

SUNY CANTON COLLEGE COUNCIL

290th MEETING

DECEMBER 17, 2021

Present:	Ronald O’Neill, Chair Jennifer Stevenson	Marie Regan Jonah Black	Joseph Rich
Absent:	Grace Burke	Toni Kennedy	
Others:	Matt Burnett Shawn Miller Zvi Szafran	Peggy De Cooke Stephanie Petkovsek Lenore VanderZee	Laini Kavaloski Travis Smith Michaela Young

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 p.m.

Minutes of the September 21, 2021 Meeting

Chairman O’Neill stated that the minutes were emailed to everyone.

Ms. Stevenson made a motion to accept the minutes of the September 21, 2021, meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rich, and with no additions or corrections, the minutes were approved.

New Business

There was no new business to report.

Old Business

There was no old business to report.

Chairman’s Report

Chairman O’Neill offered a tribute in remembrance of Dr. John L. Graham.

Today, we remember the late Dr. John L. Graham, the 17th President of SUNY Potsdam. President Graham passed away November 27. His sudden death rocked his family, friends, colleagues, and students. He was also a dear friend of our own President, Zvi. Though his tenure at Potsdam as Officer-in-Charge was brief, it did have an impact on the College, and it was profound. Last week, the SUNY Board of Trustees unanimously approved a resolution that named Dr. John Liam Graham president of SUNY Potsdam. Together we mourn his passing, and please join us in a moment of silence.

The Chairman asked Michaela to send our condolences to his wife and daughter. Dr. Szafran shared that the College has sent a dish garden to his family and planted a stand of trees in his honor. Chairman O’Neill asked that Michaela send a letter to them.

Chairman O'Neill also shared that SUNY Central has named Dr. Phil Neisser, our Dean of the School of Business and Liberal Arts, as new Officer-in-Charge at SUNY Potsdam, whose title and authority are effective immediately beginning on January 10, 2022. Dr. Neisser will be fulltime at SUNY Potsdam's campus; he was a highly-valued member of the SUNY Canton team. It was noted that this was kind of a home coming for Dr. Neisser, as he previously served as a faculty member at SUNY Potsdam for 29 years. Chairman O'Neill expressed that we were sad to see him go. He thanked him for his service to SUNY Canton and wished him well in his new role, and he also wished our sister institution great success as the search begins for their new, permanent president. A round of applause was given for Dr. Neisser.

President's Report

The President and other participants provided the following report.

- The semester is almost over, and it has had its challenges. We were looking forward to a "return to normal" due to the low levels of the virus we experienced the previous year and over the summer. Unfortunately, the delta variant caused an increase in the number of cases across the country, and especially in the North Country, due to the relatively low vaccination rates in the public. Currently, as I'm sure you're aware, the North Country counties have all issued a state of emergency warning, due to high positivity rates and declining availability of beds in the hospitals.
 - As a result of the delta variant, we were asked to assist St. Lawrence University (SLU) early in the term by providing them with isolation/quarantine space on our campus, due to an outbreak they were dealing with at the time. We reached agreement with them quickly, and ultimately a total of 10 students were temporarily housed on our campus, fully overseen by SLU personnel, early in the semester. There were no additional students further on. They have asked for the same agreement to be extended next semester, and we have agreed.
 - The omicron variant is now spreading, and Cornell University has just had an outbreak with a significant percentage showing the variant, resulting in them going fully remote early this week. We have not yet seen the variant in our own results to this point.
 - On our own campus, the virus was successfully contained. There was a major push for vaccinations, and ultimately 97% of our students complied, with another 3% getting religious exemptions. Less than 1% were compelled to switch to being fully online due to refusal to vaccinate. Throughout the semester, we typically had 12-16 positive cases at any given point, with the exception of the week before Thanksgiving break, where the number of cases rose, including in one of our athletic teams, to the 40s. It has returned to the lower levels since the break, with the current number of cases being 8. Since this is the end of finals week, most of our students have already returned home.
 - We were able to successfully transition to a more normal level of in-person instruction and student life events, which overall have gone well. Plans are for this to continue in the spring, but we are prepared to make changes if conditions change due to the virus.
- Peggy, can you talk a little about how in-person instruction has gone, as well as some of the issues we are working with the faculty on?**

Peggy shared that the feeling among faculty and students at the beginning of the term was one of joy to be back on campus; however, there have been challenges, one of

which has been the ability to get students engaged and participating in discussions. The faculty will continue their work on this in the spring semester.

Good progress is being made on the Middle States reaccreditation process – steering committee has been formalized, working groups have been developed and are meeting and gathering details for the self-study, a self-study design document has been submitted and accepted with minimal edits. In early October, a virtual visit was held with our Middle States liaison to gather information and provide guidance. The next steps will be for the Middle States Commission to name a chair and team for our evaluation. The Council was invited to view the accreditation webpage for regular progress updates.

SUNY's contract with BlackBoard, which provides our learning management system, expires at the end of 2022. Desire2Learn (D2L) Brightspace has been selected as the new learning management system, with transitions for all campuses to happen soon. Those on campus who have been able to test the new system report that it is easy to learn and use. It is thought that we will be asked to be in the early migration, with the role out being in early spring

SUNY recently approved a new general education framework that has been in process for the last three years. Key features include: a new diversity general education category and a new interpretation of the basic 7 of 10 rule. SUNY did ask for feedback on the migration of this, and it was reported that the timeline will be trying considering the need to also transition to D2L at the same time. SUNY has set full implementation for the Fall of 2023; we will be faced with issues such as new core course development and review and adjustment of current learning outcomes and possible program review.

Last fall, a new peer review committee composition and rank matrix was passed for the faculty review process. They were implemented this fall for all reviews of tenure and promotion considerations. A new rank was also designated within the lecturer position – senior lecturer – it provides a way to acknowledge the longevity and talent of this group of people by allowing those with six years or more of service to apply for this rank. They would receive a longer contract and an additional salary added to base pay.

She reported that in conjunction with the union we have been working to review and revise the duties of the Chairs, Directors, and the previously discontinued position of curriculum coordinators – the need to re-institute this position is being re-evaluated

Mr. Rich expressed his pleasure for the new rank of senior lecturer. He asked if it was met with enthusiasm. It was noted that a group did vote in favor of it, but there was a group that also voted against it. Although not definitive, it was felt that people tied it to their fears of fewer tenure-track faculty.

Chairman O'Neill asked if the incentives being given in the nursing and healthcare areas are impacting the campus. The response was yes. The nursing faculty have put forward a proposal that will be reviewed on Monday. It was also shared that SUNY is offering an incentive of \$200,000 to help with this issue; we are waiting on further details.

- With so many campuses having financial and recruitment issues, there has been some concern on campus about where we stand. Enrollment of first-year students has been down the past last year and this year due to the pandemic, most predominantly students from NYC. This has been a trend across SUNY, with only the university centers showing a small increase. Our inability to do live recruiting in NYC is what has affected our numbers there. I gave a budget presentation in October to address these points, similar to the one I gave last year. We have been working to address enrollment through increased funding and staffing in the Admissions area, as well as sponsoring our first-ever bus trip for prospective NYC students this past fall, which was highly successful. We're also seeing some positive results, with our Spring 2021 recruiting showing increases in numbers and deposits relative to last year, and good numbers of people attending our in-person and online recruiting events. Budget-wise, we're facing a potential deficit of about \$4M, though we also have about \$2.7M in CARES funds that could be applied toward that. We are working to reduce spending in appropriate places, and anticipate reducing the deficit significantly, with my best guess being that it will wind up at \$1M-\$1.5M at this point. We are also facing some challenges with more personnel turnover than we usually have, which seems to be a national trend in all industries. **Shawn, can you talk a little more about the budget and some personnel challenges and successes we have recently had?**

Shawn reported that she feels confident that our budget is fairly stable, and we still have reserves. Over the past year, we have received \$16M of federal CARES or COVID money – more than half of that goes to the students, and the other is very specific and must be used to benefit the students. It has been helpful in paying for our COVID testing, which runs about \$600,000/yearly. She noted that we are lucky and thankful for this federal assistance and also for Lenore, Courtney, and a team of volunteers who run the testing.

She shared that during COVID raises were frozen, but since July 1, we have been mandated to give raises in the amount of \$577,000. No additional support is provided for the raises, but we have been able to handle them due to our reserves.

With regard to staffing, the largest challenge has been with positive COVID results, as one positive case can take down a whole department. On a positive note, we have been able to hire a new HR director, and she fits well with the staff. She also noted that there has been turnover at the lower levels.

- In the area of Student Life, we challenged ourselves to make 2020-2021 the Best Year Ever, and I think that in many ways, we have succeeded. We've also enjoyed some recent athletic successes. Courtney has provided an updated that I will share.

In athletics, we have brought back Cheerleading, which was suspended when COVID hit. Esports has wrapped another good semester with two of our teams making it to the championships in the ECAC and eSports league. There are 100 eSports athletes this year, and in collaboration with a number of areas on campus, a new residence hall wing was created and filled to capacity. We also continue to grow at the SUNY level in eSports, starting with 636 students last year and rising to 2,077 students this year. The participating number of campuses has grown from 45 to 49. SUNY is considering an additional investment into this area, an area that is run by us, so watch for future announcements.

Our winter teams are off to a good start. Our women's basketball team beat Plattsburgh, Potsdam, and Clarkson. In men's hockey, they beat Potsdam and Castleton. Men's basketball has beaten Cazenovia and Cobleskill. Women's hockey record is impressive with an 8:2:1 record, beating Morrisville, Wilks, and Buffalo State.

There has been lots of recognition related to athletics in the news. We have asked to become a member of SUNYACT again for Men's hockey, and we are hoping for a positive outcome when they vote in the Spring.

The fitness Center, Dana Hall, and intermural sports continue to be busy, and there are plans to expand Badminton and Pickleball play next semester.

- **Faculty Governance Update – Matt, will you give us a quick update on that area?**
Matt shared that a number of the items related to this area were covered above in the Provost's report. A new initiative not yet mentioned was the work that has been done with the President and the Provost on a new way of doing strategic planning – the key components of the new strategy is making the planning more routine instead of in five-year intervals and opening it up for all faculty and staff to put forward ideas. He also shared that they have been working with the Bylaws Committee and all of the campus governance committees to review their charges and adjust where needed.

Matt shared that the last Faculty Assembly meeting for the semester was held this morning, and elections for the various campus governance committees went well with an uptick in participation to fill positions. There was a recent introduction of two parliamentary positions, which has been working well.
- **Faculty Senate Update – Laini?**
Laini shared that the Fall Plenary was virtual, and she hopes the Spring one will be in person. Topics at the Plenary included enrollment numbers for the system, which are down across SUNY, and opportunities for growth – connecting better with community colleges, leveraging, providing better tools to showcase our strengths, looking at adult learners, micro-credentials, solving real-world problems with students, etc.

She also shared that the new gen ed category is going to be called Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice.

Each sector is allowed to ask one question of the Chancellor, and the Tech Sector's question was related to recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, including international candidates, something we are having a hard time doing due to salary levels. The Chancellor was asked for ideas and more support and resources from SUNY. His suggestions were to offer incentives – lab space, research – and remind them that we have a public mission, which is good to be involved in helping people. He did also say that the SUNY System would be able to help with international candidates.

She reported that five resolutions were passed at the Plenary, with subsequent support of all resolutions through the campus faculty assembly.

Formally authorize virtual plenary meetings for the Faculty Senate
Executive Budget Resolution – to influence the development of the Governor's budget – to help SUNY's and CUNY's academic missions.

Telecommuting Policy Resolution – urged the Chancellor and the unions to make permanent the current telecommuting policy with an emphasis on flexibility and productivity.

Change in contact hours in applied learning

Supporting an AAUP Joint statement – basically in opposition to recent legislative proposals across the country that target academic lessons, presentations, and discussions of racism and religious related issues in American history in various schools, colleges, and universities

- Student Government Association – **Jonah?**

It was reported that the SGA has been able to solve a number of smaller issues for the student body. They have also held campus events for the student community – Carnival of Clubs, first annual Holiday Bash – and have been able to start planning for the Leadership Conference and Carnival of Clubs for the spring semester. SGA has also worked with students to revive and start new Clubs – ex. revival of the Eco Club, creation of a fencing club.

- Dr. Szafran explained that Tracey was not able to be here today due to the recent loss of her husband. He offered an Advancement update. Very busy season and have been able to raise significant amounts of money last year, surpassing their goals. This year, they are on track as well both in terms of general fundraising and through people making bequests. We've had some personnel turnover there as well, and they have been able to successfully replace the people who have left.

- In the area of Public Relations, we've gotten some excellent press on quite a number of things, as well as with our advertising campaigns. **Travis, can you give us an update?**

Travis shared that the PR team has been busy at work this year promoting students in a project called *People Like Me* – select students who are just like you and me and highlight their struggles and successes – all of these are featured in the weekly

updates sent out on Friday afternoon and are also housed on our webpage. He added that they have also started a *Pet Like Me* feature that will be sprinkled in from time to time.

We were recently featured in the national news site Inside Higher Ed for our pet wing – the story featured some of our students and their experiences since bringing a “piece of home” with them to the College, particularly during times of isolation and quarantine; the feature also included some of Greg’s photos. Travis believes this is the first time for the College to be featured in this publication in this manner.

It was reported that Greg Kie and Lorette Murray has been very busy in 2021 and have been putting out press releases at a record pace (normally averaging around 80-90 and are at 105), with the local media running most of what we have distributed. He added that the combination of media releases and advertising has worked well and has promoted us in the North Country. They are also advertising outside the area with targeted digital ads in NYC and running a Twitch campaign in Albany area for tech program recruitment efforts (eSports, Game Design, Cybersecurity, etc.). They are dabbling with TikTok ads.

After the New Year, they will be working on the *After Canton* publication with the Foundation; this issue will highlight alumna in the STEM fields, as well as our new classroom spaces in Dana Hall. Dr. Szafran added that the Dana Hall renovations also just won an award in an industry magazine too.

Mr. Rich noted that he always hears people talk about the eSports program at SUNY Canton. He asked if that program leads to a degree. Dr. Szafran stated that it does and offered that we have an eSports Management degree that ties in with other programs such as our regular Sports Management degree. It also ties in with degree programs we have in Graphic and Multi-Media Design and Telecommunications, as well as Game Design. It was noted that the success of this program is due in part to the well-roundedness of the program.

Chairman O’Neill asked if we do any recruitment with the Mohawk Nation. Melissa has been in contact with our former SGA President Brayden White to develop some kind of partnership to reach prospective students. At this point, there is no direct advertising in that area.

- This has been a busy season for University Relations as well. We’ve enjoyed a major success (CFA funding for on-campus Entrepreneurship Center, potential for SUNY match and for Child Care Center) and one disappointment (DRI for downtown Entrepreneurship Center), which we are continuing to work toward. **Lenore, can you provide some more details?**

Lenore shared the exciting news that SUNY Canton was awarded \$1.1M towards the building out of a second floor in the One Hop Shop in the Miller Campus Center. This award is for the creation of an on-campus entrepreneurship center, which adds over 4,500 sq. ft. of usable student-centered space. She noted that we are hopefully

supplementing that grant with SUNY matching funds – a program that was approved in the budget last year – and we have applied for those matching funds. In the end, a \$5.3M project will only require about \$250,000 of campus funds to get it done.

She also reported that they continue to work to find gap funding for the downtown project entrepreneurship center and larger facility with commercial and residential space. We were a signature project in Canton's Downtown Revitalization Initiative application, but unfortunately, Canton was not a recipient of that award. We continue to work with our development partners, and Dr. Szafran continues to have productive relationship with the current owner of the downtown property. She also added that we are finalizing an application to the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Association that will be submitted in January; and we are hoping to receive gap funding through that.

Lenore stated that she will be working closely with the local government officials and SUNY System government relations to be sure that SUNY Canton's priorities are represented in the upcoming budget negotiations.

Chairman O'Neill asked about the availability of training sessions for individuals who want to start a small business through the entrepreneurship center. Lenore noted that in the future those targeted trainings would be offered, and currently, those types of trainings are offered for free through the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) housed on our campus and in Plattsburgh.

Dr. Szafran also commended the SBDC for the work they do and shared that we are offering other programming as well, such as the CREST Center's Commercial Drivers' License program.

Ms. Regan asked if Travis would be interested in interviewing someone like the owner of Smoke House, as it would get the College more publicity and be more personal. He indicated that he would be interested and noted that ideas of who to interview could be sent his way. It was noted that the Foundation did a series of these a few years ago; Jamie Burgess was handling it. Travis was advised to contact her.

- Dr. Szafran spoke about a few more items. I'm sure you've also heard about the recent resignation of the Chancellor, Jim Malatras, and various issues that led to it. We appreciate his positive accomplishments for SUNY, as well as his support for SUNY Canton. It was his assumption that they would be appointing an interim Chancellor soon and starting a national search, but we have not received any information yet. He also reiterated that Phil Neisser was named as the Officer in Charge at SUNY Potsdam due to the unexpected loss of John Graham.

We are also working on appointing an Acting Dean and should have an announcement shortly. Additionally, he congratulated our Director of Library Services, Cori Wilhelm, on her new appointment to SUNY System in the Office of Library and Information Services. She will be working with campuses across the System on the development of

things that we have already done here, such as adopting Open Educational Resources, which has saved students an enormous amount of money. A search will begin to replace her as well.

A staff member, Dennis Tupper (Instructional Support Associate for Automotive), won the Technician of the Year award from the National Institute of Automotive Service Excellence. He was 1 of 48 recognized across the country this year. He is an alum, has worked here since 1989, volunteers to help with the Steel Bridge Team, and sponsors a scholarship for automotive students.

Finally, I'd like to mention that successfully dealing with all the issues related to the pandemic didn't just happen—it has taken the hard work and volunteer spirit of pretty much everyone on campus—our faculty, staff, and students. To thank them, we've had a series of surprise and scheduled events including a dessert and hot chocolate event with a drawing for gift cards to thank our testing volunteers, an in-person Holiday luncheon buffet for all faculty and staff which also included a gift card drawing, and our annual Holiday Party for faculty, staff, and students' children and grandchildren, which we were able to do safely and in-person. All were very well appreciated, and I'd like to recognize Michaela, Amber, and so many other people for the help they gave in making these events happen.

- UUP Update – Stephanie Petkovsek?

Stephanie reiterated that they have been working together with the President and the Provost through Labor Management on the Department Chairs and Nursing issues. With regard to UUP, most of the positions on the Executive Board are filled, with more active participation happening. One of the recent E-Board actions involved approval of \$1,000 to go toward supplies for the food pantry on campus, as well as additional competition and fundraising efforts to support this cause.

The UUP contract expires this coming year, and they are getting ready for negotiations. Dr. Szafran added that the Union also worked with administration on advocating for the senior lecturer position and bringing that forward.

Chairman O'Neill asked if anyone wanted to bring anything up.

Mr. Rich asked if the 70% that had been vaccinated were fully vaccinated. Dr. Szafran questioned where the 70% number came from, but he noted that the students are 97% vaccinated. He indicated that they were fully vaccinated, but that does not count the booster, as they are not yet eligible for the booster. It was noted that faculty and staff have union rights, and the State is in negotiation with them. Both Dr. Szafran and Stephanie stated that faculty and staff are encouraged to get vaccinated. It was noted that are routine testing and constant monitoring has helped to keep things in control on the campus. Chairman O'Neill remarked about how pleased he is with the volunteers and their efforts to help with the COVID testing on campus, and Dr. Szafran shared that all volunteers were also awarded a personalized token of appreciation for their help.

Adjournment

Ms. Regan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:23 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rich and approved.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michaela Young
Secretary to the College Council

DRAFT