

University at Buffalo Council

Meeting minutes

September 11, 2023, 8:00 a.m.

Buffalo Room, 10 Capen Hall

Members present:

Jeremy M. Jacobs, Chairman

Julie Bargnesi

Michael Cropp

Jonathan Dandes

Rene Jones

Alika Turton

Other participants:

Satish K. Tripathi, President

Jason Diffenderfer, Vice President for University Advancement

Craig Abbey, Vice Provost for Institutional Analysis and Planning

James L. Jarvis, Chief Campus Counsel

Attendees:

Tomas Aguirre, Dean of Students

Brice Bible, Vice President and Chief Information Officer

Allison Brashear, Vice President of Health Sciences and Dean of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences

Beth Del Genio, Chief of Staff to the President

John Della Contrada, Vice President for Communications

Don Erb, Senior Sustainability Associate, Student Union

Phyllis Floro, Director of UB's Office of Student Engagement

AJ Franklin, UB Alumnus

Venu Govindaraju, Vice President for Research and Economic Development

Brian Hamluk, Vice President for Student Life

Graham Hammill, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School

Laura Hubbard, Vice President for Finance and Administration

Jocelyn Jakubus, Director of Presidential and University Events

Allison Korta, Assistant Director of Presidential Events

Stacy Knapper, UB Foundation Chief Executive Officer

Nojin Kwak, Vice Provost for International Education

Dan LaDelfa, Assistant Director for Presidential Communications

Kemper Lewis, Dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences

Suzanne Leychock, UB Faculty Senate Chair

Elizabeth Lidano, Dean of Students

Eileen Sherman, Deputy to the Provost

David Shurtleff, Instructional Support Specialist, UBIT

Jean Wactawski-Wende, Dean of the School of Public Health and Health Professions

Annette Wysocki, Dean of the School of Nursing

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 12, 2023, meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Dandes, seconded by Dr. Cropp and approved unanimously by Mr. Jones, Ms. Turton, Ms. Bargnesi, Mr. Dandes, 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 new student-representative to the council, Ms. Alike Turton. Chairman Jacobs then asked Vice President Jason Diffenderfer to present details to the Council about two naming resolutions.

The Kathryn S. Jens Chair in Bullying Abuse Prevention is named after alumna Kathryn Jens. She earned her master's degree in psychology and PhD in clinical community psychology from UB. Dr. Jens has also established the Dr. Kathryn S. Jens Graduate Student Support Fund and continues to support UB's Alberti Center for Bullying Abuse Prevention. Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the resolution. A motion was made by Mr. Dandes, seconded by Dr. Cropp and approved unanimously by Mr. Jones, Ms. Turton, Ms. Bargnesi, Mr. Dandes, Dr. Cropp, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

The second resolution is for the naming of a new School of Engineering and Applied Sciences building after UB alumnus Russell L. Agrusa. Mr. Agrusa received his bachelor's degree from UB and has served as a member of the engineering school's Dean's Advisory Council. He founded and was the president and chief executive officer of ICONICS, a world-leading software developer. Mr. Jacobs called for a motion to approve the Russell L. Agrusa Hall resolution. A motion was made by Mr. Jones, seconded by Dr. Cropp and approved unanimously by Mr. Jones, Ms. Turton, Ms. Bargnesi, Mr. Dandes, Dr. Cropp, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose. Drafts of the resolutions will be sent to the SUNY Board of Trustees for approval. Copies of the resolutions can be found on the [UB Council website](#). Chairman Jacobs then asked President Tripathi to give his university report.

University Briefings: Report of the President

President Tripathi began his report by welcoming Ms. Turton to the UB Council. President Tripathi informed the Council that UB's enrollment is approximately 30,500 for the fall semester. More than 150 new faculty have also joined UB this academic year. UB is also progressing on numerous capital improvement projects including completing the renovation of Crosby Hall and continued construction of Foster Hall on the South Campus, as well as renovations to Lockwood Library and Capen Hall.

President Tripathi reported on a visit by SUNY Chancellor John King. The Chancellor met with UB student entrepreneurs at Blackstone Launchpad and also attended the launch of UB's new UB|AI Chat Series. As UB leverages its leadership in AI and other areas, the university's sponsored research expenditures are increasing, along with the number of active awards. These include recent awards such as a \$3.4 million to train cybersecurity experts, a \$3 million award to study immune cell therapy for tumors, a \$3 million grant to tap hydrogen as an affordable fuel, and \$2 million to help high school students explore learning STEM disciplines. In 2023, UB's annual sponsored research expenditures increased by 16 percent to \$232 million.

UB faculty have also received numerous awards and honors recently including a fellowship in the American Academy of Nursing, CAREER Awards from the National Science Foundation; the Carolyn McCue Award for Woman Cardiologist of the Year; and the Social Work Pioneer Award. UB also recently hired Tomas Aguirre as the new dean of students and Julia Czerniak as the dean of the School of Architecture and Planning.

In June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against race-based admissions programs. Dr. Tripathi emphasized that UB remains committed to fostering a diverse, equitable and welcoming academic environment. President Tripathi asked Mr. James L. Jarvis, Chief Campus Counsel to further discuss the Supreme Court ruling with the Council.

University Briefings: Report by James Jarvis

Mr. Jarvis stated on June 29, the U.S. Supreme Court held that affirmative action programs at Harvard and the University of North Carolina violated the 14th amendment and also Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act. This represents a change in Supreme Court precedent that has existed for decades. The Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education have released guidance to universities on this decision. Mr. Jarvis stated universities can still pursue diversity objectives and use legally permissible means to achieve diversity. While racial status cannot be used in making admission decisions, life experiences may still be used in the application process. The Supreme Court decision only directly addresses admissions, it does not impact scholarship and financial aid or recruitment outreach and pathway programs. UB has been working with admissions, financial aid, and other administrators on ensuring compliance with the decision. Mr. Jacobs commented that students often experience more diversity in college than other life experiences.

President Tripathi thanked Mr. Jarvis for his report. He informed the Council that he is serving as a co-chair on the AAU Task Force on Expanding U.S.-India University Partnerships. Tripathi stated that the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings have rated UB second among higher education institutions world-wide for its climate action. He also invited members of the Council to his annual State of the University address on October 13. UB is in the process of institutional reaccreditation through the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. President Tripathi invited Mr. Craig W. Abbey, Vice Provost for Institutional Analysis and Planning, to give the Council an update on UB's upcoming visit from Middle States.

University Briefings: Presentation by Craig Abbey

Mr. Abbey gave an overview of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which was established in 1919. UB was a founding member of the group. Reaccreditation is an on-going process of self-review and improvement. It involves a self-study to evaluate UB as compared to established standards. UB began preparing for this review three years ago to identify any gaps and make recommendations for improvements in UB's self-study report. UB has organized its self-study around seven standards: mission and goals; governance, leadership, and administration; ethics and integrity; design and delivery of the student learning experience; education effectiveness assessment; support of the student experience; and planning resources and institutional improvement. A self-study will be finalized in September and a comment period will be held for the university community on the self-study in September and October. UB will host the Middle States team chair in October with a full campus site visit planned in March 2024. Mr. Jacobs asked if the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action will be discussed during the Middle States review. Mr. Abbey stated that part of the Middle States reaccreditation is to ensure universities like UB are in compliance with all federal policies. Mr. Dandes asked about UB's enrollment numbers. President Tripathi stated that there are about 19,000 undergraduates and 11,000 graduate students. Five years ago, UB was at 27,500, and now UB has achieved its goal of reaching 30,000 students.

President Tripathi thanked Mr. Abbey for his presentation and thanked the Council members for their continued support and advocacy of UB.

Report of the Student Representative

Ms. Turton began her report by giving some background on her experience. She is a third-year political science student with a concentration in American politics and public affairs. Mr. Turton is also involved in residential housing. Ms. Turton's goals for the year include getting more student voices involved in decisions. She wants to empower students to actively speak out about their needs from the university and provide them with a platform for doing so. Mr. Turton wants to also promote transparency in all UB governing bodies and improve the process for addressing student concerns. Ms. Turton would like to increase accessibility on campus, improve transportation and parking, and create resources for equity, diversity, and inclusion on campus. Mr. Turton stated many students would prefer hands-free mechanisms to open doors for buildings. QR posters are planned to be created to allow students to contact the university for work orders or accessibility issues on campus. Mr. Turton would like to see a student-led disability resources committee created. Ms. Turton also recommended that GPS trackers be placed on UB buses to make it easier for students to track buses. Ms. Turton also suggested that an equity, diversity and inclusion celebration week be created and held on campus.

Adjournment

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Dandes seconded by Ms. Bargnesi and approved unanimously by Mr. Jones, Ms. Turton, Ms. Bargnesi, Mr. Dandes, Dr. Cropp, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose. The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 a.m.

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

Minutes approved at the December 18, 2023, meeting of the UB Council