

Chancellor Malatras Launches Newly Formed SUNY Student Voices Action Committee to Advise SUNY Leadership on Emerging, Critical Issues, and Challenges Facing Students Across the SUNY System

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Committee Appointed by SUNY Student Advocate Comprised of Diverse Students Representing University Centers, Comprehensive, Technical, and Community Colleges

Albany, NY – State University of New York Chancellor Jim Malatras today announced the formation of the SUNY Student Voices Action Committee, a newly created group composed of 27 students representing every SUNY sector—from university centers to comprehensive, technical, and community colleges. The students were assembled by newly appointed Student Advocate Dr. John Graham to amplify the collective student voice and expand students' representation and influence in key discussions and decisions that impact their lives. The group held its first virtual meeting last night.

"We are striving to be a more student-centric SUNY and to achieve that goal we must open up additional venues to listen to our most important voices: our students," said **Chancellor Jim Malatras**. "Student Advocate John Graham has assembled a diverse and impressive group of students from every SUNY sector whose input on the Student Voices Action Committee will be invaluable to providing the input and insight to improve the student experience at SUNY. Amplifying that collective student voice allows us to adequately and proactively respond to students' needs and give them the tools they need to succeed and feel fulfilled in their college experience."

"It is a privilege and an honor to bring together this magnificent group that will represent students from across the SUNY system," said **Dr. Graham**. "It is so refreshing to work with Chancellor Jim Malatras, whose actions from day one illustrate his commitment to making students his top priority. In this especially challenging COVID-19 climate—this committee will harness students' wisdom, imagination, and experience to truly tackle the biggest challenges that exist at our colleges and universities. Last night's inaugural meeting allowed these students to introduce themselves and share personal experiences that bond them as we roll up our sleeves and begin engaging in the meaningful work that I know will advance the mission of this great university system."

"Each conversation with a student offers us valuable insight to their experience and charges us to think differently and take action," said **SUNY Board of Trustee Eunice Lewin**. "It is student feedback that helped guide our decisions on mental health, food insecurity, and many other

needed programs, and I am encouraged by our first meeting yesterday and look forward to hearing more from this Student Voices Action Committee. My thanks to Chancellor Malatras and Dr. Graham for quickly convening our students."

Chancellor Malatras appointed Dr. Graham as SUNY's first Student Advocate on September 30. The senior position is designed to elevate and lead the Chancellor's more student-centric priorities for his administration. Dr. Graham, who previously oversaw the student affairs and university life department at SUNY system, now reports directly to Chancellor Malatras.

As part of the Student Advocate role, Dr. Graham oversees Student Mental Health and Wellness, Disability Services, Veterans and Military Affairs, Childcare Services, Substance Abuse Services, Chancellor's Student Excellence Awards, and the Student Assembly—the student elective governance body. He is also the liaison with campus professional groups including Chief Student Affairs Officers, Counseling Services, Residence Life, Greek Life, Athletics, Student Conduct, and College Union and Campus Activities Professionals.

Over the last three weeks, Dr. Graham has assembled a talented and diverse group of 27 people spanning varied cultural and educational backgrounds to make up SUNY's Student Voices Action Committee. For a full list of [students who make up the committee, click here](#). Three of those students offered comment:

SUNY Canton Junior and Committee Member Kwame Flora said, "We're very excited to get started with this important work to better ensure that the voices of each person in our student body are heard and represented. This semester has been full of challenges, with the current civil rights movement and pandemic the world is experiencing, but I'm looking forward to continuing to represent my fellow classmates so that we can further develop a sense of equity during a time where togetherness is so needed to have a successful rest of our semester."

Buffalo State Junior and Committee Member Leysha Velez said, "As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us, it is increasingly important that we collaborate amongst ourselves to create a space where concerns can be raised and attended to in a timely fashion. We are happy that the launch of this committee has happened so quickly so we can get to work on addressing the ever-changing needs of all students."

Stony Brook University Senior and Committee Member Shaheer Khan said, "Coming together as 64 campuses during a health crisis is somewhat of an undertaking, but we have full faith that the creation of the new Student Advocate position and Student Voices Action Committee will aid in effectively communicating important information to each student across the system. I am thankful to be able to be a member of this committee, and am looking forward to working alongside my fellow students on this important initiative."

Niagara County Community College Sophomore and Committee Member Collin Lacki said, "As a student with a disability, I know that changes are always necessary within our schools to ensure that accessibility is a topic being put in front of administration. I am very thankful that the SUNY system administration is open and willing to work with a diverse committee of students on the topics and issues they find important. We want to be a part of the

change, and during this time of uncertainty, working together on system wide communications will hopefully improve the educational experience for all."

About the State University of New York

The State University of New York is the largest comprehensive system of higher education in the United States, and more than 95 percent of all New Yorkers live within 30 miles of any one of SUNY's 64 colleges and universities. Across the system, SUNY has four academic health centers, five hospitals, four medical schools, two dental schools, the state's only college of optometry, and manages one US Department of Energy National Laboratory. As of Fall 2019, more than 415,500 students were enrolled in a degree-granting program at a SUNY campus. In total, SUNY serves about 1.3 million students in credit-bearing courses and programs, continuing education, and community outreach programs. SUNY oversees nearly a quarter of academic research in New York. Research expenditures system-wide exceeded \$1.7 billion in fiscal year 2019, including significant contributions from students and faculty. There are three million SUNY alumni worldwide, and one in three New Yorkers with a college degree is a SUNY alum. To learn more about how SUNY creates opportunity, visit suny.edu.

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