

MEETING MINUTES | MARCH 13, 2019

111 West Ave., Room 104
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-6069



COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

James Lytle, Colleen West Hay, Linda Weiss, Tony Esposito, Donna Luh, Patricia Salkin, via telephone

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Mitchell Nesler, Tai Arnold, Meg Benke, Joseph Garcia, Nathan Gonyea, Mary Caroline Powers, Anastasia Pratt, Clayton Steen

I. COUNCIL BUSINESS

Members of the College Council participated in a tour of the newly renovated building at 111 West Ave. in Saratoga Springs, focused on the work of the 1 Stop Shop for students, which is located in the building. The tour was conducted by Mary Austin, the interim director of the 1 Stop Shop.

At the conclusion of the tour, Chairman James Lytle opened the formal meeting of the council. He asked for approval of the minutes of the December 2018 meeting. Tony Esposito offer a motion of acceptance, seconded by Linda Weiss. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Mr. Lytle then updated the progress of the presidential search stating a final meeting of the search committee is set for Friday, March 22 at which the entire College Council will be in attendance in order to hear the committee discuss the semi-finalist candidates. Following that meeting, the council will meet separately to discuss the five semi-finalist candidates and select the names of just three of them to be sent to Chancellor Kristina Johnson for consideration.

He thanked all the internal and external constituents, especially the members of the College Council, who have taken part in the process of vetting candidates for the presidency, and commented that the search is very likely a major source of interest among those varied constituents.

II. REPORT OF THE SENATE CHAIR – CHAIRWOMAN ANASTASIA PRATT

Dr. Pratt asked council members to please refer to her written report regarding the recent work of the College Senate. She specifically highlighted the approval by the Senate of a Dean's List policy, which she characterized as both "a big deal" and a way to honor the college's students.

III. REPORT FROM OFFICER IN CHARGE – VICE PRESIDENT MITCHELL NESLER

Dr. Nesler centered his remarks on an update of the preparations for the upcoming reaccreditation process to be conducted by the Middle States Association. He said the number of standards used to evaluate the institution undergoing reaccreditation has been reduced from 14 to seven, adding that the college has 105 people across its divisions and offices working on the preparations for the report the college will submit. He termed the process one of self-reflection that seeks to identify an ethos of continuous improvement in all areas of the college. Seven separate committees are working, each on a single Middle States standard, and each committee has submitted a draft of its report detailing how the college is meeting the standard it was assigned. Dr. Nesler said one of the big tasks is to edited the seven separate reports into “one voice” and ensure the complete accuracy of all reports.

Mr. Lytle asked about the time frame for the process and Dr. Nesler said the team visit will take place during April of 2020, but the draft document for the team chair has to be submitted in the fall of 2019. The chair has been identified as Dr. Matthew Prineas, the provost at Athabasca University in Canada, who previously was at the University of Maryland University College. Dr. Prineas earned his doctoral degree in English at the University of Rochester. Provost Meg Benke commented that Dr. Prineas understands nontraditional education and that he and his reaccreditation team will want to meet with members of the College Council during their visit. *(The Middle States team will be at the college April 5-8, 2020, and would like to meet with council members either Monday, April 6, or Tuesday, April 7, 2020.)*

Dr. Nesler added that the team is supposed to visit one third of the college’s locations, cautioning that if the team members are “not open to our model” it can result in a difficult visit.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT – EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT JOSEPH GARCIA

Executive Vice President Garcia reported that, to date, the college is tracking at 7 percent under enrollment adding that the summer semester is critical and that the college needs to achieve at least 87 percent of the summer enrollment target. He said that in order to make up the entire revenue shortfall resulting from declining enrollment, the college would have to exceed its target for the year by 117 percent. If that does not happen, Mr. Garcia said he believes that at the end of the budget year there will be a \$3 million shortfall.

Mr. Garcia discussed the governor’s budget proposal that includes a one-time infusion of extra funds for SUNY for costs associated with the negotiated raises for union employees of the SUNY system. The proposal has passed both the state Assembly and the Senate and if adopted, it should reduce the \$3 million shortfall, which includes money for covering the wage increases, which translate to \$4.3 million in additional labor costs for Empire State College.

Mr. Lytle asked if Mr. Garcia has any sense of how much the college may get and was told that it is a five-year projected revenue stream that is not a straight one-for-one, dollar-for-dollar award. In order to deal with the revenue shortfall, he further explained that the college has been carefully monitoring vacancies and not filling them as rapidly as would be normal. He also explained that the significant investment the college has made in new integrated technology systems will be paid off this fiscal year.

He concluded his report by saying that summer enrollment numbers are a key factor in balancing the books, but that the reserves remain strong.

V. ENROLLMENT UPDATE – VICE PRESIDENT CLAYTON STEEN

Vice President Steen, using a PowerPoint presentation, reviewed the enrollment picture by academic division. He said that as of Friday, March 8, enrollment in summer terms equaled 82,110 credits and that the college is still enrolling students but that number represents a decrease of 7 percent year over year. He added that he is hoping summer enrollment will create an additional 7,000 more credits and said that a reorganization of the term calendar may have an impact on fall enrollment credits. He also discussed the positive impact the changes to the deregistration process have had. One was to increase the amount a student can owe the college and still register.

Dr. Steen discussed the October statewide open house and plans for another one in April. He said it has been determined that the Office of Enrollment Management had been holding onto leads too long and has move to tighten up the process, and do more “face-to-face” conversion of leads to enrolled status.

He reviewed marketing plans, explaining that part of the newly installed technology allows the college to customize its responses based on the “click through” pattern a student follows when making an inquiry.

He added that 20 percent of the enrollment target for summer terms is focused on nonmatriculated students at other SUNY schools.

Mr. Lytle asked about how generalize the enrollment challenge is and how Empire State College compares to other SUNY institutions. Dr. Nesler said that SUNY enrollments systemwide have been declining since 2010. He attributed the situation to shifting demographics, a very low unemployment rates, and the competition from community colleges that bill themselves as “open-admission” institutions, like ESC, adding that the numbers vary region to region and institution to institution.

Council member Hay asked if there is any sense that the decline may in part be because the classes a student needs are not being regularly offered. Interim Provost Benke answered that the college has just increased the number of 8-week course options and increased the number of offerings at all the college’s physical locations. She added that Ms. Hay’s point was a good one, because it is difficult to determine what courses a student might want. Mr. Lytle asked how the college was approaching the problem and Dr. Benke explained that Dr. Arnold is working on degree audits to help with the process, but added that the college remains very flexible in getting a student to completion by using prior learning assessment and independent studies.

VI. REPORT ON Ed.D. PROPOSAL – INTERIM PROVOST MEG BENKE, INTERIM DEAN OF SCHOOL FOR GRADUATE STUDIES NATHAN GONYEA

After a brief discussion regarding the length of time it has taken to move toward full approval of the college’s proposal for a doctoral degree, Mr. Lytle commented that one of the problems with the State Education Department is lack of full staffing and that may be exacerbating the problem. Dr. Gonyea said he is hoping for feedback in under six months from State Ed and then the proposal will go to the Board of Regents and ultimately to the Governor’s Office. Mr. Lytle asked if other states present the same level of scrutiny and Dr. Benke answered no, further suggesting that if it is a SUNY

proposal and SUNY says it is OK, that ought to be enough. She said SUNY's new Chancellor, Kristina Johnson, and the new provost, Tod Laursen, are taking a much more active role in engaging with the SUNY colleges and their interactions with the State Education Department.

With regard to the Ed.D. proposal, Dr. Gonyea said that the State Education Department wanted it to better align with the college's mission and our students, thus it was refocused to concentrate more on adult learning and continuing education.

Mr. Lytle asked about what benefit such an Ed.D. would be, suggesting it might be valuable if a person wanted a college vice president position or a community college presidency. Dr. Benke said the college built a program that will offer a quality doctoral level degree at SUNY prices, as opposed to those offered by the for-profit institutions. She said this degree will provide an important pipeline opportunity, as well as professional development and innovation opportunities for faculty.

The hallmark of this type of degree, she said, is to bring a professional to a point where they can do dissertation-based research, often with data they are already working with.

Council member Luh asked how many colleges have a degree like this and Dr. Gonyea said the degree is pretty unique in the state of New York. Some for-profits do offer similar degrees, like Kaplan and Walden, but most of the public colleges in the state concentrate on doctoral degrees for principals and superintendents.

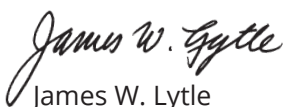
Mr. Lytle asked if part of the strategy for growing enrollment in the degree is to build better relationships with community colleges. Dr. Benke answered that ESC has talked with a lot of leadership working in state community colleges about teaching in the program and they have expressed interest.

Mr. Lytle asked for a motion to adjourn the formal meeting of the council.

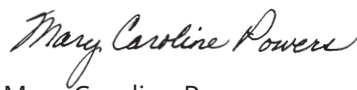
Ms. Weiss offered the motion and Mr. Esposito seconded it. The motion was approved by voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



James W. Lytle
Chairman



Mary Caroline Powers
Vice President