



The State University
of New York

Kristina M. Johnson, PhD
Chancellor

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To the SUNY family:

It has been a great privilege to serve as the 13th Chancellor of the State University of New York for the past three years, and to get to know so many of you, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when your bravery, resourcefulness, brilliance, and commitment were demonstrated every day.

Indeed, it was the experience of interacting with the magnificent faculty, students, and staff on our 64 campuses that was a key factor in my decision-making process when an unexpected opportunity arose. You have made the opportunity to engage much more directly with a university community—especially its young people—an inspiring prospect, and I have accepted an offer to become the 16th President of The Ohio State University, beginning September 1, 2020.

As you know, my focus for the past three months has been on keeping our faculty, students, and staff safe during the coronavirus pandemic. Working with my executive leadership team and the leaders of our 64 campuses, we ensured the continuation of academic instruction for approximately 400,000 students, managed critical research activities, and delivered crucial clinical care to nearly 1,000 COVID-19 infected patients. Over the next three months, we will continue our work to finalize and implement plans for restarting SUNY's on-campus operations, helping SUNY to gear up for fall.

With your help, we focused the SUNY system on four key themes that will allow SUNY to thrive even in challenging times.

By concentrating on individualized learning, including with our student success initiative SUNY Achieve and a new system-wide platform in SUNY Online, we offer New Yorkers the excellent and affordable education they need—when they need it, and at a time and place that fits in with their complex lives. Combined with Governor Cuomo's first-in-the nation Excelsior Scholarships, our efforts are really generating results: Over the last three years, two-year community college graduation rates increased 22%. Our SUNY Open Educational Resources alone saved students \$47 million in textbook costs, and we cut in half the number of students requiring remediation before starting credit-bearing college coursework. Because our faculty diversity did not reflect the demographics of our students, we launched PRODiG—Promoting Recruitment Opportunities for Diversity and Inclusive Growth—with the goal of hiring 1000 underrepresented minorities and women in STEM by 2030. With the enthusiastic support of Governor Andrew Cuomo, our board, and the SUNY system and campus leadership, PRODiG is off to a great start.

We also focused on innovation and entrepreneurship, and dramatically increased our research expenditures, while ensuring that SUNY would provide leadership in important national research projects, such as the National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium, a collaboration between SUNY and NYSERDA, and the Electron-Ion Collider, which will be built at the Brookhaven National Laboratory managed by Stony Brook University and Battelle.

We amplified a culture of sustainability across the SUNY system. With our Large Scale Renewable Energy project to purchase zero-carbon electricity for 21 campuses, we have taken a giant step on the road to 100% renewable electricity by 2023. Four hundred other clean energy and energy efficiency projects—including the design and upcoming construction of one of the first mass timber buildings in New York State—are also lowering the carbon footprints of our campuses.

Finally, we forged important new partnerships. Working alongside Empire State Development, we established groundbreaking collaborations with IBM, CREE, Applied Materials, and others, launching \$4.6 billion in research and development investment in New York State, and ensuring that the next generation of transformative technologies is developed here. With philanthropic partners, we raised the first endowment dollars for the SUNY Impact Foundation, in order to support the best ideas of our individual campuses system-wide and to support scholarships and fellowships.

As I have been leading SUNY, I also have been learning from SUNY personnel. At my first visit to the Rochester Educational Opportunity Center (EOC), I saw the power of SUNY firsthand in Dean and Executive Director Dr. Roosevelt Mareus, an immigrant from Haiti, who began at the EOC 20 years ago as a security guard. Today, after earning three degrees, Dean Mareus is the embodiment of the American Dream to every student at the EOC.

At Brookhaven National Laboratory, I had the opportunity to give a keynote to 300 summer interns, many from SUNY—and was thrilled for them they were getting research experience with some of the very best scientists in the world, including those on our Stony Brook University faculty.

I had the pleasure of visiting SUNY Cobleskill, and discovering that its tractors use 16 different satellites to guide them in using the land efficiently in farming.

The joys of serving as Chancellor include the performances I saw at SUNY Potsdam, taking the coin toss at a University at Albany football game, meeting young entrepreneurs like Ben Conard of Five North Chocolate, and celebrating the Nobel Prize award to Binghamton University Distinguished Professor Stanley Whittingham. At the University at Buffalo, I had the great honor of presenting Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg with an honorary degree.

At the NICU at Downstate University Brooklyn Hospital, I had the equally great honor of meeting the angels that walk those wards to nurse severely premature babies to health.

I believe deeply in SUNY's twin missions of accessibility and excellence, and it has been an honor to serve them. Now, at The Ohio State University, where my family has deep roots over seven generations, I will continue working to keep the American Dream alive for people from all backgrounds through excellent public higher education. Ohio State is one of the land-grant colleges established by the Morrill Act of 1862 for the "liberal and practical education of the industrial classes"—a huge force in democratizing higher education in the United States. What was true in the 1860s is just as true today: The opportunity to pursue higher education transforms lives, and I hope to continue to open up opportunities to the next generation in this new role.

I thank all of you for all that you have taught me and for sharing this wonderful experience with me, and I look forward to working with you over the summer as we finalize preparations for the Fall 2020 semester.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristina M. Johnson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kristina M. Johnson, PhD.
Chancellor