The Ad Hoc Committee on RF Relationship of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York met on June 30, 2011 at 10:33 a.m. at State University College of Optometry, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, New York pursuant to calls sent by the Office of the Secretary of the University on June 27, 2011.

June 30, 2011
10:33 a.m.

Trustees present at College of Optometry: Mr. Hunt, Committee Chairman; Mr. Belluck; Mr. McCall

Trustee present in Stony Brook: Mr. Staller

Also present in Optometry: Chancellor Zimpher; Dr. Lavallee; Mr. Howard

Also present in Albany: Mr. Abbott; Mr. McGrath; Ms. Boice (RF)

Trustee Absent: Dr. Lichtman

June 30, 2011

1. CONVENING OF PUBLIC MEETING

Mr. Hunt, Committee Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:33 am and noted a quorum existed. He stated the charge of the ad hoc committee is to review the Stromberg report and provide recommendations to the SUNY Board of Trustees and the Research Foundation Board of Directors on appropriate actions as suggested in the report. He stated today’s objective was to come up with an appropriate framework for the SUNY Board to provide reasonable oversight of the Research Foundation. He then called upon Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Dr. Lavallee for remarks.

Dr. Lavallee said this committee would be working parallel with the RF’s ad hoc committee. He said the task, as charged by Chairman Hayden, is to look from the point
of view of the SUNY Board of Trustees in the area of oversight. Dr. Lavallee stated the second piece concerns coordination of a proposed timeline which was to be completed by the end of this calendar year, but that an interim report would need to be prepared for the Board for its September meeting. Dr. Lavallee said he and University General Counsel Bill Howard met with RF staff to work out a preliminary schedule and that a joint meeting of both ad hoc committees is being planned for some time prior to the September SUNY Board meeting.

Trustee Staller stated that the committee provides both SUNY and RF an opportunity to look at things with fresh eyes and that perhaps the relationship with SUNY should not be what it has been in the past. He also stated that prior to starting a process with presumption, there is a fundamental question which should be addressed as to whether the RF should be doing more than its core mission of research administration and compliance.

Chancellor Zimpher followed by saying that the mission of the RF should be threefold: one, to manage post-award research; two, to generate increased funding from research largely, but not exclusively, from the federal government; and, three, the generation of innovation and entrepreneurship through technology transfer. Chancellor Zimpher stated that since the principal client of the Research Foundation is the State University of New York, this should all come together.

Chancellor Zimpher suggested that the Committee should consider where the RF relationship should reside in the SUNY organizational chart, and recommended that it reside with the Chief Academic Officer, the Provost, who is also being proposed to be the Executive Vice Chancellor of SUNY. The Chancellor also recommended that we begin with an Interim President of the RF and that during that person’s tenure, make certain all is in order prior to conducting a national public search for a permanent
President. Trustee Hunt asked how close we were to identifying an interim individual, to which Chancellor Zimpher responded it is currently in the discussion stage.

Trustee Staller stated that the Stromberg report made clear that the RF works for SUNY and drew attention to the issues that the RF did not increase funding, nor did it generate an increase in tech transfer. He went on to say that it is important to take a step back and address the question what direction the RF should head before selecting a new leader.

Trustee Hunt suggested reviewing some of the information distributed to the Committee and asked Mr. McGrath to provide highlights. Mr. McGrath summarized the Research Foundation’s organizational structure, the 1977 agreement with the State University of New York, and the inclusion of the RF within SUNY’s financial statements.

Trustee Hunt stated that out of all recommendations, they can be combined into four groups: The first requires the SUNY Board’s determination on the RF role, the second group clearly points to SUNY action, the third is part of the RF’s operating plan, and the fourth is working between the RF and the SUNY Board to assign priorities.

Trustee Staller, Dr. Lavallee, and Trustee Hunt then discussed the roles and leadership of the RF and the relationship between the RF and SUNY. Trustee Staller recommended that the committee meet with the presidents of the main research campuses. Trustee Hunt then welcomed any recommendations on leadership and meetings.

Dr. Lavallee mentioned the need to re-evaluate and change the Empire Innovation Program, how to best hire young researchers and see how they are going to be productive. Trustee Hunt added the need for a new general counsel at the RF, and Ms. Boice gave an update on the search process for a new general counsel.
Trustee Belluck asked who currently does all the patent and technology transfer legal work. Ms. Boice stated that there is a central attorney who supports the regional technology transfer offices, and all the doctoral schools have their own technology transfer office, with all the work happening on the campus. Trustee Staller stated this was something that should not be centralized.

Trustee Staller said that consideration of the RF mission should be a top priority, including its relationship to SUNY. Trustee Hunt agreed and also indicated the committee should tie that in with discussion of goals ten and eleven.

Trustee Hunt also mentioned the importance of area nine, transparency, and inquired on what progress was made. Ms. Boice indicated that the RF just released a whole page on its website to share a great deal of information about the corporation. The RF task force is very engaged in what they are going to do about pre-award and technology transfer and they have two faculty members on the task force. They plan on going back to look at the higher education commission report and reassess what the RF should be doing.

Trustee Staller suggested that the committee call in some of the key people and let the major research campuses decide who those people are. The goal would be to talk and lay out issues with them. The committee also discussed best practices and what external resources might be available to advise the committee on best.

Upon motion by Mr. McCall, seconded by Mr. Belluck, it was motioned to move to Executive Session a 12:01 p.m. The motion was unanimously agreed to.