

# STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## I. INTERNAL SCAN

The State University of New York (SUNY) is a dynamic and comprehensive resource for the State. Comprised of 13 doctoral degree-granting institutions (including 4 university centers), 13 comprehensive colleges, 8 colleges of technology, and 30 community colleges, SUNY educates nearly 400,000 students annually in a range of academic programs, including specialized job training, certificate programs, and degree programs ranging from the associate to doctoral level. The University maintains innovative partnerships with business and industry, is an active civic participant and contributes to the frontiers of knowledge through groundbreaking research.

Anticipating and addressing the State's changing demographics has long been an integral component of the University's strategic planning and SUNY is committed to its mission to provide the people of New York with "...a complete range of academic, professional and vocational postsecondary programs...to meet the needs of both traditional and non-traditional students and to address local, regional and state needs and goals." This includes consideration of changes in the State's high school population, shifts in the economy and the resulting impact on the workforce, shortages in key labor areas, and meeting the diverse needs of the growing adult and senior population. SUNY continually strives to develop the most appropriate learning environment to coincide with demographic changes, i.e., online learning, evening and weekend courses, specially designed professional development, and continuing education programs.

Over the past decade, SUNY has seen the percentage of students in its prime target market (18-21 year olds) decrease slightly from 1990 to 1995 (from 72.9% to 66.4% of full-time undergraduate enrollment) and then rebound in 1999 (70.0%). The University has made great strides in the past five years—with an emphasis on academic quality and admissions selectivity—and believes this has resulted in positive yields in the core demographic despite the overall aging of the New York State population. While the proportion of adult students—fifty and older—has increased slightly from 1.7% in 1990 to 2.3% in 1995 and to 2.5% in 1999, it is a very small percentage of SUNY's overall market, although an increasingly important opportunity for job retraining and enhancement skills.

While the focus of this brief is on current and proposed strategies designed to meet the needs of New York's growing elderly population, it also considers activities that SUNY is engaged in that will meet the broad changes occurring in New York's demographic profile.

1. The evaluation of policies, programs and management issues relating to changing demographics is an ongoing process. It is part of SUNY's every-day practice to be flexible enough to be able to respond to the changing needs of the State's population.

In addition to activities already underway, new initiatives are proposed to: a) enhance academic programs and support services available to seniors interested in entering the workforce; b) implement faculty and leadership development initiatives; c) enhance our enrollment planning process to ensure that the needs of New York's changing population are addressed; and d) refine academic strategic planning.

2. Current SUNY policies, programs and initiatives intended to address the State's changing demographics, particularly its aging population are highlighted below:
  - SUNY institutions are committed to reaching out and responding to the various and unique needs of their communities. These communities include large and active senior populations who look to their local colleges for a variety of needs, including education and training, cultural events, and recreational opportunities. A number of colleges sponsor ElderHostel, an international program that sponsors high quality educational and cultural programs. Most colleges actively recruit a diverse range of seniors, particularly for courses specifically designed to meet their needs (especially computer skills and technology). Many colleges also offer seniors physical fitness programs (such as swimming classes) and a broad range of cultural activities, sporting events, and library access.
  - In addition to traditional educational offerings, SUNY is also offering our aging population innovative access to learning. Through the SUNY Learning Network (SLN), our online distance learning program, campuses provide college courses at all levels in an "anytime-anywhere" format. In the 2001-2002 academic year, 53 campuses offered more than 2,500 online courses and 55 degree programs to 40,000 students. Courses are available at all levels in a variety of disciplines. Examples of courses include Art History, Developmental Psychology, Fundamentals of Nutrition, Principles of Microeconomics, and Web Page Design.

Adult students can access their courses and interact asynchronously with their professors and fellow classmates at times and a location of their choosing. Courses offered through the SLN provide adult students with an educational choice that responds to the constraints that they often face, such as family responsibilities, career obligations, travel or being homebound. Through the SLN, SUNY is making an educational opportunity possible to older students where it did not exist before. More than half of these students are over 25 and we have students in their 50's, 60's and 70's taking courses every semester.
  - Campuses continuously update their curricula to meet changing demographic needs (e.g., the growing senior population) as well as the needs of business and industry. Specific program examples include: Geriatric Nurse Practitioner M.S. at the University at Buffalo; Gerontology Graduate Certificate at Oswego, Cortland, and Upstate Medical Center; Urban Health M.P.H. at Brooklyn Health Science Center; and Economic Crime Investigation A.S. at Niagara Community College.

Programs have also been developed to address the changing economy. Specific examples include: Technology Management: Financial Services B.B.A. at Alfred College of Technology; Renewable Resource Technology B.Tech. at Morrisville; Biomedical Anthropology M.S. at the University at Binghamton; International Trade and Transportation at Maritime; and Materials Engineering at Binghamton.

SUNY provides training and retraining for the State's increasingly nontraditional workforce, especially career-changers and those that are re-entering the workforce after a sustained absence. Campuses update technological support to educate the workforce on state-of-the-art equipment. The integration of sophisticated technology has affected most disciplines, from precision machining at Monroe Community College to bioengineering at the State University at Stony Brook.

- In response to the growing demand for excellently trained teachers, SUNY launched an innovative plan to strengthen its position as a leader in teacher preparation. The *New Vision Action Agenda* commits the University to: 1) provide its students pursuing teaching careers with the best possible preparation to become effective teachers; 2) address the State's need for excellent teachers; and 3) continuously assess and improve its teacher education programs. Teacher Education has become a field of choice for career changers and retirees.
- Addressing the needs of educationally and/or economically disadvantaged adults, SUNY's ten Educational Opportunity Centers serve as "mini-colleges" to more than 17,000 students a year. EOCs provide educational and work skills programs leading to further education and/or employment and are invaluable resources for the State, producing life-long learners who are self-sufficient and self-directed.
- Through our Mission Review process, each of SUNY's institutions is committed to specific goals and benchmarks in key academic areas, many of which will impact the University's efforts to address shifting demographics. From enrollment planning to academic program development to integrating technology and instruction (e.g., to provide a state-wide electronic academic library), Mission Review is a ground-breaking, nationally recognized best practice that highlights SUNY's commitment to excellence and to meeting the needs of New York State.
- Designed to enhance the academic profile of freshman classes in state-operated/funded campuses while preserving our commitment to broad access, SUNY's enrollment planning process is a collaborative effort that takes into account the shifting demographics of the State.
- There are currently 10,402 Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) students studying at forty-seven SUNY institutions. EOP realizes the University's commitment to access in three ways: 1) by extending admission to students who have the potential to succeed in college but whose life circumstances have not permitted them to achieve at the level of their potential; 2) by providing academic

skill-building and support in the form of counseling, advisement, tutoring, workshops and specialized coursework; and 3) by providing financial support.

## **II. PRIORITY ISSUE AREAS**

As the State University looks ahead to 2015, there are broad issues that will need to be addressed in order for the University to respond to the unique needs of the State's aging population. Among them, we have identified three overarching issues:

### **1. Academic program and support service enhancements**

Ensure comprehensive and rigorous processes are in place to review and assess existing programs, and foster the development of new programs and services targeted at meeting the needs of the State's changing demographics.

### **2. Mission delineation and strategic planning processes**

Ensure that the sixty-four campuses of the State University reflect the needs of the State's aging population in mission delineation, strategic planning processes, and enrollment planning goals.

### **3. Research into the unique requirements of the State's aging population**

Ensure that the research capabilities of the State University inform the dialogue and the development of new State-supported programs to serve the unique needs of the State's aging population.

## **III. ACTIONS AND RESULTS**

### **Priority Issue #1—Academic Program and Support Service Requirements**

#### **Actions:**

- SUNY's Office of Academic Affairs will streamline the program approval process for academic programs serving the State's aging demographics. This process will be structured so that approval occurs in less than 60 days.
- SUNY's Office of Academic Affairs will establish a System-wide Task Force to inventory all current programs serving aging populations and identify areas where the University may be lacking program structure.
- SUNY will incorporate into the System's assessment processes a review of the outcomes of existing programs serving aging populations.

#### **Results:**

By January 1, 2003, the State University will establish a Task Force to review and document the University's current program structure designed to serve the needs of the State's aging population. The report of the Task Force, published by January 1, 2004, will include a complete inventory of all current programs in this area.

During 2003, System Administration will implement processes to streamline the approval process.

During 2004, System Administration will incorporate in the academic program review and student assessment processes all programs serving the State's aging population. These processes will focus on outcomes.

### **Priority Issue #2— Mission Delineation and Strategic Planning Processes**

#### **Action:**

- The State University's ongoing Mission Review process will incorporate serving the State's aging demographic profile as a significant component. This process will include a review and update of each of the missions of the University's sixty-four campuses.

#### **Results:**

The missions of each of the sixty-four campuses of the State University will be updated to incorporate serving the unique needs of the State's aging demographics as a significant component of the campuses' missions.

The State University will ensure that the sixty-four campuses have incorporated into their strategic planning and enrollment planning processes the needs of the State's aging population.

### **Priority Issue #3—Research Into the Needs of the State's Aging Population**

#### **Action:**

- By January 1, 2003, the State University will establish a Task Force to document the focus of current research efforts in understanding the requirements and needs of aging populations, and make recommendations into how the research capabilities of the University can be utilized to inform the dialogue surrounding this issue.

#### **Results:**

By 2004, the report of the Task Force will be made available to the Chancellor and University officials for implementation. The findings of the Task Force will be used to influence policies and procedures impacting future research initiatives of the State University.

By the end of 2004, the State University will develop mechanisms to communicate to State officials charged with the responsibility of serving the State's aging population the findings of research projects focusing on this issue.

