STATE OF FLORIDA AUDITOR GENERAL

Operational Audit

Report No. 2027-033
October 2026

FLORIDA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

Sherrill F. Norman, CPA
Auditor General

Board of Trustees and President

During the 2025 calendar year, Dr. Devin Stephenson served as President of Florida Polytechnic University and the following individuals served as Members of the Board of Trustees:

Beth Kigel, Chair
Jesse Panuccio, Vice Chair
Dr. Dorian Abbot through 6-30-25 [a]
Dr. Christie Bassett from 12-30-25 [b]
Jeffrey Beelaert from 12-30-25 [b]
Patrick Hagen
Jack Harrell III from 12-30-25 [a]
Robert O. Kincart from 12-12-25 [c]
Colby Manrodt from 4-28-25 [d]
Sumanth Neelam from 5-15-25 [e]
Eliot Peace from 5-15-25 [e]
Dr. Edwar Romero-Ramirez from 5-6-25 [f]
Ilya Sharpiro
Lyn Stanfield through 7-15-25 [c]
Dr. Sidney W. Theis
Dr. Bradford Towle through 5-5-25 [f]
Christos Tsetsekas through 4-27-25 [d]

[a] Trustee position vacant 7-1-25, through 12-29-25.
[b] Trustee position vacant through 12-29-25.
[c] Trustee position vacant 7-16-25, through 12-11-25.
[d] Student Body President.
[e] Trustee position vacant through 5-14-25.
[f] Faculty Senate Chair.

The Auditor General conducts audits of governmental entities to provide the Legislature, Florida's citizens, public entity management, and other stakeholders unbiased, timely, and relevant information for use in promoting government accountability and stewardship and improving government operations.

The team leader was Shaun Miller, CPA, and the audit was supervised by Mark A. Arroyo, CPA.

Please address inquiries regarding this report to Jaime N. Hoelscher, CPA, Audit Manager, by e-mail at jaimehoelscher@aud.state.fl.us or by telephone at (850) 412-2868.

This report and other reports prepared by the Auditor General are available at:

FLAuditor.gov

Printed copies of our reports may be requested by contacting us at:

State of Florida Auditor General
Claude Pepper Building, Suite G74 · 111 West Madison Street · Tallahassee, FL 32399-1450 · (850) 412-2722

FLORIDA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

SUMMARY

This operational audit of Florida Polytechnic University (University) focused on selected University processes and administrative activities and included a follow-up on findings noted in our report No. 2024-007. Our operational audit disclosed the following:

Finding 1: For the 2025-26 fiscal year, the former University President served as a full professor with a salary totaling $410,192, which was $267,192 more than the average salary for other University full professors. Despite our request, University records were not provided to demonstrate the reasonableness of the full professor salary of the former President.

Finding 2: University records supporting employee moving expense reimbursements did not generally document consideration of factors such as the distance of the move or other cost elements or require repayment if the employee terminated employment shortly after receiving the reimbursement.

Finding 3: University controls over public records requests could be enhanced.

Finding 4: The University did not always promptly cancel the purchasing cards of employees who separated from University employment.

BACKGROUND

The Florida Polytechnic University (University) is part of the State university system of public universities, which is under the general direction and control of the Florida Board of Governors (BOG). The University is directly governed by a Board of Trustees (Trustees) consisting of 13 members. The Governor appoints 6 citizen members and the BOG appoints 5 citizen members. These members are confirmed by the Florida Senate and serve staggered 5-year terms. The Faculty Senate Chair and Student Body President also are members.

The BOG establishes the powers and duties of the Trustees. The Trustees are responsible for setting University policies, which provide governance in accordance with State law and BOG Regulations. The University President is selected by the Trustees and confirmed by the BOG. The University President serves as the Executive Officer and the Corporate Secretary of the Trustees and is responsible for administering the policies prescribed by the Trustees for the University.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1: Former President

State law[1] and Board of Governors (BOG) regulations[2] authorize the University Trustees to establish a personnel program for all employees of the University, including the president and faculty positions.

[1] Section 1001.706(6), Florida Statutes.

[2] BOG Regulation 1.001(5), *University Board of Trustees Powers and Duties*.

Under the Trustee-approved employment agreement with the President, if the President resigned and elected to join the University teaching faculty, he would be eligible for a one-year sabbatical leave immediately following the conclusion of his presidency and prior to assuming a faculty role as a full professor. During the sabbatical year, he would receive 90 percent of his presidential base salary and, upon completing the sabbatical, he would be employed as a full professor at 90 percent of the sabbatical-year base salary.

According to the Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement, sabbatical leave must provide professional value to the University and offer opportunities for research, faculty development, or other experiences. The Agreement also states that faculty members, such as full professors, are generally assigned teaching, research, and service responsibilities.

The University President began employment on July 7, 2014, terminated his presidency on July 6, 2024, and began sabbatical leave on July 7, 2024. Table 1 summarizes the President's transition to the full professor position, including services and annual salary, for the period July 6, 2024, through July 6, 2026.[3]

Table 1
President's Transition to Full Professor
July 6, 2024, through July 6, 2026

Status	Time Period	Services	Annual Salary	Sabbatical Leave and Full Professor Salary Calculations
President	As of July 6, 2024	Oversaw University Operations	$506,410	-
Sabbatical Leave	July 7, 2024 – July 6, 2025	Conducted Research and Prepared to Teach Courses	$455,769	90% of President Salary
Full Professor	July 7, 2025 – July 6, 2026	Conducted Research and Aided in Pursuing Patents and Grant Writing	$410,192	90% of Sabbatical Leave Salary

Source: University records.

Despite the contract provisions authorizing the services and annual salaries, the former President did not teach any classes while classified as a full professor and received an annual salary that exceeded the $143,000 average salary for other University full professors by $267,192. Although we requested, University records were not provided to demonstrate the reasonableness of the full professor salary of the former President. Without documentation supporting the basis for the salary, the public purpose served by that level of compensation is not readily apparent.

Recommendation: The University Trustees should take official action to document and demonstrate the reasonableness of the former President's salary while classified as a full professor. In addition, the Trustees should ensure that future compensation for former presidents is based on the services assigned to the position and the University-defined benefits expected and received.

[3] The former President's employment with the University terminated July 6, 2026.

Finding 2: Moving Expenses

In accordance with good business practice, University procedures should include effective controls to ensure moving expense reimbursements serve a public purpose and are reasonable and appropriate. The University *Procurement Manual* (*Manual*) authorizes moving expense[4] reimbursements for new employees when the expenses are approved in advance by the hiring department's vice president. However, University personnel indicated that the reimbursements are typically not processed in accordance with the *Manual*. Instead, the amounts reimbursed are generally based on those specified in the employee's contract or offer letter, without considering factors such as the distance of the move or other reasonable cost limits. Moreover, University procedures did not consistently require repayment if the employee terminates employment shortly after receiving the reimbursement.

For the 2024 and 2025 calendar years, University records show that moving expenses totaling $506,000 were paid to 54 employees, with individual reimbursements ranging from $2,000 to $30,000. As part of our audit, we requested documentation supporting reimbursements totaling $137,500 for 9 employees. According to University personnel, the reimbursements were made solely based on the amounts stated in the employee contracts or offer letters, and justification supporting the reasonableness of the amounts paid was not documented. While we noted that 7 employment contracts or offer letters required reimbursement repayment provisions for early employment terminations, neither the contracts nor offer letters for 2 employees included such provisions, despite receiving moving expense reimbursements totaling $15,000 and $10,000.

University interests can be protected by documenting justification for moving expense reimbursements and including employment contract provisions that require employees to repay reimbursements for early employment terminations.

Recommendation: The University should enhance procedures to ensure that University records document justification for moving expense reimbursement amounts considering factors such as the distance of the move and other reasonable cost limits. In addition, to ensure that the University benefits from moving expense reimbursements, University contracts and offer letters should stipulate repayment requirements for employees who terminate employment after a brief period.

Finding 3: Public Records Requests

State law[5] provides that a custodian of a public records and his or her designee must acknowledge requests to inspect or copy records promptly and respond to such requests in good faith. University policies[6] require each public record request to be immediately forwarded to the Office of the General Counsel and the General Counsel is responsible for providing assistance in responding to the request. The University may assess a reasonable service charge for extensive personnel time or use of information technology resources or both that were required to gather and produce the records.

[4] Allowable moving expenses include packing and shipping household goods including mobile homes and automobiles. Charges for unpacking and storage are not allowable.

[5] Section 119.07(1)(c), Florida Statutes.

[6] FPU Policy Number FPU-1.0123P.

University policies require the University to respond to a public records request within a reasonable time frame after receiving the request and authorize the University to assess a service charge if the request requires extensive use of information technology resources or clerical and supervisory assistance. While the University maintains a record to track the status of each public records request and is responsible for providing a written explanation for denying access, making copies, or delayed responses, University policies did not always require effective, documented communication during the public records request and response process. Specifically, the University policies did not require and ensure that documented communication of the expected response date, considering any justifiable delays, is made promptly to those requesting public records or that responses to those requests are made by the expected response date, or by a delayed response date with documented justification and supervisory approval of the delayed response.

During the 2025 calendar year, the University received 99 public records requests. To determine whether the University complied with State law by promptly acknowledging the requests and responding in good faith, we requested University records supporting 25 requests. We found that the University acknowledged receipt of the requests but had not responded to 12 requests, which included requests for budget, employee information, construction procurement, and employment termination records. As of September 2026, the University had not established an expected response date or documented justification and supervisory approval of the delayed responses for the 12 requests, which had been outstanding 11 to 19 months, or an average of 15 months. University personnel indicated that the responses had not been made primarily because of turnover in the General Counsel position.

Effective communication during the public records request and response process, along with prompt and thorough responses to public records requests promotes compliance with State law, government transparency and accountability, and fosters greater public trust.

Recommendation: The University should enhance procedures to ensure that responses to public records requests are made in good faith as required by State law. Such enhancements should include revisions to University policies to require and ensure that the expected response date and any justifiable delays are promptly communicated to the individuals requesting public records and documented in the University records; and that responses to those requests are provided by the expected response date or by a delayed response date with documented justification and supervisory approval of the delayed response.

Finding 4: Purchasing Card Cancellations

The University administers a purchasing card (P-card) program, which gives employees the convenience of purchasing items without using the standard purchase order process. The University *Expense Card User Manual* requires that department heads collect P-cards during the exit interview with employees, destroy the cards, and complete and submit the cardholder termination form to the Purchasing Department. Timely cancellation of P-cards upon cardholder employment termination is important to avoid misuse of the cards.

During the 2025 calendar year, University P-card expenses totaled $1.7 million and 87 P-cards were in use. As part of our audit, we requested University records supporting P-card cancellations for the 23 cardholders that terminated from University employment. However, none of the 23 cardholder

termination forms were located and 7 P-cards were not cancelled until 18 to 130 days or an average of 64 days after the cardholders' employment terminations. According to University personnel, the Human Resources Department may have informally communicated employment terminations to the Purchasing Department, without the termination forms, contributing to the delayed P-card cancellations.

Although our examination of University records did not disclose any inappropriate P-card charges, our procedures cannot replace the University's responsibility to implement adequate controls over P-cards. The untimely cancellation of P-cards increases the risk for P-cards to be misused, unauthorized transactions to occur, and may limit the University's ability to satisfactorily resolve disputed charges.

Recommendation: The University should enhance procedures to ensure P-card privileges are promptly canceled upon a cardholder's termination from University employment. Such procedures should include targeted P-card training for department heads, emphasizing the critical importance of promptly completing and submitting cardholder termination forms to the Purchasing Department.

PRIOR AUDIT FOLLOW-UP

The University had taken corrective action for the finding included in our report No. 2024-007.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The Auditor General conducts operational audits of governmental entities to provide the Legislature, Florida's citizens, public entity management, and other stakeholders unbiased, timely, and relevant information for use in promoting government accountability and stewardship and improving government operations.

We conducted this operational audit from March 2026 through September 2026 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

This operational audit focused on selected University processes and administrative activities.

For those areas, our audit objectives were to:

- Evaluate management's performance in establishing and maintaining internal controls, including controls designed to prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse, and in administering assigned responsibilities in accordance with applicable laws, rules, regulations, contracts, grant agreements, and other guidelines.
- Examine internal controls designed and placed in operation to promote and encourage the achievement of management's control objectives in the categories of compliance, economic and efficient operations, reliability of records and reports, and safeguarding of assets, and identify weaknesses in those controls.
- Determine whether management had taken corrective actions for findings included in our report No. 2024-007.

- Identify statutory and fiscal changes that may be recommended to the Legislature pursuant to Section 11.45(7)(h), Florida Statutes.

This audit was designed to identify, for those areas included within the scope of the audit, weaknesses in management's internal controls significant to our audit objectives; instances of noncompliance with applicable laws, rules, regulations, contracts, grant agreements, and other guidelines; and instances of inefficient or ineffective operational policies, procedures, or practices. The focus of this audit was to identify problems so that they may be corrected in such a way as to improve government accountability and efficiency and the stewardship of management. Professional judgment has been used in determining significance and audit risk and in selecting the particular transactions, legal compliance matters, records, and controls considered.

As described in more detail below, for those programs, activities, and functions included within the scope of our audit, our audit work included, but was not limited to, communicating to management and those charged with governance the scope, objectives, timing, overall methodology, and reporting of our audit; obtaining an understanding of the program, activity, or function; identifying and evaluating internal controls significant to our audit objectives; exercising professional judgment in considering significance and audit risk in the design and execution of the research, interviews, tests, analyses, and other procedures included in the audit methodology; obtaining reasonable assurance of the overall sufficiency and appropriateness of the evidence gathered in support of our audit findings and conclusions; and reporting on the results of the audit as required by governing laws and auditing standards.

Our audit included the selection and examination of transactions and records, as well as events and conditions, occurring during the 2025 calendar year audit period and selected University actions taken prior and subsequent thereto. Unless otherwise indicated in this report, these records and transactions were not selected with the intent of statistically projecting the results, although we have presented for perspective, where practicable, information concerning relevant population value or size and quantifications relative to the items selected for examination.

An audit by its nature does not include a review of all records and actions of management, staff, and vendors and, as a consequence, cannot be relied upon to identify all instances of noncompliance, fraud, waste, abuse, or inefficiency.

In conducting our audit, we:

- Reviewed applicable laws, rules, University policies and procedures, and other guidelines, and interviewed University personnel to obtain an understanding of applicable processes and administrative activities and the related requirements.
- Evaluated University procedures for maintaining and reviewing employee access to IT data and resources. We examined access privileges of the 21 employees to selected critical functions within the finance and human resources applications during the audit period to determine the appropriateness and necessity of the access privileges based on the employees' job duties and user account functions and whether the access prevented the performance of incompatible duties.
- Evaluated University procedures for protecting the sensitive personal information of students, such as social security numbers.
- From the population of 99 public records requests received during the audit period, examined University records supporting 25 selected public records requests to determine whether the

University had established effective controls and prepared related records to demonstrate compliance with Section 119.07(1)(c), Florida Statutes.

- Examine University records for the 271 employees who received bonus and other negotiated salary payments totaling $1.2 million to evaluate compliance with Section 1012.978, Florida Statutes; Board of Governors Regulation 9.015; University Regulation 6.0032P; and other applicable University policies and procedures.
- From the population of 6,936 purchasing card (P-card) transactions totaling $1.7 million during the audit period, examined University records supporting 31 selected P-card transactions totaling $124,169 to determine whether the P-card program was administered in accordance with University policies and procedures and transactions were not of a personal nature.
- Examined P-card records for the 23 cardholders who separated from University employment during the audit period to determine whether the University timely canceled the cardholders' P-cards.
- Examined University records for the audit period to determine whether University procedures ensure that vendor and employee information changes, such as banking and address changes, were properly authorized, documented, and verified before payments were made.
- Evaluated the reasonableness of compensation paid to the former President.
- From the population of two major construction projects with expenses totaling $17.9 million and in progress during the audit period, selected one major project with 4 University payments totaling $3.5 million to determine whether the University's process for selecting design professionals and construction managers was in accordance with State law; the selection process of subcontractors was adequately monitored; the Trustees had adopted a policy establishing minimum insurance coverage requirements for design professionals; the design professionals provided evidence of required insurance; construction funding sources were appropriate, and University procedures had been established to properly approve change orders and effectively monitor contractor pay requests.
- From the population of restricted capital outlay expenses totaling $64.2 million during the audit period, examined records supporting 21 selected expenses totaling $13.1 million to determine whether these funds were expended in compliance with the restrictions imposed on the use of these resources. Also, we determined whether Education and General carryforward funds were budgeted and used in accordance with Board of Governors Regulation 9.007.
- From the population of payments totaling $1.9 million during January 2025 through February 2026 for new software applications, examined documentation supporting 6 selected payments totaling $1 million to determine whether the University evaluated the effectiveness and suitability of the software applications prior to purchase, whether the purchases were made through the competitive vendor selection process, and whether the deliverables met the contract terms and conditions.
- From the population of $924,261 of user fees collected during the audit period, examined documentation supporting collections totaling $360,207 to determine whether the University properly assessed and separately accounted for the amounts as required by Section 1009.24, Florida Statutes.
- From the population of Retention and Recruitment appropriated fund expenses totaling $2.6 million during the audit period, examined records supporting $249,048 selected expenses to evaluate the propriety of the expenses.
- Examined University records and inquired of University personnel to determine whether the University had any expenses or entered into any contracts under the authority granted by a state of emergency, declared or renewed during the audit period.

- Communicated on an interim basis with applicable officials to ensure the timely resolution of issues involving controls and noncompliance.
- Performed various other auditing procedures, including analytical procedures, as necessary, to accomplish the objectives of the audit.
- Prepared and submitted for management response the findings and recommendations that are included in this report and which describe the matters requiring corrective actions. Management's response is included in this report under the heading ***MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE***.

AUTHORITY

Section 11.45, Florida Statutes, requires that the Auditor General conduct an operational audit of each University on a periodic basis. Pursuant to the provisions of Section 11.45, Florida Statutes, I have directed that this report be prepared to present the results of our operational audit.



Sherrill F. Norman, CPA
Auditor General

MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSE

FLORIDA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

Finding 1: Former President

The University will fully consider and document adequate and reasonable compensation for all periods covered by employment contracts. Documentation will include, at a minimum, CUPA HR comparable compensation charts and the expected duties and responsibilities of a position. A performance evaluation will be completed annually.

Finding 2: Moving Expenses

The University will implement a policy that defines measurable guidelines for moving expenses. This policy will include a reimbursement clause for early termination of employment.

Finding 3: Public Records Requests

The University has implemented a ticketing system to document and time-stamp all public records requests. Appropriate response times will be applied to the specific request and communicated to the requestor. Large requests that demonstrate a higher impact on human resources will be communicated to the requestor and documented with justification and supervisory approval of a delayed response.

Finding 4: Purchasing Card Cancellations

The University has enhanced its procedures using the ERP (Workday) HR termination process. Additionally, a Jira ticketing system time-stamps the documentation of card collection, destruction, and deactivation in both Bank of America and Workday. The Procurement Manual is being updated to reflect these procedures.

Dr. Devin Stephenson, President