

State of the University Address 2012

Print Speech

1 of 5 ▶



President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., MD

Delivered at University Convocation, September 19, 2012

President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., MD

Welcome

Three years ago I stood before the Stony Brook community, students, faculty, staff, alumni and our many friends, and delivered my **inaugural address** as the fifth president of this great university. It was a long speech. Very long. But I had a lot to say.

I wanted to express my excitement about Stony Brook University, the extraordinary accomplishments of those who built this great institution, how far we had come and how much further we could go. I wanted to remind everyone how vital Stony Brook is to SUNY, Long Island, the great state of New York and the world. And three years ago, in the teeth of one of the worst financial crises in New York State's history, I talked about my vision for Stony Brook, and particularly the need to invest in our faculty. I was channeling the great late **John Toll**, who knew that the faculty — human capital — was the key to building a great university.

NYSUNY 2020

I argued that we must reinvest in the faculty if Stony Brook were to continue its extraordinary trajectory. In fact, we were **at a crossroads**. Enrollment had grown without any increase in the faculty. The result: bigger classes, and more important, fewer sections, making it difficult for students to get the classes they needed to graduate on time. Unchecked, this would be an obstacle to student success and ultimately a path toward mediocrity.

But how would we grow our faculty during a fiscal crisis? To do this, we would need a **new revenue plan for SUNY** — a rational tuition program with predictable modest increases, including a recognition of the higher costs associated with education at a research university — and an end to budget cuts. Achieving this change became my highest priority for Stony Brook University, and with leadership from the Chancellor and the support of many elected officials and friends, we worked to get legislation passed that would make this a reality.

Our first attempt, the **SUNY-Flex legislation**, failed. In the next fiscal year we had the **Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act (PHEEIA)**, which came so very close but ultimately died in the legislature. As you all know, the third time was the charm. With **Governor Andrew Cuomo** as our champion, NYSUNY 2020, groundbreaking legislation that contains all the elements we needed — rational tuition increases, an academic excellence fee for the University Centers and a maintenance of effort clause to combat future budget cuts — was passed and **signed into law**. On December 14, 2011, Governor Cuomo and Chancellor Zimpher came to Stony Brook to accept our NYSUNY 2020 plan, which allowed us to charge the academic excellence fee and receive \$35 million in capital for our new Medical and Research Translation building. With NYSUNY 2020 in place, we have the opportunity to hire **250 new faculty** over the next five years.

New Faculty

We have started already, so how appropriate that this occasion is about greeting our new faculty. Please rise so we can welcome you all to Stony Brook. You are the best and the brightest, and you join an outstanding faculty that is the best in SUNY and one of the best in the country. You are the first of a new wave of faculty at Stony Brook, and you and your colleagues will help take us to the next level. I hope you are as excited about the journey as I am. Welcome!

Three years ago I spoke about not just the need to hire faculty, but how that process should occur. We must be strategic, we must build on existing areas of excellence, we must identify programs that distinguish us from our peers, and we must find a way to support interdisciplinary scholarship and collaborations across the campus. What better way to do that than to engage the faculty in that process?

That is why I am so glad that **Provost Dennis Assanis**, with my wholehearted support, launched a competition in which faculty submitted proposals for some of our new cluster hires. The response was tremendous — maybe even overwhelming — with a **tidal wave** of more than 100 proposals initially submitted, but as you can see Provost Assanis handled it in style. A committee of SUNY Distinguished Professors and National Academy members has reviewed the proposals, and Provost Assanis will soon announce the five proposals recommended for immediate funding. I have reviewed them, and they are outstanding.



Next ▶

| [Stony Brook University Home Page](#) | [Search Stony Brook](#) | [Office of the President](#)

State of the University Address 2012

Print Speech ◀ 2 of 5 ▶



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One of the Most Distinguished Faculties in the World

I want to say one more thing about faculty before I turn to our amazing students. I said before that we have the most distinguished faculty in SUNY and one of the most distinguished faculties in the world. This past year we recruited two members of the National Academy of Engineering, **Dennis Assanis and Esther Takeuchi**, to Stony Brook. Also, one of the world's leading virologists, **Eckard Wimmer**, was elected to the National Academy of Sciences. **Dennis Choi**, a member of the prestigious Institute of Medicine (IOM), joined our faculty; **Ben Hsaio, Lorna Role, Peter Stephens and George Sterman** were elected to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS); and **Jeff Segal** was elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. **Ken Dill, Eugene Feinberg and Sanjay Sampath** were elected SUNY Distinguished Professors.

This is part of a tradition of faculty excellence that includes three Nobel laureates and an Abel Prize winner. It's a small thing, but I want to do something to honor the faculty who have done so much and brought such renown to the University. We will create a faculty wall of honor in the Melville Library that acknowledges our Nobel laureates; Abel Prize winner; all our National Academy members; AAAS, AAA and IOM members; and SUNY Distinguished Professors. I hope this will serve as an inspiration to all of us and remind everyone of what a special place Stony Brook University is.

Our Commitment to Students

Three years ago I spoke about our **students** and how unique they were. We just admitted our **best class ever**, in terms of GPA and SAT scores. I have had the privilege of saying that every year for the past three years, and hope I can say it again next year. The competition to get into Stony Brook University is intense, and we are the **sixth most selective school** among public universities in the Association of American Universities (AAU). Only Berkeley, UCLA, UNC Chapel Hill, University of Virginia and UC San Diego are more selective than Stony Brook University. That is good company.

But what sets us apart from almost all of our AAU peers is our commitment to economically disadvantaged students. Only one school among the 61 AAU members has a higher proportion of **Pell Grant-eligible students** than Stony Brook University. Many of the students are the first generation to go to college, and many are the children of recent immigrants or new arrivals to the United States themselves. And they have amazing stories.

Three years ago at the time of my inauguration, I did not know the personal stories of our students nor the incredible obstacles many have overcome to get to Stony Brook and graduate. But since then I have learned some of their stories, and they are inspiring — students like **Jataya McCray**, one of our Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) students, who was raised by her grandmother and was the first in her family to attend college. She was not admitted to EOP at first, but continued to apply until a space was open. She graduated from Stony Brook in May 2010 with honors and a 3.7 GPA and continued on to receive her Master of Social Work degree here in spring 2011.

Students like **Charles Rico** from Woodside, Queens, who also was the first of his family to attend college. He was part of a close-knit group of 11 friends growing up, but as they progressed through high school many lost their way to gang activity, crime and drugs, and only Charles and one friend chose to pursue higher education. Charles became an outstanding campus leader, involved in multiple service organizations. I crowned him Homecoming King in 2010, and he graduated with a bachelor's degree in biology in May 2011.

Or **Stephen Healy**, a New York City Fire Department lieutenant, who was badly injured in the fall of the first tower at the World Trade Center on September 11. After retiring from the Fire Department, and a prolonged recovery, Stephen Healy decided to commit himself to furthering his education — he enrolled first at Suffolk Community College, then transferred to Stony Brook. He graduated in December 2010 with a BA in economics. Or **Kadeem Hylton**, one of our EOP students, the first in his family to pursue a degree who became a campus leader. He interned with Assemblyman Carl Heastie (a Stony Brook alum) and graduated in December 2011 to pursue a career in education.

These are only four of the many stories I have heard, and I must say these students inspire me every day. And when it was time for Stony Brook University to submit its NYSUNY 2020 plan, it was those students and their stories that made us take the extra step to preserve access to Stony Brook. We chose to meet the dollar gap between the increased tuition and New York State's Tuition Assistance Program for all students with family incomes less than \$75,000 per year. No other SUNY school is doing this — but it is the right thing to do, and we are proud to do it.

◀ Previous

Next ▶

| [Stony Brook University Home Page](#) | [Search Stony Brook](#) | [Office of the President](#)

State of the University Address 2012

Print Speech

◀ 3 of 5 ▶



"If we are to realize the benefits of our increased revenue from NYSUNY 2020 and our new levels of philanthropic support, we must continue to find ways to do things smarter, cheaper and better."

Philanthropy

During my inauguration speech I spoke only briefly about **philanthropy** and how important it would be for Stony Brook University. What I suspected then, and know now, is that we will not achieve our goal of being one of the best public universities in the world without philanthropic support. In some sense, it represents the margin for excellence — we can do a good job with State support, but we will not be great without the support of our friends and alumni. During the past three years I have put fundraising front and center at Stony Brook University. Thanks to the remarkable gift from **Jim and Marilyn Simons** and the Simons Foundation, we are now investing in excellence across both campuses. The match component of the gift has inspired giving to Stony Brook across Long Island and the country, and we are reaping the benefits.

Since my arrival at Stony Brook University we have booked **36 gifts of \$1 million or more** and secured nearly \$235 million total in gifts. Many of these funds will be used to help us recruit and retain the best faculty, by creating endowed professorships and start-up packages that allow us to compete with the best universities in the world. I am proud to say that we have already more than doubled the number of endowed professorships at the University, and tripled the number of endowed professorships in the humanities and arts. And we continue to push for funds to support graduate education and undergraduate scholarships so we can recruit and support the best students in the land.

Frankly, I am humbled and honored that so many individuals believe in our vision and believe that Stony Brook University is worth supporting. We have much more work to do, a match to complete and many important areas to support, but I am very confident that we can do it, and I want to acknowledge **Dexter Bailey**, our Vice President for Advancement, who has brought a new level of professionalism and success to our fundraising efforts. Dexter, thanks to you and your team. I also want to thank all of the senior leadership of the University and our faculty who have worked hard to help obtain the funds to help us achieve our goals.

Project 50 Forward

Three years ago we were dealing with what would become more than \$90 million in budget cuts to Stony Brook University. I realized that if we were to preserve the academic heart of our University, we would have to become more efficient and effective on the administrative side. We could not afford duplication of administration or academic effort, ineffective procurement, stultifying hiring practices or wasteful spending. Our staff was hard working, and we were lean compared with our peers, but we were not always efficient and not always cost effective. I used a gift from the Stony Brook Foundation to initiate **Project 50 Forward**, our effort to re-engineer Stony Brook's administrative side for excellence. I am pleased to say that under the leadership of Senior Vice President **Barbara Chernow**, we continue to make great progress in this area. This has been an inclusive process, with input from faculty, staff, students and the senior leadership team. To date we have achieved **savings of nearly \$13 million annually**, and these are monies that find their way back into student support and our academic mission.

I want to particularly thank those staff members who have embraced this process and helped us achieve these remarkable cost savings while preserving the effectiveness of our support services. Many thanks to each and every one of you. I want to emphasize that there is much more to do, and if we are to realize the benefits of our increased revenue from NYSUNY 2020 and our new levels of philanthropic support, we must continue to find ways to do things smarter, cheaper and better. Simply put, Project 50 Forward is critical to our future success.

◀ Previous

Next ▶

| [Stony Brook University Home Page](#) | [Search Stony Brook](#) | [Office of the President](#)

State of the University Address 2012

Print Speech ◀ 4 of 5 ▶



"Stony Brook University, as epitomized by the Team that Shocked the World, our baseball team, has made a name for itself as a great university that also has some pretty amazing athletes."

A Global Institution

I want to make three more points before concluding. During my inauguration I spoke about Stony Brook University as a global institution. This past summer I saw that reality firsthand. I traveled to **Madagascar**, where I joined Stony Brook University Professor and MacArthur Genius Award winner Pat Wright as we opened **Centre ValBio**. Built with gifts to the Stony Brook Foundation, this amazing building will be the center for education and research at the Ranomafana Preserve, where Pat continues her groundbreaking studies on lemurs and biodiversity.

I traveled to **Mahajanga** in Madagascar, where Professor David Krause discovered the fossil remains of *Majungasaurus crenatissimus* (what we affectionately refer to as **Stony Bones**), and then traveled to **Kenya**, where I joined Stony Brook Professors Richard, Maeve and Louise Leakey and Lawrence Martin, director of the Turkana Basin Institute, and toured both Lake Turkana sites, arguably the best fossil sites for human and non-human primate evolution in the world. The research at each site is world class, and the opportunities for undergraduate, graduate and professional students amazing.

As impressed as I was with the research, I was equally proud of the **difference** that each of the research sites is making to its local community and to its country. David Krause's Ankizy Fund has already built five schools in Madagascar, and in collaboration with our School of Dental Medicine is providing children and adults in many villages with outstanding dental care. Pat Wright led the effort to create the preserve at Ranomafana, saving thousands of acres of rain forest and a unique ecosystem. She and her colleagues also are beginning efforts to look at health issues in the surrounding communities, focusing particularly on clean water and the prevention of diarrheal illnesses. And the Turkana sites are working to help surrounding communities get fresh water; improve maternal health; develop new sources of energy, such as biogas; and create new industries, such as fish farming.

I have just scratched the surface of what our faculty and students do in these areas and in many other countries around the world. And speaking of a global university, this past spring we had the official opening of **SUNY Korea**, our new campus in Songdo, near Seoul, South Korea. This is an amazing venture — we are the first and only U.S. university that has been approved by the South Korean Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to offer degrees in South Korea. The facilities are incredible, the student quality is high, and we are committed to doing this right. We want those students to get a Stony Brook-quality education and truly earn a Stony Brook University degree.

The Team That Shocked the World

When I delivered my inaugural address I talked briefly about athletics and gave a shout-out to **Wolfie**, stating there would always be a line item in my budget for Wolfie. Well, that was smart — Wolfie is more popular than ever — but I really could not have predicted the impact our **athletics program** has had over the past three years. Name recognition is so important to us, for student and faculty recruitment, for our ability to appeal to donors and for our alumni. I don't have time to chronicle all of the accomplishments — there are just too many and they encompass many of our sports teams.

But I think it is fair to say that Stony Brook University, as epitomized by the **Team That Shocked the World**, our baseball team, has made a name for itself as a great university that also has some pretty amazing athletes, some very impressive coaches and a great Athletic Director in **Jim Fiore**. I can't put a dollar value on the publicity that we have received, but I know firsthand from talking with students, faculty, alumni, donors, members of our community and people who just hear that I have something to do with Stony Brook University that athletics has really helped engage people with this great institution.

◀ Previous

Next ▶

State of the University Address 2012


[Print Speech](#) ◀ 5 of 5 ▶

"I am proud to say that I believe Stony Brook University is on the move, and we are moving in the right direction."

Campus Improvements and Expansions

Finally, one measure of any institution's health is the number of cranes on campus. Thanks in large measure to the steadfast support of our elected officials, most notably Senators Ken LaValle and John Flanagan, and Assemblymen Steve Englebright, Mike Fitzpatrick and others, there is exciting new construction happening on campus. Next month we will open the new **Campus Recreation Center**, a state-of-the-art facility that will make a tremendous difference in the quality of life for each and every student at Stony Brook University. I can't wait.

Earlier this summer we broke ground for a new **Marine Sciences Laboratory** at our Southampton Campus, a fantastic new facility that will help propel our outstanding School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences to even greater heights. Soon we will break ground for a new **Computer Science Building**, and before you know it, the new classrooms at the **Old Chemistry Building** will be online. On February 1, 2013, we are opening our new **Hilton Garden Inn** at Stony Brook — this will be transformative in our ability to host conferences on campus.

Across Nicolls Road, design is progressing for the new **Medical and Research Translation Building** and new Hospital tower that will incorporate Stony Brook Children's Hospital. These will be new signature buildings for a campus that is long overdue for an upgrade. This is just a sampling of what we are doing — our new capital plan provides for far more. We are hopeful that with the strong support of SUNY and the State, we can continue to add to, renovate and improve this great campus.

Stony Brook University Is On the Move

So three years later I am proud to say that I believe Stony Brook University is on the move, and we are moving in the right direction. The recent *U.S. News & World Report* rankings placed us in the top 100 national universities and among the top 40 public universities — the highest ranking we have ever achieved. And while I am always skeptical of these ratings, I hope they reflect the real progress we have made. To the extent that any of that progress can be traced to my administration, I want to acknowledge what I believe is an outstanding team: my three **Senior Vice Presidents**, Ken Kaushansky, Senior Vice President for Health Sciences and Dean of the School of Medicine; Dennis Assanis, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; and Barbara Chernow, Senior Vice President for Administration.

Time will not permit me to name all the other great members of our team — the other vice presidents or our superb deans — but I did want to **welcome** our new Hospital CEO, Reuven Pasternak, who will lead an enterprise that is vital to our University and region; our newly appointed Vice President for Finance and Senior Budget Officer, Lyle Gomes; Lynn Johnson, newly appointed as Vice President for Human Resources; and our new Vice President for Research, Ben Hsaio.

Welcome to each and every one of you, and thank you for your commitment to Stony Brook. That message of welcome brings me full circle. I want to conclude my State of the University Address by again welcoming our new faculty to Stony Brook University and inviting all of you to a reception in the Wang Center.

[◀ Previous](#)
[Home ▶](#)

| [Stony Brook University Home Page](#) | [Search Stony Brook](#) | [Office of the President](#)