

SUNY University Faculty Senate 197th Plenary (Cornell University)

1. President's Report (UFS President Keith Landa)

- Keith reported on his recent campus visits to SUNY Morrisville, Downstate, Fredonia
- Transfer Task Force
 - o There is ongoing governance involvement in this area. It is keeping Keith very busy.
- AI
 - o FACT2: Optimizing AI for Teaching and Learning
 - o Phase I: FACT2 is an advisory group to the asst provost on the subject of teaching in technological context.
 - o Phase 2:
 - Update guide
 - Webinar series (there is a program site and Youtube channel)
 - AI Symposium (May 21, in association with CIT)
 - Much talk of task groups and white papers but Keith feels earlier iterations were not sufficient and seems to believe this effort will be more effective in providing support for those wishing to use AI in the classroom as well as those who do not.
 - o SUNY Strategic Research Investment (STRIVE) Task Force
 - At system level and meant to explore how SUNY can work with NYS to advance and grow AI opportunities for students and citizens (effective and ethical use of AI). Ties into economic growth, work force development.
 - AI & the classroom (teaching AI literacy to students, the ethical use of AI, competency). Keith suggested this may well appear in our Gen Ed requirements at some point.
 - Academic integrity still a major concern but Keith believes that after the initial panic faculty have a more nuanced perspective on AI (this is his take after conducting many workshops with faculty).
 - He wants governance heavily involved in this process.
- Keith discussed some other councils and groups he is working with including SUNY Sustainability Advisory Council, SUNY DLE Council, SUNY FACT2, SUNY Digital Transformation Advisory Task Force (last year there was \$75 million in NYS budget to advance digital transformation; but this money will not trickle down to the campuses, presumably SUNY Central will use these funds to make investments to help the system—for example leveling off cybersecurity across the system).
- Keith reminded UFS that we are planning a national conference for January, 2025; “Public Good U: Strengthening the Case for Public Higher Education.” Still in the fundraising phase with partners before the SUNY business office will sign off on the contract.
- *Award of Academic Credit by Evaluation (PLA, CPL)
 - o Board policy, Feb. 2023
 - o Memo to Presidents, March 2024
 - o *Campus governance needs to be involved in the creation and implantation of this policy!*
- Budget – No enacted budget thus far

2. SUNY Board of Trustees Welcome (BofT) Merryl Tisch

- Tisch discussed the team that Chancellor King has hired. She is impressed with the “talent” that he has attracted. Tisch referred to the Provost, and several others.
- Tisch declared Keith Landa as an “extraordinary” representative for UFS.
- Tisch responded to my question of the UFS President asking about the debacle with the president's search at Buffalo State.

3. SUNY Chancellor (John King)

- Usual opening remarks and thank-you's
- The Chancellor what he felt were advances in the following:
 - o Student Success
 - o Research & Scholarship
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fellows
 - The Chancellor discussed how many state systems are backsliding in this area and stated his pride that NYS continues to be a leader in this area.
 - Civic Education & Engagement and Civil Discourse Fellows
 - Dr. Virginia Radley SUNY Fellowship
 - Dr. L. Eudora Pettigrew Women's History Summer Research Excellence Grants
 - o Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
 - o Economic Development & Upward Mobility
 - The Chancellor met with various offices in D.C. to obtain more funds from the CHIPS Act
- Committing to Civic Dialogue
 - o Goals to help students from all backgrounds feel respected and seen.
 - o Build and embrace more tools to advance productive campus conversations.
 - o We will not stand for discrimination and harassment
 - o *Student safety on our campuses is paramount, and we will do everything we can to ensure that our campuses are both safe and inclusive.
 - o *All fairly broad, generic language, comments no one would object to nor remember five minutes later.*
- AI for the Public Good
 - o Task force is designed to promote ethical, economically beneficial work to leverage AI while at the same time ensuring it is for the public good.
 - o There was talk of economic development and upward mobility. Most of the focus was on what is going on at research centers, especially UB which is the governor's favorite campus (my editorial comment).
- SUNY Microcredentials
 - o Another area where SUNY's leadership "has been robust."
 - o The governor has announced \$32 million to support those with developmental disabilities get free microcredentials that will enable them to enter the workforce.
 - o The Chancellor discussed the various benefits of this project
- Supporting Students through Federal FAFSA Delays
 - o The Chancellor described this as a "challenging" situation for SUNY as the roll-out of the reformed FAFSA has been problematic.
 - o SUNY Center has been communicating with the Federal Government about these problems, the impact of the shorter application schedule. Less than 1/3 of the class of 2024 have completed the FAFSA. This is a 31% drop from the same time last year.
 - o Campuses are getting the data to determine financial aid support late, and much of the data has been incorrect. Financial aid offers will come much later in the spring.
 - o This is a real threat to the well-being of our students and our campuses.
 - o SUNY guidance to campuses has been to move the decision deadline for fall enrollment to at least May 15. Many have moved to June 1.
 - o SUNY is going everything possible to communicate with students and to assist them complete the FAFSA applications.
- 2024-25 State Budget Update
 - o Not surprisingly, the Chancellor is very positive about the governor's budget. He even stated that it will make Downstate stronger which is downright Orwellian.

- The Chancellor still hopes for more funds (which will be minor at best in my estimation)
- Q & A with the Chancellor
 - University Centers – First question asked what the impact of a second Trump term would be on higher education? Second question, we feel you believe you are supportive of shared governance but “we are not feeling the love.” They feel there has not been meaningful shared governance and what is going to do going forward?
 - (1) – The key will be state level leadership to protect NYS (both Dems & Reps in state) to recognize the impact of research on the NYS economy. Local leaders need to stand up for research, public education, etc.. He claims we saw that during Trump’s first admin. He believes there will be an assault but we have to prepared.
 - (1) – During the first Trump admin Reps in Congress still stood up to Trump to protect investment, etc. He stated it is important that we stand up for “NY values and not fall into a partisan trap.” It is important that university center presidents have a visible role in D.C. with NFS, and other agencies that he describes as “non-political.”
 - (2) – Chancellor said he and his team discuss shared governance “a lot” and that is something that he emphasizes with presidents (even during the hiring process). System and campus leaders need “our partnership in having hard conversations.” We all want more resources, campus presidents feel issues are framed (presumably by us) that ignore resource constraints, setting priorities. More talk about “hard trade offs,” etc.. It is “painful” to “let go of things we feel strongly about.” We have had the largest financial increase in 20 years in NYS.
 - Comprehensive Center – First question, we asked an AI question about how our sector can leverage resources to teach and use AI ethically, in research, etc.. We emphasized our role in training teachers, etc.. Basically it is an attempt to push back on the notion that only the university centers should get funds for work in this area. Second question, we discussed how System can better support our “arts” schools—Fredonia, Potsdam, Purchase—as they have unique, nationally ranked programs that are expensive. Would he support a working group from representatives from these three schools to work on solutions for their unique circumstances?
 - (1) – The Chancellor mentioned the work of the AI Task Force, he agreed we need to find additional resources to help leverage AI as a positive tool. He is committed to this area. Vague, not very responsive. In fact he discussed UB more than any other school here. Our sector rep Wendy Gordon pushed him to respond to our question which I appreciated.
 - (2) – King emphasized the scale of enrollment loss (40%) over a decade with no subsequent drop in faculty/staff. Other institutions in this room made those changes. Potsdam is paying to heat buildings no one is in. He is open to some kind of working group. Many other comprehensives are “no where near” the problem that Potsdam, Fredonia, and Buff State have. He mentioned Delhi and Maritime have different issues.
 - (2) – He emphasized that Potsdam and Fredonia have made investments to grow other programs. He doubts they will ever return to earlier enrollments.
 - (2) – King stated his commitment to preserve the arts in SUNY, but “we have to have the enrollment.” We can’t “pay people to teach empty classrooms.” He can’t “convince the governor and legislature to do so.”
 - (2) – King discussed having an “abundance” mindset over a “scarcity” mindset. The latter is a zero sum game, etc.. Discussed the importance of going after the significant number of high school kids who don’t go to college. “We have to go get them.” They are disproportionately students of color. Discussed adult learners that need credentials.
- Tech Sector Questions – not relevant to us, very specific to them.
- CGLs

- Asked question on the use of the \$163 million in the budget this year (last year much of it went to the university centers).
 - The chancellor mentioned several points, one of them is he is asking the NYS govt to include \$86 million in addition to the \$54 million set aside for R1s (in lieu of differential tuition ask), the former would cover UUP contract increases.
- Asked question (Liz's) about some of the sketchy presidential searches over the past few years, would he commit to reforming some of the guidelines regarding closed versus open searches, OIC's being able to apply for jobs, etc.
 - The Chancellor expects more representational searches going forward because we can't get decent applicant pools without it. That means less transparency. The Chancellor thinks there is still good engagement with campuses however.
- Special & Statutory campuses – nothing especially relevant
- Health Sector campuses
 - Asked chancellor for his vision for the sustainability of the three hospitals in SUNY
 - Chancellor made distinctions between Stony Brook (very healthy financially, despite some challenges), Downstate (hospital has major challenges in terms of infrastructure, patient population, major deficit, a great deal of competition in city, declining rates of inpatient care), Upstate (largest provider for 17 campuses, better patient pool than Downstate, had more significant capital investment so infrastructure better). He emphasized about serving the community well. Micron will help Upstate, etc..
 - Asked a question about facilities, etc., and workforce training
- Questions from the Floor
 - Some good questions, several of them building on questions already asked.
 - A good one from Upstate person about how to protect LGBTQ, women, and others access to health services in light of the political scene.
 - The chancellor said the state is in a good place but some of the discussions regarding changing federal policies “are scary.” We need to be aware of this.

4. Presentation of VP Candidate and Q & A

- Wendy Gordon (Plattsburgh) was the only candidate at this time

5. Executive Committee Report & Resolutions Intro (VP Jan Trybula)

- Jan discussed efforts to improve the UFS website, making it more user friendly and functional. The website is in transition to a newer one so the current one is in a particular sad state.
- Proposed Resolutions (this is merely introducing resolutions, any debate takes place before the voting on Saturday):
 - May be found here: <https://www.sunyufs.us/proposed-resolutions.html>
 - Most of these came out of the UFS Graduate Committee so our colleague Isabelle Binchindaritz will be able to explain the rationale and goals for them.
 - No discussion at this time

6. Panel Presentation – “Whose info is it anyway?: Ethical and Practical Considerations in Ownership, Access and Usage of SUNY Faculty Data, Information and Work Product” - Our own Eve Clark-Benavides moderated (from San Francisco)

- They covered Copyright, Email use/access, FOIL/FERPA/discovery considerations, grants and research
- Began with an interesting discussion of property law that moved into more specific discussion of copyright law.

7. Provost's Report (Ram Ramasubramanian)

- Discussed Empire AI program (overlap with chancellor's report here)

- Discussed difficulties for SUNY to obtain a computer(s) large enough to conduct serious AI research. The ones the major corporations used can cost several billion dollars each. He did say the governor's proposal for \$400 million will be helpful however.
- Discussed a consortium between SUNY, Columbia, NYC, Cornell, RPI, and the Science Foundation.
 - Discussed the three committees that are working in between these universities. The final facility will be located at UB.
 - Clearly this is all geared to the research centers.
- The Provost discussed the FACT2 guide, webinar series, and symposium
- The Provost went into a lengthy disquisition on the virtues of AI for faculty in the classroom, etc., but believes it will never remove the need for humans. I suppose this is heartening.
- He is a very fast speaker, it is difficult to take notes and keep up.
- The provost discussed the "Potential of the Personal Tutor"—Khan Academy project. The provost is very excited about it. He claims the learning improvement has been impressive, two grade level differences. AI is making personal tutoring "scalable."
 - The provost has asked the FACT2 group to look at the feasibility of creating similar tools to SUNY instructors.
- SUNY Online & OLIS & OER Services
 - We received a fairly granular breakdown of the % of students taking courses in different modalities. I couldn't keep up as she rolled through her slides.
 - OER continues to spread, supported by 59 campuses, more than 3,000 faculty members have used it in over 29,000 different courses.
- Q & A
 - The provost seems very excited about the cutting edge research that can be done with the huge computer that the coalition will build in Buffalo. SUNY will have 1/7 access to it.
 - There was a follow-up question about whatever happened to the assessment of microcredentials (is industry valuing them? Etc.). This assessment has not been done but they hope to get to it soon.
 - DEI Fellows – no decision about whether the program will be continued next year. If it continues it will be modified. Not clear what they feel is problematic with it.

8. Faculty Council of Community Colleges Report (Christy Woods)

- Budget: The community college sector budget is worse than that for SUNY. It will be flat funding from the previous 2 years which was 98% of 2021 which was the worst budget CC have had in years.
 - The assembly bill does include language to review cc funding (probably won't be in the final bill).
- There is a discussion to get CC faculty members on local CC boards which faculty want but CC presidents oppose.
- Discussed enrollment difficulties which has led to "votes of no confidence all over the place" in CC's. Fear of retrenchment is strong and ongoing.
- Q & A
 - Do we need to update our transfer pathways in light of the new courses being created in CC?
 - Answer: yes! There is some task force that is looking more at the process rather than the curricular issues.

9. UUP President (Fred Kowal)

- UUP activities over the past few months—activism that has been unprecedented for the union and helped build public and political support.
- The governor has proposed a budget that is better than what we ever got under Cuomo. Kowal believes it is imperative that the \$163 million in additional funds (for 2nd year) that it be used to alleviate structural deficits at 18-19 campuses.
- Kowal believes the chancellor's focus on enrollment ignores the underfunding over the past 15 years.

- Kowal criticized SUNY's recruitment and retention efforts that have hurt enrollment.
- "it is unconscionable that we have to have food pantries on campus, homeless on campuses."
- Kowal discussed Fredonia students protesting in Albany.
- He spent special attention on the plight of Downstate. Gave a history of how the Cuomo admin tried to defund all the hospitals but especially Downstate. He emphasized that a medical school not attached to a hospital limits the learning experiences of students and will ultimately be not viable. Kowal discussed the incredible community work in central Brooklyn to save the hospital.
- A recent study has shown that central Brooklyn has the worst health outcomes in the state based upon the race of patients.
- Should the governor and chancellor successfully close a major institution in central Brooklyn think how easy it will be to do it elsewhere?

10. Student Assembly Report (SA President Alexander Ruiz)

- Ruiz discussed his pleasure at the participation of 19 different campuses across all sectors at the SA meetings this year.
- Ruiz went over a number of policies and campaigns they are promoting across the state (advocating for women's health access, working with NYPIRG, etc.)
- Ruiz is graduating in a month (from Geneseo) so a new president coming next year.

11. City University Faculty Senate Report (CUNY UFS President John Verzani and Matthew Cotter, the exec director)

- Cotter said shared governance is being "eclipsed" in the largest urban public ed system in the country.
- Cotter discussed some of the work they have been doing regarding AI. It is much more disjointed than what SUNY has been doing according to Cotter.
- Cotter is looking forward to our joint conference coming in January about public education as a "public good"—with a CUNY specific track. There is enthusiasm across CUNY.
- Verzani: Discussed some of the problems at York and Queens some months ago. Next year CUNY has a projected \$100 million dollar budget deficit. They are addressing it by trimming the adjunct budget from \$300 million to \$240-250.
 - o They are eyeing eliminating low-enrolled programs.
- There has been a conflict with CUNY faculty governance and their provost over the setting of schedules. Apparently the CUNY admin tried to change the by-laws giving faculty power over schedules.
- They are sending a letter asking the Provost to create a freedom of expression policy in the system. Presently decisions are ad hoc, confusing.
- CUNY is full steam ahead on Brightspace
- CUNY faculty/staff are one year out without a contract. Issues over load, adjuncts, etc., are present.
- CUNY did receive a \$116 gift that is focused upon workforce development. Verzani is not convinced that workforce focus will address their enrollment woes.

12. Panel Presentation – Portfolio Optimization and Fiscal Sustainability (our own Grace Maxon-Clarke moderator)

- A discussion of financial sustainability, deactivation, and discontinuance
- David Cantaffa (sp?) discussed what SUNY admin looks at when evaluating whether to support any of the actions above
- Bruce Simon discussed how the aforementioned actions above have played out at Fredonia.
 - o Focused on the program deactivation process regarding faculty involvement (or the lack thereof) and the 13 programs slated for termination.
 - o Essentially faculty and admin were asking different questions, perhaps had different agendas. The public conversation was different than the one between chairs, deans, etc..

- Tech sector rep from Morrisville discussed the unique circumstances they confront with costly equipment in an applied learning setting. Discussed how there are programs on a “watch list” on his campus and concern about what metrics will be used to assess them. How faculty bring “value” to institutions that is not being included in these metrics at this time.

13. VP Election – Wendy Gordon elected VP

14. Undergrad Committee Report (Grace)

- Discussed internship report changes

15. Resolution Voting

- Resolution: AI Tools for Research found here:
https://www.sunyufs.us/uploads/1/1/6/9/116933050/197_g_r_ai_tools_for_research_proposed.pdf
 - o There was a rather lengthy discussion about language, whether the resolution infringes upon campus-level academic integrity policies.
 - o Passed 44-0
- Resolution: SUNY Cross Campus Research Support
https://www.sunyufs.us/uploads/1/1/6/9/116933050/197_g_r_cross_campus_research_support_proposed.pdf
 - o Passed 30-13
- Resolution: Graduate Education Standards
https://www.sunyufs.us/uploads/1/1/6/9/116933050/197_g_r_graduate_education_standards.pdf
 - o Failed: 25-16
- Resolution: SUNY Research Communication Enhancement
https://www.sunyufs.us/uploads/1/1/6/9/116933050/197_g_r_research_communication_enhancement_proposed.pdf
 - o Passed: 36-0
- Resolution: recommendation for Basic Needs Resource Communication
https://www.sunyufs.us/uploads/1/1/6/9/116933050/197_slc_basic_needs_resolution.pdf
 - o Passed 39-0
- Resolution: Requesting a Progress Report on the Financial Sustainability of State University of New York Campuses
https://www.sunyufs.us/uploads/1/1/6/9/116933050/197_opr_progress_report_for_financial_sustainability.pdf
 - o Passed 41-0