

Florida A & M University

Board of Trustees

Full Board of Trustees Emergency Meeting
(By Telephone in President Conference Room)
Room 400, Lee Hall

Tallahassee, Florida

Trustees Present by Telephone: Challis Lowe, Chairperson; William Jennings, Vice Chairperson; Phillip Agnew; George Allen; Regina Benjamin; Laura Branker; Al Cardenas; Leerie Jenkins; Spurgeon McWilliams

Trustee Present On-Site: Mary Diallo

Trustees Absent: Pamela Duncan; R.B. Holmes

Minutes/Summary

Trustee Chairperson Challis Lowe convened the Emergency Meeting at 10:05 a.m. and established that a quorum was present. The Agenda included two items: Issues Surrounding the Administrative Leave of Inspector General Michael Brown and an Audit Update. Trustee Diallo wanted to add a third item to the Agenda, but was denied because this was to be a “focused” Emergency Meeting with a set Agenda and time constraints. Also she was reminded by Chairperson Lowe that there is an established protocol for including items on the Agenda. Trustee Benjamin requested that Dr. Diallo’s item be given consideration for inclusion if time permitted.

Chairperson Lowe began by thanking Trustees for their availability, which is a credit to their commitment to the responsibility for which they have been entrusted. Further, she stated that she was sorry that Trustee Holmes was absent. She admonished him for acting on his own when he sought Governor Jeb Bush’s intercession on behalf of a University personnel issue. She stated that the Board should have “one voice”, and failure to have “one voice” creates problems and disharmony for the University. Chairperson Lowe established protocol for the meeting by asking that questions be held until the conclusion of each item so that Trustees may be better informed for discussion. Presentations began with President Bryant.

President Bryant introduced two letters to the Trustees. The first letter was from Governor Jeb Bush, wherein he declined intercession on the removal of Inspector General Michael Brown. He cited Constitutional and Statutory Laws as his reasons and stated that protocol dictates that such a request should come from the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors before it reaches him. The second letter was from Board of Governor Lynn Pappas, Chair of the Audit Committee, wherein the recommendation called for an assessment and further investigation by acting Inspector General Larry Tromly. Further, it was recommended that assistance from the Department of Education be requested. Then President Bryant introduced Vice President for Compliance Rufus Little, who is Inspector General Brown's supervisor.

Vice President Little provided details of the events leading up to Michael Brown's departure and the current situation in the Inspector General's Office. He confirmed that Michael Brown is on paid administrative leave, that the Office has not ceased to function and that Larry Tromly is an adequate replacement for Michael Brown. He stated that there had not been an established protocol for handling complaints in the Office of the Inspector General at Florida A&M. Evidence of this was that Michael Brown initiated the complaint about faulty audit findings against President Bryant, Vice President Rufus Little and Chief Financial Officer Gerald Dunn, and proceeded to personally investigate the complaint that he had filed. When questioned by President Bryant, Vice President Little and Chief Financial Officer Dunn, Michael Brown presented insufficient evidence and conflicting accounts of his investigation. To date the complaint remains on "inquiry status" and a request for an external referral has been submitted to the Department of Education's Office of Fiscal Integrity. Discussion.

Trustee Diallo asked why Michael Brown was not present at this meeting since Larry Tromly could provide only one side of the story. She also acknowledged receipt of a text message from former Trustee Corey Alston. During the meeting Trustee Cardenas stated that the Board of Trustees is not a determiner of facts, but is concerned with protocol and ethics. Trustee Benjamin stated that this meeting was not a hearing, but a concern about the process. Other Trustees echoed the same sentiments. Chairperson Lowe stated that the existing Complaint Form misrepresented information. Trustee Cardenas was concerned about the lack of factual analyses during the process and requested that documents be submitted to the BOT so that they may be assured that there is a process for investigations in place. Trustee McWilliams would have liked to hear Michael Brown's side of the story, but he agreed that he prefers to have an external investigation. President Bryant assured the Board that the investigation is proceeding by the Office of Fiscal Integrity (DOE). Trustee Jennings moved that the process proceed as expeditiously as possible; the motion was seconded by Trustee Agnew. The meeting moved to Item 2 on the Agenda, the Budget Audit.

Chief Financial Officer Gerald Dunn began by stating that Florida A&M must received the Preliminary Audit findings on June 23, 2006, and called upon Paul Stepusin and Dave Dennis (KPMG) to discuss the details. First comparative data on peer groups regarding loss of funds was presented. Trustee Benjamin asked for clarification of money loss and stated that it is never acceptable to lose money. Also she inquired about losses of other revenues. It was announced that there was an aggregate increase of 2.7 million dollars. Paul Stepusin explained that this increase is different from headlines and that the bottom line is increase in net income. The entire Budget Report was unavailable. President Bryant stated that this was a draft from the Auditor General's Office and that Florida A&M had 30 days to respond before a final draft could be released. Trustee Jenkins asked if the adjustments had to do with a timing issue. Trustees concurred that the presentation was helpful and agreed to direct additional questions/concerns to President Bryant.

Trustee Cardenas had to sign-off. Trustee Diallo wanted clarification of the meeting announcement that failed to state that it was an "emergency". Kimberlee Borland explained the omission of the word "emergency". Chairperson Lowe reiterated the protocol for placing items on the Agenda. Trustee Benjamin asked if the 2005-2006 Budget was balanced for the year without the carry forward amount. Paul Stepusin stated that the Budget was balanced without the carry forward amount. President Bryant also stated that this year's Budget is balanced. Trustee Benjamin announced that a Workshop on Ways to Achieve a Balanced Budget has been scheduled for August 7 and 8, 2006.

Chairperson Lowe expressed satisfaction over the actions taken and adjourned the Emergency Meeting at 12:35 p.m.