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Clinton Community College News Release

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Landmark Reform Package Promises to Transform Higher Education Throughout New York

PLATTSBURGH, NY (January 16, 2010) -- Yesterday, Governor David A. Paterson announced groundbreaking public higher education legislation that promises to transform public higher education in New York State. As part of the 2010 Executive Budget, the "Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act" will provide a blueprint for unleashing the public university sector to achieve the promise of economic growth through top-quality public higher education.

The Governor's plan is the most sweeping reform of public higher education in decades. By using high-impact, zero-cost solutions, the legislation will create jobs, build the foundation for tomorrow's economy and strengthen public higher education - while saving millions of taxpayer dollars. In a press release, the Governor said "We must provide our institutions of public higher education with the freedom and flexibility they need to drive development both on campus and off, preparing our students for the New Economy jobs that will propel New York forward." Currently, SUNY has an "over-burdensome system of overregulation threatening the ability of our public higher education system to successfully adapt to changing educational and fiscal circumstances."

The announcement was welcome news to campus leaders throughout New York State, including Clinton Community College president John E. Jablonski. "The Governor's proposal is good news for all of SUNY and for all of New York State," he said. "The greatest benefits will be seen by our state-operated campuses like Plattsburgh State University, but community colleges also have much to celebrate in this reform package."

Specifically, the Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act would allow colleges and universities to set differential tuition at

different campuses and in different programs. "This is a key for the development of certain career and technical programs at the community college," Jablonski said. "For example, it is much more costly to deliver high-technology and healthcare programs than it is to offer programs in the liberal arts. Until now, the one-size-fits-all tuition policy at community colleges has been a disincentive for the expansion and growth of these sorely needed programs. The Governor's reforms would eliminate those disincentives and allow community colleges to establish and expand programs that benefit the regional and state economies by building capacity through workforce development."

The legislation would also authorize the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) to finance and construct facilities on behalf of State-operated and community college affiliates such as the Faculty Student Association at Clinton, which operates residence halls, the campus bookstore and cafeteria operations at the college. Furthermore, the legislation would authorize DASNY to finance and construct community college dormitories directly on behalf of each community college, making it more efficient and more cost effective for Clinton and other community colleges to meet the needs of residential students on their campuses. This, in turn, provides out-of-state revenue streams that help to offset the cost to local taxpayers. More than half of SUNY's community colleges now have some sort of residence life program for their students, according to Jablonski.

Jablonski believes that this legislation is a major step toward increased flexibility that will lead to more innovation and increased accountability on SUNY's 64 campuses. He predicts that the result will be better programs and increased efficiency that will help SUNY to be a driving force in the state's economic recovery and growth.

"In general, the legislation is aimed at unshackling New York's public higher education system from the overregulation to which it has been subject for decades," Jablonski said. "As bureaucratic complexity has increased, the State University and its campuses have become increasingly inefficient. That inefficiency is contrary to the principles for which New York State once stood. Our students and our taxpayers have suffered as a result. With this legislation, 'Onward and Upward' can once again be our motto ."

SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher said, "I commend Governor Paterson for his leadership in bringing forward the Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act. This legislation harnesses high-impact, zero-cost solutions that will create jobs, build the foundation for tomorrow's economy and strengthen public higher education - while saving millions of taxpayer dollars.

"With the unprecedented cooperation and energetic partnership of SUNY and CUNY, we have taken a major step in unleashing the public university sector to achieve the promise of economic growth through top quality education, from community college to research center. This will positively impact every community in the state with the creation of tens of thousands of new jobs and through billions of dollars in local investment."

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