

University at Buffalo Council

Meeting minutes

December 15, 2025, 8:00 a.m.

Buffalo Room, 10 Capen Hall

Members present:

Jeremy M. Jacobs, Jr. Chairman

Julie Bargnesi

Michael Cropp

Shaurya Jain

Brenda McDuffie

Other participants:

Satish K. Tripathi, President

Kathleen Heckman, Vice President for University Advancement

Scott Weber, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Venu Govindaraju, Senior Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Development

Attendees:

Keith Alford, Dean of the School of Social Work

Mark Alnutt, Vice President and Director of Athletics

Marcelo Araujo, Dean of the School of Dental Medicine

Ann Bisantz, Dean of Undergraduate Education

Chris Connor, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management

John Della Contrada, Vice President for University Communications

Beth Del Genio, Vice President for Government and Community Relations and Chief of Staff to the President

Seth Gilbertson, Chief Campus Council

Katie Gorman, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility and Strategic Initiatives, Delaware North

Jeffrey Grabill, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Emma Halstead, Assistant Director of University Events

Brian Hamluk, Vice President for Student Life

Laura Hubbard, Vice President for Finance and Administration

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

Jocelyn Jakubus, Director of Presidential and University Events

Dan LaDelfa, Assistant Director for Presidential Communications

Suzanne Rosenblith, Dean of the Graduate School of Education

Eileen Sherman, Chief of Staff to the Provost

David Shurtleff, Instructional Support Specialist, UBIT

Kristin Stapleton, Chair of the Faculty Senate

Evviva Weinraub Lejoie, Vice Provost for University Libraries

Seval Yildirim, Vice Provost for Inclusive Excellence

Opening business

Call to order

Chairman Jacobs called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

Approval of minutes

Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 15, 2025, meeting. A motion was made by Ms. McDuffie, seconded by Dr. Cropp and approved unanimously by Dr. Cropp, Ms. McDuffie, Ms. Bargnesi, Mr. Jain, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose or abstain.

Topics for discussion or action

Report of the Chairman

Chairman Jacobs asked Vice President Kathleen Heckman to present details to the Council about two naming resolutions under consideration.

The first resolution is for the naming of the Mary E. Fracassi Alzheimer's Research Fund in the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. 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 Dr. Cropp, Ms. McDuffie, Ms. Bargnesi, Mr. Jain, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose or abstain.

A second resolution is for the naming of the Medicinal Chemistry Fund and the Kurt E. Merkel, PhD Professorship in Medicinal Chemistry in the Department of Chemistry in the College of Arts and Sciences. Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the resolution. A motion was made by Ms. McDuffie, seconded by Dr. Cropp and approved unanimously by Dr. Cropp, Ms. McDuffie, Ms. Bargnesi, Mr. Jain, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose or abstain.

With the approval of the Council, both resolutions will 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. A copy of the resolutions can be found on the [UB Council website](#).

Chairman Jacobs asked President Tripathi to give his university report.

University Briefings: Report of the President

President Tripathi's report revisited some themes from his State of the University address in October, specifically, highlighting the progress UB has made over the past 15 years. Tripathi highlighted UB's growth in research, receiving major awards such as CTSA awards from the NIH, BioXFEL awards from the NSF, and major awards for AI research. UB faculty members have also received research grants in the humanities, including four grants from the Mellon Foundation since 2020. UB has seen a substantial increase in the number of national and international honors received by faculty, including the SUNY Distinguished ranks. UB students are also receiving more national and international accolades including Truman Scholars, Fulbright Awards, and NSF graduate research fellows.

UB has developed a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, including the creations of the Innovation Hub and Incubator@CBLs, as well as UB's Business and Entrepreneur Partnerships which has nurtured hundreds of start-up companies. UB has also demonstrated a commitment to modernizing its campuses. Most recently, the Graduate School of Education moved to a renovated Foster Hall on the South Campus. UB plans to construct four new buildings on the North Campus in the coming years. All told, investments to UB's campus master plan exceed \$2.5 billion.

UB has also significantly grown a culture of philanthropy. The Boldly Buffalo campaign raised more than \$1.1 billion creating 336 new student scholarships and fellowships as well as 52 new endowed professorships. The campaign also contributed to the renovation or construction of more than 100 campus buildings and spaces.

President Tripathi then asked Provost Weber to give his report.

University Briefings: Report of the Provost

Provost Weber informed the Council about an announcement from Governor Hochul for the state to provide UB with \$50 million to establish a biofabrication and imaging research hub. The funding will support facilities and equipment that leverages UB's strengths in quantum science, biomaterial fabrication, imaging, and AI to create a new discovery ecosystem that drives advances from molecules to medicine.

Provost Weber highlighted some recent major research grants awarded to UB faculty. This includes Chelsie Armbruster, associate professor of microbiology and immunology, who received a \$3.8 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to investigate how polymicrobial populations cause catheter-associated urinary tract infections; Jennifer Read, SUNY Distinguished Professor and chair of psychology, who received a \$3 million NIH grant to clinically test a novel, friend-based bystander intervention to reduce alcohol-involved sexual assault risk for college women; and biochemistry professor Michael Buck who received a \$2.2 million NIH grant to better understand how protein transcription factors bind to and activate seemingly inaccessible genetic material, which has the potential to open up unexplored avenues for therapy.

Provost Weber also noted two UB faculty members who were recently elected to the National Academies. Allison Brashear, Vice President for Health Sciences and Dean of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, has been elected to the National Academy of Medicine, joining the ranks of the most distinguished leaders in health and medicine. Maria Lehman, a 2025 National Academy of Engineering inductee, recently joined the UB faculty as the Samuel P. Capen Professor of Engineering Management in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering.

The 2025 Open Doors Report on International Exchange ranked UB at No. 20 among US institutions hosting international students, which is up four spots from last year. In the fall 2024, UB reported a total of 9,033 international students from 106 countries.

President Tripathi then asked Vice President Govindaraju to update the Council on UB's progress in Artificial Intelligence research.

University Briefings: Presentation by Venu Govindaraju

Vice President Govindaraju stated UB has been making an investment in AI for more than five decades. UB currently has more than 200 faculty members engaged in AI research and more than 500 projects underway. With Empire AI, UB is the top academic institution in terms of AI computing power. Dr. Govindaraju highlighted several major AI research awards UB recently received in areas including education, literacy, and drug discovery. UB also recently launched its Quantum Institute. Dr. Govindaraju stated that the areas of quantum and AI are beginning to form a convergence as both evolve in research.

UB is continuing its momentum in AI by employing more data driven decisions across all areas of university academic aspects and operations. Govindaraju also discussed the "Genesis Mission," which is the U.S. Department of Energy's \$320 million investment to rapidly advance AI for scientific capabilities. There are many research projects already underway at UB using the 'Alpha' phase of Empire AI. This computing power is contributing to research from speech therapy and climate solutions to drug discovery

and disease diagnosis. Empire AI's "Beta" phase is expected to begin in 2026 and "Gamma" phase after that. Govindaraju says by the time "Gamma" is implemented, it will create "a-thousand-fold increase" in the speed of calculations for future research. UB has 120 more projects ready to be implemented through Empire AI.

UB has also created an Office of AI Innovation and Integration. Its mission is to connect, convene and support efforts across UB's academic, operational and research domains to advance the university as a leader in AI innovation and integration.

Report of the Student Representative

Mr. Jain began his report by sharing with the Council that with the increased size of UB's first-year class, the campus has felt livelier and that many events, such as fall fest and athletics, have had a higher attendance of students. Mr. Jain then updated the Council on parking concerns. He stated that Professor Reza Rashidi and his students have developed a parking management system for UB's parking lots. Mr. Jain then discussed UB's Career Design Center which is now employing a stepping blocks platform. This platform can show students outcomes in terms of employment rates and opportunities related to their major. Students can also apply for jobs through the platform. The Career Design Center is planning to use institutional data to enhance the 'Virtual Vic' chatbot so students can learn about and navigate resources available to them. Mr. Jain would also like to see the Student Association to have a role in helping students engage with the Career Design Center and promote pitch competitions with the UB CoLab to first-year students. Mr. Jain concluded his report discussing the work UB's Offices of Enrollment Management and Institutional Analysis are doing to track the employment success of international students.

Adjournment

Chairman Jacobs made a motion to adjourn the meeting to executive session. The motion was seconded by Ms. McDuffie and approved unanimously by Dr. Cropp, Ms. McDuffie, Ms. Bargnesi, Mr. Jain, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose or abstain. The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 a.m.

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

Minutes approved at the March 9, 2026, meeting of the UB Council