

University at Buffalo Council

Meeting minutes

June 14, 2021, 8:00 a.m.

Meeting held via video conference

Members present:

Jeremy M. Jacobs, Chairman

Brenda McDuffie

René Jones

Julie Bargnesi

Mike Montoro

June Hoeflich (Emeritus)

Other participants:

Satish K. Tripathi, President

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

Rod Grabowski, Vice President for University Advancement

Opening business

Call to order

Chairman Jacobs called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

Approval of minutes

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2021 meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Montoro, seconded by Mr. Jacobs and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Jones, Ms. Bargnesi, Ms. McDuffie, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

Topics for discussion or action

Report of the Chairman

Chairman Jacobs began his report by welcoming the newest members of the Council, René Jones and Julie Bargnesi, as well as the newly elected student-representative, Brianna Bennett, who will begin her term in the fall semester. Chairman Jacobs thanked out-going student-representative Michael Montoro for his service to the council and also expressed his appreciation to Ms. June Hoeflich for her years of dedicated service and commitment to the council. Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve a resolution honoring Ms. Hoeflich as an emeritus council member. The motion was made by Ms. McDuffie, seconded by Mr. Jones, and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Jones, Ms. Bargnesi, Ms. McDuffie, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve a resolution honoring UB Professor Thomas A. Russo, MD, as the 2021 recipient of the UB Chancellor Charles P. Norton medal. The motion was made by Ms. Bargnesi, seconded by Mr. Jones, and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Jones, Ms. Bargnesi, Ms. McDuffie, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

Chairman Jacobs then asked President Tripathi to discuss a renaming resolution that has been put before the Council for approval.

President Tripathi explained that following the Council's approval of a resolution, last summer, to remove the name "Porter" from a residence hall in the Ellicott Complex, UB initiated a process for renaming the hall. A designated committee considered dozens of names submitted for nomination and President Tripathi decided on former UB alumnus Willie Evans as the clear choice for this distinction. Mr. Evans made a profound impact on UB and the region and renaming the former Porter Quadrangle the "Willie R. Evans Quadrangle" aligns with UB's values as a diverse, inclusive scholarly community. Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the resolution renaming the former Porter Quadrangle the Willie R. Evans Quadrangle. A motion was made by Ms. McDuffie, seconded by Ms. Bargnesi and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Jones, Ms. Bargnesi, Ms. McDuffie, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

Chairman Jacobs asked Vice President Rod Grabowski to present details to the Council about a proposed Walter E. Schmid Chair in Chemical Engineering naming resolution to be voted on by the Council. Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the resolution. A motion was made by Ms. Bargnesi, seconded by Ms. McDuffie and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Jones, Ms. Bargnesi, Ms. McDuffie, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose. The resolution will now 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. Drafts of all approved resolutions can be found on the [UB Council website](#).

University Briefings: Report of the President

President Tripathi began his report by welcoming the newest members of the UB Council, Ms. Bargnesi, Mr. Jones, and student-representative-elect Bennett. He also thanked Ms. Hoeflich and Mr. Montoro for their service to the Council and to UB.

Tripathi continued stating UB recently completed a highly productive spring semester. Sponsored research expenditures for fiscal year 2020 were \$178 million for UB. Throughout the spring semester, the health and safety of the campus community remained the foremost priority. To that end, UB held weekly testing of the in-person campus population. Throughout the semester, UB's positivity rate remained extremely low—well under 1 percent—as UB encourages its entire university community to get vaccinated. UB capped its spring semester, and the academic year, with a truly memorable commencement season. UB celebrated its 175th commencement ceremonies and was able to hold all 17 degree conferral and recognition ceremonies outdoors and in-person. More than 4,600 undergraduate and graduate students participated in-person at our ceremonies. And more than 800 undergraduate and graduate students attended virtually. In the 2021 academic year, UB awarded approximately 9,500 degrees—5,600 undergraduate degrees and 3,900 graduate degrees. The top 5 undergraduate degrees awarded were the same as in the 2020 academic year—namely business administration (BS), psychology (BA), interdisciplinary social sciences (BA), mechanical engineering (BS) and computer science (BS). In graduate education, the top 5 degrees awarded were in computer science and engineering (MS), medicine (MD), engineering science (MS), law (JD) and pharmacy (PharmD). During commencement, two of UB's most distinguished alumni, Dr. David Chu and Dr. William Kinkel, were recognized with SUNY Honorary Degrees and President's Medals were presented to alumnus Dr. Dexter Johnson and faculty member Dr. Peter Rogerson. Faculty member Thomas Russo was recognized with UB's highest honor—the Norton Medal—for his significant contributions to UB and the broader community.

President Tripathi expressed his pride in the UB community because, despite the challenges, UB never lost sight of its Top 25 Ambition. One of the hallmarks of a great university is that it remains focused on its mission, its values and its ambition for the future—even in times of turbulence. The past year and a half has shown UB has done just that. UB continues to advance its mission and vision of excellence as a diverse, inclusive scholarly community dedicated to bringing the benefits of its research, scholarship, creative activities and educational excellence to local and global communities to positively change the world. Likewise, UB continues to pursue its Top 25 Ambition by achieving greater societal impact, providing students with transformative, innovative, research-grounded educational experiences, promoting a university-wide culture of equity and inclusion and deepening its engagement in the community. Tripathi expressed gratitude to the UB Council for its continued support and endorsement of the university mission, as well as its Top 25 Ambition.

President Tripathi informed the Council about the appointment in May of Mr. Brian Hamluk as UB's Vice President for Student Life. He joins UB from the University of Pittsburgh, where he had been serving as the associate dean of students and the director of administration. President Tripathi invited Vice President Hamluk to speak to the Council. Vice President Hamluk stated he is excited to be at UB and looks forward to leading the Student Life office. President Tripathi also acknowledged and thanked Ms. Christina Hernandez for her service as interim vice president for student life. President Tripathi also informed the Council that Michael Cain, vice president for health sciences and dean of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, announced that he will be stepping down from these posts at the end of the summer. Tripathi thank and acknowledge Dr. Cain for his visionary leadership and exemplary service and added that UB has launched a search for the next vice president for health sciences and Jacobs School dean.

President Tripathi stated that three UB faculty were appointed to the rank of SUNY Distinguished Professor in the spring. They are Bianca Weinstock-Guttman and Tom Russo from the Jacobs School and from the School of Dental Medicine Frank Scannapieco.

Finally, President Tripathi updated the Council that a new head football coach has been hired. Maurice “Mo” Linguist joins UB from the University of Michigan, where he briefly served as the defensive backs coach and co-defensive coordinator. He was the Bulls’ defensive back coach in 2012 and 2013.

University Briefings: Report from the Provost

Provost Weber began his report informing the Council that UB expects to offer a full campus experience for students for the fall semester given the terrific progress that has been made with regard to vaccines and low community spread. UB has had a good response to restarting its campus visits and tours for prospective students and held over 700 virtual student recruitment events hosted this year. Freshman deposits are on par with pre-COVID levels. Deposits among students from underrepresented minority and women are up significantly. Among graduate and professional students, admissions are up 15% this year, in part because many students last year deferred their applications to this year. It is the full expectation that the majority of staff will return to campus by August 1 and will be fully place-based for the beginning of the fall semester. Gov. Andrew Cuomo has announced that students across all SUNY campuses will be required to get vaccinated for the fall semester. The requirement is contingent on the FDA approving a vaccine formally, not just for emergency use. The SUNY Board of Trustees will also need to sign off on the mandate.

Provost Weber stated UB students continue to win prestigious national scholarships and awards. These awards include 3 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships, the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, the David L. Boren Award, the Fulbright Award, the Critical Language Scholarship, the Science, Mathematics and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholarship, and the NIH Blueprint Diversity Specialized Pre-doctoral to Postdoctoral Advancement in Neuroscience (D-SPAN) Award. UB faculty also continue to be recognized for the excellent research, education and engagement activities. This includes four UB faculty members – three in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and one in the Department of Chemistry – who have received NSF CAREER Awards, the National Science Foundation's most prestigious awards in support of early-career faculty. Margarita Dubocovich, SUNY Distinguished Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology, has been named a Fellow of the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics and has also been chosen by the society to receive the Scientific Achievement Award. Paul DesJardin, a professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, has been elected Fellow of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in recognition of his exceptional achievements and contributions to the engineering profession. Sarah Handley-Cousins, Clinical Assistant Professor of History, has received an American Council of Learned Societies Fellowship – a highly prestigious award that contributes to UB’s AAU ranking.

Provost Weber also updated the Council on the hiring of two new deans. Gary M. Pollack, who currently serves as dean and professor of the College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Toledo, has been appointed dean of UB’s School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. Provost Weber also appointed Keith A. Alford as dean of UB’s School of Social Work.

After the Provost’s report, Chairman Jacobs offered Ms. Hoeflich the opportunity to speak to the Council. Ms. Hoeflich express her gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the Council and her appreciation for Chairman Jacobs’ leadership as well as President Tripathi’s leadership.

Report of the Student Representative

Mr. Montoro began his report by welcoming the newest members to the Council. Mr. Montoro discussed the upcoming 2021 fall semester and expressed optimism that the next semester will resemble a more

normal campus environment similar to the start of the 2019 fall semester. Mr. Montoro also spoke about the 2021 commencement season at UB and how meaningful it was to hold in-person event for the many graduates who have had to overcome much adversity for the past year and half. Mr. Montoro continued his report referencing UB’s plan to allocate more funding to help cover expenses such as student activity fees for fulltime PhD students working as graduate assistants. Mr. Montoro thanked Provost Weber for his commitment to graduate students and graduate education. Mr. Montoro also discussed the recent plan by the UB Foundation to divest from fossil fuel investments and thanked the UBF board of trustees and its executive director for this action. Mr. Montoro also discussed how his perspective on higher education funding—particularly for public institutions—has changed during his experience adding that he recognizes the lack of governmental support for education. Mr. Montoro says he aspires for the state to provide 75% of public higher education institutional funding. Mr. Montoro thanked Chairman Jacobs, President Tripathi and Provost Weber for their support and advice.

Adjournment

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Jones, seconded by Mr. Montoro, and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Jones, Ms. Bargnesi, Ms. McDuffie, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose. The meeting was adjourned at 8:44 a.m.

Minutes approved at the September 13, 2021 meeting of the UB Council.

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