

From: ConcernedArgonaut <concernedargonaut@proton.me>
Sent: Monday, January 5, 2026 7:13 PM
To: aross1@uwf.edu <ross1@uwf.edu>; rmoya@uwf.edu <rmoya@uwf.edu>;
Dbaker@heronsforest.com <Dbaker@heronsforest.com>; pbailey@uwf.edu
<pbailey@uwf.edu>; epfleming@pensacolalaw.com <epfleming@pensacolalaw.com>;
Paul.hsu@hsu-foundation.org <Paul.hsu@hsu-foundation.org>; akissel@uwf.edu
<akissel@uwf.edu>; Cyoung2@uwf.edu <Cyoung2@uwf.edu>; Focushawk@gmail.com
<Focushawk@gmail.com>; hriddell@uwf.edu <hriddell@uwf.edu>; sgapres@uwf.edu
<sgapres@uwf.edu>; zsmith@uwf.edu <zsmith@uwf.edu>; rmathews@uwf.edu
<rmathews@uwf.edu>; kishane@kjpcounsel.com <kishane@kjpcounsel.com>;
JaniceG@santarosa.fl.gov <JaniceG@santarosa.fl.gov>
Subject: BOT meeting comment

Dear UWF Trustees. I am submitting the following comment on the confirmation of Manny Diaz Jr as a sole candidate for our next president anonymously, on behalf of myself and many UWF employees that are too afraid to speak out about this issue for fear of retribution. We humbly ask that one of you read this comment for the record at the BOT meeting, it is under 3 minutes.

Trustees, I would like to first remind you that your primary role as Trustees is to ensure fiduciary responsibility of UWF.

Zack Smith, chair of the Presidential Search Committee has claimed that Diaz is “uniquely qualified” to serve as our president. So much so that he is comfortable violating BOG 1.002 and sending only 1 (from 84) candidates for you to consider as our next President (using a loophole in the law that was not meant to allow this). This is extremely troubling for several reasons:

1. Under Diaz’s leadership the Florida DOE mismanaged hundreds of millions of dollars of state funds that were meant to support the school voucher program. This debacle is so bad that Senator Gaetz has introduced a bill to try to fix the issue and save public schools. Add this to Diaz’s deep connections to the Florida charter school industry (including Academica which oversees Doral College where Diaz previously worked AND Somerset Academy that will be running the UWF charter school) and the fact that Diaz’s first project was to bring a charter school to UWF, is disturbing and should be investigated for a conflict of interest, or worse.
2. Zack Smith serves on the judicial nominating committee and is, therefore, well aware of the fact that any judge applying for a position is immediately disqualified if they have ever filed for bankruptcy. This is despite the fact they do not have the health of a university, with a roughly \$180 million dollar budget, under their responsibility. Not only did Diaz mismanaged state funds, but he has also filed for personal bankruptcy..
3. If 84 candidates apply for a position and only 1 is worthy of consideration, that is considered a failed search and needs to be rerun. If there were other qualified candidates, the question is, why is Smith putting forward only 1 for consideration? Claiming that it is not fair to other worthy candidates to put forward more than 1 name for you to consider “for fear of them losing their current jobs” is absurd. The

candidates knew the risk if they were considered a final candidate and applied anyhow. This also supports the theory that there was never going to be more than 1 candidate considered.

We strongly urge you to fulfill your fiduciary responsibility to UWF and consider more qualified and less risky candidates for our President. We deserve better.