

University at Albany
State University of New York

University Council

Minutes

November 5, 2010

A regular meeting of the University Council of the State University of New York at Albany was held on Friday, November 5, 2010 in University Hall, Room 306. Members present were: Daniel Tomson (Vice Chair), Pierre Alric, Robert Balachandran (conference call), Patricia Caldwell, James Clancy, John Fallon (conference call), James Jackson, Abner JohnPierre, Michael Stein and Stephen Guarneri, Jr. (Student Member). Also present were: Nicholas Fahrenkopf (Graduate Student Representative), Professor Susanna Fessler (Faculty Representative), and William McCann (Alumni Representative).

Also attending were: President George Philip, Provost Susan Phillips, Vice Presidents Christine Bouchard and Fardin Sanai; Interim Vice Presidents Stephen Beditz and James Dias; Vice Provost Wayne Locust; Vincent Delio (Chief of Staff); and Janet Thayer (Associate Counsel).

Mr. Tomson called the meeting to order at 3:05pm. He welcomed Mr. Clancy as a newly appointed member of the Council. Upon motion duly made and seconded (Alric/Caldwell), the minutes of the meeting of September 24, 2010 were unanimously approved as submitted.

Moving to the President's Report, Mr. Philip noted the reactions on campus to the recent budgetary actions involving five academic programs. He said that he had received numerous calls, letters, e-mails, personal expressions, and other types of communications in response to the actions he had undertaken. While many were, understandably, oppositional, he noted that some were very critical and personally condemning. He said that he had held several meetings with various constituent groups to hear their views and to respond to their questions and comments. These included meetings with faculty governance groups, departmental faculty, union representatives, student government leaders, alumni and other individuals.

He observed that many misconceptions and incorrect information had been promulgated and that some in the media had simply printed information without contacting any campus officers to clarify the facts before going to press.

In response to a question by Mr. Stein, the president said that the University, over the past two years, had absorbed a budget reduction in excess of 30% and additional cuts in state support were still coming, some even more severe than had been experienced. In response to the charge that the academic area and especially the Humanities were being disproportionately cut, Mr. Philip reported that the largest number of positions affected by these actions were in non-academic areas. He added that the professional schools/colleges had larger reductions than the College of Arts and Sciences.

Moving to other items, President Philip reported that the new RNA Institute had attracted grants totaling \$5.4 million and that this initiative had great promise in the years ahead. He noted campus efforts to partner with local businesses with the goal of increasing support for the University. He highlighted the University at Albany Foundation's Citizen Laureate 2010 recognition dinner as the most successful in the 31 years of the event with \$170,000 in ticket sales and sponsor support. And, he congratulated Council member Alric on being elected President of the SUNY-wide Association of Council Members and Trustees (ACT) last month. Mr. Stein commended the President for handling the difficult reactions to the budgetary actions. Ms. Caldwell commented on the importance of SUNY's role in garnering state support and Dr. Jackson spoke of the need to engage state legislators in the process.

The President invited Provost Phillips to comment on UAlbany's Strategic Plan and the SUNY Initiative. Dr. Phillips described the establishment and design of the campus Plan, the active involvement of faculty and staff representatives, and the process that led to the drafting of the document (copies distributed). She noted the specific goals that were included and commented on the implementation process.

A discussion ensued with Mr. Tomson observing the importance of public higher education in New York and the need to bring together various constituent groups to collaborate in advocating for public support now that a new administration will be in place. Ms. Caldwell, Dr. Jackson, and Mr. Stein added comment.

Moving to the next agenda item, Mr. Guarneri said that the Student Association-sponsored Speaker Series Fall Program was very successful noting that he had interviewed Barbara Walters at the event. He reported that SA is looking at the possibility of bringing former President Clinton as the Spring Speaker. He said that Vice President Bouchard had met with SA representatives regarding the academic program actions. In addition, he invited Council members to contact him if they had any questions about student activities.

Mr. Tomson invited Mr. McCann to offer comments from the Alumni Association. Mr. McCann said that the recent Alumni Homecoming Weekend went well and highlighted some alumni activities. Vice President McElroy added comment on the forthcoming UAlbany basketball game.

There being no Old Business, Mr. Tomson invited Vice President Bouchard to present the proposed revisions to Community Rights and Responsibilities. Ms. Bouchard explained the changes, which are relevant to the oversight and regulation of weapons on campus (such as for hunting) and how and where they would be stored. Upon motion duly made and seconded (Stein/Caldwell), the revisions were unanimously adopted.

Moving to the next agenda item, Associate Counsel Janet Thayer presented revisions to the University's Traffic Regulations (previously distributed). She noted that the changes would allow those staff directly involved in campus traffic management some flexibility in the placement of signs on roadways and intersections, directing traffic patterns, and similar vehicle

regulations. Upon motion duly made and seconded (Alric/Caldwell) the revisions were unanimously approved.

Moving to the next agenda item, Vice Provost Locust noted that there had been some questions at the September 24 meeting about student retention and graduation rates. Pointing to a current data handout, he commented on both the graduation and retention rates noting improvement in the several categories of students over past years. He responded to questions and comment by Ms. Caldwell and Mr. Stein.

As the meeting moved toward conclusion, Mr. Alric commented on the ACT meeting held in Albany a few weeks prior and observed that, as President, he hoped to bring representatives from each of the SUNY units together to address common issues. Mr. Stein, who attended the meeting, added brief comment.

Professor Fessler shared her observations on faculty reaction to the budget cuts in the Humanities, especially in the area of languages.

Dr. Chesin reported that the University Council webpages were being upgraded to bring them in conformity with the University-wide enhancements. He pointed to how the University Council's at Buffalo, Binghamton and Stony Brook (copies distributed) listed their membership noting that they included more information on each member and asked whether we would want to include additional member information on our pages. A discussion ensued with Mr. Balachandran, Mr. JohnPierre, Ms. Caldwell, Mr. Stein, Mr. Guarneri, and Mr. Alric commenting.

Mr. Tomson asked the Secretary to prepare a draft form that might be considered by the Council to provide additional information about each member on the webpages. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned (Alric/Guarneri) at 4:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sorrell E. Chesin, Ph.D.
Secretary to the University Council