



THE BUFFALO NEWS



Another Voice / Higher education

State must retain commitment to UB's development

By John B. Simpson

Updated: 03/17/08 6:43 AM

Today begins a new chapter in our state. All of us at the University at Buffalo look forward to building a new and lasting relationship with Gov. David A. Paterson and his team.

The recent circumstances in Albany, however, should not — and will not — slow UB's progress toward becoming one of the top public research universities in the nation, and, in turn, helping revitalize our regional economy. That plan, UB 2020, does not depend on any one individual for its success.

That is because UB 2020 no longer is just for UB. It has become a regional initiative that enjoys broad support by our community, our business leaders and our elected officials. For the nearly 5,000 individuals who have signed up to become UB Believers, UB 2020 has become our region's "big idea."

From the start we knew that for our collective aspirations to succeed, UB had to begin to make change right here on campus — focusing on our areas of greatest academic strength, transforming our services and operations and improving our campus environments.

We also have been clear that for UB 2020 to be sustainable, UB needs strong and stable state support, wise public policies and the continued generosity of donors. With the support of the Western New York legislative delegation, we will work hard to keep higher education issues high on the agenda.

I believe UB 2020 has found such broad support for the same reason that efforts to strengthen SUNY have caught hold this past year. New Yorkers understand that to remain competitive, we must invest in public universities.



But time is not on our side. We need action now. Other states and countries already are ahead of New York at prioritizing higher education, and none of them are standing still. Worse still, New York's competitors already have internalized the need for strong research universities to lead the way.

The advent of the Internet just 15 years ago has acted as an enormous accelerator for many economic and technological trends that were already under way, including a shift in the United States toward an economy based on service and knowledge, the rapid expansion and improvement of higher education systems in newly successful countries around the globe and the rapid democratization of information.

A generation ago, when many of SUNY's campuses and policies were put in place, falling behind was a slower process and hesitancy bore less cost. Today, falling behind happens very quickly and coming back is becoming exceedingly more difficult.

Collectively we have it in our power to make sure that doesn't happen. We can make sure our leaders in Albany understand that for SUNY to realize its historic potential for the people of New York, it needs more revenue, less regulation and the strong leadership of its top research universities.

We should support our leaders in making the tough choices necessary to bring this to pass in 2008.

John B. Simpson is president of the University at Buffalo.

Find this article at:

<http://www.buffalonews.com/opinion/anothervoice/story/301217.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© 2008 The Buffalo News.