

# Summary Report

**University Faculty Senate (UFS) 203rd Plenary Meeting  
Farmingdale State College | April 16–18, 2026  
Prepared for the Stony Brook University Senate | May 4, 2026**

## **I. President’s Report – Bruce Simon (UFS President)**

President Simon framed the meeting around the structural health of shared governance in SUNY, especially in relation to boards of trustees and college councils.

### **Key Points**

- **College councils and boards as intermediaries:**  
Simon questioned whether current governance structures sufficiently prepare faculty and staff representatives to serve as effective intermediaries between campuses and boards. He urged renewed attention to training, orientation, and expectations for governance representatives.
- **Board membership reform:**  
Potential reforms discussed included expanding board membership to include alumni representation and shortening trustee terms (e.g., one- or two-year terms) to improve accountability and responsiveness.
- **Limits of resolutions:**  
Simon stressed that UFS resolutions should be understood as conversation-starters, not endpoints. Sustained follow-up and engagement are necessary to translate resolutions into policy or practice.

### **Academic Freedom Q&A**

In response to questions about expanding academic freedom protections, Simon noted:

- Public employees technically do not enjoy full free-speech protections.
- Higher education may justify limited carve-outs, but the effective protections are local, embedded in departmental bylaws, campus governance documents, and faculty handbooks rather than relying solely on statute or litigation.

## **II. Reclaiming the Narrative: Faculty Voice, Public Trust, and Shared Governance**

**Kathy Roberts Forde, Ph.D. – University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Co-Founder, Stand Together for Higher Ed (STHE)**

Dr. Forde presented *Reclaim the Narrative*, an initiative launched in June 2025 to support faculty-led efforts to reassert the public value of higher education.

**Core Arguments**

- **Higher education as a public good:**  
When institutions are delegitimized in public discourse, it becomes easier for external actors to impose policy changes that weaken academic freedom and shared governance.
- **SUNY as a national model:**  
SUNY was cited as a leader in statutory and constitutional shared governance protections, providing (imperfect but real) buffers against partisan intrusion seen in states such as Florida and Texas.
- **Narrative strategy:**  
Faculty senates are well positioned to lead narrative change because of their grounding in local context and credibility with communities.

**Practical Messaging Guidance**

Effective public narratives should:

- *Make it local*
- *Make it human*
- *Make it hopeful*
- *Make it public-serving*

Dr. Forde emphasized that faculty voices, not institutional marketing, are often the most trusted messengers.

**III. SUNY Leadership Reports**

**Chancellor’s Report – John B. King, Jr.**

The Chancellor organized his report around SUNY’s five pillars: student success; research and scholarship; diversity, equity, and inclusion; economic development and upward mobility; and financial sustainability.

**1. Student Success and Academic Momentum**

- **Academic Momentum (AcMo)** targets first-time freshmen beginning Fall 2026, focusing on:
  - Degree maps
  - First-year gateway English and math completion
  - Proactive advising
  - FAFSA completion
- Implementation has occurred in three phases:
  - *Discovery and goal-setting* (Summer 2025)
  - *Campus planning and approval* (Fall 2025–Winter 2026)
  - *Launch and early implementation* (Spring–Summer 2026)
- Data dashboards are under development to track progress toward system and campus targets, though campus-level dashboards will not be public-facing.

#### **Faculty concerns raised:**

- Insufficient consultation with campus governance bodies during planning.
- Need for mid-stream assessment of Academic Momentum itself, including unintended consequences.
- Tension between system targets and disciplinary or campus-specific realities.

The Chancellor emphasized that plans are campus-owned and reviewed each semester but did not commit to a formal system-level reassessment mechanism.

## **2. Seamless Transfer**

SUNY’s Seamless Transfer Initiative seeks to reduce excess credits and improve time-to-degree through aligned policy, pathways, and advising.

Key elements include:

- SUNY Transfer Paths
- Transfer Equivalency Platform (STEP)
- Reverse Transfer, enabling associate degree completion after transfer to four-year campuses
- Proposed systemwide policies on:
  - Transfer grading equivalence
  - AP and IB credit thresholds
  - Minimum transparency standards for transfer decisions

Faculty welcomed the emphasis on consistency but expressed concern about:

- Policy implications for curriculum authority.
- Adequacy of system-provided tools and staffing support for implementation.

### 3. Research, Scholarship, and Strategic Investment

SUNY investments now exceed \$500 million across priority research areas including:

- Artificial Intelligence
- Quantum Information Science
- Biotechnology and Biomanufacturing
- Microelectronic Packaging
- Climate and Sustainability

### 4. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Ongoing initiatives include:

- DEISJ Faculty Fellows
- PRODiG+ postdoctoral fellows
- Accessibility Advocates and Allies
- Building Bridges Student Grant Competition

Faculty questioned the visibility of staff well-being and development, noting an apparent asymmetry in system-level attention.

### 5. Federal and State Policy Updates

- **Federal budget:** Congress largely rejected proposed executive cuts; major science agencies were level-funded or modestly increased.
- **Student loans:** SUNY submitted formal objections to proposed federal limits that would harm several graduate and professional programs.
- **External law enforcement protocols:** Reiterated requirements for identification and judicial warrants on SUNY property.
- **State budget:** Added operating aid for CBAs, capital funding for maintenance, EOP support, and restoration of “legislative adds”.

## IV. International Risk Management and I-RISK

### SUNY I-RISK (International Risk Information Screening Kit)

The I-RISK briefing clarified New York State and SUNY guidance issued in September 2025, following directives from the Governor’s Office and SUNY Counsel.

#### Key Features

- Risk is activity-based, not country-based.

- Most international academic work remains campus-managed.
- Campuses conduct initial screening:
  - SUNY System reviews Tier 2 and selected Tier 3 activities.
  - Only a narrow subset of cases escalates to state partners.
- Examples:
  - Routine international conferences and disciplinary discussions → Tier 1
  - Dual-use research or high-level foreign officials → Tier 3

Faculty expressed concern that many campuses had not yet communicated this guidance clearly to faculty, despite Chancellor statements emphasizing the need for system policy dissemination.

## V. Digital Innovation, AI, and Accessibility (DIAS)

### AI Initiatives

- **AI Tutor pilots** underscored the importance of:
  - LMS integration
  - Faculty onboarding
  - Trust and transparency
- **AI in Advising pilots:**
  - Designed to supplement—not replace—professional advisors.
  - 21 campuses expressed interest.
  - Governance participation was described as open and encouraged

### Accessibility and ADA Title II Compliance

- Title II regulations prompted systemwide compliance grants (up to \$10,000 per campus).
- SUNY emphasized:
  - Documentation of good-faith efforts
  - Professional development
  - Shared tools (e.g., PDF remediation, VPAT repositories)
- Faculty noted uncertainty around enforcement and workload implications.

## VI. Persistent Faculty Concerns Raised in Q&A

- Transparency of data driving academic portfolio optimization.
- Risk of anticipatory over-compliance in response to federal or accreditation directives.

- Capacity of OGC and campus legal resources, especially around immigration and procurement.
- Rising concerns about doxxing and harassment, with limited enforceability in the digital environment.

## Reports for Distribution:

### Undergraduate Academic Programs and Policies Standing Committee

- [Self-Study Guidelines for Academic Program Review](#)

### Student Life Standing Committee

- [Green Paper: “Don’t Blame the Frog’: Early Lessons from Theory to Practice in Health & Wellness Promotion within the SUNY System”](#)
- [White Paper: “The Uneven Path: A System-Wide Scan of Pre-Professional Advising in SUNY”](#)

### Presentation Slide Decks/Documents

- [“Reclaiming the Narrative: Faculty Voice and making the Case for Higher Education,”](#) Kathy Roberts Forde, Ph.D., [Stand Together for Higher Ed](#)
- Chancellor King’s [Update](#)
- [Academic Affairs Update](#), David Cantaffa
- [DIAS Update](#), Kim Scalzo
- [Academic Momentum and Seamless Transfer Update](#), Donna Linderman and Thom Hanford
- [Foreign Contacts Policy \(I-RISK\) Update](#), Marianne Hassan

### Resolution Summary and Asks

Resolution Committee/Name/Link	Resolution Summary	Ask to Campuses
<a href="#">203-01-01 Executive Committee</a> : Realizing the Promise of Public Good U in the State fiscal year 2027 Enacted Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This resolution endorses the recommendations from the open letter of March 2026. It urges all interested shared governance leaders, members, and constituents to communicate with their elected representatives in support of those recommendations, and directs</li> </ul>	Urges faculty and staff at all levels to engage in direct advocacy during the last days of state budget negotiations.

<b>Resolution Committee/Name/Link</b>	<b>Resolution Summary</b>	<b>Ask to Campuses</b>
	President Simon to continue direct advocacy.	
<a href="#">203-02-01 Executive Committee</a> : Urging SUNY System Admin to Clarify Shared Governance Engagement Expectations in Implementation Guidance to Campuses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This resolution urges SUNY System Administration to set expectations for shared governance participation in all relevant communications regarding the development of local policies or procedures.</li> </ul>	Campus shared governance leaders should be aware of the expectations of this resolution.
<a href="#">203-03-03: Executive Committee</a> : Urging SUNY System Admin to Formalize Shared Governance Engagement During Policy or Initiative Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This Resolution was withdrawn</li> <li>Executive Committee referred it instead to a joint group from Operations, Governance, and Communications Committees.</li> </ul>	None
<a href="#">203-04-01: Executive Committee</a> : Supporting NYS Assembly Bill to Amend NYS Education Law to Require Each SUNY University and College Campus Council to Include a Faculty Member and Professional Staff member as Voting Members of the Campus Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This resolution highlights Assembly Bill A10720 and endorses its passage.</li> </ul>	Campus-level awareness and advocacy as appropriate.
<a href="#">203-05-03: Binghamton Senators</a> : On SUNY Sabbatical Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This resolution calls for a revision to SUNY BOT Policies to allow time-banking with regard to sabbatical eligibility.</li> <li>Referred to Operations Committee by the body.</li> </ul>	None

*Respectfully submitted by Michael Boerner*