

MEETING MINUTES | SEPT. 16, 2015

Coordinating Center
2 Union Ave.
Saratoga Springs, N.Y.



MEMBERS PRESENT:

James Lytle, Council Chairman
Anthony Esposito
G. Angela Henry
Lori Jiava, via phone
Patricia Salkin, via phone
Linda Weiss

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

Merodie Hancock, President
Mitchell Nesler, Vice President for Decision Support
Alfred Ntoko, Provost
Mary Caroline Powers, Vice President for Communications and Government Relations
Clayton Steen, Vice President for Enrollment Management
Paul Tucci, Vice President for Administration

SENATE REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT:

Mary Mawn, Senate Chairwoman

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the May 7, 2015, meeting were approved.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

SENATE REPORT

Mary Mawn introduced herself to the council as the newly elected senate chairwoman, appointed during the last senate meeting. Mawn has been with the college since 2007, currently working as an associate professor of biology in the Center for Distance Learning. She is specifically interested in the subject of teaching science online and developing ways to engage distance learners in practical lab work.

To begin her work with the senate, Mawn met with President Merodie Hancock to discuss improving communications with governance and creating an opportunity for faculty achievements to be showcased both internally and externally. A senate committee was formed last year to begin work in

the current year to review the governance structure and models from different institutions to possibly change the way it operates at the college. As the college restructures, governance will be looking to see what changes and adaptations might best suit the new framework.

The governance chairs will be meeting the week of Sept. 21, 2015, to prepare the agenda for the first senate meeting of the year, to be held in October.

Mawn spoke about the inaugural run of the microbiology course at the college that she coordinated, allowing distance students to take a full lab-based science course. There were many students interested in the course that resulted in full enrollment, which was capped at 17.

The full hands-on lab component for students studying at home is not widely available in higher education, and, while there is a cost associated with purchasing the lab kits which include microscopes, the cost is comparable to a lab fee students would have to pay at a traditional brick-and-mortar institution. Data will be gathered on the course to gauge its effectiveness and to determine how best to proceed with this model going forward, comparing face-to-face experiences with online.

A few years ago, Mawn received a Motorola grant that funded the development of Biology 1 and 2, Chemistry 1 and 2 and Physics 1 and 2, all fully online. She will be presenting on this process at the Online Learning Consortium with her colleague Ken Charuk. Mawn has seen some pushback at conferences at the idea of online lab-based science courses, but she is working to compile data from Empire State College to show that it can be done successfully.

There are online science courses offered by other institutions, but there has not yet been a set of standards established. Mawn will be working in cooperation with the American Society of Microbiology to set guidelines for what should make up an online microbiology course, including special considerations, such as safety. Mawn represented biology on behalf of Empire State College at discussions surrounding SUNY seamless transfer programs. Some schools are concerned that the online science programs, along with the seamless transfer options, could drive students away from the more traditional offerings at some SUNYs. Mawn will be presenting at an upcoming SUNY STEM conference to discuss the transferability of online science course credits. She also was invited to contribute a chapter to a book on online science courses.

ACT REPORT

Angela Henry reported to the council that the annual ACT conference will be held Oct. 16-18, 2015, in Saratoga Springs at the Gideon Putnam. The main purpose of the conference this year will be to inform, with a number of discussion panels covering such topics as presidential searches and the cultivation of relationships between foundation boards and college councils. The panels will feature former and current presidents, SUNY System representatives and a search consultant.

Both Chancellor Nancy Zimpher and Chairman H. Carl McCall will be in attendance and students will be awarded ACT scholarships. All council members were invited and encouraged to join the conference if they are able. Henry said she would share the invitation with all her ESC council colleagues.

Jim Lytle suggested that there is a need for further conversation with the Empire State College Foundation to best coordinate efforts. Hancock added that with capital campaign underway, it's important that the College Council and the Foundation Board are sharing the same vision for the

direction of the college. Other council members agreed that further meetings with the Foundation Board would be useful in facilitating discussions. Lytle asked Mary Caroline Powers to explore the option of sharing meeting time with the Foundation Board in the future.

REPORTS FROM VICE PRESIDENTS

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION

The council thanked Vice President Paul Tucci for his service to the college, as this meeting would be his last before his planned retirement at the end of November.

Tucci reported on the past two years of finances at the college, sharing expenditure information with the council. In the 2014-2015 budget, the total expense was \$87 million and of that, \$50 million, or 57 percent of the budget, was spent in Academic Affairs. Hancock noted that for-profit colleges and universities on average have under 30 percent of their budgets in academics, with most of the funding going to marketing efforts. Marketing costs at the college are very low compared to other institutions. At the end of the 2014-2015 year, the budget ended with approximately \$6.4 million in gains. This money will be put toward the reserve funds, faculty and staff in the form of deficit reduction leave repayment and covering the cost of one-time expenditures.

Moving forward for 2015-2016, the college has allocated \$97.9 million. Tucci shared the breakdown of this money and how it will be used throughout the college. Tony Esposito asked if the college had many minimum wage workers that could be affected by the push to increase the minimum wage to \$15. Hancock said she spoke with Vice President for Human Resources Mary Ellen Keeney about this and the college does not have many individuals who fall into this category, however other schools will see an impact with the employees who work on campus in food service and dormitories, especially.

The data presented to the council will be rolled into an annual report. The numbers show that there is approximately \$5 million more budgeted this year than what was budgeted last year. Typically the amount proposed for allocation is higher than what will actually be spent by the end of the budget year, but it is better to have the money to spend as needed than to estimate too low. The state budget year begins in April, while SUNY's budget year begins in July. This creates a situation where there are five "quarters" that the college needs to plan for and work within as the schedules don't quite align.

Tucci said that there has been some pressure to spend capital dollars that have been allocated, but it is not an easy task with the amount of time and planning that must go into each project.

The new college building in Rochester is not yet completed, but the current timeline shows the work to be done in January 2016. A certificate of occupancy is expected by April 2016 after furnishings are put into place, with move in beginning in May 2016.

The purchase of land to build on in Selden is nearly complete; however, some adjustments to the building plans had to be made due to the delay in construction. Funding was put into place in 2007, but with changing costs, 5,000 sq. ft. had to be cut out of the blueprints, requiring further work with the architect to finalize the new plans. This project will go to bid for construction in January or February 2016 and then to contract by June. Building is expected to take 18 months to complete after that. Both Rochester and Selden are examples of ways in which the college is looking carefully at leased space to gauge its value to the college, in terms of cost and effective use of the space.

Lytle moved to pass a resolution in acknowledgment and appreciation of Tucci's service to the college and the resolution was passed.

Patricia Salkin offered her assistance in working with the Empire State College Foundation on future fundraising initiatives.

OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Alfred Ntoko spoke about the submission of an investment fund application for \$1.1 million to fund the launch two new academic programs in Allied Health and Construction Management, and to expand the college's New York City footprint. The college's white paper submission was accepted and now a full program proposal will be submitted for consideration.

The application highlights the importance of skilled health care workers, especially in the workforce today, with fast-changing policies and regulations. Empire State College would collaborate with SUNY community colleges to meet the needs of the students in the program. The college already has the completed concepts for a Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences, which would complement students holding associate degrees or certificates in the field.

A strong case also is made for the proposed Construction Management program. The National Labor College offered an online construction management program and its data showed that it was its fastest growing program in 2013, but the closure of the NLC in 2014, created a gap in programming. With the many contacts and partners Empire State College has formed through The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies in New York City and its teach-out partnership with the NLC, the college could leverage its resources to create a robust curriculum.

Empire State College currently offers a concentration in construction management within the Business, Management and Economics area of study, but this proposal suggests the full expansion of that concentration into its own area of study with its own specialized concentrations, such as sustainable construction and various types of hazardous reclamation work.

An important part of this funding, if granted to the college, would be the cost of bringing faculty and curriculum designers in house. The initial funding would hopefully get the programs running effectively enough that they could quickly sustain themselves.

Esposito asked about the labor studies location that the college used to have in Queens. Hancock replied that the college will be working to connect the disparate pieces of labor studies that have grown up over time, including the possibility of increasing programming such as adding bachelor's degree options and expanding the areas where its available. Ntoko added that they are looking into incorporating a location in Queens to broaden access for Metropolitan-area students for other programs.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hancock spoke about the ESC 2.0 initiative, specifically regarding ways in which it could be improved. The efforts thus far have lacked innovation by comparing Empire State College to other SUNYs when its model is so different than most and the true competition in nontraditional higher education exists

all around the world. The college faces a number of challenges in keeping up with regulatory changes, especially surrounding financial aid, while being competitive on a large scale and staying true to its mission to the students.

In the past, the college has been organized in a way that it has had to work against itself. Some restructuring and reorganization is being planned, including the reorganization of academics and streamlining recruitment tools for effectiveness such as the automation of tasks where possible so staff members have a greater ability to focus on the students. Changes will be taking place to the website, digital storage, collegewide calendar, and signage and leased spaces to better use the available resources to serve students. Faculty were previously hired by location, but now will be hired by the college to potentially move around, offering seminars and holding office hours where appropriate. All of these things will change the way the college's spaces are used.

Communications have not been easy, with difficulty building trust across the college community. Efforts are being made by the Office of the President to provide straightforward information as frequently as possible, usually presented at the regular town hall-style meetings that take place.

Some of the solid decisions that have been made include the additions of a vice president for enrollment management, who will oversee three executive directors; a dean of undergraduate studies and a dean of graduate studies; a dean of academic support; five associate deans to oversee the new Areas of Study groupings; a department composed of existing staff who will work under the Office of Administration on facilities addressing any issues that arise with leased spaces.

Nikki Shrimpton was appointed dean of undergraduate studies effective Sept. 1, 2015, and in this role, she will examine the faculty model that the college has held onto for so long. The college doesn't currently offer much room for advancement for faculty, but this will hopefully be changing.

Lytle asked what the executive director position entails. Hancock said that the executive directors would be responsible for how the regional facilities operate, including some of the look and feel. The focus would be to maintain a welcoming environment for students to use classroom space despite taking online courses or to seek a number of types of assistance. A key part of this regional-based facilities plan will be to use them to their fullest potential, which will include increased use for community engagement and recruitment.

There will be three executive directors hired at one time, with the search initially open internally and then open to the external candidates if the pool isn't robust enough. Above all else, the positions will require the potential candidates to identify and meet the needs of successful students.

The Human Capital Committee has been formed and has heard a few things in common across employee groups: it's difficult to move up within the college because unless you move to Saratoga Springs, there just aren't the same opportunities and there's potential to know if you're naturally good at something else because of your current position. This committee plans to ask, when opportunities arise, whether it's necessary, when a position is being hired for, that it be located in Saratoga, Springs for example. With more technology-based options, it shouldn't be as difficult as it might have been in the past to spread out faculty and staff so that they can function better outside of the Coordinating Center.

Mawn said that senate would lag behind on reorganizing to reflect the new structure, as they have planned one more year of center-based representation. Speaking as a faculty member, Mawn told the

council that she felt this model will strengthen the academics offerings and relationships among faculty members and their students by extension

The new regional model will allow the college to be more strategic in its planning, and while locations won't be taken away, there will be a push for greater consistency, especially with academic policy. The facilities will include more virtual connectivity and offer all learning options to students everywhere, consistently across the college, and they will play on the strengths of the facilities themselves and faculty located there.

SUNY EXCELS

Mitch Nesler presented to the council members on the systemwide SUNY Excels initiative meant to improve the lives of people across the state by using the reach and cooperation of SUNY institutions to their fullest potential. Each campus within SUNY will form a five-year plan to bring out the strengths of that particular institution to contribute to the whole system. The five key areas to be addressed in SUNY Excels are: access, completion, success, inquiry and engagement. The deadline to submit the plan for Empire State College is Oct. 21.

In the past, the SUNY system was the largest public higher education system in the nation, but the comprehensive University of California system is now the largest based on size of enrollment. While SUNY has seen a reduction in size by approximately 3.5 percent, mostly concentrated in the community colleges, the private institutions in New York have grown by approximately 3 percent.

Nesler said that he and others at the college are looking into factors that could be improved upon, such as faculty diversity, where nationally the average is 20 percent of faculty are minorities and at Empire State College, the average is 15 percent. Dropping numbers in student headcount is another factor that will be considered to improve upon to be able to better serve the communities across the state.

The SUNY Excels criteria is the basis for presidential evaluation, which serves the college well because the goals set forth by the initiative are things that the college is working on anyway. The key points are important to the growth and success and, while the college is doing well, there is still more that can be done to improve. SUNY Excels provides the blueprints for the college to be a stronger force in higher education.

The college is using data to put a spotlight on areas that need more attention, such as the use of the new customer relationship management software to uncover points at which students are falling away from the college.

The new regional center model is designed to help any student who comes in, whether they're interested in face-to-face or online learning, ensuring that students will receive help even if the center doesn't specialize in a specific program.

Graduation ceremonies have seen an increase in attendance in 2015, which is a result of allowing students to attend whichever of the offered locations best suits them. Their participation is no longer dependent on their college department or center affiliation.

WHITE HOUSE VISIT

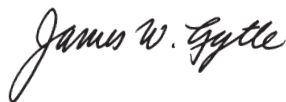
Hancock recently visited the White House, accompanied by Center for Distance Learning Mentor Sheila Aird, to attend an event that welcomed representatives from colleges and universities from across the country to discuss interfaith and community-based initiatives. Empire State College was the only nontraditional college represented and the invitation to participate was appreciated, but the event didn't entirely relate to the college's situation. However, Hancock said, some people around the college community will be looking separately into local initiatives that might provide similar opportunities for students.

Linda Weiss noted that the change in structure of locations and types of services available will allow for greater flexibility for wider religious observance, which provides a more inclusive environment for everyone.

Hancock shared that after a meeting regarding Open SUNY, SUNY institutions are regrouping. They are concerned with funding in particular, and the thought of using funds for things that don't necessarily serve their missions and their students. There are discussions about classifying a school as a "SUNY Plus" school, instead of the previous plan of deeming online degrees "SUNY Plus" degrees. Students should have access to programs and opportunities that allow them to move through SUNY institutions seamlessly, and Open SUNY could provide services to help bridge any gaps. The dialog surrounding Open SUNY is evolving and becoming a more feasible solution for SUNY institutions to better assist their students.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5 p.m.



James W. Lytle
Chairman



Mary Caroline Powers
Vice President