

Meeting Minutes | March 9, 2021

Via Microsoft Teams



COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

John Maggiore, Arlene González-Sánchez, Colleen West Hay, Donna Luh, Shelia Poole, Roberta Reardon, Molly Reilly, Mark Schroeder

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Janet Aiello-Cerio, Meg Benke, Lexie Bonitatibus, Nathan Gonyea, Thalia MacMillan, Mary Caroline Powers, Tiffany Williams, Leigh Yannuzzi

I. COUNCIL BUSINESS — CHAIRMAN JOHN MAGGIORE

Council Chairman John Maggiore called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. after dispensing with the period for public comment per Executive Order 200.1. He then asked for a review of the minutes from the March 9, 2021, meeting. Mark Schroeder moved for approval of the minutes as submitted. Roberta Reardon seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved by a voice vote of the council members.

Chairman Maggiore then updated council members on the work of the presidential search committee. He said the RFP for a search firm went out for review and resulted in several applications for consideration. Four firms were identified as the primary contenders and the one rated at the top has been recommended to SUNY and is now undergoing System Administration review.

He added that the search committee has identified a long list of attributes they hope to find in candidates for the position. The committee is following SUNY guidelines contained in a 17-page procedure for searches, which dictates that the committee and the College Council send three names to the chancellor for consideration. While there are four members of the council on the committee, he added that at certain points in the process the entire council is involved and it is imperative they join in the discussion. He said that in the near future, the chancellor will charge the committee. Mr. Maggiore then asked if there were any questions. Patricia Salkin said she would willingly volunteer to be on the search committee and Maggiore said he would talk with her "off-line."

II. REPORT OF THE SENATE CHAIRWOMAN — THALIA MACMILLAN

Chairman Maggiore asked for the report from Senate Chairwoman Thalia MacMillan, who said the Senate met in both January and February and reviewed several college policies. She said one of the most exciting initiatives coming from Senate governance is the creation of a student government committee.

She said the Senate approved several Bylaw changes that will go before the College Assembly at the All College meeting in April that include what MacMillan described as “small changes.” She said that the Senate approved a crisis prevention certification, which is the only one in SUNY, and about which there seems to be excitement. She mentioned that the Senate also approved a couple of pathways programs including one that can move a student from studies in allied health to preparation for business leadership.

Maggiore expressed his excitement about the development of student government and offered his help in the effort. Shelia Poole, who serves at the commissioner of the Office of Family Services said she is very interested in the crisis prevention certificate and asked if it is a generalized strategy or if it is targeted to students who work in large nonprofit organizations or state government. MacMillan said it could be geared to a practitioner with special interests or those working in their communities. Provost Benke said that for people in agencies the college will look at what training they already have and then find academic ways to compliment and enhance that training. Commissioner González-Sánchez offered to help promote this program, calling it a “great path” for agency employees.

III. REPORT FROM OFFICER IN CHARGE — NATHAN GONYEA

- **Enrollment** — Dr. Gonyea reported that for the Fall 2020 semester, enrollment was up by 3 percent and that the Spring 2021 enrollment numbers to date are revealing growth across the board, except for the Harry Van Arsdale Jr. School of Labor Studies, which did not enroll a full cohort of apprentices in Fall 2020. However, he said, the spring numbers are showing an increase. The Spring II term, established for prospective students who missed the registration deadline for January enrollment, is surpassing enrollment numbers for Spring II 2020. Gonyea added that several initiatives are underway by the Office of Enrollment Management and the marketing group to analyze the dip in the number of new inquiries, which, he said, is likely related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, he added, the number of new inquiries has been lagging for a full year and that trend is continuing.

Maggiore asked how these enrollment trends compare to other SUNY institutions and Gonyea answered that the community colleges have been hit the worst with enrollment declines, but that schools with strong online programs are doing well as are those catering to adult learners, both SUNY Empire strengths. He added that online graduate programs are especially strong.

• **Budget and Fundraising Status** — Lexie Bonitatibus, the college's chief financial officer and chief operating officer, reported that the college finished its 2019-2020 financial year in good shape, \$219,000 in the positive column, but it took a lot of cost cutting to get to that position. She added that SUNY Empire ended the year as one of the most financially stable schools SUNY-wide. She said the college had begun the current budget year with a negative \$2.2 million budget but right now it is ahead of the break-even point. She pointed out that state funding is the only element the college is unaware of at this point and it is expecting a 5 percent cut for next year's funding. Currently, 80 percent of college revenue is derived from tuition and fees, but 80 percent of the budget costs is personnel costs with a 3 percent annual increase, so a major challenge is to figure out how to off-set the annual rise in labor costs. One approach has been to seek out major savings in all the contracts the college has with outside vendors, adding that the CARES Act has also helped, with \$1.7 million going to student with an added \$450,000 from the college's foundation and an additional \$1.7 million used for institutional costs, a lot of which went into technology.

Bonitatibus concluded by saying the takeaways are basically that the college needs ~\$5 million for three years of contracted raises and because the operating budget was not break even, \$3 to \$4 million of borrowing from unrestricted funds took place.

Chairman Maggiore asked if there had been any progress on closing or moving many of the locations around the state and Bonitatibus said the locations currently being scrutinized are the Staten Island location, which is up for a five-year lease renewal, and the closing of the Latham location and relocating it in Saratoga Springs. Additionally, Newburgh and Plattsburg locations are looking to partner with community colleges for new locations, Auburn is under scrutiny, and a new location in Manhattan has been identified, with additional space at SUNY Global being used for evening teaching sessions.

• **New Academic Programs** — Provost Meg Benke highlighted several new programs and partnerships the college has established in recent months. Among them is a new partnership with the U.S. Navy's Community College, which has partnered with five higher education institutions. SUNY Empire is the only SUNY institution in the group. The college has 128 students enrolled in the first pilot term taking four courses and working toward associate degrees. She said the hope is enrollment will increase to 1,000 next year.

Another enrollment generator for the college is SUNY Online. Benke said enrollment is still fairly small and some rethinking of the programs being offered is underway. Particularly strong enrollment growth in SUNY Empire courses offered by SUNY Online is for psychology. Approval has been granted to offer the B.A. in Liberal Arts and the college's RN to BSN programs via SUNY Online, which ought to further increase SUNY Empire's enrollment numbers.

In the realm of new undergraduate offerings, and of possible special interest to state agencies, are the Associate in Arts and the Associate in Science in General Studies, for which a student only needs 12 credits to earn the degree and get necessary credentials faster to move into a bachelor's degree track. Benke also mentioned the Bachelor of Business Administration degree which is more focused on business. Additionally, there are new micro-credentials being offered, of note are those in career self-management and self-marketing.

In graduate studies, new additions include the recently approved advanced certificates in Nursing Education, Public Administration, and Corporate Board Leadership; new master's degrees in Public History, Applied Analytics and Agricultural Education, as well as the colleges first doctoral level Ed.D. in Leadership and Change. Additionally, new advance certificates have been approved in Labor Studies, TESOL, and Cyber Security.

Benke concluded her presentation by saying there are several other new programs currently under development or awaiting approvals by various state agencies.

- **Personnel Changes** — Nathan Gonyea reported that two significant staffing changes had recently taken place. He has named Leigh Yannuzzi as his interim chief of staff and Lindsay Holcomb has stepped in as interim director of Human Resources in the wake of Tracey Meek's leave taking.

Ms. Luh commented that she thought the meeting's presentations were excellent.

- **New Business** — Chairman Maggiore asked if there were any questions or comments, or any new business to discuss. No one raised any questions or comments. He said the next meeting of the College Council would be held at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, May 4. He then asked for a motion to conclude the meeting. Ms. Poole moved to adjourn and Ms. Reardon seconded the motion, which was passed by voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 3:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Mary Caroline Powers
Liaison to the College Council