



Item: ix.

Monday, September 30, 2024

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF PRESIDENTIAL EVALUATION

PROPOSED BOARD ACTION

Approve Interim President Dr. Stacy Volnick's 2024 evaluation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Consistent with Section 4.4. of the Board of Trustees Operating Procedures and Dr. Volnick's February 2024 Interim President Employment Agreement, the Board Chair is responsible for causing the Board to conduct an annual evaluation of Dr. Volnick's performance. Chair Bussani has reviewed Dr. Volnick's self-evaluation and has conducted a full assessment of her performance over the past year and recommends the highest level of performance, **Exceptional**.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN/DATE

The 2024 evaluation will become effective on today's date.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

Supporting Documentation: Chair Piero Bussani's Letter Documenting Interim President's Evaluation
Interim President Annual Self-Evaluation 2023-2024

Presented by: Piero Bussani, Chair, FAU Board of Trustees Phone: 561-297-1455



FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

Board of Trustees

September 20, 2024

Dear President Volnick:

Consistent with Section 4.4 of the Board of Trustees operating procedures and your February 2024 Interim President Employment Agreement, I am responsible for causing the Board to conduct an annual evaluation of the University President. This letter documents my evaluation of your performance as Interim President of Florida Atlantic University for the year 2024, your second year serving in the role. I will present this assessment to the Board of Trustees for their consideration as they conduct the annual performance evaluation.

I am attaching and incorporating your self-evaluation into this letter, which outlines your impressive accomplishments in leading Florida Atlantic University as it has continued its historic rise as a national brand. As part of this evaluation, I considered input from many members of the Florida Atlantic Community and leaders from around the state university system, who expressed genuine appreciation for the job you have done during a time of significant transition for the University.

Based on my review, I evaluate your work as **Exceptional**, the highest level of performance.

As reflected in your self-evaluation, your leadership has resulted in extraordinary momentum and recognition for the University, and includes:

- Service on numerous community boards including the Broward Workforce Development Board, Florida Atlantic Research and Development Authority, FAU Foundation, American Athletic Conference, FAU/Broward Health Academic Practice Plan, Economic Counsel of Palm Beach, and the Business Development Board, among others.
- Overseeing university-wide personnel initiatives, which led to the recruitment of 46 new faculty members, \$2.69 million in faculty bonuses, and \$4.7 million in new faculty startup funds.
- Award of the 2024 American Council on Education (ACE)/Fidelity Investments Award for Institutional Transformation, which recognizes institutions that responded to higher education challenges in innovative and creative ways and achieved dramatic changes in a relatively brief period.

- Increased brand exposure through the success of Florida Atlantic University Athletics, which will continue into the future because of your decision to sign the Athletic Director to a new contract, solidifying the stability of the Athletics Department for years to come.
- Maintenance of a strong culture of compliance across the University in all areas of operations. In athletics, you have demonstrated a commitment to Title IX by promoting the interests and abilities of our student body and supporting the University's efforts to provide a first-class athletics experience for all our male and female student-athletes.
- Management of the tremendous growth in applicant interest, which is reflected in the largest number of applications and the largest total enrollment in the University's history, along with an increase in the freshman to sophomore retention rate to 84.5%.
- As our national rankings have continued to improve in publications like *U.S. News* and the *Washington Monthly*, you also oversaw the largest single year increase in total points under the Board of Governor's performance funding metrics, including achievement of a 50% four-year graduation rate for the first time in Florida Atlantic's history, and a \$16 million increase in total research expenditures for a record \$78 million total.
- Exceeding \$500 million in funds raised with the second largest fundraising year in the university's history. Your cultivation of relationships with community members, donors, and supporters of the institution has been invaluable to those efforts, which will continue to strengthen the long-term financial position of the institution.

In my short time as Chair of the Board of Trustees, I have been extremely impressed by your enthusiasm, energy, and knowledge of the mission, values, and history of this institution, and there is no question in my mind that Florida Atlantic is in a position of strength due to the singular focus you have brought to serving in this role. The Board of Trustees and the Florida Atlantic family are eternally grateful for your exceptional service. GO OWLS!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Piero Bussani". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Piero Bussani
Chair, Board of Trustees

Stacy A. Volnick, Ph.D. Annual Self-Evaluation
2023-2024

Boards and Committees

The board appointments I hold representing Florida Atlantic University continue to assist in strengthening the relationships the university has with the communities we serve. Additionally, it is anticipated that in the activities of the boards, opportunities for Florida Atlantic to collaborate with other organizations will develop.

- Broward Workforce Development Board – Member - Board of Directors.
 - *Serve on the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board*
- Florida Atlantic Research and Development Authority (FARDA) Board – Chair
- FAU Foundation Board – Ex-officio voting member.
- American Athletic Conference (AAC) - Board member
- FAU/Broward Health Academic Practice Plan (APP) Board of Directors - Chair
- Economic Council of Palm Beach County – Board Member
- Business Development Board – Ex-officio member
- Business Development Board of Palm Beach County Academic Leaders Council
- Palm Beach County Youth of the Year 2024 by the Boys and Girls Club of Palm Beach County – Judge.

Faculty Appointments

- Affiliate Clinical Professor – FAU College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology.
- Affiliate Faculty Member – FAU College of Business, Management Department.

Scholarly Activities

- Currently serving on two doctoral dissertation committees.
- Sponsor the Annual Scholars Dinner for doctoral students in the Higher Education and Research Methodology program. This affords students the opportunity to share their research with faculty and obtain important feedback and advice.

Professional Acknowledgements

- *Palm Beach Illustrated* Magazine's Palm Beach 100 – selected for 2023-24 and 2024-25 lists.
- *South Florida Business Journal's* 2024 Power Leaders 250, which spotlights winning executives across the tri-county region's major sectors.
- Featured in *The Boca Raton Observer* story "Leading With Heart: Celebrating 5 Women Elevating Our Community".
- Research Park's 2024 Distinguished Awards – Recipient of the Distinguished Leader Award.
- *South Florida Business Journal's* 2024 Power Leaders in Education.

Personnel and Work Force Initiatives

- Athletics - To continue the upward trajectory of the program, it was evident that a review of VP, Athletics' contract in comparison to those in the American Athletic Conference needed immediately attention. I consulted with the appropriate sources and developed a favorable compensation package. Working closely with the university and the FAU Foundation Executive Committee, we identified the funding needs. I am pleased at the outcome – a 5-year contract with VP White. When Dusty May announced he was leaving FAU, I worked closely with VP White to recruit a coach expeditiously and provide the funding support needed. The Foundation Executive Committee was supportive, and their assistance afforded us the opportunity to sign Coach Jakus. *This is a striking example of the positive relationship the University and the Foundation leadership have.*
- Academic Dean Searches - We currently have three academic dean searches in progress. This includes the Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, and Education. It is critical to the mission of these colleges that these searches be managed expeditiously and thoughtfully. We intend of having both the Colleges of Medicine and Nursing finalize during the Fall '24 semester.
- University-wide personnel initiatives –
 - Recruitment and Retention funds – Managed the distribution of \$10 million in funds to recruitment and retention efforts for faculty. Highlights include:
 - Recruitment of 46 new faculty
 - \$2.69 million in faculty bonuses
 - \$4.7 million in new faculty startup funds
 - Launched a voluntary retirement incentive program for faculty for the 2024-2025 academic year. To date, we have 23 potential candidates.
 - Staff – Between 2014 and 2022, Staff received one 1 ½ percent across the board base salary pay increase. This caused significant retention challenges. To address this, we have developed an annual staff salary program awarding base salary increases. This cannot immediately resolve the salary inequity issues but it begins to address the issue. Additionally, we have awarded two retention bonus payments payable in November ('23 and '24).
 - Adjunct Salaries – learning that adjunct salaries have not increased in some colleges in over a decade, it became apparent that this is an area requiring focus. We are currently reviewing the data to develop a plan.
 - Faculty salaries – as we begin the collective bargaining process, we are conducting a comparative analysis of salaries. Faculty salaries vary by college and faculty status (i.e., instructor – full professor).
 - The President has the authority to designate university holidays. In another way to expressing gratitude to our university team, I have designated two additional days this year.
 - Held team appreciation events inviting faculty and staff.

Addressing the response to the attack on Israelis and Antisemitism

- Managed the safety of the university campuses in collaboration with our university police, mutual aid agencies, federal partners, and university leadership.
 - This included law enforcement assistance from the Department of Highway Patrol.
 - Updated university policies to address campus protests (time, place, and manner) to further enhance campus safety.

- Developed handouts to be distributed in the event a march/protests happens. Police and staff are charged with the immediate distribution. These handouts clearly describe what is acceptable and not.
- Engagement – continue conversations with members of the community.
- Became a signatory on universities united against terrorism organization. Three members of the SUS were among the signatories – FAU, FIU, and Chancellor Rodriguez. The appeared in a full page add in the October 28-29 Wall Street Journal.

University-wide Initiatives, Achievements, and on-going efforts

There are numerous university-wide initiatives and achievements. Those listed here are simply a snapshot of those most noteworthy. Many of those listed are on-going.

- FAU received **2024 American Council on Education (ACE)/Fidelity Investments Award** for Institutional Transformation.
The award, established in 2014, recognizes institutions that responded to higher education challenges in innovative and creative ways and achieved dramatic changes in a relatively brief period.
- **Health Initiatives**
 - We continue to develop the strategies associated with building out FAU Health initiatives. This includes the partnership with Broward Health and the APP, the Consortium, and identifying additional partners for the College of Medicine.
 - Focus on the College of Nursing on continued improvement in the test pass rates to what they were several years ago ('98-100%). I discovered one year ago that pass rates were abysmal. An action plan was developed and implemented. We made the decision to teach out the Davie program and close it allowing the focus to be on our Boca Raton program. Pass rates continue to improve. I have confidence with new leadership in the college, our pass rates will continue to reach and maintain an acceptable level.
 - FAU Medicine Clinical Office – We are moving the clinical practice to the research park. This allows for an expansion of the practice and continues to demonstrate our commitment to seeing the 'park' grow in a focus area of health.
- **Athletics**
 - Athletics is a critical part of the college experience and to the reputation of the university. To that end, my role in cultivating the relationships with the teams, the staff, donors, and friends of the program was critical. I attended every football and men's basketball home games and attended tournament and conference games away. I hosted hundreds of supporters in the president's suite at football, hosted a donor suite for two home basketball games, hosted alumni and donor events at men's basketball tournament and conference games away, hosted special staff and faculty appreciation events to support women's basketball, among others. In short, I have personally cultivated relationships with our fanbase (students, community, alumni, donors, and prospects).
 - I am very proud of the work of Public Affairs in maximizing the exposure the Final Four "run" meant for FAU. FAU continues to capitalize on that exposure which is evident in the impact it has had on our application and enrollment numbers, rankings, etc.
 - Brand and media exposure continues to remain at a dramatic increase with an 80% increase in earned media last year as compared to the pre-Final Four year (2021-2022).

- Acclimating as a new member of the American Athletic Conference. Other members have greater resources which poses a challenge that needs to be considered when looking at department budgets and facilities.
- We have commenced the process of working with a nationally recognized consultant to guide an Athletics' strategic plan. This is critical as we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of intercollegiate athletics including the impact of NIL.
- **Zeiss** – In a partnership with Zeiss Microscopy, we opened the Zeiss Microscopy Solutions Center at Florida Atlantic University in the Stiles-Nicholson Brain Institute on the Jupiter Campus. This partnership provides our teams (FAU, Max Planck, and UF Scripps) with access to the latest microscopy technologies and imaging solutions. Held a ribbon cutting in May to commemorate this partnership.
- **Research** – FAU set a goal a decade or more ago to reach R1 status. We have met all the requirements to do so, and we anticipate the official announcement and recognition early Spring. There will be a significant campaign around this accomplishment and is currently in development.
- **Student Housing** – Developed a three-phase plan for resident student housing on the Boca Raton campus. This included demand assessment, market condition survey, housing type assessment, cost analysis, financing options and other pertinent factors in developing such a plan. This project received financing approval from the FAU Finance Corporation, and project approval from both the FAU Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors approval. It is currently in the design phase with an anticipated completion and occupancy date of Fall 2026. Additionally, we continue to explore other opportunities both on and adjacent to our campus.
- **Capital Projects** – We are currently in the design or construction phase of several major projects including the boca student residential housing phase I, Student Union expansion, Hillel expansion, The Kurt and Marilyn Wallach Holocaust and Jewish Studies Building, and the Henderson Stem Facility Phase II. Total projected project costs are approximately \$176 million. Additionally, we are managing a deferred maintenance project consisting of several smaller projects of \$17.5 million.
- **Enrollment** – While many institutions of higher learning are seeing enrollment declines nationally, Florida Atlantic has seen just the opposite. We have seen increased interest in the university.
 - Fall 2024 - received the largest number of applications in the university's history (~47,000).
 - Fall 2024 – total enrollment of 31,615 students which represents largest enrollment in the university's history.
 - Transfer student enrollment is up 4% over prior year.
- **Rankings and Student Success** -
 - Freshman to sophomore retention rate is 84.5%, an increase over prior year.
 - FASFA issues impacted enrollment nationally. We set up funds in our FAU Cares account providing ~\$420,000 to 449 students, which afforded them the funds needed to continue enrollment. This not only assists the individual student but assists in not having an adverse impact on retention and graduation rates.
 - Since my appointment to the Career Source Broward Board, FAU has increased our collaboration. Our Career Services office is tied into the internship opportunities available through Career Source and they are promoted to our students. Additionally, we advertise positions they have to our students developing a pipeline for vacancies in Broward County. We continue to collaborate on ways to partner.
 - Serving as Chair of the FARDA Board, I have worked closely with the administrative team at the Research Park to increase the number of paid internships. I allocated funding and are looking for opportunities to increase the number of internships for FAU students.

- There are several national rankings that universities look to. US News and Washington Monthly university rankings are listed below. There are also rankings for colleges and programs where FAU has demonstrated sound improvement.
 - US News and World Report – the current rankings are expected prior to 9/30. The rankings listed below are.
 - Public universities – ranked 112 - up 20 spots from prior year.
 - Social Mobility – ranked 26 – up 15 spots from prior year.
 - Best value schools – ranked 146 – up 22 spots from prior year.
 - Washington Monthly
 - National – ranked 41 – up 5 spots from prior year.
 - Best Bang – ranked 6 – up 7 spots from prior year.
 - Social Mobility – ranked 17 – up 9 spots from prior year.
- Board of Governors Performance Funding Rankings
At the June Board of Governors meeting, FAU's 84 points in performance funding was announced as the largest single year increase to total points in the State University System.
 - Major Achievements:
 - Metric 4. Four-Year Graduation Rate hit 50% for the first time in FAU's history, a record which we project we will break again by 2 percentage points next year.
 - Metric 5. Academic Progress Rate (Retention of Freshmen with 2.0+ GPA) improved by 4.2 percentage points, also the largest one-year increase in the System.
 - Metric 10. BOT Choice: Total Research Expenditures improved by \$16M and resulted in a record \$78M for FAU.
- **Reaffirmation** process - Successfully completed the university's ten-year reaffirmation process with The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges or SACSCOC with no findings or recommendations. The official reaffirmation will be on the SASCOC Board's December 2024 meeting.
- **Budget Redesign** - continue Phase II of this project with our CFO, the working committee, and our outside consultant. We expect Phase II to assist us in making a recommendation for a budget model that makes sense for FAU and an implementation plan. This process will include significant collaboration from all units in the university including faculty participation.
- **Economic Impact Study** – Florida Atlantic has not completed an economic impact study in nearly 15 years. We are in conversations to commence such as study.
- **The Office of Ocean Economy** – this year the legislature designated Florida Atlantic as the site for the Office of Ocean Economy. We are developing a structure and plan to stand up this office and start the collaboration with partners throughout the state.
- **Fundraising** –
 - We closed out the fundraising year at the second largest fundraising year in the university's history. This year was second to last with the two largest years of total fundraising dollars. We have exceeded \$500 million in funds raised towards the campaign goal of \$600 million.
 - Annual President's Gala – held the annual president's gala raising dollars for scholarships. This is also an excellent opportunity to celebrate the university supports for the entire year. Over 700 guests joined us including members of the FAU community, donors, elected officials, and the like.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is critical to the ongoing success of the university. The university must be an active participant in the communities we serve. Active engagement allows for the production of knowledge, the identification of and development of partnerships, increased research productivity, funding to support the university's mission, policy development, and the like. Consistent and intentional engagement is needed.

My engagement in this role has been significant. Having board seats as referenced above affords me the opportunity to give FAU a voice. This not only allows me to share the extraordinary work that FAU is doing but also how the university might be a driver or a participant in addressing and solving critical societal matters.

I have focused a significant amount of my time friend and fundraising this past year. This includes one-on-one meetings with current and prospective donors and partners, alumni, and students. I attended numerous events representing the university. Additionally, I continued cultivating relationships with the community at large and our university supporters. I managed these efforts personally arranging calls, luncheons, and dinners myself. I hosted hundreds of guests at home and away sporting events as well as student and academic events. I gave remarks at many events and meetings which served to reinforce the university's presence and importance in the community. We strategically sponsored several community meetings and functions to expand the knowledge of the work FAU is doing academically and in research.

Additionally, as part of Presidential Communications, letters are sent from me to every new provost and president throughout the county. This engagement continues to put FAU on the minds of colleagues across the county. This is only one example of the myriad of strategies used in communicating regularly with internal and external constituents and colleagues across the country.

Community engagement is part of the fabric of what I do daily.

Legislative

I worked closely with our Board Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the university community to socialize our legislative priorities. This included numerous meetings starting in January through the legislative cycle. Additional highlights:

- Participated in FAU Days in Tallahassee
- Gave remarks at the Broward County and Palm Beach County Legislative Delegation meetings.
- Met individually with delegates visiting FAU.

I am very pleased with what has been accomplished this year. This is a snapshot of the accomplishments but there is a myriad of others. FAU has been on an upward trajectory for years. During the past two years, we have not only continued that upward trajectory but achieved truly remarkable things such as meeting all the criteria to be rated a Carnegie R1 classification research university.

The year has also proved challenging with the numerous policy and regulatory changes, yet I am pleased with the team's approach to mindful and accurate compliance. We also faced as did universities across the country significant concerns related to protest and campus safety. We worked diligently to educate our teams on our processes and protocols, the applicable laws, and updated practices and policies as needed. While I am pleased with the results, we are continually evaluating possible threats and evaluating safety plans. These matters are situational, so continued training and education is critical to our response I the event that becomes necessary.

Florida Atlantic University is not the university it was a decade ago and it is not the university it was two years ago. I will continue focusing each day on the daily operations, the academic, student success, fundraising, and research aspirations so we continue with intention on our upward trajectory.