



MANY VOICES, ONE CALL – The Strategic Plan to 2026

President's Report

January 13, 2025

PROMOTING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, collaborated with Susanna Adams, ADA Coordinator; the DEI Professional Development Initiative; and the Academic Senate's Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee on the development of Community of Care workshops around the theme of "Fostering Inclusion through Digital Content Accessibility." These workshops are scheduled to be offered during Institute Week.

Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Babette Faehmel, Professor, and Sean Mullen, Counselor, organized an Institute Week panel and group dialogue titled "Navigating Disagreement in Academic Discourse."

Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, consulted with Melissa Kamm, Principal Payroll Audit Clerk, on an inclusive-language update to the weekly payroll timesheets used by student workers. The updated timesheet was completed on December 19, 2024 and has been distributed to HR.

Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, began a collaboration with Anna Westerman, Academic Advisor and VA Certifying Official, and Kevin Dean, Executive Director of ASAP, to gauge student interest in the development of a student club for Military Veterans and Active Service Members.

On December 5, 2024, Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, consulted with Dr. Dean Bennett, Professor, on impactful wording for a micro-learning series that's under development. Based on Professor Bennett's input, the micro-learning series will be titled "Religious Literacy".

On December 6, 2024, Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, hosted a DEI Dialogues Series session that encouraged attendees to reflect on their DEI-related learnings over the past year and identify what they'd like to learn or focus on in the year ahead.

Academic Affairs

On December 2, Melanie Uebele, LPP Program Administrator and her staff partnered with Elisha Wilson, Schenectady School District Social Worker to bring a group of 40 Schenectady High School students to SUNY Schenectady. LPP staff worked closely with Kevin Rivenberg, Director of Admissions and Matriculated Enrollment to provide an engaging experience including an admissions presentation by Kevin Rivenburg, followed by a tour of campus. (1.4)

On December 6, the Albany Library Pine Hills branch Opalka Gallery hosted a reception to celebrate the opening of “Repeat Play: The Art of Pattern” exhibition which features the works of nine Capital Region artists including large oil paintings by Stephen Tyson, Art Gallery Director and Curator. (Gen P1)

On December 9-11, ECHS and SCSD staff held recruitment assemblies at each Middle School (Oneida, Mont Pleasant and Central Park) in Schenectady to introduce 8th grade students to all of the options they have to choose from including Smart Transfer, Smart Tech, and Smart Scholars and other offerings at SCSD. Most importantly, they also held separate informational workshops to inform parents/guardians of eighth graders about their options for next year and to clarify differences and costs associated with each option. (1.3, 1.4)

Dawn Jones, Director of Career Services, Jacquie Keleher, Director of Library Services and Tiombé Tatum, Chief of Staff collaborated with Alicia Richardson, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Officer at Hartwick College to present *"Staying True to the Mission: Institutionalizing DEI"* at the 2024 Middle States Commission on Higher Education annual conference in Philadelphia. They shared their experiences institutionalizing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) at SUNY Schenectady and Hartwick College and offered a detailed framework for assessing institutional culture, conducting needs assessments, and adapting to the evolving DEI landscape. (Gen P1)

Strategic Initiatives and Planning

The Office of Admissions hosted forty Schenectady High School students in conjunction with the Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP). Students received an information session and interactive small group tours to make them more comfortable with, and to increase their knowledge of, SUNY Schenectady and higher education topics in general, supporting their perseverance through the middle and high school and likelihood for future enrollment at SUNY Schenectady (1.4).

Kevin Rivenburg, Director of Admissions and Matriculated Enrollment, and Steve Fragale, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, hosted Beverly Plowucha, Field Representative from SEVIS/Homeland Security. During the visit, F-1 student enrollment, related needs, and best practices of navigating SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Program) were shared to increase productivity and efficiencies for the College in working with international students (Gen. P1; 2.3; 3.5).

Schenectady College and Career Outreach Center

Ms. Elizabeth Cowan, Participant Services Specialist of SCCOC, conducted bi-weekly outreach at Schenectady Works resource hub.

DELIVERING A MEANINGFUL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Academic Affairs

Throughout December, Michelle Ragucci, Director of Academic Services and Karen Smith, Food Pantry Coordinator, stocked a “Brain Fuel” table in the Testing Center to provide snacks to students taking final exams to help them to focus and take their time. (2.3)

Mykha’el Wilson, Dean of Business and Professional Programs and Dr. Eric Savage, Director of Aviation Programs collaborated with Sarah Wilson-Sparrow, Vice-President of Workforce Development and Community Education on a new partnership with Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego (DCMO) BOCES to offer an opportunity to become certified Drone operators. They are also working to develop Air Traffic Control and Aviation certification programs. (Gen P3)

On December 4, Michelle Ragucci, Director of Academic Services, Mary Silvestri, TRIO Director, Jacquie Keleher-Hughes, Director of Library Services and Robyn King, Director of Campus Wellness, executed another successful Long Night Against Procrastination student event. Students participated in late-night studying and tutoring, interacted with student support programs, and received additional late-night support, such as chatting about financial wellness, career services, and meeting with academic advisors. This event has been shown to re-energize students and motivate them to finish the semester strong. It also aides the College’s retention efforts. (2.1, 2.3)

On December 5, Dr. Hope Sasway, Dean MSTH attended her first meeting as a member of the Belanger School of Nursing Advisory Board. (2.2, 2.5)

On December 5, the American Culinary Federation awarded the Certified Executive Chef (CEC) Certification to Giovanni Lontoc, HCAT Adjunct faculty. (Gen. P1)

On December 6, 2024, Melanie Uebele, LPP Program Administrator and her staff attended CREATE Community Studio's *December to Remember* event. LPP has partnered with CREATE Community Studios since 2017 and was honored to receive the Enchanted Paintbrush Award for being an outstanding community partner. (Gen. P1)

On December 14, School of Music String students and students from local high schools participated in a masterclass by the Catalyst Quartet sponsored by Friends of Chamber Music, a new community partner. Friends of Chamber Music of Troy, N.Y. Is a non-profit organization that sponsors classical concerts and educational outreach. They reached out to the School of Music to offer masterclass opportunities with nationally known musicians. This is a great opportunity to showcase the Music School and high schoolers get to hear current SUNY Schenectady students and interact with our faculty while on campus. (2.3, 2.4 & 2.5)

Strategic Initiatives and Planning

Kevin Rivenburg, Director of Admissions and Matriculated Enrollment, partnered with Karen Tanski, Executive Director of Marketing and Public Relations, to promote the December 3, 2024 opening of our eSports Arena to the local educational community, influencers, and prospective students. Over 50 guidance counselors and school administrators, local coaches, and advisors in the eSports community were invited to the unveiling of the new space as were over 80 prospective students who expressed interest

in eSports specifically. Teachers and counselors in attendance representing Cohoes, Berne-Knox-Westerlo, and Niskayuna have already responded to event follow-ups interested in scheduling field trips and campus visits for students, faculty, and staff from their respective high schools during the Spring 2025 semester (Gen. P2; Gen. P4).

The Office of Admissions hosted multiple Instant Admissions programs at local high schools and large neighboring districts, including Shenendehowa, Colonie, and Burnt-Hills over the first two weeks of December. These fall events provide the College access to secure early interest with high school seniors and to establish rapport with the counselors and teachers who support those students. Students completed applications and Admissions Advisors reviewed them right onsite to allow for formal and personalized acceptance offers to be sent out to students within one business day and a mailed acceptance letter by week's end for each Instant Admit program (2.3; 2.4; 3.5).

The ASAP program participated in LNAP, providing an opportunity for students learn more about the benefits of the ASAP program while playing fun games in a relaxing environment (2.3; 3.1).

The ASAP staff met with and were in regular contact with 98.5% of the students in the program over the Fall Semester, exceeding the SUNY benchmark of 85%. The ASAP program met in person or virtually with 157 of the 160 ASAP students during the Fall semester (2.1; 2.3).

Student Affairs

New Student Orientation for Spring 2025 is set for Wednesday, January 15, 2025, from 12pm through 4pm. New students should be expected to have reviewed the online orientation prior to attendance at the face-to-face orientation.

Associate VP Fragale was the master of ceremonies for the new E-Sports Arena grand opening on Tuesday, December 3, 2024. The event received significant local news coverage and included representatives from SUNY System, the College Board of Trustees, and the Schenectady County Legislature.

Wellness and Student Support Services

December 2024 was a highly impactful month for the Food Pantry, marked by significant milestones and contributions to the community. Through meticulous processing and inventory management, the pantry handled 1,865 lbs of food, with 1,500 lbs sourced from the Regional Food Bank and 365 items valued at \$783 donated by a local church food drive. These efforts ensured a steady supply of essential goods for those in need.

During the period from November 22 to December 16, the pantry welcomed 117 households and served 382 individuals, demonstrating its vital role in the community. The addition of a new double-wide large freezer further enhanced the pantry's capacity to serve more visitors, improving overall efficiency and storage capabilities.

In partnership with LNAP, the pantry supported snacks for 80 participants, contributing to ongoing nutritional support initiatives. Efforts to promote sustainability continued with the processing of 8 bags of Clynk bottles and cans, and the coordination of 24 full bags for delivery to Hannaford.

A large personal care order consisting of over 80 boxes, valued at \$9,000, was initiated, made possible through SUNY Transformation. This addition promises to enhance the accessibility of essential hygiene products for the community.

Engagement and feedback were fostered through semester surveys, where 20 visitors participated. As part of this initiative, participants were entered into a drawing held on December 10th, with nine winners receiving household appliances and utensils funded by a SUNY System grant. The “Snack Attack” program continued to encourage engagement, with 22 participants registering for next semester incentives.

Workforce Development and Community Education

Our first set of seven students completed the DSP (Direct Support Professional) I Micro-Credential through the OPWDD grant.

Information Technology Services

In Progress – Improve campus wide Wi-Fi coverage.

- **Wi-fi Coverage Audit:** Audit complete awaiting report and plan for upgrading the entire campus.

Completed – Operations Team Activities

- **Ticket Resolutions:**
 - According to Remedy, the Operations team completed 450 tickets in the past month.
 - IT and facilities have responded to 31 events for this time period.

In Progress – Equipment and Faculty Moves

- **Aviation Equipment Preparation:** Flight Simulator relocation from Center City to Stockade 301 in Progress. Expected to be operational the first week of January.

Faculty Relocation: Faculty are being moved from the CST building to Elston.

Development Office

Foundation staff continue to organize and participate in Panera donation pick-ups each Monday.

Vice President and Stewardship Officer Liuzzi are active Middle States participants.

Senior Stewardship Officer attended the biannual event *Long Night Against Procrastination* to provide an activity for students.

Schenectady College and Career Outreach Center

On December 5, 2024, SCCOC, in partnership with Schenectady County Connects and Department of Labor, hosted a community job fair at Center City. Over 100 job seekers attended the fair and had the opportunity to meet in person with 40 employers to discuss employment opportunities.

BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, accepted a seat on the Belanger School of Nursing Advisory Committee. Her term began in December 2024.

On December 5, 2024, Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, attended the Narcan Training organized by Eric Fluty, AVP of Campus Safety, and offered by Schenectady County Department of Health.

On December 13, 2024, Catia Laird de Polanco, Chief Diversity Officer, attended the SUNY CPD webinar titled “Elevating Inclusion: Integrating Accessibility into Everyday Workflows.”

Academic Affairs

Dave Wolf, Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning has been laser-focused on developing ways for faculty to produce more accessible pdfs with a goal of reducing the total number of inaccessible documents to single digits or lower next year. (Gen. P3)

This month the Achieving the Dream (ATD) Steering Committee organized a series of Professional Development “watch parties” including several SUNY CPD webinars focused on more efficient use of MS Outlook and Teams. (2.3)

Lauren Gallo, Director of College in the High School and Theresa Polson, Early College and High School Project Director updated the ECHS application for 2025 to integrate more Slate components, including an application review rubric for ECHS staff. (3.4 & 3.5)

Strategic Initiatives and Planning

Dale Miller, Director of Institutional Research, submitted three SUNY Systems reports and two New York Department of Education reports. Mr. Miller provided data for the following projects: enrollment data to Administration for budgeting, School of Music data for accreditation, enrollment data to Admissions, graduate data to the Registrar, enrollment data to Finance for the auditors, EOP enrollment data, and Middle States data to members of Middle States Working Groups (3.3).

Kevin Rivenburg, Director of Admissions and Matriculated Enrollment, partnered with Mitzi Espinola, Director of Academic Advisement and Retention, and Jessica Gilbert, Dean of Learner Support, to build Slate infrastructure to support returning students expressing interest in re-enrolling in the College. Mr. Rivenburg created a dedicated form to capture that student’s interest at the point of their first interactions with the College and to track and support their progress, and to more easily enable communications. A prospective Returning Student submits the form, Admissions and Financial Aid are notified and students personalized re-entry process including a self-service landing page that allows the students to book an appointment with Advising and to receive confirmation and reminder communications (3.1; 3.4; 3.5).

Kevin Rivenburg, Director of Admissions and Matriculated Enrollment, Anna Sherman, Admissions Advisor, and Laura Cossart, Executive Secretary II, attended Behavioral De-escalation training. This training was very informational for staff, in how to assist a person who is struggling, even if the staff

member is not able to directly help the person. The training provided tips and ideas to incorporate a safe space for all and a way to help people feel more included with words or actions (3.3).

Dr. David Clickner, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives & Planning, along with multiple other campus team members attended the Middle States Commission on Higher Education conference (Gen P3).

Development Office

The Foundation continues to work to refine the scholarship program to maximize funding available to support the student experience.

- Scholarship Donors continue to receive thank you letters from their scholarship recipients. To date, 137 notes have been shared.
- Stewardship officer coordinated a donor meeting with scholarship donor Tom Rider and scholarship recipient Vinny Marotta.
- Stewardship officer attended the Voice Recital with scholarship donor Julie Panke to see scholarship recipient Kourtney Brand.
- Scholarship donors received updates from scholarship recipients that graduated in December.

Human Resources

The Executive Director for Human Resources attended session three of a Labor and Law Academy on December 10, 2024. The program provided a comprehensive review of employment laws as well as a three-part series addressing the full spectrum of leave issues which included - leave as a reasonable accommodation, family leaves under the FMLA and PFL, and other protected leaves and leave issues (e.g., PSL, leave for victims of domestic violence, jury duty, emergency responders and the retaliation provisions of the New York Labor Law). Practical workplace applications were covered for preparation for real-life issues in the workplace.

We continued to provide Wednesday Wellbeing messages:

- 12/4- December (holiday season) Wellbeing – all aspects of wellbeing
- 12/11 – Year end reminders – Financial Wellbeing
- 12/18 – Giving of One’s Self – Psychological and Social Wellbeing

We onboarded 10 new employees in the month of December.

We are preparing for the year end benefits reports, including the preparation of the 1095Cs, and have been continuing the reconciliation of benefits data.

We have secured a Wellbeing presentation for Institute Week to begin the spring semester.

Initial plans are being discussed for an employee wellbeing event in early 2025.

We currently have six total open positions which consist of two faculty, one Civil Service, and three Professional positions.

Information Technology Services

In Progress – Cyber Security

- **Enhanced VPN Security:** Testing continues implementing secondary Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for all users accessing college assets via VPN, improving off-campus security.
- **Penetration Testing:** SUNY SOC Penetration and Vulnerabilities testing has been completed. We have created ticket to track and work on issue within IT and Logical Net
- **Restrict Shared drive (NFS) access:** we interacted with all users involved to verify they no longer use the NFS drive and removed access. We are continuing to configure that users can only see what they are required to for their position.

In Progress – Replacement for Account Creation

- **Upgrading Account Creation Systems:** Work has begun to replace the aging integration process for creating computer accounts from Banner to network systems. This is a complex project, but we are leveraging a year's worth of notes to address areas for improvement.
- Kick off meeting complete actual work expected to begin in January.

In Progress – Phone system replacement

- **System Overhaul:** A comprehensive project to replace the College's phone service is underway. The goal is to consolidate all systems into a single platform integrated with MS Teams Apps, providing enhanced productivity features. This project will require several months to complete.
- **Next Steps:** Final proposals have been received. 2 bids and 2 no bids. Working with Patrick, the broker and the county to finalize paperwork and plan.

Administration

Replacement of electrical wiring in the Elston Hall Lobby, President's Office, and Mohawk Room started in December. This project was added to the Elston Hall Lobby and Mohawk Room project once cloth wiring was discovered during the renovation process. Our electrician requires two additional months to complete this work with a new project completion date of February 28, 2025.

Documentation for the College's 2025 Capital Project request was submitted to SUNY for inclusion with the State's 2025 Fiscal Year budget request. Capital projects included the Aquatic Center, Elston Hall Façade Work & Window Restoration, Renovations to the Begley Building Garage, Culinary Program intake and exhaust fan replacement, Elston Hall gathering area and a Mechanical, Electrical and Engineering Study.

Planning continued on major capital projects in preparation for the spring construction season. Bids were received for the CST Bathroom and Lobby project. The Fire Alarm Replacement project contractor is working with the college's IT department on use of our existing fiber network for the new alarm system. During the December/January break, a contractor will survey our wifi dead spots to determine where we need to install new wireless routers.

In late December, our architect on the Auditorium project met with college officials on equipment, lighting and sound needs. This project is scheduled to occur during the summer. An RFP was released for development of construction bid documents on the 2nd floor Student Affairs area. Proposals are due back in late December.

IT is working closely with the county on the purchase of a new telephone communications system. Under State contract, the college plans to replace the telephone system and all individual handset station units. During early Spring, a contractor will be installing an exterior door electronic card swipe system for use by faculty, staff and students.

Work continued on the Aquatic Center project. The County and the College are meeting weekly to review project schedules and activities. This month discussions centered around financial support, SUNY match and site preparation.

ENSURING FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Administration

In mid-December, SUNY submitted its formal budget request to the Governor for inclusion in the 2025-26 State budget. Within that request, SUNY asked the State to retain the State budget operating funding “floor” on behalf of the community colleges. This would keep State funding to SUNY Schenectady flat from the 2024-25 budgeted amount. In addition, SUNY requested funding for 2025 Capital projects including; \$18,450,000 for the Aquatic Center, \$2,500,000 for the Elston Façade and Window Restoration project; \$1,500,000 for the Begley Basement Renovation; \$600,000 to replace the Culinary intake and exhaust fans; and \$1,250,000 for the Cafeteria Kitchen and Gathering area. The State budget is anticipated to be adopted by April 1, 2025.

2025-26 budget requests are due back from each department in early January of 2025. Requests will be compiled into one large request for continued analysis during the Spring budget making season.

Information Technology Services

Completed – Login/SSO/MFA

- **Account access migration:** Migrate all system login and Single Sign on, Multi-Factor authentication to Microsoft process.
 - Net saving to college by migrating away from 3rd party Unified for this service, 48,750.

Development Office

The Foundation continuously builds and draws upon the strength of the Foundation Board members as advocates for the College:

- Board members are beginning to solicit items for Food for thought & All That Jazz.
- The Foundation Finance Committee was presented with the 2024 draft audit by Lumsden and McCormick

The Foundation is creating a bold, new, positive case for growing flexible funding to support our students:

- The Rising Together year-end appeal was mailed to 3,675 alumni and friends and has resulted in \$23,000 as of December 19, 2024.

The Foundation is working to increase fundraising effectiveness to grow 5% annually by engaging alumni, businesses, and the community:

Engaging our alumni:

- Vice President and Joe April have been working with Joshua Murphy who will spearhead an alumni fundraising effort for the Rising Together Campaign. The outreach campaign will commence in January.
- Vice President conducted online alumni meeting for volunteers.

Engaging our corporate and community supporters:

- Vice President and Chief of Staff hosted representatives from MTX, a new company to Schenectady. The two representatives enjoyed the tour of the facilities and are eager to continue to talk about ways for us to partner with them.
- Senior Stewardship Officer attended a virtual meeting hosted by Sales Club USA with local book authors Denis Horan, Kara Conway Love, Tamani Wooley, Jim Sweet, Miranda VonFricken, Kat Koppett, Laren Lombardo, and Mary Moller.
- The 33rd Annual Food For Thought & All That Jazz Save the Date was emailed to over 17,000 followers. This year's Honorary Chair is Fran O'Rourke and the Presenting Sponsor is KeyBank. This year's theme will highlight 100 years of Van Curler.
- An invitation to Building an AI-Ready Region: Partnership and Progress was emailed to 157 corporate and community supporters.
- Vice President met with Barbara Casey, volunteer and potentials Foundation Board member
- Vice President attended Fennimore Investment Update event at Glen Sanders
- Vice President and President had a Zoom call with Jim and David Basil regarding their father, former president Dr. Gabe Basil.

Notable Gifts:

\$10,000 from the Carlillian Foundation for renovations to the Quad.

\$5,000 from Richard Heekin for a new endowed scholarship in memory of Ellen Heekin.

\$5,000 from KeyBank for the Annual Community Scholarship.

\$3,000 from Donna Slavik, an alumna in California, 50% increase over last year.

\$1,200 from the Hubbard Foundation for operating support, an increase from their usual \$1,000.

PRESIDENT'S OUTREACH



President Dr. Steady Moono is joined by Board of Trustees Chair Ann Fleming Brown, Interim Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges and Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Deputy for Student Success Valerie Dent, Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara, Schenectady City School District Superintendent Dr. Carlos Cotto, SUNY Schenectady Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs Stephen Fragale and SUNY Schenectady students at the grand opening of the eSports Arena on December 3, 2024.



President Dr. Steady Moono enjoying one of the new gaming terminals in the new eSports Arena during the launch on December 3, 2024.