

SUNY Cobleskill College Council Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 7, 2025

College Council Members in Attendance: Eric Stein, Hannah Case, Anna Blinn Cole, Linda Cross, Erik Hage, Theresa Heary, Martin Messner, Tracy Purcell, Susan Rightmyer, Daniil Usmanov, Marilyn Wyman

College Council Guests:

Cabinet Members – Scott Ferguson, Wendy Gilman, Anne Hopkins-Gross, Laura Gross, Gus McGiver, Darcy Medica, Anna Miarka-Grzelak, Jason Politi, John Zacharek, Cynthia Zinzow

Apologies: Marion Terenzio, Derwin Bennett,

Eric called the meeting to order at 08:36 a.m.

Approval of the Minutes – April 16, 2025

- Corrections noted: Martin Messer and Teresa were not in attendance.
- Clarification: Revisions approved pertained to “Credit for Prior Learning” and “Attendance Policy.”
- Erik motioned to approve the minutes with corrections from the April 16th meeting, and the motion passed.

Part I Information Sharing with On-Campus Contingencies

President’s Update – *Delivered by Provost Darcy Medica*

Facility Master Plan Process

- The 10-year Facilities Master Plan (2027–2037) is underway, led by Erdy McHenry (Philadelphia-based architectural firm).
- Currently in Phase I: Campus profile development.
- Emphasis on integrating academic, student development, and economic development needs, including micro-credentials.
- Stakeholder meetings are being scheduled; completion expected by June 2026.

Enrollment Management Plan – *Anna Miarka-Grzelak, VP Strategic Enrollment and Innovation*

- Enrollment is stable and on target.
- 89% of continuing students have re-registered, slightly ahead of last year.

Budget Summary Report - *Wendy Gilman*

- Laura Gross was introduced as the incoming Vice President for Finance and Operations, noting her start date of July 1, 2025, and her long-standing experience on campus and within SUNY System Administration.

Institute for Rural Vitality Update – *Scott Ferguson*

Entrepreneur Business Plan Competition

- Funded by an Empire State Development (ESD) grant through the Division of Entrepreneurship Assistance Centers.
- SUNY Cobleskill was one of five awardees statewide, and the only one in upstate New York.
- 14 teams competed, all graduates of Cobleskill’s business development boot camp.
- Three winners received capital awards:
 - 1st Place: \$15,000 – *Love and Mama Farm* (Amsterdam)
 - 2nd Place: \$8,500 – *Middleburgh Coffee*
 - 3rd Place: \$8,500 – *Light Ghost Farm*
- Finalists pitched to a panel of six judges after initial track-based judging.
- ESD representatives attended and praised the event’s quality and organization.

Third Annual Rural Vitality Expo

- Featured 33 vendors showcasing local products.
- Format: “Try, Taste, and Buy”
- Attendees voted for awards via QR codes at each vendor table.
- Awards were given for each product category and a Best in Show.
 - Best in Show Winner: A curry paste vendor from Cooperstown.
 - Product developed and certified on campus.
 - Will be featured at the upcoming Vitality in the Valley event at Herkimer Community College

Community Impact

- Strong networking among vendors led to cross-selling and collaboration.
- Vendors shared how Cobleskill’s programs helped them grow and connect.
- The expo has become a launchpad for regional entrepreneurs.

Faculty Governance Update – *Erik Hage – Presiding Officer of the Faculty*

- Upcoming faculty meeting on May 22 to review:
 - New AI policy.
 - Revisions to Academic Integrity Policy.
 - Bylaws for Academic Policies and Curriculum Committees.
- Governance restructuring underway to align with departmental changes and shared governance evolution.
- Strong collaboration between faculty and administration noted.

Advancement, Foundation, and Alumni Updates - *John Zacharek*

- Fourth consecutive record-breaking fundraising year; over \$3 million raised.
- \$4 million in pipeline for next year.
- Upcoming Golf Tournament (May 30) nearly sold out; expected to be another successful fundraiser.
- Alumni engagement is increasing via newsletters and events.
- Kate Weaver appointed Associate Director of Annual Fund, Donor Relations, and Research.

- \$700,000 in new planned gifts secured.
- Donor interests include scholarships, equipment, and targeted program support (e.g., neurodivergent student initiatives).

Student Government Update – Hannah Case

- “Coby Countdown” week featured multiple events: Pizza with Police, Grad Cap Decorating, Kickball Tournament, Water Bar, Resume Help, and Grad Lunch.
- Coby Gala had nearly 200 attendees.
- Student engagement significantly increased:
 - Over 3,000 events hosted.
 - Attendance exceeded 35,000 (up from 27,000 last year).
- DEI efforts highlighted:
 - Active DEI Director on SGA Senate, a role not commonly found at other SUNY Campuses.
 - Events for International Women’s Month and Sexual Assault Awareness.
 - Collaboration with Title IX, Planned Parenthood, and Catholic Charities.
 - Suggestion made to receive regular reports on student experiences, especially students of color.
 - Suggestions:
 - Receiving regular reports from individuals who represent diverse student populations and ensuring that student voices are heard and their needs are addressed.
 - Existing Reporting Mechanisms:
 - Derwin typically has a standing agenda item at council meetings to report on DEI matters, though he was not present at this meeting.
 - The Climate Survey is conducted annually and analyzed by the DEI Committee, chaired by Derwin Bennett.

Part II – Council Reports, Discussion and/or Actions

Chair’s Report – Eric Stein

- Congratulations extended to Susan Rightmyer and Wendy Gilman on their retirements.
 - Susan: 14 years on the Council.
 - Wendy: 9.5 years at Cobleskill, over 30 years with SUNY.
- Appreciation expressed for their contributions and leadership.

Council Member Reports / Comments

- Linda Cross highlighted opportunities for targeted giving (e.g., food pantry, housing-insecure students).
- Discussion on donor engagement and the importance of aligning giving with personal values.
- Recognition of the success and impact of the Institute for Rural Vitality events:
 - Business Plan Competition and Expo featured local entrepreneurs.
 - Strong community engagement and vendor networking

2025–2026 College Council Look Ahead

- Discussion on meeting format and frequency:
 - Interest in campus tours and site visits (e.g., brewing lab, greenhouse, hatchery).
 - Proposal to explore evening meetings and summer sessions.
 - Council expressed interest in more exposure to learning labs and micro-credential programs

A motion was made to go to executive session. The reporting part of the meeting concluded at 9:29 a.m. Erik made a motion to end the meeting. Martin seconded, and the meeting adjourned.