President’s report, 14 October 2014.

Welcome back to another year of fun and games with the Senate. I trust that everyone had a productive summer and first half of the semester. I take this opportunity to update you on happenings at System Administration and the Board of Trustees over the last few months as well as outline our goals for the 2014-15 academic year.

1. Personnel changes at System Administration. As I’m sure you are all aware, Alexander Cartwright has joined SUNY System Administration as Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor. Alex comes to System from the University at Buffalo, where he had been Vice President for Research. Alex has been working hard to learn about all of the operations of the SUNY Provost’s office, and he brings to Albany a campus perspective and an announced desire to seek campus input in advance of System decisions and initiatives. You’ll have an opportunity to meet Alex at the Plenary. Beth Bringsjord, who served as Interim Provost for the past year, has returned to a position as Vice Provost and Vice Chancellor, serving in essence as the second-in-command, at least over the next year, facilitating the transition and offering Alex any and all assistance he needs. Jim Malatras left the position of Chief of Staff, called back to the Governor’s office to be Director of Operations for New York State. Stacey Hengsterman is interim Chief of Staff, with a search in place for a permanent individual. Josh Sager is the new chief budget officer, and he will be with us at the Plenary; he replaces Wendy Gillman, who retired. There are more changes, with more to follow, but these are the ones of most significance to us.

2. Chancellor and Strategic Planning. First, the Board of Trustees conducted a review of the Chancellor, and was pleased with what they heard, particularly about her national recognition and what that has meant for SUNY. The Board is offering/has offered the Chancellor a new contract, which I believe is to be for 5 years. The Chancellor previously indicated to us that she is willing to tie increases in State funding for SUNY to performance measures. You will hear about the approach during the Plenary. It is being called SUNY Excels—a matrix of performance measures that will include data and goals at the System level, but with campus goals to be set in appropriate areas (as defined collaboratively campus by campus).

3. System Administration Budget. You may have heard about new financial assessments to campuses in order to support the operations at System Administration. The line-item budget for operating System Administration within the legislatively approved SUNY budget hasn’t been increased in some 20 years. Obviously costs have gone up since then, and the Chancellor’s numerous initiatives have added to the budgetary pressures. System has been charging campuses for some services, but the System expenditures significantly exceed this as well. A further complication is that some System offices have sent these costs, charge-backs, etc., to campuses at irregular times during the year, making campus budget planning more difficult. So a phased approach has been established that includes some central budget cuts, increases in the charges to campuses, but a single charge for the year—phased in over 5 years. Presidents are unhappy with this. The Board of Trustees is also concerned, in part about the methodology, in part about the size of the System budget. The Board
has approved the increased assessments to campuses for this year, but has demanded more justification and an examination of alternatives before moving any further forward.

4. Seamless Transfer. The transfer paths were updated by the end of last spring, and we are now in a period of considering if adjustments to programs might be necessary to make this work. Therein lies the rub. Many if not most requests for program waivers have apparently been denied. Faculty on some campuses are questioning if they are being told to change major requirements for the first two years. I’d like to hear from you about what you know from your campus.

5. Open SUNY. The “first wave” of “Open SUNY +” programs—existing online programs with enhancements—was approved last academic year, and the second wave of 56 programs from 17 campuses has just been announced. System Administration has increasingly recognized that most student services need to be coordinated among or handled by the contributing campuses rather than established centrally, although SUNY is currently contracting with an outside vendor to cover a help desk 24/7 (beyond what was being covered by previously existing SLN assistance). System Administration is working with interested campuses to evaluate campus readiness for (expanded) online programs, and there is also now a business tool available to help campuses evaluate the short- and long-term costs/benefits of online programs. Finally, SUNY is helping facilitate the identification and development of digital materials and open education resources (Affordable Learning Solutions) for courses, not just online ones.

6. START-UP NY. Some 50 SUNY campuses have approved plans (or soon will). Companies have been announced at a number of campuses. I was particularly impressed by the process that Binghamton has established to get faculty input into approving company proposals: a faculty committee that has veto power over proposals that are deemed not to fit with the campus mission.

7. LICH and the Hospitals. We finally have a contract to sell the Long Island College Hospital site. What will be the financial impact on the rest of the SUNY campuses? The Board of Trustees will be delving into this question now that we know what SUNY will recover from the sale, but I don’t yet have an answer for you.

Last spring, we assured the Senate that the Executive Committee would take up a resolution that calls upon SUNY to conduct an investigation of how the whole LICH purchase and subsequent closure occurred, in order to try to prevent such a fiasco from occurring in the future. The EC chose not to pass the resolution, reasoning that the basic reasons behind what happened already are public record, that this would be an unnecessary expense that likely wouldn’t yield any new results, and that such a study might better be done by one or more of our own faculty.

There are some other developments regarding the hospitals and medical schools. First, the Board passed a resolution to set up a task force to examine and propose a “new governance structure” for the SUNY hospitals: how the hospitals should be governed—likely with local governing boards, answering perhaps to a central governing board that is separate from the SUNY Board of Trustees. As some of you are aware, the Chancellor has pressed for closer ties between the stand-alone medical schools and the University Centers. Accordingly, Downstate and UAlbany have been in
discussions about collaborations, and Susan Phillips (former Provost at Albany) has been assigned as VP for Academic Affairs at Downstate. Binghamton and Upstate are in talks about the shape of future collaborations. I’ve learned over the last year that the SUNY hospitals really are essential to successful operation of our medical schools and thus need to remain a part of the SUNY family.

8. Budget for 2015-16. With the final year of NYSUNY2020 looming, System is consulting with the Presidents and the Board about whether to request a new round of tuition increases to actually bring us to 2020. Further budget issues are a hard push to convince the governor and the legislature that “maintenance of effort” means covering mandated cost increases. The SUNY Excels matrix is to form the basis for seeking new State funds in support of SUNY. And finally, SUNY is seeking additional bonding authority for both critical maintenance and selected new construction projects.

9. TeachNY. There was a lot of focus on teacher education over the last year, and the Chancellor has emerged as a national champion for the Common Core Standards in K-12 education. As part of this, she and I urge you to familiarize yourself with the standards, as future NY students will have been educated according to that approach. We can expect some changes in the abilities of our future students, and we should be prepared to appreciate and take advantage of the skills they should possess. The Chancellor also has established a TeachNY program in conjunction with the State Education Department, with an advisory committee to offer guidance on how to improve teacher education and K-12 quality and success. Nationally recognized experts as well as SUNY faculty (and union) leadership are working together to advise the Chancellor on next steps for teacher education, particularly how to improve the effectiveness of our teacher education programs and the teachers they produce.

10. There are a number of important upcoming conferences and events to which I draw your attention:
   Nov. 7: "Protect, Use and Share Content in Online Education"; SUNY System Administration, Albany; organized by the FACT2 group
   Nov. 11-12: “Making Diversity Count: Ensuring Equity, Inclusion, Access, and Impact”; Albany Marriott; sponsored by the UFS and the SUNY Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
   Feb 10, 2015: “Graduate Research: Making a Difference in New York”; Legislative Office Building, Albany; sponsored by UFS
   March 20-21, 2015: 2nd Annual SUNY Voices Shared Governance Conference; location TBD.
   April 10, 2015: First SUNY Undergraduate Research Symposium; Brockport. Open to all undergraduate researchers.

11. The committees of the UFS already have been extremely busy this year, as you will learn from their reports and the resolutions they are presenting for adoption. Among the major projects: updating guidance to faculty and campuses on best practices for internships and service learning; examining the role of non-tenure-track faculty in shared governance; guidance for the ethical behavior of faculty; reviewing best practices for prevention of bullying and hazing; fostering and supporting undergraduate and graduate research. And that is but a taste of what we’re looking into this year.
The ultimate goal of all we do is engagement: engagement with System Administration to set policies and procedures; engagement with each other as faculty to improve what we do and what we offer our students; and engagement with the wider higher education community. I look forward to working with you on all of these initiatives and projects. And I wish you the best for a continued productive academic year.