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## **<http://tonawanda-news.com/local/x651390471/UB-2020-passes-Senate>**

**By David J. Hill**  
**<http://tonawanda-news.com>**

— — After stalling in the state Legislature last year, the UB 2020 bill took a step forward Wednesday when the Senate voted 55-1 to pass the legislation, which would significantly raise the profile of the University at Buffalo. Harlem Sen. Bill Perkins cast the lone vote against it.

The Senate bill was sponsored by first term Buffalo Republican Mark Grisanti, and co-sponsored by George Maziarz, R-Newfane, and Michael Ranzenhofer, R-Amherst, among others.

The Senate's Western New York delegation hailed the bill's passage as a victory for the region's economic future.

"This legislation represents one of the major pieces of the puzzle when you talk about the economic future of Western New York," Grisanti said. "I am hopeful this will be a catalyst to start a dialogue with the governor and the Assembly so we can reach our goals and get these important reforms enacted," he added.

If enacted, UB 2020 would allow the university to craft differential tuition rates that are predictable, rather than relying on steep hikes proposed by the State University of New York system, of which it is a member. SUNY tuition has often increased in difficult times, sometimes by as much as 28 percent, the bill's supporters say.

The bill would cap undergraduate tuition hikes at \$375 per semester, while tuition for UB's graduate and professional programs wouldn't be allowed to increase by more than 15 percent a year.

"Today's action will focus the Legislature's attention on how these reforms are absolutely necessary as a way to provide the state's students with access to world-class public higher education and give UB the opportunity to help revitalize the Western New York economy through academic and research excellence," UB President John B. Simpson said Wednesday.

Simpson said state budget cuts in recent years have dramatically impacted the university's efforts to implement the UB 2020 strategic plan.

The bill also will allow UB to forge public-private partnerships, such as the one it has with Kaleida Health and which led to the construction of a new medical care and research building in downtown Buffalo.

In addition, its impact will enlarge the university's enrollment — by as many as 10,000 students by 2020 — while helping it draw top-flight faculty and staff. The plan is seen by many as among the best ways to grow the Buffalo Niagara region's economy.

The bill heads to the state Assembly, where it stalled last year during budget talks. The Assembly version is sponsored by Kenmore Democrat Robin Schimminger.

"The report that Buffalo is one of the worst cities in which to find a job highlights the need for bold and strong initiatives to get our region moving again," Schimminger said Wednesday.

He added: "Certainly, one such initiative is UB 2020. In addition to cementing UB's place as a major research university, UB 2020 would create thousands of jobs. The passage of this bill in the Senate is but a first step toward reaching the final goal."

In addition to strong bi-partisan support, UB 2020 has garnered the blessing of several groups, including the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, the Buffalo Building and Construction Trades Council and Kaleida Health, which operates DeGraff Memorial Hospital in North Tonawanda.

"We are united in our belief that the UB 2020 vision is critical for growth of higher education and economic development in our region," Maziarz said.

The plan is expected to create thousands of construction and medical jobs, particularly by growing UB's three campuses and transforming the region into a hub of medical research.

"UB 2020 will modernize and expand the University at Buffalo and, at the same time, create opportunities and provide research and technology for businesses and institutions in our community," said Ranzenhofer, a graduate of the UB Law School.

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