



Onondaga County Legislature

HASSINA K. ADAMS
Clerk

NICOLE WATTS
Chairwoman

SPENCER BERG
Deputy Clerk

JOINT MEETING OF THE WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE AND COUNTY FACILITIES COMMITTEE – MAY 19, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Ryan, Mr. Brown, Mr. May, Mr. Burtis, Mr. Bush, Mr. McCarron, Mr. Romeo, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Denton

ABSENT: Ms. Hernandez

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairwoman Watts, Mr. Kelly; also see attached list

Chair Ryan called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m., and the previous meeting minutes were approved.

A. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.

B. Presentation of Resolutions and Local Laws:

1. **ONONDAGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE:** Dr. Warren Hilton, President, and Trinh Ho, Student

a. **INFORMATIONAL:** Budget Overview

(Attachment No. 1: OCC Budget Presentation to the Onondaga County Legislature; Attachment No. 2: 2026-2027 OCC Annual Budget)

Presentation by Mr. Hilton:

- Here to help people achieve their dreams and to help community thrive
- Going to talk about a few students, then hear from a student
- Nicholas Hay, local county resident; some legislators were present for the ribbon cutting at the Micron Clean Room Simulation Lab and heard his story
 - Graduated from high school; was working in different jobs; found out about Micron; came to OCC
 - Experience at OCC is transforming his life; graduated in December; now working in Manassas, Virginia
- Marquita Hetherington, 40-year-old Navy mom from Syracuse; returned to OCC through the Return to Complete program
 - Many students try college, it doesn't work out, and they leave with a balance owed to the college; often due to a financial aid situation; when they try to go back, the college says they can't enroll until the balance is paid
 - Enrollment management and finance created this program; certain criteria must be met; the college works with the student to get them enrolled while carrying the balance and reduces it over time

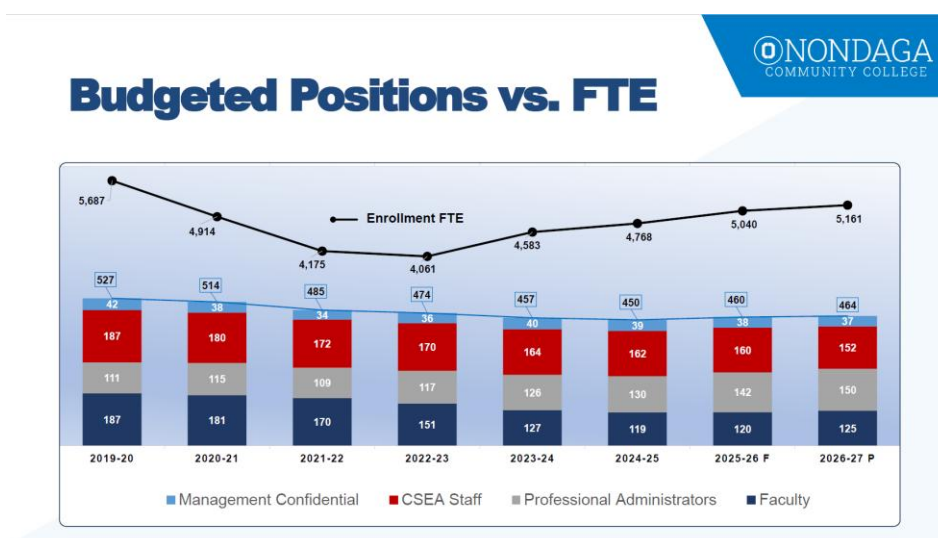
- Marquita works at Blueprint 15; helping to rebuild the 15th Ward
- Paul Clark, Baldwinsville High School; on the track and field team
 - Two-time national champion in track and field; walked across the stage this past Saturday; transferring to Le Moyne College
- Offers curriculum to high school students through different means; one of those means, working with Syracuse Academy of Science; Early OCC program
- Samara Hurtado completed high school diploma and already completed her associate's degree; conferred this past Saturday; transferring to University of Buffalo to study engineering
- Introduced Trinh Ho; came to OCC and to the Syracuse area after her home in New Orleans was destroyed during Hurricane Katrina; graduate of Henninger High School; in the nursing program
 - Correction noted: not graduating in 2027; graduating December 2026

Presentation by Trinh Ho, OCC Student:

- Thanked Dr. Hilton and all legislators for their support

Presentation Continued by Mr. Hilton:

- Proposed budget revenue for 2026-2027 fiscal year, \$73,654,251
- Revenue comes in from three main sources: county support, state support, student tuition and fees
 - Additional sources of revenue; chargebacks, a formulaic thing in New York State; if a student from another county comes to OCC and fills out their residency form, they get charged the in-county rate and there is a chargeback to that county
- Expenses line up with revenues; 81% of expenses is personnel; feel very strongly about supporting people so they can help students succeed
- Experiencing increases in utility costs, supplies, maintenance of plant; difficult winter required more salt, more overtime
- Commitment made: any public dollars received, committed to using them wisely



- Slide 10: line on top is enrollment; bottom graph is number of budgeted positions; 2019-2020, 527 budgeted positions; went down as enrollment went down; gone slightly back up as enrollment has increased; significant increases since the 2022-2023 academic and fiscal year
- Ask today: additional \$400,000 in operating budget; asking the county to increase its contribution to \$10,472,000

- County support over the years; trend of keeping support flat for quite some time; 2% increase; flat in 2024-2025; asking for roughly 4% increase, or \$400,000
- Most affordable education in higher ed; included in revenue is a 3% increase in tuition; wanted no increase but utility costs, personnel costs going up; kept it as low as possible
 - Full-time student: \$2,781 per semester; part-time: \$232 per credit hour
 - Technology fee went up; first time increased in a very long time
 - Historically in the bottom third compared to other SUNY community colleges; with this increase, right in the middle of the pack; still below the average

Questions/Comments

- Mr. May: Some interesting twists compared to prior years I think, but it's great to see enrollment coming up. I think the turf is probably two years overdue. The twist I see is fund balance utilization for 25-26, which I think was \$5 million, and then again next year, and that's following many, many years of not using fund balance, building it or at least maintaining it. So when you talk about the need for the use philosophically, why are you using it now, or is there something because it can't be capital, what are you doing with that money? Is it to stabilize costs for everyone else? What's up with it?
- Mr. Hilton: Historically, ever since I've been here, every budget that we have shown you all has had at least a \$4 million use of fund balance
 - Each year we work to not use any of that fund balance if possible; goal is to use fund balance for one-time things. We do have some one-time things built into next year's budget, for example the college is going to undertake a student information system transition
 - There are some one-time costs that come along with that. There is a reality that sometimes things happen, you have a bad winter or whatever, and you have to use fund balance. To date, we have not had to use fund balance since I've been here, even though it has always been in the proposed budgets. If we start to have to use fund balance, we would look at saving on expenses and would look at coming back to this body for additional operating support
 - The slide I showed where we had those years of flat, that was when enrollment was going down. As enrollment goes up, our costs increase, and we would definitely look at coming back to this body in full transparency asking for additional operating support, and maybe not to the tune of 4% every year, but a more steady 2 or 3% a year, so that we don't get to three years from now and start asking for a 10% increase
- Mr. Ryan: It looked like in 2021 there was a big injection into the fund balance. Historically before we got into those last five years, what were we running on a typical fund balance before the COVID stuff?
- Mr. Hilton: COVID is where you saw that injection into our fund balance. We utilized the federal government's money in ways that, again, using taxpayer dollars wisely, so that fund balance increased. I don't know the exact number before those stimulus funds, and I don't know Sarah if you remember, but we can get those numbers to you. About \$15 million
- Mr. Ryan: About 15, consistently for a while?
- Mr. Hilton: To the leader's questions, each of the years that I have been at OCC, we've actually put money each year into the fund balance
- Mr. Brown: My question is about the SUNY Reconnect. Trinh, I'm glad you took advantage of that. When the governor put that forward, I thought that was really exciting. It says 165 students took part. Do we know how many completed and do we know what programs they were in?
- Mr. Hilton: The programs are prescriptive based upon the state, all programs in healthcare, technology, applied engineering, and education. There are some nuances you may not think about, like construction management is included, supply chain management, and we believe when the state budget passes we'll have our fire protection program in there as well. Our welding program that's brand new this year is included in that. I don't have the numbers with me, we can get those numbers

to you. Nicholas Hay participated in that program, he graduated using Student Reconnect, but we can get those numbers on how many we graduated this year

- Mr. Burtis: Could you explain a little bit about state aid, just for the group, and how they come to that?
- Mr. Hilton: State aid has largely remained flat with the implementation of what the state calls the community college funding floor. In 2021, 2022 the state basically said whatever the community colleges got that year, you were going to continue to get that. Each year we do ask the state to give us additional money. The last two years we've gotten \$8 million each year in additional aid. It has not been what we would classify as operating aid; it's been very prescriptive on what we had to use it on
- Mr. Burtis: One more if I could. Chargebacks as far as tuition chargebacks, right, as high as they've ever been, that just means that folks are leaving the county, right? Is that what that is?
- Mr. Hilton: The chargebacks that are here are students from other counties who come to OCC. There's a formula the state put forward. As that gets higher, if you have more students there's a formula that goes along with that. We continue to aggressively pursue students outside our county
- Mr. Ryan: To the legislator's point, we're charging back about 225 to outside folks coming in, but we're paying out about \$4 million, which comes from the county
 - If you could explain the grant expenditure by funding source, under state grant expenditures it says it's going up a million bucks. Do we anticipate that or have any information, I'm trying to understand what that is
- Mr. Hilton: The state grants are for various needs. We got a big state grant, about \$1.6 or \$1.8 million a couple of years ago. We do get grants for programs for students like CSTEP, that's the big one, and Liberty Partnerships. Those programs are funded via the state and state grants
- Mr. Brown: My question is about the capital project, Ferrante and Gordon. What's the latest?
- Mr. Hilton: Ferrante, hopefully you all will get to see that later today. It should be wrapping up right at the beginning of the fall semester. Gordon, it was in the capital request we made to the county last year. Once the state budget passes, we will start, we have a plan. The capital that you approved a few years ago for Coyne as well, that project is starting, the design RFP has gone out, we're going to start moving people out of Coyne in the fall, and we expect that construction to start in 2027
- Mr. Brown: You mentioned Coyne, which brings me to another question. Is the campus shuttle back?
- Mr. Hilton: We do not have the campus shuttle. We actually sold both of the shuttles. We couldn't find drivers and those shuttles were just sitting there. We actually sold them at auction
- Mr. Bush: The chargebacks, as the college becomes more popular and is drawing students from outside Onondaga County, how does that balance out? Is it a negative financial benefit? Are we losing money if students from Cayuga or Oswego or Madison County come and that chargeback is involved?
- Mr. Hilton: The real answer is it depends upon what program the student is in. There are some programs where it doesn't matter where you're from, it is an expense to the college. I look at it as a good thing when we get students coming from outside the county as long as our county residents are served. We're not in a position where individuals from outside the county are taking seats away from county residents because of the expansion we've done in these in-demand programs like electromechanical, like welding. I look at it as a positive because we're filling the seats that we have in our classrooms
- Mr. Bush: Filling seats is different than subsidizing students from outside the county
- Mr. Hilton: Correct. If I have 25 seats in a classroom, it's better for all of us to have 25 seats filled no matter where the student comes from. The subsidy is more about which program they're in. There are programs here that don't pay for themselves. Trinh is in the nursing program, we have 200 students in that program, that program does not make OCC any money. It doesn't matter whether the student is from Onondaga County or Madison County, that math is the same
- Ms. Smiley: The chargebacks that OCC is getting is filling that gap. The revenue you're seeing them bring in is charges to the other counties that fill that gap of the dollar amount. OCC gets the full tuition, part of it comes from students

- Mr. Ryan: What is the status of the Middle States re-accreditation? Is that done?
- Mr. Hilton: The site visit is done. We have gotten the report from the team on campus. They asked us not to talk about details of that report outside of campus. What I can say is none of us are concerned. In June when the Middle States board meets, they give the final vote
- Mr. Ryan: The OCC Foundation had a game plan of trying to get to \$7 million. What's the status of that?
- Mr. Hilton: We're a little bit over \$5 million towards that \$7 million goal. It was a five-year campaign that kicked off in August of 2024, so not even two years in, we're at \$5 million. Some of that was what I would categorize as a surprise bequest in somebody's estate that we had no idea was coming, and that was \$2 million out of that \$5 million. We will be at roughly \$6.1 million in gifts and pledges by probably the end of July
- Mr. Ryan: We're anticipating a \$4 million bump in tuition. Is that based on the raising of tuition or are we expecting an increase in students?
- Mr. Hilton: Both. We raised tuition and our budget is based upon a 3% increase in part-time and 2% increase in full-time
- Mr. Ryan: In staffing it seems like there's been a shift, faculty numbers have lowered, administrators have gone up. Is there a trend or a reason to any of that?
- Mr. Hilton: Some things were happening in higher education in general, what we would call unfunded mandates. You have to have a Title IX coordinator, you have to have this, you have to have that. Also in 2023, 2024 we had a reduction in faculty through the voluntary early retirement incentive that we offered the previous year, and we took some of that savings and invested it in what we call navigators, staff members who work with our students to help them navigate through college. The most recent increases are really in faculty in high-demand programs, electromechanical technology, what some people call the Micron degree. We've added faculty in nursing, surgical tech, some of the sciences. As those programs grow to capacity, we need those additional faculty
- Mr. Ryan: And those CSEA jobs going down, is there a trend to that?
- Mr. Hilton: CSEA going down is a function of enrollment going down and then some efficiencies. We reorganized some things so we didn't need as many departmental secretaries, for example
- Mr. Romeo: What category do the navigators fall under?
- Mr. Hilton: They fall under the professional administrator

Mr. Hilton invited Ms. Ho to speak about her navigator

- Ms. Ho: My navigator is Lindsay. She works in the health department and she helps a lot of our nursing students to make sure they are on track to becoming successful graduates. She helped me throughout the years with just being there as a person to confide in when I'm stressed out, a person to be there and say hey, am I on track to succeed in my goals
- Mr. Hilton: Trinh has never gotten contacted by her navigator for negative reasons. But the navigators, if a student doesn't go to class and the faculty member raises a flag in the system, the navigator reaches out, helps the student get back on track, helps figure out the reason they're not going to class and how to solve that issue
- Mr. May: It shouldn't be lost that with enrollment going up and programs getting more aligned with the contemporary needs of this community, we should expect to see these subtle increases that were mentioned year over year going forward. It was nice to have a run where we had a flat contribution to the college, but clearly with the progress that's being made, I see no issues with this budget whatsoever, but I also think we should be mindful of the fact that going forward we will continue to need to increase subtly our investment in the school, and I think it's a good thing
- Mr. Ryan: There was a significant bond in 2022 for about \$60 million

- Mr. May: It was more than that, it was like \$110 million, and it was a 10-year plan. True to the college's word we've been on that plan. That field expense could have easily been a separate capital request today; I appreciate the fact that it wasn't and that the foundation is stepping in. It was a comprehensive 10-year plan across the campus in every kind of imaginable capital requirement that school's going to have, and it's nice to have a plan. Obviously it all requires New York State to pony up alongside with us. I don't know if New York State made a 10-year commitment as well or if they just appropriate year to year
- Mr. Hilton: They do it year to year and there hasn't been a year where they've not approved their portion
- Mr. May: Having our 10-year plan, all we did was officially approve each request as they come up as you reach the next phase of your process, but I'm sure that helps at the state level tremendously that we took that action
- Mr. Hilton: You can expect our next facilities master plan is not going to be \$100 million because much of the big stuff has been done
- Mr. May: I think that first bite was pretty big, it was \$110 million, 100 million, 10 years, something like that

b. DISCUSSION: Adoption of Annual Budget for Onondaga Community College for the Fiscal Year September 1, 2026, to August 31, 2027, and Authorizing the County Executive to Enter into Contracts with Other Governmental Units in which Appropriations and Revenues Are Approved by the Adoption of the 2027 Budget

- Resolution to support replacement and repairs for baseball and softball fields
 - History was that when the county approved those dollars, the county did not want the college coming back regularly for maintenance money
 - College planned to have money for replacements and updates to the athletics facility; money is in the OCC Foundation
 - Need a resolution saying the county's portion will be covered by the OCC Foundation; does not require any money from the county
 - Resolution needed to submit to the state for a dollar-for-dollar match; project is \$1.6 million; \$800,000 in the foundation
 - Fields are about 12 years old; average life is about 10 years; worn to the point where something needs to be done

Questions/Comments

No additional questions; covered during the budget presentation

C. Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. Brown, seconded by Mr. Burtis, to adjourn. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ATTENDANCE

The meeting was adjourned at 12:29 p.m.

COMMITTEE: **JOINT: COUNTY FACILITIES AND WAYS & MEANS**
DATE: **MAY 19, 2026**

Respectfully submitted,



NAME (Please Print)	DEPT/AGENCY/ORGANIZATION
Debra Donnelly	CF Off.
Warren Hilton	OCC
Sarah Gaffney	OCC
Trinh Ho	OCC
Rose Mirabito	OCC
See Toranzo	OCC

