



State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry  
**Board of Trustees Meeting**  
September 20, 2024 – 10:30 a.m.  
24 Marshall Hall & Livestream

## MINUTES

### Voting Members in Attendance:

Chair William Fisher, Vice Chair John Bartow, Trustee Linda Brown-Robinson, Trustee Emme Christie (virtual), Trustee Vita DeMarchi, Trustee Rick Fedrizzi, Trustee Daniel Fitts, Trustee Oluwale (OJ) McFoy.

**Absent:** Trustee Stephen Sloan

### Non-Voting Members in Attendance:

Eden Gardner (MOSA), Amanda De Santis (representing Lt. Governor), Chancellor Syverud.

### College Personnel/Students in Attendance:

Joanne Mahoney (*President*), Ragan Squier (*Secretary to the Board*), Kelly Berger, Tyler Dorholt, Nichole Dougherty, Brenda Greenfield, Susan Head, Matt Millea, Mark Lichtenstein, Samuel Mukasa, Lindi Quackenbush, Baylee Woods, Aaron Rounds, Ruth Yanai, Gary Scott, Matt Smith, Aley O'Mara.

### Call to Order, Roll Call and Welcome

Chair Fisher called the meeting of the ESF Board of Trustees to order at 10:34 a.m. Secretary Squier took roll call and confirmed a quorum with seven voting trustees in attendance in-person.

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

- Approval of the Minutes of the May 10, 2024 Board Meeting.
- Personnel Actions Presented for Board Review.

Trustee McFoy motioned to approve the consent agenda items. Trustee Fedrizzi seconded, all approved.

#### 2. **Chair's Report** – *Chair Fisher*

- Discussed Interstate 81:
  - Contract 4: Shared renderings of Interchange between 6-90 and University Hill.
  - Shared project designed to help bring traffic to university area, even during construction.
  - DOT has announced an open house (9/26 6-8PM). Encouraged ESF participation, noting



that there is still time for design changes.

- It was noted that ESF faculty have been involved.

Chancellor Syverud noted choke points around campus, including the Irving Avenue crosswalk in front of Crouse Hospital. M. Lichtenstein thanked Syracuse University, noting that Vice President and Chief Facilities Officer, Pete Sala, ensured that ESF is at the table with planning meetings for I-81.

### 3. President's Report

#### 3.1. College Update:

- **Summer Reflections:**
  - Commencement (Syracuse and Ranger School)
  - MSCHE Reaffirmed accreditation, ESF is now compliance with standards 5 & 6.
  - DEC Announced \$2M partnership with ESF for study of impacts of urban heat island effect on disadvantaged communities.
  - Partnered with The MOST for SUNY ESF Summer Science Week.
  - ESF continues Lawn to Meadow program: Cory Williams, Syracuse City Counselor (ESF Alum) who represents ESF and SU is interested in changing city code to allow for meadows.
  - Syracuse City School District (SCSD) is opening STEAM School. ESF wants to increase the number of students that are SCSD grads.
  - DEC rangers are using ESF Ranger School for training.
  - Senator Schumer visited ESF for a press conference on NYS Mesonet.
  - Chancellor King visited Timbuctoo, resulted in national story on NPR.
    - B. Greenfield reported that NPR story spurred new donor funding.
    - K. McCarthy will check on how many Timbuctoo participants enrolled at ESF.
  - Higher Ed. Climate Action Plan Launch Day Maryland, California, Louisiana State Systems put together and launched plan.
  - Orientation Week: Orientation leaders welcomed incoming class.
    - Thanked Chancellor Syverud for use of Hendricks Chapel for convocation.
  - Faculty & Staff In-Service:
    - Updates on budget and academics for faculty.
    - Budget update for staff.
  - NYS Fair Tent: Chancellor visited. ESF theme was "science fair". Provided good visibility and outreach.
  - Lt. Governor visited ESF for student-led voter registration drive, spent a lot of time with ESF students.
- **Introduction of new Executive Leadership team members:**
  - Lindi Quackenbush, Interim Vice President of Research.
  - Tyler Dorholt, Interim Executive Director of Communications and Marketing.
- **Enrollment update:**
  - 429 first-year students registered for fall 2024 (exceeded target of 420), 222 transfers.
  - Total enrollment is ticking back up (2,150). We still have some capacity; we have had more students in the past (2,248 in 2012).
- **Budget**



- Reviewed 2023/24 actual revenue and expenses along with 2025/25 projections.
  - Deficit: \$8.3M deficit (actual) in 2023, \$6.6M deficit (projected) for 2024.
- ESF is a SUNY focus campus because of our deficit.
- Stability plan has been submitted, not yet approved.
  - ESF targeted reductions outside of personnel, reduced scholarships.
- STIP Interest: ESF monitors this closely, this is the money that ESF is charged as we go to cash negative balance, interest exasperates the budget challenges.
- Reviewed Academic and Administrative budget, noted that administrative side saw most of the budget reduction.
- Tuition revenue is up, ESF received incremental funding.
- ESF has received new funding from the state, some designated, some non-designated.
- ESF was granted permission to increase out-of-state tuition (gradual but continue to increase). Low compared to out-of-state tuition at campuses like Albany, Alfred and Cornell.
- President Mahoney thanked Chancellor Syverud for advocating for ESF because of partnership with Syracuse University (SU).
- ESF was granted permission to charge Accessory Instruction fee for elective courses taken at SU. Required classes are exempt, electives are paid by ESF per credit hour, ESF is charging students \$355 (less than half of what ESF pays SU).

Chair Fisher noted that the Board has been encouraging the administration to look at expenses associated with Accessory Instruction. Chancellor Syverud noted that SU is looking to raise funding to help support ESF students taking classes at SU. SU faculty like having ESF students in courses. He remarked that ESF students are very involved in SU activities, including marching band. President Mahoney noted that ESF has a student involved in a leadership role as a ROTC Cadet.

- President Mahoney reviewed a deficit planning template that was provided by SUNY, noting the following:
  - No layoffs.
  - Hold positions vacant as long as possible for salary savings.
  - No new positions.
  - Increase enrollment revenue by adjusting in-state and out-of-state ratios.

Trustee Brown-Robinson asked the meaning of Avoidance of Salary Agreement Cost Actions; President Mahoney noted that this is the value of contract negotiated raises on unfilled positions. President Mahoney reiterated that Other SUNYs are also going through the process of developing a Stability Plan.

E. Gardner asked why STIP increased without an increase to the deficit, President Mahoney noted the timing of expenses, S. Head noted the negative cash balance from the past fiscal year.

### **3.2. Presentation of ESF Sustainability Action Plan (SAP):**

Sue Fassler presented the ESF Sustainability Action Plan

- ESF has been focused on sustainability for decades but did not have a formal plan.
- ESF wants to be the leader in curriculum, research and operations.
- Internally created by Sustainability Team, led by Delaney Demro. Usually done by consultants.
- Set seven priorities: carbon neutrality, energy reduction, circularity, leadership (ESF as flagship for SUNY), commitment to environmental and social justice, community impact and



influence, thriving campus culture.

- Actions originated from:
  - Industry Standards AASHE STARS framework (75% of actions from STARS)
  - NYS EO22, NYS CLCPA, and NYS EO32
  - Campus Community: stakeholder interviews, ESF Strategic Plan and Office of Sustainability
  - SUNY Initiatives
- Aligned actions with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Reviewed actions, noting that we may not be able to accomplish them all 100% but should be working to move forward and make progress.
- Emphasized data and importance of standardizing data collection.
- Noted that ESF's SAP is in alignment with Syracuse University's Climate Action Plan and that the two have been working synergistically as members of Sustainability on the Hill.

Trustee Fedrizzi remarked that he has read hundreds of Sustainability Plans, including from Fortune 500 corporations, and can't remember one being as comprehensive, noting that many are based on past success, he found ESF's SAP to be a unique action plan and appreciated it being tied to AASHE as a monitor for performance.

#### **4. Academic Affairs Update – Dr. Samuel B. Mukasa**

- Discussed STEM Education in an Increasingly AI-Driven World
- Reviewed data of population decline in US and strategies to succeed.
  - Identify opportunities for recruitment from targeted international geographic locations.
    - Discussed potential partnerships with universities and companies in Ghana.
      - Joint Conference with ESF on Sustainability
    - Discussed Partnerships with China 3+1 BLA
    - Discussed opportunity ESF-SU BA/MBA programs.
  - Restructure academic departments to increase visibility for areas of Environmental Health and Data Sciences.
- Provided Cluster Hire Update.
- K-12 Outreach: Updated and created new courses for ESF in the high school.
- Microcredentials: Creating programs for professional development and certificate opportunities.

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

##### **5.1. Graduate Student Association – Trustee Christie**

- Shared vision, mission, and theme of leading with care.
- Reviewed structure: Representatives from all departments except for Landscape Architecture.
- EDGE (focuses on professional development).
- Reviewed activities: Research/Mentoring Program, CCESS25 Conference, GSA Day, community outreach, revamping website, new graduate seminar: Critical Reconciliation (provides spaces for difficult conversations and sharing of experiences).
- Reviewed budget: Sponsorship items, student fee.
- Reviewed grievances: Blue lights, blue lives matter flag, clear windows/glass in Marshall Hall,



Increase in TA/GA workload with increase in enrollment, unclear residency requirements, RF handling of grants.

## 5.2. MOSA - Eden Gardner

- Reported an increase in involvement: 20% increase in tabling from fall '23.
- Advocacy for Accessory Instruction Fee: concerns on implementation and communication.
  - Worked with Presidents Office and Administration to address concerns.
  - Still fielding a lot of questions.
- Vacant DEI Office: Student position has been elevated to executive position, students increasing DEI work on campus.
  - Working to ensure connections that were facilitated through the DEI Office are still happening.
- New SUNY Policies ahead of new election, SUNY policies – students would like to assist in review and helping to shape policies to fit ESF.
- Class overcrowding survey: results sent to administration.
- Moon 24/7: vital and appreciated.
- Budget: Collect student activity fee, funds MOSA as separate non-profit, transparency is critically important. Most funding goes to programming, club budgets, staff stipends, student stipends.
- Campus already feeling effects of campus stabilization plan, student hiring, even if paid through fees.
  - President Mahoney noted that ESF was responsible for some of the delay in hiring students, positions were held with batch, student positions will go to SUNY for approval by the end of the day.
- A new cohort of MOSA department senators, close to all departments will have direct student representation.
- Town Hall scheduled for October 10<sup>th</sup>.

## 6. Academic Governance Report – Aaron Rounds, Academic Governance Co-Chair.

- Thanked Board, Introduced Academic Governance (AG) co-chair and himself. Noted that trustees an important play roll with ESF.
- AG will be involved in identifying \$1M in budget savings and is working to streamline academics, currently working to develop data-driven programmatic review process.
  - Faculty and staff advancement committee to review where we are excelling and where we can improve; the committee will use evidence to make a case to SUNY that ESF needs a better funding model.
  - Invited trustees to participate in the committee's next meeting September 23<sup>rd</sup> at 4:00 PM.
- Encouraged trustees to continue to participate and support with advocacy.

## 7. New Business: Chair Fisher asked for a motion to renew the nearby roundabout committee for one year, Trustee Fedrizzi motioned, Trustee Brown-Robinson seconded, all approved.

Trustee Brown-Robinson motioned to adjourn, Trustee McFoy seconded, Meeting adjourned at 1:10



PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Nichole Dougherty.

DRAFT