



The State University
of New York

Office of the Chancellor

State University Plaza
Albany, NY 12246

www.suny.edu

September 5, 2019

Dr. Gwen Kay, President
University Faculty Senate
State University Plaza
Albany, New York 12246

Dear Gwen:

Thank you for your letter sharing resolutions adopted at the University Faculty Senate (UFS) Spring Plenary in Potsdam. I was glad to be able to join you in person and always appreciate your feedback on the presentations made by System staff. My responses to adopted resolutions follow:

- **182-01-01: Proposed Policy for Appointment of Interim Administrators at and above the Level of Dean**

My thanks to the UFS for its suggested practices and procedures on interim appointments. I greatly appreciate the contributions of interim/acting employees, talented individuals who are often asked to take on significant new responsibilities with little advance notice.

With respect to faculty input on interim appointments, the Policies of the SUNY Trustees do specifically address acting/interim appointments of college administrative officers and professional staff. The policies specify that (emphasis added), "Appointment of academic officers such as vice-president for academic affairs, academic deans and others with similar responsibilities shall be made *after consultation with the faculty.*" My understanding from our Office of Employee Relations is that the parameters of this consultation around appointments or reappointments of employees are a matter that has been negotiated in the UUP Contract, Appendix A-4.

Regarding related policies and practices, I have shared your resolution with our new Vice Chancellor for Human Resources Paul Patton to consider as he works to identify and set initial priorities.

- **182-02-01: Resolution to ensure numerous pathways to continuing appointment and promotion**

The resolved clauses of this resolution ask that I direct college presidents to take three actions: 1) work with their Provosts and campus governance leaders to ensure that continuing appointment/promotion policies align with SUNY inclusivity goals; 2) work with campus governance leaders to ensure continuing appointment/promotion pathways encompass all five areas of faculty evaluation suggested by the Policies of the SUNY Trustees; and 3) direct college presidents to require written expectations for continuing appointment/promotion be developed for each new tenure-track hire as part of their onboarding process.

After reviewing the resolution carefully, I do not believe that I have sufficient information to respond fully. There are certainly employee relations/labor implications to some or all of these actions that will require careful study. A report on the status of current continuing appointment/promotion policies and practices on SUNY campuses, an assessment of what's working well and challenges, and research on best practices nationally would also need to be prepared prior to any meaningful conversations on these issues.

Gwen, I would appreciate you and Provost Laursen working together to outline for me the range of baseline research, necessary outreach, and other issues to consider beyond what I have already noted here; including discussion of what role faculty governance might play in any preliminary analysis.

- **182-03-01: Resolution on the Expectation of Professional Employees, as defined by policies of the Board of Trustees, to participate in shared governance**

As you know, I strongly support system-wide and local campus governance. On this matter, I defer to local campus governance to make professional employees aware of opportunities to participate in shared governance activities, in accordance with the campus faculty bylaws.

- **182-04-01: Resolution to create common SUNY onboarding information points and processes for new employees**

Dynamic and meaningful orientations are important to new employees (and our students); they are key in introducing employees to the distinctive culture of their institution. With respect to common SUNY onboarding, you may know that SUNY System has long sponsored orientations annually for campus middle to senior managers, new chief academic officers, and new campus presidents where we review the responsibilities of each System office and talk a bit about System initiatives. I have shared this resolution with our new Vice Chancellor for Human Resources Paul Patton to consider as he works to identify and set initial priorities.

- **182-05-01: Resolution to improve SUNY reimbursement processes**

I have asked our Associate Vice Chancellor for Finance and Business Josh Sager to reach out to you to get more detail on specific concerns. These may be issues that can be reviewed with the campus business officer community.

- **182-06-01: Resolution on campus review of course withdrawal deadlines**

No response requested.

- **182-07-01: Resolution on Academic Freedom and Shared Governance in Online Education**

In response to this resolution, I am taking the liberty of attaching my response to a similar resolution adopted by the Faculty Council of Community Colleges. Their

resolution expresses similar concerns and calls for similar action. I want to ensure that both bodies to have the same information about our respect for faculty, academic freedom and shared governance.

- **182-08-01: Resolution reaffirming 176-11-1 Resolution in support of a stand-alone unit head for New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University**

I want to thank the UFS for what I see has been their long-standing support of the faculty at the New York State College of Ceramics. I have had multiple conversations with the President of Alfred University, Mark Zupan, and was pleased to hear his genuine excitement about the mission of the College of Ceramics. We talked about the joint responsibilities that SUNY and AU share for the College and the importance of the New York State College of Ceramics as a statutory college. Provost Laursen has been working with the campus to identify the next unit-head for Ceramics and we expect movement on that shortly. Note too, the Provost is working to ensure mutual compliance with the May 2017 Memorandum of Understanding signed by my predecessor, Chancellor Nancy Zimpher.

My thanks to you for your continued leadership and service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristina M. Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kristina M. Johnson, PhD.

Attachment



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May 21, 2019

Ms. Nina Tamrowski
President, Faculty Council of Community Colleges
State University Plaza
Albany, New York 12246

Dear Nina:

Thank you for sharing resolutions adopted at the Faculty Council of Community Colleges' March 2019 Plenary. I consulted with Provost Laursen on Resolution: G2:2018-2019, focused on the SUNY Online white paper, and I am pleased to share our response below.

We want to begin by extending our thanks to you and Trustee Kay for serving on the SUNY Online Working Group. We knew from the beginning the critical importance of having faculty governance represented in the group and look to both of you to guide us in ensuring that your respective constituencies are informed and engaged. Please know that Tod and I will continue to work together with you to ensure that happens.

We know well how important (and challenging!) it is to ensure consistent communication across a System our size. We are always working to improve our communications and realize in reading the FCCC resolution that we could have done a better job in explaining the overarching goals and expectations of this project, and in underscoring our strong commitment to the principles of academic freedom.

Regarding the first few clauses of the resolution adopted by the FCCC, I do want to highlight that beyond the small pilot effort this fall, this initiative is *not* focused on what SUNY already offers online. We applaud SUNY community college faculty for being early adopters of online learning and for their participation in the Open SUNY+ designation focused on program quality and student and faculty resources. We agree that we have a number of strong associate degree programs online.

Our challenge, and the primary focus of the SUNY Online effort, is on filling the significant gaps in our current online offerings. The fact is that SUNY has very limited bachelors, masters and doctoral programs online, despite significant research telling us about the extensive demand for online offerings by students at these levels. This new SUNY Online effort is about addressing this need, particularly in high-demand fields—identified by a matching of labor market trends and existing SUNY expertise/programs. We believe that by filling these program gaps, we can attract a new type of student into the system—one focused on studying 100% online.

With respect to the latter clauses of the resolution, we are proceeding with a sense of urgency. Our focus in doing so is driven both by the enrollment challenges facing many SUNY campuses as well as the growing number of New York residents who are underemployed and/or need additional

credentials to advance in their careers or to start a new career. Our tempo is also influenced by the belief that SUNY has a responsibility to move quickly to provide affordable, high-quality, online instruction to New York residents in an environment where we are currently losing too many students to out-of-state private or for-profit institutions. That said, our commitment to involving governance and respect for faculty leadership, has never wavered.

All prospective (and final) plans for SUNY Online are based on campus-made decisions to participate and feature courses, programs, and/or micro-credentials already developed (and not yet online) or to be developed via local governance processes. All plans will follow existing SUNY Trustee policies around academic freedom and intellectual property. While we recognize the sensitivity to the academic calendar highlighted in the FCCC resolution, we note that staff has made multiple presentations at individual campuses and to many recognized SUNY role-alike and stakeholder groups. Notably, over 1,100 faculty and staff participated in the SUNY Online webinars. We were responsive to anyone who contacted us to say they could not participate.

We do believe that the need for the Working Group has ended. Our focus is now on moving forward is as follows:

- Finalizing the white paper by incorporating feedback received during the comment period as appropriate. Note that the white paper was meant to be a documentation of a strategic process, rather than a policy or academic paper; we will add some clarifying language about that as well.
- Hosting faculty workshops for deep dives in technical subject areas identified for cross-campus collaboration during the disciplinary webinars (new pathways, new program development, opportunities for core course development). We will include campus governance leaders in the distribution of such announcements. Issuance of an RFP(s) seeking proposals for stand-alone courses for electives, general education options, and core courses to meet campus needs.
- Planning for an advisory body that will be formed consistent with the way we form policy task forces where all key stakeholders are represented, including of course, the presidents of the UFS, FCCC, and SA and a set number of individuals they nominate. The charge for this advisory body is still in development but its overarching responsibility will be recommendations about moving from the pilot to future phases of the project.
- Issuance of an Open RFP(s) for program offerings to address the gaps identified in SUNY-wide offerings (not intended to compete with existing programs).
- Review and support of campus IT infrastructure to accommodate the growth in online activity and elevated student supports.
- Expanding marketing and recruitment efforts that will include general promotion of all SUNY online offerings as well as the newly added programs.
- Continued work on financial models, budget development and budget advocacy.

Nina, we hope that the above addresses the concerns addressed in the FCCC resolution and makes clear our commitment to shared governance and our appreciation for SUNY community college faculty leadership in this area.

My thanks to you for your leadership and service.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristina M. Johnson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kristina M. Johnson, PhD
Chancellor