

SUNY CANTON COLLEGE COUNCIL
303rd MEETING
October 7, 2025

Present:	Ronald O'Neill, Chair Kyla Garrison	Kathleen Dodge	Joseph Rich
Zoom:	Marie Regan	Jennifer Stevenson	
Absent:	Brian Plonka	Toni Squires	
Others:	Jesse Clark-Stone Nicholas Kocher Travis Smith Michaela Young	Amanda Crump Kelly Obermayer Zvi Szafran	Peggy De Cooke Stephanie Petkovsek Geoffrey VanderWoude

Attendance Notes

- Kyla Garrison joined the Council at 11 a.m., which made quorum.
- Jennifer Stevenson joined via Zoom from a public location and was included in quorum.
- Jesse Clark-Stone joined via Zoom when the meeting adjourned.
- Nicholas Kocher had to leave early.
- Kelly Obermayer joined via Zoom.
- Marie Regan joined via Zoom.

Call to Order

At 10:00 a.m., the meeting was called to order. It was announced that quorum would not be met until the student representative joined the meeting at 11 a.m. Chairman O'Neill requested permission to reverse the agenda and do the non-action items (reports) first. There were no objections from the group.

Chairman's Report

Chairman O'Neill requested a moment of silence in honor of Dan Fay, recognizing his passing and extraordinary service to the College. He also requested formal recognition from the Council for two students for their accomplishments - Isabella Haydt, an outstanding student weightlifter, and Liam Waite, a SUNY Canton EMT student who was first on the scene for a call to Chairman O'Neill's home. He requested a letter of appreciation be sent to both students, in addition to the campus EMT program, noting the College Council's recognition and appreciation for their contributions to the College. He also noted the favorable public relations from the frequent media coverage of events related to the College.

President's Report

The following was provided as the President's report, which also included area updates.

Students are currently taking their mid-term exams, and Fall break is Thursday and Friday of this week, marking the midpoint of the Fall semester.

The Vice President for Administrative Affairs position has been filled, with the hiring of Eric Shinnick. Eric will begin on November 3. He has served as St. Lawrence University's (SLU's) Executive Director of Finance and Risk Manager since 2018, oversaw a \$130M annual operational and capital budget, and led their Financial Planning and Analysis (FP&A) efforts. He brings extensive experience in insurance and risk management from his position as Chairperson of the Board for the New York Colleges and University Risk Managers' Group. Eric also volunteered as an assistant coach with the SLU varsity men's soccer team and was a co-founder of the esports program.

The President thanked Amanda Crump for stepping up over the past nine months as interim Vice President after Shawn Miller's retirement. Amanda demonstrated her commitment to SUNY Canton as she simultaneously fulfilled her regular duties as the College Accountant during this time.

Dr. Szafran shared the enrollment numbers submitted to SUNY. Enrollment showed a 0.5% decrease overall, but compared to other North-Country colleges, it is a relatively modest decline. Some strategies being considered in response include, providing more financial aid, especially for transfer students; moderating our dropping of schedules for those who have not completely paid; adopting some new recruiting ideas; increasing the focus on our associates degrees; and moving to convert our 4-year Engineering Technology degrees to Engineering degrees, something that should be coming to the relevant governance bodies soon, if they have not already.

The following issues were shared as factors affecting enrollment - lower numbers of students graduating from high school, not being included in the State's Reconnect Program, and the continuation of flat state funding due to it being an election year. It was noted that there will be a continuation of advocacy for alternative funding for a similar program to the Reconnect Program, but there is little optimism with the current budget shortfall and uncertainty of the 2026 budget.

The Federal government remains on shutdown with the continued lack of bipartisan progress causing concerns with the Federal budget process. While political shifts could change the situation, the State is currently facing a \$750M shortfall for the remainder of FY 2025, with projected federal cuts of \$2-3B for FY 2026. The Federal government is also considering a College Compact that would apply to a limited number of institutions and increase oversight of college operations. So far, no federal actions have directly impacted SUNY Canton. The proposed change to green card policies could result in a \$100,000 fee for hiring non-U.S. citizens, which may make it impossible to recruit international faculty or staff if implemented.

Academic Affairs Update

Dr. De Cooke reported that this past summer, additional funding was received to expand our ACE/ASAP program to 250 students, with a subsequent request for our program to take on 35 more, for a total of 285 students, making us one of the largest ACE/ASAP programs in New York State.

It was reported that at the same time the College's TRiO program funding was expiring they were notified that the program's funding was renewed for an additional five years in the amount of \$1.5M. This federally-funded program provides enhanced academic and counseling assistance to eligible students. The aim of the program is to retain participants and encourage them to continue to obtain a baccalaureate degree. Federal requirements for this program are based on a student's status of being a

first-generation college student, income, and documented disability. Support services provided include academic advising, tutoring for math and sciences, and assistance with financial aid. It was also noted that the College is in the process of hiring a new director for this program.

The following data from a 24-25 FY collaborative study between ACE/ASAP and the Office of Institutional Research was shared as documentation of how our participants compared to a control group. The transfer students had a 10% higher persistence rate and a 15% higher credit completion rate than the control group. SUNY has announced a new multi-year, Academic Momentum campaign to increase retention and completion of all SUNY undergraduate students. The College is being asked as a campus to contribute towards the larger system goals through development of individual action plans that build on our strengths and adoption of evidenced-based strategies not currently in place or delivered at scale. A team is being formed to work on this, and plans are expected to be developed and submitted by January 15. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

Administrative Affairs Update

The President commented on the amount of construction happening on campus. The most obvious places include the CARC, the Plaza, and the newly covered stairways from the residence halls to Payson Hall, which are now complete and beautiful. On the negative side, the Payson Hall project will likely be delayed by one year. It was noted that there is also a plan to look at the turf field.

Vice President Crump reported that campus reserves remain consistent, but there are plans to spend down some of the reserves on new equipment for the Fitness Center. It was noted that the current equipment was purchased in 2012. The plan is to close the Fitness Center during the Christmas break for one week, reopen, and market it to be ready for the New Year, for new members.

Additional information was provided on the Athletic field study, and it was noted that they will be looking at replacing the main turf field and updates to the lighting, baseball, and softball fields. Other projects include adding seven additional electrical vehicle (EV) charging stations in faculty/staff lots 2, 5, 8, 12, and 13; replacing the chiller at the Southworth Library; and rehabilitating the Wicks Lecture Hall, which is currently underway.

Lastly, she noted that the government shutdown has had very little impact on the College so far, but we may see some downward effects with the FAFSA processing since the 2026-27 applications opened on October 1. President Szafran added that SUNY sent a survey about the government shutdown. The survey asked very specific questions, such as whether any of the cuts have resulted in anyone losing their jobs. He noted that, thus far, all answers were no.

Student Affairs Update

The following information was provided for Student Affairs.

Housing

It was reported that housing numbers are basically flat over last year, with the following chart providing a comparison of the last five years.

Semester	Kennedy Hall Occupancy	DIFR Dorm Occupancy	Total Occupancy
Fall 2020	273	582	855
Spring 2021	228	314	542
Fall 2021	284	492	776
Spring 2022	286	414	700
Fall 2022	273	481	754
Spring 2023	261	336	597
Fall 2023	277	439	716
Spring 2024	269	348	617
Fall 2024	279	497	776
Spring 2025	258	402	660
Fall 2025	277	501	778

Athletics

Club Hockey has grown, with a roster of 33 players. Competition has already started, and players are happy to compete in a conference versus other schools. JV men's basketball has a full roster of 14 players and are ready to begin competition this year. Fall sports are in full swing, and winter sports season practices begin next week. Men's golf is currently our most successful Fall sports team, with recent wins over Clarkson, St. Lawrence, and SUNY Oswego, among others. Our top golfer is Raine Rumble, a local student from Gouverneur.

Other

It was reported that Student Affairs is onboarding new software (slated to kick off in Spring 2026) that will greatly expand the offerings for telehealth and tele counseling, as well as provide emergency medical and mental-health support for students. This will allow online students to receive services, and it works directly with the Health Center and Counseling Center so that continuity of care is maintained. It was noted that additional information will be shared with the Council closer to launch time.

Dr. Szafran shared the following information with the Council. He noted that there was a Yik Yak post which threatened violence in a racist way. The campus community was notified, and steps have been taken to track down the person who made the threat; however, due to leadership changes within Yik Yak, that avenue has been unsuccessful. Additionally, at the same time, there were two outside groups on campus with different political viewpoints that caused concern among the students. It was explained that as a public college there are laws that the College must follow regarding Freedom of Speech and Title VI and campus policies that regulate student groups. It was noted that these situations are often complicated to deal with, and while it is true that the College will uphold the laws and abide by the policies, there is also an expectation that no one should have to defend their own humanity on the campus, and the College will do everything in its power to make sure that remains the case.

Advancement Update

Geoffrey Vanderwoude gave an update on the accomplishments for FY25. The overall goal of fundraising efforts was surpassed by raising more than \$1.8M. He noted that this included more than \$1.2M in gifts from alumni and \$145,000 from new first-time donors to the Foundation.

Vice President VanderWoude emphasized that fundraising remains central to their mission, and his current focus is on sustaining recent success by engaging young alumni, particularly those graduates from the last 10 to 20 years. The goal is to do this by reenvisioning events and reigniting the Alumni Board. He noted that events have traditionally catered to retired alumni with the idea of reminiscing about their time at college. Those events have done well, especially in specific geographic areas, such as Florida, but noted that they are missing out on engaging a huge subset of alumni. Now, when they plan their events, they are asking themselves, "Why would an alum choose to attend this event?" To broaden engagement, the team is now prioritizing value-driven programming such as networking receptions, professional development opportunities, and family-friendly gatherings. Additionally, events are being scheduled and publicized earlier to allow alumni ample time to plan. The Alumni Board is playing an active role in alumni engagement through events and a new on-campus mentorship program using the Foundation's Alma-base software, which connects students and alumni. This program will be managed in coordination with the Ready Center and is currently being launched softly. Geoffrey shared that by leveraging existing campus technology, such as smart classrooms or Zoom, they are able to expand on alumni engagement opportunities by virtually involving them in events such as the Living Writer Series, micro-course Mondays, or similar events to show a consistent alumni presence and to allow current students to see that they can continue to participate even after graduation.

Lastly, Geoffrey explained that while their practice of sharing the traditional generosity of alumni through major gifts and scholarships has served them well, they have determined that to reach all alumni, especially the younger alumni, they need to rethink what a gift is. As an example, an alum offers a student an internship or job after graduation. This should be celebrated as a gift even though there is no direct financial benefit to the College. The benefit lies with the student and allows the College to fulfill their mission to produce job-ready, employable graduates.

College Assembly Update

Nicholas Kocher reported that he and parliamentarian Charles Robinson attended a faculty governance training course in Lake Placid this past summer. Jessie Clark-Stone and Nick will be attending SUNY UFS this weekend.

In terms of College Assembly activities, the ad hoc Bylaws Committee is working on a proposal for a standing governance committee, as it is felt that a dedicated committee is needed to ensure regular updates occur. Additionally, at the Provost's direction, an ad hoc committee is being formed to make recommendations on the aspects of scholarship during a portfolio review. A newly formed caucus dedicated to faculty issues has recently elected officers and is currently determining how it will be integrated into the existing structure. And lastly, in an effort to prevent loss of information and to improve with dissemination, Nick reported he is working on moving the Faculty Governance files from Bright Space to Teams and Share point.

Chairman O'Neill asked if the new committee would report to Nick, and Nick responded that they have not discussed that yet. Nick added that he will find out what governance model they plan to use.

Faculty Senate Update

As Jesse Clark-Stone was unable to attend, President Szafran shared the following as Jesse's report. This semester, Jesse is a current member of the UFS Operations Committee, and he participated in the meeting to develop the Committee's annual agenda, with two main foci being Title II and AI. In terms of Title II, the Committee will draft a resolution for the Fall 2025 plenary, requesting greater clarity and support to help meet the April 26, 2026, deadline. Regarding AI, they will collaborate with other committees to promote responsible and ethical use of AI among faculty and staff, ensuring its presence and applications are acknowledged without misuse.

Chairman O'Neill asked about the master's program in Cybersecurity. Provost De Cooke stated that they are in the process of putting together the institutional self-study and finding external reviewers to look at the College, its resources, and whether the program can be adequately delivered. Once that is developed and because it is a new degree level for the College, it goes to the following for approval - SUNY, State Education department, Middle States, the Governor, and the Board of Trustees. The Data Science and Analytics program is part of it. She noted that the master's degree approval is probably three years off.

UUP Update

Stephanie Petkovsek, President of UUP for Canton, is part of the 12-person statewide negotiation team, which meets every three weeks and represents 32 campuses. It was noted that the negotiation team is comprised of representatives from various campuses, ensuring a balanced cross-section of professionals and faculty. Initial sessions were held in Albany this past summer. As contracts expire in Summer 2026, preparations are underway, including campus visits, surveys, and feedback collection, aiming to be negotiation-ready by November. The team seeks to avoid prolonged contract talks, especially with the Governor's reelection approaching. Stephanie shared the names of the new officers for the College's UUP leadership: Scott Quinnell (VP for Professionals), Marela Fiacco (VP for Academics), and Kevin McAdoo (Treasurer). It was noted that UUP continues their advocacy efforts through campus-delegate assemblies and attending advocacy days, as well as continuing to hold supervisor training for their members.

Student Government Association Update

Kyla Garrison reported on having two projects in process. She noted the first project as creating healthier food options for the campus and shared that they are in discussions with College Association regarding revising vending machine options and food choices at Chaney, Rendezvous, and The Corner. The SGA E-board's research found that unhealthy food choices can increase student's stress, which may lead to having anxiety attacks or other health problems, and also revealed that students with certain medical conditions, such as some forms of diabetes, may need food with sugar, so it is also important to keep some sugar choices.

Kyla shared the second SGA project in process, residence halls' updates, specifically a request to add murals. Kyla noted that each hall had murals in the past, and they are looking to bring that back with designs that fit the hall's unique community, i.e., a gaming design for the e-Sports wing in Heritage East.

Strategic Relations and Communications Update

Dr. Szafran shared Lenore's report, as she was unable to attend the meeting. He noted that Senator Stec was on campus a few weeks ago, and they talked with him about some of the bigger campus wants that could use legislative support - the Reconnect Program, the Downtown Entrepreneurship Center, and the Childcare Center.

With regard to the Downtown Entrepreneurship Center, there is a new development team that is eager to move things forward. He noted that an additional \$2M was received through the New York Forward grant and an additional \$1M was received through NYPA for that project.

With regard to the Childcare Center, he noted that several grants have been applied for, and our application has moved to round 2 of the Northern Border grant process, which will be \$1M towards it if approved. Dr. Szafran further noted that the Center's location has been decided and there are preliminary designs. The next step is a full engineering design, and it has been determined that the College will cover that cost to further this project towards being shovel ready. Efforts to raise the additional money needed will continue. A question on the location of the Childcare Center was asked and answered, stating that it will be in the "triangular" section of land behind the digital sign/Miller Drive and the windmills. Dr. Szafran continued by saying that this is something that is an important need for the area and will benefit our faculty, staff, students, and the community. He further noted that it will also serve children with developmental issues, which no other local childcare center does. Chairperson O'Neill asked if Potsdam's Education students will be involved. It was stated that all options will be considered, including involvement of our Early Childhood and Applied Psychology students.

Public Relations Update

Travis Smith provided an update for his area. He noted that the PR team has been busy compiling all the area reports for this year's annual report, and he gave a general overview of what is included - photos of the new Downtown Entrepreneurship Center and the Childcare Center in the President's Foreword, and highlights such as the \$1M Nursing grant, outstanding faculty research, the new enrollment program, summer camps, and top-notch fundraising. As soon as the report is final, it will be shared with the Council for their review and action in adopting it as their annual report to SUNY.

Travis also stated the College was recognized by US News and World Reports again this year:

- Tied for twelfth on the Regional Colleges North list.
- Eighth in the Top Public Schools North list.
- Fourth in Best Colleges for Veterans North Category.
- Seventh in the Best Value North category.
- Thirteenth for social mobility.

Admissions and PR attended the UCI Mountain Bike World Series in Lake Placid last weekend. There were over 8,000 attendees, and their booth engaged with numerous alumni, parents, and prospective students. Travis noted that it gave them some nice opportunities to create social media clips for the College's channels and also mentioned the new billboards on I-81 and 781 near Watertown. Noting that one is a general ad as you head north from Watertown Center, and the second is a digital ad that loops, located on 781 when you are coming off Interstate 81 towards Fort Drum. This ad is specific to our fee-

free military campaign for anyone who is active duty, which has yielded nine additional students compared to last year.

Additional advertising is being done through NFHS Network, which live streams the majority of NYS high school events; in New York City, Albany, and the North Country; and during our live sporting events and NFL events, especially the Bills games.

Meeting Minutes – June 13, 2025

It was announced that everyone received a copy of the minutes by email.

Council Member Dodge made a motion to approve the June 13, 2025, Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Council Member Stevenson, with no additions or correction, and the Minutes were approved.

New Business

2024-25 President's Annual Report

It was noted that the annual report was not yet complete, so it will not be acted on today. Once complete, Michaela Young will send it to the Council via email for review and action to be conducted by an e-vote.

Required SARA Statement

It was announced that everyone received a copy of the required SARA Statement by email. This was provided to the Council as information, as the College is mandated to post it as part of the agreement with SARA. Everyone acknowledged that they received it, and no comments were made.

Old Business

There was no Old Business brought before the Council.

Adjournment

Council Member Garrison made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:07 a.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Dodge and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Michaela Young
Secretary to the College Council