

MINUTES OF
FACULTY SENATE MEETING
April 21, 2026

Associate Professor of Chemistry Julien Panetier, chair of the Faculty Senate, called the fourth Faculty meeting of the academic year to order at 11:32 in Old Union Hall.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the March 24, 2026, meeting were unanimously approved.

2. Approval of Spring 2026 Degree Candidates

Chair Panetier reported that more than 4,000 students are expected to graduate in the coming weeks, including over 3,000 undergraduates and just over 1,000 graduate students.

A motion was made to approve and to present the list of 2026 degree candidates.

With no questions or comments from the Senate, a motion to approve the degree candidates was made and seconded.

The motion was passed unanimously.

3. Old Business

Chair Panetier announced that commencement ceremonies would take place on May 14, 15, and 16, 2026, and encouraged registration for participation.

The third agenda item concerned the proposed departmentalization of Environmental Studies into the Department of Environmental and Sustainability. Supporting materials included a revised proposal summary and an academic business plan. Chair Panetier noted that the proposal had previously been tabled at the November 19, 2024, Faculty Senate meeting due to concerns raised by multiple departments, including Biological Sciences, Geography and Earth Sciences, about overlaps, resource reliance, and program scope.

Updates since that time were presented. The revised proposal received approval from the Faculty Senate Diversity Committee, and the Departments of Biological Sciences, Earth Sciences, and Geography were not opposed to it. The proposal was also reviewed and supported by the Executive Committee. Additional information on budget considerations and program structure was provided in the supporting documents.

Prof. George Homsy, Chair of the Environmental Studies program, offered remarks summarizing revisions in response to prior concerns, including strengthened collaboration with related departments, clearer curricular boundaries, and adjustments to the program's structure and budget. The Director emphasized the program's growth

(over 200 majors), the need for formal departmental status to support faculty governance and grant administration, and ongoing interdisciplinary partnerships, including shared research, teaching, and student opportunities.

Prof. Peter Huang, Mechanical Engineering, asked whether the proposed department would introduce a new academic program focused on sustainability or restructure existing programs.

Prof. Homsy clarified that no entirely new program would be created; rather, the existing Environmental Studies major would be revised and potentially renamed to reflect a stronger emphasis on sustainability.

Dean Celia Klin of Harpur College supported the proposal, emphasizing the challenges of managing large interdisciplinary majors within traditional departmental structures and noting that Environmental Studies has outgrown its current program model. She also noted that the proposed department would include mechanisms for ongoing coordination with related disciplines to prevent overlap and promote complementarity.

With no further discussion or objections, a motion was made to approve the departmentalization of Environmental Studies as the Department of Environmental and Sustainability.

Before the vote, Chair Panetier indicated that voting would be conducted by secret paper ballot.

After the ballots were collected and tallied, Chair Panetier announced the results: 37 in favor, 5 opposed, and 5 abstentions. The departmentalization of Environmental Studies as the Department of Environmental and Sustainability was approved.

4. New Business

Chair Panetier introduced new business, noting the proposed creation of the Department of Counseling and Applied Psychology. The proposal included two new Master of Science programs and was endorsed by the Department of Psychology, as stated in a letter from the department chair.

Chair Panetier summarized the key elements of the proposal, emphasizing that the new department would support practitioner-focused training that requires extensive supervised clinical experience. The structure would enable clearer alignment among mission, faculty research, evaluation, and program administration. The Faculty Senate Diversity Committee approved the proposal but raised concerns about strategies for recruiting and retaining diverse faculty, students, and staff.

The two proposed programs were described in detail:

- The MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is a 60-credit program designed to meet New York State licensure requirements, including 600 hours of supervised

clinical experience. The program is structured to be completed over five semesters (approximately 24 months).

- The MS in Applied Psychology and Behavioral Analysis focuses on applying behavioral science to societal and individual issues, combining foundational coursework with advanced specialization and practical training.

Prof. Jennifer Gillis Mattson of Psychology provided additional context, citing documented shortages of mental health and behavioral health providers in the Southern Tier and nationwide. It was noted that many Binghamton undergraduate students leave the region to pursue such training elsewhere. The proposed department aims to retain these students and attract new applicants. The department is projected to include 13 faculty positions and, at full capacity, enroll approximately 120 graduate students. Both programs are full-time, in-person, and designed to lead to professional licensure in New York State.

Prof. Cláudia Nogueira Hora Marques, Biological Sciences, Diversity Committee Chair, clarified that it had formally approved the proposal and reiterated specific concerns about retention, particularly for underrepresented faculty and students.

Prof. Gillis Mattson responded by outlining a retention framework that includes dedicated funding for professional development, mentoring structures, and individualized support plans based on faculty and student needs.

Prof. Robyn Cope, Romance Languages and Literatures, raised a detailed concern about whether the program would effectively address regional workforce shortages. The question specifically asked what mechanisms would be in place to (1) recruit applicants from the local area who are more likely to remain in the region after graduation, and (2) whether the program would consider reserving or prioritizing admission slots for local residents to strengthen the local mental health workforce.

Prof. Gillis Matson responded that the proposal team acknowledged that this goal was central to the program's intent but not fully detailed in the written proposal. She described planned outreach efforts to local high schools and community members, efforts to make the program accessible to working individuals through scheduling considerations, and the expectation that increasing local training capacity would improve regional retention, while also noting that no formal guarantees or admission preferences for local applicants were currently proposed.

Prof. Meg Leja, History, inquired about governance and structure, asking why the programs could not be housed within the existing Department of Psychology. She also expressed concern about establishing a department composed entirely of professionally oriented graduate programs.

Dean Klin explained that the proposed programs differ significantly from the Psychology Department's existing undergraduate and PhD programs in terms of mission, accreditation requirements, faculty roles, and clinical training obligations. A

separate department was described as necessary to support licensure standards, specialized administration, and a distinct professional training model, while still maintaining collaboration with Psychology and related disciplines.

A motion was made to approve the creation of the Department of Counseling and Applied Psychology, along with the two associated MS programs.

Due to the significance of establishing a new department, Chair Panetier called for a paper ballot vote, and the motion was put to a vote.

Following the collection and tallying of ballots, Chair Panetier announced the results: 44 in favor, 2 opposed, and 2 abstentions. The proposal to create a new department, the Department of Counseling and Applied Psychology, along with two MS programs—one in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and the other in Applied Psychology and Behavioral Analysis—was approved.

Chair Panetier introduced a proposal to deactivate the Master of Engineering (MEng) in the Thomas J. Watson College of Engineering and Applied Science. It was noted that the program has not received any applications for several years, while multiple Master of Science (MS) programs in engineering remain active and continue to attract students.

Prof. Scott Craver, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Program Review Committee Chair, explained that the purpose of the deactivation is to eliminate confusion in the academic catalog, as prospective students may encounter the Master of Engineering even though it is no longer offered. It was clarified that deactivation would not remove the program entirely but would formally discontinue its availability.

The Faculty Senate Diversity Committee indicated its support for the proposal.

Chair Panetier opened the floor for discussion; no comments or questions were raised.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the deactivation of the Master of Engineering in the Thomas J. Watson College of Engineering and Applied Science. The motion was brought to a voice vote. The motion carried, with one abstention noted.

5. Reports

Prof. Laura Fine Hawkes, Theater, Faculty Senate Executive Chair, Chair of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC), presented the committee's year-end report. She noted that the FSEC met 26 times during the academic year.

She summarized key activities and accomplishments over the past nine months, including:

- Providing input and feedback on the university's new strategic planning process.
- Advancing discussions at the Faculty Senate level regarding support for non-tenure-track faculty.

- Partnering with the Provost's Office on the Joint Task Force on the Advancement of Associate Professors, with a final report expected by the end of the spring semester.
- Collaborating with the Provost's Office on the Joint Task Force on Undergraduate Education and AI, which recently hosted a series of campus-wide faculty forums.
- Reviewing and discussing multiple resolutions originating from the SUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS), particularly in the context of ongoing federal policy changes and broader national and international developments.
- Co-hosting a regional UFS event on campus in November in collaboration with other governance bodies.
- Participating in the Middle States accreditation self-study process.
- Initiating plans, in partnership with the Provost's Office, to host faculty panel discussions in the upcoming fall semester focused on research and creative activity endeavors in the Age of AI.
- Supporting the creation of a Joint Task Force on ADA compliance.
- Continuing review of academic program proposals, including Environmental Studies and Psychology-related departmental initiatives and associated graduate programs.
- Appointing faculty representatives to search committees, including for the Vice President for Research, and meeting with finalists for several administrative positions in accordance with Faculty Senate bylaws.

No questions were raised following the report.

Prof. Nathanael Andrade, History, SUNY UFS representative, reported on the recent SUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS) Plenary held at Carnegie Hall State College. The plenary opened with sector meetings, including discussions on SUNY system-wide initiatives, shared governance, and evolving institutional programs.

Key topics discussed included concerns about:

- The relationship between campus accrediting bodies and campus or SUNY initiatives.
- Campus reliance on centralized legal counsel, particularly regarding contracts and immigration-related policies.
- Compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), in light of an anticipated April 24 compliance deadline.
- Faculty concerns regarding adherence to SUNY Board of Trustees policies, including sabbatical leave policies.

At the general plenary session, UFS leadership highlighted ongoing coordination between SUNY and CUNY in support of academic freedom and higher education as a public good. A related public webinar series was announced, with the first session scheduled for April 30.

A keynote presentation was delivered by a faculty member from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, emphasizing strategies for communicating the value of higher education to the public and providing related advocacy resources.

A report from the SUNY Chancellor addressed long-term enrollment and financial stability. Topics included:

- Expansion of general education initiatives focused on civil discourse.
- Efforts to address student food and housing insecurity.
- Integration of experiential learning and alternative credentialing pathways.
- Workforce development initiatives for students, faculty, and staff.
- Federal policy developments affecting higher education funding and program eligibility.

The Chancellor also addressed concerns regarding shared governance, academic freedom, student transfer policies, and inter-campus coordination. Questions from attendees focused on governance processes, faculty involvement in policy development, and system-level decision-making.

An update was provided regarding the creation of a SUNY travel guidance and reporting webpage for employees conducting international academic travel or engaging with foreign public officials. The tool is intended to support compliance and risk management and is expected to be launched shortly.

A joint roundtable including representatives from faculty, staff, and student governance bodies addressed shared governance structures and communication across constituencies.

It was also noted that the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division extended the deadline for digital accessibility compliance by one year to April 2027. The extension applies to web content and course materials accessibility requirements at the federal level but does not affect SUNY campus operations.

Following the plenary report, Prof. Craver provided clarification regarding ADA compliance. It was explained that while the federal compliance deadline has been extended, institutions remain bound by both federal and state accessibility laws. The extension provides additional time for implementation but does not eliminate existing obligations. The university's Technology Accessibility Advisory Group will continue work on system-wide accessibility assessment and training initiatives, including remediation planning and faculty support.

No questions were raised following the report.

6. *Faculty Senate- Open floor*

After no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

Present: Meaghan Altman, Ming An, Nathanael Andrade, Michael Armstrong, Christina Balderrama-Durbin, Jeremy Blackburn, Elizabeth Casteen, Robyn Cope, Weiying Dai, Anne D'Alleva, Sidney Dement, Tara Dhakal, Marvin Diaz, Kristina Donders, Mateo Duque, Gregory Evans, Elise Ferer, Anthony Fiumera, Heather Fiumera, Sasha Frizzell, Cullen Goldblatt, Donald Hall, Melissa Hardesty, Matthew Harrick, John Havard, Laura Fine Hawkes, Kimberly Jaussi, Barry Jones, Rebecca Kissling, Michael Lawler, Meg Leja, Shuxia (Susan) Lu, Colin Lyons, Adam Mathews, Andre Mathis, Tom McDonough, Debi Mishra, Vladimir Nikulin, Nikiru Nzegwu, Julien Panetier, Sabina Perrino, Xingye Qiao, Gail Rattinger, Erin Rushton, Anton Schick, Tarek Shamma, Timothy Singler, Manuel Smeu, Jodi Sutherland, Sofia Theodore-Pierce, Melvin Whitehead, Bogum Yoon, Denise Yull

Excused: Laura Anderson, Elizabeth Anderson, Peter Borgesen, Paul Chiarot, Gladys Jiménez-Muñoz, Andreas Pape, Surya Parekh, Erin Pauling, John Starks, Jennifer Stoever

Absent: Reethee Antony, Ramaesh Bhagirat, Prabhu Anil Bhor, Michael Buck, Kenneth Chiu, Sungdai Cho, Rosemary Collier, Komla Dzigbede, Mikhail Filippov, Yang (Jenny) Guo, Robert Guay, Tiffany Keller Hansbrough, Douglas Jones, Joseph Keith, Ahyeon Koh, Adriane Lam, Emily Leppien, J. Koji Lum, Mark Poliks, James Rea, Olga Shvetsova, Cyma Van Petten