



College Council Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 9, 2024
University Village Conference Room

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

President's Cabinet Members Present: President Kolison, Naomi Baldwin, Jennifer Costa, Kathryn Kendall, Michel Kouadio, Vicki T. Sapp, David Starrett, Tracy Stenger, Jeff Woodard

Absent: Karen Rohr

College Council Members Present: Frank Pagano, Cynthia Ahlstrom, Richard Alexander, AJ Dolce, Tamu Graham-Reinhardt, Richard Morrisroe

Absent: Stephen Keefe, Dakota Richter

Guests: Justin Rose, IT; Dr. Rob Deemer, Chair of University Senate, Daniel Quagliana, SA Speaker standing in for Student Association

Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 a.m. and Chairman Pagano asked for a motion to move into an executive session. The motion was made by Mr. Morrisroe, seconded by Mr. Alexander. The meeting moved into an executive session, which ended at 11:04 a.m.

Dr. Kendall was introduced to offer an update from the division of Enrollment Management and Services.

Report from Enrollment Management and Services

Presented by Dr. Kathryn Kendall, Vice President for Finance and Administration

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Dr. Kendall presented information about the Fall 2024 application cycle. Overall, there were increases in the total numbers of students, and the increases were concentrated in the first-time first-year (FTFY) new students and new graduate student populations. While applications have increased, the acceptance rate has decreased, showing that the university is continuing to maintain standards for the students being accepted. Enrollments are about 100 ahead of last year in terms of the incoming class. Dr. Kendall clarified some of the terminology commonly used to report student enrollment numbers.

In terms of retention, the first-year retention is 76.4% and total retention, including students who graduate, is 70%. This is at or above the national average, which is 76.5% for first-year retention and 68% for total retention. Dr. Kendall noted that the retention rates have improved with the appointment of the Assistant Vice President for Retention and Academic Success.

In terms of trends, the enrollment between Fall 2023 and Fall 2024 shows a halt in the downward trend. This is an indicator that the university's strategies have been effective, and performance exceeded the projections. Dr. Kendall will continue to prioritize resources to ensure that they continue performing over the projections.

The FAFSA challenges that Dr. Kendall reported last May are continuing, and the team is working through the FAFSA processes and ensuring the students are getting accurate packages.

She summarized some strategies that will continue moving the institution forward. The team will be leveraging the Slate system to maximize its recruitment power, they are awarding scholarships more strategically, planning more on-campus visits, coordinating more intentionally with academic units, and expanding graduate and international recruitment efforts.

President Kolison underscored the importance of these strategies as examples that demonstrate that the university is urgently working on turning the enrollment around and that delivering on investments to serve students in the best way possible.

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Ms. Ahlstrom asked what factors might be involved in the decrease in transfer students, and Dr. Kendall noted a combination of things. Overall, there is a decline in enrollment in community colleges, which then impacts the available students who can transfer. To mediate this, they are working with intentional partnerships with other regional community colleges. Another opportunity is to look at transfer students from other four-year universities/colleges in cases when students have decided not to continue with their initial choice of university. SUNY is working on building a transfer student portal for the system so students can compare what will transfer at different SUNY institutions. Ms. Ahlstrom asked a follow-up question about the reasons students do not select Fredonia, and Dr. Kendall clarified that as part of the yield efforts, admitted students who do not enroll receive a survey that helps the university collect additional data that provides insight on what can be done differently.

Mr. Alexander asked for clarification about the partnership with JCC, and Dr. Kendall explained the preferred partnership and the distinction from the SUNY transfer portal.

Ms. Ahlstrom asked if students have offered feedback based on the online course offerings. Dr. Kendall has not received any feedback about this, and acknowledged that online programming, done well, would increase our marketing opportunities and service to new student populations. Ms. Ahlstrom suggested that online programs could be an area that would offer Fredonia a more competitive advantage. President Kolison noted that the JCC preferred partnership will be a part of this kind of growth and will help Fredonia programs become even more visible for JCC students.

Ms. Ahlstrom asked about the enrollment in the 3-1-3 program (early admission program for high school students.) If high school students prefer to earn college credits through JCC instead of the 3-1-3 program, she asked about opportunities to work with the students in the high schools not affiliated with JCC. Dr. Kendall clarified that these would already be local students in the county, in commutable distance to both campuses, so there would be likely be overlap.

Mr. Morrisroe asked what has the trend of out-of-state student enrollment. Dr. Kendall will investigate this further, and she will present a historical overview in the future.

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Approval of Minutes

Before progressing to the next divisional report, Chairman Pagano asked for the approval of the minutes from the last meeting. Ms. Ahlstrom made a motion to approve the May 15, 2024, minutes, and Mr. Dolce seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Chairman Pagano offered remarks to the cabinet members and the success they had achieved with enrollment. He designated Richard Alexander to oversee the remainder of the meeting and departed at 11:35 a.m.

Report from Information Technology Services

Presented by Dr. Michel Kouadio, Chief Information Officer

As a special presentation to the council, Dr. Kouadio reviewed the vision of the President to increase the institution's technological innovation approaches. There are many benefits to doing this: It attracts students who are looking for innovative learning opportunities, it is attractive to future employers who are looking for strong skill sets in technology, and it helps distinguish the campus by offering unique opportunities.

Dr. Kouadio offered some examples and demonstrated some of the initiatives they are putting in place. They are implementing an AI chatbot that will help expand and enhance recruitment and services to students, and they will be opening a lab that will offer a wide selection of innovative technologies.

Dr. Kouadio reviewed several of the pieces of equipment available in the Innovation Lab and the applications to teaching and learning. The College Council members were invited to attend the Innovation Lab ribbon-cutting ceremony after the meeting, where Dr. Kouadio will further demonstrate some of the equipment.

Report from Student Affairs

Presented by Dr. Tracy Stenger - Interim Vice President for Student Affairs

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Dr. Stenger introduced the new Athletics Co-Directors, Angela Puccirelli-Rice, and PJ Gondek. There will be a search in the spring for the full-time athletics director with the intent to hire a new director in time for the Fall 2025 semester. There is also a new Athletics Strategic Plan that they are initiating. The plan was developed and approved last spring semester.

Dr. Stenger encouraged council members to attend a game if they could, noting the many different accomplishments student-athletes and their teams achieve. She shared several highlights including both their success on their athletic teams and their service to the campus and the community.

There have been several upgrades to the athletics facilities. The turf field was replaced, which enhanced its safety and increased its use by athletes and student clubs. There are several other projects underway including the outdoor track and field. Noting that there are many critical needs, Dr. Stenger reviewed how the various construction projects are scheduled over a long-term plan and based on the funding and prioritization. Other projects in the works include the repairs to the baseball field, Steele Hall, and the ice rink, which are areas utilized by the campus as well as the community members.

Dr. Stenger reviewed key pieces of the new Athletics Strategic Plan including the mission, vision, values, and goals. This new plan aligns with the SUNY Fredonia strategic plan and the SUNY plan.

Ms. Ahlstrom asked about the baseball field on campus and asked to ensure that a US flag is available for the national anthem. Dr. Stenger confirmed that she will ensure this is in place.

Ms. Graham-Reinhardt offered comments about the value of indoor facilities being available to youth teams. She knows of some teams that are using other facilities in the region and noted that, if possible, SUNY Fredonia's availability could be helpful to bring people to the campus and into the county. Dr. Stenger agreed to follow up on this opportunity.

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Report from the President of the Student Association

Presented by Daniel Quagliana, Student Association Speaker, on behalf of Mr. Dakota Richter, President of the Student Association

Mr. Quagliana offered the report prepared in advance by Mr. Richter, starting with an update of the new SA leaders and the newly elected class presidents.

SUNY Fredonia's SA is working on enhancing the voice at SUNY SGA (Student Government Association) and Mr. Richter offered to liaise on any relevant issues and advocacy efforts as a SUNY SGA representative.

SA held a summit for campus student club leaders, and it was attended by 150 students. The student clubs completed Title IX training and engaged in discussions about the value of the club participation.

SA hosted their first Activities Night, with Mr. Richter taking on the event's main coordination. This was its first year of transitioning from Spectrum's organization to the SA, and Mr. Richter noted indicators of its success such as the number of student sign-ups and a high turnout of class president and other student representation candidates.

Mr. Richter encouraged the College Council members to be on the lookout for a surprise guest speaker to come to campus later in the Fall semester, which SA will announce once confirmed.

Council members were encouraged to attend the Collingwood Distinguished Lecture on Thursday, October 17, at 5:00 p.m. in Rosch Recital Hall. The 2024 speaker is Peppermint, a well-known artist and advocate for transgender justice. While visiting campus, she will also be offering a masterclass to music, theatre, and dance students.

Another guest speaker invitation is underway to talk about mental health on campuses, which will be announced later once confirmed.

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SA is aware of a new law about menstrual health products being offered in all restrooms on campus and is anticipating updates on what a timeline of implementing this might look like.

With a goal of inviting more community members to the student events, Mr. Richter asked for advice on how to contact more local businesses, and Mr. Morrisroe advised that the local and county chambers of commerce would be useful resources. In the context of community engagement and connecting to student events, Ms. Graham-Reinhardt noted that there is not a good mechanism for the people in the south part of the county to engage with the campus. She offered some ideas for what might be helpful to support students in the south county who may not have access to some of the activities offered on campus. More specifically, taking activities to the Jamestown and Chautauqua Lake areas could connect students there to the campus and help them experience the value of participating in extracurricular activities.

There was a town hall hosted by SA and attended by members of the administration to answer questions from students about the impact of the program discontinuations on instructors. Mr. Richter noted a more positive feeling on the campus this term and examples of some of the positive engagements with members of the administration. He encouraged administrators to continue attending future events and offered feedback about how to be present as much as possible for the students.

Report from the University Senate

Presented by Dr. Rob Deemer, Chair of the University Senate

Dr. Deemer noted that with just a month and a half into the semester, the senate activities are just getting started. Among the new initiatives, there is a joint task force on academic minors, and this group will be working over the next month to propose a framework that can inform faculty and administrators on decision-making. This effort is to ensure that faculty governance can have a strong partnership with the administration to make decisions about the academic array. Dr. Deemer clarified that this group is not making any recommendations on any specific minors and will only be proposing a framework and approach at the November meeting.

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In March, there was a resolution to bring a consultation team to campus through the SUNY University Faculty Senate. This group will visit campus and talk with various stakeholders about issues related to financial stability, shared governance, and the overall relationship with campus leadership. The visit is scheduled for October 18-19, 2024. Dr. Deemer noted that since the resolution was made, there have been more information sessions and communications, which have added to clarity and mediated some of the concerns. He noted that the consultation is a process that most campuses go through from time to time, and he anticipates it to be a positive visit. Dr. Deemer shared his personal view on the approach noting that Fredonia has a long history of successful shared governance. Through time, in terms of campus decision making, roles diverge and change, and the outside perspective might help reset the campus and move forward as an institution with the common goal of improving our work and increasing student enrollment.

Mr. Alexander thanked President Kolison and the cabinet members for a successful meeting and the delivery of the thorough reports. He noted that the news about enrollment and the progress made with the strategic plans is very encouraging.

Meeting Adjourned

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Ahlstrom and seconded by Ms. Graham-Reinhardt. The meeting ended at 12:22.