

## SUNY Educational Opportunity Program Celebrates 40 Years

November 02, 2007

Albany – The State University of New York celebrates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Educational Opportunity Program this month. SUNY's EOP is the second oldest program of its type in the nation.

At 84.5 percent, first-year retention rates for SUNY EOP students outrank the national public average by 11.5 percent and six-year graduation rates for SUNY EOP students, 62.6 percent at doctoral degree-granting institutions, outpace the national average by more than seven percent. Additionally, more than 2,200 EOP students maintained a 3.0 cumulative average and received honor certificates in the spring 2007 semester.

SUNY's EOP has been creating opportunity for educationally and economically disadvantaged students since October 1967, when Arthur O. Eve, then a first-year assemblyman from Buffalo, helped launch the program and open SUNY's first office to 249 students on the Buffalo State campus.

"We are very proud of the accomplishments of our wonderful EOP students," said SUNY Interim Chancellor Dr. John B. Clark. "The support provided to our students by our dedicated EOP staff on our campuses and here at System Administration is tremendous and we are very grateful to these outstanding professionals for their work each and every day."

Today, more than 10,000 students on 43 SUNY campuses are enrolled in the EOP, and since the program began, more than 50,000 EOP students have earned degrees from SUNY campuses.

"Forty-years ago, with the support of the New York State African-American and Hispanic Legislators, we launched EOP with a great deal of hope on behalf of the New York's disadvantaged", said EOP founder and past state Assembly Deputy Speaker Dr. Arthur O. Eve. "Tens of thousands of students have graduated thanks, in large part, to the dedicated women and men who staff the EOP. I am grateful to these workers and very proud of all EOP students and Alumni."

[SUNY Old Westbury President Rev. Calvin O. Butts III said, "A college education is a transformative experience, giving students the knowledge and skills upon which lives and careers can be built. Throughout its history, SUNY's Educational Opportunity Program has made college possible for those who may experience educational and financial deficits but possess a will to learn and the drive to see themselves advance. By empowering students, EOP has helped tens of thousands of men and women excel and embark on careers and lives through which they have contributed mightily to the communities in which they live and work."](#)

Strong demand by potential students is another indicator of the strength and value of the program. Last year, more than 10,700 eligible first-time students applied for EOP and SUNY was able to enroll only 1,705.

**EOP Anniversary Event:**

The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary kick-off event will be held Friday, Nov. 2, 2007 at the Marriot Hotel and Conference Center, Main Ballroom, 189 Wolf Road, Albany, NY.

**Alumni Share their Successes and Achievements**

An event marking this occasion will take place at location, date and time to honor EOP alumni such as Anthony Kendall, vice president of Client Services, Client Services, Mitchell and Titus, LLP, Dr. Helen Suchanick, family and occupational medicine and Robert Jackson, member, New York City Council.

**When others doubt you; believe in yourself**

Anthony Kendall earned an accounting degree from Binghamton University in 1983, describes himself as "ill equipped" for the academic rigors of Binghamton. He credits his summer EOP experience with teaching him the study habits needed to succeed in the college classroom.

Mr. Kendall said, "Many times, I relied on the wisdom and advice of the EOP staff. I was once told by an EOP counselor that "when others doubt you, that's when you must really believe in yourself." That statement resonates with me today."

Currently Mr. Kendall is vice president of Client Services, Mitchell and Titus, LLP, in Manhattan.

**Overcome your fears**

Dr. Helen Suchanick, SUNY Fredonia, biology, '89, dreamed of being a physician since she was a little girl, but was afraid she wouldn't achieve her goal because she a woman of Hispanic origin. As Dr. Suchanick tells the story, "Of course, this did not stop me, especially after learning of the Educational Opportunity Program at Fredonia State. I realized that all people, no matter what nationality or gender, could achieve whatever goals they dreamed of, if they put their minds to it."

Today she owns a building in Dunkirk, where she practices family and Occupational Medicine.

**Expose yourself to new ideas and experiences**

Robert Jackson, SUNY New Paltz class of '75, credits the EOP on campus with keeping him grounded and focused and instilling a strong work ethic, a sense of responsibilities and leadership skills.

Mr. Jackson says, "I became the person I am today because I had a real break – I participated in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at SUNY New Paltz. For me, the EOP at SUNY New Paltz opened-up an entire new world, far removed from the inner city of New York. I was exposed to new ideas and experiences, both in class and on campus. I met students from all over the globe, including my wife, Faika Rifai Jackson, who is from Tanzania."

A co-founder of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Robert Jackson is a member of the New York City Council representing the northern Manhattan neighborhoods of Morningside Heights, West Harlem, Hamilton Heights, Washington Heights and Inwood. He currently chairs the Council's Education Committee and co-chairs the Council's Black, Latino and Asian Caucus.

"Success stories such as these demonstrate the transformational impact that SUNY's EOP has on students, their families and the communities in which they live," said SUNY Associate Provost for Opportunity Programs Robert James, who has directed the program for 18 years. "The positive social and economic benefits of these students moving from poverty to the middle class cannot be over emphasized."

**Furthering Equity and Diversity**

SUNY will continue to advocate for underrepresented students through the newly-created Office of Diversity and Education Equity, which oversees SUNY's Office of Opportunity Programs.

Dr. Pedro Cabán, a nationally-recognized expert in the field, has been chosen to head SUNY's efforts in this area. He will assist ongoing system-wide efforts to align campuses with their respective communities in order to assist underrepresented high school graduates with access to higher educational opportunities and a successful college experience through to graduation.

"SUNY's commitment to broadening access for economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented student populations has never been stronger," said Cabán. "SUNY can take great pride in the accomplishments of our EOP alumni, while recognizing there is more work to do in furthering educational equity for disadvantaged students."

For more information on SUNY's EOP, please see the [EOP Brochure](#) and [Graduation & Retention Rates](#).

**About the State University of New York**

The State University of New York is the largest comprehensive university system in the United States, educating more than 417,500 students in 7,669 degree and certificate programs on 64 campuses. To learn more about how SUNY creates opportunity, visit [www.suny.edu](http://www.suny.edu)

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