<u>WHCU's Dave Vieser Interviews Chancellor Zimpher</u>
June 3, 2009

WHCU – 7:17 on the morning news watch, The State University of New York, 440,000 students and the 12th Chancellor of The State University of New York SUNY system, Dr. Nancy Zimpher is beginning an incredible 64 campus tour and it begins right here in Ithaca. Dr. Nancy Zimpher joins us on the news line. Chancellor, good morning thank you for being with us.

NZ – Good Morning Dave

Dave – You are getting right into it. You began work June 1st and here you are making this tour. What is the purpose of this tour?

NZ – Well, in the first part it is simply to get acquainted, say hello and meet the campus leaders, the constituents across the campus and the community. So that would be good in its own right, but it is also the first building block of a strategic planning process that we are going to engage in over the next 6 months.

Dave – In fact you are looking to set up a 5-year and 10-year plan?

NZ – I think it really will be a true 10-year plan but as you know, you have to think short-term and long-term. The goal is by early spring of 2010 to be able to bring to the community what has been a widely circulated set of goals for SUNY and for the State of New York and our relationship, and then work as hard as we can to meet those goals. And it is going to be a real inclusive process Dave.

Dave – And how do you get those goals to become action plans, if you will?

NZ – Well that is a really good question because in the final analysis it is all about what you can get done that is important to the State of New York, and to our students and to our various constituencies, so I will have to say Dave that I have had a lot of experiences taking a big goal like putting students at the center and then breaking that down into better students services, improving student mobility, enhancing the diversity of our student body, making sure the campuses are 24/7. You know you have to break it down into specific steps and that is what we are going to use this state-wide, SUNY-wide conversation to do. Build not only the big picture goal, but the strategic steps we would have to take to meet that goal.

Dave – Prior to joining SUNY, you were the President of The University of Cincinnati and had a billion dollar budget there and a number of different colleges, right, this just was not just one school?

NZ – Well The University of Cincinnati is pretty big, it is 37,000 students and we had 16 colleges and three campuses off of the main campus. So it was complex. Of course, nothing rivals the complexity of SUNY, but I do think the kind of management skill and

leadership skills that I have had the privilege of honing over the years are going to serve well for this mega system.

Dave – Yeah, and Chancellor, you are going to meet with the Deans of the four colleges at Cornell University today and also SUNY Cortland. If you will allow me, one of the things you are going to find I think in this state is the wide variety. You are going to be in areas that are very rural. You are also going to be in New York City, which obviously is the largest city in the world. What a variety SUNY has.

NZ – Well it is a geographic variety David and I think the other really cool thing about it is under one umbrella, we have research centers, medical centers, comprehensive four-year baccalaureate institutions, community colleges and technical schools and that is the portfolio of the kinds of institutions that working together can really change the economic profile of the state. So I am very interested, since the tour is regional in nature, when I get to a region to think about how the research in the community and the technical schools, medical schools, can work effectively together. I know they are doing this, but my role is to sort of lift that up and make that obvious to the opinion leaders, the elected officials, and most importantly the people who live in these communities and I am just so excited about having the opportunity to do that.

Dave – We are talking with the new SUNY Chancellor, Dr. Nancy Zimpher is with us. Dr. Zimpher, I am a graduate from 1987 of SUNY Oswego and I talk with Dr. David Skorton the President of Cornell University once in a while and it always seems to be the key to success for higher education is to integrate back into the community. In other words, Ithaca is such a key part of Cornell, and Cornell is such a key part of Ithaca. How important in your mind is that for higher education institutions?

NZ – I really think it is the big idea. I know in my experience in Cincinnati, in Milwaukee, and Columbus—three great mid western cities--I always said two things Dave, great cities need great universities. But I will tell you what, great universities need great cities. So this is really not a one-way street. This is if the community is thriving and enhanced that is going to make it easier to attract faculty and staff to come and work and live in these communities and of course to help recruit students and then that just makes the community better. I think that kind of reciprocity is really what it is all about and that is, if you will, “job one” for the universities.

WHCU – And Chancellor, one final question, we face an economic trouble situation, our state is facing big deficits. Is that the biggest challenge you are going to face initially when you take a look at the situation with SUNY right now?

NZ – Well, I think we all have to keep in mind that this is a pretty versatile context. This is the context I left in Ohio and I understand as well as anyone how tight our economic circumstances are, but I also know we have to grow our way out of this challenge. We do that by creating jobs. Universities are job producers and then of course, we produce the employees. So I think that is the role we are going to play in this economic recovery and I know this great nation and this great state are both going to recover.

Dave – The new State University of New York Chancellor started her job on June 1st, just the beginning of this week. Dr Nancy Zimpher will be visiting Cornell and SUNY Cortland. Dr. Zimpher, thank you so much for being on this morning.

NZ – Thank you Dave

Dave – 7:23 on the morning news watch