



Message from *Board of Trustees*

April 24, 2025

To the Jacksonville University Community:

As members of the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees, we write today with a unified voice of support for President Tim Cost and his leadership during this pivotal time in our university's history. This University Administration and this Board is wholly focused on the success of our students – today, tomorrow and into the future.

In a period when higher education institutions across the country are facing significant challenges—shifting demographics, rising costs, and evolving student and workforce expectations—Jacksonville University is taking intentional, strategic steps to ensure long-term strength and sustainability. We fully and unanimously support the *Future Focused* initiative and the vision it represents.

We also recognize that change is never easy, especially when it affects beloved academic programs and trusted colleagues, and we do not take that lightly. We hear and respect the voices of our students, faculty, alumni, and staff, and we are committed to continuing an open and respectful dialogue as our university moves forward.

As Trustees, we want to clarify some of the questions and concerns that have emerged, and reaffirm our commitment to transparency, shared governance, and responsible leadership.

- **Faculty played a central role** in the evaluation process, which was conducted in full compliance with university bylaws. The *Academic Financial Task Force*—composed of both tenured and non-tenured faculty members—provided extensive analysis and recommendations. Their work directly shaped the plan ultimately brought to the Board for approval. The President and Provost met with the full faculty body at their monthly assembly for the past six months, openly discussing the challenges facing higher education nationally, statewide and locally and

consistently communicated that difficult decisions around program alignment are necessary.

- **The Stein College is not being eliminated.** Rather, our traditional College of Arts and Sciences will join the College of Fine Arts and Humanities to create a new, unified Linda Berry Stein College of Arts and Sciences, with new opportunities for collaboration and cross-disciplinary study.
- **The arts remain a vital part of JU's academic life.** Programs in dance, animation, film, ceramics, illustration, photography, game design, and others will continue, contributing to the creative energy and vibrancy of our campus.
- **Jacksonville University remains committed to a liberal arts education.** Our core curriculum will continue in its current form to cultivate the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are hallmarks of a liberal arts education.
- **Every impacted student has a clear path to graduation.** Most students will continue on their original path to a degree from JU. A small number will need to consider a related degree or shift from a BFA to a BA. Each student is receiving personalized support through a dedicated Care Team to help them navigate their options.
- **All student scholarships will be honored.** Every student at Jacksonville University, in every program, will continue to receive the scholarships they currently have.
- **Jacksonville University remains fully accredited** by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the university's accreditation is effective for the 10-year period 2023-2033. JU continues to work closely with SACSCOC, as we have always done. The university has informed our accreditors of the recently announced plans to realign our academic offerings to support long-term financial stability.
- **Jacksonville University remains on a strong, stable trajectory.** Smart planning requires periods of strategic refinement and recalibration. In fact, it is our responsibility to continually evaluate how best to achieve our mission for the benefit of our students.

We are proud of the incredible progress JU has made under President Cost's leadership—from launching the region's first law school and medical school, to investing in high-demand fields like cybersecurity, nursing, aviation, finance, marine science and more. These achievements were not accidental. They reflect careful planning, sound stewardship, and a relentless focus on student success.

We also recognize and thank the faculty for their contributions to these conversations. Members of our Executive Committee will make themselves available to meet with faculty to discuss their concerns. Shared governance is an essential part of the academic enterprise, and we remain committed to fostering trust, collaboration, and constructive engagement with all members of the JU community.

Jacksonville University is a remarkable institution with a proud legacy and a promising future. Our support for President Cost is unwavering, and we believe he is exactly the leader JU needs at this moment to ensure we continue to evolve, thrive, and deliver on our mission.

Sincerely,

The Executive Committee of the Jacksonville University Board of Trustees

Matt Kane, JU Class of 2001, *Chairman*

John Miller, *Vice Chairman*

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