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UB 2020 passes in senate

By: Ryan Burgess

By a vote of 53 to 1, the UB 2020 legislation passed in the New York State Senate on Wednesday. But how much closer does this bring the plan to becoming a reality? YNN's Ryan Burgess sat down with UB president John Simpson to find out.

AMHERST, N.Y. – Sitting in his office Wednesday afternoon, University at Buffalo president John Simpson was all smiles.

"You know, it's better than I might have hoped," said Simpson, after he found out UB 2020 legislation passed in the New York State Senate 53- 1. The bipartisan effort represents a major hurdle for the plan.

"It enables the university to start doing the kinds of things that will let us build 2020 over the next years and decades. So changes will come. They'll come gradually and come slowly, as change does at a university. But boy, over time, they'll be strong and they'll be of such significance for this community that it will have a major impact," said Simpson.

One of the bill's sponsor's is Senator Mark Grisanti. He said passage in the Senate paves the way for what matters most in western New York.

"From the outset, it's jobs. And they're much needed jobs. And it's at a level that ranges from top researchers to professionals in teaching and all the way down to maintenance," said Grisanti (R- Buffalo).

Included in this version of the bill is a tuition policy UB officials view as fair and predictable. It would essentially allow the university to use tuition revenue for the 2020 project, without drastically raising tuition or taking away from financial aid.

"What this bill also does is it says that any individual that comes from a family that makes less than \$60,000 a year is going to have their tuition frozen. So there will be no tuition differential," said Senator Tim Kennedy (D- South Buffalo).

Kennedy is another sponsor of the 2020 legislation, which also advances plans to expand UB's downtown medical corridor.

"It's very heady stuff to see this kind of recognition that's not only in Western New York, but I think now, as a result of today, statewide and strongly so," said Simpson.

In order to advance further, the legislation needs to pass the Assembly. After the Senate's passage, Senator Kennedy sent a letter to Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, urging him to take up the measure.

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