



The State University  
of New York

Office of the Chancellor

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**REVISED**

**MEMORANDUM**

**September 10, 2015**

**TO: Members of the Board of Trustees**

**FROM: Nancy L. Zimpher, Chancellor**

**SUBJECT: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy**

**Action Requested**

The proposed resolution establishes a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy (the "Policy") based on the recommendations of the SUNY Diversity Task Force. The Policy reaffirms the State University of New York's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusiveness, and is designed to make SUNY the most inclusive higher education system in the country.

**Resolution**

I recommend that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution:

Whereas SUNY was founded in 1948 on the principles of equity and inclusion to serve those who had been turned away from other institutions for reasons of race, ethnicity and/or religion; and

Whereas Section 351 of New York State Education Law sets forth the mission statement of SUNY to "provide the people of New York educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population"; and

Whereas SUNY has actively supported the evolving role of diversity in higher education, including recognition of "inclusive excellence," as defined by the Association of American Colleges and Universities wherein an academic institution can only reach the highest levels of excellence when it is inclusive; and

To Learn  
To Search  
To Serve



Whereas SUNY's commitment to diversity is further evidenced by the creation of a System Administration Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in 2007 and by making diversity central to the *Power of SUNY Strategic Plan: 2010 and Beyond* (an action supported by the University Faculty Senate in its May 2013 *Making Diversity Count* report); and

Whereas in response to a request by SUNY Board of Trustees Chairman McCall that SUNY report on the diversity of leadership at SUNY campuses and at System Administration, areas were found where diversity efforts could be improved; and

Whereas in January 2014, Chancellor Zimpher called for the creation of a SUNY Task Force on Diversity; and

Whereas in January 2015, upon recommendation of the Diversity Task Force, Chancellor Zimpher called for the appointment of a Chief Diversity Officer on every campus—a staff member beyond what is required for mandatory reporting and who would work closely with their campus academic affairs, human resources, enrollment management, admissions offices in support of campus and University-wide diversity goals; and

Whereas also in January 2015, upon the recommendation of Chancellor Zimpher, the Board of Trustees adopted *SUNY Excels*, a framework for continuous improvement and accountability, wherein diversity-related progress will be monitored in each focus area (Access, Completion, Success, Inquiry and Engagement); and

Whereas SUNY has made successful progress toward *SUNY Excels* goals a central element of the presidential review process; and

Whereas the Diversity Task Force included representation from the University Faculty Senate, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, and the Student Assembly, which submitted suggestions regarding the characteristics of an effective Chief Diversity Officer that will be provided to campuses as part of additional guidance to assist with implementing this Policy; and

Whereas the Diversity Task Force defined diversity broadly to include race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, age, socioeconomic status, status as a veteran, status as an individual with a disability, students undergoing transition (such as transfer, stop-out,

international student acclimation), and first-generation students; and

Whereas the work of the Diversity Task Force was informed by an extensive review of available data about diversity at SUNY as recorded in the June 2015 *Data Brief: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion* ("Data Brief"); the October 2014 National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education's ("NADOHE") *Standards of Professional Practice for Chief Diversity Officers*; and, a review of national best practices; now, therefore, be it

Resolved that the Board of Trustees adopts the Goal, Guiding Principles, and Action Items below as follows:

*The Goal*

- SUNY aspires to be the most inclusive State university system in the country. We will achieve this goal by: striving to ensure that the student population we serve and the administrative staff and faculty we employ are representative of the diversity of our state; recognizing the value of international experiences and interactions; and eliminating achievement gaps for minority and low income students. We will develop strategic diversity and inclusion action plans for system administration and at each campus that tangibly demonstrate SUNY's commitment to the principles of inclusive excellence, wherein an institution only achieves excellence when it is inclusive. SUNY will identify diversity, equity and inclusion as essential aspects of system and campus planning and as indispensable characteristics of academic excellence and the ongoing experience of every member of the SUNY community.

*Guiding Principles*

- Diversity and inclusiveness are integral components of the highest quality academic programs and the strongest campus climate. Diversity is essential to excellence in the university setting.
- SUNY's statutory mission makes clear its responsibility to provide the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population of New York State.
- As detailed in the Data Brief, SUNY has made important strides at System Administration and on its campuses to

increase diversity and strengthen inclusiveness; however, challenges remain.

- This is the right time for a system-wide effort to address challenges, particularly in light of projected increases in the diversity of New York's high school population and the expected increases in the number of new hires across SUNY due to a growing number of retirements.
- A multi-pronged approach to strengthening diversity and inclusion is essential for a system of SUNY's stature. SUNY's approach must employ best practices to attract diverse students, faculty, staff and administrative leaders, including efforts to strengthen the pipeline of diverse individuals with advanced credentials; ensure that services are in place to support retention (of faculty and students) and foster student completion at a rate that closes existing achievement gaps; and implement programs and strategies to establish a welcoming environment for all.

#### *Action Items*

- System Administration and each campus will appoint a chief diversity officer ("CDO") by no later than August 15, 2017.<sup>1</sup>
  - The Campus CDO will:
    - Be a senior member of the campus administration, reporting directly to the president or provost;
    - Work collaboratively with offices across campus—including but not limited to, the offices of academic affairs, human resources, enrollment management, and admissions—to elevate inclusiveness and implement best practices related to diversity, equity and inclusion in such areas as the recruitment and retention of students and senior administrators, faculty and staff hires; and
    - Serve as part of a system-wide network of CDOs to support SUNY's overall diversity goals.

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<sup>1</sup> This shall not preclude campuses from sharing the services of a chief diversity officer. However, any proposal to share such services shall be subject to prior review and approval of the Provost.

- The System CDO will:
  - Be a senior member of System Administration;
  - Work collaboratively with offices across System Administration—including but not limited to, the offices of academic affairs, human resources and enrollment management and student success, to elevate inclusiveness and implement best practices related to diversity, equity and inclusion; and
  - Support the system-wide network of campus CDOs in collaboration with the Provost and Executive Vice-Chancellor to realize System Administration's goal of becoming the most inclusive system of higher education in the country.
- System Administration and each campus will develop and implement strategic diversity and inclusion plans to achieve SUNY's inclusion goal.
  - Campus plans will build on existing efforts and include:
    - Campus commitments for diversity and inclusion;
    - Campus principles guiding the development and implementation of the diversity and inclusion plan;
    - A student recruitment strategy that includes programs and activities that will enable the campus to enroll a student population that is increasingly representative of the diversity of its primary service region and the State as a whole;
    - A student retention and completion strategy wherein the campus strives to increase the rate of completion for all students and close any gaps in the completion rates of students from any group when compared with the average campus completion rate and to address the challenges of students in transition (such as transfer, stop-out, international student acclimation);
    - An administrative, faculty and staff recruitment and retention strategy that continuously improves campus efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in the following areas:

- Recruitment, development of the prospect pool, and hiring decision-making for campus leadership, faculty and staff. Plans should address the unique challenges of dual career couple relocation and ensure that selected candidates can articulate a commitment to diversity and inclusion;
  - Implementation of best-practice mentoring plans and strategies tailored to the needs of diverse campus groups of faculty and staff; and
  - With support from System Administration, the introduction or expansion of cultural competency programming as a central aspect of the orientation program for new employees and as a regular program for all continuing employees.
- An evaluation component to ensure that the campus is meeting its diversity and inclusion commitments and that activities designed within the overall plan are achieving their intended outcomes. The evaluation system should be aligned to the campus planning and resource allocation processes to ensure that required improvements in the diversity and inclusion plan are incorporated in the revision of the academic and financial plans.
- The System Administration plan will build on existing efforts and include:
- System Administration commitments for diversity and inclusion;
  - System Administration principles guiding the development and implementation of the diversity and inclusion plan;
  - An administrative, faculty and staff recruitment and retention strategy that continuously improves efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in the following areas:
    - Recruitment, hiring prospect pool development and hiring decision-making. Special attention is encouraged for the plan to address the unique challenges of dual career couple relocation;

- Implementation of best-practice mentoring plans and strategies tailored to the needs of diverse campus groups of faculty and staff; and
  - Introduce cultural competency programming as a central aspect of the orientation program for new employees and as a regular program for all continuing employees.
- An evaluation component that ensures that System Administration is meeting its diversity and inclusion commitments and that activities designed within the plan are achieving their intended outcomes and that System Administration is providing appropriate resources and guidance to campuses to assist them in meeting University commitments and SUNY's overarching goal of being recognized as the most inclusive system of higher education in the country. The evaluation system should be aligned to System Administration planning and resource allocation processes to ensure that required improvements in the diversity and inclusion plan are incorporated in the revision of the academic and financial plans.
- Campuses and System Administration will inquire about a search firm's success in assuring diverse candidate pools. In those instances where the campus is considered a Federal Contractor, the campus will require that the search firm provide it with information about the diversity of the search firm's staff and its success rate in placing diverse candidates prior to entering into a contract with such firm.
  - System Administration will develop the tools to provide cultural competency training across System Administration and to campus senior leadership teams, faculty and staff.
  - System Administration will implement a Campus Climate Report Card to evaluate System Administration and campus efforts to attain the goals and the intent of its respective diversity and inclusion plans.
  - Questions on surveys administered or procured by the System Administration Office of Institutional

Research and Data Analytics will be reviewed to ensure that questions are free from bias and provide necessary information to support diversity goals.

- System Administration will begin a system-wide initiative to meet the challenges associated with dual-career couple relocation that will include identification of best practices related to cluster hiring.
- System Administration will examine the feasibility of a cross-campus mentoring network for faculty and staff within the SUNY system, in consultation with faculty governance, which will be piloted as a resource for diverse faculty and staff and later expanded.
- The University Provost and System Administration CDO will convene faculty researchers in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion as well as program evaluation to work with the System Administration office of Institutional Research and Data Analytics to support the SUNY Network of CDOs and develop an evaluation of the effectiveness of this policy for the purposes of ongoing improvement; and, be it further

Resolved that campus presidents will report to the Chancellor no later than March 2016 on their plans for appointing a CDO; and, be it further

Resolved that campus presidents and the System Administration CDO will submit their diversity plans, to be developed via a process set by the campus president where in place, for review to the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor no later than September 1, 2016; and, be it further

Resolved that after initial review of campus plans, presidents will annually report on their progress in implementing their plans and this policy as part of the Performance Improvement Plan reporting process; and, be it further

Resolved that the SUNY Diversity Task Force shall be reconstituted as a standing Diversity Advisory Committee to support campuses during the implementation of this policy and make additional recommendations, where appropriate; and, be it further

Resolved that the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor and System Administration Chief Diversity Officer shall be responsible for overseeing implementation of this policy,



including distributing additional guidance and resource materials to campuses, assessing progress, and reporting back to the Board of Trustees, and shall be required to provide an annual updated data brief on diversity, equity and inclusion, including a summary of campus annual reports, which will be shared with the Governor and New York State Legislature.

### **Background**

SUNY was established in 1948 in large measure as a refuge for those who were victims of discrimination by the State's private colleges and universities. This call to action to address inequities is an integral part of the foundation of SUNY and is captured in SUNY's statutory mission to provide the "broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population."

SUNY has kept pace with the national evolution of the significance of diversity in higher education. It has made closing gaps in admissions and hiring, and having a broad array of viewpoints and ideas in the classroom, key elements of policy and strategic planning efforts. SUNY also has recognized the significance of the 2005 Association of American Colleges and Universities study of "inclusive excellence," which found that an academic institution can only reach the highest levels of excellence when it is inclusive.

In 2007, SUNY created a centralized Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at System Administration, which has grown to administer a series of state-funded scholarship and grant programs as well as conferences and events designed to support campus efforts to enhance diversity and inclusiveness and to share national best practices. In 2009, SUNY's system-wide strategic plan, the *Power of SUNY - 2010 and Beyond*, specifically described how progress toward goals and objectives will be grounded in a commitment to diversity.

In November 2013, under the leadership of Chairman McCall and Chancellor Zimpher, review of data showed that SUNY could do more to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion. In January 2014, Chancellor Zimpher called for the creation of a system-wide Task Force on Diversity. In January 2015, at the recommendation of the Chancellor, the SUNY Trustees adopted a performance improvement framework, SUNY Excels, which addresses diversity in each of its five focus areas: access, completion, success, inquiry and engagement. Importantly, performance on SUNY Excels goals will be key to the presidential review process. Also in January 2015, Chancellor Zimpher called for creation of a Chief Diversity Officer on every campus—a staff member beyond what is required for mandatory reporting and who would work closely with the campus offices of human resources, enrollment management, and admissions in support of campus and system-wide diversity goals.

As documented in the Data Brief, SUNY has made a number of commitments to diversity and inclusiveness and as a result, has made important

strides. However, it was determined that SUNY could do more to address urgent challenges, including, but not limited to: the continued achievement gap between minority students and their non-minority peers, and between students from families with low-incomes and their counterparts; support of an emerging protected class of LGBTQ+ students and those who identify as a gender other than male or female or who are transitioning or questioning; and, a need to continue recruiting and retaining students, administrators, faculty and staff that are reflective of the population of New York State. Further, we know that the State's high school population is anticipated to shift significantly over the next five years, increasing the numbers of historically under-served students.

SUNY needs a multi-pronged approach to addressing diversity and assuring inclusiveness. It must implement best practices to attract diverse students, faculty, staff and administrative leaders. It must ensure that services are in place to support retention of faculty and students. It must foster student completion and implement programs and strategies to establish a welcoming environment for all.

Given its history, size, depth and breadth, SUNY has the opportunity to be recognized as the most inclusive public university system in the country. The intent of this policy is to support campus and System Administration efforts to achieve that goal.

The proposed policy is informed by an extensive review of available data about diversity at SUNY as recorded in the Data Brief, the October 2014 National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education's ("NADOHE") Standards of Professional Practice for Chief Diversity Officers; and a review of best practices in higher education nationally. This research was studied by the SUNY Diversity Task Force which subsequently made recommendations that drove the recommended goal, guiding principles and action items herein.

The SUNY Diversity Task Force was charged with recommending policies to strengthen SUNY's efforts to increase diversity among students, faculty, and staff and also ensure supportive and welcoming environments at both the system and campus levels. The Task Force was asked to examine all relevant data, review best practices, review existing system-wide initiatives, and identify challenges and opportunities. The Task Force identified four areas of focus:

1. Undergraduate and graduate student recruitment, admissions, retention, and graduation;
2. Recruitment, retention, and support of diverse faculty, staff, and administrators;
3. Creation of welcoming System Administration/campus environments; and
4. Identification of the most effective structures and reporting relationships of diversity officers/offices.

The Task Force defined diversity broadly to include race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, age, socioeconomic status, status as a veteran, status as an individual student with a disability, students undergoing transition (such as transfer, stop-out, international student acclimation), and first-generation students.

The initial recommendations of the SUNY Diversity Task Force have evolved into the action items presented herein. These action items are designed to advance diversity in a meaningful way, supporting SUNY's goal of being recognized as the most inclusive University system in the country.