

Recommendations from the Chancellor's Working Group on Faculty and Staff Well-being October 2026

To address SUNY faculty and staff well-being, Chancellor John B. King formed a working group of four faculty governance leaders, three presidents, one provost, and two members of his cabinet. The working group was charged with identifying actionable recommendations for the Chancellor and senior leadership on concrete steps the System can implement, support, or facilitate within available resources. The recommendations are intended to advance faculty and staff well-being and development while supporting the System's broader commitments to student success, upward mobility, research and scholarship, diversity, equity and inclusion, and institutional resilience.

The working group met roughly every other week between January 29th and June 17th. The faculty representatives on the working group surveyed UFS and FCCC members for their perspectives on issues affecting faculty and staff well-being. The working group also drew from a white paper on faculty burnout and a green paper on fostering a culture of well-being written by UFS subcommittees.

Well-being can encompass many aspects of physical and mental health which are beyond the scope of the working group. The group focused its efforts on the impact of the professional work environment. Various components of work environment may affect well-being, including the following:

- Agency, control (or perceived control) over one's professional work and responsibilities, including feeling secure about the expectation for one's position of employment, having adequate resources to perform the work, opportunities to use personal professional strengths, and clear paths for professional growth and development;
- Trust in leaders, co-workers, and in procedures and the institution; and
- Safe working environments.

The working group has identified recommendations and resources for the system as requested, but also for campus leaders. The recommendations address six themes:

- Faculty and staff professional well-being
- Professional development and shared learning infrastructure
- Faculty workload and sustainable engagement
- Engagement in System initiatives
- Shared governance practices and leadership development
- Systemwide coordination, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Because the System includes distinct sectors and institutional roles—community colleges, comprehensive colleges, university centers, health science centers, agriculture and technology colleges, and statutory colleges—these recommendations are not intended as one-size-fits-all suggestions. Instead, the System should establish common expectations, shared tools, and accessible resources while allowing each sector and campus to adapt implementation to its mission, governance structure, collective bargaining context, student population, and available resources.

Guiding Principles:

The working group recommends the following principles when considering and implementing these recommendations:

1. Well-being is a condition for institutional effectiveness.

Faculty and staff well-being is not separate from student success, enrollment, retention, academic quality, research productivity, or institutional sustainability. Faculty and staff levels of support and clarity about expectations help them support students and advance institutional priorities.

2. SUNY's ongoing commitment to shared governance is part of the solution.

Effective shared governance improves trust, communication, implementation, and campus problem-solving. Faculty and staff are more likely to engage in System and campus initiatives when they understand the purpose, have meaningful opportunities to shape implementation, and see that their contributions lead to action.

3. Existing resources should be easy to find.

Many high-quality resources already exist across the System, but they are often difficult to locate, unevenly distributed, duplicated in different sites, or not widely known. A major goal should be to centralize, organize, and amplify existing resources before creating new ones.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Creating a Framework for Faculty, Staff and Student Well-being

- System and campuses should develop a Resources Library which leaders, faculty, and students can utilize to address well-being on their campuses. We recommend System Administration identify a means of making the compendium available electronically (i.e., on a website, through the library system?) and update it regularly. Include resources such as the [SUNY Wellness Frameworks Webinar Series](#) on YouTube. (See recommendations

for compiling and updating the Resources Library in the section on “Continuing the Work of Addressing Faculty and Staff Well-being,” below.)

- Campuses should use shared governance to explore and potentially adopt a well-being framework and then work to implement and assess initiatives that align with the selected framework. There are many models available, including the Okanagan Charter for Health Promotion in Colleges and Universities recommended by a UFS resolution. Other materials are available in the Resources Compendium.
- Campuses, with support from System Administration and working in consultation with faculty and staff governance, should conduct regular campus climate surveys and assessments of faculty and staff engagement, morale, and well-being to track trends over time and identify opportunities to enhance well-being. System Administration should work with statewide governance bodies (FCCC and UFS) to inform the development of core questions.
- Campuses should be encouraged to analyze survey results and other campus data to develop local well-being action plans. These plans should be developed in partnership with campus governance bodies and administrative leadership. Results should be shared on campus, available to faculty, staff, and students, and form part of a vigorous campus discussion on well-being.
- Campuses, in consultation with governance bodies, should normalize support services for faculty, staff, and students (i.e., universal design principles for campus and class materials; access to campus resources like food banks, etc.), and strengthen Employee Assistance Programs where possible.
- Campuses should work with campus governing bodies to review their policies, practices, and physical spaces to consider safety holistically.

Professional Development and Shared Learning Infrastructure

Issue: Faculty and staff have uneven access to professional development within campuses and across campuses and sectors, but it is critical to address changing classroom environments, federal regulations, curricular and pedagogical strategies, new technologies (such as Artificial Intelligence), and to keep up with their professional fields. This is particularly challenging on campuses where there are not enough resources available for conference travel, outside speakers, course release, training, or professional memberships.

A more coordinated, affordable, and visible professional development infrastructure could help address these needs.

Recommendations

- System Administration, campuses, and shared governance can work together to **expand awareness** of existing professional development opportunities currently available within the system, such as:
 - The offerings available from the SUNY Center for Professional Development (CPD), including webinars, resource libraries, regional support for Centers for Teaching and Learning, and especially webinars and other options that are free or low cost. System Administration should work with the CPD to explore ways to create more free offerings and make the CPD point system easier for faculty/staff to navigate.
 - Technical assistance available through Academic Momentum and seamless transfer initiatives.
 - Conferences organized by the System such as the General Education Conference, the Online Summit, and the Conference on Instruction and Technology.
 - Resources and support offered by various system-level Fellows programs.
 - Opportunities to apply for System grants and fellowships and to join communities of practice and leadership academies.
- System Administration should establish easy-to-find repositories of existing professional development resources for faculty, including wellness webinars; Academic Momentum materials; the EIT accessibility resources; OER resources; pedagogical tips; resources/guidance from Fellows, etc. Centralize existing resource repositories and make them more searchable.
- System Administration, in consultation with campus and shared governance leadership, could identify ways to incorporate strategies and best practices learned from the System-led communities of practice into broader professional development opportunities for faculty and staff not directly involved in the CoPs. This could include hosting regional trainings/professional development in support of system initiatives that faculty are tasked with implementing.
- System Administration could work with campus leaders and UFS and FCCC to identify campuses that are implementing initiatives in strategic ways and provide a forum to share their work with other campuses.
- System Administration, campuses, and shared governance should work together to create new opportunities for collective, regional professional development and problem solving, including regional partnerships where campuses can share best practices and in-person professional development trainings with each other so faculty and staff can have those opportunities without the cost of extensive travel and overnight lodging. Encourage campuses to invite other campuses in their region to participate in professional development. Record and share those trainings where possible.
- Faculty and staff with expertise could be invited by campuses or the system to host informal trainings or discussions regionally or via webinars. Encourage participation via badges or a similar vehicle that could be documented, where appropriate, in promotion folders.

- System Administration can continue to convene and facilitate conversations on AI and teaching, curriculum, and governance.
- System could explore a shared services model to support system-level memberships in academic and professional associations to create cost savings and encourage more participation by campuses and individual faculty.
- System or regional campus partnerships should maximize use of the SUNY Leadership Institutes and establish additional mid-level leadership/pipeline training for faculty and staff who may want to move into roles like deans or directors, similar to the Department Chair training offered by CPD and the Community College Leadership Academy.
- Campuses could collaborate to create professional mentorship opportunities across campuses within a region.
- Campuses, in consultation with campus shared governance, should continue to provide civil discourse and constructive dialogue training for faculty and students during orientation or onboarding, with frequent reminders and follow up. System Administration and campuses should expand the work that supports training for students on constructive, civil dialogue (including implementation of SUNY's new General Education Framework core competency) and for faculty on how to handle disruptive classroom behaviors and difficult discussions, building on resources developed and collected by the Civil Discourse & Civic Education and Engagement Fellows.

Faculty Workload Recommendations

Issues identified:

Faculty and staff workload was identified as a significant concern by both faculty and campus leaders. In some cases, workload inequities result from unclear expectations. In others, faculty and staff report that the same individuals are asked to support major initiatives, student success efforts, assessment, curriculum work, accreditation, governance, search committees, mentoring, and program review. This is especially challenging on small campuses where there may not be enough people to share the load. Workload concerns vary across sectors and must be addressed in ways that respect campus mission, faculty roles, collective bargaining agreements, and existing policies.

Recommendations

- Utilize SUNY Policy 1003
 - Policy 1003 *Faculty Utilization Guidelines*ⁱ notes that a report from the State Comptroller recommends that “*all state-operated campuses should have the following in place: formal policies specifying the teaching responsibilities of faculty; specific standards on minimum class size; annual performance programs for full-time faculty members addressing instructional, research, service and administrative responsibilities; annual reports from individual faculty members*

on their activities and accomplishments; and systematic procedures for review of course loads, class size and faculty reports by appropriate officers.” The SUNY Policy emphasizes that: “No uniform policy on faculty utilization can work in a system as diverse as the University. Each campus needs a policy that reflects its institutional type, educational mission and unique character.”

- System Administration should ensure that each campus, including community colleges, adopts a campus policy on faculty utilization.
- System should offer technical assistance to campuses that request assistance in establishing a set of policies in cases where policies are not in place or do not fully align with SUNY Policy 1003. Consistent with SUNY Policy 1003, this review process should not modify existing workload expectations, but it should ensure that current practices are formalized and demonstrate the “effective, efficient and equitable use-of faculty to assist the campus in achieving its educational mission.”
- System Administration, in consultation with presidents, the University Faculty Senate and Faculty Council of Community Colleges, and in dialogue with faculty and staff unions, should explore updating this policy and other means of addressing workload inequities.

Recommendations Related to Campus Engagement in System Initiatives

Issues identified: Campuses see the value of System initiatives and all stakeholders wish to ensure engagement of faculty and staff within available resources. Faculty and staff are sometimes unaware of how campuses are participating in those initiatives and how they are aligned and prioritized.

Recommendations

- Communicating System initiatives and developing plans and timelines:
 - Presidents now have access to the new system initiative calendar management tracker. Campus leaders can be reminded of the importance of sharing information about System initiatives and timelines with their campus stakeholders.
 - Presidents, campus administrative leadership teams, department chairs, and shared governance leaders should regularly discuss with each other and key constituencies campus implementation of System and campus initiatives to advance student success, research and scholarship, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and upward mobility and economic development as well as institutional resilience.
- Faculty engagement at the system level:
 - System should work with UFS and FCCC to clarify how system committees, working groups, task forces, and other liaison groups (such as FACT2) include representatives of governance bodies and the responsibilities given to those committees (such as

developing and communicating recommendations) so that they become important elements of the UFS/FCCC shared governance process.

- Recognize the difficulty of including shared governance in development/implementation of System initiatives during “no obligation” times like the summer, while acknowledging the State budget calendar that requires considerable consultation and progress during this period:
 - UFS and FCCC should work together to identify and utilize appropriate standing committees of those bodies (such as the Executive Committees) and ensure they are available to engage in shared governance with System initiatives even over the summer when other faculty may be in “no obligation” times.
 - Local campus shared governance bodies should work with presidents and other campus leaders to identify similar designated shared governance representatives or committees available to work with campus leaders during “no obligation” periods. Campuses should identify extra service compensation or other means of compensating for this summer work, to abide by contractual agreements. Campuses may need System financial support for some of this extra service cost for summer work on System initiatives.
- UFS and FCCC should identify processes for “closing the loop” when faculty serve on system advisory committees or when UFS and FCCC executive committees or delegates have participated in System-level initiative design or implementation. Clarify that their participation and voting in those committees constitutes participation of the shared governance body. Specify how those representatives should report back to UFS and FCCC on that work. Identify ways for communicating this work out to faculty who do not actively participate in shared governance bodies.
- System expectations for faculty engagement at the campus level:
 - Memos to Presidents should continue to come with expectations that System initiative implementation incorporate appropriate campus shared governance where curriculum and instruction are involved. System should continue to include explicit language regarding meaningful consultation and faculty responsibility.
 - Information from Memos to Presidents should be shared widely with the appropriate constituents across the system and on campus, for example, by System copying relevant campus Cabinet members (e.g., CAOs, Chief Student Affairs Officers) and by presidents sharing with the campus community as appropriate.
 - Campus leadership should clearly communicate to faculty and staff how the campus is participating in system initiatives and how the campus has solicited shared governance participation in initiative design and implementation.
 - Campus faculty governance leaders should identify processes for “closing the loop” when faculty serve on system or campus advisory committees. They

should ensure faculty understand that the participation of designees in committees constitutes participation of the shared governance body. They should specify how those representatives should report back to the governance body on that work and, in partnership with presidents, identify ways for communicating this work out to faculty who do not actively participate in shared governance bodies.

Recommendations shared governance and initiative implementation

Issues identified: Although the working group was not specifically charged with looking at shared governance, when implemented effectively, shared governance supports faculty, staff, and student well-being and professional development. The difficulties caused by discrepancies in the understanding of what “shared governance” means in the SUNY context came up in multiple conversations in the working group, in governance body plenaries, and on some individual campuses. Different stakeholders may have multiple concepts of what shared governance means and the roles of faculty and administration or shared governance bodies and unions.

Faculty participation in shared governance, System initiatives, accreditation, curriculum reform, transfer implementation, AI policy development, assessment, and student success initiatives requires time and expertise. Campuses should be encouraged to identify how this work is recognized as appropriate within workload, service expectations, release time, stipends where available, or other forms of support. This recommendation should not override collective bargaining agreements, but it should make clear that governance and implementation work are essential to institutional effectiveness

Recommendations for the System:

- System Administration should continue to communicate and demonstrate its expectation of shared governance;
- Make existing policies, regulations, and other documents related to shared governance easier to find and accessible online in a centralized location.
- System Administration, UFS, and FCCC should work together to provide examples of best practices for shared governance and academic freedom. System Administration should continue to provide annual training on best practices for shared governance for presidents and could expand training to include Chief Academic Officers.

Recommendations for UFS and FCCC:

- Expand the joint annual training for UFS/FCCC representatives on roles and responsibilities, parliamentary procedures, establishing healthy working relationships with partners in shared governance, etc.
- Revise and clarify the SUNY Shared Governance webpage to clearly identify it with UFS and FCCC:
 - Include materials/links for a shared governance toolkit for campuses that could include a searchable repository of campus bylaws and other foundational governance documents, templates for common communications, and sample of practices in place at various SUNY Campuses.

- Identify opportunities for meaningful faculty engagement and collaboration in system-level shared governance.

Continuing the Work of Addressing Faculty and Staff Well-being

The working group's recommendations will only be meaningful if they are connected to implementation, communication, and follow-up. We recommend that System Administration, in consultation with the UFS, FCCC, presidents, and other campus leaders pull together experts across SUNY to continue and extend the work of this group.

Recommendations:

- Create a standing opportunity for Faculty and Staff and senior leaders to continue to engage on well-being and development.
- If funds are available, we recommend System appoint additional Fellows to support faculty and staff development and thereby help share, communicate, and distribute well-being promotion efforts across SUNY (perhaps modeled on existing Fellows programs such as Civil Discourse & Civic Education and Engagement Fellows, AI for the Public Good Fellows, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Social Justice Fellows, Sustainability Fellows, Academic Momentum Fellows, etc.).
 - Fellows could consult with campuses as they develop their own strategic, systematic approaches to enhancing faculty/staff health, wellness, and well-being;
 - The Fellows could develop the recommended resources library (building on materials collected by this working group) that leaders, faculty, and students can utilize to address faculty and staff development and support well-being on their campuses, working with System Administration to make it available electronically (e.g., on a website, through the SUNY Digital Repository), and updating it regularly.
- The Fellows could work with System leaders to review and revise SUNY's climate survey to incorporate questions that allow System Administration to track trends in faculty/staff engagement, morale, and well-being over time; analyze results; and provide support to campuses as they develop, assess, and revise action plans.

¹ https://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=19