State University of New York

College of Environmental Science and Forestry

Board of Trustees Meeting

February 28, 2020 - 9:00am

Syracuse, New York – Gateway Center

# Minutes

## Attendees:

* **Voting Members:** Attending: Matthew Marko, Chair, John Bartow, Linda Brown-Robinson, Vita DeMarchi, William Fisher, Rick Fedrizzi, and Student Representative Edward Wozny. Not in Attendance: Stephen Sloan, and Daniel Fitts

**Non-Voting:** Not in Attendance: John Liu, Vice Chancellor and Provost, for Kent Syverud, Chancellor Syracuse University, Shannon Tahoe, Commissioner of Education, Kathleen Hochul, Lieutenant Governor, Kristine Johnson, SUNY Chancellor, Basil Seggos, Commissioner, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

* College Personnel in Attendance: Interim President David Amberg, Justin Beslity, Malika Carter, Debbie Caviness, Douglas Daley, Sue Fassler, Maureen Fellows, Sophie Gublo-Jantzen, Kevin Hayden, Rebecca Hoda-Kearse, Mark Lichtenstein, Anne Lombard, Joanie Mahoney, Thayer Miller, David Newman, Chris Nomura, Gary Peden, Kevin Reynolds, Joseph L. Rufo, Stephanie Specchio, Ragan Squier

## FMP Presentation:

Jason Henault, JMZ Ryan Kovac, Trowbridge Michael, LA & John Inman, SUNY Construction Fund

## Call to Order

Chair Marko called the meeting of the ESF Board of Trustees to order at 9:06 am.

He welcomed everyone and reminded the Trustees that the microphones were live and that all Board meetings are open meetings and will be livestreamed, digitally recorded and the video would be available soon after the meeting on the ESF web page. Chair Marko asked Secretary Rufo to begin roll call for those attending the meeting. With more than five voting Board members in attendance, a quorum was confirmed.

Chair Marko reminded those in attendance that the ESF Campus is located within the original territory of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and thanked the Centers for Native Peoples and the Environment for their leadership and traditions regarding stewardship of the earth and scientific ecological knowledge.

Chair Marko reminded visitors that although welcomed and encouraged to attend SUNY ESF Board meetings, general discussion will be limited to Trustees. When recognized by the Chair, members of the ESF Administration and invited guests are able to participate in discussion. Visitors may be granted the privilege of the floor for a limited amount of time at the Chair’s discretion under New Business.

Welcomed newest trustee Eddy Wozny. Trustee Wozny is the newly selected undergraduate student representative and has the distinction of carrying the title of voting member. Welcomed both graduate student representative Justin Beslity and Academic Governance Executive Chair Doug Daley.

Chair Marko, on behalf of the Trustees, acknowledged and thanked Leslie Talbot for her service to the College. Prior to this meeting and with 10 years of service, Leslie submitted her resignation.

Approval of the Consent Agenda

* Approval of the Revised Minutes of the December 6, 2019 Board Meeting
* Personnel Actions Presented for Board Review

Trustee Fedrizzi made a motion to approve the items in the consent agenda, seconded by Trustee Bartow. All in favor 6, abstained, Trustee Wozny.

**RESOLVED** that the items in the consent agenda be approved as presented.

## Report of the Board Chair – Matthew Marko

I want to thank Dr. William Powell, Professor, and Director of the Council on Biotechnology in Forestry, for his presentation on ESF’s American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project.  It has been remarkable to see Bill advance this incredible project that has brought great notoriety to the College, and now so very close to restoring this tree to its native range in North America.  Over the next five years, Bill and his team have the goal of growing ten thousand blight-resistant American chestnut trees.  Dr. Powell, the Board is committed to helping you achieve this vision.  We look forward to working more closely with you.

Trustee Bartow suggested that ESF focus on the international standards for certifying forests since none of them recognize genetically modified stock. Chair Marko recommended that the Operations Committee work on this issue with Dr. Powell.

Recognizing the departure of Trustee Talbot, this leaves our board with a vacancy in the Officer position of Vice-Chair.  In accordance with our Bylaws, I would like to make a motion to nominate Trustee Fisher to serve in this role for a one-year term.  I would like to begin discussion by stating that at our May meeting, I will identify a nomination committee, which will spend the summer identifying officer candidates for Chair and Vice Chair to begin serving a 2-year term at the next annual meeting.  Until then, I note that Trustee Fisher has demonstrated exceptional dedication and acumen since coming on board last summer, specifically in supporting our Lands Into Trust Committee, as well as Finance Committee.  With my ongoing commitment to Chair the Presidential Search Committee, it is critical we have a Vice Chair that can be present on campus as needed and provide leadership support to this Board.  I look forward to working more closely with him.

**MOTION** - Chair Marko made a motion to nominate Trustee Fisher as Vice Chair for a one-year term; Trustee DeMarchi seconded the motion. All in favor – 6; Trustee Fisher abstained.   
**APPROVED** that Trustee Fisher will serve as Vice Chair for a one-year term.

Speaking of the Presidential Search, I know many of the Campus Community are interested in an update.  Proposals for Search Consultants to aid the Search Committee in its search were received this week, and we will begin a process to select the search firm next week and enter the contracting phase.  I have met with all constituencies that make up the Search Committee, and they are all either deliberating or have selected their participant.  The final membership of the committee will be advanced soon, well in advance of the contracting of a consultant.  I will continue to keep the college community informed of Presidential Search activity, primarily by working closely with Academic Governance leadership.

I will note that the Chairs and leaders of the College’s eight academic departments and programs have advanced a letter to SUNY Chancellor Johnson, of which I was copied, advocating for an internal search.  The Chairs raise important and relevant reasons for this request, including time frame of search, engagement of community, continuity of progress on campus, and financial and other costs of an extended search process.  I look forward to discussing this letter with the Chancellor and SUNY BOT in the coming weeks.

Now, we have an important line-up of business items today, and we must get to it; specifically, discussion about campus diversity, equity, and inclusion; budget and progress on our deficit reduction plan; faculty workload; capital master plan; and accreditation.

## Committee Reports

Prior to the committee reports, Chair Marko updated the committee assignments. Finance Committee will be chaired by Trustee Fisher, Trustee Bartow and Trustee DeMarchi will continue as members. Governance Committee will continue to be chaired by Chair Marko and Trustee DeMarchi and Trustee Brown-Robinson as members. Sustainable Operations will be chaired by Trustee Fedrizzi and members will include Trustee DeMarchi and Trustee Fisher and Chair Marko as ex-officio. Trustee Fisher will continue as chair of the Lands In to Trust Ad hoc committee, with Trustee Bartow as member and Chair Marko as ex-officio.

Sustainable Finance Committee – Committee Chair Bill Fisher. The 2/27/20 scheduled meeting was not convened due to a travel related and family related matter for two fellow committee members. There was discussion with Joe Rufo and members of Executive Cabinet regarding the budget deficit plan. We will finish in June with a 4.8 million dollar deficit, a 25% reduction from the projected 6.4 millions. Plans are under way to further reduce the deficit.

* Recommendation to challenge the administration to come back to the May BOT Meeting with a 2020-21 budget that reduces the planned deficit by 50% (3.4 millions) and that we look to SUNY for the other 50%.
* Action Item: Trustee Fisher will invite graduate student representative Justin Beslity to a Sustainable Finance Committee meeting to share the graduate students’ ideas for closing the budget gap.

Sustainable Operations - Committee Chair, Leslie Talbot - No Report at this time.

Governance Committee – Committee Chair, Matthew Marko. Committee met and put together a policy for visitor participation at BOT meetings. Secretary Rufo read the Visitor Participation Policy Resolution Visitors are welcome and encouraged to attend SUNY ESF Board of Trustee meetings. Please be advised that the Board of Trustees has adopted the following procedure for conducting regular business meetings: General discussion will be limited to Trustees, invited members of the ESF Administration, and invited guests. Visitors may be granted the floor only at the discretion of the Board Chair. The Chair typically grants limited time to willing visitors under the New Business agenda item. The time frame may be expanded or rescheduled at the discretion of the Chair. All in attendance are requested to mute their mobile phones during the meeting.

**MOTION -** Chair Marko made a motion to approve the resolution; seconded by Trustee Brown-Robinson. All in Favor.

**RESOLVED** that the Visitor Participation Policy be approved as presented.

Committee started deliberation on a Trustee self-evaluation process which will be introduced to the Board prior to the May meeting. Also working on clarifying agenda development.

Lands Into Trust Ad Hoc Committee – Committee Chair, William Fisher- Report given at September meeting, no further action to be taken at this time. Suspended activity until relevant.

## President’s Report*– David Amberg*

Introduction of new key staff hires – Stephanie Specchio, Associate VP for Communications and Marketing; Dr. Lizette Rivera, Director of Student Inclusion Initiatives and Special Assistant to the CDO; and Rebecca Hoda-Kearse, Title IX Coordinator and Affirmative Action Officer.

President Amberg gave an update on anti-bias measures that the College has taken and plans for additional measures on how to best support our students and allies of the Not Again SU movement. There was discussion on required procedures to be followed when students are involved in bias/racist behaviors, and training that is taking place and in the process of being developed.

January 30 there was an ESF-OCC press event for an MOU signing. The two institutions are creating opportunities for OCC students to pursue degrees at ESF in a 2+2 arrangement. A similar MOU was signed with Jefferson Community College.

January 1 ESF became a smoke-, vape-, and nicotine-free campus. Smoking cessation courses through Upstate Medical University have been made available to our community.

A Satellite Properties Task Force was created to get a clear understanding of the finances of the satellite properties. Maureen Fellows chairs the two-phase task force. The task force is nearing completion of phase one, which was to gain detailed knowledge of the revenues and costs associated with supporting the properties and phase two will be to make recommendations as to how we can increase revenues and reduce expenses. President Amberg will provide a completed report to the Trustees once phase two is complete.

President Amberg reported steps the Administration is taking to inform the College community about the Coronavirus, monitoring international travel of members of our community very carefully, seeking guidance from the County Health Department and SUNY, and working in cooperation with Syracuse University and Upstate Medical University in the development of a pandemic response plan. It was noted that communication and web access are of critical importance.

Professor James Gibbs has been getting tremendous press on his rediscovery of two giant tortoise species that were thought to be extinct. It is truly an achievement of a lifetime.

The Sloan Foundation has designated ESF as being in their Indigenous Graduate Partnership, which will support five students of Native American, Alaskan Native or Native Hawaiian descent. Dr. Robin Kimmerer deserves all the credit for the partnership.

Dr. Bill Powell received the American Chestnut Restoration Forest $3.2 million grant from the Temple World Charity Foundation. This is the largest gift/grant ever made to the College.

## Inclusion, Diversity & Equity Presentation – Dr. Malika Carter, Chief Diversity Officer

* The IDE staff is giving guidance to faculty on how to deal with the anti-bias issues. Training development is ongoing and there is state mandated Title IX and Cleary training. Dr. Carter and Kevin Hayden, College Counsel, are implementing anti-discrimination and anti-harassment training for employees on an annual basis. There will be a proposal going to the provost for a one-credit class for incoming students. Elective training for those who want ongoing professional development as well.
* The Living document is a constantly changing document. They are rolling out the second version on March 1, and will update on a quarterly basis. Malika is asking the entire campus community to engage in the living document.
* Dr. Carter highlighted the student inclusion initiatives that are in progress, the letter to campus regarding bathroom signage and menstruation products in all bathrooms, the IDE Liaison Initiative and the Diversity Rubric (Prodigy).
  + Action Item – Include the Trustees on the anti-bias/anti-discrimination training opportunities.
  + Action Item – Chair Marko will attend an IDE Committee Meeting. Malika will inform him when the next few meetings are.

## College Finances – Joseph Rufo

State Operating Budget -2nd Quarter Update

There have been improvements to the 2019-2020 budget projections. There is a slight increase in forecasted revenues and a significant decrease in projected expenditures. Budgeted for a 6.4 million deficit and are now running at about a 4.8 million deficit – a 25% improvement. The projected cash balance deficit by year-end will require us to borrow from SUNY.

CFO Rufo gave highlights of the Governor’s 2020-21 Executive Budget as it relates to ESF.

Deficit Reduction Plan – Joe is working with the SUNY Business Office to put together a five-year plan to increase revenue and decrease expenses. It is currently being drafted and should be finished in the next few months.

There was discussion on the need to increase revenues rather than more cuts and the importance of finding ways to accomplish that goal.

## Provost’s Report – *David Newman*

Provost Newman spoke briefly about each of the 12 new faculty hires this year. Many of them started in the fall semester. Most of the positions were backfills with a few new additions.

Dr. Newman presented data and explained the variation in faculty workloads across campus in terms of teaching, research, service and in some cases administration. He noted common allocations for professors at this campus is 40% teaching/50% research/10% service or 50% teaching/40% research/10% service. Instructors typically teach 100%. He also touched on the concerns with not enough graduate only course being taught and the challenges it presents. Dr. Newman also presented data on the research dollars brought into the college by the different departments. In summary there is a high percentage (70%) of teaching among faculty and research continues to remain steady at about $16 million per year. He is encouraging department chairs to examine individual faculty work allocations to account for teaching and research productivity.

Chair Marko commended Provost Newman for providing this very important data.

* Middle States Self-study Process for Reaffirmation of Accreditation – Dr. Sophie Gublo-Jantzen, Assistant Director of Assessment and Institutional Research
* Sophie gave an overview of what the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Accreditation is and explained the re-accreditation process. She noted we are beginning the two-year self-study process. The self-study document has been communicated to campus for comment and will be submitted to the VP Liaison on March 30. The VP Liaison’s visit to campus will take place on April 21 with recommended revisions completed and SSD accepted by Summer 2020.
* Trustee Fisher has agreed to be the Board representative to the MSCHE Self Study Committee. Sophie has requested that the Board be knowledgeable of the process, participate in the visit with the liaison’s visit on April 21, and with the peer institutions review team visit in Spring 2022. Also if the Board feels it appropriate, the self-study committee would welcome documented endorsement in support of work products as they are offered to them for review.

## Facilities Master Plan Update:

Jason Henault, JMZ Architects; Ryan Kovac, Trowbridge Wolf Michaels, LA

This is the first public presentation of the facilities master plan. JMZ and Trowbridge Wolf Michaels, LA have been tasked with looking at the physical facilities and how they can best support academic programs, research initiatives and all of the students on campus. Jason and Ryan presented the project goals, the planning process, proposed floor plans and physical environment of the Facilities Master Plan.

* Action Item: President Amberg will distribute the FMP to campus once Dr. Newman presents it to Chairs Council/Academic Council.
* Action Item: Trustee Bartow requested the FMP be included on the agenda for the May meeting and materials be provided prior for a deeper look at the plan.

## **Executive Session**

Chair Marko called for an executive session to discuss personnel matters. All Trustees in attendance, Joseph Rufo, Secretary to the Board, David Amberg, Interim President, Kevin Hayden, College Counsel, Mark Lichtenstein, Chief of Staff, Joanie Mahoney, Chief Operating Officer, and David Newman, Provost, were asked to attend.

Chair Marko motioned that the meeting move to Executive Session. The meeting moved to executive session at 12:56 p.m. in 211 Gateway.

The meeting returned from Executive Session at 2:21 p.m. Trustee Fisher had to leave the meeting before returning from Executive Session.

## New Business: Chair Marko opened the floor to the students

* Justin Beslity, student representative for the Graduate Student Association (GSA) realizes the College is struggling with two simultaneous problems – the budget deficit and trying to graduate Ph.D. students. However, he feels it very important that the Board and Administration take another look at raising the graduate student stipend, which will help with recruitment and increase our chances to improve diversity.
* Eddy Wozny – USA fully supports GSA in their request to raise graduate student stipends.
* Rose Osborne – Graduate Student Employees Union business agent –She thanked the Board and Administration for being so open to hearing what Justin, Rose and other graduate students have to say about increasing stipends and the critical nature of funding to diversifying the institution. Rose also thanked Trustee Fisher for inviting Justin to speak about the Living Wage Campaign and the graduate students’ ideas about bringing in revenue to support those raises. Thanked Dr. Carter for her efforts on increasing inclusion and diversity over all. Discussion on accommodations for faculty and students who are affected by the Federal Travel Ban and requested a brief update on the Living Wage Campaign Task Force.

## Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm

Respectfully submitted by

Robin Perkins