

MEETING MINUTES | MAY 7, 2015

325 Hudson St.
New York, N.Y.



MEMBERS PRESENT:

James Lytle, Council Chairman
Tony Esposito
G. Angela Henry
Lori Jiava, student representative, via telephone
Patti Salkin
Lewis Trippett
Dan Wall

STAFF ATTENDING:

Merodie Hancock, President
Alfred Ntoko, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs
Mary Caroline Powers, Vice President for Communications and Government Relations
Paul Tucci, Vice President for Administration
Cynthia Ward, Dean of the Metropolitan Location (for welcome to members only)
Walter Williams, Vice President for Advancement

I. WELCOME

Cynthia Ward, dean of the Metropolitan Center, greeted the council and presented some background about the college's operation at 325 Hudson St. She said the center occupies two and a half floors in the building and serves 1,200 Empire State College students. There are four programs that function within the Hudson Street space: the Metropolitan Center, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies, and representatives of the Center for Distance Learning and the School for Graduate Studies.

II. COUNCIL BUSINESS

The meeting was called to order at 2:40 p.m.

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

III. REPORT OF THE SENATE CHAIRMAN

Senate Chairman Tom McElroy was unable to attend the meeting, but did submit a report on recent Empire State College Senate activities. The report was provided to the council members in the packet of meeting materials.

IV. REPORT OF THE ACT CHAIRWOMAN

Ms. Henry provided her report on to the members of the council in the materials packet. She highlighted the urgent need to appoint College Council members to the many councils that either do not have

enough members or have members serving in expired terms. ACT will be focusing on working with the governor's office to remedy this situation.

The ACT Fall Conference is planned for the weekend of Oct. 16, 2015, to take place at the Gideon Putnam in Saratoga Springs, N.Y. Panelists, including SUNY trustees and presidents, will be talking about the work that the councils do, as well as cooperative efforts between councils and foundation boards. ACT also will make an effort to encourage council members to send thank you notes to their legislators thanking them for the investment the state is making in SUNY. The SUNY trustees spent a day in Albany and met with more than 200 legislators to discuss the value and importance of SUNY for the state.

Mr. Lytle suggested that he and Ms. Henry meet with Director of State Operations Jim Malatras and newly appointed Secretary to the Governor Bill Mulrow to help them understand the dire nature of the college councils that continue to function without full membership. Ms. Powers said that the council has submitted two recommendations for members with supporting materials to the governor's office but is unable to move forward without approval.

V. OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION REPORT FROM VICE PRESIDENT PAUL TUCCI

Mr. Tucci reported on the current budget status to date and 2015-16 budget projections. Going into this year, targets were set 2 percent lower than last year's actual targets due to downward trends in enrollment in recent years. At the time of the meeting, Mr. Tucci explained, actual enrollment is still down about 2 percent, as expected. With new vice presidents coming in, the college has been spending less overall while they get settled in their offices and they are reviewing past investments and practices to determine how the college's money is best spent.

Approximately 90 percent of the allocation was spent – that, in addition to the revenue holding steady, will put the college \$5 million in the black for the current year. That additional amount will be added back into the reserves. The deficit reduction leave plan that was agreed to by the various unions represented at the college is in its third year. The DRL program might have contributed to an inflated savings for the college for the fiscal years 2013-14 and 2014-15, as it creates a type of "forced savings."

Looking forward to college operations for 2015-16, state support will be flat as part of the rational tuition plan that is in place. State funding has seen an overall decrease, from \$13.9 million to \$8.9 million since 2008-09 to 2014-15. Campus revenue in the form of tuition dollars has increased over the past few years, from \$36.5 million in 2008-09, to \$60.9 million in 2014-15. This increase is due to the 5-year rational tuition increase plan. Despite declining enrollments, the revenue has increased due to the rising tuition costs.

For the coming year, Mr. Tucci presented these possible enrollment scenarios: a 2 percent drop in enrollment, no increase in enrollment, and a 2 percent increase in enrollment. Even at a 2 percent drop in enrollment, the college will still be taking in \$2 million, due to the tuition increase, while a flat enrollment will bring in \$3.7 million, and a 2 percent increase will bring in \$5.3 million.

A proposal to increase the per-term technology fee has been put forth to the SUNY Board of Trustees to raise it from \$175 to \$185. With the proposed increase, the fee would still be below the SUNY-wide average for students, but would result in an additional \$300,000 for the college. All broad-based fees, like the technology fee, must be submitted for approval to the SUNY Board of Trustees and cannot change without that approval.

The council members discussed the raise in tuition, specifically the out-of-state tuition increase, and whether or not it could account for the decrease of enrollment numbers. Ms. Henry added that because of her work with ACT, she has witnessed the conversation at the SUNY Board of Trustee meetings about improving rates for students in New York's border states as well as bordering Canadian provinces. For Empire State College, this would mean better rates for online students especially.

Mandated costs will account for \$2 million in expenses for the college, which includes contractual collective bargaining agreements.

The students attending the college who receive TAP must be considered, as the current maximum TAP award is capped at \$5,000 and tuition now exceeds that amount. The college will be putting forth \$400,000 to bridge the gap between the maximum TAP allowed and rising tuition costs. SUNY is working to level the playing field across all SUNY campuses with the TAP allocation as well, though Empire State College is still paying in more than others.

The budget request process for 2015-16 is coming to a close; with limited funding, requests must be carefully considered before being fulfilled. The question facing the administration is how much of the funding for the transitional ESC 2.0 year will be taken from the reserves. The reserves must remain within 10 to 25 percent of the maximum budget to satisfy SUNY requirements and the college is currently holding steady at the lower end of that range.

The guiding force behind ESC 2.0 is the improvement of student success along with the creation of a more sustainable business model that encourages growth in enrollments. One of the elements of ESC 2.0 is a reduction in hiring new staff and faculty by working with those who are already with the college to realize their potential and fill any voids in staffing. This would serve the college by showcasing the talent that already exists here and by avoiding using budget allocations for unnecessary hires.

A small marketing budget in the past could have contributed to low enrollments, as a spike in enrollments could be seen as the marketing budget was strengthened. However, the students gained by the increased budget were not retained and the leads that were paid for were not pursued to their fullest. To avoid a similar misstep in the future, the college will explore ways to ensure the budget is spent as effectively as possible. Vice President for Information Technology Services Sam Conn will be working on this endeavor, along with Ms. Powers, who is working specifically with the recruiting staff. As part of a group effort, they will work to find the best way to invest money in recruitment and marketing.

Dr. Hancock said that the retention level at the college is approximately 40 percent for a six-year span, which is better than the college's competitors, but could be improved. The retention of minority students at the college is much worse, at about 20 percent over a six-year span. SUNY has been working to place chief diversity officers to address this and other issues at each of their 64 institutions. For Empire State College, Ms. Powers, with her experience and knowledge in the subject from her past role as affirmative action officer, will be investigating these areas. The search for the vice president for enrollment management is still underway, but when the new vice president begins, he or she will continue to work to bring the elements of enrollment and retention together.

Mr. Lytle remarked on the motivation required for nontraditional students to work their way through their studies and to achieve their goals. Dr. Hancock said that mentors at the college are a big part of student success, and looking into the faculty roles is one of the many ways that they hope to find to increase retention. Some faculty are more enthusiastic about mentoring, while others would rather

focus on teaching. If there was a way to give faculty members more distinctive roles that suit their strengths and provide the best guidance for students through their coursework, everyone would benefit.

A marketing firm will be working to redesign the college's website in a way that caters to the student specifically before anyone else. With the current design and function, no matter how much money is spent to drive traffic to the website, once people get there, navigating and completing tasks can be frustrating. The goal will be to create a website that is accessible and functional for prospective and current students.

VI. PROVOST'S REPORT FROM DR. ALFRED NTOKO

Dr. Ntoko discussed the progress of ESC 2.0 undertakings for 2014-15, which include filling current vacancies in the administration and increasing academic offerings to students. The college hired Walter Williams to serve as vice president for advancement, officially joining the college on May 18, 2015. There are six new combined bachelor's and master's degree programs that begin fall 2015. These programs are less costly for students, as some courses will count for both bachelor- and master-level coursework. Broad categories in the undergraduate level combined with more specific areas in the graduate level to help students accomplish more in a shorter time, spending less money. These combined degrees will cover a wide range of topics, including community and economic development, teaching and business administration in global leadership.

The Student Health and Wellness Retreat brought approximately 500 students together April 16-18, 2015, at the Hilton Albany in Albany, N.Y. The retreat featured about 50 sessions and presentations and more than 50 vendors. The retreat features a time when students can ask questions and make comments – this provides useful feedback to the college about the student experience.

Four Empire State College students received the Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence in April 2015. The recipients were Dwight Anderson '98, '14, from The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies, Laura Dreyer '14, from the Metropolitan Center, Tamla Htoo, currently studying at the Central New York Center, and Edward Shevlin III '11, '14, from the Long Island Center. These individuals were recognized for their academic excellence, as well as their strengths as leaders within their communities.

Dr. Hancock noted that the college was one of the only nontraditional colleges that hosts events like the Student Health and Wellness Retreat and the Student Academic Conference. These events allow students to develop a sense of community, by networking with fellow students and faculty and by participating in workshops and discussions in person when they wouldn't otherwise be able to. The students give strong positive feedback about the event, and it helps the college straddle the line between a traditional college community and a flexible nontraditional institution.

There is a movement to "ban the box" that appears on college applications that prospective students must fill out if they have been convicted of a felony. Empire State College will have to decide on its own how to move forward in regards to this – especially with its nontraditional structure, knowing someone's criminal past might not be as relevant as it would be for other institutions. Also, the college takes its responsibility to access seriously, and this would open a door to education for many.

VII. VARIOUS FROM VICE PRESIDENT MARY CAROLINE POWERS

Ms. Powers presented possible dates for the 2015-16 College Council meetings and the council discussed their availability: Sept. 16, 2015; Dec. 3, 2015; March 9, 2016; and May 4, 2016.

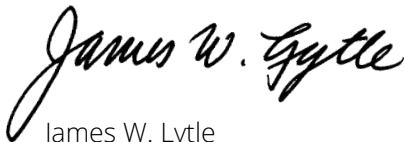
She described the evening reception to follow the council meeting, which some of the council members would be attending. The reception is planned as part of the college's Black History Celebration, where Melba Tolliver '98, first African-American network news anchor, and Robert Roach Jr. '96, general secretary-treasurer of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, would be honored. The reception is expected to be well attended by the Empire State College community, as well as notable political figures and members of SUNY administration.

Directly following the close of the council meeting, the members would be joining the Foundation Board members in a joint meeting.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



James W. Lytle
Chairman



Mary Caroline Powers
Vice President