

University at Buffalo Council

Meeting minutes

September 30, 2020, 8:00 a.m.

Meeting held via video conference

Members present:

Jeremy M. Jacobs, Chairman

Michael Cropp

June W. Hoeflich

Brenda McDuffie

Mike Montoro

Scott Friedman

Other participants:

Satish K. Tripathi, President

A. Scott Weber, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Rod Grabowski, Vice President for University Advancement

Michael Cain, VP for Health Sciences and Dean, Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

Opening business

Call to order

Chairman Jacobs called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

Approval of minutes

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 3, 2020 meeting. A motion was made by Dr. Cropp, seconded by Ms. McDuffie and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Friedman, Ms. McDuffie, Ms. Hoeflich, Dr. Cropp and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

Topics for discussion or action

Report of the Chairman

Chairman Jacobs asked Vice President Rod Grabowski to present some details to the Council about four proposed naming resolutions to be voted on by the Council. Drafts of each resolution can be found on the [UB Council website](#).

The first resolution calls for the Council's approval to name the Margaret Hempling McGlynn Endowed Chair in Clinical Pharmacy. A motion was made to approve the resolution by Dr. Cropp, seconded by Ms. McDuffie and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Friedman, Ms. McDuffie, Ms. Hoeflich, Dr. Cropp and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

The second resolution calls for the Council's approval to name the Amol S. Lele Professorship and Chief, Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine. A motion was made to approve the resolution by Dr. Cropp, seconded by Mr. Friedman and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Friedman, Ms. McDuffie, Ms. Hoeflich, Dr. Cropp and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

The third resolution calls for the Council's approval to name the Callum McKeefery and Nikki Albano McKeefery Pediatric Division of Genetics Fund. A motion was made to approve the resolution by Ms. Hoeflich, seconded by Mr. Friedman and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Friedman, Ms. McDuffie, Ms. Hoeflich, Dr. Cropp and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

The fourth resolution calls for the Council's approval to the Anthony J. and Nicole Soltyka Professorship. A motion was made to approve the resolution by Ms. McDuffie, seconded by Dr. Cropp and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Friedman, Ms. McDuffie, Ms. Hoeflich, Dr. Cropp and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

Upon approval of the Council, all four resolutions will not be forwarded to the State University of New York System Administration for final review and approval by the SUNY Chancellor and the SUNY Board of Trustees.

Chairman Jacobs concluded his report by offering his congratulations to Mr. Michael Montoro, who was elected to a second term as the student representative to the Council.

University Briefings: Report of the President

President Tripathi began his report by offering his congratulations to Mr. Montoro on his re-election. Dr. Tripathi stated UB has embarked on a semester that is unprecedented in its history. UB is stressing to the university to comply with measures such as wearing a mask and has decreased the on campus population density through reducing occupancy rates in residence halls and campus apartments by approximately 40% with the number of residential students now on campus is 4,600, and limiting in-class student instruction to 25% capacity which has also contributed to reducing the number of non-residential students

on campus daily to approximately 2,200. To accommodate UB's hybrid model for academics, UB made several changes to the fall academic calendar including holding classes on Labor Day and moving to fully remote instruction after the Thanksgiving recess for the remainder of the semester.

UB has also established screening, testing and tracing protocols grounded in evidence-based methods. These efforts include daily online health checks, which are required for all faculty, staff and students, on-campus testing for antibodies, as well as PCR testing for symptomatic students, and Random Pool Surveillance Testing, developed by colleagues at SUNY Upstate Medical University. President Tripathi then invited Dr. Michael Cain, Vice President for Health Sciences and Dean of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences to further discuss UB's COVID-19 testing.

Dr. Cain chaired UB's Health Guidelines Committee to develop a robust health plan. Goals of committee are to protect public health. Dr. Cain described UB's surveillance testing as a scientifically and statistically driven random surveillance of four groups who make up the university community: students who live on campus; students living off-campus who come to campus and those students who are completely remote; faculty and staff; and special groups such as student-athletes. Sample sizes of each group tested weekly are driven by UB's Public Health bio-statistical experts and based on the prevalence of COVID-19 in the WNY community. SUNY Upstate University has pioneered a pool sample approach that uses saliva pooled from samples of 12 people. UB is now employing this testing with random members of the campus population—from each group described earlier. A viral test that detects the genetics of the virus is conducted on the pool sample. If the pool is positive, each sample can be re-evaluated individually. Individuals are then placed in isolation. UB is also conducting robust contact tracing. UB determines if positive cases come to campus or not and what contact they have with others in university community. All information is shared with the Erie County Department of Health for contact tracing. UB is also using a cellphone app that uses Bluetooth technology to help determine if a positive case has come into close contact with others as well as Wi-Fi data to determine what classes students have been attending. Through a grant and support of state, the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences has begun to look at wastewater analysis on the North Campus for high level surveillance of an entire building to know whether cases are going up, down or staying the same.

Dr. Cropp asked about the supply chain and availability of testing for UB. Dr. Cain stated there are three types of testing going: point of care which is done in the WNY community and through local healthcare. Pool testing at UB is being tested in Syracuse. Upstate has had all the access it needs for testing. UB also has rapid testing. UB Student Health Services has several thousand tests for onsite testing as necessary. Regarding overall supplies, Dr. Cain stated testing supplies are more available than they were a few months ago. UB is now getting test results back in a few days.

Mr. Montoro asked if students on campus can get testing for any reason, how they secure a test. Dr. Cain stated asymptomatic students must seek existing testing sites through the Erie County Department of Health. These students are also covered through UB's random surveillance testing.

Dr. Tripathi continued his report stating UB is updating the university community and WNY about its COVID-19 cases through an online COVID-19 dashboard. UB faculty are also playing a key role in the response to COVID-19. Faculty are researching the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on under-represented minorities, conducting a clinical trial to test the effectiveness of an inhaler-based medication on non-critical COVID-19 patients, and serving on the front line of care among other examples. COVID-19 has also put a serious strain on New York State's finances and UB's finances. UB has been taking measures and preparing as a university in anticipation of potential reductions to direct state tax support including a one-time 10% fiscal reduction so far this fiscal year in all vice presidential and decanal areas. SUNY is projecting a reduction to direct state tax support could be in the 20-25% range totaling \$30 million. UB has instituted a hiring freeze and directed units to reduce all state expenditures by 10-25%.

UB has also experience revenue losses from tuition and housing. SUNY campuses have been directed to backfill NYS financial aid for TAP (Tuition Assistance Program) and EOP (Educational Opportunity Program). The first quarter of the state's fiscal year (March-June) the university reduced expenditures by 22.8 percent from the previous fiscal year. Additionally, \$19.2 million is still due to UB from New York State for the previous fiscal year (2019-2020).

On September 25, the Mid-American Conference Council of Presidents voted to approve the return to play for MAC football. For testing, the MAC requires student-athletes, coaches, trainers and other individuals who are on the field for all practices and games to undergo antigen testing. All members of the football program will be tested four times a week including being tested the day before competition. The university still needs approval from SUNY and the NYS Department of Health in order for UB Football to compete this fall.

President Tripathi formed the President's Advisory Council on Race in June and over the past several months, UB has been having robust conversations about race and racism, diversity, inclusion and social justice. A University Police Advisory Council has also been formed. UB has also been hosting town hall meetings and other events—at the university level and within decanal units—to foster meaningful conversations toward its goal of cultural and structural transformation. This includes a celebration of the newly renamed Mary Talbert Way in September.

Despite many challenges UB has faced over the past year, UB still remains ranked among the top public universities in the nation. According to rankings released by U.S. News and World Report in September, UB is ranked 34th for public universities—the seventh consecutive year UB has been among the nation's top 50 public universities. Overall, UB was ranked 88th among the best national universities both public and private.

President Tripathi also invited members of the Council to view his 9th annual State of the University address on October 16. Instead of a live—in person—speech, this year's address will be held virtually.

University Briefings: Report from the Provost

Provost Weber began his report stating UB welcomed the inaugural group of Distinguished Visiting Scholars this fall. These nationally and internationally recognized scholars will spend the academic year at UB – one remotely – engaging in research, partnering with UB faculty on collaborative projects, and providing exciting mentorship opportunities for UB students. The nine scholars' work traverses the arts, humanities, social, physical, health and applied sciences, through their planned activities, they will engage with faculty and students in all of UB's schools. The Distinguished Visiting Scholar program may be the largest and most comprehensive diversity-themed visiting faculty program in the United States. Through creating this unique program, UB has made an institutional commitment to supporting diversity-related research at UB and nationally. UB is dedicated to enhancing its social impact and addressing issues related to structural racism and inequity through our curriculum, research, and hiring and retention practices. The president and provost also share as a top priority of doubling the number of underrepresented minority faculty at UB in 5 years.

Provost Weber also reported on a number of faculty who received significant awards and grants to support their research including: Tamara Thornton, Professor of History, received a highly prestigious American Antiquarian Society-National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship; Yu-Ping Chang, Patricia H. and Richard E. Garman Endowed Professor of Nursing, received a \$2.5 million award from the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute to study ways to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of people in underserved and minority communities; Jian Feng, Professor of Physiology and Biophysics, has received a five-year, \$2.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to develop a method to diagnose Parkinson's disease (PD) before clinical symptoms are present;

and Jaekyung Lee in Counseling, School and Educational Psychology and Anya Bernstein in the School of Law, who have received Fulbright Awards to fund their international research efforts.

Provost Weber also updated the Council on UB's current enrollment numbers. Nearly 30,500 students are enrolled with UB this year including a record more than 4,200 new freshmen.

Provost Weber also reported that Fortune magazine has named UB Graduate School of Education PhD student Raven Baxter to its exclusive "40 Under 40" list of emerging leaders in the field of healthcare. Ms. Baxter is a science communicator who marries science with hip hop music to educate and inspire young, underrepresented students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math fields.

Report of the Student Representative

Mr. Montoro informed the Council of his reelection as the Student Representative to the UB Council, a position he will hold until July, 2021. Mr. Montoro discussed the global climate crisis citing California wildfires and frequent tropical storms hitting the U.S. Mr. Montoro would like to propose a resolution that mandates UB's endowment divest from any fossil fuel investments by 2025. Mr. Montoro also discussed the start of the new semester with a conversion to a hybrid model of in-class and remote learning. Mr. Montoro noted the decrease in campus population density and commended UB's faculty and staff for providing creative solutions for remote teaching and student support. Mr. Montoro noted the risk of COVID-19 spread and expressed a desire to see that UB's health and safety compliance is enforced both on and off campus and would like to see additional free testing for students available through UB.

Mr. Montoro referenced the success of discussions held at UB regarding systemic racism and inequity, and in particular, events held by the Graduate School of Education, School of Law, and Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. Mr. Montoro stated he is looking forward to reading the recommendations of the President's Advisory Council on Race.

Mr. Montoro expressed his hope that the Council will consider a resolution similar to the one passed by the SUNY Faculty Senate that approved a vote of no confidence in the SUNY Board of Trustees for what he described as unilaterally appointing a new chancellor. Mr. Montoro also expressed concern about the prospect of possible funding cuts to UB by the state.

Mr. Friedman stated UB's thoughtful efforts responding to COVID-19 are impressive and asked what UB is doing to promote wellness beyond this response. President Tripathi stated programs for mental and physical health are continuing on campus. Mr. Friedman also asked about UB's town-gown relationship. Dr. Tripathi stated UB's relationship with the community is probably the best it has been in many years and cited the work of the Jacobs School in downtown Buffalo and its impact within the city as an example.

Adjournment

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Ms. McDuffie, seconded by Ms. Hoeflich and approved unanimously by Dr. Cropp, Mr. Montoro, Chairman Jacobs, Ms. McDuffie, Mr. Friedman and Ms. Hoeflich. None voted to oppose. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Minutes approved at the December 14, 2020 meeting of the UB Council.

An [archived video](#) of this meeting can be found on the UB Council website.