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EDITORIAL:

### Stony Brook University's success is linked to LI's growth

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The presidential succession this week at Stony Brook University signifies a lot more than just a flash of academic ceremony to mark a significant new chapter in the school's half-century history. It's also a meaningful pivot point in the evolution of Long Island's economy.

At the risk of loading too much pressure on the new president, Dr. Samuel L. Stanley Jr., this must be said: A lot is riding on his success.

If the Island is to grow a stable, prosperous and innovative high-tech base, Stanley must lead the university to further research eminence. He has to play a major role in developing our emerging research triangle: Stony Brook, Brookhaven National Laboratory and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. With proper state support and smart leadership, the unusual alliance of a public research university, an influential private lab and a Department of Energy lab can lead the Island to prosperity and the nation to breakthroughs in energy and biomedical science.

Those tasks are no less vital for being less glamorous or visible than the bricks-and-mortar landmarks that the outgoing president, Shirley Strum Kenny, has achieved.

To the grim, early-penal look of the campus, she has added color, warmth and touches of nature. The university has acquired the former Southampton College campus, set up a remote location in Manhattan, taken over property west of the main campus and begun a research and development park there, accepted a major building from computer-and-hockey magnate Charles Wang, and built a big-time football stadium.

#### Higher SATs, bigger linemen

Since Kenny's 1994 arrival, the SAT scores have gone up, even as the enrollment has grown. So has the size of the football team's linemen - a statistic Kenny loves to cite. She's from Texas, where Friday Night Football is almost a sacrament. So developing Division I sports - and a marching band - have been priorities for her.

But few priorities have been bigger than undergraduate education. Just after she took over, an accrediting agency warned that if Stony Brook didn't make the campus more undergraduate-friendly, it



could lose its accreditation. So she helped launch and later chaired a commission on undergraduate education at research universities. Since then, she has implemented most of its recommendations at Stony Brook.

She also achieved a goal that had eluded the two physicists who preceded her, John Toll and John Marburger: admission to the elite, invitation-only Association of American Universities in 2001.

Some scientists on campus had wondered if a literary scholar could lead a top research campus. But she did score some key research accomplishments: the AAU admission and her successful drive to get Stony Brook a prime role in managing Brookhaven National Laboratory.

### Instant research credibility

Stanley can expect the opposite experience. He'll have to reassure the humanities faculty that he cares about them. But as a medical doctor and an eminent researcher, he'll enjoy instant credibility among the scientists on both sides of Nicolls Road, which divides the main campus from the university's hospital.

That hospital is certain to be a major focus. Stanley wants to figure out the best governing structure for the hospital and medical school - one that will endure after him. And he'll use his expertise in biomedical research to raise its research profile.

The new president wants to put renewed emphasis on Stony Brook's founding mission: to be an elite research university. He'll push Stony Brook to climb higher in the AAU's ranks by garnering more and more federal research dollars. But he must strike a careful balance and not let undergraduate education slip.

Stanley also should attend to something that Kenny has begun: trying to coordinate not only the three big corners of the research triangle, but also other institutions that will train people to work in the high-tech companies that the research triangle will spawn. He should also exert leadership in making sure there's enough seed money to nurture these companies, and enough political will to keep them on the Island.

Plenty of projects will compete for scarce resources: continuing to grow the Southampton campus and finishing the research and development park, to name just two of many. Wisely, Stanley believes strongly in strategic planning. He wants to examine the university's strengths and create a plan to use them best. In that process, he should reach out to the community as well as the campus.

He'll have to make tough calls, such as: Should the university pursue a law school? A key Stony Brook backer, Sen. Kenneth LaValle (R-Port Jefferson), thinks so, and he'll be among Stanley's first meetings this week. It's Stanley's job to weigh that idea against many others - all in the context of scarce resources.

As Stanley arrives, the state is broke. And even in flusher times, it hasn't supported SUNY as well as it should. He'll have to fight those battles. He also arrives at a time when President Barack Obama is promising a new commitment to science - an exciting opportunity.

Maybe he'll have fewer bricks-and-mortar moments than Kenny, but there's plenty for Sam Stanley to do. And we're counting on him to get it all done. hN

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