



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

Oppenheimer Applauds Governor's Signing of Bill Allowing Purchase College to Build Senior Learning Community

SUZI OPPENHEIMER August 22, 2011

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Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) today hailed Governor Cuomo for signing into law her bill authorizing Purchase College to lease land for the development of a senior residential learning center on campus (S.1846A).

“I have been working closely with University administrators for many, many years to bring this innovative public-private partnership approach to SUNY,” said Senator Oppenheimer.

“The senior learning community was eagerly sought by both University officials and seniors who came to me for assistance in getting this legislation passed.”

Purchase College was the forerunner of the collaborative public-private partnership approach now being looked at throughout SUNY. The legislation represents a change in policy for SUNY. The Purchase legislation passed the Senate in 2006 and 2010, but did not win passage in the Assembly. In 2008, the bill passed both houses but was vetoed by then-Governor David Paterson. “I am pleased that this innovative partnership at Purchase College has now won support of both houses and the Governor this year,” noted the Senator.

The legislation was sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblywoman Amy Paulin (D-Scarsdale), who negotiated changes required in that house to win passage this year.

The public-private partnership will generate additional revenue for the University, while expanding affordable housing opportunities for seniors. Senior residents will be able to take classes and attend the many cultural and theatrical events on campus. At least 20 percent of the residential units for seniors will be reserved for low-income tenants. Westchester residents would be given priority for 50 percent of those affordable housing units.

The new law further mandates that 75 percent of the revenue generated by the senior learning community be used to provide financial aid to students, while the remaining 25 percent would support additional full-time faculty.

“We are extremely grateful to Senator Oppenheimer and the NYS Senate for passage of the bill,” said Purchase College President Tom Schwarz when the legislation passed the Senate in June. “It opens the door to enormous possibilities in terms of increasing the number of patrons for the Performing Arts Center and Neuberger Museum of Art, providing a great opportunity for lifelong learning for senior adults, offering quality educational services to

the Westchester Community, as well as spurring economic activity in the local community. The Senior Learning Community will generate much needed funds for student scholarships and the hiring of new faculty.”

“I hope that this innovative partnership will serve as a model throughout the SUNY system, as lawmakers have come to recognize the value of giving campuses more flexibility to find outside revenue, consistent with their educational mission,” said Oppenheimer. “Learners of all ages will benefit from the multigenerational perspective that this unique living and learning community will foster.”

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