

**University at Buffalo Council**

Meeting minutes

June 2, 2020, 2:00 p.m.

Meeting held via video conference

**Members present:**

Jeremy M. Jacobs, Chairman

Jonathan Dandes

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

Rodney Grabowski, Vice President for University Advancement

## **Opening business**

### ***Call to order***

Chairman Jacobs called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

To begin the meeting, Chairman Jacobs asked President Tripathi to speak to the Council.

President Tripathi stated recent events across the country have weighed heavily on everyone. Dr. Tripathi wrote in a communication to the university community reaffirming that intolerance, hatred and institutional racism have no place in the community or nation and expressed sadness regarding the lives taken in Minneapolis, Atlanta and Louisville. Dr. Tripathi is calling on the UB community to lift its voices together and pledge that all people—regardless of race or gender—be afforded a life of liberty, equality, opportunity and dignity. Currently, the U.S. is experiencing the convergence of a pandemic, an economic downturn that rivals the Great Depression and a series of violence against black men and black women. UB is committed to listening, to understanding, to adapting and to being creative in the pursuit of realizing our values. Dr. Tripathi cited several examples of UB's efforts to help bring equality to the community including working with the African-American community to understand the social determinants of health and alleviate healthcare disparities, mentoring under-represented minority students so that they are prepared to successfully pursue doctoral and medical degrees, and incorporating a holistic review of admissions applications. Dr. Tripathi also acknowledged the work university faculty, staff and students are doing to ensure at UB is a place where all members of our community— regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation – can succeed in their academic and professional pursuits.

### ***Approval of minutes***

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 9, 2020 meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Friedman, seconded by Ms. Hoeflich and approved unanimously by Mr. Montoro, Mr. Friedman, Mr. Dandes, Ms. Hoeflich, 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 three 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 David and Jane Chu Chair in Drug Discovery and Development in the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. A motion was made to approve the resolution by Ms. Hoeflich, seconded by Mr. Friedman and approved unanimously by Mr. Dandes, Mr. Montoro, Chairman Jacobs, Ms. McDuffie, Mr. Friedman and Ms. Hoeflich. None voted to oppose.

The second resolution calls for the Council's approval for Squire Hall Room 110 in the Department of Oral Surgery be named the Dr. Stanley A. Youdelman, DDS '64, and Lois J. Youdelman Conference Room. A motion was made to approve the resolution by Mr. Dandes, seconded by Mr. Friedman and approved unanimously by Mr. Dandes, Mr. Montoro, Chairman Jacobs, Ms. McDuffie, Mr. Friedman and Ms. Hoeflich. None voted to oppose.

The third resolution calls for the Council's approval to name room 805 in Furnas Hall the Henry E. and Joan H. Stone Classroom. A motion was made to approve the resolution by Ms. Hoeflich, seconded by Ms. McDuffie and approved unanimously by Mr. Dandes, Mr. Montoro, Chairman Jacobs, Ms. McDuffie, Mr. Friedman and Ms. Hoeflich. None voted to oppose.

Chairman Jacobs then called to move for a motion to approve a Council resolution to endorse Mrs. Mary McLean Wilson as the 2020 Chancellor Charles P. Norton Medalist. A motion was made to approve the resolution by Mr. Dandes, seconded by Ms. Hoeflich and approved unanimously by Mr. Dandes, Mr. Montoro, Chairman Jacobs, Ms. McDuffie, Mr. Friedman and Ms. Hoeflich. None voted to oppose.

***Report of the Student Representative***

Mr. Montoro began his report discussing the transition to online learning at UB in response to the COVID-19 pandemic based on guidance provided by New York State. Mr. Montoro asked the Council to pause for a short moment of silence for those people connected to the UB family both directly and indirectly whom have passed away due to the disease.

Mr. Montoro continued stating that despite the challenges faced through having to move to an entirely remote learning system during the spring semester, often without some of the resources available normally for online education, the structure of education at UB has stayed intact. He thanked the dedicated efforts of faculty and teaching assistants, as well as administration support for the successful transition. Most students have responded to this effort warmly. While there have been issues with testing and sometimes overall morale, students have stayed persistent in their effort to get the world-class education afforded to them by UB. Mr. Montoro express appreciation for the university’s flexibility regarding numerous potential academic issues including extending paper deadlines, understanding technology access limitations, and implementing a “satisfactory/unsatisfactory” grading system. In planning for the fall 2020 semester, Mr. Montoro is focused on ensuring issues that occurred during the spring transition, such as access to technology, are addressed. Mr. Montoro commended President Tripathi and Provost Weber for being inclusive of groups planning for reopening the campus.

Mr. Montoro then discussed the “Bunsis Report” presented to the Council at its March meeting. Following the meeting, a series of responses from the president and provost have been given, and a resolution has been moving through the Faculty Senate regarding its contents as well. Mr. Montoro continued adding that the most recent response, given by the president as an address to the Voting Faculty in May gets significantly closer to an open conversation regarding the university finances. Mr. Montoro described it as a step in the right direction and achieved his goal to renew open and transparent dialogue regarding budgeting and financial processes. Mr. Montoro stated he supports the model of open information, followed by evaluation of that information, formation of opinions, acknowledgement of differences, negotiation, and finally compromise and asked the Chairman to reconsider the short resolution written to enact the budgetary review. Mr. Montoro also expressed concern regarding the potential for budget cuts to education in the state budget.

Mr. Montoro continued by recognizing the “10 in 10” plan recently announced by UB’s Sustainability Office which provides actionable strategies to make UB carbon neutral by the year 2030.

Mr. Montoro also commented on the killing of George Floyd which has sparked demonstrations around the U.S. and challenged the UB community to think deeper about these issues, especially as an educational institution—particularly the meaning of “systemic” in “systemic racism.”

Mr. Montoro completed his report by informing the Council that he will remain the Student Representative to the Council until at least October, 2020. A special election will be taking place at some point in September for the next Student Representative.

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

President Tripathi began his report discussing the transition of the 174th annual commencement ceremonies to a virtual format. As with part of the spring semester, commencement activities were adjusted to ensure the safety of our students, faculty, staff and families. Although UB was unable to hold

commencement in its traditional manner, the virtual celebration was a terrific success as 17 ceremonies were transitioned online. UB is hoping to hold an in-person commencement at a later date, when possible. In terms of our graduating class, UB awarded some 9,400 degrees—approximately 5,600 undergraduate and 3,800 graduate and professional degrees. As with other graduating classes in recent years, many students in the Class of 2020 gravitated to engineering and other STEM fields. Among the most popular majors were mechanical engineering and computer science. Other popular majors were business administration, psychology, and interdisciplinary social sciences.

Despite the challenges of dealing with the pandemic, the university continues to make progress in its research and academic enterprise, as well as its community engagement. The School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences was awarded four federal research grants totaling more than \$10 million. This research has the potential to enhance quality of life because it seeks answers to wide-spread health concerns such as: obesity, C-O-P-D (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease); and life-threatening infections.

Earlier this spring, five UB faculty were promoted to the rank of SUNY Distinguished Professor, which is the highest SUNY faculty rank. They are: Laura Feltri, Jo Freudenheim, Amit Goyal, Elad Levy, and Stephen Tiffany. Three UB faculty members received National Science Foundation CAREER awards. And geography professor Peter Rogerson was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Students also continue to win national awards and scholarships including six NSF Graduate Research Fellows, two Boren Scholars, a Goldwater Scholar; a Fulbright Scholar; and a Critical Language Scholar.

UB also continues to be recognized for its Climate Action and the university has been working to meet the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. Among the UN's 17 goals, UB is ranked first among U.S. universities for its efforts to take urgent action to combat climate change, and 7th globally.

President Tripathi also informed the Council that Kemper Lewis, Moog Professor of Innovation, and former chair of the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, has been appointed dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

Addressing campus planning, Dr. Tripathi noted the university quickly adjusted to distance learning in March when Governor Cuomo mandated that SUNY move to remote learning in response to COVID-19. With the semester and commencement now over, the focus has shifted to planning for the 2020-21 academic year. UB wants to ensure that it continues to provide its students with an exceptional education, and that it continues to conduct impactful research, scholarship and creative work during these challenging times. What makes today far more challenging than anything encountered in the past is the convergence of two historical events a pandemic and an economic downturn the likes of which hasn't been seen since the Great Depression. President Tripathi has asked Provost Weber to lead a comprehensive planning process. Recommendations on operationalizing the full spectrum of contingencies will be developed through this university-wide planning structure. It is important to note that determinations about the fall 2020 semester will align with the governor's executive orders—including Western New York's progress pursuant to the state's phase 1 through 4 regional benchmarks. President Tripathi then asked Provost Weber to give a presentation on UB's campus planning activities.

#### ***University Briefings: Presentation from the Provost***

Provost Weber began his report stating campus planning has been taking place for several months. COVID-19 has been the most disruptive event to affect higher education in modern history. Provost Weber noted UB transitioned to remote learning in about ten days for the second half of the spring 2020 semester and he expressed his gratitude to members of the university community for making it a success. Universities nationwide are planning for an uncertain fall 2020 semester and beyond. UB can expect significant disruption to campus operations for some time as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect

enrollment, curriculum delivery, research, overall campus operations and finances. UB must preserve its mission as a place-based public R1 research institution, care for its campus community and provide the best possible educational experience, whatever the mode of operation.

Provost Weber stated enrollment remains an uncertainty for universities including UB. There are numerous factors that may affect enrollment and operations at UB including: public health perception, economic impact on families, potential travel restrictions and the overall limitations of campus life and increased distanced learning. The guiding principles for planning include a culture of health and safety, sustaining UB's mission as an AAU leading public research university, maintaining the financial health of the university, remaining flexible as an institution and continuing campus wide engagement.

Approximately 180 university faculty, staff, students and administration members are participating in numerous planning committees at UB. There are five key subcommittees underneath a broader campus planning committee. They are: academic continuity, retention and completion; faculty and graduate professional research continuity; student experience and wellness; faculty and staff; and operations committees. UB is considering variations of three different planning scenarios for the fall 2020 semester. These scenarios are a return to 'normal' operations, a modified in-person and on-campus environment, and a fully remote learning scenario. The campus planning committee hopes to have recommendations by late June or early July. Provost Weber indicated that he anticipates a variation of the modified in-person scenario for UB. Provost Weber also discussed UB's academic priorities in a phased reopening. These include UB's curricular/accreditation/licensure requirements, clinical training, studio or performance courses as well as labs and classes involving in-person and practical experiences; research requiring in-person components and courses serving high enrollment masters graduate programs; and retention and student experience including first-year seminars, small group instructions related to large online lectures, and small discussion courses.

For further details on this presentation, please watch the [archived video](#) of this meeting.

Chairman Jacobs stated that resources within the state are going to be limited and will contribute to the unknown factors going forward. Ms. Hoeflich inquired if UB's plans need SUNY or state approval. President Tripathi confirmed that UB's plans will require SUNY and state approval. Ms. McDuffie inquired if the potential for civil unrest has been considered in the campus planning. President Tripathi stated the university is cognizant of current events and the rights of students to protest and UB's desire to provide students the appropriate environment. Mr. Friedman inquired about mental health support and UB's strategies to recognize, identify and address the issue. Provost Weber stated the university has been reaching out to current and prospective students to get a sense of how they are feeling. Student Life is also meeting regularly to talk about these issues and that UB continues to offer mental health support year-round. UB has also raised funds for a student emergency fund to help support students. UB also received approximately \$12 million from the federal CARES ACT and expects to distribute these funds to students to help meet unexpected needs that have arisen as a result of the pandemic.

### **Adjournment**

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Friedman, seconded by Mr. Dandes and approved unanimously by Mr. Dandes, Mr. Montoro, Chairman Jacobs, Ms. McDuffie, Mr. Friedman and Ms. Hoeflich. None voted to oppose. The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

*Minutes approved at the August 3, 2020 meeting of the UB Council.*