



TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS)
FROM: Comprehensive Colleges Sector
RE: Resolution to Endorse Potsdam Faculty Senate Resolution to freeze the Financial Stability Plan
DATE: Fall Plenary, October 19-21, 2023
LOCATION: SUNY Geneseo, Geneseo, NY
RESOLUTION #: 195-03-1
VOTE: For: 47 / Against: 2

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS The administration at SUNY Potsdam has announced drastic program cuts to 14 academic programs, likely to cause further declines in enrollment; and

WHEREAS the proposed cuts disproportionately affect the liberal arts and sciences; and

WHEREAS the process used to determine the program cuts was developed without input from shared governance or from the faculty as a whole; and

WHEREAS the administration has failed to provide budget data showing how these cuts will improve Potsdam's financial situation;

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate endorses the resolution passed by the Potsdam Faculty Senate on October 18 2023 calling for an immediate freeze to the Financial Stability Plan until data-driven justifications, including cost-benefit analyses, are presented to justify the claim that there is a financial benefit to be gained from discontinuing each of the programs slated for discontinuance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate calls on UFS President Keith Landa or his designee to help Potsdam President Suzanne Smith in implementing a transparent process, developed in consultation with the SUNY Potsdam Faculty Senate, and with the inclusion of significant faculty, staff, and student voices regarding curricular needs and opportunities at SUNY Potsdam as the quest for financial stability moves forward; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate strongly encourages any future financial sustainability initiatives at any SUNY institution include both transparent and inclusive processes and data-driven justifications as mentioned above.



APPENDIX:

Albany Times Union, ["SUNY Potsdam president announces cuts to keep college afloat"](#)

[SUNY Potsdam Financial Stability Framework](#)

Potsdam Faculty Senate Resolution

Resolution to Freeze the Financial Stability Plan

SUNY Potsdam Faculty Senate Resolution

WHEREAS the SUNY Potsdam Faculty Senate affirms the need for fiscally responsible institutional decision-making that is responsible to SUNY Potsdam students as well as to the residents, taxpayers, and youth of the state of New York;

WHEREAS despite claims to the contrary, the development of the Financial Stability Plan has been an opaque process, where senior leadership has failed to clearly and forthrightly communicate the future vision of the university, the efficient allocations of resources therein, the precise budgetary and personnel goals for each unit to "increase efficiencies," and cost-benefit analyses of programs that are to be discontinued.

WHEREAS despite claims to the contrary, senior leadership has failed to accurately and effectively communicate how decisions being made in the name of Financial Stability are data driven, informed by stable and reasonable criteria, and in reference to the full scope of disciplines and practices associated with other SUNY Comprehensive Colleges;

WHEREAS the development of the Financial Stability Plan has been carried out in a way that severely deviates from academic professional norms and principles that are designed to preserve the integrity of the institution and discourage corruption, where the expertise of the faculty, chairs, and directors are respected, employee



time and effort spent on mandated tasks are respected, and faculty are meaningfully included in the process of developing potential solutions;¹

WHEREAS despite claims to the contrary, the Administration has not fully carried out the procedures required by the official college policy on administrator-initiated deactivation. They have failed to develop and deploy an "Academic Affairs Program Evaluation Criteria" rubric, despite explicit mention of same in the policy for discontinuation, and the list of metrics cited as data considered in their "holistic" assessment includes no data directly pertinent to peer comparisons, service to other programs, service to General Education other than WAYS, or to the college mission.

WHEREAS the Financial Stability Plan has been built on a foundation of misleading communication in the following ways:

- Failure of senior leadership to fully and transparently disclose the source of the budget shortfall, purporting that it was a result of student population decline, while the massive 43% loss of enrollment over 10 years is difficult to explain in demographic terms alone, leaving out that significant contributors included two administrations that ignored the growing crisis created largely by severely reduced State funding and other SUNY policies that seriously disadvantaged the comprehensive sector, and SUNY Potsdam in particular;²
- Failure of senior leadership to explain how recommended cuts correspond with the larger goal of Financial Stability by refusing to define the metrics used in the planning, share any cost-benefit analyses, or other college-wide data that would justify recommending discontinuance of these 18 programs, asserting in response that their decision making was holistic.

WHEREAS the Financial Stability Plan's proposed cuts are in contradiction with the college's stated mission of being "committed to the liberal arts and sciences as an academic foundation for all students." 14 of the 18 discontinued programs are housed in the School of Arts and Sciences which supplies the overwhelming majority of liberal arts courses on campus;

¹ ["Responding to Financial Crisis: Policies and Best Practices"](#) American Association of University Professors; ["Financial Crisis FAQs."](#) American Association of University Professors

² ["UUP concerned over possible program, faculty cuts at SUNY Potsdam to reduce deficit"](#)



WHEREAS the consequences of cuts related to the Financial Stability Plan and its implications for students, faculty, and the state of New York have not been forthrightly and clearly communicated. The senior leadership claims that the measures are efforts to put students first and that they will impact only 6.3% of students, when many more will be affected by reduced course availability, lack of access to a full and meaningful liberal arts education, negative perceptions about value of a degree from this university, limited access to support as a result of the overworked faculty and staff who remain, larger class sizes and a higher student-to-faculty ratio, decimated campus climate, and more;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Faculty Senate of the State University of New York at Potsdam calls for an immediate freeze to the Financial Stability Plan until such a time as data-driven justifications, including cost-benefit analyses, are presented to justify the claim that there is a financial benefit to be gained from discontinuing each of the programs slated for discontinuance.³

³ This resolution borrows heavily from a similar resolution at West Virginia University passed last month by their University Assembly calling for a freeze on their proposed Academic Transformation Plan.