



State University of New York
College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Board of Trustees Meeting
December 8, 2023 - 9:00 am
24 Marshall Hall, Zoom & Livestream

MINUTES

Voting Members in Attendance:

Chair William Fisher, Vice Chair John Bartow, Trustee Linda Brown-Robinson, Trustee Silas Cochran, Trustee Vita DeMarchi, Trustee Steven (Rick) Fedrizzi, Trustee Daniel Fitts, Trustee Oluwale (OJ) McFoy, Trustee Stephen Sloan (via Zoom).

Absent: None.

Non-Voting Members in Attendance:

Adriana Espinosa (representing DEC Commissioner, via Zoom), Emme Christie (GSA).

College Personnel in Attendance:

Joanne Mahoney (*President*), Ragan Squier (*Secretary to the Board*) (via Zoom), Kelly Berger, Nichole Dougherty, Danushi Fernando, Danielle Gerhart, Brenda Greenfield, Susan Head, Mark Lichtenstein, Kitty McCarthy, Samuel Mukasa, John Stella, Baylee Woods, Gary Scott, Diana Jaramillo, Matt Smith (President, UUP), Aley O'Mara (UUP), Camden Roberts (President, GSEU), Grace Vollmers (GSEU), Valerie Luzadis, Paul Hai.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Welcome

Chair Fisher called the meeting of the ESF Board of Trustees to order at 9:07 am. He announced the recent passing of former Trustee Leslie Talbot, thanked her for her service to the College and called for a moment of silence in her honor. Chair Fisher did roll call. With eight voting trustees in attendance, in-person, a quorum was confirmed.

1. Consent Agenda – Chair Fisher

- Approval of the Minutes of the September 22, 2023 Board Meeting.
- Personnel Actions Presented for Board Review.
- Candidates for Graduation Presented to Board for Endorsement.

Trustee Bartow motioned to approve the consent agenda items. Trustee Brown-Robinson seconded, all approved.

2. Chair's Report – Chair Fisher

- Chair Fisher discussed the MSCHE process:
 - Seven trustees met with Dr. Judith Sciple from MSCHE in October.
 - Reviewed two standards that ESF needs follow up actions on: Standard V: Educational



Effectiveness Assessment and Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement.

- The Sustainable Finance Committee has been focusing on Standard VI.

Trustee Fedrizzi asked about Standard V, wondering if there is more involved than students' relationship and success.

- Dr. Valerie Luzadis noted that ESF must follow best practices in higher education that focus on the process of documentation and assessment of cohorts over the years to ensure that our programs are designed the way they need to be and have the necessary resources for success.
- ESF has been following the process (as indicated in the MSCHE report) but needs to provide better documentation.
- She will provide a more in-depth discussion of the process and the data analysis involved during her presentation.
- Chair Fisher noted risks related to MSCHE and that efforts to mitigate risks will be important.
 - Some institutions have been requested to cut programs and reduce expenses.
 - The Sustainable Finance Committee has met twice since the September Board meeting, has reviewed the budget at a deeper level and has reviewed changes to budget cycle.
 - ESF will need to address budget deficit by reducing expenses and increasing enrollment, rather than waiting for direction from others on how to address our budget deficit for us.

Trustee DeMarchi commented that the level of budget participation has been encouraging.

3. President's Report – Joanie Mahoney

3.1. College Update

- Strategic Plan approved; implementation committee appointed. Will provide updates.
- SU contract expired 5/13/2024. President, Counsel, and Executive Director for Strategic Initiatives attend meetings.
 - Framework is set. Looking to add graduate school partnership, housing, food.
 - On track for agreement by March for the next steps of presentation for approval by the attorney general and state comptroller to avoid a lapse on May 13th.
- The Auxiliary Services Corporation has been set up and held its first meeting.
 - First resolution to hire a consultant on parking was passed.
- Budget Review: Presented mid-year review.
 - ESF is on track for the proposed budget.
 - Budget is not in balance, projected deficit of \$8.5M, same as last year.
 - We received a one-time loan from SUNY, the loan repayment will take place over five years, adding to our annual deficit.
- S. Head has made updates within the Business Intelligence (BI) system.
 - Departments can all view budget information in BI system, departments previously lacked access to budget information.
 - S. Head meeting to review and create budget worksheets.
 - Transition, deficit, and covid resulted in a flat budget without much need for budget planning.
 - Departments and units are now actively participating in budget planning.



- Maximizing campus space: ESF needs to be more deliberate with planning and use of space.
 - Looking to add new lab space at ESF.
 - Introduce a new process that will help with space equity.
 - Assess and maximize our space using data-based space allocation.
 - Space needed for faculty to conduct research as part of the promotion and tenure process, we have had an instance where we were not ready to provide a lab for new faculty.
- Enrollment
 - SUNY marketing campaigns have helped increase our number of applications.
 - SUNY free applications are creating a significant increase in workload for admissions for review as we experience the highest number of first-year applications we have ever had.
 - Out-of-state flagship tuition match (Eight other states – pay home state in-state rate).
 - FASFA is typically available in October, delayed until end of year due to changes to FASFA, this will set the process back.
 - It is important to get financial aid packages out quickly as data shows that the first acceptances impact enrollment decisions.
 - ESF enrollment is increasing, even with the decline in the college-age population.
 - Out-of-State enrollment has increased, this has been deliberate as higher out-of-state tuition helps increase revenue.
 - ESF can do this without impacting in-state applicants because we are working to increase our total enrollment.
- SUNY/University of Puerto Rico MOU: Traveled to Puerto Rico during SOMOS for signing of MOU.
 - ESF and UPR will collaborate on joint academic and research programs and services that focus on environmental justice, sustainability, and climate change.
 - ESF has a long-standing commitment to and partnership with Puerto Rico focus led by M. Lichtenstein.
 - M. Lichtenstein organized a roundtable discussion with SUNY, congress people, NGOs, and Puerto Rican students. ESF was highlighted for its continued commitment in Puerto Rico, contrasting groups that go on one service trip and then never return.
- ESF is a school of national service: We will offer AmeriCorps alumni a one-year deferral on admission.
- SUNY Sustainability Advisory Committee – established by Chancellor King, led by SUNY Chief Sustainability Officer, Carter Stickland.
 - Co-chaired by President Mahoney and President Alberto Cardell (SUNY Oneonta).
 - ESF Committee members: staff representative: Sue Fassler, student representatives: Isabel Valentin and Eden Gardner.
- Chancellor King is relying on assistance from ESF, especially in areas relating to sustainability.
 - Asked President Mahoney to represent him on the Aspen Institute’s Higher Education Climate Action taskforce.
- SUNY Provost/President of SUNY Research Foundation (RF) visited ESF.
 - State agencies can’t contract directly with the RF, they work with ESF and we work with RF.



- Layers make for a slow process that creates frustrations for research faculty.
- If we can get RF as preferred vendor with the state, this can make for a more streamlined process.
- President met with SUNY Chancellor and senior leadership staff to present on how ESF is unique.
 - ESF is different: relationship with SU, STEM programming, footprint, no food services, etc.
 - Ex: SUNY issued funding for accessibility improvement, we pay SU for our accessibility, we can't use the funding to offset our payment to SU.
 - The Chancellor gave a directive for ESF to grow to a solution to our fiscal problems, no discussion of cutting.
 - The Chancellor likes our enrollment trends and increase in out-of-state enrollment.
 - Supportive of capital funding for ESF to accommodate growth.
 - Growth will not be able to happen overnight, increases in both out-of-state students and out-of-state tuition should have taken place over time.
- ESF People:
 - Student: Isabel Valentin named woman of the year in Puerto Rico, interviewed on ESF podcast.
 - Faculty: Dr. Karin Limburg received the Distinguished Career Award during the International Otolith Symposium in Chile – sustainable fisheries research.
 - Dr. Joshua Millsbaugh, an ESF alum and the new Camp Fire Conservation Fund Professor, will lead a research program that involves graduate students and focuses on establishing expertise in ecology and management of big-game species, the program is also designed to cultivate conservation partnerships.
 - Dr. Bill Powell passed away on Sunday, November 12th. President Mahoney provided a tribute to Dr. Powell and his contributions to education and research around the American Chestnut Tree.
 - \$636K grant from the USDA for ESF Chestnut, to monitor disbursement of chestnuts.
 - NYS Commendation Award for Dr. Powell and Dr. Maynard for work to restore American Chestnut. Andy Newhouse and Linda McGuigan accepted on behalf of Dr. Powell and Dr. Maynard.
- President Mahoney is meeting with Academic Governance Executive Committee.
 - Will hold retreat of AGECE and the President's Executive Cabinet on January 9th (result of a clear need for better communication).
 - Will discuss shared governance.
 - President Mahoney is committed to transparency.
 - A professional facilitator will work with the group.
- Response to public safety concerns after some incidents in the fall 2024 semester.
 - ESF will implement AppArmor, a public safety app, for the spring 2024 semester.
 - Improved family communication – ESF Family Connection, a web-based platform to communicate with families.
- Implementing TimelyCare for telehealth and tele-mental health services. Full launch in February.
- ESF Athletics:



- Men & Women's cross-country teams both three-peat as National Champions.
- Women's soccer team won the conference for seventh straight year.
- ESF Hall of Fame inductees during alumni weekend: Two championship cross-country teams were inducted, along with individuals from golf, lacrosse, soccer, and basketball.
- Climate and Applied Forest Research Institute (CAFRI), led by Dr. Colin Beier, created a publication; a map of carbon accounting, which can serve as an essential tool for New York State to meet its goals for net-zero carbon emissions. The map can help target where to protect land, establish new forests, and where to improve sequestration and storage on working lands.
 - Serve as scientific and advocacy tools – includes mapping by cities, towns, assembly districts, etc.
 - The publication was used by NYSERDA in a recent RFP.
 - Revenue of approx. \$2M between CAFRI and Timbuctoo programs.
- ESF role relative to Micron: Held meeting on campus on Nov. 7th as Micron was looking to interact with the environmental community. Helped Micron to understand who ESF is (not just a school within SU).
- Trash Audit Results: 38% of trash should have been recycled or composted (diverted).
- Alumni weekend: 200 visitors, 15 events hosted. Good faculty participation. Featured Landscape Architecture tours of Marshall Hall, a Robin Kimmerer book signing, and the athletics hall of fame induction.

3.2. Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) Update – *Valerie Luzadis*

- Accreditation required by congress.
 - Accreditation is required for eligibility for Title IV funding (financial aid) and some federal grants.
 - MSCHE has been recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a global institutional accreditor since 1952.
 - ESF has been a member of MSCHE and has maintained continual accreditation since 1952.
- Review of process
 - As a member, we agree to meet best practices as articulated by seven standards.
 - Eight-year reaccreditation cycle (next cycle 2029-2030)
 - Self-study begins two years ahead (2027-2028).
- Current status:
 - ESF remains accredited.
 - ESF received a non-compliance warning with two standards: Standard V and Standard VI
 - Need better documentation around standards V and VI.
 - Monitoring report due to MSCHE by 1/16/2024: provide evidence that ESF has achieved and can sustain ongoing compliance with standards V and VI including:
 - Assessment of student learning programs and use of assessment results to improve teaching and learning (standard V).
 - Development and implementation of organized and systematic assessment that evaluates the extent of student achievement in general education (standard V).
 - Clearly stated, aligned, and coherent institutional and unit objectives with evidence of the implementation of a systematic, organized, and sustained



assessment process demonstrating that institutional and unit stakeholders have considered and used assessment results in planning, budgeting, and the improvement of institutional and unit effectiveness (standard VI).

- ESF's response – a campus-wide effort.
 - ESF received the warning letter on 6/29/2023, status was anticipated based on our MSCHE visits – work began before official warning notice.
 - Created a platform in Microsoft Teams to collect and view data in dashboards.
 - April – June 2023 - Collected curriculum reports from academic departments.
 - May-June 2023 – implemented institutional improvement and assessment process; Administrative units developed goals and metrics (KPIs) in alignment with institutional priorities and strategic goals and budget needs.
 - Spreadsheets were designed to show data by strategic planning pillars, themes, and goals, allowing us to connect our mission and actions with our Strategic Plan.
 - Meetings held across all departments and units, full campus engagement in the process.
 - The 2024 Hardey Shirley colloquium in January will be dedicated to strategic planning and accreditation.
 - Report writing team established: Tyler Dorholt and Kurt Stavenhagen.
 - Held institutional planning meetings in November: included cross-cutting goals and discussions on how we can improve.
 - Status of three elements asked to report on:
 - Academic Assessment plans, 93% complete - working to finalize others now.
 - Program Learning Outcomes, 68% have assessment data:
 - General Education nearly complete.
 - Data available for multiple years for some Collegewide Learning Outcomes (CWLOs)
 - Assessment of two of the six CWLOs will take place each year beginning in spring 2024 (three-year rotation).
 - 100% of administrative units have goals aligned with strategic plan.
- Planning and Next Steps:
 - Supervisors will review reports prior to submission to MSCHE on January 16, 2024.
 - Executive summary will be produced and used for engagement and preparation moving forward.
 - ESF adhered to an accelerated timeline by using an abbreviated process.
 - MSCHE was satisfied with progress at most recent meeting.
 - College will build out a full annual process for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, including planning and budgeting.

Trustee Fedrizzi questioned if all SUNYs are evaluated in the same timeframe. Dr. Luzadis responded that evaluation is staggered among SUNYs. He also questioned if information on all SUNY Colleges is shared system-wide. Dr. Luzadis responded that all SUNY Colleges are members of the MSCHE and we can view the data, but it is not reported through SUNY.

Trustee DeMarchi questioned if the MSCHE report is a living document? Dr. Luzadis responded that the report is specific, but that we will have guidance documents that will help to clearly define our process.



Trustee Fitts questioned if MSCHE is involved in our campus process. Dr. Luzadis responded that they are not involved, they will receive our report and will have access to all documentation.

Trustee McFoy noted that accreditation includes evaluation of institutional effectiveness and is outcome based, he questioned how much was lost and how much was buried since the last accreditation process. Dr. Luzadis responded that our data improves every day, the transition to Banner in 2020 created challenges, we are working through challenges.

Chair Fisher commented that ESF will plan and improve which may take time. We are currently in the planning phase, and it is likely that we will stay under review. We will be required to submit a one-year report, it is likely that we will need another in two years to show that we have a sustained process. He noted the three potential outcomes: 1. Warning lifted. 2. Warning narrowed. 3. Probation. He emphasized that we are being reviewed on the documentation of our process involving the use of data to make change, not measuring our achievement.

Chair Fisher provided a land acknowledgment as the meeting resumed from break.

4. Timbuctoo: Paul Hai thanked the Board for the opportunity to present on the Timbuctoo summer program.

He discussed the ideas and history that lead to the development of the Timbuctoo Institute:

- Institutions as monoliths, address by changing the foundations that support us.
- Attract the audiences that we want to reach. Institutions need to focus on being more representative.
- History: Timbuctoo is a John Brown reference – John Brown’s Farm is located just outside of Lake Placid. Timbuctoo and John Brown were pillars in the fight for equality and access.
- ESF aimed to parallel John Brown’s Timbuctoo mission by providing access to careers.
- ESF partnered with the ADK Council and Medgar Evars College and legislative partners.
 - Immersive summer program with 48 slots, aimed to expose underrepresented students to people in careers that intersect climate science, climate justice, environmental justice, social justice.
 - Introduced career pathways: Started in Brooklyn, moved throughout ESF campuses, met with people in careers in each location. Engaged with several senators and assembly members.
 - Explored history of locations, the forest industry and had a strong focus on ethics.
 - Included admissions information sessions and essay writing guidance for college admissions applications.
 - Focused on supporting local and minority-owned businesses.
 - Doubled as a tool for undergraduate recruitment and provided graduate student opportunities.
 - Established ESF as a trusted partner.
- Next steps: Timbuctoo has funding for one more year, look for future funding.
 - A. Espinosa commented that the DEC was happy to partner with ESF and the DEC will support funding for Timbuctoo in the budget.

5. Committee Reports:



Sustainable Finance Committee.

Trustee Fitts questioned what SUNY is telling ESF about our financial situation? He also questioned the role of the College Foundation in providing support.

President Mahoney reported that SUNY has told us that we need to grow enrollment.

- B. Greenfield reported on support from the College Foundation:
 - SUNY completed the return on investment for fundraising, Foundation provides about \$8M in support for the College, has grown since President Mahoney became president.
 - Increased beds in dorms.
 - Foundation and Alumni Association will be more deliberate in engaging alumni for support, Career Services will now report to the College Foundation and will grow both career opportunities for students and corporate partnerships for the College.

Trustee Bartow questioned what it means to grow out of deficit structure. President Mahoney noted that it will include growth in enrollment, growth in facilities, and increased revenue opportunities. She noted that ESF will also need to evaluate the faculty to student ratio and address where ESF wants to be. She noted that ESF serves as a workforce development university for the State of New York. She also noted that S. Head has been tasked with developing our stabilization plan.

E. Christie noted that it is important to communicate ESF's status with SUNY to the student body. Chair Fisher reported that the Sustainable Finance Committee has more detail than has been provided in the past and has a better understanding of the budget. The Committee is looking to make recommendations and will meet again to review the SU contract.

Facilities Committee Report: Trustee Fedrizzi reported that the Committee has not met but that he met with the SUNY Construction Fund. He also met with M. Lichtenstein and D. Jaramillo.

D. Jaramillo provided a brief update on the following projects:

- Stadium Place SMSA schematic phase, completed design charette.
- Illick Program verification phase. Review existing building, programs, equipment, staff, offices, etc.
 - Illick Hall will undergo total gut renovation, even more than Marshall.
 - Timeline for construction bid is December 2024.

M. Lichtenstein noted that ESF is focused on space and planning. An annual space utilization survey will be developed. He also reported that ESF has the temporary certificate of occupancy for Marshall Hall. The building will be turned over on Jan. 1, 2024 with several punch list items remaining, we can then decide how to proceed with the completion of the work.

- 6. Academic Governance Report:** G. Scott noted that Academic Governance is part of larger SUNY governance. He shared three resolutions passed at recent plenaries and approved by ESF AG.
- Continued support of AG and introduction of micro credentials, urge appropriate support and equitable access.
 - Faculty Senate resolution to freeze stability plan at Potsdam, request for a transparent process and consultation with faculty and students.
 - University Faculty Senate president will work with SUNY for expanded support for SUNY and CUNY. SUNY did not allocate funds appropriately.

G. Scott requested that the Board advocate to properly fund SUNY and ESF. He noted better work between AG and President Mahoney and Executive Cabinet. He also noted that Trustees are



welcome to attend AG in person or via Zoom.

Chair Fisher asked Trustee DeMarchi to discuss advocacy versus lobbying. Trustee DeMarchi noted best practices for campuses as developed by the Association for Council Members and College Trustees (ACT). ACT is active in advocacy for budgets. Trustees can speak with legislators to assist in getting the messages out but need to be careful to avoid entering into the lobbying level. The Governance Committee can further discuss lobbying at their next Committee meeting.

7. Student Reports:

7.1 Trustee Cochran reported for MOSA:

- Provided date on student involvement: 300% growth since fall 2022, 52% of students involved. Five new special interest groups (groups in process of becoming clubs).
- MOSA has been working to establish benefits for involvement in MOSA.
 - Partnered with Alumni Association to provide E-Board members with a discount at the College Bookstore.
- MOSA resolution on mid-term grades passed last academic year, 86% of fall mid-term grades submitted.
- Department Mixers have been successful.
- ESF hosted SUNY Student Assembly.
- Projects & Goals:
 - Updating bylaws
 - Resolution to involve department senators.
 - Restore traditions on campus – The Knothole, Eustace B. Nifkin.
 - \$\$ - Increase student activity fee to address finances.

7.2. Emme Christie reported for the Graduate Student Association:

- GSA continues to work on restructure for organizational efficacy.
- Increase in participation.
 - Looking for additional funding, considering an increase in the student fee.
- Noted that relationships are getting better.
- GSA focused on shifting funding from social activities to professional development activities.
- Creating a MOSA-GSA research mentoring program that will launch in Spring '24, providing funding to prevent mentors from incurring any additional costs.
- Working to establish a grad-focused writing program.
- Hosting the second CNYC Conference on Environmental Science and Studies: March 22-23, 2024.

8. New Business: Trustee Bartow motioned to table the agenda item of the Sustainable Finance Committee's recommendations regarding College Finances, Trustees DeMarchi seconded, all approved.

Adjournment: Trustee Brown Robinson motioned to adjourn, Trustee Fedrizzi seconded, all approved. The meeting adjourned at 12:25PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Nichole Dougherty.