

SUNY New Paltz on 'Hot' list

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New Paltz – For SUNY New Paltz officials, Christmas came early this week. Newsweek magazine has named the school the “Hottest Small State School” in the country.

Not just in the state. Not just within the SUNY system. In the country.

“It’s great to see others acknowledge us for what we’ve always known ourselves to be,” said a very happy David Eaton, vice president for enrollment management.

The magazine’s first-ever 25 Hottest Schools compilation includes some traditional heavy hitters in its list – Princeton, Harvard, Johns Hopkins – in categories considerably less formal than U. S. News & World Report’s exhaustive annual survey.

The magazine acknowledges its list is subjective and informal – “but in a good way.”

Rather than relying on numerical assessments from college administrators, Newsweek interviewed students, parents, educational experts and, most especially, high school guidance counselors, arguing they were the people most in tune with what’s hot and what’s not.

Three friends stood in the shade of a maple on the campus yesterday. They hadn’t heard the news.

“You mean ‘hot’ as in ‘cool’?” asked Lissa Eraza. “Oh yeah, it’s cool here.”

Her friends Sermania Arias and Erica Pagan concurred enthusiastically, praising the school for its diversity and friendliness at the student, faculty and administrative levels.

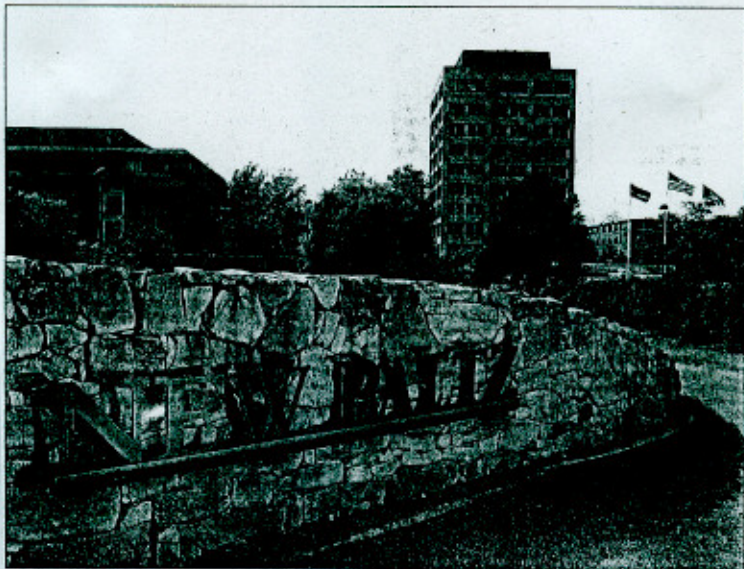
All three were on campus a week ahead of the incoming freshman class; they’ll be mentoring new students as part of the college’s much-praised Educational Opportunity Program.

Martha Tait-Watkins, a SUNY New Paltz career counselor, said she wasn’t surprised by the designation.

“We’ve always known we were hot,” she said with a knowing smile.



SUNY New Paltz students Erica Pagan, Lissa Eraza and Sermania Arias talk yesterday about why they like the school. The three, who will be seniors when classes start later this month, spoke on campus. Times Herald-Record photo/TOM BUSBY



SUNY New Paltz scores high with students, parents and high school guidance counselors in Newsweek’s informal compilation.

Here’s what Newsweek had to say about SUNY New Paltz, which it called the “Hottest Small State School:”

Alicia Mejias chose SUNY New Paltz because it was just 90 minutes from her family in Brooklyn, didn’t cost too much and had a step team. Her only concern was she’d be one of the few Hispanics on the rural campus of 6,400 undergrads. That worry was allayed by a rush of festivities that included Jam Asia, Carribash and Latino Week. “Since I was the first in my family to attend college,” she says, “I didn’t know what to expect.” She concluded New Paltz was a place “where anyone should be able to grow.” More first-generation college students are enrolling. The school recently opened a 57,000-square-foot Athletic and Wellness Center with an indoor track.