
The Understory - President Kolison's Update to Faculty and Staff January 5, 2023

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State University of New York at Fredonia

The Understory



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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.

January 5, 2023
Fredonia, NY

Dear Faculty and Staff,

Happy New Year! I hope you had an enjoyable and safe holiday. I wish you the very best for good health and joy for 2023 and beyond.

Welcome to a new semester, Spring 2023. I have a few things to share with you in this Understory.

Mid-Academic Year Conference

You have probably seen the invitation from my office for the Faculty and Staff Mid-Academic Year Conference scheduled in Rosch Recital hall at 9:00 a.m. on January

19. I hope that you will be able to attend. I ask that supervisors be flexible with their staff and encourage attendance if at all possible. Please [click here](#) to add the event to your calendar and to see the meeting agenda.

Update on Leadership Searches

During the Fall semester, we launched several searches to fill key positions at the university. These included the Vice President for Finance and Administration, Vice President for University Advancement, Chief Information Officer, Dean of the School of Music, and Dean of the School of Business.

This was a tremendous undertaking as it involved significant amounts of work, coordination, and participation of the campus community: Shared governance, stakeholders, and individuals serving on the search committees. I am pleased to say that this was a very successful undertaking, and I hope to have announcements regarding the cabinet-level positions next week. You have likely seen that the new Dean of the School of Music has been announced, and I anticipate that Executive Vice President and Provost Starrett will continue to keep the campus updated regarding the remaining dean positions.

I want to express my sincerest thanks to the various search committees for their work and to the campus community for participating in the searches. As you know, many of the vacancies we are filling occurred over a long period of time due to retirements and resignations. I stated upon my arrival at SUNY Fredonia that we needed to stabilize the senior leadership at the university by filling key positions in interim status and allow for these leaders to pursue their role with long-term views in mind.

I remain very grateful for the individuals who filled these roles and for their dedication to the university, for their work to keep Fredonia's future secure, and for bringing us this far. I truly enjoyed the opportunity to work with those individuals: Ben Hartung, Betty Gossett, Moj Seyedian, and Laura Koepke. I thank them for continuing to serve in interim status until the persons selected come to campus and transition into their roles. They have all contributed significantly to the fulfillment of the mission of the university. I am also grateful to Mike Metzger for his service and leadership for the last five years as Vice President for Finance and Administration. It has been a pleasure working with Mr. Metzger. I thank him for his commitment to the university and for working very hard to manage our financial challenges and ensuring that our facilities are among the best in the SUNY System.

Input from Campus Community

As I interact with various groups across campus, I have opportunities to receive input about some of the things that would help improve the work and learning environment. I

have received ideas from students, the President's Student Cabinet, the faculty, CSEA, and UUP. These ideas are many, as you can imagine. They ranged from compensation matters to building a parking garage. Some of these proposed ideas are easy to do, and some are hard to do. Some of the ideas can be implemented in short order, while others will take time given resource requirements. In fact, some of these proposed ideas have already been implemented while others are underway. In all cases, I am encouraged by this input because it is clear that everyone providing thoughtful feedback wants the best for our university, which aligns with my sole purpose of being here - working hard to secure the very best for SUNY Fredonia's future.

So that none of the input that I received goes unvetted and unprioritized, I will be requesting a small working group to work directly with me to categorize and prioritize the various items of input and to put together a set of actions that will benefit the entire campus. In the interim, the things that I know can be done without the need for further analysis will be implemented. For example, in an effort to bring about increased efficiency, and to offer support to faculty and staff to complete their purchasing requests in a timely manner, we have changed the levels of purchasing approval to the following:

- \$500 and under does not need VP or Dean approval (approval is at the account signature level only);
- Above \$500 and up to \$2,500 will need Dean/Director approval but not VP approval;
- Above \$2,500 will require VP approval.

In addition, the time for the cabinet to review and make decisions for new faculty positions will be no later than the week after the enrollment census is released. I anticipate that this will be about mid September. I believe this will enable searches for positions intended for the proceeding fall to begin much earlier.

Strategic Planning

As you are aware, work is underway regarding the development of a new strategic plan for the next five years, summer 2023- spring 2028. The committee has already completed a tremendous amount of work on this plan's foundation, and I encourage you to attend the town hall meeting they will be hosting on January 19. I hope everyone will attend the town hall and provide additional input. It is important to note that the strategic plan will drive, to a very large extent, our financial commitments going forward. This is why it is important that all voices are heard through this process. I hope you will be able to attend.

Presidential Vision for the New Year

Given that this year is the year for a new strategic plan and the infusion of new leadership in many areas of the university, I envision this year as a year in which we explore and vet many new ideas that will take Fredonia into the future. As we become less encumbered by the issues we have had in the past, including the COVID-19 restrictions, I envision this to be a year of bold and thoughtful ideas and a resurgence of energy that will position the university to thrive in the years ahead. I see 2023 as a year in which we will further enhance pathways towards optimum enrollment and a more secure financial future. During this year, we will begin divesting ourselves from things and ideas that no longer hold promise for our future.

Be energized. Be hopeful notwithstanding our current budget deficit. Be positive. Be involved. Engage! Happy New Year!

Very truly yours,
Dr. K
President and Professor



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