



## University Council Meeting Minutes

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**Wednesday, December 10, 2025**  
**University Village Conference Room**

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

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**President's Cabinet Members Present:** Stephen H. Kolison, Jr., Naomi Baldwin, Maria Carroll, Judith M. Horowitz, Kathryn Kendall, Michel Kouadio, Wayne Lynch, Karen Rohr, Tracy Stenger, Jeff Woodard

**Absent:** Vicki T. Sapp

**College Council Members Present:** Frank Pagano, Richard Alexander, Tamu Graham-Reinhardt, Stephen Keefe, Jordan Stephens

**Remote:** Cynthia Ahlstrom

**Absent:** AJ Dolce, Richard Morrisroe

**Guests:** Zachary T. Dean, Asst. Project Director, STEP/CSTEP, Jesse Blum, ITS; Michael Puleo, ITS; Laura Koepke, Chair of University Senate

### Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

### Approval of Minutes

There was a motion from Richard Alexander to approve the October 2, 2025, minutes and Stephen Keefe seconded. The minutes were approved.

### Guest Presenter, CSTEP Grant

Chairman Pagano introduced the guest speaker, Zachary Dean, Assistant Project Director for STEP, CSTEP.

Mr. Dean is a current SUNY Fredonia graduate student and a local community member. STEP program stands for the "Science and Technology Program" and supports middle and high school students to find career pathways in science and technology. CSTEP is similar for college-level students.

## **State University of New York at Fredonia University Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday December 10, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

---

Their current grant is for 5 years, administered through the SUNY Research Foundation and awarded by the NYS Education Department. There are over eighty programs across the state, going back to 1986. The overall goal of the programs is to expand opportunities for economically disadvantaged students to pursue careers in science, technology, and licensed professions. These include programs such as counseling, computer science, geology, and many more.

The STEP program has been at SUNY Fredonia for about 25 years – their goal is to expand the program to serve 240 students in schools through Chautauqua and parts of Cattaraugus counties. Programming includes academic support and tutoring, guest speakers, college and university visits and field experiences. These activities are of great importance for student development because they would otherwise not be able to have these experiences. Mr. Dean reviewed several of the strategies they are using to expand the program, and some examples of the field experiences the students have done this year. Students also receive research mentorship through SUNY Fredonia faculty and have the opportunity to complete research experiences and presentations.

The CSTEP program is smaller with around twenty eligible students. This program includes support similar to the STEP program and adds test prep and test reimbursements, peer mentoring programs, research support, and internship support.

Direct campus support for CSTEP is also a key component, and Mr. Dean offered some recent examples such as equipment to assist with virtual dissection, a 3D scanner, and individual scholarships to students. Mr. Dean encouraged the cabinet and council members to reach out to him with other ideas to support the academic enrichment of students.

In terms of future objectives – they are integrating social supports and are working on enhancing participation in student clubs on campus and other campus programs and events. They are also working on certificate programs, social media presence, expanding outreach to first-year students, and building more partnerships with departments on campus.

Tamu Graham-Reinhardt asked about recruitment and Mr. Dean clarified that the CSTEP program recruits from among the current students on campus. The STEP program has a different approach. They have liaisons who help recruit for the program in the local schools. He noted one challenge in recruitment is the income threshold for student participations – this is very low, and it is difficult to find students who are eligible.

## State University of New York at Fredonia University Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday December 10, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

---

Stephen Keefe recalled working with the STEP program when he was a principal and noted its positive impact - most students who participated in STEP eventually earned a degree from SUNY Fredonia.

### Report from the President

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

President Kolison expressed thanks to the council members for their work over the past year.

He announced the formal approval of the name change from College Council to University Council, as a follow-up to the council's resolution at the October meeting. They will see the formal changes made on the council website and materials.

In terms of updates to the council, most recently, President Kolison attended the Washington DC SUNY Advocacy event, including approximately 70 SUNY representatives from multiple campuses and a total of twenty-five meetings scheduled with representatives. He acknowledged the key role of council members in their advocacy efforts and noted the highlights of advocating for maintaining Pell support, TRIO programs, research funding, and indirect cost reimbursements.

He then reviewed some of the grants and contracts that faculty and staff have been awarded and are pursuing. In the context of increasing financial pressures, President Kolison noted the importance of these funds to enhance scholarship of the faculty, student supports, student experiences, academic opportunities, and to generate funds for the university. With the current total of \$13.9 million, even a slight increase would be helpful to the university. He encouraged the council members to express their appreciation to the individuals who have secured these awards.

Continuing the presentation, President Kolison summarized the steps in the search process for a new Provost and reviewed the progress on each step. A search firm is actively recruiting applications, and the campus should be able to invite candidates to campus in the middle of the spring semester.

President Kolison updated the council on his engagement in the community and has been appointed for another term on both the Brooks Hospital board and the Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce board. He reviewed recent updates for each board. Most notably, office space in the Center for Innovation and Economic

## State University of New York at Fredonia University Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday December 10, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

---

Development (CIED) has been dedicated to the Chautauqua Chamber of Commerce for one of their staff members.

Richard Alexander thanked President Kolison for this update and noted that there seems to be a better connection overall between the campus and community.

Concluding the report, President Kolison expressed his appreciation for the council members' engagement and the many discussions.

We briefly clarified the name of the CIED and its common reference as the Incubator. President Kolison is looking at the potential for the CIED's future and will bring this topic forward for consultation with the council at a future meeting.

### Report from Academic Affairs

Presented by Dr. Judith M. Horowitz, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Provost Horowitz reviewed updates about the JCC-Fredonia partnership. She summarized that there were three main goals in her last report. One goal was to find physical classroom and office space on the Fredonia campus, and this has been accomplished. JCC will be operating from there starting in the Spring 2026 semester, and we are looking forward to welcoming those students and staff. There was also a recent convening of the campuses to discuss enhancements to preferred partnership initiatives, including seamless transfers and shared academic programs. Future meetings are scheduled in early spring semester with additional working groups to be identified and outcomes by the late 2026 spring semester.

In terms of new programs, there is an alternative energy management program at SUNY for approval. Other programs on the horizon include a Bachelor's in Health Care Administration and a Master's in Data Science – these are with external reviewers. She summarized the process: Once programs are approved at the campus level, there is an external review conducted outside the system, about 3 months, then they go for the final approvals to the SUNY system and NYS levels.

Provost Horowitz offered an update on the Academic Master Plan, which was completed this past May 2025. There is now an implementation team assigned to execute the next steps. They will identify 3-5 top priority programs that can be offered by the end of the next year. There are eight new programs that can be in progress by May, and Provost

## State University of New York at Fredonia University Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday December 10, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

---

Horowitz offered examples of some of the certificate-level programs: Digital storytelling, screenwriting/playwriting, medicinal chemistry, athletic training, school business leadership, songwriting literacy, and actuarial science. These are all great examples of the “growth” pillar among the president’s three pillars for financial sustainability.

We discussed certificate programs compared to micro credentials: Provost Horowitz summarized that certificate programs are a credential, whereas a micro credential tends to smaller segments that are completed and stacked. Tamu Graham-Reinhardt noted that she is working with teachers to pursue different credentials and offered her support of the programs.

Concluding her report, Provost Horowitz reviewed some of the activities from the individual colleges and schools – performances, fundraising, exhibitions, and other events. The 8-year MSCHE re-affirmation will also be coming up soon, and Provost Horowitz has a team put together to start a self-study. The official visit will be in the fall 2027 or spring of 2028, and Provost Horowitz asked the council members to watch for opportunities for input. Her office will extend invitations to meet with the accreditation visitors, and part of the re-affirmation will include the engagement with the council.

### Report from Finance and Administration

Presented by Mr. Wayne Lynch, Vice President for Finance and Administration

VP Lynch offered an update from the last presentation and progress on the financial plan for the point in time of the year. He noted his regular communications with SUNY to ensure that our campus progress is aligned with their expectations.

The most urgent areas over budget are salaries – the SUNY projections include one-time monies that increase the forecast, placing the current projection with an excess spending of \$2.2 million. When the one-time funding is accounted for, he anticipates this will be of \$1.7-\$1.8 million. The Fredonia Voluntary Separation Program will yield some savings, but these will not be realized until later in the year. There were some one-time cash contributions that have been able to offset costs of scholarships and some operational costs.

VP Lynch noted that the academic array review is a major initiative that may yield additional longer-term savings in the outlying years.

## State University of New York at Fredonia University Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday December 10, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

---

President Kolison emphasized the discipline needed and the increased urgency for continuing to work through the financial sustainability plan, despite the very difficult decisions that lie ahead. The goal is to eliminate the deficit by the end of fiscal year 2028.

VP Lynch continued that since implementing the new budget approach, the fuller campus has been very engaged in the financial sustainability plan and the processes needed to continue to see it through. He underscored the importance of the support we have received from SUNY. In the context of what some private institutions are facing, SUNY Fredonia is fortunate to be part of a strong system that is supporting us through challenges.

Returning to the program array review, VP Lynch updated the council on the financial models his team has been working on that will help the campus understand the financial health of any program. He has worked through multiple versions of the model with consultation with the Planning and Budget committee of the University Senate to ensure that they are establishing best practices and a focus on data.

They are looking at revenue over the last (5) years (student credit hours and service credits – which is when a department offers a significant number of courses to the overall/general ed curriculum) and the corresponding expense over time (faculty costs only attached to the academic programming including – service staff within the department or school; scholarships are not factored in). They then look at the rate of change calculated for each of these two factors to establish if the program/department is losing or generating revenue at the same rate of change– some programs by their nature are more expensive than others because of the instructional needs. The model is used to look at the department overall – as well as each of the programs individually. Currently, the models are being revised to include information from the campus consultations.

In terms of moving forward, Provost Horowitz noted that these models have been one of the strongest tools in helping to communicate with the campus. They allow the departments to be aware of their revenues and expenses and can help the departments be more in tune with efforts to ensure their programs are financially healthy.

President Kolison acknowledged the work of VP Lynch and his team in putting these models and other structures in place that help the campus communicate and

## State University of New York at Fredonia University Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday December 10, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

---

understand the complexity of the financial challenges as part of the overall efforts to keep the campus on a path forward.

Chairman Pagano recognized the improved transparency and the implications for accountability.

### Report from Student Affairs

Presented by Dr. Tracy Stenger, Vice President for Student Affairs

VP Stenger emphasized the importance of positive student experiences and shared some of the highlights to underscore areas of excellence and positive impacts.

She updated the group on a high-level recognition of our campus: Two University Police Department officers were recognized at the SUNY-wide conference. There are new award-winning officers coming onto the team – they are recognized for their physical fitness and academic accomplishments at the police academy.

The Athletics department also continues to excel. There were three teams that made the SUNYAC playoffs this fall (Men's Soccer, Women's Soccer, and Volleyball), and a top cross-country athlete was recognized as a SUNYAC runner of the year. The SUNY Fredonia Volleyball Coach was recognized as the SUNYAC Coach of the Year.

A challenge with athletics is transportation as they travel across the state to competitions. The department is collaborating with other institutions and looking at how to organize games through the state that can help make travel logistics more efficient and save on transportation costs for all involved.

VP Stenger noted some programming coming up that the council members are invited to attend. The MLK program will be offered again in late January-early February. This week-long series of activities is supported by external funding and contributions from multiple departments on campus to keep the program strong. VP Stenger reviewed the specific events and thanked those contributing their service and funding to the program.

To conclude her report, she made the council aware that the Bicentennial program will begin in the next semester and year. There is a website that will be listing the specific programming, and other scheduled events on campus will be tied to the bicentennial

## **State University of New York at Fredonia University Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday December 10, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

---

theme. She noted that FSA will also be celebrating their 75<sup>th</sup> year during Fredonia's bicentennial year.

These all underscore the many positive results of the hard work the campus is engaged in, and the commitment to a high-quality student experience and student success.

The group discussed the status of the new track field and the search for an athletics director. In terms of the track and field, the generator has been installed, and they will do the final punch test later in the spring before concluding the project. The Athletics Director position is covered by interim staff for now, and VP Stenger clarified that the position can also serve as a coach. She noted that many smaller campuses use this model, and one of the current interim directors is also a coach.

Discussion then moved to possible changes in funding for certain careers at the federal level and what potential impact there might be on the campus, especially for the teacher education programs or health sciences. President Kolison acknowledged that this is a nation-wide concern, and this was part of the advocacy efforts in Washington DC. The conversations are ongoing at the political level, and the entire SUNY delegation is working diligently on reducing the impact of these potential decisions. Provost Horowitz further clarified different credentials in the health professions and what areas would be possible for the campus to explore.

### **Report from the President of the Student Association**

Presented by Mr. Jordan Stephens, President of Student Association

Mr. Stephens offered updates on their annual goals to restructure leadership and enhance overall student engagement. They are about 70% complete with revisions to their constitution and aim to present the new constitution in increments at the General Assembly starting next spring. He mentioned several events on the horizon – Student Activities night is ready for the spring semester. There will also be SUNY Advocacy Day in early February – Student Association leaders will be traveling with about 22 SUNY Fredonia students to Albany, NY.

### **Report from the University Senate**

Presented by Ms. Laura Koepke, Chair of University Senate

## **State University of New York at Fredonia University Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday December 10, 2025, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.**

---

Senate has met three times since the last council meeting. A new secretary will serve this spring, Karen Lillie. They have also established updates to the Distinguished Professor committee – Kate Mahoney.

The new programs presented today have been a big part of the senate's work this semester. Ms. Koepke highlighted the Alternative Energy Management program, which was enthusiastically supported by the senate and has minimal new courses that need to be added to the curriculum. She summarized some of the other curricular actions supported by the senate.

There were also two recent resolutions, one to urge collaboration on SUNY Fredonia's financial crises. Since this resolution was moved forward, the timeline has changed, and the senate is in a holding pattern until a new timeline is announced. The second resolution called for an autonomous distinction for interdisciplinary studies.

In terms of senate membership, they are examining the seats on senate with the goal of continuing to be as inclusive of the campus as possible.

President Kolison commended the many ways that senate and administration is engaging, with examples of his monthly executive committee meetings and one-on-one meetings with the senate chair and subcommittee chairs.

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

Chairman Pagano closed the meeting and encouraged council members to consider their contributions to the Fredonia College Foundation to support university initiatives and scholarships for students.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

Chairman Pagano called for a motion to adjourn the meeting, and a motion was made by Tamu Graham-Reinhardt, seconded by Cynthia Ahlstrom at 11:50.