

MEETING MINUTES | MARCH 9, 2016

SUNY Empire State College
2 Union Ave.
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866



MEMBERS PRESENT:

James Lytle, Council Chairman
Anthony Esposito
Lori Jiava
Patricia Salkin, via telephone
Lewis Trippett
Daniel Wall
Linda Weiss

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

Merodie Hancock, President
Samuel Conn, Interim Executive Vice President for Information Technology Services and Administration
Shelley Dixon, Acting Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs
Mitchell Nesler, Vice President for Decision Support
Alfred Ntoko, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs
Mary Caroline Powers, Vice President for Communications and Government Relations

SENATE REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT:

Thalia MacMillan, Senate Vice Chairwoman

I. COUNCIL BUSINESS

A. Minutes Review and Approval

Minutes from the Jan. 13, 2016 meeting were approved by voice vote.

II. SENATE REPORT

Thalia MacMillan, vice chairwoman of college Senate, reported to the council members on recent Senate activities, providing a report included in the meeting materials.

She highlighted information about the Applied Learning Initiative from SUNY, which presents an interesting question: What counts as applied learning? MacMillan also is chair of the governance committee, which currently is looking at how governance occurs at the college and also how it may need to change as the college's organizational structure changes, to ensure all voices can be heard.

Senate members have given their approval of several certificates and programs, including the graduate-level certificate in marketing analytics. An upcoming policy retreat will offer a chance for Senate members to discuss governance restructuring and curriculum issues that arise.

James Lytle asked about the potential of future interaction among the College Council and Senate members and MacMillan said that it would be welcomed.

III. ACT REPORT

G. Angela Henry, immediate past president of ACT, was unable to attend the meeting, so James Lytle delivered the ACT report in her stead. A written report was provided in the meeting materials that detailed ACT business, including the upcoming meeting that SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher will be attending.

IV. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Merodie Hancock reported that the college is seeing a lot of activity and change with the implementation of ESC 2.0, with key positions being filled and restructuring taking place.

A year ago, two online degree proposals were sent to SUNY and one was approved to move forward: an online Doctor of Education degree. The degree plan must be approved at multiple stages, but if it is successful, this degree will be the first doctorate that Empire State College offers.

To advance in the process, the college must work to build out not only the program but also the policies and procedures surrounding the doctoral-level offering, showing that the college has the resources needed. Currently, no public institutions in the state of New York are offering an online doctorate, so this presents a great opportunity for the college to fill that void. The degree is well aligned with the college's call to be innovative and to serve the needs of its surrounding communities.

The target population for the Doctor of Education is the "teacher leader," someone who would be involved in education at the administration level. A Doctor of Philosophy requires original research, whereas the focus of the Doctor of Education degree is centered on continued applied learning. This will suit the mission of the college by combining theoretical and practical approaches.

The college has re-engaged with SUNY in regards to Open SUNY; in order to work best as a system, it is important to recognize the strengths that each college has to offer the Open SUNY initiative. The best results of this endeavor for Empire State College will come when it can find its place within the larger picture.

Empire State College is working with a set of goals set forth by the SUNY Excels initiative, as it was engineered by Chancellor Zimpher. Hancock explained that she will seek input from a variety of sources, including some College Council members, to review the goals that have been set for the college in the scope of SUNY Excels. The chancellor will meet with college representatives and they will be given the opportunity to explore if the college is aligned with the SUNY mission.

The 2016 All College Conference will be taking place March 22-24, bringing faculty and staff together from across the college. The details of the restructuring have been shared, but this gives everyone a chance to discuss the initiative.

The SUNY Board of Trustees has worked to install chief diversity officers on all SUNY campuses to serve minority students better. This is important for Empire State College, as diversity, as defined by SUNY, includes not only ethnic minority groups, but also transfer, military and returning students, making up over 99 percent of the college's student population. Employees have been asked to think of

ways to help improve the experiences of all students, as academic performance varies greatly among different student groups at the college. With the focus directed at leveraging the curriculum and a more purposeful valuing of diversity, a task force has been created to ensure a high level of success among minority and majority students alike by looking at academics, student life and recruitment.

Commencement ceremonies will begin in New York in June; council members are invited to attend and participate in any that they are able. This year will be the second in which graduates are openly encouraged to attend a ceremony in the location of their choosing from the list of ceremonies being conducted to better suit their individual needs and make the graduation experience more accessible.

V. DISCUSSION TOPIC: NEW ACADEMIC PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

A. Introduction

Hancock noted that while the topic of new academic program development was touched upon during the last council meeting, she wanted staff to go into further depth on the overall process. New academic programs are being considered based on the resources that already exist at the college to be able to offer as much as possible to students in an efficient way.

B. Exploration of How Academic Affairs Program Ideas Evolve

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Alfred Ntoko reported on the evolution of program ideas through Academic Affairs, citing several sources for the ideas themselves, including faculty members who take note of academic trends and partners of the college that provide insight into where there is the biggest need and students, whether directly or through the work of recruiters. The college also identifies areas of need by referring to statistics released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and watching areas of focus for grant competitions by SUNY.

Ntoko said that the college will work by observing a demographic and striving to fill the needs of that demographic within a program when possible. The market demands reveal the important areas for future development – for example the migration of Hispanic individuals to Nassau County – is there a way that the college can provide learning opportunities and serve the needs of that community?

C. Research and Market Testing of New Program Proposals

Vice President for Decision Support Mitchell Nesler spoke about how data gathering has changed in higher education and addressed the methods of the market research that the college undertakes. In order to gather the most useful information, the needs of interested people are assessed. By looking at areas that show projected job growth in the next 10 years as supported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and keeping in mind what competitors may exist, the college can understand the skills and academic gaps that may exist in graduates entering the job market.

Nesler reviewed the coding and research that inform the process of program development for the college, showing the detailed and customized data that can be gathered based on variables such as region, salary, program type and degree requirement for education and jobs.

Hancock added that while the methods described by Nesler seem complicated, it's necessary to be analytical and informed when prioritizing investments.

Nesler demonstrated the need for growth in the downstate region. The college had applied for a grant to expand in New York City, but ultimately was denied the funding. This, however, continues to be an area of interest.

In some higher learning institutions, the focus is put on giving students an “education” rather than teaching a profession, but Empire State College strives to do both. Providing access for students means creating education building blocks – helping students reach current goals and keeping doors open to achieve additional goals in the future.

D. Program Proposal and Approval Process

Acting Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs Shelley Dixon spoke about the process of program approval and the importance of a connection between faculty and the Decision Support staff to enable the college to build its programs based on the best information available. An approval process already exists within SUNY, but Empire State College needs to maintain its own individualized process through governance as structure and offerings change.

At the certificate level, approvals are able to go through internally and SUNY fairly quickly, as there is no requirement for a 30-day posting with sister colleges in the state. A concept proposal typically comes from faculty members, whether they've come up with it themselves or they've been asked to develop it, and they run that proposal by other faculty members and then either the undergraduate or graduate committee to give input and adjust when needed. At that point, the provost is brought in to give approval to move forward. Certificates are designed to fit into a degree program and must undergo a full build out before being submitted for governance approval by the Senate and approval by President Hancock and Provost Ntoko. At that point, the program proposal is sent to SUNY to be sent through to the Education Department. Typically this process takes one year to complete, whereas approval for a full degree takes up to two years.

The Doctor of Education began with the concept 18 months ago, and did receive some pushback from other schools. This process is a bit longer because approval is required before the program can be built to eventually be approved and launched.

The typical degree-approval process includes consulting with external faculty reviewers, which includes an on-site visit and many questions to be answered before going to SUNY to complete the process. However, because the Doctor of Education program is at a level that Empire State College has not offered before, the additional vetting by reviewers and SUNY will take at least another year. The review will involve the Education Department canvassing other institutions in state for approval, and then it goes on to the governor and ultimately to Middle States Association accrediting agency.

Certificates are very low risk for the college, because they are created by taking existing courses and using them to form a cohesive offering. Graduate-level certificates tend to serve as professional development tools, often for people who already have degrees but need advancement in a specific area. The undergraduate certificates are newer for the college, and will be developed with a closer connection to the demands of the workforce, likely serving students as milestones toward a degree.

Public colleges all face a slower approval process than private colleges. This situation holds the potential to present the problem of losing out on opportunities because the private colleges are simply able to complete their approvals faster and first. At the same time, SUNY institutions represent such a large portion of colleges in New York state that once their approval is granted, the proposed program has the

support of 64 colleges. Out-of-state institutions offering online programs to New York state students do have to gain permission to operate in the state, but the common definition of physical presence can vary from state to state.

E. Launch and Success Measurements

Nesler concluded the presentation, saying that Empire State College needs to be clear in its self-evaluation to ensure targets are being met, and Dixon added that the college builds assessment plans into everything to achieve that.

Currently the college does not offer financial aid options for certificates, as the minimum for qualifying for aid is 15 credits because the required data collection cannot be achieved. However, as more certificate programs are developed and the success of those programs can be accurately measured through data collection, financial aid can be pursued.

While no program proposal has been fully denied, programs can be granted conditional approvals. This was the case with the Master of Arts in Teaching degree with a specialization in special education that was given approval on the condition that a specific person was hired for the program. When an idea for a program is turned down, it's typically in the idea stage and turned down by SUNY at the beginning.

The Doctor of Education will provide a stepping stone to more doctoral degrees, because the approval process will be much less intensive once the new policies and resources are outlined and approved this time around.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

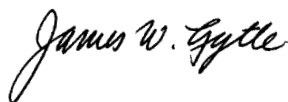
Council members discussed the upcoming meetings, including the potential of aligning a future meeting with the Empire State College Foundation Board.

The next College Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 4, 2016, at the Empire State College location at 21 British American Blvd. in Latham, and the September meeting will provide an opportunity for the council members to visit the college's new facility in Rochester.

Hancock invited council members to request future topics that could be covered in meetings. Anthony Esposito suggested some attention be given to the variety of publications that the college produces and Lytle mentioned the option of inviting faculty members and students to speak to the council.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



James W. Lytle
Chairman



Mary Caroline Powers
Vice President