



State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
December 9, 2022 - 9:00 am - 408 Baker Lab

MINUTES

**Voting Members in Attendance:**

Chair William Fisher, Vice Chair John Bartow, Trustee Linda Brown-Robinson (joined at 9:52 am via Zoom), Trustee Daniel Fitts, Trustee Oluwole (OJ) McFoy, Trustee Steven (Rick) Fedrizzi (via Zoom), Trustee Vita DeMarchi, and Trustee Michael Goodman

**Absent:** Trustee Stephen Sloan

**Non-Voting Members in Attendance:**

Amanda DeSantis (representing Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado), Matthew Marko (representing DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos), Syracuse University Chancellor Kent Syverud, and Silas Cochran (MOSA)

**College Personnel in Attendance:**

Joanne Mahoney (*President*), Ragan Squier (*Secretary to the Board*), Kelly Berger, Nichole Dougherty, Danielle Gerhart, Brenda Greenfield (virtual), Susan Head, Rebecca Hoda-Kearse, Mark Lichtenstein, Anne Lombard, Matthew Millea, Samuel Mukasa, and John Stella

**Invited Guests:**

Gary Scott, Academic Governance Chair

**Call to Order, Roll Call and Welcome**

Chair Fisher called the meeting of the ESF Board of Trustees to order at 9:00 am. Secretary Squier did roll call. With six voting Trustees in attendance, in-person, a quorum was confirmed.

Chair Fisher acknowledged the privilege to meet on the ancestral lands of the Haudenosaunee.

**1. Consent Agenda – Chair Fisher**

- 1.1. Approval of the Minutes of the September 22, 2022 Board Meeting
- 1.2. Personnel Actions Presented for Board Review
- 1.3. Candidates for Graduation Presented for Endorsement – December 2022

Chair Fisher invited a motion to approve the consent agenda. Trustee McFoy motioned, Trustee DeMarchi seconded, All approved.

**2. Chair's Report – Chair Fisher**

Chair Fisher announced that a report from the Nominating taskforce would be added to the agenda.



- Trustee Fitts reported the Nominating task force was comprised of past Board Chairs Fitts, DeMarchi, and Marko.
  - The task force unanimously agreed to nominate Chair Fisher and Vice Chair Bartow each to an additional 2-year term.
  - Action will be taken at annual meeting.

Chair Fisher recognized the last day of classes for the fall semester and Commencement Day for December graduates. He thanked Chancellor Syverud for use of Hendricks Chapel for ESF's December Commencement. Chair Fisher announced that Vice Chair Bartow's sister, Karyn Bartow Richards, would receive a Lifetime Achievement Award during Commencement and offered his congratulations to the Bartow family.

Chair Fisher provided the following observations regarding finances in higher education:

- The Buffalo News reported that Buffalo State and Fredonia are both facing \$16M deficits during the current academic year, 17 other SUNY campuses also operating at a deficit.
  - Information was provided by United University Professional union president, Fred Kowal, who represents faculty and staff at 28 SUNY campuses, including ESF.
- Western NY Faculty and legislators are requesting \$350M in new state funding to address deficits that SUNY schools across the state are facing.
- The Chair of Cazenovia College Board of Trustees announced that the college will not reopen after its May 2023 commencement.
- Headwinds facing higher education are significant.
- ESF is facing a budget deficit, but is well positioned strategically:
  - Not facing declining enrollment.
  - Seeing significant increases in sponsored research revenue.
  - Hiring new faculty in clusters that will strengthen the College in strategic academic areas.
  - Long history of expertise in critical areas of focus such as sustainability.

Trustees will have the opportunity to review plans presented by President Mahoney and administration and provide feedback and make recommendations.

### **3. President's Report – Joanie Mahoney**

#### **3.1. College Updates:**

- SUNY recruitment initiatives:
  - SUNY offered free application weeks Oct. 24-Nov. 6. Students were allowed to select up to five schools. SUNY received 120,000 more applications than last year.
    - ESF received 2,000 applications during the free application week.
    - As of December 2, ESF received 2,533 first-year applications compared to 1,200 at the same time last year.
    - ESF has already exceeded the 2,466 total for first-year applications (a previous all-time high) from last year. Transfer applications are also up. The demand for ESF is strong.
    - K. McCarthy increased capacity of the Admissions Office to review applications. Working to get decisions and financial aid awards out early.
    - ESF already has deposits in, President Mahoney will continue her tradition of calling the



- first student that submitted a deposit.
- SUNY Out-of-State flagship tuition match: SUNY will accept the tuition rate of out-of-state student's home state flagship institution (example: SUNY will accept a tuition rate for students from Vermont equal to the in-state tuition rate for UVM).
  - Eight states have partnered with SUNY for this initiative.
  - SUNY will now determine EOP eligibility at system level as separate campuses have been reviewing the same students.
    - Individual campuses will still be ready to review eligibility if needed.
- SUNY new state-wide marketing campaign, "great minds – big hearts" will feature ESF student Isabel Valentin, who was recently featured in Vogue Magazine for her environmental activism work.
- ESF Recruitment Updates:
  - ESF Moved from an early decision college to early action.
  - Test Optional – creates a need to look at other opportunities to identify potential applicants. ESF has new partnerships:
    - Naviance: A high school platform – provides a new source of names for potential applicants.
    - Greenlight Match is an experiment with direct admission:
      - Non-profit that engages students that are traditionally disenfranchised by the college search.
      - Partnerships with high schools that send transcripts, Greenlight provides initial transcript review to help identify students that appear to be a good match for its partner colleges, then forwards selected transcripts for college review.
      - Greenlight has provided 65 transcripts that meet the math and science requirements and grade point average for ESF. ESF has reviewed and identified 61 of the transcripts as favorable for admission.
      - Greenlight is providing mostly out-of-state transcripts. ESF would like to mirror this program locally.
  - ESF is working closely with the National Student Clearing House to review where students that applied to ESF, but did not matriculate, have ended up.

Chair Fisher asked if ESF will reach out to Cazenovia undergraduates. President Mahoney responded that ESF has already been in conversation with Cazenovia and asked Provost Mukasa to elaborate. Dr. Mukasa noted that some students from Cazenovia College have been identified for transfer programs into Environmental Biology and Environmental Studies.

- Budget
  - State budget has been submitted to SUNY.
  - Each Department will meet with CFO, look for efficiencies.
  - Revenue is not enough to cover expenses.
  - SUNY has intentionally kept tuition rates low.
  - Six months of the budget is approved, full approval pending.



- Updating our budget to match SUNY BI system – standardization with SUNY
- SUNY has announced a new chancellor—John B. King, Jr. will begin in January
- Faculty/Staff/Student Highlights
  - Dr. Kimmerer named 2022 MacArthur Fellow, \$800K Genius Grant recipient
  - World’s Top-Cited Scientist: 34 ESF faculty were among world’s top 2% (conducted by Stanford University)
  - ORP received SUNY Partnership Excellence award recognizing its increased expenditures, awards, and proposals.
  - Climate warriors:
    - Madeline Clark: Graduated in 2015, returned for MS in Environmental Policy, inspired by working with the American Red Cross, she is studying how experiencing large-scale disasters during youth impacts the youth later in life
    - Isabel Valentin began environmental advocacy after Hurricane Maria devastated her home of Puerto Rico, She plans to use her ESF education to change the world as she continues her advocacy.
  - ESF has two Cross Country National Championship teams, again. ESF is the first school to win both men’s and women’s national championships two years in a row.
- ESF/DEC Partnership: Forest Rangers training academy – training was conducted at ESF Ranger School & the Newcomb Campus
  - President Mahoney specifically thanked DEC Commissioner Seggos, along with Mariann Johnston from the Ranger School & Paul Hai from the Newcomb campus
- Rankings and Ratings
  - Princeton Review #3 Top Green College
  - Platinum STARS Rating – Includes rankings for AASHE and Princeton Review
    - #1 for sustainability curriculum
    - #8 Doctoral granting program
    - Top Green College
- ESF, in partnership with the DEC, Cornell, and Syracuse University, received a \$60M grant for Climate-Smart Farms and Forests
- Podcast: Season 3 of Campus Conversations is almost complete: Bonus episodes include interviews with Senator May and Assemblyman Magnarelli.
- The ESF College Foundation is launching a capital campaign, working with consultant Washburn & McGoldrick.
- Media Presence
  - Dr. Kimmerer’s Genius Grant covered by: Washington Post, NYT, ABC News, WRVO (NPR), The Post Standard, and Science Friday.
  - Pollinator Garden covered by: WAER (NPR), Spectrum News, and WSYR (ABC).
  - SUNY free applications, ESF Specific coverage by WAER (NPR) and WSYR (ABC).

#### **4. Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives Report – Matt Millea**

##### **4.1. First-year Experience**

- Higher Education is facing many challenges.



- Demographic decline: NYS is seeing a significant decrease in the under 18 population, resulting in lower numbers of high school graduates.
- Industry Shift: companies like Google will offer certificate programs to its employees, eliminating the need for a college degree.
- Student Affairs formerly reported to the provost, now reports to Office of the President
  - Restructure:
    - Student Success & Engagement Director – specifically assigned to focus on student success
    - Campus Program & Comm. Service Coordinator
    - Leadership Development & Student Organization Coordinator
    - Added EOP Councilor
- Orientation for the 2022-23 academic year, returned to a normal in-person experience: Focus to ensure smooth handoff from recruitment to matriculation.
  - Student Success Initiatives: 132 courses were restructured as a recommendation from the first-year task force.
    - Shift programming to earlier in the semester: Course covers the transition from high school, student life, mental health/academic support service.
    - Professional Advisors: First-year task force made the recommendation to hire professional advisors. EB now has two professional advisors, they run the 132 courses for the department.
- Anthology: Engage – Platform for tracking Co-curricular Activities
  - Co-curriculars are identified as being an important piece of the student experience.
  - Students requested investment in Engage and have led the charge for its implementation.
  - Tracks club engagement and participation; 962 students are using the app.
  - Engage allows ESF to track service hours, this data is required for our STARS reporting.
- Anthology: Beacon – Important to have synergy between systems: “Software as a Service”
  - Key capabilities: visualizations and dashboards
  - Provides alerts for students at risk for failing and departing
- Student Mental Health
  - Better mental health treatment and options have enabled students who may not have previously taken a college track.
  - COVID-generation: Increase in struggle with mental health
  - In higher education, one mental health support specialist is recommended for every 1,500 students. ESF has three, this is more than recommended for our population.
  - Federal relief funds have been allocated to mental health including funding for a medical records system, SAD lights, zen booths, massage chairs, student wellness folders, ride share program for off-campus mental health appointments, and several other initiatives.
- A need for space – ground floor of Moon Library targeted and relocating archives to off-campus site.
- Food & Dining – moved from SUNY Morrisville to Syracuse University for management of Trailhead & the new Moon Café
  - New manager, Steve Morrison – very experienced in the food industry



- Dining plan can be used at Trailhead & Syracuse University. ESF would like to do a marketing push for Syracuse students to use Trailhead Café.

M. Millea noted that there will be attrition and our goal will be to identify why students leave and do what we can to fix it and increase our retention rates.

Trustee Bartow noted that he worked on the academic advising portion as one piece of first-year experience. He is happy to see that the academic advising piece, along with the other areas, is being addressed.

Q: Trustee Fedrizzi asked if there is a comprehensive listing of the initiatives that can benefit students and how these initiatives are communicated to campus?

A: M. Millea noted that communication begins with first messages to students and parents at welcome and convocation. A. Lombard noted that communication begins prior to arrival via newsletters in the summer and even starts with the Admissions team. Student Affairs is also looking to add a summer component to orientation to provide a more in-depth focus on student success initiatives.

Trustee Goodman suggested adding comprehensive list of student services to the Engage app.

S. Cochran noted that the Resilient Oaks app does support the items discussed, but consolidating by adding resources to Engage should be a goal.

Trustee DeMarchi noted that things have changed for employers and wondered how to shift to an employee-centric system, especially as the future of the workforce is experiencing the student-centric higher education model. President Mahoney discussed adding a session to the Career Fair for employers to learn about the student-centric experience.

M. Marko commented that the presentation was very important. He thanked President Mahoney for the leadership and coordinated effort of the team that has led to the work to address the flags and risks for student life. He commented that everything discussed is also linked to diversity. He asked how faculty is involved with the transition. G. Scott responded as a representative for faculty members, noting that they have to play a key part, this is the first time he's hearing about some items. Beacon will begin with senior leadership and will be brought to Academic Governance. It was noted that there have been many campus-wide presentations, seminars, and Academic Governance specific presentations, as well as resource folders provided for faculty. These initiatives aren't supposed to interfere with the classroom, rather should serve as a safety-net around the academic program.

## 5. Student Reports

### 5.1. Graduate – Trustee Goodman

- GSA will host CNY Student Conference on Environmental Science & Studies in collaboration with the Graduate School, ESF's Research Office, LSAMP, MOSA, and SU's GSO at ESF on April 7-8
  - Theme: Exploring the margins of environmental research for a better future.



- ESF GSA is working more closely with SU Graduate Student Organization, participating in their senate meetings.
  - ESF Graduate students pay into SU graduate funding but are not on their listserv, working to rectify.
- GSA surveyed grad students for concerns: Accessibility on Campus, specifically from Centennial Hall up.
  - Follow up transportation issue hours 5-8 pm
  - Safe orange app: rides start at 8 pm, but you can't request until 8 pm (up to 2-hour delay)

M. Lichtenstein noted that accessibility will be addressed with accessibility program: Stadium Place Building will include elevator to Baker Level, sidewalk will be installed. He and A. Lombard will discuss transportation issues.

- GSA will hold open house with the senate, Trustee Goodman invited President Mahoney, Provost Mukasa, Trustees, etc. Date will be shared when it is available.

#### 5.2. Undergraduate - S. Cochran (read by R. Squier)

- Training: MOSA has continued to grow student advocacy and support, offering Title IX, safe zone, and implicit bias training for club officers.
- Working to create Blackboard online training modules for club officers.
- Engage: students are checking in; clubs are using the platform extensively.
- Aquarium: MOSA collected concerns around environmental justice and met with representatives from the county and will work in partnership with county representatives.
- Mental health: mid-term grade resolution for academic milestones, mid-terms will help catch issues early in the academic year and help students and faculty devote more where needed. Will bring to AG with a goal to have mid-term grades added to ESF grading policy.
- Sustainable Events: Many events certified sustainable events, will support and encourage sustainable events.
- Future: Would like a return of College Hour as Marshall returns.

M. Lichtenstein commented that MOSA has really jumped on board with green events, he congratulated and thanked Silas for their participation.

### 6. Academic Governance Report

- Creating 3 Ad-Hoc Committees to review technology issues:
  - Classroom Tech Design; Research Computing; and Academic Software
- University Faculty Senate Plenary
  - Discussed campus governance leadership vacancies issues
    - President Mahoney noted that recommendations for new trustees are forwarded to the Governor's Office for consideration each year
  - Resolutions around Perkins loans held by State that do not align with federal Perkins loans that have been approved for deferral
  - SUNY budget advocacy





- SUNY needs to better advertise (and follow) class modalities
- Gen. Ed. implementation

M. Lichtenstein thanked G. Scott for the report that faculty will work on committees around campus technology and made the recommendation to discuss Banner and other software access issues within those committees.

## **7. Committee Reports:**

- 7.1. Diversity Equity and Inclusion: Trustee Bartow reported for the DEI Committee.
- Resignation of CDO, M. Carter, has been difficult for committee to operate without a CDO. J. Bartow thanked R. Hoda-Kearse for keeping things going.
  - Committee met with the Syracuse University Vice President for Diversity & Inclusion, Dr. Almandrez and Dr. Chin from the School of Engineering for a review of DEI at SU.
    - Dr. Almandrez shared what attracted her to the position at SU
    - SU has added accessibility to DEI
  - Committee recommends that ESF conduct an audit for of DEI tools and documents and present a clear directive for the new CDO to get a strategic plan in place. Committee is reviewing how to get an audit completed.
  - Review campus committees: review structure and reduce redundancies
  - Search committee has started reviewing CDO applications, hoping to schedule interviews prior to holiday. Marlena Daher-Rahman is representing the Board of Trustees DEI Committee on the search committee.

S. Mukasa noted that the campus-wide strategic planning committee consists of a 15-person steering committee with 10 focus groups, including one on DEI, social justice, and campus internationalization, which is co-chaired by Kailyn Wright, Lemir Teron.

## **8. New Business:**

- The 2023 and 2024 ESF Board of Trustees meeting dates have been provided. Committees will meet as needed.

## **Adjournment:**

Chair Fisher called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. M. Marko motioned, R. Fedrizzi seconded. All Approved.

The meeting adjourned at 11:37 am.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ragan Squier, Secretary to the Board, through the assistance of Nichole Dougherty.