

CONVOCATION SPEECH

September 20, 2006

Welcome to our annual convocation, and welcome to the first convocation I can remember with unmitigated good news. This one you're going to enjoy! Or certainly **I'm** going to enjoy.

Having removed any suspense about the state of the University, I want first of all to welcome our special guests, good friends of the University and very important members of the family. Without their help, we would never have progressed so far so fast:

- Assemblyman Steve Englebright
- Assemblywoman Pat Eddington
- Assemblyman Mike Fitzpatrick
- Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota
- Suffolk County Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher
- Suffolk County Clerk Judith Pascale
- East Hampton Mayor Paul Rickenbach
- Stony Brook Council members
 - Lou Howard
 - Bobby Kumar
 - Diana Dominguez-Weir

Alumni Association Board Members

- Scott Abrams, President
- Gloria Snyder
- And Christina Vargas Law

I also want to welcome new administrators and faculty who are here. You will have an opportunity to meet the faculty at the reception in their honor immediately following this convocation, and I encourage you to do so—they are the ones wearing boutonnieres, and just about to stand and receive your applause. Let me also acknowledge now some newly appointed administrators and ask them to stand:

- Lance King, Vice President for Advancement
- Peter Baigent, Vice President for Student Affairs
- Richard Fine, Dean of the School of Medicine
- Craig Lehmann, Interim Executive Dean for the Health Sciences
- Howard Schneider, Dean of the School of Journalism
- Martin Schoonen, Interim Dean of Stony Brook Southampton
- Fred Sganga, Acting CEO of the Hospital
- Anne Thompson, Director of Alumni Affairs
- And in Athletics:
 - Chuck Priore, Football Coach
 - Rick Sowell, LaCrosse Coach
 - Allison Comito, Women's LaCrosse Coach

By every measure—enrollments, quality of students, quality of the curriculum, curricular innovations, research initiatives, capital improvements, and fundraising, we have had an extraordinary year. And most remarkably—this is a good budget year. Moreover, we have every

reason to believe, based on this year's budget, that the future will prove better yet. It is certainly an appropriate time for such multifaceted success on campus, for 2007 marks the fiftieth anniversary of our campus. There are plenty of reasons to celebrate.

Let me just provide some. First, our rising national and international stature is redefining our student body: This year we have the largest freshman class ever and the most students we have ever had. Enrollments are up about 600 students over last year, for a total of 22,600 students. The increases emanate from both sides of Nicolls Road. Nationally SAT scores declined by 7 points; at Stony Brook SAT scores have risen by 2 points, despite that national decline, to an average of 1215. So we not only attracted more students; we got better ones. This year we have 18 new freshmen who are National Merit Finalists and seven Semifinalists; five of these students are also Intel Semifinalists. We have 16 valedictorians and 21 salutatorians among our new recruits.

This year for the first time SUNY's Central Application Processing Center handled more applications for Stony Brook than for any other campus. Our freshman applications increased by a significantly greater percentage than our admissions; there were more than 21,000 applications in all. The number of applicants has increased by two thirds in ten years, and actually increased by 3,000 students since last year, from 18,000 to 21,000, an increase of 17 per cent in a single year. As a result, our selectivity index improved dramatically: ten years ago we admitted 58 per cent of the applicants; last year we admitted 51 percent; this year it was 48 per cent. I would point out that a selectivity index of 50 percent is an important

consideration in judging quality of institutions; this is an important milestone for Stony Brook. Transfer selectivity also improved, from 61 per cent last year to 53 per cent this year. We have improved quality significantly, and this year's statistics show how rapidly our reputation is not only reflecting but probably also affecting our rising stature.

We have also dramatically increased the percentage of out-of-state undergraduates even as our enrollments were growing—from 6 per cent of the freshman class ten years ago to 13 per cent this year. Since we have a much larger class than we did then, we actually have more than three times as many out-of-state students. SUNY is encouraging an increase in out-of-state students, and Provost McGrath has committed to increasing the percentage of out-of-state freshmen to 30 per cent within five years; we are comfortably on track to reach that goal. Our doctoral students hail, of course, from many other states and many countries. This year 45 per cent of our new doctoral students are international, coming from 35 different countries. Overall we have students from more than 100 countries. Our master's degree students, understandably, are more locally based since many master's degrees are acquired by local teachers, business executives, and returning students.

The five health-related schools are flourishing, increasing undergraduate as well as graduate enrollments. The School of Medicine has determined to increase the size of its entering classes for the next five years because of the great demand for doctors.

Our curriculum has changed for the better. All our freshmen are now affiliated with undergraduate colleges, organized with six different themes. Each freshman takes a freshman seminar, an opportunity to explore academic interests, get to know top professors, and be introduced to research opportunities. The importance of the freshman seminars should not be underestimated—a recommendation of the Boyer Commission’s Report, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education at the Research University*, it has been adopted by the best universities in the country, including Cornell, Stanford, Berkeley, Princeton, Harvard, Duke, and many others. The undergraduate colleges and seminars will make a significant difference in retention and graduation rates. `

This year we have several new undergraduate academic programs, including an approved major in journalism in the first School of Journalism in SUNY. The program will give students experience in three media: print, broadcast, and journalism on the internet. Because each of these media requires a different kind of writing and different shaping of the materials for the story, the triple approach will set our students in good stead. They will also have opportunities for internships on Long Island and New York City to give them real-life experience. Howard Schneider, who heads the program, is developing “the newsroom of the future” and populating it with first-rate practicing journalists including Marcy McGinnis, an Emmy Award winner and the former Senior Vice President for News for CBS, and Bob Greene, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner. Howie is also developing a course in News Literacy, which I firmly believe all students need—a course in critical reading to determine what is fact, what is fiction, what is opinion, in an increasingly confusing journalistic *mélange*.

The master's program in creative writing is being offered this fall for the first time at Stony Brook Southampton (about which more later). The program, headed by Robert Reeves, engages many of America's best writers, including essayist and novelist Roger Rosenblatt, former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins, memoirist Frank McCourt, playwright and cartoonist Jules Feiffer, and acclaimed novelists Kaylie Jones and Ursula Hegi.

Stony Brook is a product of the 1960's when federal support of research grew and universities began rearranging their priorities to meet the nation's needs. Research has always propelled our campus, and now, appropriately, we have expanded our concept to the undergraduates' Right to Research, as the Boyer Report calls it. But our major efforts particularly in the sciences and technology continue to be the hallmark of this university. It is therefore of concern that our total expenditures of research dollars slipped a bit this year. There are numerous reasons for that, some of which are a matter of circumstance, including the termination of certain grants, the beginning dates for others. Of greatest concern is the declining funding available at various federal agencies. According to the AAAS, the federal research investment will continue to decline this year despite the increases in NSF and DOE research budgets. Federal research funding peaked in 2004 and has fallen subsequently, exacerbated by steep cuts in NASA, DOD, and other agencies' research budgets for fiscal 2007. Despite the decrease in inflation-adjusted dollars of 8 per cent in these three years, we at Stony Brook are determined to increase our expenditures this year. In the Medical Center this will mean a greater emphasis on translational research, where funding streams are growing, at the same time that we continue our world

class basic research. Stony Brook has recently brought in more federal dollars than any other SUNY campus—and we will continue to lead in this area.

Our faculty honors for research are impressive. Robert Aumann, a member of our Economics faculty, received the Nobel Prize for his work in game theory. Mathematician Dennis Sullivan received the Presidential Medal for Research. These are merely the very top of a very long list of honors received by our faculty this year.

Our facilities staff has worked hard to keep up with the needs of the campus, not only through new construction, but through critical maintenance as well. Stony Brook has unique problems because our campus was built in the 1960's and 70's, a period of brutalist architecture and substandard concrete; as a result, critical maintenance issues have now hit the entire campus. We have a veritable epidemic of spalling bricks and broken pavement. Many of our most important classroom spaces have been afflicted, and so has the infrastructure—hot water pipes have burst; unhealthy building materials had to be replaced; leaky roofs—we may lead the world in leaky roofs—had to be repaired; roads had to be made safe. The facilities staff had to address all those issues, prioritizing the most urgent and important needs because, as you know, it will take a long time and a lot of money to complete the needed repairs. The new SUNY five-year capital plan is based entirely on critical maintenance. We can certainly put our share of the money to good use.

The summer was a time of intense work; Barbara Chernow and her staff did an incredible job of dealing with the projects that would have interrupted campus life severely during the regular semester. For example, the road project itself was massive—and irritating—but the work was concentrated in the summer months. Repairs were made on Circle Drive, including a roundabout at the troublesome crossing with Marburger Drive; the new entrance was completed. The Administrative Oval (no longer a circle) is now complete, and the landscaping for the Humanities Building, as well as the Main Entrance, has been completed. Many other projects—renovations of lecture halls, labs, and sidewalks on both sides of Nicolls Road have been completed or are now under way.

The Medical Center has required a major modification estimated at \$300 million for completion. The funding, which requires State approval, must be covered by the hospital's self-support budget. The difficulty here is juggling the day to day needs of the hospital with the interference of the construction and continuing to serve patients well with such disruptions underway; since the hospital is working at capacity, that requires careful planning and execution. Upon completion of the new spaces, however, the staff will be able to serve more patients in improved and enlarged facilities with the newest state-of-the-art equipment.

The truly remarkable story, however, is how many State appropriations have been made for new buildings in a time when the regular capital budget is reserved for repairs and rehabs. First, the new Recreation Center, with the support of the New York Assembly, is now in the planning and design phase, and should be completed within three years. The Rec

Center, for which Fred Preston worked with such determination, will be located between the Stony Brook Union and the Student Athletics Center and will make available many forms of exercise and healthy activities.

Construction is now underway on an access road into our Research Park, in order to begin building the Center for Excellence in Wireless and Information Technology this fall. The Centers of Excellence are projects supported by the Governor; \$50 Million was provided for 100,000 square feet of research space. The first building in our new Research Park, it will house projects of faculty and graduate students, flexible incubator space for private industry, and substantial computing support space. Completion is set for August 2008. The second project that has received State funding is a Center for Computational Neuroscience, that has been approved for \$22.5 million. Construction will take about three years. And a third building to house an Advanced Energy Research Center has been funded for \$35 million by the Legislature, spurred by the Long Island Senate delegation. Keyspan, LIPA, other Long Island Universities, and other corporations will collaborate in research and product development. Energy has long been a key issue for Long Island as it is now for the world as a whole.

The State is also providing \$26 Million for a supercomputer, to be owned by Stony Brook and built at Brookhaven National Lab. It will be one of the most powerful in the world for advanced computation in many fields, including nanoscience, advanced materials design, biology, physics, energy, engineering, and climate modeling. Stony Brook and Brookhaven will create the New York Center for Computational Science, to facilitate the work of scientists from our and other institutions.

All in all, the State's commitment to these projects extraordinarily enhances our abilities and expands our horizons for research in a way that will doubtless not occur again. I will talk about the State Operating Budget for the campus in a few minutes; these important buildings are add-ons that will shape opportunities for our future and facilitate research in new and important fields.

Like every university we are now engaged in also enhancing the University through private and corporate largesse. When we announced the public phase of our capital campaign of \$300 million in June 2005, it sounded like a big number. However, I am proud and pleased to say we have already reached \$190 million of that goal, and I have every confidence that our seven-year campaign will significantly exceed it.

I am also delighted to report that we have increased our scholarship budget by 479 per cent over the last seven years, from \$1.9 million to \$9.1 million. Last year our annual gala in Manhattan brought in \$3.2 million, an extraordinary number for anybody's fundraising event. Of that number 93 per cent or more than \$3 million will go into our scholarship fund, although fundraising events usually require a percentage far bigger than 7 per cent for expenses (sometimes bigger than 100 per cent, unfortunately). This year we also received \$1.4 million from the federal government for merit-based scholarships.

Our fundraising totals for the fiscal year that ended June 30 were strikingly larger than the previous year. We reported a total of \$63 million

this year as opposed to \$23 million in 2005, an increase of 174 per cent. Equally good news is the fact that our endowment grew from \$31 million five years ago to \$49 million in 2006, an increase of 59 per cent in five years. Our net assets grew by 90 percent, from \$58 million to \$110 million. And this year we are already ahead of last year in fundraising.

Our growing footprint on Long Island is also worthy of note. The year 2006 is a major year for Stony Brook's expanding influence as a University: we purchased the Research Park formerly known as Gyrodyne, we have doubled the space of Stony Brook Manhattan (from one floor of a building to two floors), and we will soon have finalized the purchase of the Stony Brook Southampton campus. Each of these acquisitions has a different purpose and a different strategy, but all have in common the purpose of strengthening the educational and research mission of the main campus.

Stony Brook Manhattan has proved a very successful venture, which is already paying for itself. There is demand for additional space, for certain graduate programs such as Business and Social Welfare, for outreach programs such as those of the Center for Wine, Food, and Culture, for internship programs, and to meet demand for undergraduate courses in summer school and the winter session. We have already reached capacity in these programs in the evenings and weekends as well as the summer and winter sessions, although there is space available during the daytime in the regular semesters. We also need a dedicated lecture hall. The new space will provide more classrooms as well as a large lecture hall that will hold

150 students or can be subdivided into three smaller classrooms when necessary.

The latest final date for the closing on Stony Brook Southampton is October 4. (Take that date with a grain of salt—LIU has postponed it several times.) Regrettably we were unable to mount a full program for this fall because we didn't yet own the property (and still don't), but we have continued with our Marine Sciences undergraduate program in space we rented from LIU and initiated our master's program in creative writing. Some Health Sciences courses are planned for Southampton, including Nursing, Social Welfare, Health Technology and Management, and Public Health. We have allowed LIU use of space for their graduate programs and radio station for three years, and they have also rented a building from Suffolk County Community College at Riverhead for additional graduate courses. The State provided us not only the \$35 million to purchase the property, thanks particularly to the good offices of Senator Kenneth LaValle, but also funding in this year's budget for \$10 million for capital improvements. The first job to tackle will be the unfinished library, which has lain fallow for a year. The remaining funds will go to the most critical maintenance issues. We will also begin to rehab the residence halls or build new ones, but those expenses will be covered by a self-support budget, not State funding.

The community has greeted us openly and warmly, enthusiastically supportive of the University's coming to Southampton. George Meyer has led the development of a Community Advisory Committee of representatives of various organizations, churches, tribes, and other groups,

and working with these people has been a delight. The Marine Sciences faculty are advising the Shinnecock on their oyster farming project, and we are beginning a mentoring project with the Poosapatuck tribe's high school students. The Committee is full of good ideas and the energy to pull them off. The Southampton College alumni and a group called "Save the College" are also working collaboratively with us. And of course we are initiating fundraising activities on the East End.

We are eager to celebrate the new campus. Last weekend Louisa Hargrave hosted a well-attended symposium there on "Sustaining the Good Life." We hope to sign the papers and nail up the signs on October 4, and if that happens, we plan a big celebration on that campus October 14. Then the real work begins.

Another notable effort on the East End is the work to build affiliations with four hospitals: Peconic Bay, Eastern Long Island, Brookhaven, and Southampton. The progress is slow, though individual programs have already gotten started with Peconic Bay and Eastern Long Island. The four hospitals are also creating an internal alliance and applying for State H.E.A.L. money from the Berger Commission. Since we are the only tertiary care center in Suffolk County, it is important that we work cooperatively with community hospitals to assure the best medical care for all citizens.

The major modification of the Medical Center is underway, and despite the monumental sand pile and concomitant inconvenience, the staff continue to provide outstanding medical care. The responsibilities of a

tertiary care hospital, in our case the only one in Suffolk County, are always monumental, and the current construction doesn't make things any easier. But statistical comparisons show that the medical staff are doing an incredible job. Our Medical Center measures up very strongly against comparator hospitals statewide and nationwide such as Columbia, Cornell, UCSF, and Stanford in such important data as mortality statistics.

The Medical Center has been recognized regularly for its outstanding achievements. Our doctors have wrought medical miracles in such cases as reattaching both a man's hands successfully after an industrial accident, delivering triplets after their mother had an aortic aneurysm and then immediately saving her life through successful surgery, and preserving the life and brain function of a tot whose head had been run over by an SUV. But the Medical Center and its staff are also remarkable for the day to day care of less dramatic, life-threatening cases for which our hospital is also recognized and honored. This year's *New York* magazine featured 26 of our faculty in its "Best Doctors" issue. Of a total of ten featured stories of extraordinary medical achievements, two focused on Stony Brook doctors.

The Medical Center just won the Consumer Choice Award, the only hospital in Suffolk County and one of only two on Long Island to do so. The National Research Corporation surveyed consumers about 3,200 hospitals in the country and gave the award to 233 or 7 per cent.

The hospital recently had its accreditation visit of the Joint Commission on Accreditation for Healthcare Organizations. The Joint Commission has a new process by which they conduct surprise visits for the

standard three-year accreditation—that is, they no longer announce when they are coming. A team of seven spent several days looking over every aspect of our Hospital. Although we will not have the final report for several weeks, we are anticipating full accreditation.

One of the most important trends on this campus is the development of interdisciplinary research activities. More than ever faculty are utilizing the particularly advantageous proximity of the Health Sciences and Medical Center to other departments on campus. In an era in which interdisciplinary research is burgeoning, we are exceedingly fortunate to have such propinquity. Faculty members from Physics, Chemistry, Engineering, and many other disciplines are teaming with medical and health sciences faculty on important research. One of the most frequent themes in the task force reports for the next Five Year Plan is the importance of facilitating interdisciplinarity in research. We will do so. We will also facilitate research partnerships with other research universities, Brookhaven, and Cold Spring Harbor.

Of all the good news on campus, the best news—and this is the first time I have ever given you this message—is the budget. After years of bare bones budgets, SUNY has obtained significantly increased State funding. Not only is our base budget fully funded, including support for negotiated salary increases going into the budget year, but the historic and devastating deficit between our utility budget and projected expenditures has been totally resolved. There is also a reserve to protect us against unfunded rate increases in the future, if they occur. That means the substantial funds we have been forced to take off the top of our operating budget every year to

pay the utility bills can be redirected to much more exciting endeavors. Given our recent history, the financial change from two years ago is extraordinary.

Chancellor Ryan fought long and successfully for these resources and even more importantly to acquire financial support for faculty appointments, by far our greatest need after years of steady state or declining budgets.

The new SUNY Empire Innovation Program will provide our campus \$1.7 million this year to recruit new faculty in targeted areas where there is significant potential for attracting sponsored research funding. The money will be used for initiatives in CEWIT, the Center for Infectious Diseases, Computational Science Using Large-Scale Parallel Computers, a Center for Environmental Science, Education, and Research, Diabetes and Endocrinology Research, Chemical Biology and Drug Discovery, and Neuroscience. Moreover, a special allocation was made for special needs programs; at Stony Brook funds were provided for Nursing and Engineering.

We hope these funding streams will continue in the future. Chancellor Ryan has committed to them as his highest priority. Stony Brook has in its five-year financial projections submitted a modest proposal for 375 additional faculty lines, which would allow us responsibly to cover our anticipated growth to 25,000 students on this campus and 2,000 at Southampton—and to continue to bolster our national and international rankings.

But today's big news is short-term. Thanks to the best budget in years, locally developed through the meticulous budgetary work of Dan Melucci and Mark Maciulaitis and the Budget Office, I am pleased—overjoyed!—to announce that Stony Brook will be able to make a total number of 50 additional tenure track appointments this year—50 appointments to celebrate our Fiftieth Anniversary. Funding will be available for up to ten outstanding senior faculty when special needs or opportunities for “star” appointments present themselves. But the new appointments will primarily comprise assistant professors, at least 40 of the 50; given the constituency of our faculty, very heavily skewed toward the senior ranks and senior demographics, we urgently need to build the numbers of junior faculty on campus who will shape our course in the next fifty years.

Now is a time in which every department needs carefully to examine its potential, its priorities, and its future directions. I honestly believe we are on the brink of a new era in which the essential role of public higher education for New York's economic well-being will be understood and acted upon. I believe we can in the coming years witness the realization of Governor Nelson Rockefeller's dream of greatness for SUNY. And in that greatness Stony Brook must lead the way.

What more fitting time for us to celebrate our 50th anniversary? Amazingly some of the pioneers are still here to help us celebrate, people who saw this campus rise from a Governor's dream to an AAU institution, from the infamous mud years to recognition as one of the top two per cent of universities worldwide. 2007 is our anniversary year, extending from this

academic year to the next, and I hope every department and every organization will join in making that year truly celebratory. Now is the time for us to take stock not only of who we have become but where we are going, what the next 50 years will hold and how Stony Brook will realize its seminal role in the years ahead.

This has been no ordinary journey. Although Stony Brook has been in some ways permanently shaped by the era of its birth, it has depth and breadth far beyond the original concept of a Long Island College of Education. The emphasis on the sciences cannot be surprising considering the campus and Sputnik were both launched in the fall of 1957. When the campus moved in 1962 from its temporary site at Oyster Bay, it was purposely located near Brookhaven National Lab. Stony Brook grew as federal funding for scientific research grew, and yet the institution has historically been blessed with outstanding arts, humanities, and social science departments. I will not pretend those fields have been funded generously; compared to how they have fared at great institutions with longer histories, the attention has been modest. And yet we have been home to extraordinary faculty across the disciplines. Now, as we have the opportunity to grow, we must develop new strength throughout the campus.

This has been the most exciting opening of school I can remember. There is a kind of electricity, a new pulse of energy, dynamism. Every place I go I see more people than I've ever seen on campus, day and night, weekday and weekend. I hear more and more from faculty about how bright their students are. More students tell me how much they love Stony Brook, a sentiment I don't remember hearing too often a decade ago. Our students

are involved in activities; our athletic teams are beginning to win; we even have a marching band. I get complaints that there are too many people in the dining facilities—and the next new one is in the design phase. The new entrance is complete—finally people can get to Staller without facing inconvenient temporary construction paths.

Stony Brook is a great university. It is great because of its faculty, its students, its staff. It is not only an educational institution, it is a community, with a total of 35,000 citizens, twice the population of Tyler, Texas, when I was growing up there. It is a community of diversity in race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, academic interests, and talents. It brings together many lives, interwoven, depending in so many ways on one another, created for the highest of purposes—learning, making new discoveries, protecting people's health, making art. Now is the time for us to celebrate that greatness, to remember we are fortunate to be part of such a vibrant community, and to give it our best. The Fiftieth Anniversary gives us an opportunity to reassess what we have built here at Stony Brook, and, more importantly, shape the vision for the Stony Brook of the future. And—of course—together—to have a very good time. It's going to be a great year.