

**Full Board Meeting  
April 23, 2026  
Minutes**

---

Contents

Board Meeting.....	2
I. Call to Order.....	2
II. Roll Call.....	2
III. Greeting.....	2
IV. Public Comment.....	2
V. Approval of Minutes.....	2
VI. Reports.....	3
A. Chairman’s Report.....	3
B. President’s Report.....	3
C. Provost’s Report.....	3
D. Faculty Report.....	3
E. Student Report.....	3
F. External (State University System) Report: Efficiency Study.....	3
G. Committee Reports.....	3
H. Direct Support Organization Reports.....	4
VII. Unfinished Business.....	4
VIII. New Business.....	4
A. Action Items.....	4
B. Information Items.....	8
IX. Good of the Order.....	9
X. Adjournment      12:22p.m. ....	9

**Board Meeting****9:03 a.m.**

The public was provided with information on the UWF Board of Trustees website to attend this public meeting virtually through Zoom Webinar.

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting of the UWF Board of Trustees was called to order at 9:03 a.m. by Chair Rebecca Matthews.

**II. Roll Call**

Chair Matthews asked Kristie Johnson to conduct roll call. Trustees Paul Bailey, Ed Fleming, Janice Gilley, Kevin Mason, Rebecca Matthews, Rachel Moya, Kishane Patel, Heather Riddell, Ashley Ross, Eli Schatz, Zack Smith and Chris Young were in attendance.

Others in attendance included:

Manny Diaz, Jr., President; Jaromy Kuhl, Senior Vice President and Provost; Clifford Humphrey, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives; Tori Bennett, Vice President of University Advancement; Dan Lucas, Vice President of Finance and Administration; Mary Anderson, Vice President of Academic Engagement and Student Affairs; Dave Scott, Associate Vice President for Athletics; Jamie Sprague, Senior Associate VP, Human Resources; Alex Smith, Associate Vice President of Governmental and External Affairs; Julie Sheppard, Interim General Counsel; David Fugett, General Counsel; Cass Boatwright, Assistant Vice President and Chief Operating Officer; Anna Lochas, Director of Events; and Kristie Johnson, Board of Trustees Liaison.

**III. Greeting**

Chair Matthews welcomed everyone to the special meeting and thanked them for their time. She welcomed new Trustees Kevin Mason and Eli Schatz and Ben Watkins, the Director of the Florida Division of Bond Finance.

**IV. Public Comment**

Chair Matthews opened the floor for public comment. Domani Turner-Ward and Alyssa-James Gray, both students at UWF, spoke on BOT-9: Amendment of University Policy 12.02. Alyssa-James Gray also spoke on BOT-3: United Faculty of Florida (UFF) University of West Florida Chapter Collective Bargaining Agreement.

**V. Approval of Minutes**

Chair Matthews reminded the committee members that they had been given the opportunity ahead of time to review the minutes of the February 12, 2026 and April 2, 2026 Special Full Board Meetings. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented if there were no changes or corrections.

- i. Motion by: Trustee Fleming
- ii. Seconded by: Trustee Smith

iii. Motion passed unanimously.

## **VI. Reports**

### **A. Chairman's Report**

Chair Matthews gave an update to the Board on activities including those surrounding the D1 transition, the Women in Leadership Conference, and the Donor Dinner.

### **B. President's Report**

President Diaz presented an update on University Strategic Directions and recent University initiatives including student and employee accomplishments, strategic employee hiring, academic programming and grants, fundraising, infrastructure, operations, the D1 transition, and media impressions and publicity.

### **C. Provost's Report**

Dr. Kuhl briefed the board on our performance on Board of Governors Performance Based Funding Metrics.

### **D. Faculty Report**

Trustee Riddell presented the recent activities and accomplishments of UWF Faculty members.

### **E. Student Report**

Trustee Schatz provided the board members with goals and initiatives for his term as SGA president as it relates to the board activity and briefly on student activities since the last meeting.

### **F. External (State University System) Report: Efficiency Study**

Mr. Ben Watkins presented the State University System Efficiency Study that was commissioned by Governor DeSantis. Mr. Watkins provided an overview of his findings on student performance, financial responsibility and efficiency. He also encouraged UWF to further analyze and evaluate efficiencies and to continue to make improvements in the areas he reviewed.

### **G. Committee Reports**

#### **1. Academic Affairs Committee**

Trustee Riddell reported on two action items and one information item from the Academic Affairs Committee meeting held February 12, 2026.

#### **2. Audit and Compliance Committee**

Trustee Young reported that the Audit and Compliance Committee met on February 12, 2026 and recommended approval of two action items from that committee in the consent agenda later in the meeting.

#### **3. Finance, Facilities, & Operations Committee**

Trustee Moya reported that the Finance, Facilities, and Operations Committee met on Thursday, February 12, 2026. The committee had two action items and one information item on their agenda with the action items reflected on the consent agenda for the current full board meeting.

#### 4. Student Affairs Committee

Trustee Smith explained that the Student Affairs Committee had not met since the last regular full board meeting and therefore, had no report.

#### H. Direct Support Organization Reports

##### 1. UWF Business Enterprises, Inc.

Vice Chair Young reviewed the September 29, 2025 BEI board meeting with trustees as well as the performance status for contracts.

##### 2. UWF Foundation, Inc.

Trustee Ross provided updates from University Advancement and from the UWF Alumni Association. She reviewed the financial standing and also reported on Foundation Board and committee activities.

##### 3. UWF Historic Trust, Inc.

Chair Matthews gave the UWF Historic Trust report providing a summary of the most recent UWF Historic Trust board meeting and information on the organization's events and activities.

### **VII. Unfinished Business**

Chair Matthews asked if anyone wished to pull an item for further discussion from the consent agenda. Seeing none, Chair Matthews asked for a motion to adopt the recommendations of the Academic Affairs, Audit and Compliance, and Finance, Facilities, and Operations Committees approving the New Material and Supply and Equipment Fees in Mechanical Engineering, the Internal Audit Report: UWF Athletics – Agreed-Upon Procedures, the University Carryforward Spending Plan & Fixed Capital Outlay Budget, and the amendment to BOT Regulation 4.008 Tuition and Fees, Fines and Penalties as reflected on the consent agenda.

Motion by: Trustee Young

Seconded by: Trustee Mason

Motion passed unanimously.

### **VIII. New Business**

#### A. Action Items

1. BOT-1: Resolutions for Former Vice President of Finance, Facilities, and Operations Betsy Bowers, Trustee Trista Bennett and Julie Sheppard, Esq. in Recognition of Distinguished Service

Chair Matthews lauded the work of Betsy Bowers, Trista Bennett, and Julie Sheppard and asked for a motion to adopt Resolutions 2026.1 and .2 in Recognition of Distinguished Service to the University of West Florida.

Motion by: Trustee Fleming  
 Seconded by: Trustee Riddell  
 Motion passed unanimously

Ms. Bowers, Miss Bennett, and Ms. Sheppard each commented briefly on their service to the University.

## 2. BOT-2: Hire Vice President, Advancement

President Diaz reviewed the accomplishments of Interim VP of Advancement, Tori Bennett, and recommended making her position permanent. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to approve hiring Tori Bennett for the position of Vice President of the Division of Advancement, as presented.

Motion by: Trustee Fleming  
 Seconded by: Trustee Riddell  
 Motion passed unanimously.

## 3. BOT-3: United Faculty of Florida (UFF) University of West Florida Chapter Collective Bargaining Agreement

Provost Jaromy Kuhl presented an overview of the UFF agreement. Chair Matthews asked for a motion ratify the 2026-2029 UFF-UWF Collective Bargaining Agreement as presented.

Motion by: Trustee Riddell  
 Seconded by: Trustee Smith  
 Motion passed unanimously.

## 4. BOT-4: UWF Holiday Regulation 2.028

Chief Human Resources Officer, Jamie Sprague, presented the proposed updates to UWF Holiday Regulation 2.028. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to approve revisions to UWF/REG-2.028, University Holidays as presented.

Motion by: Trustee Schatz  
 Seconded by: Trustee Riddell  
 Motion passed unanimously.

## 5. BOT-5: UWF-PBA Sergeant Collective Bargaining Agreement

VP of Finance and Administration, Dan Lucas, asked for the board to ratify the PBA Sergeant's agreement providing, among other things, a pay increase. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to ratify the University of West Florida and the Police Benevolent Association Sergeant (UWF-PBA Sergeant Union) Collective Bargaining Agreement for 2026-2029.

Motion by: Trustee Gilley  
 Seconded by: Trustee Fleming  
 Motion passed unanimously.

#### 6. BOT-6: Authorization to Sign Checks

Jeffrey Djerlek, Senior Associate Vice President for Finance & University Controller, presented a request to update the individuals authorized to sign checks on behalf of the University. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to adopt Resolution 2026.3 to authorize the specified officers and employees of the University of West Florida to sign checks effective April 27, 2026.

Motion by: Trustee Patel  
 Seconded by: Trustee Mason  
 Motion passed unanimously.

#### 7. BOT-7: Name Change: Wright Family Institute for Global and Population Health

Tori Bennett, newly approved Vice President of the Division of University of Advancement, presented a request to change the name of the Wright Family Institute for Global Population Health to the Wright Family Research Institute for Health and Technology to better reflect the institution's focus. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to approve the recommended name change of the Wright Family Institute for Global Population Health to the Wright Family Research Institute for Health and Technology as presented.

Motion by: Trustee Riddell  
 Seconded by: Trustee Patel  
 Motion passed unanimously.

#### 8. BOT-8: Proposed Increase to the Student Athletic Fee

Dr. Mary Anderson, Vice President of the Division of Academic Engagement and Student Affairs, presented a request to increase the student athletic fee by \$2 per credit hour in support of the move to Division I athletics. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to

approve the proposed \$2 per credit hour increase in the student athletic fee to support the transition to Division I athletics as presented.

Motion by: Trustee Gilley  
Seconded by: Trustee Mason

Discussion: Trustee Schatz reported on a student poll conducted via social media. Trustee Riddell questioned resource allocation which Athletic Director Dave Scott answered that it would support scholarships and operating budgets. Trustee Smith mentioned that later in the agenda an item will be presented to help offset the increase in fees and Trustee Patel commented that the University was offsetting and lowering costs to students via parking fees.

Motion passed unanimously.

#### 9. BOT-9: Amendment of University Policy 12.02

Julie Sheppard, Interim General Counsel, presented a request to amend the Public Comment Policy 12.02, citing it had not been amended for 10 years, to encourage public comment, clarify when comments would occur in meetings, and collecting commenter information. President Diaz added that the changes would bring our policy more in line with the Board of Governors, other University system policies, and other public boards. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to approve the amendment of University Policy BOT-12.02, Board of Trustees Public Comment Policy as presented.

Motion by: Trustee Schatz  
Seconded by: Trustee Fleming

Discussion: Trustee Riddell requested an amendment to the motion to provide at least 30 minutes to the comment period referenced in section A.5. General Counsel suggested additional language that would allow for no less than 30 minutes for public comment. After further discussion, it was agreed to amend section A.5. as follows: "The total time allotted for public comment in any meeting, normally 30 minutes, may be extended if the Chair determines that a time limit extension is necessary due to the amount of registered speakers."

Amended Motion Seconded by: Trustee Smith  
Motion passed unanimously.

#### 10. BOT-10: 2026 Accountability Plan

Provost Kuhl reviewed the 2026 Accountability Plan, stating that the approval is to submit to the Board of Governors. He highlighted UWF strengths on the Performance Based Funding Metrics, the Key Performance Indicators, and enrollment outcomes. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to approve UWF 2026 Accountability Plan.

Motion by: Trustee Smith  
Seconded by: Trustee Schatz  
Motion passed unanimously.

11. BOT-11: Amendment to UWF Regulation 5.001 Parking and Registration

Mr. Dan Lucas explained that item BOT-11 was to rescind a parking tag fee established in fall of 2025 to allow back-in parking. The proposal is to require the parking tag to back into a space but making the hang tag free. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to approve revisions to UWF Regulation 5.001 Parking and Registration, as presented.

Motion by: Trustee Schatz

Seconded by: Trustee Riddell

Discussion: Trustee Schatz commented the students are excited about this change. President Diaz commented it amounts to an approximate \$25 per semester reduction in fees.

Motion passed unanimously.

12. BOT-12: Approval of BEI Board of Directors

Dan Lucas also presented BOT-12, approval of the appointment of three individuals to the Business Enterprises, Inc. board. Biographies of the new members were available in the agenda packet. Mr. Lucas explained that approval would be subject to the approval by the BEI which meets after this full board meeting. Chair Matthews asked for a motion to approve C. Ray Jones, Dick Baker, and Autumn Bek-Blackledge to the BEI Board of Directors, subject to approval at the next BEI board meeting.

Motion by: Trustee Gilley

Seconded by: Trustee Schatz

Motion passed unanimously.

B. Information Items

1. INFO-1: President's Self Evaluation

President Diaz presented his self-evaluation to the board. The report is attached to these minutes and incorporated by reference. Trustee Gilley commended President Diaz for his work and mentioned that she was working with the new General Counsel to bring a new policy to the board (as chair of the Presidential Performance Evaluation Committee) and looked forward to working with that committee.

2. INFO-2: University of West Florida Police Department Update (Boatwright)

Cass Boatwright, Chief Operating Officer, and Chief Jackson, Chief of the UWF Police Department, presented department initiatives and accomplishments.

**IX. Good of the Order**

Chair Matthews opened the floor for Trustee comments. Trustees Gilley and Fleming commended the police department. President Diaz mentioned that the house and senate agreed to top line allocations and would reconvene May 12<sup>th</sup> to start the negotiation process for the budget which could be approved before June. Chair Matthews identified that business had been concluded. She mentioned the committee meetings would be May 21<sup>st</sup> and the next in-person Board of Trustees meeting on campus is scheduled for June 18th. Chair Matthews asked if the board members had any additional business to discuss. No other business was discussed.

**X. Adjournment**

**12:22p.m.**

With no other business to discuss, Chair Matthews adjourned the meeting at 12:22 p.m.

# Goal 1 - Capital Campaign



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Oversee the achievement of expanding and meeting the goal of the “Here For Good” campaign to \$100 million.**

The University of West Florida continues to make strong progress toward achieving and surpassing the expanded \$100 million goal of the “Here for Good” capital campaign, the most ambitious comprehensive fundraising effort in institutional history. Originally launched with a \$90 million target, the campaign goal was increased to \$100 million following significant philanthropic momentum and sustained donor engagement.

Campaign performance remains strong, with more than 10,000 donors contributing to date and continued growth across major giving, annual fund participation and corporate partnerships. In November 2025, the University surpassed \$95 million in total funds raised, prompting the official expansion of the campaign goal. UWF is now on track to meet, and potentially exceed, the \$100 million milestone by the campaign’s conclusion on June 30, 2026.

For the current fiscal year, UWF is projected to raise more than \$8 million in total philanthropic support, including more than \$1.8 million in annual fund gifts (cash, pledges, and planned gifts under \$10,000) and more than \$6.5 million in major gifts (cash, pledges, and planned gifts of \$10,000 or more).

Additional indicators of engagement underscore this momentum, including participation from more than 550 faculty and staff donors, over 450 Nautilus-level donors contributing \$1,000 or more, and the successful securing of more than 60 new major gifts during the fiscal year.

Alumni engagement continues to grow, with a current participation rate of 4% and clear opportunities for growth. These results reflect strong philanthropic momentum and continued investment in the University’s mission and future, further strengthened by the leadership of President Diaz as UWF’s seventh president.

As the campaign enters its final phase, efforts are focused on securing leadership-level gifts and maintaining engagement to ensure a successful conclusion.

# Goal 2 - Brand Refresh



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Oversee and implement a comprehensive University brand audit and refresh.**

To strengthen its position in an increasingly competitive higher education landscape, the University of West Florida has completed a comprehensive brand audit and is now advancing into the implementation phase of a full brand refresh. This effort is designed to ensure the University's brand accurately reflects its mission, continued growth, and strategic direction, while improving clarity, consistency, and differentiation in the marketplace.

The recently completed audit included a thorough evaluation of institutional messaging, visual identity, and stakeholder perceptions, providing a strong foundation for the work ahead. Building on these insights, the University is now preparing for the rollout of a refreshed brand identity and logo, timed to align with the upcoming academic year.

At the core of this initiative is a focus on strengthening and refining the University's messaging and visual identity to better align with institutional priorities, including student success, workforce impact, research, and community engagement. By creating a more cohesive and compelling brand, UWF aims to enhance its effectiveness in student recruitment, fundraising, and broader community engagement.

Implementation efforts are already underway. The University has refined its institutional narrative to ensure consistency in messaging across all audiences and platforms. Updated visual identity elements, including a new logo and brand standards, are being finalized for deployment across digital, print, and campus environments. Equally important is internal alignment; comprehensive brand guidelines, tools, and training will be provided to ensure consistent adoption across all divisions and departments.

The rollout will occur in phases. Following the completion of the audit in 2025, the University is using the Spring of 2026 to finalize brand assets and prepare for launch. The official unveiling of the refreshed brand will coincide with the new fiscal year, launching July 1, 2026, supported by a coordinated marketing and communications strategy. Beyond launch, ongoing efforts will focus on campus-wide adoption and sustained brand governance to ensure long-term consistency and impact.

Through this initiative, the University of West Florida is positioning itself to achieve a stronger, more unified institutional identity. The refreshed brand is expected to improve the effectiveness of enrollment marketing, increase donor engagement and philanthropic alignment, and elevate the consistency and quality of University communications. Ultimately, this work will enhance UWF's visibility and reputation at both the regional and national levels.

# Goal 3 - Talent Catalyst



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Double the number of Talent Catalyst internship partners from 7 to 14.**

The UWF Talent Catalyst program is a structured internship program that connects University of West Florida undergraduate students with Northwest Florida employers. Administered by the UWF Office of Workforce Development, the program integrates paid workforce experience/internships, professional development training, and employer mentorship to prepare students for successful careers.

Talent Catalyst has been designated by UWF as two High Impact Practices (HIPs) – Internships/Work Experience and a Living Learning Community – and all participating students receive transcript recognition.

### **Three Core Components:**

#### **1. Paid Internships/Workforce Experience**

Students work in paid, part-time internships with regional employers (with pay ranges from \$16 to \$27 per hour), predominantly spanning multiple semesters (Fall, Spring, and Summer). Many students begin as juniors and gain two years of experience with the same employer before graduation, building skills and often transitioning into full-time roles with the company.

#### **2. UWF Talent Catalyst Professional Development Course**

All participating students take a free hybrid professional development course taught by Dr. Sherry Hartnett (1–2 hours per week) focused on communication, teamwork, professionalism, time management, problem-solving, and critical thinking. The course combines flexible online learning with monthly in-person sessions featuring guest speakers and practical training. The Canvas course is built with multiple levels of learning, so in their first semester they take Level 1, second semester Level 2, and so on.

#### **3. Mentorship**

Each student is paired with a mentor from their employer organization who provides guidance on workplace expectations, career development, and professional networking.

Talent Catalyst currently includes 21 employer partners with signed MOUs. In less than two years, more than 56 students will have participated – most for over a year – by the end of this academic year.

The program creates a strong talent pipeline for regional employers while ensuring UWF students graduate with meaningful internships/work experience, professional skills, and industry connections.



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## Talent Catalyst Business Partners:

1. GE Vernova
2. Landrum
3. LifeView Group / GCE
4. BlueWind Technology
5. University of West Florida
6. American Magic
7. LocaliQ
8. Jupiter Bach
9. Engineered Cooling Services
10. Leonardo DRS
11. Birdon
12. American Heritage Financial
13. On-Point Defense Technology
14. Tocaro Blue
15. Guided Particle Systems
16. PenAir Credit Union
17. RescAlert
18. Viewpoint Systems
19. Catalyst (Healthcare Real Estate)
20. Levin, Papantonio, Proctor,  
Buchanan, O'Brien, Barr, & Mougey  
P.A.
21. St. Engineering North America

# Goal 4 - Stadium Groundbreaking



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Oversee and implement the groundbreaking and construction of the new football stadium to include general event space for the University.**

On Feb. 11, 2026, UWF officially broke ground on the Darrell Gooden Stadium, a multi-use football and events facility that represents UWF's growth and a significant investment in the community.

Construction on the Darrell Gooden Stadium is underway and will continue while the Argos compete during the 2026 season. As part of the phased development, a new state-of-the-art LED video board – measuring 85 feet wide by 30 feet tall – will be installed in the end zone opposite the Darrell Gooden Center and will be in place for the 2026 season.

The first kickoff at Darrell Gooden Stadium is planned for Fall of 2027.

# Goal 5 - Student Area Enhancement



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Improve campus appearance and enhance student areas to include a new student union patio and refurbished Cannon Green.**

The University of West Florida has made significant progress in enhancing campus appearance and elevating student-centered spaces through the completion of key improvements to the Cannon Green and a new Commons Patio. These efforts are part of a broader commitment to creating a more vibrant and engaging campus environment that supports student life.

The new Commons Patio was completed in January 2026 and officially introduced to campus with a “Party on the Patio” event in February 2026. Designed to encourage connection and engagement, the patio provides a central outdoor area for informal gatherings, eating space, and daily student use.

The University also completed a large-scale landscape enhancement project, transforming and expanding the Cannon Green in March 2026. The revitalized space significantly increases the usable green area, creating a more open and flexible environment for student activities and campus events. As part of this project, the University introduced “Greek Way,” a dedicated walkway recognizing Fraternity and Sorority Life. This walkway features custom benches for each FSL organization, many of which are now being personalized by the Chapters, fostering a sense of ownership, pride, and community among students.

# Goal 6 - Housing / Retail Expansion Opportunities



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Explore and propose P3 opportunities for the University to expand housing and new retail entertainment facilities.**

The University of West Florida is actively exploring and advancing public-private partnership opportunities to expand on-campus housing and introduce new retail, entertainment and student-centered facilities. This effort reflects a strategic commitment to enhancing the campus experience, supporting enrollment growth and meeting evolving student expectations, while leveraging innovative funding and development models.

To support this initiative, UWF has released an ITN to solicit proposals and ideas from potential partners. Responses are expected in the coming quarter and will provide a range of concepts for consideration, including development along Argo Boulevard; expanded student housing, retail, and dining options; entertainment venues; and new student activity spaces. These concepts will be carefully evaluated and prioritized based on demonstrated student needs, institutional fit, and funding feasibility.

### **Student Housing**

Significant progress has already been made in advancing housing expansion efforts. A comprehensive housing demand and feasibility study, completed in Summer 2024 in partnership with Brailsford & Dunlavey, confirmed sustained demand for additional housing and identified viable pathways for expansion. Building on this foundation, Housing and Residence Life has been actively engaged in design and construction planning, including schematic design reviews with housing architects throughout 2025.

HRL has developed and continues to refine standardized inventories for building materials, furnishings, and fixtures to ensure consistency, cost efficiency, and long-term maintenance sustainability across facilities. The team has also prioritized continuous improvement by evaluating emerging solutions and operational efficiencies, while benchmarking against peer institutions across the State University System to inform competitive positioning, design standards, and partnership models.

### **Retail, Entertainment, and Mixed-Use Development (Argo Boulevard) and New Student Union:**

The University has made meaningful strides in conceptualizing retail, entertainment, and mixed-use development opportunities, particularly along Argo Boulevard, as well as planning for a potential new student union. These efforts have been heavily informed by student input. Engagement with Fraternity and Sorority Life leadership has helped assess interest in Greek housing and associated mixed-use developments, while structured feedback sessions through the Vice President's Student Advisory Council have provided valuable insight into student preferences.



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

Student-driven concepts for Argo Boulevard emphasize a vibrant, experiential environment that blends dining, retail and entertainment. Ideas include various dining options accommodating a range of tastes and dietary needs, destination-style retail, and amenities such as live music, outdoor gathering spaces, and late-night programming. Students have expressed a desire for an atmosphere that is both energetic and inviting, drawing inspiration from destinations like Disney Springs and walkable urban districts.

Similarly, concepts for a new student union reflect a strong desire for multifunctional, student-centered space. Proposed features include a mix of amenities such as food service, coffee shops, and recreation options, alongside expanded commuter resources, event and meeting spaces, and dedicated areas for student organizations. Design preferences emphasize openness, natural light, flexibility, and a modern, engaging aesthetic, informed by peer institutions and comparable campus environments.

## **Next Steps:**

Looking ahead, the University has identified several key next steps for 2026. Efforts will include exploring potential partnerships for Greek housing, engaging interested alumni to assess feasibility, funding models, and potential P3 structures. Additionally, \$100,000 in FY27 CITF funding will support the conceptual design of a new student union, with renderings and materials used to build student enthusiasm, gather feedback, and align stakeholders. The University will also evaluate funding mechanisms, including potential adjustments to student fees, to support future development, while considering opportunities to repurpose existing campus spaces such as the University Commons.

Through these coordinated efforts, UWF is positioning itself to deliver a more dynamic, engaging, and student-focused campus environment, supported by strategic partnerships and sustainable development approaches.

# Goal 7 - Civic Literacy and Discourse



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Establish a center for civic literacy and increased civil discourse engagement.**

UWF has made significant progress in establishing a comprehensive and impactful center dedicated to civic literacy and the promotion of civil discourse. This effort was kickstarted with the awarding of a \$1.5 million, three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, supporting the creation of the UWF Academy of American Civic Republicanism. Building on this foundation, the University formally established the Academy for American Civic Republicanism to serve as the hub for programming, education, and community engagement in this space.

To ensure strong leadership and effective implementation, the University has hired key personnel, including a program director and coordinator, as well as established an advisory board with the majority of invited members already confirmed. UWF has developed a robust network of local and regional partnerships to extend its reach and impact, including collaborations with Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa County School Districts; the UWF Historic Trust; and the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative.

During 2025-26, UWF hosted four debates and six lectures supporting civic literacy and increased civil discourse engagement.

- Office of Public Policy Events
  - “Storm over the Constitution: Procedure or Prescription?” with Dr. Allen Mendenhall and Dr. Clifford Humphrey on 9/17/25
  - “What Caused the Change in the Youth Vote? A Bipartisan Dialogue” with UWF Interim President Manny Diaz Jr. and Steve Schale, CEO of Unite the Country on 11/17/2025
  - “Church, State and the First Amendment” with Dr. Mark David Hall and Dr. Steven K. Green on 1/22/26
  - “Private Vices, Public Prosperity: Can Self-Interest Sustain a Free Republic?” with Dr. Adam Cayton, Dr. Clifford Humphrey, Dr. Tom Barber, and Dr. Brian Rucker on 2/25/26
- America 250 Florida Events
  - “The President, the Bureaucracy, and the Fate of Government by Consent of the Governed after 250 Years” with Dr. Ronald Pestritto on 10/7/25
  - “Did America Have a Christian Founding?” with Dr. Mark David Hall on 1/23/26
  - “Duty Before Glory: Washington’s Enduring Legacy of Leadership” with Mr. Travis Souther, UWF Emerald Coast librarian, on 2/16/25 at the Emerald Coast campus and 4/14/26 at the Pensacola campus
  - “Rome in Philadelphia: Polybius and the Roman Republic at the American Founding” with Dr. Carl E. “Tripp” Young III on 3/5/26



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

- “On Turning 250: How Americans Should Remember Their Founding” with Dr. Wilfred M. McClay on 4/16/26

Summer Institute session schedules have been finalized with a focus on “Using Primary Sources in Civics/History Instruction” for middle and high school teachers. The program will include two five-day seminars, supported by four selected guest lecturers, with 60 participants already registered. To expand access, a four-part summer webinar series has also been developed for K–12 educators in Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa counties who are unable to attend the in-person sessions. The webinar series, themed “Foundations and Crises of the American Republic,” will cover topics including the foundations of republican government, slavery and its impact on the republic, ideological challenges to constitutional order, and the balance between security and liberty during the Cold War. Each session is expected to serve approximately 15 educators, reaching a total of 60 participants.

A pilot undergraduate course, The Founder’s Constitution, has been developed and launched, providing students with an in-depth analysis of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, including the debates over the structure of the national government, arguments for and against ratification, and the creation and adoption of the Bill of Rights in the First Congress. The course is currently enrolling 22 students. In addition, the Academy is hosting a course on statesmanship, scheduled to launch in Fall 2027 as a senior capstone class, with guest lectures by President Diaz.

Planning is underway for a conference in February 2027, with the theme, keynote speaker, and venue secured.

# Goal 8 - Advocacy Program



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Expand and implement a state and federal advocacy program with emphasis on combined and expanded funding opportunities.**

Over the past year, UWF has made significant progress in establishing a stronger presence at both the state and federal levels. Building on this momentum, the University will advance a more structured, proactive, and results-driven advocacy program focused on alignment, engagement, and execution.

### **Key Initiatives and Progress to Date:**

- **Federal Representation and Strategy Development:** UWF has engaged federal representation to advocate on behalf of the University in Washington, D.C., and to provide strategic guidance on navigating federal processes, identifying funding opportunities, and positioning UWF competitively for federal resources.
- **Strategic Engagement with Federal Delegation:** The University has successfully hosted members of Congress in Pensacola, including visits to the UWF Center for Cybersecurity and the UWF Historic Trust. These engagements have highlighted UWF's impact, strengthened relationships with key decision-makers, and showcased nationally recognized programs.
- **National Presence and Relationship Building:** UWF leadership has conducted targeted visits to Washington, D.C., to build recognition for the University and its areas of excellence, including cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, workforce development, and community partnerships.
- **Development of an Internal Federal Advocacy Process:** The University has initiated the creation of a formalized internal process to coordinate federal advocacy efforts. This includes identifying priority projects, aligning institutional messaging, and ensuring timely pursuit of federal grants, congressionally directed spending (community funded projects), and other funding opportunities.
- **Submission of Community Funded Projects:** UWF has successfully submitted community funded project requests through members of Congress, positioning the University to secure direct federal investments that support critical infrastructure, academic programs, and regional economic development initiatives.

### **Next Steps and Strategic Focus:**

To build on this foundation, UWF will:

- Fully implement a coordinated advocacy framework that integrates state and federal priorities across all divisions of the University.
- Expand strategic engagement with elected officials and agency leaders to increase visibility and influence.
- Strengthen internal capacity to identify, develop, and advance competitive funding proposals aligned with institutional priorities.



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

- Enhance collaboration with regional partners to pursue joint funding opportunities that amplify UWF's impact across Northwest Florida.
- Establish clear metrics to track advocacy outcomes, funding secured, and relationship development.

# Goal 9 - Office of Military Services



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Establish the Office of Military Services to better serve active military, veterans, and military families under the Office of the President.**

In August 2025, UWF launched the Office of Military Services as a priority initiative to strengthen its commitment to those who serve, have served, or will serve, and their families. Housed within the Aylstock, Witkin, Kreis and Overholtz Center for Leadership, OMS unified the University's Army and Air Force ROTC programs and the Military and Veterans Resource Center into a centralized structure designed to enhance coordination, expand services, and elevate UWF's impact across the military-affiliated community.

In the months since its launch, OMS has made substantial progress across three key focus areas: (1) serving veterans and military-affiliated students, (2) supporting ROTC programs, and (3) strengthening partnerships with active-duty installations and military organizations.

### **Serving Those Who Have Served (Veteran and Military-Affiliated Students)**

The University has significantly strengthened its support for veterans, their families and other military-affiliated students, earning national recognition for its efforts. During the 2025–2026 academic year, UWF achieved top rankings and distinctions, including recognition from U.S. News & World Report, Military Friendly and Military Times, underscoring its position as a leading institution for veteran education.

Programmatic expansion has been a central focus. In partnership with the Small Business Development Center, UWF successfully secured and launched the Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program, providing workforce and entrepreneurial training opportunities to veterans and their spouses across Northwest Florida. The University is also entering into a partnership with Home Base, a nationally recognized nonprofit organization, to deliver clinical care, wellness services, and research addressing the invisible wounds of war for veterans, service members, and their families.

To further strengthen community collaboration, OMS leads the Pensacola Veterans Support Organization Network, convening regional partners on a quarterly basis to improve coordination, reduce service gaps, and better support both student and community veterans.

In addition, OMS has begun pursuing funding for a dedicated facility that will centralize services, provide classroom and office space, and potentially house workforce training labs and resiliency-focused programming. Demonstrating its commitment to student success, UWF also provided financial support to cover tuition gaps for veterans impacted by the late 2025 government shutdown.



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Serving Those Who Will Serve (ROTC Programs)**

OMS has enhanced support for ROTC programs through targeted investments in student success, leadership development, and program visibility. Through collaboration with local donors, the University established new scholarships to support both ROTC cadets and veteran students, helping to reduce financial barriers and attract high-quality candidates.

A key initiative has been the creation of the “Warrior Scholar” Living Learning Community, developed in partnership with academic and athletics units. This program brings ROTC cadets together in a shared residential environment alongside student-athletes, fostering leadership development, academic achievement, and a strong sense of community.

The University also launched its first annual Spring Review, a formal event recognizing graduating cadets and celebrating their transition into commissioned officers. This initiative reinforces longstanding military traditions while strengthening connections between cadets, the military community, and external stakeholders.

Looking ahead, UWF is actively exploring a partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard to establish a Lateral Entry Program. This initiative would create accelerated career pathways for graduates in technical fields, allowing them to enter service at advanced ranks while contributing critical expertise to national defense.

## **Serving Those Who Are Serving (Active Duty and Military Installation Partners)**

OMS has expanded its engagement with active-duty service members and military installations across Northwest Florida, positioning UWF as a key partner in education, training, and workforce development. The University is currently finalizing an agreement with the Air Force’s 479th Flying Training Group at Naval Air Station Pensacola to deliver instruction in pedagogy and leadership for flight instructors and students, with programming expected to begin in Summer 2026.

Through coordination with the Pensacola Military Affairs Committee, UWF is hosting regular engagements with installation commanders, providing opportunities to showcase University resources, strengthen partnerships, and align academic offerings with military needs.

OMS has also played a key role in advancing UWF’s engagement with the defense and research sectors. This includes facilitating a strategic visit with DefenseWerx leadership to highlight the University’s capabilities in cybersecurity, engineering, and human-machine teaming, as well as supporting a cross-college effort to pursue research opportunities with the Air Force Research Laboratory. These



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

initiatives position UWF as a contributor to national security innovation and expand opportunities for faculty and students.

Additionally, OMS is coordinating with leadership at the Center for Information Warfare Training at Corry Station to explore partnerships in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and workforce training. These efforts further strengthen UWF's role in supporting military readiness and advancing regional and national defense priorities.

Goal 10 - 90 on PBF



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

**Under the current Florida SUS Performance-Based Funding model, UWF's overall metric score for the 2025-2026 performance year is at least 90.**

The University achieved a total Performance-Based Funding (PBF) metric score of 91 for the 2024-25 academic year and is projected to exceed a score of 90 again in 2025-26. Notably, the University has surpassed every PBF goal outlined in its 2026 Accountability Plan, reflecting sustained excellence across all measured areas. These results underscore the University's strong and consistent performance within the state's funding model. The final score will be officially announced at the June BOG meeting.

# Goal 11 - Increase Research Expenditures



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

**Achieve an increase in overall research expenditures from FY 2024 to FY 2025, as reported by the NSF HERD Survey.**

Total research expenditures reached \$43,503,000 in FY 2024. Based on the recently submitted Higher Education Research and Development survey to the National Science Foundation, FY 2025 expenditures are projected to increase to \$47,528,000, a 9% gain. This marks the highest level of research expenditures in recent years and continues a strong upward trajectory in research activity.

Notably, the University reported more than \$25,000,000 in external expenditures, including \$19,000,000 in federal funding. This sustained growth reflects expanding research capacity, increased competitiveness for external funding, and continued momentum in advancing the University's research enterprise.

# Goal 12 - Student Enrollment



# UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA

## **Grow and sustain UWF's total fall semester student enrollment to more than 15,000 students.**

UWF achieved a historic milestone in Fall 2025, surpassing 15,000 enrolled students for the first time in the University's 58-year history. Total enrollment reached 15,411, representing a 5% increase over the previous fall and exceeding the University's goal of 15,200 students. This achievement reflects strong, sustained growth and the University's increasing appeal to both undergraduate and graduate students.

Notably, Fall 2025 also marked the first time undergraduate enrollment exceeded 10,000 and graduate enrollment surpassed 5,000, demonstrating balanced growth across academic levels. This momentum continued into Spring 2026, with enrollment increasing by more than 2% compared to the previous spring semester. Together, these gains underscore the University's successful recruitment and retention strategies and position UWF for continued enrollment growth.