

SUNY CANTON COLLEGE COUNCIL
305th MEETING
April 7, 2026

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

Attendance Notes

Kelly Obermayer joined via Zoom.

Call to Order

At 10:01 a.m., the meeting was called to order.

New Business

New Program Proposal – Applied Marketing, BBA

The program proposal was sent to everyone via email. The Chair asked if there were any questions or need for discussion. Council Member Dodge asked if it would require any additional faculty. It was stated that additional faculty would not be required initially, but depending on the growth of the program, it would be ideal to have more at the 5-year mark. Provost De Cooke explained how she and the Deans annually review the programs to determine what is needed and what is working. She added that the new Dean and the new Business Director are doing very well.

New Program Proposal - Business AI and Society, BS

The program proposal was sent to everyone via email. The Chair asked if there were any questions or need for discussion. Chairman O’Neill asked if it would create or cost jobs. Provost De Cooke stated that the hope is that it creates jobs for students. Dr. Szafran added that it is better to be the leader, but he did acknowledge that there are a lot of serious questions and things to consider – i.e., information is only as good as the person entering it, reviewing it, promoting it, etc.; very complex.

Policy Updates – Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid

The policy update was sent to everyone via email. The Chair asked if there were any questions or need for discussion. Dr. Szafran explained that the changes were made to help students understand the policy better, as well as what they can receive.

Council Member Dodge made a motion to approve all three New Business items simultaneously. The motion was seconded by Council Member Rich and was approved.

Old Business

There was no old business.

Chairman's Report

Chairman O'Neill announced that a new Council Member, Seamus O'Brien, has been appointed to the Council. He shared that Seamus is North Country Savings Bank's Manager, and he lives in Canton. Chairman O'Neill stated that he will be a good addition to the Council.

President's Report

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

President Szafran stated that due to the timing of the meetings and that Spring Break occurred there is not much to report.

- Several of our students have won important state-wide SUNY awards. Meredith Parker won the Norman R. McConney Jr. Award for Educational Opportunity Programs and was presented with this honor in Troy on March 9. Meredith is majoring in Nursing and is from Lisbon. Two of our students have won the Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence, which will be presented in Albany on April 27. Our two winners are Natalie Baxter, Health and Fitness Promotion major, and Richard Haller, Technological Communications major. Finally, our Outstanding Baccalaureate Graduate Award recipient is Sydney Valiquette, with a major in Forensic Criminology and a minor in Applied Psychology. Our Outstanding Associate Graduate Award recipient is Allison Bickford, earning a Physical Therapy Assistant degree. These awards will be presented at graduation. Congratulations to all five of these high achieving students.
- Speaking of awards, our own Lenore VanderZee was named to be President of the University Economic Development Association. She was also selected as winner of the St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce's Chamber Appreciation Award on March 11. Congratulations, Lenore!
- Speaking of Economic Development, I've now been named as the Chair of the Workforce Development Committee for the NCREDC and as Co-Chair of the Committee that will work with Heuvelton's recent \$4.5M New York Forward grant, something I did last year when Gouverneur won its NY Forward grant.
- The final State budget has not yet been passed, so we still don't know the outcome, but some temporary good news is that both the NY Assembly and the Senate included language adding 4-year public colleges offering 2-year degrees to the State's Reconnect Program in their One-House budgets. We're not too excited yet, since we were included in last year's One-House budgets but didn't get incorporated into the final budget. Hopefully, this year will be different, but we'll keep lobbying until we are in.
- Moving on to the budget area, the coming year continues to look like it will be a bit tight. The Federal budget process continues to be all over the place. Pell Grants are largely intact money-

wise, but our students may encounter some problems because the rules have changed in terms of the amount that can be borrowed per year and overall.

- Vice President Shinnick was asked to tell the Council about what he's hearing related to the financial picture and any updates from his area.
 - Vice President Shinnick shared that it is his first time through the budget process, so he plans to observe and identify changes for next year. He also shared that it is too early to comment on this year's net performance, but he hopes to have a better understanding of where we are by the Council's next meeting. He explained his approach for this year's budget process – instead of going line by line in the budget spreadsheet, he will be looking at each area, putting together some key points, and meeting with the Divisional Head to go over the key points. His focus will be on where the dollar has a better return.
 - Dr. Szafran mentioned that it is hard to know what to do, as two reviewed programs should have been cut, but they are booming now, and we are glad we didn't cut them.
- Our American Concrete Institute student club had some outstanding results in the recent Fiber Reinforced Polymer competition in Chicago, as well as having been named as an Outstanding Student Chapter for 2025. Dr. De Cooke was asked to update the Council on their success and any other news from Academic Affairs.
 - Provost De Cooke expanded a bit on the two programs that were up for elimination – Automotive and HVAC. Due to some retirements, good replacement hires, and lots of outreach, enrollments in Automotive are exploding. HVAC program enrollments are exploding as well. These both are good two-year degrees and serve a community need.
 - Provost De Cooke shared that the SUNY Canton Civil and Environmental Engineering Technology team competed in and earned national recognition at the American Concrete Institute's Fiber-Reinforced Polymer Composite Competition. They competed against 42 other international teams and finished first in cost-to-load, second among U.S. Institutions, and sixth place overall in the international competition.
 - Additionally, we have numerous other students who engage in research with the help of faculty. These students have an opportunity to be selected to present at the SUNY and CUNY jointly sponsored research conference. If selected, Provost De Cooke noted that she is happy to support them.
 - An invitation was extended to all Council Members to attend the Honors Convocation ceremony. The Provost noted that this year's Honors Convocation is being named for Christina Lesyk.
- I know that there are a few more of our students who have won awards, including the David R. Maynard Student Activities Award. Our athletics teams have also continued to excel with three of the four winter sports making the SUNYAC playoffs. Vice President Bish was asked to update the Council on the news from Student Affairs.

- Vice President Bish shared that Lydia Austin is the recipient of the David R. Maynard Student Activities Award. She also shared that they will give out about 30 awards at the Student Excellence Awards Ceremony, which will be held on Wednesday, April 15, at 5 p.m. in Kingston Theater. She welcomed everyone to join.
- Outdoors for All Initiative – The College received an award of \$10K from SUNY to diversify and expand access to outdoor activities for students. Activities include: ice fishing, snowshoeing, hiking, geocaching, Wilderness First Aid, and even a mushroom walk. She noted that RJ Thayer has taken on this initiative and worked with a lot of businesses and agencies on this. An old trailer has been retrofitted and wrapped for storage; it is parked in the parking lot across from French Hall.
- For a second year in a row, Goat Yoga is being held in the Dana Hall Gym today at 2 p.m.
- Observe, Address, Respond (OAR) Training – This is a 45-minute training on identifying and referring student mental health concerns. The training will cover supporting wellbeing, warning signs of struggle, conversation starters, and referral options. A decision was made to end our relationship with the company who provided it and develop our own homegrown program through the Counseling Center and Wellbeing Programs Office. She noted that the team has done a wonderful job.
- Vice President Bish shared that new student leaders are coming in, and she acknowledged the outgoing student leaders and thanked Kyla for the wonderful job she has done.
- The following was shared for Athletics:
 - Athletics is very proud that both of this year’s outstanding graduate award winners are student athletes from our Women’s Hockey team.
 - An evening discussing Women in Sports will feature Green Bay Packers Vice President of Marketing and Fan Engagement Gabrielle Valdez Dow and Jacksonville Jaguars Senior Director of Marketing Brette Sadler at SUNY Canton. The event was originally postponed due to flight issues. It is open to the public and will be held in the College’s Kingston Theater on Tuesday, April 28. Valdez Dow and Sadler’s careers have included working in the NFL, UFC, NHL, and the entertainment industry.
 - We will host Special Olympics this Sunday, April 12, at 9:45 a.m. in the Roos House.
 - Spring sports are in full swing.
- The following was shared for Housing:
 - Occupancy is essentially flat. We were down 1 student fall 2024 vs fall 2025, and we are down 5 students spring 2025 vs spring 2026.

Semester	Kennedy Hall Occupancy	DIFR Dorm Occupancy	Total Occupancy
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	282	493	775
Spring 2026	265	390	655

Returning Student Housing Reservations Fall 2026 vs Fall 2025		
	Fall 2026	Fall 2025
Traditional Dorms	239	215
Kennedy Hall	195	202
Total	434	417

- Looks like we are slightly ahead of fall 2025 with returning students.
- Kennedy Hall (KH) is down a bit because we are holding a few more spaces for incoming students (We completely filled every KH space we made available to returning students and have a wait list for that building.).
- We'll start tracking new/incoming student numbers in May.
- Dr. Szafran asked Vice President VanderWoude to update the Council on how fundraising is going and on any changes for the future.
 - Vice President VanderWoude reported that they are outpacing the last two years; they have raised just under \$1.4M, surpassing their goal. And, he noted that their sixth year for Athletics Giving Week is yet to happen.
 - VP VanderWoude noted that they had a variety of donors contribute to the pediatric SIM manikin.
 - As they look forward to next year, they will focus on taking advantage of the large number of donors they have in their portfolio. They will be looking to increase the number of small-gift donors. They will be using new ways to engage with donors such as a new style of newsletter – little impact pieces and developing a podcast. He also spoke about the launch of a new giving society – New Gold Giving Society – which is a subscription-based model that allows the donors to participate in deciding where the money is spent.

- Dr. Szafran asked Vice President VanderZee to update the Council on news about our Downtown Entrepreneurship Project, as well as continuing growth in other programs being offered in your area.
 - Vice President VanderZee reported that they have been working with the developers of the Downtown Entrepreneurship Project on designing the space; it is anticipated that it will be an 18-month project.
 - In the area of Research and Sponsored Programs, she reported that the number of active grants has increased by 37.5% from 2024-2025, the number of submissions has increased by 22%, and three faculty members had successfully funded proposals for the first time in 2025. They are ready to open the Research and Innovation Center, which will allow them to use faculty research for the good of society. The Center will also open up other opportunities to use faculty research.
 - In the area of Workforce, Community, and Industry Partnerships, automotive pre-apprenticeships start today, which allows students to dip their toes into higher education in a field that may be of interest to them and dovetails well with the growth in that program. She also shared that the new welding instructor for the new non-credit workforce program is touring Nevaldine today and may do some adjuncting for the College.
 - There is a new SUNY initiative to gather additional data on non-credit initiatives with the purpose being to increase the touchpoints and encouraging additional participation after that one-off program. It will be a heavy lift at first, but they are hoping it will increase repeat participation in our workforce non-credit programs.
 - The 12 Summer Camps are filling up fast.
 - The University Economic Development Association (UEDA) is convening in Washington next week; this group focuses on the federal landscape when it comes to university-led economic development in talent, innovation, and place. It serves to give an important voice to the colleges involved and economic development.
 - In terms of building up our capacity and engaging faculty in this type of research, Dr. Szafran reminded the Council that the College is part of the EPIIC grant, which we received three years ago. He noted that we continue to look for opportunities. Lenore noted that the Grants Office is working to submit 13 proposals in the month of April.

- Dr. Szafran asked Stephanie Petkovsek to give her area update.
 - Stephanie noted that UUP is working to get permanency for faculty who are lecturers. She explained that one issue the lack of permanency causes has to do with the ability to submit grants.

- She noted that contract negotiations have been going well, and their work the prior year to get things finalized so the process would move faster through the various groups helped. She noted that they are working to get longer term appointments for lecturers, and she also noted that they were able to get them more pay last year.
- Stephanie mentioned that they will be giving out the UUP award in honor of Ed Mafoua for the third year in a row. This year's award recipient is Ashley Hanson, who is also on the Woman's Hockey team.
- And, lastly, she noted that they have also been working on making sure faculty have input on dual enrollment.
- Dr. Szafran asked Nick Kocher to give a Faculty Governance update.
 - Nick shared that the initial recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee on Scholarship – evaluating the definition of scholarship – should be coming out before the semester ends, and the Ad Hoc Committee on Bylaws proposal is going in front of the College Assembly today.
 - Nick noted that he feels more comfortable with things this semester. He also noted that they are trying to create an onboarding document to make transitions more formalized. And, lastly, he noted that faculty governance is healthy on this campus, because issues get worked out.
 - Dr. Szafran noted that he meets monthly with the Presiding Officer of the Faculty, Nick, and a staff member, Julie Parkman, and that has been going well.
- Dr. Szafran asked Jesse Clark-Stone to provide an update for the Council.
 - Jesse Clark-Stone reported the following:
 - The Plenary is scheduled for next week.
 - The University Faculty Senate (UFS) President has been doing lots of advocacy for the State budget.
 - The UFS President will be on campus on April 22 for the Barnstorming Tour. It was believed that he will discuss the expansion of the research connect portal, academic momentum, and the federal student loan challenge.
 - The Fact 2 SUNY Group will be putting out information on AI.
- Kyla Garrison was asked to provide her update to the Council.
 - Kyla Garrison reported that they have new e-Board members in the President, Vice President, and Secretary positions. She noted that due to timing she won't be running again, but the new Board is wonderful.

- The SUNYSA trip is this weekend, and they have invited the new e-Board members to attend.
- They are also hosting an end-of-the-year gathering for seniors, with an Oscar Awards theme – food, drinks, and formal dress code.
- Dr. Szafran added that he meets with the SGA e-Board about once a month. Chairman O’Neill thanked Kyla for her time and contributions to the Council and wished her continued success and happiness.
- Dr. Szafran asked Travis Smith to update the Council on what’s new in Public Relations.
 - Travis Smith expanded on the update related to the Trades programs being up significantly. He noted that PR did a press release on them and provided the following statistics:
 - HVAC – Up 65%
 - Automotive – Up 56%
 - Electrical Construction Maintenance – Up 93%
 - Construction Tech – Up 35%
 - Travis reminded the Council about the ESPN campaign that he reported on at the last meeting and noted that it launched in early March. To date, there have been strong results, with .5M impressions so far. ESPN’s average click-through benchmarks are .02% for their banner ads, and we are exceeding those on both Desktop and Google. The Knicks Talk Daily videos sponsored by SUNY Canton have produced 13 short videos so far, with .25M views on four major platforms. He shared that they are focusing more in the NYC area as we get between 40-45% of our applications from there each year.
 - Vice President VanderZee noted that due to a previously approved increase in investment by Zvi and Shawn Miller, along with some great research on where to advertise, PR is able to do some extra marketing.
 - Travis shared that the popular Cybersecurity ad has reached 2.6M views, only Data Science is close with 1.5M views. For reference, YouTube’s completion rate (viewing a video from start to finish) is usually 70-80% – Data Science stands at 83.9% and Cybersecurity stands at 95%.
 - Chairman O’Neill asked if there was any one area in the State that we draw the most students from; Travis stated that they come from the North Country first and NYC second.

Executive Session

Chairman O’Neill stated that the Council will move into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters, and he doesn’t anticipate any business to be conducted afterwards. Chairman O’Neill asked President Szafran and Council Secretary Young to stay for Executive Session.

Council Member Steveson made a motion to go into Executive Session at 11:14 a.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Dodge and approved.

Council Member Garrison made a motion to leave Executive Session at 11:32 a.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Stevenson and approved.

Return to Regular Session

The Council returned to regular session at 11:33 a.m. No action was taken in Executive Session.

Council Member Dodge made a motion to accept all award nomination recommendations put forward by the award review committees. The motion was seconded by Council Member Stevenson and approved.

Chairman O'Neill entertained a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment

Council Member Stevenson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:33 a.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Dodge and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Michaela Young
Secretary to the College Council

DRAFT