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## The Understory - President Kolison's Update to Faculty and Staff April 11, 2023

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

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State University of New York at Fredonia

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# *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.

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April 11, 2023  
Fredonia, NY

Hello Fredonia Faculty, Staff, Emeriti, and Friends,

I am happy to be able to connect with you again through the Understory. Thank you for the privilege to take some of your time to update you on matters that make up the tapestry of our institution as well as things that continue to shape the future of our university.

### **Kudos for Years of Service and Retirement**

Let me ask a question, the answer to which I believe that we all know. What does kudos mean? The origin of the word and how it entered the English language make an interesting reading. The Oxford dictionary defines kudos as, "The praise and honor that goes with particular achievement or position". The two words that stand out to me in this definition are "honor" and "achievement". Achievement, which often involves hard work and/or sacrifice, is what in many cases moves us to

honor or to praise in ways that are genuine. We honor as a way of expressing our thanks and appreciation to others for what they contribute to the accomplishment of goals that have high importance or value.

Here at SUNY Fredonia, our mission is to educate, challenge, and inspire students to become skilled, connected, creative, and responsible global citizens and professionals. On May 20, 2023, we will be sending out into the world many of those students to help shape it for the better. The important question for this Understory is how does preparing such students get accomplished? How do we deliver on our mission year-to-year? I find the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child" to be useful in answering this question. As this proverb implies, the accomplishment of an important endeavor involves the support and cooperation of many people. Accomplishing the mission of the university is not achieved with just a few persons. It takes each member of our "village" for us to succeed in delivering our mission. Each member has a responsibility for fulfilling a part of what it takes each day, month, and year to achieve the mission of the university. The process is continuous, with individuals joining in and getting off at various points with the movement of the hands of time.

This is why I am very excited that we will take some time on April 27 at the Years of Service and Retiree Recognition Luncheon to honor or say kudos to several of our continuing colleagues for their years of service to the university, and to our former colleagues who retired recently from the university after years of dedicated service. This event is particularly special since this will be our first in-person Years of Service and Retiree Recognition Luncheon since 2019 due to COVID-19. The list of our honorees can be viewed in my invitation email to the campus. I hope you will take some time to attend. If you have not already done so, you can [RSVP to the invitation here](#).

### **President's Awards for Excellence**

We have been working on redesigning the President Awards for Excellence to ensure that they are more inclusive and aligned with some of the areas that we want to enhance at Fredonia. You will soon be seeing a call for nominations for a new series of presidential awards. Together with the Chancellor's Awards, I believe we will be recognizing exceptional performance in all areas that align with the things that we value at SUNY Fredonia. The goal is to present these awards along with the Chancellor's Awards at the Fredonia Faculty/Staff Conference Plenary in August 2023.

### **SUNY Cybersecurity Assessment**

The cyber targeting of higher education institutions continues to increase. It has been reported that within SUNY alone, just within the last three years, cyberattacks increased by 250%. This trend is expected to continue to increase and with increased sophistication. Consequently, institutions of higher education must remain vigilant to preempt such attacks. The cost involved in securing our infrastructure from individuals with criminal intent is significant including purchasing cyber insurance.

Recently SUNY performed a Cybersecurity Resilience assessment of its campus in eight cybersecurity control areas. I am pleased to report that SUNY Fredonia was fully compliant in six of the assessed areas and partially compliant in only two areas. Fredonia's results relative to the rest of SUNY are exemplary, and we can all be proud of this. Of course, we will strengthen the areas of partial compliance. For now, please join me in congratulating our ITS team for this accomplishment.

### **Designated Parking**

As a follow-up to the survey sent out last fall, we found that many people did not express strong opinions about designating/restricting certain lots for student or faculty/staff use. In addition to the survey results, I have heard from some members of our community who do not view the restriction of certain parking lots to be a pressing matter to be addressed at this time. Hence, given this level of support, and the time, financial, and enforcement resources needed to implement such a change, we will leave things as they are for now. Let's revisit this matter again when our enrollment reaches about 4,200 and overall demand for parking increases.

### **Commencement**

We will hold our 196th Commencement on May 20, 2023. We will hold two sessions of Commencement: at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Retired Buffalo City Judge, the Honorable James A.W. McLeod, Fredonia Class of 1971, will deliver the commencement address in the morning session, and the Mayor of the City of Lancaster, the Honorable Lynne Ruda, Fredonia Class of 2007, will deliver the commencement address in the afternoon. Both addresses will be recorded and made available to all graduates. The Office of Marketing and Communications will deliver a press release that will provide information on the backgrounds and achievements of these two alumni who I have found to be trailblazers.

I want to encourage all members of our community to come out and help celebrate our students for their achievements on May 20th.

### **Presidential Committees**

As you can imagine, from time-to-time, I get suggestions regarding things we could do to enhance some aspects of the university. Some of these suggestions come to me in person, while I receive others through the results of surveys shared with me. Notwithstanding how I receive suggestions and the nature of the suggestions - easy, difficult, inexpensive, expensive, feasible, or infeasible - the important thing to me is to be able to respond, be it immediately, or at a later date. Often, responding requires some consultations, especially when there are complexities. Consequently, in February 2023, I appointed a working group to assist me in reviewing results of various surveys conducted by different groups and at different points in time. I asked the working group to categorize items resulting from the surveys in terms of practicality, impactfulness, and affordability.

Of the practical, impactful, and affordable items, I asked them to make recommendations to me regarding five items that might be accomplished by the end of this calendar year, and another five items that might be accomplished by the calendar year 2024. I anticipate that I will receive the recommendations from the Working Group by mid May 2023. I am looking forward to receiving the outcomes of their work.

I also appointed other committees this semester to help carry out some very important tasks.

These include:

1. Fredonia Affordability Committee;
2. SUNY Fredonia Presidential Commission for the Commemoration of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday on Campus;
3. Honorary Doctorate Committee.

The charges and membership of these committees can be found [here](#).

I want to thank everyone for agreeing to serve on all these committees. Like in the understory of the forest, it is my anticipation that the “plants” emerging from the work of these committees will grow and become a part of the “canopy of the forest stand”.

Thank you for taking time to read this version of the Understory. I look forward to seeing you at the Years of Service and Retiree Recognition Luncheon.

Very truly yours,

Dr. K

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

President and Professor



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