SUNY Oneonta alumni give more gifts than other SUNY alumni

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ONEONTA - SUNY Oneonta alumni led their SUNY peers in supporting their alma mater for the eighth successive year, said college officials reporting 2008-09 figures.

“It’s one of our best years ever,” Paul Adamo, vice president for college advancement and executive director of the College at Oneonta, said Thursday. The college received a total of $3.9 million in gifts and grants from all sources in 2008-09, he said.

The total includes a bequest of more than $2.5 million from the estate of alumna Dorothy Wemple of the class of 1936.

Nationally, the State University College at Oneonta ranked sixth among public master’s-granting colleges in the percentage of alumni who made a gift to the institution, according to a media release from the college.

In 2008-09, the average gift from alumni and other individuals, not counting Wemple’s bequest, was $150, Adamo said, and alumni gifts accounted for 76 percent of all gifts. The Council for Aid to Education reported the average gift nationally in 2008 for public colleges like SUNY Oneonta was $177, he said.

According to the Council, 14.4 percent of SUNY Oneonta alumni made a charitable gift to the college in 2008-09 fiscal year. The average among four year SUNY colleges was 7.9 percent, and the national average among public colleges was 6 percent, the council said.

Adamo said gifts and grants to SUNY Oneonta support the college’s mission, programs and students.

“Our graduates and friends recognize that charitable investments in our college can provide life-altering opportunities for our students, our communities and our shared future,” Adamo said in the release. For the 2009-2010 academic year, SUNY Oneonta awarded 1,085 scholarships to students, valued at over $1.8 million, he said.

Many scholarships at SUNY Oneonta are endowed through gifts to the College at Oneonta Foundation. As of Dec. 31, the endowment was $31.6 million, college officials said, and earnings from the endowment’s investments are used to fund the awards to students.

The Council for Aid to Education said alumni participation in giving to public and private colleges and universities nationwide dropped to 10 percent in 2009, the lowest level recorded on its Voluntary Support of Education survey. Overall, charitable contributions to colleges and universities fell 11.9 percent nationwide.

The high rate of alumni giving was a positive sign for SUNY Oneonta in a difficult economic year, Adamo said.

“We appreciate our alumni and friends,” Adamo said in the release. “We know that their continuing support in difficult economic times reflects their understanding of the important work that the college does.”