's authority to be authorized to do

the work of administering the scholarship program. Mr. Emerson recognized Kim Dyson, President, A.A.A. Scholarship Foundation to provide the board a brief overview of the work that goes on at A.A.A. Ms. Dyson thanked the board and shared that A.A.A. is currently authorized to administer three scholarship programs in Florida that economically empower families to best fit their learning needs.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve A.A.A. Scholarship Foundation- Florida, LLC as a Scholarship Funding Organization for 2024-25. Vice Chair Petty made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval of Step Up for Students, Inc. as a Scholarship Funding Organization for 2024-25**

Mr. Emerson recognized Doug Tuthill, President, Step Up for Students to provide the board a brief update on behalf of Step Up for Students.

Mr. Tuthill thanked the board and gave an overview of how Step Up for Students approved over 500,000 student applications. He further explained, if Step Up for Students were a school district it would be the third-largest in the United States.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve Step Up for Students, Inc. as a Scholarship Funding Organization for 2024-25. Vice Chair Petty made the motion with a second by Ms. Byrd. The motion passed unanimously.

### **CONSENT ITEMS**

Chair Gibson recognized Cathy Boehme, Florida Education Association for a comment on the High Demand Teacher Needs Areas for 2024-25. Ms. Boehme provided an overview of helping students in those teacher preparation programs by providing scholarships and fee waivers and stipends.

Chair Gibson recognized Juan Copa, Deputy Commissioner, Accountability Research and Measurements. Mr. Copa provided an overview of the decline in vacancies.

Chair Gibson called for a motion to approve the consent items. Ms. Brown made the motion with a second by Ms. Garcia. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Member Comments**

Ms. Garcia thanked Commissioner Diaz for the recap of the 2023 accomplishments and shared her excitement for the number of scholarship applications processed by A.A.A. and Step Up for Students. Ms. Brown thanked Commissioner Diaz for his leadership and shared information about a program at TCC called Project Anchor. She explained that TCC is the only college in the state working with the Department of Juvenile Justice to provide programs to juvenile justice facilities and providers to help these students get on the path to college, or to careers or technical school. Ms. Magar echoed the comments of fellow member Garcia regarding 2023 accomplishments. Ms. Byrd thanked Governor DeSantis and Commissioner Diaz for their leadership. Vice Chair Petty commended the Office of Safe Schools and commissioner for their leadership and focus in successfully training 23,400 on the Florida Threat Management Model. Chair Gibson echoed the sentiments from all the members and thanked the board for their dedication and commitment to education in their volunteer role.

Chair Gibson announced that the next meeting would be at his Alma Mater, Winter Park, H.S. on March 27, 2024.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Having no further business, Chair Gibson adjourned the meeting of the State Board of Education at 11:59 a.m.

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Chris Emerson, Corporate Secretary

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Ben Gibson, Chair