

TO: Staff Senate  
FROM: Kristi Klien  
DATE: March 18, 2026  
SUBJECT: Staff Senate Meeting Minutes

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**In Attendance:** Lucy Grissinger, Denise Kuzma, Patti Tetreault, Megan Sweeney, Kristi Klien, Bridget Conlogue, Shawn Beistline, Brenda Clarke, Diane Collins Gilmore, Marcella LaMura, Melinda Finnerty, Grace Crowley, Bridget Hunter, Gerianne Barber, Gina Butler, Traci Vennie, Meghan Eidenberg, Kelly Cook, Bridget Judge

**Not in Attendance:** Bryn Schofield, Daniela Teneva, Melissa Eckenrode, Raymond Kratz, Joseph Medina, Hollie Roscioli, Jill Eidenberg, Autumn Forgione, Rose Ann Jubinski, Melissa Przewlocki, Melisa Gallo, Sybil Keris, Brenda Amato

**Welcome:** Kristi Klien called the meeting to order. Bridget Conlogue offered the opening prayer. Volunteer needed for the opening prayer at the next meeting, Gina Butler volunteered. The Land Acknowledgement Statement was read. Attendance was checked, and a quorum was not met due to:

- A Facilities quarterly meeting.
- The memorial service for Charles Kratz.
- As a result, no official votes could be taken, and approval of minutes and agenda was postponed.

**Guest Presentation – Steve Hietsch, Sr. Vice President for Finance & Administration  
Pat Donohue, Asst. Vice President Budget & Finance Planning**

- Steve revisited themes from his July visit and emphasized his commitment to transparency and open dialogue. He noted that many on campus have differing understandings of the university’s financial situation and aligning that understanding is essential.

Presentation Objectives

1. Current financial status
2. How the university arrived at this point
3. What happens if the institution does not change course
4. Context for the Board of Trustees’ budget mandate

Current Financial Status

- FY26 is projected to end with a \$14.3 million operating deficit.
- Operating cash reserves will be nearly exhausted by year-end.
- The university faces a structural deficit, meaning expenses consistently outpace revenues.

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM)

- The SEM plan is expected to slow the growth of deficits but will not eliminate them.
- To resolve the deficit, revenues must grow faster than expenses for multiple years.

#### Board of Trustees Budget Mandate

- The Board requires the university to achieve a 3% operating surplus (~\$6–7M) by FY36.
- Combined with the current deficit, the university must close a \$20M gap over the next decade.
- Progress must be steady; the deficit cannot be eliminated in a single year.

#### Endowment Use and Risks

- After FY26, deficits will need to be covered by the unrestricted endowment (~\$100M).
- Continued withdrawals will:
  - Shrink the endowment
  - Reduce annual investment income
  - Worsen future deficits
- This creates a negative financial spiral that could eventually leave the university without reserves.

#### How We Got Here: Enrollment Declines

- Student revenue accounts for 80–90% of operating revenue.
- Since FY15:
  - Total enrollment has declined 14%
  - Undergraduate enrollment 12%
  - Graduate enrollment 22%
- Declines are tied to shrinking high school graduate populations in PA, NY, and NJ.

#### Revenue Trends

- From FY04–FY15, revenues grew 5% annually.
- From FY15–FY24, growth slowed to 0.5% annually.
- Tuition increases have been offset by:
  - Enrollment declines
  - Rising institutional financial aid (growing 6–7% annually)

#### National Context

- Most U.S. colleges are tuition-dependent and face intense competition.
- Financial aid has become an “arms race,” suppressing net revenue.
- College closures are increasing nationwide.

#### Growing Dependence on Endowment Income

- Endowment spending increased 17% annually from FY15–FY25.
- This is no longer sustainable given projected deficits.

#### Future Scenarios: Steve presented three modeled scenarios:

##### Scenario 1 – Ideal (Purple)

- No additional endowment withdrawals.
- Endowment grows to \$450M+ by FY36.
- Unrestricted endowment remains above \$100M.
- Annual endowment income grows to \$21.4M.
- *This scenario is hypothetical and not achievable under current conditions.*

##### Scenario 2 – Current Course (Teal)

- Endowment declines to ~\$270M.

- Unrestricted endowment is fully depleted by FY34, which is not feasible.
- The university would face severe financial crisis requiring drastic measures.

#### Scenario 3 – Board-Mandated Path (Gold)

- Annual deficit reduced by \$2.2M per year.
- Endowment stabilizes and remains sustainable.
- Unrestricted endowment preserved.
- Annual endowment income decreases slightly but remains viable.
- This is the only sustainable path.

#### Operating Budget Clarification

- Includes: salaries, benefits, utilities, maintenance, and all recurring expenses.
- Excludes: capital projects and debt principal payments.

#### Endowment Spending

- University spends 5% of the three-year average endowment value annually.
- Deficit coverage must come from the unrestricted portion only.

#### Zero-Based Budgeting

- May yield \$2–3M in savings but cannot close the full \$20M gap.
- A combination of:
  - Enrollment growth
  - Fundraising
  - Endowment performance
  - Expense control is required

#### Communication of Budget Changes

- Process will be participatory, not top-down.
- Multi-year planning is expected.
- Cabinet must present the FY27 budget to the Board by May.

#### Faculty Contract Cycles

- Contract negotiations will be a key component of long-term financial planning.

#### Closing

- Steve and Patrick were thanked for their transparency and willingness to engage.
- Steve agreed to share his slide deck with Kristi Klien, who will forward the document to all senators.

### **Liaison Report – Patricia Tetreault, Vice President Human Resources**

#### **Board Mandate Communication**

- Father Marina announced the mandate on March 12.
- More information will be shared as planning develops.
- Campus engagement efforts are underway.

#### **Feedback on Financial Graphs**

- Patti asked for feedback on Steve’s visual materials.
- Members found them helpful and suggested adding more context (e.g., operating expense categories).

#### **Mission Priority Examen**

- Cabinet participated in a session facilitated by Dan.

### **Compliance Matrix Project**

- Liz is developing a comprehensive policy and compliance matrix.
- Goal: a centralized, indexed policy website.

### **ERP System Review**

- Tambellini presented options for:
  - Banner upgrade
  - Workday
  - Hybrid solutions
- Software demonstrations are forthcoming.

### **Staff Holiday Calendar**

- Calendar is finalized pending cabinet approval and will be released shortly.

### **Upcoming Events**

- Accepted Student Days: March 28 and April 11
- PRO DEO Awards:
  - 10-year luncheon in April
  - 20-year event in May

### **Provost Search**

- Dr. Wei-Dong Zi has accepted the provost position and will begin in July.

### **Timeshare Bank Update**

- Current balance: 1,361 hours (up from 1,221 last year).
- Hours shared this year: 344 (up from 146).
- Usage remains appropriate and aligns with program intent.

### **Staff Handbook Update**

- Proposed addition clarifying that university email must be used for university business. Not restrictive; intended as a reminder. Draft language will be shared with the full Senate for feedback before adoption.

### **Supervisor Meeting**

- 122 supervisors invited. Supervisors will be encouraged to share key takeaways with their teams.

Meeting will include:

- Discussion of the Board mandate
- Breakout sessions
- Communication guidance
- Idea-sharing activities

Patti added that she offered a shout out about Staff Senate at the Governance Committee Meeting highlighting the Senate's contributions to the campus community.

## **President's Report – Kristi Klien**

**UGC** – Traci Vennie - Updates overlapped with Board discussions:

- Budget
- ERP system and Tambellini
- Middle States
- Faculty, student, and staff elections
- Meeting was brief and largely covered previously discussed topics.

**UPC** (University Planning Committee)

- Work continues on strategic plan implementation.
- Current focus is identifying responsible parties for each initiative.
- Kate Yerkes will populate the responsibility grid; the committee will reconvene to begin next steps.

### **Board of Trustees Updates**

- Middle States Self-Study: Mike Jenkins provided an update, consistent with his recent Staff Senate presentation.
- Finance Update: Steve shared a financial overview similar to the update given to Senate earlier that day.
- Mission Priority Exam & Listening Sessions: Dan Cassachi reported on recent sessions. Attendees found them useful for offering feedback.
- Enrollment: Shannon presented the latest enrollment update.

Administrative Follow-ups

- Agendas and minutes have not been posted since November; December–February materials will be uploaded together.
- The senator list is outdated due to alternates moving into senator roles.
- The group agreed to update the list now so alternates can be contacted as needed.

### **Previous Business**

- Board Resolutions: Updates to the Staff Senate Constitution and Bylaws were approved. These will be updated on the website and forwarded to the Communications Committee.
- Staff & Faculty Appreciation Party (2027) – Kristi Klien followed up with Conference & Events regarding Staff Senate participation. Senate is open to participating if faculty are also included in planning. Members may consider volunteering; no immediate response required.

### **New Business**

Search Committee Representation

- Discussion centered on representation for high-level academic administrator searches (president, provost, deans). Current structure includes multiple faculty members, at least two students, and one professional staff member.
- Proposal:
  - Increase to two staff members, or
  - Replace “professional staff” with “staff” to broaden eligibility.

- Past attempts stalled at FAC; Tracy Stewart is reviewing faculty handbook language.
- Broad support was expressed for increasing staff representation.
- A vote will be held next month when quorum is present.

## **Standing Committee Reports**

### **Communications Committee**

Communications Symposium details shared:

- Opening session in Brennan 228
- Guided tours of the Idea Center with demonstrations.
- To-go lunch provided at the Idea Center
- Megan Sweeney will serve as interim co-chair during Denise Kuzma's upcoming leave.
- After the symposium, work will shift to preparing the next newsletter.

### **Elections & Membership**

Election Timeline:

- Nominations: March 16–26. Elections: March 27–April 7
- Senators are encouraged to reach out to potential nominees or share names with leadership. Rose Ann emailed senators rolling off to gauge interest in running again.

### **Finance**

No major changes since the previous meeting.

- Available balance: \$3,970.66; Agency account: \$102.62
- Need to verify whether the agency funds were incorrectly deducted from the regular budget; Kristi will review.

### **Social Events and Community Building Committee**

Assisting Melinda Finnerty with the April 8 Roundtable event. RSVPs are being managed by Melissa Eckenrode.

### **Staff Development**

Training initiatives are temporarily on hold due to system transitions. Shawn Beistline provided new information for potential development opportunities; the committee will review.

### **Staff Recognition & Excellence**

Committee met prior to Sursum Corda and received HR clarification on nomination language. Updates will be incorporated.

Assessment: Geri Barber requested that:

- Paper evaluations from events are forwarded to her. Any downloaded spreadsheets with feedback also be shared. These materials are needed for annual assessment reporting.

**Items from the Floor**

- AI Task Force Survey: AAC&U AI Fellows (Kate Cummings and Deborah Boudash), with support from Dean Aulisio, will distribute a generative AI survey. Survey topics include AI awareness, experience, perceptions, and learning needs. Opens: March 24, Closes: April 1. Participation is voluntary but encouraged.

**Adjournment**

- Motion to adjourn by Traci Vennie; seconded by Shawn Beistline