

Table of Contents

UFF Feb 14 Senate Minutes Final Draft	2
25-26 Approved Budget - YTD updated 2.12.26	11
HELU Update Feb 2026	13

United Faculty of Florida
Final Proceeding of the Spring Senate 2026 Meeting
February 14, 2026
Virtually on Zoom

Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 am by Robert Cassanello, President, United Faculty of Florida. Robert welcomed the attendees.

Credentials Report

Gregory McColm reported that 98 senators and 5 guests or staff were online at the time the meeting was called to order.

Adoption of the Standing and Special Rules

President Cassanello stated the rules had been sent out previously. Wendy Pogoda (FUSA/HC) moved to adopt the Standing and Special Rules, and Chasidy Hobbes (UWF) seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion carried.

Adoption of the Agenda (with flexibility)

President Cassanello stated the agenda had been previously sent out.

Dawn Witherspoon (UNF) moved to adopt the agenda with flexibility. Seconded by Chasidy Hobbes (UWF). No discussion. The motion was adopted by unanimous consent.

Approval of the September 2025 Minutes

President Cassanello stated the minutes had previously been sent out. Jassica Magnani (SPC) moved to approve the minutes of the September 2025 Senate meeting and Mike Finlayson (?) seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion carried.

Recognition of First-Time Senators

Chapter presidents were invited to introduce any first-time senators. Multiple Chapter Presidents were recognized and introduced first-time senators.

Introduction of the Steering Committee

Robert Cassanello introduced the steering committee members.

Introduction of the Parliamentarian

Robert Cassanello introduced Jeff Neurauter, who made a few comments.

UFF President's Address

President Cassanello addressed the body. Florida became the first “Right to Work” state in 1944, but Janus v. AFSCME extended “Right to Work” across the country. Organizations like the Freedom Foundation push for laws not meant to hobble us, but to eradicate us; for example, SB 1296 would require 50% of the employees in a bargaining unit to support certification, and would eliminate course releases. Such union-busting laws are intended to make our rights inaccessible.

Unions have been fighting for a long time, and we have to prepare our chapters for the fight. Members and non-members can see what is happening, but we have to convince them that democracy is the way to fight. We need to organize: each chapter must have an organizing plan, for it was not fear that drove chapters to 60% density, it was successful organizing plans. Reach out to those successful chapters.

Power comes from organizing and density. To build power, one must demonstrate power. And power comes from the grass roots: unions that survived “no-right-to-exist” laws in Wisconsin were those that organized from the grass roots and did not wait for national leadership. We must organize at the local level.

UFF Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Ghadami addressed the body. We face an existential threat in SB 1296; this bill may pass this year or next year, and its goal is to weaken or destroy us.

We cannot survive without density and growth. We have improved CMS and Action Builder and pursued funding opportunities. Our service people are the best in the business. We have more members than ever before, but we have to grow; everyone must stretch and work out of their comfort zone.

Standing Committee Reports

A. Contract Enforcement Chair Bruce Nissen, UFF Retired, addressed the body. Since September, it has been relatively quiet. There were three cases, two from UF and one from UNF. The cases involved issues like summer work for Performance Improvement Plans or using words like DEI in syllabi. All three cases were moved to arbitration.

B. Government Relations Chair Jonathan Fink, UWF, addressed the body. The union-busting bill appears stalled, and our lobbyist informs us that there are constitutional problems that could be the basis of litigation. A Guns on Campus bill has bipartisan support, so we are seeking to amend it. We are pushing graduate fee wavers and safety. The status of the budget item on New College taking over USF St. Petersburg is unclear. The UFF UNF site tracks bills.

C. Leadership, Equity, Inclusion, & Diversity Chair Elizabeth Key Reimer, HCC, addressed the body. We are pushing for recognition of Juneteenth and making a toolkit to share with chapters.

D. Membership Chair Jen Fulsider, FGCU, addressed the body. We need both density and leadership growth. We are training and developing materials for chapters, and we are working on data for chapters, e.g., using SharePoint to share materials.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports

A. Credentials and Elections Chair Deandre Poole, FAU, addressed the body. We are addressing concerns from the 2025 election. Our goal is to strengthen trust, and we are focusing on documentation concerns, strengthening procedures. Assessing options, and consider possible improvements. We have considered

online voting, but we must comply with federal, state, and local laws. We expect to do better in 2027.

B. Senate Planning Committee Chair Jeniah Jones, FSCJ, addressed the body.
We are reviewing comments to plan for the next Senate Meeting.

C. Work-to-Rule Committee Chair Mike Amato, UCF, addressed the body.
We are working on it.

At 11:09 am, President Cassanello declared a recess until 4:00 pm.

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 pm by President Cassanello. Robert reminded the body about the rules and how to be recognized.

Ad Hoc Committee Reports, continued

D. Higher Education Takeover Action Committee (HETAC) Chair, Chasidy Hobbs, UWF, addressed the body.

The committee hopes to join forces with Higher Education Labor United (HELU), but has not been particularly active

Credentials Report

Gregory McColm reported that 96 senators and 6 guests or staff were online at the time the meeting was called to order.

Bargaining Council Reports

A. Colleges, Jessica Magnani, SPC, addressed the body.

Not much is happening. The Tampa Bay Rays may build a stadium at HCC Dale Mabry. Some colleges are getting right wing board members. Pasco-Hernando State College was forced to abandon recognition language in collective bargaining.

B. Graduate Assistants United, Tessa Barber, addressed the body.

UFF GAU has won certification elections overwhelmingly. UFF UF GAU is at impasse with UF.

C. State University System, Robing Goodman, FSU, addressed the body.

The Bargaining Council will present a New Business Item. In bargaining, we are getting more leeway on parental leave but they are coming after nondiscrimination. UFF UF is at impasse over waivers, grievances (arbitration), and release time.

New Business

NBI 2026-1 UFF Website

Jessica Magnani, SPC, moved to adopt NBI 2026-1. Motion seconded. Motion: UFF will update and maintain the myuff.org website monthly, at a minimum, including keeping News, Issues & Actions, Legislative updates, chapter links and contracts current.

In discussion, there was a request for the rationale for the \$0 estimated cost, to which the Executive Director said that each staff works 37.5 hours a week and UFF cannot ask for more, but other than that cannot say more.

Motion to adopt NBI 2026-1 passed 86-2.

NBI 2026-2 Compare State Versus Local Option

Jessica Magnani, SPC, moved to adopt NBI 2026-2. Motion seconded. MOTION: UFF will form a committee made up of graduate assistant, college, and university members to investigate the feasibility and impact, including costs, benefits, and potential repercussions of moving to the local option structure under FEA. The preliminary report will be presented at the Fall 2026 Senate meeting, followed by a final report emailed to all Senators once completed.

In discussion, the President said he would select the committee in consultation with the Executive Committee. The question of what the “local option” is would be addressed by the committee.

Motion to adopt NBI 2026-2 passed 79-13.

NBI # 3 Sociology

Anne Barrett (FSU) moved to adopt NBI 2026-3 and seconded by Robin Goodman (FSU)

Whereas the Florida State University System Board of Governors, acting in their

capacity as a state-appointed body, created a sociology working group charged with determining how to teach Introduction to Sociology in “a way that conforms to public expectations and state law”;

Whereas this working group operated under the oversight of Board of Governors staffers, none of whom had graduate training in the field of sociology and, therefore, none of whom were qualified to make curricular decisions;

Whereas the Board of Governors constituted a committee including four Florida sociologists but denied them the opportunity for substantive input or the ability to make or vote upon final decisions;

Whereas one sociologist on the committee, a UFF member, was removed and subsequently suspended from his position after he was accused of teaching “gender ideology,” meaning that the committee was never an open space for discussion but one in which sociologists could be disciplined for arguing for inclusion of materials that meet disciplinary norms and standards;

Whereas no published textbook was deemed legal to teach in Florida in accordance with the Board of Governors’ overly broad interpretation of Florida Statutes 1007.25 and 1007.55, which, among other things, prohibit the teaching of “identity politics” and “theories that systemic racism, sexism, oppression, and privilege are inherent in the institutions of the United States”;

Whereas the working group has unilaterally created a censored textbook for use in teaching Introduction to Sociology in the State of Florida since there was no existing textbook that suited the Board of Governors;

Whereas the Board of Governors has issued a verbal directive ordering the usage of their censored textbook, which the Board of Governors-led work group created by removing more than 50 percent of an existing open-source textbook, excising entire chapters on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, among other topics (none of which are out of compliance with the aforementioned Florida Statutes), offering little explanation of any systemic forms of inequality;

Whereas there is no requirement that instructors use a prescribed textbook, let alone any textbook, in the State of Florida;

*Whereas the resultant textbook, out of compliance with the norms and teaching standards in the field of sociology, was not reviewed by a panel of experts but instead created under duress by a small working group at the behest of the Board of Governors,
the latter of whom made all final editorial decisions without any vote from working group participants on the final text;*

Whereas this would establish precedent for the state prohibiting the teaching of material in the classroom that is otherwise standard in a major academic field;

Whereas this would not only prohibit material but essentially require that certain materials be used by all instructors in the classroom, meaning that a state government is determining what cannot be taught, and conversely, providing a sole textbook, created by a government committee, as the only option for faculty who wish to remain compliant with the law;

Whereas the orders that faculty use this textbook were never communicated to faculty in written form but instead orally by Board of Governors staffers to campus provosts, from provosts to compliant department chairs, and from chairs to individual faculty members;

And whereas upon being asked for further clarification, no written directive or statement of potential sanctions for lack of compliance was provided,

We, the members of UFF hereby condemn this attempt for a government to impose a state-created curriculum, which threatens the ability of faculty to teach in line with current expertise in their field; we condemn the process through which this textbook was created and the spirit behind its creation, which is rooted in government censorship of free academic inquiry; we condemn anticipatory compliance on the part of both campus provosts and department chairs, who communicated these orders without a written directive to do so; and we condemn the atmosphere of fear created by the Board of Governors' actions, none of which follow from a reading of Florida Statutes 1007.25 and/or 1007.55.

We hereby reaffirm our commitment to the defense of academic freedom and our opposition to all attempts by governments to prohibit materials from being taught and to dictate materials that must be taught.

We hereby reaffirm the importance of demanding written directives before engaging in actions that compromise academic freedom, and affirm that by educating instructors on this issue, we can guard against the debasement of our institutions through acts of anticipatory compliance.

We hereby commit our union to publicly defend all instructors who are disciplined for teaching according to their disciplinary expertise in Florida public university and college classrooms.

Greg McColm (USF) moved to amend by striking “the members of UFF” and inserting “the UFF Senate”. Seconded by Dawn Roth. Motion to amend passed 69 – 11.

John Woodward (FSCJ) moved to amend by inserting “we strongly condemn the removal of Phillip Wisely from the working group” after “a written directive to do so”. Seconded by Chasidy Hobbs (UWF). Discussion.

Mason Cash (UCF) moved to amend the amendment by striking “Phillip Wisely from the working group” and inserting “a sociology professor from the working group because of what the professor was accused of teaching”. Discussion. Motion to amend the amendment passed 73 – 15.

The Amendment failed 39 – 46.

Wendy Pogoda (FUSA/HC) moved to amend by striking “We, the UFF Senate” and inserting “UFF”. Seconded by Lynn Spencer (EFSC). Point of order challenged whether the amendment was in order. The motion to amend was ruled in order.

Caitlin Gille (PHSC) moved to close debate on all pending motions. Seconded by Robin Goodman (FSU). Motion to close debate passed 78 – 4.

The Amendment passed 77 – 12.

The motion to adopt NBI # 3 passed 86 – 5.

Good of the Order/ Announcements

Senators were recognized for some announcements.

Adjournment

President Cassanello declared the meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm.

DRAFT

COST CENTER 800

		25-26 Budgeted Amount	25-26 Actual YTD
	Local Income		
8000	UFF Dues - Local (Received)	580,295.00	334,995.20
8010	FEA Local Assistance	275,000.00	92,180.00
8011	Interest Income	1,000.00	
8015	Other Income	185,000.00	35,988.94
8023	Org Project - National Support	375,000.00	83,221.47
8024	Cost Center Funds Reallocation	N/A	N/A
	Total Local Income:	1,416,295.00	546,385.61

Local Expenses

	Governance		
8051	Presidents Salary & Fringes	115,000.00	66,774.12
8052	Presidents Travel & Expenses	10,000.00	5,021.71
8032	VP Summer Stipend	15,000.00	
8040	UFF Senate	120,000.00	125,770.62
8042	UFF Committees	1,000.00	
8065	Government Relations	1,000.00	
8043	NEA RA Delegates	10,000.00	
8045	FEA DA Delegates	7,500.00	11,229.14
8056	National Conferences (Leadership Development)	6,000.00	
8058	FL AFL-CIO Convention	10,000.00	2,580.35
8059	AFT Biennial Convention	10,000.00	
	Total Governance Expenses:	305,500.00	211,375.94

	Communications		
8047	Publications - Print & Electronic	5,000.00	2,558.80
8048	Rep Elections/Member Promos	0.00	0.00
	Total Communications Expenses:	5,000.00	2,558.80

	Programs & Projects		
8029	UFF Fellows Program	275,000.00	90,726.75
8049	Chapter Organizing Support	18,000.00	
8050	GAU Organizing Support	8,000.00	2,002.89
8060	Contract Enforcement	36,000.00	17,767.72
8070	Chapter Rebates	600,000.00	
8073	Legal Contingency	40,000.00	
	Total Programs & Projects Expenses:	977,000.00	110,497.36

	Statewide Operations		
8033	Accounting & Audit Fees	23,000.00	13,750.00
8035	Duplicating	2,500.00	1,095.78
8036	Office Supplies & Expenses	6,500.00	3,980.81
8037	Telephone	7,000.00	4,117.98
8038	Postage & Mailing	4,000.00	1,436.36
8053	Rent	45,600.00	18,985.55
8054	Filing Fees (PERC, etc)	250.00	60.00
8055	Solidarity Fund	14,000.00	600.00
8074	UFF ADP Cost & Associated Fees	4,500.00	938.90
8057	Banking Fees	2,000.00	2,155.00
8071	Community Contribution Fund	0.00	
8072	PERC Elections	10,000.00	6,115.27
	Total Statewide Operations:	119,350.00	53,235.65

Total Local Expenses:	\$	1,406,850.00	\$	336,592.03
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FEA controls this Cost Center; This is for informational purposes only

COST CENTER 801

		25-26 Budgeted Amount	25-26 Actual YTD
	Service Unit Income		
8001	UFF Dues - Service Unit (Received)	1,544,501.00	736,127.61
8002	UFF - Affiliate Dues (Received)	3,970,978.25	489,360.49
8009	FEA Service Unit Grants	250,000.00	125,000.00
8015	Other Income	24,000.00	7,377.43
	Total Service Unit Revenue:	\$ 5,789,479.25	1,357,865.53

	Service Unit Expenses:		
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	Staffing Costs:		
8034	Staff Salaries & Fringes	1,725,000.00	455,334.36
8039	Staff Travel & Expenses	93,501.00	17,966.22
	Total Field Services:	\$ 1,818,501.00	355,277.34

	Affiliate Payments:		
8002	Payments to our Affiliates	\$ 3,970,978.25	1,343,081.77

	Total Service Unit Expenses YTD:	\$ 5,789,479.25	1,698,359.11
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HELU is growing to meet the challenges. A short update from UFF Senator and HELU Delegate Mike Budd, UFF-Retired Chapter

Introduction

Organized faculty and other campus workers (student workers, postdocs, staff) in the U.S. are fragmented. We are represented by more than a dozen national unions, most of whose members are not faculty, campus workers or even teachers. Until HELU started to build a higher ed labor movement in 2021, the members of these disparate unions didn't coordinate or talk to one another very much or organize the collective voices of higher ed workers to build regional and national power and counter the power of our bosses on major issues in higher education. As the labor movement has learned over decades, organizing workers who do similar kinds of work in the same sector has important advantages for all unions.

In the last few years, directed by major conservative institutions like the Heritage Foundation, hostile state politicians like Ron DeSantis have attacked higher education and our unions on multiple fronts. And in 2025 the second Trump administration spread and escalated these attacks across the federal government as well. Attacks on tenure, job security, academic freedom and other working conditions have become pervasive. And for organized and unorganized faculty and other campus workers, the building of a higher ed labor movement through HELU has become urgent.

Update

In five years, HELU has grown to more than [fifty local unions](#) and other labor organizations, large and small, that pay solidarity pledges based on their yearly budgets. In addition, HELU has unexpectedly attracted a rapidly growing number of often isolated individual [at large members](#), who want to join a supportive organization that works to organize campus workers wall to wall and coast to coast.

Starting with a minimal budget and volunteers with lots of organizing experience in our own higher ed unions, HELU has grown into a multifaceted organization mostly working through multiple committees. But given the constant attacks, HELU, like our member unions, finds its resources (4 full time, 1 part time staff) stretched. HELU committees focus on outreach to more higher ed unions; media and communication; reforming state and national higher ed policies through politics; budget and finance; national organizing; and contingency, perhaps the biggest structural problem that divides faculty and other campus workers.

For example, I'm active on the Media Communications Committee, which produces a growing monthly newsletter full of news, updates and solidarity asks about all aspects of higher ed labor around the country. (Many articles can be found in the [HELU blog](#).) In the January issue I have [an article](#) about AAUP and UFF's opposition to the recent attempt by southern politicians like Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, supported by Trump's Education Department, to replace our independent accreditor, SACS, the "Southern Association," with either the Commission for Public Higher Education (CPHE) or the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), that conservative politicians can control, both new accreditors in different ways bad news for academic freedom in the south. The campaign to sustain independent, nonpolitical higher ed accreditation in the states of the Old Confederacy is led by AAUP, while UFF's participation is facilitated by HELU. Growing in both size and organizing strength as faculty in formerly sleepy AAUP chapters recognize the need for unionization and action, AAUP is led by President Todd Wolfson (Rutgers) and Executive Director Mia McIver (UCLA), both former HELU leaders. The accreditation issue has become one of the ways in which HELU and AAUP increasingly cooperate as challenges to higher ed labor proliferate.

I'm also active on the Contingency Task Force, which continues to organize a series of dynamic online events on multiple aspects of what is arguably the central challenge to organizing higher ed faculty, the steady replacement over more than fifty years of tenured and tenure track faculty with contingent, especially part time faculty. These part time or adjunct faculty, though well qualified, excellent teachers, find their working conditions and pay so degraded and their status so marginal (routinely humiliating and unsustainable) within their institutions that it becomes more and more difficult to maintain student learning conditions and professional standards given the way they are treated.

A new HELU project: On January 9 and 10, 2026, HELU's National Coordinated Organizing Committee sponsored HELU's first-ever "Northeast Regional Bargaining Summit," where more than 150 delegates representing 55 union locals from the nine states of the Northeast – Pennsylvania to Maine – gathered in Amherst, MA. The summit aimed to build a sense of community and solidarity, to develop delegates' understandings of the current state of higher education collective bargaining agreements, and to build unity around shared goals for a cross-state collective bargaining strategy to raise the floor for workers across the region. Since the Northeast is one of the more well-organized regions for the developing higher ed labor movement, the delegates

were able to focus on and coordinate specific contract issues like compensation, job security (including a special focus on contingency), immigrant workers' issues, workload, benefits, anti-discrimination and Trans issues. The Summit concluded with the assembled delegates editing what they called the "Amherst Compact," a statement of shared bargaining priorities, which now will go back to the participating locals for discussion and consideration. Delegates agreed to call a follow-up meeting to move forward discussions for shared organizing strategies in March 2026.

These are only a few of HELU's projects in recent months. You can see how one of the dimensions in which HELU is organizing now, regional organizing around regional priorities, is emerging. Where higher ed organizers in the Northeast need one kind of organizing support, those in the south need something very different.

Become a HELU Delegate! Join a HELU Committee!

If you're a UFF Senator, or a UFF member who is ready to get more involved, you're invited to run to become a HELU Delegate. The HELU General Assembly meets quarterly on Zoom to deliberate and decide on HELU priorities and policies. UFF currently has four active HELU delegates (Robert Cassanello, Katie Rainwater, Jessica Magnani and Mike Budd), with one delegate position unfilled. You can also join a HELU committee that matches your interests and expertise. Contact UFF President Robert Cassanello to nominate yourself or someone else (who has agreed to run) as a HELU Delegate, and Mike Budd (mbudd44@gmail.com) for more information. And the HELU site has lots of up to date information about the burgeoning higher ed labor movement.