

MEETING MINUTES | DEC. 5, 2016

SUNY Empire State College
2 Union Ave.
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866



COLLEGE COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

James Lytle, Council Chairman
Anthony Esposito
Daniel Wall
Linda Weiss
Patricia Salkin by telephone

SUNY EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

Merodie Hancock, President
Michael Mancini, Chief of Staff
Mitchell Nesler, Vice President of Decision Support
Alfred Ntoko, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs
Mary Caroline Powers, Vice President for Communications and Government Relations

SENATE REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT:

Mary Mawn, Senate Chairwoman

I. COUNCIL BUSINESS

A. Minutes Review and Approval

The minutes from the Sept. 15, 2016, College Council meeting were approved.

II. REPORT FROM SENATE – CHAIRWOMAN MARY MAWN

The restructure in governance in relation to the restructure in the college was discussed. During the previous week, Senate members met to discuss proposed bylaw changes. Senate members voted to pass 20 out of the 30 proposed resolutions. While Senate does not provide final approval on the bylaw changes, the vote pushes those changes forward to be presented and ultimately voted on at the Plenary Session of the College Assembly, which takes place annually at the All College Conference in March. More discussion on changes will take place before the next Senate meeting in February.

The Senate Executive Committee, consisting of the Senate chair, vice chair, PPC chair and the university faculty senator, met with President Merodie Hancock and Chief of Staff Michael Mancini in an effort to maintain communications across the college in light of the far-reaching changes to the college.

III. REPORT FROM ACT – MARY CAROLINE POWERS, IN PLACE OF G. ANGELA HENRY

A. Review of the ACT Annual Meeting

Mary Caroline Powers presented the ACT report in Angela Henry's absence. Powers attended the annual ACT conference to introduce Patricia MacLeod, one of the ACT scholarship recipients and a SUNY Empire State College student. The conference also featured discussion of START-UP NY, a SUNY initiative focused on revitalization in upstate New York, the responsibilities of college councils and ways to help campuses fight sexual assault.

SUNY Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Alexander Cartwright presented at the conference on the importance of diversity, citing as examples of SUNY's commitment the addition of diversity officers on all campuses and inclusion of language about the importance of diversity in all high-level position listings. He also shared that the presidential search process will be changing. In the future, when search committees narrow down the candidate pool to three finalists, the finalists must go before the SUNY Board of Trustees to present. A select group from the board also will be conducting in-person interviews with the three finalists.

Additionally, Cartwright presented the plan developed by SUNY to make \$53 million available for curriculum development, diversity initiatives and applied learning. He reported that the search for the new chancellor is ongoing, and the search committee has solicited feedback from all college council members through a website.

B. Update on Council Membership Efforts

The effort to keep council membership appointments moving along is being led by Teare VanDenburgh, administrative staff member of the Office of University Relations for SUNY System Administration. Powers is in the process of getting a list of council vacancies being prepared by VanDenburgh to share with council members.

James Lytle asked about the role of the council in fighting sexual assault on college campuses. Powers responded that one of the tasks the councils are charged with is related to the student code of conduct complying with new student safety guidelines. While Empire State College does not have a traditional campus environment with components such as sport teams and Greek life, there is still a great need to be current and compliant with these policies.

Lytle asked if there were any updates about the SUNY 2020 tuition flexibility plan. Powers explained that the discussions that have taken place have been challenging. Hancock added that, given the budget structure, the college would be more suited to analyze tuition competitively rather than all being included in the same tuition group, but with the various institutions within SUNY and a widespread, diverse student base, there are many different needs to be met.

IV. DISCUSSION TOPIC – VICE PRESIDENT OF DECISION SUPPORT MITCHELL NESLER

Hancock introduced the discussion topic, reviewing the efforts by the college since her arrival to work toward a more consistent structure with policies to unify the academic process across every location, particularly in regards to assessment and review. The strategic plan committee has been working to take the disparate processes at the college and combine or retool them to create a more cohesive institution.

Mitchell Nesler, vice president of decision support, presented the work that has been done on Strategic Plan 2020: Going for the Gold. The plan is not yet final and will continue to be shaped. Nesler provided the council with information on the plan with PowerPoint and a packet of materials.

Nesler briefly reviewed the history of the strategic plan at the college and described the changes to the mission statement over time. The strategic plan committee has worked to mold the most current version of the mission statement, using knowledge about the communities served by the college and previous keywords that have or have not had an impact. A shift to community service has taken place in the state overall, and, as a result, at the college. The college was founded to provide flexibility of access, and now, the focus is centered on serving the needs of local communities and beyond. The statement will continue to be adjusted to best summarize the goals and direction of the college.

The council members discussed suggestions and the implications of changing certain words in the statement, such as “rigorous” and “respected,” and phrases like “transforming communities.” It is important to convey the quality of the education, while speaking to what it is that students hope to achieve with their studies, like a degree to further their careers. Lytle suggested the statements don't make clear that “the student is driving the train.” Hancock proposed posting the mission statement, along with some options, as an effective way to garner feedback from the college community.

Ultimately, the statement must uniquely reflect the college's mission and speak to students and the larger higher education community, without adding so many words and ideas that it becomes clouded. Hancock urged council members with any ideas about the statement to contact her, Powers or Nesler.

The vision statement is another important piece of the future for the college. Nesler asked council members to think about where the college would like to be in five years, and how they would know when they achieved the goals set forth by the vision statement. Hancock said that the vertical and horizontal expansion of programming could be set as a priority, and the college is looking to make strategic moves geographically where possible, including one day owning property in New York City. Nesler summed up the steps taken by the college in the past as being opportunistic, rather than being strategic. With careful consideration in regards to building relationships with other SUNY institutions, an opportunity to share spaces could benefit all parties.

Hancock spoke about the balance between consistency and individualization that the college is working to achieve. Mawn used the term “inclusive excellence” – increasing the capacity for inclusion in the higher education environment – as a concept to consider for the vision statement.

V. PRESIDENT'S REPORT – PRESIDENT MERODIE HANCOCK

Hancock delivered her report to the council. As part of the restructure, most of the regional deans moved to faculty positions or retired, and associate deans began to work fully in their new roles. The transition has presented some difficulty, as expected, due to the high number of faculty and staff working throughout the college. Academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels have begun to move through the internal approval process, giving way to new avenues for future students.

The college celebrated the opening of the new Rochester building with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The building, located at 680 Westfall Road in Brighton, features newly designed student and faculty spaces, meant to encourage access to college resources and the college community.

Hancock has worked with SUNY leadership to help develop a partnership program with the University of the West Indies, called the Center for Leadership and Sustainable Development. University of the West Indies Vice Chancellor Sir Hilary Beckles and SUNY Board of Trustees Chairman H. Carl McCall, among others, helped to establish the center, located at Empire State College's Manhattan location. This has been spurred by, and led to, further involvement and interaction with the Caribbean diaspora in New York City. The efforts of the center fit in nicely with the United Nations' sustainable development goals.

Overall, the college has experienced a decline in enrollments in the past months. This is an unfortunate trend across many colleges, so did not come as a surprise. There are some terms with increased numbers, but not enough to have an effect on the bigger picture. The reserves that were built up in the last few years have helped, and the positions held vacant to save money need to begin to be filled.

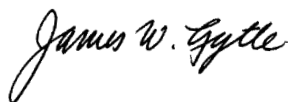
Elliott Dawes has settled in as the chief diversity officer, fulfilling the SUNY mandate. He already has made connections throughout the college by attending events such as the Student Academic Conference.

Multiple searches are ongoing, at the cabinet level and beyond, that really will help the new organizational structure take shape in the coming months.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The council adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



James W. Lytle
Chairman



Mary Caroline Powers
Vice President