



BUFFALO STATE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL



COUNCIL MEETING November 28, 2023, 4:00 PM MINUTES

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

In person

Chair Linda Dobmeier
Ms. Patricia Farrell
Mr. Pete Grum
Mr. Charles Naughton
Mr. Gary Siddall
Mr. Mo Sumbundu
Mr. Donald DJ Hardwick (student representative)

Virtually via Zoom

Mr. Robert Zak

Excused:

Mr. Kevin Horrigan

FACULTY & STAFF PRESENT (in person):

Interim President Bonita R. Durand
Provost Jim Mayrose
Interim Vice President for Management and Operations, Lisa Krieger
Interim Vice President for Finance and Controller, Jim Thor
Vice President for Student Affairs, Tim Gordon
Vice President for Institutional Advancement, Jim Finnerty
Vice President for Enrollment Management, Randy Bowen
Dean, School of the Professions, Carol DeNysschen
Interim Chief Diversity Officer, Lisa Morrison-Fronckowiak
Associate Provost, Academic Affairs, Amitra Wall
Secretary to the University Council and President's Chief of Staff, LeVar Burke
Interim Executive Assistant to the President, President's Office, Melissa Slisz
Temporary Administrative Assistant 2, President's Office, Kristine Kaminsky

ALSO PRESENT (in person):

Channel 7 News

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dobmeier called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. Chair Dobmeier welcomed everyone to the last Buffalo State Council meeting for the fall 2023 semester. Chair Dobmeier thanked all for attending, in person and remotely.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Mr. DJ Hardwick reported on the ACT 2024 Annual conference. (See attached.)

Chair Dobmeier noted that this report will serve both as the Council Chair's Report and the Nominations & Presidential Search Advisory Report.

The chair of the presidential search committee, Ms. Linda Dobmeier, shared that the presidential search committee activities have concluded. From October 22nd to November 3rd, the search committee hosted six highly qualified presidential candidates on campus. On November 6, 2023, at the final search committee meeting, four of those candidates were presented to the University Council. As per the New York State Public Officer Law, the University Council then went into executive session to deliberate on these candidates. Following careful consideration, the Council members voted, and three candidates were advanced to the SUNY Chancellor, Dr. John B. King, Jr., and the SUNY Board of Trustees for their consideration.

Chair Dobmeier said that the executive search firm, Storbeck Search, has been instrumental in the successful realization of the search process. She extended her thanks to Mr. Steve Leo, Dr. Christopher Lee, Ms. Vicki Henderson, and to SUNY Assistant Vice Chancellor Zulaika Rodriguez, for their support.

Chair Dobmeier expressed her gratitude to all the members of the presidential search committee and the dedicated staff--LeVar Burke, Carolyn Morris-Hunt, Bill Benfanti, Matt Heidt, Tom Killian, Lamar Floyd, and all the staff in Marketing and Communications, IT, the Alumni and Visitors Center, and Chartwells. Their contributions made this process run smoothly. Chair Dobmeier also gave thanks to the search representatives, and the Buffalo State community.

This past summer, Chair Dobmeier empaneled a Presidential Transition Committee, who will meet again at the beginning of the spring 2024 semester to prepare for welcoming and on-boarding our permanent president.

Dr. Bonita Durand was thanked for her interim leadership during this time of transition.

In closing, Chair Dobmeier reiterated her gratitude to all involved in this process and looks forward to the next steps to select the best candidate to serve as Buffalo State's 10th president.

ACTION ITEMS

Chair Dobmeier called for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 3, 2023 meeting. Mr. Sumbundu moved that the minutes be approved; the motion was seconded by Ms. Farrell. The motion carried by unanimous vote.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Interim President shared that she is grateful for the diligence, support, and unwavering commitment of the University Council to the progress of this beloved institution. She expressed that she is also thankful for their presence at the update on the State of the University Address that was delivered on Tuesday, November 14, 2023, which was shared in her report (see attached).

Central to the address was the implementation of Buffalo State University's Financial Sustainability Plan, an initiative crafted to tackle the structural deficit and bolster the financial stability of the institution. The structural deficit, a challenge Buffalo State University has grappled with for some time, is a product of the imbalance between the total employee count and the current student enrollment. However, with the strategic plan, the President is optimistic about resolving this issue over the next year, and by the 2027-2028 academic year, as mandated by SUNY.

The action plan involves the reframing of our strategic priorities, the crux of which is the enhancement of morale and the campus climate, followed by the addressing of our structural deficit. The President firmly believes that these two priorities, when pursued in tandem, will create a conducive environment for academic excellence and financial sustainability.

To address Buffalo State's structural deficit, three strategic initiatives were proposed. First, there will be a focus on increasing the student enrollment and residence hall occupancy, thereby improving financial footing and enriching the academic discourse. Second, there will be

a diversification of the revenue sources beyond tuition, leveraging the Auxiliary Services, intensifying fundraising efforts, and advocating for increased government support. Last, there will be a plan to implement a prudent budget reduction strategy, which will involve stabilizing the workforce and optimizing Buffalo State University's academic offerings.

As part of the workforce stabilization plan, a rolling 12-month hiring freeze, effective November 14, 2023, has been implemented. This measure will significantly reduce the structural deficit by the 2027-2028 academic year, although it will not eliminate it entirely. To close the remaining gap, optimization strategies will be launched, which will involve a thorough analysis of Buffalo State University's service delivery mechanisms, benchmarking non-academic organizational structure against peer institutions, and a comprehensive review of academic offerings.

In conclusion, Buffalo State University is committed to enhancing its financial sustainability while improving morale and campus climate. The President is confident that the strategic initiatives will set the stage for a more robust and resilient institution, capable of overcoming present challenges and forging a prosperous future. The President's full remarks and Divisional Highlights were submitted for review (see attached).

COMMITTEES

- **Naming of Buildings and Grounds (Robert Zak)**

No report.

- **President's Community Advisory Board (William Benfanti)**

No report.

- **Student Life, Housing, Conduct, & Safety Committee (Charles Naughton, Chair)**

No report.

- **Facilities, Buildings and Grounds (Robert Zak, Chair)**

It was mentioned that there is no report for the Facilities Committee; however, there is a meeting planned for the spring semester.

- **Government Relations (Linda Dobmeier, Chair)**

No report.

- **Nominations & Presidential Advisory Committee (Linda Dobmeier, Chair)**

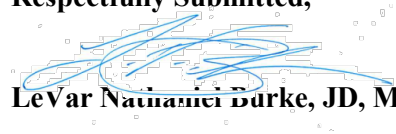
No report.

- **Budget (Robert Zak, Chair)**
No report.
- **Strategic Initiatives (Robert Zak, Chair)**
No report.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Linda Dobmeier called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Grum moved to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Naughton seconded the motion. The motion carried by unanimous vote. The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



LeVar Nathaniel Burke, JD, MPA

Secretary to the University Council

ACT 2024 Annual Conference

DJ Hardwick

On October 14th, the Association of Council Members & College Trustees (ACT) conducted their Annual Conference, where Buffalo State was represented by Student Representative DJ Hardwick. In addition to Hardwick's participation, Buffalo State's presence was further highlighted by two key presenters, Brad Baumgardner and Zackery Ungara, who presented on Veteran Services. Adding to the University's recognition, Cassidy Baron was honored with the ACT scholarship, recognizing excellence and student initiative. DJ Hardwick, sharing insights from the conference, shared various topics presented by SUNY leadership. These included the Council's role in aligning institutional resources and strategies, quantifying deficits within the SUNY priority pillars, the increase of state operating aid for mental health services, and SUNY's approach to addressing national challenges against Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. A handout was provided outlining the SUNY priority pillars.



SUNY ON THE MOVE

Under the leadership of Chancellor John B. King, Jr. and the SUNY Board of Trustees, the State University of New York (SUNY) is committed to being the best public statewide system of higher education in the nation. With strong support from Governor Kathy Hochul, SUNY's progress and momentum continue to accelerate across four priority pillars: **student success; research and scholarship; diversity, equity, and inclusion;** and **economic development and upward mobility.**

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

There is a place at SUNY for every New Yorker. Following a period of declining enrollment consistent with national trends and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, SUNY is laser-focused on boosting enrollment. To take the guesswork out of admissions, SUNY has implemented enrollment innovations. They include targeted marketing campaigns, cascading admissions so students who are not accepted at their first-choice campus are automatically accepted at other great campuses that match their needs, direct-transfer admissions so students can move easily from community college programs to baccalaureate programs, as well as direct admission of graduating high school seniors into their local community college. We are cautiously optimistic about Fall 2023 enrollment data, which will be released later this fall.

ROCHESTER
FIRST.COM

SUNY Brockport welcomes
largest incoming class in
nearly 50 years

DAILY SENTINEL

SUNY Morrisville welcomes largest incoming class in years

Mid Hudson
NEWS

SUNY Orange opens semester with
enrollment surge

STUDENT SUCCESS

SUNY believes in the success of every student. Starting this year, [SUNY will expand ASAP and ACE](#)—the nation's leading college persistence and completion strategies—to 25 campuses across the state. The effectiveness of these programs has been proven by randomized controlled trials, with ASAP nearly doubling college completion rates.

The New York Times

Could \$2,000 a Year Keep Students in College?

THE
ECONOMIST

SUNY Expands Academic Support Program

Newsday

SUNY's ASAP program expands, giving some Long
Island community college students a financial boost

SUNY has also dramatically expanded basic-needs support, which includes [addressing food insecurity](#), public transportation access, mental health services, childcare, and programs for students with disabilities. Four SUNY campuses—Stony Brook, the University at Buffalo, Binghamton University, and SUNY Geneseo—were recently listed among the [top selective colleges in the nation](#) for serving students from low-income backgrounds, and UAlbany was named among the [best national universities in 2023](#) based on social mobility, research, and providing opportunities for public service.

The New York Times Magazine
The Top U.S.
Colleges With the
Greatest Economic
Diversity

UAlbany Listed Among Best
National Universities in 2023
Washington Monthly Rankings

INVESTMENT

Thanks to Governor Hochul and the State Legislature, SUNY received the [largest investment in more than two decades](#), with \$163 million in operating aid for State-operated campuses this year and commitments for an additional \$54 million in each of the next two years, along with \$1.6 billion in capital support for state-of-the-art facilities and digital transformation. Our campuses are attracting new faculty to support our students and invest in SUNY's research activities, with 170 full-time faculty recruited just through the end of the last academic year thanks to a dedicated \$53 million in State funding. These historic investments mark a turning point, allowing us to foster innovation and strategic growth in the most promising areas, all while upholding our commitment to affordability, with 53% of our students attending tuition-free after state and federal grants and nearly half graduating debt-free. As we forge ahead, we do so with a vision focused on sustainability, accountability, and maximizing opportunities for every SUNY student.

RESEARCH & INNOVATION

SUNY is on track to achieve Governor Hochul's ambitious goal to double research expenditures by leading the way in research on semiconductors, sustainability and climate change, artificial intelligence, health care, and more. For example, this spring, Stony Brook was selected to serve as the anchor institution for The New York Climate Exchange, a world-leading climate solutions center on Governors Island, NY. In addition, this year's State Budget included a first-of-its-kind \$1.5-billion State-matched endowment fund to bolster research and innovation at our leading institutions. Stony Brook announced a historic \$500-million contribution from the Simons Foundation—the largest unrestricted endowment gift to a higher education institution in American history. And at the University at Buffalo, the 2023-fiscal-year annual fundraising total hit \$120 million, an all-time record, and included funds from more than 15,400 individuals and institutions.

The New York Times
Stony Brook University to Receive \$500 Million, an Uncommonly Large Gift

Stony Brook University Selected as Anchor Institution by NYC for World-leading Climate Center on Governors Island

Binghamton University-led battery initiative selected as semi-finalist in \$160 million National Science Foundation competition

Forbes
NSF Awards University Of Buffalo \$20 Million For AI Center On Speech - Language Disorders

THE BUFFALO NEWS
UB attracts record high donations for 2022-23, surpassing \$120M

Upstate 2.0 Wins \$1 Million NSF Award to Transform Economy

SECTOR LEADERSHIP

Across every sector, SUNY campuses are leading the way. Our university centers and doctoral campuses are among the nation's leaders in research, scholarship, and upward mobility. Our comprehensive colleges provide high-quality programs with broad access, a focus on teaching and scholarship, and strong connections to economic demand. Our colleges of technology offer extraordinary opportunities for students to master the knowledge and skills that will connect them to lifelong success in fast-growing, high-demand fields from aviation to agriculture to the maritime industry. Our community colleges are champions of open access, setting students on a path to degree, certificate, and microcredential completion, transferring across the system, and direct connections to employers and regional economic-development needs. Across all SUNY sectors, we have set the goal of every SUNY student participating in an internship by the time they graduate—starting with a major new investment this year.

SUNY IS ON THE MOVE.





President's Report and Divisional Highlights

University Council Meeting November 28, 2023

PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

As Interim President, I am grateful for your diligence, support, and unwavering commitment to the progress of our beloved institution. I am also thankful for your presence at update on the State of the University Address that I delivered on Tuesday, November 14, 2023 (see pages 15-21).

Central to my address was the implementation of Buffalo State University's Financial Sustainability Plan, an initiative crafted to tackle our structural deficit and bolster the financial stability of our institution. Our structural deficit, a challenge we have grappled with for some time, is a product of the imbalance between our total employee count and our current student enrollment. However, with our strategic plan, we are optimistic about resolving this issue over the next year, and by the 2027-2028 academic year, as mandated by SUNY.

Our action plan involves the reframing of our strategic priorities, the crux of which is the enhancement of morale and our campus climate, followed by the addressing of our structural deficit. We firmly believe that these two priorities, when pursued in tandem, will create a conducive environment for academic excellence and financial sustainability.

To address our structural deficit, we have proposed three strategic initiatives. Firstly, we will focus on increasing our student enrollment and residence hall occupancy, thereby improving our financial footing and enriching our academic discourse. Secondly, we will diversify our revenue sources beyond tuition, leveraging our Auxiliary Services, intensifying fundraising efforts, and advocating for increased government support. Lastly, we plan to implement a prudent budget reduction strategy, which will involve stabilizing our workforce and optimizing our academic offerings.

As part of our workforce stabilization plan, we have implemented a rolling 12-month hiring freeze, effective November 14, 2023. This measure will significantly reduce the structural deficit by the 2027-2028 academic year, although it will not eliminate it entirely. To close the remaining gap, we are launching optimization strategies, which will involve a thorough analysis of our service delivery mechanisms, benchmarking our non-academic organizational structure against peer institutions, and a comprehensive review of our academic offerings.

In conclusion, Buffalo State University is committed to enhancing its financial sustainability while improving morale and campus climate. We are confident that our strategic initiatives will set the stage for a more robust and resilient institution, capable of overcoming present challenges and forging a prosperous future. I am submitting the full remarks as part of my report, as well as the Divisional Highlights for your review.

Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to our shared vision.

Office of Equity and Diversity Highlights

- College Night for Students with Disabilities: Student Accessibility Services in partnership with Western NY disability providers hosted a college night for students with disabilities. The event included a session geared toward parents, students, and high school professionals that focused on the difference high school and college and how to encourage a successful transition.
- A Walk in her shoes fashion show. The aim of this program was to bring awareness to the plight of missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and two spirit individuals.
- President's Council and Equity and Campus Diversity has established the following subcommittees for the 23-24 academic year:
 - Diversity Speaker
 - Anti-racist subcommittee
 - Campus climate
 - Awards and Recognitions
 - Centralized DEI initiatives
- Equity and Diversity partnered with Say Yes Buffalo to host a Racial Healing circle. The concept of racial healing circles is rooted in the idea that open dialogue and empathetic listening can contribute to breaking down barriers, challenging preconceptions, and ultimately fostering greater understanding and connection among people of different racial backgrounds.

ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT DIVISIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Registrar

- Working with IT to implement BDR (Banner document batch removal) for Registrar's Office documents stored in BDMS that are no longer needed using the NYS Documents Removal guidelines.
- Senate approved X grade policy Change - Working with IT to implement X grade script to remove old X grades that are 2 years old at the end of each term. Target implementation date Fall 2023.
- First module installation of SSB-9 SSB will be Student Registration
 - This is the largest and most complicated portion of Banner.
 - Because of the very different way Banner 9 Self Service is structured, the Registrar's functional folks will be heavily involved in this implementation.
 - Faculty online grading will most likely be the next module of SSB 9 to be implemented following on the heels of the implementation of Self-Service Registration.
- We awarded 181 degrees for August 2023 (UG and GR).
- We have 337 students (UG and GR) applied for December graduation; we expect the numbers to slowly increase over the next few weeks with late applicants.

Admissions

- Fall and Spring 2024 application review has begun. Fall 2024 applications are up by 35% over last year point in time. Spring 2024 applications are up 42% over last year point in time. Merit scholarships and grants are being awarded earlier than last year which will help offset some of the uncertainty with the delayed FAFSA and subsequent award packaging.
- We are partnering on Direct Admission with Common Application. These are students from New York State who have entered a GPA on their Common Application in a range admissible for Buffalo State. They are identified by Common App as first generation and/or Pell eligible students. This program aligns with our mission of empowering students and our commitment to actively facilitate access to public higher education. We are one of 11 schools participating in NYS and the only SUNY selected.
- November Open House (Grad and Undergraduate combined event). We have over 2,000 total guests registered for this Saturday. We are running a pilot program of hosting students (~100) overnight from NYC for this fall program.
- New Graduate Admissions staff have been hired - Associate director of Graduate Admissions (Tyra Henson), Assistant director of Graduate Admissions (Mary Kate Metzger).
- We have begun implementation of the EAB Transfer Portal. This tool will be used by prospective transfer students and advisors to get credit transfer estimates immediately, provide recommendation on best fit majors and see estimated time to degree. This was funded through the SUNY Limited Investment budget from last year.

- We are piloting an AI tool called Oblio to send personalized messaging to admitted students and parents with the intention of increasing visits to campus and improving yield of admitted students. We are one of a handful of campuses participating in this initial pilot and were able to negotiate a nominal cost for participation

Academic Advisement

- Bengal Success Portal outreach to early alerts for students with 2.25 GPA or less to support student success outcomes
- Developing a SUNY Erie and Buffalo State Partnership to enhance seamless transfer pathways between the two institutions.
- Partnered with Academic Affairs to support the first Major/Minor Fair to support student pathways across schools.

Financial Aid

- SUNY/AmeriCorps FAFSA Corps Completion Grant: This grant is designed to encourage FAFSA completion of new, current, and non-traditional students. Buffalo State is one of six SUNY schools participating in the grant. Rob Karak, Financial Aid Advisor, is serving as the program coordinator. To date, he's interviewed 13 student candidates and has 5 interviews scheduled for this week. Based on the candidate pool, filling the 13 positions should be achievable.
- 2023-24 Aid Processing: Nearly \$32 million in aid has disbursed to 4,876 students for fall 2023. There is approximately \$1 million in pending payments for Excelsior for 439 students. This will disburse after the fall semester ends and awards are certified based on grades. There are about 130 students with outstanding requirements (verification, c-flag, independence appeals, etc) that also owe more than \$1,500, meaning they cannot register. These students have received numerous reminders of what's needed. These students are SAP-compliant.
- 2024-25 FAFSA Processing and Awarding: The 24-25 FAFSA is expected to be released sometime in December. Ellucian will then release technical patches for the changes and then SICAS will make additional modifications (~January). While IT is working closely with us, these changes will require a re-write of nearly all our automated procedures to load FAFSAs into Banner, evaluate them, and package students. We are targeting February for sending out new student award packages, but this could change significantly depending on when the FAFSA is actually released and all the subsequent patches. In the meantime, staff are viewing Department of Education webinars to be as prepared as possible for all the changes.

Roar to Success

- The furniture arrived for the Bengal Success Center on 11/8/23, a formal opening reception will be announced soon for the Bengal Success Center located on the first floor of Bengal Hall
- We have partnered with Academic Support services and have offered math, writing, and time management support to students weekly in the Bengal Success Center since October
- We held our 3 annual “Roargiving” Event on 11/13/23, 225 students were in attendance (2/3 stayed the full 2 hours). We worked with the HESA program to design our data collection method. Our student employees helped us to develop a series of questions we divided into 4 topical areas (Before the semester, During the semester, Moving Forward, Hot Topics). Once the quantitative and qualitative data is interpreted, we will share with campus stakeholders.

Marketing and Communications

- Activated extensive and integrated marketing campaign to support “Drive to Apply”, which includes open house messaging. Target audiences: Prospective students and parents, influencers. Geo Targets: WNY, Rochester, Select downstate areas. Flight period: September – December (with significant ramp up two weeks prior to each open house). Sample tactics: search engine marketing, targeted digital display, social, traditional (radio, TV, billboards).
- Planned and organized detailed program-specific marketing campaigns. Due to a push for, and receiving, additional funding from SUNY via the Provost’s office, this initiative was expedited. The Provost, in conjunction with the Deans and VP for Enrollment Management, identified the program priorities for this initiative. The basic objectives for these campaigns are to increase inquiries, applicants, and enrollments in the respective programs, while improving awareness in the market.
- Recently completed a minor department restructuring which shifted resources and support to digital marketing and content strategy efforts. Four directors in MarCom now lead the following areas: 1) Communications & Content Creation, 2) Creative Services & Brand Standards, 3) Digital Marketing & Social Strategy, and 4) Website Services & Marketing Analytics.
- Working to improve content creation collaboration and amplification through regular meetings of communications professionals on campus – which aims to bring together MarCom, student affairs, alumni, athletics, and each academic school.
- RFP process for Branding Initiative is moving into evaluation phase. Hoping to have agency selected soon to begin work on revamping our entire brand platform.

INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT DIVISIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Development

- The team secured gifts/commitments across campus: Theatre, International Studies, Anthropology, Data Analytics, Art Con, TV/Film Arts, Continuing Education, Computer Information Systems, Social Work, HEA, General Scholarship Fund, Small Business Development Center, Anne Frank Project, the planetarium, the Performing Arts Center, and more.
- The campus secured a \$75,000 grant over three years from Stenclik Family Fund to support College Access Programming (dual credit for free/reduced lunch high school students, Erie 1 BOCES Education Pathways Academy scholarships, and Major for a Day programs on campus).
- The campus expects to receive gifts totaling \$134K under the 2023 New York State Charitable Tax Credit Program; \$80K will be directed to Buffalo State, \$54K to the Burchfield Penney Art Center.
- The campus secured a \$25,000 endowed scholarship for international studies.
- The campus secured a \$20,500 grant from Vogt Family Foundation to support the creation of Sophia's Legacy curriculum for the Buffalo Public Schools through the Anne Frank Project.
- The campus hosted celebrated alumni Tom Fontana and Kyle Bradstreet.
- This year's Peterson Society induction luncheon attracted close to 150 guests. Twenty-six (26) constituents joined the society during the last fiscal year.
- The campus secured financial commitments from Ferguson Electric, M&T, and Linde in support of the Planetarium, leading up to the eclipse on April 8, 2024.

Alumni

- October 5-8, 2023 – '70s Reunion Weekend - Alumni that graduated or attended Buffalo State during the '70s decade came back for a weekend of events celebrating the lifelong connections they made while attending. During this weekend, the Class of 1973 celebrated their 50th Reunion.
- October 19, 2023 - Building Business Pathways to Success - The Office of Alumni Engagement and Buffalo State's Small Business Development Center hosted an entrepreneurial alumni panel focused on educating about leadership, developing a small business, and civic responsibility.
- November 2, 2023 - Texas Alumni Networking Reception - Alumni in the Dallas-Ft. Worth- Plano region hosted a networking event with local alums at Union Bear Brewing Company.
- November 18, 2023 - SIXTY NINE SEVENTY Play Reading and Luncheon - Alumni are invited to join the Theater Department and Office of Alumni Engagement for a table reading of alumnus Michael Eichler's, '72, play entitled SIXTY NINE SEVENTY. The play debuted earlier this year in New York City and is set at Buffalo State in the 1969-1970 academic year. The plot focuses on the growing civil unrest of that time period and follows the lives of four Buffalo State students from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Government Relations

- Early meetings have taken place to plan for the next legislative session to play for increased operating aid and additional capital support. In addition, we are working to support initiatives such as a bilingual teacher pipeline initiative and proposed legislation would update the engineering licensing requirements by requiring that applicants who hold a degree in engineering technology are required to complete the same number of credits based on education, additional work experience credits, and have the same examination requirements, as applicants who hold a degree in engineering.

STUDENT AFFAIRS DIVISIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Weigel Wellness

- 1,172 students attended appointments in person and/or via telehealth video or audio sessions. 64 students were seen for 71 Urgent Care appointments who presented with severe mental health symptoms and needed extended time for assessment, stabilization, and recommendations. In addition, 85 students of concern were seen and who had with high level and urgent mental health related concerns.

Career & Professional Education

- Over 489 students attended the Major and Minor Fair. This was a collaborative program between Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Enrollment Management.
- Over 23 employers came to campus to meet with students regarding job and career opportunities.

Dining

- NINE & NIGHT is a new restaurant concept launched in campus retail dining in partnership with WEDI to support dual focus areas of Education and Economic Development work in tandem to tackle systemic inequities that affect Buffalo's underserved residents by empowering entrepreneurs as well as continue to have food offerings that reflect the diversity of the community.
- Other student engagement events in dining included a pop-up Farmer's Market, Teaching Kitchen, 40 meal passes donated from our Farmer's Market to Milligan's Pantry, and hosting of Rwanda chef with the Anne Frank Project and local to highlight and serve authentic Rwandan food in the dining hall.

Inclusion and Equity

- Over 30 people attended the Silent March that was held on November 8th on campus to honor of military veterans.

OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT DIVISIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Awards

- Buffalo State University hosted its annual Faculty and Staff Recognition Ceremony on October 12, 2023 in the Performing Arts Center at Rockwell Hall.
- Michael Lewis, Senior Director of Administrative Operations, was awarded the 2022-23 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Professional Service, and Luanne Jarosz, Supervising Housekeeper in Custodial Services, was awarded the 2022-23 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Classified Service. Kudos to these award recipients!

Environmental Health and Safety, Facilities Maintenance, and Grounds

Winter Storm Response Plan

- Following the aftermath of last year's blizzard, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety, in close collaboration with our maintenance and grounds departments, has taken proactive measures to address the challenges posed by severe winter weather conditions. Recognizing the need for an enhanced response system, they are currently engrossed in the development of a comprehensive new university-wide supplemental Winter Storm response plan.
- This forward-thinking initiative aims to ensure the safety and well-being of our campus community, including students, faculty, and staff, during future snowstorms. By studying the lessons learned from the previous blizzard and considering best practices in emergency management, this new plan will incorporate effective strategies and guidelines tailored specifically to our unique campus environment.
- Through a coordinated effort, the Office is dedicated to creating a robust and efficient emergency snow plan that will enable continued swift and effective responses to any future snow-related emergencies.

Campus Planning

Buckham Hall Project

- The recent legislation signed by the Governor enables SUNY to lease portions of Buckham Hall for the purpose of capital development and occupancy by Leonardo DaVinci High School, a Buffalo Public School (BPS). This collaboration between Buffalo State University and BPS presents an exciting opportunity to create a state-of-the-art educational facility that will benefit both institutions and the surrounding community.
- Moving forward, the university will actively engage with BPS to collaborate on the design of the project. This collaborative process ensures that the high school's design aligns Buffalo State's expectations with the educational goals and needs of the students, teachers, and administrators. By working closely together, SUNY and BPS can create a

learning environment that fosters innovation, creativity, and academic success.

- In addition to the design phase, both the university and BPS will continue to negotiate and finalize agreements related to the construction, as well as the eventual occupancy of the high school. These agreements will outline the responsibilities, timelines, and financial aspects of the project, ensuring a smooth transition and successful implementation of the high school within Buckham Hall.
- The overall benefit of this collaboration is significant for the campus community. By leasing parts of Buckham Hall to accommodate Leonardo DaVinci High School, SUNY demonstrates its commitment to supporting quality education and fostering partnerships with local schools. The presence of a high school within the campus not only enhances the educational opportunities for both the University and BPS students but also creates a vibrant and diverse learning environment where different generations can interact and learn from one another. This collaboration has the potential to strengthen community ties, promote academic excellence, and contribute to the overall growth and development of the campus community, as well as creates potential recruitment pipeline for the university.

University Police Department (UPD)

Promotions and General updates

Permanent Promotions. The permanent promotion of Interim Chief Amy Pedlow to the position of Chief of University Police brings stability, continuity, and a wealth of experience to the department's leadership. With her permanent appointment, Chief Pedlow can implement long-term strategies and initiatives that will enhance campus safety and security, instilling a sense of trust and confidence within the campus community.

Similarly, Interim Assistant Chief Steven Cahoon has been permanently promoted to the role of Assistant Chief of University Police. This promotion reflects Assistant Chief Cahoon's outstanding skills and dedication, which have consistently contributed to the overall success of our department.

Temporary Promotion. The temporary promotion of Officer Raven Harvey to the position of University Police Investigator 1 showcases the department's commitment to recognizing and nurturing talent within its ranks. This opportunity for professional growth and development will not only benefit Officer Harvey but also enhance the department's investigative capabilities, thereby bolstering the overall security and well-being of the campus community.

Coffee with a Cop Event. Our annual Coffee with a Cop event, held on October 4, 2023, was a resounding success. This event provided a unique opportunity for members of our campus community to engage in meaningful conversations with our dedicated police officers. The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly, fostering positive relationships, trust, and open dialogue between law enforcement and the community we serve. The event's success demonstrates the department's continued commitment to community-oriented policing and its dedication to working collaboratively with the campus community to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for everyone.

Facilities Design and Construction Capital Projects

Capital Projects - DESIGN

Reconstruct NCAA Athletic and Practice Field. Buffalo State's NCAA Athletic and Practice Field is finally coming to fruition as bidding will happen December/January and construction beginning after commencement. Buffalo State is the only SUNY University with one field. The installation of this field allows for expansion of Athletic teams and recreation and is an important component of student recruitment.

Capital Projects – CONSTRUCTION

Renovate Karner Hall (formerly Building 50). Karner Hall is under construction and will house University Police and some campus facilities operations such as the grounds department.

Renovate Elms Hall (formerly Classroom Building). Phase 1 and 2 are under construction. This is a key academic building that is planned to be operational by fall of 2026.

Information Technology

- The IT department is currently working on various projects to enhance the experience of students, faculty, and staff. These projects include:

Upgrade of the Banner Self Service

- This upgrade aims to improve the functionality and user-friendliness of the Banner Self Service system, making it easier for students, faculty, and staff to access and manage their information.

Implementation of the Transfer Student Portal

- The IT department is working on implementing a dedicated portal for transfer students. This portal will streamline the transfer process, providing a seamless experience for students transitioning to our institution.

Upgrade of the CourseLeaf Curriculum Inventory Management System

- The IT department is enhancing the CourseLeaf system, which is used to manage and track curriculum information. This upgrade will improve efficiency and accuracy in curriculum management processes.

Review of User Account Management Process

- The IT department is conducting a comprehensive review of the user account management process. This review aims to identify areas for improvement and streamline the process of creating and managing user accounts.

Banner Document Retention (BDR)

- The IT department is implementing a system to manage the retention of documents within the Banner system. This project ensures compliance with document retention policies and facilitates efficient record-keeping practices.

Enhancements to Multi-Factor Authentication

- The IT department is working on enhancing the Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) system. MFA adds an extra layer of security to user accounts by requiring multiple forms of authentication, reducing the risk of unauthorized access.

Implementation of FOIL Request Management

- The IT department is implementing a system to effectively manage requests made under the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). This system will streamline the process of handling FOIL requests, ensuring compliance with legal requirements and optimizing response times.

These projects reflect the commitment of the IT department to continually improve services, comply with regulations, and enhance the overall experience for students, faculty, and staff.

FINANCE DIVISIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Student Accounts Office

Collections Procedure Revision:

The Student Accounts department is in the process of revising their collections procedures to provide improved assistance to former students who have outstanding balances owed to the university. This initiative aims to create a more supportive and effective approach in helping former students resolve their financial obligations.

Transfer of Treasury Management Duties

Effective December 1, the Financial Management department will be transferring its treasury management duties to the Student Accounts department. This decision has been made to streamline and enhance the management of university funds, ensuring more efficient and centralized financial operations.

- Transferring the treasury management duties to Student Accounts, will offer a more cohesive and integrated financial structure within the university. This consolidation of responsibilities will enable better coordination, communication, and oversight of financial processes, resulting in improved financial management and decision-making.

Impact on University Operations

The transfer of treasury management duties signifies a strategic move towards optimizing financial operations at the university. This transition will not only enhance the efficiency of fund management but also contribute to a more streamlined and transparent financial system. Ultimately, this will positively impact various aspects of university operations, including budgeting, cash flow management, and financial reporting.

Student and Staff Support

Throughout these changes, both students and staff members will receive appropriate support and guidance. The Student Accounts department will provide clear communication and resources to assist former students with outstanding balances, ensuring they have the necessary information and options to address their financial obligations. Additionally, the Financial Management and Student Accounts teams will collaborate closely to facilitate a smooth transition and minimize any disruptions in service or support during this process.

These revisions and transfers demonstrate our commitment to continuously improving financial procedures and services at the university. By better assisting former students with outstanding balances and optimizing treasury management, we aim to enhance the overall financial operations and support the success of our campus community.

Update on the State of the University: Seizing our Destiny

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

Introduction

Greetings Colleagues, Council Members, Senators, Staff, Alumni, and Students:

I have gathered us here today to share an update on the state of our beloved institution. Despite any challenges we face, I want to reassure you that the state of our university is strong, built on our rich history, unwavering commitment to academic excellence, and our aspirational vision as SUNY's flagship comprehensive university.

Our strength is not a matter of chance but a result of the deliberate decisions we make today, shaping not only our present but also our future. When I assumed the interim presidency, I identified three strategic priorities: increasing enrollment, diversifying our revenue sources beyond tuition, and fostering a vibrant and inclusive campus culture.

I truly believe that we have made substantial progress in these areas, laying a solid foundation for the next president to build upon. However, after attending a recent meeting in Albany of SUNY presidents that was convened by the Chancellor, it has become abundantly clear that it is in Buffalo State's best interests to reframe the three strategic priorities into two, which I will delineate after I layout, once again the issue that we are called to resolve.

Issue and Purpose: What we're facing

At the State of the University Address in September, I articulated the issue that many SUNY comprehensive institutions are facing, generally, and Buffalo State is experiencing, specifically. To reiterate, the financial issue that we are trying to address is right-sizing Buffalo State University as it is experiencing a structural deficit.

The structural deficit is calculated by comparing the total number of institution employees to the current number of enrolled students. In fall 2012, when enrollment was about 10,000 students, our total number of employees was about 1,400. By fall 2022, enrollment had dropped to about 5,900 and our employee base was 1,200. So, in essence, the employment numbers were not trending with enrollment numbers. As I stated before, there are many intricate reasons and explanations for this that I will not revisit today. But the bottom line is without being able to increase significant sources of other non-tuition revenue, we were forced into using reserves to cover our personnel expenses for several years.

Following this trend of declining enrollment and a static employee base, we had calculated a structural deficit of \$24 million for the 2022–2023 academic year. However, after last year's budget was reconciled, we are showing a \$16.5 million structural deficit as of June 30, 2023. The mitigating circumstances that brought us to this number include:

- SUNY not completing collective bargaining contract negotiations in time to be included in the 2022-2023 budget;
- Utility payments that came in lower than the budgeted amounts; and
- Increases in revenue collections.

Now that collective bargaining negotiations have been completed, we will have additional expenses to cover the salary agreement for the next four years, totaling \$11.4 million. Also, we are looking at less than two years of operating funds remaining in our reserves.

To address the structural deficit, SUNY has requested a deficit reduction plan from the campus that eliminates the deficit by the 2027-28 academic year. The development of this plan is a continuous work in progress and is reviewed with the SUNY CFO on a regular basis. As it stands now, if everything remains constant, we can expect a structural deficit, upwards of \$30 million by the 2027-2028 academic year.

In developing the sustainability deficit management plan, we benchmarked our institution against five other SUNY institutions with similar enrollment numbers. We learned that our expenses on average are running about 20% higher than others in the peer group. So, as I stated in September, we still have some work to do with addressing this structural deficit.

Research Design & Methodology: How we're going about getting this done

So as not to reinvent the wheel, I am reviewing with the cabinet all plans and research that has been conducted by you. These plans and analysis include, the Future Forward documents, the strategic enrollment plan, the academic review, the retention plan, the strategic plan, the financial sustainability plan, and the workforce reduction plan.

In addition, I have held meetings with key stakeholders, and will continue to do so on an ongoing basis to ensure that the decisions I make in the best interests of our institution are inclusive of the input of the people to whom they will ultimately impact. I have held focus groups with residential life to understand the perceived issues in the residence halls, I have met with the UPD, admissions and recruitment staff, EOP, and will continue to make my rounds to our faculty, student support offices, and operations units.

I have and will continue to speak with my fellow presidents at our sister institutions who are going through this process to elicit best practices, as well as with colleagues from other public institutions who have already successfully navigated this issue.

Taken as a whole, I am positive that we will develop and implement a plan that will help us significantly address the structural deficit through 2028, and beyond.

Action Plan: Reframed Strategic Priorities

In light of our evolving circumstances and recent insights, we are reframing our strategic priorities to better serve our mission and community.

Firstly, central to our actions is the enhancement of morale and our campus climate. We firmly believe that a positive and inclusive environment is the bedrock upon which academic and institutional excellence is built.

Secondly, we need to tackle the structural deficit that challenges our financial sustainability. This task can be broken down into three key areas:

- Increasing enrollment will be a vital component, focusing on recruitment and conversion, ensuring efficient revenue collection, and boosting our retention and graduation rates. By

enhancing our student body, we not only improve our financial footing but also enrich our campus life and academic discourse.

- We need to expand our revenue sources beyond tuition. This will require a multifaceted approach, ranging from leveraging our Auxiliary Services, pursuing private and governmental research grants, intensifying fundraising efforts, and advocating for increased support from government entities.
- Simultaneously, we must implement a prudent budget reduction strategy. This will involve stabilizing our workforce, improving our service delivery, effecting structural changes where needed, and optimizing our academic offerings.

These steps are crucial in addressing our structural deficit, allowing us to continue offering a high-quality educational experience while ensuring our financial sustainability.

Our approach to right-sizing the institution involves a comprehensive stabilization and optimization plan that encompasses workforce, structural, service delivery, and academic facets. This adaptive change requires that we pursue these two strategic priorities in tandem, ensuring that humanity remains at the center of our decision-making process.

In summary, by improving morale and campus climate, and addressing our structural deficit through increased enrollment, diversified revenue, and budget reduction, we are setting the stage for a more robust and resilient Buffalo State University.

For Immediate Action

For the remainder of this update, I will discuss Budget Reduction prong of the Structural Deficit remediation strategic priority.

Workforce Stabilization

We aim to strategically align our workforce with the needs of our institution. To ensure financial sustainability and preserve fiscal responsibility, I am implementing a retroactive hiring freeze, effective November 1, 2023.

The intention is to actively monitor and assess our workforce, while being conscientious of future organizational needs and budget constraints. This will require the consistent review and approval of all position requests and funding by using the annual position management review process and emerging needs request forms. This process has been reviewed and amended to increase efficiencies and fairness. For instance, the Office of Equity and Diversity has been reincorporated and strategically placed in the review of all these decisions.

To begin this process, a review of all open positions, including:

- Positions in an active recruitment process
- Pending positions
 - Position in a draft state but not posted for active recruitment
- Search waiver requests that are pending approval
- Requests for temporary service hires

This does not include student assistant, work-study, or graduate assistant positions.

The personnel sustainability position management guidelines include:

- Vacant lines due to separation of service, such as retirements, separation, or other.
- Minimum waiting periods of one year (12-months) between the incumbent's last paycheck and posting of the position.
- The department should review departmental needs and may request backfilling up to 20% of the vacant line's salary, to be used for temporary service support, also receives and/or extra service.
- The Position Management Emerging Needs form must be submitted, reviewed, and approved.
 - Prior to initiating an action to a position, including but not limited to new positions, reclassifications, promotions, change in budget title, and/or salary increase, etc.
- This policy covers all full-time, part-time, and temporary appointments regardless of funding source used to support the position.
 - Grant or SUNY funded positions are the only exception to this if proper documentation is provided.
 - Academic Affairs, under the guidance of the Provost and the Deans, will continue to make decisions regarding the filling of part-time and adjunct lines, as well as the filling of full-time lines of faculty and staff who vacate their position. Academic Affairs will build upon the work that the division began back in 2019 and make these determinations with a critical lens.

As I stated earlier, our anticipated structural deficit has the potential to grow to upward of \$30 million if we do not take aggressive action toward tackling this problem. The preliminary assessment is that the hiring freeze alone has the potential to bring that number down to around \$3 million. Now—this is not going to be an easy road for the next five years. We will actively monitor and assess our workforce, considering future organizational needs and budget constraints. While we are reducing hiring, we will also explore opportunities for internal staff development and advancement.

Now—this is not a solution in and of itself, but rather a first step towards a comprehensive workforce stabilization strategy.

Evolving Actions

In addition to working toward workforce stabilization, we will also explore three other aspects of our budget reduction plan.

Service Delivery Optimization

We will conduct a thorough analysis of our service delivery mechanisms to identify potential areas for cost reduction. This may include considering the alteration of the current service delivery schedule, outsourcing certain services, or sharing services with other SUNY campuses. Please be assured that the quality of our services will not be compromised; instead, we aim to leverage the collective strength of the SUNY system to bring down costs while maintaining or improving service quality. For example, when our FOIL officer retired, we had a half-time professional take on the responsibility, in concert with a colleague from SUNY Fredonia who provides assistance as needed.

Non-Academic Structural Optimization

To achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency, we will benchmark our non-academic organizational structure against our peer institutions. Identifying areas of redundancy and inefficiency will allow us to restructure our operations and redeploy staff from personnel-heavy divisions to those in need. By doing so, we will not only ensure a more balanced workforce distribution, but we will also create opportunities for advancement and professional growth for our employees.

Academic Optimization

You have heard me say several times, our core business as an institution of higher education is the academic enterprise, where the faculty and academic staff is at the center of designing, implementing, and supporting research, curriculum, and pedagogy. As such, it is my intent to leverage our uniqueness and strengthen our ability to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

Academic optimization was specifically identified by SUNY as a means for campuses to bring their budgets into alignment. Our academic offerings are the heart of Buffalo State University. Therefore, we will undertake a comprehensive review of these offerings to ensure they meet the evolving needs of higher education and the labor market, as well as the demands of the current and potential students. Our plan includes continuing combining existing departments where synergies exist, updating courses to reflect current academic and industry trends, shifting suitable programs to online or hybrid modalities, discontinuing low-enrollment or low-demand majors, and creating new programs aligned with market trends and student interests.

Summation of Optimization Plan

These strategies reflect best practices in higher education and the public sector. They are not quick fixes, but strategic shifts designed to restore the fiscal health of our university, while preserving our commitment to provide a quality education and maintaining an optimal working, living, and learning environment for our faculty, staff, and students. This is a challenging time, but I am confident that together, we will emerge stronger.

Closing Remarks

Colleagues, we cannot avoid the reality of our situation any longer. Now is not the time to revisit history or lay blame. The time to act is **now**! I cannot stress this enough—the power to maintain control in shaping the destiny of our institution is in our hands. If we squander this time through denial, avoidance, or other delay tactics, **we risk the autonomy to make these decisions and the future of Buffalo State University, as we know it.** By not taking proactive and decisive action, we invite the imposition of draconian solutions from external entities that may not fully understand our unique culture, strengths, and impact to this community. Let us not allow this to happen, for Buffalo State University is not just any institution – it is **our** institution, and its fate lies with us—unless we fail to seize this opportunity.

Contrary to the belief of some, this is not an old western movie, and John Wayne isn't about to ride in on his horse to save us. It is not happening! Yet, we do have our own champion in Chancellor John King, who has shown his commitment to Buffalo State. He has made several members of his chancellery available to me on a weekly basis to provide us with the best counsel

and support we could ask for. In addition, he has allocated funds intended to help us boost our enrollment.

While the changes that we will have to make may be difficult, I assure you that they will be implemented with the utmost care, compassion, and empathy. We have the backing of SUNY and the University Council. I have initiated dialogue with the campus union leadership, university Senate leadership, and our elected state legislators regarding this strategic plan to address our structural deficit. Faculty, staff, and students, we will continue to work in a spirit of shared governance. I will continue to be as transparent as possible and welcome your guidance and support. But, let me be clear—the ultimate responsibility for the operation of this institution resides with the president, and for the interim, that authority is vested in me.

As your Interim President, my role is to guide us through these turbulent financial times and set a course for the permanent president to lead us toward. I am confident in our ability to navigate these waters and emerge stronger. The challenges we face today will only serve to forge a more prosperous future for Buffalo State University.

I am sure you have questions. As the end of the semester draws near and the holiday season is upon us, I have decided to use the university meetings and forums already scheduled to address your concerns; such as, the Provost's Council Meeting, the December Senate meeting, etc.

Before I conclude, I'd like to read a poem by The Reverend Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays, famed theologian, college president, public school superintendent, and mentor to the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Life Is Just a Minute”
 [We]’ve only just a minute,
 Only sixty seconds in it.
 Forced upon [us], can’t refuse it,
 Didn’t seek it, didn’t choose it,
 But it’s up to [us] to use it.
 [We] must suffer if [we] lose it,
 Give an account if [we] abuse it,
 Just a tiny little minute, But eternity is in it.

Thank you.