

Resolution: Holistic Student Space

TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate
FROM: Student Life Committee
RE: Resolution: Holistic Student Space
DATE: 188th Plenary, April 22-24, 2021
LOCATION: Online
RESOLUTION #: 188-02-1
VOTE TALLY: For: 41 / Against: 5 / Abstain: 3

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS the mission of the State University of New York (SUNY) system commits SUNY to offering “the broadest possible access” and being “fully representative of all segments of the population” with a “comprehensive program of higher education” that meets the needs of “traditional and non-traditional students” through careful development and “balance of its human and physical resources;”¹ and

WHEREAS SUNY’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy codifies that SUNY “needs a multi-pronged approach to addressing diversity and assuring inclusive excellence” and “it must implement best practices to attract and retain diverse students, faculty, staff, and administrative leaders,” that includes implementing “programs and strategies to establish a welcoming environment for all;”² and

WHEREAS higher education literature suggests the critical role college environments play in student development³, people’s sense of mattering⁴ and belonging⁵, and retention of students⁶, faculty, and staff; and

WHEREAS behavioral health literature suggests isolation causing anxiety and stress is increasing in U.S. society, and such isolation is exacerbated in college students when communal non-curricular spaces on campuses are limited, both in general and during specific emergency situations such as during the recent COVID crisis when communal spaces were closed entirely, and

WHEREAS various SUNY initiatives, such as PRODIG⁷ and the Student Mental Health and Wellness Task Force⁸ have been developed to attract, retain, and support students; and

WHEREAS a survey conducted by the UFS Student Life Committee in the Fall of 2019 of SUNY state-operated campuses indicated that there are multiple campuses that do not provide a dedicated multi-purpose space on campus for private student holistic well-being needs (e.g., spiritual practice, meditation space)

¹ <https://www.suny.edu/about/mission/>

² https://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=804

³ Astin, A. (1987) “Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education,” Journal of College Student Personnel, 25.

⁴ Schlossberg, N. (1989) “Marginality and Mattering: Key Issues in Building Community.” New Directions for Student Services, 48,

⁵ Strayhorn, T. (2018) College Students’ Sense of Belonging, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge

⁶ Tinto, V. (1987) Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

⁷ <https://www.suny.edu/prodig/>

⁸ <https://www.suny.edu/suny-news/press-releases/10-19/10-10-19-student-mental-health-task-force/index.html>

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the SUNY University Faculty Senate requests the Chancellor to direct campus presidents to designate, develop, and maintain a dedicated fully accessible, multi-purpose space on campus for private student holistic well-being needs (e.g., spiritual practice, meditation, or other self care), and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the SUNY University Faculty Senate requests the Chancellor to direct campus presidents to develop and maintain a dedicated fully accessible, secure multi-purpose online meeting space for student well-being needs, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Faculty Senate requests the Chancellor to direct campus presidents to create a plan to broadly advertise these spaces, assess the spaces for appropriateness and usage, and to use assessment data for the continued maintenance and refinement of these spaces to best meet student needs.