

SUNY CANTON COLLEGE COUNCIL
301st MEETING
APRIL 11, 2025

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

Call to Order

At 1:02 p.m., the meeting was called to order.

Introductions and Acknowledgements

Chairman O'Neill introduced and welcomed Brian Plonka, College Council Member, from Norwood and owner of Buck Funeral Homes, Inc.

Chairman O'Neill also asked for a moment of silence for the passing of Dave Gerlach and Tom Lascell.

Minutes of the February 21, 2025, Meeting

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

Council Member Rich made a motion to approve the Minutes of the February 21, 2025, meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Plonka, with no additions or correction, and the Minutes were approved.

New Business

Required Additional Title IX Language

It was noted that the proposed language change was to help clarify a pre-existing process and to aid in greater awareness of the steps that occur after the hearing board has reviewed a Title IX case. The language has been vetted and approved by SUNY Legal. The Council is being asked to approve the proposed change effective immediately.

When asked, no questions were put forward.

Council Member Dodge made a motion to approve the Required Additional Title IX Language. The motion was seconded by Council Member Stevenson and was approved.

Old Business

There was no Old Business brought before the Council.

Chairman's Report

Chairman O'Neill shared an article with the group regarding the College's PR Office awards. On behalf of the Council, he noted their appreciation for all that PR does.

President's Report

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

President Szafran remarked that Dave's celebration of life was nice and added that the College will be planting a tree in his memory.

Academic Affairs Update

It was reported that enrollment looks good at this point (up 32 deposits compared to last Fall and up considerably for Summer), and the two recent Admitted Student Days went well. The College looks forward to the Open House on Saturday, submitting the converted engineering proposals (B.S. level Engineering Technology degrees to B.Eng. degrees in Engineering), and beginning to offer the new Data Science and Analytics program this fall.

Administrative Affairs Update

It was noted that the State Budget is not yet finalized, and the following "good news" points and concerns were mentioned.

- Expanded funding for the ACE/ASAP program. Since SUNY Canton met all first-round requirements and goals for these programs, the College is slated to receive more funding to increase the program size from 175 to 250. This will likely also involve hiring an additional advisor for the program.
 - Council Member Dodge asked if these programs hit first-generation students. It was stated that there is no criteria for that, but the entry requirements are reasonable. They try to match the student with the program that fits them best.
- Additional SUNY funding in lieu of a tuition increase.
- Additional operating funds to cover some of the salary increases that are part of the most recent Union contract.
- Free Community College initiative for adults aged 25-55 in selected high-demand degree programs. Currently, this initiative is only for community colleges, however, extensive lobbying is being done to make sure that the Colleges of Technology in general and SUNY Canton in particular are included in this effort, since the College offers a range of associates degrees in the target areas and serves as the de facto Community Colleges for the county. There is hope that the Colleges of Technology inclusion by both the Assembly and Senate's One House Bills will carry through to the final budget.
- Similarly, SUNY announced that it will offer scholarships for B.S. level nursing graduates to attend graduate school, if they agree to work at a SUNY community college for 3 years. After raising the same point—that SUNY Canton should be included—the announcement was modified to make the requirement that they agree to work at a SUNY college that offers an associate's degree in nursing for 3 years, which would include SUNY Canton.
- Employees are concerned about potential changes being implemented by the new federal administration. SUNY and the State are working on several contingency plans to address issues of concern, and the College remains committed to protecting employees and students from any harm that new policies may cause. The implications of the

administration's executive orders, etc. on the College will, in part, depend on the result of litigation in the courts, up to and including the Supreme Court.

- Regarding Title VI, the February 14 Dear Colleague letter and FAQ from the Department of Education is impacting colleges. The letter "prohibits covered entities from using race in decisions pertaining to admissions, hiring, promotion, compensation, financial aid, scholarships, prizes, administrative support, discipline, housing, graduation ceremonies, and all other aspects of student, academic, and campus life." This has impacted several scholarships that were directed toward women, where modification of the language was needed to make them open to anyone. The necessary changes were made with the agreement of the donors. The latest directive involves modification of several other scholarships directed to African-American students or underserved populations. It is unclear as to what to do if the donor does not agree to the required changes. The College is working closely with SUNY to determine how to address this issue.

Due to the budget extension of April 15 and the potential for financial roadblocks with the current administration, the College continues to spend conservatively – including analyzing new-position requests, position renewals, and general operating expenditures. The campus' budget process for the 2025-26 fiscal year is underway and will be submitted to SUNY in August. Additionally, the College is complying with the State's request for bi-weekly data reports on federal funding.

The following information was shared related to operations and projects:

- There are no new projects on the horizon.
- Work will begin on several pipeline projects, including:
 - Payson Hall (bids open ~ early July; anticipated construction ~ November 2025 – November 2027).
 - Cooper Service Complex Bathrooms (part of our Civil Rights Review).
 - Plaza Rehab (Summer 2025 – Summer 2026).

It was noted that the College will be focusing on development of a new Facilities Master Plan as the current one is outdated.

Council Member Dodge asked if there was a building with asbestos exterior included in the above projects. The specific building could not be identified, but it was noted that rehabs are regularly done and that is why it is important to update the Facilities Master Plan.

It was additionally shared that, after Payson, Nevaldine will be the next building to be renovated, and due to some agreement issues on other SUNY campuses relative to the Facility Master Plans, the College may experience a delay when it comes to SUNY's review and approval. And lastly, it was shared that lobbying for the Childcare Center funds has resumed.

Student Affairs Update

The following information was provided as this area's update:

- **BBNO\$ Concert** ~ the concert was well attended (~500 attendees) despite poor weather.
- **Awards**
 - Chancellor's Awards

- Sarah Balcom – Health and Fitness Promotion major; plays Volleyball
- Sonia Wilson – Healthcare Management major
- Outstanding Graduates
 - Natalie Bartle – Baccalaureate Level – Applied Psych major; plays Women's Basketball
 - Eli Larson – Baccalaureate Level – Mechatronics Tech major, with minors in Math and Physics; plays Men's Basketball
 - Betsy Brabant – Associate Level – Nursing major (continuing student in Nursing, BBA)
- David R. Maynard Award
 - Cassidy Asiamah – Early Childhood major, with minor in Applied Psych (going on to Columbia University to work on her DNP in Pediatric Nursing)
- Northstar Award
 - Dr. Maureen Maiocco

The group was invited to attend the Student Excellence Awards next Wednesday, April 16, at 5:00 p.m. in Kingston Theater.

- **Athletics**
 - Three of the four winter sports teams – men's hockey, women's hockey, and women's basketball – all advanced to the postseason in the College's first year in the SUNYAC conference.
 - Spring sports are in full swing despite the weather. The teams are struggling a bit to adjust to the SUNYAC competition level, but they have some big games coming up and are still hoping to make the playoffs.
 - The College is hosting the Special Olympics regional games this Sunday, beginning with Opening Ceremonies at 9:45 a.m.
 - Belonging to the SUNYAC has helped with recruiting efforts both in quantity and quality; recruiting deposits for next year have surpassed 100 this week.
 - E-sports has had another very successful year with a full roster of students. They have been utilizing the gaming computers in the E-sports Arena, Kennedy Hall, and the E-sports residence hall. Playoffs begin soon with hopes of qualifying for an in-person competition in Albany later this semester.
 - It was noted that each team has the required faculty representative, and work is being done to bring back the highest GPA awards that were previously awarded at College Assembly.

Chairman O'Neill asked if there were any concerns related to student loans – repayment of or application difficulties. The response indicated that there have not been any issues yet, and the process remains the same. There was a brief discussion related to the effects of federal funding on SUNY.

Advancement Update

The aforementioned scholarships specifically for African Americans or under-represented groups were briefly mentioned, and it was noted that the Foundation has been in touch with their attorney and SUNY Legal and await their guidance.

Fundraising Status:

- \$1,330,660 Total Raised (99.5% of fundraising goal)
- \$327,000 Canton Fund
- \$697,000 Restricted Gifts
- \$305,000 Endowed Gifts
- Additional proceeds will be received from individual gifts, two targeted appeals, and at least one, and possibly two, bequests, with potential to close the year at \$2M raised.

It was shared that next academic year's scholarship awards are in process; they will award 425 scholarships totaling \$750,000, which will benefit at least 350 students, an all-time high.

The 5th annual Athletics Giving Week recently concluded and was again successful with 1,070 gifts and more than \$115,000 raised, an increase over the first year with 694 donors and \$71,000 raised.

It was asked and answered that there was not a need to have SUNY Legal vet the establishment of any future scholarships, as they know what criteria to accept and to avoid being too narrow.

Faculty Governance Update

It was reported that things are running smoothly so far, and the following were noted as anticipated upcoming items: various policies (i.e., prior learning, microcredentials, academic integrity), revamped honors program, and conversion of the ad hoc Bylaws committee into a standing committee.

Faculty Senate Update

It was shared that the Spring UFS Plenary will be held on the last weekend of April. Campuses have been encouraged to have a plan in place before summer, in case there are sudden and disruptive decisions by Washington. Jesse plans to bring this up at the next College Assembly to secure some (more) faculty volunteers, in case pressing issues arise over the summer.

UUP Update

It was shared that they participated in Advocacy Day and the delegate assembly. They are putting together the contract negotiating team, as their contract expires in the summer of 2026.

Student Government Association Update

It was reiterated that the BBNO\$ concert had 500 people in attendance. The SGA elections concluded, and new-member training is taking place. One new club – Delta Alpha Phi Honor Society – is awaiting approval. The following upcoming events were shared with the group: Springfest, with a fairy theme, will be held on May 2. An end-of-year gathering for SGA Clubs/Organizations has been scheduled and will include a presentation of awards to seniors. And, the SGA E-Board, including the new members, will be attending SUNY SA.

Strategic Relations and Communications Update

A meeting to share project visions and designs was held with the selected downtown project developers. It was noted that they are still waiting to hear from NYS on Canton's NY Forward award (\$4.5M, with \$2M potentially for this project).

Dual Enrollment continues to do well, with 570 dually-enrolled students visiting campus. Through the Dual Enrollment program, they have been able to increase partnerships with the high schools to offer pathways to college credits, and they are also partnering with BOCES on some pathways.

There will be six summer camps offered this year for students in grades 1st through 9th.

The SBDC has been rebranded to be North Country SBDC at SUNY Canton. They have also hired two new staff to better serve the community. And, for the third year in a row, one of their clients have received a state-wide award, a testament to the SBDC staff's help.

The Grants Office has been working with offices across campus on grant applications, which has helped to increase the number of applications. It was noted that CSTEP has been renewed for five years. Additionally, weekly meetings are held to discuss the federal funding landscape. An issue of potential concern is regarding future funding and capacity to administer grants; any decrease in facilities and administrative rates would be an issue for us.

A brief discussion happened related to the Midtown Plaza:

- No demolition date is set yet, but there is funding through Restore NY to cover it.
- The Federal funding requirement of an environmental review is being worked on and needs to be completed first.
- To some extent, private involvement is being explored relative to development of the entrepreneurship piece, but not the housing piece.

Public Relations Update

The College was named as a Military Friendly School for 2025, as well as being recognized as a Military Spouse Friendly School. Thanks was extended to Patrick Massaro for his work on this.

PR has unofficially won three more SUNY CUAD awards – Excellence in Creativity and Design category for the After Canton Alumni Magazine, Excellence in DEI category for the redesign of the campus light poles project, Excellence in Research Writing category for the press release on the fiberglass concrete project.

The Data Science and Analytics promotion video continues to do well with more than 240,000 views on Google and YouTube, as well as through other media outlets. It is the second most watched video of all time on YouTube.

The College is sending a team to Ottawa for the Cybersecurity and Identity Summit to promote the College and its programs.

Lastly, it was shared that the College will host an Open House and the Sustainability Day and Green Living Fair this weekend.

Executive Session

The Council went into Executive Session to discuss a personnel issue; Chairman O'Neill asked President Szafran, VP Bish, and Council Secretary Young to stay for Executive Session.

Council Member Stevenson made a motion to go into Executive Session at 2:39 p.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Dodge and approved.

Council Member Rich made a motion to leave Executive Session at 3:01 p.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Stevenson and approved.

Return to Regular Session

The Council returned to Regular Session at 3:02 p.m. No action was taken in Executive Session.

Chairman O'Neill entertained a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment

Council Member Dodge made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:03 p.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rich and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Michaela Young
Secretary to the College Council