



## College Council Meeting Minutes

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**Friday, March 22, 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, Michael Kelly, Michel Kouadio, David Starrett, Tracy Stenger

**Absent:** *Vicki T. Sapp, Kathryn Kendall, Karen Rohr, Jeff Woodard*

**College Council Members Present:** Richard Alexander, AJ Dolce, Stephen Keefe, Richard Morrisroe, Dakota Richter and Stephen Wright on behalf of Rosie Rapisarda

**Remote:** *Frank Pagano, Cynthia Ahlstrom*

**Absent:** *Tamu Graham-Reinhardt*

**Guests:** Justin Rose, IT; Dr. Bruce Simon, Chair of University Senate

### Meeting Called to Order

Chairman Pagano called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and introduced a proposal for a College Council committee: The Northern Chautauqua Community Coalition. Mr. Alexander introduced the intent of the committee: This is a coalition of key stakeholders on the campus and community to advance shared interests.

Members currently involved include the administrative leaders from the SUNY Fredonia campus, Central Connections, University Faculty Senate Chairperson, College Council members, the Mayor of the Village of Fredonia and Trustees, and two local chamber of commerce bodies.

Mr. Alexander summarized the proposed goals and notes from preliminary discussions about this coalition. Mr. Keefe offered an additional summary of intended

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accomplishments of the coalition. Mr. Alexander reviewed potential structures of the coalition: The leadership will be from among the College Council, to fulfill part of their charge as supporters of connecting the campus and community members.

Chairman Pagano offered his endorsement of the committee and authorized Mr. Alexander to move forward.

Ms. Ahlstrom asked for clarification about the membership and what other groups or people might be invited. Mr. Alexander clarified that representatives of the City of Dunkirk have been approached, and they are also looking for representatives from the Town of Pomfret, Brocton, and Westfield. Dunkirk is involved through the Central Connections representative, and Mr. Alexander is working on building more Dunkirk representation.

Mr. Morrisroe offered examples of groups that are doing similar work and insight about the coalition's functions. With other groups advancing some of the work listed in the proposed goals, this new coalition should be cautious about how it overlaps with the work of existing groups. It might be more helpful if it serves as a collective voice and pulls together cohesiveness among existing groups. He also advised that the coalition ensure that the benefits are equitable to the various stakeholders represented. He acknowledged the committee's good intent, but to ensure effectiveness at this early stage of the coalition, the goals of the other groups and their current position should be considered.

Ms. Ahlstrom supported the sentiments of Mr. Morrisroe. She agreed there is a positive intent and asked that the council members refine and re-focus the broad set of initiatives and goals proposed.

Chairman Pagano endorsed the committee on behalf of the College Council.

### Approval of Minutes and Reports from College Council Members

There was a motion from Mr. Alexander to approve the December 13, 2023, meeting minutes, and Mr. Keefe seconded. The minutes were approved.

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There were no additional reports from the College Council members.

### Report from the President

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

President Kolison updated the College Council on the appointment of Dr. Kathryn Kendall, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Services. Dr. Kendall was not able to be present for the meeting but will attend the May meeting for a more formal introduction. This is a new division to establish the appropriate focus, leadership, and organizational structure for SUNY Fredonia's enrollment efforts.

To illustrate the bigger picture and the new climate for institutions of higher education across the United States, President Kolison presented multiple examples of what other institutions are doing to adapt. Many universities are making difficult adjustments - SUNY Fredonia is not alone in the enrollment and financial challenges and its need to reduce programs and other financial obligations to remain relevant.

President Kolison offered updates about the Roadmap to Financial Sustainability, which he presented in December. The three pillars are revenue, efficiency, and strategic reductions. The overall goal is to reduce the deficit by \$10 million in the next five years and to ensure that the institution's revenues are more than the expenses. The SUNY system is addressing financial deficits system-wide, and this charge has been issued to all SUNY campuses in financial distress. As a recent example of how he has been asked to address the financial sustainability, President Kolison mentioned the recent deactivation of 13 low-enrolled academic programs. He encouraged College Council members to help those they are communicating with and working with talk about and understand the conditions that are precipitating these kinds of challenging decisions. He acknowledged that these actions have been some of the most challenging and complex decisions, yet it is his responsibility to address the challenges. The reality is that SUNY Fredonia can no longer maintain the number of degree programs it offers; SUNY also agrees that re-alignment of the academic programs is urgent.

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Chairman Pagano stated that these changes should have started ten years ago. The distress of the students and faculty is understandable, and he offered support to the members of the administration for the difficult decisions they have had to make.

### Report from Enrollment Management and Services and Report from Academic Affairs

Enrollment Management and Services updates presented by Dr. David Starrett, on behalf of Dr. Kathryn Kendall, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Services  
Academic Affairs updates Presented by Dr. David Starrett, Executive Vice President and Provost

Provost Starrett offered enrollment updates: The applications, acceptances, and deposits are up by 5%-7% based on the same point in time last year. President Kolison offered further context: SUNY Fredonia has not seen these kinds of numbers since before the impacts of COVID-19. This is very promising, especially in consideration of some of the delays that are related to the new FAFSA system and its impact on the timing of financial aid communications. SUNY Fredonia has been investing in the enrollment management infrastructure by hiring new recruiters, increasing resources, and providing stronger leadership.

Mr. Alexander asked what College Council members can do to share this message more publicly, noting that the perceptions in the community are much different. President Kolison acknowledged that he is not talking enough about these highlights. Provost Starrett added that negative publicity is not always based on a full understanding of what has been going on and can have a negative impact on recruitment. By talking about it in the College Council meetings, he encouraged the sharing of good news presented in the meetings and offered a summary of recent accomplishments: Enrollments have a positive outlook, there is a fully staffed admissions team for the first time, a consultant worked with SUNY Fredonia this past fall, there is a new STEM scholarship, and Fredonia is well-represented and active in college fairs.

College Council members Mr. Keefe and Ms. Ahlstrom offered comments about the opportunities to help promote more positive public perceptions. Communicating in

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College Council meetings alone is not enough and more should be done to communicate with the public.

Stephen Wright, Vice President of Student Association, representing Student Association, asked if the information offered in College Council could be shared; Student Association would like to ensure that positive news is shared with their constituents and when they are contacted by media representatives. Chairman Pagano encouraged him to share news from the meetings.

Mr. Morrisroe noted the success given the particularly challenging climate: Despite the enormous challenges that have impacted the institutions, these figures show the reversal of the downward trend. It may feel that the numbers are still down based on what they were in the last ten years, but that is the reality for everyone. The upward trend is tremendous in consideration of what SUNY Fredonia has been facing and the national climate in which it is operating.

Provost Starrett continued his report and summarized that another good sign is the spring enrollment numbers. Some of the yield activities that Dr. Kendall has put in place are already showing promise. Mr. Dolce asked about some of the yield activities, and Provost Starrett clarified that strategies include personal phone calls, emails, texts, and postcards. There are automated strategies in addition to personalized strategies.

Continuing with additional information for the Enrollment Management and Services report, Provost Starrett offered an update about the FAFSA issue and its impacts on recruitment. There is a new process at the federal level, and FAFSA is a few months behind their schedule. FAFSA is the federal funding application and process that families use to get information on how much a student's education will cost and what aid or scholarships they will be able to use. FAFSA has not been able to send this information out, so families must decide where their student will attend without knowing the full picture of financial support resources. In about a month, he anticipates that financial aid packages will be able to be delivered, and the deposit deadline is extended to June 1 to help accommodate this delay. All institutions are facing these delays, but the upward trend in deposits is still a good sign. SUNY Fredonia staff are doing everything they can

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to help students and families understand the process and help them make their decisions.

Moving on to the Academic Affairs update, Provost Starrett updated the College Council members on the new Mental Health Counseling program. It launched in the Spring 2024 semester and already has 11 students in its first cohort. The Fall cohort can accept 24 students and they have 20 students who have applied and 10 who have accepted. This is a good sign given how early it is for graduate students to decide on a program. The current program offers a remote option but has a once-per-month in-person meeting on campus. To further improve access, they are working on implementing a fully online version, but there is a longer process to work through.

In the context of programs being able to move and adapt quickly, Mr. Dolce asked about the approval process for programs and the timing. Provost Starrett reviewed the current process: The program is approved internally by the campus, it is sent to SUNY, and finally to the New York State Department of Education. Depending on the type of program, there can be additional layers of approval from professional programs offices. These layers take time, but overall, it is improving. The process locally has been streamlined, and SUNY and New York State processes have also improved. When a step is not moving forward as expected, the campus has good partnerships and relationships that have been helpful to ensure program approvals move through in a timely way. Additional programs approvals are underway: MBA in Accounting, the RN to BS in Nursing.

Provost Starrett reviewed the specific 13 programs that will move forward for deactivation. He acknowledged the work and partnership with shared governance while also working within the expectations of SUNY that SUNY Fredonia will re-align the curriculum. Thirteen programs have been submitted for deactivation effective in June. Academic Affairs is working on sending teach-out plans to ensure students in the programs can complete their degrees. Provost Starrett noted that after the teach-out plans have been completed and there are no longer students in the programs, the programs are then discontinued. There will still be many courses in these disciplines, and it is only the majors and the major-specific courses that are impacted. Minors and many

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of the courses included in these degrees will be maintained, and departments are not being cut. Some of the departments are already working on developing new programs that will build on what they are already doing while better serving students.

Also on the horizon for Academic Affairs is the Academic Master Plan and an Academic Program Health process. These are part of the broader institutional strategic plan and the Academic Affairs divisional strategic plan. The Academic Master Plan will be a guide for SUNY Fredonia's curricular offerings in the next five years. The Academic Program Health process is a full review of the entire curriculum and started last year. Data was sent to departments for consideration and discussions about what the data suggests about their programs and any changes. Provost Starrett described it as a self-evaluation process for the programs, and he will present his final report to the University Senate at the end of the semester.

Mr. Alexander asked for an update on the JCC partnerships, and Provost Starrett updated the group that the BOLD program has not yielded the number of students he had hoped for. The program will be offered this fall 2024 semester, but over the time of offering the program in its current format, they have been able to collect more input from prospective students and know that the program completions would be more helpful if offered online. To support this direction, President Kolison updated the group that he has asked Provost Starrett to ensure that SUNY Fredonia has 5 undergraduate degree completion programs that would be fully online by Fall 2025. This will help extend education to students who cannot come to the SUNY Fredonia campus and to others who are hoping to complete their degrees. Provost Starrett emphasized that they are looking at building these programs as completion opportunities.

Provost Starrett summarized some of the new funding recently awarded from SUNY. The Advancing Completion through Engagement (ACE) program was funded at \$960,000 and officially launched at capacity. There are 34 students in the first cohort and 120 prospective students for the fall cohort. Additional funds are supporting more internships, transfer partnership initiatives, and graduate assistants. President Kolison added that these funds were awarded through a competitive process, and he

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underscored the work from Academic Affairs that contributed to the success of receiving this funding.

### Report from Finance and Administration

Presented by Mr. Michael Kelly, Vice President for Finance and Administration

Mr. Kelly presented a current overview of the budget. The total financial plan revenues are up from what was budgeted by approximately \$1.6 million. This is due to a higher enrollment than planned for in the Spring 2024 semester.

The structural deficit as of March 4, 2024, is about \$12.9 million, and the expected shortfall has declined from around \$8 million to around \$5 million. This demonstrates that continued efforts to reduce expenditures and find efficiencies are having some positive impact, and the additional funding from SUNY has helped the campus invest in ways that should yield growth longer-term.

Mr. Kelly shared additional news that the University Police Department recently traveled to Albany to present on and receive their reaccreditation. This is a great demonstration of the continued and excellent work of the University Police Department.

Chairman Pagano offered words of gratitude to Mr. Kelly as he transitions to a new role outside of SUNY Fredonia.

### Report from Student Affairs

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

Dr. Stenger offered an overview of the student activities underway from departments in her division. The Multicultural Weekend, historically a high yield activity, is coming up this weekend. Also notable is the eclipse viewing events including student organization activities, bands, food trucks, and special programming about the eclipse from Dr. Michael Dunham, Department of Physics. The event is also bringing in high school students for viewing and special recruitment activities.



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### Report from the President of the Student Association

Presented by Mr. Dakota Richter, SA Chief of Staff and Mr. Stephen Wright, SA Vice President, on behalf of Ms. Rosie Rapisarda, President of Student Association

Mr. Wright summarized some of the work related to SA committees. Some committees have not been active, so they are reforming these to facilitate collaborations. He offered a list of those who will succeed the current SA leadership members next year and additional officers will be named as their processes conclude.

Mr. Richter asked for feedback on some of the committee positions discussed, and Dr. Stenger offered to meet with the e-board to talk about opportunities on some Student Affairs councils.

There will be an administrative panel, a Town Hall, on March 27 to help facilitate transparency and effective communication between students and administrators. This is a follow-up session to a Student Town Hall on March 6 regarding program cuts and mental health issues. President Kolison offered his assurances that he will do better at communications. Chairman Pagano offered historical insight of being in the position of needing to cut programs, and the longer-term benefits of that decision.

### Report from the University Senate

Presented by Dr. Bruce Simon, Chair of University Senate

Dr. Simon stated three main priorities of the University Senate for the remaining semester: State budget advocacy, curricular innovation, and improving shared governance.

He summarized the advocacy work they are doing as the New York State budget decisions are ending. Members of University Senate are working hard to promote the value of the university degree and to reinforce the idea of a university education as a public good. SUNY Fredonia is crucial to the economic future of this county and the region, and the University Senate believes that New York State should be the national leader in college affordability and in supporting higher education through the direct

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support from the state. Dr. Simon encouraged College Council members to take into consideration their March 4 resolution and to leverage any connections and networks to advance the interests of the university where they can.

President Kolison took a moment to observe the various roles that different groups can play in advocacy: Some efforts are more public than others. When resolutions are moved forward from the university senate, College Council members should have the content in advance to review them and consider the role they can take. Chairman Pagano clarified that he had received the resolutions from Dr. Simon in the reports from the beginning of the month. He confirmed he would take another look to allow more time before endorsing the resolutions.

University Senate's second priority of curriculum innovation and transformation is arising out of the emergency process necessitated by the recent 13 program cuts. This is not the position that anyone wants to be in. The recent process had to be created at the last minute and could not follow the regular processes in order to protect faculty from being in the position of voting on or weighing in on decisions that may negatively impact their colleagues. The process was followed, but it did not have the outcome that the senate had hoped for, and a resolution was subsequently passed condemning the process. Because any resolution is advisory, Dr. Simon is encouraging the faculty to use the opportunity to look at what they can act on. This means taking a hard look at the academic programs and academic array while keeping in mind the future job opportunities and student and parent perspectives of what is important. As content experts, faculty can ensure academic integrity and quality while also seeing this as a learning opportunity and a chance to be innovative. As examples of what the faculty are doing to ensure that all of SUNY Fredonia's programs are stronger, Dr. Simon offered a summary of the activities during his last two years: 13 program revisions, 10 new approved programs, and 17 program deactivations (majors, minors, and certificates). When faculty take the initiative, it yields better consultation and smoother processes.

Mr. Alexander asked about issues with timing, and Dr. Simon clarified that there are typically timing issues, but more recently, University Senate has been able to meet more

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than just monthly due to the emergency process, and this has assisted with moving forward more expeditiously on other decisions.

Transitioning into the third priority on improving shared governance, Dr. Simon updated the group that they have passed three resolutions with this goal in mind. They will be working with an external team from the University Faculty Senate to look at SUNY Fredonia's internal communications and communications with the SUNY system.

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

Chairman Pagano offered remarks about the positive news and general content of the meeting. He is working on connecting with the Office of the Chancellor to help advocate for some of the unfunded mandates, including the uncovered contractual raises, the urgency and speed of program review, and ways that campuses can have better flexibility to utilize facilities that would help raise revenues.

Mr. Wright asked what the responses have been from the SUNY or state level when they receive the University Senate resolutions, and Dr. Simon stated that there has not been any indication of how they are received. Mr. Morrisroe suggested the new committee write a letter of support for more operational aid. Chairman Pagano agreed that a letter would be appropriate.

### Meeting Adjourned

Chairman Pagano called for a motion to adjourn the meeting, and a motion was made by AJ Dolce at 11:37 a.m. and seconded by Richard Morrisroe. The meeting was adjourned.