



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kenneth P. LaValle

## Senator LaValle and Assemblyman Thiele Call for Investigation of Deceptive Practices by Stony Brook University Toward Southampton Students and Parents

KENNETH P. LAVALLE April 13, 2010

| ISSUE: **CONTINUING EDUCATION**



New York State Senator Kenneth P. LaValle and New York State Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. have contacted the State Attorney General and the State Comptroller to investigate deceptive acts and practices relating to currently enrolled students and parents, and prospective students and parents, at the Stony Brook Southampton campus (SBS).

Students and parents have flooded Senator LaValle's and Assemblyman Thiele's offices with complaints regarding deceptive acts and practices engaged in by Stony Brook University.

On April 7<sup>th</sup>, the President of Stony Brook University abruptly announced the campus would be closed in August. According to LaValle and Thiele, the decision was made unilaterally, behind closed doors, with no input from the administration at the Southampton campus, elected officials, students, or the public at large.

Since the announcement, the Legislators' offices have been deluged with complaints from students currently attending SBS and their parents, as well as those accepted for the coming year. Specifically, these students and parents have reported that they asked officials and representatives of Stony Brook whether the campus or its programs were in any danger of being closed or eliminated because of New York's fiscal situation. Without exception, Stony Brook made representations to these students and parents that SBS would not be closed or its unique environmental sustainability program eliminated. In some cases, these representations were made just days before the closure announcement.

As a result of these representations in response to direct questions, students and parents made decisions relying on Stony Brook's statements. For example, some students have foregone scholarship offers from other institutions in order to attend SBS. Others have transferred to SBS because of representations that the program was safe. One family even purchased a home near the campus based on Stony Brook's statements. Attendance at Stony Brook as an option is not acceptable to many of these families.

LaValle and Thiele stated, "It is clear to us that Stony Brook University has engaged in deceptive acts and practices which may be in violation of state law. Stony Brook University, by its actions, has shown callous disregard for these students and their families. The result has been extreme emotional distress as well as tangible economic losses. Stony Brook University is exposing the State to litigation and substantial financial claims."

In 2006, the State of New York, pursuant to legislative action initiated by the undersigned and others, acquired the Stony Brook Southampton campus from Long Island University. The State has, in four short years, invested more than \$78 million in capital improvements. Six-hundred students currently attend the campus. Because admission applications have increased by 54% this year, that number would have increased to 800 next year. Ultimately, 2,000 students would attend the college.