

College Council Meeting March 18, 2021

Voting Members Present: Mr. Basch, Mr. Law, Mr. Catalinotto, Ms. Noble, Ms. Hershenson (Student Association president), Dr. Scott-Childress (non-voting faculty representative), and Ms. Bishop (non-voting alumni representative).

Campus Administration Present: President Christian; Interim Provost Lyman; Vice Presidents Blaisdell, Gant, Halstead, Marks, and Wright; Tanhena Pacheco Dunn, Associate Vice President, Human Resources, Diversity and Inclusion. Guests: Middle States Reaccreditation Self-Study Report Co-Chairs – Laurel M. Garek Duhaney, Associate Provost for Strategic Planning & Assessment; Ken Goldstein, Chair and Professor of Theatre Arts.

Interim Chairman's Report:

Mr. Basch called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Mr. Basch welcomed Council members and introduced Ms. Noble, who was just appointed by Governor Cuomo. Ms. Noble is an environmental educator and sustainability coordinator.

The Council moved to approve the minutes from the September 24, 2020, and October 21, 2020, meetings. Mr. Law moved on the motion and Mr. Cataliontto seconded. Both sets of minutes were approved unanimously.

Mr. Basch introduced Mr. Gant, who joined the College in January as vice president of enrollment management. Mr. Gant shared his background and had served more recently as director of undergraduate admissions at Montclair State University in New Jersey.

President's Report:

President Christian welcomed Ms. Noble and Mr. Gant to the Council.

The president said that the College's weekly testing is contributing to prompt detection of positive COVID-19 cases and helping to control spread of the virus. The positivity rate remains well below 1%, noting that today it was 0.85% with nearly 20,000 on campus tests since January 1. The president added that there was a slight uptick in recent weeks but we've seen the number of positive cases drop. We expect those numbers to fluctuate a bit for the rest of the semester.

President Christian said that the increasing availability of vaccines and their effectiveness, increased federal support for more aggressive vaccine delivery and administration, and the rapid development and approval of new vaccines are significant signs of hope, including for the College's ability to have a more normal fall 2021 semester. But we remain vigilant in enforcing and encouraging compliance with all health and safety regulations, especially with the increasing spread of new variants.

The president thanked members who are able to meet with the Middle States Reaccreditation review team when they visit (virtually) campus next week. He added that the team is interested in hearing Council perspectives.

President Christian noted that our planning for spring commencement ceremonies is underway. We have heard from students about what they most want in a ceremony – an in-person experience. At the same time, the ongoing pandemic means the College must follow county health department, SUNY, and state guidance. Accordingly, the College is planning for multiple scenarios. A SUNY task force is developing guidelines and constraints for campuses, focused especially on health and safety considerations.

The president said that Vice President Halstead will share some information about the College's current budget. Following the Governor's release of his executive budget last month, the New York State Senate and Assembly have released their one-house budget resolutions. The Executive Branch, the Senate, and the Assembly must now come together to negotiate a final state budget. The president shared that there are some positive signs in all of the bills.

President Christian noted that *Soaring Higher: The Campaign for SUNY New Paltz* continues to be highly successful and runs through the rest of this fiscal year. One of the campaign priorities is to increase scholarship support for students. The president said that many of our students and their families struggle with financing their education, as direct taxpayer support has remained stagnant, tuition and fees have increased, and the federal Perkins Loan program ended. And these issues are amplified now by the impact of COVID-19 on the finances of many of our students and their families. The president said that this is the context in which our progress on growing scholarship support is noteworthy. In 2014-15, when the Foundation launched its "Major Gifts Initiative," which was the start of our first-ever comprehensive fund-raising campaign, about \$276,000 was awarded to just under 100 students. During the current year, we are on track to award more than \$1 million to more than 400 students.

The president said that in his February report to the faculty, he shared some of the latest statistics on the College's first-year retention and six-year graduation rates. He wanted to point out these metrics because the College's rates are very high compared with national averages. Achievement gaps by race and ethnicity, low income status, and first generation status are small or non-existent compared with national averages. President Christian said that these are key educational outcomes that reflect the high caliber of our programs, the dedication and hard work of our students, and the support, care, and attention that teaching faculty, professional staff, and other employees pay to our students and their academic and personal success. He added that we should take pride in these achievements, at the same time recognize that continuing to increase retention and graduation and reduce any achievement gaps should be part of our goals for being an inclusive institution.

Finally, the president shared recent rankings that may be of interest to the Council. The first is that the College continues to rank in the top 3% of 1,449 U.S. colleges and universities in CollegeNET's Social Mobility Index, which measures "the extent to which a college or university educates more economically disadvantaged students (with family incomes below the national median) at lower tuition and graduates them into good paying jobs."

In a different ranking, the College was again recognized for the strength and impact of our programming and support for veteran and military students. For the second year in a row, we were included in the top ten Military Friendly Schools among small public colleges and universities in the nation.

The president said that the College also scored very high in a new ranking by Intelligent.com of the most affordable colleges in the country, based on curriculum quality, graduation rate, reputation, and post-graduate employment. The College was ranked in the top 50 institutions in the country on those metrics. Mr. Basch applauded the College's most recent rankings and fundraising support for students.

Mr. Basch asked about the number of positive COVID-19 cases. President Christian noted the campus's positivity rate of less than 1%. Vice President Blaisdell said that the College is continuing with enforcement, as needed.

Ms. Noble asked about course deliveries. Interim Provost Lyman said about 25% of courses are in-person or hybrid. Mr. Basch asked if this is the same course delivery breakdown as the fall semester. The interim provost confirmed this.

Middle States Reaccreditation Update:

Professor Goldstein thanked Council members for their participation in next week's virtual visit. Associate Provost Garrick Duhaney thanked Mr. Goldstein, as co-chair, for all of their collective work together. The associate provost said that the College has worked on the reaccreditation process for 10 years, since the last reaccreditation in 2011. When you look at the current self-study report, she added that it will show that the College has accomplished many important and significant things this past decade. She encouraged the Council to read the report, especially Standard VII.

Associate Provost Garrick Duhaney provided an overview of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and walked the Council through the seven standards. She noted that Middle States is a voluntary, non-profit membership organization that performs peer evaluation and accreditation of public and private institutions. As part of the process, institutions conduct self-study and undergo peer evaluation. She added that Middle States is an accrediting body that allows institutions to access federal funds. Their approval is a stamp of excellence and quality. When reaccredited, it means the College has achieved their standards.

The associate provost said that the Middle States review team is interested in knowing the Council's opinions about the College's governance. The focus of the questions will come from Standard VII. She encouraged members to participate in this process. Vice President Marks mentioned that five members of the Foundation Board will be joining Council members during their session with the review team. The vice president will advise members to defer governance questions to Council members.

Ms. Noble asked about the decision-making process for reaccreditation. Associate Provost Garrick Duhaney said that the review team will issue a preliminary report, followed by a draft report. There will be an opportunity to correct errors of fact in their work. Then, the commission will meet in the summer and make a final decision that will come to president.

President Christian said that the review team recommended that the College be reaccredited in 2011. We received five commendations (e.g., for culture of assessment, high graduation rates, Education Opportunity Program) and several suggestions.

Mr. Basch thanked Associate Provost Garrick Duhaney and Professor Goldstein for their contributions to this effort.

Vision and Direction for Enrollment Management:

See attached PowerPoint slides.

Vice President Gant said that he was pleased to come to institution with a strong reputation and brand. He said that the enrollment management team has built up a great product over a long period of time.

The vice president noted that COVID-19 has had an impact on enrollment, but the first-year class size is holding fairly well. On transfer admissions, the vice president added that there are community college enrollment and long-range transfer recruitment challenges. Community colleges have had a 10% decrease in enrollment with no signs of rebound yet.

Vice President Gant walked the Council through a brief presentation that addressed the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing competition for students and shrinking demographics. He identified opportunities amidst these challenges, including solidifying current enrollment markets and increasing yield. The vice president said that he and his team will be engaging in strategic enrollment management planning, and plans to expand the culture of data-informed decision-making.

Mr. Law asked if the economy plays a part in the forecasted enrollment decline over the next 10 years? Mr. Gant said that the economy is a factor and hopefully that will lead to a stronger pipeline of transfer students once that sector rebounds.

Mr. Basch asked about the status of international student enrollment. Mr. Gant said that international enrollment is starting to pick up but not enough to predict longer term outcomes at this time.

Budget Update:

Vice President Halstead noted that she did not have her typical budget report document to share with the Council, given continued funding uncertainties in light of the pandemic.

Vice President Halstead said that the College's tuition revenue is down, between \$5-6 million from previous year levels. Fee revenue has also decreased largely due to enrollment levels and the athletic fee, which was reduced last fall when sports were paused. The vice president said that room rents are down by about \$11 million, as the College is at half-capacity in the residence halls. And user fees are substantially lower than at this point last year.

On a more positive note, Vice President Halstead said that last summer the College received \$3.2 million in federal stimulus support that went to students and \$3.2 million that went to the College, plus another \$320,000. The infusion of funds for the College covered refunds that were issued to students last spring when the campus shifted to a virtual teaching and learning environment. The vice president noted that the campus is expecting another \$7.5 million from last December's federal stimulus bill and students will receive another \$3.2 million as well.

Vice President Halstead was just informed last week that the most recent federal stimulus bill, the American Rescue Plan, could provide campuses with another \$9 million of institutional funds and students would receive an equal amount. This is good and welcomed news.

The vice president said that SUNY and DASNY refinanced residence hall bonds, creating significant savings for this year and next. The bonds won't be repaid for another two years and it amounts to about \$11 million in savings. She added that the College is still holding the line on expenditures and only filling positions for health and safety or critical to operations.

Vice President Halstead noted that there are still unknowns relative to the College's financial picture, as state taxpayer support for this year is still not determined. She added that we are eagerly anticipating the upcoming state budget for the new fiscal year, as that will impact what state taxpayer support the College receives for this current year.

Mr. Law asked if DASNY's borrowing authority was specific to the College or part of the aggregate amount they borrow annually. Vice President Halstead said that it's an aggregate amount for everyone under their purview.

Ms. Noble asked if the current vacant positions are from attrition or furloughs. The vice president that the vacancies are all due to attrition and that most are from Classified Service roles (e.g., facilities, administrative staff, library positions). There is no discussion about furloughs at this point.

Wrap-Up:

Mr. Basch said that the next virtual meeting will be April 22. He reminded the Council about the reaccreditation review team's visit on March 24. Mr. Basch adjourned the meeting at 4:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Winters", with a stylized, flowing script.

Richard Winters
Director of Community and Government Relations

Navigating Our Enrollment Landscape:

The Vision & Direction for Enrollment Management

Presented by Jeff Gant

Vice President for Enrollment Management

Our Recruitment & Enrollment Context

■ The COVID-19 pandemic

- Impact on continuing students and first-year class size
- Community college enrollment and long-range transfer recruitment challenges
 - 10% decrease in community college enrollment; no sign of a rebound yet

■ Increasing competition

- Competitors in states with less favorable population projections have their eyes on NYS
- Out-of-state students may be harder to attract, as other states protect their own
- Students submit applications to an average of 6 schools

■ A shrinking population

- From 2022-2025 the population of HS grads in our recruitment territory will grow by 1.4%
- After 2025, the population will steadily fall for 10+ years, a 14% decline.

Opportunities Amidst Many Challenges

- **Solidifying current markets:** Increasing the applicant pool in strategic territories
 - Strengthening our most reliable territories
 - Out-of-state markets where we've been successful
 - Regions where we can make strategic gains based on high school enrollments
- **Increasing our yield:** Maintaining enrollment levels and selectivity by converting more accepted students into enrolling students.
 - Examining recruitment territories with lower yield and investing energy and resources
 - Refining a more competitive institutional merit scholarship strategy
 - Supporting our diversity, equity, and inclusion goals through yield
 - Leveraging technology and data for more sophisticated yield strategies
- **Focusing on the student on-boarding experience:** Mitigating summer “melt”
 - Moving up the registration timeline for first-time freshmen
 - A hands-on, data-driven approach to moving students through the business of enrolling

Strategic Enrollment Management Planning

■ Mid-range planning (Fall 2022 – Fall 2025)

- Maximizing enrollment while population is increasing
- Becoming yield experts
- Identifying and expanding revenue-generating programs
- Expanding transfer partnerships in anticipation of an enrollment rebound

■ Long-range planning (Fall 2025 and beyond)

- Doubling down on yield and retention – it's cheaper to retain than to recruit
- Being prepared to welcome larger transfer classes once again
- Diversifying enrollment streams and revenue-generating programs
 - Online degree offerings, certificate programs that respond to industry need, summer programming, etc.

Our Vision for Enrollment Management

- Capitalize on our strengths
 - Ex: Expand our reach through digital marketing
- Expand a culture of data-informed decision making
 - Ex: Leveraging our software systems to give us actionable insights on student behavioral data
- Pivot quickly in response to opportunities, threats and emerging research and best practice
 - Ex: Testing the potential of our scholarship program with a new scholarship campaign for 2021
- Increase our ability to provide our students with a high-touch experience and strong community of care throughout the enrollment lifecycle
 - Ex: Communication Survey to improve student satisfaction, build affinity, and improve outcomes

Questions?