

Report of the UFS Governance Committee Sub-Committee on Sector Representation

December 27, 2023

Senators and Campus Governance Leaders were invited to respond to a survey. Forty-three (43) of them responded by the deadline of October 16, with the following representation from existing sectors: University Colleges (12 responses), Health Sciences (11 responses), University Centers (8 responses), Colleges of Tech/Agriculture (8 responses), Specialized/Statutory Colleges (4 responses). Another four senators responded after the Fall 2023 Plenary, but the substance of their responses was reflected well in previous comments so those comments have not been added to this report.

The survey questions and substantive responses may be found below. All responses are provided in the [appendix](#).

Summary and recommendations

I. New senator onboarding: Although a few survey respondents indicated satisfaction with new senator onboarding, most did not. Many made practical suggestions.

We recommend that the Executive Committee determine whether these suggestions can be adopted, given current staff resources. It would be helpful, we believe, for the UFS leadership to explain the extent and limitations of our staff resources and whether a case might be made somehow for more adequate staffing.

II. Potential sector realignment: The opinions of survey respondents on this issue vary a lot. Many see value in considering new alignments—small and large—but others think the current configuration works well. Some argued for creating space for interest groups to get together based on a range of concerns (locality, disciplinary emphasis, institutional type). Only a few commenters supported the idea of changing the balance of representation, as was proposed in regard to the health centers at Stony Brook and UB.

We recommended that the time set aside for discussion of these issues at the Fall 2023 Plenary focus on the desirability and feasibility of encouraging conversations across sectors at plenaries and throughout the year, possibly by the creation of interest groups that senators could join in addition to sector meetings. Time and logistical constraints at the Fall 2023 Plenary prevented discussion of our draft report, but we were able to demonstrate to senators that their survey responses about sector organization and senator onboarding are being taken under consideration.

We also recommended that the UFS leadership indicate that the proposal to increase UFS representation from the health sciences at Stony Brook and UB has received insufficient support each time it has been proposed, and so should not be considered again for a certain number of years. This part of the draft report was criticized by a few senators at the Fall 2023 Plenary. We leave it to the UFS leadership to decide whether

and how to continue deliberation on the matter.

III. Continuous improvement: Many substantial suggestions were forwarded by those who answered the survey.

We recommend that the Executive Committee read these carefully and charge the appropriate committees with considering how to adopt those that merit adoption.

Survey questions and substantive responses

The following survey comments are provided as submitted, except to anonymize some of them. Our intent is to provide a snapshot of Senator and CGL perspectives on these matters in Fall 2023 for the consideration of Executive Committee and for the historical record.

Onboarding New Senators: How effectively are new senators introduced to the UFS as an organization and to the ways they can be active in it? Please suggest improvements, if you have any to suggest.

New senators are not introduced to the UFS very well at all. At a minimum, upon elections, new senators would be provided an orientation manual. There should also be a special orientation session prior to and separate from the first plenary. By then, too much work has gone on, and new senators are not even sure what the meeting schedule is, where to go, or even what "plenary" means.

Logistically, it is not long enough. The presentation should be more of a flipped classroom whereby there are "homework" videos sent to new senators and CGL's and then there should be a two hour meeting for Q&A and examples at the plenary (in the time that we offer to the orientation now.)

I don't know; the Plenary will be my first official meeting. I received a Document from my Dean about the rules and requirements for being a SUNY Faculty Senator

Not very well. The communication around the training is disorganized and campus level leadership should be more involved in insuring Senators are trained. This training should occur well in advance of the Fall Plenary. Otherwise it's too much information for a new Senator to digest all at the same time.

I do not find the brief orientation given to Senators is very effective. The first time at a Plenary is pretty overwhelming. I wonder if more of a year-long program that provided meeting times for new senators at each plenary would be possible. Sector reps might also be given assignments for onboarding the new senators in their sector meetings.

As far as I know, there is no formal introduction of Senators to the UFS at the local level. It would be helpful if there were a video produced by the UFS that new senators could watch to learn about the organization and how to become involved. This presentation could be hyperlinked to the university Faculty Senate webpages across the NYS.

On our campus, my first introduction and training to UFS was based mostly on observation at meetings, questions to fellow senators and alternates, and mentorship. That is the nice way of saying that we are mostly left to our own to figure things out. I think that each layer of UFS (individual center, sector, and overall body) should create a template for onboarding with a minimum of definitions of senator/alternate roles and responsibilities, best practices, overview of committees and their role in UFS, and important contacts. A more formal mentorship program should be in place - especially for those interested in leadership or committee participation. It has always been interesting to me to be part of an academic organization that often overlooks the importance of onboarding and orientation. This is both true of new employees and of our UFS body. That said, we have all the tools and expertise in order to remedy that efficiently. Please note: I am not suggesting a comprehensive handbook - 1 to 2 page overviews with pairing of senior or experienced senators should be the model.

We can acknowledge new senators by having them all introduced at the beginning of a plenary. We can also create a new senator forum, have one meal during each in person plenary where we have seating that mixes people up so new senators can meet incumbent senators from different sectors and regions.

Potential Realignment: With the renaming of most University Colleges as “Universities” based on the number of graduate programs, and the Chancellor’s stated interest in supporting collaborative research system-wide, it may be time to propose a realignment of our UFS sectors into more strategic associations. Perhaps an organizational structure based on disciplines and professional fields could be considered more effective? There could be significant advantages to aligning the sectors regionally or with legislative districts. Or we could modify the current sector breakdown and balance of representation. Please share your thoughts on continuing with our current configuration and the opportunities that may be gained with a reconfiguration of the sectors.

If we are going to look at the realignment of representation, we need to look at ALL of the colleges. Being from a tech sector originally, I never thought it was fair representation for the smallest colleges was limited to one senator. Giving the health science sectors even more representatives only widens the divide in physical representation at the table. From a logistical point of view...The table that we require now is pushing the limits of the campus spaces and of many hotels. Adding more people to this equation will limit the campus participation and availability of many hotels in areas that already do not have enough options.

Tec sector campuses have a somewhat different profile and unique concerns from comprehensive colleges, and it does therefore make sense for us to convene together. However, although the majority of our programs are Bachelor's programs (and some Master's too), we seem to be thought as "two-year colleges". This has resulted in us being frequently bypassed for SUNY initiatives aimed at four-year colleges as well as for those aimed at two-year colleges. In this sense, being grouped with other four-year institutions in a region might be beneficial.

I am new to this Senator stuff but I think that, for research collaboration realigning sectors based upon disciplines and professional fields makes more sense although that could be difficult with my Statutory Unit which represents both Art & Design and Science/Engineering.

I don't believe in silos. We should have interprofessional organization of newly imagined 'sectors'. Perhaps randomly assigned and resorted every 1-2 years. Honestly, I'm not that interested in reports and concerns from other sectors, but if we worked together on solutions and conversations with the Chancellor, Provost, BOT, then I would be more engaged. SUNY is too stuck in the past and it's a huge part of our problem.

Farmingdale State College is currently part of the Colleges of Technology/Agriculture sector. However, we more closely resemble a comprehensive; we mostly offer 4 year degree programs; we are now bigger (in terms of FTE) than ALL of the Colleges of Tech and ALL of the Comprehensives. The issues currently faced by the smaller upstate Colleges of Technology do NOT reflect the issues faced by FSC. That said, I think spending too much time worrying over sector breakdowns is not productive. If your campus has grad programs, there's an affinity group for that. If your campus is dealing with massive enrollment declines, there's an affinity group for that. Certainly the regionally similar campuses have things in common (FSC has more in common with Old Westbury and SBU than it does with a very small upstate College of Tech). Or maybe we collaborate with campuses of similar size. In the end, each campus has a set # of votes, and it doesn't matter which sector we're in.

I think we should continue with the current method of representation. While I can see some benefits having a more regional representation, there are more things that my far-flung sector have in common than what we have in common with institutions closer to us geographically but not in our sector.

I actually like our sector configurations, in particular the University Colleges sector. I think we are already too silo-bound in our professional/disciplinary segregations. It has always been very instructive for me to hear from my sector colleagues about ongoing issues. The University Colleges may have different individual orientations/concerns but they are overlapping in significant ways and their particular perspectives have always provided alternative solutions. I would prefer to keep our sector the way it is.

My initial preference is for regional organization, since that seems to open room for special meetings and consideration location-specific issues like depopulation or unprecedented flooding. Alignment by disciplines/fields is tricky for the former "comprehensives" sector - multi-disciplinarity is the whole point of our institutions; I would not want us to be reduced to our Nursing program. If the Comprehensives stay together as a group for this reason, it is hard to see how the remaining campuses could be organized other than our current form. But perhaps I lack imagination.

I understand the suggestions behind redivision. Working regionally is helpful, but I worry that the research centers (currently doctorals + medical schools) would dominate even more than they already do. These institutions get a disproportionate share of money, attention (excellent research happens at 4 year campuses!). To wit, current funding for technology + education has gone largely to CCs + university centers, not the comprehensives. Too, the ag/techs often get short shrift: they offer 2 year degrees but aren't classified as community college so can't access that funding; the teaching load is very heavy so disparaged for not doing lots of research/don't get to tap into funds that stream to comprehensives. I worry a great deal about humanities getting less attention if we shift based on disciplines or professional fields. Or, more accurately, I worry that this might be a way to justify closing down departments because a nearby/"other" campus is still doing X. (And, again, will most of the shift accrue to research centers? Right now, Jamestown and Broome CCs are more closely aligned with nearby institutions than ever before.) It is true that past presidents are disproportionately from the comprehensive sector. I do not believe that changing categorization will alter that, nor who/which campuses staff UFS committees. To allow medical schools to count as separate entities is disingenuous: do those medical schools function autonomously from the parent university? It has been voted down, and those home institutions already have much greater representation advantage than any other (in terms of pure number, e.g). Too, how a campus votes for its senators is up to them - for a while, SBU was represented disproportionately from the medical school. (Is that fair to schools of engineering, social work, etc?)

I don't really have enough information/experience to meaningfully answer. I see benefits to all options. Organizing legislatively may make some sense, to better lobby Albany for more funding. Discipline/professional fields alignment also makes some sense. It depends what UFS decides is the most pressing item on the agenda. It would seem that money is always number one. If that's the case, maybe legislative alignment would work, but again, I don't know enough.

I am in the specialized and statutory colleges category, which always seemed to be the miscellaneous category. The members of that group are probably the most diverse. Honestly, I have not given much thought about a realignment. Other possibilities could be regional, highest degree offered. Maintain current configuration with possibility of merging Ag/Tech and Specialized Colleges into one sector.

Recognize the health sciences centers at Stony Brook and UB as separate units from the other parts of Stony Brook and UB

I think the current structure works, as least from my perspective in the Health Sector. Organizing based on disciplines could work well and provide connection between similar programs withing SUNY.

As a member of the university centers sector, I find it very helpful to have opportunities for conversations within our current sector. I would advocate for maintaining the centers as a sector.

As a member of the health sciences sectors, this alignment that correlates with interest/focus is helpful in our objectives.

I don't see anything wrong with the current UFS structure. As to the question of increased representation of the Buffalo HSC and Stony Brook HSC, their representation is not determined by UFS. First, SUNY repeatedly reports them as being part of their respective universities. If it is desired to have additional representation for them, it is either the responsibility of SUNY (not UFS) to treat them as separate units, or it is incumbent upon UB and SBU to

increase HSC representation from within their current allotment of senators. Secondly, as you know, senatorial representation is determined by the SUNY Policies of the Board of Trustees. Does UFS want to recommend to the BOT to change the Policies? What would the recommendation be? The Policies used to determine that the HSCs have one UFS senator. I quote from the 1967 Policies (Article VII, Title B, Section C): ""No unit shall have more than four representatives, including the representative from an associated health science center."" This was subsequently changed to an increase representation ""[...] for units whose professional staff is greater than or equal to 1600,"" etc. Is opinion from UB or SBU somehow lacking that more senators are needed?

We should explore the opportunities of reconfiguring the sectors in balance with the strategic strengths of the university. I do not favor an organizational structure based upon disciplines, except among the health sciences sectors. A regional linkage of sectors could be useful in promoting collaborative associations.

I will make a comment about organizational behavior at my campus. One department is very large compared to others. They contribute less to college governance than the other units do, though you might expect them to contribute in proportion to their numbers. People in the US don't think much beyond our borders, compared to people in small countries. Thus I predict that adding more senators from the largest campuses will not improve participation in governance of the whole, but that's just me being cynical.

Personally I see Fredonia through three main lenses: we are an institution based in Western New York in a rural location and our most notable academic programs are the arts and education. All three of these could potentially overlap with other University Colleges and I'd be curious to see what others have to say on the matter.

I think the current configuration works, as issues faced by health science campuses are unique though shared by the campuses. Changing alignment based on region can be considered but would change the above. Campuses would align on different issues based on region. Could there be room for primary vs secondary alignment? Time for the health science centers to meet but then also time for regional campuses to meet?

As a new senator I would like to learn more about the structure of the organization. It does make sense to me to perhaps examine a structure which is based on similarity of disciplines and professional fields may provide more appropriate talking points and collaborations.

I think that realignment based on disciplines and professional fields would prove to be too complicated to be effective... Realignment based on regions or legislative districts would likely exacerbate the representation issue for comprehensive and other sectors - issues at the largest campuses would overshadow those at the smaller ones.

From my experience, each of the sectors have similar issues and concerns. If we were to realign based on geography, I believe that our collective issues would not match and we would have difficulty articulating concerns to the Chancellor and it might even have a negative impact on support if there is confusion on the ask. I do think that making an effort to carve out time in Plenaries to have regional discussions and strategize ways to lobby and unify message to local officials is a great idea. I would say we could do both - keeping current sectors and creating opportunities for collaboration based on region. This may not have to be each Plenary or could be twice a year virtually to align with key legislative sessions (budget for example). A unified voice from multiple centers could be powerful.

I would recommend aligning with region/legislative districts.

Since SUNY uses sectors to determine funding and in marketing, if we restructure, we should have at least sector work groups/sessions. I see benefits to the subject and regional suggestions as well. Overall, I feel we should be having more discussions/work groups, even if we keep the present sector designations.

I believe that an organizational structure based on disciplines and professional fields has the possibility of being effective and helpful.

I imagine a stratification by discipline/professional field would be quite complex, as the health affiliated centers

would have a lot, and there would be some smaller group of specialized stuff like forestry, maritime, etc, but then outside that, there is probably a much greater degree of overlap between campuses regarding discipline/professional field. Anyhow I'm in favor of any kind of shakeup here, I do not know what the right answer is, but I'm glad you're looking at it!

Fluid compositions to serve various purposes would be helpful so I would serve the comprehensive group, the legislative district for my region as well. The problems of our various campuses are too different to realign by area or region solely.

It may be beneficial to separate health sciences from other sectors given the very different needs and issues facing our hospitals and medical centers. This would foster a more collaborative environment between the different medical centers and allow a more unified approach to concerns regarding patient care, funding, infrastructure, equipment, etc.

I think regional networks will definitely add value. I also believe that connecting based on areas of interest has value. If on our website we had topics, areas of interest then people could find colleagues with whom to connect and align for resolution proposal and program development

University Colleges should be renamed—Comprehensive universities or comprehensive sector

I do not favor an organizational structure based upon disciplines, except among the health sciences sectors. A regional linkage of sectors could be useful in promoting collaborative associations.

I think we need to keep the current structure t the moment, with so many university colleges in financial distress. We need to work together to strategize. After we weather the current crisis we could explore realignment models.

I await details. Being from a small specialty college, I worry about loss of representation.

Continuous Improvement: Please make any other comments you have on the organization, composition, or functioning of the UFS here.

I do not feel the UFS has engaged in meaningful work during my time on the Senate. There are genuine threats to academic freedom and higher education in this state and in this country, yet we seem to be fiddling while Rome burns. The last two years have not resulted in anything to address the critical issues, such as declining enrollment, state support for SUNY, free speech, etc.

The logistical concerns that have been raised about working late into the evening can only be addressed by expanding the plenary time to start on Thursday. The EC would meet from 8am to noon, sector meetings would be from 2pm-5pm, dinner from 530-7pm and then a follow-up meeting if needed could be handled at 7-8.

Robust Senator and CGL training would be welcome. Senators need to understand why bringing UFS resolutions to vote on their campus and registering the results on the UFS page is important (I just asked my sector folks about this and many have not brought the resolutions to vote). We need Chancellor's responses to resolutions on the UFS website so Senators can show folks at our home campuses that UFS gets results.

We are required as or programs are professional to have Assessment/Continuous Improvement based up professional accreditation and Assessment/Continuous Improvement based upon what is required by the University to which our Statutory College is attached. Another different type of Assessment/Continuous Improvement could be time consuming and not necessarily helpful.

UFS needs to be more hands on at the campus level. I see UFS like alumni associations - it's a struggle to get people involved because nobody is aware of their existence, vision, or mission.

Please make plenary info available much earlier, including travel/lodging.

More time for intra-sector meetings and then an opportunity for informal conversations across sectors, separate from the Sharing of Concerns with the Chancellor? BTW, there is no other place to provide this information but my email address is ... NOT the gmail address! Maybe you could tweak this questionnaire to allow for a change in email address!

The points you make about Senator participation and the usual leadership by the Comprehensives are significant. What if we create an expectation (not requirement) that Senators after their first year will serve on a standing committee? What if we implemented a structure somewhat like UUP (with their VP for Academics and VP for Professionals) and designated more significant leadership roles for non-comprehensive sector Senators - beyond the Sector Rep positions?

It would be helpful to have the resolutions several weeks in advance so that the UFS senators have a greater amount of time to solicit input from their campuses.

I dislike having Sector meetings on a Thursday night. We had sector meetings on Friday from 10:15-12 and met with the Chancellor in the afternoon.

Consider online form/better communication mechanisms for moving ideas between the UFS and campuses and vice versa.

Plenary proceedings used to be recorded and transcribed until 2004 or 2005. They may still be recorded -- I recall that in 2010 I was told they were recorded, but when I asked for a copy for committee business I got no response. I'm sure it was felt that they were no longer needed. But is there any historical record of Senate business? Also, is the business of the body so uninteresting that we no longer have a Faculty Senate Bulletin?

I don't think that one sector should have double the amount of senators as another. While they may have more schools, several schools do have a large student body and this is not accounted for.

A good next step could be to develop specific proposals, possibly many of them, for organizational structure.

A frequent response to questions posed of the Provost and Chancellor is that they will need to get back to us. I would like to know if answers are provided, if so, who receives them, and how they are disseminated - I don't recall ever receiving a postponed response. Perhaps a more formal means by which to submit and retrieve answers to our questions could be generated. / I would like to know what it is we are supposed to be receiving from the BOT President during the plenary. Dr. Tisch has not presented to the UFS and has been unavailable to take questions over for over year. It is evident that her attendance is required given her extensive effort to show-up, but I think we need to ask more from the person in that office than being marked present. Could we have the VP attend if the President is unavailable? / I would like to have all "canned" presentations from the Chancellor, Provost, and/or Trustee President provided prior to the UFS prior to the meeting - out time with these individuals is very short and I think we should do what we can to make the most of it.

We need a system that allows for follow up to proposed resolutions. This should include historical information to help curtail duplicate resolutions, give examples of resolutions that were effective, and provide metrics on success. Responses from the Chancellor are often not found or sent but even that is static. We need to be able to see if our body is actually making change within SUNY or are just meeting and suggestion without action. This needs to be a high priority within our organization to maximize our time and impact.

Reevaluating the effectiveness of the resolutions and our accountability structures in place.

We focus so much time on writing questions to the Chancellor, and sometimes the responses are political and not so meaningful (not specific to this Chancellor--it is a pattern I have observed for a while). We might have more meaningful conversations Thurs. if we could focus less on the Chancellor task.

I'll start by saying that we have an amazing amount of very hard working, very dedicated colleagues, and what I am about to say does not apply to them, nor is any of this personal in any way - I think many people, not pointing at

my campus specifically, view the Senate role as one where they can be complacent and get to go on fun vacations around the state. I think

this means, in turn, that the agenda is driven by those dedicated few who have a LOT they want to consider, and I just wish there was a way to just get rid of all that complacency and fill it with people who actively want to make it all better. This largess/complacency weighs on me a lot when I consider the environmental impact of moving so many people to all the various corners of our sprawling state so often. Thanks for all your dedication!

A who to contact if you have a question about x information sheet. Otherwise, my go to for EVERYTHING is Jen Redinger.

Earlier notification of dates and locations of plenaries and meetings would be helpful.

Additional time to present issues to the governor and Chancellor during plenaries would allow senators to present a more complete picture of the initiatives and challenges faced by the various sectors.

I believe we should continue to focus on creating centers of excellence who can then disseminate resources for all SUNY institutions, whether it be health, wellness, and well-being, faculty benefits, resources for grant writing, communication skills, promotion support, and fundamentally, working towards reducing redundant use of limited resource.

Clarify senators' reporting responsibilities, structures, and mechanisms—both on their campus and reporting to UFS. Whenever possible, circulate resolutions in advance of plenaries, with context/info for Senators to get initial feedback from campuses.

As a general matter, I think it's important to aim for solutions (and structures) that ensure that the influence of university centers does not overwhelm that of community, tech, and comprehensive colleges.