

SUNY CANTON COLLEGE COUNCIL
300th MEETING
FEBRUARY 21, 2025

Present:	Ronald O'Neill, Chair Jennifer Stevenson	Kathleen Dodge Evan Velasquez	Joseph Rich
Zoom:	Marie Regan		
Absent:	Toni Squires	Brian Plonka	
Others:	Courtney Bish Peggy De Cooke Travis Smith Lenore VanderZee (<i>late</i>)	Jesse Clark-Stone Nicholas Kocher Zvi Szafran (<i>late</i>) Michaela Young	Amanda Crump Stephanie Petkovsek (<i>late</i>) Tracey Thompson

Call to Order

At 10:07 a.m., the meeting was called to order.

Chairman O'Neill introduced Nick Kocher and Amanda Crump.

Minutes of the November 15, 2024, Meeting

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

Council Member Stevenson made a motion to approve the Minutes of the November 15, 2024, meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Dodge, with no additions or correction, and the Minutes were approved.

New Business

The Parking Regulations Policy changes were shared with everyone prior to the meeting. It was noted that these are the same changes that the Council previously approved; this serves as the final review and approval.

Council Member Dodge made a motion to approve the Parking Regulations Policy changes. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rich and was unanimously approved.

Old Business

No Old Business was brought before the Council.

President's Report

Due to a scheduling conflict, Dr. Szafran's report was given by Provost De Cooke. Dr. De Cooke provided the following as the President's report, which also included area updates.

Academic Affairs Update

SUNY Canton has received SUNY approval for their first master's degree in Cybersecurity, the first major step in the approval process. Next steps will include development of a full program proposal, with external evaluations, for SUNY's and State Ed's review and approval; application for a master plan amendment (a requirement for the first two master's degrees); and approval from Middle States and the Governor. This may be a two-year process, but SUNY approval is a big step forward for the College.

Other Academic Affairs updates included the following: continued conversion of the Engineering Technology degrees to Engineering degrees, with the plan to seek SUNY approval this term. Dr. Kenneth Rhee, Dean for the School of Business and Liberal Arts, is working to update the Business programs, as well as developing new majors for Entrepreneurship and Digital Marketing. Additionally, he is revising the Finance program to incorporate Financial Technology. The hope and reason for these changes is to increase the marketability of these programs, attract new students, and provide SUNY Canton with a competitive edge. Other programs are also being fine tuned to attract new students.

Administrative Affairs Update

The Governor's proposed executive budget includes expanded funding for the ACE/ASAP program. This program provides enhanced advising for students, as well as approximately \$2,000/student in additional support toward tuition, books, and other costs, which helps attract students to SUNY Canton and improves retention. Due to SUNY Canton having met all first-round programmatic requirements and goals, there has been a commitment to increase SUNY Canton's funding for the program, allowing for the program's capacity to increase from 185 to 250 and an additional advisor for the program to be hired.

Also in the executive budget is additional SUNY funding in lieu of a tuition increase for 2025-26, as well as increased funding for operating expenses which is anticipated to help cover some of the contractual Union salary increases. Appreciation for the continued State support was noted. Additionally, it was shared that the SUNY Tuition Rate Working Group has decided to keep the same out-of-state rates as last year - \$11,900 for associates, \$17,490 for bachelors, and \$8,480 for online.

There have been some recent changes to who will host the Police Academy, which is overseen and controlled by the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's decision to move the Academy to SUNY Potsdam led SUNY Canton to create their own, giving them the opportunity to establish a college-operated academy and make improvements, such as inclusion of their own students.

There was a question about the motivation for the Academy's move. It was noted that specific details were not provided, and the campus was not involved in the discussions of dissatisfaction. Due to the long partnership, the College had with the Academy and the Sheriff's Office, it came as a shock to the campus as well, but the Sheriff has the final say.

A follow-up concern was raised regarding timing of the academy classes and meeting the needs of cadets. A request was made to be mindful of this need, and a suggestion of an alternate schedule was offered. It was shared that SUNY Canton's plan was to have something up and running by January. A discussion took place related to how this violated the SUNY non-compete agreement between SUNY Potsdam and SUNY Canton and that SUNY Potsdam should have discussed it with SUNY Canton before agreeing to take it over, the unprofessionalism of how SUNY Canton was notified by the Sheriff, the personality conflicts and the continuation of such, the use of the current Academy's name, and the program's funding – the program supported itself and SUNY Canton had been approved to receive additional SUNY funding in the amount of \$6,000/training for cadets to attend. Unless that additional funding is applied for and approved, that funding is lost to them.

Facilities is working to develop corporate partnerships to secure financial support to help with the cost of site improvements. Current or upcoming construction projects include continuation of the Plaza renovations, replacement of the Library's chiller unit, site improvements, and renovation of Payson Hall.

Student Affairs Update

The Title IX changes that were supposed to take place in 2024 did not apply to SUNY Canton, as the College was included in an injunction that prevented it from adopting those changes. President Trump's decision to revert to the 2020 rules resulted in no changes for SUNY Canton. It was further noted that the College will continue to support all students.

A Spring concert has been scheduled, and the artist was chosen through a student survey.

In Athletics, Women's Basketball has a 9-7 record and will likely be the fourth seed. Men's Hockey will come in at fourth, fifth, or sixth, with Women's Hockey possibly clinching the win this weekend. Despite a great season, Men's Basketball will not make the playoffs this year. Baseball has a new coach, and they brought with them almost a dozen new students, including two legally deaf students; they will start their season indoors soon. E-Sports and Cheerleading continue to thrive. The CARC also hosted some major Section X competitions such as the girl's hockey playoffs and cheerleading competitions.

Overall, Student Life is going well.

Advancement Update

The VP for Advancement announced their retirement – May 16, 2025 – and shared that the search is in process, with a transition plan, and possible bridge, being developed.

In other Advancement news, an OCR complaint was filed alleging that four scholarships discriminated against men. SUNY Legal was and continues to be consulted, and the necessary changes that were made were explained to the group.

Advancement is working to award \$767,000 in scholarships for next year to 350-400 students. So far, they have been able to grow these awards each year. Their fundraising currently stands at:

- Overall - \$1,135,000
 - Canton Fund - \$293,000
 - Restricted - \$586,000
 - Endowed Gifts - \$256,000 (Endowment stands at \$19.2M)
- Other Tracked Giving
 - Alumni Giving - \$735,000
 - New Donor Giving - \$109,000

The Council was briefed on the Next Level initiative – an initiative that focuses on donors – and provided with examples of the staffs’ efforts – targeted mail appeals, grant awards, corporate sponsorships, creation of individual donor new endowments, cultivating and securing new donors and large gifts, athletic fundraising events, and implementing an alumni directory software.

Strategic Relations and Communications Update

A developer has been hired for the Downtown Project. There is one more round of funding to secure, and then, it will be set to move forward. For the on-campus portion, after renovations to Payson Hall are complete, it will house the Entrepreneur Center and business-related programs.

Work with the local high schools continues:

- Creating tracks to feed into our degree programs.
- A MASH camp was held on campus for high school students who are interested in health-related fields.
- As part of the entrepreneurship initiatives, a Launch Day was held for 50 North Country students. Assigned teams developed a business idea from start to finish and pitched their business plans to judges for the opportunity to place first, second, or third. They plan to hold this event annually with the hope that it will lead into the official State program.

The Summer camp offerings have expanded to 12-day camps that run the STEAM gamut. The camps are open to the community and run from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; they have been retooled a bit and are more affordable.

In the Grants area, the 2026 fiscal year projection and 2025 revised prospective were submitted. A projection of over \$2M in grant funding is expected – almost a 30% increase over FY 2025.

UUP Update

The Union and the administration continue to meet regularly. The following Union concerns were shared with the group – the number of tenure-track faculty compared to adjuncts, number of overloads, difference between adjunct and fulltime faculty overload pay, committee

membership/vacancies, advising loads, and inability for lecturers to get permanency related to applying for/receiving grants.

A question related to what caused the disproportionate number of tenure-track faculty vs. adjuncts was asked. It was acknowledged that the situation was unhealthy and stated that there will be a concerted effort to hire more tenure-track faculty. The following reasons were provided as some causes for the situation – the comparative information is often inaccurate (same data isn't being compared; reasons for differences aren't always apparent – i.e., a financial situation may have led to cuts and parttime faculty would be cut first), some tenure-track faculty have opted to move to a lecturer position, and the State's decision to do away with the title of fulltime temp resulted in a switch to assistant lecturers, causing a bulge. Additionally, there is a draft proposal in process to address the number of overloads.

A further discussion happened related to differences in duties, benefits, and pay for tenure-track positions and lecturers. It was noted that the difference is with pay and permanency. It was asked and answered that the pay difference is ~\$45,000 vs. \$50-60,000, and it was thought that the lowest paid lecturer is now at \$50,000. There have been efforts to lengthen a lecturer's term (a resolution has been proposed to the Board of Trustees requesting a five-year term option) and to move lecturer lines to tenure track lines (a plan is being considered).

Lastly, it was shared that the Union and the administration always advocate for more operating money for the College.

Student Government Association Update

The SGA E-Board has approved two new clubs – the EOP Club and Blacksmith Club – and received interest in starting two others – the Society for the Study of Modern Visual Culture Club and a Disability Honor Society. This year's carnival of clubs – Carnival of Love, aptly named for Valentine's Day – had a good turnout. And, the fiscal year budget cycle is open for clubs to make their budget requests.

SGA's spring events include:

- Success is a Mindset Leadership Conference – held on March 19
- 4th annual Comic Con – this weekend
- BBNO\$ Concert – March 29
- Student Government Elections - will take place soon, and the current Board will offer shadowing and training to the new candidates. The new candidates can also attend SUNYSA.

Faculty Governance Update

The College Assembly leadership transition is now complete. The new Presiding Officer of the Faculty shared that they inherited an Assembly that has undergone some positive changes, which is a benefit to him. Moving forward, he is looking to make the College Assembly process

more effective, and currently, codification of the promotion and appointments process and review of Committee bylaws are in process.

Faculty Senate Update

Key points from the University Faculty Senate's (UFS) Winter Plenary were provided.

- AI Focused - AI GER proposal, SUNY GPT and AI Tutor development
- Updates to/Support and Resources for - civic discourse core competency and information literacy
- Prior Learning Assessment
- SUNY-wide posthumous degree policy
- Student focused – expansion of ACE/ASAP, addition of campus advisory councils for the Transfer Taskforce (a seamless transfer path between SUNY schools) and SUNY-wide Student Tool, and Accessibility Advocates and Ally Fellowship (supporting students with disabilities)
- Horizon Awards for faculty
- 2026 PROGiD+ allocations will happen in April
- Federal Regulation Navigation – focus on System-wide support for undocumented students, continue DEI work, watch for predatory for-profit colleges, and consider unlikely allies (some aligned with the Trump Administration may be proponents of educational programs).
- Encouraged continued promotion of SUNY as a public good.
- Be mindful of language used on websites to avoid giving them leverage.
- The Tech Sector talked with the Chancellor about the Governor's Free Community College initiative and ability for them to participate, support for the faculty teaching DEISJ courses, and Dual Enrollment.
- At the State level, there is hope of aligning the FAFSA and TAP income definitions to make them easier for students and hope for more flexibility by allowing campuses to use bonded capital.
- There are Innovation grants for AI and OER Course adoption
- By April 2026, there will be more ADA compliance requirements. A SUNY Learning Object Repository is being developed to share information and resources.
- Elections for a new UFS President will happen in April.

A discussion regarding military and veteran transfer credits took place. This and credits for adult learners overall have been a SUNY priority. It has led to an expansion of campus policies related to experiential learning, and the Center for Adult Learning (CAL) is making sure campuses have procedures in place to give these credits. Additionally, a local initiative through the REDC awarded funding to three regions in the State. This region's project was selected and had all the local colleges working together to help Fort Drum soldiers transition out of the military.

Public Relations Update

Data Science and Analytics – a new promo video was developed and debuted during the AFC Championship game between the Bills and Chiefs. Additionally, a big digital push on Google and

YouTube began a few weeks ago and has resulted in nearly 40,000 views, making it the 7th most watched video of all time. Website views have also tripled in the process.

Microcredentials – a new spot to highlight the 40+ microcredentials is being developed and should roll out next week.

Bronx Admissions Event – they have been working with Admissions to coordinate a mini-Admissions event at the Bronx Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) for March 12. Students will be able to meet with Admissions and EOP staff to get a quick transcript evaluation and assistance with the application process. They are working with iHeartMedia in NYC to promote the event with a combination of live radio spots, digital ads, and podcasts.

Campus News –

- Dr. Puttagounder Swaminathan, fondly known by students as Dr. PS, recently received a Distinguished Faculty Advisor Award from the professional manufacturing organization SME. Dr. PS teaches CADD and machine design in our Mechanical Engineering Technology program. Congrats to him on this great honor.
- A group of Civil and Environmental Engineering Technology students, led by Dr. Saied Ghasemali, were recently recognized as an Outstanding American Concrete Institute Student Chapter for the second consecutive year for their continuing research into innovative concrete mixtures supported by fiberglass reinforcement materials. Their formulas can provide reduced fire risk, increased durability, and lower maintenance costs. Using their lightweight concrete mixture instead of wood could make homes more fire-resistant and durable.
- The Veterinary Technology program has partnered with the St. Lawrence County District Attorney's Office to assist animals seized in cruelty cases. Our students will perform exams and assist with spaying and neutering the animals.

It was added that PR continues to impress by receiving 5 new awards.

President's Report

Currently, the Free Community College initiative for adults aged 25-55 in selected high-demand degree programs is only for community colleges, but efforts are being made to expand the initiative to include SUNY Canton, including meeting with Assemblyman Gray to advocate for the College's participation.

Due to the new federal administration, many people are concerned about the possible changes that may occur. SUNY and the State are working on several contingency plans to address issues of concern, and the College remains committed to protecting our faculty, staff, and students from any harm that new policies may cause. The Council was updated on the executive orders that caused concern – federal spending, immigration status, and the Title IV Dear Colleague Letter. Regarding federal spending, it was noted that the implications on the College will, in part, depend on the result of litigation in the courts, up to and including the Supreme Court.

Regarding immigration status, it was noted that the College will follow the existing NY policies on undocumented students, and the Council Members were asked to contact the President's Office immediately before responding should they receive any requests from the federal government related to the College. Regarding the Title IV Dear Colleague Letter, it was noted that there are a number of concerns, including the fact that things are not clear. The College is working closely with SUNY on what to do and how to respond. In conclusion, it was stated that every day is a continuously changing landscape. SUNY does NOT want individual colleges to respond to each new order. SUNY is a system that needs to have a common response, which we will be closely following.

Chairman O'Neill thank Matt Burnett for his service. He additionally thanked everyone for attending and participating in the meeting. It was announced that the Council will go into Executive Session to discuss personnel issues – specifically, the College Council Awards. Chairman O'Neill asked the Council Members, Dr. Szafran, and Ms. Young to stay, and he excused everyone else.

Executive Session

Council Member Rich made a motion to go into Executive Session at 12:02 p.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Regan and approved.

Council Member Rich made a motion to leave Executive Session at 12:15 p.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Stevenson and approved.

Return to Regular Session

The Council returned to Regular Session at 12:16 p.m., and the Chair entertained a motion to approve the awards that were discussed in Executive Session by consensus.

Council Member Regan made a motion to approve the awards by consensus. The motion was seconded by Council Member Dodge and approved.

Adjournment

Council Member Dodge made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:17 p.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Stevenson and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Michaela Young
Secretary to the College Council