

MEETING MINUTES | SEPT. 19, 2018

2 Union Ave.
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

the
COLLEGE COUNCIL
for
SUNY Empire State College

COLLEGE COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

James Lytle, Council Chairman

Anthony Esposito

Colleen Hay, via telephone

Donna Luh

Daniel Wall

Linda Weiss

SUNY EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT

Mitchell Nesler, Officer in Charge

Tai Arnold, Chief of Staff, Office of President

Joseph Garcia, Executive Vice President for Administration

Mary Caroline Powers, Vice President for Communications and Government Relations

Clayton Steen, Vice President for Enrollment Management

Karen TanskiHewison, Senior Director of Marketing and Creative Services

SUNY Guest: Joseph Porter, Senior Vice Chancellor for Executive Leadership and Employee Development

I. COUNCIL BUSINESS

Chairman James Lytle began the meeting by welcoming two new members of the council: Donna Luh of Depew in Western New York, who was appointed to a one-year term by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in July; and Colleen Hays, a student the college's School for Graduate Studies, who also is Town Clerk for the Town of Livonia, south of Rochester, and who will serve a two-year term.

He also introduced Joseph Porter, SUNY's senior vice chancellor for executive leadership and employee development, who will be working with the College Council on the search for the next president of the college.

Mr. Lytle asked for amendments to or approval of the minutes from the May 2018 meeting. Mr. Esposito moved to approve. Ms. Weiss seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved by voice vote.

Dates for possible meetings between the members of the College Council and the Middle States reaccreditation team were proposed for Thursday, Sept. 26, 2019, or Thursday, Oct. 3, 2019. Additionally, a conference call has been scheduled from 1 to 2 p.m., Monday, Oct. 15, 2018, for council members to speak with an advisor from Middle States Association about the process for the team visit.

These meetings are meant to explore one of the Middle State's standards related to governing boards of the college.

Mr. Lytle reviewed some of the responsibilities detailed in the statutory language that establishes College Councils at SUNY institutions, which include selection of a new president, the naming of buildings, and the role of sounding board that provides guidance and direction. He added that Middle States has a great appreciation for the role of the College Council plays, while drawing a distinction with the "all – powerful" Boards of Trustees at private institutions. He advised that when speaking with members of the reaccreditation team, council members should ensure they make clear they are involved with the affairs of the college and speak their minds about them.

II. PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH PROCESS AND PROTOCOLS – SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR JOSEPH PORTER

Mr. Porter led the discussion on the search process for a new president as dictated by SUNY guidelines, which were revised in 2016. He emphasized the very important role played by members of the College Council in the search process, saying they are the "drivers" and added that the investment of time by council members is very much appreciated.

He explained each of the steps in the process, from first securing the services of a search firm to the final interviews conducted by the search committee, Chancellor Christina Johnson and a subcommittee of the SUNY Board of Trustees. He stressed the importance of the committee committing to the principles of diversity and inclusion and the vital importance of confidentiality.

Dr. Esposito raised the issue of costs associated with conducting a search and questioned why it is spent in that, in the end, the Chancellor does the selecting. Mr. Lytle countered by saying the Chancellor selects from a small group of three that had the strongest support of the search committee, and suggested that it becomes clear to the Chancellor who is the preferred candidate. He added that the inclusion and engagement from so many different campus constituencies is almost as important as the selection process.

Mr. Porter added that there is no "perfect process" and that given that the college is part of the largest higher education system in the United States, there is a balancing of interests of the individual institution and of SUNY as a whole that must also take place

III. REPORT FROM SENATE – CHAIRWOMAN ANASTASIA PRATT

Chairwoman Pratt was not in attendance but her written report was in the briefing packet distributed to council members. The list of qualities the members of the Senate would like to see in a new president was a part of that report.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT – EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT JOSEPH GARCIA

Mr. Garcia went through a time line of the colleges budgeting system, beginning with the late 1970s through the 2017-2018 academic year. He made special note of the 2008-2009 through 2011-2012 time period when the nationwide recession hit and direct state tax support of the college was heavily reduced by 44 percent from \$15.8 million to the current support of \$8.7 million. He commented that once the Higher Education Price Index is factored in, it becomes clear the college is losing financial ground. He shared a table comparing Empire State College with other four-year comprehensive colleges in the SUNY system; the average percentage of state support the others receive is 27.8 percent, compared with Empire State College's 11.1 percent, while at the same time the college has the second largest financial plan, of \$80 million.

Mr. Lytle asked if recent tuition increases off set the reduction in state support and Mr. Garcia emphasized 83 percent of the college's operating budget comes from tuition, when the national average is 47 percent. Additionally, many other institutions have other sources of revenue, such as room and board, and health and parking fees, which ESC does not, while our delivery method remains expensive and we carry the added burden of lease expenses.

Dr. Steen added that his division is working to reduce the lease costs by finding new, less expensive facilities to work from, citing the example of the \$30,000 spent to lease the former Lockport location versus the \$9,000 to lease space from Niagara County Community College. Mr. Garcia added that the college is hiring a lease consultant.

Ms. Weiss expressed curiosity in learning if the recent reorganization of the college led to the drop in enrollment, especially online enrollment. Mr. Esposito asked where the money for the presidential search is coming from and Mr. Garcia said he took it out of the surplus funds.

Mr. Wall said he was not confident that the funding formula will change so adjusting what the college can control seems the wisest approach to take. He and others on the council agreed, however, that arguing for an adjustment in the funding formula was "a fight worth fighting." Dr. Nesler added that he has tried to educate the new Chancellor on the situation. Ms. Weiss asked about the profit margin other colleges realize from auxiliary services and Mr. Garcia said he would get information from other SUNY colleges and share it.

V. NEW ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN – CLAYTON STEEN, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT; KAREN TANSKI, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND CREATIVE SERVICES

To explain the current approach to marketing, Ms. Tanski and Dr. Steen noted several factors: the former president had outsourced much of the marketing and they felt it was not creating an integrated campaign; there were no measurements in place to determine the ROI on marketing buys; they could not get data on the response to engaging in the online environment for 30 to 60 days; and the success of the statewide open house that has helped reduce the cost per lead by generating as many as 2,000 new leads per event.

Ms. Tanski said the new campaign is based on the college's flexibility and how we respond to the busy lives of our students. It is adult student focused, it used "ESC" and it strengthens the college connection to SUNY. The campaign is using "testimonials" from students and alumni coming in via social media. Ms. Tanski shared tracking data with the council members, who were most impressed with the more than 600,000 new visitors to the college website and the reduction of the bounce rate to 45 percent.

Mr. Lytle asked if the college is using more traditional forms of media outreach such as radio and television, and was told there is some use but it is very expensive. He then asked who the college's big competitors are and was told that Excelsior is locally, and, national, Arizona State, Perdue, Southern New Hampshire, and the Chamberlain for nursing.

Dr. Steen then detailed how his division has pulled together all the materials needed to create "Open House in a Box," which will soon be in use.

VI. REPORT FROM OFFICER IN CHARGE – MITCHELL NESLER

Dr. Nesler reviewed the visit by Chancellor Johnson to the college during which he took the opportunity to point out that ESC has the highest percentage of part-time students, the oldest student body in SUNY, and additional information about the decline in enrollment since 2010, and the college's negative funding history. He then mentioned several points of pride including the demonstrated success of the Black Male Initiative, and the college's No. 1 ranking in the SUNY student opinion survey since 1994 for overall satisfaction among our students.

He then reviewed for council members the SUNY RFI regarding the potential for a significant expansion of online enrollment, saying that the college responded by asserting it must be "front and center" in any online enrollment discussion. Mr. Lytle commented that SUNY hasn't fully explored online learning and expressed the hope that if the college figures centrally in such an effort that the ESC's goals for people who have been left out and left behind are not discarded.

Dr. Nesler's final topic was about the "listening tour" he has been on across the college, asking three questions of college employees: what do they want in a new president; what do they see as the challenges the college is facing; and what do they love about the college.

Responses to the first inquiry brought comments contrasting prior leaders and requests for someone who is thoughtful, who will take time to listen, make ESC sustainable, empower its people and make a long-term commitment to the college.

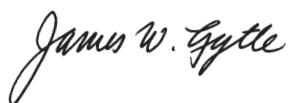
Responses to the question about challenges varied based on location, ranging from complaints about a rug, to lack of signage and communication. Some newer concerns were expressed, especially about the loss of a sense of community following the reorganization of the college, confusion about what is handled locally vs. what is handled centrally, concerns about the new software and lack of training on it and problems it is creating with various processes such as deregistration and immunization proof.

The responses to what they loved about working at the college were much more uniform: the college's mission, its students and the ability to be flexible and to innovate.

Mr. Lytle commented that the responses are surprising and encouraging while also being realistic.

Mr. Esposito moved the meeting be adjourned. Mrs. Luh seconded the motion. The motion was approved by voice vote and formally adjourned at 5:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



James W. Lytle
Chairman



Mary Caroline Powers
Vice President