



April 2024 COLLEGE COUNCIL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Present: Council Members:

RoAnn Destito-Chair, Darlene Burns, William Thickstun, Chris Giruzzi, Keith Levatino, Mitchell Ford, Nikki Hinman, and Bailey Wadsworth

Administration:

Wole Soboyejo, Wayne Westervelt, Andrew Russell, Dan Sargent, Andrea LaGatta, Jennifer Adams, Michele Kilburn, Mary Ellen Burdick, and Mark Montgomery

Shared Governance: Ron Sarner

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Destito convened the Public Meeting at 4:04 p.m. and welcomed all participants to the College Council meeting and asked everyone to join her in a moment of silence in memory of a regional law enforcement officer recently killed in the line of duty.

Chair Destito spoke to the College Council members about the dates for their terms of service, and asked Dan Sargent to make a search through the files and documents left by the previous Executive Assistant for reappointment letters for current members of the College Council, so that their term of service information can be updated. The Council members also discussed possible candidates to be considered for filling a membership slot that is currently open.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by William Thickstun and seconded by Darlene Burns to approve the minutes of the February 14, 2023 meeting as presented. Approval was unanimous.

Chair Destito acknowledged the good work that went into the University's new strategic plan that has now been published and submitted to the SUNY Chancellor.

Chair Destito also encouraged the Council members to take part in the May 4th Commencement ceremony and to email Dan Sargent if they want to participate, so the necessary arrangements can be made.

President's Report:

Dr. Soboyejo provided a recap of his plan for his first 100 days as president and the efforts that built on the work from the previous year for developing a strategic plan. He stated that the



University has an excellent framework in place, and that the number of strategic “pillars” forming the main features of that framework had been reduced to just four: support student success; expand the University’s brand; continuous improvement for campus infrastructure; and investing in academic success. Dr. Soboyejo stated that the new strategic plan aims to raise the Mohawk Valley community as well as the University. He noted that the strategic plan was based on a set of values that the University had identified for itself, and he thanked everyone involved for the great team effort that succeeded in distilling all the elements of the plan into a clear document. The next phase of the strategic planning process is to organize how it will be implemented. Dr. Soboyejo likened this phase to a playbook outlining operational details and identifying milestones and targeted outcomes to be tracked and measured. The University is in the process of developing an implementation task force that will look at such metrics and also budgets to will help lead to successful implementation. This task force will be convened by May.

Dr. Soboyejo provided an update on research funding, referring to \$2.7 million for research in the form of seed grants, or which 10 or 11 would be announced in a few weeks. There may be opportunities to fund six or seven new programs in the fall, and Dr. Soboyejo stated that he plans to continue to build in this direction to expand programming. He informed the group that the University was currently waiting on decisions in regard to some NYS ESD grants that could support development of a semiconductor process lab in a ground floor space in the Danfoss building. This project could provide SUNY Poly students with four clean rooms and would be a key resource for workforce development in the Mohawk Valley, as well as helping facilitate world class research on our campus.

Dr. Soboyejo updated the Council on Department of Defense appropriations for research projects that the University is currently pursuing, working with a business development group, Command Strategies, and bringing together groups of universities and companies with the potential to create innovative strategies for these projects. The appropriations are in the amount of roughly \$10 million each, and SUNY Poly is either the lead applicant, or a supporting member of the group for each one. Dr. Soboyejo and a team from SUNY Poly are travelling to Washington, DC tomorrow to solicit support for these appropriations funding applications, with the aim of increasing the University’s research funding “from small to medium.” Dr. Soboyejo thanked the Foundation Board for exercising due diligence and for their willingness to listen and support the University’s plans in this regard by helping hire Command Strategies for these efforts.

Dr. Soboyejo provided an update on capital projects around campus, mentioning that the construction of the geothermal wells that are part of the Campus Center renovations is under way. He also referred to the new classroom spaces that are part of the Campus Center renovations. In regard to regular infrastructure wear and tear, the summer will see repairs to some of the roads on campus, to include new sidewalks, road surfaces, and lighting; and work on the electrical and wireless infrastructure. Interior design and leaking in the Cayan Library will also be addressed. Dr. Soboyejo also referred to the \$44 million in funding from the State that would support renovations and construction of labs in Donovan Hall.



Dr. Soboyejo spoke to the Council members about community events that have contributed to the University having a vibrant campus. These included the Greater Utica Chamber of Commerce's "Business After Hours" event on campus that brought about 200 people to campus, including a lot of people with connections to the University (e.g., alumni), which led to a discussion regarding the development of a Business Center on campus, an idea that will be explored further.

There was also an eclipse watch party on campus that included excellent presentations by Professors Boylan and Li that were accessible to all.

Dr. Soboyejo updated the Council on the spring career fair, which was a great success, bringing to campus representatives from 82 regional employers. The career fair also included SUNY Poly alumni and had over 370 attendees. Dr. Soboyejo visited the fair and said there was palpable positive energy at the event. Dr. Soboyejo also informed the group that Michael Badolato had been promoted to Director of Career Services and would now be covering internship and coop opportunities for SUNY Poly students.

The "Next Frontiers of Research" lecture series is being launched that will bring speakers who are experts in their fields to campus to present to our students, faculty, and staff, and who can also help generate collaborative initiatives for the University around the globe. Tomorrow's presentation will be by Dr. Ange Nzihou and will focus on preparing for the carbon economy of the future. Dr. Soboyejo assured the Council that the University will continue this series as a way of encouraging people at SUNY Poly, particularly faculty, to get involved in these kinds of collaborations.

Dr. Soboyejo provided a summary of planned summer programming. The "Summer Spotlight Series" aims to bring the community back onto the campus and make it a livelier place in the summer. 143,000 promotional postcards were mailed throughout the region to spread the word. Over 32 events and programs (e.g., athletics and STEM camps) are planned to kick off in June. Dr. Soboyejo acknowledged the work of Bill Dustin and Andrea LaGatta in putting together a strong set of summer programming in a short space of time.

Dr. Soboyejo spoke to the group about plans for a STEM Expo event in collaboration with the Utica City School District planned for May 9 and 10 for seventh graders. He described this event as part of broader engagement with the Utica School District that the University is working on, and he thanked Michele Kilburn for facilitating the connection with Dr. Patricia Kilburn at Herkimer-Oneida BOCES, who helps the University connect with all the school district superintendents in Madison, Herkimer, and Oneida Counties. Dr. Soboyejo stated that there would be a planning team meeting in May for this event.



Dr. Soboyejo also updated the Council on plans for a “Rumble in the Valley” event that will help bring robotics competitions back to the campus and to the region. The two-day event in June will bring together 32 robotics teams on campus to compete.

In regard to recruitment efforts, Dr. Soboyejo reported to the Council members on three accepted student days that had been held on campus, which had 417 students register and 360 students attend, along with 524 parents and guests in attendance. Dr. Soboyejo attended one of the accepted student days and stated he was impressed by how the SUNY Poly team greeted the parents in attendance and worked with them as well as with the students. Marketing and promotion efforts in support of recruitment included digital advertisements and billboard advertisements. Digital advertisements are being run on various platforms (e.g., Tik Tok). Dr. Soboyejo recognized the good work of Director of University Marketing and Communications, Sara Furlong, for moving the digital advertising forward on these platforms. He also spoke about the “Path to Poly” recruitment initiative that is part of an integrated marketing approach the University is pursuing. The University Marketing and Communications team is working well together to advance this strategy and promote initiatives like this.

Dr. Soboyejo reported on recent personnel searches, including: Provost, for which a decision would be made in the next week; Vice President for Student Affairs, for which a decision is expected within the next month or so; Deans for the Colleges of Engineering and Health Sciences, for the latter of which an offer has been made; and a K-12 Coordinator, for which the search is still in process. Dr. Soboyejo reported that Dr. Rafael Romero is doing a very good job in his role as Interim Dean for the College of Business, and that the search for a permanent dean for that college would be re-started, as the first search was unsuccessful. Dr. Soboyejo also displayed a slide on which were listed 27 positions that had been filled this year, and recognized the good work and strong performance of Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, Michele Kilburn, and her staff for bringing in these new members to our campus community. Chair Destito asked if all those positions had been vacant, or if they were filled due to retirements. Michele Kilburn answered her that it was a combination of those situations that led to those positions being filled. Michele also assured the Council members that Human Resources was coordinating with Finance and Administration to keep an eye on budget expenditures to make sure they do not overspend on the hiring process. Dr. Soboyejo also announced the retirements of Valerie Fusco, Director of Institutional Research, and Sue Kimak, Institutional Research Coordinator, calling them “very dedicated staff.”

Dr. Soboyejo provided the Council members with summary highlights on the work and projects of faculty and students, including: Dr. Lauren Endres’ presentation on forever chemicals as part of the MV Health System’s Physicians and Faculty Development series; the successful Regional NY Business Plan Competition led by Professor Robert Edgell that was held on campus earlier in the month; the participation of eight students from the College of Engineering in state and national level design competitions; and the College of Health Sciences being named among the top 100 “Best Nursing Schools” by U.S. News & World Report.



Dr. Soboyejo stated he was looking forward to the Commencement celebration on May 4th, at which there will be over 800 students graduating, including graduate students. The Computer Science program alone will have 59 graduates. Commencement speakers will be Heather Hage and Mike Ballman. There will be two ceremonies as usual; one for the College of Engineering students, and one for the students of the Colleges of Business, Arts and Sciences, and Health Sciences.

Dr. Soboyejo also gave the group the date for his inauguration ceremony, Friday, September 13, and recognized that he has now been at SUNY Poly for over half a year, and he thanked everyone for all the support and encouragement he has received.

College Council member Dr. Keith Levatino asked to provide the group with an update on a project he has been collaborating on with Dr. Joanne Joseph, Interim Dean of the College of Health Sciences, that will bring 188 eighth grade students from the Little Falls and Herkimer school districts to the SUNY Poly campus on May 30 for a Career Exploration program with activities in the areas of social sciences and health sciences. The Provost Office is covering the cost of lunch that day for all 188 students. Chief of Staff and Vice President for External Relations, Wayne Westervelt, thanked Dr. Levatino for this update and stated that it was a project that would build on President Soboyejo's emphasis on building more and stronger connections with regional school districts, particularly those beyond the immediate area of the campus and Oneida County.

Middle States/Reaccreditation Update:

Interim Provost, Dr. Russell, stated that teamwork is the core strength of the University's reaccreditation efforts, and he recognized the excellent work of the Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Carlie Phipps, for leading these efforts. The full draft of the self-study will be ready by the end of the summer. Dr. Russell also recognized and thanked Valerie Fusco, Director of Institutional Research, for her good work processing a large volume of data for this effort. The chair of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) reaccreditation review team will be visiting SUNY Poly in September, and the full team visit will take place in the spring 2025 semester. The MSCHE decision in regard to reaccreditation will be made in the summer of 2025. Dr. Russell also reported that a revised and effective faculty handbook was now in place and being circulated among faculty members.

Shared Governance/Faculty Update:

Due to Dr. Adam McLain being unavailable to take part in the meeting, Dr. Ron Sarner agreed to take his place and provide the updates for this portion of the meeting. Dr. Sarner stated that the updates he had to share had already been covered by Interim Provost Russell in his updates and that he had nothing to add to them.



Student Representative Update:

Student Government President, Bailey Wadsworth, provided the Student Representative Update in place of Nicholas Rossi, who was unable to attend the meeting. Bailey provided a brief summary of events and activities that were part of the wrap-up for the academic year, and said she was looking forward to Commencement on May 4th. Dr. Soboyejo acknowledged and thanked Bailey for her dedication and hard work as Student Government President. Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, Jennifer Adams, echoed Dr. Soboyejo's comments, saying that Bailey demonstrated an exemplary level of professionalism and kindness, and that the Student Government was in an excellent position to move forward because of her good work.

Andrea LaGatta provided the Council with a summary of results from this year's Day of Giving. She stated that there was a great team effort supporting this year's event, and that at present \$210,00 had been raised, compared to \$184,00 last year. Chair Destito thanked everyone from the College Council who had contributed to this year's Day of Giving.

Happy Birthday to Michele Kilburn, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer!

No executive session was called during this meeting.

Adjournment

Chair Destito requested a motion to adjoin. A motion was made by Keith Levatino and was seconded by Mitchell Ford. The Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Sargent