Mission Review II (2005 - 2010)

Building an Expectation of Excellence

A MESSAGE FROM THE PROVOST

The Mission of the State University, reaffirmed by the Board of Trustees in Rethinking SUNY, is to provide the people of New York with "educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population in a complete range of academic, professional, and vocational post-secondary programs..."

Today the State University is achieving its mission with remarkable distinction. As you know, Rethinking SUNY made far-reaching recommendations for the State University, including an ongoing commitment to re-examine the University and its work, with the intention of raising academic standards, utilizing State resources efficiently, and ensuring accountability to the public. Mission Review has become the vehicle for accomplishing these priorities.

Now, more than ever before, public higher education institutions must demonstrate their effectiveness in objective terms and do so in the context of appropriate benchmarks and peer comparisons. From national accrediting bodies and government agencies to bond raters and potential students, there are clear mandates to provide evidence of institutional quality. Mission Review provides the framework with which the University satisfies such mandates.

SUNY has an ongoing commitment to realize the full potential of its diverse campuses and its comprehensiveness as a system. The first cycle of Mission Review focused on individual campus missions as components of the State University's overall academic mission. Through that process, the status and direction of the University was articulated and a vision for the future began to take shape. Today that vision is clear and is embodied in the strategic academic agenda that drives Mission Review II (2005-2010).

Before I describe what lies ahead, let's briefly take stock of where we are today.

During the first cycle of Mission Review, campuses identified specific institutional goals for higher admissions standards, academic program excellence, enhanced student outcomes (e.g., improved graduation and retention rates), and increased faculty research. Commitments were also made in the areas of assessment, teacher education, participation in the University's library integration initiative (SUNYConnect), and expanded online learning offerings, especially through the SUNY Learning Network. Mission Review II (2005-2010) will build upon the successes already achieved through Mission Review and incorporate the University's companion efforts to raise academic quality.

Following the first cycle of Mission Review, stakeholders were surveyed in order to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of Mission Review and determine how this strategic planning process might be improved. Here's what we learned:

Overall, survey respondents felt the goals/objectives set out for Mission Review were

successfully achieved. Most agreed that the process helps the University meet its mission, is an effective way for the University to evaluate itself, and should be continued. There was consensus that the review process should be conducted every five years and that it should be streamlined and carried out in a more compressed timeframe. There was also consensus that there should be greater faculty involvement in the process and that the schedule should be more in line with the academic calendar to facilitate enhanced faculty participation.

Critically important feedback from the University community has been incorporated into Mission Review II. Rest assured that the strengths of the process remain, including its collaborative and consultative nature, its comprehensiveness, its focus on institutional improvement and accountability, and its recognition of the importance of campus-based planning. New to this cycle will be greater attention to the physical facilities, resource, and infrastructure implications of academic plans. Consistent with national trends and SUNY Trustees' direction, efforts to further enhance and measure student outcomes will be of central importance. The enduring theme across Mission Review topics will continue to be academic quality.

Key principles upon which Mission Review rests, derived from the Mission Review Task Force Report entitled A Template for Rethinking the State University of New York (1998), have also been retained. The Report articulates a vision for the State University as "the single most dominant higher education institution in New York" and "one of the pre-eminent educational institutions in the nation and the world." That vision continues to drive the work of the Provost's Office and, I know, campus efforts as well.

I enthusiastically reaffirm the principles underlying Mission Review and am more certain than ever that this is an academic strategic planning process that continues to provide a useful framework for assuring SUNY's place in the front ranks of American public higher education.

On the pages that follow you will find a brief description of the Principles and Purpose of Mission Review, and an overview of the context for Mission Review II.

PURPOSE AND PRINCIPLES OF MISSION REVIEW

Mission Review is intended to encourage campus responsibility for higher levels of distinctiveness, performance, efficiency, and System-wide collaboration. It is premised on the following principles:

- The State University as a whole fulfills its comprehensive mission, meeting the needs of the State's postsecondary students. A commitment to access is fundamental to the University.

- Building on current levels of success and achievement, all campuses will aspire to perform at even higher levels and to enhance the quality of all programs within their unique mission envelopes.

- Consistent with a required degree of comprehensiveness, each campus will identify, develop, and hone a distinctive mission. In their totality, SUNY campuses should complement each other and cooperate in sharing the resources of the State University System.

- Campuses will have in place robust budgeting and financial management policies and practices to ensure that they fulfill their missions efficiently and cost-effectively.

- All campuses share three key objectives: to advance student learning by offering an academically rigorous program of instruction; to support an outstanding faculty in their instruction and scholarship; and to provide public service to the citizens of New York State.

We must look to the challenges of the future and shape our University accordingly. Mission Review continues to be a vehicle for forward-looking change. It provides a way to help identify where the System needs to develop new programs and services, and invest additional resources.

THE UNIVERSITY'S STRATEGIC ACADEMIC AGENDA – A CONTEXT FOR MISSION REVIEW

Mission Review is focused on meeting the academic goals of the Board of Trustees' policy, *Rethinking SUNY*, thereby ensuring that the State University provides services of the highest academic quality and is recognized as the premier comprehensive system of public higher education in the world. The Mission Review II Guidance Document asks campuses to describe plans in several key areas. In doing so, campuses should respond in the context of the University's overarching goals and plans, many of which are articulated in the Strategic Academic Agenda presented to the Board of Trustees in September 2003. At its most fundamental level, the Academic Agenda—with Mission Review as the University's core strategic planning process—is aimed at raising academic aspirations and building an expectation of excellence. What follows is a brief discussion of the context for each of the key areas addressed in Mission Review II.

Campus role and distinctiveness

As noted during the first cycle of Mission Review, the sheer scope and comprehensiveness of the State University places a particular responsibility on System Administration to assist each campus in focusing and

differentiating its mission. To maintain the quality of education, scholarship, and service provided by the University, regular and thoughtful attention must be given to avoiding institutional drift and mission creep. It is also important that each campus understand and be comfortable with its role and place in the University, and that institutional sectors (see Appendix B, State University of New York Sector Taxonomy) play a meaningful role in the planning of University objectives.

Each campus has a unique role within the University, encompassing both distinctive features that complement other campuses, and common features that ensure necessary breadth, quality, and access. As the nation's largest comprehensive system of public higher education, we have an unparalleled opportunity to generate efficiencies while nurturing campus distinctiveness and excellence. In Mission Review II, we will endeavor to identify the unique programmatic strengths of each SUNY campus while exploring potential synergies—especially regionally, but also statewide—such as joint programs, shared faculty, facilities, and equipment, that can yield enriched academic environments for students and faculty alike.

Gauging institutional quality and effectiveness necessitates looking beyond SUNY, to measure our progress against broader goals and our national peers. In Mission Review II, we will work with campuses to generate robust sets of current and aspirational peers—ones that share common characteristics (e.g., mission, program mix, etc.) and are clearly useful for benchmarking purposes.

In addition to providing academic programs of the highest quality, each campus has a significant impact on the economy—locally, regionally, statewide, and beyond. In the aggregate, the economic impact of SUNY is enormous. In many areas of the state, the State University is the largest employer and in less tangible ways it plays a profound role, enriching the culture and vibrancy of communities throughout the state. But SUNY must do a better job of *describing* its impact to the public. An explicit goal of Mission Review II will be to credibly measure the economic impact of the University—as a whole, by sector and region, and at each constituent campus—so that SUNY's power as an economic engine can be fully demonstrated.

Plans for strengthening the quality and diversity of the student body

The State University will continue to seek to attract and educate a stronger, more diverse student body. Over the last five years, we have made tremendous strides in improving the academic profile of students enrolled, with SUNY gains outpacing the state and nation. At the same time, we have become more diverse than ever before. As a public university, SUNY remains committed to ensuring access to the full range of populations served; thus, diversity—including geographic, ethnic, economic, gender, age, and disability status—will be a priority in Mission Review II.

In addition to enhancing the quality and diversity of the student body, it is essential that SUNY campuses manage enrollment with the same level of sophistication found at the best colleges and universities across the country. Many campuses have made significant investments in the area of enrollment management, and Mission Review II will explore plans and priorities to develop this expertise further.

Based on demographic trends, increases in the college-going rate, and growing need for baccalaureate and advanced degrees, there is likely to be greater demand for public higher education in New York State between 2005 and 2010. But resources may not be sufficient to support growth and quality simultaneously, and SUNY cannot compromise on quality—to do so would be inconsistent with the University's mission. In order to assure that SUNY campuses maintain and enhance academic quality, the Guidance Document will ask for campus enrollment plans in this context, with projected enrollments linked to likely available resources.

Plans for strengthening the quality, diversity, and reputation of faculty

The State University must continue to attract, engage, and support a diverse faculty of leading teachers and scholars, while advancing the frontiers of knowledge and practice appropriate to each sector. This round of Mission Review will see greater emphasis on faculty development, including plans for recruitment and retention, strengthening promotion and tenure processes, and ensuring the work of the faculty is appropriately supported.

During the first cycle of Mission Review, a system-wide goal was set to reach one billion dollars in sponsored activity per year. With over $770 million in annual expenditures as of June 2003, we are well on our way to reaching that goal. A new goal will be articulated in Mission Review II, consistent with campus missions and aggregate plans, to increase research and other sponsored activity beyond the one-billion-dollar mark.

Campus goals for faculty productivity, including research and scholarship, will be set in the context of national peer performance; plans to support those goals—with adequate infrastructure, resources, and facilities—will also be discussed. Implications for State University policies and procedures will necessarily emerge during the dialogue with campuses, and there will be broader participation from System Administration during Mission Review II. We must work together to ensure that SUNY is a place where leading faculty can create outstanding programs of instruction and research, and serve effectively.

Plans for strengthening the quality and reputation of academic programs

The University is committed to offering academic programs of the highest quality. Campuses will be encouraged to focus on their strengths, and sharpen and build on institutional differentiation in setting academic program direction, including development of new programs, revision of existing programs, and elimination of outdated/moribund programs. At the same time, Mission Review and the University's program review policies and procedures—which focus on Mission, Market, and Quality—provide mechanisms to monitor and prevent unwarranted duplication of programs and efforts, maintain distinctive missions, and offer programs appropriate to the scope of each campus' distinctive academic mission. As mentioned previously, we will explore potential synergies and opportunities for greater collaboration between campuses in developing and delivering academic programs—opportunities uniquely available to SUNY because of its size and comprehensiveness.

The University will increase the proportion of programs that are nationally recognized and, wherever applicable, ensure programs are nationally accredited. This serves to strengthen the reputation of individual campuses and the University as a whole. In addition to developing excellent and accredited programs, we have an obligation to develop programs in areas important to New York's future. Recent program development activity suggests that campuses are sensitive to that mandate, and thus we see new programs in areas such as nanotechnology, materials science and materials engineering, forensics, nursing (accelerated), cyber security, and port security—to name just a few. Similarly, the University continues to implement *A New Vision in Teacher Education*, which will provide more teachers and better prepared teachers to meet the needs of New York State's K-12 schools.

The State University of New York has emerged as a national leader in technology-mediated learning, with dramatic growth in student and faculty participation, and numbers of courses and programs offered online. We will continue to work with campuses to strengthen technology-based learning environments, including online course delivery, and ensure that SUNY faculty can access the full range of instructional tools to deliver excellent instruction. Online learning also holds enormous potential for facilitating synergistic, inter-campus academic collaboration in teaching and research, which the University is only just beginning to explore. Importantly, we want to support campus efforts without unnecessarily duplicating infrastructure, and we look forward to dialogue with campuses to identify where System's role is most value-added.

Assessment is another important factor in ensuring academic quality. During the first round of Mission Review, all campuses made commitments to ongoing, systematic assessment. As a University, we have come a long way these past few years with the progress that has been made in campus-based assessment of both General Education and the Major. A System-wide project now underway involving all 15 campuses with teacher education programs, supported by a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), illustrates the efficacy of inter-institutional collaboration on assessment within an academic discipline. In Mission Review II, campuses will describe how assessment results are being used to improve program quality, teaching effectiveness, and student learning, and share plans going forward.

Similarly, during the first cycle of Mission Review, campuses made commitments to participate in the SUNY-wide library initiative, SUNY*Connect*. By 2005, all campuses will be operating a common library management system, providing every student and every faculty member on every campus full access to SUNY's entire holdings (over 18 million volumes). In Mission Review II, we will continue to explore opportunities to increase access to library resources and generate long-term cost savings through mechanisms such as unified subscriptions to electronic databases and regional storage facilities. This is one of many areas where we can leverage SUNY's size, and achieve substantial savings through joint purchasing, group purchasing, and shared licensing.

Plans for enhancing student outcomes/success

SUNY is committed to a culture of accountability and continuous improvement, with particular concern for student outcomes. Success can be measured in terms of strong retention rates and timely graduation, pass rates on licensing and certification examinations, and postgraduate success in attaining a job, transferring, and/or pursuing an advanced degree. During the first cycle of Mission Review, campuses set three- and five-year goals for retention and graduation. In Mission Review II, campuses will be asked to update those goals and continue their commitments to enhance student success, and we will benchmark student outcome data against appropriate peer institutions.

Successful student outcomes depend on a number of factors, including the quality of instruction, students, and faculty, and the quality and availability of student support services and co-curricular experiences. During Mission Review II, we will try to better understand the link between support services and student success at each campus and facilitate sharing of best practices where appropriate. National and system-wide surveys may be particularly useful in understanding this relationship.

Successful transfer is another important student outcome, one that received a lot of attention during the first round of Mission Review. As a result of those discussions, the SUNY transfer initiative was launched and a SUNY Transfer Action Plan developed. The largest transfer initiative—the Teacher Education Transfer Template project—which aims for full participation of all associate degree-granting colleges and all senior institutions with undergraduate teacher education programs is nearing full implementation in spring 2004. We continue to seek ways to encourage the best possible communication between associate and baccalaureate institutions, with strong articulation and seamless transfer the desired product. Many campuses have worked particularly hard over the last two or three years to strengthen articulation agreements and, more generally, communication with sister SUNY campuses. The work that has been done to date is truly commendable. Still, the University needs to continue to enhance campus-to-campus relationships and ensure that students wishing to transfer receive the best possible advisement and are well prepared for academic work at the next (i.e., receiving) institution.

We also want to work with campuses to determine post-graduate success; to measure it, keep track of it, and benchmark it. In Mission Review II we will try to identify best practices for gauging this as well.

Plans for ensuring technology infrastructure supports academic quality

It is essential for the State University to invest in its technological infrastructure to support academic quality. Many of the University's systems are in need of updating and integration with other campus-based and/or centrally based systems. In particular, systems that track applications, student data, courses, faculty and staff, library resources, and so on, must provide accurate and timely information for effective decision making and planning. Because resources are limited and maintaining technology is very costly, campuses must be strategic in developing technology plans, and plans and investments must align with academic priorities and institutional mission.

Technology planning and investment is another area where cross-campus collaboration can be particularly effective in maximizing resources. During Mission Review II, we will explore opportunities to expand such collaborative activity.

Plans for ensuring facilities support academic quality

The State University must invest in and maintain its facilities to support academic quality and successful student outcomes. Campus facilities must go beyond functional adequacy; they must be aesthetic spaces where world-class teaching and research can flourish, where students and faculty are excited about learning and creating new knowledge. Indeed, the University's priorities will be dramatically revealed by the manner in which its facilities and site infrastructure are maintained. Each campus' focused attention to facilities maintenance and renewal, via strategic capital planning efforts that integrate resources with vision and mission, will best position that campus to attain both short- and long-term goals for facility improvements which promote academic excellence. Moreover, no campus can sustain a core of excellence without a demonstrated commitment to facilities; neglect of facilities suggests a conflict of administrative priorities readily apparent to prospective students and their parents upon arrival. Accordingly, in Mission Review II, we will emphasize the need for, and discuss with campuses both short- and long-term plans for ensuring that facilities support academic quality and enhance prospects for favorable student-life experiences.

Many campuses, while properly planned and developed for the era in which they were built, are now in need of major rehabilitation and renovation in order to reflect current advances in technology and to support new and evolving directions in academic programs, research, and student life. Successful attention to and transformation of campus facilities is essential. To ensure that every campus is positioned to achieve such transformation and that all campuses effectively maintain and improve the University's vast infrastructure—the extent of which rivals the core facilities found in a small city—each campus must develop and implement new facilities plans, fully integrated with the campus' overall mission objectives. These should include a carefully constructed campus design concept plan and a long-range plan for facility rehabilitation, improvement, and development.

Each set of plans will be as unique and varied as the legacy of SUNY's individual campuses, which range from historic and landmark structures like the Maritime College's Fort Schuyler campus and Westchester's Hartford Hall to building complexes designed by contemporary world-class architects, such as those found at Fredonia, Purchase, and the University at Albany. Many campuses have already seen extraordinary transformations—the beautifully landscaped and aesthetically pleasing Academic Mall at Stony Brook is a classic example. Other examples include the renovation of historic Weiskotten Hall at Upstate Medical Center (the original medical school building at the campus); the major rehabilitation of Cornell's Mann Library, including significant technological upgrades, and its new Veterinary Science building—part of the largest veterinary college complex in the country; and Jamestown's creation of an entire branch campus complex in downtown Olean, successfully renewing the business district of that small city and providing a positive economic impact on the community as a whole.

In Mission Review II, we will look for consistency between academic plans and priorities and facilities

planning. In addition to academic, clinical, and residential facilities plans, we will explore plans for developing and equipping research facilities, essential to attracting federal funding. As we explore these areas, the implications for University policy and procedures that put SUNY in the strongest position possible for attracting competitive funding are likely to emerge.

Plans for administrative structure and resource support to ensure academic quality

The University must distribute its resources efficiently and effectively; and its resource allocation must be closely linked to and supportive of campus mission, with appropriate performance measures defined and applied. The University's budget allocation process is currently under review to determine how to best support the academic priorities of the University. A continued commitment to develop a resource allocation model that encourages excellence and rewards quality is essential to SUNY's and, therefore, New York's future. Mission Review II will proceed in conjunction with these efforts.

As mentioned previously, in Mission Review II we will show that dollars invested in SUNY bring significant returns to the state—in terms of jobs, a better educated population, reduced crime, cultural enrichment, inventions, external research support, population growth (especially with rising out-of-state enrollment)—and beyond. But while SUNY demonstrates its value to stakeholders, the economic reality in which it operates must be faced, and the University must do all that it can to maximize available resources. Taking advantage of the size and strength of the system wherever possible—through joint purchasing agreements, shared facilities, and other forms of collaboration—is essential and must be explored fully.

Effective use of data is another way in which the University can maximize its resources. A goal of Mission Review II will be to ensure that timely and accurate institutional data is available to support decision-making, at both the campus and system level.

Clear delineation of responsibility—between System Administration and campuses and among campuses themselves—is an essential step to maximizing effectiveness and leveraging the size and strength of the University. While *Rethinking SUNY* and the tradition of the State University devolved substantial numbers of academic and administrative functions to campuses, System Administration continues to play an important role. However, System Administration must ensure that what is being done centrally truly adds value to the University. Similarly, on a campus level, campus leadership must put in place administrative structures and resources to ensure the highest possible academic quality and institutional effectiveness. Maintaining reasonable administrative costs is essential; and there should be mechanisms in place at each institution to ensure this.

Contributions to community ensuring a vibrant environment to support academic quality

As an outgrowth of the University's commitment to service, all campuses endeavor to build strong and productive partnerships with their communities, to the benefit of students, faculty, and programs. SUNY campuses make significant contributions to the communities they serve—as cultural centers where art, theater, athletic and other such activities occur regularly; as educational centers where credit and noncredit instruction, and continuing education is offered; and in public service, where faculty, staff, and students share knowledge and expertise. In turn, local support is vital to institutional success and academic quality. In Mission Review II, we will expand the description of these activities. To the extent that service and other contributions can be quantified, for example, by describing the economic impact of the campus and/or University, we must capture that data and clearly demonstrate the value of such contributions.

Overall institutional reputation/ranking appropriately reflects quality

Rankings in higher education are ubiquitous and there can be no question that stakeholders—students,

parents, legislators, donors, funding agencies, and others—refer to them when making important decisions. Working collaboratively with campuses, we will establish an analytical framework to benchmark SUNY institutions relative to national current and aspirational peers. These analyses will enable campuses to determine the likely impact of qualitative improvements on national standing and will also help inform campus-based discussions on academic priorities, faculty recruitment, and areas for strategic investment. The result will be enhanced institutional reputation, appropriate recognition of quality, and heightened prominence for the State University in national rankings.

As in the first cycle of Mission Review, the topics above are starting points for discussion and we expect additional ideas and important directions to emerge. It cannot be emphasized enough that Mission Review lays the foundation upon which the future of this University will be built. It is an effort that is best served by open, flexible dialogue and the genuine commitment—on the part of campuses and System—to raise academic aspirations and build an expectation of excellence.

- February 11, 2004