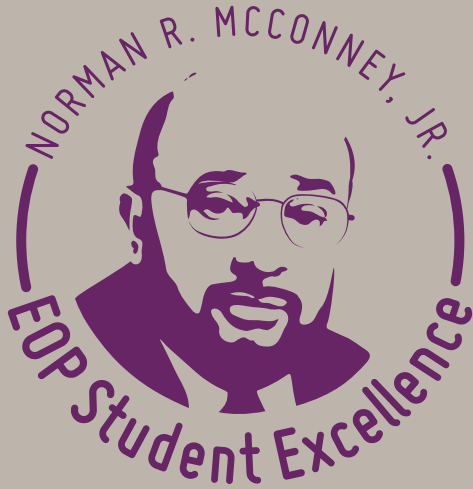


*4th Annual*

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



**NORMAN R. MCCONNEY, JR.**

AWARD FOR

**EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM  
STUDENT EXCELLENCE**

APRIL 17, 2023



Educational Opportunity  
Program

## THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM (EOP)

The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) plays a pivotal role in opening the doors to a SUNY education for academically underprepared students from low-income families in New York. EOP is one of the oldest and most successful college access programs in the nation. In 2017, EOP marked a milestone celebrating 50 years of providing college access, success and opportunity.

The program was established in 1967 through legislation advanced by former Deputy Speaker of the New York State Assembly Arthur O. Eve of Buffalo who dedicated his career to addressing the needs of underserved communities.

In the 2022-23 academic year, EOP will serve nearly 8,000 students on 54 SUNY campuses. The EOP serves a diverse student body and many students are first in their family to go to college. EOP students dream big and those selected for the program possess the motivation and promise to succeed in college.

In many cases participants outperform their peers, with 68 percent of EOP students completing a bachelor's degree within six years. Since the program's inception, **more than 80,000 EOP students have earned SUNY degrees**, participate in the workforce and contribute to the social and economic well-being of their communities.

## FROM THE CHANCELLOR



### To the EOP Student Excellence Awardees of 2023:

As I've traveled across New York visiting our campuses, I've been blessed to meet students in the Educational Opportunity Program who prove how essential EOP is in participants' lives. Spending time with these future leaders fostered conversations about academics, social lives, family and friends, personal struggles, and so much more—leaving a lasting, inspiring impression.

Students tell me the SUNY Educational Opportunity Program provides the motivation and support they need to push forward through challenges. They say it makes higher education a real and tangible option in their lives and has opened previously unimagined doors. And they confide that it makes them feel capable, helping them understand they always possessed the capability to succeed with the right support and encouragement. These students have proven, with both their words and accomplishments, that the aim of the EOP—to create an empowering, nurturing environment that paves pathways to achievement both during and after earning a degree—is a success.

The great power of EOP is that it helps on the individual level while creating bonds between students on their own campuses and across the entire system. This community understands the beauty and importance of “community,” proven by the loyalty and commitment EOP members show toward their peers and the program. Regardless of distance and difference, the students we celebrate with this event have invested in themselves and one another, creating a family that will remain long after their time at SUNY ends, and made the Educational Opportunity Program proud.

With these awards, we celebrate a program that has made a difference for over 50 years, and one of the people who, along with Arthur O. Eve, helped create the program—Norman R. McConney, Jr.—through the EOP Student Excellence Award carrying his name. This ensures his name will always be remembered, and in conjunction with the students who comprise his legacy. This year we will also bestow upon Arthur O. Eve the Norman R. McConney, Jr. EOP Student Excellence Award to celebrate the groundbreaking work that made the Educational Opportunity Program possible.

To this year's honorees, congratulations on a well-deserved accolade; the entire SUNY community takes pride in your work and your commitment to success in the face of all challenges and obstacles. I applaud all you've accomplished and highly anticipate your future successes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John B. King, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

John B. King, Jr., J.D., Ed.D.  
Chancellor  
State University of New York

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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### **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM STUDENT EXCELLENCE**

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#### **STUDENT VIDEO**

#### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF THE CHANCELLOR**

William Clyde, Jr.  
Director, Educational  
Opportunity Program (EOP)  
Nassau Community College

#### **CHANCELLOR REMARKS**

John B. King, Jr.

#### **INTRODUCTION OF ALUMNI AND STUDENT SPEAKERS**

#### **STUDENT SPEAKER**

Joshua Goodwin  
SUNY Corning Community  
College  
Class of 2023

#### **ALUMNI SPEAKER**

Joel Nunez  
SUNY Binghamton  
Class of 2019

#### **INTRODUCTION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

#### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

The Honorable Robert Jackson  
NYS Senate

#### **INTRODUCTION OF TRUSTEE**

#### **TRUSTEE REMARKS**

#### **PRESENTATION OF AWARDS**

#### **INTRODUCTION OF HONORARY NORMAN R. MCCONNEY, JR. AWARD FOR EOP STUDENT EXCELLENCE**

#### **REMARKS** Leecia Eve

#### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Cheryl D. Hamilton  
Associate Vice Chancellor  
for Student Life, Opportunity  
Programs and Student Advocate

## **NORMAN R. MCCONNEY, JR.**

AWARD FOR

### **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM STUDENT EXCELLENCE**



The Norman R. McConney, Jr. Award celebrates the achievements of SUNY Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) rising seniors who have exhibited academic success, courage, perseverance and leadership qualities during their journey to earn an associate's or bachelor's degree.

Established in 2019, the award today honors its fourth class of distinguished EOP students from 46 campuses.

The award is named in honor of the late Norman R. McConney, Jr., (1946-2016) a graduate of the University at Albany and former assistant dean for special programs at SUNY. Mr. McConney, alongside former Deputy Assembly Speaker Arthur O. Eve, helped draft the legislation that created EOP as a statewide program. A respected public policy strategist, Mr. McConney served as Assemblyman Eve's long-time Chief of Staff. He dedicated his career in public service to advancing legislative initiatives to address the needs of economically disadvantaged and underrepresented New Yorkers.

Mr. McConney spearheaded programs to prepare minority high school students for careers in science and medicine and created scholarships for students underrepresented in the licensed professions. Mr. McConney was also a driving force behind the creation of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, which later became the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus. He is recognized as one of the principal authors of The People's Budget, which each year analyzes the Executive Budget and its impact on the poor and minorities in the state. Mr. McConney taught classes at the Graduate School for Policy Management at both Baruch College and George Washington University. He also developed, and was the lead negotiator for, the passage of the bill to create nurse practitioners in New York State. Mr. McConney was a graduate of the "Revson Fellow for the Future of the City of New York Program" of Columbia University.

Mr. McConney was no stranger to adversity. As a young child, he fell on a picket fence and damaged his left lung. He was hospitalized for two years and became one of the first pediatric patients to undergo a revolutionary surgical procedure to remove his injured lung. He leaves a legacy of success that is a testament to his determination, resilience, and tenacity.

## MASTER OF CEREMONIES

### William Clyde, Jr.



William Clyde, Jr. is currently the Director of the Arthur O. Eve Educational Opportunity Program at Nassau Community College and former HEOP Director at LIU Post.

He attained a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education from Manhattan College and earned his Master's degree in College Student Development from Long Island University Post Campus.

William credits his success as an administrator through the mentorship and guidance of many, particularly the likes of Jim Pruitt, James Boatwright, Major Thomas, Bob McCullough, Bruce Moody, Valerie Vallade and Ethel Watson. Each one of them made an indelible, lasting imprint on him.

He is a proud parent of two adult children who have attained advanced degrees. His passions include watching sports and public television, preparing a good meal (yes, real men do put on an apron), listening to classic jazz and empowering, challenging and engaging students to be their best.

## STUDENT SPEAKER

### Joshua Goodwin



Joshua Goodwin is an EOP sophomore majoring in Liberal Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Corning Community College. Upon graduation, he plans to transfer to a four-year institution and study political science.

Mr. Goodwin seeks to build a career that is focused on developing policies and programs that reduce poverty, bring equity to diverse communities and make this world a better place for his mother and younger siblings.

Joshua has distinguished himself academically by being named to the Dean's List. He has taken on several leadership positions on campus. He serves as the president of the Student Association Government Assembly (SAGA), editor-in-chief of the campus newspaper, plays point-guard for Corning's Red Barons basketball team and works as a resident assistant.

In nominating Joshua for the Norman R. McConney, Jr. Award for Educational Opportunity Program Student Excellence, his EOP director described him as "a generous, hard-working and dedicated student leader. He is well-known around campus to be the 'go-to' person for questions and campus events."

Joshua loves to spend time with friends and his lovely family while also finding time to stay productive with his education.

## ALUMNI SPEAKER

### Joel Nunez



Joel Nunez, a graduate of Binghamton University, was one of 42 students to receive the inaugural Norman R. McConney, Jr. Award for Student Excellence in 2019.

Born and raised in the South Bronx, Joel faced some difficult challenges at Binghamton, but credits his EOP Counselor for believing in him and pushing him to achieve academic success. In his final semester he earned a 3.4 GPA. After earning his degree in Human Development, Mr. Nunez returned to the classroom to teach math to students in 5th and 7th grade. He is currently working as a high school teacher at Wadleigh High School in New York City where he instructs students on the basics of front-end web development.

In his free time, Joel enjoys working out, reading and spending time with family.





## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

### Senator Robert Jackson



Senator Robert Jackson has taken on difficult fights on behalf of New Yorkers and never backed down: in his first elected position as School Board President where he launched the Campaign for Fiscal Equity school funding lawsuit, walked 150 miles to Albany to highlight the cause, and won a court judgment that awarded \$16 billion for NYC public schools; in his 12 years on the City Council where he sponsored the Small Business Jobs Survival Act and fought for justice and equality; and now as a State Senator championing public education, workers rights, climate justice, gun safety, and more.

He knows how to get things done and has a record to prove it.

Growing up in Northern Manhattan with eight brothers and sisters, times were often challenging. As a student at PS 186, he never dreamed that one day he would be a New York State Senator. It was possible through hard work, perseverance, and the help of good people in the community.

In 2018, Robert Jackson was elected to the State Senate. He has continued to advocate for fairness and equality at the state level.

Senator Jackson attended New York City public schools and graduated from the State University of New York at New Paltz. He is married and a dedicated father of three daughters.

## S P E A K E R

### Leecia Eve



Leecia Eve is a partner at Ichor Strategies, a New York-based best-in-class consulting firm founded by her brother Eric Eve. The largest Black-owned professional services firm in the nation with a presence in more than 70 cities across the country, Ichor uses a combination of data, research, in-depth analytics, risk management, and meaningful community engagement to help Ichor's corporate and government clients succeed with mission-critical initiatives, while building real and lasting trust.

Before joining Ichor last year, Leecia served as a senior executive at Verizon, where she drove the deployment of 5G in the New York metropolitan area and oversaw public policy, government affairs, and philanthropic matters in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Prior to joining Verizon in July 2013, Leecia served as Deputy Secretary for Economic Development for New York under New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, overseeing 11 state agencies and billions in public-private capital investment.

Leecia previously served as Judiciary Counsel to Senator Joe Biden, Jr., as well as Counsel and Homeland Security Advisor to Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. She began her legal career as a Law Clerk to the Honorable Fritz W. Alexander II of the New York State Court of Appeals, the state's highest court.

Leecia previously practiced law at Covington & Burling and at Hodgson Russ.

She currently serves as a Commissioner of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and on the boards of Hackensack Meridian Health, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, Educational Housing Services, and the Regional Plan Association.

## 2023 STUDENT HONOREES

\* Inductees are alphabetized by campus

### ADIRONDACK COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Maria Teal**

Liberal Arts: Humanities & Social Science  
Rensselaer, NY

*"Believe in yourself and all that you are. Knowing that there is something inside you that is greater than any obstacle." - Christian D. Larson*

### UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY

**Aminata Kargbo**

Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies  
Albany, NY

*"On the one hand, I hold the power to accomplish anything. And in the other, I have the humbling reality that I am just one woman."  
- Roxanne Gay*

### ALFRED STATE COLLEGE

**Makala Rachel Saldenha-Raye**

Individual Studies  
Brooklyn, NY

*"When something is important enough, you do it even if the odds are not in your favor." - Elon Musk*

### BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY

**Bettany Braswell**

Psychology  
Brooklyn, NY

*"I came, I saw, I conquered." - Julius Cesar*

### SUNY BROCKPORT

**Matthew Afoakwah**

Computer Science  
Bronx, NY

*"If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way." -  
Martin Luther King, Jr.*

### BROOME COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Ethan Roselle**

Film/Communications  
Carmel, NY

*"Challenging the meaning of life is the truest expression of the state of  
being human." - Victor E Frankl*

## 2023 STUDENT HONOREES

### UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO

**Michael Almontaser**

Political Science

Brooklyn, NY

*"Success isn't always about 'greatness', it's about consistency. Consistent hard work gains success. Greatness will come."*

- Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson

### BUFFALO STATE UNIVERSITY

**Iyanna Williams**

Exceptional Education

Buffalo, NY

*"Life isn't about finding yourself, life is about creating yourself."*

### SUNY CANTON

**Muhammad Hussan Shabbir**

Civil & Environmental Engineering Technology

Kingston, NY

*"No matter what you're going through, there's a light at the end of the tunnel." - Demi Lovato*

### SUNY COBLESKILL

**Gianah Millien**

Applied Psychology

Brooklyn, NY

*"It always seems impossible until it's done." - Nelson Mandela*

### NYS SCHOOL OF INDUSTRIAL AND LABOR RELATIONS AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY

**Mo Islam**

Industrial & Labor Relations, Inequality Studies (minor)

Bronx, NY

### SUNY CORNING COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Joshua Goodwin**

Liberal Arts - Humanities & Social Sciences

Bath, NY

*"If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." - MLK*

## 2023 STUDENT HONOREES

### SUNY CORTLAND

**Nia Vega**

Sociology

New York, NY

*"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."*

### SUNY DELHI

**Mavenson Therneus**

Criminal Justice

New Windsor, NY

*"Some people might be more skilled and talented than you, but there's no excuse for anyone to work harder than you." - Derek Jeter*

### DUTCHESS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Ichiro Santos-Arias**

Aviation Science, Commercial Pilot/Aviation Management

Bronx, NY

*"The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot."*  
- Michael Altschuler

### COLLEGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND FORESTRY

**Asly Ventura**

Aquatic and Fisheries Science

Staten Island, NY

*Cada minuto es una oportunidad de cambiar - el mundo." - Dolores Huerta*  
*"Every minute is an opportunity to change the world."*

### FARMINGDALE STATE COLLEGE

**Dominique Duliepre**

Electrical Engineering Technology

Elmont, NY

*"A man who fears suffering is already suffering from what he fears." - Michel de Montaigne*

### FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

**Tajahanae Aiken**

Interior Design

Bronx, NY

*"The secret of getting ahead is getting started." - Mark Twain*

## 2023 STUDENT HONOREES

### **FINGER LAKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Joshua Bauer  
Business Administration  
Interlaken, NY

*"You can't perfect something that doesn't exist."*

### **SUNY FREDONIA**

Emma Goetz  
Computer Information Systems  
East Dunkirk, NY

*"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." - Benjamin Franklin*

### **FULTON-MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Javonie Barham  
Nursing (AAS)  
Johnstown, NY

*"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." - Malcolm X*

### **GENESEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Amaar Kelly  
Fashion Merchandising  
Scottsville, NY

*"Self-control is strength. Right thought is mastery. Calmness is power."*

### **SUNY GENESEO**

Michelly Meza-Benitez  
Sociology  
Brooklyn, NY

*"Success is its own reward, but failure is a great teacher too, and not to be feared." - Sonia Sotomayor*

### **HUDSON VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

Ivan Gomez  
Business Administration  
Valatie, NY

*"A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing." - George Bernhard Shaw*

## 2023 STUDENT HONOREES

### JEFFERSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Paige Schultz**

Psychology

Watertown, NY

*"The best things in life are on the other side of terror, on the other side of your maximum fear, are all of the best things in life." - Will Smith*

### MARITIME COLLEGE

**Grace Colon**

Marine Operations, Deck License

Brooklyn, NY

*"You are more capable than you think"- Omar Itani*

### MOHAWK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Leisha Ayala**

Early Childhood Education

Utica, NY

*"Strength and growth come only through continuous effort and struggle."  
- Napoleon Hill*

### MONROE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Elle Parrotta**

Liberal Arts/English

East Rochester, NY

*"Great heroes need great sorrows or burdens, or half their greatness goes unnoticed. It is all part of the fairy tale." - Peter S. Beagle*

### SUNY MORRISVILLE

**Jean Carlos Pérez**

Applied Psychology

Morrisville, NY

*"Be a happy memory for everyone."- Nitin Namdeo*

### NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Nataly Yanza**

Liberal Arts

Hempstead, NY

*"The only source of knowledge is experience." - Albert Einstein*

## 2023 STUDENT HONOREES

### **SUNY NEW PALTZ**

**Brianna Hicks**

Black Studies

Brooklyn, NY

*"Success is a journey not a destination." - Arthur Ashe*

### **NIAGARA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**Gabrielle Kramer**

Psychology/Chemical Dependency

Lockport, NY

*"There's no point to living life unless you make history, and the best way to make history is to help others." - Demi Lovato*

### **SUNY OLD WESTBURY**

**Christina Corye**

Biology

Brentwood, NY

*"We know all about the struggle... as a member of EOP, you know you're resilient." - Isabella Sosa, Class of 2015*

### **SUNY ONEONTA**

**Samuel Rodriguez**

Political Science & Criminal Justice

Yonkers, NY

*"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit." -Aristotle*

### **ONONDAGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**Yasmin Hassan**

Human Services

Syracuse, NY

*"Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the present." - Bill Keane*

### **ORANGE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**Cristofer Cardoza**

English Education

New Windsor, NY

*"Lost your balance on a tightrope, oh. It's never too late to get it back."  
- Taylor Swift*



## 2023 STUDENT HONOREES

### SUNY OSWEGO

**Damien Nguyen**

Human Development & Criminal Justice

*"Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself." - John Dewey Read*

### SUNY PLATTSBURGH

**Saran Kaba**

Communication Sciences & Disorders

Bronx, NY

*"Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepared for it today." - Malcolm X*

### SUNY POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

**Myles Duah**

Computer/ Information Science

Staten Island, NY

*"We will all, at some point, encounter hurdles to gaining access and entry, moving up and conquering self-doubt; but on the other side is the capacity to own opportunity and tell our own story." - Stacey Abrams*

### SUNY POTSDAM

**Kristi Pruitt**

Literature/Writing & Secondary English Education

Potsdam, NY

*"If they can't learn the way we teach. We teach the way they learn."  
- Dr. O. Ivar Lovaas*

### SUNY PURCHASE

**Mayari Guzman**

Psychology

Staten Island, NY

*"Dream as if you'll live forever, live as if you'll die today." - James Dean*

### SCHENECTADY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**Hemnarine Gobind**

Computer Science

Schenectady, NY

*"No matter where you go in life, always remember where you started."  
- Mom*

## 2023 STUDENT HONOREES

### **STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY**

**Nicole Chen**  
Health Science  
Elmhurst, NY

*"Everything happens for a reason, always." - Aristotle*

### **SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**Kimone Thompson**  
Liberal Arts & General Studies  
Wyandanch, NY

*"Always remember you're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." - A.A Milne*

### **ULSTER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**Mohammed Khan**  
Network Administrator  
Kingston, NY

*"Do not lose hope, not be sad." - Quran 3:139*

### **WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**Juan Ortiz**  
Liberal Arts/Social Science: Psychology  
Yonkers, NY

*"The highest realms of thought are impossible to reach without first attaining an understanding of compassion." - Socrates*

# C O N G R A T U L A T I O N S



## CHERYL HAMILTON

Congratulations to the 46 recipients of the 4th Annual Norman R. McConney, Jr. Award for Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) Student Excellence! It is with great pride that we acknowledge the achievements of these honorees who have demonstrated academic success, perseverance and leadership qualities in pursuit of a SUNY degree.

This award honors Norman R. McConney, Jr. who, while serving as long-time chief of staff to Buffalo Assemblyman Arthur O. Eve, helped draft the legislation which allowed the SUNY Educational

Opportunity Program to expand statewide. EOP is now offered on 54 campuses.

For more than 55 years, EOP has endeavored to make higher education accessible for students from historically disadvantaged communities. In spite of the adversity, obstacles and the hardships they face, these awardees model the spirit and power of resilience. They inspire us with their commitment to their studies, their institutions, their communities and their peers. And they show us the power of how EOP's holistic support system, which addresses students' academic and personal needs, helps ensure they achieve their goals and thrive.

We salute this year's winners of the Norman R. McConney Jr. Award for EOP Student Excellence and wish them continued success. We can't wait to see what they will do next.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheryl D. Hamilton". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Cheryl D. Hamilton  
Associate Vice Chancellor for Opportunity Programs,  
University Life and Student Advocate



Educational Opportunity  
Program



THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK