



## College Council Meeting Minutes

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**Wednesday, May 15, 2024**  
**Williams Center S204DE**

Prepared by Dr. Naomi Baldwin, Interim Chief of Staff and Executive Assistant

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**President's Cabinet Members Present:** President Kolison, Naomi Baldwin, Maria Carroll, Kathryn Kendall, Michel Kouadio, Karen Rohr, Vicki T. Sapp, David Starrett, Tracy Stenger, Jeff Woodard

**College Council Members Present:** Frank Pagano, Cynthia Ahlstrom, Richard Alexander, AJ Dolce, Stephen Keefe, Richard Morrisroe, Rosie Rapisarda

**Absent:** Tamu Graham-Reinhardt

**Guests:** Justin Rose, IT; Dr. Bruce Simon, Chair of University Senate, Dr. Rob Deemer, SUNY Faculty Senator, Markus Kessler, Director of Facilities Planning

### Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m.

### Approval of Minutes

There was a motion from AJ Dolce to approve the March 22, 2024, minutes, seconded by Richard Alexander. The minutes were approved.

### Report from the President

Presented by Dr. Stephen H. Kolison, Jr., University President

President Kolison began the last meeting of the academic year with a message of gratitude to the College Council members for their time and contributions to advance SUNY Fredonia. He updated the College Council members about the upcoming

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Commencement ceremony on May 18, 2024. There will be approximately 540 undergraduate students and 85 graduate students receiving their degrees.

Chairman Pagano offered a few remarks to the College Council members to plan for Commencement Day. The council members will use the ramps to go on stage to assist Chairman Pagano with the diploma cover distribution.

President Kolison acknowledged some of our distinguished students for the 2023-24 academic year, the Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence award recipients, Amanda Keppel and Chloe Kowalyk, the Lanford Presidential Prize recipient, Patience Glatt, and the Norman R. McConney, Jr., EOP Student Excellence award recipient, Yan Jiang.

In terms of leadership updates, President Kolison introduced Dr. Kathryn Kendall, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Services. The search to fill the vacant Vice President for Finance and Administration will launch this summer. In the meantime, the leadership of the Finance and Administration division is being overseen by Dr. Starrett and President Kolison. Finally, Jennifer Costa will be overseeing HR operations for the summer and fall 2024 semester.

President Kolison offered an overview of the recent New York State budget outcomes for SUNY. Considering the continued funding of \$163 million and a new allocation of \$114 million from the state, the system has received the highest funding in the last 50 years. The new allocation will be to assist campuses with operational costs. These new funds will be allocated to the various SUNY sectors using a formula, and the comprehensive sector institutions will receive about \$23.1 million total. SUNY Fredonia's allocation of the new funds will be approximately \$1.25 million, which covers a portion of the state-negotiated salary increases and increased internship support. While the new allocation does not completely cover all increases in salaries, it is the first time campuses have received this kind of funding. As a final note, President Kolison added that the release of these new funds is conditional on the finalized, SUNY-approved 5-year financial stability plan.

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In closing of his presentation, President Kolison offered a summary of some of the capital investments the SUNY Fredonia campus has received. Over multiple years, 2022-2028, the campus will receive an estimated \$227 million.

These funds are separate from the campus operational funds and demonstrate another way that New York State and the SUNY system support the success of our campus. These funds are awarded based on proposals and demonstrations of plans throughout the course of the projects. Therefore, the funds can be subject to further review. As one example of ongoing review of projects, President Kolison updated the group about the Jewett Hall renovation project, which has been in progress for a few years. The design phase was recently completed but then put on hold for re-examination by SUNY. After some additional discussions, the campus has received assurances that Jewett Hall's renovations will continue. It is a key project to help our campus establish a centralized student services building, and once completed, the renovated building will include offices such as the registrar's office, advising, financial aid, international student services, the career development program, and others, which is a stronger model of delivering student services and will be vital to student experience and retention efforts.

President Kolison emphasized that the capital investment funds cannot be used toward the campus operational costs and therefore do not contribute to reducing the campus deficit.

For follow-up questions, Mr. Keefe asked how we highlight the student award recipients. They are announced in the local papers and in the papers of their local high schools. President Kolison also follows up with the high school principals.

Ms. Ahlstrom asked about the five-year plan and when the deadline is to submit it. President Kolison will offer updates to the group when he has more information about the timeline and finalization.

President Kolison introduced Markus Kessler, Director of Facilities Planning, to offer a special report to the College Council members on the capital investments and construction projects, current and future.

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### Special Report from Facilities Planning

Presented by Mr. Markus Kessler, Director of Facilities Planning

Mr. Kessler summarized a table of current projects totaling about \$127 million in capital projects and \$112,000 in DIFR (residence hall) projects.

The Reed Plaza project has been ongoing, and he expects that to be completed by Fall 2024. The Kirkland Plaza near the Erie Dining Hall and residence hall quads will be replaced, the Maytum roof will be replaced, Mason Hall is having the siding replaced, there are some emergency generators being replaced, and the turf field and track will be replaced. These projects have various completion dates from summer 2024 through 2025.

Projects that are in the documentation stage include the Lanford (exterior), and Jewett Hall; In design, the mechanical and air-hanging units will be replaced in Rockefeller Arts Center, they are rehabilitating the interior of Reed Library for a Learning Commons, and the Mason Hall interior will be refurbished to comply with new accreditation requirements.

Currently under a study phase is the Fenner House, which will have a feasibility study conducted for a community service center associated with the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program. Under the DIFR projects, they are also studying the residence hall complexes comprehensively with the goal of determining the best living environment for students.

Mr. Kessler offered more detailed updates and images of the Jewett Hall plans: We will keep the planetarium, install lounge areas, and create open study areas. The first floor will house the Registrar's Office. They also have designed suite-style offices for the various service areas. The design includes more open spaces to allow natural light and a more welcoming feeling in the building.

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This summer they will also start the renovations of the Kirkland Plaza and the Track and Field, and Mr. Kessler showed images of what those areas will look like.

To finalize the report, Mr. Kessler updated the group on what the upcoming capital project budget will be for SUNY. The (system-wide) SUNY construction fund received about \$550 million for capital improvements. These funds are split in two main portions, a “lump sum” controlled by the construction fund, approximately \$396 million, and another fund that is distributed to campuses, approximately \$153 million through SUBOA, the State University Business Officers Association. The “lump sum” portion is at the discretion of the construction fund and is awarded based on campus proposals. These funds usually cover larger projects such as the Jewett Hall renovation. Campuses must request funding from the construction fund for the “lump sum” allocation.

The portion that goes to the SUBOA group, (\$153 million) is distributed among all state-operated SUNY campuses based on a formula that considers age of the buildings, total square footage, and student enrollments. These funds cover critical maintenance, campus discretionary projects, and some staff salaries. There are decreasing shares of these funds distributed to all campuses because this specific funding to the system overall has decreased by about \$100 million. This year, SUNY Fredonia’s share will be about \$3 million. Though the “lump sum” projects tend to be larger, some smaller projects are proposed for this funding to be sure we are making the most of the SUBOA funds.

Ms. Ahlstrom asked about other athletic facilities being renovated, and Mr. Kessler offered updates about other facilities that will have some minor critical maintenance and further studies such as the ice rink, tennis courts, baseball fields, softball fields, and the Steele Hall fieldhouse.

Chairman Pagano asked about the status of the Erie Dining Hall in the context of the Kirkland Plaza rehab, and Markus clarified that the Erie Dining Hall itself will not be refurbished. This space has been under discussion and various purposes are being explored. The upcoming Facilities Master Plan will be part of determining some of the purposes of buildings like this.

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As a follow up to the future of Fenner House, Chairman Pagano asked if the property has historical property designations. Mr. Kessler clarified that the building is not registered as historical property, but SHPO (State Historical Historic Preservation Office), considers it of historical value due to it belonging to an IM Pei campus, and they have been more involved due to this association.

The distinction between these construction funds and state operating funds was clarified once again, and Mr. Kessler's report was concluded.

### Report from Enrollment Management and Services

Presented by Dr. Kathryn Kendall, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Services

Dr. Kendall offered an update on the search to fill the Director of Admissions position and summarized key aspects of the structure of the new division. The division's main function is to ensure efficient functions of all its direct areas and work collaboratively with other divisions to maximize enrollment of students. The Director will work closely with the Vice President to implement strategic goals and initiatives and oversee the day-to-day operations of the admissions functions; the Vice President will be working with partnerships across the institution to coordinate strategies and make decisions related to enrollment and areas that impact enrollment: best practices for services, recruitment, retention, and the fuller campus experience.

One challenge the division faced this year was a new process from the federal financial aid system, FAFSA. The Department of Education has been implementing a simplification act that has changed the processes and timelines of federal financial aid packages being awarded to students. This year was the first year of implementation, which created some delays in the student deposit timelines due to some technical issues. Typically, institutions receive this information many months earlier, but the delay resulted in the information coming to our campus in April, and about 40% of the information had data errors. As of now, most of the inaccuracies have been addressed and students have their financial aid packages. This delay impacted all institutions

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nationwide, and the SUNY campuses have been following a similar timeline with each other. One major improvement from last year is the frequency of batching and sending packages from twice per week to daily. Thus, the campus has increased responsiveness to students, and they are getting their offers from SUNY Fredonia with less lag time.

Dr. Kendall is using data analytics and some predictive analytics to start benchmarking metrics. Based on her analysis so far, applications and acceptances are up. Deposits are down, but because of the delay, a decrease is expected, and this will recover quickly by the June 1 deadline. The new deposit deadline of June 1 will offer a better estimate of the coming year's enrollments.

Despite the general decrease in students everywhere, our deposits are still on track, which indicates that our yields are improving, and we expect a spike starting in June and continuing beyond.

Chairman Pagano asked about other yield efforts, and Dr. Kendall elaborated on some of the additional support resources that students are getting from the campus and the FAFSA website to be sure they understand the packaging and the next steps they need to take. With these efforts and others, the admissions team is focusing on yield activities and follow-up engagement communications to the students. She is currently conducting a full audit of the communication plan with accepted students, and in partnership with marketing experts, they are looking at the timing and content of the messages to further enhance yield.

Dr. Kendall completed her report by noting that enrollment is not a goal, it is an ongoing process. The campus might have a target number in mind as a goal, but the entire team is constantly working through the process and building strategies to build enrollment. She offered some examples of what the team has been doing to increase yield, establish new touch points, and make connections with students. There is not a single action that will improve enrollment, but it will be a series of multiple steps and coordinated strategies across the institution that will grow enrollment.

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Chairman Pagano asked about the website redesigns. Mr. Woodard offered an updated timeline and a summary of the ways that the web design and content will be revised to support recruitment efforts. There will be updates starting the second week of June with multiple notices to campus prior to the official launch.

Ms. Ahlstrom asked about the Director of Admissions position and the timing it is taking to fill the position. Dr. Starrett offered an update that there have been three failed searches since 2022. An interim appointment is in place while the search to fill the position permanently has been underway. In the meantime, the Vice President position was put into place to strengthen the leadership of the area. The director position is incredibly competitive in today's higher education climate.

### Report from University Advancement and Marketing and Communications

Presented by Ms. Karen Rohr, Vice President for University Advancement and Executive Director of the Fredonia College Foundation and Mr. Jeff Woodard, Director of Marketing and Communications

The Day of Giving (April 3) surpassed their goal of \$50,000 by about \$18,000. This success, which yielded \$22,000 more than last year, was attributed to a new crowdsourcing platform and social media content.

The Bicentennial Fund has been contributing to yield and retention efforts and has been helpful in leveraging our full financial aid packages to help students with critical needs who would otherwise not be able to attend SUNY Fredonia. The Bicentennial Celebration steering committee will be appointed by President Kolison in the coming weeks to start planning for the 200<sup>th</sup> year anniversary celebration, which University Advancement will be spearheading. Ms. Rohr encouraged the College Council members to engage in this planning process.

There have been some significant investments in staffing and student interns to help with marketing and social media activity, and Mr. Woodard offered more details about these investments. There are four interns who will be helping with social media. They also have a dedicated social media staff member, the first in SUNY Fredonia's history.



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Mr. Woodard offered additional remarks on the impact this position has already had and the increased social media activity.

Mr. Woodard closed his report by offering compliments to Dr. Kendall's leadership and his positive experience with the marketing team and enrollment team and their collaboration.

### Report from the President of the Student Association

Presented by Ms. Rosie Rapisarda, President of Student Association

Ms. Rapisarda offered comments to President Kolison about his presentation and the importance to the student body of the clarification between the construction funds and operational funds. She then summarized the activities of SA to strengthen their leadership and leadership style. They have been working hard on fostering a sense of community through various activities, and they hosted three different town halls, including a student-administrator panel.

Four of the five current Student Association executives will be graduating, and the SA leaders have been prioritizing the training of successors to be sure they have a solid foundation on which to launch their leadership.

Ms. Rapisarda expressed her thanks to the College Council members and President Kolison.

### Report from the University Senate

Presented by Dr. Bruce Simon, Chair of University Senate

Dr. Simon began his report with the introduction of the incoming Chairperson of the University Senate, Dr. Rob Deemer, and he updated the group on other incoming University Senate Executive Committee roles. They are working on finding a fifth committee member and secretary.

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One of the major themes this year has been curricular innovation and transformation. There have been more program revisions and deactivations than new degree programs, and they will continue doing this work to result in a robust academic array that is attractive to students.

Another major initiative is to advocate for fair funding for SUNY Fredonia. The senate has passed a resolution to draw attention to the culmination of decreased funding from the state over time, to re-assess the SUNY allocation process and develop more equitable ways to fund campuses that would ensure affordability and access to public higher education. The goal is to partner with the system and look at procedures that no longer work for the system.

There is a task force that will be looking at arts-centric campus like Fredonia, Potsdam, and Purchase to highlight the needs of those programs and to offer insight on what a sustainable and equitable funding model might look like to ensure these high-touch programs and the students in them can thrive.

Dr. Simon and Dr. Baldwin will be co-chairing the search committee for the new Vice President for Finance and Administration. Their work will begin this summer to secure a new vice president as quickly as possible.

Chairman Pagano asked about the composition of the search committee. Dr. Simon clarified that there were fewer faculty appointed to the committee due to the nature of the role; Chairman Pagano advised that the committee be sure to include those with a background in finance.

Dr. Simon closed his report with assurances that the partnership with President Kolison and Provost Starrett will continue and thanked the cabinet members for the support of their work and collaboration. President Kolison echoed the sentiments of Dr. Simon and offered his gratitude to the University Senate Executive Committee members.

### Report from the Coalition Committee

Presented by Mr. Richard Alexander, College Council member

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Mr. Alexander updated the group about the membership and activity. The group is comprised of College Council members, Chamber of Commerce staff, University Senate leadership, County Legislators, Village of Fredonia officials, and community members. The group has been meeting to establish a framework and to prioritize and focus their goals.

Among their goals is to help advocate for the ongoing requests for Brooks Hospital funding, help local businesses, advocate for funding, and support the university in enrollment efforts.

### Remarks from Chair of College Council and College Council Members

Chairman Pagano closed the meeting with congratulations to the 2024 graduating students, and he encouraged the College Council members to attend the ceremonies on Saturday. He thanked those offering reports during the meeting and for the wonderful examples of collaboration.

Chairman Pagano asked a follow-up question about the retention efforts, and Dr. Kendall offered some examples of how her area is working with the Assistant Vice President for Retention and Academic Success.

### Meeting Adjourned

Chairman Pagano called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Richard Morrisroe and seconded by AJ Dolce. The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.