

**Minutes**  
**SUNY Downstate Medical Center**  
**Council Meeting**  
**President's Board Room**  
**July 13, 2017**

**Council Members Present**

Rev. Dr. Kirkpatrick Cohall, Chair  
Michael Connors, Esq.  
Andrew Hasenzahl  
Marlene Dietrich Heath  
Dr. Constance Shames  
Dr. Mirian Zavala

**Downstate Administration Present**

President Wayne J. Riley  
Dr. Keydron Guinn  
Dr. Carlos Pato  
Dr. Mark Stewart  
Dr. Daisy Cruz-Richman  
Dr. Allen Lewis  
Dr. Pascal J. Imperato  
Dr. Lori Escallier  
Dr. Jeffrey Putman  
Dr. Edgar Mandeville  
Thomas Gray  
Dorothy Fyfe  
Ellen Watson

The meeting was called to order. This was the first Council meeting to be held under the leadership of President Wayne J. Riley, and attendees introduced themselves, including Andrew Hasenzahl, voting student representative who is new to SUNY Council. The minutes from the last meeting were accepted by consensus.

**REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT**

President Riley delivered his inaugural report to the Council. He shared with Council his background as a clinician and leader in academic medicine, the Presidential Search Committee process, and the appointment of the Transition Committee, headed by School of Public Health Dean Pascal J. Imperato and Dr. Edgar J. Mandeville, immediate past Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health.

President Riley noted that his focus will be to address Downstate's challenges while simultaneously pivoting to address the future. "We need to seek out points of light that we can pursue to serve our students, faculty, and multiple missions," he said. This will include being attentive to changes in Washington and Albany, as well as forging strong relationships with the SUNY Board of Trustees. He noted that Downstate will move forward with enhancing the attractiveness of its educational facilities, including improving lecture halls and upgrading Alumni Auditorium. "We're going to have a vigorous, thoughtful, well-planned, well-managed physical improvement process," he said. President Riley also plans to assess Downstate's communication needs and reorganize the communications function to more effectively tell Downstate's story.

President Riley introduced Dr. Keydron Guinn, who previously served at Meharry Medical College as its Associate Dean of the Graduate School. At Downstate he will serve as Vice President and Chief of Staff. President Riley also introduced Dr. Lori Escallier, the new Dean of the College of Nursing, recently recruited from SUNY Stony Brook.

President Riley concluded his report by noting that Downstate is a national treasure, and that, while the institution is guided by multiple missions, students and the learning environment are its primary focus. "We believe in higher education and the future impact our students will have on improving the community and the world," he said.

In response to a request from Dr. Shames, President Riley reviewed some of the challenges Downstate faces. These include lifting employee morale, addressing significant cuts in Disproportionate Share and hospital funding, enhancing advocacy efforts, and improving facilities. "We need to embrace excellence in everything we do, knowing that perfection is not attainable, but excellence is," he concluded.

## **REPORT FROM THE TRANSITION COMMITTEE**

Dr. Edgar Mandeville and School of Public Health Dean Dr. Pascal J. Imperato jointly presented on the work of the Transition Committee, whose 22 members represent a cross-section of the Downstate community. The Committee, which is working on a detailed report, was charged with reviewing education, research, operations, community affairs, and student affairs. The spectrum of departments examined also included the Research Foundation, Graduate Medical Education, Continuing Medical Education, Security, Facilities Management & Development, Human Resources, and Contracts & Procurement, as well as the private practice plan. The review process should be concluded by early September.

Dr. Mandeville added that the Transition Committee found the level of talent at Downstate to be extraordinary and its interaction with the community "a point of honor." However, he said, the institution does face challenges that need to be addressed.

President Riley noted that it is for this reason he has enlisted Dorothy Fyfe, Associate Vice President for Planning, to undertake an attitude survey to ensure that Downstate has better data on student and faculty perceptions. These data will be foundational to a strategic planning

process planned for launch in the fall. The objective, Dr. Riley said, will be to examine Downstate's preferred future and to help answer the question, "How do we get there?"

The Transition Committee's report will bring together sources of information examined, summarize presentations, and present conclusions reached. It will review what exists now and make suggestions for moving forward. The work of the committee will feed into the strategic planning process.

Dr. Riley noted that decisions will need to be prioritized, with some recommendations being implemented rapidly and others deferred. "We'll be transparent about those decisions," he said, "but we will also reference back to the Transition Committee's work even as we migrate into the strategic planning process."

Chairman Cohall asked if the Transition Committee's report would describe both the current state of Downstate and its future, and if the presentations from each department would be available for review. Dr. Mandeville responded that, while the majority of presentations focused on the current status of the reporting departments, those reports evolved into questions about "Why this?" and "Why not that," or "Is there another way?" Literally every presentation touched to some degree on ideas for future development. The Transition Committee's final report will summarize each presentation and present conclusions. It will be presented to SUNY Council at a future meeting.

## **REPORT ON ADMISSIONS**

The Report on Admissions, presented by College of Medicine Dean Dr. Carlos Pato and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Jeffrey Putnam, included information on all Downstate colleges and schools but focused primarily on the College of Medicine, which has undertaken a review of its admissions processes with the goal of implementing improvements to increase diversity. Because admissions data for the 2017 entering class had not been finalized at the time of the Council meeting, data for 2016 was reviewed and shared.

The College of Medicine plans to enroll an entering class of approximately 190 students, based on accreditation ceilings and clinical slot capacity. (Clinical slot capacity represents the number of affiliated hospitals available for student training and preceptors available to mentor in community based practice.) The College seeks to develop a broadly diverse, gender-balanced class, within guidelines established by recent Federal law. The College also considers engagement in community service, preparation for success in medical school, and applicants' potential to become compassionate and caring physicians – something that can be difficult to extract solely from MCATs or GPA results.

The College of Medicine receives over 5,000 applications annually for the 190 slots and interviews approximately 1,100 students, ultimately accepting roughly half of interviewees on the first round. This number is whittled down through a "continuous chain" process as students receive acceptances from other schools and weigh their options. Close to 16 percent of students

accepted are underrepresented in medicine, putting Downstate in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally for this benchmark.

“However, let me be clear,” said Dr. Putman. “While we do well in national comparisons, that does not mean that we are satisfied with these numbers. Our goal is to increase the number of underrepresented students in medicine.”

This is not necessarily easy, he cautioned. Many of the underrepresented students accepted by Downstate choose instead to attend private schools capable of offering full scholarships. And while Downstate has successful pipeline programs, many of the students who complete these programs and enhance their portfolio choose to go elsewhere than Downstate.

Dr. Pato said that the College of Medicine understands the need to create a path for students who have excellent potential but who may not be competitive for admission, for any number of reasons. This likely includes those who find objective testing challenging, for example, or whose life experiences, such as having to work full-time while attending undergraduate school, might be disadvantaged compared to students from more privileged backgrounds. “Some applicants may have a different type of support within their family system, or need to support their family system in different ways – so we’re sensitive to that” he said.

To address this, the College of Medicine has created the Bridge Program, which provides a path for students who would otherwise have little to no chance of getting into medical school. Students admitted to the Bridge Program take half the courses they would have normally taken in the first year, do not pay tuition, and are given a scholarship for a dormitory residence. Those who successfully pass are admitted as regular students in the College of Medicine. Seven students have already been accepted into the pilot program.

In addition to the Bridge Program, the College of Medicine has actively restructured its admissions process since Dr. Riley’s arrival, with the goal of optimizing opportunities for underrepresented students. To date in 2017, the number of underrepresented students accepted has risen from 92 in 2016 to 127 in 2017 – a 138 percent increase. “This is about a programmatic shift in delivering a good outcome to our community,” he said. “It is the crucial underpinning to what we need to do.”

## **FINANCE REPORT**

Chief Finance Officer Thomas Gray reviewed steps that had been taken with President Riley to stabilize the 17-18 FY budget and address institutional challenges, including departmental allocation silos, transparency, and flexibility. A Budget Planning Committee, representing a cross-section of Downstate, worked weekly to evaluate, assess, and make recommendations to President Riley on departmental budgets. The process facilitated assessment of opportunities that, moving forward, should create a different, revitalized budget environment.

Mr. Gray characterized the recently-passed State budget as “flat” in terms of SUNY, with no increase in support for SUNY campuses. For Downstate, this means that on the academic side, the only opportunity to expand revenue is from students, either through increased enrollment or

increased tuition. Yet, said Mr. Gray, we are limited in both. Tuition rates are set by the State, and enrollment is in large measure limited by accreditation standards. “We need to rethink the dollars we have and repurpose them in a more meaningful way.” To accomplish this, Downstate is moving forward with a budget that is going to be balanced, will allow select departments to expand and will facilitate investment in much-needed facilities improvement. “There will be a change in what we have here,” said Mr. Gray, “and we’re going to have a really different campus. We’re literally building out the future, and it’s exciting.”

The meeting concluded with information on the upcoming Presidential Inauguration Ceremony on September 15, which will be attended by Chairman McCall and incoming Chancellor Johnson, and the ACT Conference for Council members from September 15 to September 18.

There being no additional business, the meeting concluded. Possible presentations recommended for the next meeting include Diversity and Inclusion efforts and a review of pipeline programs. Council Member Andrew Haszenhal suggest a report on changes that the student governance structure is making in its University Council Bylaws.