
A matter of leadership

Tripathi is off to a good start at UB, but there is much left to accomplish

By **News Editorial Board**

Published: May 7, 2011, 12:07 AM

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Updated: May 7, 2011, 12:07 AM

It all boils down to leadership. If an institution or a community is to succeed and grow, performance by the person in charge is the critical factor. With it, anything can get done. Without it, a downward slide is inevitable.

Let's look at the University at Buffalo and what good leadership can accomplish. We have at least one stellar example from UB's past.

During his tenure as UB president, Steven B. Sample:

È Gained university admittance to the Association of American Universities. Membership in this organization of 62 leading research universities gave UB a new level of national recognition. But AAU members can't coast. Recently, the University of Nebraska was dropped because its standards fell and Syracuse University dropped out because it anticipated being dropped.

- * Moved the university into Division I athletics.
- * Secured the Center for Earthquake Engineering Research from California.
- * Sharply increased competitive research funding.
- * Raised the level of SAT scores for incoming freshmen.

Sample went on to the University of Southern California, where he moved that institution to a higher plane educationally. He set in motion a fundraising project that raised \$2.85 billion. We look forward eagerly to what Satish K. Tripathi will accomplish as UB's 15th president. What goals will he identify? What will be his

rationale for those goals? What priorities will be established? By what criteria will his effort be judged?

We didn't have to wait long to start getting the answers. Tripathi announced a giant step forward for the university and the community with a \$350 million move of the medical school from the South Campus to the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. The benefits of a new school in the medical campus will be manifold. It's an opportunity for both the medical school and the hospitals to achieve new levels of cooperation and excellence. And with that, the quality of both interns and doctors should grow. Strong new leadership at the medical school will help push it to excellence.

The revamped medical school also gives Tripathi something tangible to point to in securing major gifts. While this would involve state and federal money, the alumni, medical community and private sector need to be involved. Tripathi has the concept; the detailed plan must be thorough and aim high, and the execution of the plan must be comprehensive if it is to move the medical school to the next echelon.

The governor and our representatives in Congress say they want to help Western New York. Well, Tripathi has given them something worthy of seeking big money.

He still may have a problem with Assembly Leader Sheldon Silver and Education Committee Chairwoman Deborah Glick. But his job is to understand their thinking and arrive at the best possible result for the university. This can be done, and he doesn't have to do it alone.

This is the time for the backers of UB 2020 to swing into action. They got cut off at the knees when their \$3 billion request of the state turned into a comparatively measly \$35 million. Ironically, three other SUNY campuses received the same amount despite not participating in UB's multiyear effort.

While enhancing the university's presence in the medical campus is greatly appreciated, we would hope Tripathi would also look for new initiatives to bring the university's assets to bear in behalf of the city.

So we congratulate the new president of UB. He acted quickly to move the university forward, and his decision to move the medical school was significant. In a meeting with The News editorial board, Tripathi said he was looking at adding to the medical campus by bringing the dental school downtown. He also said he is open to creating a downtown campus, separate from the medical school, that would offer a broad curriculum designed to attract a whole new group of young adults and professionals. Downtown campuses of major universities have had great success elsewhere, and a downtown campus here would generate extraordinary benefits.

We look forward to other announcements of import from Tripathi. If they are as significant as moving the medical school, the new UB president will enjoy strong community support.

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