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News

An Early Take on SUNY

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PODCAST Nancy L. Zimpher, who became chancellor of the State University of New York on June 1, pledged to visit each of the 64 campuses within her first 100 days in office. She's approaching [the halfway mark of campuses](#) -- and took a brief detour to Washington this week to attend a meeting of the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, a group she chairs.

Having previously led the University of Cincinnati and University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, and taking over a system that she sees playing a key role in the revitalization of New York cities such as Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse, Zimpher sees urban issues as a big part of her agenda. In this podcast interview, she discusses her goals for promoting SUNY as a system, not just individual campuses, and the challenges facing the university.

Zimpher arrived at SUNY after a prolonged chancellor's search that moved in several directions before selecting her. The last permanent chancellor stepped down in May of 2007, and [his tenure was short](#). Many in the SUNY system believed that Gov. Eliot Spitzer, elected in 2006 with vows to focus on higher education, had the power to transform the role of SUNY in the state. While Spitzer appointed a panel that issued wide ranging reform suggestions, he left office in disgrace and the state's economy collapsed. So the system Zimpher is taking over is one that has faced disappointments and budget cuts in recent years.



In [this podcast interview](#), she discussed the need to promote a more cohesive vision for the university system, and for its ties to the City University of New York and to the state's many private colleges. While some in the state have advocated that two SUNY campuses be designated as flagships, Zimpher rejected that idea -- and said she wanted to promote the ambitions of all of the university centers and medical centers in the system. Asked about the [SUNY Buffalo proposals](#) to give the campus more autonomy on tuition and administration, she said "Yes, and" -- endorsing the concept, but wanting these freedoms applied to SUNY campuses systemwide.

— **Scott Jaschik**

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