

**University at Buffalo Council**

Meeting minutes

September 13, 2021, 8:00 a.m.

Meeting held via video conference

**Members present:**

Jeremy M. Jacobs, Chairman

Julie Bargnesi

Brianna Bennett

Michael Cropp

Jon Dandes

Scott Freidman

Brenda McDuffie

**Other participants:**

Satish K. Tripathi, President

Laura Hubbard, Vice President for Finance and Administration

## **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 June 14, 2021 meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Dandes, seconded by Ms. McDuffie and approved unanimously by Mr. Dandes, Ms. Bennett, Ms. Bargnesi, Ms. McDuffie, Dr. Cropp and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

## **Topics for discussion or action**

### ***Report of the Chairman***

Chairman Jacobs began his report by welcoming the newly elected student-representative, Brianna Bennett, and stated he and the Council looked forward to working with her. Since there are no resolutions for the Council to consider at this meeting, Chairman Jacobs asked President Tripathi to give his university report.

### ***University Briefings: Report of the President***

President Tripathi welcomed student-representative Bennett. Tripathi began his report with an update on the start of the academic year as UB welcomed students, faculty and staff back to campus after an unprecedented 18 months dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. UB has worked diligently preparing for this return to campus to ensure a safe and healthy return for the university community. All students participating in in-person classes or activities are required to be vaccinated. President Tripathi also briefly discussed UB's Boldly Buffalo campaign which has an extended goal of reaching \$1 billion before providing a presentation to the Council on UB's Top 25 Ambition.

President Tripathi began his presentation stating it has been nearly two years since he announced UB's ambition to be situated among the top 25 public research institutions in the nation within this decade. Tripathi provided an overview of UB in terms of enrollment, faculty, research and other metrics as well as the university's overarching strategic goal to achieve its top 25 ambition. Dr. Tripathi described what characterizes a top 25 university which includes: nationally and internationally recognized faculty; top rated academic departments and programs; a diverse, welcoming, inclusive and supportive campus environment; and strong academic and student support services among other attributes.

President Tripathi stated there are several areas UB is focus on to achieve this goal. These areas include: impactful research—such as increased research productivity from external funding in the form of federal grants and increased faculty research recognition in the form of increased faculty citations. Increased faculty research and innovation also creates new companies that help revitalize the region's economy. Another focus area is providing students with a transformative educational experience, which, in turn, attracts the very best students to UB who become nationally recognized through awards and honors. For doctoral students, UB seeks to reduce time to degree; increase degree completion rates, and prepare students for meaningful careers. For undergraduate students, UB seeks to improve university metrics in first-year to second-year retention rates (from 86% currently, to 93% by 2025); four-year graduation rates (from 60% currently, to 65% in 2025); and six-year graduation rates (from 76% currently, to 80% in 2025). Also important to UB's top 25 ambition are the institution's values of diversity, inclusion, equity and social justice. To that end, UB has instituted numerous initiatives and programs to focus on these values such as: the President's Advisory Council on Race; the Center for Diversity Innovation Distinguished Scholars Program, and the Visiting Future Faculty program.

In terms of enrollment, UB has grown by approximately 2,250 students in the past five years. As part of the top 25 ambition, UB is diligently working to ensure it is admitting an ambitious, well-prepared and diverse student body that creates gender balance among students, further increases UB's underrepresented minority students enrollment, and restores previous levels of international student enrollment.

President Tripathi highlighted UB's success in achieving these goals by discussing several schools and departments that are already ranked in the top 25 such as the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences and School of Social Work, as well as the department of Industrial Systems Engineering and programs in nursing anesthesia and audiology. Chairman Jacobs asked if more professional schools will be moved—particularly health sciences schools such as Pharmacy or Nursing. President Tripathi stated that there are no short term plans to move these schools to the downtown campus.

President Tripathi then asked Vice President Laura Hubbard to present to the Council on UB's capital priorities and projects.

Vice President Hubbard's informed the Council that the goal of the capital plan is the align capital resources with UB's strategic goals and priorities, and UB's long term comprehensive campus master plan. Over the past ten years, UB's has received substantially less funding from the state for critical maintenance as well as little funding for new capital facilities other than the Jacobs School building. More capital funding is part of the state budget this year and is available to all SUNY institutions. UB plans to be competitive to receive some of this funding. UB has also leverage operating funding in areas such as \$18 million in utility savings and reinvested this funding into classrooms and educational labs. \$3 million is also allocated every year for classroom enhancements—some of this funding comes from the technology fee.

Regarding UB's comprehensive master plan, UB has achieved the goal of moving the Jacobs School to the downtown campus. The south campus focus is to become a professional studies campus, which would include moving the Graduate School of Education and School of Social Work. North campus would be reimagined as an undergraduate and research campus. Across all three campuses, UB wants to enhance its Heart of the Campus environment—including reimagining libraries and recreation spaces.

Hubbard reviewed some changes already made on each campus. This includes renovating the Cooke-Hochstetter Labs, and creating the Heart of the Campus in Capen, Talbert and Norton Halls. This also includes the One World Café project that is currently under construction and is expected to be completed in late 2021. It will provide 800 seats for dining and study space. Classroom renovations in the Natural Sciences Complex, O'Brian Hall and Clemens Hall were also highlighted. Hubbard also discussed a new School of Engineering and Applied Sciences building on the North Campus that is still in the planning phase as well as a new wellness and recreation center.

On the South campus, Hayes Hall has been renovated. Renovations have also been made to Townsend Hall, as well as Clark Hall, Farber Hall, Harriman Hall Abbott Hall and Crosby Hall. Planned renovations for Foster Hall are fully funded and once complete will allow the Graduate School of Education to occupy the building.

On the Downtown campus, in addition to building the new Jacobs School facility, UB has renovated the New York State Center of Excellence for Bioinformatics and Life Sciences to create space for an innovation hub. Renovations have also been made to 955 Main Street for the Department of Biochemistry.

Plans for student housing on the North campus includes both renovations to existing buildings and new construction with the ultimate goal of bringing students closer to the academic spine. The proposed area

for new construction would be along Lee Road. UB's solar panel installations are nearly complete with the goal of making a direct buy of all of UB's electricity from renewable energy sources.

Chairman Jacobs thanked Vice President Hubbard for her report and asked Ms. Bennett for give the student representative report.

### ***Report of the Student Representative***

Ms. Bennett began her report stating it is a privilege to be part of the Council and informed members that students are pleased to be back on campus to engage in activities and more interactions with fellow students, faculty and staff. The pandemic has highlighted conflicts and challenges for students regarding childcare services. Students, faculty and staff have advocated for expanded adult care services and childcare services on campus outside of the early childhood center and child care facilities on North and South campuses. This would open up opportunities for students in GSE to have work-like experiences.

President Tripathi stated there are childcare facilities on campus, but it is also something that needs to be continuously reviewed by the university.

Ms. Bargnesi asked if UB is actively engaging the community around the South campus to give those students a better experience and more to do. Ms. Hubbard stated one of the goals for South campus is focused on community outreach. The Graduate School of Education and School of Social Work are looking forward to implementing programing directly with the surrounding community once they are located there. UB is weighing what it should provide and what the community should provide. UB is working with surrounding communities—Town of Amherst, City of Buffalo, and others regarding this issue.

Ms. McDuffie expressed a desire to learn more details about the numerous projects discussed by Ms. Hubbard. Ms. McDuffie asked how COVID has impacted how UB is planning for the future. Ms. Hubbard said the pandemic has highlighted the need for expanded health and wellness services as well as consider what and how UB should provide services in the areas including adult and childcare services.

Chairman Jacobs suggested a meeting in person for Councilmembers would be helpful for them to get many of the answers to these questions. President Tripathi stated that hopefully Ms. Hubbard can meet in person with Councilmembers interested in discussing planned projects and further discussions on other issues can be discussed in person if the next Council meeting is held in person.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Dandes seconded by Ms. McDuffie and approved unanimously by Ms. Bennett, Dr. Cropp, Mr. Dandes, Mr. Friedman, Ms. Bargnesi, Ms. McDuffie, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose. The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 a.m.

A video recording of the entire meeting, including both presentations, can be found at this link on the UB Council [website](#).

*Minutes approved at the December 13, 2021 meeting of the UB Council*