

University Faculty Senate: 185th Plenary Session – Fall 2020
October 15-17, 2020
Virtual

Major Topics the Plenary Session

The Budget

- The budget situation was not discussed in great detail or specifics, given the overall gravity of the deficit situation. Cuts of 25% across campuses are presumed, and there is still uncertainty as to what NYS will be giving SUNY. Governor Cuomo will not address budget cuts until after the 2020 presidential election; details will be available at the Winter 2021 plenary (President Gwen Kay).
- At the **Comprehensive College sector meeting**, Senators' discussion of budgetary impact and/or budget-related concerns, ranged from actual actions taken on campuses to possible actions taken to reduce spending/deal with the budget problem, including:
 - hiring freezes and unfilled vacancies;
 - no extra service pay or course releases;
 - cuts to adjuncts (many campuses) and staff; cuts to mentoring programs;
 - cancelling of under-enrolled classes;
 - withholding of contractual raises; withholding of salary adjustment re: promotions (to be provided retroactively?);
 - “budget bomb” coming if there is no new relief (stimulus) package.
 - Deactivation or discontinuance of under-enrolled academic programs;
 - closure or consolidation (cannibalization) of one or more campuses;
 - conversion of SUNY from a traditional in-person to an online educational system;
 - creation of “supercourses” to use as a reason to no longer hire real instructors (President Kay); and,
 - budgetary decisions made without consultation with/involvement of faculty governance (President Kay).
- Despite CARES ACT funding, COVID-19 is having a seriously adverse impact upon NYS budget, already grappling with a 6 billion-dollar deficit.

COVID-19

- Probably as much time was spent discussing the pandemic as the budget. Several campuses are dealing with COVID-19 spikes, with “pauses” as required by state law (including Oneonta, Oswego, Cortland, and Binghamton).
- At the **Comprehensive College sector meeting**, Senators:
 - shared remote/virtual teaching experiences;
 - expressed concerns about the coronavirus:

- testing and health safety;
 - campus outbreaks and possible (probable) orders to pause (halt in-person classes for at least a couple of weeks);
 - o stated preference of many faculty to teach remotely for health safety reasons;
 - o reported anecdotal data of students not liking remote learning, preferring in-person classes instead;
 - o expressed the necessity for more resources to meet the increased need for online instruction; and,
 - o discussed proposed scheduling changes regarding Spring 2021 semester to facilitate coronavirus containment (*see below*).
- **Provost Laursen:** Winter 2021 classes will be virtual system-wide; there will be no Study Abroad programs overseas this spring. Efforts to contain future outbreaks and spread have led to proposed spring 2021 scheduling changes, particularly starting the semester a week later or starting face-to-face classes after February 1st (except possibly for clinicals and practicums), and canceling spring break. Additional strategies to reduce student/student-faculty density include: alternating attendance, increasing time between classes, scheduling of classrooms later into the evening (after 8 pm), and increasing instruction to six days a week. However, the Provost stated that no one solution would work for all campuses. Some campuses have already made their decisions about spring semester.
 - Strategies for reducing density among staff/personnel, include: staggering employee start/report times, staggering breaks, alternating on-campus workdays, and continuing to have employees work remotely.

Enrollment

- Student enrollment was discussed as a prime measure of SUNY's value (Chancellor Malatras). Based on preliminary data (as of 9/8/20), enrollment figures are "better than expected last March and better than was predicted this summer" based on data re: applications and deposits, and also student survey data (Provost Laursen).
- Based on comparison of Fall 2019 and preliminary Fall 2020 student headcount data, enrollment is up slightly at the doctoral institutions, down a bit at the Comprehensive Colleges and Technology Colleges, and notably lower at the Community Colleges
- **Enrollment Results:**
 - o SUNY State Operated Campuses – Total Enrollment: 219,733 (-1.3% from Fall 2019);
 - Doctoral Institutions: 112,651 (+0.3%);
 - Comprehensive Colleges: 80,971 (-3.2%);
 - Technology Colleges: 26,111 (-2.1%);
 - o SUNY Community College Total: 174,834 (-10.7%)
 - o *SUNY Total: 394,567 (down 5.7% from Fall 2019);*
- Preliminary Fall 2020 undergraduate enrollment data suggest greater reduction in first-year/first-time enrollees, compared to returning/continuing students (Laursen). This

could be due to more first-time students taking a gap year, and/or to effectiveness of student support services, resulting in greater retention. Further study is needed (Laursen).

- One hypothesis presented for the greater decline in Community College enrollments this Fall may be that the Excelsior program is shifting more students from community colleges to the state-operated facilities, making their numbers look better at the expense of the community colleges (past UFS President Knuepfer).

Other Business

- **OW First-Year Resolution Update**

The Student Life Committee supports our resolution, and began additional study this past spring when the pandemic hit and disrupted forward progress. The committee is seeking input from other SUNY campuses (to see how they address the matter), as well as input from students (via Student Assembly/student governance).

- **Campus Presidential Searches Update**

Considerable activity has taken place since last year with regard to replacing the numerous campus presidents who resigned or retired (or, in one case was ousted):

- o There were four successful searches resulting in new Presidents (Stony Brook, Fredonia, Purchase and Plattsburgh); one search was unsuccessful (Polytechnic) and must be done again.
- o Two searches are on-going, with Officers-in-Charge (ESF, Upstate Medical); OW has Dr. Teresa Miller as Officer-in-Charge.
- o Two new presidential searches are now needed (for ESC as former Pres, Malatras is now the Chancellor; recent resignation of Oneonta president).

- **SUNY Statement on the White House Executive Order** *(See SUNY Statement included)*

Or, go to: <https://www.suny.edu/diversity/federal-response/>

Executive Order 13850 on “Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping” issued by President Trump in September has not been well-received by numerous organizations that are recipients of federal funds such as contracts and grants, including businesses and academic institutions. Chancellor Malatras was especially incensed over threat of loss of funding in the face of exercising SUNY’s right to and responsibility for addressing systemic racism, which includes discussion in and outside of the classroom, as well as researching the topic.

- o A statement from SUNY Administration in response to the Executive Order has been drafted and members of the SUNY community (faculty, staff, and students) are urged to endorse the statement if they so agree. The SUNY Statement was posted on the SUNY website this week, and has over 1300 endorsements thus far – including the Chancellor, the Board of Trustees, campus Presidents, faculty governance leaders, faculty, staff and students.
- o You may read the entire statement and, if you wish, add your name to the list of those who endorse it. Simply click on the link provided above.

- o *See also* the **American Council on Education's** Letter (dated 10/8/20) in Response to the Executive Order, which has been endorsed by over 50 higher education organizations, including Middle States Commission on Higher Education and American Association of Colleges and Universities. (link to ACE site and letter: <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Letter-White-House-Race-and-Sex-Stereotyping-Executive-Order-100820.pdf>)

Resolutions (*See Resolutions included*)

- **186-01-1: "Racial Equity and Social Justice Curriculum"**

This resolution asks Senators to work with campus shared governance to develop and implement (or expand upon existing) curriculum and all-campus programming dealing with the issues of Racial Equity and Social Justice. This resolution was approved (45 in favor, 0 against, 1 abstention).

- **186-02-1: "Joint Statement on the Search for the SUNY Chancellor"**

This joint University Faculty Senate (UFS) – Faculty Council of Community Colleges (FCCC) statement to the Board of Trustees urging that a national search that follows principles of shared governance when replacing outgoing Chancellor Johnson, was approved by the Executive Committees of the UFS and FCCC in August. The statement was brought to the UFS body for a vote at the plenary (no amendments allowed), and was approved (41 in favor, 0 against, and 6 abstentions).

- **186-03-1: "Vote of No Confidence in Politically Appointed Members of SUNY Board of Trustees"**

This joint UFS - FCCC resolution of no confidence in response to the Board of Trustees's appointment of Chancellor Malatras without having a formal search was also approved in August by the UFS and FCCC Executive Committees, and was brought to the UFS body for a vote at the plenary (no amendments allowed). The resolution was approved (38 in favor, 4 against, and 4 abstentions).

- **186-05-1: "Importance of maintaining effective shared governance practices during times of crisis"**

This resolution asks the Chancellor to reinforce to campus Presidents the importance of supporting shared governance, even in times of crisis, and calls on Campus Governance Leaders to ensure that campus governance bodies have structures and processes that allow them to respond expeditiously when campuses are dealing with emergency situations. The resolution was approved (46 in favor, 0 against, and 0 abstentions).

- A fifth resolution was referred back to the Executive Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurette (Laurie) Morris
OW Senator