
The Understory - President Kolison's Update to Faculty and Staff, October 27, 2022

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To: Faculty/Staff group <facultystaff@fredonia.edu>

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State University of New York at Fredonia

The Understory



Stephen H. Kolison, Jr., Ph.D., President



The Understory is President Kolison's update to the faculty and staff at SUNY Fredonia. The term "understory" is used in forestry to refer to the undergrowth of a forest below the canopy. The understory of the forest, which consists of new growth and other matter, is, to a large extent, the future of the forest.

October 27, 2022
Fredonia, NY

Dear Faculty and Staff,

Happy Thursday! I hope this Understory finds you doing well, and please allow me a few minutes of your time to connect with you on a few things.

Faculty Positions

I am sure by now you have seen information from Provost Starrett about our plan to carry out searches for 16 new faculty members. This total number includes 4 of the positions that we opened last year and were not able to fill and 12 new positions. As he indicated, some of the funding for these positions is a

result of the hard work and advocacy for the New York State budget to support our SUNY campuses.

While it is a fact that we face both enrollment and financial challenges, we must continue positioning the university for growth. It would not be prudent if all we did was to budget-cut our way out of this situation. We need to continue to make strategic investments while taking actions to address the deficit.

Enrollment and Retention

The decline in our enrollment remains our major challenge as it impacts many aspects of the university including our financial outlook. Consequently, since May of this year, we have been working with the Educational Advisory Board (EAB) to evaluate various aspects of our existing efforts and structure regarding student enrollment. This has included a deeper examination of how we are structured when it comes to enrollment services and how we recruit students. We have received some feedback, and we are studying it. I anticipate some adjustments soon in our posture and approach to attracting and retaining students at the university as we learn more from our work with EAB. In the interim, I want to share some specific actions that we taking:

1. We will launch a search for a Director of Admissions soon. Our previous Director, Dana Bearer, left the university in August 2022;
2. The table below points out another potential opportunity we may have to enhance our enrollment. If you study the table, you will find that our five-year average yield of students is 21%. Our average number of admitted students is 4,291 over the same five-year period. Imagine the impact if we were able to improve on our yield by even just a little bit. In light of this, I have authorized the addition of two “yield maximizers” to the admissions team to specifically assist us in increasing our yield. To be clear, this is in addition to the search currently underway for two admissions counselors;
3. As another effort towards attracting more students to SUNY Fredonia, we are working with BrightEdge to enhance the process by which search engines direct students from a wider geographical area to the academic programs presented on our website. Our goal is to have our programs showing up on the first or second page of search results for academic disciplines that we offer at Fredonia.

Together, these efforts, along with others, will strengthen our capacity to be more successful at recruiting and enrolling students. I appreciate all the work pertaining to enrollment and retention that is done by everyone across the university. Thank you.

Students	Number of FTFY Students				
	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022
Applied	6,183	6,277	5,754	4,668	4,598
Admitted	4,711	4,464	4,157	4,236	3,888
Enrolled	1,180	1,003	763	809	718
Percent of Admitted Enrolled	25%	22%	18%	19%	19%

Thank you COVID-19 Steering Committee

Although COVID-19 certainly still exists and continues to pose a danger to our health, its impact on our campus and community has lessened significantly. Hence, the Steering Committee that has helped navigate campus through the SUNY COVID-19 requirements and guidelines over the past couple of years is going on standby. We thank the members of Steering and the subcommittees for their dedication and commitment of time and energy these past more than two years as they helped the campus in navigating the complexities we faced due to COVID-19. The Infection Control Management Team (ICMT) will continue to monitor and respond to the impact of COVID-19 on campus, as it has since March 2020. This team also supports the quarantine and isolation needs of residential students. I extend my deepest gratitude to members of Steering, the subcommittees, and the ICMT for their work.

SEFA Campaign

As you know, SEFA is the state employee campaign to support United Way. I hope you will consider supporting this year’s campaign, especially given the needs in our communities. This year's campus goal of \$35,000 will allow SEFA to continue providing much-needed services to those in our community.

Please [click here for step-by-step instructions](#). (Please use Fredonia Agency Code 28180 when selecting your Division.)

- The charity search function works with keywords, so finding your favorite charity will take just a few seconds.

- If you need technical assistance with making your online pledge, please email or call the SEFA Coordinator, Lisa Sunday. You can reach Lisa at (716) 366-5424 or lisa@unitedwayncc.org.

If you are unable to use the online method, you can certainly send a check, payable to Chautauqua County SEFA, to United Way, 626 Central Avenue, Dunkirk, NY 14048. Please be sure to note in the memo section that it is for the FREDONIA SEFA Campaign.

Discretionary Salary Increases for M/C Employees

SUNY has authorized campus presidents to consider awarding discretionary salary increases to Management Confidential employees (MC). Unfortunately, the authorization was not accompanied by any funds. Campuses are expected to find resources to accomplish this. Of course, this puts campuses like ours in a very difficult situation. I say it is a difficult situation because I would like to offer discretionary salary increases to MC employees. Unfortunately, our financial situation is too precarious to do so at this time. Hence, I need to defer this for now and return to it when it is feasible to do so. To all our MC employees, please know that I did not reach this decision lightly as I am fully aware of your work and the sacrifices you make for the benefit of our university. Thank you for understanding.

Budget Outlook for 2022-23

I have shared information about the financial outlook for this fiscal year (2022-23) at various meetings. Vice President Mike Metzger has also done so. Please know that we are continuing to work intensively to reduce the projected deficit for the next fiscal year while protecting our core functions and ensuring that we are still able to carry out our mission adequately. This includes investing in areas that will yield greater returns on investment. Examples of these include filling key faculty, staff, and leadership positions, investing in our recruitment and retention efforts, maximizing efficiencies, and increasing our fundraising efforts for scholarships that would attract and retain more students at the university. We will provide another update of the financial outlook for the remainder of this fiscal year in January 2023.

Houghton Hall Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

Thank you to those of you who attended the Houghton Hall ribbon cutting ceremony on Friday, October 14. I understand that many of you who have worked on this campus since the renovation of Houghton began have waited a long time to see the removal of the construction zone blocking the sidewalks

and necessitating some road closures. Well, the construction fences are down, the sidewalks are open again, and we have a beautiful facility. The state invested \$36 million to transform Houghton Hall into a state-of-the-art science facility that is a game changer and completes our science complex/corridor. I also believe that you will be pleased to know that about \$800,000 was raised through the naming of various spaces in the facility. These funds will support the enhancement of programs in the building. Please join me in expressing thanks to the donors who made these funds possible, the Fredonia College Foundation for its fundraising efforts on behalf of the university, the Houghton Hall Dedication Committee led by Dean Andy Karafa, and the faculty and staff on this campus who advocated for this facility and helped see the project through to a successful completion.

Thank You for a Successful Investiture

I want to express my sincere thanks to everyone who attended (in-person and online) and supported the investiture. Many thanks to the Inauguration Committee led by Teresa Adams and Rob Strauss for an outstanding job.

As I stated previously, we were determined not to use state dollars for the event. Therefore, I am grateful to those who donated money to pay for the event and those who used the investiture to contribute to the Bicentennial Fund. Over \$18,000 was raised to cover the cost for the investiture and as contributions to the Bicentennial Fund. Monies left unused for covering the cost of the investiture will go to the Bicentennial Fund, which is intended to enhance student access and retention. [Thank you again to all of our sponsors and donors](#) who made this event financially possible and successful.

Fredonia License Plates

SUNY Fredonia is exploring the possibility of helping students, employees and alumni show institution spirit and pride with a custom license plate approved through the New York Department of Motor Vehicles. We are currently considering potential designs for the custom plate and we seek your input for this possibility.

If successful, the custom plate will be available for both passenger and commercial vehicles and remissions to the university will go to the Bicentennial Fund. Kindly [access this form and provide your feedback](#) on this initiative.

Campus Parking

The issue of parking at SUNY Fredonia, especially during the daytime hours of Monday through Friday, is not new and is not unique to our campus.

Notwithstanding, it is an issue that we would like to address. All students and employees have been sent a survey link from the Campus Parking Committee to collect information about parking on campus. I encourage all of you to [participate in this survey](#). This information will help us make informed decisions regarding this matter. We want your input!

Facilitating Various Searches Underway

Searching for new employees requires time, talent, and work. So, I would like to extend special thanks to the members of the various search committees for their time and work. I also want to thank Human Resources for all the work they must perform to facilitate these leadership searches, the faculty and professional staff searches, and the searches that fall within the CSEA classification.

Some Enjoyable Things I Did Recently

Unlike my first two years here at Fredonia when the COVID-19 situation precipitated restrictions on various activities, including how we interacted, I am really enjoying the opportunity to attend some events and get around to meet people in-person. I thought I would share with you my top dozen things that I had the opportunity of enjoying outside of my regular office work within the last few weeks. Some of these things were by invitations and then there were others I simply invited myself. Many thanks for the notifications, invitations and/or reminders, or allowing me to drop by and interrupt your work/lab time.

1. Women's volleyball game against Hilbert College
2. President's Own Marine Band performance at King Concert Hall
3. Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce Awards Banquet
4. Athletics Hall of Fame induction
5. Stopping by the offices of a few faculty members
6. Lunch with emeriti faculty and staff members
7. A visit to the tutoring center
8. Unplanned chat with students at the Fishbowl in Houghton Hall
9. Unplanned observance of students in a biochemistry lab
10. Unplanned observance of students in a physics lab

- 11. Various Homecoming 2022 events
- 12. Participation in the STEM shirt making - I designed a shirt with tree rings and the inscription, "History Lives in Tree Rings"

I hope to meet more people and learn about their work during my walkabouts on campus.

Time

As I looked at today's date, October 27, 2022, I was reminded of how fast time flies. It was not too long ago when we welcomed 2022. Also, it was not too long ago when we began this academic term. I was reminded of a time when I was a very young lad and felt that the year took too long to progress because I could not wait for Christmas to arrive. I was anxious for Christmas because of the gift possibilities it presented. Then somewhere in my twenties I found that some days did not seem long enough and the speed of the days, weeks, and months appeared to have increased. The years appeared to come to an end much quicker than they used to. Have you ever felt that way, or the opposite?

In any case, with the beautiful color changes and falling of the leaves, with 65 days left on this calendar, and with more than half of the term behind us, I want to thank you sincerely for the hard work in getting us to this point. I wish you the best for the remainder of the term and the year. Thank you for your time.

Very truly yours,

Dr. K

Stephen H. Kolison Jr., Ph.D.
President and Professor



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