
[FacultyStaff] Message from President Stephen H. Kolison, Jr., January 27, 2025

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

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

January 27, 2025

Dear Faculty and Staff,

Greetings from Albany, the capital of our great state! What am I doing here? You may have guessed correctly. My advocacy work on behalf of our institution for 2025 has begun. I trust that you have seen the [Executive Budget](#) proposed by Governor Hochul. Once again, her Executive Budget manifests her commitment to SUNY. It includes increased funding to aid the operation of campuses and enhance ASAP, ACE, and facilities, among other significant investments.



June 2024 at the SUNY Fredonia campus, President Stephen H. Kolison and New York State Governor Kathy Hochul

I recall a conversation with Governor Hochul during her visit to SUNY Fredonia last summer. In that conversation, I thanked her for supporting SUNY. Her response to me was, “We are just beginning.”

I want to express my gratitude to Chancellor King and the SUNY Administration for their advocacy on behalf of the SUNY System. As we have seen during the last two years, they are succeeding in their efforts in a financial environment where the state has to make difficult choices among highly competitive needs. We will work hard to ensure legislative support for SUNY's proposal between now and when the budget is passed.

I hope the first week of the spring semester went well for you. Please allow me a few moments to share with you highlights from the presentation I made at the Mid-Academic Year Faculty and Staff Conference. Many thanks to all the faculty and staff members who were able to attend the presentation. I appreciate the time you took to attend this important meeting. Let me also thank our colleagues who performed Journey's "Don't Stop Believin' " to get our conference started. That was a lot of fun!



Photo by Amberly B. Abbey showing left to right, James Harrington, Assistant Professor, School of Music, David Stringham, Dean of the School of Music, Stephen H. Kolison, Jr., University President, Naomi Baldwin, Int. Chief of Staff and Executive Assistant, Jill Reese, Professor, School of Music, John Caruso, Instructional Support Assistant, Graham Howes, Head Piano Technician.

Overall, the conference went well and adjourned promptly on time. I sincerely thank those who offered remarks and presentations at the conference: David Starrett, Executive Vice President and Provost; Wayne Lynch, Incoming Vice President for Finance and Administration; Vicki T. Sapp, Chief Diversity Officer; Austin Brass, Director of Admissions; Rob Deemer in his role as University Senate chair; Stephanie Teachman in her role as CSEA Chapter President; and Chris Taverna in his role as UUP Chapter President. Thanks also to Marc Levy for always ensuring our conferences in the Rosch Recital Hall go smoothly.

Some Key Highlights

Below are some highlights of the things that I covered in my presentation. I will follow up on some of these items at future University Senate meetings.

Enrollment

As you are aware, we have faced enrollment challenges for several years now for various reasons. Since 2022, we have been working intensively to build a new enrollment management infrastructure. As I indicated at the conference, I believe we now have in place the capacity and infrastructure that will make us more competitive in recruiting students. The presentation made by Austin Brass on behalf of Vice President Kendall outlined many new strategies that have been put in place, such as offering financial aid packages to students much earlier and more efficiently than we did in the past. That will make a difference in helping prospective students to fully assess the value of what we are providing them in a timely manner.

Provost Starrett also announced that a draft of the Academic Master Plan (AMP) has been developed. Given the highly competitive environment in which regional universities recruit students, I was very pleased with that development. In today's enrollment environment, an institution's academic array, often driven by an AMP, can influence the degree of success realized in attracting students. The AMP will help position us to be more successful in our recruiting efforts. Because this is an important endeavor, I want to encourage everyone to contribute to the conversations around the AMP. You will be notified of such opportunities.

Fundraising

It was a pleasure to report on behalf of Vice President Rohr that we attracted more donors and yielded more gifts in 2024 than in the previous year of 2023. Our total number of donors went up from 1,951 unique donors in 2023 to 2,210 unique donors in 2024. Among our faculty and staff, the total number of unique donors went from 96 in 2023 to 111 in 2024. The total funds raised went up from \$2,057,412 in 2023 to \$3,823,551 in 2024. Impressive! As of December 31, 2024, our endowment is \$55,064,817, with an annual spending rate of 4.5%.

I am very grateful to all our donors for their generosity towards the university. Many thanks to the Board and team at the Fredonia College Foundation for their hard work in raising funds. Their efforts make it possible for many of our students to achieve their dreams of a high-quality college education. Thank you.

Financial Stewardship

My presentation at the conference covered the enhancement of the stewardship of our funds. This will be given a very high priority. Thus, among the things that I am including in the entry plan of our new Vice President for Finance and Administration is establishing all-funds, binding budgets for each division of the university. To ensure that we will eliminate our structural deficit by 2028 in accordance with our financial sustainability plan, we will need to pay closer attention to our budgets and take care to operate within budgetary outlays.

Enhancing Campus Climate

In enhancing our campus climate for the benefit of all persons at the university, in December 2024, we have restructured our work in this area in two big “buckets”: (1) Belonging initiatives, including those pertaining to Native Americans, will be led by Dr. Vicki T. Sapp and; (2) compliance work such as Title IX and child protection policies will be led by Ms. Kristen J. Helling. This new structure will enable us to achieve some wonderful things in these areas. You may recall that Goal 3 of our current strategic plan is, “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Belonging.”

Special Recognition

We awarded the President’s Award for Excellence in Collaboration to the Facilities Services staff for their work in clearing the snow and ensuring our campus was safe for return after the major post-Thanksgiving winter storm. Each person who contributed to that effort will receive a certificate of appreciation from the university. Again, congratulations to our coworkers in facilities services for their selection for this prestigious award.

Special Projects

The following were presented as special projects currently underway:

1. Bicentennial Commemoration;
2. Crime Lab Establishment at SUNY Fredonia and feasibility study - in collaboration with Chautauqua County;
3. JCC North County Presence in the Future - in collaboration with JCC;
4. Spring Event - creating a new tradition at SUNY Fredonia;
5. Weather-proofing instruction - The University Senate asked to facilitate this effort;

I will share more information about these projects throughout this semester.

Other Items

Other items or topics that were covered or touched on at the conference included the following:

- New staff welcomed to the university
- Prioritizing student success and student success opportunities:
 - ASAP and ACE
 - Credit for prior learning
 - Enhancing seamless transfer
- SUNY budget priorities

- Advocacy for SUNY Fredonia
- Building capacity to serve nontraditional students
- Diversification of funding sources
- Making it more flexible for students to earn their degrees
- Celebrating the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King
- President Kolison's goals relative to our strategic plan and the SUNY Pillars
- Partnering with SUNY to eliminate Fredonia's structural deficit by 2028
- Necessary ingredients for securing a brighter future for SUNY Fredonia
- The President's upcoming visits with faculty and staff at individual Colleges and Schools
- President Kolison's invitation to a Super Bowl watch party

As you know, throughout this week, we will celebrate the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. There are [many activities planned](#) for the entire campus and our guests. There is something for each person at our university. Hence, I encourage you to take some time to participate and enjoy what has been planned with you in mind. This is our second time doing this, and it is my hope that this effort will go on to become a tradition at SUNY Fredonia for years to come. I want to thank the Presidential Commission, led by Dr. Sapp and Dr. Stenger for their excellent work in planning this celebration.

Thank you for your time, and have a wonderful week.

Very truly yours,

Dr. K

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

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