Minutes of the Student Life Committee of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York
January 28, 2020

Pursuant to a notice of a meeting duly given on January 14, 2020, the Student Life Committee of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York held a meeting on January 28, 2020 at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University.

Committee Members Present:
Trustee Lewin, Co-Chair
Trustee Ostro, Co-Chair
Vice Chair Perales
Trustee Burke
Trustee Fogal
Trustee Kay
Trustee Litow

Trustees not present:
Trustee Belluck
Trustee Spielvogel
Trustee Staller

Other Trustees Present:
Chair Tisch
Trustee Spiro

Others Present:
John Graham, Committee Liaison
Chancellor Johnson, Provost Laursen, Ms. Casey, Mr. Conrad, President Duffy, Ms. Duncan-Poitier, Mr. Haelen, Mr. John, Mr. Megna, Ms. McLoughlin, Ms. Miller, Mr. Patton, Mr. Pratt, President Riley, Dr. Wang, Dr. Wentworth

Meeting Convened
Trustee Lewin called the meeting to order at 3:15 p.m., explaining that this would be an abbreviated session.

Approval of Minutes
Trustee Ostro took a moment to introduce Martin John, SUNY Downstate student and SUNY Student Assembly Vice Chair of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

After confirming that a quorum was present, Trustee Ostro called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Committee’s September 4, 2019 meeting. A motion was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Student Mental Health and Wellness Task Force
Trustee Lewin introduced the first agenda item, a report from the Student Mental Health and Wellness Task Force. She recognized and thanked Task Force co-chairs SUNY Downstate President Wayne Riley and SUNY Oswego President Deborah Stanley, and Task Force Liaison, Dr. Leah Wentworth, SUNY System Director of Student Wellness.
Recognizing mental health concerns among college-age students as a public health crisis, Trustee Lewin said that acting on the recommendations of this Task Force would be some of the most important work this Board has done to date. She asked President Riley to begin the update.

President Riley explained that college is a transitional time when students find themselves dealing with issues and experiences they have never dealt with before; potentially exasperating existing conditions and even unmasking previously undiagnosed mental health issues that can interfere with academic attainment. He said that the work of the Task Force was important to institutions across all sectors of SUNY.

Noting that the Task Force had already convened two in-person meetings, President Riley summarized the charge of three of the Task Force’s five subcommittees:

1. Wellness: Identifying best practices and strategies for ensuring that students understand the value of being well, which includes having the skills and resiliency necessary to bounce back when faced with setbacks. Specific areas of focus include outreach, prevention, health promotion, self-care, and staff support.

2. Assessment: Focusing on data, including existing capacity, study of what types of interventions work and, once implemented, how are those efforts are assessed and adapted for continuous improvement.

3. Campus-wide Engagement: Identifying strategies to involve faculty, staff and administrators across an individual campus as well as the required training and resources.

President Stanley explained that the Task Force members were dedicated professionals who jumped right into the task at hand. She said that the group was focused on bringing insights that would serve and leverage SUNY as a System and that would instill in individual students key lessons around mental health and wellness that would serve them beyond graduation. She then reviewed the remaining two subcommittees:

4. Clinical: Identifying possible solutions to critical capacity challenges around the delivery of psychiatric care and clinical services; identifying best practices and issuing guidance about how SUNY can achieve effective implementation.

5. System-wide Structure and Support: Identifying opportunities for SUNY to leverage System-wide procurement, technology, contracts and affiliate programs. Also exploring how to best maintain support as students move from one SUNY campus to another.

Dr. Wentworth noted that next meeting of the Task Force will focus on assessment. She also announced a new, five-year suicide prevention grant from the New York State Office of Mental Health that would support the work of the Task Force.

The Committee asked about the value of the current tele-counseling work underway. Dr. Wentworth said that even with a funding reduction this year, the program was serving 10 campuses and was regarded as successful. She said that psychiatry and a smaller number of cognitive behavior therapies were being administered, largely by Upstate Medical University. She underscored that for some of these campuses, tele-counseling is the only quickly available care. She said that students referred to doctors in the community can wait up to three months to get an appointment, a time-frame that for many is just too long. She said that SUNY’s tele-counseling effort has the potential to grow with sufficient resources. President Riley noted that tele-health or app-based therapy has been validated as effective and is in demand by students.

The Committee asked about cost, noting that the Task Force had to keep resources in mind when making recommendations. Dr. Wentworth mentioned that some financial analysis was previously done and that she would re-share that with the Committee.
The Committee asked about insurance. Presidents Riley and Stanley said that insurance coverage is an ongoing challenge for mental health and all medical services as not all students have insurance and for those that do, services are often deemed out-of-network and not approved. Dr. Wentworth said the tele-counseling project was not currently billing insurance. Dr. Wentworth said one of the matters the Task Force is reviewing is the current mandatory insurance for international study and its potential broader application.

The Task Force Co-Chairs said they planned to have an initial report and recommendations by the end of the semester. The agreed that recommendations had to be feasible.

In closing the co-chairs noted that while the Task Force intentionally decided to not make substance abuse a key focus of its immediate work—citing it as an issue that required dedicated focus. They did, however, note that the potential legalization of recreational marijuana could have a significant impact on students and campuses.

Trustee Lewin thanked the Task Force Co-Chairs and Dr. Wentworth. She also thanked Chair Tisch for her important advice about making recommendations that are actionable.

Co-Chair Lewin then asked Co-Chair Ostro to present the next agenda item.

Special Meeting of the Student Life Committee

Trustee Ostro asked Committee members to mark their calendars for a special meeting of the Student Life Committee to be held on April 21st at the University at Buffalo.

He explained that students from 14 SUNY campuses—community colleges and state-operated institutions—will attend to share their thoughts, experiences and suggestions with the Board on issues of critical importance to them.

He recognized and thanked Chair Tisch for initiating this convening. He also expressed his thanks to the Chancellor for her willingness to attend, noting that students always appreciate time to speak with her.

Guest Tim Conrad, Five North Chocolate

Trustee Ostro then asked Dr. Graham to introduce a special guest speaker. Dr. Graham asked the Committee to join him in welcoming SUNY Geneseo alumnus Ben Conard, founder and CEO of Five North Chocolate.

Mr. Conard began by telling the Committee that as a young entrepreneur he is often asked if he thought it was worth it for him to go to college; he said is answer is always a resounding ‘yes.’ He went on to describe four “opportunity chains” that link him very closely to SUNY Geneseo and the SUNY System:

1. Given its broad liberal arts focus, he had the opportunity at SUNY Geneseo to major in business and minor in German. He was encouraged by his German professor to apply to Congress for Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange fellowship which he subsequently won. He spent a year in Germany where he became a German national champion at the Global Student Entrepreneur awards, met German officials, worked and studied at a German university, participated in language training and became proficient in German.

2. He was encouraged by classmates in his business program to pursue SUNY Geneseo’s Venture Works entrepreneurship course which runs over three semesters. It was in this course that he launched his company, Five North Chocolate, entered and won numerous awards at the New York State Business Plan competition, had the opportunity to engage with the Clinton Foundation and meet President Clinton and his daughter Chelsea.

3. A resident of Long Island, New York he was able to make connections to another SUNY campus, Stony Brook University, to ask for help post-graduation to keep his business up and running. Stony Brook allowed him to use a kitchen at on-campus, helped him
acquire insurance, and he was up and running with product at farmer's markets in under three weeks. He also won first prize in the Stony Brook Wolfie Tank pitch competition.

4. Citing the SUNY Geneseo community as a special place home to diverse students from across the State, Mr. Conrad shared his fourth opportunity chain. He described SUNY Geneseo as a place where he felt safe enough to be himself, to know himself, and to not only come out as a gay man, but to have the confidence to be out and proud in the business world. He was named to the Forty LGBT Leaders Under Forty list and he and his company were featured in Forbes magazine for producing the first packaged goods that carry the LGBT Chamber of Commerce seal.

Mr. Conard thanked Geneseo for helping him to become the person he is today. And he thanked the SUNY Trustees and System leaders for doing all that they do to make SUNY campuses special places for all students.

Trustee Lewin said that she could not think of a better way to end the Student Life Committee meeting and thanked Mr. Conard for sharing his important story.

Adjournment

Confirming that there was no other business before the Committee, Trustee Lewin adjourned the meeting at 3:48 p.m.