

Faculty Senate

BULLETIN

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SUNY IN CRISIS: A Challenge



PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Kenneth P. O'Brien
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Budget Woes

On February 1, Governor Andrew Cuomo delivered his first budget message: the state, he said, was “functionally bankrupt,” a condition he vowed to fix with real cuts, not just the “cuts” computed on what the budget would be if nothing were done. In all, state operating funds would increase by only 1%, while the total state spending, which includes federal pass through dollars, would decline by 2.7%, the first real decline in almost two decades

Despite cuts of almost 10% across the board to state agencies, no new taxes support the proposed budget. In fact, the additional income tax surcharge imposed on those in the highest income category two years ago as a temporary solution to that budget crisis will expire into the legislative sunset. If that measure were renewed, it would generate between \$4 and \$5 billion in each of the next two years, certainly not

enough to close the structural gap, but enough to relieve the need for draconian measures for yet another year.

What this budget means for state government is that as many as 9,800 state positions would be eliminated and that aid to public schools, one of the single largest portions of budget, would be slashed by 7%, instead of rising 13%, as mandated in current law. In addition, the money available to pay for Medicaid will be cut by a real 2%, even though the state allocation will increase, a budgetary oddity resulting from the end of \$5.7 billion of federal stimulus, much of which was used to cover the rising costs of Medicaid in the past two years. Local governments would also suffer losses, as would those local agencies—such as libraries, social agencies and other cultural organizations—that receive state pass-through monies. In this budget, New York City alone is projected to lose more than \$600 million in state aid.

What this budget promises for SUNY is less clear. Although Governor Cuomo has included a projected cut of almost \$90 million in the operating support for SUNY, which is in line with the 10% exacted on other state agencies, he also supports purchasing reform and easier paths to public-private partnerships, two of the three legs of last year’s “Empowerment” proposal. UUP supports the first, with reservations regarding services, and strongly opposes the latter. The problem is that even if enacted, these two affect long-term fiscal

needs, not the 2011-12 budget cycle, and they do so disproportionately across the system.

As for the third leg, tuition, he was clear; the budget reductions should not require a tuition increase this year for SUNY. The truth is different. Without any relief in the form of increased revenues, in other words, a substantial tuition increase, it is likely that we will be hearing more about programs being shuttered on a number of campuses, since so many have had to live off reserves, which are now tapped out. The “fat” that politicians often refer to—and demand others find—when cutting public budgets has now been melted, with the result that we are offering fewer classes to more students.

Yet, it’s not quite true that there are NO tuition increases in the public higher education sector this year. In November CUNY’s Board accepted a recommendation by their administration, with the certain prior approval of political leadership, for a 5% (\$230 per year) across the board increase for spring 2011, with

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Budget Woes . . .

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another 2% to follow in the fall. The charge for the four-year colleges is now \$4830 per year, which in the fall will still be just under SUNY's current \$4970. And, that 2% increase scheduled for the fall can grow to 3% at the CUNY Chancellor's discretion, if state support is significantly reduced, as it has been in this budget proposal.

On another issue, the Governor's budget, by eliminating \$130 million in direct support, millions more in construction funds and yet millions more in Medicaid, carries a direct, perhaps mortal, threat to SUNY's teaching hospitals. These hospitals are located in areas where they serve many impoverished citizens, those otherwise least served by New York's medical delivery systems.

Several other points to consider:

Comparative tuition charges in surrounding states are, in fact, much higher than those charged by New York's public university systems; our tuition is half of that charged at Rutgers (New Jersey), 60% of the \$8,000 charged by the University of Connecticut, and 20 to 40% less than that of Penn State, the variation depending on the campus and choice of major. I have excluded the University of Massachusetts system because it charges very low "tuition", about \$1500, but it is accompanied by a very large, mandatory "operating fee," about \$8,500, bringing that total to over \$10,000 for undergraduates, irrespective of the campus.

These figures, while well known, matter little to those who determine fiscal policy in New York State. Rather than benchmarks, they are used by New York legislators—with obvious pride—as indicators of their success in holding down costs to students, which they define as the equivalent of "access." Yet, as Chancellor Zimpher wisely noted in her testimony before the Joint Legislative Hearing on

February 10, "access" alone is not what we seek, nor is it what New York needs. To meet the needs of New Yorkers for public higher education, access should be understood in terms of "success," that is, the ability of students to achieve meaningful degrees in an appropriately timely manner. Chancellor Zimpher stated our goal succinctly: "We must ensure access AND success."

While SUNY has been particularly good among public systems in achieving those metrics that demonstrate success, such as freshmen to sophomore year retention and five and six years graduation rates (see the supporting data in the article by Provost David Lavallee in this issue), the more than \$650 million in reductions that SUNY has taken in response to budget crises in the past three years directly threatens our ability to meet student needs next year. It is degree completion that promises a better educated work force, a more engaged citizenry and a civic life that is better prepared for the trials, tribulations and opportunities of the 21st century global village.

Whether or not we, as recipients of checks written by New York State, see ourselves as part of that vast, amorphous "public workforce" is irrelevant. Others do, from our legislators to our neighbors, who judge our value to the state in very personal terms. And, as members of that public workforce, we currently face a very difficult position within the larger culture, which in recent years has witnessed unremitting attacks on our value, as public workers and as fellow citizens. While this particular strain in American culture, like so many others, first emerged with a vicious edge during the Great Depression and the New Deal's expansion of government assistance to the most needy, it was reinforced in the 1980's as part of a larger attack on what was assumed to be the legacy of the 1960's, a big government that

was tilted toward those presumed to be undeserving, the poor.

Today, as we see in Wisconsin and in those other states that are moving to deny public workers the right to organize, the attack on public employees and their unions has a current cultural currency that would have been unimaginable even a decade earlier. It took three days of focused reporting before the national news led with the facts from Madison: this Governor and his party passed a substantial decrease in income taxes for the most wealthy, as well as reduction in corporate taxes, all in the name of competitiveness. Then, when the crisis inevitably came, he found the solution in unilateral reductions in the benefits offered public employees—to which they acceded—but added a deal breaker, the elimination of the right of public employees to bargain collectively. Wisconsin, as many now know, was the first state to extend the right to bargain collectively to their public employees over a half century ago.

Added to the refusal to consider any forms of increased taxation, which I refuse to call a "revenue enhancement," politicians have joined the media circus that dismisses the value of education, the knowledge it imparts and the critical skills it teaches. Much of what we in academe collectively hold to be "true," especially in the life sciences and history, is now disparagingly debunked as mere "belief," with one person's belief as valid as any other. The drumbeat of criticism—no, open attacks—on the value and meaning of knowledge has been extended to the unions that represent teachers and educators, from the earliest grade levels to graduate education. The uncomfortable truth is that knowledge brings with it an inevitable appreciation for complexity, which is often accompanied by a disquieting sense of uncertainty, none of which is easily communicated in modern media's favorite forms, the sound bite or

its internet equivalent, the tweet. Nor is it easily understood by "true believers" who choose not to engage in meaningful dialogue about pressing economic and social issues, among which I number local, state and federal budgets. Argument by sound bite is simply much easier.

We are, of course, only at the beginning of New York's annual budget theatrical run, which will probably, if history is our guide, extend beyond the scheduled curtain closing of April 1. While it is unlikely that the budget situation will get worse, it is questionable whether it will materially improve. The projected deficits are very real, the power of lobbies other than those for public higher education demonstrated, and the desire of many to keep tuition at current levels seemingly unaffected by our current fiscal reality.

These musings lead me to conclude that it is imperative to move slowly and carefully into the realm of public debate and discourse, but, move we must. And, in doing so, we must advocate, not only for more money, but also for what those public funds mean to the citizens and communities of New York State: better careers for individuals, greater innovation in every sphere, and more meaningful engagement in civic life and culture. Public dollars, in other words, are transmuted into greater human capital through the alchemy of higher education. It is as simple, and as complicated, as that.

Although our status as a state agency is, in fact, an artifact of history, a footnote revealing the weak position of public higher education at the moment of SUNY's birth, our mission as the public university of the State of New York is nothing of the kind. That is our institutional birthright, "to learn, to search, to serve" in the language of SUNY's motto. Now, we fight to protect our ability to pursue that birthright for New York State and its citizens.



Dr. Nancy L. Zimpher
Chancellor
The State University of New York

2011: A Year of Action

In January, I gave SUNY's first State of the University Address and I am thankful to the University Faculty Senate for allowing me the opportunity to reiterate that address at its recent plenary meeting in Binghamton and again for this *Bulletin*.

Higher education stands at a crossroads. We live with the reality of declining public investment, greater enrollment demand, and rapidly shifting economic sands, all of which require us to be increasingly agile. Ironically, these very challenges have only added to SUNY's importance to the welfare of our state. The good news is that our history, our mission, and our relationships with the communities we serve make us equal to the task. No one is more qualified than SUNY to navigate the knowledge and innovation economy and re-imagine the role of public higher education in our state's economic development.

A more competitive SUNY has the capacity to grow excellence in teaching and learning; to enhance its commitment to research, inquiry and innovation; and to extend its service to the betterment of New York.

First, we must break the shackles and obstacles that impede student mobility. Early last year, our SUNY Board of Trustees passed a series of resolutions to clear the path for smoother transfer. Every SUNY

student who completes the general education requirements should be guaranteed successful, stress-free transfer to another SUNY school. And by this time next year we will announce that students can also carry up to five courses in their major to another SUNY campus, an accomplishment that sets a national precedent for any institution of higher learning.

Second, making SUNY more competitive will require an ongoing commitment to student access and success. SUNY has joined a national consortium that has pledged to cut by half the tragic gaps in college attendance and graduation for low-income and minority students. SUNY campuses received high marks thus far, most notably Stony Brook, whose success earned them a featured spot on the PBS News Hour. While access will continue to be the highest priority for SUNY and this state, we must be equally committed to degree completion.

Access and completion, that's the goal.

Third, on-line courses will become a standard of instructional efficiency and will reduce what we call the "time to graduation." No matter how carefully students and their advisors plan a course of study, circumstances change; obstacles arise. It's up to the institutions to be flexible. So we will coordinate our online offerings to make sure core requirements for the most popular majors are readily available.

These three steps—mobility, access and completion, and online learning—put students first. But there's still more to do.

Fourth, we have created the SUNY Global Center in New York City to coordinate our extensive international portfolio. This new umbrella will support our commitment to cultivating an international mindset across our learning landscape. Now, we will be able to map our activities and that of other universities, and, ultimately, New York business activity around the globe.

Fifth, we must re-form the way SUNY manages program growth and delivery. SUNY is

committed to system-wide enrollment management that will:

- > meet the state's needs for highly educated entrepreneurs and professionals;
- > provide programs that develop critical thinking, communication and analytic skills;
- > meet the technology and innovation needs of the future; and
- > better coordinate program offerings across SUNY.

In partnership with the Governor and the New York State Legislature, we will make these reforms a reality. Together we will find creative ways to grow SUNY and give New York a positive return on its educational investment.

To achieve our goals in the face of economic crisis, I am advocating for a new approach, one that finds innovative strategies to raise revenues from alternative sources.

First, SUNY must have regulatory relief from the state to allow our 64 campuses to enter into public-private partnerships. These partnerships can advance our core mission and values and protect collective bargaining rights while generating revenue and creating jobs. While we're at it, we also need to cut the red tape surrounding the procurement of goods and services.

Second, we must settle on a tuition policy that is fair, responsible and predictable and also maintains access to a quality higher education experience. We are pursuing the establishment of a five-year tuition plan, beginning in the 2012 academic year that is both responsible and predictable, rooted firmly in hard data and the realities of our tuition environment. In return, we at SUNY must commit ourselves to be held accountable for how we use our resources.

All of SUNY must embrace a spirit of understanding and cooperation that will allow the system to leverage best assets—its size and diversity—in service to its students, faculty, staff, and all New Yorkers. To do this, we will implement performance-based resource allocation. We will

streamline operations through shared services. Finally, we will build our SUNY base by locating all of our alumni and mobilize them to support the university that provided the pathway to their success and help us advocate for policy reforms.

In return, our alumni will benefit from a new and improved SUNY network. In time, we're confident that tomorrow's graduates will follow suit and become our donors because they know, better than anyone, what an amazing value proposition SUNY is for our students, our communities and our state. For this reason, we are working to double our fundraising in the coming years. Joining forces with our largest campuses will embark on multi-million, even billion dollar campaigns.

I've sought to draw the connection between a competitive SUNY and a competitive New York because I truly believe our fates are interconnected and reciprocal. It could be said, "As SUNY goes, so goes New York; as New York goes, so goes SUNY." As we fulfill our destiny as New York's economic engine, we are committed to SUNY's capacity to innovate and expand our tech transfer, and we continue to act as anchors in our local communities. In many cases, the local SUNY institution is a community's largest employer, an essential consumer of goods and services and a massive source of construction and jobs.

For every million dollars invested in SUNY, we calculate that we can deliver 20 jobs. More millions, more jobs. And we estimate SUNY has the capacity to create nearly 20,000 construction and construction industry jobs, as well as another 20,000 spinoff jobs through partnerships.

Innovation ... access and degree completion ... jobs, jobs, jobs and jobs.

These goals speak to the fundamental power of education to transform our society, our economy and our future. Our capacity to deliver on them is The Power of SUNY.



David K. Lavalley
Provost

Success and Challenges

It is all too easy to get down at times like these—with budgets being cut, fewer opportunities to initiate or expand programs and new course offerings, at the same time, greater numbers of qualified students who would like to enroll. So, I would like to share with you some of the more uplifting items to consider that I presented at the last UFS plenary at Binghamton University.

First, our overall graduation rates at our 4-year campuses. We have been able to track students who enroll at our 4-year campuses and graduate either from the same campus or from another 4-year SUNY campus—a success for the student, each campus and the system as a whole. The SUNY-wide 6-year graduation rate for the class of 2009 was 70% overall compared with a national average for public colleges and universities of 55%. For our individual sectors, the SUNY-wide numbers and the corresponding national average (in parentheses) are: doctoral campuses 73% (62%), comprehensive colleges 67% (46%) and colleges of technology 56% (38%). If we include successful transfer to non-SUNY 4-year colleges as well, the combination success rate is nearly 90% for doctoral and comprehensive colleges and 86% for colleges of technology.

Another great success story is the graduation rate for students with A.A. or A.S. degrees from SUNY's community colleges that transfer to SUNY 4-year campuses. For the past several years, these community college transfer students have actually graduated at a bit higher rate (consistently about 2%) than first-time freshman enrollees. I would like to put in a plug here for campuses to favor admission of SUNY community college students who complete their degrees instead of earlier admission. The current average number of credits for our SUNY community college transfer students is a bit less than 45, so they have at least an extra semester to go before completing their bachelor's degree. Nearly all of our campuses are now at capacity for new admissions and we cannot accommodate all of the qualified students who wish to transfer. By taking students with degrees, our four year campuses would have 20% more room for transfer students (4 semesters instead of 5).

As I hope you know, we are committed to reduce the gap in graduation rates for our under-represented minority and low income students relative to our average over the next five years. The good news is that our access for under-represented minority and low income students and their graduation rates are much closer to the population demographics and the average rate than is true for other public university systems. Our gaps are on the order of hundreds of students system-wide, not thousands. The task is very doable. And what makes it even more feasible is the experience and success of several of our campuses. In fact, six campuses have been recognized by the Education Trust for graduating Black and/or Latino students at very nearly the same or even higher rates than their average. Stony Brook University's outstanding work was recognized by an excellent PBS production.

Some of our challenges may, in fact create opportunities for benefits to students and faculty and we will work with you to make that happen. One recent challenge you are likely to be well aware of is the deactivation and, in some cases, suspension of majors. When a campus has departments with student faculty ratios that differ by as much as a factor of ten and must consider how to make investments in faculty, departments with small enrollments have a much harder time justifying resources. At some point, faculty sizes become so small that delivering a quality program is compromised.

My staff and I have been analyzing graduation and enrollment data for programs across SUNY. We will begin this spring to bring faculty members together in areas of low enrollment and/or graduation to foster discussions of collaboration—either regionally or more broadly—so that students from several campuses can populate courses, making more courses available to students, more varied teaching opportunities available for faculty, and a greater probability that relatively small programs can remain intact. Our first effort will be for degree programs in languages other than Spanish, but we envision a number of others as well.

We are also working toward administrative cooperation and consolidation that will help us avoid the increasing workload on smaller staffs, allow campuses to assign their staff more productively and to use economies of scale to reduce supervisory personnel (and area of the most rapid turnover and difficulty in recruiting replacements). The end goal is to preserve our support for the teaching and instructional support staff: directing as much of our resources as possible to teaching and learning.

At the beginning of February I was invited, along with two of our SUNY campus presidents and a similar cohort from CUNY to meet with the Board of Regents to discuss achieving higher rates

of college readiness. Among other suggestions we offered was continuing mathematics into the senior year (perhaps as topical courses that would apply content from previous courses to topics outside mathematics itself) and making more opportunities for college coursework available to students who are ready for it and would otherwise be unchallenged, but the aspect we emphasized most was the need to rethink the actual curriculum itself (not just Regents' exam cut-off scores) to better match the thinking skills student need to be successful. We have offered to follow up with them by involving faculty members who teach freshmen and those who have appropriate research design experience. If they take us up on this offer, we'll be reaching out to you.

Recently the chair of the faculty governance group at Vanderbilt University authored an article on the back (feature) page of the Chronicle of Higher Education that bemoaned the sorry state of shared governance at his campus. I think that we can be very proud that shared governance in academic matters at SUNY is alive and well and is, in fact, critical to our academic strength both on campuses and as a system. Some of the changes that we face will be difficult and it will be ever more important for us to work together to use our best insights in solving (or at least coping with) challenges. I thank you for your past support and look forward to our new ventures together.



Norman Goodman
Editor, Faculty Senate Bulletin
Stony Brook University

A Time of Challenge = A Time of Change

Background

Historically, SUNY has been hindered by its status as a state agency in having the resources and flexibility to develop its full potential. For example, in 2008, the Division of the Budget and Governor Paterson was able to cut all state agencies by 10.35% without requiring approval of the Legislature. SUNY's status as a state agency puts it on par with such agencies as the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Division of Parole, the New York State Racing and Wagering Board, and the Adirondack Park Agency. While all state agencies play an important role in providing needed services to the citizens of New York State, SUNY has a unique and most essential mission: providing for New York State's future by educating its citizens to function in an increasing complex, competitive, and global environment and enjoying a fulfilling and satisfying life.

In 2007, then Governor Spitzer charged the Commission on Higher Education to review public higher education in New York State. The Commission was comprised of legislators, community representative, labor leaders, and faculty and administrators for public and private institutions of higher education. In response to its charge from the Governor, the Commission addressed many of the issues raised by the white

papers it requested from various groups, including the fact that the shift of control of SUNY from the State Department of Education to the SUNY Board of Trustees did not provide this Board with the full governing authority enjoyed by university system in most other states. Specifically, the Commission noted that SUNY's governance structure "is complex" and suggested that SUNY's status as a state agency inhibits excellence and creates administrative and system-wide fat. The Commission recalled that a report from an earlier 1985 Wharton Commission bemoaned SUNY's over-regulation and noted that many of the most important recommendations in regard to governance were never implemented. Consequently, its recommendation was strongly stated:

"This Commission's comparison of governance structures in peer states revealed that SUNY's classification as a state agency is extremely unusual. Indeed, the autonomy of public university systems in many states is guaranteed in constitutional or statutory provisions. Moreover, virtually every individual the Commission consulted on this matter urged the State to unshackle SUNY, end micromanagement and free the system to focus on achieving excellence in a competitive global environment."

In addition, the Commission recommended certain statutory changes that, in the interim, would enhance SUNY's ability to serve the needs of New York State more effectively. Specifically, the Commission's report indicated that:

"To best position our public higher education systems to achieve excellence, the Commission finds that statutory changes are necessary in three areas: (1) empowering SUNY's Board of Trustees to lease SUNY property for a purpose in support of its mission without prior legislative approval; (2) granting the SUNY Construction Fund necessary operation flexibility; and (3) streamlining and improving the procurement process for SUNY and CUNY."

Achieving Constitutional Status and/or Enhanced Statutory Status

Advocating for SUNY to gain constitutional status as a separate unit of state government, which would have it less entangled in political debate and control than is currently the case, will require a long-term commitment and concerted efforts on the part of many SUNY constituencies. Either constitutional status coupled with statutory reform or a basic redefinition of SUNY's status as an "agency" would distance the system from the political arena, thereby lending it the greater flexibility and independence that is necessary to enhance its operation and its national and international reputation.

Preliminary research demonstrates that in approximately 17 states, systems of public higher education have constitutional status; in most of the others, they have either statutory authority that endows them with considerably more flexibility in carrying out their mission than is true for SUNY. Since SUNY legitimately aspires to be a top system in the nation, and since it has two institutions that are members of the prestigious American Association of Universities (AAU), a basis of comparison with AAU public institutions seems relevant and justifiable. Of the 34 public universities that have been elected to the AAU, a third of these are located in states that imbue them with constitutional status. More important, however, is that these institutions are among the most prestigious of the AAU public universities and the shining lights of public higher education in the United States: the University of California campuses (Davis, Berkeley, Irvine, Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Barbara), both major institutions of higher education in Michigan [University of Michigan/Ann Arbor; Michigan State University/East Lansing], and the Universities of Minnesota, Missouri, and Nebraska. In fact, not one of the states in which of the remaining two-thirds of the AAU public universities are located define them as a "state agency" which would restrict their flexibility and submit them to the

vagaries of contemporary political winds that is so detrimental to their continued development and enhancement. Yet, that is the situation that SUNY is in.

While the majority of America's public systems of higher education are located in states that have a statutory and/or agency rather than constitutional status, many of them include provisions that give their governing board significant if not complete control over their university system's operation. For example, in many of these states, the Boards of Trustees or Regents is the body that sets tuition [often differential tuition], enters into real estate deals, etc. (Iowa and Maryland are good examples.) New York State should follow the example of those states that give their institutions of public higher education the political and economic flexibility to "become all they are capable of becoming." To do so, will take the concerted effort of SUNY/CUNY system and local campus administrations, faculty, staff, students, the relevant unions, trustees, and members of local college councils. The present dwindling state of support for public higher education suggests that this is an appropriate time to consider such an effort.

However, the political difficulty of effecting such a change suggests a temporary alternative that could be pursued. This more limited change that would allow SUNY some of the benefits described above, and that would be more politically feasible at this time, would be to have it identified in the budget process in the category of "aid to localities" rather than as a "state agency." This would put in on a par, budgetarily, with CUNY and the community colleges in SUNY. However, it would not redress the limited governance structure that the Commission identified as a major problem in "achieving excellence in a competitive global environment." But it would be a start.



Julie Gondar
President
Student Assembly

The Students' Perspective

Over the past few years, SUNY has witnessed some of the largest cuts in its history, a number totaling \$1.1 billion since 2008. As students, we read and hear about these cuts and see the numbers. However, it isn't until we gauge how much our campuses, classrooms, and the overall quality of our education have declined since the beginning of these massive cuts that we can fully comprehend the full and detrimental impact that they are having.

Already, programs have been cut, teachers laid off, students forced to graduate late and valuable services across the campuses eliminated. Many times, these cuts have an unthought-of chain reaction. As campuses are forced to cut classes and staff, class sizes will predictably rise or the campus will be forced to offer fewer sections of needed courses each semester.

In the former scenario, larger class sizes mean less class discussion, more students having to sit farther away from the professor, and less time each student has to interact, learn, and receive help from the professor inside and outside the classroom.

In the latter scenario, fewer sessions each semester mean that students will be forced to wait longer for required classes. Many times this could lead to more students graduating late, thus preventing them from receiving financial aid and delaying their ability to enter the workforce for six months, a year, or sometimes as long as two years.

As these cuts continue year after year, the issue of sustainability must be considered. While we understand that the Governor and Legislature are concerned about pricing students out of higher education by raising tuition, the dire fiscal situation of the state combined with the fact that by not raising tuition, campuses will be forced to reduce programs and services, a question of which is the lesser of two evils emerges.

This is why we have supported and will continue to support a rational tuition policy, a policy defined by slight and predictable year-to-year tuition increases that are affordable and allow for students and parents to plan for these increases each year. A slight tuition increase would be more desirable than a year or two extra in college and far less detrimental than seeing programs and services get cut.

While many of the issues discussed above can also be applied to our students at community colleges, it is important to note several of the challenges they specifically face in spite of these cuts. Despite President Barack Obama's praise of community colleges, calling them the "Unsung Heroes of American Education," the Governor has called for 10% reduction in base aid, and community college students are all but guaranteed a tuition raise at their campuses for next semester.

Combined, these may make it extraordinarily more difficult for these campuses to provide the

same access to classes and services, such as day-care services, that many of its students depend on. As institutions that help many non-traditional students, such as recently laid-off older New Yorkers seeking new training and skills to reenter the workforce, community colleges are a gateway for economic redevelopment both for the individual and the state.

By cutting community college aid and making community college education more expensive, it is limiting the economic, educational, and social potential of community colleges.

As a public university, it is our mission to provide affordable and accessible education.

Despite the challenges both presently and ahead, SUNY will continue to fulfill its mission and serve its students. We will continue to fight for the restoration of our funding, a rational tuition plan, and other reforms that will ensure SUNY's prosperity.

We will find strength in the SUNY Strategic Plan, as many of its "Big Ideas" will help counter-balance the weight of continuous cuts forced upon SUNY. Some, such as the Education Pipeline, will still allow SUNY to provide accessible education for any and all New Yorkers.

When confronted with challenge, we can see it as an obstacle or an opportunity. While obstacles may lie ahead, SUNY will continue to grow and take every opportunity to serve its students and fulfill its mission.

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