

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20510

June 18, 2025

The University of Florida Board of Trustees  
226 Tigert Hall; PO Box 113150  
Gainesville, FL 32611-3150

Dear Trustee:

We want to thank you for your hard work on behalf of the University of Florida (UF). We have had the opportunity to work with many of you, and we know how committed you are to making UF the top university in the nation. We also want to specifically thank you for all you have done to protect Jewish students on campus following the atrocities of October 7<sup>th</sup>. UF led the nation in calling out antisemitism and standing up for Jewish students and we know that this Board has been vital in that effort.

In 2017, Florida became the number one state for higher education and many of you played a critical role in making that happen. We are so proud that Florida has continued to hold that top spot and that we were able to achieve that while holding the line on tuition to ensure we kept costs affordable for all families.

As the University of Florida embarks on its third presidential search in less than three years, we urge the Board to have a completely open and transparent search process. We believe an open process to the public that enables multiple candidates to be considered and interviewed is what led Florida to becoming the top state for higher education almost a decade ago.

While the new law that took effect in 2022 has merits, it seems that it is being abused by creating an unfair system that allows much of the selection process to be shielded from the public. It is our hope the Florida Legislature reviews how this law has been implemented and considers changes next year, but in the interim, we urge the following in the upcoming search process:

1. Under the existing law, the Board interview is the primary arena for the public to learn about the candidates. However, the law is being interpreted in such a way that it has created a system where only one candidate is often sent to our university boards to consider. We urge UF to change course in the upcoming search, and commit to multiple candidates being interviewed by the Board.

2. Under the existing law, portions of the process are now done privately, outside of the sunshine. However, it is still incumbent that the entire search process maximizes transparency, including thorough vetting that is provided in advance to the search committee long before any interviews take place. And once candidates are sent to the Board for interviews, all vetting and application materials should be posted online for the public to view before the meeting occurs.

Many of our state's university presidents are awarded salary packages over \$1 million, and the draft contract for Dr. Santa Ono was valued around \$3 million. Students, their families, and Florida taxpayers that help fund these compensation packages should have the opportunity to have a role in the selection process.

To be clear, we opposed the selection of Dr. Ono for two reasons.

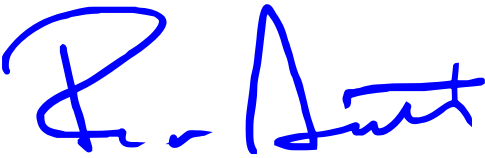
1. He failed to quickly and proactively stand up for Jewish students at the University of Michigan. UF has set a gold standard for fighting antisemitism and protecting Jewish students, and its leadership must follow suit. Ono allowing an illegal, pro-terrorist encampment to take over the University of Michigan campus for nearly a month, putting Jewish students in danger and failing to uphold even the most basic standards of leadership was a complete disqualifier to us.

2. His long history of statements in support of DEI initiatives, record of embracing divisive and radical DEI policies showed that he is willing to appease and prioritize far-left activists over ensuring students are protected and receive a quality education that prepares them for a job.

We firmly believe that if the University of Florida had an open and transparent search and interview process, the concerns we all expressed, along with those that were brought up by the public and the Board of Governors, would have been dealt with long before this month's vote.

It is our hope that the next president of the University of Florida can continue to propel our flagship university to number one while standing for what's right - especially in the wake of a terrifying rise of antisemitic rhetoric on college campuses across our nation.

Go Gators,



Rick Scott  
United States Senator



Byron Donalds  
United States Congressman



Greg Steube  
United States Congressman