
SUNY economic impact estimated at \$20 billion

By **Tom Precious**

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ALBANY -- The state university system has an economic impact on the state of at least \$20 billion, according to a new report due to be released Wednesday.

The State University of New York, poised to become a player in the state's new regional-based economic development efforts, supported 173,000 jobs and that created \$460 million in state and local taxes in 2008-09, the report states.

In Western New York, SUNY's economic impact totals \$3.7 billion. The report noted that one in four residents of Western New York are connected to SUNY either as students, employees or alumni.

The study, obtained by The Buffalo News and characterized as the most detailed analysis of SUNY's economic impact on the state, was conducted by the University at Buffalo Regional Institute and the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government at the University at Albany.

SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher, who commissioned the study, will release its findings Wednesday at a news conference in Albany.

Zimpher said the study will help SUNY's goal to see the higher education system "become the economic engine for New York state's recovery."

The chancellor said the study's focus on 10 different regions "will help our campuses define their impact in a more consistent way."

"We're all poised to get ourselves organized regionally. I want to foster collaboration amongst our campuses. That's always been my theme," said Zimpher, who came to SUNY two years ago.

Kathryn Foster, director of the UB Regional Institute, said the report "suggests what SUNY can do for the future economy of this state." She noted the different ways campuses use business incubators and research facilities to have an impact on local economies that SUNY officials hope to spread to throughout the system.

"It was driven by SUNY's impact on economic development activities. That's the major theme," she said.

The 64-campus SUNY system, the nation's largest, has 464,000 students and 84,000 faculty and staff with a budget of over \$11 billion -- \$4 billion of which comes from the state. The report noted 16 percent of SUNY's revenues come from beyond New York, mostly in the form of federal funding or tuition from its 35,000 out-of-state students.

In Western New York, 15,000 SUNY degrees are awarded each year, accounting for 64 percent of the total annual college graduates in the area. SUNY also employs 16,400 people in Western New York, the most of the 10 regions in the state.

Nearly 80,000 students in 2010 attended one of the SUNY schools in the Western New York region, nearly a quarter of which came from other areas of the state. Eight percent of the students came from other countries, with India, Singapore and China representing the top three home locations of the students. Only New York City's four SUNY schools had a higher percentage of foreign students.

SUNY, the report said, has an impact on 32,500 jobs in Western New York, half of which are direct SUNY positions at one of the eight campuses in the region.

Officials said the report -- based on 2008-09, the most recent period for which data was available to study all 64 campuses -- bases its \$19.8 billion economic impact number on state operations at each campus, the SUNY headquarters and SUNY Research Foundation in Albany, as well as off-campus spending by students, faculty and staff.

Not included in the number is the economic impact from spending by SUNY retirees or the 1.3 million SUNY graduates living in the state. Also not included are private-sector jobs affected by SUNY operations, such as those at the Buffalo health care corridor or the sprawling nanotech facility near the University at Albany that today is home to 2,600 scientists, engineers and researchers.

The SUNY report notes that officials wanted to take a temperature read of the system's current economic impact, but also where the campuses are poised to grow in ways to help the state's economy. It noted some campuses are better than others at offering academic programs tailored to the needs of employers in local regions or having policies to encourage purchasing or hiring from their own region.

SUNY spends \$7 billion, or about 60 percent, on employee wages and benefits, and students spent another \$2.3 billion living off-campus on housing, food and other expenses. SUNY also spent \$4.4 billion on various purchases, from construction to supplies.

The study said 10 percent of New Yorkers are tied to SUNY as a student, employee or graduate. About 60 percent of graduates are focused into one of 16 "clusters," which are identified by state leaders as professions to help New York grow, such as financial services and back office jobs from information technology to accounting.

SUNY in 2008-09 also attracted \$1.3 billion in research revenues -- about half of that going to UB and the other three campus centers at Albany, Binghamton and Stony Brook; the report said SUNY employees in a typical year make 225 patent applications and 60 licenses yielding revenues for discoveries made on SUNY campuses.

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Oh yes, public private partnerships at universities have been just disastrous. Why look at Boston, Ma, or Austin, Tx, or N. Carolina, or even just down the thruway at Rochester. We sure don't want any of those high tech jobs or growing businesses, that would change the character of Buffalo.

MICHAEL DEWALD, SPRINGVILLE, NY on Wed Jun 1, 2011 at 12:45 AM

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Then why are we one of the poorest areas in the United States? Kudos to the author of this article.

PHILIP JAMES JAROSZ, BUFFALO, NY on Tue May 31, 2011 at 11:11 PM

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I'm familiar with the science of ECONOMETRICS and the multiplier effect, as a former practicing urban planner and sometimes economic development assistant. As they say, "Figures lie and Liars Figure" . Statistics can tell you anything you want to hear. Not that I'm disputing any of these.....however, the story does appear at a particularly auspicious time.The UB 2020 plan is under tremendous scrutiny; State legislators and the Gov. are scheming and dreaming a way to control and mold this thing . Corporate partners like LP Ciminelli and Savarino Construction (of Buffalo, N.Y), the principals of which also serve on various Boards of SUNYAB, get awarded extremely lucrative construction contracts and have a say in how this community gets shaped. Can you say "conflict of interest" ?I really don't believe Lou Ciminelli or any of his sons or nephews are in danger of having to rely on NYS Social Services, any time soon, or ever! I really don't believe increasing tuition at UB by 5%-7% a year will make higher educational opportunities more available to those that want it, or help to cover the supposed "higher" costs of operating UB. WHAT IT WILL DO is enable UB to form partnerships with private companies for the purpose of spending hundreds of millions of dollars to build things that probably are not necessary with NO PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY OF WHERE THE MONEY WENT OR WHY THEY SPENT IT. It will also (continue to) change the DEMOGRAPHICS of the UB student body to the point where the median household income of a typical UB student's

family will be about \$90,000 a year, if it isn't at that level already. This doesn't sound like "educational opportunities for all" . BUT HEY.....WHAT DO I KNOW??

MICHAEL WILLIAMS, BUFFALO, NY on Tue May 31, 2011 at 03:18 PM

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