

# State of the College



Donald P. Christian, President  
August 25, 2017



New Paltz  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



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Before I begin, I want to acknowledge the loss of two New Paltz students this summer, Eddineth Monroy and Ryan Davison. The death of those so young and full of potential is heart-breaking. I also want us to pause to reflect on the loss of life stemming from the violence in Charlottesville a few weeks ago. This event and its implications for our nation have been very troubling for me, as I know they have for many of you. Later in this speech I will address these issues further. But now, as we launch a new academic year, I'd like us to observe a moment of silence as we remember those we have lost. (pause)

Thank you.

**I have spent thousands of hours of my life in a canoe.** Some have written about the poetry of gliding silently across open water, or being moved along in a canoe by a gentle current. I have enjoyed such times, alone, with family and friends.



I also know that bad things can happen quickly in a canoe.



More than 50 years ago, I was canoeing with my uncle's Boy Scout troop on a river swollen by spring runoff. My uncle feared we were moving too fast, and grabbed an overhanging tree branch. It was stunning how fast our canoe turned sideways, filled with water, and in we went.

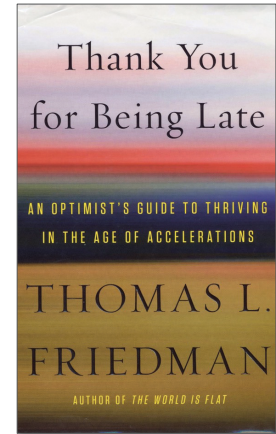
Seasoned kayakers and whitewater rafters, like canoeists, know that the best way to remain stable in fast-moving water is to paddle faster – at the least keeping up with the current. Trying to stop or slow down in fast current is often a recipe for disaster.

## LIVING IN A FAST-CHANGING WORLD

Several authors have used this metaphor for living in a fast-changing world.

Thomas Friedman's 2016 book was titled "Thank You for Being Late," subtitled "An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in an Age of Accelerations." He described the unrelenting pace of technological change, globalization, and environmental stress, and the widening gap between those forces and our ability to adapt. He argued that to thrive in such a world, we must "paddle as fast as or faster than the rate of change in the world around us."

But better than just keeping up in perilous waters is harnessing the forces moving us – so they can take us in the direction we wish to go, maybe faster than we thought possible.



In previous State of the College addresses and monthly reports, I have shared the dramatic shifts confronting higher education. Rapidly changing societal expectations, financial challenges, demographic trends that threaten enrollments and tuition revenue, growing skepticism about our value. Such shifts demand that higher education change as well, and I have offered ideas about how we can do so. It is natural to want to slow down, change at a more considered pace, perhaps even stop and paddle back upstream to return to better times – real or imagined. But this is not going to happen. We must find ways to adapt, and quickly.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY

**“...From the first campfire, human beings evolved as tribal beings.”**

—Marina Gorbis,  
cited in Friedman p. 352

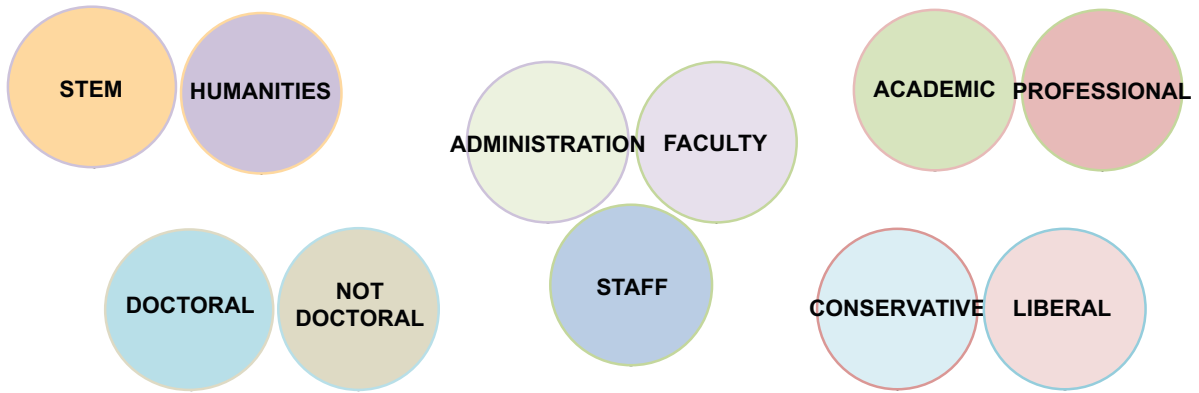
Friedman's ideas for how to adapt to fast and roiling currents have drawn praise because they counter the many reasons we have to despair. One crucial solution: build community. In a world that is inextricably interconnected and interdependent, we must develop healthy, lasting interdependencies. Friedman wrote that pluralistic communities encourage more rapid social evolution, spurring innovation by drawing on the thoughts and talents of diverse people. Strong communities also restrain the negative impact of those who want to break things.

Friedman acknowledged that developing such communities is difficult. Citing Marina Gorbis, he said one reason is that humans have been tribal – since the first campfire. But even though we are wired to be tribal, we are not hard-wired to view our tribe in the narrowest way possible.

We know the group affinities on a university campus that take on a tribal tone. We identify by discipline – STEM or humanities, – by school, by whether we are administration or faculty or staff, academic faculty or professional, doctorally educated or not, conservative or liberal, by race, generational difference, gender identity, faculty senator or not! The list could go on.

**“...but we are not hard-wired to view our tribe in the narrowest way possible ... to survive we have to widen the circle of the campfire”**

—Friedman, p. 353



Our challenge is to define our “tribe” broadly and inclusively. At the same time, we must respect and value the contributions that different viewpoints, roles, and backgrounds bring to our work. Certainly, navigating difference and drawing on the positive values of diversity are essential to the function of civil society – and a civil university.

We’ve heard from you in recent campus survey results that you hunger for more opportunities to share perspectives and get to know each other across some of these boundaries. I hear the same sentiment in conversations I have on my campus walkabouts. They reflect a strong commitment to community here that I have grown to admire and respect, and that we want to keep building. Our leadership team is looking hard at ways to bring us together more often.



I hope we can carry these lessons about living in an age of accelerations into the coming year: first, the imperative to develop a strong sense of community; second, that some of our work must be approached with urgency – we must paddle faster than the currents to move where we want to go.





## INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME

The coming year kicks off officially at noon today with our annual Fall Convocation – an important rite-of-passage for new students. Associate Professor of English Cyrus Mulready – a recent recipient of the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching – will serve as Faculty Grand Marshal and macebearer, and will welcome new students on behalf of the faculty. Reem Ahmed, an accounting and business administration major, will share a student perspective. Providing the alumni welcome will be George Ramos. Mr. Ramos, a mental health counselor and psychotherapist, was recognized in June’s Forty Under Forty celebration of outstanding young alumni. I am grateful to the faculty who will don academic regalia to participate in Convocation, and hope that others will consider watching the live stream.



Cyrus Mulready  
Associate Professor of  
English



Reem Ahmed  
Accounting, Business  
Administration '17



George Ramos  
Alumnus '06  
Mental Health Counselor and  
Psychotherapist

We welcome new members of our community and acknowledge those who have stepped into new leadership positions. We will introduce new academic and professional faculty individually on September 15 and new classified staff individually at a meeting in October. But we ask that all new employees stand now to be recognized. (pause) Please be seated.

I wish to introduce Dr. Stephanie Blaisdell, who arrived last month as our new Vice President for Student Affairs and member of our senior administrative team. Dr. Blaisdell comes to us from the University of Memphis, where she was assistant vice president for student affairs, and previously directed Student Affairs Learning and Assessment. Her research has focused on the role of self-efficacy on career selection, persistence, and achievement. Dr. Blaisdell has also specialized in supporting success of first-generation students, including organizing a professional development program for faculty. She holds a Ph.D. in counseling psychology from Arizona State University.



Dr. Stephanie Blaisdell  
*Vice President for Student Affairs*



Shala Mills, J.D.  
*Assistant Vice President for Graduate & Extended Learning*

Shala Mills is joining us as assistant vice president for graduate and extended learning. She will work to advance our goals of providing high-quality educational opportunities to a wide range of students throughout the region. AVP Mills was director of liberal education and chair and professor of political science at Fort Hays State University in Kansas. She served in several capacities with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, including as National Manager for that organization's Blended Course Consortium.

Several administrators were appointed during the year or have moved into new leadership positions and have not been formally introduced. Kristin Cash Holland, a New Paltz alumna, joined us last fall as assistant vice president in Development and Alumni Relations and chief financial officer of the SUNY New Paltz Foundation.

John Reina was promoted to Assistant Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer in January, having previously served as Director of Systems and Networks.

Laurel M. Garrick Duhaney has taken on a new assignment as Associate Provost for Assessment and Strategic Planning, with responsibility for leading assessment and fostering stronger connections between strategic planning, assessment, and reaccreditation.

Dante Cantu has assumed new responsibility overseeing both the Center for Student Success and Academic Advising, building a stronger connection between these key student support functions.

I hope that you will introduce yourselves to your new colleagues and assist them in their transition to New Paltz or to their new roles.



Kristin Cash Holland '05  
*Assistant Vice President for Development Operations; Chief Financial Officer of the SUNY New Paltz Foundation*



John Reina  
*Assistant Vice President for Information Technology, and Chief Information Officer*



Dr. Laurel M. Garrick Duhaney  
*Associate Provost for Assessment and Strategic Planning*



Danté Cantu  
*Executive Director of Academic Advising and the Center for Student Success*

Let me acknowledge directors of the SUNY New Paltz Foundation joining us today. These business leaders, alumni, and committed citizens support the College and our students by raising private funds, and promoting us in the broader community. Thank you for being here today, and for all that you do.

## OUR VALUES

I am continuing the tradition today of reinforcing who we are and what we value, to guide our work ahead. We value:

- ◆ A **personalized, residential campus** environment where students, faculty, and staff learn together through close interaction.
- ◆ **Rigorous academics** that bring together intellectually capable students and exceptional faculty committed to students and their learning, AND to research, scholarship, and creative accomplishment that supports and advances the mission of a top-tier regional public university.
- ◆ A commitment to build an **open, diverse, inclusive, and equitable college community**.
- ◆ A **spirit of exploration, discovery, and artistry** so critical for our graduates to excel in a rapidly changing society and economy.
- ◆ A commitment to **educating each student as a whole person**.
- ◆ And, being an **intellectual and cultural resource in the Hudson Valley** and serving regional economic and educational needs.

These values provide guideposts for our success in a changing higher education world. I am grateful for your contributions that advance these values and make this such an outstanding institution.

## LOOKING BACK

### FREE SPEECH

I'd like to take a few minutes now to look back upriver at where we've paddled in the past year. We ran our fair share of rapids and rough currents, without taking on water or being pushed off course!

We entered a period of political divisiveness that most of us have not experienced before, and that played out on college and university campuses nationwide. We have been challenged to juggle competing values around free speech. One is helping members of our community understand the fundamental importance of free expression and diverse views, including the right of liberal, middle-of-the-road, and conservative views to be voiced.

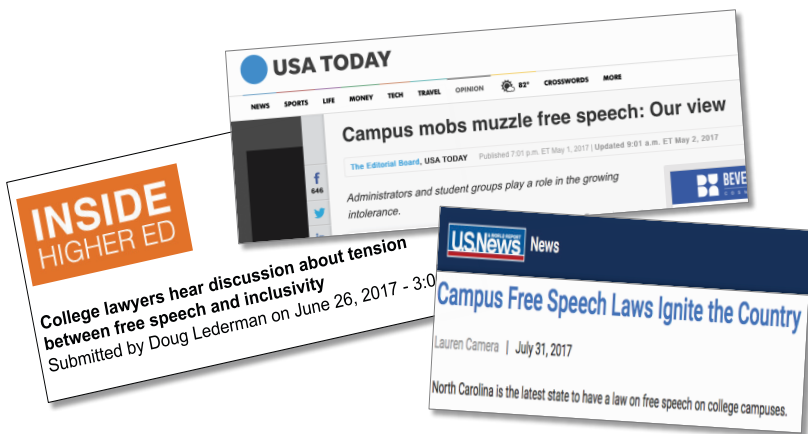


But we also recognize that some speech contributes to the disenfranchisement and marginalization of some community members, especially those who may feel they do not have the same privilege or opportunity as others to exercise their free speech rights. Recent events at Charlottesville, Virginia, bring these issues into sharp and painful focus. I know that many members of our community – students, faculty, staff – are carrying the impacts of these events with us as we start the

year. We need to support each other through a time of anger, fear, and confusion.

Let me be clear. Hatred, bigotry, racism, intolerance, and violence are not part of my personal values, nor those of our campus. We will continue to condemn such acts and the individuals or groups that





perpetrate them. My support for free speech on campus does not mean that I agree with all views expressed or that I afford moral equivalency to all views. However, as a **public** university, we are bound to uphold the First Amendment. Hate speech, provided it does not cross the line into intimidation or threat, is still protected speech, even when it hurts, upsets, or offends people. These are tough, complex issues with no easy answers, and they require our careful thought and attention – as a community.

The work of our free speech task force last year was a critical part of our response

to these matters. The events we held, our response to incidents of bias and hate speech, and our frequent communication about these issues helped our community discuss and learn about free speech and the impact of our words on others, intended or not. We must be vigilant to seize these opportunities to reinforce our commitment to our values and these critical elements of our institutional mission.

Changes in federal immigration enforcement and travel policies threaten many students and their families and some faculty and staff. We will support them to the full extent possible through SUNY policies and state and federal law. We also know that many of our international students have felt increasingly uncomfortable about coming to the U.S. to study, and we must heighten our efforts to welcome them and make them feel at home and supported.



## PROGRESS AND SUCCESSES

As we look back on last year, we made partial progress on adjusting our budget in a tight economy. More to come on this topic in a few minutes.

And of course, we survived a mumps outbreak that seemed like it would go on forever!

The year had many successes. I certainly endorse the move to a Faculty Senate governance model. Thank you, members of the Committee on Governance!

With strong faculty support, we approved a consensual relations policy forbidding romantic or sexual relations between employees and students where a power differential may exist. That is more often the rule than the exception. This was a goal that I laid out in last year's State of the College address. I am grateful for your strong support to accomplish this.



### Beyond rankings: SUNY New Paltz named a College of Distinction

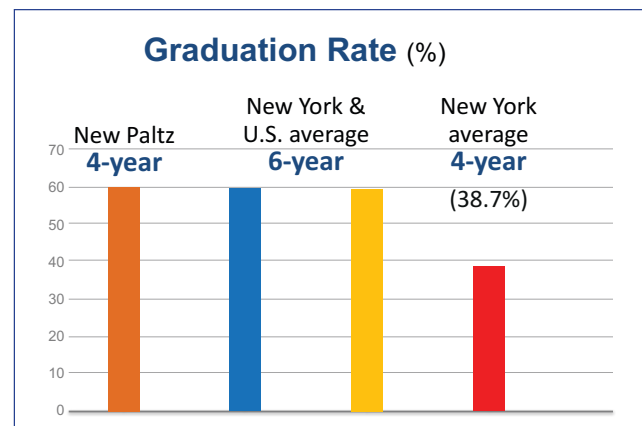
July 18, 2017 - College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Institutional, News Releases, Rankings, School of Business, School of Education, School of Fine and Performing Arts, School of Science and Engineering, Top Story



SUNY New Paltz has earned recognition from Colleges of Distinction, a unique evaluator in the world of higher education that serves as an in-depth resource for prospective students.

We grew in reputation and profile. We were included for the first time in the Colleges of Distinction listing. We also were included in a new ranking that placed New Paltz in the top 8% of the hardest schools in New York to get into. We are also in the top 8% of more than 900 colleges and universities in a social mobility index ranking – a measure of our success in creating upward social and economic opportunity for our graduates. We maintained our high rankings in US News and Kiplinger's "Best Value" rankings. These recognitions should be a source of pride – reflecting our success in fulfilling our mission as a public university, in educating students from a broad socioeconomic swath, and doing so with distinction.

That high quality and our focus on student success is reflected in our four-year graduation rate of nearly 60%, the highest ever. That **four-year** rate is equal to the average **six-year** rate for other public colleges and universities in New York and nationally, and well above the state and national four-year rate. We should be proud that our completion rates for students from different racial, economic, and family educational backgrounds differ very slightly compared with the sizeable achievement gaps so apparent in national patterns.



## ENROLLMENT

We recruited one of the largest incoming undergraduate classes ever, counting first-year and transfer students together. We did this without lowering admissions standards. This is also our most racially and ethnically diverse class, with about 36% of our new students from historically underrepresented groups, and more Black and more Latino students than any previous year for which we have data. About 41% of our new first-year students are from historically underrepresented groups, also the most ever.

I've spoken every year about the challenge of achieving our enrollment goals in the face of declining numbers of high school graduates, increasing competition among colleges and universities for bright students, and financial challenges faced by students and families. Yet here we are with a record incoming class! But this did not just happen. Our Admissions staff worked exceptionally hard and well to recruit students, and many faculty and staff contributed greatly to this achievement. This summer, a dad took me aside during orientation to tell me that his daughter decided to study Theatre at New Paltz rather than the Tisch Drama program at NYU – where she also was accepted – because a faculty member here engaged her in ways that she did not experience at NYU. Another wrote to tell me that the warmth of the faculty was one of the reasons his daughter is coming to New Paltz this fall.

Our success reflects many factors: a welcoming environment, our growing reputation, diverse academic offerings, new, modern living and learning spaces, a beautiful and well-maintained campus, and effective marketing and communication. Our success carries all your fingerprints. Thank you.

We made excellent progress on elements of our strategic plan directed at improving student success. We improved course availability and course scheduling, realigned and improved academic advising and peer-tutoring programs, developed an early-alert system that helps us support students needing academic or other intervention, and launched block scheduling for first-year students this summer. Our transfer student initiative has improved the social and academic integration of transfers.

We graduated our first cohort of mechanical engineers. Other innovative academic programs are being developed or are in the approval pipeline. This is an imperative that I will speak more about shortly.

## Student Learning and Student Success

- ◆ Improved course availability and course scheduling
- ◆ Realigned academic advising, peer-tutoring programs
- ◆ Developed an early-warning system
- ◆ Began block scheduling for first-year students
- ◆ Enhanced transfer student initiative

## CONSTRUCTION

We settled into the renovated Wooster Hall and the new Science Hall. These new spaces house three College of Liberal Arts and Sciences departments and several Science and Engineering disciplines. As I walk these buildings, students from many different majors tell me how much they like taking classes or studying in these two buildings.

We co-located several student services offices in Wooster to improve core student support. One director told me recently this has fostered some great inter-departmental collaboration. She said this has made a huge difference in their hard work to meet this summer's short deadlines to launch the new Excelsior Scholarship Program.

We also completed an 8-month renovation of Bevier residence hall. I remind you that funding for major construction and renovation is through state bonds, not recurring operating dollars. We are not trading off buildings for faculty and staff salary, scholarships, or conference travel. The bonded money that funds our residence halls is separate from that for academic buildings, and is repaid over many years through student housing fees.



Bevier Hall

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

With SUNY approval of our Diversity and Inclusion plan, we have assembled our Diversity and Inclusion Council, a shared governance committee, which met over the summer.

We continue our integration of Human Resources, Diversity and Inclusion, and Title IX, and have seen improved processes and support for employees – like a reconfigured new faculty orientation program, better guidance for supervisors to develop and use performance programs, and an increased emphasis on high-quality customer service, all in support of the strategic plan.



## ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT AND FUND-RAISING

Our plan priorities include three goals that reinforce each other – increasing our philanthropic success, engaging our alumni more effectively, and increasing our engagement with and support for the Hudson Valley region. We finished the third year of a major gift initiative, raising over \$3 million annually, double our previous five-year annual average – for a 3-year total of \$9.4 million.



Our alumni reunion in the fall attracted record numbers from 55 different graduating years. In June, we recognized 40 alumni under the age of 40 who have achieved distinctive career and life successes. As I talked with these alumni, they shared their clear affection for their alma mater, and their deep appreciation for the profound impacts that faculty or staff mentors had on their lives. These are important reminders of the difference you make with students.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our Hudson Valley Future Summit in November brought entrepreneurs, business leaders, artists, techies, and others to discuss ways we can collaborate to advance our very special region, with SUNY New Paltz in the lead role. Many have come to see the College in a new light as a regional thought leader. Efforts



like this have boosted our profile among regional influencers. Some who joined us that day are supporting us philanthropically, arranging internship opportunities for students, or engaging our faculty in new ways.

Examples abound of our support for the region. Here are a few. The Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art attracts visitors and extends appreciation for Hudson Valley art and artists. Last spring, several College of Liberal Arts and Sciences departments and the Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives hosted a widely acclaimed conference to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women gaining voting rights in New York and to raise awareness of contemporary issues. Student and employee volunteerism is a notable connection between our campus and local communities. Our

departments reach out to youth and families in the community through events like the Saturday Arts Lab and Family Mole Night. Our regular Observatory and Planetarium programs attract school groups and community members. Earlier this week, we saw an overwhelming community response to our solar eclipse event. I had expected maybe a hundred people, and was stunned that the entire Excelsior Concourse was packed. I saw many of you there, with spouses, partners, your children, along with students, alumni, community members, even prospective students – truly a large and diverse grouping, a New Paltz tribe.

These and other accomplishments point to many bright spots in the past year and your excellent and dedicated work.



## LOOKING AHEAD

How does the coming year's stretch of water look? I will speak first about areas where it is especially critical that we row together as a community.

Earlier I spoke about free speech issues, which will undoubtedly occupy college and university campuses this year, especially the tensions between free speech and inclusivity, and free speech and safety. Our Emergency Management Team and the Cabinet have been assessing and improving our preparedness for incidents like those that have occurred on other campuses. We are also planning programs for the fall semester. Again, addressing these issues upfront and productively will require patience, empathy, and a clear community focus.



Our transition to a Faculty Senate will no doubt require a strong sense of community commitment, as faculty review and approve new bylaws, develop new processes, and build appropriate consultation at departmental levels. The Provost and I look forward to collaborating with Presiding Officer Anne Balant, and stand ready to support this transition. The current governance system will remain this fall, and we will move rapidly to the Senate model in January – in the spirit of keeping up with the current.



The Diversity and Inclusion Council will undertake a “listening tour” this fall to gather community input about the top priorities from our plan. This group has chosen “citizenship” as our guiding theme for this year – to inspire us to explore citizenship through many lenses. Stay tuned for more information about offerings that the council will kick off in September.



Some tasks ahead require us to move rapidly, in some instances to paddle faster to keep up. We must not let our success this year in recruiting new undergraduate students lead to ANY complacency in our recruitment or retention efforts. It's still a tough climate. And, as we graduate students more quickly, we must replace them at higher rates to maintain our enrollments and tuition revenue.

At our President's Cabinet retreat last month, we discussed a recent article titled “Here there is danger,” about some of the biggest threats to colleges. One is “An inability or unwillingness to develop academic programs that provide a

competitive advantage.” We must not think about mission versus market, but instead about mission **and** market. That's true for content and mode of delivery, and for both undergraduate and graduate programs. We've seen positive student responses to new programs and program formats, like an accelerated MBA. We anticipate positive impact of other programs under review or in development, such as data analytics and an interdisciplinary autism initiative.

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Academics Admission About Us Campus Life

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# acceleratedMBA

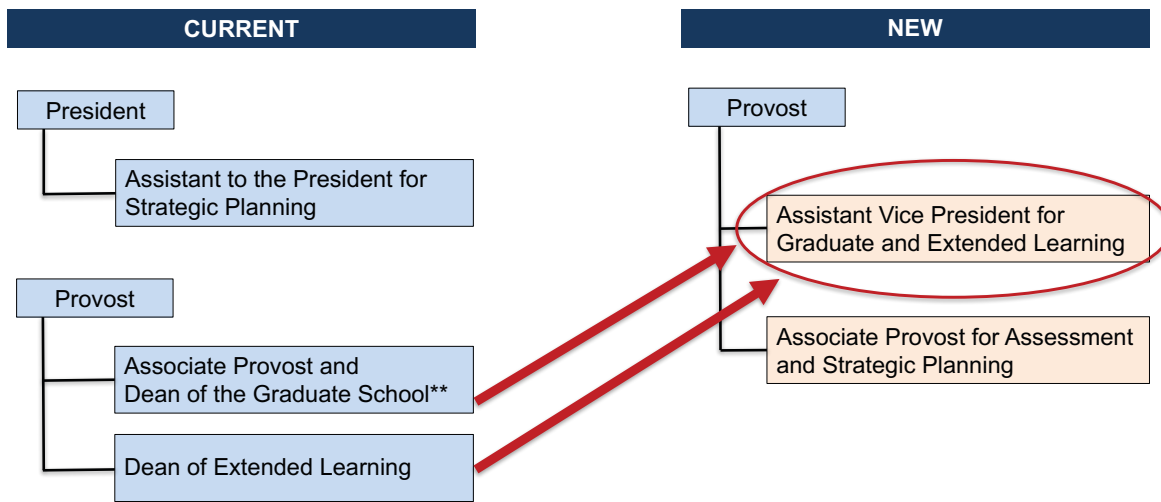
- Accelerated**  
The curriculum has been streamlined and modernized, allowing you to earn an MBA in as little as 15 months (saving up to \$2,340 in tuition).
- Flexible**  
Courses are available nights, weekends and online, so you can mix and match to fit your needs.
- Affordable**  
We offer the best in-state tuition rates for MBA programs.
- Personal**  
Our dedicated faculty bring decades of industry experience to the classroom, guiding you with custom advising in person, after hours or via web conference.

School of Business

New Paltz » School of Business

## ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Our graduate enrollments have fallen further. Both our financial well-being and our regional and state role demand that we take more aggressive action to reverse that trend. Doing so requires new programs that meet **today's** students' needs and interests. We need to recognize that even graduate programs whose enrollments have declined and may rebound in the next half dozen or so years are unlikely to return in traditional seated, daytime, face-to-face formats. We can't paddle back upstream, or stand still in fast-moving water.



\*\* Responsible for Graduate Education, Assessment, Reaccreditation Leadership

Our structural realignment of graduate and extended education will help us advance new programs. Provost Arnold and I respect the principle that primary oversight of the curriculum – including new program development – rests with the faculty. At the same time, as institutional leaders we must ensure that new and diverse programs are developed to attract students and ensure adequate revenue streams.

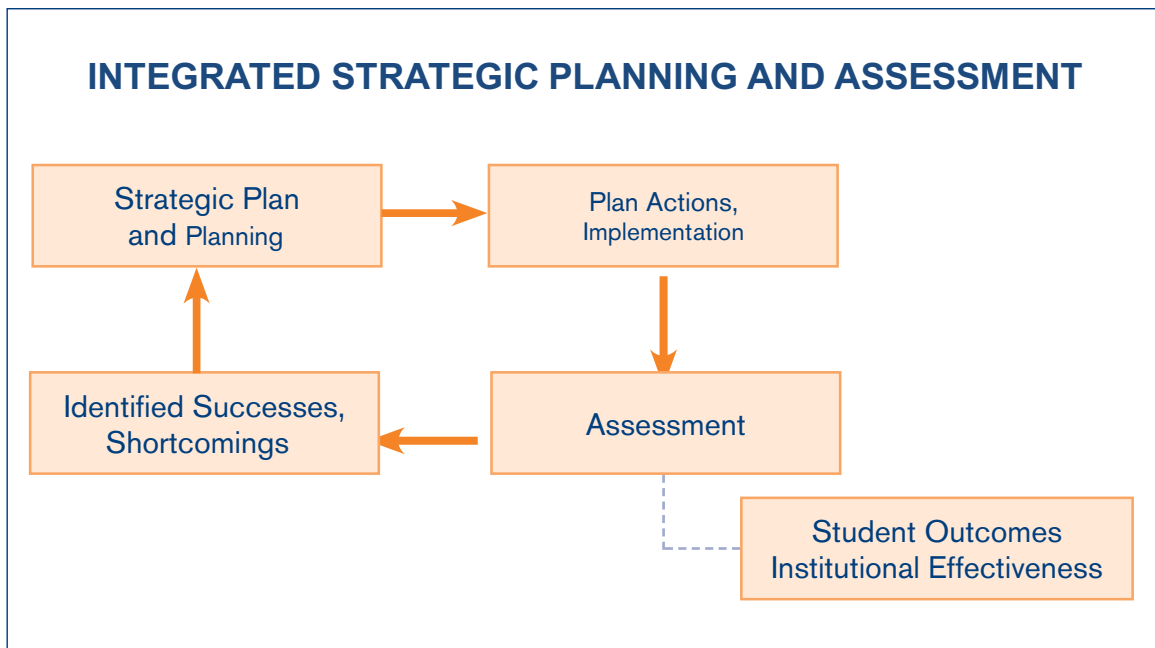
## BUDGET

Budget is a theme in all my yearly addresses. Last year, we reduced expenditures to right-size our budget in a new environment. But we have more work to do to adjust our economy, and to identify resources that we can reallocate to invest in innovation. Our strong undergraduate enrollments have helped, but we cannot grow at the undergraduate level enough to fully address our financial challenges. This year's \$200 undergraduate tuition increase will not cover inflationary and other cost increases. The State has settled several contractual employee agreements that include salary increases, but not funded them. There are limits to how much we draw down campus reserves, and it will be some time before we will see increased revenue from new programs or modes of delivery. These are the reasons that we need to make further adjustments, through a process that we will undertake and complete this year.

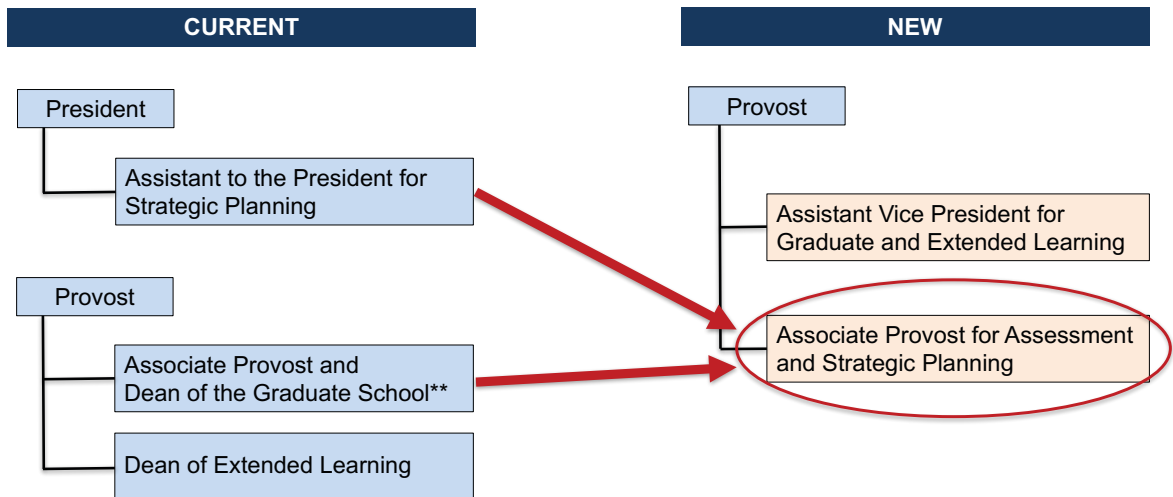
## STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

The essential initiatives of our current strategic plan capture the most pressing work we must do to thrive, and to position the College for a sound future. These include initiatives that advance our foremost purpose: student learning and student success. Our focus this year will include improving academic advising and predictive analytics, and further building academic and student affairs collaborations. We will also emphasize growing online programs, and expanding graduate and extended learning. A top priority will be building upon our recent fundraising advances to increase private support.





Our new organizational structure treats strategic planning and implementation as an ongoing process integrated with assessment. We will feed assessment results –for student learning and institutional effectiveness – more directly and promptly into our planning, using what we learn about what is working and what is not to adjust our course and to inform budgeting. It will also help us focus on collecting relevant assessment data. Dr. Laurel Garrick Duhaney will direct this work in her new position, drawing on her expertise with assessment and reaccreditation. She will report to Provost Arnold, who will assume more significant oversight for the plan. Other Cabinet members will direct work within their divisions to advance our goals. The results will be important elements in our Middle States reaccreditation, in 2020-21.



\*\* Responsible for Graduate Education, Assessment, Reaccreditation Leadership

I am grateful to our Strategic Planning Council members who guided and documented our collective progress on the plan these past several years. They gave a frank analysis of what has worked and where we need to improve. A restructured Strategic Planning and Assessment Council, with faculty members selected through school-based governance, will bring a broad voice to this effort.





## **SUSTAINABILITY**

We are advancing our sustainability goals. Our Foundation Board is close to finalizing a plan to remove endowment funds from direct investment in fossil fuel companies. We will have a ribbon-cutting ceremony this year to celebrate our photovoltaic array and battery storage demonstration project. We've installed solar cell phone charging stations, and are evaluating several campus practices to identify ways to reduce our use of energy and materials.

## **MODERN SPACES**

We've made unprecedented recent progress on improving our campus physical environment, supported by generous state funding. But our progress will slow, as capital funding has diminished.

We are wrapping up the renovation of the Speech-Language-Hearing Center that will allow us to grow graduate enrollment in a high-demand major.



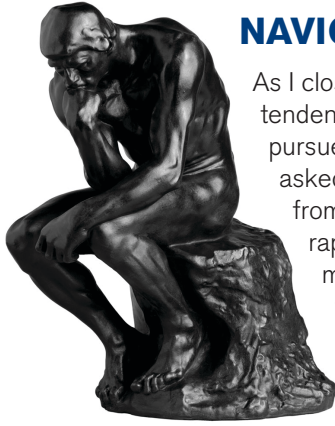
We will soon renovate a new space for EOP, the Educational Opportunity Program, in the previous home of Records and Registration. This move will support the enrollment growth underway in EOP, in a more accessible location.

We break ground this fall on our Engineering Innovation Hub, next to Resnick Engineering Building, to house our Hudson Valley Advanced Manufacturing Center and our mechanical engineering program – for which demand is exploding. This building was funded by a competitive award from Governor Cuomo to increase support for academic programs that translate directly into economic development and jobs.

And, finally, a matter always one of the most contentious at colleges and universities across the nation. Parking. We **are** replacing parking spaces lost to construction!



VIEW OF BUILDING ENTRANCE FROM SW



## NAVIGATING THE WATERS AHEAD

As I close, I am reminded that I have spoken to you before about cultural tendencies in higher education that hinder our progress. One is the instinct to pursue careful, slow, stepwise analyses, not deciding or acting until we have asked all questions. This approach serves us well as scholars but holds us back from achieving larger institutional goals. In a previous address, I advocated for rapid prototyping – putting in place a “good enough” solution, immediately measuring its effect, improving it, and trying again. This is like paddling through the current by always moving ahead, carefully reading the water and adjusting as warranted.

Another tendency I have spoken about is the academy’s cultural tradition of individualism – our resistance to moving beyond our individual department or functional area to support bigger goals. Our individual leanings also mean we often try to invent our own knowledge rather than borrowing and adapting from others. I have spoken before about the detriments of silo thinking. These tendencies parallel the tribal leanings I spoke about today, and the value that we gain if we work collectively and communally, drawing on diverse sources of knowledge and experience, in a large and inclusive tribe – the SUNY New Paltz tribe.

We are all in this boat together.

I hope we are inspired to use these themes as touchstones for our work this year. Given our successes to date, I have full confidence in our collective ability to navigate the waters ahead.



I wish everyone a productive, rewarding, and healthy year, as we advance through the currents together.



[www.newpaltz.edu](http://www.newpaltz.edu)