

FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Special Committee on the Developmental Research School

Meeting Notes

Meeting Date	June 11, 2026
Committee Meeting Time	Called to order at 1:04 p.m.; committee portion concluded at approximately 2:06 p.m.
Recording Segment	Approximately 4:33:41-5:36:42
Record Source	Zoom meeting recording and transcript

Committee Membership and Roll Call

Role	Trustee	Roll Call
Chair	Dr. Jamal A. Brown	Present
Vice Chair	Roderick Harris	Present
Member	Natie G. Figgers	Present
Member	Emery A. Gainey	Present
Member	Michael White	Present

A quorum was established. Chair Brown also requested that University leaders and DRS personnel supporting the presentation join the Committee at the table.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee considered the minutes from the May 12, 2026 meeting. Upon a motion and second, the minutes were approved by voice vote with no opposition stated.

Committee Framework and Purpose

Chair Brown explained that the Committee’s work is grounded in the statutory role of FAMU DRS as a laboratory school, the Board-approved Special Committee charter, six working teams, and the collection of baseline data necessary before recommendations are finalized. The Committee’s central objective is to help DRS more fully achieve its statutory purpose as a laboratory school.

Florida Statute 1002.32 was identified as the principal statutory framework. The discussion highlighted DRS’s laboratory-school mission; program demonstration, evaluation, replication, and technical assistance; its Teacher Education Center relationship with the College of Education; teacher preparation and clinical experiences; and accountability through school improvement planning, advisory governance, faculty compliance, and fiscal stewardship.

Chair Brown stated that the Committee is moving from issue identification to establishing dashboards, ownership structures, reporting expectations, and improvement recommendations.

Team 1: KPI, Accountability, Governance, and School Performance

The first team is focused on a KPI dashboard; clear ownership of DRS data; reporting expectations among the Board of Trustees, School Advisory Board, and School Advisory Council; review of advisory structures, policies, and handbooks; and alignment of academic, staffing, finance, pathway,

and stakeholder metrics. Vice President Jones described a KPI framework addressing student achievement, student growth, fiscal and operational health, and administrative performance. He emphasized development of a KPI dictionary defining measures, data sources, terminology, and the relationship among goals, policies, systems, supports, and outcomes.

Team 2: Academic Quality, Instruction, Internships, and College of Education Alignment

The second team is addressing academic performance and school-grade drivers; instructional interventions and supports; staffing and certification alignment; out-of-field assignments; professional development; and College of Education internships, residencies, clinical placements, tutoring, and certification support.

Chair Brown emphasized DRS's Teacher Education Center function and the need for a stronger, more intentional College of Education partnership in supporting DRS academic improvement. Comparative models referenced included the UF Lastinger Center, FSU College of Education reading programming, and FAU professional-development programming for teachers, students, and administrators. The Committee described a model that begins with statutory and College of Education alignment, develops intervention and instructional programming, documents outcomes through dashboards, and uses demonstrated results to support institutional, legislative, philanthropic, and external funding requests.

Team 3: College, Career, Pipeline, and Pathways

The Committee presented a pre-K through FAMU pipeline model designed to create intentional pathways from early childhood through employment. The framework includes early-literacy and readiness support; elementary-school preparation; middle-school STEM and health-career exposure; high-school research, dual enrollment, and strategic pathways; associate-degree options through Tallahassee State College; and memoranda of understanding, GPA-based incentives, scholarships, research opportunities, publication opportunities, and experiential learning.

Illustrative pathways included health-career exposure and research before enrollment at FAMU, as well as a supply-chain pathway through which students could complete an associate degree through Tallahassee State College, finish a FAMU undergraduate degree, and potentially pursue an MBA in an accelerated timeframe. Vice President Hudson described the approach as a "birth to employment" pipeline and emphasized tracking students who begin at DRS and remain through graduation.

Team 4: Finance, Facilities, and Sustainability

This team is examining a dedicated DRS Foundation account; restricted and unrestricted giving; scholarship models tied to FAMU recruitment and retention; grants, legislative appropriations, capital needs, philanthropy, and sustainability metrics.

Vice President Tatum-Frederick discussed developing support that follows students from early childhood through FAMU and noted that such support should include philanthropy, state resources, Title III, and other aligned funding opportunities.

KPMG Risk Discovery Update

Vice President Maleszewski provided an update on the KPMG Phase I risk-discovery engagement. He reported that stakeholder interviews, Board and management input, survey administration, document collection, and initial benchmarking had been substantially completed. KPMG was synthesizing findings related to governance, legal, financial, and comparative structures.

A draft report was expected to be reviewed with Chair Brown. An exit conference with President Johnson and KPMG was anticipated on June 26, and the Committee expected to receive the final report during the summer.

Team 5: Research, Innovation, and Pilot Programs

This team is focused on developing a DRS research agenda; increasing University faculty and graduate-student involvement; expanding research and grant opportunities for DRS faculty and students; identifying pilot programs; tracking grants; maintaining data and IRB guardrails; and documenting programs that can be replicated and reported. The presentation noted opportunities for collaboration with multiple FAMU academic areas, including garden-based learning, music, arts, and academic programs.

Team 6: Community and Alumni Engagement

This team is focused on advisory representation, school-improvement participation, parent, student, alumni, and stakeholder feedback, as well as coordination with the finance team regarding alumni and community giving. The Committee noted that KPMG had completed initial stakeholder-engagement work, with additional feedback to be collected based on team needs.

Information Requested From DRS

Chair Brown identified the primary information requested from Superintendent Johnson and DRS leadership as school-grade information; enrollment trends; student achievement; staffing and certification gaps; accreditation status; budget and financial impact; truancy and discipline; University partnerships; and additional baseline data needed for recommendations. The Committee stated that reliable baseline information is necessary before making meaningful recommendations.

Fall 2026 Priorities and Next Steps

The Committee identified the following priorities for fall 2026:

- School-grade improvement and learning-gap identification;
- A consistent KPI dashboard and reporting cadence;
- College of Education internship and teacher-support recommendations;
- Staffing and certification analysis;
- Coordination with existing FAMU K-12 programs;
- Pre-K through FAMU pipeline development;
- Finance, facilities, capital, sustainability, and scholarship planning; and
- Integration of KPMG findings into Committee recommendations.

Chair Brown stated that teams were expected to bring implementation recommendations for the fall to the next Board meeting.

Board Discussion and Direction

Chair Gibbons commended the Committee's work but directed that future DRS presentations be more concise, action-oriented, and centered on Board-level decisions. He stated that the Board needs clear historical baselines, specific measurable action plans, concrete resource or policy requests, consistent reporting at each meeting, and materials delivered in time for Executive Committee agenda development. Chair Gibbons directed Chair Brown to lead a disciplined reporting structure and return with concise recommendations at each Board meeting until DRS reaches the desired performance level.

Funding and Enrollment

Chair Brown stated that the working approximation was approximately \$10,000 per student and that additional enrollment capacity could help address funding gaps. He indicated there may be potential to add approximately 200 students.

Superintendent Johnson stated that DRS revenue is driven by FTE enrollment and described a conceptual \$5 million revenue level based on 500 students at approximately \$10,000 per student. He also stated that FTE funding does not fully equal the cost of operating DRS.

Chair Brown stated that future Board recommendations would include College of Education teacher-training support, targeted intervention planning, elementary-reading support, middle-school science and social-studies support, and specific fall 2026 implementation recommendations.

Superintendent Johnson's Update

Superintendent Johnson stated that DRS was the only C-performing laboratory school in the state but was projected to move to a B school during the upcoming year. He credited greater teacher stability as one factor supporting improvement. He stated that secondary enrollment had declined, consistent with broader trends, while DRS projected overall enrollment growth. He also reported that nine teachers were working with nine University faculty members on research, with plans to expand this work.

School Grades by Level

Superintendent Johnson explained that laboratory schools are graded in totality rather than separately by elementary, middle, and high school for accountability purposes. He reported the internal status as elementary: C; middle: D; and high: B.

Chair Brown noted that high-school acceleration, dual enrollment, and graduation metrics contribute positively to the overall grade, while DRS remains below county and state peers in several core academic and learning-gain measures.

Postsecondary Outcomes

Superintendent Johnson reported that five students earned both an associate degree and high-school diploma in the prior year. No students earned an associate degree in the most recent graduating class, although a small number were expected in the coming year.

He reported that DRS operates a Future Center to support college and career planning. Fifteen students, approximately 36 percent of the graduating class, entered FAMU's IGNITE program; ten students, approximately 24 percent, entered FAMU directly; five students, approximately 12 percent, entered technical or career programs; and two students, approximately 6 percent, entered the Air Force. DRS also partners with Lively Technical College, including technical pathway opportunities in areas such as cosmetology and barbering.

Attendance, Truancy, and Chronic Absenteeism

Superintendent Johnson reported overall attendance of approximately 90.8 percent, above state and federal attendance benchmarks. He clarified that a displayed 70 percent figure was not intended to represent chronic absenteeism but rather an absence-contact or parent-notification measure, and stated that future reporting should more clearly label this measure. Approximately 35 percent of students were described as chronically absent.

Teacher Certification and Compliance

Superintendent Johnson reported that one certified social-studies teacher was teaching Spanish and was listed as out of field for Spanish K-12 while working toward Spanish certification. He also referenced an Embry-Riddle aerospace teacher working toward relevant certification. He stated that

teachers listed as out of field were generally progressing toward certification in the applicable assignment area.

College of Education and Internship Relationship

Superintendent Johnson stated that he did not have an exact intern count available but would provide it. He stated that the majority of student teachers at DRS come through the College of Education, more than half of DRS teachers may have come through the College of Education as undergraduate or graduate students, and DRS generally looks first to College of Education candidates in hiring. College of Education leadership added that most DRS teachers come from the College of Education, nearly all College of Education interns have some clinical or field experience at DRS, and the Candidate Empowerment Center and 240 Tutoring can support teachers needing certification assistance.

Additional Board Discussion

Chair Gibbons stated that aggregate school reporting is insufficient for intervention planning. He urged DRS to distinguish elementary, middle, and high-school performance so the Board can identify specific deficiencies, direct resources appropriately, and measure whether interventions improve results.

Board discussion emphasized elementary-school improvement as a priority because early learning establishes the long-term pipeline; a level-specific plan to move each school level toward A performance; resource allocation tied to a clear improvement strategy; an economic-impact model showing the long-term value of the DRS-to-FAMU pipeline; and early elementary investment as a potentially more cost-effective approach than later remediation. President Johnson stated that K-12 performance is directly connected to higher education outcomes and that the University has an obligation to ensure DRS becomes an A school. She emphasized that resources should be tied to a clear plan for addressing identified needs.

Chair Brown noted that a Committee member connected to Brownsville Academy could support early-literacy work. Brownsville Academy was described as having a strong early-reading program serving very young children.

Trustee White supported the Committee's work and asked the Committee to examine whether DRS has the appropriate model and structure to operate as a true developmental research school. He raised questions regarding whether the current model resembles a charter-school structure, the appropriate long-term funding and governance model, sustainability, and DRS's role as a feeder school to FAMU. Chair Brown responded that KPMG's work and the Committee's benchmarking would examine comparison models, funding models, governance structures, and sustainability options for future Board consideration.

Conclusion

The Special Committee on the Developmental Research School portion of the Board meeting concluded at approximately 2:06 p.m.

Archive Note: *These meeting notes were prepared from the Zoom meeting recording and transcript. Recording timestamps are included for reference and are not the official meeting time.*