The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) is a comprehensive support program that plays a pivotal role in opening doors to a SUNY education for academically disadvantaged 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 2020-21 academic year, EOP will serve more than 10,000 students on 49 SUNY campuses. EOP students are more likely to be from underrepresented populations and the first in their family to go to college. They dream big, and those selected for the program possess the motivation and promise to succeed in higher education.

In many cases, EOP participants outperform their peers, with 74 percent of EOP students completing a bachelor’s degree within six years. Since the program’s inception, more than 76,000 EOP students have earned SUNY degrees, participate in the workforce, and contribute to the social and economic well-being of their communities.
Among the greatest joys of my role as SUNY Chancellor is spending time getting to know our students—the next generation of leaders. Even though most of these meetings have been virtual, I continue to cherish these conversations so that I can understand their needs and do even better to support their pursuit of a higher education.

Some of the most touching and memorable discussions have been with students in SUNY’s Educational Opportunity Program. In fact, on one of my first stops as Chancellor I visited with students in the EOP program at SUNY Plattsburgh and I came away enthusiastic about the great students we have at SUNY.

No matter where our students are from or what campus they attend, they demonstrate tremendous resilience and strength in the face of overwhelming adversity. Many have overcome extreme hardships to attend college. And yet, when they arrive on campus, they flourish and succeed, displaying an indomitable spirit, and unrelenting commitment to academic excellence.

SUNY’s EOP is designed to enable students to thrive, academically, personally and professionally. Today, we are recognizing 45 exceptional students who have done just that. Embodying the purpose and mission of the program, these students are living testaments to why the EOP is so critical both to our university system and to the vibrancy of our great state.

For more than 50 years, the EOP has helped students pursue their dreams and goals. Today, we honor one of the unsung heroes who helped create the program—Norman R. McConney, Jr.—through the EOP Student Excellence Award in his name. In doing so, his legacy as a champion for underrepresented students lives on.

To this year’s honorees, congratulations on receiving this well-deserved accolade. You are here today because no matter what challenges you faced, you overcame those obstacles and remained determined to succeed. I applaud you for all that you’ve accomplished, and look forward to seeing what you do next.

Sincerely,

Jim Malatras
Chancellor
THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

NORMAN R MCCONNEY JR AWARD FOR
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM
STUDENT EXCELLENCE

December 14, 2020

WELCOME AND REMARKS

Trustee Camille Varlack, Esq.
Trustee, State University of New York Board of Trustees

Jim Malatras, Ph.D.
Chancellor, The State University of New York

John L. Graham, Ph.D.
Senior Advisor to the Chancellor,
Student Advocate & Associate Vice-Chancellor for Student Affairs

INTRODUCTION OF STUDENT AND ALUMNI SPEAKERS

Cheryl Hamilton
Associate Provost and Director of Opportunity Programs

ALUMNI SPEAKER

Ayuong Arop
SUNY Poly Class of 2020
Meharry Medical College Class of 2024

STUDENT SPEAKER

Aesron Jeremiah
Farmingdale State College Class of 2020

INTRODUCTION OF KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Marcos Crespo
Trustee, State University of New York Board of Trustees

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The Honorable Victor Pichardo
Member, New York State Assembly

AWARD INTRODUCTION

Cheryl Hamilton on behalf of Cathleen Coleman McConney

STUDENT VIDEO

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS
Norman R. McConney, Jr. (1946-2016), a University at Albany graduate, dedicated his life to public service and was instrumental in advancing legislation that created several statewide initiatives to address the needs of economically disadvantaged and underrepresented New Yorkers.

After serving as Assistant Dean for Special Programs at SUNY, Mr. McConney became the long-time Chief of Staff for Buffalo Assemblyman Arthur O. Eve, who was Deputy Speaker of the New York State Assembly. A highly respected public policy strategist, Mr. McConney helped draft legislation that established SUNY’s EOP, one of the most successful college access programs in the country.

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.
Victor M. Pichardo is a Democratic member of the New York State Assembly representing 86th New York State Assembly District, which includes the University and Morris Heights, Mount Eden, Kingsbridge, Tremont, and Fordham sections of the Bronx.

He attended the State University of New York at Buffalo where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications.

Pichardo went on to work for U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer as a staff assistant and was eventually promoted to Community Outreach Coordinator. During his time with Senator Schumer, Pichardo worked on such important issues such as Comprehensive Immigration Reform, the DREAM Act and the Affordable Care Act.

After serving for 4 years in Senator Schumer’s office, Pichardo became an Associate Director of Public Relations at Mercy College. In 2012, Pichardo left Mercy to join New York State Senator Gustavo Rivera’s staff as Director of Community Affairs.

Shortly after Pichardo was elected to the New York State Assembly in a November 2013 special election, he has since advocated and served his community.
Ayuong Arop is a proud graduate of SUNY Polytechnic Institute. She was among the students recognized at the inaugural Norman R. McConney EOP Student Excellence Awards Ceremony in 2019. Since then, Ayuong has earned her B.S. in Biology, with a minor in Chemistry. She is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Dental Surgery at Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry in Nashville, Tennessee.

During her years at SUNY Polytechnic Institute, Ayuong stood out as a leader among her peers. She provided valuable support to incoming EOP students while serving as a peer mentor in the EOP Summer Institute for three consecutive years. Additionally, Ayuong served as a student ambassador, and tutored her peers in both chemistry and biology over the course of her time at SUNY Polytechnic.

Throughout her undergraduate years, Ayuong took advantage of opportunities for experiential learning in the medical field. She interned at Columbia University Medical Center in the Summer Health Professions Education Program, participated in the Health Careers Opportunity Program at Marquette University, and spent summer 2019 as a full-time academic researcher at SUNY Poly.

Ayuong’s academic record is equally impressive. She was named to the President’s Achievement List and Dean’s List all four years as a student at SUNY Poly.

While Ayuong’s accomplishments are impressive, they are also evidence of her resilience. Ayuong was born in Sudan during a contentious time period for civil liberties. Her family sought asylum in Egypt and later sought refuge in the United States. As a first-generation student fought tirelessly to access the resources necessary to succeed. She will apply the lessons she’s learned through her life experience to address health disparities and support marginalized populations.
Aesron Jeremiah, an EOP student at Farmingdale State College will earn his bachelor’s degree in Science, Technology and Society, with a minor in Aviation Administration in Fall 2020. Upon graduation, he plans to join the military and continue to pursue his dream of becoming an aeronautical engineer.

Mr. Jeremiah has distinguished himself academically by being named to the Dean's List and the EOP Scholar’s List. In 2016, he was awarded a Children’s Defense Fund-New York Beat the Odds scholarship which honors outstanding high school students who have excelled academically and as leaders in their communities despite facing difficult circumstances in their lives.

Aesron has served as a motivational speaker for homeless youth and volunteered to advise middle and high school students about selecting colleges and their majors. While a student at Farmingdale, he also participated in the Black Student Union and an EOP sponsored Diabetes Awareness Campaign.

In nominating Aesron for the Norman R. McConney, Jr. Award for EOP Student Excellence, his EOP counselor described him as “a young man with strong character, an optimistic vision and a great role model for his peers...he motivates others by sharing the challenging and victorious life experiences that elevated him to college success.”
# 2020 Student Honorees

*Inductees are alphabetized by campus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNY Adirondack</th>
<th>SUNY Canton</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courtney Powers</td>
<td>Serena DeJesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Administration AS</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson Falls, NY</td>
<td>Staten Island, NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University at Albany</th>
<th>SUNY Cobleskill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eliane Alexandre</td>
<td>Krista Gaynor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Biology</td>
<td>Bachelor of Technology, Animal Science - Canine Concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albany, NY</td>
<td>Forest Hills, NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alfred State College</th>
<th>Cornell University – College of Industrial and Labor Relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curlicia Smith</td>
<td>Henessy Pineda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Media and Animation (BS) &amp; Interdisciplinary Studies (BTech) with a concentration in Business</td>
<td>Industrial and Labor Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfred, NY</td>
<td>Brooklyn, NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binghamton University</th>
<th>SUNY Cortland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Celine Lodge</td>
<td>Edith Hernandez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing and Psychology</td>
<td>Double BA Sociology and Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronx, NY</td>
<td>Brentwood, NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The College at Brockport</th>
<th>SUNY Delhi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Bobadilla</td>
<td>Jessica Martinez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Event Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brockport, NY</td>
<td>Middle Village, NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNY Broome Community College</th>
<th>Dutchess Community College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Zolnoski</td>
<td>Nicodea Simms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts Individual Studies</td>
<td>Liberal Arts and Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binghamton, NY</td>
<td>Poughkeepsie, NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buffalo State College</th>
<th>Erie Community College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ko Meh</td>
<td>Chivas Suber-Savage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Substance Abuse Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo, NY</td>
<td>Buffalo, NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University at Buffalo</th>
<th>SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hector Sosa</td>
<td>Heaven Ortiz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology and Minor in Computer Science</td>
<td>Environmental Studies: Environmental Policy, Planning &amp; Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn, NY</td>
<td>Island Park, NY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2020 STUDENT HONOREES

FARMINGDALE STATE COLLEGE
Aesron Jeremiah
Science, Technology & Society with a minor in Aviation Administration
Brooklyn, NY

HUDSON VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
David Mejias
Individual Studies
Watervliet, NY

FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Ava Pina
Advertising and Marketing Communications
Albany, NY

JEFFERSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Rodman Marte
Criminal Justice A.S.
New York, NY

FINGER LAKES COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Gabrielle Young
Childhood Education
Shortsville, NY

MARITIME COLLEGE
Annamarie Ranni
Marine Transportation
Deer Park, NY

SUNY FREDONIA
Ithamare Joseph
Social Work
Brooklyn, NY

MONROE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Felix Mateo
Liberal Arts, Business/Entrepreneur
Rochester, NY

FULTON-MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Adnan Ahmed
Business Administration
New York, NY

SUNY MORRISVILLE
Dahmili Pierre Browne
Criminal Justice - BTech
Manhattan, NY

GENESEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Tzyonah Reese
Psychology Concentration: Liberal Arts and Sciences: Human Social Sciences
Batavia, NY

NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Gisselle Villatoro
Criminal Justice
Levittown, NY

SUNY FREDONIA
SUNY GENEO
Tshering Sherpa
International Relations and Psychology
Middle Village, NY

MARITIME COLLEGE
Annamarie Ranni
Marine Transportation
Deer Park, NY

SUNY NEW PALTZ
Peaches Wallace
Sociology - Human Services
New York, NY

NIAGARA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Elaine Champagne-Lewis
Human Services
Niagara Falls, NY
2020 STUDENT HONOREES

SUNY OLD WESTBURY
Kalief Shack Metellus
Politics, Economics and Law
Old Westbury, NY

SUNY ONEONTA
Teresa Gonzalez
Adolescence Education Major with a Spanish concentration
Stephentown, NY

ONONDAGA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Si Po Ra
Liberal Arts & Sciences: Humanities & Social Sciences
Syracuse, NY

SUNY ORANGE
Mecca Witherspoon
Criminal Justice - Police
Middletown, NY

SUNY OSWEGO
Fadi Gaye
Wellness Manager, BA. Minor in Biology
Bronx, NY

SUNY PLATTSBURGH
Marie Alcis
English Writing Arts and English Literature with a minor in Africana Studies
Plattsburgh, NY

SUNY POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
Giovanni Harvey
Communications and Information Design
Utica, NY

SUNY POTSDAM
Ramatu Muhammed
International Studies and Politics
Bronx, NY

PURCHASE COLLEGE
Brianna Agont
BA in Journalism and BFA in Communications
Mount Vernon, NY

SCHENECTADY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Amira Singletary
Associate in Culinary Arts
Schenectady, NY

STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY
Estrella Nunez
Psychology
Bronx, NY

SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Madimayamou Dansoko
Business Administration
Bayshore, NY

SUNY ULSTER
Michele Sandy
Criminal Justice
Highland, NY

WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Tamisis Mejia
Journalism A.S.
Bronx, NY
THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
NORMAN R. MCCONNEY, JR. Award for Educational Opportunity Program Student Excellence

The 2nd Annual
NORMAN R. MCCONNEY JR. AWARD FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM STUDENT EXCELLENCE