

**2014-15 Executive Budget Testimony
Deborah Stanley, President
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**Joint Legislative Public Hearing
New York State Assembly Committees on Ways & Means and Higher
Education
New York State Senate Committees on Finance and Higher Education**

Good morning. My name is Deborah Stanley, and I am President of State University of New York at Oswego.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of Oswego and the other 12 state-operated university colleges in our State University of New York system, a vigorous and productive sector that currently enrolls 82,500 students and last year conferred 19,000 bachelor's degrees and 3,700 master's degrees. I am pleased to be here with Chancellor Zimpher to strongly support her budget request for SUNY.

Senator LaValle and Assemblymember Glick and all the members of the Senate and the Assembly Higher Education Committees, particularly Senator Patty Ritchie from the 48th District, I acknowledge your enduring commitment to excellence for our students and our state and, once again extend my thanks for your insight and foresight in establishing the pace-setting program of the Rational Tuition Plan you enacted for SUNY in 2011.

Since 2011, the Rational Tuition Plan has helped reverse campus decline and allowed the SUNY state-operated campuses to imagine and transform the educational experiences that allow our graduates to produce economic, cultural,

and social good for New York State and foster a climate of more prosperous prospects into the future.

Between 2008 and 2011, cuts to operating budgets for all state-operated campuses severely depressed new program development, depleted funding needed to hire and support full-time faculty and stalled our efforts to effectively address disruptive changes taking hold throughout higher education. But, with the first year of the Rational Tuition Plan, we began to turn that trend around. At Oswego, each year since 2011, we have infused the new tuition revenues into funding full-time faculty lines and direct student benefits. We have supported new academic programs and provided students with deeper learning experiences like undergraduate research and cooperative education, refined and advanced compelling pedagogies especially those connected to online and hybrid instruction, expanded enrollment connections to deal with demographic shifts, and forged increased productive partnerships to better align with 21st century workforce demands.

For example, by the beginning of the 2013-14 academic year we had restored 40 full-time faculty positions, directed at populating high-need existing and new programs. In 2013 we were able to launch our newest baccalaureate degree program, in Electrical and Computer Engineering, and our newest master's degree program, an MBA in Health Services Administration, hiring accomplished faculty in these emerging fields.

Faculty in these fields, and in others where we are focusing our hiring, are among those most in demand in our manifold partnerships with business and industry, especially our newest ventures linked to StartUp-NY. Oswego County has the

highest unemployment rate in Central New York. The jobs that this initiative has the potential to add in our region mean a great deal to our community.

While the greatest percentage of Rational Tuition Plan revenue each year has been invested in full-time faculty, we have also boosted direct services to students in scholarships, mentoring and advising all to help the students succeed and stay on path to their degrees. We have also focused on sustainable enrollment management and future-oriented development activities to keep the tremendous asset that Central New York has in SUNY Oswego vibrant for the long term.

So I think you can see that the Rational Tuition Plan has had a very meaningful impact at SUNY Oswego, and it has been similar at the other state-operated comprehensive colleges across the system. As a sector, we have been able to hire 140 *new* full-time faculty. But we are worried that the progress we have been able to make with the increased tuition revenues of recent years will be significantly undermined if those revenues are diverted in any significant way. Specifically, if the campuses are required to fund already negotiated salary increases, we in effect lose more than half of the net revenue gains of the Rational Tuition Plan. At Oswego next year alone, this cost amounts to \$1.1 million. Across our sector of SUNY, we estimate that the negotiated salary increases have a \$27.6 million impact and the annual tuition credit costs add another \$11.2 million. This diversion of funds will undercut our recovery. This is why we are asking for your help. I urge you to invest in us so that our sector can continue increasing faculty who are there full time for our students and continue delivering on the promise of greater value for New Yorkers to be realized through higher student retention and completion rates.

Also of high concern is funding for critical maintenance. Past SUNY Capital Plans have enabled us to bring campus facilities up to meet the learning needs of today's students. Yet, the estimated value of the current backlog at just SUNY Oswego remains at \$89.6 million for buildings and \$23.8 million for utilities and infrastructure. Oswego's expected share of the current \$500 million critical maintenance proposal is \$18.6 million, a level that would *never* reduce our backlog. Please consider providing between \$750 million and \$1 billion to address critical maintenance needs across the 64-campus SUNY system.

Finally, it is crucial that the Legislature pursue an immediate and equitable solution to the financial insolvency facing hospitals affiliated with our system, a solution that does not unfairly and harshly burden the educational mission of SUNY.

Thank you for allowing me to speak before the Joint Committee today. I am grateful for your constant dedication, ensuring that SUNY remains a vital asset for the people of our state.