

University at Albany
State University of New York

University Council

Minutes

May 10, 2013

A regular meeting of the University Council was held on May 10, 2013 in University Hall, Room 306. Members present were: Michael Castellana (Chairman), Pierre Alric, Robert Balachandran, Patricia Caldwell (by teleconference), John Fallon, James Jackson, Abner JeanPierre, and Michael Stein; also Gary Roth (Graduate Student Representative), Christine Wagner (Faculty Representative), and Timothy Murphy (Alumni Representative).

Also present were: President Robert Jones, Provost Susan Phillips, Vice Presidents Stephen Beditz, James Dias, Catherine Herman, and Fardin Sanai; and Canon Kay Hotaling, Vincent Delio (Chief of Staff); Assistant Vice President Robert Andrea, and Diane Corbett, Director of Financial Aid.

Upon motion duly made and seconded (Balachandran/Stein) the minutes of the previous meeting were approved as submitted. Moving to the President's report, Dr. Jones reported that since his first Council meeting in March, he has been busy interfacing with faculty, staff, students and various research groups. He commented that he has now experienced his first student protest, having been presented a list of demands by the Student Revolution Coalition. While some of their demands are unrealistic, the group did raise a number of legitimate issues. Accordingly, the President subsequently held a 1.5 hour meeting, to which all students were invited, to discuss these matters in greater detail. The President stated that he planned to have quarterly open forum meetings with all students invited, and do the same once a semester for faculty and staff.

The President went on to comment on the progress of his Nine County Tour. He has been on four visits since the last Council meeting: Schenectady, Albany, Washington and Columbia counties. He finds these meetings very useful in several ways: they have helped raise the University's profile in the surrounding counties; they have helped identify economic development opportunities in which the University might participate; they have provided a means to connect with nonprofits in the area, especially those serving depressed communities; and they have been helpful to the President in his role as Co-chair of the Capital Region Economic Development Committee. The President noted his next visit will be to Saratoga County on May 29.

The President noted that the first symposium of the Capital Region Research Alliance, a collaboration between the University, Albany Medical Center and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, recently took place. The symposium was very successful with over 100 partners participating. The goal of the Alliance is to foster increasing partnerships across the region to enhance economic development, particularly in the area of technology development and translational research.

The President stressed his emphasis on the University at Albany becoming an increasingly engaged university. He mentioned that his former colleague, Andy Furco, visited from University of Minnesota to talk to various groups on campus about the need for engagement. The President intends to make community engagement a core part of UAlbany's mission.

The President went on to mention the May 8 recognition of our community engagement partners, the University's positive mention in the Princeton Review, and the success of our men's lacrosse team which will be playing in the first round of the NCAA championship tournament on Saturday.

In closing, the President informed the Council that the Medallion of the University, our highest honor, will be bestowed upon former Council Chair Dan Tomson at the undergraduate commencement ceremony on Sunday.

Moving on to other business, Chairman Castellana introduced the new student member of the Council, Klara Botvinnik. Klara will be formally joining the Council at its first meeting in the fall, but voluntarily attended this meeting to become familiar with the operations of the Council. Pierre Alric also informed the Council that Trey Price, a previous student representative to the Council, will next year be representing the entire SUNY student body on the SUNY Board of Trustees, a prestigious assignment.

Moving to the faculty update, Prof. Wagner reported that University Senate elections have concluded and all councils and committees are complete. Joette Stefl-Mabri is the new vice chair and will be representing the Senate on the Council in the new academic year.

Moving on to the Graduate Student update, Mr. Roth reported that the GSO is now out of debt and has set aside a \$6000 contingency reserve. Mr. Roth will continue as the Graduate Student Representative on the Council in the coming academic year. Mr. Roth then went on to comment upon a report on student debt compiled by GSO (attached). Their research shows that many students lack financial literacy as well as the ability to manage existing debt. He believes that the University would be able to provide instruction and resources to help ameliorate the problem. He went on to request assistance from the University in managing ancillary costs of attendance, and to increase a student's ability to acquire services from the Financial Aid Office. He also mentioned the levels of graduate assistant support, the number and duration of

assistantships and various other dimensions of this issue. A discussion followed (Stein, Jackson, Phillips, Jones).

Moving to other business the Council welcomed Timothy Murphy who will serve as the Alumni Association representative. Mr. Murphy provided a brief biography and introduced the Association's annual report.

Moving to other business Chairman Castellana suggested that at this point the Council, pursuant to its bylaws, undertake an election of officers. Pierre Alric was subsequently elected Vice Chair and Pat Caldwell was elected Secretary.

Moving to old business Diane Corbett, Director of Financial Aid and Robert Andrea, Assistant Vice President, offered a Power Point presentation on student financial aid and student indebtedness, as well as SUNY's Smart Track program (attached). Student loan default rates, on-line courses, and parental debt literacy were also discussed. Various dimensions of the issues were discussed at length (Jackson, Stein, Phillips, Jones, JeanPierre). President Jones noted that if the federal Pell Grant program is abolished our campus, as well as many others, will be in serious trouble, as that program supports a large number of our financial need students. Chairman Castellana remarked that is important for the Council, as it decides its role, to be proactive on this issue.

Moving to other business, the next academic year's tentative meeting schedule was discussed. It was agreed that meetings in early October, early December, late February and early May would be appropriate. All agreed that Friday remains the best day to hold the meetings. The potential to hold a meeting in New York City was also discussed. Michael Stein, Abner JeanPierre and Gary Roth volunteered to work with the Division of Student Success over the summer months regarding the adoption of a new code of student conduct at the first meeting in the fall.

Moving to other business Provost Phillips offered a Power Point presentation (attached) on online teaching and learning. A very lively discussion on the topic ensued covering such dimensions as: massive open online courses, flipped classrooms, online and blended courses, and the socialization students get in a classroom versus independent study. (Castellana, Fallon, Caldwell, JeanPierre, Balachandran, Stein, Roth). Provost Phillips offered that the issues raised, as well as academic integrity, are at the forefront of the discussion of online learning. But notwithstanding the issues, online learning is with us and the Open SUNY Program will accelerate its adoption across the University.

Moving onto other business Vice President Sanai reported on the efforts of University Development. He thanked SEFCU for its generous support of the business plan competition and further reported that the School of Business capital campaign is 85% complete.

Moving on to other business, Vice Chair Alric introduced resolutions recognizing and thanking Canon Kay Hotaling, Christine Wagner and Sorrell Chesin for their contributions to the Council. Upon motion duly made and seconded (Stein/Jackson) the resolutions were unanimously approved.

There being no further business and upon motion duly made and seconded (Balachandran/Jackson) and unanimously endorsed, the meeting adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen J. Beditz
Liaison to the University Council