

SUNY CANTON COLLEGE COUNCIL
302nd MEETING
JUNE 13, 2025

Present: Ronald O'Neill, Chair Kathleen Dodge Joseph Rich
 Toni Squires Jennifer Stevenson

Zoom: Marie Regan

Absent: Brian Plonka

Others: Courtney Bish Jesse Clark-Stone Amanda Crump
 Nicholas Kocher Travis Smith Zvi Szafran
 Tracey Thompson Michaela Young

Call to Order

At 9:29 a.m., the meeting was called to order.

Chairman O'Neill offered condolences on the passing of Dr. Fraser's wife, Betty.

Meeting Minutes – April 11, 2025

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

Council Member Rich made a motion to approve the April 11, 2025, Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Council Member Dodge, with no additions or correction, and the Minutes were approved.

New Business

Advisory Board Appointments/Reappointments

It was announced that everyone received a copy of the Advisory Board Appointments/Reappointments by email.

Council Member Dodge made a motion to approve the Advisory Board Appointments/Reappointments. The motion was seconded by Council Member Stevenson, and the Advisory Board Appointments/Reappointments were approved.

Policy Approvals

It was announced that everyone received a copy of the new and existing policy proposals by email.

Council Member Rich made a motion to approve all New and Existing Policy Proposals. The motion was seconded by Council Member Regan, and the New and Existing Policy Proposals were approved.

Old Business

There was no Old Business brought before the Council.

Chairman's Report

A Thank You Note from Judy Chase regarding her receipt of the Distinguished Citizen Award was shared with the Council members.

President's Report

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

Graduation was excellent, with around 500 students walking out of almost 900 graduates. The ceremony went beautifully with no complications of any kind, and the arena was packed with a lively and positive audience.

The College's new Vice President for Advancement and Executive Director for the Canton College Foundation has been named – Geoffrey VanderWoude. Geoffrey has worked at the College for over 11 years in positions of increasing authority.

There was a brief report and explanation regarding the College's enrollment numbers. It was noted that due to the issues with FAFSA last year a true comparison of the last two years' data is unable to be made. Enrollment numbers are being monitored closely, with the situation being analyzed and response initiatives being implemented to address any gaps. The belief is that enrollment will be flat this year.

The State Budget is now final, including the approval for expanded funding for the ACE/ASAP program. The College received word that they will be allocated \$492,500 to support the expansion of the current program from 185 to 250 students. The College also received \$799,000 in additional state aid. It was explained that this will be a tight fiscal year, as the faculty and staff negotiated salary increases will exceed that amount, and there will be other additional cost increases. Acknowledgement and a statement of appreciation for the College's state support having increased by some 60% compared to three years ago was given, but it was also noted that tuition has remained flat so there is no additional revenue from that. It was added that there should be some additional revenue from higher housing numbers.

The Council was reminded of the College's concerns regarding the announcements about a Free Community College initiative for adults aged 25-55 in selected high-demand degree programs. It was reported that since the College is St. Lawrence County's de facto community college, hard lobbying efforts to be included in this program were made, resulting in being included in both the Assembly and Senate's One House Bills. However, the College was not included in the final bill. This situation is being closely monitored for any effects on the College and enrollment.

Many people at the College continue to be concerned about the changes taking place under the new federal administration. SUNY and the State are working on several contingency plans to address issues of concern. The College remains committed to protecting our faculty, staff, 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.

So far, none of the executive orders have directly impacted the College. It was noted that there have been some ICE arrests – first SUNY student at Suffolk CC and some workers at Potsdam nail salons. It was also noted that there are concerning elements in the current draft of the omnibus budget bill, including a reduction in the caps for full-time PELL grant funding, and a near elimination of part-time PELL grants, as well as the proposed Medicaid cuts which could cause major problems for all rural hospitals.

Academic Affairs Update

It was shared that the College has received an \$8M grant in support of the nursing program to upgrade and expand facilities, especially regarding simulation, with the goal of doubling the current level of enrollment in this program. This grant will establish the College as the North Country Hub for nursing education, allowing the College to partner with other North Country programs and hospitals. It was also noted that the College has been able to hire a new Program Director, as well as some well-qualified new nursing faculty.

Some additional information regarding the ACE/ASAP programs was provided. The Council was reminded that this is a last-dollar-in program for tuition. It was also shared that this program provides students with about \$2,000 in additional aid for childcare, travel, and grocery expenses to make college affordable for them. Additionally, to better serve the students, the College is also serving as a pilot institution for a new data analytics approach for all ACE/ASAP campuses that will allow the accurate reporting and use of data in real time.

Progress continues to be made on the Masters in Cybersecurity. A campus team is writing the necessary self-study to get institutional approval from Middle States and the NY State Education Department. It is expected that the self-study will be completed by the beginning of the Fall term.

It was reported that the College still awaits funding notification for the TRIO Student Support Services grant. An explanation of the TRIO program was provided – an educational outreach program that has helped thousands of students at the College for decades. It serves around 200 students who are first-generation, low-income, and disabled by providing tutoring assistance, academic advising, and other forms of support. Due to the possibility that this program may no longer be funded in the federal budget, the College is participating in ongoing advocacy to continue TRIO-program funding nationwide. Council Members were asked to contact Peggy or Lenore if they would like to advocate for SUNY Canton's TRIO program.

Administrative Affairs Update

Related to budget and finance, the following was shared – there have been no fee increases, expenditures are being closely monitored, the initial budget review meeting is scheduled for next week, and data analytics and strategic planning are routinely used.

An update on the College's construction projects was provided:

- Roselle Plaza – rehab will continue in stages through next summer
- Payson Hall – renovations have been pushed back (bids open July 2025; notice to proceed October 2025; completion November 2027)

- Wicks Hall – renovations will take the lecture hall offline for Fall 25/Spring 26 (completion July 2026)
- Southworth Library – the chiller replacement ended up being more expensive than anticipated due to supply costs
- Covered Pathways – wrapping up soon
- CARC renovation – accessibility and site improvements continue
- Campus Store – renovations will be completed before students return
- Civil Rights Review – projects are wrapping up soon
- Geothermal Wells/Wind Turbines – damage to the blades of the wind turbines has caused a delay in usage

She noted that Mike McCormick and Michelle O'Brian attended SUNY's Sustainability Conference; they will be meeting with campus leadership to discuss requirements and decide how to proceed.

Student Affairs Update

The following policy information was provided.

- Several policies have non-substantive language changes (largely to clarify or provide greater understanding for students). Anyone wanting more information was asked to contact Courtney.
- Changes to the financial aid policies are being finalized, and as soon as they are complete, they will be shared with the Council for review and action.
- There will be at least one policy (and possibly more) coming up for an electronic vote this summer, as SUNY has some new requirements surrounding Hazing policies that will impact the Student Handbook. As soon as they are ready, they will be sent to the Council for review and action.

The following information related to Housing Numbers for Fall 2025 was provided.

- New students are down 10% (-30 students)
- Returning students are up 8% (+37 students)
- Overall, housing numbers are up 1% (+7 students)
- **Compared to this week two years ago:**
 - New students are up 9% (+23 students)
 - Returning students are up 12% (+52 students)
 - Overall, housing numbers are up 11% (+75 students)

It was noted that the single-room initiative has made a significant impact.

The following Athletics update was provided.

- At the annual SUNYAC meeting, the SUNYAC presidents voted unanimously to admit Alfred State, Delhi, and Cobleskill to the SUNYAC for the 26-27 academic year. It was noted that these are terrific additions to the conference, which will result in better schedules. It will also allow for the creation of two (East/West) divisions that will benefit students and shorten travel time.

- Student-athletes recorded another strong academic semester:
 - A cumulative GPA of 3.26 (compared to 3.09 for non-student athletes)
 - 12 of 15 NCAA teams had team GPAs above 3.0
 - 6 teams had GPAs at/above 3.6
 - Men's Hockey 3.7
 - Women's Hockey 3.6
 - Volleyball 3.6
 - Women's Cross Country 3.6
 - Women's Basketball 3.8.
- Esports is currently organizing an on-campus tournament for several local high schools in the Esports Arena. This is expected to be a good recruiting effort for both the team and the College.
- Women's Soccer Player Chloe Thomas has been chosen as a recipient of the 2025 [State University of New York Athletic Conference \(SUNYAC\) Award of Valor](#), and has accepted her award. The award, which originated in 2003, is presented to those who have used perseverance, dedication, and determination to overcome a life-altering event and whose ability to overcome obstacles has served as an inspiration to others. It was shared that she lost her mother this past January to colon cancer, but she continued to thrive in her freshman year and helped organize a 5k Cancer Run on campus along with her team and men's hockey.
- Recruiting numbers continue to be strong with 135 deposits thus far for next year, including 16 for Baseball, 13 for Men's Soccer, 12 for Men's Lacrosse, 11 for Club Hockey, and 10 each for Esports, Women's Lacrosse, and Volleyball.
- The new JV Men's Basketball and Club Hockey programs both experienced strong first years, with full rosters and competitive games and are expected to continue to thrive next year.

The College has hired its first fulltime Title IX (TIX) Coordinator, Kaelee Shrewsberry. It was noted that Kaelee comes from Renewal House and has hit the ground running since she began in April, including attending a SUNY TIX conference for additional training. Acknowledgement and thanks were expressed for the work that Nico Auguste provided over the past two years.

The College is seeking qualified NPs/PAs for two 11-month provider positions in the Davis Health Center for the coming academic year. It was noted that there is also an open search for a Director of Health Center Operations, a new leadership role in the Center, which could be a wonderful leadership opportunity for one of the Healthcare Management graduates. The Council was asked to send any interest in these roles to the College. Questions about the positions were answered, and it was noted that full details can be found on the College's website.

Advancement Update

VP Thompson noted that her last day will be June 19, but she will be staying on as a mentor and consultant until the Ray Modell estate closes. She also noted that Geoffrey begins in the role of Vice President on Wednesday.

It was reported that all fundraising goals were surpassed this year – \$504,000 in unrestricted funds, \$759,000 in restricted funds, and \$558,000 in endowed giving with a total overall amount of \$1,822,000. Credit for this success was attributed to a team effort, with thanks being given for the Council's support and confidence.

The following accomplishments during VP Thompson's tenure were shared:

- Implemented Blackbaud Raiser's Edge and other software to provide the team with state-of-the-art tools
- Changed staff assignments so each School has their own gift officer
- Built up the Canton Fund and instituted Crowd funding
- Brought in 47 new endowments, with many coming in higher than required
- Updated the Foundation Board Membership with 10 new members
- Retained great staff and recruited new ones
- Raised a total of \$10,450,000, with more than \$3.7M raised for Canton Fund, Cash and Stock Gifts averaging out to about \$419,000/year, and \$4M+ raised for the endowment
- Increased the Foundation's total endowment from \$12.8M in March of 2019 to \$18.7M in March of 2025 (briefly hitting \$20M)
- Significantly increased the Student Emergency Fund from a few thousand dollars to as high as \$206,000

Strategic Relations and Communications Update

The following updates related to the Center for Workforce, Community, and Industry Partnerships were offered:

- Six summer camps in STEM and the arts for grades 1-9 are being offered and filling up fast. More information can be found at www.canton.edu/wcip/summer.
- This summer, a Sustainability Series for workforce development is being offered, including Heat Pumps, EV Maintenance, Home Energy Audits, Solar Training, and more. These are also filling up.
- The College's Dual Enrollment initiative, which credentials high school teachers to provide college-level classes in local high schools at no cost to students, has been a huge success. It was reported that in addition to hundreds of area high school students gaining college credit this program has also been expanding the College's partnerships with local school districts, streamlining the pathway between high school and college into specific programs. The College currently has agreements with BOCES and Madrid-Waddington and is in conversations with other districts to offer similar pathways.

The SBDC has doubled its service capacity by adding three new hires, one of which has been featured in statewide media releases – Benjamin Mambou. The SBDC's service territory extends from St. Lawrence County through to Plattsburgh/Canton County and the Adirondacks. A sneak-peak of their annual report was shared – even without full staffing, the SBDC helped start 36 new businesses, served 500 total clients, helped create and retain nearly 950 jobs, and had an economic impact of over \$11M. Their average client survey rating is 4.67/5.

In the Grants area, it was reported that SUNY Canton has not received any stop work or cancellation notices on any of the College's grants to this point. It was also reported that the

office's 2024-25 impact was as follows: SUNY Canton was awarded over \$330,000 in new grants, stewarded over \$2.25M in continuing grants, and assisted with an additional \$380,000 in grants — facilitating a total of nearly \$3M in grant funding this fiscal year. There has been an additional \$2.5M in grants submitted but not yet decided.

Faculty Governance Update

Nick Kocher noted that his first semester as Presiding Officer is complete, including a SUNY University Faculty Senate training that he attended this week. He also noted that he plans to focus on improving communication from the faculty through to the president and states that he thinks this will be helpful. He also stated that he feels fortunate that governance is important to everyone. As an example of improved communication initiatives, it was noted that the faculty developed a faculty caucus to discuss important topics in a smaller group; integration of this group into the overall governance model is still being determined.

Faculty Senate Update

Jesse Clark-Stone reported on the 200th Faculty Senator Plenary held in April.

The following information was part of the Chancellor's presentation, which focused on student success:

- There are available resources for the Civil Discourse GER, AmeriCorps/FAFSA completion, and DEISJ GER.
- As another support measure, SUNY has developed a high-impact practice metric for all students to do an internship, with the goal of increasing graduation rates and job opportunities.
- SUNY is on a financially stable trajectory.
- SUNY and the NYS Attorney General are working on various litigations related to Federal grant cuts.
- Executive Order Responses – there is no tolerance for antisemitism; DEI changes will be complied with, but no work assistance will be provided; international students may face more travel bans; follow protocols for ICE presence; there have been no changes related to LGBTQ, PRODiG, EOP, or GERs; and SUNY is taking a leadership role in helping campuses with litigations.
- Continue to strongly advocate for Higher Education.

Jesse shared that the question the Tech Sector asked the Chancellor was related to targeted funding, based on the Chancellor's statements that Higher Education is a public good and the call for campuses to review their offered programs. He indicated that the Chancellor's response was for campuses to look for efficiencies within their programs; use support services like ACE/ASAP, tutoring, and remediation; and look into shared financial aid services to help reduce costs.

In terms of Title II compliance, the Chancellor indicated that they are waiting for final decisions, as these may be pushed back, but there will be resources to help with this. He went on to say that State mandates have not been previously funded, but the new State funding should help

with that. He also suggested that campuses should consider shared roles – i.e., the requirement for campuses to have Diversity Officer could be shared between campuses.

Jesse noted that the SUNY Provost reported on the Empire AI supercomputer, noting that it will be seven times faster, and faculty who need this capability for their projects can submit a request for use. SUNY is pushing their Digital Transformation project (digital integration of academic services), with the following resource options:

- AI Tutor Pilot Program – faculty will test six systems to determine which one is the best.
- Digital Toolbox
- Generative AI Taskforce
- Brightspace Dashboards

It was also noted that the Chancellor spoke about PELL cuts and what issues might arise from those and effects that changes in grants might have, indicating that more guidance is forthcoming. The Faculty Senators expressed to the Chancellor that it would be helpful to have a plan in place for summer advocacy.

The Resolutions acted on at the Plenary were shared with the group.

Public Relations Update

It was reported that PR won three SUNYCUAD awards this year – Best of Category for the light pole flags and two Judges' Citations for the Alumni Magazine and the fireproof building.

PR has been running one-page ads in the NY Nicks' and Rangers' programs, as well as in Esports related programs. They are also retooling the TV promotions.

Lastly, it was shared that the College's summer session broke an all-time enrollment record with 2,053 students.

Chairman O'Neill expressed that he felt PR has exploded under Travis and his staff.

Dr. Szafran shared information about the economic-development groups that he is involved with.

Chairman O'Neill asked about the nursing grant and its restrictiveness and about clinical placements. Dr. Szafran explained that the money is restricted to what was requested – new facilities, new equipment, and advancement in AI abilities. He further explained that it would allow the College to offer up to 33% of clinical training in a SIM setting, helping to reduce the off-campus clinical need. As off-campus clinicals are still needed in some circumstances, work continues with Upstate Medical to secure clinical opportunities. A concern related to hospitals being impacted by changes to Medicaid was noted, as it would impact clinical sites.

The group briefly discussed where students can do their clinical training, with some examples of the new training opportunities to be offered through the grant funding.

Council Member Rich asked about the plans for a 2-year Cyber Security program. Dr. Szafran noted that the College currently has a 4-year program and has applied for a Master's degree. He stated that he felt a 2-year program should be developed to help the College compete.

Chairman O'Neill thanked Tracey for her service, and Council Member Regan expressed that the College was lucky to have her for the time that she was here.

Adjournment

Council Member Squires made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:49 a.m. The motion was seconded by Council Member Regan and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Michaela Young
Secretary to the College Council

DRAFT