

COUNCIL MINUTES

February 19, 2021

Present from Council via Zoom: Kathryn Grant Madigan, Linda Biemer, Anthony Fiala, Zachary Herz, Jennifer Lesko, Dennis McCabe, James Orband, Matthew Salanger, and Maureen Wilson

Present from the Community: President Stenger, Assemblyman Angelino, Dr. Bodur, Mr. Cordi, Prof. Craver, Vice President Delviscio, Ms. Doyle, Director Elliott, Ms. Ellis, Ms. Fegley, Vice President Jones, Vice President Koch, Ms. Legette, Provost Nieman, Ms. O'Neil, Mr. Partell, Vice President Rose, Ms. Reuther, Vice President Sammakia, Ms. Scarlett, and Mr. Yarosh

CALL TO ORDER

The Binghamton University Council meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m. on Friday, February 19, 2021 by Chair Madigan with all attendees participating via Zoom.

The minutes of November 20, 2020 were approved.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

President Stenger reported that students have returned for the spring semester. Every student living on campus was tested for Covid-19 prior to moving in. Over 4,500 tests were administered with only eight students being confirmed positive for a positivity rate of less than .2%. We will be increasing our campus testing to 2,000 persons a day.

University faculty who are teaching in-person classes have been given priority status to receive the vaccine. The University is playing a small role in the delivery of these vaccines, with the new Library Annex facility in Johnson City serving as a vaccination site.

The spring academic calendar has been adjusted to reduce student travel, omitting the traditional spring break. Following discussions with the Student Association, we've added three non-consecutive days off for "rejuvenation" – March 17, April 8, and April 20.

Nursing faculty moved into their newly renovated building at 48 Corliss Street in Johnson City. Classes began there last week in state-of-the-art classrooms, labs, and common areas. We were saddened to learn about the death of former Decker Dean Joyce Ferrario. Joyce joined the Decker School in 1985, was named dean in 2005, serving until 2015. In that role, Joyce helped raise the school's reputation and rankings and played a key role in the early efforts to establish the Health Sciences campus.

The Binghamton Foundation has agreed to \$1 million in bridge funding to support the hiring of faculty in our occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language pathology, and doctor of nursing practices. In addition, the Foundation is providing an additional \$1 million to enhance the walkability and safety of the Johnson City campus through lighting, greenspace, and parking.

We are moving forward on several construction projects – renovation of the Library’s third floor, renovations to Hinman dining hall, Science 4 and Science 2 tower renovation, and the baseball stadium complex.

During the winter break, an ice skating rink was constructed on the Old Dickinson co-rec field with free ice skating and skate rental available to students, faculty, and staff. This has proven to be a real hit among students.

The New York State Department of Transportation is starting work on the greenway path from the south side of Binghamton to the University. This 2.5 mile path will provide a direct route for pedestrians and cyclists moving from downtown to the campus.

It has been a successful year with our first-year student retention increasing to 93%; thank you to faculty and mentors in helping us to attain this success.

We are adding a new Road Map Strategic Priority – SP6: Internationalism. Our goal is to develop international research partnerships, strengthen diversity and inclusion, and contribute to the University’s resource management in ways that recognize and overcome these challenges.

The campus experienced a cyber-attack in November. Shortly after the attack, we called together an Information Technology Task Force to develop policies and procedures to better protect the University’s IT systems. The key change will include the use of a two-factor authentication that will prevent non-approved, outside access to the campus network.

We are continuing to address concerns about sexual assault and improving the campus climate. We hired Amy Zieziula to serve as the deputy Title IX coordinator. She will create reports, oversee efforts to coordinate interim accommodations and support services, assist in investigations, and work with local agencies and campus representatives for outreach and engagement.

We will also be opening a new Violence, Abuse, and Rape Crisis Center (VARCC) to provide support for victims of sexual assault and harassment and provide 24-hour Zoom assistance through a partnership with the Crime Victims Assistance Center (CVAC) in Binghamton.

The School of Management received good news when the website Poets&Quants ranked Binghamton as the 28th best Undergraduate Business School in America. This is the best ranking SOM has ever polled, and it represents a jump of 19 spots from last year’s ranking. Congratulations to SOM and Dean Dhillon; this is a testament to the strength of the school’s programs, progress, and relevance and rigor of its curriculum.

Applications for next fall are up compared to last year. Impressive is the interest in the Decker College of Nursing, which has seen an increase of 33% compared to last year. Also, out-of-state applications are up 25%.

STUDENT REPORT

Zachary Herz reported that in a normal academic year, there would have been approximately three weeks leading up to the February council meeting. With the late start of this semester, organizations and student groups are only beginning to plan their semesters.

The Student Association Congress finalized the three rejuvenation days that have been integrated into the academic calendar. The fall semester proved that having classes straight through the semester without any breaks remained academically challenging which took a mental toll on students. The objective of these rejuvenation days is to allow for students to have the opportunity to decompress during this semester with no breaks.

Zachary reported that he has been working with the Student Association to come up with events and club happenings to allow for students to enjoy themselves on these days. That same Congress meeting was also met with some controversy as the Binghamton Review, a student run newspaper, made an insensitive comment that sparked controversy among Binghamton students. Zachary finds those comments to be appalling and at the ignorance of those who wrote them. As described by the SA E-Board, we understand that legally there is not much that can be done. With such a large Jewish student body, it is important that the University continues to create a welcoming environment for such a larger sector of the campus community.

This past week, Zachary experienced the ice-skating rink that our students have been using. He saw President Stenger along with many other students who were enjoying those first few days of the semester. Moving forward, we think that students will continue to take advantage of the opportunity to take a mental breather and hang out with their friends in a safe “COVID friendly” way.

The SA decided to put on another Virtual Fair, allowing for clubs and other groups to show themselves off to our students. It was a great opportunity for some of the spring-admitted students to check out the clubs during their first full week at Binghamton.

The Student Association has also been at work planning large scale virtual events for the undergraduate community. These include a virtual music show that will be held tonight as well as “Insights with Dr. Yusef Salaam.”

In partnership with the Multicultural Resource Center, the Student Association vice presidents for academic affairs, multicultural affairs, and programming are collaborating on a “Diversity in Careers Summit” event taking place next week featuring three panelists.

It is great to hear that Binghamton University is continuing to make progress with the Violence Abuse and Rape Crisis Center. Having the center located in Old Johnson provides a very similar environment to those who feel comfortable using other facilities such as the University

Counseling Center. We hope that the VARC Center provides a safe space to students who have been sexually abused for years to come.

As we close the week, it is expected that the university will reach the 100 positive case threshold. What campus may look like once that happens is still up in the air. Regardless, Zachary plans to continue to be a main voice on campus encouraging our students to do their part in stopping the spread of COVID-19.

REPORT ON ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Donald G. Nieman, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost introduced the three presenters: Patti Reuther, Director of Innovation Simulation and Practice of Decker College; Peter Partell, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of Watson College; and Megan Fegley, Director of First Year Research Economics Immersion Program.

REPORT ON DIVERSITY

Karen A. Jones, Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, reported.

There being no other new business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

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