

SUNY OPTOMETRY PRESIDENT PRAISES GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL

NEW YORK, NY JAN. 15, 2010

Today, Governor David A. Paterson introduced what may be the most significant proposal for reform in New York public higher education in decades. The Governor's bill addresses tuition policy, land-use, public-private partnerships, procurement efficiencies, operations efficiencies and hospital reforms.

According to the Governor, the *Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act* will provide SUNY and CUNY "with the freedom and flexibility they need to drive development both on campus and off, preparing our students for New Economy jobs that will propel New York forward".

Dr. David A. Heath, President of the SUNY College of Optometry, said "The Governor's proposal calls not only for reform to enhance the strategic management of our system of tuition and fees, but enables our campuses to develop mission-driven, non-State, revenues to support our students and the programs so vitally needed by people of New York."

According to President Heath, during the current economic crisis, most of the public debate has focused upon spending management. While spending control and the strategic allocation of State resources are essential to the long-term economic stability of our State, innovation and the creative development on new, non-State-based revenues is equally critical to the future success of public education and job expansion. The *Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act* provides campuses with the financial stability and the tools for growth that are so essential to long-range planning and the achievement of our strategic priorities in service to New York.

Among a number of initiatives, the College of Optometry's 2008 strategic plan, "*A Shared Vision*", calls for a significant expansion of vision care services for New York City and enhanced research efforts into the understanding and treatment of diseases and disorders of the visual system. Through its clinical care unit, the University Eye Center, the College offers a wide array of vision care services, supporting 75,000 visits per year to patients from the greater New York metropolitan area.

According to President Heath, "The *Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act* will allow us to achieve these goals, positively impacting of the state economy and upon the health of New Yorkers. For our institution, like the other SUNY academic health centers, this legislation will provide us with the autonomy needed to enhance our ability to adapt to the ever-changing health care delivery system. We are very supportive of this dynamic initiative."

The SUNY College of Optometry, founded in 1971, is a doctoral research center offering a 4-year, a post-baccalaureate doctoral-degree in optometry, graduate research education and innovative vision research, as well as vision care services in one of the largest outpatient facilities in the country. The College is located at 33 West 42nd St., in midtown Manhattan.

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