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EDITORIAL:

New Stony Brook president outshines budget woes

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It was a little academic joke, but it spoke volumes.

Minutes after the trustees of the State University of New York had unanimously voted to make Dr. Samuel L. Stanley Jr. the new president of Stony Brook University, their chairman, Carl Hayden, told a packed room at Stony Brook that it was nice to be at a happy SUNY event, with no mention of budgets.

That will come soon enough, but yesterday there was plenty to cheer. The new president, a top researcher, was at the center of it. But there was also fitting acknowledgment of the achievements of the outgoing president, Shirley Strum Kenny, who got Stony Brook to the point where it attracted so many high-caliber candidates for president, and of her predecessor, John Marburger.

The new SUNY chancellor, Nancy Zimpher, who takes office next month, flew in to present Stanley, who takes over in July, to the trustees. Her presence was a good sign that they'll be a strong team. They'll have to be, to get SUNY more state support, and make sure that student tuition goes to improve the system, not solve the state's budget woes, as it does now.

But Zimpher and Stanley are too politically adept to start their tenure whining about budgets. The crucial point is what Stony Brook has become, and what lies ahead. Stanley mentioned President Barack Obama's commitment to increase science funding, and promised that Stony Brook, a key economic force on the Island, will play hard in that game.

The arrival of Stanley is felicitous enough news to shove the budget gloom to the background - for now.
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