

## **FARMINGDALE STATE COLLEGE**

### **College Council Meeting - In person Quintyne Hall room 100 or**

### **Virtual via TEAMS**

**September 10, 2025**

Councilmembers present in person: Patricia Hill Williams, David Curry, Paul Caroleo, Robert Sweeney, Randi Shubin Dresner, Michelle Torres

Virtual Attendees: Ralia Polechronis

Excused absences: James Durant

College Administration: Robert Prezant, Sean Lane, Greg O'Connor, Rohan Howell, Chris Maio, Kevin Jordan, Ronald Jackson, Carolyn Fedder

Guests: Amanda Cataldo, Lloyd Makarowitz, Brett Southard

Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 10:02am. She asked if all had reviewed the minutes from the April meeting and if any corrections were needed. As there were none, she requested a motion to accept the minutes. Councilmember Sweeney made a motion and Councilmember Caroleo seconded.

#### **Motion carried.**

**Chair's Report:** Chair Williams said that at Convocation President Prezant did an excellent job in sharing the accomplishments of the College and his vision for the future.

She encouraged councilmembers to attend the upcoming ACT Conference as it is an important time for all colleges and universities. Councilmembers will learn about how SUNY is addressing current challenges and Chancellor King will be the keynote speaker. Attendees will hear updates from SUNY General Council and gain insight from a panel on Artificial Intelligence in higher education. Dr. Williams recommended Assemblymember and Farmingdale alum, Clyde Vanel to moderate the panel.

**President's Report:** President Prezant introduced Michelle Torres, new SGA President and student representative on the College Council. Michelle is a bioscience major, who works in the Nexus Center and is a resident assistant. She also volunteers at NYU Langone and is a patient care assistant with Community Healthcare, she hopes to become a pediatrician. Dr. Prezant also welcomed Provost Sean Lane, who is a psychologist with an extensive record of administration, scholarship and teaching.

Dr. Prezant made comments on some new initiatives and groups that have been developed. The President's Transition Team were charged with collecting data and reporting back on what issues needed to be prioritized. One area that came up repeatedly was better communication. As a result, additional newsletters have been created to reach out across campus and a President's Administrative Team comprised of the Cabinet plus others from across the campus, including deans, government relations, directors, etc. was assembled to get word out on important topics more effectively. President Prezant has gathered community and corporate leaders to form two separate advisory boards. The intent of the corporate advisory board is to get their knowledge and insight about creating programs and micro-credentials and what the real-world need is. The Community Advisory Board's mission will be to bond us with the surrounding communities and grow partnerships with local business and nonprofits.

What is discussed with these boards will come back to the College Council for conversation. In addition, a RAM Leadership Council has been created made up of highly active students who are deeply interested in success.

The President plans to continue Pizza with the Prez, townhalls for students, the bi-annual Partners in Education newsletter to high schools on Long Island, The Proposal Incentive Program for faculty, funds for publications, and the Visiting Scholars Program.

The Ombuds program is now up and running with the purpose of fostering fair processes and addressing employee concerns informally to prevent escalation. To promote additional research, half of the indirect funds received will go back to the principal investigator, home department and Dean. A search for Director of Sponsored Programs & Research Administration is underway. The VP for Development and Alumni Engagement search is near conclusion.

Keeping an eye on tomorrow, President Prezant has goals to grow corporate and community partnerships, major donations, graduate programs, extended education, recruitment radius, grant programs of all kinds, and public art on campus.

Councilmember Caroleo asked about the status of the lacrosse field project. VP for Administration and Finance, Greg O'Connor, replied that SUNY requires a request for proposals to go out, which is expected to happen in the next couple of weeks. In answer to Chair Williams request for campus construction updates President Prezant said that they will break ground on the new computer science building in October and the completion date for Roosevelt Hall continues to be delayed. VP O'Connor offered to do a full report at a future meeting. LIEOC offices have been working remotely as their home building, Hooper Hall, is in dire condition. There is conversation about moving to a nearby institution. LIEOC continues to offer their full programming. VP for DEI, Kevin Jordan, reported that the EOC Brentwood location is too small and that there is an upcoming meeting with stakeholders. Chair Williams commented that many successful students have come out of the EOC and they are proud to be part of Farmingdale. SUNY also acknowledges the good work FSC does with the LIEOC.

**Enrollment:** VP for Enrollment Management, Rohan Howell, reported that fall numbers remain strong with over 10,000 students registered, which is up 2% over last year. Applications have spiked because of the SUNY's free application initiative. Admissions staff need to review many more applications to yield students who are serious about attending Farmingdale. Private institutions are now offering significant discounts to tuition. Some of our current programs have begun to show decreased enrollment. VP Howell and Provost Lane have discussed a more evenly distributed program mix across our schools. Thirty-eight US states will see a decline in high school graduates over the next 15 years. Already, 94 school districts on Long Island have seen declines. A planned enrollment vision is necessary for the future. Decisions on optimal college size, academic offerings, and resource planning need to be aligned. Our retention has improved, but we do not have the necessary supports in place to accommodate larger enrollment, and we could see regression in retention and positive outcomes. Market-driven programs will be essential to our success. Online programs are an opportunity but infrastructure is needed to support that area. The governor's law offering free community college to 25 or older will affect some of our programs. In addition, the Executive Orders and financial ramifications may discourage students from attending College. Councilmember Sweeney asked if our international students have been affected and if we have an opportunity to expand our international student population. VP Howell replied that fortunately our students have not experienced any challenges. Issues remain with visa appointments,

but we do have opportunities to recruit international students who are here already in New York City, specifically in the business and engineering programs. We would also need to consider housing for these students. In the future, the Department of Education may mandate that international students are capped at four years, a challenge to recruitment as many of them need longer than that to complete or do externships after graduation. In addition, some governments are no longer supporting students to study outside their countries, and there have been payment issues with private sector agreements.

**Student Affairs:** Vice President for Student Affairs, Ron Jackson, said that he is focusing on reconnecting, reflecting and reimagining the division. He informed that Michael Nembhard has been hired as permanent Dean of Students. The division's new mission aims to empower students to thrive through inclusive experiences that foster personal growth, meaningful connections and lifelong success. Their vision is for FSC to be a dynamic, inclusive community where every student is engaged, supported and inspired to achieve their fullest potential. All offices in the division tweaked their goals to match the College's goals. Orientation programs for freshman students, transfer students, online students, and families have been revamped. Orientation programs for freshman focus on ensuring that students are confident in beginning their first day of class. They learned how to get to class, read a syllabus and use campus resources. A first 30 days calendar was shared to show all activities happening on campus. Transfer students were connected with faculty. Orientations were held at Nassau Community College and Suffolk County Community College for students in the interinstitutional partnerships program. A basic needs team has been assembled to assist students who encounter unforeseen barriers to academic success. Case managers will assist with life issues, food insecurity, accessibility, etc. The Students of Concern Committee is now using best practices recommended by the National Association of Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment to be better positioned to help students before they have negative outcomes. The revised student handbook incorporates the student code of conduct, an academic advisement guide, and a college wide calendar. All first-year students will receive the handbook in their first-year experience course. A new newsletter, Rambo's Rundown, will provide tips for success and important deadlines.

Chair Williams pointed out that one of our student's will receive the ACT scholarship at the conference next month.

**Graduate Programming/Academic Affairs:** Sean Lane, Provost and Senior VP for Academic Affairs, said he was pleased to attend his first Farmingdale Council meeting. He reiterated that the value of an education is being questioned, and that there have been changes in demographics and the nature of work in demand. Artificial intelligence is affecting the kinds of jobs people get and whether they will need continuing education across their lifetime. He noted that while traditional freshman numbers may go down, others needing an education may increase. For example, graduate education, extended and professional education and micro-credentials will be in demand. The Masters in Engineering Technology Management has had a decline in enrollment over time and so the focus will be changed to Construction Management – an area of strength. Under review in the pipeline are Masters programs in Quality Assurance and Regulatory affairs and Applied Behavior Analysis. The roughly 18-month process includes approval by SUNY and the NYS Department of Education. Master's programs are being drafted for Architecture and Criminal Justice. All new programs must meet these criteria - a strong job market, faculty expertise, and development with input from partners in industry and the community, ensuring that our programs are providing value to our students, our partners and the region. Existing programs that have shown a decline in enrollment will need to be reviewed, revised or eventually discontinued.

Councilmember Dresner said that after hearing the various presentations today she understands the importance of the new Advisory Boards that President Prezant has assembled.

President Prezant spoke about the present reality for higher education. Changes to DEI, grants, federal student loans, accreditation, and increased immigration enforcement for non-documented and international students and the US Department of Education being dismantled are among the challenges. He reminded that executive orders are not laws and there are things that we can do to move forward in this environment. At Chancellor King's instruction, we are not going to pursue anticipatory compliance. There are more than 250 lawsuits pending. We will persist in finding new scholarship and financial support for students and seek competitive grants and research opportunities through different venues. Dr. Prezant has been reaching out to state representatives and asked for councilmembers to do the same. They need to know how our students (their constituents) are being impacted. Educate whoever you can about the continued value of a higher education. Corporations and community partners should advocate with state legislators because cuts in education will eventually affect them.

Councilmember Sweeney said that with cuts in federal funds, many will be looking to the state to fill gaps. We want higher education at the top of their list. Individuals on our councils and corporations should start advocating for us now for the next budget cycle. There should be less fear of speaking out and being targeted than with the federal government.

Councilmember Dresner said she spoke to Assemblymember Stern about taking a group of non-profit CEOs on a day trip to meet with representatives at the state level. She mentioned to him that Farmingdale's students may be affected by loss of financial aid and that populations that Island Harvest serves are similar to Farmingdale's.

Dr. Prezant said that our 10,000 students and 1600 employees amount to may votes and that institutions from across New York should band together and push for higher education. Chair Williams said that councilmembers should go out in their capacities and engage with civic associations and organizations they are involved in. VP Jordan said that we must keep planning for the future for when the next administration comes in.

Dr. Prezant thanked all for their input and said he thanked councilmembers going out and talking about Farmingdale. Chair Williams said that she appreciated the presentations that were provided today.

As there were no other questions or business to be entertained, Chair Williams asked for a motion for adjournment. A motion was made by Councilmember Sweeney and seconded by Councilmember Caroleo.

**Motion carried.** The meeting adjourned at 12:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Fedder

***Approved November 19, 2025***