
[FacultyStaff] Message from President Stephen H. Kolison, Jr., September 13, 2024

President's Office <President.Office@fredonia.edu>
Reply-To: president.office@fredonia.edu
To: Faculty/Staff group <facultystaff@fredonia.edu>

Fri, Sep 13, 2024 at 4:00 PM



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

September 13, 2024

Dear faculty and staff:

I am reaching out to follow up on our continuing efforts to achieve financial sustainability and ensure a bright and long-lasting future for SUNY Fredonia.

As I have communicated in emails and campus presentations, Fredonia has struggled with a structural deficit for over a decade, with operational costs exceeding revenues generated. For a time, the university addressed this deficit utilizing a combination of fund balances and federal COVID funds.

With these funds exhausted, we needed to face our fiscal reality head-on with a long-term plan to invest in key strategic areas and optimize our operations to reduce costs. This is what led to my campus presentation in December 2023 where I proposed growth areas where we can lean into our strengths as well as the discontinuation of 13 degree programs that are no longer generating student demand.

Consistent with our strategy, after very hard and at times painful discussions, we are moving forward with plans to adjust our workforce in conjunction with the program discontinuations. Many, but not all, of these adjustments can be made through attrition or voluntary separations.

I want to stress that these decisions are not taken lightly. I know they are most difficult on those directly impacted. We will make every effort to assist impacted employees every way we can, and we have notified their respective bargaining representatives so that they can assist as well.

I am encouraged that we increased the most recent student cohort by 10% over the previous year. We have also made tremendous progress in our retention efforts. This year, we achieved a 77.8% first-year retention rate, which exceeds both the national average and our target. We are also seeing growth in the graduate student body.

Newly admitted graduate students are up by 30% from last year, and there are a total of 431 graduate students enrolled this fall, which is an 18% increase from the previous year. The new Clinical Mental Health Counseling masters program, which has a cohort of 23 students for its first fall semester, is one example of how we are strategically developing programs to support our plan for growth.

These are all promising signs, and I greatly appreciate all the work that made it happen. Those trends need to continue to help us get where we want - and need - to be. We still have more work to do, and as we have seen with this incoming class, we can do it.

I appreciate the work you are all doing to move us forward, and I know that by pulling together as a campus community, and with the support of SUNY, the Hochul administration, and other key stakeholders, we will succeed.

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



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