

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY SENATE
University Environment Committee

Meeting of September 2nd 2020, 1:00 - 2:30 pm
Online meeting (Zoom)

Attendance: Thomas Wilson, Frederick Walter, Jeanne Charoy, Shirley Lim, Hiya Panja, Sean Deery, Mona Ramonetti, Clifford Knee, Michelino Puopolo, Joanna Kaczorowska, Carlos Colosqui, Malcolm Bowman, Heidi Hutner.

Meeting called to order 1:10

Carlos Colosqui is the committee's new representative from Engineering, and Hiya Panja the new undergraduate representative along with Justin (who was absent at this meeting). The Senate election is scheduled to take place in the second half of September, but members will continue serving until the elections happen. If Thomas Wilson is reelected he will look for the best time for everyone to meet (more on that as it develops).

Consideration of the July minutes: Wilson entertained a motion to accept the minutes. Malcolm Bowman moved and Michelino Puopolo seconded. The minutes were approved with none opposed.

Chair report. The chair, Wilson, had nothing to report other than what he mentioned about the Senate elections. He opened the floor for a discussion about the covid-19 university response and asked Clifford Knee whether he had information to share. Knee shared that the students are back on campus and that the testing protocol for them prior to arriving went well. Now there is follow-up testing that are going well too. There was surprise at the lack of case numbers: There have been additional covid-19 cases since schools opened, but the protocols put in place are working as they are supposed to. For quarantine, people get put in West B apartments. There has been a lot of conversation about face masks and face coverings, but the policies from Stony Brook University are straightforward. Knee suggested to go to Morris Zachary for questions, since he is the head of a lot of different committees and a lot of information goes through him. The Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) department goes to departments to go through opening plans. For questions about return to work, Knee asked to please reach out to EHS.

Wilson mentioned that the Senate task force (in which both Wilson and Frederick Walter participate) continues to meet with the administration to discuss reopening plans. Wilson added that the SBU covid-19 dashboard, which changed from giving weekly updates to daily updates, is quite impressive. Malcolm Bowman asked if Wilson could show the dashboard to the committee. Wilson shared his screen to show the dashboard according to which 1 SBU student had tested positive so far. Wilson mentioned that the governor's regulation is that if more than 5% of the campus population or more than 100 people on campus contract Covid-19, the campus has to go completely online for 14 days. The dashboard also shows that there is plenty of capacity on campus to quarantine people, and that the number of in-person classes has

decreased drastically compared to before. Wilson said that the dashboard contains a lot of information and is excellent. It will continue to be developed in response to people's demands.

Walter noted that the graphs on the dashboard are misleading because even for in-person classes, very few students actually show up, so registered does not mean on campus. In his class, only 3 people out of 15 show up in person - the rest join via Zoom. Walter added that there is a caveat on the number of new cases reported on the dashboard: it only reports people tested through the SBU health services, so some people are not being counted. There are some gaps, since the dashboard reports that 37 people are in isolation.

Bowman asked how many international students made it back. Walter answered that it was very few from what he had heard. Bowman mentioned a story about international students published in the New York Times. Wilson added that the Senate had discussed the numbers reported in the New York Times and that there is a Suffolk county dashboard that keeps track of things.

Shirley Lim said that one of her undergraduate student is an RA in a campus dorm and that she told her the rules are strictly enforced in the dorms, to the extent that one RA was asked to leave. Students who violate social distancing are banned from living on campus. Lim said this is a sign that at least in her undergraduate student's circle, the safety mechanisms are enforced.

Wilson added that Oneonta is currently on a 14 days lockdown and that the spread of Covid-19 there may have had to do with a large party. Another university where this happened was Georgia Tech. Wilson said that as far as he can tell, Stony Brook students have been pretty serious about being careful.

Working groups.

Natural Environment and Preservation working group (coordinator: Thomas Wilson). Wilson reported that it is appropriate to approach President McInnis to get her endorsement for permanent official preservation for the Ashley Schiff reserve. Since last year was the 50th anniversary, a new slogan for this year could be "51 and done". This working group is also still working on the Lake Brianna data (the rainfall and lake data). Lake Brianna, also called the East Recharge Basin, is a 5 acre artificial wetland between Nicholls Road and Circle Drive, north of the main campus entrance. It has become naturalized and is classified as a wetland. There have been proposals to open it up as a natural observatory classroom. But it needs to function as a recharge basin so this working group is monitoring it to make sure that is the case. If the rain events don't overflow the lake, it will help the argument that the basin can remain naturalized and be used as an observatory.

Transportation working group (coordinator: Mona Ramonetti). Parking and traffic are much less of an issue now than before, due to classes and work moving online. Wilson asked if this group should be maintained. Bowman mentioned that one concern he has was the bus. Wilson said that parking had been reorganized to allow commuters to park on main campus so as to lower the stress on the shuttle buses. Wilson noted that the South P lot was no more than a quarter

full when he went there. Walter agreed that parking doesn't seem to be an issue at the moment and that the committee could shift its focus to buses and trains.

Wilson said that there has been an acknowledgement that the situation is very fluid and that things can change quickly - it seems that SBU has done about as well as any SUNY school. Mona Ramonetti asked whether there has been any discussions on the committees Wilson are on of adopting more virtual classrooms in the future. In other words is this temporary or are we changing the class. Wilson answered that nobody really knows The fact that a large number of people are working from home certainly solves the parking problem - the burden on parking is probably reduced by about 70%.

Bowman said that about 4 or 5 years ago, there was a push to bring on massive online education, and the faculty was against it because it was considered an attempt to reduce faculty permanently. Walter added that MOOCs have failed and faded away - in his opinion, things will move away from teaching large amounts of students in large halls and the university will be more hands-on with research classes, seminars, etc... But this is a different topic than what the committee should be discussing.

Joanna Kaczorowska added that Governor Cuomo seems to like online teaching, even for pre-college classes, which outraged a lot of teachers. Walter noted that both the Provost and Chancellor are also fond of online education. Wilson said that this current period will demonstrate what works and what doesn't for online education. Heidi Hutner added that there is a real social loss to online education, even though there are advantages for driving and such. Sean Deery shared that he took an online class this semester and enjoyed the videos which he found more engaging.

Efficiency, recycling, and liveability (coordinator: Jeanne Charoy). One of the action items of this committee was to reduce the amount of non-reusable things on campus. That may be a difficult ask right now given Covid-19. But this group could work on things like proper PPE disposal. This group should think about other actions they may pursue. Hutner said that this seems like an opportune time for us to participate in the conversation about online learning. There are serious environmental advantages to people not being on campus (waste, driving, etc...). But then there is the issue of not creating a community. Henner suggested that it might be important to be part of that larger conversation with the environmental piece. Wilson said that he will email Hutner information about what the committee has worked on and also ideas of people to connect with - this time may be an opportunity to change the paradigm. Hutner added that the fact we have a new president is also an opportunity for change.

Old and new business.

Colosqui mentioned that by the student activity center, the buses are running idle and it's a waste of fuel (and in fact illegal in some countries, like Germany). Wilson said that he could ask about that but that it may be because of diesel engines which are less efficient if turned off a certain amount of time. Bowman said that the committee once worked on proposing the use of

biofuel for the school buses. One problem is that the biofuel solidifies in the winter, but winters are not as cold as they used to be. Wilson noted that a few of the buses already run on biodiesel and that we can ask for more information. Knee confirmed that they do and that SBU received an award for it. Colosqui said now may be the chance to run some electric or at least hybrid buses. Knee said that he believes some of the buses are hybrid already.

Wilson entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ramonetti moved. None opposed.
Meeting adjourned at 1:57.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Charoy, UEC Recording Secretary.