University at Buffalo — UB Council

DRAFT of the meeting minutes of December 2, 2024

University at Buffalo Council
Meeting minutes
December 2, 2024, 8:00 a.m.
Buffalo Room, 10 Capen Hall

Members present:
Jeremy M. Jacobs, Chairman
Michael Cropp
Scott Friedman
Rene Jones
Patrick Roche
Alika Turton

Other participants:
Satish K. Tripathi, President
Graham Hammill, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of Graduate School
Kathleen Heckman, Interim Vice President for University Advancement
Derek Strykowski, Associate Teaching Professor, Department of Music
Jinjun Xiong, SUNY Empire Innovation Professor, Department of Computer Science and Engineering

Attendees:
Tomas Aguirre, Dean of Students
Marcelo Araujo, Dean of the School of Dental Medicine
Allison Brashear, Vice President for Health Sciences and Dean of the Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
Chris Connor, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management
Julia Czerniak, Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning
John Della Contrada, Vice President for University Communications
Beth Del Genio, Vice President for Government and Community Relations and Chief of Staff to the President
AJ Franklin, UB Alumnus
Brian Hamluk, Vice President for Student Life
Laura Hubbard, Vice President for Finance and Administration
Jocelyn Jakubus, Director of Presidential and University Events
Allison Korta, Assistant Director of Presidential Events
Dan LaDelfa, Assistant Director for Presidential Communications
Suzanne Laychock, Chair of the Faculty Senate
Kemper Lewis, Dean of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
Eileen Sherman, Chief of Staff to the Provost
David Shurtleff, Instructional Support Specialist, UBIT
Heath Tuttle, Vice President and Chief Information Officer
Suzanne Rosenblith, Dean of the Graduate School of Education

Opening business

Call to order
Chairman Jacobs called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

Approval of minutes
Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2024, meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Roche, seconded by Mr. Friedman and approved unanimously by Mr. Roche, Ms. Turton, Mr. Friedman, Dr. Cropp, Mr. Jones, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

Topics for discussion or action

Report of the Chairman
Chairman Jacobs began his report by asking Kathleen Heckman to present details to the Council about three naming resolutions under consideration.

The first resolution is for the naming of the Mark J. and Elizabeth A. Czarnecki Professorship and the Czarnecki Resource Fund in Literacy. Both graduates of UB, Mark Czarnecki was an executive at M&T Bank and served on the UB Council. Elizabeth Czarnecki was a longtime teacher. The $2 million gift for the professorship and fund will support literacy initiatives in the Graduate School of Education. Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the resolution. A motion was made by Mr. Jones, seconded by Dr. Cropp and approved unanimously by Mr. Roche, Ms. Turton, Mr. Friedman, Dr. Cropp, Mr. Jones, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

A second resolution is for the naming of the John and Katherine Doyle Experiential Learning Fund. Mr. Doyle is a graduate of UB and longtime supporter of the School of Management and, along with his wife, is giving $1 million for the creation of this fund. Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the resolution. A motion was made by Mr. Roche, seconded by Dr. Cropp and approved unanimously by Mr. Roche, Ms. Turton, Mr. Friedman, Dr. Cropp, Mr. Jones, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

A third resolution is for the naming of the University at Buffalo Dental Alumni Association Fund. This $1 million gift will support the mission and goals of the UB School of Dental Medicine. Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to approve the resolution. A motion was made by Ms. Turton, seconded by Dr. Cropp and approved unanimously by Mr. Roche, Ms. Turton, Mr. Friedman, Dr. Cropp, Mr. Jones, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose.

Upon approval by the Council, the resolutions will be forwarded to the State University of New York System Administration for final review and approval by the SUNY Chancellor and the SUNY Board of Trustees. A copy of the resolutions can be found on the UB Council website.

Chairman Jacobs then asked President Tripathi to give his university report.

University Briefings: Report of the President
President Tripathi began his report by briefly discussing his State of the University address from October. He shared accomplishments in several priority areas, including research and scholarship, students' educational experience, entrepreneurship and economic development, the built environment, international enrollment and partnerships, and the Boldly Buffalo campaign. President Tripathi then presented a brief video recap of his address, which can be found at this link.

UB celebrated the grand opening of the Brittany Murchie Mulla Sports Performance Center in October. The center represents a significant enhancement to university athletics facilities and the overall experience of student-athletes. U.S. Senator Kirstin Gillibrand was on campus in November to promote the federally funded Cyber Service Academy Scholarship program. This scholarship allows students pursuing a course of study in a cyber-related field to receive tuition-free education in exchange for service within the Department of Defense or the intelligence community.

UB also recognized the accomplishments of faculty and staff at the annual Celebration of Academic Excellence in October. In the past two years, 17 faculty members have been appointed to the SUNY Distinguished ranks, one of the largest two-year cohorts in UB's history. Faculty members were also named fellows to the Association for Psychological Science and American Academy of Nursing, among others.

President Tripathi then asked Derek Strykowski, associate teaching professor in the Department of Music, to speak to the Council about how he is incorporating artificial intelligence in his classroom teaching.

University Briefings: Presentation by Derek Strykowski
Professor Strykowski stated that the music department is naturally interdisciplinary in various forms for music performance, creation/composition, and history, among areas. He provided numerous examples of how AI is used in multiple ways in his department for pedagogical purposes. This includes using AI to help examine student performing on a musical instrument such as a keyboard or piano performances in the classroom. Music faculty also use AI software to help create music with varying adjustments to a composition. In a course Professor Strykowski teaches, he uses AI programs such as Aiva and SUNO to help students create music and alter aspects of it to see how these changes impact the outcome. Using SUNO, Professor Strykowski created a song titled "Guiding the Blue and White" which he played for the Council to demonstrate how AI assists in the creation of music.

President Tripathi then asked Vice Provost Graham Hammill to share details about UB's proposed new academic department focused on AI and Society.

University Briefings: Report by Graham Hammill
Vice Provost Hammill stated that in October, SUNY issued a request for proposals to create an institute, center, or department in AI and Society at a SUNY campus. UB submitted a proposal for a new department in November that would be shared between the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and the College of Arts and Sciences. The plan is for the department to have graduate programs—a master's program and a PhD program. The curriculum would combine technical competencies related to AI with areas that are under the boarder rubric such as information integrity and social analysis. At the undergraduate level, the department would partner with existing departments to develop bachelor's degree programs that integrate similar competencies as the graduate program with existing areas of expertise such as music, public health, or anthropology, among others.

President Tripathi then updated the Council on Empire AI developments at UB. In October, Governor Kathy Hochul visited UB's downtown campus to announce the launch of the initial phase of Empire AI. This initial installment is housed in the CCR – UB's Center for Computational Research. Empire AI's new computing system within the CCR is courtesy of a philanthropic contribution from the Simons Foundation—one of Empire AI's private partners—and an investment from New York State. This computing power now in place is 18 months ahead of schedule. The launch of the second phase of Empire AI is scheduled for April of 2025. UB is working with the AI powerhouse Nvidia to thoroughly enable the CCR to bring this second phase online. The Empire AI consortium has also sought a request for proposals for Empire AI's permanent supercomputing center on the North Campus and has begun

receiving bids. Governor Hochul has said that she hopes to have the center constructed within 18 months to two years.

President Tripathi then asked Jinjun Xiong, SUNY Empire Innovation Professor in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, to discuss how UB will be able to harness Empire AI to accelerate research around the most pressing problems facing society.

University Briefings: Presentation by Jinjun Xiong
Dr. Xiong began by describing how UB contributed to the creation of Empire AI and will leverage Empire AI for its research, as well as more background on Empire AI. This includes the consortium's funding which is comprised of $250 million from the state over 10 years, $25 million from SUNY over 10 years, and $125 million from founding institutions and private partners. Consortium members include Columbia University, Cornell, NYU, RPI, SUNY, CUNY, the Simons Foundation, and the Tom Secunda and the Secunda Family Foundation. Currently, private companies such as Meta and Microsoft tower over competitors, and public institutions like UB, in terms of computing power. Empire AI will help UB improve its computing power, but it will still be far behind private companies. Dr. Xiong then described further details of the computing machines (HGX Nodes) being used for Empire AI and how fast they can compute. UB faculty have submitted 81 projects for Empire AI's first phase. These projects include how to use AI to model the trade market, optimize plant growth, improve gas absorption materials, and predict structures for drug designs. UB has received several recent major grants related to AI including $20 million from the National Science Foundation to create the AI Institute for Exceptional Education and $10 million to create a national center on early literacy and responsible AI.

Report of the Student Representative
Ms. Turton began her report updating the Council on the activities of several UB student groups including the School of Pharmacy Student Association, Student Bar Association, Graduate Student Association, Residence Hall Association, Dental Student Association, and the Medical Student Polity. Ms. Turton has also been meeting with university leaders with the goal of improving student enrollment from the NYC area. Through her work with the Council of Advocacy and Leadership (COAL), the group has awarded $60,000 to various student governments and clubs. For the spring 2025 semester, Ms. Turton is working to review and revise the rules for student representative elections. She is also working on establishing a guidebook for the UB Council Student Representative position and members of COAL and wants to help create more student leadership positions as well as raise more money for the COAL grant fund.

Adjournment
Chairman Jacobs called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Dr. Cropp, seconded by Mr. Jones and approved unanimously by Mr. Roche, Ms. Turton, Mr. Friedman, Dr. Cropp, Mr. Jones, and Chairman Jacobs. None voted to oppose. The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 a.m.

A video recording of the meeting, including all presentations, can be found at this link on the UB Council website.

Minutes to be approved at the March 10, 2025, semester meeting of the UB Council