Minutes of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York
September 18, 2013

Pursuant to a notice of meeting duly given on September 4, 2013 the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York held a meeting on September 18, 2013 at 8:30 a.m. at the SUNY Global Center, New York, New York.

Committee Members Present:
- Trustee Ronald G. Ehrenberg, Chair
- Trustee Angelo M. Fatta
- Trustee Tina Good
- Trustee Marshall A. Lichtman
- Trustee Eunice Lewin
- Trustee Peter Knuepfer
- Trustee Tremayne Price
- Trustee Richard Socarides
- Trustee Cary F. Staller

Other Trustees Present:
- Chairman H. Carl McCall
- Trustee Eric Corngold
- Trustee Henrik Dullea
- Trustee John Murad

Others Present:
- Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher
- President Drew Matonak, HVCC
- Johanna Duncan-Poitier, Senior Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges & Education Pipeline
- William Howard, Senior Vice Chancellor and General Counsel
- Elizabeth Bringsjord, Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor
- Craig Billie, Associate for Institutional Research
- Sandra Casey, Senior System Counsel
- Kaitlin Gambrill, Associate Vice Chancellor
- Carey Hatch, Associate Provost
- Tim Killeen, Vice Chancellor for Research & Research Foundation President
- Jason Lane, Associate Provost & Associate Vice Chancellor
- Mitch Leventhal, Vice Chancellor
- Carlos Medina, Associate Provost & Associate Vice Chancellor
- Rick Miller, Associate Provost
- Deborah Moeckel, Assistant Provost
- Ruth Pagerey, Assistant Provost
- Jay Quaintance, Assistant Vice Chancellor & Assistant Provost
- Zulaika Rodriquez, Assistant Secretary
- Deb Tyksinski, ACE Fellow
- Hao Wang, Chief Information Officer

Meeting Convened
Trustee Ehrenberg convened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. He extended his thanks to former Committee Chair Gerri Warren-Merrick for her leadership and to Provost Emeritus David Lavallee for so ably staffing the Committee for the past four years. He said that the Committee was fortunate
to now have Interim Provost Elizabeth Bringsjord on board to help guide its work. Stressing the important role of the Academic Affairs Committee, he explained that he has worked with Interim Provost Bringsjord to introduce some changes to the Committee’s long-term agenda and meeting format. For example, he said that rather than having lengthy presentations at each meeting, Trustees will now receive more in-depth reports in advance of the meeting and hear more concise presentations on meeting day, with the goal of allowing more time for questions and discussion among the Trustees during the meeting itself. He said he wanted the Committee’s work to be grounded in data that was presented with the appropriate contextual information necessary for analysis. To that end, he said that each meeting will feature a Data Brief on topics of import to the Trustees. He noted that this month the brief focused on graduation rates. He added that the Committee would also devote time to graduate education and was pleased that Associate Provost Lane had now joined the Provost’s Office to lead that important work. Trustee Ehrenberg added that there will be a regular report on initiatives of the Chancellor that will be priorities in the next phase of the strategic planning process and also that Academic Affairs will now be the venue for regular reports on education pipeline activity.

Trustee Ehrenberg then asked Dr. Bringsjord to take the Committee through the first agenda item. Interim Provost Bringsjord thanked Trustee Ehrenberg and noted that she and the staff look forward to supporting the work of the Committee. Referring to this month’s data brief on graduation rates and the overall Meeting Overview document, she noted that these were the first such reports prepared for the Committee. She anticipated that these reports would be improved and shaped by the Committee’s feedback going forward.

Before beginning the report on the first agenda item, Interim Provost Bringsjord asked the Committee to join her in welcoming Dr. Deb Tyksinski, Associate Provost for Sponsored Research & Continuing Education at SUNY IT who this year is serving as an American College of Education or ACE fellow. Dr. Tyksinski will spend a good part of this academic year at SUNY System shadowing Chancellor Zimpher and members of her Executive team. The focus of her fellowship is on building an excellent institutional reputation as perceived by institutional stakeholders. Interim Provost Bringsjord noted that Dr. Tyksinski will be conducting research, visiting campus presidents, observing and participating in projects with staff across system, and will also participate in campus visits as opportunities arise.

**Data Brief: SUNY Graduation Rates and Student Success**

Interim Provost Bringsjord then introduced Associate Provost Rick Miller to provide a brief overview of the extensive data brief provided to the Committee on graduation rates and student success.

Dr. Miller explained that this data brief was reflective of a new direction for the System office of Institutional Research focused on better data analytics and more timely analysis. He shared with the Committee a brief PowerPoint presentation (on file with the Office of the General Counsel and Secretary) featuring highlights of the information sent to the Committee in advance of the meeting.

Dr. Miller said that overall, SUNY’s six-year graduation rates for state-operated campuses, and three-year graduation rates for community colleges, exceed national benchmarks. He noted that the lens through which we view individual campus graduation rates should include consideration of the varying institutional missions across SUNY campuses as well as academic and financial preparedness of incoming students. He explained, for example, that in looking at the percentage of Pell recipients at individual campuses there is a correlation, mirroring the national trend, that the higher percentage of Pell students served impacts successful completion. Likewise, where a campus falls on the SUNY admissions selectivity matrix, which ranges from open admission to highly selective and is reflective of high school GPA and SAT scores, can impact completion.
Trustee Ehrenberg explained that campus selectivity categories are not static over time, noting that Stony Brook, for example, is now in most selective category. He also noted that when the Pell legislation was originally framed, policy makers understood that students who were economically disadvantaged may have a harder time reaching graduation. He said that the legislation originally included funding for students and extra support for institutions serving these students that did not come to fruition.

He emphasized that it is important to realize that the composition, in terms of socio-economic background, of a given institution’s student body on average is going to be related to success, and so will the academic credentials students bring with them upon entering. He urged the Committee members to not look at graduation rates in isolation. He thanked Dr. Miller and Interim Provost Bringsjord for this terrific start and said that he also wanted to see additional work in this area focused on students transferring from a two-year to a four-year institution.

Trustee Staller thanked all involved in the preparation of the materials. He thought the data brief was great and useful. He said that while it is fine to look at overall numbers, drilling down to specifics can really be instructive. He said his review of the data revealed a number of success stories, noting as examples that both Brockport and Stony Brook serve comparatively high numbers of students who are Pell recipient yet both have achieved increasingly improving graduation rates over time. He said that these were the types of good news stories we would hope to have published about SUNY. He said that we need to delve into what efforts they are making that have been deemed successful so that we can share those with others.

Interim Provost Bringsjord explained that this data was going to be shared with campus presidents at a meeting the next day and that presidents will have an opportunity to share strategies that have been successful and also to discuss shared challenges. She noted that even those campuses with comparatively strong six-year graduation rates struggle with closing the gap between their six-year rate and their four-year rate. Dr. Bringsjord explained that from a System level we want to challenge campuses to continue to reach for improvements noting that we all want many more students completing on time. She noted that initiatives around degree audit and planning, discipline about curricular requirements of degree programs, clarity for students about requirements, and providing access to courses across the system through Open SUNY become all the more important.

**Diversity Update**

Associate Provost Medina provided a Diversity Update which included a report on the progress of the Provost’s working group to support LGBT students. He said that he was pleased to announce that the System working group had come to agreement on a series of optional questions to be included in campus online student information systems by January 2014. He explained that these questions will provide students with an opportunity to self-identify as LGBT and share information on disabilities, gender identity, veteran status, and plans for working while completing their degree; all areas that may require additional campus supports. He said that by using the student information systems to collect this data, students will have the opportunity to update their responses over time. He also noted that this data is reported to System Administration, which, with the appropriate protections for student privacy, can monitor student success over time.

Trustee Socarides thanked Associate Provost Medina and others for their hard work on this. He said that he was pleased with the outcome and thought this would make strides in our efforts to ensure that LGBT students and all students know they are welcome at SUNY.

Associate Provost Medina also shared a survey that was currently being piloted for campus administrators to have them share what services and supports are currently available for LGBT students. He shared a copy of his office’s inaugural newsletter and invited members of the
Committee to the upcoming conference focused on increasing diversity among students and faculty in STEM fields.

**Education Pipeline Report**

Senior Vice Chancellor Duncan-Poitier provided an update on the Education Pipeline. She shared a brief PowerPoint presentation (on file with the office of the General Counsel and Secretary) focused on how SUNY is strengthening its preparation programs to ensure SUNY’s teachers and school leaders are fully prepared to help students reach the higher state standards. She provided a brief review of the results of the grades 3-8 New York State Mathematics and English language arts assessments. She discussed next steps in the alignment of New York’s high school curriculum to the Regents’ exams and the Common Core.

Senior Vice Chancellor Duncan-Poitier also shared with the Committee a number of initiatives SUNY is leading to help more students to graduate from high school prepared for college. She explained that, in addition to these ongoing initiatives, SUNY is currently partnering with the State Education Department to plan for a statewide College and Career Readiness Convening. The purpose of the Convening is to build awareness among higher education faculty and leadership of the transition to Common Core Regents Exams that assess readiness for college and careers. The Convening, which is being supported by a grant from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), is being designed to focus on the alignment of high school and college expectations and the need for increasing partnerships to address the current readiness gap.

**Power of SUNY 2.0 – Academic Related Initiatives**

Associate Provost Hatch and Associate Vice Chancellor Kaitlin Gambrill provided an update on the Open SUNY initiative. They shared a summary PowerPoint presentation (on file with the Office of the General Counsel and Secretary) which noted a number of significant accomplishments: a consultant has been engaged through a competitive RFP process; a Provost’s Advisory Council has been convened; a series of regional meetings has taken place; individual working groups have been established to address everything from financial aid to professional development for faculty; and a new informational website has been established allowing the SUNY community to provide input. Associate Vice Chancellor Gambrill explained that plans are underway for a partial launch in January.

Chancellor Zimpher said ‘Open SUNY is bigger than big’ and thanked Associate Provost Hatch and Associate Vice Chancellor Gambrill for their hard work and for keeping everyone informed every step of the way.

Associate Provost Hatch mentioned that there may be a need for additional board action going forward to address cross-registration and reimbursements across campuses.

Trustee Ehrenberg said he looked forward to continued reports on Open SUNY at Academic Affairs and also in the Finance Committee. Chancellor Zimpher noted that an update may also be appropriate in the Research Committee as we are learning a lot about effective teaching and learning strategies in the online environment.

**Resolution: Teacher Preparation**

Assistant Provost Ruth Pagerey presented a proposed resolution entitled *SUNY Educator Preparation and the NewNY Education Reform Commission*. She explained that the resolution sets standards for admission to SUNY’s teacher and leader preparation programs to ensure we are attracting the best and brightest; pledges transparent reporting of outcomes data; and defines more rigorous clinical preparation.
Chancellor Zimpher said that this recommendation aligns with the draft report of the Governor’s Education Reform Commission. She serves as a member of the Commission along with State Education Department Commissioner John King, the President of the American Federation of Teachers and representatives of administration and faculty. Chancellor Zimpher expressed her strong support for the resolution and underscored that we have more work to do to ensure that prospective teachers emerge ready for a competitive career in teaching. Chancellor Zimpher said she believes very strongly that the preparation of teachers is an all-University responsibility, that disciplinary knowledge is as important as pedagogical knowledge. She said across the country there is a great divide about who “owns” teacher preparation. However, she commended SUNY’s liberal arts and science deans who are working hand in hand with teacher preparation deans.

Chancellor Zimpher said that she can attest from personal experience that nearly every one of her campus visits included tours of laboratories for nursing, culinary arts, agriculture, equestrian studies. However, when she asks to see clinical laboratories for teacher preparation, most are often at a loss as to how to respond. Chancellor Zimpher said that for too long teaching has not been viewed as a practice-based profession. She is pleased that the fourth anchor of the resolution includes such an emphasis.

Trustee Staller believes that this resolution sets a good direction. He urged that performance data be made publicly available so that students and parents can make informed decisions about which program are best suited to their needs. In addition, with respect to requirements for extended classroom experiences, he said it was his understanding anecdotally that it was becoming more difficult for campuses to obtain placements from districts. He has heard that some teachers are reluctant to hand over the class to a student when that teacher will be evaluated on student performance. Dr. Pagerey agreed this is a problem but one that staff and campuses are working to resolve. Chancellor Zimpher noted that this is the same problem we have with trying to place our medical students. She hopes that the Commission will work to address this issue.

Trustee Dullea said he is unclear on the timetable for the new standards, asking whether the change would be effective for students enrolling next September. Dr. Pagerey pointed out that because the resolution calls for reconvening an Advisory Council to plan implementation that timing would be closer to 2015. Trustee Dullea, noting that he was not a member of the Committee, wondered whether a timeline should be added to the resolution.

Trustee Ehrenberg agreed that a timeline would be a helpful addition and suggested a friendly amendment that implementation would be in place no later than 2015-16.

Trustee Knuepfer said conceptually he thought this resolution was wonderful and agrees that SUNY needs to get the best teachers and administrators in our schools and we are not currently 100 percent successful at doing so. However, he said that he questions the assumption that a strong GPA equates to the ability to be a strong teacher. He said that a person could have performed at the top of their class but they would not have the appropriate strengths or character traits to be an effective teacher. He also wondered if the number assigned for GPA would impact efforts to recruit a diverse student population.

Trustee Ehrenberg noted that the resolution sets a minimum GPA or a rank in the top 30th percentile of the high school class. He noted the concern nationally that too often our teacher preparation students are from the lowest levels academically. He assumed that this was something the Commission considered.

Chancellor Zimpher noted that the complexity of the argument is clear. She said the perceptual issue is why do we have a benchmark for entree in every other profession except teacher preparation. She said the Commission debated it and decided this was important.
Trustee Kneupfer also recommends adding a clause to the resolution that we need to do more to ensure that students can successfully receive strong classroom placements. He said that campuses and System need to work with districts and the state education commission on this. Trustee Ehrenberg agreed.

Trustee Good asked if the resolution had implications for community colleges. Assistant Provost Pagerey noted that there will be some implications. She noted that the advisory council will have community college membership. Interim Provost Bringsjord noted that SUNY policy makes it clear that there cannot be different expectations for rising juniors as for transfers.

Trustee Good also asked what the consultative process was for developing the resolution. Dr. Pagerey said that the draft was shared with chief academic officers and deans and directors who shared with their faculty. She said that overall the comments were positive and many noted that this aligns with the recommendations of a new accrediting body, CAPE, which recommend a minimum of a mean 3.0 GPA.

Chairman McCall asked if this resolution would come before the full Board. Trustee Ehrenberg said it would.

The resolution entitled **SUNY Educator Preparation and the NewNY Education Reform Commission** was unanimously approved to be forwarded to the full Board for consideration with two friendly amendments—adding a date for implementation and a commitment to support efforts to facilitate student placements.

**Big Data Conference**

Associate Provost and Associate Vice Chancellor Jason Lane and Associate Vice Chancellor Kaitlin Gambrill provided an overview of this year’s Critical Issues in Higher Education Conference: *Building a Smarter University, Big Data, Innovation & Ingenuity*, sharing information on session topics and featured speakers. They utilized a Power Point presentation (on file in the office of the General Counsel and Secretary).

Dr. Lane noted that SUNY has emerged as a thought-leader in each of the critically important areas of focus for these annual conferences. He noted that the conference and the related Book Series continue to attract national attention and this year’s conference is shaping up to be the biggest yet.

Trustee Staller noted that New York City experiencing a tech boom and it’s not too late to invite company leaders to participate. Dr. Lane thanked him for the suggestion and noted that they had made an effort to do so. He noted, for example, that Google was represented.

Trustee Staller also noted that since we first imagined the theme for this year’s conference, the term big data has come to mean a lot of things, some not so good. It said it will be interesting to see whether government collection of data becomes a focus. Associate Vice Chancellor Gambrill noted that there was going to be a session on the cautionary side of big data.

Chancellor Zimpher expressed how terrific it is that SUNY is emerging as a thought leader in each one of these areas with not only great conferences but edited volumes from SUNY Press that take deep dives into the process.

**Conclusion**

Trustee Ehrenberg asked Committee members to e-mail him with suggested topics for future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:27 a.m.