



The State University
of New York

Dr. Jim Malatras
Chancellor

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June 11, 2021

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


Dear Dr. Kay:

With respect to the resolutions adopted at the University Faculty Senate's Spring Plenary, my responses to the adopted resolutions are as follows:

188-02-01; Resolution on Holistic Student Space

I recognize and appreciate the work of UFS and its members in supporting both the academic success and overall wellbeing of students, especially over the past year. I see value in providing the type of space suggested but understand that it requires organization and oversight. I am comfortable making some recommendations around best practices in this area but defer decisions about logistics and practicality to campus presidents, especially given that the allocation of physical space for summer and even fall 2021 continues to be in flux in light of changing pandemic-related guidance. I spoke with Senior Advisor to the Chancellor and Student Advocate, Dr. John Graham, about the 2019 survey mentioned in the resolution and asked him to study the issue with the Student Voices Action Committee to get their thoughts on possible recommendations. I have also asked Provost-in-Charge Sandvik to ask the SUNY Online team to make some best practice recommendations about virtual space.

188-03-01; Resolution on Academic Planning for Responding to Future Crises

UFS has passed several resolutions related to future planning, and I agree that such action is needed. While multiple campuses include academics in their crisis/emergency planning, having to put those plans to the test during the past year has certainly expanded our collective view about the type and level of detail needed. Provost Sandvik and her team have done much work in this regard with campus chief academic officers over the past year, with the resulting information incorporated into campus re-opening plans. Regarding modality of instruction, we also learned that this is something we do not always have control over as Department of Health, state and federal guidance take precedence. I am still considering, and continuing to consult with stakeholders, about

specific guidance for future planning requirements and will carefully consider UFS recommendations as this work progresses.

188-04-01; Resolution on Recognizing the COVID-19 Pandemic Response, and the Need for Continued Support

The first part of this resolution recognizes the ongoing extraordinary work demonstrated by faculty, staff, students, and administrators in responding to the pandemic and recommends that these efforts be documented and memorialized. This is a terrific idea and perhaps a great opportunity for our students to work with any campus archivists, historians, directors of teaching repositories etc. This also aligns with our plans to share best practices from this work. I will discuss this with my executive leadership team and happily support campus plans that take this up. The second request included in this resolution was that System Administration continue to provide wellness, mental health, and professional development support going forward. This aligns with my commitment to a more student-centered SUNY and will be evident through the work of the Student Mental Health Task Force, ongoing grant-funded work on suicide prevention and related training for faculty and students, ongoing work around food insecurity, and more.

188-01-01; Resolution on Implementation of 360 Reviews for SUNY's Management/Confidential (M/C) Employees

This resolution requests that I encourage and fund a campus-based 360-review program for all M/C employees below the level of president, noting that a SUNY360 tool is offered by SUNY's SAIL institute as a framework. The resolution further proposes a schedule of M/C employee evaluations be made accessible to those on campus. Multiple campuses do utilize a form of 360 evaluations as a professional development or self-evaluation tool, while others opt to use alternative tools or models to gather performance-based information. While it is important to offer employees opportunities for professional development and self-evaluation, my sense is that whether this tool, or a similar one, is appropriate for each one of the approximately 1,600 M/C employees across SUNY is a decision best made and funded at the campus level. Further, after consultation with our office of University-wide Human Resources, I have concerns that publicly posting a 360-degree review schedule could harm the integrity of the process. Individual participants in a 360 evaluation are asked to participate in confidence and should not be subject to any outside comments/suggestions that could come as a result of a public schedule and anticipation of who would be selected participants.

188-05-01; Resolution on TIAA Disinvestment

It's been asked that I publicize SUNY support for divesting all TIAA funds from the fossil fuel industries and resulting deforestation activities, and encourage TIAA to consider investing in renewable energy as part of its fiscally responsible management of SUNY retirement funds. The resolution also urges individual TIAA members to consider



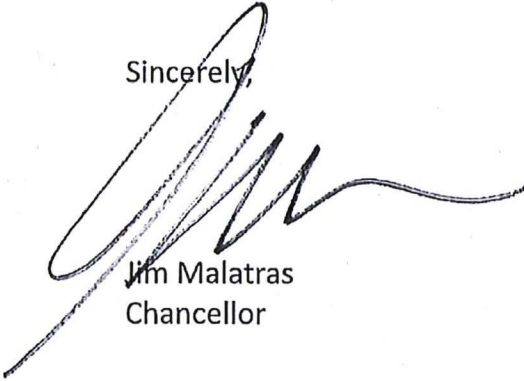
investing in renewable energy funds. The latter point, I believe, is in recognition of the fact that, unlike the New York State pensions (NYSLRS and NYSTRS), SUNY offers self-directed retirement plans. Each plan participant, in both the Optional Retirement Program (ORP) as well as the supplemental 403(b) plans, can decide where to invest their contributions. In an effort to help support those who want to align their investments with environmentally and socially responsible causes, SUNY's program was among the first to offer Environmental and Socially Responsible Investment (ESG/SRI) funds on the TIAA platforms when they were first introduced in 1990. The University-wide benefits team continually reviews new options as these types of funds become more available, and in fact, just last month, added four more. There is available support from TIAA to help with individual planning.

More broadly, I am aware of and support calls from campuses to encourage TIAA to fully divest of investment options that hold fossil fuel and environmentally unfriendly stocks and bonds. Our University-wide benefits team has brought these concerns directly to TIAA. Additionally, SUNY is represented on TIAA's Advisory Board by SUNY System Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer, Eileen McLoughlin, who also works to make clear SUNY's commitment to clean energy and to address global warming, and TIAA has been responsive, as is reflected in its ongoing expansion of ESG investment options. Progress is coming but will take time, and we will continue to advocate with our investment providers.

I will bring this issue up directly with the new TIAA CEO, Thasunda Brown Duckett, whom I will be meeting with later this month.

I thank you for leading the University Faculty Senate over the last four years. I look forward to continuing the great work you've done for shared governance in SUNY.

Sincerely,



Jim Malatras
Chancellor

