

MEETING MINUTES | SEPT. 20, 2017

SUNY Empire State College
2 Union Ave.
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-4390



COLLEGE COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

James Lytle, Council Chairman

G. Angela Henry

Linda Weiss

SUNY EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

Merodie Hancock, President

David Bejou, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Joseph Garcia, Executive Vice President for Administration

Mary Caroline Powers, Vice President for Communications and Government Relations

SENATE REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT:

Anastasia Pratt, Senate Chairwoman

**I. INTRODUCTION OF JOSEPH GARCIA, Ph.D.,
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ADMINISTRATION**

James Lytle introduced Executive Vice President for Administration Joseph Garcia to the council. Garcia explained that his time spent in the military, serving 28 years in the United State Air Force, as well as his work at The Citadel, Military College of South Carolina, drove him to pursue a career at Empire State College. Specifically, Garcia felt a connection with the college's mission. He was able to pursue higher education only after serving in the military for a few years, working and raising a family, and understands the need for adult-learning opportunities like the college provides. As a first-generation college graduate in his family, he was able to see just how impactful having a degree is to a career.

II. INTRODUCTION OF NEWLY ELECTED SENATE CHAIRWOMAN ANASTASIA PRATT

Merodie Hancock introduced newly elected Senate Chairwoman Anastasia Pratt to the council. In addition to the chairwoman position on the college Senate, Pratt represents the college on the University Faculty Senate.

Apart from her work with college governance, Pratt teaches American and public history at the undergraduate level, Master of Arts in Liberal Studies programs at the graduate level, and certificate programs in heritage preservation in public history. Pratt employs various methods in her course-delivery, including online, small groups and residencies, and has recently submitted a proposal for a master's program in public history. Because of her wide range of mentoring practices and experiences, Pratt is able to relate to many other faculty and truly understands the challenges they may face.

III. COUNCIL BUSINESS – CHAIRMAN JAMES LYTLE

The minutes from the May 15, 2017, College Council meeting were approved.

IV. REPORT FROM SENATE – CHAIRWOMAN ANASTASIA PRATT

Pratt stated that there had not yet been a meeting held for the 2017-2018 Senate year, so instead gave an overview of the items and business discussed at the annual Senate retreat that took place in May. During the meeting, Senate approved an advanced certificate in leadership for sustainable development for the School for Graduate Studies, passed a number of policies relating to the college catalog to ensure its function serves students well, and discussed potential changes to the academic calendar. Recently, the structure of college governance changed, from being geographically grouped to a division-based grouping. Pratt said she would update the council on the impact of the changes in future meetings.

V. REPORT FROM ACT – PAST PRESIDENT G. ANGELA HENRY

Lytle apologized for being unable to attend the ACT conference that was held Sept. 15-17 in Albany, N.Y. Past ACT President G. Angela Henry reported on the conference, which had as a strong underlying theme the need for the new members on all of the college councils around the state. Many councils have been left without full membership for years, as the confirmations of nominated prospective members are held up in the governor's office. All councils have been affected by this, including the SUNY Board of Trustees. With so many different organizations within SUNY being affected by the backlog of confirmations, the Empire State College Council is not the highest priority.

Henry remarked on how differently college councils are utilized at each institution – some councils have regular student and governance representation and involvement, while others never do. With the addition of student and governance representation on the Empire State College Council, the varied perspectives offer more value to the community as a whole.

The conference also featured a session on student financial aid and debt, which highlighted some of the disparities Empire State College students experience as part-time, returning students who are ineligible for most of the federal and state tuition assistance programs. Henry suggested that she be armed with the figures of how many students the college has versus how many of the college's students receive aid, and how that fits into the larger SUNY picture. With this information, she could have better advocated on Empire State College's behalf.

Every year, multiple scholarships are awarded to outstanding students, and this year marked the first time the Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher Scholarship for Teacher Education was awarded. The students who receive these scholarships are exemplary in their academics as well as in their service to their communities. Henry mentioned one student in particular who was an active member of her community through the arts and opted to take the full amount of her scholarship award to donate to a charity of her choice that supports individuals and families affected by the repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

Hancock followed up by explaining more on the financial aid situation that the college faces. She and others, including Mary Caroline Powers, Financial Aid Director Michelle Fontaine and Chief of Staff Michael Mancini, have worked to develop a strategy in how best to pursue financial support for part-time students, which make up so much of the college's population. The Excelsior Scholarship, announced by the governor's office to be offered beginning in the fall of 2017, will provide tuition-free degrees to many people, but will not apply to the majority of Empire State College students. As part of this work, Hancock has been in touch with people who are close to the governor's office, such as members of the SUNY Board of Trustees, but the advice has varied greatly. They have reviewed options like working to expand part-time TAP or to open the option of the Excelsior Scholarship for part-time students, and are carefully considering which scenario would be most effective for the greatest number of Empire State College students. Currently, the college has no more than 20 students who qualify for part-time TAP, and nearly 10,000 part-time students. These numbers are sometimes represented in such a way that makes it seem like Empire State College doesn't have students who need the financial assistance when compared to other schools, when really, they have a great need for assistance but simply do not qualify based on enrollment. Lytle offered his help in coming up with a plan to best approach this issue, suggesting that providing a plan on how to ensure students have a clear path to degree completion might make a difference. Tuition assistance would likely have to be tied to some sort of timeline career end-goal to separate serious part-time students from those taking courses with no path in mind. Another aspect of financial issues that affect many Empire State College students is the accumulation of debt without degree completion. The loan default rate of Empire State College is lower than the national average, which reflects well especially when compared to other similar access schools.

Hancock attended the first presidents meeting with newly appointed SUNY Chancellor Kristina Johnson. Johnson represents a very grounded, research-centric addition to lead SUNY in the wake of Zimpher's legacy. Empire State College does not quite fit in with the other comprehensive schools that were represented, but rather might occupy a unique space within SUNY. Hancock will be meeting with Chancellor Johnson to work through the challenges the college faces and ultimately help determine how it should be categorized within SUNY.

VI. PRESIDENT'S REPORT – PRESIDENT MERODIE HANCOCK

The college's strategic planning process is well underway and will include a master academic plan developed by Provost Bejou and his group in support of the plan. Other features will include plans for risk assessment, information technology and facilities, all supported by a larger strategic financial plan. With the balanced scorecard approach, the college will be looking for the effects of the plans put into place, not just the actions alone. For this meeting, Garcia gave a report reviewing the strategic financial plan.

Lytle added that in addition to his own involvement on the strategic plan committee, other council members might be able to offer insight to future discussions.

Garcia presented to the council via PowerPoint, focusing on the overall fiscal health of the college, putting the numbers that make up the budget into context. Given the financial challenges that can face an institution, it's important for the college to utilize fiscal planning and measurement tools such as metrics and ratios. This gives a better sense of not only what the college is doing, but how the college is doing in the larger financial picture. Garcia said that the main focus for assessing the college's status is the Composite Financial Index, or CFI. In terms of assets accumulated over time, Empire State College is qualified as having "stable or strong fiscal health" by SUNY, though it's difficult to compare to other SUNY institutions because each one has very different factors that must be considered. Primary reserves, net operating revenue and return on net assets are all factored in to rate each SUNY institution.

SUNY sets a target of keeping reserve funds of at least 10 percent of the operating budget, but Empire State College has set a goal of maintaining 15 percent of the operating budget for reserve funds. These funds would help the college handle challenges such as enrollment trend changes, and beyond that amount, reserves could be used for larger investments such as collegewide customer relationship management (CRM) technology applications. The past few years, the college has been able to limit expenses so that even during times when revenue has decreased, the reserves were able to remain at a comfortable level.

Hiring practices for new faculty and staff must be done in a selective way to ensure that the students, enrolled credits and staff hired to deliver the credits all follow the same trends. If there are fewer credit hours, for example, the college shouldn't see a great increase of hired adjunct instructors. Limiting rehiring and new hires among support staff and management confidential employees has accounted for downward hiring trends and, therefore, saving as well. Personnel costs factor in more heavily than lease

costs for the college, though more college-owned facility options are being sought to reduce the lease costs even further. However, the factor with the biggest impact on the college revenue overall is student enrollment and completion.

The college must remain focused on a favorable return on investment while also staying true to its mission. Garcia employs what he refers to as a three-dimensional review of the resource allocation structure, made up of the strategic plan, risk mitigation and return on investment. To achieve the most favorable fiscal position, members of the president's cabinet have worked together to weigh the risks of investments to think in a longer-term way by hiring the most effective positions or making the best facilities moves and decisions, or even diversifying revenue through new programs and grants.

The Office of Advancement is planning for a capital campaign with a goal of \$20-30 million with no plans to pursue funds for buildings. With assistance from the provost's office and possibly academic chairs, Hancock explained that they would like to reach out to donors with thank you notes and letters sharing more about what a donation means to the college and its students. In order to align with the celebration of the college's 50th year, 2021, the campaign would begin to go public in 2018 or 2019.

VII. DISCUSSION TOPIC: REVIEW OF FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS – JOSEPH GARCIA

A. Review of Improvements to Various College Locations

In the past few years, the college has made many improvements to its facilities around the state. These updates were shared with council members with a PowerPoint presentation. Through a shared services agreement, Empire State College now has access to a large data center located at the University at Albany. The old data center was located in the basement of 3 Union Ave., Saratoga Springs, which was not ideal for many reasons including risk of flooding and less general security. With the new location, the data center is up and running around the clock and allows for more staff and student support. The new center adds an academic research network to the student experience as well, which allows students to access Oracle-based applications for research purposes.

Many of the college's locations have been improved through minor redesign, such as new meeting spaces, the addition or upgrading of current signage and fresh paint and furnishings. This has been done in an effort to achieve a consistent "Empire State College look" to help connect student, staff and faculty experiences, no matter the geographic location. These locations include Binghamton, Utica, Nanuet and Batavia. Most of the signage was produced in-house at the college's Print Shop. The Fredonia location also was improved by moving to a new incubator center building shared with SUNY Fredonia to better reach students.

B. Video Tour of Rochester

The ribbon cutting for the new Rochester building took place in November 2016 with local government and community leaders in attendance, such as SUNY Trustee and Chamber of Commerce President Bob Duffy, State Assembly Majority Leader Joe Morelle, Brighton Town Supervisor Bill Moehle and

State Senator Joe Robach. The college's goal was to build a facility that would pull together academic and civic communities with physical space and technology and through grants awarded, they were able to achieve that.

C. Video Tour of Staten Island

Dennis Modafferi, Staten Island site coordinator, narrated a video tour to share with the council members, showcasing the new improvements made such as remodeling spaces and adding a suite space. The Staten Island location serves 1,300 students with paraprofessionals from the United Federation of Teachers making up the majority. The location frequently hosts students in classroom and study group environments as well as for general open study time and the new design suits these needs well.

D. Coming Soon – 111 West Ave.

The next facilities projects scheduled for Saratoga Springs locations include general meeting room and building mechanics updates at 3 Union Ave. and the complete renovation including the addition of a 1 Stop Student Services center in 111 West Ave. The 111 West Ave. student services center will allow staff to be grouped together in a way that will encourage communication and ultimately help them best tend to student needs.

E. Selden – Groundbreaking Details

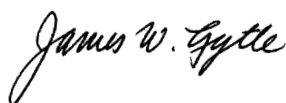
A new building is being built in Selden to serve Long Island students and will be very similar to the design of the Rochester building. All council members were invited to attend the official groundbreaking ceremony in Selden on Tuesday, Oct. 10, 2017. Sen. Kenneth LaValle was instrumental in securing funding and helping the college pursue this new space and will be in attendance at the groundbreaking. Hancock said that the details of the interior spaces are still being worked out and they are considering filling the currently empty wings of the building with a makerspace or creative or performing arts space, but that will be determined at a later date.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

This meeting marked the last time G. Angela Henry would be joining the council, as her term had expired in 2016. Lytle recognized Henry as a valuable member of the team and an asset to the college and SUNY as a whole through her participation and service in ACT. Henry expressed that while she didn't attend Empire State College, she found a connection to the mission and was honored to accept the position on the council. The council members thanked her for her time and commitment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



James W. Lytle
Chairman



Mary Caroline Powers
Vice President