



# The Buffalo News : Opinion

Friday, November 21, 2008

Make us your homepage!

[Home](#) > [Opinion](#) > [Buffalo News Editorials](#)

11/18/08 06:57 AM

## Give universities flexibility

### UB's added role in regional recovery means cuts must be offset by reforms

**Story tools:**

**Share this story:**



New York finds itself in the midst of a fiscal crisis because investments made on Wall Street have gone stinkingly sour. So it is time for some other investments, in other parts of the state, in other fields of endeavor, so that the state's economy will both grow and diversify.

High on any list of investments that will help New York not only emerge from this recession, but avoid future ones, is the state's system of higher education. And the most notable example of that is the plan called UB 2020.

That's the ambitious plan put forward by University at Buffalo President John B. Simpson. He would make the SUNY flagship not only home to many more students, but also a dynamic center of research and creativity that will provide great economic and cultural benefits even to people who never set foot on any of its growing campuses.

The current economic crash, and the state budget crisis it has created, are both a reason why the state might trim its investment in UB and a reason why it shouldn't.

People who receive even the smallest amount of money from the state are of course protesting that the budget cuts proposed by Gov. David A. Paterson are excessive, unfair and fatal to deserving programs or perhaps even to susceptible people. There will be pain, including pain for local school districts at lower levels of education. But while there's no reason to expect that the state's universities will be totally exempt from the budget crisis, any action that limits their additional ability to serve as growth engines for the entire state economy will be a blow not only to students, faculty and staff, but to the whole of New York.

SUNY's various colleges and universities already have had their budgets cut and seen millions of the dollars they collect in tuition and fees swept into state coffers to cover other expenses. Paterson proposes tuition hikes of \$600 a year throughout the SUNY system, with some of the money siphoned away from college operations and into the state's accounts. Given that SUNY tuition rates are among the most affordable in the nation, and that tuition hikes are rare here, that is not an unreasonable idea.

But anything that seriously handicaps the UB 2020 plan is not in the state's best interest. The fact that the state's budget takes such a painful hit when Wall Street falters is proof enough that New York needs economic drivers that don't live in Manhattan, that don't depend on the success of exotic financial experiments and that can spin off businesses that make things that people around the world will want to buy.

That the university will share the pain of this crisis is inevitable. But it should not share it to the extent that the hope it represents for Western New York's future is crippled, and lawmakers should pair its cuts with an increase in managerial flexibility — the ability to cut deals with the private sector as so many other state universities do, for example — that offset the loss of state dollars. If the governor and legislators cannot find the money to boost their universities, they should at least give them each the independence to manage what funds they do get in the most productive way, as neither a huge cost center nor short-term cash cow for Albany.

#### Advertisement

#### Sponsored Links

##### "How to Lose Belly Fat"

Learn how I lost 32lbs fast in just 2 months. Lose your belly fat too!  
[www.momsweightloss.com/Success](http://www.momsweightloss.com/Success)

##### Become "Six Sigma" Certified

Villanova Six Sigma Certification 100% Online Program - Free Info.  
[www.VillanovaU.com/SixSigma](http://www.VillanovaU.com/SixSigma)

##### Advance Your CPA Career

Tronconi Segarra & Associates LLP – offering CPAs a brighter future.  
[www.tsacpa.com](http://www.tsacpa.com)

##### Transitowne Car Dealers

Dodge, Chrysler, Jeep, Mitsu & Hyundai. Online or Local in Buffalo.  
[www.transitowne.com](http://www.transitowne.com)

[Buy a link here](#)

© 2008 The Buffalo News. The information you receive online from The Buffalo News is protected by the copyright laws of the United States. The copyright laws prohibit any copying, redistributing, re-transmitting, or re-purposing of any copyright-protected material.