



State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
May 10, 2024 - 9:00 am  
24 Marshall Hall, Zoom & Livestream

## MINUTES

### Voting Members in Attendance:

Chair William Fisher, Vice Chair John Bartow, Trustee Linda Brown-Robinson (via Zoom) Trustee Silas Cochran, Trustee Vita DeMarchi, Trustee Daniel Fitts, Trustee Oluwole (OJ) McFoy, Trustee Stephen Sloan (via Zoom).

**Absent:** Trustee Rick Fedrizzi

### Non-Voting Members in Attendance:

Emme Christie (GSA), Adriana Espinosa (representing DEC Commissioner, via Zoom), Chancellor Syrverud (Via Zoom), Amiya Castro (representing Lieutenant Governor of New York State)

### College Personnel/Students in Attendance:

Joanne Mahoney (*President*), Ragan Squier (*Secretary to the Board*), Kelly Berger, Nichole Dougherty, Danushi Fernando, Danielle Gerhart, Brenda Greenfield, Susan Head, Matt Millea, Mark Lichtenstein, Samuel Mukasa, John Stella, Baylee Woods, Gary Scott, Diana Jaramillo, Matt Smith (President, UUP), Tyler Dorholt, Patrice Kohl, Jason Kohlbrenner, Erin Tochelli, Reagan Johnson, Abbey Leibert, Maggie Liddell, Owen Volk.

### Call to Order, Roll Call and Welcome

Chair Fisher called the meeting of the ESF Board of Trustees to order at 9:03 am. He provided a Haudenosaunee land acknowledgement. He welcomed Eden Gardner, new President of MOSA and confirmed a quorum with six voting trustees in attendance in-person.

#### 1. **Consent Agenda** – *Chair Fisher*

- Approval of the Minutes of the March 8, 2024 Board Meeting.
- Personnel Actions Presented for Board Review.
- Candidates for Graduation Presented for Endorsement – May and August, 2024

Trustee McFoy motioned to approve the consent agenda items. Trustee DeMarchi seconded, Trustee Cochran abstained from the vote, all others approved.



## 2. Chair's Report – Chair Fisher

### President Evaluation:

- Faculty, Student Leaders, Executive Cabinet members, alumni, College Foundation and Academic Governance members, along with Trustees have been contacted to provide feedback for formal evaluation of the President. Chair Fisher encouraged all to respond as soon as possible.

### Budget:

- \$5M mission adjustment, was not approved with the final budget.
  - Continue advocacy in the future, first ask is often not successful.
- Look at revenue enhancement opportunities and continue to look expense savings.
- CFO is working on the ESF budget, will schedule meeting of sustainable finance in second or third week of June, part of process before budget goes to SUNY for adoption. All trustees will be invited to participate.

### I-81 Project:

- I-81 Project Meeting with Manager, Regional Director from DOT.
  - Receptive to expertise that ESF offers.
  - Major impact for years to come,
  - President Mahoney noted that the plan seems to cut off the University area, LA student shared a design that includes a land bridge to connect ESF to community, which was well-received.  
When and duration – contract will be awarded this year. Fall movement.  
Conversation on i-81, we will provide list of important dates, events, and projects.

### Board Business:

- Reminded the Board to complete the self-assessment and submit for review by September.

## 3. President's Report

- Thanked Chancellor Syverud, noting that SU welcomes ESF for Commencement. Noted that Syracuse University and the ESF have both taken an approach to balance free speech and safety during peaceful protests. Both institutions have worked together and have well thought plans for commencement.
- Provided data for a review of ESF's financial position which will serve as basis for 6/17 meeting with the Chancellor.
  - Fall 2024 enrollment is going up, still a lot of capacity.
  - ESF at top of list for support from SUNY to cover our operations – 54% of operations covered by state appropriations vs tuition revenue.
    - ESF % increases for state aid have been lower than other SUNYs but our base is higher, dollar amounts are not significantly different.
- Reviewed the most recent complete fiscal year data (2022-2023) for an analysis of revenue and expenses.
  - ESF spends \$28,857/student – A \$4,814/student deficit from tuition revenue collected.
  - Reviewed Instructional expenses and revenue:
    - Cost of Instruction - \$9603/student
    - Tuition revenue \$7109/student.



- Total Instructional deficit of \$4.4M (Represents half of annual deficit)
- Our scholarship \$ is high, SUNY is looking. State \$4M, CF \$2M
- ESF students are top recruits for universities, we have to be competitive with scholarships offered from big university centers.
- Reviewed Cost of operations - \$34.3M (includes \$1.6M of non-instructional satellite property expenses)
  - Cost of Operations - \$19,523/student
  - Total Administrative/Operation revenue - \$30.2M
- Total Operational deficit \$4.1M (Represents other half of annual deficit)
- ESF has better financial data and information than we have has in the past and feels confident that we can now decrease the deficit.
- Student to faculty ratio – one of lowest rations in SUNY (necessary for STEM) but going in the wrong direction – it will be necessary to monitor.

#### **Potential Strategies for deficit reduction:**

- Reviewed percentage of expenses covered by the state for all SUNY campuses, ESF is at the top (47.4% of expenses covered).
- Chancellor King asked for – alignment of academic offerings, ESF doesn't have a lot of opportunity to change our current programs, but this includes additional, new programs; ESF will invest in new programs that help our finances.
- Possible increase in workforce, possible reductions. Monitor our faculty/staff ratio.
- Retirements and other separations: Can we delay hires for salary savings?
- Shared services – share non-student facing. SUNY system is now facilitating.
- Non-salary, can we make adjustments to scholarship, start up, faculty recovery.
- Maximize revenue opportunities – grant for micro credentials, adjust mix of in state and out of state enrollment (and increase rates), MPS programs – marketing, loan payment.

S. Head available to answer questions.

Trustee DeMarchi questioned what ESF's bottom line is if we are not paying the loan back. The loan represents \$1.6-1.7M each year.

Trustees had discussion on additional opportunities to reduce expenses and generate revenue.

#### **4. Academic Governance Report – Chair, Gary Scott**

- Congratulated 2024 graduates.
- Announced new Academic Governance co-chairs Aaron Rounds and Ruth Yanai.
- Acknowledged challenging times for ESF and noted that we are moving in the right direction.
- Thanked friends, family, and colleagues at ESF for support during personal health struggles.
- Commented that the SU contract and accessory instruction rates will need review when addressing budget challenges.

#### **5. Student Reports:**

##### **5.1. Graduate Student Association - Emme Christie**

- Completed elections on April 29 new senate: More Department Representatives, reduced the number on the senate.
- Approved more programming to student body: "EDGE" enhancing development for graduate



excellence.

- Approved student-lead events, students can apply for funding to host events.
- Established Research Mentoring Program.
- Increased graduate student scholarship excellence fund from 500 to 1000/student, travel from 250 to 500/student.
- Increased student activity fees to support the increase in grants and awards.
- Standardized graduate student regalia.

IDE and International Affairs, rep on committee.

- Asked about the diversity policy and action plan for campus and if there is training for faculty and staff.
- Requested Pride and Nation flags on campus.
- Complimented ESF Administration's response to Encampment at Syracuse University. Thanked administration for being open to communications and committing to review investments.

### **5.2. MOSA - Silas Cochran and Eden Gardner**

Trustee Cochran noted that it had been a pleasure to serve on the Board of Trustees and work with everyone involved, he yielded his presentation time to incoming MOSA President, Eden Gardner. E. Gardner introduced himself, noting that he has been serving MOSA in two positions, external communications with Syracuse University and Vice President. He reported on the following:

- Programming: 7 new special interest groups, 1 registered student organization. Staple programming and MOSAIC events have been a success.
- Resolutions: Passed a resolution for department senators to attend department meeting – resolution was tabled in Academic Governance. Passed a resolution for ceasefire in Gaza, noted that having open conversations has helped and noted the review of investments by the ESF College Foundation.
- Established student leader benefits of an ESF Bookstore discount and early registration.
- Created a Board of Elections to provide more legitimacy to the election process.
- Increased advocacy and involvement with SUNY Student Assembly
- Looking forward:
  - MOSA will work to expand collaborations with Syracuse University.
  - Considering a Career Services Fee to help establish a career closet.
  - Will focus on managing organization structure with membership growth.
  - Advocate for Moon after-hours access.
  - Advocate for an increase in safety and health services.

### **6. Planet Forward Storyfest Finalist - Mark Lichtenstein**

M. Lichtenstein provided a history of Planet Forward (founded by Frank Sesno in 2013) and ESF's engagement as a Pillar School (since 2015). He highlighted the many benefits provided by ESF's partnership with Planet Forward including networking, publication, internship, and experiential learning opportunities for students.

M. Lichtenstein introduced four ESF student finalists in the 2024 Planet Forward Storyfest Competition, students presented on their Storyfest submissions:

- Reagan Johnson: Conservation starts in your neighborhood.



- Created story as an assignment for Dr. Patrice Kohl's Foundations of Environmental Communication course.
- Focused on biodiversity in lawns, interviewed Sam Quinn of ESF's Restoration Science Center along with many community members with biodiverse lawns.

S. Mukasa questioned if storytelling results in policy advocacy.

Chair Fisher made a motion to authorize him to send a letter as Chair, on behalf of the Board of Trustees to send a letter to Syracuse City Hall requesting that they reverse the fine imposed on the family featured in R. Johnson's story. V. DeMarchi seconded, all approved.

- Abbey Leibert: Talking Trash: The Lehigh Valley's Litter Problem
  - Researched and discovered a state-wide litter problem in Pennsylvania, litter action plan was developed in 2022.
  - Highlighted Lehigh Valley Clean Up led By Kathy Frederick in Allentown, PA.
  - Interviewed Director of Allentown Recycling and Solid Waste Department – discovered that the City of Allentown spend upwards of millions of dollars addressing litter problems.
- Maggie Liddell: Denim Redone what is the environmental impact of a pair of jeans?
  - Started with a lot of questions.
  - Focused on water: 1,000 gallons on water are used to produce a pair of jeans.
  - Started when cleaning out closet – aligned fashion with sustainability, learned to sew from mother and repurpose old jeans to create new items that can continued to be worn.
  - Disposal is not a part of the story.
  - M. Liddell served as a Planet Forward Correspondent, published three stories, worked with different editors. She is also a member of ESSO, their club helps sponsor the Planet Forward Summit trips and have successfully brought 13-15 students to Washington, DC for the past two years.

Trustee DeMarchi questioned if there is a formal recycling program for denim? M. Liddell noted that Levi does denim recycling, she also noted that she accepts donations.

M. Lichtenstein noted that donated clothing/textiles are first reviewed to see if they can go to a reuse store and then go to the ragging industry if not acceptable for reuse. He thanks M. Liddell for being a leader for ESF's engagements with Planet Forward for the last few years.

- Owen Volk: Crunch Time: How Sustainability is taking over the world of sports.
  - Discussed involvement with Planet Forward, served as a correspondent and senior correspondent. Has published several stories and has been a finalist two years in a row.
  - Story focused on the Syracuse Crunch repurposing rainwater through the Save the Rain program and explored sustainability initiatives in other sports arenas.
  - Pledge to Zero organization is working to bring sustainability to sports.
  - Sustainability is being incorporated into organizational plans.
  - O. Volk presented a bonus video story that was created during a Planet Forward experiential learning trip to Ford Headquarters in Dearborn, MI. This story focused on water use in the production of Electric Vehicles.
  - O. Volk noted that his experience with Planet Forward has helped him to realize what he would like to do for his career.

M. Lichtenstein thanked Tyler Dorholt and Jason Kohlbrenner from the Digital Storytelling for their support with Planet Forward, T. Dorholt noted that the College has been supportive, helped bring



Jason Kohlbrenner with his filmmaking and technical expertise to ESF. He also noted that the Planet Forward partnership has presented endless opportunities, including a Summit that ESF will host in the fall on October 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. ESF will bring faculty and students from Rutgers, along with partners from National Geographic and filmmaking experts to campus to present on a series that was developed to train young scientists to be filmmakers in their labs.

**7. New Business:** No New Business.

Trustee DeMarchi motioned to adjourn, Trustee McFoy seconded, Meeting adjourned at 11:40 AM.

DRAFT