



State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Board of Trustees Meeting
September 22 - 9:00 am
24 Marshall Hall, Zoom & Livestream

MINUTES

Voting Members in Attendance:

Chair William Fisher, Vice Chair John Bartow, Trustees Linda Brown-Robinson, Silas Cochran, Vita DeMarchi, Steven (Rick) Fedrizzi, Oluwole (OJ) McFoy, and Stephen Sloan (via Zoom).

Absent: Trustee Daniel Fitts

Non-Voting Members in Attendance:

Adriana Espinosa (representing DEC Commissioner, Basil Seggos) arrived at 9:09 am, Emme Christie (GSA).

College Personnel/Invited Guests in Attendance:

Joanne Mahoney (*President*), Ragan Squier (*Secretary to the Board*), Kelly Berger, Nichole Dougherty, Danushi Fernando, Danielle Gerhart, Brenda Greenfield, Susan Head, Mark Lichtenstein, Kitty McCarthy, Samuel Mukasa, John Stella, Baylee Woods, Gary Scott (9:17 am arrival), Diana Jaramillo, Robert MacGregor.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Welcome

Chair Fisher called the meeting of the ESF Board of Trustees to order at 9:02 am. Secretary Squier did roll call. With seven 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

- Approval of the Minutes of the May 12, 2023 Board Meeting
- Personnel Actions Presented for Board Review

Trustee Brown-Robinson motioned to approve the minutes from the May 12, 2023 Board Meeting. Trustee Fedrizzi seconded, all approved.

Trustee DeMarchi motioned to approve the Personnel Actions presented for Board review. Trustee McFoy seconded, all approved.

2. Chair's Report – Chair Fisher

- Chair Fisher reminded the Board that he requested a Sustainable Finance Committee meeting following the May Board meeting with a goal to review the budget and make



recommendations at the meeting today. He met with Chief Financial Officer, Susan Head, a few weeks ago and asked her to report to the Board. S. Head provided the following update:

- Budget was reviewed and consolidated into executive levels and submitted to SUNY for comment.
- ESF has revenue and expense numbers.
- Allocations will be distributed at the executive levels; executives will discuss with unit/department heads.
- Resources will be allocated in relation to Middles States assessment data.
- Will meet and bring information back to the Sustainable Finance Committee.
 - Finance Committee to meet in first half of October, all Trustees will be invited to participate.

3. President's Report – Joanie Mahoney

- President Mahoney reported on the start of the fall semester:
 - Reopening of Marshall Hall, first event was a welcome back reception for faculty & staff.
 - Review of incoming class demographics:
 - Record year of applications (3,542).
 - 401 first-year students, closer to peak class sizes.
 - ESF does not face enrollment issues that other financially stressed SUNY Colleges are experiencing.
 - Review of total undergraduate enrollment:
 - Up 7% from fall 2022 (to 1,738).
 - Total number still influenced by low incoming class size during COVID (fall 2021), but getting closer to normal numbers, ESF goal is to get back to peak enrollment.
 - Smaller pool of transfer students.
 - Review of graduate school enrollment numbers.
 - New student enrollment is flat, first-year retention is better.
 - Reported that a College retention council was formed to monitor and increase retention rates.
 - Noted ESF is waiting for the new FAFSA and new SUNY initiatives to finalize this year's recruitment strategies.
 - Highlight of orientation:
 - Highest attendance at New Student Convocation.
 - Highest participation in Saturday of Service—440 participants at 7 locations.
 - Largest move-in day at Centennial Hall.
- Announced a new Welcome Center that was established in the Gateway Center.
- Reported on Newcomb storm damage – Thanked Syracuse Facilities staff and Newcomb staff, along with DEC Park Rangers, who assisted with evacuation.
- Shared STARS Ranking. Only SUNY to achieve platinum rank, ESF practices what we preach.
 - #1 Investment and Finance – noted the work by B. Greenfield and the College Foundation.
 - #1 doctoral curriculum
 - #3 in research – First time in the top three for this category.
 - #4 in public engagement



- #7 in doctoral institutions – moved up in this area, ahead of UConn, Stanford and others.
- #8 in water
- Announced that ESF piloted the Chancellor’s Summer Research Excellence Fund Internship:
 - ESF was one of 6 campuses to receive funding from SUNY.
 - Funds provided for undergraduate internships – helps eliminate barriers for students that need to work and want to gain research experience.
- Announced that ESF joined TikTok – shared chestnut project video and analytics (224K views).
- Recognized individuals at ESF with notable achievements since our last meeting in May.
- Reported on ESF Hosted Events & Community Engagement:
 - MOST Summer Science Camp: Summer camp for rising ninth graders.
 - Timbuctoo Institute: Immersive Program created by ESF to introduce students to climate science and career opportunities; 50 sophomores and juniors from NYC participated.

A. Espinosa noted that the DEC is a partner with the Timbuctoo Institute and will be producing a promotional video to showcase the success of the program.

- NYS Fair: ESF booth, engaged with alumni, perspective students and Chancellor King.
- Dale Travis Lecture Series: Featured virtual forest work by Aidan Ackerman.
- Inaugural DEC day @ ESF: Commissioner Seggos attended, promoted career paths with the DEC. ESF has 662 alumni that work for the NYS DEC.
- Center for Sustainable Materials Management hosted its first statewide summit at ESF.
- Promotion and Tenure Policy Updates:
 - Policy had not been updated since 2015.
 - Chuck Kroll and Bob Malmshemer lead the college-wide review process.
 - Feedback on new policy has been good.
 - Initially included additional assessment of associate professors prior to review for promotion to full professor – this has been removed based on guidance from UUP and SUNY. Intention was to address gender inequity for full professors.
 - ESF will look to identify opportunities to provide additional support and feedback, outside of the P+T process, that can help with promotion and tenure.

Matt Smith noted that the tools exist in article 12 of SUNY Board of Trustees policy.

- Provided MSCHE Update:
 - ESF maintains its accreditation.
 - Need further evidence for two standards.
 - Valerie Luzadis and Jeremy Hall have created an aggressive schedule to gather information so they can file ESF’s report on 1/16/2024.
 - Reinstated a formal process for assessment. Formerly had one individual responsible, other areas of campus have been brought in to avoid a singular approach.
- Reviewed State Operating Financials:
 - Susan Head has created a model with better data and transparency.
 - Reviewed budget:

Revenue:

- Incremental funding- some is restricted, i.e.: mental health, transformational funding (for scaling up online courses and micro-credentials).
- Tuition revenue is up, our enrollment numbers have increased.



- RF reimbursements are from salary recovery for grant research by faculty, helps fund visiting faculty to assist with teaching.
- Pooled offset is received if we reach a non-tuition revenue target.

Chair Fisher asked if the tuition revenue is the net number, President Mahoney responded that it is not, it is before the scholarships, which are accounted for in the expenses.

Trustee McFoy asked why the miscellaneous revenue had increased. S. Head noted that the difference is mostly from the Timbuctoo funding which is over \$1M, we receive this funding in a different way.

Expenses:

- UUP negotiated salary increases, etc. created an increase in personnel expense.
- Non-personnel expenses, we're try to keep flat.
- Scholarships –40% of students receive scholarships - we attract highly recruited students; new model will help monitor this spending.
- State Loan – first payment due.
- Thanked M. Smith and UUP for advocacy for state funding, specifically for schools like ESF that are operating in a deficit and need the additional funding.
 - Funding was allocated using old formula.

Matt Smith noted that SUNY BOT and Chancellor did not honor legislative intent of funding.

- Enrollment up, tuition revenue is up, research up, philanthropic dollars up. ESF does well where we have control.
- ESF needs to advocate with SUNY.
- We can increase out- of-state tuition.
- Other SUNYs with partnerships with private institution charge out-of-state tuition at the rate of the private institution.
 - Syracuse tuition is \$60K, we charge \$17K, we pay bills to Syracuse at a much lower rate than other SUNYs connected to private institutions.
- Area of concern is the time it takes to hire. ESF is working on a stabilization plan with SUNY and we have committed that non-critical positions will be held for 6 months as part of our stabilization plan.
- Pursuing shared services with other SUNYs.
 - President Mahoney to meet with Chancellor and SUNY Board of Trustees to advocate for ESF.
 - SUNY has committed \$100M+ Illick Hall project along with a Stadium Place project.
 - Reviewed upcoming events: Homecoming, Feinstone, Family Weekend.
 - Rebecca Hoda-Kearse and Danielle Gerhart striving to make ESF a best place to work, focused on part of the strategic plan of building community.

Trustee DeMarchi requested to review information in a Finance Committee meeting.

Chair Fisher questioned the name of the Open Academy, noting that it is not clear what this means and wondering if ESF has considered a rebrand? President Mahoney responded that considering a rebrand makes sense. D. Gerhart noted that at the time of creation, the name was aligned with messaging from SUNY. Provost Mukasa also noted Open Academy encompasses other programs besides the online learning programs.



3.1. Strategic Plan 2023-2028: Provost Mukasa reported on the Strategic Plan

- Reviewed the process, which included strategic planning meetings by 12 academic departments, and 9 focus groups with 14 non-academic SWOT analysis completed, along with multiple community input and feedback sessions.
- Highlighted academic areas that ESF will need to establish to assist with increasing enrollment, with a focus on data and quantitative sciences.
- Next step is Implementation, a team has been identified and will assist with the following:
 - Provide implementation reports.
 - Select goals to address and update community on progress.
 - Update website with goals (annually).
 - Implement dashboards that show progress.

In response to Provost Mukasa's information on the increase in data being collected globally, Trustee Bartow asked if we have assessed the quality of data being collected. Provost Mukasa responded that new programs in data science will help our students to develop data analytic skills, noting that it will be imperative to master these skills for most future career paths. Matt Smith noted that Librarians are working as data analysts, big data is monopolized from corporations across the country, there is a need for expertise to curate data.

Chair Fisher presented a resolution to endorse the SUNY ESF Strategic Plan 2023-2028, final version dated 08/31/2023. Trustee McFoy motioned to endorse the resolution. Linda Brown-Robinson seconded, all approved.

4. Chief Diversity Officer Report: - *Danushi Fernando*

- The new College strategic plan states that diversity, equity, and inclusion need to be an institutional priority and incorporated into all areas.
- Addition of access under the Office, thus changing to Office of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Access.
- Diversity in STEM and Environmental Science fields is a global problem, not just an ESF issue.
- Establish Ladders: Work with community colleges, K-12, marginalized groups to work with SEEC, LSAMP, other student organizations.
- Establish Programming. IDEA Ambassadors, Affirmative Action Advocates.
- Accountability through Assessment – Campus Climate Survey.
- Address challenges: (Re)build bridges/relationships.
- Marginalized identities appreciate transparency around challenges.
- Highlighted Fall Events: Employee Mixers BIPOC and LGBTQIA

Adriana Espinosa asked if there are membership programs for marginalized communities. D. Fernando responded there are two paths, one for students, one for employees.

- MOSAIC – Help students build capacity – COVID was difficult, help navigate imposter syndrome, leadership program, build so orgs don't dissolve.
- Employees – professional development, help navigate imposter syndrome.

Chair Fisher asked if ESF is compliant with SUNY policies. D. Fernando noted that she is working with



Assessment, Counsel and Human Resources on compliancy. Will have more info. in next report.

Trustee Bartow noted that the previous SUNY chancellor established a 25-point strategy, we are currently waiting for guidance from the new chancellor.

A. Espinosa questioned how the Affirmative Action case is impacting recruitment. D. Fernando noted that we are waiting for guidance from SUNY.

E. Christie noted that they have observed an increase in student diversity. GSA completed a campus survey on accessibility and will share the results.

Trustee Fedrizzi questioned if inclusion encompasses mental health? D. Fernando responded, yes and that the new Director for Counseling is working very intentionally to build more capacity.

5. Satellite Properties Facilities Master Plan

- M. Lichtenstein announced the Satellite Properties Facilities Master Plan has been completed.
 - The firm visited and assessed 8 properties across the state with estimates of projects over a 10-year period.
 - Recommended the Facilities Committee meet to review the plan, then report back at a future meeting.
- M. Lichtenstein also reported on and shared photos of the flooding disaster that impacted the Newcomb Campus in June, 2023.
 - 18K acres of roads damaged, impacted access for research, students, the Forest Service, and USGS, along with others that use our roads, such as the DEC Park Rangers conducting rescues in the high peaks region.
 - State Partners: NYS Office and General Services and DEC Rangers responded rapidly.
 - ESF received assistance from Newcomb partners and other local partners and ESF staff. All were phenomenal and ESF will reach out to thank them.
 - Opportunity to engage faculty and study to build back better and more resilient.
 - Estimated \$2.5M-\$3M of damage, ESF is working with FEMA and SUNY to recover money, including staff time.

Trustee Bartow asked if the area was declared a disaster zone. M. Lichtenstein responded yes.

Trustee Bartow noted that ESF may be eligible for emergency funds from the Bond Act, as there are funds for working forest easements.

A. Espinosa noted that the DEC has extended the deadline for the web survey soliciting ideas for the Bond Act, recommended entering ideas for review by Chief Resiliency Officer.

6. Student Reports:

6.1. Trustee Cochran reported for the Mighty Oaks Student Association:

- Highlighted accomplishments



- Launched club trainings on Blackboard.
- Partnership with SU Student Assembly – Trolley system to farmers market.
 - Club representatives vote in general assembly.
- New website
- Established MOSAIC
- Reviewed new Initiatives:
 - MOSAIC – help with advising and space on campus.
 - Oakie’s Green Team – Help improve and ensure sustainable practices on campus.
 - Oakie’s Activity Council – Bring life back to campus.
- Highlighted upcoming projects:
 - Restore College Hour in spring ’24.
 - Identify opportunities to offer incentives to student leaders.
 - Mid-Term grade resolution – monitor and assist with training of faculty if needed.
- Reported on the MOSA budget:
 - Increase in student involvement has increased the financial burden.
 - Ran in deficit – reserves currently covering the cost of operations.
 - Auxiliary Corporation – hoping to reduce audit fee by sharing services.
 - Student driver policy – reduce miles on personal vehicles, 18K miles driven on personal vehicles resulted in \$7k in personal reimbursement.
 - Considering an increase in student activity fee – ESF is on lower end within SUNY, when adding in the Syracuse University activity fee, we are comparable with other SUNY schools.

Trustee DeMarchi asked why the campus college hour went away. Trustee Cochran responded that it was from Marshall being offline, the building is back online now and college hour should return for the spring semester.

6.2. Emme Christie reported for the Graduate Student Association:

- Shared GSA Visions and Mission.
- Explained difference between GSA and GESU.
 - Graduate Student Employees Union represents students employed by ESF.
 - GSA represents all grad students.
- Reviewed grad student demographics and emphasized the importance of getting more international students involved in student government.
- Reviewed organizational structure, restructured to improve efficiency.
- GSA and MOSA have strategized to gain more representatives with SUNY.
- Reviewed success of CNY Conference on Environmental Science and Studies (CCESS).
 - Will host again, scheduled for 2/29-3/1/2024.
- Rebuilding relationships: working closely with MOSA, SU, and ESF administration.
- Creating opportunities for graduate students to earn professional development credits and mentor experience.

Trustee Brown-Robinson asked how often GSA meets. E. Christie responded that senators meet twice a month. Chairs and other also meet on varying schedules.



7. Academic Governance: Shared governance system.

- Reviewed Committees.
- Noted that campus improvements and capital projects are encouraging.
- Faculty/Staff/Students have concerns:
 - Middle States Assessment – Lack of communication, overall schedule is fast-paced.
 - Understaffed departments.
 - Communication and transparency.
- AG meets monthly during the college hour, BOT can attend and may be invited to speak at upcoming meeting.

Trustee DeMarchi asked what the role of AG leadership is to address lack of enthusiasm and consult with administration and if AG has any recommendations for solutions to concerns. G. Scott did provide a response.

- Reported faculty/staff feel pressured and overworked.
- Provost Mukasa noted that we are compliant in 5 of 7 standards. We are non-compliant for 2 of 7. We are addressing these areas by providing the data needed.
 - Implementing dashboards for decision making and allocation.
- In response to the report of a lack of communication, Provost Mukasa noted that he meets with untenured faculty monthly and holds a townhall once a semester, he noted that only 7 people attended his recent townhall.

Trustee Fedrizzi noted that solutions being presented are logical and that information needs to be positively communicated. There is a clear commitment to success from the administration. Things that have been missing are growing and thriving, temporary problems should not stop us from being excited to be involved in doing this work.

Trustee McFoy asked how faculty and staff are perceiving the decline in enrollment, staffing issues, potential cuts, etc. G. Scott responded that departments cuts and workload are concerns.

Chair Fisher summarized that becoming compliant with the two accreditation standards identified as needing additional work is a priority of the College and asked if Academic Governance is committed to supporting the Provost and the College with the information needed to come into compliance. G. Scott did not feel that he could speak for others at the College.

Chair Fisher asked if there would be opportunities for feedback from Middle States or if the information would be submitted and then a decision given. President Mahoney responded that the process is ongoing and includes opportunities for feedback and guidance.

8. Committee Reports:

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – *Trustees Brown-Robinson and Bartow*

Trustees Bartow reported for the DEI Committee. He has been meeting with Danushi and discussing how to move forward with the following recommendations presented:

1. Campus-wide IDEA committee, Trustee Brown-Robinson will serve on campus DEI committee



and bring info back to the Board of Trustees.

2. Staffing for IDEA Office. Personnel can stay where they are, but can work with IDEA office. Include staffing in the next year's budget.

3. MOSAIC proposal – moving forward.

Student recruitment—Employee Recruitment—Included in Strategic Plan, hold accountable.

On the right track, will support staff doing the work.

- Facilities Committee Report -- Trustee Fedrizzi reported that he met with the State University Construction Fund and SUNY Chief Sustainability Officer to gain understanding of the organizational structure and help build relationship. They discussed LEED and WELL.

Emme Christie asked about the status of IT identities. Chair Fisher noted that this is a priority and ESF is in active conversation with SU.

9. New Business:

No new Business.

Adjournment:

Chair Fisher called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Brown-Robinson motioned to adjourn the meeting, Trustee McFoy seconded. All approved.

The meeting adjourned at 12:31 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ragan Squier with assistance by Nichole Dougherty.