

COUNCIL MINUTES

September 10, 2021

Present from Council: Linda Biemer, Tony Fiala (via Zoom), Acting Chair Dennis McCabe, James Orband (via Zoom), Caroline Sandleitner, Matthew Salanger (via Zoom), and Maureen Wilson

Present from the Community: President Stenger, Ms. Bello, Dr. Bodur, Dr. Capobianco (via Zoom), Professor Craver (via Zoom), Vice President Delviscio, Dr. Edouard, Ms. Ellis, Ms. Fauci, Ms. Gahring (via Zoom), Mr. Hatami, Mr. Hayden (via Zoom), Mr. Hickey (via Zoom), Mr. Hovancik (via Zoom), Mr. Hubeny, Vice President Jones, Interim Director Kalina, Dean Klin, Ms. Legette, Vice Provost Loewen, Ms. Mignone, Professor Mijatovic, Ms. Mthombeni (via Zoom), Vice President Navarro, Provost Nieman, Vice Provost Pitarresi, Vice President Rose, Dr. Smith, Mr. Wright (via Zoom), and Mr. Yarosh

CALL TO ORDER

The Binghamton University Council meeting was called to order at 9:16 a.m. on Friday, September 10, 2021 by Acting Chair McCabe. Attendees participated in-person and via Zoom.

Acting Chair McCabe announced that Jennifer Lesko's father passed away this past week and his funeral is today. On behalf of the BU Council, he expressed condolences to Jennifer and her family.

The minutes of April 23, 2021 were approved.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

It is great to see everyone for the first Council meeting of the 2021-2022 academic year. The campus is now approximately 14 class days into the fall semester and things are going well. We have a strong positive attitude on campus and the faculty are working hard to deliver the education that we are known for.

Since the April Council meeting, a lot has happened on campus. In May, the University celebrated the achievements of the class of 2021 with 28 highly modified Commencement ceremonies over the course of 5 days. Each ceremony was intimate with the number of graduates in each ceremony limited to 150, and a limit of 2 guests per graduate. Everyone attending had to show that they were either vaccinated or tested negative for the virus to be admitted to the ceremony.

On October 9th, the day after the campus Homecoming event, we will hold an in-person Commencement ceremony in the Events Center for the class of 2020. We have invited all 2020 graduates to attend but, due to distance, jobs, etc., we expect around 300 graduates will attend. Each graduate can invite 5-6 guests and all attendees will be required to wear masks.

On August 28th we held the 27th annual University Fest in-person on campus. This is a huge outdoor event where the campus welcomes its students and many organizations and activities which are available on campus are highlighted. Over 200 student organizations set up tables at this event.

This year's new students are excellent, having been drawn from nearly 48,000 applications. It is early in the semester but, as of 2 days ago, our enrollment was 18,022 which includes 14,300 undergraduates and 3,600 graduate students. Overall, enrollment among undergraduates was up slightly from last year, while graduate enrollment is down about 100 students.

The COVID response for this fall is a little different than last year. We thought we would be in better shape from immunity because we require all students to be vaccinated unless they have a medical or religious exemption. We expect approximately 98% of the student population will be fully vaccinated by the end of this month. However, we are finding that the Delta variant can infect people who are vaccinated. The Delta variant can also make those who are vaccinated symptomatic. We have to manage the symptomatic students in a way that we weren't prepared for, but we are ramping up efforts in that regard. Vice President Rose will present more information during his report.

There have been construction changes to campus since the last time BU Council met. Hinman Dining Hall has been expanded and renovated and is now open. It is a beautiful facility and offers some unique dining options for the students.

In Johnson City, 48 Corliss Avenue is almost complete. The first four floors of the Decker College of Nursing and Health Sciences are complete and the top two floors are being transformed into classrooms, labs, and offices for our new physical, occupational, and speech and language therapy programs, as well as space for our partnership with Upstate Medical University. The Research and Development facility, which will be constructed adjacent to the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, is expected to be complete in December 2022. The Ford Family Wellness Center, on Jenison Avenue, is expected to be complete in the next 3 to 4 months. This Center is in partnership with Ascension Lourdes Hospital, and will provide primary healthcare and holistic health and wellness services for seniors. Our nursing students will receive practical experience in the Center.

In May, the inaugural class of the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences graduated in-person with SUNY Chancellor Malatras in attendance. The School achieved a major milestone earlier this summer when it received full accreditation from the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education.

Next week we will hold the formal opening and dedication of our new Violence, Abuse and Rape Crisis Center (VARCC) located on the third floor of Old Johnson Hall. The VARCC provides a place for victims of sexual assault or harassment to report the incident and receive counseling and other services.

We set a record this past year with 7 faculty members who won National Science Foundation CAREER awards. These awards are the NSF's most prestigious awards for early-career faculty members, supporting five years of work and encouraging the integration of education and research. The multi-year grants are given to approximately 10% of Assistant Professors in the country. This is a sign that Binghamton's research programs are on an excellent trajectory and that these professors will be very successful in the future.

This will be a busy year for the administration as we will be conducting searches to replace some key campus leaders. We will be searching for:

- a new Dean for the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. Founding Dean, Gloria Meredith, announced in August that she will be stepping down as Dean the summer of 2022. We want to thank Gloria for her outstanding job to build the School.
- a new Dean for the School of Management. Dean Dhillon served as Dean of the School of Management for twenty years and announced in August that he will step down in the summer of 2022. Dean Dhillon's work has been essential to the School's growing reputation and impact.
- a new Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. Don Nieman, who has served in this position for 10 years, will be stepping down at the end of the academic year. It will be hard to replace Don because of his significant accomplishments, developing the new School of Pharmacy, creating our Transdisciplinary areas of Excellence, increasing faculty hiring over the last decade, and the growth of our graduate programs. We thank Don for all of his outstanding work.

We will conduct national searches for these positions beginning this fall.

STUDENT REPORT

Acting Chair McCabe introduced the new Student Representative to Council for the 2021-2022 academic year, Caroline Sandleitner. Caroline is a third-year student at Binghamton studying Philosophy, Politics and Law and History on the prelaw track. She is currently a graduate student in CCPA earning a Master's in Public Administration with a concentration in Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention. For the past two years, Caroline has been involved with the Student Association which inspired her to represent her peers as a BU Council Representative. In her free time, she loves to cook and volunteer in downtown Binghamton.

Caroline began her report by thanking the student body for electing her as their representative to Council for the academic year. She also thanked President Stenger, Kate Madigan, and Martha Gahrng, for helping her transition into the role despite the quick turnover last spring. Caroline looks forward to working with Council this year.

Caroline reported that students are back on campus and resuming in-person activities with great enthusiasm. As the semester kicked off, there have been many events held to engage students in traditional settings for the first time in over a year. The Student Association hosted one of the most successful University Fests, where hundreds of clubs gathered along the Spine. The following day, the SA also hosted the *Multicultural Extravaganza* which highlighted the cultures of Binghamton's diverse student populations.

These events were especially important to the transition of Freshman and Sophomore students who are experiencing college in-person for the first time. Since then, clubs and organizations have seen incredible student interest in their missions, which is a testament to how effective UFest was this year.

Over the summer, there were some concerns regarding the mask and vaccine mandates on campus. Some students expressed confusion about the protective measures, while others were willing to continue wearing masks in order to be in-person.

When students returned to school this August, there was support for the mask mandate and students have been urging one another to stop the spread in order to continue normal college life.

In late August, students expressed concerns over exposure to COVID, and many inquired about opportunities to be tested through the University. Last week, the University responded by increasing the number of surveillance tests available to vaccinated students, which has improved student's comfort on campus. Students are being tested at an increased rate, and are reassured by the rapid test results administered on campus. Some clubs are even mandating their members get tested if exposed to a confirmed positive case of COVID, which lowers the likelihood of outbreaks even in areas where masks are worn. In the next few weeks, it is likely that students will continue to be conscious of COVID and will take precautions to protect the campus community.

The Student Association has been hard at work for students. This coming Sunday, the Executive Vice President of the Student Association will host their annual fall leadership conferences for all club leaders. This year the EVP, Sakib Choudhury, will integrate the first ever diversity training with the help of U Diversity. Over 350 student leaders will be in attendance, which will help foster greater cultural competency on campus. The SA is hopeful that diversity training will allow students to feel more comfortable and unified, especially in extracurricular activities.

The Graduate Student Organization is working to expand their outreach to the larger campus community by coordinating more closely with the Student Association. The SA and GSO will host 3 on 3 meetings between their respective eboards to establish a lasting relationship into the future. As a liaison for both the SA and GSO, Caroline is excited to see increased communication between the governing bodies.

With in-person classes underway, students are travelling to the main campus again. Concerns about COVID have caused a 50% decrease in the number of students taking the OCCT busses, and more people are opting to drive from the downtown area in cars. However, the influx of cars causes extensive traffic congestion on campus, and students are finding it difficult to park nearly

every hour of the day. Over 1,000 more parking passes were sold in comparison to two years ago, which has only contributed to the parking limitations. The increase in cars on campus has made the transition to in-person learning more strenuous for the thousands of students living off-campus.

Next week, the SA Congress will conclude their fall elections and will hold their first Congress meeting of the school year. The newly elected congress will attend a Congress Retreat to train in the policies and procedures of the SA Congress, with an emphasis on team building. The SA Programming Board is enthusiastic about hosting the fall concert in person for the first time in two years, with students wearing masks and abiding by the University policies. This event will be publicized in the coming weeks, but represents a move towards normalcy at Binghamton.

Binghamton students are enthusiastic about the start of a new school year, and I foresee this trend continuing with proper oversight.

REPORT OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Mr. Brian Rose, Vice President for Student Affairs; Ms. JoAnn Navarro, Vice President for Operations; Dr. James Pitarresi, Vice Provost for Online and Innovative Education; Dr. Donald Loewen, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Enrollment Management; and Ms. Paola Mignone, Assistant Vice President for Residential Experiences, presented their report.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

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