

## **COUNCIL MINUTES**

September 23, 2022

Present from Council:

Chair Kathryn Grant Madigan, Avery Benzaken, Linda Biemer, Jennifer Lesko, Dennis McCabe, James Orband (via Zoom), and Maureen Wilson

Present from the Community:

President Stenger, Ms. Bello, Mr. Brhel (via Zoom), Mr. Brice, Dr. Bodur (via Zoom), Vice President Delviscio, Interim Dean Dixon, Dr. Edouard, Ms. Ellis, Ms. Fauci, Ms. Fiore Conte, Ms. Gahring (via Zoom), Provost Hall (via Zoom), Mr. Hayden, Esq., Ms. Ignarri, Ms. Jantz, Ms. Jones, Vice President Jones, Interim Director Kalina, Vice President Koch, Ms. Legette (via Zoom), Interim Dean Mahler, Ms. Mignone, Ombudsman Mthombeni, Ms. Nirmal (via Zoom), Ms. Reindl, Vice President Rose, Chief Rossie, Vice President Sammakia, Dr. Smith, Dr. Szymanski, Mr. Yarosh, Professor Zinkin, and Ms. Zwierlein (via Zoom)

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The Binghamton University Council meeting was called to order at 9:21 a.m. on Friday, September 23, 2022 by Chair Madigan.

The minutes of the April 15, 2022 Binghamton University Council meeting were approved.

Chair Madigan welcomed Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Dr. Donald Hall, who was participating via Zoom from overseas.

### **PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

President Stenger reported that the May Commencement ceremonies went well, and thanked Council members who participated in the ceremonies. We were back to the traditional 10 ceremonies, as opposed to the 29 ceremonies held in 2021 due to COVID social distancing requirements. We awarded 4,300 degrees including 650 masters and 150 doctoral degrees this spring. We also awarded an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree to Bob Swan, MBA '85, during the School of Management's ceremony. Bob served as the CEO of several prominent technology firms, most recently at Intel Corporation, and has been a strong supporter of the School and University.

In August we welcomed the freshman class of 2026. We received more than 42,000 undergraduate applications for this class, which is a new record, and more than 5% above last year's record. This brings the campus enrollment to 18,332 students, up 252 over last year, and is the largest we have ever been. We are also up 92 undergraduates and 160 graduate students which means our budget will be good, too.

Binghamton University was recently recognized by Forbes as one of "America's Best Employers by State," ranking 52<sup>nd</sup> best employer in New York state, and 9<sup>th</sup> overall in its higher education category, based on a national survey of 70,000 employees.

This summer we learned that four of our faculty members have been awarded National Science Foundation (NSF) Career Awards, one in Chemistry, one in Computer Science, and two in Mechanical Engineering. An NSF Career award is the highest award that new assistant professors can receive, it is a \$500,000 5-year award to support their research. Every year Binghamton University has four, five, and sometimes seven faculty members who receive NSF Career Awards.

The most exciting news came at the start of the semester when we learned that Binghamton University, and our New Energy New York (NENY) coalition, was awarded a \$113.7 million grant from the US Economic Development's Builds Back Better Regional Challenge given by the Economic Development agency of the Federal Government. We will receive \$63.7 million from them and \$50 million from the New York State's Empire State Development Corporation, which is part of the upstate revitalization initiative.

This money will go toward building a manufacturing research center in Endicott, NY, across the street from where the Gigafactory is being built by iM3NY. This facility is expected to be completed over the next 12 to 18 months and will have a full line of equipment to make lithium ion batteries, from raw materials to end product. Nine out of ten of the largest lithium battery manufacturers in the world are outside of the United States; Tesla is the only one in the United States. We need to bring that industry onshore and train people how to make them. We have a secret weapon, a Nobel Prize awardee, Dr. M. Stanley Whittingham, that invented the lithium ion battery and is an expert in manufacturing them. Dr. Whittingham, along with Associate Vice President for Innovation and Economic Development, Per Stromhaug, put together a series of proposals, and the construction will start soon. The goal is that employers will come that will build the batteries, employees will come who will be trained to work in the factory, and we hope that the companies will relocate here to build their next battery manufacturing facility. Broome County Executive, Jason Garner, recently announced that several buildings at the former IBM Endicott facility will be demolished, and this will open up several acres for future manufacturing development.

We received a \$6.5 million increase to our base budget from the State, with our base budget from SUNY at about \$45 million a year. This is a big increase that will be used to hire new faculty. We surveyed the Deans and the Department Chairs and have reviewed the desirable areas in which they would like to hire. Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, Dr. Donald Hall, and I received about forty-seven requests and narrowed it down to about thirty-five, which is how many we can afford from the \$6.5 million. We are in the process of beginning the

searches. Thirty-five new additional faculty, on top of the 650 or so faculty that we currently have, is a big increase in one year. At the same time, we are doing the normal hiring of about 30 positions per year for those who have retired or left the University for other reasons.

## **STUDENT REPORT**

Chair Madigan introduced the new Student Representative to Council for the 2022-2023 academic year, Mr. Avery Benzaken, and welcomed him to Council. Avery is a transfer student and a first-generation college student. He earned his undergraduate degree in Economics and is pursuing an MBA in marketing and analytics. In his spare time, he enjoys reading, going to various driving ranges in the area, watching movies, and submitting a lot of job applications.

Mr. Benzaken thanked Council members and the student body for putting their faith in him as the student representative to Council. He is grateful for the opportunity to serve in this role.

The Student Association's University Fest was a great example of the spirit that he believes will continue in the year to come. Over 250 clubs and organizations tabled at the event, and thousands of students attended to create student engagement and connections that he expects will thrive in the coming year. The connections that students build among one another, is important.

At the last Council meeting, we talked about student mental health and wellness. Mental and physical wellness is important, and there are a lot of initiatives being implemented across campus to promote student health and wellness. The Campus Connectors initiative seeks to identify at risk students by analyzing social networks and providing services to students that need help finding their place on campus. The Healthy Campus initiative seeks to create an environment and identity that encourages and supports healthy living. These initiatives, along with the various counseling and mentoring programs, provide vital resources. Many students still feel that there are not enough mental health resources available to help in their time of need, some feel that the resources are spread too thin and they are unable to get an appointment at the University Counseling Center, or they are unable to find a counselor that they can relate to. In the coming months, Avery plans to work with various campus offices to create promotional materials to make students aware of resources and mentoring programs available to help when they are in crisis and need them.

In times of need, many students reach out to their RA because they have built a connection with them. The recent announcement about restructuring the RA position is being met with a lot of criticism both on and off campus. The RAs feel that their position has been diminished to a series of tasks that are being divided into three different positions. Many RAs went above and beyond in the last couple of years due to COVID, providing extra support for their students, and with some delivering food to students who weren't able to go into isolation housing, and they believe that what they do is far beyond their job descriptions. The complaints voice by RAs in opposition to this new proposed structure has highlighted greater issues within residential life on the supervisory side. Mainly that there isn't an RA council that represents the RAs at meetings with professional staff, and some feel that their communication is based on individual connections with supervisors. Some RAs feel they have a flow of transparency with their

supervisors and others feel they are being kept in the dark. If the new structure is going to be implemented successfully, the RAs and the students need to be on board.

The RAs recently sent a letter to the central Residential Life office, and the letter was posted publicly. The letter stated that RAs have been kept out of the conversations regarding the proposed changes, they haven't been given a chance to express their opinion on the negative impacts of the new system, and they cited reasons why they believe that this would specifically negatively impact students of color, Asian students, and students that come from lower-income families.

Chair Madigan reported that Council will see a formal presentation on the RA positions, after all of the gatherings and meetings with students have taken place, to further inform them on the issue.

Another conversation that has been ongoing over the last few weeks is about a former Binghamton University nursing student's TikTok videos that have gone viral. The student posted videos about how he faced sexual assault, sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and a hostile work environment when he was a student in the nursing program and while doing clinicals at UHS. He posted recordings and documentations of the events that occurred, as well as remarks that can be deemed as racist and dismissive that were sent to him while trying to report the events. He was dismissed and he reported that he never received a formal grievance hearing. While the case of dismissal is outside of the Council's scope of responsibilities, it is Council's job to ensure that every student, regardless of race, sexuality, gender identity, or background, feels that Binghamton University is a safe place for them. The recent videos have sparked outrage from students who question how the University handles claims of discrimination, and expressing fear that if a student reports an incident of discrimination against an employee or an affiliate of the University that they will be retaliated against. The SA Executive Board, the President of SUNY SA, and Avery believe it is important that the Administration releases a statement reminding the students that the University handles all cases of discrimination very seriously and that the students will never be retaliated against for bringing an incident of discrimination to the University's attention.

### **REPORT OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

Mr. Brian Rose, Vice President for Student Affairs, Ms. Johann Fiore-Conte, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Chief Wellness Officer, Ms. Paola Mignone, Assistant Vice President for Residential Experiences, Dr. Christen A. Szymanski, Director for Students with Disabilities, and Dr. Kelli Smith, Assistant Vice President for Student Success, presented the report.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

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