

**Minutes**  
**SUNY Downstate Medical Center**  
**Council Meeting**  
**President's Board Room**  
**March 12, 2016**

**Council Members Present**

Dr. Monica Sweeney, Chair (joining by phone)  
Dr. Phillip Abramowitz  
Dr. Randall Bloomfield (by phone)  
Jacob Carl  
Michael Connors, Esq.  
Dr. Constance Shames  
Dr. Mirian Zavala

**Council Members Absent**

Robert Hermann  
Dr. Garry Sklar  
Rev. Elgin Watkins

**Downstate Administration in Attendance**

President Dr. John F. Williams  
Astra Bain-Dowell  
Dr. JoAnn Bradley  
Alan Dzija  
Dorothy Fyfe  
Melanie Gehen  
William Holman  
Dr. Jeffrey Putman  
Thomas Reitinger  
Dr. Ian Taylor  
Ellen Watson

Minutes from the last meeting were accepted and approved.

***Report from Council Chair:***

At the request of Council Chair Dr. Monica Sweeney, Downstate's staff liaison to the Council, Ellen Watson, presided over the meeting, with Dr. Sweeney joining by phone. The minutes from the March meeting were approved without amendment.

**Report from the President**

Downstate President Dr. John F. Williams provided a brief update on Long Island College Hospital. Judge Johnny Lee Baynes authorized Downstate to disassociate from LICH effective May 22, 2014. A request for proposals had been released and several bidders have responded.

Evaluation of submitted proposals would be conducted by two separate teams; one consisting of community and union representatives; the other by SUNY representatives. In the interim, Downstate is continuing to run Long Island College Hospital as it was on June 19, 2013.

President Williams also discussed the Medicaid Waiver, which has the intent of transforming how healthcare is provided in New York State. Downstate is participating in the process, and developing a proposal for a regional consortium of institutions. He also touched on the inclusion of Downstate's Incubator and BioBAT projects in New York State's new taxfree business zone program, and issues related to Downstate's residency programs.

**Special Report: Dr. JoAnn Bradley, Middle States Accreditation Project,**

With Dr. Jeffrey Putman, Dr. JoAnn Bradley, senior vice president for philanthropy, provided an update on preparations for the launch of the Self Study for 2016 Middle States Accreditation evaluation. She reminded Council members that they would be meeting with Dr. Ellie Fogarty, Downstate's liaison to Middle States, on April 9, 2014 and gave members a preview of what they might expect.

**Hospital Report: William Holman and Thomas Reitingger**

Thomas Reitingger, Chief Restructuring Officer, brought Council members up to date on Downstate's Sustainability Plan, which has focused on revenue cycle, labor productivity, supply chain, care management, indirect expenses, and volume growth. Within these categories, over 50 initiatives are encompassed. Over the next 24 months, Downstate anticipates improvements approaching \$34 million. While in many areas Downstate had either exceeded or was close to the target between July 2013 and January 2014, there was some slippage in the revenue cycle area. This has now begun to turn around. A significant amount of education programming is going on, so that the management structure of the hospital will be able to effectively carry on after the Pitts Management assignment is completed.

William Holman, Interim Chief Executive Officer, reviewed steps that Downstate is taking to address cash flow. Downstate has hired four remote coders and two additional internal FTE's to improve receivables, which should have a major impact. In terms of labor productivity, Downstate is moving closer to FTE target goals outlined in the Sustainability Plan. In line with national trends, Downstate has experienced an approximate 10 percent decrease in patient volume. Inpatient surgeries has been a very positive story, and administration is working with its respective chiefs in cardiac thoracic surgery and neurosurgery to continue to enhance volume. There are opportunities to build the ambulatory surgery program. Ambulatory Surgery at the Bay Ridge site is doing well, and Downstate should be able to replicate that at its main campus.

Dr. Sweeny asked how labor productivity was being accomplished, and what was the benchmark by which to judge receivables – is there an average goal across the country or in Brooklyn? Mr. Holman responded that it is important to build revenue and the best way to accomplish this is through growth. Workforce cuts should be made through attrition if possible, but also with sensitivity to the impact that cuts may have on revenue generation. Relative to accounts receivables benchmarks, he said, the national average is about 49 days; Downstate's goal is 60 days by July first.

### **Hospital Finance Report: Alan Dzija**

Chief Financial Officer Alan Dzija explained that Downstate is a billion dollar business that includes education activities, research, clinical care, and sales and services to other hospitals, including graduate medical education. Downstate depends on SUNY and the State for a significant level of transaction business processing. These interactions require a great deal of manual work that makes it difficult to easily and rapidly format data into meaningful reports. Once a year SUNY produces a system-wide set of financial statements, but individual campuses are largely left on their own to pull together a campus-wide financial picture. Producing financial data at the medical and research campuses is a great deal more complex. Mr. Dzija hopes to complete a task begun about five years ago to install a campus-wide general ledger accounting system that ties together the complex facets of Downstate.

Downstate realizes about \$35 million in tuition; \$40 million in grants; \$750 million a year in clinical revenue, and an additional \$40 million in sales and services revenue. The enterprise more or less breaks even except, lately, in hospital operations. “What we want to do,” said Mr. Dzija, “Is have the ability to drill down and identify which areas are performing well and which are underperforming.” Mr. Dzija characterized Downstate’s budget as a “herding challenge,” that involves literally hundreds of account units, locations, and transactions, with some 400 separate line-items of activity.

On other fronts, Mr. Dzija discussed a new opportunity to fast track certain types of purchases related to the Sustainability Plan; the need to convert to more modern systems; and to attain performance benchmarks through the use of the electronic health record system.

### **Academic Report: Dean Ian Taylor**

Dr. Ian Taylor, senior vice president for biomedical research and education, briefed Council on the LCME accreditation. A requested progress report was submitted in December and reviewed in February, with Downstate granted full accreditation. Two side issues that LCME has expressed an interest in following up on are the rollout of the new curriculum and the financial situation of the hospital. Dr. Taylor noted that he expects no challenges with the curriculum; LCME has indicated it may want to showcase our new curriculum on a national level as one that meets its new requirement of competency-based assessment. The hospital finance issue may be more closely monitored by the LCME, even though the academic budget has its own separate budget and funding stream. There is mixed news on accreditation for Downstate’s residencies programs through the ACGME. Downstate continues to enjoy full institutional accreditation. However, over the preceding month, there had been four adverse actions taken against individual residency programs, with issues ranging from a focus on service over education to residents having to fill in to cover the loss of supporting staff.

### **Special Report: Dr. Daniel Ehlke, School of Public Health**

Dr. Daniel Ehlke, professor in SPH’s program of Health Policy and Management (HPM), gave a report on that program. In addition to his educational focus, Dr. Ehlke is a frequent contributor to media news coverage and has been featured in *Everyday Health*, *MedPage Today*, and the *Huffington Post*, among other media venues. Dr. Ehlke noted that HPM is one of the five core programs in public health, with courses that focus on policy, finance, and the basic structure of the healthcare system. Students in the program include a mix of new college graduates,

Downstate employees, and students enrolled in other Downstate programs. The program offers master and certificate programs, and plans to re-offer doctoral study in the near future. Dr. Ehlke also announced that Downstate has just developed a new program that will offer a master's degree in conjunction with the Peace Corps – the only public health program in New York City to offer such a degree.

**Special Report: John Zubrovich, Biomedical Communications**

Mr. Zubrovich directs Biomedical Communications, which provides design, video, website development and other media support to all sectors of the campus. Examples of services include filming and editing of *Health Center*, a show aired on cable TV, featuring Institutional Advancement's Dr. Gerry Deas as host; teleconferencing and international video conferencing; and photography services. Mr. Zubrovich said that his office manages over 100 websites within the SUNY Downstate structure, and ongoing planned improvements include increasing interactive communications and content management. Mr. Zubrovich said that by 2015, projections are that unique visitors to the Downstate website will hit the 6 million mark, with added services such as streamed curriculum content and online patient information. His office is currently building the infrastructure that will be required for future digital media growth required in medical education and health care. Mr. Zubrovich said that his creative staff is dedicated to the future challenges of implementing new technologies that will contribute to Downstate's legacy of healthcare, research, and education.

**Special Report: Dr. Jeffrey Putman, Dean of Student Affairs**

Dr. Putman followed up his presentation at the January meeting by reviewing data on Downstate's student demographics, including headcount by college, male-female ratio, racial identification, and residence. Downstate currently has 1,838 enrolled students.

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There being no further business, the meeting concluded. The next meeting is scheduled for May 14.