

COUNCIL MINUTES

October 15, 2021

Present from Council: Chair Kathryn Grant Madigan, Linda Biemer, Tony Fiala (via Zoom), Jennifer Lesko, Dennis McCabe, James Orband (via Zoom), Caroline Sandleitner, and Maureen Wilson

Present from the Community: President Stenger, Ms. Bello, Dr. Bodur, Mr. Brhel (via Zoom), Professor Craver, Ms. Curtin, Vice President Delviscio, Ms. Doyle (via Zoom), Dr. Edouard, Ms. Ellis, Ms. Fauci, Ms. Gahring (via Zoom), Mr. Hayden, Dr. Jacobson, Vice President Jones, Interim Director Kalina, Ms. Legette (via Zoom), Vice Provost Loewen, Ms. Macargel (via Zoom), Professor Mijatovic (via Zoom), Vice President Rose, Vice President Sammakia, Dr. Smith, Dr. Stromhaug, and Mr. Yarosh

CALL TO ORDER

The Binghamton University Council meeting was called to order at 9:20 a.m. on Friday, October 15, 2021 by Chair Madigan.

The minutes of September 10, 2021 were approved.

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

President Stenger reported that the fall semester is about half over, things have gone smooth and the weather has been great! When the fall semester began, there was concern that there would be another COVID surge. The rise in cases was similar to what we saw in February when, at the peak, we had over 450 students in isolation and quarantine housing at one time and, cumulatively, we had close to 1,500 students over the semester. At that time, we were serving those in isolation and quarantine housing three meals a day, managing their stress and anxiety, and helping them to be successful academically. When the campus saw the increase at the beginning of this semester, we got ready. We now have 160 isolation beds and all beds are empty as of today. We also scaled up the testing capability to test up to 5,000 students, faculty, and staff each week. Just as quick as the number of COVID cases increased at the beginning of the semester, we saw the number of positive cases drop significantly. We are now stable, and we had only 22 positive cases reported on campus over the past two weeks between faculty, staff, and students. We are in good shape, but we are ready to handle another surge, if needed. We still require that on State property indoors, everyone must wear a mask.

In late September, we held Family and Parent weekend. More than 1,750 family members were on campus to participate in 70 different events. We saw twice as many family members than usual for a Family and Parent weekend. We had the second largest crowd for a men's soccer game, and we beat Stony Brook 1-0 in overtime. Other special events were conducted by student groups, the music and the theater departments.

Last weekend, we held Homecoming and an in-person Commencement celebration for the class of 2020. This was one of the more successful Homecoming events in recent years with more than 2,800 registered to attend. About half of the attendees were here specifically for the Commencement ceremony.

During Homecoming, we held the Wenzel 5K in memory of Gregg Wenzel '91. Gregg competed on the men's varsity swimming and diving team while at Binghamton. He eventually became a lawyer and, after 9/11, he joined the CIA. In 2003, Gregg was killed in the line of duty in Ethiopia, where he was working as a CIA directorate of operations. His name was recently recognized when he earned a star on the CIA's Memorial Wall. Gregg's father and sister were on campus for the 5K, along with the race sponsor, an alumnus and friend of Gregg's who is currently a member of the Binghamton University Foundation Board.

Commencement was a great success! We were honored to have Binghamton alumnus and representative of New York's 8th Congressional District, Hakeem Jeffries, speak. He was a terrific speaker, and he praised the students for their resiliency and encouraged them saying, when life "knocks you down, don't give up, get up!" It was great to have Hakeem on campus along with all of the graduates and their families.

Unfortunately, the men's soccer team didn't do as well during Homecoming. We lost 4-1 to highly ranked New Hampshire, who was ranked 5th or 6th in the country among all Division 1 schools at the time. Binghamton men's soccer is highly ranked in the North East and will have a good chance of playing in the America East finals.

The *U.S. News & World Report* rankings were recently released. Binghamton University went up from 88 to 83 in the national university category. Last year, we were ranked 88 and tied with nine other schools including the University of Buffalo and Stony Brook. This year the University of Buffalo and Stony Brook are still tied at 93, but we rose to 83! Our best public in the nation ranking went from #41 to #33. We struggle in name recognition, but we ranked 57th for best value of all the national universities, and that is 35 places ahead of any other SUNY Campus. We also recently learned that we received the 2021 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) award for having an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. President Stenger thanked Vice President Karen Jones for shepherding the application stating, "This is a big deal. There are not many institutions who win this award so it gives Binghamton notoriety."

We were pleased to learn that Professor of Human Development, Leo Wilton, received a \$3.1 million grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to study specific factors that promote or impede behaviors that comprise engagement along the HIV care continuum and how

they operate and interplay over time among African American/Black and Latinx youth and emerging adults living with HIV.

We are busy preparing for the public launch of our Comprehensive Gifts Campaign. We will have a large, public on-campus event to announce the campaign's launch in April 2022. At that time, we will announce the campaign goal. As of now, we have collected a total of \$140 million, and our current working goal is a modest \$190 million. The campaign has already attracted 20 seven-figure gifts, including one gift from a generous alumnus, Roger Kramer, who gave more than \$1 million to construct the Charlene and Roger Kramer Welcome Center at the campus' main entrance. This will greatly improve first impressions for our campus.

STUDENT REPORT

Ms. Sandleitner congratulated the University for hosting a successful Homecoming weekend. She enjoyed the on and off campus events, and observing how happy the students and alumni were to come together.

Students are enjoying their in-person classes, and appreciate the flexibility the University is offering in COVID-times with faculty being more lenient on doctor's notes for excused absences.

The student body, clubs in particular, are also grateful for the University's help in accommodating COVID surveillance testing and student life. Initially, COVID testing in the Mandela Room conflicted with many student-run club events that are hosted in the room over weekends. However, when this issue was brought to light, Administration and the Student Association worked together to create a schedule that would allow for students to use the facility on the weekends, while testing would resume in Old Union Hall.

This past month the Student Association hosted a number of successful events for the student body. On September 28th, the Planning Board hosted Fall Fest, an outdoor festival on the peace quad, with crafts, food, and Harry Potter movies. Student support for the event was strong, and the feedback was incredibly positive.

Just over a week later, the Planning Board regrouped to host WILLOW, or Willow Smith, as the headliner for this year's fall concert. The concert sold out with over 2,000 students in attendance. Even with such a great turnout, the SA ensured students were COVID safe by creating pod systems on the floor, and socially distancing groups of students as much as possible. This strategy is another example of student consciousness of COVID on campus, and the innovative ways the campus community is adapting to enable a successful school year.

Since our last meeting, there have been a number of shootings in the downtown Binghamton area that have come close to our student populations. Over 11,000 students live off campus throughout the school year, mainly populating the downtown area and the west side closest to the river. The main shootings occurred on Murray Street, with bullets brushing student houses, and outside of Maryam's, a high traffic area for student life. While the downtown area is not specifically within the University's domain, the students who live here are equally a part of the

school and local Binghamton communities. Violence downtown has always been something that adjacently affects students, but now more than ever it is important that students recognize the realities of living off of University property, or walking around the area late at night. Students should stay together in groups, and educate themselves on the best preventive measures as we transition back to normal activity downtown. This includes locking doors, walking together if going out at night, being aware of where local law enforcement is stationed, and following the local news for increases in reports of violence. These crimes do not define the Binghamton area and, luckily, they have not affected our student population to a large extent, but prevention is much more effective than reaction in the long run.

On a more positive note, the Broome County community hosted Spiedie Fest, highlighting a dish native to the area, and the Hot Air Balloon Rally. This was the first time the event was held during the school session. OCCT busses ran from the Union to the event, on the hour every hour throughout the weekend, and successfully transported hundreds of students to the event. The event and coordination between the festival and OCCT marks an important collaboration between Broome County and the student body that will hopefully encourage more student participation in the local community.

Students are enjoying their first fall break in nearly two years. Fall break started yesterday and will continue through the weekend. Many students went home to spend time with their families. Students are excited to move forward with the fall semester.

REPORT ON RESEARCH AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Bahgat Sammakia, Vice President for Research; Dr. Michael Jacobson, Director of Strategic Research Initiatives; and Dr. Per Stromhaug, Assistant Vice President, Office of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Partnerships, presented their report.

Chair Madigan noted that today is the annual meeting for the Association of Council Members and College Trustees of SUNY (ACT). She will participate in the virtual meeting following the conclusion of the Council meeting. One of our students, Daniel (DJ) Hennie, will be honored at the meeting as the recipient of the Nancy L. Zimpher Scholarship for Teacher Education. DJ received a BS in Human Development with a minor in Education in 2020 from Binghamton University. He is currently a MSED candidate in the Childhood, Early Childhood and Literacy Education Program and expects to graduate in 2022. DJ has been active in a number of clubs and intermural sports at Binghamton, and is the captain of the club baseball team.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m.

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