

University at Buffalo Council

Meeting minutes

August 3, 2020, 11:30 a.m.

Meeting held via video conference

Members present:

Jeremy M. Jacobs, Chairman

Michael Cropp

Jon Dandes

Scott Friedman

June W. Hoeflich

Brenda McDuffie

Mike Montoro

Other participants:

Satish K. Tripathi, President

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

Opening business

Call to order

Chairman Jacobs called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

Approval of minutes

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2020 meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Dandes, seconded by Mr. Friedman and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Friedman, Mr. Dandes, Ms. Hoeflich, Dr. Cropp, Ms. McDuffie, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

Topics for discussion or action

Report of the Chairman

Chairman Jacobs asked President Tripathi to provide some background information to the Council about a proposed naming resolution to be voted on by the Council. A draft of the resolution can be found on the [UB Council website](#).

Before discussing background information related to the proposed resolution, President Tripathi informed the Council of a pending name change that does not require Council approval. Over the past several months, UB has been having robust conversations across campus about historical namings on campus and that clearly—whether academic buildings, residential halls, interior spaces or thoroughfares—these namings carry important symbolic value. UB wants to ensure that these symbols align with the university’s mission—namely, that UB is a diverse, inclusive scholarly community. As UB considers some of these symbols, the university has no intention of erasing its history. However, UB can purposefully determine whom the university wants to honor in this way. Within the Ellicott Residential Complex, there is a space called the “Millard Fillmore Academic Center.” This space includes classrooms, study lounges and the Katherine Cornell Theater. President Tripathi informed the Council that the university is actively exploring the renaming of this space to the “Academic Center.” In the fall, UB will initiate a process to provide recommendations for a permanent naming of the academic center.

In reference to the proposed resolution under consideration by the Council, Putnam Way, which loops around the academic spine of UB’s North Campus, is named after James O. Putnam. Putnam was a New York State senator who helped found UB. He was later named chancellor and served on the university council for more than three decades. What is less widely known about Putnam is that he held and expressed openly racist views. Dr. Tripathi stated that reflecting on his earlier comments to the Council, this proposed resolution provides an opportunity to recognize the historical figures of UB and Buffalo who embody the university’s mission. That is why UB would like to rename Putnam Way “Mary Talbert Way.” Mary Talbert, who lived in Buffalo from 1894 to her death in 1923, was one of the nation’s most prominent activists for civil rights and women’s rights. Talbert was instrumental in establishing the precursor to the NAACP. Of note, an academic building on UB’s North Campus is named “Talbert Hall,” also in Mary Talbert’s honor. Regarding Porter Quadrangle, which is also addressed in the resolution, this is a residence hall in the Ellicott Complex named after Peter Buell Porter, a politician who lived in Buffalo for most of his life. Porter served in many capacities—including as a member of the U.S. Congress and a regent of the University of the State of New York. Porter and his wife owned five enslaved African Americans, as they attested in an 1820 affidavit. As UB is deeply committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community, the university would like to remove Porter’s name from the residence hall.

A motion was made to approve the resolution by Ms. Hoeflich, seconded by Ms. McDuffie and approved unanimously by Mr. Dandes, Mr. Montoro, Dr. Cropp, Ms. McDuffie, Mr. Friedman, Ms. Hoeflich and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

University Briefings: Report of the President

President Tripathi began his report stating the university has been busy preparing for the upcoming semester. At the June Council meeting, Dr. Tripathi shared the comprehensive planning structure that has informed these preparations. Based on the recommendations of these university-wide committees, UB announced in July that the university will return to campus this fall in a “modified in-person” capacity. This includes a mix of in-person instruction—within distancing and public health guidelines—and online courses. UB’s first principle for reopening is to ensure a culture of health and safety for all members of the UB community, including visitors. As always, all of UB’s determinations about the fall semester align with the Government’s Executive Orders—including Western New York’s progress pursuant to the state’s Phase 1-4 regional benchmarks. President Tripathi then invited Provost Weber to offer a few details to the Council about UB’s campus plan for the fall semester, including UB’s health guidelines and procedures.

University Briefings: Report of the Provost

Provost Weber began his report stating UB will be returning to campus in the fall in a modified, in-person capacity. This means residence halls will be open and UB will offer some in-person instruction, with a reduction in density in classrooms, student housing, and offices across campus to allow for physical distancing. UB will be adding time between classes to decrease traffic in hallways. Dining services will be available, with additional takeout and delivery options. Whether a course will be offered in-person, hybrid in-person/online, or fully remote has been determined by academic units and departments based on course goals and curricular/clinical requirements and in consultation with faculty. UB will move to remote instruction after Thanksgiving for the remainder of the semester—this will minimize travel during the semester to help decrease the spread of COVID-19. Some professional degree programs will maintain in-person instruction following Thanksgiving due to accreditation or licensure requirements. To maximize instructional time and to discourage travel over the long holiday weekend, this fall UB will hold classes on Labor Day. This calendar change was supported by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. These plans preserve UB’s mission as a place-based, public research institution, while providing UB the needed flexibility to continue caring for our campus community and providing the best possible educational experience for UB students. They are based on recommendations developed through a framework of university-wide committees, which included over 180 faculty, staff, students and senior administrators.

Regarding UB’s health and safety guidelines, Provost Weber reiterated UB’s top priority is to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, staff and visitors. To ensure UB is doing so, UB has released health and safety guidelines that are based on evidence-based methods recommended by the most recent scientific research and CDC guidance for higher education institutions. The guidelines were developed by a dedicated committee, led by Dr. Michael Cain, Vice President for Health Sciences and Dean of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, and composed of campus medical, infectious disease, laboratory medicine, public health, facilities and operations experts. These guidelines include asking all students, faculty and staff to undergo a precautionary seven-day quarantine prior to their return to campus for the fall semester. The university will also follow NYS guidance requiring mandatory quarantines for students, faculty, staff and visiting scholars traveling to the university from an area experiencing significant community spread of COVID-19. UB will require face coverings in indoor and outdoor public spaces. UB is implementing a process of daily screenings of all students, faculty and staff, using chatbot technology, followed by targeted viral testing of those who have COVID-19 symptoms or who have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. UB will require all individuals who test positive for COVID-19 to quarantine for 14 days. The university will designate space and provide daily needs (e.g. meals, medication) for students who require a period of quarantine or

isolation if they are exposed to COVID-19 or test positive for the virus. UB is continuing to follow CDC requirements for hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting across all of the university's facilities and hand hygiene stations will be available across the university. UB's guidelines will be updated regularly as new guidance is provided and new knowledge emerges from the scientific community. While UB recognizes that campus decisions are being made in a very fluid and ever-changing environment, the university is confident that the best possible decisions are being made and that the university is taking appropriate precautions in this evolving situation to protect the health and safety of UB's campus and wider community.

Adjournment

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Dandes, seconded by Dr. Cropp and approved unanimously by Mr. Dandes, Mr. Montoro, Dr. Cropp, Ms. McDuffie, Mr. Friedman, Ms. Hoeflich and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose. The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

Minutes approved at the September 30, 2020 meeting of the UB Council.

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