

Convocation – State of the College, September 9, 2015
Presented by President Thomas J. Schwarz

Welcome and thank you for coming. I am excited about where we are as an institution and how we are doing. The physical evidence of improvement is all around us, whether as completed projects or ongoing. And I think this physical evidence has both played a part in and mirrors the success we are having with our primary mission of educating and graduating our students.

National averages for public institutions for four (not six) year graduation rates are 33.5%. In 2003 our four year rate was 35.2%. More recently in 2009 we had climbed to 49%. Since then we have marched ever upward so that the Class of 2015 graduated at 57%-56.94% to be exact. Now that is terrific progress but it isn't all the story. When we track those who left Purchase but graduated within four years from Day 1, there is another approximately 5%. So we are doing a good job.

But we could do better. With respect to the Class of 2015, I bet Dennis that they would graduate 60% in four years. He won having guessed 57%. But that difference is only 24 students – 1%=8 students. Now here is the real challenge – to get to 67% which is where Binghamton and Geneseo are. And we can do it without in any way compromising quality or standards. We need 80 more students graduating in four years to get to 67%.

If we keep some of those students who left Purchase and graduated from another institution within four years and graduate them from Purchase, we are part-way there. And if all faculty and staff just focused a little more attention on those who seem to be wavering we could easily get there if we focus on what has come to be called “the murky middle”.

I know that Patty Bice and her student success team, for example, focused on undeclared first year students last year and significantly increased the number who returned over the prior year. These kinds of efforts are bearing fruit, more focus on the Senior Project will make significant progress. We can do it.

CONVOCATION BUSINESS SECTION

Now let me turn to some highlights from the past year.

I have asked all of the Officers to post their annual reports –they will be attachments to the Convocation Speech that will be on the President’s page of the College website.

I would like to begin with a heartfelt thanks to the community for its commitment to “continuing the conversation,” that is, to focusing on the issues of diversity, inclusion and tolerance in our academic and social programs, from orientation and first year experience, to coursework.

It is my top priority to be engaged in both the formal and informal interchanges that I hope will go on in response to the meetings and forums that we conducted last spring. I would like to recognize our new interim chief of police, lieutenant Dayton Tucker, who will be initiating new programs designed to reaffirm the importance of security and trust as part of our efforts.

As many of you know, we are in the midst of completing work for SUNY that I hope will yield some additional funding.

We recently submitted a “white paper” with a \$10.4 million request to expand our STEM program serving underrepresented minorities through the expansion and renovation of our science laboratories. We should hear this week whether we can go forward and submit a formal proposal. We have made a “pitch” with our legislators for funding to redo the underpass of the Performing Arts

Center—a renovation project in lieu of phase II construction of the Center for Theatre, Film and Media.

If we can get it funded phase II can become a reality and not a distant pipedream.

We continue at pace with the planning of the Senior Learning Community and anticipate an opportunity to review an initial development plan this fall. As we move forward, there will be full involvement from campus constituencies as we explore the opportunities for integration within our community. We are drafting our Performance Improvement Program, a document requested by SUNY that is both reflective and aspirational, and speaks to our alignment with SUNYs strategic goals.

I would like to thank the Provost, Peggy DeCooke, Keith Landa, Barbara Moore and Betsy Robertson for their hard work moving this forward.

In Academic Affairs we welcomed 24 new fulltime faculty members and I am pleased to announce our new appointments: Lawrence Tamburri, is the new interim chair of our arts management and entrepreneurship program, James Undercofler will serve as the interim director of the Conservatory of Music, Nelly Van Bommel is the new interim director of the Conservatory of Dance, and Agustin Zarzosa will serve as the interim chair of the school of film and media studies while Michelle Stewart is on leave.

Our new first-year student convocation on Sunday, August 30th was a huge success in part due to the jazz performance kick off by our faculty, Pete Malinverni, John Faddis, Todd Coolman, and Michael Camacho. The event was an important first step toward introducing students to the kind of intellectual engagement that they will find in classes and to role-model civil discussion.

The current strategic plan will end this year. Peggy De Cooke will work across the campus to update our progress on the current plan's initiatives. The provost will arrange special community forums to gather responses to the summary evaluation. I hope you will make time to attend.

Connected to the current strategic plan, and a central element of developing the new one, will be our Periodic Program Review (PPR) for Middle States. Our review will take place in 2017 and the study document will need to be prepared, reviewed, and submitted to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education by June 1, 2016. This is an important accreditation action and one that will require involvement from across the campus.

Finally, we achieved an important milestone this past academic year by approving a new governance structure. Dan Hanessian, the new faculty presiding officer and chair of the College Senate, is working with Peggy De Cooke, his predecessor in those positions, Keith Landa, our University Faculty senator, and Betsy Robertson, to plan the migration to the new senate structure. This is an exciting process, but one that will take time. I look forward to the final stage of this process.

We continue to expand our academic offerings. We await approval from SUNY to offer a new MFA in Media, Art and Culture, a program that will draw from both Visual Arts and Film and Media Studies.

We continue to expand our outreach with the opening of The Purchase College Center for Community Culture in Yonkers (PC4-Y).

Funding came from the US Department of Housing & Urban Development to rent a storefront in downtown Yonkers. The college will stage programming and activities, thereby assisting the City of Yonkers with its strategic goal of “investing in community development activities in lower income and deteriorating neighborhoods and in facilities that serve lower income populations”. Casa Purchase will expand to participate in community activities in Yonkers as well.

We move ahead on another expansion as plans progress on “Neuberger on 42nd street.” We expect this exhibition and event space in the College of Optometry across from Bryant Park to be open by the end of 2016.

And with great pleasure we have reopened the Humanities building thus ending the three year diaspora of many of our faculty in Liberal Arts and Sciences. It is worth a detour to see the reconfigured theatre and lecture hall and our new journalism suite.

With respect to Finance, I am pleased to report that fiscal year 14-15 ended in the black with a net cash balance of approximately \$300,000 to be added to college reserves.

For the next two fiscal years, FY 15-16 and FY 16-17, we have reduced our total budget by just over \$700,000. This reflects the continuation of the rational tuition plan while anticipating unfunded collective bargaining.

We have undertaken a change in college budgeting to a 2-year budget model. The new model will allow for better planning and alignment with our strategic plan.

We are the top SUNY college for contracts with Women and Minority Business Owners—a priority of the Governor and of mine and we lead all with a 30% participation rate for discretionary dollars.

Nik Lentner's efforts are responsible for this highly regarded effort.

Construction is underway on our Center for Media, Film and Theatre. The contractors have spent the summer making the necessary preparations to the spaces above and below the plaza to prepare for the major construction work to come during the next year. Once completed, which we hope to be spring 2017, the project will house a new theatre, mixing/screening studio, small sound stage, fabrication lab, production shop, classrooms and computer labs, open atrium space, performance studios, and offices.

We continue planning on our new residence hall behind Fort Awesome while repairing and renovating the interiors of our residences. You can also expect scaffolding at the Gym, Music and Natural Sciences as we begin exterior repairs.

Our commitment to being stewards of the environment continues. We have converted much of our lighting in public areas to LED—much more energy efficient and also importantly will lead to cost savings.

We received eight proposals to install up to two megawatts of solar power on campus. The solar power systems will generate approximately ten percent of clean, renewable power which the college will use to power our buildings. Once installed, the two megawatt system would be the largest solar power project on any SUNY school campus and we estimate will save us more than \$100,000.00 per year.

While the College was once again chosen by the Princeton Review as one of the Greenest Colleges and Universities, it also received Westchester Green Business Challenge certification for being a sustainable organization and received a \$765,000 green infrastructure grant to mitigate the amount of stormwater on campus that flows into Blind Brook and ultimately the Long Island Sound.

From Enrollment Management:

More than ever, Purchase College is rising to levels of national attention. We are ranked among the best 380 Schools by the *Princeton Review*. We've been named as one of the top 10 national public liberal arts colleges by the *U.S. News and World Report*, and one of the best value colleges by *Kiplinger's*.

This academic year, 1,232 new students join us from 35 states and the District of Columbia, as well as 14 countries that include Monaco, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Greece, Norway, South Korea, India, and China. Average high school GPA is 87% and the average SAT score is 1120.

We're also excited to begin the process of launching a new, more responsive website which will help the campus community and the public connect to us, as well as streamline their experiences whether they are searching for upcoming events, researching classes, or looking for a club to join.

In the coming months, the college community, patrons and visitors will have a brand new navigational system, as antiquated and ineffective vehicular and pedestrian signs will be replaced by a comprehensive and contemporary campus-wide signage and wayfinding project.

(Student Affairs):

Great strides have been made in integrating the learning and advising centers with Enrollment Management to better serve our students, particularly those who are at risk. We continue to look to the success of our EOP/MAP program as a case study for the role of active intervention and mentoring.

During the course of the year, the Office of Community Engagement has focused on the experience of our students: we have hired a new Director of Community Engagement, Mario Rapetti, and have upgraded the training and expectations for our residents, coordinators and assistants.

The numbers of students studying abroad on Purchase College summer programs increased from the previous year. A new study abroad agreement was finalized with Bilbao College in Bilbao, Spain for a faculty-led summer program.

Agreements were renewed with two institutions- Taipei National University of the Arts and Beijing Dance Academy.

Our intramurals and recreation, athletics and wellness programs continue to grow in popularity. We offered a total of 55 recreational programs with a total of 1,382 students, faculty and staff participating.

During our tenth full year of NCAA participation and our eighth year in the Skyline Conference 3 of the 16 sports teams advanced to the playoffs. The Athletic program had a total of 38 Scholar Athletes with a 3.5 GPA or better for 2014-15. We also had 2 student athletes receive the Chancellor's Scholar Athlete Award for 2015.

(INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT):

The Office of Institutional Advancement raised gifts totaling \$5.5M for the Purchase College Foundation in fiscal year 2014-15. Combined with fundraising results for The Performing Arts Center and The Neuberger Museum of Art, \$6.8M of private support was realized. Of particular note, Emily and Eugene Grant continue their legacy of philanthropic support with the recently established Eugene Grant Faculty Incentive Fund and the Eugene Grant Distinguished Scholar.

This year, we are pleased to announce that Ruth Wilson Gilmore has been chosen as the inaugural Eugene Grant Distinguished Scholar. Gilmore, a professor of geography at the CUNY Graduate Center, known for her innovative work on the environment and public good, will contribute to the college's mission of social activism and community engagement.

The Purchase College Foundation Board's Student Success Committee continues to seek new ways to lend support to the College's highest priorities. The Foundation's Make an Impact Fund has helped dozens of students. The Student Success Committee has dedicated itself to raising awareness and funds for the newly created, International Study Assistance Fund. This fund will aid in the College's goal to engage more students in a study abroad experience. The Student Success Committee is also hard at work to connect community mentors with campus-wide student success initiatives.

In addition to major gift donors, more than 2,000 donors contributed to the Purchase College Foundation. The student call center completed 14,000 calls, with almost 10,000 solicitations. Equally important as fundraising results, the student calls provide an opportunity for current students to connect with alumni.

Last March, we hosted *The Nelson A. Rockefeller Award for Creativity* with 185 industry leaders, philanthropists, and notable alumni at a private dinner and awards presentation held at the New York Historical Society. Twenty medals have been presented since the award was established in 2007.

Finally, we topped off last spring with the first, all-class alumni Reunion by hosting The Heliotrope and Puce Alumni Ball in NYC at Gotham Hall. It is our hope that our alumni will be able to sustain an event such as this over the coming years and plans are underway to continue this new, alumni tradition.

Again, I direct you to the reports of the Vice President's that will appear on online with my speech on our website.

Prepared by the Office of the President, Thomas J. Schwarz.
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