A regular meeting of the University Council was held on May 13, 2016 in University Hall, Room 306. Council members present included: Michael Castellana, Chair; Nancy Burton; Patricia Caldwell, Secretary; James Clancy; John Fallon; James Jackson; Abner Jean-Pierre; Marc Cohen (Elected Student); James Collins (Faculty Representative); and Caitlin Janiszewski (Graduate Student Representative). Joining via teleconference: Joseph Garba, Alumni Representative. Also present were President Robert Jones; Vice Presidents Joseph Brennan, Fardin Sanai, Laura Schweitzer; Jim Van Voorst; and Simeon Ananou. In addition, John Reilly, Counsel’s Office; James Stellar, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost; Leanne Wirkkula, Chief of Staff; Sheila Seery, Government Relations; Alice Oldfather, President’s Office and Jennifer Carron, Marketing Services.

Mr. Hyde confirmed that the membership present constituted a quorum and Chairman Castellana called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. The Chair requested a motion to approve the Consent Agenda (Cohen/Jean-Pierre), which passed unanimously. He then turned the floor over to President Jones.

In the President’s report, Robert Jones thanked the Council for their service and dedication to the University. He then provided an update on the enacted state budget, noting that CEAS was not funded in this cycle and the extension of NYSUNY2020 did not pass. The budget however included $55 million for SUNY2020 challenge grants, restored funding to NYSTAR Center of Excellence in Atmospheric and Environmental Predication and Innovation, and a 20% funding increase to EOP. Though disappointed by the denied capital request for the CEAS building, the effort by a diverse community of stakeholders and strong support of our Legislative delegation is appreciated. The University will be seeking funding through additional avenues. The President briefly touched upon the University’s role as a critical partner in the CREDC process. The coming year includes opportunities such as the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and the additional $50 million for regions not selected during last year’s URI process. Then he provided an update on the University’s academic expansion and strategic enrollment efforts to reach 20,000 students by 2020. The addition of schools and programmatic offerings address areas of growth and demand. President Jones then discussed the NIH Minority Disparities Grant, the largest NIH award UAlbany has ever received. This will fund an initiative to address inequity and disparities in health outcomes among impoverished and minority communities. In closing, the President referred to his last communication regarding the CDTA incident, indicating that this is the last official communication on the event and that the University will continue to keep the conversation on race and diversity going.

Questions regarding SUNY’s requirement to have Chief Diversity Officers identified on each of its 64 campuses (Collins, Jones). Conversation regarding tuition and the process for changes in structure ensued (Castellana, Fallon, Caldwell, Van Voorst, Jones). Then a discussion regarding funding sources available to the University to
support initiatives such as CEAS followed (JeanPierre, Caldwell, Fallon, Sanai and Jones).
Cohen voiced the Student Association’s support of SUNY 2020 which led to conversation surrounding tuition (Castellana, Jones, Fallon, Caldwell and Collins).

Chairman Castellana then introduced Joe Brennan, Vice President for Communications and Marketing. Brennan discussed brand development and the process the University has undertaken to assess its identity. Conversation regarding data collection, its tie into the strategic planning process ensued (JeanPierre, Collins, Castellana, Brennan).

Chairman Castellana then introduced Laura Schweitzer, Vice President for Health Sciences and Biomedical Initiatives, who led a discussion on academic, entrepreneurial, and research initiatives occurring across campus. She underscored the unique collaborative work being conducted at the East Campus. In addition, she discussed the proposal to rename the East Campus and planned enhancements including deep partnerships in both the public and private sector. Conversation between Jackson, Fallon, and Castellana followed.

Chairman Castellana then lead a brief discussion regarding the process of electing Officers on the Council as outlined in its bylaws. Discussion ensued about the need for these positions, their role and term limits (Caldwell, Fallon, Burton, JeanPierre, Castellana and Collins). The election of Officers will be addressed in the first meeting of the 2016-17 academic year.

Finally, Chairman Castellana introduced Fardin Sanai, Vice President for Development and Executive Director of the University at Albany Foundation. Sanai provided an update on the status of the campaign planning process.

With no additional business to discuss, Chairman Castellana thanked both Jim Collins and Caitlin Janiszewski for their service to the Council and invited them back to the first meeting of the fall to be officially recognized for their year of service. A motion to adjourn the session was approved 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James D. Hyde
Liaison to the University Council