

## **COUNCIL MINUTES**

September 18, 2020

Present from Council via Zoom: Kathryn Grant Madigan, Linda Biemer, Jennifer Lesko, Dennis McCabe, James Orband, Matthew Salanger, Willa Scolari and Maureen Wilson

Present from the Community: President Stenger, Mr. Bodur, Mr. Cordi, Prof. Craver, Ms. Curtin, Vice President Delviscio, Ms. Doyle, Dr. Edouard, Director Elliott, Ms. Ellis, Ms. Fatima, Dr. Fauci, Ms. Faber, Mr. Faughnan, Ms. Fiore Conte, Vice President Jones, Vice President John Koch, Ms. Legette, Mr. McGoff, Prof. Mischen, Ms. Mthombeni, Vice President Navarro, Provost Nieman, Ms. O'Neil, Ms. Roosa, Vice President Rose, Vice President Sammakia, Ms. Scarlett, Dr. Smith, and Mr. Yarosh

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The Binghamton University Council meeting was called to order at 9:15 a.m. on Friday, September 18, 2020 by Chair Madigan with all Council members participating via Zoom.

The minutes of April 17, 2020 were approved.

### **PRESIDENT'S REMARKS**

President Stenger reported that when Council last met in March, the campus was in the process of gearing up for moving all student education online and moving students off campus in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, COVID has dominated much of the University's work, as we finished out the Spring 2020 semester and planned for a successful reopening in August.

By April, faculty and students had done a great job transitioning to online teaching and learning using technologies like Zoom and Panopto, though the University found that several hundred students struggled with the transition because they lacked access to necessary technology. Fortunately, SUNY and the Binghamton University Foundation provided support to offer these students laptops and access to MI-FI hotspots so they could continue their work.

The Foundation stepped in to help students in financial distress as a result of dislocations caused by the pandemic. The Foundation also raised around \$214,000 to distribute emergency aid to students; these funds supplemented nearly \$7 million from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act that was distributed based on financial need.

Perhaps the most difficult decision of the Spring semester was the decision to cancel Commencement ceremonies for the graduating class of 2020. Initially, we had hoped to reschedule these ceremonies for this fall, but because of ongoing restrictions regarding the size of gatherings, we've pushed the scheduled date back to May 2021. We are looking at the weekend before the scheduled Commencement for the Class of 2021.

Planning for restarting for the fall semester began almost as soon as we started online with the appointment of our Public Health Advisory Group, led by Associate Vice President for Student Affairs Joanne Fiore-Conte and including several deans and faculty knowledgeable in public health and modelling.

In a few minutes Vice President for Research Bahgat Sammakia will be discussing our efforts to Restart Research, while Vice President for Operations JoAnn Navarro will be talking more about the planning and safety efforts in which her division played a key role, Vice President for Student Affairs Brian Rose will be discussing our efforts to reopen the residence halls and our COVID testing and compliance efforts, and Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Don Nieman will be discussing what we've done to get classes and study spaces up and running for the fall semester.

It was a different kind of start for the semester, with a focus on student safety and testing. This year, we staggered incoming students over more than a week in order to limit student density and to provide for student testing. All students were required to be tested before accessing their rooms, and parents were not allowed inside the residence halls. The testing response was very good with just a few students found positive, and the move-in was very smooth.

We welcomed 2,863 students into the class of 2024, as well as 1,020 transfer students to our campus. In addition, we have 1,241 new graduate students in our community. In total, the University enrolled 18,110 students, including 14,148 undergraduates and 3,962 graduate students. Overall, our total enrollment is down 29 students from last year, but we've actually seen a small increase of 148 students in our graduate enrollment. This is especially gratifying since many of our international students – many of whom are in our graduate programs – were unable to travel to the United States due to COVID.

This year's class includes the final cohort of our School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. This fall 93 students were added to the program, bringing the school's total enrollment up to 310 students. These 93 students were able to participate in the traditional White Coat ceremony that marks the entry of students into the medical profession, with the school holding two ceremonies so that students, faculty, and healthcare preceptors could socially distance themselves.

Work continues on facilities for the Decker College of Nursing and Health Sciences, the co-anchor College of our Health Sciences campus. Phase 1 of the project involving the first four floors of the facility is nearly complete with fixtures and casework nearly completed and interior painting about to begin. Interior construction is winding up and furnishing of the building will soon begin. We will be scheduling the first classes in the facility in January 2021.

Design work for floors five and six, which will house our new physical, occupational, and speech and language therapy programs, as well as space for a joint partnership with Upstate Medical University, is complete. Construction is scheduled to begin in fall 2020 with an expected completion date of August 2021. In addition, the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences' Research and Development facility is currently in the design phase.

This summer saw an eruption of concerns about social issues across the United States as a result of videos of violence against Black Americans. In response to these issues, the University has established a Campus Citizen Review Board composed of students, faculty and staff which is charged with reviewing and improving the Binghamton University Police Department's policies, procedures and practices.

We also have established the new George Floyd Scholarship for Social Change to support historically economically disadvantaged, underrepresented minorities. We will be announcing the recipients of the 2020 George Floyd Scholarships in the next few days.

During the summer, a number of current and former students posted on social media expressing concerns about sexual assault and sexual violence and problems with the process for reporting Title IX violations. To address these concerns, we have created a new Title IX Council to investigate complaints and identify problems related to the campus response to complaints. We also will be appointing a sexual violence counselor, hiring two sexual violence investigators, and hiring an outside consultant to assess campus policies and procedures. We also will be changing student conduct rules to enhance punishments for students and groups found to be involved with sexual assault cases.

Overseeing both Title IX Council and the campus Citizen's Review Board will be Karen Jones, who has been appointed Vice President of the Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. In April, John Koch was appointed Vice President for Advancement, having served in several development roles previously, including more than a year as Interim Vice President for Advancement. Celia Klin has been appointed interim dean of Harpur College and we are pleased that Dean Krishnaswami "Hari" Srihari has agreed to stay on as Dean of what is now the Watson College of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

In August, I sent a message to faculty and staff outlining the challenges we are facing. These include:

- \$27 million in refunded housing and student fees for spring 2020,
- \$2 million in extra costs associated with COVID,
- a 25% reduction in state support this year, plus a retroactive cut of \$6 million for last year,

- an estimated \$20 million in lost tuition from international and out-of-state students, and
- \$12 million in lost housing revenues and ~\$2 million in lost student athletics fees for this semester.

These costs will be offset by:

- Restructured housing debt (~\$25 million for each year, 2020-21 and 2021-22),
- reduced hiring and purchasing by 15%,
- \$6 million in CARES Act funding in July, and
- potentially \$30-40 million in federal support.

This adds up to a shortfall of around \$11 million. We will be utilizing reserves to help address this, but it will be a challenging year, particularly if needed federal support fails to materialize. We do see this as a short-term problem as we anticipate very high demand when the pandemic is brought under control. We are optimistic that we can weather this and be in a good position to move forward.

Chair Madigan thanked the work of everyone on campus for a successful return of students to campus.

## **STUDENT REPORT**

Chair Madigan read Ms. Scolari's bio, introduced her to all attendees, and welcomed her to Binghamton University Council.

Ms. Scolari thanked the student body for believing in and entrusting her to represent them on the Council. She also thanked President Stenger, the Council, and other administrators who she has worked with already and noted that they have all made the transition easier than anticipated.

Ms. Scolari reported that there's no question that the issue top on the minds of students is the pandemic. Students and professors are adjusting to a new learning format, SA leaders are helping student groups find creative ways to build community from a little farther apart, and everyone is doing what they can to stay healthy. It is imagined that a lot of the work this year will be in some way focused on or impacted by the pandemic. Feedback from students is that everyone understands the situation we're in and the tough calls that have to be made, but some of the tough calls have raised certain concerns from students -- the long semesters with no breaks, travel limit, concerns about mental health, the late start and late end to the spring semester which may not match up well with some students' housing leases and summer internships, changes in class formats (ensuring that students, especially those with disabilities or those who might otherwise struggle, are getting connected with the support services they need to do well this semester). The hope is that throughout the year, as we're implementing the restarting plan, that everyone can continually work to get a sense of how decisions are impacting students so there is a better sense of what we can do to make a tough year for everyone a little bit easier.

So far students are rising to the challenges they're facing. Student groups are looking at how to adapt some of their favorite events to virtual or socially distanced formats. The SA Congress just held its first virtual meeting of the year, and reps are excited to get to work. RAs are going above and beyond to ensure residential communities are staying safe and healthy. RAs are finding that it's a little hard to be the enforcer without impacting their relationships with their residents, and the work they're doing to support the community deserves our support as well.

Ms. Scolari's other main focus for this year will be on sexual assault. This summer, the Instagram account Shareyourstorybing came out, sharing stories of sexual assault or harassment experienced at Binghamton University. It has always been a prevalent issue, but seeing the numerous stories emphasizes the necessary and immediate change that needs to be taken. SA President Khaleel James has begun working on sexual assault reform, and Ms. Scolari will be working closely with him, along with other administrators, to address this issue and culture from multiple angles.

Lastly, Ms. Scolari will be working closely with Kimberly Peabody, the director of Health Promotion and Prevention Services, to address and promote the department's resources and services, seeing that this is the most important year for students to be aware and knowledgeable of what the campus has to offer.

The biggest obstacle that everyone is facing is trying to adjust to this new normal and this odd semester. SA reports that student life is booming to the best of its ability - our annual U-Fest was done virtually during SA recruitment week and the turnout was fantastic. Many freshmen showed up and were able to engage in different clubs. There are barely any issues with students abiding by the COVID rules -- students are being respectful and wearing their masks while still enjoying their college experiences. Given the circumstances, everything is going smoothly and campus life is thriving, with upcoming events from SAPB still intact and other clubs and offices learning to navigate this new system!

### **REPORT ON RESTARTING BINGHAMTON**

See attached presentations by Vice Presidents Navarro, Sammakia, Rose, and Nieman.

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