



# UNIVERSITY FACULTY

## SENATE REPORT

Binghamton University, Binghamton  
January 27-29, 2011



### SENATE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ken O'Brien (SUNY Brockport).

- **Budget and related issues.** As the meeting preceded the unveiling of the Governor's budget proposal, there were no specifics in the report. However, a number of mechanisms will be used to try to mitigate the impact of this and next year's projected budget shortfalls on SUNY. Chief among them is continuing to make the case for SUNY funding with leaders and members of the legislature and their staff. One
- "Research That Matters: an exposition of Graduate Research in CUNY and SUNY," a joint effort of UFS and CUNY's Senate, will be held on March 8, in the Legislative Office Building in Albany. UUP and senior members of SUNY Central Administration seem to be moving toward an increasingly common set of objectives. UFS will have representation on a system-wide budget group being established by Senior Vice Chancellor Rimai.

- **Program Deactivation.** This entire bullet is an excerpt from President O'Brien's report.

We now know that three campuses – Morrisville, Geneseo, and of course, the University at Albany – have each announced plans to deactivate, suspend, or eliminate several programs. There are two issues that concern us as a governance body: 1. What does the elimination of a specific program mean for the education offered by SUNY, an issue that has and remains important to the Provost and his staff? and 2. To what extent is program elimination in a time of fiscal crisis, with attendant staff reductions, being employed as a means of achieving retrenchment through the back-door, without the protections provided by the UUP contract?

I have discussed these issues, especially the latter, with our Union leadership, with SUNY administration, and with our CUNY colleagues and will continue to do so, especially as we expect the number of programs scheduled for deactivation may well increase if the budget news does not improve significantly. Last month, before the break, we held a joint meeting of the Executive Committees of the CUNY and SUNY Executive Committees in New York City, graciously hosted by CUNY, out of which came a commitment for closer coordination and communication. For this meeting, you will have a CUNY statement on this issue, as well as one from your Executive Committee. Although we had hoped to issue a joint statement from the two Executive Committees, it is clear that our different labor contracts necessitate our use of different language, but to a common end: statements on the problem of using program elimination as a means to budget savings. In that regard, the Provost's Office has issued a new form, "Request to Deactivate and/or Discontinue a Program," which now, for the first time, indicates that the President or Chief Executive Officer's signature "affirms that the proposal has met campus administrative and governance procedures for consultation."

Last month, I was invited to speak to the Senate at UAlbany, where I presented the same message I have been delivering since the beginning of our current state fiscal crisis, which has become a SUNY funding crisis: existing governance bodies should be involved in drafting the criteria and process by which programs and offices will be evaluated, but they should not have representatives at the table when those processes and criteria are being implemented. That is the responsibility of administrators, not faculty and professional staff. This is my personal view, but it is one grounded in my experience at Brockport in 1981-82 where and when we lost approximately 10% of our teaching and professional staff, including 37 faculty with continuing appointment. I am deeply aware of the cost that such devastation wreaks for a campus community, and the decades it can take before faculty and staff begin working without looking for the specter of retrenchment over their shoulders.

- **SUNY's Strategic Planning Process.** It is well underway with two groups going full steam ahead. The first consists of 13 teams which have been charged with synthesizing means of evaluating how well the System is meeting its goals. The second group is comprised of the 6 Innovation teams whose focus is on the state's social issues such as energy usage, health and the education pipeline.

President O'Brien and Professor Tina Good, President of the FCCC, are co-chairs of the Transformation team on Shared Governance. They expect to come up with metrics for measuring effective shared governance by mid-April.

- **General Education and Student Mobility.** The Joint Committee on Transfer and Articulation has sunset. It is to be replaced by a Student Mobility Advisory Committee whose final membership is yet to be announced. The new body will have representation from community colleges and BA granting institutions.

Much work is being done to ensure that the 1972 promise made by SUNY of a seamless transfer be realized soon. SUNY System Administration's recent changes in the general education requirements, the ensuing consideration by local governance bodies and the outcome of that process will impact student mobility.

*Written report available.*

### DAVID LAVALLEE, SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR AND PROVOST

- The Provost was to meet with Language Department Chairs and Program Directors and the Executive Director of the Modern Language Association (MLA) on Monday, January 31 to discuss the current state of language teaching. Among the topics to be discussed were:

- a) How to work collaboratively with the current curriculum?
- b) Developing a group interested in changing the curriculum?

- Provost Lavallee stated that our retention and graduation rates need to improve. Closer attention should be paid to the seemingly disparate requirements from one campus to the next, for a degree in the same major. Benchmarking SUNY's credit requirements for programs with the national average could prove helpful in that regard.
- Phase I of the Transfer Website has been launched. The site is dedicated to improving student mobility throughout SUNY and it can be found here: <http://www.suny.edu/student/transfer.cfm>
- Change in the Office of Diversity and Educational Equity (ODEE). Dr. Pedro Caban who led that office since its creation is to return to UAlbany's Department of Latin American, Caribbean, and US Latino Studies. Mr. Carlos Medina who was previously the second in command has been named Interim Director of ODEE.

### JOHANNA DUNCAN-POITIER, CHANCELLOR'S DEPUTY FOR THE EDUCATION PIPELINE & VICECHANCELLOR FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

- Vice Chancellor Duncan-Poitier gave a presentation on New York's Education Pipeline.

### KATHLEEN PRESTON, INTERIM VICE CHANCELLOR FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND HEALTH AFFAIRS

- Interim Vice Chancellor Preston did not have much to offer in terms of details as the budget had not been announced. She answered questions posed to her by a number of senators.

## NANCY ZIMPER, CHANCELLOR

- There was a question and answer period in which the Chancellor took questions from each of the sectors.
- The Chancellor expressed the need for future program consolidations and closer collaboration among campuses due to the implications of the financial situation for SUNY. She mentioned that absorbing the cuts imposed by New York State will affect SUNY's ability to be an economic engine for New York.
- The Chancellor also stated that SUNY System has seen a reduction in personnel from 2,000 employees to the 400 or so who remain today.

## UNIVERSITY CENTER SECTOR CONCERNS/QUESTIONS

The following list of University Centers' concerns was reported by Senator Peter Knuepfer (Binghamton University):

1. Each of our campuses is examining our General Education programs in light of the Board of Trustees resolution. Stony Brook is re-evaluating their program to focus more on educational objectives rather than course-content areas, in order to avoid the "course check-off" approach to General Education that so many students take. In terms of student mobility, we seek to continue to work with the institutions that are our primary transfer partners to ensure that potential transfer get adequate advising about how best to position themselves for transfer to our campuses (both in terms of General Education requirements that go beyond the SUNY minimum and major courses).

2. Performance-based funding. The senators were concerned both about the Chancellor's intention and what the role (if any) of faculty governance would be in defining the new performance-based funding.

3. Differential tuition. While this is not a popular notion among other sectors and not unanimously supported in our sector, we stress the importance of assuring that any changes in our sector's tuition include explicit mechanisms to minimize the impact on student access and affordability. There are some risks, of course; our campuses would be more expensive for undergraduates, who may find that the added expense makes us less desirable than other SUNY campuses. On the other hand, a differential tuition would both mirror the situation elsewhere in public higher education and acknowledge the higher cost of research-intensive institutions. Furthermore, at present the budget formula for allocating SUNY funds to campuses provides the Centers with additional funds because of their specific needs. However, when there is a stable SUNY budget (in some hard-to-imagine future), this must of necessity reduce the funds available to the other sectors. With differential tuition, this would probably not be necessary.

4. Governance involvement in budgetary decisions. The UAlbany Senators reported that the resolutions passed at the UFS Fall Plenary were helpful because they provided Faculty-based support for continued formal consultation. UAlbany's President Phillip has not yet made any formal recommendations to central administration. The UAlbany University Senate is awaiting feedback from the President's office in response to their recommendations and observations. Discussion at the Fall Plenary and subsequent follow-up by Senators managed to return the locally suspended programs to the System admissions website; they had been removed prematurely after the President suspended admission to the programs. Finally, all of us agreed that we'd like to see the Provost's office require a detailed description of the consultation with faculty (dates, selection criteria, representation), but we are grateful for the steps that have been taken thus far.

5. An interesting and perplexing HR issue was brought to our attention. Apparently in more than one case at UBuffalo, a staff member was sent a letter of permanent appointment by the campus President, but even a year later no letter was forthcoming from the Chancellor. Although this was not explained adequately in our oral report to the Chancellor, a follow-up from a Buffalo senator clarified the concern to her.

6. We are concerned about the implications of consolidation that were discussed by the Chancellor in her State of SUNY address and, in a different way, by the Provost at the Fall Plenary. What we are hearing (or implying) is that System sees that a solution to program closures at Albany is to have students take necessary courses through cooperation/sharing with other SUNY units, especially within the same region. We are concerned with what this implies for coherence of a campus curriculum, and indeed for faculty control of the curriculum. We are also concerned that this would place financial and time (transport) constraints on students. Nor are we convinced that distance learning

would be an appropriate solution for all students and all areas of study or courses.

7. We'd love to see SUNY be more public about what pain has been caused to students and campuses from past, let alone proposed, budget cuts. At some point, decision-makers need to understand the results of their withdrawal of support from SUNY.

## Reports for the Following Committees are available:

- **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**
- **DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE**
- **ETHICS COMMITTEE**
- **GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**
- **GRADUATE AND RESEARCH COMMITTEE**
- **OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**
- **PROGRAMS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE**
- **STUDENT LIFE COMMITTEE**
- **UNDERGRADUATE COMMITTEE.**

Respectfully submitted,

J. Philippe Abraham,  
Shadi Shahedipour-Sandvik, and  
Daniel D. White  
SUNY Faculty Senators

