Minutes of the Student Life Committee
of the Board of Trustees
of the State University of New York
May 8, 2019

Pursuant to a notice of meeting duly given on April 23, 2019, the Student Life Committee of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York held a meeting on Wednesday, May 8, 2019 at SUNY Geneseo in Geneseo, New York.

Committee Members Present:
Trustee Braun, Co-Chair
Trustee Lewin, Co-Chair
Trustee Litow
Trustee Tamrowski

Trustees not present:
Trustee Staller
Trustee Belluck
Trustee Spielvogel

Other Trustees Present:
Chairman McCall
Vice Chair Tisch
Trustee Burke
Trustee Duffy
Trustee Kay
Trustee Spiro

Others Present:
John Graham, Committee Liaison
Chancellor Johnson, Provost Laursen, Dr. Cimini (University at Albany), Ms. Duncan-Poitier, Ms. Garvey, Mr. Haelen, Ms. Kukjian, Mr. Pratt, Dr. Rivero (University at Albany), Dr. Wang

Meeting Convened

Trustee Lewin called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m. Noting that this would be Trustee Braun’s last meeting as Student Trustee and Committee Co-Chair, Trustee Lewin recognized him as a tremendous advocate for SUNY students and a wonderful colleague.

Trustee Braun thanked Trustee Lewin and recognized her own leading advocacy for SUNY students. He wished all SUNY students good luck on their upcoming final exams.

Co-Chair Braun Report

Trustee Braun provided a brief summary of the seven student roundtables the SUNY Trustees conducted at campuses across the system since last May. He explained that each roundtable
had student attendees from three to five campuses. He thanked Trustee Lewin, Chairman McCall and Chancellor Johnson for creating this opportunity, noting that it demonstrated how much they value the student perspective. He said that the roundtables provided an opportunity to hear about what students enjoyed about their SUNY experience as well as challenges they were facing.

Stressing that this was more than a listening tour, Trustee Braun explained that a key charge for his successor and incoming Student Assembly President, Austin Astro, was follow-up action on issues raised. He introduced Mr. Astro to the Committee.

Approval of Minutes

After confirming that a quorum was present, Trustee Braun called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Committee’s November 15th meeting. A motion was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Co-Chair Lewin Report

Trustee Lewin said that the primary focus of the Committee’s meeting would be creating a plan to support SUNY campuses in meeting student mental health needs.

Trustee Lewin recognized that this has been an ongoing topic for the Committee and acknowledged the work done to date. However, she underscored the need to move faster on this critical issue and called on her fellow Trustees to leverage this moment. She commended Chairman McCall for being a co-author of a critically important recent op-ed on this issue, along with Columbia’s Dr. Jeffrey Lieberman and Randy Auerbach. She explained that the letter stressed how important consideration of available mental health services should be when making the decision about where to attend college. Trustee Lewin said we want to ensure together that every SUNY campus meets or exceeds the bar outlined in that communication and hopes that the Committee’s conversation today will lay the foundation for the required work ahead.

Mental Health Supports

Dr. Graham began the conversation with an overview of national and SUNY data. He said that, according to the American Psychological Association, there has been a 30 percent increase in students seeking additional counseling support. He also noted a tragic increase in the number of students thinking about or attempting suicide. According to the 2018 SUNY Student Information Survey, 49% of responding students self-identified as having anxiety and 36% identified as having some form of depression. Dr. Graham then introduced two guest speakers to discuss possible options for SUNY’s response.

Note that all presenters utilized a shared PowerPoint presentation to accompany their remarks (copy on file in the Office of the Secretary).

Dr. Estela Rivero, Director of the University at Albany Counseling Center and her colleague, Dr. Dolores Cimini, shared highlights from their new book, “Promoting Behavioral Health and Reducing Risk Among College Students,” published just last summer. Their book is a compilation of the large body of research on the behavioral health of college students, offering guidance on evidence-based prevention and early intervention strategies. Dr. Rivera shared new thinking in the development of comprehensive mental health programs and important work
underway today at several of SUNY campuses that they felt could be replicated as part of a broader initiative. They noted that efforts big and small are needed and urged SUNY leaders not to ignore the importance of simply talking about mental health and for faculty and administrators to be willing to share their own experiences.

Dr. Azziz shared an update on the SUNY Tele-Counseling Network pilot, the efforts and investments of other States and systems to address mental health, and the complexity of addressing mental health and student wellness across a system as diverse as SUNY.

Provost Laursen announced that he will be charging a University-wide Task Force to pick up on the conversation today and to move expeditiously toward recommended action. He also announced the planned appointment of a Director of Student Wellness at SUNY System Administration, a new position that will support the work of the Task Force and help to: assess needs and identify strategic priorities; build partnerships at the state and national level; identify funding opportunities; and more.

The Committee discussed the timing of the Task Force and new hire. Provost Laursen said that the position was already posted and that his office would move to populate the Task Force over the summer. There was also discussion of related professional development for faculty.

**EIT Accessibility**

Ms. Kurkjian then shared with the Committee the final draft report of the Electronic and Information Technology Accessibility Committee (EIT Committee) and a related draft resolution. Ms. Kurkjian, who chaired the EIT Committee, explained that the group worked tirelessly to recommend an accessibility framework to support compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans With Disabilities Act and to help SUNY move forward with being inclusive. She said that the EIT Committee’s recommendations were informed by Office of Civil Rights presentations, court findings, and the work of national peers. She also noted that the draft report was strengthened as a result of a University-wide open comment period.

EIT Committee recommendations, Ms. Kurkjian explained, call for creation of a SUNY-wide EIT policy, which has been outlined in draft resolution form and shared with the Committee. Key elements of the proposed policy include: endorsement and adaption of the recommendations of the EIT Committee’s report; designation of an EIT Accessibility Officer at System Administration and each campus; and collaborative development of an EIT Accessibility Plan at System Administration and each campus.

Ms. Kurkjian explained that the proposed policy identified required standards and best practices in each of the following areas: websites and software, digital content, classroom technology and design, libraries, and procurement. She noted that comments were welcome from the Trustees and that the goal was to bring a final policy to the Board for consideration in June.

Trustee Lewin thanked Ms. Kurkjian for her report and directed Trustees to send any comments to Provost Laursen.

**Adjournment**

Trustee Lewin adjourned the meeting at 12:10 p.m.