



Board of Trustees Meeting

October 3, 2018

Report of the Board Chairman, Matthew Marko

2018 Board meetings in February and May discussed the need to restructure our business model onto a more sustainable path. We continue to be hard at work on this challenge. The issues we face are complex and dynamic. Interim President Amberg arrived, acclimated, maybe winced a little, rolled up his sleeves and got to work. He has impressed me with his style of collaborative leadership and adaptive management. Our frequent and routine meetings have been honest and direct, innovative, and productive.

Chancellor Johnson and her team have been very engaged and supportive throughout the transition this summer. The direction the Chancellor provided SUNY at her State of the University System Address in January, and reinforced during her visit to ESF in April, speaks directly to ESF – Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Individualized Education, Sustainability, and Partnerships. These principles are part of our century long history; however, we need to think about what they mean for us in the context of a 21st century institution.

The Board asked interim leadership to improve consultation with faculty, work to clarify roles and responsibilities among Administration and Academic Governance, and establish a renewed commitment from all parties to an atmosphere of respect, forgiveness, and professionalism. Dr. Amberg has taken this challenge seriously and made great strides in achieving these goals. He has enlisted the help of Dr. Don Leopold to help design and lead, with Trustee Talbot, Chief of Staff Lichtenstein and Chief Diversity Officer Carter, a restorative practices process that will continue the hard work of repairing relationships on campus and developing shared values for respectful communication. Dr. Amberg and his staff, as well as the Board of Trustees are committed to fully participating in this process so that we can further heal the relationships across the breadth of the organization.

Communication, communication, communication. We all know how important it is, and yet, something we have struggled to do effectively over the last few years. The Acorn Advisory newsletter, a weekly publication of student and faculty happenings, is simple yet effective, informative and interactive. News from the Interim President, as well as the “open door” policy of the President, is helping to provide frequent updates on direction from the administration. The Board of Trustees continues to engage with as many campus groups as possible, spending time with alumni, faculty and students. As we enter the academic year, everyone appears to be optimistic about the road ahead. This is good because, as we have discussed, the challenges are significant. Finances, infrastructure (including remote campuses and lands in trust), cultural adjustments, redefining partnerships, and long-term leadership will be the Board’s focus over

the next year. Be there no mistake about it, the College will still need to grow if we are to survive. We will hear more from the Administration throughout the day on efforts underway to achieve progress in these areas.

As we know, the SUNY Chancellor charged Dr. Amberg with guiding the campus through a process modeled after a framework she designed and implemented while provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at Johns Hopkins University. David is tailoring Dr. Johnson's product to be specific to ESF's needs, and it is called The ESF Discovery Challenge. This effort challenges campus leadership to chart the College's future by "engaging and empowering the broader ESF community in a solution-focused approach." It includes three focus areas in Discovery, People, and Ways and Means. This effort will help us collect much of the recently completed hard work, and determine what, who, and how we will sustainably move forward, together.

In his role as Chief Sustainability Officer, Mark Lichtenstein will update us today on the status of ongoing sustainability efforts, specifically the reorganization of Physical Plant and Facilities, and Chief Financial Officer Rufo will be speaking to some of the bottom line savings from these efforts. In May, I asked that the Administration provide a written update to the campus at the start of the Fall Semester, providing quantifiable results on progress with these initiatives and an outline of the next steps for continued improvement. In communication with the sustainability team, I am adjusting this request to allow a more complete report that will be produced by the end of October. I want to thank our students for their dedication to continuous improvement in sustainability at ESF. The GSA and USA have been persistent in seeking both incremental and breakthrough improvement, continuing to hold the Administration accountable for further greening the College. We enjoy the great fortune of having numerous student groups focused on this important task, and actively participating in Mark's sustainability committees.

Last night at our Trustee dinner we met Neil Rizos, an award-winning artist specializing in birds and landscapes, who spent the summer in Newcomb as Artist-in-Residence at the Adirondack Interpretive Center. The work he produces is as inspiring as nature itself. Moreover, the way Neil speaks about his journey through life and art draws us in to share and contemplate our own place on Earth and in nature. I hope the campus community enjoyed his presentation yesterday, and will take advantage of his workshop titled "Observational Drawing for the Sciences" later today from 4 to 7 pm here in Gateway.

Neil's talent and passion serve as inspiration to confirm that despite the challenges we face, the best days for ESF lie ahead.

Thank you.