

## Senate Higher Education Committee

October 27, 2021

Wang Center - Room 201

### President Maurie McInnis - Testimony

- Chair Stavisky members of the committee, thank you for hosting this public hearing on the campus of Stony Brook University to understand how this public research institution is working to maintain quality, equity and affordability throughout the pandemic and beyond.
- And to our former Senator and Higher Ed Chair, Ken LaValle, it's great to see you again and back on campus.
- In the peak of the pandemic, I started as Stony Brook's President with a clear mandate - continue Stony Brook's upward trajectory as one of America's leading research institutions that makes a difference in the world and leads the AAU in driving inter-generational socio-economic mobility.
- Stony Brook and the University of Buffalo were actually created to be different from the other SUNY institutions. In 1960, Governor Rockefeller's Heald Commission recommended that two new public research universities *"be designed to stand with the finest in the country..... and help to advance the technical and scientific industries that are playing an increasingly important part of our national economy."*
- In 1990, SBU President John Marburger said *"The State of New York, through its diverse manifestations, wants us to compete nationally with other research universities in faculty quality and impact, in student excellence and success, and in the encouragement of industry and culture. The State does not want us to resemble any other type of university in our system. It is our responsibility to deliver the "high end" of research and instruction."* He went on to say that we also have a responsibility to redress social injustice, to provide equitable access to higher education, and to assist the State of New York in improving the physical, economic, and cultural condition of its people.
- We proudly continue to meet those challenges.

- Today, 40% of our over 15,000 undergraduate students pay no tuition because their financial need is so great that financial aid covers this expense, while one-third are first generation students.
- We are among the Top 10 Most Diverse universities in the US and one of the most diverse public universities in the State.
- We are a top producer of the degrees that are needed in New York, with particular strength in math, science, engineering and healthcare. We are the number one producer of engineering degrees in New York State and 19th in the nation. Sixty percent of our degrees are in the STEM and healthcare fields. And, we serve as an economic engine for the region, with a \$15 economic return for every state dollar invested in the University.
- I mentioned the AAU earlier. If you are not familiar with the AAU, it is the Association of American Universities, composed of North America's 65 leading research universities. Having a public university in the AAU is a pride point for New York State.
- AAU Member universities earn the majority of federal funding for research that improves public health, addresses national challenges, and contributes significantly to economic growth, while educating and training tomorrow's visionary leaders and innovators. They are widely acknowledged as cornerstones in their respective regional and statewide economies that contribute greatly to the communities in which they reside. They are also places that involve students...even undergrads...in the creation of new knowledge.
- To put this in context, Speaker Heastie always talks about the fact that he got an MIT education at a Stony Brook price. He's right that America's great research universities are our competition. And the kind of research our faculty do requires state of the art labs and equipment. And we compete with those institutions for great faculty.

- Both SBU and UB worked hard to gain entrance to this group, and it is vital to the institution, our communities and the state that we remain strong members.
- Compared to other AAU public universities, Stony Brook and UB are ranked fourth and sixth respectively for serving the greatest number of Pell grant eligible students; first and second among major northeast public research universities and first and second among all New York AAU institutions. Stony Brook is also number three in the nation and first in the AAU in enhancing social mobility for students and ranks first the nation in reducing inequality. We take great pride in that and I hope you do as well.
- We are near the top of the AAU in admitting low-income students and more importantly - graduating them – all while eliminating the graduation rate gaps between Pell and non-Pell students and between white and traditionally underrepresented groups.
- We are nationally recognized for our success in social mobility. Nine years after graduation, our Pell grant students are earning more in wages than our non-Pell grant students and significantly more than graduates of other SUNY schools.
- As a co-manager of Brookhaven National Lab, with which we share dozens of faculty, we help make Long Island a hub of innovation especially for state policy priorities like sustainable energy, healthcare, engineering and artificial intelligence, health disparities, quantum communications and networking, and environmental resiliency.
- And we recently learned that we have reached the second stage in the competition to transform Governors Island into a hub focused on climate change. Our proposal includes research, environmental justice, K12 education, and public engagement.
- Many SBU grads remain in New York State with high paying jobs. 42% of our research-funded graduate students stayed in NY after graduating between 2015-2017. One year after leaving Stony Brook, 100% of our

research-funded graduate students are employed and are earning an annual average salary of more than \$111,000.

- The pandemic revealed the profound impact a leading research university and academic medical center like Stony Brook can play... from excellent patient care to groundbreaking research, from supporting economic recovery to creating the jobs and technologies of the future while also vaccinating hundreds of thousands of our neighbors across the region.
- But the pandemic has also brought home some financial challenges.
- As a result of the pandemic, the academic enterprise has experienced over \$125 million in either new costs or revenue loss for the University. Half of our federal COVID relief funds were sent directly to students with need to support them during this difficult time, and like many institutions across the country, most of the rest was applied to cover the COVID-driven deficit in the Dormitory Income Fund in an effort to preserve the strength of the residence hall operations.
- Our two primary sources of revenue are state funding and tuition. We also receive EOP support, which has increased and allowed us to serve more students, and our students receive TAP and Excelsior, which has helped our neediest families to afford college.
- We are grateful that New York State continues to pay for the fringe benefits of our employees, but are hopeful that as the Legislature, the Governor, and SUNY work through the budget process there can be a review of best ways to support the academic and research enterprise and to support growth in enrollment and graduation rates.
- In-state tuition does not cover all the costs for a research institution education. There must always be a mix of tuition, financial aid, and state aid. For example, last year difficulties caused by COVID reduced our international and domestic out-of-state student numbers, and we increased our in-state student population to keep enrollment flat. We love our NY students, but this resulted in lost tuition revenue of \$9M.

- The reality is our current tuition structure is one of the lowest of all AAU schools and of all public research universities in the Northeast region. This is great for our families, but freezing tuition for too long without additional operating aid will make it tough to fully meet the needs of our students, staff, and faculty.
- We are always on the lookout for savings, operational efficiencies, and revenue generation opportunities, and last year ran a successful Strategic Budget Initiative that is in the implementation phase this year. We are looking to clear away structural inhibitors to innovation, collaboration, and greater research performance. For this year we are focusing on improving our HR processes and systems, having a more integrated approach to our purchasing contracts, putting a greater focus on marketing the use of the campus, and making sure that our tuition revenue sharing is strategically allocated across the campus.
- To save money, we have deferred investments in new programs and delayed or canceled the filling of vacancies. Both our staff and faculty headcount has decreased over the past few years as a result.
- We are grateful that the budget includes a phase out of the TAP gap. This program is critical and allows us continue our mission to serve these smart but needy students.... to help them use their SBU experience to move up the ladder of success.
- Lastly, but as important, is Stony Brook University Hospital which remains a leader in patient care on Long Island. Our staff was exemplary throughout the pandemic. As an example, in addition to great patient care, we hosted and ran Suffolk County's State COVID testing site, and continue to run the mass vaccination site as well as community vaccination sites across Long Island.
- In total, between revenue losses and COVID expenses, the hospital and our clinical practices lost over \$300 million. Through the CARES Act, the hospital received \$156 million in federal relief aid and has made great strides in building back its revenue base.

- When I was hired, I committed to unleashing our ambitions, expanding research, enhancing academic success, and ensuring cutting edge clinical care. Stony Brook University's momentum as one of the country's leading public research and healthcare institutions is good for Stony Brook, SUNY, Long Island and New York State. I look forward to working with our executive, legislative, and SUNY partners going forward to ensure this success.
- Once again, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to address the committee today. I will be happy to answer any questions.