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- **WNED-AM 970 NEWS**
- **TOPPING THE NEWS**
- **US**
- **World**
- **Business**
- **WNED Forum**
- **Buffalo City Forum**
- **Arts & Culture**
- **Weather**
- **The Economy Project**
- **Education**
- **Opinion**
- **In Focus Today**

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WNED-AM 970 NEWS

State Senate Passes UB 2020 Plan

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Mike Desmond (2011-03-02)

BUFFALO (WNED) - The long-delayed UB 2020 plan took a major step forward this afternoon with overwhelming passage in the Senate, sending the legislation to the Assembly where it has been stalled for several years.

To ensure passage in the Senate, the bill provides scholarships and tuition locks to make sure anyone can afford to attend and stay in UB.

With a unified effort from the local Senate delegation, several senators who have voted against the proposal in the past switched their views and voted 'yes,' saying they liked changes to ensure students could afford higher tuition. They said Western New York needed the economic development involved in this plan and if it worked for UB, the ideas could be extended to the other three SUNY university centers.

Senators Mark Grisanti and Timothy Kennedy persuaded enough senators that the bill passed 53-to-1, after the plan died on the Senate floor in August.

Kennedy told the Senate the bill is vital to the economy of this region and all of Upstate.

"Tens of thousands of jobs have left Western New York in the last decade. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have left Upstate New York in the last several decades. We need to reverse these trends. We need to take unique steps, bold steps, that are unique to various regions of this state," said Kennedy

Senator Grisanti says the bill was changed to provide scholarships and locked in tuition for the state's neediest students to keep them in school.

"There were major amendments put in this bill...that allow students whose families make under $60,000 a year to be locked in to the State University of New York's tution for this year," said Grisanti.

UB 2020 is expected to help expand the university and make it the economic driver for Buffalo and Western New York.

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