

SUNY CANTON COLLEGE COUNCIL
304th MEETING
February 10, 2026

Present:	Ronald O’Neill, Chair Joseph Rich	Kathleen Dodge Kyla Garrison	Brian Plonka
Zoom:	Marie Regan	Jennifer Stevenson	
Absent:	Toni Squires		
Others:	Courtney Bish Nicholas Kocher Travis Smith Lenore VanderZee	Jesse Clark-Stone Kelly Obermayer Zvi Szafran Michaela Young	Peggy De Cooke Eric Shinnick Geoffrey VanderWoude

Attendance Notes

- Jennifer Stevenson joined via Zoom from a public location and was included in quorum.
- Kelly Obermayer joined via Zoom.
- Marie Regan joined via Zoom.

Call to Order

At 10:03 a.m., the meeting was called to order.

Chairman O’Neill called for a moment of silence for the passing of Bryan Felitto, Harry Podgurski, and Bruce Dartt.

Additionally, he introduced and welcomed Eric Shinnick, the College’s new Vice President for Administration/CFO.

Meeting Minutes

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

Council Member Dodge made a motion to approve the October 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rich, with no additions or correction, and the Minutes were approved.

New Business

Policy Updates – Student Academic Integrity Policy

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

Council Member Dodge made a motion to approve the Student Academic Integrity Policy Updates. The motion was seconded by Council Member Plonka, and the Policy Updates were approved.

New Program Proposal – Applied Professional Studies

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

Council Member Rich made a motion to approve the Applied Professional Studies New Program Proposal. The motion was seconded by Council Member Garrison, and the New Program Proposal was approved.

Old Business

E-Votes Recorded in Minutes

The following items were approved by the Council through electronic vote and are being officially entered into the meeting minutes.

- #05-042 Tabling Policy
- #02-035 Proficiency/Challenge Exam Policy
- New Degree Proposals – Engineering (3)

Council Member Dodge made a motion to approve the electronic votes for the items listed above. The motion was seconded by Council Member Stevenson, and all items were approved.

Chairman's Report

Chairman O'Neill noted that the Council received a thank you card from the Student EMS Squad.

President's Report

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

- US News & World Report has ranked the nation's top bachelor's degree programs. There were 1,850 colleges assessed, of which 349 were included in the 2026 list, so that's the top 18.9%. SUNY Canton was ranked 125th in the nation, which would put us well in the top 10%, in the top 6.7% to be exact. With respect to veterans, we were 78th nationally (top 5%), and also 125th nationally in business (top 6.7%).
- The following are some significant grants that have been received since the last meeting:
 - \$1M from the Northern Border Fund toward our Childcare Center project.
It was noted that we're busily applying for other grants and doing some fundraising to get the rest of what will be needed. We are moving forward with the design.
 - An additional \$358K to expand nursing education through partnerships with other colleges in the north country, as well as to offer our LPN program with the Equal Opportunity Center in Syracuse.
 - \$77K to help fund CDL program scholarships.
- In the "let's celebrate" category, our Student Emergency Medical Services squad is celebrating its 10th anniversary. I'm sure Courtney will have more to say about that.

- I've been somewhat worried about the effect that the Reconnect Program may have on our associates programs, and we're still lobbying to be included in it, but at least so far as this Spring Semester is concerned, our enrollment in the target areas for people aged 25-55 has not declined—it increased from 103 to 122 compared to last year. The Council was reminded that this program allowed people aged 25-55 to take high-needs programs for free. It was noted that advocacy to be included in this program has focused on the issue of these students having to pay tuition and should not have to, as their counterparts are not required to.

- Moving on to the budget area, the coming year looks like it will be a bit tight. The Federal budget process continues to be all over the place. The co-pays for the American Care Act have jumped since the subsidies have not been renewed, but the Pell Grants seem to be intact. At the State level, once again, there will not be a tuition increase. Instead, there will be a \$54M increase in State funding, of which our share is typically 1%, or \$540K. Funding for ACE/ASAP will increase a bit, so we will probably get a little more money there. Money for maintenance from SUBOA will likely be flat. Vice President Shinnick was asked to provide an update.
 - It was noted that there is more funding for capital projects, but it is felt that we won't receive any of it.
 - It was reported that the College is facing a small deficit for the first time in a number of years. As a proactive measure, a memo related to how to think about the budget and planning has been sent to all managers.
 - VP Shinnick shared that he is working to tour and learn about all areas that he oversees and will eventually shift into reviewing and preparing for projects. He also shared that accounting has been one challenge, as there are differences between the private and public sectors. He wants to have a solid understanding before any changes are made and so good policies can be setup.
 - Dr. Szafran added that he meets regularly with Eric and that he likes that Eric wants to make the budgetary process more transparent, open to the entire community, and streamlined.

- We have submitted some new program proposals, and others are moving down the approval path. Provost De Cooke was asked to provide an area update.
 - Provost De Cooke shared information about the approval path – ex. An idea for a new program is put forward, and it follows the following path – vetted by the programmatic department, the School, College Council, College Assembly Executive Committee, and College Assembly; Provost submits it to SUNY – vetted across the System for 10 working days to allow others time to raise concerns or objections (If any

are raised, they need to be addressed.); SUNY review (There is often feedback that we need to respond to.); and then State Ed review (This can be long and tedious.).

- Provost De Cooke noted that all three Schools have been very busy.
 - Conversion of the three Engineering BTech degrees to Engineering degrees is underway, and they have been submitted to SUNY. SUNY has provided feedback on two of them, with the third's feedback expected today. After that, they will move to the Office of Professions.
 - Health Care Studies, A.A.S. is a new degree program that is geared towards students in the select programs in the health sciences, specifically our Nursing and Vet Tech programs. She explained that some students come in as not meeting the criteria, may never meet the criteria, or may not be as successful as we'd like in those majors, and this provides a landing spot for them, so they can get a degree that actually reflects their interests from the College. There will be tracks for both Nursing and Vet Tech, giving them a well-rounded associates degree, so they have something marketable when they leave the program.
 - Applied Professional Studies, B.S. degree is designed to be a completer program that is geared primarily towards business students who are not as successful or decide the major they are in is not for them. It gives them a landing spot for a 4-year degree, so they do not have to transfer somewhere else.
 - Applied Marketing, B.B.A. degree is a reconfiguration of some of our business courses into a marketable industry-related degree. This is a change within our programming to reflect movement within that profession itself.
 - Business AI and Society, B.S. degree is in the comment period; it looks at decision making in business with the use of AI and provides a very strong grounding in Liberal Arts.
 - Exercise Science, BTech. degree is in the development phase; it is a reconfiguration of our Health and Fitness Promotion degree to something more marketable and that provides a place within it for our Physical Therapy Assistant program students to have a 4-year degree that they need to move forward.
 - The program proposal for the master's degree in Cyber Security is close to being completed; it needs an external review next to evaluate our readiness to offer this degree level and ability to offer this program. Dr. Szafran noted that we will also need the Governor's approval to offer the master's and to switch to Engineering degrees.
- Chairman O'Neill asked Provost De Cooke if the other area colleges' offerings are taken into account when deciding on a new degree program to be sure it will work here. Provost De Cooke stated that we absolutely do that; she explained the comment period and shared that a couple of our degrees often are targeted, so we provide comments when they put them through. Occasionally, she is able to speak directly with the college looking to have that degree program and work through the issues, but if that cannot happen, it will go to System for review.

- There was a discussion about mission creep and how we are a prime target, no program management by System and how we have to watch what programmatic shifts there are to keep ahead of the trends, and what we have done to keep students moving forward.
- We recently hosted another Comicon and will have our Carnival of Clubs this week. There's also good news from our athletics area in terms of their team GPAs, our Men's Ice Hockey team beat Oswego for the first time ever, and our Women's Basketball Coach's career wins hit a landmark. Vice President Bish was asked to provide an update.
 - It was reported that Chris Klassen has the second highest wins of any coach at SUNY Canton. It was noted that he is a great coach, a great recruiter, and a great win for the College.
 - It is the Student EMS Squad's 10-year anniversary. The 15 active members serve as the first responders for emergencies on campus; they are very engaged and active. She noted that the squad was established to help students majoring in related emergency fields to have something to be involved in.
 - A call for nominations in the categories of Student Excellence Awards and Outstanding Graduate Award was sent out.
 - They applied for and received the Outdoors for All grant in the amount of \$10,000 to help diversify outdoor activities for students; they are starting with snowshoeing and ice fishing and are hoping to broaden into summer activities. The program is run by RJ Thayer.
 - Currently, housing numbers are at 655, compared to 660 last year. The single room initiative started two years ago was helpful and brought in over \$1M for the Residence Halls.
 - In athletics, three of the four teams are in position playoffs – Men's and Women's Hockey and Women's Basketball. It was noted that Men's Hockey beat Oswego (4 to 1) for the first time in our history, and Oswego was ranked 4th in the nation at the time. They also beat Morrisville in the Alzheimer's Awareness Tournament this past weekend. Women's Hockey tied Cortland and beat Oswego and Morrisville. Women's Basketball has a 16:5 record, and they are in 3rd place in the SUNYAC. Men's and Women's Basketball recently beat Potsdam.
 - It was shared that each team has a Faculty Athletic Rep (FAR) who works with the team and focuses on study skills and academic success. This is a requirement for NCAA, but Athletics was doing it prior to joining the NCAA. It was noted that Kelly Ficner is the Women's Basketball FAR and also serves as the overall FAR lead; her help has contributed to the impressive team GPA shown below.

- The student-athletes have an overall GPA of a 3.2, and 9 of the 15 NCAA teams have GPAs of 3.1 or higher.

- **Team GPA Averages**

- Women's Basketball - 3.81

- Men's Hockey - 3.7

- Women's Lacross - 3.7

- Women's Hockey - 3.6

- Volleyball - 3.4

- Men's Basketball - 3.3

- Men's Golf - 3.25

- Softball - 3.21

- Women's Soccer - 3.1

- It was noted that the Special Olympics will be held on Sunday, April 19.
- Council Member Rich commented on how wonderful the GPAs are, specifically Women's Basketball.
- Provost De Cooke noted that Kelly Ficner is also the Chair of the Criminal Justice programs and was recently selected by System for an Accessibility Fellowship, which will have her working across the System on accessibility issues. Dr. Szafran additionally noted that accessibility is an area that the Council will be hearing more about as we move forward.
- Vice President VanderWoude was asked to provide an update to the Council.
 - It was reported that the year started with a goal of \$1.1M, and by the end of January, they raised well over \$1.2M, with a half year to still go. As part of that, Giving Tuesday was the biggest ever, surpassing the initial goal of \$55,000 and exceeding \$100,000 and generating three new scholarships. Acknowledgement was given to PR for their help with the social media aspect and to Chris Chambers for running it. It was noted that 100% of the President's Cabinet and Foundation staff donated, along with nearly 100% of the Foundation and Alumni Boards participating. This has led to Chris Chambers being asked to present at the Northeastern Annual Giving Conference to talk about our success.
 - They have received \$520,000 Unrestricted Endowment, which will go to help fund Faculty and Staff Awards, Campus Enhancement Awards, and other initiatives like the Student Emergency Fund.
 - VP VanderWoude noted some of the new noteworthy things they are funding this year – Leadership Fellows program headed up by SBLA faculty (in development), Accountability Group program through the Tutoring Center (focuses on gaining

confidence, time management, and studying), purchased all new mirrorless cameras (professional cameras) for students in GMMD to learn on, funding trips for Legal Studies students to go to UB and for Vet Tech students to go to Cornell, funding capstone projects for mechanical engineering and electrical students, working to provide funding for the licensing exams that are required for our licensing programs, and supporting the Forging Club, which provides academic competition through a fun interest while gaining real-world experiences.

- Vice President VanderZee was asked to provide an update to the Council.
 - She provided an update on the Downtown Project – Design meetings are going well. There will be about 12,000 sq. ft. of space, with a large open area, offices, and maker spaces. It will also include 55 apartments, which will be a huge economic boost. Demolition of the old space is planned for the spring with construction to begin after that.
 - The following highlights of things that the Center for Workforce, Community, and Industry Partnerships is working on include:
 - Using the \$10,000 grant to expand the CDL program, specifically, adding in a school bus driver program.
 - Offering a total of 14 summer camps for grades 1 – 10 in various programmatic areas. They currently have 67 registrants so far, and they are brainstorming to come up with ways to offer scholarships for these camps to attract more registrants.
 - Each Monday, a Micro-course Monday program is offered, both in person and online; everyone was encouraged to check them out.
 - Worked with faculty to develop 40 credit-bearing micro-credentials that can be stand alone or add on; there are also 10 non-credit ones.
 - Dual Degree Courses – these have been very successful with about 700 students taking up to 2 courses that will count as academic credit at SUNY Canton or other institutions. This initiative is at no cost in the St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES area, but they are also developing additional partnerships with the BOCES programs themselves – i.e., BOCES is offering some of their programs for Juniors and Seniors on our campus, giving students the opportunity to come to campus, receive dual enrollment credit, and ability to take a SUNY Canton course. They are also developing other partnerships with other school districts that lead into our academic programs.
 - She noted that overall grant submissions are up across campus in both the academic and non-academic areas.
 - A shout out was given to Assemblyman Scott Gray for his support of the College and the System.

- Dr. Szafran added that Liz Brown is also working on the Workforce Pell initiative through SUNY and noted that we submitted a list of programs for approval under Workforce Pell.
- Nick Kocher was asked to provide a College Assembly update.
 - Nick extended a personal thanks to Charles Robinson, Julie Parkman, Jesse Clark-Stone, President Szafran, and Provost De Cooke for their help with Faculty Governance items. He noted that the election cycle is happening, and they are working to put together a College Assembly – How to do Business policy and procedure manual. Additionally, a proposal to make the Ad hoc Bylaws Committee a standing committee, as part of their push to make Campus Governance stronger. And, lastly, he reported that Provost De Cooke asked them to work on reviewing the definition of scholarship – what counts as scholarship, how is it disseminated, and differences between traditional fields vs. professional fields.
- Jesse Clark-Stone was asked to provide a Faculty Senate update.
 - Jesse reported that the Faculty Plenary was held during Winter Break, and the major topics were Academic Momentum (focus on first-year, fulltime students and gateway courses) and an AI Advising pilot (in development). Related to Title II, the College received a \$15,000 grant to help with the ADA compliance efforts, and there should be webinars coming out to help with meeting the April deadline. There is also a FACT2 group within SUNY to help leverage AI to meet the ADA goals, and Jesse is part of that group. In terms of advocacy and support, he noted that the College is hosting a University Faculty Senate (UFS) Barnstorming Tour at the end of April to help with public buy-in on why higher education is needed and to hear our campus concerns. The UFS also has a rapid response group to help with any immediate changes needed.
 - Jesse shared that at the last few plenary meetings the Tech Sector has raised the topic of being included in SUNY Reconnect with the Chancellor; he indicated that the Chancellor stated he is very aware that the Tech Sector wants to be included but that he does not see it happening right now.
 - He also shared that there are Leadership Institutes for underrepresented groups to provide leadership opportunities.
 - The UFS Ethics Committee produced a whitepaper from survey results on F/S burnout. SUNY has put out two surveys that are due by March 1, which will help the Chancellor and the System to combat this issue.
 - Jesse also shared the following items: Empire State Service Corp is being expanded, the Military Tuition Rate will go into effect in 2026 (This is something we already have in place.), SUNY will be looking into how they might help with transportation issues in

areas that do not have public transportation, chilled lockers for food pantries is being looked into, grant funding cuts were less than predicted, the \$100,000 fee for an H1B visa will cause hiring issues, and the resolutions that were presented.

- Dr. Szafran noted that we continue to meet with the Union.
- Kyla Garrison was asked to provide the Student Government Association update.
 - Kyla reported that Carnival of Clubs would be taking place from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. in Campus Center 212-214 and invited everyone to check it out. They are also hosting a Lead without Minutes conference. The Executive Board will be going to SUNYSA. The recipient of the Northstar Award has been chosen and will be announced later in the Spring. They continue to push for healthy foods in Chaney, and they have started offering smoothies and fruits. And, lastly, their elections are coming up.
- Travis was asked to provide his update.
 - Travis shared that a new version of the College's website was launched last Fall. It focuses on student recruitment, in addition to accessibility, as well as changes that will push customers to our programs. They are working to keep the user experience in mind and make changes and updates as needed. He noted that the views for the full listing page of programs is up by 42%, and the request for information and visit campus pages are also up in views. The hope is that this all translates into increased enrollments.
 - Travis noted that Dr. Szafran provided the update for the US News and World report, but he added that we were the only SUNY School on the Best in Veterans for Online Bachelors Programs list. Acknowledgement was given to Patrick Massaro for the great job he does with veterans and military students.
 - Related to marketing, they are working on a new multiprong plan with ESPN and ESPN NY Radio and are hoping to run spots over the radio in the NYC area during the morning and afternoon drives. As part of this, they also have about 2M digital impressions on ESPN.com, which is one of the best sites we can get on. Another part of this campaign is a Social Media Influencer campaign with an ESPN personality, who is one of the voices for the NY Knicks and has some prime radio spots; this should get our name out there about three times a week. We will also be on the airways for the opening of the Yankee season, March Madness, and NBA and NHL playoffs.
 - And, lastly, he shared that the PR team is finishing up After Canton, which focuses on the Age of AI.

Chairman O'Neill noted that as a College Council member out in the community they hear a lot that faculty and staff may not, and he noted that there is a huge amount of respect for everyone on campus, including the President.

When asked, there were no further questions or comments.

Adjournment

Council Member Rich made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:46 a.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Dodge and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Michaela Young
Secretary to the College Council

DRAFT