

Academic Affairs — Progress Update

Progress, priorities, and questions for the committee

Institutional Research and Planning Committee • April 2026

Academic Affairs, working closely with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), and other key partners across the College, has focused the year's work through three lenses: Excellence, Innovation, and Engagement. This handout summarizes where we've made progress and where our priorities lead next.

EXCELLENCE

Aligns with Goals 1 (Professional & Residency Education), 2 (Student Support), and 5 (Community & People)

- **First-Year Curriculum Analysis:** In-depth, retrospective review of first-year student performance identified key courses as persistent outliers for failures and Ds.
- **Curriculum Plan — Short and Long Term:** Short-term, Optometric Theory (OT) lectures aligning with Clinical Optometry (CO) labs and reinforced through Integrative Seminar (IS); long-term, integrating OT and CO into a single course. Human Bioscience sequence next for review.
- **NBEO Performance Analysis:** Five-year trend review of Parts I, II, and III presented at the March faculty retreat to anchor teaching and board-prep decisions in evidence.
- **Board Preparation Redesign:** Tiered listening sessions with Class of 2027 (top, middle, lower thirds); study-strategy and time-management workshops; fourth-year student panels; gap exam with peer review; 600+ review questions now on Brightspace.
- **Accessibility & Instructional Design:** CTL partnered with D2L Learning Services; Creator+ and H5P adopted in Brightspace; Title II work underway with IT and faculty. CTL leadership completed the SUNY Preparing Facilitators for Access course.
- **Learning Assessment:** LASSI launched for incoming first-year students with annual reassessment planned to track learning practices and habits.
- **Faculty Systems:** Interfolio launched for Promotion and Tenure; Faculty Activity Reporting underway and will integrate with faculty web profiles.
- **BVS Chair Search:** National search is underway. Search committee convened, position description finalized, posting open through May 6.

INNOVATION

Aligns with Goals 1 (Professional & Residency Education), 2 (Student Support), and 6 (Infrastructure)

- **PRISM Launch (Pilot for Remote and In-person Student Mastery):** Piloted four courses — CO I and OABP in the fall (4 students), CO II and OT II in the spring (6 students). Fall outcomes matched the regular cohort academically and in proficiency, validating the model for the 2027 Upstate launch.
- **Attendance Policy & Quickly Pilot:** Mandatory attendance policy implemented in the 2025-26 academic year, with faculty input meetings to minimize tracking burden. Quickly piloted in spring 2026; faculty and student surveys completed. No significant academic-performance difference in the first-year class. Full automated rollout ahead, with summer 2026 policy review.
- **SUNY Academic Momentum:** Proposal with Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and CTL accepted; \$20,000 awarded to formalize metric tracking beginning Fall 2026.
- **Mental Health First Aid:** SUNY System grant awarded; three staff (Dr. Sarah Gleason, Kemi Burgen, Jacky Hunt) trained to deliver MHFA sessions to the community twice per year.
- **New Faculty Orientation — Hybrid Redesign:** Orientation being converted into a Brightspace course with asynchronous modules, knowledge checks, and small-group discussion.
- **Classroom & Teaching Technology:** Beta testing ceiling-mounted cameras and slit-lamp image capture; Concourse Course Syllabus deployed Fall 2025; iPad-as-whiteboard under evaluation.
- **CTL Faculty Focus SharePoint:** Central hub launched covering Gamification, AI, Faculty Development, D2L training, and retreat materials.
- **AI Policy Development:** Institutional policy on AI in teaching, learning, and clinical practice actively in development.

AI disclosure: Claude (Anthropic) was used to help organize and structure this document based on the source materials I (Melissa E. Trego) provided. All factual claims, accomplishments, and data points reflect my own work and the work of the Academic Affairs team. I have reviewed and verified the content for accuracy.

ENGAGEMENT

Aligns with Goals 2 (Student Support), 4 (Patient Care), and 5 (Community & People)

- **Leadership Partnership:** Weekly meetings with Dr. Marina Su (VP for Clinical Affairs) to align didactic and clinical schedules; new faculty orientation materials shared with Dr. Su and planned for Dr. Ostrin.
 - **Monthly Academic Affairs Faculty Meetings:** Established as a standing forum for updates, agenda items, faculty kudos, and good-and-welfare; follow-up synopsis and notes distributed after each meeting.
 - **Student Voice Channels:** Town halls held with all classes and councils; anonymous weekly check-in and feedback form established with the Class of 2029 and reviewed weekly.
 - **Upstate Extension Program:** Weekly coordination with Dr. Gleason to drive PRISM implementation and planning for the August 2027 cohort (Class of 2031).
 - **15th Floor Teaching Labs:** Partnered with Administration and Finance to review 16 bidding firms and conduct finalist interviews with four.
 - **New Faculty Cohort:** Onboarded Drs. Mohamed, Nandwani, Germain, Ghosh, and Su;
 - **Faculty Development:** Mid-Career Faculty Development Grant awarded to Dr. Matt Vaughn.
 - **Student Well-being Programming:** Counseling & Wellness and Office of Accessibility & Enrichment (OAE) Services sustained substantial reach — therapy dogs (52 and 56 at midterms and finals), Meal Prep 101 (64), Overcoming Perfectionism (42), Imposter Syndrome (48); Wellness Week April 20–23.
 - **Tutoring Expansion:** OAE refined and expanded peer tutoring with improved faculty coordination and tutor access to Brightspace materials.
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Priorities for the Months Ahead

- **Curriculum Redesign:** Move OT/CO short-term alignment into implementation; scope the long-term integrated course.
- **AI Policy & Faculty Development:** Finalize the institutional AI policy and design faculty support to accompany rollout.
- **BVS Chair:** Complete the national search and onboard the new chair.
- **Academic Affairs and UEC Alignment:** Deepen joint work with Dr. Su on schedules, teaching assignments, and faculty workload.
- **PRISM Scaling and Continued Program Planning:** Translate pilot learnings into a scalable model for the Upstate 2027 cohort.
- **Attendance Policy Review:** Evaluate spring 2026 data; revisit the policy in summer 2026 ahead of full automated rollout.
- **Reasonable Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Policy:** Finalize the policy, prior to the 2026-2027 academic year
- **Board Prep Sustainability:** Evaluate Part I NBEO performance for the Class of 2027 interventions and plan continuity.

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