

**THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT FREDONIA  
MEETING OF THE COLLEGE COUNCIL  
UNIVERSITY TOWNHOUSES  
December 19, 2018**

Present: Cynthia Ahlstrom, Connor Aitcheson, Richard Alexander, Russell Diethrick, A.J. Dolce, Joseph Johnson, Stephen Keefe, JoAnn Niebel, Frank Pagano

Guests: William Boerner, Teresa Brown, Betty Gossett, Virginia Horvath, Cedric Howard, Kevin Kearns, Michael Metzger, Seth Meyer, Stephen Rieks, Jeff Woodard, Xiao Zhang

Absent: Michael Cerrie

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

The College Council meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The College Council minutes of October 3, 2018 were approved without modification with a motion by Mr. Joseph Johnson and seconded by Mrs. JoAnn Niebel.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Virginia Horvath thanked Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Teresa Brown and Associate Vice President for Advancement, Engagement, and Economic Development Betty Gossett for coordinating the successful sale of a gifted painting at Sotheby's in London. The painting by Niko Pirosmani, "Georgian Woman Wearing a Lechaki," is a valuable painting that had been gifted to the Fredonia College Foundation more than 30 years ago. The valuable painting hung in an unprotected area in Reed Library prior to its sale. The money brought in from the sale will be used to establish an endowment to support the Stefan Zweig collection, as well as Archives and Special Collections in Reed Library. Dr. Horvath noted that there are no intentions to sell other gifts from the collection.

Fredonia is not alone in addressing its needs to address a structural budget deficit, President Horvath said. Campuses with enrollments below 1,000 are especially vulnerable to budgetary shortfalls. The current SUNY financial model is challenging for regional, public colleges in New York State. Since 2011 the administration at Fredonia has worked diligently on reducing Fredonia's budget deficit and expenses. Fredonia's 2019-2020

campus budget includes the implementation of the *Procedures for Emergency Program Reduction/Elimination* (PEPRE) process. PEPRE guidelines are guided by criteria developed in 2010–12 and approved by University Senate in 2013. Criteria used to identify programs and services across all divisions include: demand for the program, costs vs. revenue, centrality to the mission, and quality of the program. After careful consideration by Cabinet and Senate-designated PEPRE representatives, a narrowed list of programs and services was identified this fall for potential reduction or elimination. Just before the Thanksgiving holiday, Dr. Horvath sent letters to identified individuals as well as a campus-wide email announcing the undergraduate and graduate degree programs, office, and services being considered for elimination or reduction.

The campus continues to look for ways to reduce the size of its workforce to better align with projected enrollment. Degrees, services, and support that students need to do well academically will continue to be offered, but some low-enrolled degree programs will be reduced or eliminated. Fredonia's academic programs remain strong, and the campus remains committed to continuing to promote and value liberal arts as a solid foundation for all learning.

The State Employee Federated Campus Appeal Campaign, which concludes December 31, has already brought in a record-breaking amount of \$51,610. College Council members congratulated the employees of the State University of New York at Fredonia for their generosity.

Mr. Joseph Johnson asked about the PEPRE timeline, in particular, the deadline to respond about the potential elimination of a program or service. Dr. Horvath said areas identified for reduction or elimination were sent a letter and have been offered the opportunity to respond by February 1, 2019. Dr. Horvath will announce the final decisions of any program reductions/eliminations by March 15, 2019. Mr. Johnson suggested the campus get ahead of the criticism and clarify the urgency of the cuts. Director of Marketing and Communications, Jeffrey Woodard, is working on a response to a letter signed by 26 Fredonia faculty who went on record criticizing Fredonia's administration about potential program eliminations. The letter appeared in the December 16 edition of the *Observer*. The signers were not identified in the article and the *Observer* did not give Fredonia's administration a chance to respond before publicizing the letter. Council members requested that Denise Szalkowski forward the letter to their attention via email. Mrs. Cynthia Ahlstrom questioned the integrity of the letter since it did not include comment from Fredonia's administration. Mr. Pagano agreed that a reply is needed, but cautioned administration with how they reply.

Dr. Horvath remarked that the budget has been a very sensitive topic and clarified that no positions were suggested in her letter to be cut, but rather a reduction in programs and services.

In response to questions about cutting academic programs, Dr. Horvath said enrolled students will be provided with the courses they need to complete their degree even if a program is identified for elimination. Admission to an academic program may be suspended, but the program will not be deactivated until all students have completed their degree requirements. Mr. Russell Diethrick asked if the campus has communicated this message to students and their families. Although the information has been shared, administrators agreed that they need to do a better job of restating it.

Dr. Brown held an Academic Affairs Forum on December 18 in which nearly 100 faculty and staff attended. The group shared 90 minutes of positive back-and-forth discussion about the budget situation. Dr. Brown received very good feedback following the meeting. She noted there's understandable apprehension, but staff are beginning to understand the serious budget situation the campus is facing.

Mrs. Cynthia Ahlstrom said she's concerned that many people do not understand the complexity of the campus budget such as fee support or the ongoing deficit between state expenses and revenues.

President Horvath's budget presentation is available for viewing online on the Fredonia website at <https://www.fredonia.edu/about/offices/budget>.

#### **STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT (RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION) UPDATE**

Dr. Brown said her division continues to work closely with Enrollment and Student Services to focus on student success.

Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services Cedric Howard shared the Fall '19 SUNY recruitment application data with council members. In comparison to other SUNY campuses, Fredonia is doing exceptionally well. Incoming enrollment is basically down less than one percent which is comparable to SUNY competitors. Dr. Howard said Fredonia is doing a wonderful job with its recruitment efforts. Across SUNY, Fredonia has the largest percentage of Excelsior student admits. Fredonia does not limit its recruitment efforts to New York State. Fredonia students represent 19 states and seven countries. Fredonia staff remain committed in getting to know prospective students before they arrive to campus. Many faculty and staff are engaged in recruitment efforts. Mrs. JoAnn Nieble asked

why Excelsior hasn't helped increase Fredonia's enrollment numbers. Dr. Howard explained that many students receive TAP or PELL before any Excelsior dollars can be allocated toward their tuition so Excelsior may not even factor in for many students.

Working with an outside consultant, Marketing and Communications redesigned Fredonia's website to offer a more user friendly site to a myriad of audiences.

Mr. Richard Alexander asked about Fredonia's retention efforts. Fredonia's retention level is slightly above the SUNY median with a three-year retention rate of 75 percent. The campus does a good job of monitoring retention and staff have already begun to reach out to students who have not registered for the spring. If a student has a campus related issue, they're directed to the appropriate office or staff member for assistance. Fredonia continues to see an increase in the number of students requiring mental health services. Eight mental health counselors are available to students. On average, the number of students seeking campus counseling and/or tutoring is up significantly. A large percentage of non-returning students are those who intended to transfer when they first enrolled at Fredonia. The top three reasons students do not return to Fredonia are academic, financial, and personal. Dr. Brown said faculty retention teams have been designated in each of the colleges and the teams do deep dives into the data as well as follow up with conversation to help each student succeed.

College Council members requested that a future Council meeting focus on Fredonia's retention plan. Provost Brown agreed to work with Institutional Research in developing a report, broken down by year, to present at the next Council meeting.

Thanks to the good work of the Health and Counseling Center and Engagement and Economic Development, all faculty, staff and students now have access to a free online tool through myStrength.com. The online tool teaches skills to reduce stress, improve mood, and overcome other challenges. It was made possible through a Chautauqua County Tapestry grant.

Chairman Pagano suggested that faculty and staff be trained on how to recognize signs that a student is in distress. Dr. Brown explained that Starfish, an early alert initiative, was activated on campus to help keep track of students in need of support. The system allows faculty to track student concerns and progress with other staff.

The campus continues to work with Brightspot Strategy, a student service design expert, on a comprehensive plan for a new model of student services to be delivered in renovated spaces on campus. It's important that Fredonia offer spaces for those who are impaired as well as spaces that encourage group interaction.

### **ENROLLMENT AND STUDENT SERVICES**

Dr. Howard said he's appreciative of everyone's involvement in the campus-wide enrollment process. Alumni in Houston, TX have even assisted with Fredonia's advocacy efforts by encouraging prospective education majors to consider Fredonia as their college of choice.

Dr. Brown announced that Fredonia recently implemented an accelerated program leading to a M.S. in Education in five years.

Mr. Diethrick asked if the campus offers mental health or drug testing to prospective students. Mr. Howard said as a public institution, Fredonia cannot legally condone such testing.

### **BUDGET PROCESS AND APPROACH**

#### **FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

Vice President for Finance and Administration Michael Metzger highlighted items of his report.

1. Fredonia has been running a structural deficit for more than 10 years because revenues taken in have been less than campus expenses.
2. The campus will deplete its strategic reserves by the end of the 2018–2019 fiscal year. These reserves have been used to offset the deficit.
3. The campus plans to reduce the 2019–2020 structural deficit by \$4.5 million.
4. The campus will borrow \$3.4 million from SUNY System for 2019–2020.

Fredonia's 2017–18 end-of-the-year budget resulted in a shortfall of \$3.5 million. State support and tuition were \$4.5 million, or \$1,096,790, more than anticipated. Expenses were \$2.5 million less than anticipated resulting in a \$3.4 structural deficit. Over-enrollment and Strategic Investment Reserves were used to cover the deficit, leaving \$3.5 million to be exhausted this year. The reserves were built up through over-enrollment funds from previous years. The 2019–20 budget, beginning July 1, includes a reduction of \$4.5 million and \$3.4 million financed by SUNY. SUNY requires a four-year payback plan before loaning Fredonia the money. Fredonia will need to build up its campus reserves by building up its surplus and by cutting expenses and increasing revenue.

How will Fredonia cut its expenses? The campus will look to transition employees as programs and services are eliminated. Temporary and non-permanent positions will be eliminated. Fredonia will reduce or postpone some of its operating expenses. Fredonia's enrollment projection for 2019-20 is 4,700, however; even if the enrollment target is met and overall expenses are cut by \$4.5 million, the campus will still carry a shortfall of \$3.5 million. Fredonia's deficit this year is equal to the amount of financial support cut by the state in the last few years. It's critical that New York State begin to offer campuses a more reasonable level of financial support. State support is only 1/3 of what neighboring states offer. State support dropped from 18 percent to 13 percent in the last five years. SUNY Administration continues to work with Fredonia to address the campus budget deficit. The Chancellor's office is advocating at the state legislative level. All agreed that the citizens of New York need a greater awareness of what is happening in SUNY and CUNY and what it means for future students.

Mrs. Ahlstrom asked how the campus proposes to increase its revenue. Enrollment is number one and Fredonia continues to look at alternative revenue sources including low risk investments. It's premature to discuss any specifics. No matter what, Fredonia cannot grow its way out of the financial situation with just enrollment. Up until a few years ago, SUNY discouraged private and public partnerships, but now they are encouraging such relationships. Some states have switched over to a per credit hour tuition fee. Currently, if a student at Fredonia takes 18 or 21 credit hours, the tuition cost is the same. Those who invest in Fredonia want to see direct support to the students. We cannot sell off any assets to bring in money since the state's Internal Control policy does not allow such action. Fredonia has proposed a voluntary retirement plan to all full-time Fredonia employees, age 55+ with a minimum of 10 years of state service. Pending SUNY's approval, eligible retirees will receive a one-time payment and must be off state payroll by June 30, 2019.

Council members went on record to acknowledge Dr. Howard for his good work on enrollment and Dr. Brown for navigating the largest percentage of budget cuts in the Academic Affairs area. Kudos were also extended to Mr. Metzger for his good work in realigning the budget.

## STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Ten students represented Fredonia at the SUNYSA Conference in Albany November 16–17. Several Fredonia student representatives presented and all in attendance participated in leadership workshops. Mr. Aitcheson and Mr. Meyer served as voting delegates at the SUNYSA business meeting. Two important resolutions were passed: 1) task force to monitor the single use plastic waste and plan to reduce the waste, and 2) implementation of diversity and inclusion training into all student orientations.

Following a proposed and endorsed amendment, effective January 1, 2019, the stipend for five Student Association (SA) executives will increase from \$80 to \$100 per week. SA Executives dedicate a minimum of nine office hours per week, as well as attend meetings and other duties as assigned. Due to the amount of time needed to serve as a SA executive member, representatives are prohibited from applying for a residence hall position or serving on the FSA Board. Mr. Aitcheson said this increase will appropriately compensate officers and bring their salaries closer to the minimum wage for the 2019 year. The increase also helps to ensure that students will want to represent their peers.

Following the 2018 Executive Elections, Fredonia students unanimously voted to keep the Student Activity Fee, which is currently \$113.50. Students also elected Seth Meyer as President, Kaitlin Battaglia as Vice President. Both will assume their posts on January 1, 2019.

The Council had no questions for Drs. Boerner, Zhang, or Mr. Rieks regarding their reports.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT**

Vice President for Advancement, Engagement, and Economic Development Kevin Kearns announced that the Fredonia Technology Incubator was awarded a five-year grant for \$625,000 from New York's Regional Economic Development Council. The Advisory Board for the FTI has assisted 20 business start-ups and FTI has brought in over a million and half dollars over the last six years.

The *Nurturing Innovation* campaign is progressing nicely toward its goal of \$20 million.

The Fredonia Technology Incubator received a community grant from the Northern Community Foundation to assist with the mission of the Multimedia Innovation Design Studio.

FTI was notified yesterday that their Consolidated Funding Application under the New York State Business Incubator Program was received for \$625,000 over the next five years.

Mr. Stephen Keefe thanked President Horvath for her continued good work on the budget, especially for proposing a retirement incentive that will lead to attrition and a budget savings.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Richard Alexander and seconded by Mr. Joseph Johnson. The Council meeting concluded at 3:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Szalkowski, Fredonia College Council Secretary