

SUNY EXCELS 2015-16 PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Section 1: Campus Alignment with SUNY Excels (the framework for the Power of SUNY 2020) and SUNY's overall focus on completion. In this section, please provide information about how your institution's current or proposed strategic focus (i.e., plan name, years covered, and a hyperlink to the plan) broadly aligns with the five priority areas of SUNY Excels and Chancellor Zimpher's System-wide completion goals.

Introduction

SUNY Empire State College is a post-traditional, comprehensive liberal arts college with 35 locations, providing a statewide presence across New York, as well as in locations abroad and online. The college focuses on innovative teaching and learning, where college faculty mentors guide learners through individualized degree programs.

With nearly 2,000 faculty and staff, SUNY Empire State College serves more than 19,000 students annually in 12 broad areas of study, offering degrees at the associates and bachelor's levels. The college also offers 15 degrees at the master's level, along with nursing programs at the bachelor's and master's level.

Mission / Standing

College Mission

SUNY Empire State College's dedicated faculty and staff offer innovative, alternative and flexible approaches to higher education that transform people and communities through rigorous programs that connect individuals' unique and diverse lives to their personal learning goals.

Our Commitments

As a community of learners at a public institution, the college is committed to:

- critical reflective inquiry that encourages active engagement in the local and global communities
- promoting social justice and a sustainable world through responsiveness to human and social circumstances
- ensuring a healthy democracy that recognizes and respects diversity in all its forms
- supporting the individual goals of our students in a collaborative mentoring environment
- acknowledging multiple avenues of learning and prior college-level learning through rigorous evaluation
- developing, implementing and assessing new approaches to learning that recognize and adapt to the diverse needs of our learners
- fostering respectful, creative and vibrant learning environments for students, faculty and staff
- supporting the scholarly, creative and professional goals of the college community
- serving students and the public with a high level of courtesy and effectiveness, advocating at the regional, state and national levels for the needs of our students and of higher education

- expanding access to affordable, high-quality educational opportunities through partnerships with employers, unions, government agencies, the armed forces, community organizations and other educational institutions.

Among our peers, SUNY Empire State College is regarded as a leader in online education, adult education, degree completion, prior learning assessment and transfer-friendliness, all with an open access mission. SUNY Empire State College ranks first among all state-operated campuses in overall student satisfaction, as measured by the ACT SUNY Student Opinion Survey (SOS) and has done so consistently at every administration of the SOS since 1994. Being first in SUNY in student satisfaction for 21 years straight is a strong statement about the unique mission of the college and the passion with which Empire State College faculty and staff fulfill that mission.

To remain competitive with its adult-serving peer institutions, SUNY Empire State College is undergoing a significant reorganization. We seek to streamline our processes and procedures, introduce greater consistency across our statewide footprint and honor our past, while looking forward to the future. Enhancing our facilities to introduce a branded look and feel, upgrading our technology to reflect better integration and better analytics and enhancing our academic programs will ensure going forward that the college continues to be first in serving adult learners in the state of New York.

Program Mix / Centers / Distinct Programs or Activities

Our academic program mix includes 12 broad undergraduate areas of study, within which students can design their own degree programs on a variety of subjects. SUNY Empire State College also offers a Bachelor of Science in Nursing for students who are already licensed as registered nurses. This RN to B.S.N. program responds to New York State's need for nurses with higher credentials and has been our fastest-growing program. The college also offers a Master of Science in Nursing program, introduced in the fall 2015 term.

We are currently developing plans for several advanced certificates in response to statewide industry needs.

SUNY Empire State College has been the leader within SUNY in online education and is exploring ways to expand and enhance our online programs.

A cornerstone of our offerings is our prior learning assessment, which assesses the college-level learning that adult students accrue over their lifetimes and shortens the time to degree for Empire's student body. Our students are largely part time and tend to transfer in significant amounts of credit to the college. Transfer-friendly policies and prior learning assessment reduce the opportunity costs associated with extending a student's education and helps students get their credential sooner, at considerably reduced cost.

Post-Graduation Success

SUNY Empire State College recognizes that SUNY System is negotiating an MOU with the New York State Labor Department, so that we will be able to better track the job attainment of our graduates. This data will supplement our existing alumni surveys with additional information that can be used for curriculum development and "closing the loop" on academic quality.

Alumni/Philanthropy

SUNY Empire State College's Office of Advancement takes a multi-tiered approach to engaging alumni, who are the college's best ambassadors. We are currently working on establishing appropriate benchmarks for our advancement efforts, as many of the college's graduates studied exclusively online and developed a different type of relationship with the college than students who attended a bricks-and-mortar institution. Our next major philanthropic campaign will begin in 2017-18.

Strategic Plan / Excels Goals

SUNY Empire State College will begin developing its new five-year strategic plan in spring 2016. Our five-year plan will take us through the 50th anniversary of the college's founding in 1971. The plan will correspond with our next capital campaign, which will also culminate in 2021. Our plan will align with the six big ideas of the Power of SUNY. We anticipate that our major goals/commitments will include:

- increasing our annual unduplicated headcount from more than 19,000 currently to nearly 22,300 by 2020
- expanding our academic offerings to include registered programs that meet the workforce needs of the state of New York; We make use of Bureau of Labor Statistics' projections and other data sources to develop new programs
- strengthening our infrastructure, academic offerings and creating a culture of continuous improvement, embodied in an experimenting, learning organization.
- strengthening transferability of our courses across SUNY by including them in the SUNY Seamless Transfer in multiple modes of delivery statewide.

SUNY Empire State College shares SUNY's overall commitment to SUNY's Completion Agenda and SUNY Excels. This will be reflected in reports on our strategic priorities and the development of our strategic plan.

We are setting goals in each SUNY Excels focus area as shown in section 2 of this report.

Environmental factors

SUNY Empire State College makes these commitments not only in the spirit of continuous improvement, but also in recognition of current challenges/responsibilities. There has been a significant drop nationally over the past five years in post-traditional learners returning to college. This is noticeable in both the for-profit sector, whose enrollments have seen sharp declines, and the public post-traditional sector.

Investment Fund

SUNY Empire State College has received approval of its white papers and has submitted complete proposals for SUNY's Investment Fund as follows:

- joint program and combined certificates in Construction Management with the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF)
- Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences
- a pilot to address attrition using **Full Measure** with SUNY Canton
- Smart Track Re-enroll to Complete Project (with 27 SUNY campuses, submitted by SUNY)

GUIDANCE FOR ATTACHMENT 1, SECTION 2

2.1 Access

1. **Full Enrollment Picture** – What are your plans for enrollment growth? As you think about your Planned Goals for 2018-19 and 2020-21, be sure to comment in the context of the overall system goal a path to 100,000 increase by 2020 (Open SUNY).

SUNY Empire State College is undergoing a significant reorganization in the interest of creating efficiencies in operations. We are revitalizing our institution: We have new leadership in our president, and in the divisions of Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, Advancement, and Information Technology. We are excited about our future and anticipate continuing to position ourselves for growth going forward. We will monitor our progress and continue to monitor the adult-student market. The college is working on models that will decrease internal competition for students and enhance the Empire State College experience for students. We are seeking to introduce greater consistency and less regionalization of our offerings and better leverage technology and our outstanding faculty and staff to take full advantage of our statewide footprint. SUNY Empire State College is the only SUNY institution with a physical presence throughout New York state. We have the ability to reach adult learners by blending high-quality online learning opportunities with in-person teaching, mentoring and student support services. This uniquely positions SUNY Empire State College to increase its market share in the post-traditional learner space.

Upgrading SUNY Empire State College's physical presence in the state is a key strategy that will foster growth. We expect aggressive growth going forward from 2016-17 with new buildings opening in 2016 in Rochester and in 2017 on Long Island. Our analysis suggests that there are large populations in these areas who have "some college but no degree" and significant life experience that will lend itself to prior learning assessment (PLA), which will help shorten the time to degree for adult learners.

A collaborative effort between our new CIO and new vice president for Enrollment Management is the roll-out of a new enterprise-level constituent relationship management system (CRM). The new CRM will allow for better and more accurate lead management, along with enhanced analytic capabilities, ensuring a greater yield rate at each step of the enrollment funnel. It will also allow us to track student progress throughout the lifecycle and provide early alerts for at-risk students, and intervention management tools. The college is revamping our website and developing more sophisticated analytics in the interest of improving yield rates.

Faculty are working with the Office of Academic Affairs to increase the number of registered programs, which will serve to make SUNY Empire State College offerings less confusing to prospective students. The college will revisit out-of-state tuition discounting to further take advantage of the SUNY brand in other states and will build better linkages with SUNY and OPEN SUNY. We anticipate we will grow from an annual unduplicated headcount of 19,140 students today to 22,300 students by 2020, for a cumulative growth rate of 16.5 percent over five years.

2. **NYS Residents Served by SUNY** – Describe your plans for increasing the number of NYS Residents served by your institution, including those served beyond what is reported in SUNY student data submissions. Use the Excel template to report these numbers.

Fully 91 percent of SUNY Empire State College's students are currently New York state residents; our growth will be heavily within New York, but will include out-of-state online students. We will aggressively seek to penetrate in-state markets and develop new programs. We will strengthen community college pathways. Additionally, SUNY Empire State College will soon be offering the only two

professional doctorates that are fully online in the state. As the college seeks to educate the population of New York, we will utilize Bureau of Labor Statistics projections that follow job growth in the state.

3. **Diversity** – Describe your plans to further strengthen the diversity and cultural competency of students at your institution, to reflect the increasing diversity of our population. Also describe your plans to further strengthen the diversity of faculty and staff at your institution. You will be provided state and regional diversity profiles for reference.

Embedded in SUNY Empire State College's core values is the goal of creating comprehensive and integrated approaches for ensuring employee diversity by promoting access, equity and inclusion in all aspects of college life. The following objectives will help to further strengthen the **diversity of faculty and staff** at the college.

The college will enhance its environment that respects differences, improves access to college resources and encourages inclusiveness, by addressing climate-related concerns regarding diversity and inclusion identified in faculty, staff and student climate surveys and work to improve morale in those areas of the college. The college will provide diversity and sensitivity training highlighting the college's service culture and hold collegewide dialogues to support diversity and inclusive practices. We will also conduct training to identify potential micro-aggressive dialogues that may hinder welcoming and inclusive practices.

SUNY Empire State College will increase the recruitment, representation and retention of diverse faculty, administrators and staff across the college by reviewing and modifying search practices to broaden diversity outreach areas for protected classes and by reviewing affirmative action goals with administrators at various college locations. In addition, we will establish and develop existing partnerships with diverse business and civic organizations to enhance equity and diversity by partnering with local colleges and universities to share best practices and resources, while continuing to explore Open Education initiatives whose outcomes focus on themes of diversity and inclusion.

With respect to our **curriculum**, SUNY Empire State College has piloted several cultural diversity initiatives and presented on various topics to support our minority population. One such project was titled, "How does cultural openness apply to adult learning? Examples from the Buffalo Project." The faculty mentors that worked on this initiative successfully impacted cultural understanding and the development of student-centered programming at SUNY Empire State College's Buffalo location. At the institutional level, we will work on ways to incorporate these best practices within our college.

In the college's various academic programs, cultural competencies are explicitly denoted – such as Cultural Studies, which states that this program will help to create "cross-national and cross-cultural understanding and that these skills are particularly important in the 21st century, when local and world cultures are increasingly intertwined....(and that) linguistic and cultural competency opens numerous opportunities to experience and contributes to globalization and enhances learners' professional and personal growth."

The college is also looking to strengthen diverse cultural competencies through grant activity, such as the SUNY Office of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion grant received earlier this year titled "MIA-Veteran Specific Content-Post-Grad Degrees." This grant is aimed at our veteran population and its specific needs that will help to increase our current enrollment and retention efforts.

Additionally, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, the School of Nursing prepares nurses to integrate knowledge from the nursing, biological and social sciences, as well as the humanities, to provide culturally competent care to individuals, families and communities. At the graduate level, students are prepared to design patient-centered and culturally responsive approaches to promote

optimal health outcomes. These outcomes are accomplished by embedding content, infusing learning activities and requiring assessments focused on cultural competence throughout the curricula. Examples of where this occurs are the Community Health Nursing course and the Advanced Health Assessment course at the undergraduate level and the Contemporary Issues in Health Care course and the Population Health, Human Diversity and Social Issues course at the graduate level.

With respect to **students**, SUNY Empire State College has achievement gaps similar to other colleges and universities for minority student retention and graduation rates. We are introducing a new Diversity Task Force designed to examine and identify how we close gaps between majority and minority student achievement. The college has initiatives underway, such as the Black Male Initiative, which started in our New York City location. This peer-mentoring program provides enhanced services for African-American men. Early indications suggest that this program has led to enhanced retention; however, more in-depth study of the program is needed. Faculty at the college have noticed that Hispanic women tend to request less prior learning assessment credit than their Caucasian counterparts, which has led to an outreach effort specifically for that population to involve them in prior learning assessment. Studies have demonstrated increased retention among students who use this tool.

The School of Nursing's faculty and leadership also recognize the importance of diversifying the nursing workforce, so that it better represents the populations it serves. This is being accomplished through targeted recruitment, along with retention strategies. For example, one of the college's New York City-based recruiters, who is bilingual (English/Spanish), has accompanied the associate dean of nursing to two Hispanic Nursing Association outreach events in Manhattan and Northern New Jersey to describe the college's online RN to B.S.N. program and recruit for it. Additionally, all nursing program-specific literature used by recruiters is being translated into Spanish.

Throughout the college, we have highly productive student clubs that provide peer mentoring, tutoring and support to many minority students, such as the Black Male Initiative: <http://www.esc.edu/metropolitan-new-york/bmi/what-we-are/>, The LGBTQA Club: <http://esclgbtqa.org/our-mission/>, The Minority Students in Action Club: <http://sunyempiremsia.com/> and the Students Veteran and Military Club: <http://www.esc.edu/veteran-military/veterans-military-club/>.

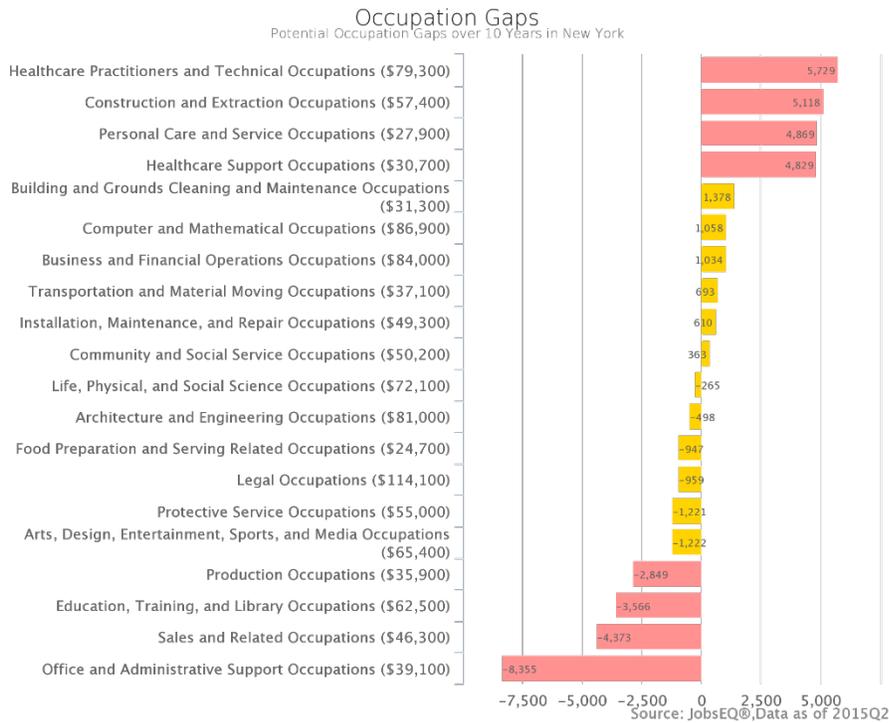
Finally, the college tracks relevant data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, which will allow us to track progress from the students' perspective on issues of diversity and inclusiveness.

4. **Capacity** – Describe your plans to improve the alignment of programs and course capacity with need and demand, including expanded online delivery through Open SUNY.

SUNY has a goal of 100,000 new learners and 150,000 graduates per year, an increase from 93,000 currently. In order to contribute to that goal, SUNY Empire State College must grow. Working with the Empire State College faculty, we will realign our academic structures to meet workforce and marketplace needs. We are using a vendor product (JobsEQ) to examine employment growth opportunities statewide, along with degree production and competition from other institutions; our ongoing assessments of program inquiries, student headcounts within each area of study (major) and numbers of graduates in each area are created by Decision Support and reviewed annually by Academic Affairs and Enrollment Management for planning purposes.

The diagram below shows occupational gaps projected over the next 10 years for New York state. This suggests that health care and construction are the largest occupational growth areas. SUNY Empire State College is working to expand its capacity in both nursing and allied health-related education, as

well as in construction management. We are seeking support from SUNY through grants to achieve these objectives.



2.2 Completion

- 5. Completions** – Describe your campus efforts to increase the total number of degrees and certificates awarded. As you think about your Planned Goals for 2018-19 and 2020-21 (see Attachment 2), be sure to comment on your institution’s plans in the context of the overall system goal of 150K by 2020.

In the last three years, SUNY Empire State College has added 21 “stackable” graduate certificates that may be part of a full master’s degree program. The college has added six combined undergraduate and graduate programs, making the pathway from undergraduate to graduate education more clear. We anticipate growth in these programs.

SUNY Empire State College is participating in the U.S. Department of Education’s Experimental Sites for competency-based education in the area of limited direct assessment. The literature suggests that competency-based learning may help to shorten time to degree completion. To that end, we are currently engaged in developing competency-based learning courses for degree program concentrations in information systems or information technology. The courses launched in fall 2015.

As the lead partner in SUNY Complete, SUNY Empire State College piloted several strategies and processes to encourage stop-outs to return to college and complete their degrees. We are continuing with some of those strategies to improve retention and graduation rates. As of this writing, outreach efforts have led to the graduation of 31 students who were previously stopped out, with another 24 students resuming studies and registered, or with plans to register for their final term at the college. Researchers at SUNY Empire State College have been studying the literature on stop-outs. At the department level, there are localized efforts to undertake outreach to students who have stopped out. We seek both to track the effectiveness of such efforts, as well as identify stop-outs most likely to re-enroll to ensure maximum return on such initiatives.

- 6. Student Achievement/Success (SAM)** – As you know, SUNY was the first system in the country to adopt the Student Achievement Measure (SAM). Briefly comment on student achievement overall and your campus efforts to enhance student achievement in the component parts of retention, persistence, graduation and transfer.

SUNY Empire State College was one of the earliest campuses to provide data to SAM in support of this initiative. As the vast majority of Empire State College students are not first-time, full-time freshman enrolled in the fall term, SAM provides broader measures of the success of Empire State College students. We have also developed our own measures of tracking students using National Student Clearinghouse data.

- 7. Graduation Rates** – Describe campus goals and plans to increase graduation rates at both the four- and six-year level for four year for baccalaureate institutions and at the two and three-year level for associate institutions. Compared to peers, within and outside SUNY, detail steps you are taking to continue to improve. You can also discuss your institution’s involvement in SUNY-wide initiatives such as seamless transfer, degree works, and Open SUNY, and the anticipated impact on your undergraduate graduation rates. Please include efforts to narrow gaps between URM and non-URM.

As the only SUNY institution that offers open admissions, is adult-serving and heavily online, we have no SUNY peers for graduation rate comparisons; however, compared to open access peer institutions, we perform better than average, but are striving to improve.

SUNY Empire State College has been a campus leader in the Open SUNY initiative since its inception and has shared its best practices broadly within the SUNY system, including a three-year reassignment of a faculty and professional employee to serve as project managers for Open SUNY Student Supports initiatives. In their reassignment, they have worked with Open SUNY leadership, campus coordinators and other interested stakeholders to gather and disseminate input, best practices, analysis of options with respect to the core pillars of the student supports initiatives, and to ensure that the campuses meet each of these expectations: concierge model, online tutoring, readiness assessments, 24/7 help desk (as it relates to student support elements), online orientation and early alerts. An outcome of our first OPEN SUNY Institutional Readiness process (and based on a recommendation from undergraduate faculty), we adopted the Quality Matters rubric for course design; a national standard for quality.

Approximately 60 percent of SUNY Empire State College students are already taking classes online and the college has gone through rigorous self-evaluations of our online programs and support systems to ensure continuing quality. It is our hope that by strategically looking at all available programs and continuous improvement in student supports, our persistence rates will increase.

SUNY Empire State College’s academic programs meet the requirements of the SUNY Board of Trustees Resolution on Seamless Transfer Requirements. Our team continues to progress with the Early Transfer Review (ETR) project which is fundamental to the functioning of Degree Works and we are following a time table which should be complete in 2016. Once the ETR has been completed, it will make the college more accessible for students seeking clearer pathways to Empire State College.

Building on our current student information center, the college will put in place a one-stop student success center that provides a case management ticketing system to ensure that students are provided the service they need as directly and expeditiously as possible. The center will be in place by fall 2016. Please see our response to section 3 (diversity), which addresses URM/non-URM students. While we

seek to drive up our overall graduation rates, we also want to develop better intelligence about sub-populations to intervene where URM students drop/stop out.

8. **Time to Degree** – Describe plans to reduce average time-to-degree. Does your campus have a finish-in-4 or finish-in-2 guarantee program? If not, what are your plans to implement one? If yes, report on participation and the effect the program is having on time to degree.

Students transfer significant amounts of credit to a SUNY Empire State College degree and the majority attend part time. “Finish-in-4” programs make sense for traditional, first-time, full-time cohorts, but are not relevant for us. However, our new CRM and plans for learning management system analytics will allow the college to follow up more readily with students who display risk behaviors; our outreach to students who are close to graduation/SUNY Complete/Reverse Transfer has led to a number of students graduating with more on track to do so. We seek to reduce the length of stop-out behavior, because it has opportunity costs for students.

Fifty percent of all Empire State College students earn approximately 23 prior learning assessment credits for their verifiable college-level learning. This saves 1.25 semesters for full-time students or three semesters for part-time students, significantly reducing time-to-degree completion. The total dollar savings equals \$22,968,000, or an average of \$5,891 per student.

2.3 Success

9. **SUNY Advantage** – this represents campus selected initiatives and programs that make up the set of things that go beyond basic curriculum to support student future success (e.g., hands-on research, applied learning, study abroad/ multi-cultural experiences, enhanced co-curricular supports and opportunities, etc.). Please describe your plans for improvement in this area. What does your campus uniquely offer that you feel is critical to student success? Describe your efforts to increase participation for all students, including both URM and non-URM. In addition to campus-specific efforts, comment on plans to participate in SUNY-wide enabling initiatives and projects.

SUNY Empire State College seeks to provide more co-curricular activities to enhance students’ skill sets and employability. For example, the college hosts an annual **Student Academic Conference**. This two-day conference hosts students from across New York state, the country and the world, to network with fellow students, faculty and staff in a face-to-face environment. Students and alumni can also present their multi-disciplinary academic and creative work through workshops, panel discussions, artistic showcases and poster presentations. This conference bring students together from all geographic and academic areas to learn from each other. We aim to provide an arena for developing community among our students, considering that the majority of them are engaged in some type of online learning. This October, we will be holding our 11th annual Student Academic Conference and each year we see an increase in attendance and participation. In addition to the student presentation, the college offers online workshops in proposal writing, how to create an effective multimedia presentation and tips on oral presentation skills.

Our Office of Veteran and Military Education serves military and veteran students and holds memberships in CCME, NYSACME and SUNY-wide veterans’ organizations. This office has a NYS Division of Veterans Affairs veteran counselor on site; does routine preliminary reviews of potential military and institution transfer credits; supports a Student Veteran and Military Club (SVMC) that sends a student member to the yearly Student Veterans of America conference; coordinates events locally and

statewide (Mil/Vet Family Fun Day @ Darien Lake and Great Escape, Veteran's Day events); works with community organizations, such as Adopt a Soldier; Adopt a Platoon; Saratoga County Veteran's 5K; and Saratoga County's Peer-to-Peer Program); acknowledges military service with a Veterans Day letter from the college president; and presents red, white, and blue cords and service coins at graduations.

The college's Center for Distance Learning (CDL) has a **Student and Alumni Advisory Group** that has been active in engaging the CDL community in initiatives to promote a sense of community. Specifically, they have taken an active role in community service projects and recently hosted a 'Packing Party' for Operation Adopt a Soldier. More than 1,000 items were collected to pack boxes to send to military members overseas. CDL also has been working to engage students utilizing the online community space in Mahara with focused discussion areas. Work is underway to increase the presence of this group across the college by recruiting members from the college's various physical locations to promote events and activities that are of interest to everyone.

SUNY Empire State College is responding to the needs of post-traditional students by offering flexibility in **career services**. The college added a new collegewide career development coordinator to provide leadership to this vital college function. We are building online capacity and finding ways to involve our alumni network to help students advance their careers. Student appointments and presentations are available in the evenings and on weekends to accommodate schedules for adult learners. The collegewide career services website was updated recently to focus on a four-stage career planning process. We offer resources for students to conduct personal assessments on skills, workplace values and interests. An increased awareness of internships and applied learning opportunities are being shared, so students can pursue experiences that can be helpful as they move toward the next step of their career. Finally, job search resources are available both through a collegewide job posting system and other job databanks. The college also has contracted with Purple Briefcase to provide enhanced career services.

Empire State College has **student residencies using a cohort model and blended learning** (face-to-face meetings with an online component). When students attend the residency, they are exposed to additional value-added experiences: prominent guest speakers, career counseling, tutoring and academic workshops, and professional and personal development activities.

In keeping with the objectives of SUNY EXCELS, Empire State College's **International Programs** is uniquely situated to support and enrich learning beyond the basic curriculum by giving students opportunities to engage in meaningful international experiences via various learning modalities, including online collaborative studies and short-term study abroad. An example is our International Business Field Study in Turkey. This innovative hybrid study brings students together from two SUNY institutions (ESC and Cortland) and one Turkish university (Anadolu University) in a highly collaborative and experiential learning environment. In an innovative use of the COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) model, students participate in an online course, as well as a 10-day intensive field study in Turkey. In the process, students move from theory to practice, from the classroom to real life, applying conceptual knowledge generated from their studies to discussions with high-level executives in the field. Working as teams composed of members from each university, students create a business plan in the context of the macroeconomic and cultural dimensions of Turkey as an emerging market. Participants have consistently included URM students and there is a wide diversity of ages. We look forward to expanding opportunities such as this to engage larger numbers of students across the college and throughout the SUNY system.

10. Financial Literacy – Please describe campus efforts, through SUNY Smart Track and other initiatives, to promote smart student borrowing, decrease student default rates, and increase the financial knowledge of all students. Be sure to document the impact your efforts are having on the measures you are tracking to support performance in this area.

SUNY Empire State College has implemented a number of initiatives to promote smart student borrowing, decrease student default rates and increase the financial knowledge of all students. The financial aid office has partnered with EdFinancial Services for our default management initiatives. We work closely with EdFinancial Services to determine which students are at most risk of default and, through a monthly report card from EdFinancial Services, are able to change the population of targeted students if we notice a potential increase in a particular at-risk group. We decided to partner with EdFinancial due to its ability to fine tune the type of service we were requesting, ability to work within a price point that the financial aid office could afford and its commitment to respecting our students and educating them about their options. Our 2011 2-year official default rate is 7.2 percent and our 2011 three-year official default rate is 9.1 percent. These rates are currently below both the national average default rate and the New York state default rate and we hope to continue this trend well into the future.

The financial aid office remains committed to student success. We offer a brief online video orientation for viewing at all times and refer students only to non-predatory providers. Our office provides email outreach each term to students who have loans to remind them to view their information on National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), so that they can continue to be reminded of their overall debt load, and encourage students to consider decreasing their loans for the upcoming term. Students who enter the term in federal aid warning are sent a midway progress check reminder encouraging them to speak with a financial aid counselor, if they are experiencing difficulty in the term. Likewise, we send a notification to students who are nearing Pell or loan aggregate limits, so that we can discuss options available to try to ensure that we keep the path to graduation open despite financial barriers. Our office continues to pinpoint potential opportunities to increase student knowledge. For students who are administratively withdrawn, the registrar's office provides notification of the student's course outcome prior to the financial aid office recalculating federal aid. Likewise, the business services office ensures timely billing in the event that aid is recalculated. Our office will continue to evaluate the services we offer and listen to our consumers to determine how we can be proactive in meeting their needs. According to the 2015 SUNY Student Opinion Survey, our financial aid office ranks first in student satisfaction among all state-operated campuses.

2.4 Inquiry

10. Total Sponsored Activity – Please describe your plans to increase total sponsored activity.

As a teaching institution, our goals for sponsored activity focus on institutional grants that reflect our mission of access, innovation and teaching effectiveness. Future initiatives aimed at increasing our sponsored programs activity are underway, including hiring of a new director of sponsored programs with increased scope and responsibilities that will help to grow this important area of the college. Areas in which the college will focus on more in the coming year are:

- **Fulbright Scholars.** With the college's most recent Fulbright Fellow announced, we will encourage more faculty to apply to this prestigious fellowship.
- **NIH Fellow.** A faculty member in nursing was chosen to be an NIH Fellow and will be at NIH next month learning more about applying for NIH grants. We will encourage her to apply, as well as other faculty members.

- **Environmental Sciences.** Building on a SUNY Research Foundation grant of \$5,000 and IITG grants, we now have a summer course with a residency that emphasizes student research in environmental sciences. These faculty are all intending to apply for a NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates grant. This could also be attached to the citizen science work in which the college has participated.
- The college's restructuring will position us to seek funding for our student success initiatives and competency-based curriculum.

Current sponsored programs activity includes the recently completed, two-year Gates-funded grant on Adaptive Learning. Faculty from the School for Graduate Studies led the project with the acting dean for the Center for Distance Learning, along with assistance from institutional research and four adjunct faculty. For more than a year, half of the sections (400 students per year) utilized adaptive software as a way to personalize the learning with the support of technology and learning science. While gains were modest, faculty reported students coming better prepared to discussions and more faculty time being applied to more significant learning areas.

The college was recently granted two Innovative Instruction Technology Grants (IITG) that offer promise for future grant work in international online studies and ADA-compliant online coursework. For the second year in a row, SUNY Empire State College was a recipient of a Next Generation Learning Challenges grant (funded by the Gates Foundation) to participate in the Breakthrough Models Incubator. Our project focuses on continuing to develop competency-based learning opportunities for our Information Technology students. Three courses are being redesigned in a competency-based learning mode and piloted currently in the fall 2015 term.

Thanks to a SUNY High Needs Grant, the offices of Integrated Technology Services and Academic Affairs have joined forces to create the Academic Research Network, a virtual lab that allows students to access specialized software through the cloud. Science, Math and Technology faculty are currently piloting the use of this virtual lab in two courses.

Empire State College remains an active participant in the Gates Foundation Personalized Learning Network (PLN), a network of institutions that are involved in a range of projects in the areas of competency-based learning, adaptive learning technologies and other approaches to scaling personalized learning for nontraditional and at-risk student populations.

In December, the dean of the School for Graduate Studies finished work for a \$536,000 three-year grant provided by the Graduate Management Admissions Council's Management Education for Tomorrow fund. The funds were provided to develop the Veteran and Military Pathway to the MBA, which included developing the course "Leading in a Civilian Context" and the articulation of ACE evaluations of military education into the MBA curriculum.

The S-TEN (SUNY Teacher Education Network) granted the campus \$40,000 and we received the no-contract extension through June. We have utilized the monies to invest in technology, support our clinically rich partnerships, bring in consultants on recent educational changes, and provide direct student support for the new teacher certification exams in the form of practice tests and live webinars.

The college will continue to showcase the efforts of its faculty and staff and is committed to increasing grant opportunities by more explicitly announcing opportunities to its employees.

11. **Student hands-on research, entrepreneurship, etc.** – As measured by courses in SUNY Institutional Research Information System (SIRIS) that include hands-on research,

entrepreneurship, etc. SUNY is just beginning to collect this information through SIRIS but it will take effort on the part of campuses to get reliable data. Please describe your plans for promoting hands-on research and entrepreneurship, and your efforts to accurately capture this data in your SIRIS data submission.

As a post-traditional institution, SUNY Empire State College is unique in how we build pathways for student research and entrepreneurship. As our students are typically working adults, we seek to provide applied research and scholarship opportunities for students with a focus on solving real world problems.

Since 2008, faculty and staff at SUNY Empire State College have been exploring citizen science projects as an innovative teaching approach for nontraditional students. In 2011, we received a \$95K USDA NIFA Higher Education Challenge grant to develop the Beetle Project, which is a place-based, technology-enhanced student research experience. The project involves developing a virtual map of the life stages and population densities of Japanese beetles across New York state, using data collected by students distributed throughout the state. By participating in the project, students learn about their local climate, ways their local climate may be changing and the impacts of a non-native species on their local environment.

In 2013 the Beetle Project team received an Innovative Instruction Technology Grant to develop the first Citizen Science in SUNY conference, designed to encourage faculty across SUNY to develop citizen science projects as a vehicle for undergraduate research.

The college's annual Environmental Studies residency is based at SUNY Cortland's Camp Huntington at Raquette Lake and provides another opportunity for undergraduate research experiences. One of the residency study activities is a project for long-term monitoring of wildlife found at the site; another is a project that maps habitat changes at the site over time.

SUNY Empire State College and Corning Community College (CCC) are in preliminary discussions regarding the possibility of offering science programs for students at CCC. This collaboration would share the expertise of our faculty with the physical laboratory space of the community college. Two ESC students have presented at the SUNY Graduate Research symposia and have received dean's medals for their work. An ESC faculty member currently serves as campus liaison for the SUNY Graduate Research Symposium and as the founding chair of the Graduate Student Research and Professional Development Committee. The committee's role is to support and encourage graduate students in their research and professional development activities, to share opportunities for funding and conference participation; to develop a collaborative research community and encourage graduate faculty to involve their students in research; to bring graduate students together to create social and educational opportunities around the topic of research and professional development; and to disseminate graduate student, faculty and alumni research and professional development accomplishments through a biannual newsletter, webinars and university and college events and conferences.

The Community and Economic Development program encourages community- and organization-based student projects and collaborates with organizations within the state to develop opportunities for students.

Decision Support at SUNY Empire State College will work closely with our Office of Academic Affairs, the Registrar's Office and SUNY IR to ensure that our SIRIS submissions contains fields that characterize registration level data, including "instruction type," which could include values for hands-on learning including practicums, internships, advanced graduate research and cooperative education.

12. **Scholarship, Discovery and Innovation** – Some of the SUNY Excels metrics will require system and campus shared commitment to report and collect the data. While reporting on your plans

for this metric, we would appreciate your comments and perspective on the data collection and reporting for this measure.

As an institution primarily focused on teaching, rather than the creation of new knowledge, our Office of Academic Affairs works to ensure a balance in expectations for faculty teaching, research and service. The college's current strategic plan includes the objective, "Build and sustain a comprehensive, coherent approach to the scholarship of mentoring and learning, other mission-related research and disciplinary research and ways of sharing and disseminating the results." Toward that end, the college licensed Activity Insight, which is software developed by Digital Measures to assist colleges in recording and managing information on faculty professional activity, including scholarship. Currently, the college is reassessing the system and the kind of support needed to manage it effectively.

At an individual level, faculty report their scholarly and other professional activity annually in a conference with the dean. Faculty seeking reappointment, continuing appointment or promotion create an electronic portfolio including evidence of scholarly productivity. This electronic review file (ERF) is available to peer and administrative reviewers. Each faculty member's ERF contains documents from all prior reviews, as well as the current one, so longitudinal information is available for the individual. The information in faculty ERFs is not aggregated or quantified, but is used instead to guide the professional development and monitor the performance of faculty undergoing formal personnel review. Tenured faculty go through a triennial developmental review that includes review of scholarly activity, but the documents created in the process are used only by the faculty member and dean.

The Center for Mentoring and Learning (CML), the college's faculty development center, is being reconstituted to enhance the digital fluency and online pedagogy of faculty at the college. Currently, it has a website that publishes information about scholarship. There is a database of faculty and staff experts that can be searched by name or topic. Faculty are invited to provide information about their scholarly products for inclusion in a bibliography of faculty publications. The CML website has a section on scholarship and research that informs faculty of funding opportunities and publication outlets. From that section, faculty may join community discussion forums on such topics as scholarly projects in progress and writing for publication. Through the CML site, faculty can connect to Scholar Universe, a national database of faculty profiles designed to assist faculty to secure grants and find partners for collaboration in research.

While the college has extensive information on the scholarly activity of its faculty, we are examining methods to ensure that we have complete information that is organized, accessible, searchable and capable of providing an aggregate view of faculty achievement.

2.5 Engagement

13. **START-UP New York and beyond** (businesses started / jobs created) – Explain how linkages with business support the academic mission of the campus, citing specific metrics (as applicable) such as the number of experiential learning experiences provided to students, etc.

SUNY Empire State College is not formally engaged in a START-UP NY partnership, largely due to regulatory restrictions; however, the college works with government agencies and businesses throughout New York state to evaluate professional learning evaluations (PLEs) with their employees. Further, the college remains up-to-date on the START-UP NY initiative, so that if appropriate opportunities arise, we can engage. PLE along with coursework can be delivered at the employers' place of business to enable adult students to study and be evaluated where they work. This is part of the

college's mission to provide high-quality, affordable and flexible education to working adults. PLE is a college credit designation determined by SUNY Empire State College for college-level learning acquired outside of a traditional educational setting and is currently offered at institutions including:

Center for Disability Services (CFDS): This agency, which serves people with developmental disabilities in the Capital District, has about 2,400 employees, many of whom already study with, or have graduated from, SUNY Empire. Our partnership seeks to coordinate the education of these employees and to create opportunities for new employees to earn or advance their degree. Through these efforts, CFDS hopes to increase the number of employees they can promote to supervisory and management positions. SUNY Empire's services include mentoring and teaching a cohort of CFDS employees to create a learning community within the agency providing on-site instruction offered at times that are optimally convenient to the students from CFDS; assisting students in the completion of their individualized prior learning assessment using the Global Learning Qualifications Framework and, in the 2015/16 AY, developing a new PLE related to the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities' professional competencies that all CFDS employees must meet.

AIM Services: This agency serves people with developmental disabilities in Saratoga Springs and surrounding areas. It seeks to increase the leadership skills of current employees in order to promote them to supervisory and management positions, and create internship opportunities to prepare current students for future entry-level positions. SUNY Empire's services include providing on-site instruction offered at times that are optimally convenient to the students from AIM Services assisting students in the completion of their individualized PLA using the Global Learning Qualifications Framework and, in the 2015/16 AY, developing a new PLE related to the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities' professional competencies that all AIM Services employees must meet. In addition, SUNY Empire faculty are developing a new course in leadership, through which students can concurrently satisfy training needs of AIM Services and earn credit toward a Human Services degree.

GLOBALFOUNDRIES: This company has significant staffing needs in both the advancement of current employees and training new employees. SUNY Empire State College, through its work on the TAACCCT grant, has coordinated with five community colleges to recommend a PLE for GLOBALFOUNDRIES' class-based and on-the-job training needs. This credit will address the needs of employees seeking advancement in both managerial and technical fields and will allow them to advance their studies at SUNY Empire and other SUNY campuses.

14. **Alumni / Philanthropic Support** – As you know, across SUNY there is increased and focused attention on creating and strengthening a culture of philanthropy and alumni engagement. Describe your plans and strategies for enhancing alumni engagement in campus activities, advocacy projects, and student support, as well as your plans to increase the level of alumni support and donorship. Additionally, briefly describe the case statement and status of your (current or planned) capital campaign including individual campus goals, and how the work that your institution has been doing aligns with the system-wide, multi-year target of \$5B target by 2020-21.

SUNY Empire State College's Office of Advancement has identified seven key areas of focus in support of the SUNY Excels Performance Improvement plan.

1. **Building and engaging the SUNY Empire State College Foundation Board.** Recruiting a talented and committed Foundation board with significant philanthropic capacity is crucial for increasing the Foundation's impact and preparing for a future capital campaign.

2. **Enhancing our base of unrestricted support.** The Fund for Empire State College: Successful fundraising programs require a diverse range of supporters at all levels to sustain their efforts and support our major and leadership giving activities. Building on our previous success, we will continue to refine and execute a comprehensive engagement and solicitation program focusing on unrestricted support of the institution.
3. **Building the prospect pool for individual and major gifts.** Establishing a robust pipeline of identified, qualified and engaged individual and major gift prospects is key to our fundraising success and to preparing us for a future capital campaign.
4. **Broadening relationships and support among corporations and foundations.** Establishing a corporate- and foundation-relations program that works closely with the Office of Sponsored Programs will be key to leveraging partnerships and maximizing support for the college's mission of open education, research and service to underserved communities.
5. **Investing in our staff and expanding our knowledge of best practices.** In the increasingly competitive philanthropic marketplace, effectively engaging and soliciting our supporters requires that we employ the latest innovations and practices to ensure that our message is heard. With the migration to more online students who demonstrate less institutional affinity and shifting trends in alumni giving, many traditionally successful fundraising and engagement strategies are simply no longer effective and it is incumbent upon us to remain innovative and up to date on advancing technological trends and their impact upon advancement.
6. **Engaging our alumni and student populations.** The Office of Alumni and Student Relations is the driving force for engagement opportunities for alumni and students and serves as the first point of contact and sets the tone for all future outreach. We employ a multi-tiered outreach approach including in-person events, as well as online and print communication, with a heavy emphasis on leveraging social media. We will engage alumni and students in the life of the college and ensure that we always listen to them, implement their feedback, provide a myriad of services and tell their story.
7. **Enhancing our comprehensive stewardship program.** Gifts to the Empire State College Foundation have a direct and positive impact on the college's programs and students. Alumni and board feedback clearly indicate that demonstrating this impact to both individual donors and the broader alumni and college community is the most important thing we can do to encourage their new and continued support.

Campaign Planning. Empire State College concluded its last comprehensive campaign effort, The Learner's First Campaign, in 2008, exceeding its original goal of \$51.5 million by \$21.7 million for a total of \$73.3 million. We are in the initial planning stages for our next campaign and anticipate launching the quiet phase of the effort in late 2017/early 2018. The goal, funding priorities and case documentation will be developed and finalized over the next 18 to 24 months.

15. **Civic Engagement.** While reporting on your plans for this metric, we would appreciate your comments and perspective on data collection and reporting for this measure; for example, does your campus measure civic or community engagement, how do you measure it, how would you recommend we define, collect and measure this item, etc.?

SUNY Empire State College’s unique mission and educational model emphasizes social equity, social justice and community service. While we do not currently measure civic and/or community engagement, our core values create opportunities for students for civic engagement. To measure these opportunities, we will utilize Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) VALUE initiative Civic Engagement rubric to identify courses that meet the following expectations: Diversity of Communities and Cultures, Analysis of Knowledge, Civic Identity and Commitment, Civic Communication, Civic Action and Reflection and Civic Contexts/Structures. These expectations overlap Office of Academic Affairs’ College Learning Goals of Social Responsibility. The Civic Engagement outcome will be added to the 2016-2017 academic year assessment cycle and will utilize the ESC’s GEAR outcomes assessment process. This will ensure that direct student samples are collected, analyzed using the VALUE rubric and outcomes reported to the college community.

In addition, there are questions on both the SUNY Student Opinion Survey, NSSE and our in-house Alumni Survey that address civic engagement.

16. Economic Impact. While reporting on your plans for this metric, we would appreciate your comments and perspective on the data collection and reporting for this measure; for example, does your campus measure economic impact, how do you measure it, are you planning a study, etc.?

SUNY Empire State College uses JobsEQ developed by Chmura Economics and Analytics to measure our economic impact on New York state. We evaluate our economic impact on the state on an annual basis. For example, SUNY Empire State College has a budget of approximately \$98 million for 2015-16. As the table below demonstrates, our total economic impact on the state of New York will be roughly \$172 million for the upcoming fiscal year.

	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Employment	1,509	149	501	2,159
Sales/Output	\$97,859,499	\$28,712,822	\$45,076,818	\$171,649,139
Multipliers for Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools				
	Direct	Indirect	Induced	Total
Employment	1.00	0.10	0.33	1.43
Sales/Output	1.00	0.29	0.46	1.75
Source: JobsEQ®	Data as of 2015Q2			

Additional elements the college will explore with respect to economic impact on New York state include the career mobility afforded to graduates of the college. Our students learn where they live and stay where they learn as a general rule; as adults, they are largely members of the communities in which they live and tend to stay in New York after graduating. Approximately 70 percent of our living alumni live in New York state. They contribute to the tax base of the state and, by furthering their educations, often move from being underemployed to fully employed. We look forward to collaborating with SUNY on analyzing workforce data obtained from the New York State Labor Department so that we will be able to validate these observations.