

Report on the University Faculty Senate Fall 2010 Plenary¹

*Plenary called to order at 8:30 a.m., 10/21/10:
Lake Lodge, Alfred State*

President's Report—Ken O'Brien [*Please refer to President O'Brien's full report, available at the University Faculty Senator's Corner.*]²

BUDGET—announced (via SUNY Purchase to O'Brien) 10/20/10, an additional \$23.25m cut to SUNY colleges was generally announced on 10/21/10, to be “differentially absorbed.” In other words, everybody hurts, sometimes. Local pain to be determined. The Governor is trying to make up for \$250m in union-contract give backs that did not materialize. [*Implied in this and other presentations/discussions—notably by the Chancellor and by Vice Chancellor Rimai—is the loathsome nature of legislative budgetary activities, the dysfunctionality of NYS's de facto one-man system of rule, the duplicity of legislators as they appear to support SUNY then vote against support by treating tuition as “tax money,” etc. The question is still pending as to whether nascent-Gov. Cuomo will impose an additional mid-year cut: he has promised a 20% reduction in each state agency—and SUNY is a State Agency. Of interest is that the actual figure reported by President O'Brien—and confirmed by others—was not, in fact, correct: he announced 23.5m; Ron Sarner from SUNYIT had the correct figure at 23.25m.*]

As the Provost would detail later in his report, an enrollment cap will be imposed in fall 2011 using fall 2009 data. Tuition for any “first-time-first-year” (FTFY) enrollments over the cap will go directly to System Administration, creating a disincentive for campuses that try to balance their budgets by adding to their enrollments. [*N.B.—later questioning of the Provost revealed that transfers are not to be a part of the cap: details are still to be worked out and chief academic officers will be notified. This particular cap seems tied to the so-called “education pipeline”: Gen Ed revisions and calls for students to complete two-year degrees before transferring to senior colleges mean that more transfers will appear who will need to be pushed through to graduation in two-years. The connection between seamless articulation, Gen Ed revisions, this cap, the push for regionalism and curricular collaboration across campuses, the new tracking system / database called something like SIRRIS, etc. seems fairly clear: It's all about the System, and rationalizing perceived inefficiencies.*]

Furloughs were imposed on all management confidential employees at SUNY Central, durations geared to salary, even as the raises for senior administrators were announced. The clumsiness of this and other recent events at SUNY Central were discussed.

¹ Article VI of the University Faculty Senate Bylaws states that “The duties and responsibilities of Senators shall include . . . reporting fully and regularly to their constituents on the activities of the Senate” (*Bylaws and Procedures* 41).

² Senator's commentary and internal references appear throughout in italics within brackets. Errors of transcription are entirely the fault of the Senator, and all statements on policy-related material should be carefully checked with appropriate local and / or SUNY offices.

[Ultimately, no one at the plenary asked Chancellor, Provost, et al. about any of this or other substantive budgetary activities and their related perceptual, public relations' impacts on SUNY.]

PHEEIA—Essentially dead, of course, but the Chancellor will continue to work on its various pieces. Of the three core issues (private-public partnerships, approvals-authorization efficiencies, rational if not locally owned tuition policy), UUP is in favor of efficiencies in approvals and auditing; is now willing to talk about routine, incremental tuition increases; and is adamantly opposed to public-private partnerships as detailed in PHEEIA. *[In answer to a question about its “death,” O’Brien noted—carefully—that elements will “appear and re-appear,” including a possible tuition increase this year. Chancellor Zimpher’s post-dinner presentation on Friday 10/22 stressed that she is committed to PHEEIA regardless of what it is called in the future, whether it is passed as law or put into effect as administrative order, whether it succeeds in whole or part.]*

Monica Rimai’s budget update & the Chancellor’s presentation on the implementation of the new SUNY strategic plan provided more info. *The Power of SUNY* implementation had its kick-off meeting in mid-October in Albany: thirteen working groups (seven transformation teams; six “big ideas” teams).

O’Brien was asked several questions:

- * Has any SUNY institution ever left SUNY (gone “private”)—asked by Geneseo’s rep. O’Brien: “no”
- * After questioning by Ron Sarnier (SUNYIT) and Norm Goodman (Stony Brook), O’Brien and others explained that it seems the intent of the Department of the Budget is to cut CUNY as well as SUNY: since SUNY is a State Agency, it can be cut arbitrarily by the Governor without recourse to the Legislature. CUNY is funded as an Aid-to-Localities entity, so any change to its legislatively approved budget must be done via the Legislature, which usually goes along with the Governor’s office in such matters.

Comprehensive Colleges’ Sector Meeting

*Google Docs will be the holding space for reports and consultation on Gen Ed revisions. Sector Rep Jim McElwaine will coordinate.

*The sector representatives will continue to share information on budget-related problems on each campus. In particular, info on restructurings, program changes, consolidations, etc. will be shared.

*Other issues of concern included responses to Middle States Standard 4 (many peers are in M. S. self-study reporting now); workload issues, some related to Gen Ed; forced or phased retirements and impacts on programs, restructurings, etc.; budget transparency; shared governance concerns; Research Foundation concerns, especially related to indirect cost recovery; etc.

*Sector campuses reported a number of budget actions: Geneseo will be announcing program closures within a couple of months and is moving many courses to 4 s.h.; at New Paltz, undergraduate classes with fewer than twelve students are routinely canceled and “more program cuts are coming”; at Potsdam, two undergraduate programs have

been suspended: labor relations & computer instructional technologies. Further, Potsdam, which had been a 4-4 course load campus and went to 3-4, is now back at 4-4 for the “foreseeable future.” Retirements and resignations have led SUNY Canton to cancel many humanities offerings. Brockport is currently at 4-4, but “active scholarship” as determined by a faculty-led committee allows for differential course loads, usually 3-3; Plattsburgh’s 3-3 course load is now at 4-3 “for two years.” Twelve positions at Fredonia are to be cut to accommodate a \$500k cut. [No info was forthcoming about whether the cuts would be administrative, vacant positions left unfilled, etc., or if that \$500k is the original budget reduction or the “new” mid-year cut announced 10/21.]

Presentations

University Operations Committee

Chair Ron Sarner updated the UFS on reports delivered in the spring: *Trends in Library Acquisitions, Library Space Survey, Baccalaureate Degree Time to Completion Rates & a Longitudinal Faculty Profile by Gender 1980-2008*. [Copies of all but the Library Space Survey were given to Steve Garner; all are available on the SUNY UFS website.]

This year, the Committee will build upon analyses of these data, including enrollment statistics as they relate to faculty composition, etc.

Provost David Lavallee

*Governance committees are being formed to deal with problems related to part-time faculty concerns and expansion of awards to clinical faculty.

*Approximately eight administrative positions in the Provost’s office have been unfilled due to budget considerations; however, two key associate provostial vacancies are about to be filled: one primarily responsible for academic program review and assessment, the other for interactions with (especially) the members of the comprehensive colleges sector. Administrative reorganization will include oversight of six (geographical) sectors in the System, each overseen by someone in the Provost’s Office.

*Mobility & Transfer Articulation is proceeding apace. Disciplinary articulation of courses normally offered in the first two years has been completed in 30 majors. This represents 90% of all transfer students. A website will be made active to governance and student leaders very soon (a trial prior to full transparency). Majors being looked at right now (less than .4% of all transfers) include Anthropology, Geography, Spanish, Spanish Ed., Health Science, and others. If campuses want have majors / programs considered for articulation [which could lead to more transfers coming to your campus], contact the Provost’s office. [N.B.—We might want to assume that transfer students who complete two-year degrees and meet the 7 of 10, 30 s.h. minima at two-year schools will be considered to have completed Gen Ed: this scenario is not the policy nor am I advocating for it: some in our sector consider this to be the end-game goal of Provost and FCCC.]

A new student information system [SIRIS? Mentioned several times, but no one was sure what the acronym meant] will include a great deal of inter-related student and course

information, including course transfers, gen ed., etc. [FCCC “concerned” about the data being gathered and potential uses.]

*Mention was made of an increased focus on student success, improving developmental education programs, advisement, etc. [N.B.: but no mention was made of how this would be paid for or whether this meant that these chronically underfunded programs—especially developmental ones—would receive attention or have cutbacks reversed.]

*The Provost also commented on Albany’s “suspension” of five majors [N.B.: not “deactivation,” and the wording matters]³: According to the Provost, campuses need to look at “trend lines of enrollments,” “collaborate across campuses,” “create regional hires,” because “no longer can we be all things to all people.” [N.B.: recurrent themes throughout the plenary—the need for regional collaboration, of “showing the pain,” of scrupulous paring of programs and staff,” and of knowing your facts before spreading budgetary rumors.”]

*As for defining what he called “regional hires: “Joint hiring on a regional basis—full-time faculty shared across campuses to deliver curricula.”

*As for budgetary facts: Campus Reserves: “some people who are saying things know they are not saying true things.” Reserves are thin and thinner still after the flood at Systems Administration in Albany. Campuses’ reserves are really fund balances—committed funds held to float expected payments, i.e., cash flow. Planned savings for purchases account for much of the rest. Unrestricted reserves or stabilization accounts (SUTRA accounts) can be used, but they tend to be fungible. [Vice Chancellor Rimai’s presentation, detailed below under “Budget Update” and the Chancellor’s various comments made clear that we were meant to deliver this back to our campuses.]

*SUNY Strategic plan: several committees are especially active this year, including Academic Excellence & Strategic Enrollment Management:

Academic Excellence Committee—focused upon undergraduate curricula, general education and liberal arts, areas of said excellence to include internships, faculty-related scholarship. In the Provost’s words, one focus will be “what makes a program excellent and how we measure/demonstrate it.”

Strategic Enrollment Management Committee—studying true costs and impacts of adding, suspending or deactivating programs, costs beyond the marginal ones of faculty, including overhead. Too, evaluating program offerings regionally and system-wide to ensure SUNY is offering the most viable programs at the right campuses.

*“Enrollment cap”: working with campuses to create fall 2009 baseline for first-year admits. No cap on total enrollment (transfers and retention excepted), but cap on first-year admits. This is actually consistent with current trends anyway: four-year institutions’ new-admit rates are flat or down a bit since 2007. 30% of new admits throughout the

³ According to public statements made from the podium, “suspension” means that a three-year period begins that can lead to re-activation or deactivation; “deactivation” is the end of a program, and only a new program approved by the various curricular levels of SUNY can be staffed and offered.

system were “tripled,” leading to horrendous retention issues and perceptual concerns [See comments at the end of the second paragraph of President O’Brien’s report, p. 1.]

*Cross-registration between campuses is a system-wide “good.” A change needed to be made, however, in implementation because the old procedure penalized the campus where instruction occurred (tuition and FTE remained with “sending” campus: costs of instruction, including in some cases consumables, carried by “receiving” campus). FTE will now follow the instruction: student pays at home campus, teaching institution gets FTE.

*He is concerned about a system-wide trend: too many graduating students have too many credits beyond their graduation requirements. This fact and a push from his office to urge more students to transfer once they receive their two-year degrees (rather than 45-50 semester hours) “will increase overall system capacity by at least 20%.”

BUDGET UPDATE

***Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer Monica Rimai: Virtual Presentation on Financial Overview, Current Budget Crisis, Etc.**

New, \$23.5m reduction (10/20/10), yet to be allocated to all campuses. Complicated, grim fiscal situation, well detailed in her slide presentation, which will be available for review on the SUNY website. The gist is that total cuts of something like \$600m in a \$9.5b budget have been absorbed since 2007-08. Vice Chancellor Rimai gave a slide presentation of the budgeting process and a detailed lecture on fund accounting. [*The lecture was clearly meant to educate us—to train the trainers—about how little unrestricted money is actually available, regardless of how many times reference is made to “reserves” of various sorts. The intricacies of SUNY’s budgeting realities, the card house that is NYS budgeting and campuses’ relationships to these and other insanities were explained.*]

Sector Reports & Chancellor Nancy Zimpher’s Responses

***Campus Governance Leaders (CGLs)**

--Susan Camp (Binghamton) raised issues for the Chancellor related to increased enrollments, cuts or cancellations of programs: “How can we maintain academic excellence in the face of increased class sizes, increased faculty workload and budgetary pressures that lead to low morale and actual elimination of programs?”

Chancellor Zimpher’s response: We must get better at communicating the pain of the budgetary crisis. We are not succeeding at convincing the legislature and the public that access is the key to SUNY’s future; the core focus for the future will be the focus on academic excellence: not access, but success and persistence to graduation. These metrics will make sense to legislative leaders, showing them that we do well with the funds and responsibilities given us. We need to show the pain—our advocacy strategy is not working. No longer can we continue to do more with less, so enrollment caps and other visible measures of the net effects of duplicitous legislative support will now be the norm.

--A related question was raised: the seeming contradiction of SUNY pushing campuses for more new undergraduate and graduate programs even as cuts are the norm.

Chancellor Zimpher's response: [*It is The System, The System, The System that matters*]: System-wide enrollment management, regionalism and collaboration is key, and “under-enrolled programs” must look carefully at their use of resources and return on resource investment over time. [*In other words, she reiterated that which the Provost had stated: rational analysis and efficiency of regionally available resources including much greater attention to strategic enrollment management is the new focus. The System trumps the local.*]

***University Colleges**

--Sector Representative Jim McElwaine (Purchase) expressed concerns about enrollment caps and faculty evaluation of administrators. General Education concerns and administrative over-reaching is a concern. Many peers are in self-study mode for Middle States.

Chancellor Zimpher's Response: repeated Provost's comments about governance, etc.

***Colleges of Technology**

—Sector Representative Joe Petrick (Alfred State) raised issues such as collaborative forum w/ UUP SUNY System Admin and UFS re: PHEEIA. In addition, re-visiting Gen Ed needs to happen.

Chancellor Zimpher's Response: “Sure” as to meeting with anyone about parts of PHEEIA or whatever it will be called. “Sure” as to Gen Ed should still be under consideration. Three-to-five year reviews of College presidents to begin very soon.

***Health Sciences Sector**

—Representative Rochelle Mozlin (SUNY Optometry) noted concerns about ownership of research data and intellectual property by faculty who leave. Clinical faculty income pressures are undercutting faculty ability to focus on SUNY initiatives, and those pressures are hurting their chances at tenure and promotion. Sector is also advocating for SUNY-wide healthcare colloquia for increased professional development and stewardship of state travel funds.

Chancellor Zimpher's Response: Will look into or delegate concerns.

***Specialized and Statutory Colleges**

—Representative Maryellen Keefe spoke to such issues as accommodating UUP and the Assembly. Too, how will you deal with another round of cuts?

Senior Vice Chancellor Rimai's Response: Directly related to debriefing of last budget cycle and PHEEIA's failure. Still working with UUP, and who can possibly know what a new Governor will do?

***University Centers**

—Representative Peter Knueffer [sic?] (Binghamton) raised questions about the recent cuts at U Albany. Breadth matters, so languages and liberal arts matter too. Also, were these program suspensions a round-about way of retrenching faculty without calling it so & is this perceptual minuet [*my phrasing, not his, which was more elegant*] what we can

expect throughout the system. Last, regarding access, the Opportunity Programs seem to be particularly suffering, so what are SUNY's commitments regarding EOC and EOP Programs.

Chancellor Zimpher's Response: [*Well now.*] EOP was not cut last year—one of very few areas that escaped cuts [*according to Provost Lavalley*]. \$6.5m is committed to EOP scholarships. Again, more advocacy is needed. As for Albany and academic decision-making: “It’s not going to get better. Look at SUNY as a system. No longer can every campus be all things to all people. Enrollment management strategies, regional consolidations, cross-registration flexibilities and other creative solutions are all needed.”

(Friday session ended at 5:15pm; a dinner presentation by Chancellor Zimpher reiterated the SUNY Strategic Plan)

(Reconvened Saturday, 10/22; 8:30am)

Reports

***By representatives of CUNY's faculty senate and the Student Association.**

***Faculty Council on Community Colleges (FCCC)—Tina Goode**

We did not support the Gen Ed resolution of 2009, though we certainly agree in principle with seamless articulation / transfer and the education pipeline. This year, as we review Gen Ed under an agreement we made with the then-Interim Provost, we were disappointed to hear from him that the system-wide review of Gen Ed is suspended because of other pressures and problems some institutions are having implementing the 2009 B of T resolution on Gen Ed. [*See summary of her report from the spring 2010 plenary.*]

New, recently passed resolution: FCCC Resolution (G2-2009-10) on Shared Governance Processes in the Student Mobility Initiative calls into question the processes used to establish articulations in accounting, criminal justice, social work, communications, etc. In particular, the resolution identifies the “overly prescriptive” nature of course descriptions of accounting courses.

FCCC concerned about the SIRRIS [*sic?*] student data tracking system that is being implemented by the Provost's office.

Committee Reports (bringing forward agenda items for the year). [Summaries will be made available in the next issue of *The Bulletin*.]

***Programs and Awards Committee—Janet Nepkie (Oneonta)**

For this year

--Conversations in the Disciplines projects will be considered and guidelines will be reviewed;

--we will review local guidelines for Chancellor's Excellence Awards to ensure that all awards and distinguished ranks procedures at local campuses conform to B of T guidelines; and

--we will review guidelines for Chancellor's Excellence Awards and Distinguished ranks to allow for inclusion of clinical and other health science faculty.

***Committee on Diversity and Cultural Competence**—Phil Ortiz (Empire State)

Work for the year includes

--Data collection on the status of diversity curricula throughout SUNY; and

--planning for a fall 2011 STEM conference, details to follow.

***Graduate and Research Committee**—Ed Feldman (Stony Brook)

--Currently organizing a Graduate Research Symposium: *Research That Matters: An Exposition of Graduate Research in SUNY and CUNY*, to be held March 8, 2011, in the LOB in Albany;

--another subcommittee will be organizing a conference / workshop on sustainability and research needs in the areas of green chemistry, the environment, energy and social and political impacts; and

--The Ad Hoc Committee on Grading has begun its work, is housed in and will report out through the Graduate and Research Committee. [See below, Governance Committee, note #4.]

***Committee on Ethics and Institutional Integrity**—Sara Jo Grethlein

--Distributed a survey to all campuses' VPAs on policies, procedures, etc. Committee has reported to the Executive Committee on recent matters regarding academic freedom. Presentation on Ethics and Technology presented. [Available on the website.]

--Planning a conference in Albany for November 17-18, 2011 on faculty ownership of intellectual property.

***Governance Committee**—Dennis Showers (Geneseo)

Goals and reports for the year to include

--Reviewing possibilities of special, virtual meetings between plenary sessions;

--ongoing orientation and training activities for CGLs;

--investigating removal of AAUP censure; and

--discussing the work of the ad hoc committee on student (and other) challenges to faculty grading, conducting a system-wide survey on campus procedures for grade change. Janet Nepkie is chairing this ad hoc committee under the aegis of the Graduate and Research Committee.

***Student Life Committee**—Ray Krisciunas (Canton)

The Committee will discuss and report on

--SUNY Campus Traditions II (and begin work on III, which will include CCs);

--SUNY and the World initiative, participating in and supporting that section of the SUNY Strategic Plan;

- honor codes throughout SUNY;
- the “Pleasures and Perils of Social Networking”; and
- sustainability projects and their impacts upon students and programs.

***University Operations Committee—Ron Sarner (SUNYIT)**

Goals and discussions include

- Fringe benefit recovery (IFR accounts);
- Longitudinal Faculty Profile;
- database of budget shortfalls by campus;
- policies on mobile computing in the classroom; and
- report on overrides and sabbaticals (personnel decisions, administrative fiat, etc.).

***Undergraduate Academic Programs and Policies Committee—T. Hamblin (Delhi)**

Goals include

- Update of the widely used *Guide for the Evaluation of Undergraduate Academic Programs* (last revised in 1999);
- review of instructional support of faculty by undergraduates;
- review of Contact / Credit Hour relationship (as part of a charge from Provost Lavalley); and
- report on campus adjustments to new SUNY Gen Ed policies.

Resolutions [*Available in full in the UF Senator’s Corner and the UFS website.*]

1) *Resolution on Consultation with Governance*

Resolved: “The University Faculty Senate urges System Administration to ensure that campus administrations and existing governance bodies employ formal procedures for consultation before reaching any decisions regarding program consolidation, suspension or elimination.”

PASSED

2) *Resolution on the Suspension of Programs at U Albany*

Resolved: “The actions of the administration at the University of Albany compromise the core mission of the University Center and compromise the ability of SUNY to fulfill its global mission as articulated by the ‘Power of SUNY’ strategic plan.

Discussion and debate occurred over (1) whether this resolution is over-reaching on the part of the UFS (this is not a process resolution, but a statement on the substance of a decision); (2) whether language in the resolution that describes “core mission” is either disingenuous or dangerous; (3) whether we have the right to “resolve” on this issue without total access to local information; (4) etc.

PASSED

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Lee,
SUNY College at Oneonta
University Faculty Senator