



SUNY Office of Government Relations Newsletter

Dear Friend,

Welcome to the June edition of the SUNY Office of Government Relations Newsletter.

With the conclusion of the state legislative session, we reflect on an incredibly productive season for SUNY and public higher education in New York State. The end of session marks the culmination of months of advocacy and collaboration - all focused on strengthening SUNY's pillars of student success; research and scholarship; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and economic development and upward mobility. SUNY is grateful for the continued historic support from Governor Hochul and the State Legislature for our students, faculty, staff, and campuses.

June also marks Pride Month, a time to celebrate the diversity, resilience, and contributions of the LGBTQ+ community across our campuses and beyond. SUNY remains committed to fostering inclusive environments where every student, faculty member, and staff member can thrive.

As summer begins, we look forward to continuing our work with our federal partners in Washington, D.C. and preparing for the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Will Schwartz
Vice Chancellor for Government Relations



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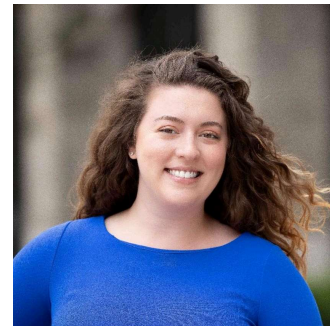
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SUNY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

- Chancellor King and SUNY Board of Trustees Appoint Leaders for Hudson Valley, Herkimer County, and Columbia-Greene Community Colleges. [Read more](#)
- Chancellor King and SUNY Board of Trustees Approve Steps to Strengthen Community Colleges. [Read more](#)
- Governor Hochul Announces Expansion of Nation Leading Retention and Completion Program to Help More New Yorkers Remain in College and Earn Their Degree. [Read more](#)
- New York's Investment in ACE and ASAP is Solving the National College Dropout Problem. [Read more](#)
- SUNY Chancellor King Celebrates Student Excellence in the Arts. [Read more](#)
- SUNY Chancellor King Launches SUNY Reconnect Tour. [Read more](#)
- SUNY Chancellor King Announces First SUNY Maritime Pay It Forward Fund Class. [Read more](#)
- City and State published its 2025 Albany Power 100, including influential New York figures such as Chancellor King, Governor Hochul, Speaker Heastie, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and other important leaders in state and federal government. [Read more](#)
- Statement from Chancellor King and SUNY Board of Trustees on Recognition of Juneteenth. [Read more](#)
- SUNY Chancellor King Announces Nominations Open for the [Harvey Milk Scholarship Award](#) for Student Leadership in LGBTQIA+ Community. [Read more](#)

TRIVIA

Of the following, who is a SUNY alum? Scroll to the bottom to find out!

Harvey Milk

Edie Falco

Al Roker

Hakeem Jeffries

All of the above

A LOOK BACK

AAPI Summit

SUNY participated in the NYS Asian Pacific American Task Force's second annual New York State AAPI Summit at the end of May, during which we celebrated Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Month. This year's summit was themed "Margins to Mainstream," celebrating the accomplishments and historical significance of Asian Americans. SUNY hosted the "Executive Leadership in Higher Education: The Impact of SUNY's Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Leadership Institute" panel showcasing the vast array of leadership opportunities at SUNY and the impact of the SUNY LEADS institutes. From linguistics to technology and various disciplines in between, SUNY continues to shine a light on the importance of diversity – thought, experience, and people - of all kinds. A special thanks to Senator John Liu for sponsoring our panel and co-moderating alongside SUNY AANHPI Executive Director Dr. Christa Grant.







SUNY DC Trip

On June 4, Will Schwartz joined Whitney Riggs, Director of Federal Relations, in Washington, D.C. for a series of meetings with the New York Congressional Delegation to discuss the anticipated impact of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act on SUNY institutions and the communities they serve. The conversations emphasized the critical role of federal Pell Grants in expanding access to higher education, as well as the importance of sustained Medicaid funding to ensure high-quality health care for New York's most vulnerable populations.

Will and Whitney were joined by Mackenzie Soloman from the University at Buffalo for a meeting with Representative Tim Kennedy's office. They also met with staff from the offices of Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand, and Representative Malliotakis to further advocate for these key priorities.





On June 5, Will Schwartz joined Whitney Riggs in Washington, D.C. for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) Council on Governmental Affairs (CGA) Spring Meeting. The CGA is led by Binghamton University alumnus Craig Lindwarm. Debbie Altenberg, Vice President for the APLU's Council on Research and a former member of SUNY's government relations team, also played a key role in this event.

Will and Whitney were joined by several SUNY colleagues, including Lauren Brookmeyer (CGA Chair) from Stony Brook University, Megan Toohey and Mackenzie Soloman from the University at Buffalo, and Faith Vavra from Binghamton University.

SUNY Research Spotlight

Across the SUNY System, our campuses conduct a vast amount of groundbreaking research, producing innovations and insights with far-reaching benefits not only for New Yorkers, but for people across the globe. Here are a few recent highlights:

- Stony Brook University Vice President for Research Kevin Gardner Highlights American Universities' Pivotal Role in Drug Innovation. [Read more](#)

- SUNY Oswego Students Unravel the Mysteries of Thundersnow. [Read more](#)
- Binghamton School of Pharmacy Hosts Education Agents from South Korea. [Read more](#)
- 16 Ways Binghamton University Research is Helping New Yorkers. [Read more](#)
- Check out the University at Albany's new Division for Research and Economic Development website. [Read more](#)

National Puerto Rican Day Parade

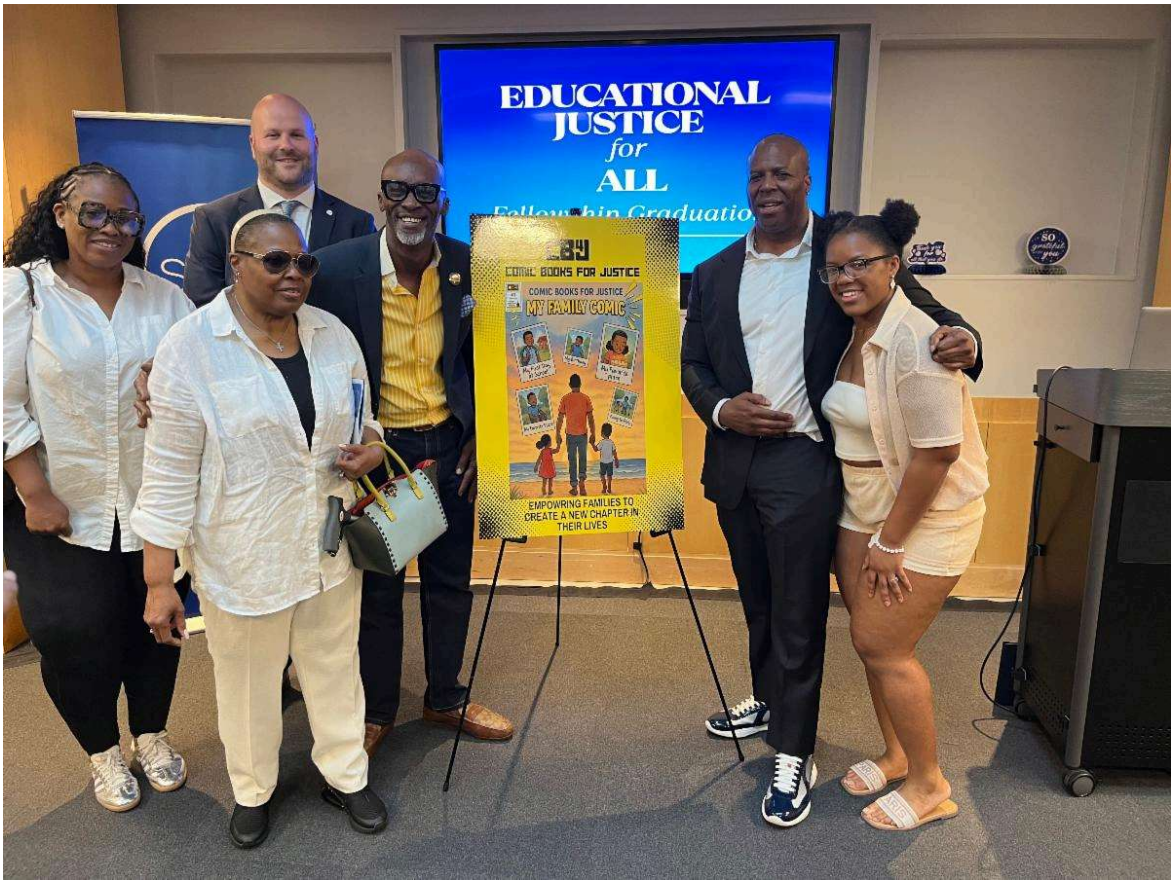
On June 8, Puerto Rican pride and culture were on full display in New York City. Thousands of New Yorkers lined 5th Avenue and came out to celebrate the largest cultural celebration in the United States. This year's theme - Plantando Bandera, meaning "planting roots" - showcased various ways Puerto Ricans have contributed to this great nation, including SUNY's own Chancellor John B. King Jr. Chancellor King and his family, along with students from SUNY Farmingdale and SUNY Purchase, and Tanhena Pacheco Dunn, a Hispanic Leadership Institute fellow, walked along the route with Governor Kathy Hochul, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, DASNY President Robert Rodriguez, and New York State Secretary of State Walter Mosley displaying the rich cultural heritage of Puerto Ricans.





SUNY Educational Justice Fellows Graduation

On June 12, Will Schwartz joined the SUNY Office of Higher Education in Prison to celebrate the Educational Justice Fellows graduation. This was the inaugural cohort of the program, and Will was honored to serve as one of the mentors from the SUNY's leadership team. Learn more about the fellows' impactful work [here](#). Congratulations to this amazing group.



SUNY Nursing Simulation Fellowship Celebration

On June 16, a celebration was hosted at SUNY System Administration to recognize the inaugural cohort of the Nursing Simulation Fellowship. SUNY, especially the Health and Hospitals Team lead by Senior Vice Chancellor for Health and Hospital Affairs, Val Grey, are very proud of the accomplishments the fellows have made. The **Fellowship** was launched thanks to the support of Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature, with **legislation** signed into law in May of 2023 to permit nursing students to complete up to one third of their clinical training through simulation experience. We thank Senator Fahy for joining the celebration and for her overall support of this initiative.



Campus Visits

This month, the OGR team had the pleasure of visiting the **Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT)**, **Dutchess Community College**, **SUNY Poly**, and **Columbia-Greene Community College**.

On June 12, Vice Chancellor for Government Relations Will Schwartz, Director of Government Relations Maria Volpe-McDermott, Government Relations Specialist Emily Van De Loo, and Graduate Intern Alice Russo toured **FIT**, seeing a sneak peek of the soon to be completed new academic building, the

cutting-edge Design and Technology Lab, and experiencing the Knitwear and Stoll Lab hands on.





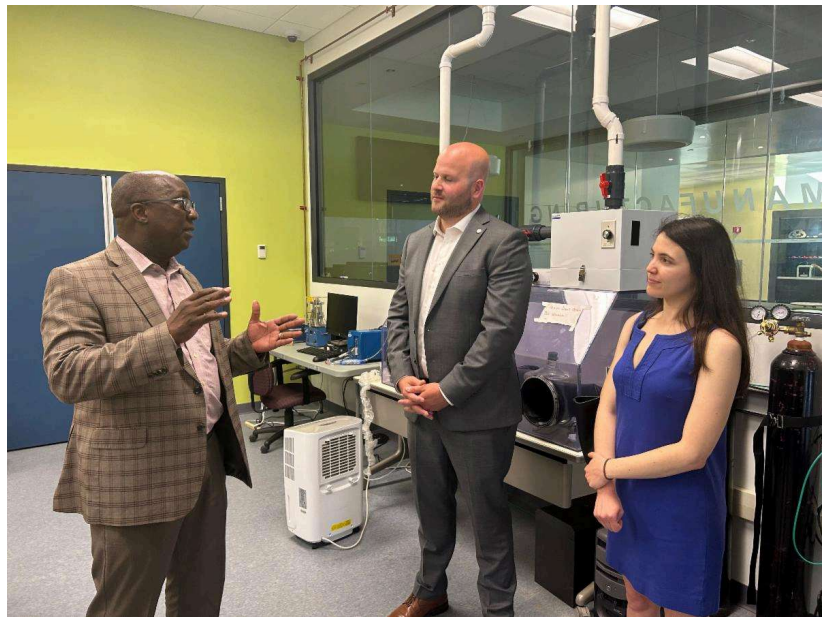
On June 16, Director of Government Relations Maria Volpe-McDermott visited **Dutchess Community College** for the launch of Chancellor King's **SUNY Reconnect Tour**.

For the four million working-age adults in New York who do not already have a college degree, the SUNY Reconnect free community college program will provide free tuition, fees, books, and supplies support for adult students ages 25-55. Senator Rob Rolison; Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino; Dr. Peter Jordan, Dutchess Community College President; Dr. DaMia Harris-Madden, Commissioner of the NYS Office of Children & Family Services; Melinda

Person, President of NYSUT; Dana Politis, Acting Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Development at NYS Department of Labor; and Jamie Frank, SUNY Associate Vice Chancellor for Policy Implementation, joined Chancellor King in a panel discussion on how childcare support allows more adult learners to be able to participate in SUNY Reconnect. By having childcare opportunities available on campus, more adult learners with children will be able to focus on their classes, removing a potential hurdle they face when taking time to focus on academics ahead of a career change.



On June 23, Vice Chancellor for Government Relations Will Schwartz, Director of Government Relations Maria Volpe-McDermott, and Graduate Intern Alice Russo toured **SUNY Polytechnic Institute**. Thank you to President Wole Soboyejo and Chief of Staff Wayne Westervelt for the engaging tour of the Student Center, Donovan Hall labs, and the Center for Global Advanced Manufacturing. SUNY Poly is New York's premier public polytechnic university doing amazing things in quantum, AI, advanced manufacturing, engineering, biomedical sciences, and defense research to transform not only the Mohawk Valley, but New York State.



On June 25, Will Schwartz visited **Columbia-Greene Community College** to meet with incoming President Dr. Victoria Walsh and Columbia-Greene's Board of Trustees Chair-Elect, Doreen Davis. Will was excited to learn about President Walsh's vision for campus and to hear about the strong support from their Board. SUNY System is proud to count one of Columbia-Greene Community College's most distinguished alum as one of our very own, Chief Financial Officer Josh Sager!



Pride Parade

From the Pride March to Pride Fest, SUNY pride was on display. On June 29, SUNY System staff members, SUNY Marching band, students, faculty, and Chancellor John King walked in the 2025 Pride March, "Rise Up: Pride in Protest." This year's theme acknowledged LGBTQ+ achievements since the 1969 Stonewall Riots, while reemphasizing the importance of advocating for equality and liberation for all LGBTQ+ members. NYC Pride was a celebration of New York City's legacy of diversity and inclusivity.

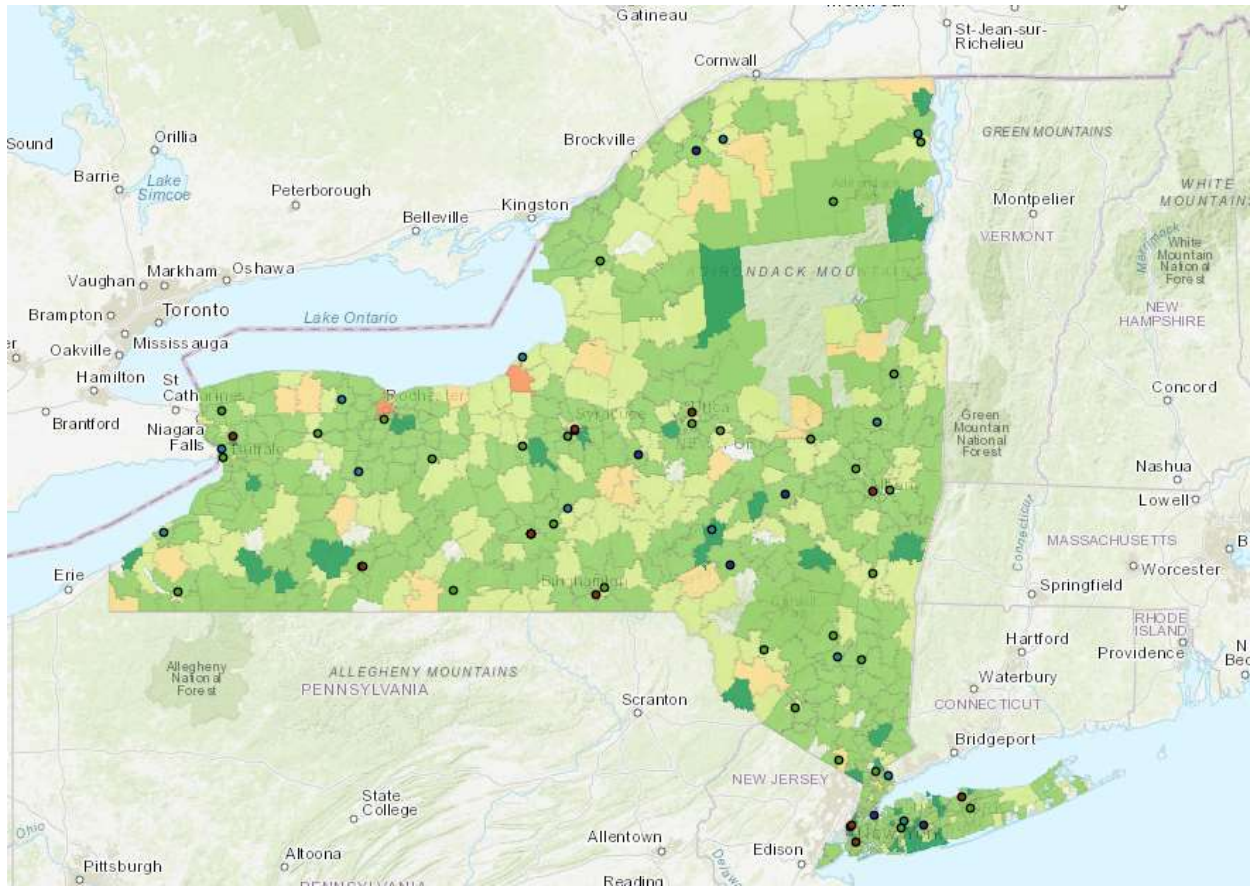


FAFSA Update

Please encourage your local school districts to ensure that students and their families are completing the FAFSA in order to be eligible for financial aid.

Through June 20, 2025, the data reflects that:

- **59.7% of the estimated class of 2025 in New York has completed a FAFSA.**
- Nationally, 53.4% of the estimated class of 2025 have submitted a FAFSA. New York is in 6th place in the country. (Tennessee is #1 at 65.9%)
- See how New York districts are doing on this interactive map [here](#).
- Find resources for applying for financial aid [here](#).



Percent FAFSA Completion:



Trivia Answer

Trick question: All of the above!

Harvey Milk, the first openly gay politician in California and Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, graduated from the **University at Albany** in 1951 with a Bachelor of Arts in mathematics. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009.

Edie Falco, American actress known for her lead role in the hit series *The Sopranos*, graduated from **SUNY Purchase** in 1986 with a Bachelor of Fine

Arts in acting.

Al Roker, American journalist and weather presenter, graduated from **SUNY Oswego** in 1976 with a Bachelor of Arts in communication.

Hakeem Jeffries, New York Representative and Minority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives, graduated from **Binghamton University** in 1992 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science.

Keep up with SUNY and the Office of Government Relations

- Check out SUNY's legislative memos on our website [here](#).
- Join the SUNY team! Look for careers at SUNY [here](#).

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