



**Talking Points on the Governor's
Commission on Higher Education
December 17, 2007**

We thank Chair Hunter Rawlings, and the members of the Commission who spent many hours listening to the people of New York and then brought to bear their broad expertise in public and independent higher education and public service to reach agreement on a comprehensive blueprint to address the challenges facing higher education in New York State.

- We applaud the Governor and the Commission for understanding the educational needs of New Yorkers and taking an aggressive approach to meeting them. We look forward to working with Governor Spitzer and the State Assembly and Senate on the agenda set forth by the commission.
- The Commission report (1) builds on the foundations of past state higher education commissions to ensure that a top quality public college education is an affordable option for generations to come, and (2) outlines an educational plan for the reinvigoration of the state and thus the nation.
- The Commission outlined the challenges and opportunities to make SUNY a great public university system.
- All sectors of SUNY - doctoral granting universities, comprehensive and technology colleges and community colleges – will benefit from the Commission recommendations.
- The Commission recognizes that the University needs autonomy and flexibility in legal terms in order to achieve the goals set forth by the Commission. (Note: the degree to which SUNY enjoys some flexibility is due to the 1985 Commission report, *The Challenge and The Choice*, and favorable action by the subsequent governors and legislatures.
- SUNY needs to continue to provide our students with a top-quality education that they can afford. Key to this mission is the New York State Compact for Higher Education. This reinvestment plan will keep public higher education accessible and affordable for all citizens while enabling SUNY to enhance academic quality with more full-time faculty and smaller class sizes.
- The NYS Compact for Public Higher Education is a commitment by the State and the University to provide the resources necessary for a first-class, affordable, and accessible public higher education. Thus, the State would be committed to providing full state support for the University's mandatory costs, such as labor, contracts, general inflation, and collective bargaining. The University, in turn, will finance its academic quality initiatives with savings drawn from more efficient operations, increases in philanthropy and in campus supported programs, small and predictable tuition increases, and additional State support for 30 percent of the cost of for new strategically important educational initiatives.

- SUNY needs an investment in faculty to meet current and planned enrollment. The call for 2,000 new faculty (for SUNY and CUNY) will improve our full-time faculty percentage as well as our student-to-faculty ratios, which lag behind our national peer institutions. We're striving to meet our peer's averages in these categories; however, our graduation and retention rates already outpace national public and private averages.
- We support the Commission's call for an enhanced focus on our research universities including the establishment of a new Board Committee and executive staff positions, as well as the investment in cutting-edge research across higher education. SUNY's ability to attract world-class research faculty will greatly enhance the University's ability to recruit top graduate students and drive research in areas that industry demands. .
- We support the Commission's recognition of SUNY's community colleges as both the first point of access to higher education and a major contributor in workforce training coupled with its recommendation that the state needs to better fund these schools and a call for seamless transferability within the State University System.
- While investment in the academic enhance is important, SUNY owns over 2,700 buildings which encompass 95 million square feet of space that needs attention. The Commission's recognition of over \$5 billion in deferred critical maintenance across New York's public higher education sector is welcome news and a priority for the University as it helps the governor and legislature develop the next five-year capital facilities plan.
- We expect the Board of Trustees to take up some of the Commission's recommendations at their January meeting.
- The Commission on Higher Education sees the future of SUNY as inextricably linked with the future of New York. The governor has said: "We are going to build the SUNY system into the best public university system in the nation. That is our future, that is our economy, and that is how we build New York."