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## Another Voice / SUNY development

# Jonathan Dandes: Legislation will create jobs and investment in Buffalo

By Jonathan Dandes

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Much has been written lately about UB 2020 and the proposed Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act. The Buffalo Niagara Partnership has been an avid supporter of UB 2020 for a number of years now; in fact, passage of the act has been identified by our members as our No. 1 state advocacy issue.

Why? For Buffalo Niagara, the act will be instrumental in allowing UB 2020 — the most aggressive economic development plan our region has seen in a half-century — to progress. The promise of UB 2020 is substantial: tens of thousands of jobs, badly needed public and private investment in downtown Buffalo and an economic impact to our region of more than \$2.6 billion. This is an opportunity we cannot afford to delay, or worse, pass up.

In the midst of a growing state budget deficit, now more than ever Albany should be focused on short- and long-term economic development and job creation. The act is practical and timely. It is a no-cost, high-impact economic development initiative that the Legislature can move forward immediately.

For the past two years, the partnership and our regional partners have worked toward passage of similar legislation specific to the University at Buffalo. We're pleased that our regional efforts have inspired the rest of SUNY to see the potential. The estimated impacts listed above are for Buffalo alone — imagine the impact on communities SUNY-wide.

Having been in the SUNY reform advocacy “business” for a number of years now, it is understandable that the Buffalo Niagara region is the first to have a strategic plan, implementation schedule and communitywide grass-roots support. As other regions are beginning to develop their plans, our region is helping. UB is reaching out to other SUNY institutions on planning.

The partnership is reaching out to other business organizations to talk about what the act means to regional economies. Our young professionals program is reaching out to similar organizations to discuss “big picture” economic opportunity. Organized labor is reaching out across the state to talk about jobs and work force development. Now we need our local elected officials — particularly in the Assembly, which failed to include SUNY reform in its 2010-11 budget — to do the same with their counterparts and leadership.

New York State is at a crossroads, with our economic future on the line. We must find a way to attract new private- sector investment and create and retain jobs. Here in Buffalo Niagara, the foundation is already laid for UB 2020 to be a catalyst for that effort, and other regions across the state are quickly following suit. These vast economic development opportunities need to be set in motion with the passage of the Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act.

*Jonathan Dandes is chairman of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership board of directors and president of Rich Baseball Operations.*

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