

MEETING MINUTES | MAY 16, 2019

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



COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

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

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Mitchell Nesler, Tai Arnold, Joseph Garcia, Mary Caroline Powers

I. COUNCIL BUSINESS

Council Chairman James Lytle opened the meeting at 3:03 p.m. and introduced Dr. Jim Malatras, newly appointed president of Empire State College, who joined the meeting by telephone. Mr. Lytle reviewed the search process that led to the College Council recommending three names to Chancellor Kristina Johnson, with whom he had an extensive conversation about her recommendation to the SUNY Board of Trustees.

Mr. Lytle welcomed Dr. Malatras to the meeting and to the college and said the college community is looking forward to working with him and assisting in his transition. Dr. Malatras responded by apologizing for not being able to attend the meeting in person, adding that he is honored to have the opportunity to serve the college. He thanked Mr. Lytle, Senate Chairwoman Anastasia Pratt, Officer in Charge Mitchell Nesler and Interim Provost Meg Benke for all the work they have done over the past year to keep the college running smoothly. He concluded by adding that he is “fired up and ready to go” and is looking forward to working with the entire college community and the College Council for many years of joint success.

Mr. Lytle noted that this is a very important time for the college as it faces the Middle States Association reaccreditation process, increasing competition in the marketplace, fiscal challenges, and SUNY grappling with how to react to market pressures. He called it “about as critical a time as he has seen in all the years he has been associated with the college.”

Dr. Malatras said he appreciated the entire team that has been doing such great work and termed the college a model for the future of higher education, adding that ESC is well positioned to be a leader in providing every potential access point to the college experience during challenging times. It was announced that his official start date is July 15.

A motion was made by Dr. Esposito and seconded by Ms. Weiss to approve the minutes of the March 13 meeting. The minutes were approved by voice vote.

Mr. Lytle also noted that College Council colleague and member Patricia Salkin was recently honored by Albany Law School with the Kate Stoneman Award, given for those who expand opportunities of women in the law. Dr. Esposito, who noted that Stoneman is buried in the Albany Rural Cemetery, added that the Stoneman Award is very prestigious.

II. REPORT OF THE SENATE CHAIR – CHAIRWOMAN ANASTASIA PRATT

In the absence of Senate Chairwoman Anastasia Pratt, Mr. Lytle noted that a brief report from her about the recent work of the Senate was in the briefing packets, which mentions SUNY Online. He said he would like to learn more about the role ESC will play in that initiative.

III. FINANCIAL REPORT – EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT JOSEPH GARCIA

Executive Vice President Garcia began his report by saying he wants to take a more strategic look at finances and, thus, has developed a strategic financial plan, which he distributed to those in attendance.

Various features of the plan are that it:

- Serves as a handy reference tool
- Lays out strategy for college fiscal health for next three years
- Is aspirational
- Includes various budget components
- Tracks trends in state support for higher education across the U.S.

Mr. Garcia said that he is hoping for a \$7 million improvement in revenues, something he feels is achievable, but the college needs to address the question of how to grow revenues. He said that ESC depends on enrollment more than most colleges and that online enrollment is very important. Thus, he would like to:

- Grow our own additional revenue
- Look for more state support
- Engage in partnerships with corporations and government agencies
- Enroll more military
- Look to support SUNY's marketing efforts for online education

Additionally, Mr. Garcia said he would like to control expenses, especially of leases and is doing a deliberative review of each lease, as well as investigating congressional support for a new capital project in East Harlem, and looking into leasing rather than buying equipment.

A broader discussion of locating alternate space in New York City took place. (The college's Hudson Street lease is its most expensive.) Mr. Garcia said he thought Congressman Adriano Espaillat is very interested in helping the college. Mr. Lytle asked if there was any state-owned space available, and was told by Dr. Nesler that SUNY BOT Chairman H. Carl McCall has been trying to identify space. Some other spaces that have been considered are at 125th Street near the Apollo Theater, in Washington Heights and the South Bronx. The college has made it clear to the construction fund that this is our No. 1 ask.

IV. DISCUSSION TOPIC: NEW TERM CALENDAR – INTERIM CHIEF OF STAFF TAI ARNOLD

Dr. Arnold asked attendees to refer to the PowerPoint in the briefing packet for her discussion about the new term calendar. She said what triggered the reorientation of the calendar to three 15-week terms with 8-week terms inserted in some of them was the need to ensure college compliance with federal financial aid regulations. She traced the history of various calendars from monthly enrollment periods, to 48 term starts, later to five term starts, then the addition of an added third summer term. The new calendar, which begins in the fall and will offer three term start dates, with formal "sessions" within the fall and spring terms, also will accommodate particular student populations, like those enrolled through Fort Drum and in the distance learning programs. Dr. Arnold said that a lot of competitors are offering shortened terms and as a result are attracting student who would normally enroll at Empire State College. She said that some experimentation with shorter terms had been taking place at the college but was "hidden" and students were unaware that shorter term options were available on a regular basis.

Faculty will teach 8-week terms on a voluntary basis. Many are looking at them as a way to have concentrated periods of teaching and then time to do their own scholarship. Dr. Arnold added that research has shown that engagement in shorter terms has a positive impact on student retention.

She discussed the importance of assessing the impact and effects of the new term calendar, particularly on enrollment and retention of students.

Mr. Lytle commented on the complexity of a college operating all the time and how hard it must be to market that concept.

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

Dr. Nesler talked about his 16 ½ months in the president's office, praising the members of his staff and the Cabinet, the support he received from faculty and staff, alumni, and students, his work in government relations, and with Chancellor Kristina Johnson and SUNY Provost Tod Laursen, both of whom he described as very impressive. He ascribed the universal passion for the mission of the college on the part of staff and faculty as the reason the college continues to be rated No. 1 in student satisfaction among SUNY institutions.

He said he believed that things were “a bit better” than when he began, listing the following as significant challenges that were faced during his tenure as officer in charge: declining enrollments, on unfunded labor contract, the difficult roll-out of the Banner system, and the lingering effect of ESC 2.0 and its impact on college climate and morale.

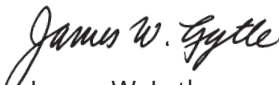
He listed as accomplishments of his tenure the SUNY online initiative and its dependence on the expertise of Empire State College, the preparation of the first draft of the Middle States self-study, the development of the college’s strategic plan and the sub plans for all divisions, and the closing of the budget deficit with the expectation of closing the fiscal year “even.” Additionally, he listed the long list of solidified partnerships, the most recent with the Anderson Center for Autism, his statewide tour of all 34 locations, and the move to some new locations that are better for students and also saving the college about \$200,000. He also made note of the passage of significant policies with governance, like the creation of a dean’s list, progress made on the Ed.D., the 10th anniversary of the college’s School for Nursing, various alumni events, the \$4 million renovation of 111 West Ave., and the successful completion of the search for a new president.

Mr. Lytle extended to Dr. Nesler the gratitude of the College Council for his work, saying the college is now well positioned for the challenges ahead. He added that one mission he hopes Dr. Malatras undertakes is to replenish the ranks for the College Council membership. He then extended an invitation to all council members to attend the upcoming commencement ceremonies and participate by being a member of the platform party.

Dr. Esposito then made a motion to enter executive session to discuss management issues at the college. Ms. Weiss seconded the motion, which was approved by voice vote.

Following the conclusion of the executive session, the meeting was officially concluded at 4:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


James W. Lytle
Chairman


Mary Caroline Powers
Vice President