

Minutes of the Executive Committee – APPROVED

April 13, 2023 (in-person, business conducted)

Officers Present: Tim Tryjankowski (Chair), Don Erb (Vice Chair), Catherine Donnelly (Secretary)

Executive Members Present: Kimberly Behun, Jaclyn Bodack, AJ Franklin, Lauren Galgovich, Chris Keough, Tim Matthews, Sherene Milizia, Melinda Saran, Eileen Sirianni, Fred Stoss,

Absent/Excused: Rita Ferri, Kathryn Griswold, Hugh Jarvis, Carl Lam, RJ Multari, Susan Ott, Lisa Zander

Members/Guests: Scott Weber, Virginia Stever

Parliamentarian: Rachel Poole

Staff: Jessica Naish

PSS Recorder: Catherine Donnelly

Meeting called to order by Tim Tryjankowski at 3:02 p.m.

Quorum reached: 10 members and 3 officers present.

**Supporting documents in Box.com folder in
Professional Staff Senate/ Meetings/ Executive Committee Meetings/**

PRESENTATION OF AGENDA – Tim Tryjankowski

- Motion to adopt agenda: **Jaclyn Bodack (Lauren Galgovich) Passed**

REVIEW OF PAST MINUTE(s) – Tim Tryjankowski

- Minutes available in Box folder.
- Motion to approve Minutes from previous meeting: **Eileen Sirianni (Sherene Milizia) Passed.**
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GUEST SPEAKER – A. Scott Weber, PhD, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs

UB is a busy place right now:

- A lot of faculty hiring is underway which will help with our Top 25 aspirations since academic reputation is impacted by the quality of the faculty. There are four thematic areas of focus: democracy and society, human health (we have all five health schools etc.) sustainability, and transformational technology.

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We must pay fringe on the faculty salaries from the state funds, which is very unusual. In the next two years we anticipate hiring a net new 60-80 new faculty, with a total hiring of 175-200 due to retirements and other faculty attrition. Several searches for deans are ongoing and we are excited for Marcelo Araujo to start at the School of Dental Medicine.

- Was recently in India to sign research partnership agreements. The Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IIT-K) and UB will focus on research in biomedicine and bioengineering. IIT Jodhpur and UB will launch center of excellence in artificial intelligence and data science. IIT Delhi and UB will focus on quantum photonics. IIT Varanasi and UB have partnered to create a research center in the areas of materials. UB believes that India is well positioned for tech growth and continuing to promote democracy in the world.
- President Tripathi was named co-chair of the AAU Task Force on Expanding U.S.-India University Partnerships since we are a leader in this arena.

Q&A: Do we feel that geopolitics is also happening in the US? Do you think that UB will be able to recruit faculty and students because we are a blue state? Yes, we have had faculty approach UB who want to work where their beliefs align. A recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* piece suggests that students may migrate to states that protect reproductive rights etc.

- Very excited by the award to establish institute to create AI technologies to help children with speech and language disorders. Once children fall behind it is hard to catch up. Want to see UB use technology to improve the human condition.
- We are doing a search to replace the position held by Julius Adams, EOC director who just retired and then passed away suddenly. Cheryl Taplin is leading that search. Scott taught a brownfields remediation program at the EOC. It is a wonderful place working with nontraditional students.
- Other searches the VP for inclusive excellence.

Q&A: What about HR? Not under Scott and he is aware of the information about childcare needs and other issues critical to that position.

Q&A: Will staff be hired to help with these new positions in India and new faculty on campus? Scott said UB is assisting the partnership by funding graduate students and providing travel money and the Indian Universities will do the same.

- SUNY just relaxed requirements for that vaccine to follow flu guidelines.
- Advisory Council on Race continues to evolve. Fall update will discuss all the work being done.
- Enrollment is critical. 10-15 years ago, 2/3 state operating dollars (not RF and UBF) came from taxes, 1/3 tuition. Now it's reversed. NYS is pretty high in its support of students but more of the cost is pushed to

the individual and their families. We are doing well here. But our international enrollment is still recovering from the pandemic. Our transfer population is greatly decreased with a smaller pipeline of available students but our master's degree programs are strong. We still want to maintain our overall enrollment at 30,000 students. Curious how our historic data on admissions will work this year with the increased number of applications after SUNY offered free ones. UB increased to 37,000 applications this year. Honors is growing. EOP is growing.

Q&A: students happy to get accepted. Any update about the 6% tuition increase as a flagship? We have lobbied hard. The governor is in favor.

- Saw the Buffalo News story about the Audubon renaming conversation. Our landscape and building committee will review this issue.

- Controversial speakers this spring. We are a public institution and must protect free speech.

Students can invite speakers. Our job is to not cancel them, but confirm that health and safety are protected. I'm proud of how we handled the Knowles event. Tonight, is Riley Gaines. We are ready for that, I'm proud of the team managing these events.

Q&A: Do you feel like interpersonal relationship between students and staff and faculty are personal enough? Do we address non-academic needs enough? I agree that students should seek mentors within both the faculty and senior staff ranks where possible. It is a joint responsibility to initiate these opportunities between the student and mentor. Scott shared that he had a strong mentor in his life and that he very much enjoys connecting with students. Says the best part of his job is meeting students and their families. Most experiences are positive.

Comment from Fred Stoss: We have opportunities that come from unexpected places with alumni engagement. Faculty instruct the alumni of the future. Seeds are planted in the classroom. We need to leverage that!

Q&A: Is there any policy for how to help suspected homeless people on the campus? There is a dignity issue. We know how to help a student in trouble, how do we support the community? Scott will find out. It is a challenge in the libraries. Call Security for help but perhaps there is more that can be done. We are a public space, funded by NYS, so there are some things we have to respect about that.

Q&A: Immigration services. With the push to J1 Visas now taking three months we are losing postdocs who have turned down their positions and gone elsewhere. It is very long time. Can we improve this? Scott will find out.

Q&A: The downtown campus is lacking many resources available on North and South. Childcare is a desert. Can a point person be involved from UB to coordinate with the medical campus groups to solve this need? Scott said that the university should not lead this charge. Needs to come from the non-profit sector.

Q&A: LGBTQI support needed. Is an LGBTQI center viable to offer support to students, along with faculty and staff? Scott replied that this is a challenging topic. I think we support our populations well. I understand that it is hard when one group of students invite difficult speakers but as administrator, we have to support a sanctioned group. We believe in free speech even when it is painful to certain groups. I know that people feel harmed and disagree with me. Relative to spaces on campus, we have many different public groups and I defer to Student Life for managing spaces related to student issues.

Q&A: Where does the line get crossed? When is too much free speech? Scott said this is not just students but faculty and staff. Things are comfortable until it's not. Read *Profiles in Courage*. Our obligation is to be as educational as possible and keep everyone safe.

CHAIR'S REPORT – Tim Tryjankowski

- The federal government has officially ended the COVID 19 pandemic. As Scott said, SUNY has now ended all vaccine mandates for enrollment at SUNY schools beginning with summer classes.
- Related to this matter, the SUNY wide faculty senate committee on faculty ethics is conducting a loose survey related to pandemic and post pandemic job stress. They have expanded their look to professional staff. I responded to the questions I was asked on behalf of our professionals. I did highlight that UB admin was very inclusive of professional staff needs, concerns during the pandemic. I noted that UB ran exceptionally well while we were mostly remote for 18 months, and I clearly stated that since back to campus many of the old issues of burn-out – poor supervisory staff practices, a need for supervisory training through HR, a need for a bottom up review not just top – down, a real look at best practices – as documented by UB School of Management researchers, that tele commute is a great and useful tool.
- An FYI, UB is hosting focus group sessions (April 18 at 1, 2:30 and 4 p.m.) on gender inclusive restrooms in the soon to be revamped Student Union. Let's continue to push for such forward thinking in ALL areas of campus life.



- UB is holding an open comment period on “preferred/chosen name pronoun policies”. Please go to the UB administrative services website where you can read and comment on the proposed policy changes up until May 5.
- Faculty Senate had a first read about changing the bylaws and rules of nomination for SUNY wide senator alternates going forward. I objected to the first reading and explained that Faculty Senate has many matters specific to their body, as does PSS to our own – but the SUNY wide senator seats are a joint effort – joint representation of faculty and professional staff and that any notion to make changes to the rules of electing those seats should first be a conversation between the PSS and FS election committees. I submitted a written response as well. In that document, I outlined my objection to their first read – and also reiterated that the faculty member who presented it, was the same faculty member who floated the idea to merge the PSS with the faculty senate. This faculty member – both times now, has then asked for her comments to be stricken from the Faculty senate minutes. I encourage diligence going forward as I am concerned about these thoughts being floated without any research or due diligence.
- I was contacted by a PSS member over difficulties in planting a memorial tree outside of a UB office/department. I understand that UB advancement can work with individuals or departments to set up a memorial, but it's hard to get started. I have reached out to learn more about the way to handle these requests in the future.
- Audubon parkway – we had some new movement on our past resolution. It seems UB will now look into what it might take to change the UB portion of that roadway to a new name. The Buffalo News has published an article about this situation too.
- If any professional staff participate in information gathering sessions on the search for a new VP of HR – I encourage you to bring up that telecommuting, bottom up reviews, and child & elder care shortfalls. These are issues that the next VP of HR candidates should be asked to address.
- Look for an offer for free tickets to see Josh Allen speak April 19!
- **Motion to receive chair’s report: Melinda Saran (Jaclyn Bodack) Passed.**

VICE-CHAIR’S REPORT – Don Erb

- *Awards Committee*: No update this month.
- *Budget Advisory Committee*: No update this month.



- *Constitution and Bylaws:* Will begin its annual review of our governing documents in May. There are a number of areas that may be addressed this cycle.
- *Election Committee:* Has worked with the Faculty Senate Elections Committee and an election was held to elect four alternate senators to the SUNY-Wide Faculty Senate. Voting ended on March 31, 2023, for the SUNY Faculty Senate Alternates. Winners are: Kimberly Behun, Thomas Covey, Kerry Traynor and Laertis Ikonomou. Then, a call for Senators for the Professional Staff Senate will be coming next week followed by the election process for the PSS Executive Committee. The PSS will be electing our first group of senators under our redistricting that mirrors the VP/Decanal Unit Structure of UB. Cathy Donnelly has forwarded a mapping document to the committee that explains how many seats are available.
- *Inclusion and Diversity:* No update this month.
- *Marketing and Communication:* The April Newsletter went out yesterday. We had a glitch with our mailer software and Jessica Naish took care of arranging an upgrade to handle our mail quantity.
- *Recreation and Wellness Committee:* Had a great reception event in the University Club last week. Kayaks will be in the water very shortly when student staffing is available. The next event being planned is CPR classes in cooperation with UB Athletics.
- *Retirees Committee:* No update this month.
- *Staff Development:* Is planning an in person ½ day program on preventing burnout in mid-July.
- *Sustainable Living Committee:* Will host a UB Paint Recycling Event and Hearts for the Homeless Clothing Donation Drive on May 24 from 7:30-12:30 in the CFT Lot. See the April Newsletter or your email for details.
- *Welcome Committee:* Planning a new employee lunch for June 13.
- **Motion to receive: Chris Keough (Lauren Galgovich). Passed.**

SECRETARY'S REPORT – Cathy Donnelly

- EC Update: Tony Waleszczak has accepted a position at the medical school. He can no longer represent Area 2. Kathryn Griswold has been moved from the alternate position to the second Area 2 seat. The alternate seat will not be filled at this point with only one EC meeting remaining this cycle.
- **Motion to receive: Lauren Galgovich (Kimberly Behun) Passed**

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- Election Updates:

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- RJ has one more year in his role with SUNY.
- Next election will follow the new areas process. Cathy Donnelly to share the mapping document with the EC.
- The most recent elections faced a few challenges including individuals proposing running on a ticket, requests to amend the voting platform, misuse of the PSS Connect Listserv, declination by the highest vote getter and a need to rerun an election for that seat. As a result, the Elections committee will be reviewing all their documents and recommending changes to improve the process and limit issues in the future. The EC has been asked for any comments.
 - Discussion brought up how the Erie County Bar has contested elections (Melinda Saran will share information).
 - Do not recommend endorsements except in person.
 - Against running a ticket, officers should be solo representatives prepared to work with any other elected professional staff.
 - Listservs should be moderated during the nomination and election cycles.
 - Parliamentarian appointment group is recommending that Rachel Poole be reappointed. Rachel accepts this recommendation.

Motion to reappoint Rachel Poole as Parliamentarian: **Chris Keough (Tim Matthews) Passed.**

Comment from Don about being thrilled she will continue to serve because she really helped with Roberts Rules and a national professional parliamentarian group to make sure our elections were valid.

NEW BUSINESS

- Next general membership meeting is April 27. It is also the last for this cycle. Will start in the football team meeting room in UB stadium. General business to start and Mark Alnutt will make a presentation and take us on a tour. Will head someplace after the meeting to celebrate the year.
- **Motion to approve the agenda for April 27: Jaclyn Bodack (Lauren Galgovich) Passed**
- Inclusive Excellence Summit on May 4.

ADJOURNMENT



PSS meeting ended at 4:35 p.m. Attendance sign in sheet(s) available through the PSS office. No recording was made.

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