

MEETING MINUTES | MAY 4, 2016

SUNY Empire State College at Latham
21 British American Blvd.
Latham, NY 12110



MEMBERS PRESENT:

James Lytle, Council Chairman
Anthony Esposito
G. Angela Henry
Lori Jiava, Student Representative, via telephone
Daniel Wall
Linda Weiss

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

Merodie Hancock, President
Sue Epstein, Assistant Professor
Samuel Conn, Interim Executive Vice President for Information Technology Services and Administration
Alfred Ntoko, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs
Mary Caroline Powers, Vice President for Communications and Government Relations
Clayton Steen, Vice President for Enrollment Management

SENATE REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT:

Mary Mawn, Senate Chairwoman

I. COUNCIL BUSINESS

A. Minutes Review and Approval

James Lytle welcomed the council members and acknowledged that Lori Jiava, student representative, was nearing the end of her term of service to the council. Council members congratulated Jiava on the completion of her degree work with the college and moved to pass a resolution to acknowledge her service to the council. The resolution was approved.

The minutes from the March 9, 2016, meeting were approved by voice vote.

II. SENATE REPORT

Mary Mawn, college Senate chairwoman, reported on Senate business, highlighting the recent work relating to the restructuring of the college specifically to maintain a level of engagement at the local level as the transition from a regional-based model to an academic discipline-based model occurs. At the Senate meeting, members discussed the transition from faculty chairs to governance chairs and the importance of local support during this transition.

At the All College Conference meeting in March, a proposal set forth by the committee of teaching and mentoring sought to amend the college bylaws. To keep in stride with the emphasis on a discipline-based structure, faculty on Senate will have greater representation. While faculty typically have a large governance presence at traditional colleges, Empire State College Senate has been more inclusive of all groups. The assembly approved this change at the All College Conference.

Governance will be changing to reflect the shifting structure in other ways as well. A committee has been formed to collect feedback and work through the necessary changes, to ultimately present at the upcoming Senate meeting. Bylaw changes will be proposed accordingly and a policy retreat was held to address changes needed by the collegewide course catalog. Mawn will be traveling to the SUNY-wide faculty senate meeting, which takes place three times a year.

At this time, G. Angela Henry joined the meeting.

III. ACT REPORT

G. Angela Henry told the council members about a conference call between ACT members and SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher regarding the procedures of presidential searches. Those who joined in discussed possible ways to facilitate the search process for campus staff and to alleviate some of the costs incurred during the search. Meeting participants also discussed the highly qualified candidates who are not chosen but remain as people of interest – some candidates who ultimately are not chosen for the position they are seeking are still very qualified for the field, and would be considered in the future for other positions as they open. She described this as an internal employee recruitment resource where resumes and notes could be kept and shared across the SUNY system to make the most of their search processes. More meetings will be held to discuss this subject further.

The annual ACT conference is taking place this fall in Fairport, N.Y., near Rochester. Survey results from last year's conference were used to inform the planning process this year, and the planning committee is still working to set the agenda for this year's conference. Lytle suggested that ACT contact the governor's office to invite a representative to speak to the difficulty that college councils across the SUNY system have experienced in appointing new members as their term dates expire.

IV. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Merodie Hancock addressed the difficulty of a presidential search from a candidate's perspective: SUNY conducts open searches that reveal candidates at the stage that they are brought in for "campus" visits and presentations, which often dissuades potential candidates who feel they might be putting themselves at risk at their home institutions as it is learned they are considering external positions. This means that many applicants are individuals just starting out in their careers at that level of higher education leadership. The approval process for a hire can also be time consuming, and risks losing a candidate to another offer.

The broad restructuring of the college will soon be complete, as ESC 2.0 comes to a close, with all major changes in place by Sept. 1. Once this work is done, the college will be able to move forward with strategic planning. The search for assistant vice president for enrollment management is still ongoing, as this position will be key to the college moving forward and the individual filling the role will need to be exceptionally well suited for the demands in marketing and other areas. The chief diversity officer for institutional equity and inclusion is also in progress. The position is an unfunded mandate from SUNY, but the college will be shaping the role to best serve students through embracing differences and Hancock believes it will ultimately better the college as a whole.

The Ban the Box initiative is an international campaign started to remove the checkbox on applications that asks whether the applicant has a criminal record. Groups at the college have become interested in pursuing a similar movement for college applications in SUNY. The efforts to further this campaign reached SUNY system and options are being explored, such as leaving "the box" off of applications, but keeping it for residential life disclosure applications. This would be helpful for convicted individuals trying to begin anew in society after having served their time. There are some restrictions that ex-offenders face when pursuing specific licensure programs, and the college will work with that in mind so that applicants are aware what their options are so no one goes down a path to a career that would ultimately be unattainable due to their past.

Chancellor Zimpher called an emergency meeting with the presidents and chief financial officers of SUNY to address the uncharacteristically low budget allocations from the state. The upcoming fiscal year is being discussed along with the next year, 2017-18, in hopes of being better prepared for whatever the future allocation may be. Hancock explained that the colleges have been reaching out to government contacts for support.

The college is moving forward with the development of health professions programs and the first doctoral offering.

A large scale construction project will soon be underway on Union Avenue in Saratoga Springs, next door to the college's Alumni House located at 28 Union Ave. A developer has purchased Moore Hall, known locally as the Pink Palace, with plans to tear down and rebuild residential units in its place. This project has caused some concern to the college, as the Alumni House is close to the property line where the demolition and construction will be happening and is fairly fragile, having been built in the late 1800s. The developer has assured the college that they his employees are very familiar with taking special care of historic buildings and they will continue to work with the college throughout the process.

Hancock announced the upcoming commencement ceremonies and encouraged council members to attend if possible.

Lytle asked if there was a way to characterize how alarming the budget is this year and Hancock answered that the current budget simply puts the college in a vulnerable position, requiring a cautious approach. The reserve funds are within the appropriate range, and some funds are even being used to invest in infrastructure, such as server space, that will benefit the college in the long run.

V. DISCUSSION TOPIC – OFFICE OF ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT RECRUITMENT PLANS

A. Introduction

Hancock explained that this portion of the meeting is part of the ongoing effort to keep the council members informed about college business and introduced Sue Epstein and Clayton Steen, who would be reporting.

B. Examples of Empire State College Recruitment Efforts

Assistant Professor Sue Epstein gave a presentation titled “Balancing Work Life and School for SUNY Empire Students.” Students typically come to the college already established in some type of work, and often have families as well, meaning that they must find a balance when trying to manage work, life and school. The way that these parts overlap can be positive or negative, depending on the student’s individual situation. Epstein explained that she looks into how things like confidence gained in the classroom can positively affect, or enrich, other parts of their lives, like their time at work.

The range of study modalities the college offers, including onsite meetings, online classes and prior learning assessment, allow students to choose what works best for them within their specific work-life-school balance needs. Degree planning also engages students to reflect on what they would like to achieve personally and professionally.

Epstein interviewed alumni about their experiences balancing these aspects of their lives and explained the value in these perspectives. Alumni were able to share stories about the difficulties and benefits they faced, as well as some examples when a difficulty resulting from school ultimately became a benefit.

C. Explanation of Higher Education’s Current Approach to Recruitment

Vice President for Enrollment Management Clayton Steen remarked about the special way the college treats students – at many institutions, when people attend, they are expected to be students first and all other things second, but that isn’t the way Empire State College operates. Enrollment Management is working to embed the idea of creating and maintaining the work-life-school balance in the marketing and recruitment plans.

A statewide open house will be held on June 28 at 5 p.m., which allows for more effective advertising and increased availability to prospective students. Following in the same vein of statewide availability, a statewide clubs and organizations fair is being planned for September and brown-bag lunch and learns throughout the college’s locations will be scheduled this coming fall. These events are all part of a larger culture shift in the college, which will ultimately better serve students. Feedback from faculty and staff from around the college has generally been positive.

A four-phase strategic enrollment plan is underway, with communication and collaboration as the key features to the plan's success. The phases were outline as follows: 1) data collection, 2) strategy development, 3) enrollment goals, especially important with the current financial state wherein the college will rely heavily on enrollment revenue, and, finally, 4) implementation of the plan including committee formation and re-evaluation of the plan.

A new customer relationship management, or CRM, system will be implemented to provide current data and inform college initiatives. Steen illustrated in his presentation how key performance indicators will be used to determine where funding goes, for example, and what areas require the most attention to be successful.

Some of the plans in place using the strategic enrollment planning as a guide include working to increase nursing student enrollment in some locations, increasing the summer coursework offerings and translating recruitment materials to Spanish.

The measures will eventually provide a richer image of how people are finding out about the college and how best to serve students during their time enrolled. Internal workflows will be streamlined to be more effective and current with marketing strategies.

Statewide channel recruitment presence will be represented by five territories: Buffalo, Alfred, Latham, Newburgh and Staten Island. These recruiters will work to establish and maintain relationships with local companies to explore partnerships. Once initial contact and interest is established, the Office of Academic Affairs will become involved to arrange for the actual academic plans and areas of study connections through the associate deans. This could eventually become a way to achieve statewide partnerships between the college and larger companies.

Empire State College will be working more carefully than ever to stay focused on keeping ahead of the competition.

Steen described current practices in determining return on investment and ways in which that will be improved. More strategic ad placement and more realistic calculations, such as not planning expenses for people simply inquiring about enrollment versus actual prospective students who are very likely to attend by "scoring leads."

This work is part of a plan to increase student retention from 68 to 74 percent within the next two years and have a better hold on the student life cycle as they move through their academic journey. Center for Distance Learning students, who have slightly lower retention rates, will be routed by zip code to local college locations with the idea that they will receive more direct care and tending, and have a stronger connection to their own experience.

The Student Information Center is working to conduct outreach to students who are near to graduation but need assistance in completing their education. The goal is to increase the percentage, which is currently at 42 percent, of students graduating within six years.

Nonmatriculated students have long flown under the radar in the Empire State College metrics, but their information will also be considered when Enrollment Management works toward a fuller picture of the college.

Henry applauded the use of data and the focus on customer service that these plans outline.

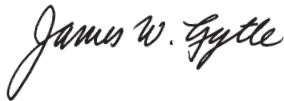
The average student age is on the decline, which is important to keep in mind as the tenured college faculty age and technological and academic advances speed ahead. The college must work to maintain relevancy and usefulness in these times.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The September College Council meeting is being planned to coincide with the open house of the new building located at 680 Westfall Road, Rochester, N.Y., scheduled to take place Sept. 14 and 15.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted



James W. Lytle
Chairman



Mary Caroline Powers
Vice President