

Downstate Assembly of the Faculty & Professional Staff Fall Assembly Meeting Minutes

Date: December 8, 2025

Location: Lecture Hall 2, BSB

Time: 3:30 – 4:45 PM

Presiding Officer: Dr. Christopher Roman

Presiding Officer Elect: Dr. Mark Stewart

Secretary: Edeline Mitton

1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Secretary Mitton opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. She noted a minor edit to the minutes from the previous meeting, which will be incorporated into the final version. A motion to approve the prior meeting's minutes as presented was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Introductions and Assembly Overview

PO Roman introduced key members of the Faculty Assembly leadership:

- Dr. Mark Stewart (College of Medicine) as the new Presiding Officer-Elect
- Dr. Norin as Past Presiding Officer, a new role created by recent bylaw revisions
- Ms. Mitton continuing as Assembly Secretary

He reiterated the Assembly's role as a resource and encouraged faculty and staff to engage with standing subcommittees focused on Education, Facilities, Professional Development, and other core areas of university life.

3. Senate and Governance Updates

- Current SUNY University Faculty Senate representatives were acknowledged:
 - Dr. Pagpatan (SOHP)
 - Dr. Hopner (Public Health)
 - Dr. Viswanathan, who is retiring
 - Dr. Daniel-Osaze rejoining from Public Health
- Alternate senators: Dr. Jumbo (SOHP), JD Nwokoye, Dr. Camacho Rivera, and Dr. Oliveira
- Dr. Desport serves on the Nominations Committee, with upcoming communications about a special election to fill Dr. Viswanathan's Senate seat.
- Dr. Perkins (Graduate Studies/College of Medicine) was recognized as a parliamentarian and instrumental in recent bylaw updates.
- Alithia Alleyne (SOHP) serves on the Senate Communications Committee along with Dr. Kamarajan and Dr. Hopner, who also serve on key SUNY Senate subcommittees.

4. Title II ADA Mandate

A task force led by Dr. Imperato is addressing the campus's compliance with federal Title II accessibility mandates. Faculty are encouraged to engage in the initiative. Senator Pagpatan noted there are potential related grant opportunities.

5. 2025 Faculty Senate Annual Report

PO Roman recommended the 2025 Faculty Senate Annual Report, highlighting a feature by Dr. Kamarajan (Psychiatry) about revitalization plans for the Downstate campus.

6. Address by President Dr. Wayne J. Riley

President Riley delivered a detailed update covering:

A. Hospital Modernization Project

- \$1.1B in state funds allocated to overhaul the hospital and build an ambulatory care annex on the former garage site.
- SUNY Construction Fund is managing architect and contractor selection, with bids expected to be reviewed post-holidays.
- Construction starts likely in early 2027 due to state approval delays.
- Dr. George was acknowledged for work on the Community Advisory Board.

B. Hospital CEO Search

- Three finalists interviewed for the CEO position.
- A recommendation will be made to the SUNY Chancellor in early 2026; anticipated start by March.

C. Federal Policy Concerns

- Downstate received a federal notice about gender-based scholarships being out of compliance.
- Dr. Riley reaffirmed no changes would be made prematurely to DEI initiatives, following state guidance.
- Major concerns expressed about federal student loan caps, particularly affecting students in Nursing, Public Health, OT, and PT.

D. Federal Grant Success

- Downstate secured a \$10M NIH research endowment grant to support faculty hiring and health disparities research.
- Drs. Lambert and Christini were recognized for their leadership.

E. State Budget

- FY 2025–2026 looks stable; SUNY expects no cuts.
- However, a projected \$20–30B state budget gap for FY 2026–2027 is a major concern.
- Planning for potential impact is underway.

F. Capital Projects

- The Commons (new cafeteria) ribbon cutting scheduled for December 15; full operation expected by December 18–19.
- Full library renovation project approved and launching soon.
- Renovation of 395 Lenox Road lobby also planned.
- A decision is pending regarding the University Center location. Options being explored include demolishing the current dorm towers or the old student center.
- Student Representative Toby Somorin shared support for modern apartment-style housing over dormitory-style living.

7. Special Election for University Faculty Senator

Dr. Desport presented the nomination update:

- Vacancy left by Dr. Viswanathan's retirement.
- Final candidates:
 - Dr. Michelle Adams, Senior Assistant Clinical Case Manager
 - Dr. Chella Kamarajan, Assistant Professor, Psychiatry
 - Dr. Sivan Kenrich, Assistant Professor, Psychiatry
- Election to be conducted via VoteNow over a two-week period; results expected by January 15, 2026.

8. Closing Business

- No old or new business was introduced.
- Faculty and staff were encouraged to reach out with issues or concerns and to make use of the Assembly as a governance forum.
- Emphasis was placed on the importance of Downstate's representation in SUNY-wide governance, especially given the campus's unique graduate and professional structure.

9. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and approved. Attendees were invited to the annual holiday tree lighting immediately following the meeting.