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## Another Voice / UB 2020

# State should enact new plan for its universities

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Updated: April 18, 2010, 6:34 am /

Published: April 18, 2010, 12:30 am

Elected officials at the state level have an opportunity to help the University at Buffalo and the Western New York economy by including the Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act in the fiscal year 2010 budget. One of the key provisions of this legislation would allow UB to leverage private sector funding to create economic growth.

Greatbatch, Inc. has long recognized the value UB offers to a medical technology company like itself. That is why Greatbatch has supported educational and research initiatives at UB to encourage the development of next-generation technologies by our future engineers and scientists.

In 2002, the Western New York community spoke with one loud and clear voice to say that a center of excellence in bioinformatics and life sciences located on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus would help create a new economy. It would create an economy where those future engineers and scientists would not have to leave our community for employment opportunities elsewhere.

The policy change proposed would ensure a growing, thriving UB, which will continue to provide a pool of talented engineers and scientists for companies like Greatbatch. In the world of medical technology, it is all about the next great invention. It is perhaps that next great invention that will be developed by a UB engineering grad and manufactured in Greatbatch's Clarence and Alden facilities.

UB 2020 is poised to add 6,700 direct jobs at UB, create 20,000 construction jobs as a result of campus growth and increase UB's annual economic impact by an additional \$2 billion. This can only happen if the reforms outlined in the Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act are enacted.

Having the ability to set a predictable tuition increase plan — and one that allows UB to keep the tuition its students pay rather than sending it to Albany — is crucial to making UB 2020 a reality. This flexibility is as important to UB as it is to any private sector company making decisions where to invest in the company.

Imagine if Greatbatch did not have the ability to invest the tens of millions of dollars it spends every year in research and development. The company's ability to remain competitive in a global market, where technological innovation is paramount, would cease to exist.

UB needs that kind of flexibility to achieve its growth plans, which in turn will have exponential benefits for Western New York.

A strong UB will attract companies to our region and foster an entrepreneurial spirit as intellectual property developed on campus is turned into commercial reality. We need our government elected officials to support, not hinder, economic development that could result in the next new technology that will save lives and advance health care.

*Thomas J. Hook is president and CEO of Greatbatch, Inc.*

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