



Purchase College | Notes from the Provost

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

November 20, 2017

To: The Faculty and Staff

From: Barry Pearson, Provost

Dear Colleagues:

In October's *Notes*, I discussed the importance of leadership and, specifically, the necessity of hiring capable new deans. In essence, then, you'd be right to say that I see leadership as a pressing, strategic challenge.

Of course, leadership is important. But I think we fail to consider its strategic importance beyond day-to-day affairs. Leadership is strategically important now because our mission, and those like ours, will require passionate and articulate defenders who are on the forefront of thinking about the public role of education in the 21st century. Nerve, collaborative, and innovative thinkers will attract the means to advance liberal and arts education across the spectrum. This work is not for the faint of heart, nor can it simply reinforce old notions of the academy.

But I want to turn our attention to another important and pressing strategic subject, which has to do with the hiring and retaining of faculty and staff. There is no more pressing challenge for our college than finding and keeping the right people. We work at it daily. But pressuring all of higher education is the competition for top faculty and staff. And within this challenge, and if we are to succeed, we must improve career-length viability for everyone at the institution.

Most people in education will tell you they "don't do it for the money." And in years when modest salary increases were steady and the state's percentage of support stabilized institutions, I think we all felt that jobs in higher education were "worth it," even if it meant having to take less money than our professional counterparts in other industries. I don't believe that feeling is as strong anymore, and for good reasons.

For one, the situation across SUNY does not feel stable. Institutions are being challenged on the enrollment front. State support is less secure now than 10 years ago. The total cost of attendance for students continues to rise. Student loan debt now exceeds credit card debt. External to the college, we know that the cost of living is challenging for most who work in higher education. For faculty and staff carving out careers at Purchase, they live in one of the most expensive places in the country. In total, these factors create a very precarious situation.

So, what do we do? The top priority in any strategic plan should receive the highest level of both effort and sacrifice. I think that hiring and retaining the right people must be our highest priority. It may require that we sacrifice doing other things in order to pay for it, but that's the kind of effort warranted at this time.

In terms of effort, a lot has been done to implement President Schwarz's innovative idea of creating a Senior Learning Community (SLC), which will support student scholarships and increase overall support for faculty. This

step is an important one. The potential for the SLC to sustain new investments in faculty and students is very exciting.

Over the next several months, the progress on the SLC will be communicated widely across campus. I want to encourage you to take advantage of the next issue of these *Notes* and a campus forum in the spring to learn more about this important strategic initiative. It's not the complete answer to our financial challenges, but the SLC promises to be an important lynchpin in an overall plan to improve career viability for our faculty and staff.

The Suzanne Farrell Ballet Says Goodbye

As part of the PAC's 40th Anniversary "season of celebration," they've invited back many of the exceptional audience favorites who have performed on their stages throughout the years. Among them is the incomparable **Suzanne Farrell Ballet**, embarking this season on its farewell tour and stopping here for the [only NY-area appearance](#) on **December 3 at 3 p.m.**

Under the artistic direction, coaching, and guidance of [Suzanne Farrell](#), George Balanchine's most celebrated muse, the Suzanne Farrell Ballet has given us unique insights into Balanchine's works for more than 20 years. The company's performances reveal the musicality and nuance of Balanchine's masterful ballets in ways that no other stagings can. The program on December 3 will be a pageant of favorites handpicked for their special meaning to Farrell, including classic works of the canon and iconic works created especially for her by Balanchine.

After the performance, Interim Director **Seth Soloway** will moderate a discussion with Suzanne Farrell and dancers from the company.

The Ballet's performance and the post-show discussion with Suzanne Farrell are definitely things worth getting excited about, but our campus community is fortunate that the PAC was able to coordinate another very special extra for us.

On **Saturday, December 2**, from noon to 1:30 p.m., we will be given a rare opportunity to observe the Suzanne Farrell Ballet's morning class, led by Farrell herself. This class starts every day of rehearsal and performance; it is considered an essential part of the dancers' daily routine, where they work on their own bodies and aspects of technique. Much about a company's style of movement and approach to work is established in company class, which makes class just as vital as rehearsal of the ballets themselves. Selected students in the **Conservatory of Dance** will be invited to participate in this class, which will take place in the Concert Hall, and will be free and open to the public.

"The point of class," says Suzanne Farrell, "is to be in control of your body and not at the mercy of it. The combinations are musically challenging and mathematically challenging, so that the body is always in a state of learning. The goal is to always be improving, always experimenting."

As always, discounted tickets are available for faculty and staff, and a student rush sale will be offered for the Sunday afternoon performance. Keep an eye on the PAC website, your purchase.edu email, and the PAC's social media channels for information about rush-sale dates and times. For more information about the PAC and to view the full season schedule, visit www.artscenter.org.