



MANY VOICES, ONE CALL – The Strategic Plan to 2026

President’s Report

March 18th, 2024

Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Office of Diversity and Inclusion

On February 6, 2024, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion hosted a Schenectady County Historical Society presentation titled “History Lost.” The event was organized by Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, and it was free and open to the public. On February 20, 2024, Student Affairs hosted a presentation titled “From Past to Purpose: Rewiring Our Response to Historical Trauma.” The event was organized by Christina Charette, Student Activities Advisor. On February 26, 2024, the Office of Diversity & Inclusion sponsored a presentation and performance titled “Celebrating Identity through Music” by the Bardin-Niskala Duo. The duo showcased composers from various backgrounds and performed their commissioned pieces exploring themes of identity and belonging. The event, organized by Professor Mark Evans, was free and open to the public.

Academic Affairs

This month, Dr. Laurie Lacey, Professor of Mathematics, participated in Zoom meetings on “SUNY LYI (Launch Years Initiative)”. She is currently involved in discussions about Mapping Pathways to Programs. (1.1) Dr. Allyson Keyser, Professor (trumpet) and adjunct faculty member Phil Pandori (low brass), along with other members of Brass Abbey, held a recital in celebration of Black History Month featuring music honoring some of history’s favorite composers from ragtime and spirituals to pop, and everything in between. (1.4) Associate Professor Mark Evans’ Chamber Music Series presented The Bardin-Niskala Duo, who has commissioned ALAANA (African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American) composers to use their music to address their sense of identity by composing a piece based on or around a folk song and/or a children’s song that is central to their sense of cultural or racial belonging. The concert/lecture features personal videos about the composers’ work based on their racial and cultural heritage. These videos are shared with audiences before the Duo performs each work. There were two presentations on February 26. (1.4)

David Wolf, Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning redesigned Instructional Design and Inclusive Teaching training to work within Brightspace. New training modules include

Assessment and DEI units. All faculty and staff at SUNY Schenectady who have a Brightspace account are registered for the training. Training has been “gamified” and will produce individualized certificates for learners who complete the five separate training modules. (1.1, 1.3)

Strategic Initiatives and Planning

Assistant Director of Careers, Dawn Jones, gathered information on the impact of unpaid internships on students in order to develop a plan of action to support underrepresented students in gaining meaningful experience that aligns with future career goals (1.3; 2.3).

Mitzi Espinola, Assistant Director of Academic Advisement, Lauren Gallo, Program Administrator-High School Partnerships, Dr. David Clickner, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives & Planning, Dale Miller, Director of Institutional Research, Michelle Ragucci, Director of Academic Services, and Mary Silvestri, Director of TRIO, along with SUNY Schenectady faculty and staff across campus where they were immersed in learning about community college best practices specifically related to student success, first year experience course, new student orientation, and K-12 and community partnerships. The College was recognized with Leader College status at the DREAM conference (1.1; 1.3; 3.3; conference topics and sessions also included focus areas touching on all 4 Pillars). Students in LPP middle school after school programs celebrated notable African Americans both past and present throughout the month of February through short readings, word searches, crossword puzzles, and games (1.4; 2.4).

Workforce Development and Community Education

On February 9, Michelle Kraines attended 1115 Waiver forum to understand the impact of this legislation on workforce development opportunities in healthcare and how we can support that.

Schenectady College and Career Outreach Center

SCCOC opened the Center’s Everyday Essentials Pantry that provides participants with toiletries and laundry care items on a monthly basis.

On February 17, 2024, Schenectady College and Career Outreach Center (SCCOC) staff, joined by Ms. Tiombe Tatum, Chief of Staff, SUNY Schenectady County Community College, tabled at the EOC Exhibition at the NYS Association of the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislatures Inc.’s Conference. SCCOC sponsored two participants’, Ms. Kim Lane and Mr. Jerrold Rose, attendance for the event.

SCCOC staff received GED Testing Administration training at the Capital District Educational Opportunity Center in preparation for the opening of the Center’s GED Testing Center.

Ms. Christine Goss, Associate Executive Director of SCCOC, conducted outreach at the Scotia-Glenville Fresh Table.

Ms. Christine Goss met with the Community Outreach Manager at SiCM to discuss opportunities to strengthen our existing partnership. SCCOC plans to increase onsite visits to SiCM for support and recruitment.

SCCOC staff attended SUNY UCAWD’s virtual DEI - A Lesson in Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication training.

Delivering a Meaningful Student Experience

Academic Affairs

The Paralegal program in BCJL sponsored a panel presentation of the Capital District Paralegal Association on February 27 to discuss paralegal career opportunities and pathways. (2.2)

Lou Aiossa, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice has arranged for Detective Ryan Romagnano (Albany Police Criminal Investigation Unit) and Assistant District Attorney Collin D'Arcy (Albany County District Attorney Office) to present details of the case "People v. Nicholas Higgins" to the Principles of Investigations class in a format open to all students. (Gen P2)

Trooper TJ McCue joined Criminal Justice students to discuss employment opportunities with the New York State Police. (2.2)

Jacque Keleher, Director of Library Services, was one of four presenters at the Capital District Library Council (CDLC) High School to College Transition Interest Group virtual meeting on February 15th. They spoke about their "typical" day so academic and school librarians could gain a better understanding of their duties. She also attended the virtual session, "AI in Libraries: A Practical Guide for Non-Techies" on February 13 and the Schenectady County Historical Society presentation entitled "Black History Month - History Lost". (Gen P1)

Dr. Paul Amy, Assistant Professor of Physics collaborated with Dr. Hope Sasway, Dean of MSTH and Dr. Lorena Harris, CSTEP Director to plan a campus presentation about the total solar eclipse predicted to occur this April and will provide 300 pairs of eclipse glasses to the College community for safe viewing of this rare phenomena. (2.3)

David Wolf, Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning participated in an AI collaborative with SUNY Oneonta to develop better training in AI literacy for their faculty. (GP2) David Wolf, Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning developed an AI teaching template form for faculty that assists in creating a uniform policy for AI usage in courses. It illustrates the caveats of using AI in course assignments and offers possible solutions for faculty to combat plagiarism, while simultaneously improving student information literacy. (Gen P2)

Strategic Planning and Initiatives

SUNY Schenectady Human Services major, Grace Henderson, joined LPP, as an intern through her field placement under Professor Adamany. Grace successfully completed LPP orientation, mandated reporter training, and began working with LPP staff in Mont Pleasant Middle School and Schenectady High School. She will have an intern experience that is productive and meaningful to her identified goals and will gain practical experience in her field of study (2.3; 2.5).

SUNY Schenectady Human Services major, Yarissa Cueva, joined LPP as a work study student. Yarissa successfully completed LPP orientation, mandated reporter training, and began working both in the LPP office and with LPP staff in Mont Pleasant Middle School. Through this experience Yarissa will gain practical experience in her field of study (2.3; 2.5).

Student Services

The Valentine's Day Event organized by the Student Activities Board was a delightful celebration, held on February 14th from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM. This event aimed to foster community engagement and spread love and cheer amongst the college community.

The Black History Month Film Festival, curated by the Student Activities Board, served as a platform to honor and celebrate the rich cultural heritage and contributions of African Americans through cinema. Held every Tuesday in February from 1:30 PM to 3:30 PM in Stockade 102, the festival showcased a selection of four impactful films chosen by students.

The World Hijab Day Celebration, hosted by the Student Activities Board in partnership with the newly reformed Muslim Student Association (MSA) Club, took place on February 1st, 2024. This event aimed to promote awareness and understanding of the hijab, an important cultural and religious symbol for the Muslim community, while also fostering unity and engagement among students on campus.

The Black History Month Speaker and Interactive Keynote featuring Elaine Porcher was a thought-provoking and engaging event that took place on [Insert Date]. Addressing a crowd of 40-50 students and staff, Porcher delivered a captivating presentation centered around the theme of overcoming historical trauma and forging new purpose from our experiences.

Athletics:

Richard Pitsas finished the regular season with a 214 average putting him number one for the team and top of the second team all stars for the conference. Tyler Drexel finished the regular season with a 210.3 Average putting him third for the conference. Tyler is a second- generation bowler for SUNY Schenectady. Both his mom and dad bowled for Coach Ray Ross back in the day. Both of these guys are co-captains and help push not only their selves but also push their teammates to the best of their ability. We finished the season 11-13 .

We will be competing in regionals this Saturday at 9am in Rome,NY at King Pin Lanes. We hope to be at our best and win another regional title. We will also be heading to Lansing, Michigan Feb.27-March 2

ADA Transition Services:

New York State Disability Service Council (NYSDSC) partners with students on February 26, 2024 for Student Empowerment Day at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center in Albany to show a united and clear message that people with disabilities are involved and are an important part of Higher Educational institutions. A small but dedicated group of SUNY Schenectady students attended the rally.

SUNY System has partnered with Our Ability to provide a webinar series designed to benefit students with disabilities in their career search. In a series of 6 webinars beginning March 6th, [John Robinson CEO](#) of Our Ability, will provide valuable context and information on the following:

Disclosing disability, Requesting Accommodations in the workplace, Conducting a job search, Conversation with a Business from an employer's perspective
The event is open to all students at no cost and has been promoted through the ADA Transition Services office and Career Services.

Work Force Development and Community Education

On February 14, OPWDD Grant was able to provide support to remove a barrier for a student.

On February 23, 12 students completed the Certified Recovery Peer Advocate training class and received provisional CRPA certification

Marketing and Public Relations

As one of five SUNY community college's participating in a pilot program partnering with Benefits Data Trust (BDT), SUNY Schenectady has developed an outreach campaign to a select group of students to encourage them to apply for SNAP benefits to gain assistance for groceries. Mark Bessette, Assistant Dean of Financial Aid, has been coordinating the project, with Karen Tanski, Executive Director of Marketing and Public Relations; Robyn King, Director of Wellness and Support Services; Laura Sprague, Director of Admissions; Dale Miller, Director of Institutional Research; and Sean Mullen, Counselor contributing on various efforts. We have collaborated with Stephanie Baker of Benefits Data Trust (BDT) as one of five participating SUNY community colleges in the pilot program. BDT provided Marketing with the program strategy for developing outreach communications and training on messaging best practices. The intent of the pilot is to develop and send a series of communications (text or email) to our students encouraging them to apply for SNAP benefits. We selected email as the introductory communication channel to allow us to better explain the benefits. We identified students who would likely be eligible resulting in a leads list containing 855 student email addresses. Marketing drafted the email and webpage content, and worked with Laura on building the campaign in Slate. We have a county Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) Coordinator who comes to campus 2-3 times per month where students can make appointments to meet and get help with their SNAP application.

Development Office

The Foundation provided \$265,000 in scholarship support for the 2023-2024 academic year, which includes \$20,000 support to College in the High School scholarships.

The Award Spring site was added to the student account sign on and has more than quadrupled scholarship applications for 2024-2025 scholarships!

Building Organizational Effectiveness

Office of Diversity and Inclusion

On February 16, 2024, Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, attended the training titled “Civilian Response to Active Shooter Event” facilitated by Eric Fluty, Associate Vice President of Campus Safety. On February 21, 2024, Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, attended a virtual panel discussion titled “How Trauma Informed Workplaces Support DEI” hosted by The Wounded Workforce. The discussion addressed socio-historical sources of workplace trauma, its impact on varied identity groups, and active allyship strategies. On February 27, 2024, Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, attended a webinar titled “Crafting the Self-Study Report: Telling Your Self-Reflection Journey” hosted by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. On February 28, 2024, Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, attended a SUNY Office of General Council training titled “Title VI: What You Need to Know” for Chief Diversity Officers.

Academic Affairs

Academic Affairs contracted to use Ad Astra scheduling software starting this summer. Ad Astra is used by many SUNY schools to increase scheduling efficiency and offer registration solutions that reduce obstacles to student degree completion. This is made possible by a SUNY SEM grant. (3.4, 3.5)

Strategic Planning and Initiatives

College in the High School staff worked to develop and streamline the instructor onboarding process and data collection process for easier reporting moving forward (3.5).

Registration is open for College in the High School students for the Spring 2024 semester.

Registrations are on target to successfully meet the enrollment numbers from Spring 2023 (3.4; 3.5).

Melanie Uebele, LPP Program Administrator, attended the NYSED LPP Statewide Meeting (3.3).

LPP staff meet biweekly to discuss best practices and case management and to assess students’ progress in achieving personal and LPP goals (3.1).

LPP staff communicate with Schenectady City School District staff including social workers, school counselors, administrators, and teachers to advise on LPP students’ needs and progress (3.1).

ECHS and Schenectady City School district staff meet weekly to review student grades and assess student progress according to grade level programmatic benchmarks. Staff collectively make decisions regarding course advisements and action steps related to individual students which are then communicated to school district and college stakeholders (3.1).

Abdul Samassa, LPP Assistant Director, and Carly Denué, LPP Program Coordinator, attended NYSED LPP New Employee Orientation (3.3).

Student Affairs

ADA Transition Services: SUNY Annual Disability Studies Series: This year SUNY welcomes Dior Vargas, a mental health activist with over ten years of experience in advocacy. Her talk is entitled, *Pain, Promise, Persistence: A Latina's Journey with Mental Health*. Born and raised in New York City, Vargas is the editor of *The Color of My Mind* and received the White House Champion of Change for Disability Advocacy Across Generations Award under the Obama Administration. She earned a BA in the Study of Women and Gender from Smith College and an MPH from New York University. The event takes place on Wednesday, March 6th at 1:00pm via [Webex](#).

Workforce Development and Community Education

Michelle Kraines led search team to fill Program Coordinator of Office of Workforce Development position. On February 22, Workforce Development and Community Education and the Foundation Office hosted National Grid at Casola Dining Room to enhance the partnership and discuss project collaboration.

Human Resources

Human Resources (HR) welcomes Ellen Mesley as she joins our team as the new Assistant Director of Employee Benefits and Wellbeing. Ellen is currently under a special appointment and will be going through the Board of Trustees approval on March 18, 2024 to finalize her role in our team. We have continued our Wednesday Wellbeing messages which focus on various aspects of our wellbeing. The messages during February have focused on: Heart Health, Self-reflection and Gratitude, Random Acts of Kindness, and the Gift of Time . We currently have 23 open searches which consist of 2 faculty, 4 Civil Service, and 17 Professional positions. For the month of February, we onboarded 10 new hires in total. HR continues to send updated information regarding COVID positive cases to the College community as well as updated guidance and updates impacting employees.

Administration

Construction on the new Student Service Center in the Stockade Building continued during February. Carpeting, flooring and millwork was completed during February. Furniture for the new space arrived on March 1st and will be installed during the week of March 4th. The new glass entry is scheduled to arrive in mid April. After the end of the Spring semester classes, HVAC to the Stockade Building will be turned off for replacement of the mechanical systems. As a result, employee occupation of the new space will occur in late July. In March, our contractors will begin work to replace the historic shingled roof on top of Elston Hall. Scaffolding and a crane will be employed to transport old roofing material and underlayment from the roof and bring up new materials. This capital project will replace the failing underlayment which results in loss of roofing shingles during heavy wind events. Bid documents for the following capital projects are underway for release in March of 2024. Repair to the Elston Hall Basement wall, ceilings and pipe openings; renovation to the Elston Hall Biology Greenhouse above the Welcome Center entrance; and a renovation project for the Mohawk Room and Elston Hall Hotel Lobby area. In March, the college will meet with a vendor on replacement of presentation technology in Stockade 101 and 102. Work is also underway for additional renovations to the Taylor Auditorium which will

include replacement of the lighting and audio systems. Additional sound engineering will be included in this project to minimize road and mechanical system noise in the space.

Foundation

Vice President Visited with Stan Blanchard and Johanna Peterson to pick up auction items and talk further about their scholarship support.

Vice President had a call with Ron and Kathy Cooke about their planned support of the Campaign and the Student Opportunity Fund. A proposal will be drafted for their review.

Ensuring Financial Sustainability and Self-Sufficiency

Academic Affairs

On February 13, Dr. Lorena Harris, CSTEP Director accompanied five CSTEP students to the Empire State Plaza to participate in the Association for Program Administrators of CSTEP & STEP (APACS) Advocacy Day 2024. They presented their stories to Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy and the staff of NY State Senator Neil Breslin from District 46 and requested increased funding for STEM programs and the CSTEP grant. CSTEP is also sponsoring a Letter Signing Campaign to encourage Governor Hochul to reverse her proposed CSTEP and STEM budget cuts. (4.5) The School of Music hosted the Empire State Youth Orchestra (ESYO) for a performance in the Carl B. Taylor Auditorium on February 15. (4.3) On February 21, the School of Music hosted their annual Shadow a Music Student Day which brought 25 current high school students to campus to follow current students to classes, hear a faculty concert, and participate in an information session with Admissions and Dr. Christopher Brellocks, Dean of the School of Music. (4.3)

Strategic Initiatives and Planning

The Career Services team brought in \$1,125 in employer registration and sponsorship fees from the Hotel, Culinary Arts and Tourism Expo, from which event costs, including the employer networking lunch and student engagement prize fees, will be paid. Any remaining funds will support professional development and future career events for students (Gen P4).

Student Affairs

Wellness and Support Services

Director King planned and administered the American Red Cross Blood Drive on campus. Additionally, she welcomed Chancellor King and Vice Chancellor Poitier to the Food Pantry to discuss food pantry operations and SNAP screening and recruitment. She also continues to meet monthly with the Schenectady Food Council and Schenectady Food Council Advocacy and Empowerment Working Group for grant possibilities.

ADA Transition Services

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has allocated the next round of funding for the Enhancing Supports and Services for Students with Disabilities for Postsecondary Success (SWDPS) Program for the time period of 9/1/2023 – 8/31/2024. SUNY Schenectady has submitted the required Notice of Intent to Request Funds survey to be eligible to receive 2023-24 SWDPS funding. Monetary amount TBD.

Workforce Development and Community Education

On February 28, Center for Disability Services signed Provider Agreement to partner with WFD&CE in the OPWDD DSP Micro credential Program to offer to their current DSPs. WFD&CE received \$654,000 on March 1 to support the OPWDD initiative. On February 28, an Industry Round table to present Apprenticeship opportunities in Financial Services. 30 participants attended including participants from 8 Financial Institutions. This event was held in partnership with Center for Economic Growth, NYS DOL and Capital Region Workforce Development Board. On February 20, Sarah Wilson-Sparrow, Lauren Lankau and Michelle Kraines met with Mazzone Hospitality to discuss apprenticeship opportunities in the culinary field.

Administration

The Office of Administration is refining the 2024-25 Budget Requests from each of the College's divisions/departments. Revenue modeling and expenditure refinement are underway. At this time, the State funding floor is in the Executive budget; which means State support would be flat from 2023-24 to 2024-25; unless new initiatives are approved. We anticipate knowing our State support figure upon passage of the 2024-25 NYS budget.

In late February, the College submitted the recently approved 2022-23 operating budget audit with the National Clearinghouse.

In late February, College leadership met with the County Engineers to plan and discuss potential 2025 Capital Projects. Ongoing phased projects, mechanical system replacement and infrastructure needs were discussed. Projects needs will be refined over the next few months.

Information Technology

Kim Emerson and Nancy Hall have completed a weeklong training session on using and managing computers via Azure.

As for Cyber Security, we are in process of installing CrowdStrike, our endpoint protection and security for computers and servers, rolled out to over 750. Servers will be changed manually to ensure no problems to our systems. Jolly Pazhai is expecting to attend Ellucian Live from April 5 – 10 to stay current with knowledge and contacts to provide the best support for SUNY Schenectady County Community College. Jolly is working diligently to get up to speed on the full range of capabilities for Banner and SICAS. This conference will provide the needed information to allow Jolly to maintain our systems. Ethos is an application that ensures secure reliable connections between Banner and other data systems. Work is progressing with the first step of getting Ethos activated on our Banner instance. Requires work with Ellucian, SIACS and ITEC. After the connection is established and tests well we will continue with configuration.

Foundation

The Foundation Finance Committee heard presentations from our 5 investment companies on the 2023 performance of our investment funds. The Foundation fundraising and Engagement committee reviewed the Campaign “elevator speech” in preparation for the Steering Committee launch. FreeWill met with Vice President and Stewardship Officer to schedule and discuss the next outreach launch to be conducted in the Spring. Current bequest intentions from that program total \$\$47,500. February LinkedIn activity had 206 unique views, 140 new followers, 130 reactions, 14 comments and seven posts. Planning for 32nd Annual Food For Thought & All That Jazz is in full swing with a newly instituted Steering Committee comprised of alumni, staff members from a variety of divisions, and community members. Vice President hosted alumna Joan Dembinski '10 at the Italian dinner fundraiser. Stewardship Officer is working with alumni who are on the Steering Committee for Food For Thought & All That Jazz including Julian Febo, Samantha Williams, and Amber Chandler. Stewardship Officer hosted Casola Dining dinner with alumni Tom Delaney, Stop DWI Coordinator at Schenectady Police. Stewardship Officer hosted Casola Dining lunch with Karen Good from Proctors Collaborative whose late mother was an alumnus of SUNY Schenectady. On Valentine’s Day, Stewardship Officer posted a love story of two alums Tom ‘81 and Kim Labelle ‘81 who met here on campus. Stewardship Officer sent Valentine’s Day Cards to 16 couples who graduated from SUNY Schenectady. Stewardship 32nd Annual Food For Thought & All That Jazz fundraising is in full swing with nearly \$80,000 raised. An update will be provided the evening of the Trustee meeting. \$64,250 Sponsorships, \$11,900 Honorary Committee Sales, \$2,325 General Ticket Sales, \$1,050 Donations and \$10,000 unrestricted bequest from Retired faculty member, Lois Atkinson.

President's Outreach



This is a photo taken at the Friends of SUNY Reception held on March 4th in Albany, NY. Included in the photo from left are: Devin Hershberger, Brianna Kwiatkowski, Chancellor King, Giovanni Lontoc, Ngambala Zulu, Suleiman Al-Sheber, and Dr. David Brough.



From the left is Lane Filler, SUNY Chief Communications Officer, Ngambala Zula, Culinary Student and Chancellor King at the Friends of SUNY Reception.



Fantastic Demo & Tasting today on February 28th with Guest Chef Gino Minacapilli of the Marco Polo Program Abroad in Italy. Thank you Chef Gino, Giacomo Berselli & student chefs Sara Perluigi and Giulio Bianco! This summer, students and faculty from our School of Hotel, Culinary Arts and Tourism will once again travel to Italy, through the Marco Polo Institute, for amazing learning and cultural experiences!



On the Menu – Italian Cuisine and Support for Studies in Italy: Guest Chef Gino Minacapilli, of the Marco Polo Institute, prepares Agnolotti col Plin alla Piemontese during a demo and tasting in the Van Curler Room on Feb. 28. He was joined by Giacomo Berselli, Co-Founder of Marco Polo, and Sara Perluigi and Giulio Bianco, student chefs from Italy. Chef Minacapilli was also the featured Guest Chef during a four-course fundraiser dinner that benefitted the Culinary Arts Marco Polo Program Abroad in Italy. This summer will mark the sixth year that students and faculty from the School of Hotel, Culinary Arts, and Tourism will travel to Italy for learning and cultural experiences.