

**SUNY NIAGARA
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FEBRUARY 18, 2025**

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**A meeting of the Board of Trustees was held
on February 18, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.
in person, and live streaming**

Board Members Present

Ms. Katherine Alexander, Chairperson
Mr. Kevin Clark, Vice Chairperson
Ms. Gail Tylec, Financial Secretary (ZOOM)
Ms. Sheila Smith, Secretary (ZOOM)
Mr. David Haylett, Jr.
Mr. William Ross
Ms. Gina Virtuoso (ZOOM)
Mr. Lee Wallace (ZOOM)
Mr. E. Bryan DalPorto
Mr. Jacob Joseph Fleming, Jr.

Administration Present

Lloyd A. Holmes, Ph.D., President
Catherine Brown, Assistant Vice President of Human Resources
Tammy Bruno, Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs
Barbara DeSimone, Assistant Vice President of Institutional Advancement
John Eichner, Director of Business Services
Fabio Escobar, Ph.D., Assistant Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness
Brian Michel, Ph.D., Assistant Vice President, Economic Development
Harold Legg, Director of Public Relations
Kristin Leszkowicz, Assistant to the President

Chairperson Alexander called the meeting to order at 4:31 p.m. and stated the meeting was being recorded and live streamed.

A roll call of board members present was taken: Trustee Alexander, Trustee Clark, Trustee Haylett, Jr., Trustee Ross, Trustee DalPorto, and Student Trustee Fleming, Jr.

A roll call of board members present via ZOOM: Trustee Smith, Trustee Tylec Trustee Wallace and Trustee Virtuoso.

Trustee Clark lead the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence to thank and honor our first responders, and women and men in the military - those that serve domestically and abroad.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

WELCOME

Chairperson Alexander welcomed the new governor appointed trustee, Mr. E. Bryan DalPorto. Trustee DalPorto introduced himself and provided information regarding his background.

President Holmes introduced the new Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Maher Ghalayini, who will start on March 3, 2025. Dr. Ghalayini introduced himself to the board and expressed his excitement as he continues his career at SUNY Niagara.

PRESENTATIONS

Chairperson Alexander introduced Randall Shepard, Partner with the Bonadio Group. Mr. Shepard provided the presentation of *Audit Results and the Financial Statements as of August 31, 2024* (draft), gave handouts to board members, and discussed the executive summary. Trustee Clark asked about ERS/TRS. Trustee Tylec asked about recommendations or additional steps the college could take to improve net position. It was recommended the college continue its normal approach to enrollment in order to help the bottom line.

Chairperson Alexander introduced Bridget Beilein from the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Division; she provided presentations on her IRC Grant entitled *Stay Local, Go Global*. The presentation showcased the study abroad opportunities SUNY Niagara students have taken part in various countries. The grant supported efforts through social media, such as Tik Tok, to market the study abroad experience to current students and potential students, specifically the local high school CAP (College Access Program) students. Bridget presented short clips of videos posted to social media highlighting the experiences and conversations that started amongst her students based on their travels.

Chairperson Alexander introduced Michele Burke from the Nursing, Physical and Allied Health Division; she provided presentations on her IRC Grant entitled *Radiologic Technology- Positioning Videos*. The grant supported the creation of a second set of short videos students can use to help study and learn the proper positioning of body parts for scanning purposes. The idea for these videos stemmed from COVID when students were not able to visit clinical sites or have contact with patients. Since the videos, the success rate of students in the Radiologic Technology program has increased.

Chairperson Alexander introduced Caitlin Wetherwax, Director of Student Success Services, to present on EdSights, a student retention system that launched in January 2024. The system is a chatbot branded "Talk to Tripp" that is accessible to students 24/7 via text. Since its launch, "Talk to Tripp" has supported 738 students. The system has the ability to check-in with students to proactively put students in touch with services they may need. It also flags students' concerns to initiate outreach from resources on our campus.

CONSENT AGENDA

Chairperson Alexander asked if Board members had any questions regarding the Consent Agenda items. There were no questions. It was moved by Chairperson Alexander and seconded by Trustee Ross that the Board approve the minutes from the January 21, 2025 board meeting, Statement of Revenues and Expenditures, and Grant Activities. Motion carried.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Chairperson Alexander asked Board members if there were any questions regarding the Information Items. The following items were received and filed: Grant Tracking Chart, Personnel Status Chart, Foundation Report, and Facilities Update. Trustee Ross asked about concerns on vacancies. Catherine Brown noted the challenge of filling positions within the nursing program as well as the proactive search by the Human Resource department to find candidates to fill vacant positions. It was also noted that the Vice President of Administration position has been posted. There were no other questions.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairperson Alexander discussed the following:

- The next board meeting will take place on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 4:30 PM
- Middle States Update- Packets were provided to the board members in their materials from the Middle States committee to include the Strategic Plan 2023-25 and the self-study report. Also included in the packet were sample questions for the board to review to help in preparation for the meeting with Middle States in March. A reception for Middle States will be held at Savor on Sunday, March 9. The board will meet March 10 in the morning with the visiting Middle States members.
- Save the Dates:
 - Pre-Inauguration Dinner - April 9, 2025, at Savor
 - President's Inauguration- April 10, 2025 at 11AM with reception to follow in the Learning Commons.
 - Pre-Commencement Dinner- May 16, 2025 at Savor
 - Commencement Ceremony- May 17, 2025 at 10 AM on Sanborn campus.

President's Report

The following was discussed:

- President Holmes provided an update on the search for the Vice President of Student Services. Four finalists have been selected and will be visiting SUNY Niagara this week and next.
- Bad Debt Scholarships were posted using SUNY Smart Start money. A total of 51 scholarships were awarded allowing students to return to campus and continue their programs.
- Financial Aid office has processed 1300 applications for the 2025-26 fiscal year.
- In the Fall, Student Life and Future Leaders Liberty Partnership are partnering to create volunteer opportunities for student. The two areas of campus are working with Niagara County agencies to identify needs within the local communities.
- SUNY Niagara's new website will launch February 19, 2025. The website address will now be www.sunyniagara.edu. The Public Relations office is working to migrate data from the old website to the new and should be notified of any issues with the website in order to resolve.
- Middle States Update- packets were provided to the board members in preparation for the upcoming visit.
- The Law Enforcement Academy was awarded *2024 Structures Project of the Year* by the American Public Works Association New York Chapter – Western Branch.
- Courtney Helinski has been named Interim Director of Development, Institutional Advancement effective March 5, 2025.
- President Holmes provided an update on the ACCT legislative summit in Washington, D.C. He attended with Dr. Brian Michel, Assistant Vice President, Economic Development. Documents will be supplied to the board members from the summit.

STUDENT TRUSTEE REPORT

Student Trustee Fleming, Jr. provided his report with an overview of campus activity dates which have occurred recently and are planned for the upcoming days. Summary of the report was provided in the materials.

FACULTY OBSERVER REPORT

The Faculty Observer Report was provided by Dr. Elizabeth Sachs. She noted the good response from the campus during Professional Development Days which took place in January. Dr. Sachs noted the many meetings taking place on campus in preparation for Middle States. The College Council has been formed with meetings taking place in February and March. The Dolce Valvo Art Center opened its first installation, "Arborea." The spring musical, *Lizzie*, was announced and is beginning rehearsals. Promotion and tenures were granted to many faculty members. A full report was provided to the board in the meeting materials.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ACADEMIC/STUDENT LIFE COMMITTEE

Committee Chairperson Smith stated the Academic/Student Life committee met on February 5, 2025, and the minutes were included in the materials. There were no questions regarding the minutes.

A motion was made by Committee Chairperson Smith and seconded by Trustee Clark to approve the granting of Emeritus status to retired faculty member Robert Borgatti. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Committee Chairperson Smith and seconded by Student Trustee Fleming to approve the granting of Emeritus status to retired faculty member Jerald Truesdell. Motion carried.

An overview of the new Digital Marketing Certificate was provided by Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs, Tammy Bruno. If approved, the program would be offered in Fall 2025. It is a 30-credit certificate which can be completed online and is stackable with other degrees offered at SUNY Niagara. A motion was made by Committee Chairperson Smith and seconded by Trustee DalPorto. Motion carried.

An overview of the changes and clarifications to the Administrators Handbook were made by Vice President of Human Resources, Catherine Brown. The handbook was presented in both the Academic Student Life Committee and the Fiscal Committee. Additional clarifications were requested and made. An updated copy of the handbook was provided to the board. A motion was made by Committee Chairperson Smith and seconded by Trustee Ross. Motion carried.

Trustee Tylec requested a list of names of the faculty granted promotion and tenure.

The next Academic/Student Life Committee meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 5, 2025 at 8:00 AM.

FISCAL COMMITTEE

Committee Chairperson Tylec stated the Fiscal Committee met on February 5, 2025, and the minutes were included in the materials. There were no questions regarding the minutes.

Chairperson Alexander made mention of the changes to by-laws regarding the necessity to make a motion. Since the board voted to make changes to committee meeting requirements after the December 2024 and the January 2024 meetings, a motion was necessary to approve those meeting minutes. A motion was made by Trustee Tylec and seconded by Chairperson Alexander to approve the meeting minutes from December 17, 2024 and January 21, 2025. Motion carried.

Committee Chairperson Tylec asked if there were any questions on the Business and Finance Report. There were no questions.

The Faculty Association Contract Signing took place with Faculty Union President David Nemi, President Holmes, and Chairperson Alexander.

The next fiscal committee meeting is Wednesday, March 5, 2025 at 2:00 PM.

AWARDS COMMITTEE

A motion was planned to vote on the requirements for the Trustee Emeritus. The by-laws regarding the Trustee Emeritus state the recipient must hold two consecutive terms. Trustee Ross suggested that this be changed to 10 years in order to receive the status. The rubric for the criteria will need to be approved. The motion will be held until the Awards Committee can discuss and bring to the full board for approval. The Awards Committee is set to meet immediately following the fiscal committee on the first Wednesday of each month at 3 PM.

The Awards Committee will meet Wednesday, March 5, 2025 at 3pm.

A motion was made by Chairperson Alexander and seconded by Trustee Clark to go into executive session at 6:02 PM.

A motion was made by Chairperson Alexander and seconded by Trustee Clark to come out of executive session at 7:08 PM.

OLD BUSINESS

None at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

Congratulations was extended to Trustee DalPorto on his governor's appointment to the board.

GOOD & WELFARE

None at this time.

The next board meeting will be on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, starting at 4:30 PM.

It was moved by Trustee Clark and seconded by Trustee DalPorto, to adjourn at 7:10 PM. Motion carried.

Kristin Leszkowicz
Assistant to the President