

State of the University Address 2011

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President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., MD

Delivered at University Convocation, September 21, 2011

Samuel L. Stanley, Jr., President

Welcome

Good afternoon. What an honor it is for me to extend official greetings to each of you at the beginning of this new academic year and to welcome you to our annual University Convocation, an institutional tradition for us here at Stony Brook. This year's Convocation is particularly meaningful, as we celebrate the life, work and memory of Dr. John Sampson Toll, who, I believe in some sense was Stony Brook's George Washington, the founding father of the University, serving as its second president from 1965 to 1978.

Before I introduce you to a few special individuals who have come to help us celebrate and honor the memory of Dr. Toll, I ask you to join me in recognizing Mrs. Deborah Taintor Toll, Dr. Toll's wife of 40 years, who shared her husband's passion for Stony Brook and contributed significantly to this institution's success during his tenure here.

Mrs. Toll, thank you for joining us today and for your continued support of Stony Brook University. I want to extend my most sincere gratitude for your many years of support of President Toll and for your role in helping this University become the institution that it is today.

Also, joining us today to help us honor the memory of Dr. Toll are former Stony Brook University President **Shirley Strum Kenny** and her husband, **Bob; Richard Gelfond**, Chair of the Stony Brook Foundation; **John Burness**, Visiting Professor of Public Policy at Duke University who served as an assistant to President Toll; and **Robert de Zafra**, Professor Emeritus, Department of Physics and Astronomy. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to join us today.

I would now like to give each of our special guests an opportunity to offer a few brief comments about President Toll, from their own perspective, as a means of celebrating the remarkable man for whom this year's Convocation program is dedicated. They will each come forward in the order printed in your program. We will begin with comments from Mr. Rich Gelfond, the CEO of Imax who was a student during President Toll's time here at Stony Brook.

[Memorial remarks in celebration of the life and career of Dr. John S. Toll]

Introduction

Once again, I am pleased to welcome you to the beginning of this new academic year and to our annual University Convocation, which provides an opportunity for us as a University to reflect on the successes and challenges of the previous year, and to take a brief glimpse at our strategic road map for the coming year. I am especially delighted to welcome an outstanding group of new faculty and staff to our Stony Brook University family this year, and I am so pleased that many of them are here to join us in this year's special tribute to President Johnny Toll.

As I mentioned in my announcement to the University community a few weeks ago regarding the passing of Dr. Toll, I sincerely regret not having had the opportunity to personally meet him. This feeling has been heightened in recent weeks as I have heard more and more about his transformative approach to leadership and the great vision that he had for Stony Brook to realize its potential as a world-class research institution. Truly his impact on this University cannot be underestimated. One of the hallmarks of Johnny Toll's tenure here was his commitment to recruiting outstanding faculty, including Nobel Laureate C.N. Yang, who, regrettably, was unable to join us today.

As we ceremoniously remember Dr. Toll, I would like to share with you part of a brief statement sent to us by Dr. Yang because I believe that it is not only reflective of Dr. Toll's impact on a number of very significant individuals in Stony Brook's history, but it also speaks to the quality of leadership that this institution has been privileged to have over the course of its formative years.

Dr. Yang writes:

One day in the spring of 1965, I received a call from John Toll who said he had just accepted an appointment as the President of a new campus of the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He wanted me to join him to make Stony Brook a major research-oriented State University, "the Berkeley of the East."

I had always liked Toll's open and dynamic personality, and had admired his leadership talents. I thought Stony Brook had chosen well to appoint him to lead the campus. But I and my family were happy at Princeton and had prospered in the Ivory-Tower like atmosphere of the Institute. Should I leave Princeton against the advice of many of my close friends to follow John to an entirely new career?

It was a difficult decision, but it turned out to be one of the major important decisions in my life: I accepted John's offer and spent the next 33 years at Stony Brook.



Dr. John S. Toll
(1923 -1978)

I am grateful to John for having the insight that I could fit into his vision of the development and growth of a major research university, and for all the help and advice he had given me during his lifetime.

With a similar sense of gratitude, I wish to formally acknowledge this institution's deep appreciation for Dr. Toll's vision for this University. [Continue reading ►](#)

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"Fostering an environment which supports diversity is not just a SUNY commitment; it is one that Stony Brook genuinely embraces as well."

RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL COMMUNITY GUESTS

Before I acknowledge the presence of our new faculty and senior staff, I would like to take a few moments to briefly recognize a group of other individuals who lend their constant support, in the way of service, to this great, public university:

Government Officials:

- Assemblyman Steven Englebright
- Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick
- County Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher

Stony Brook Council Members:

- Kevin Law, Chair
- Robert Flynn
- Lou Howard
- Frank Trotta

Alumni Executive Committee:

- Scott Middleton (President)
- Gloria Snyder (Past President)
- Sherry Sussman (President-Elect)
- Robert Stafford (Treasurer)

Please join me, once again, in extending our welcome to all of these individuals, not only for their attendance here today but also for everything they do on behalf of Stony Brook University throughout the year.

RECOGNITION OF NEW FACULTY

One of the most exciting aspects of today's Convocation for me is in having the honor of welcoming and presenting to the University community the newest additions to our faculty. I am pleased to announce that, this year, we have 66 new faculty members. We have done our best to include each of their names in today's program. As they stand as a group, please help me greet them with a warm Stony Brook University welcome.

As new faculty members here at Stony Brook, you join the ranks of some of the world's most distinguished teachers, scholars and academic leaders. It is not just bragging when we tout the outstanding quality of the faculty who call Stony Brook home. Our faculty are nationally and internationally known, and the quality of the graduates that they help to produce is second to none. With more than 14,000 faculty and staff members affiliated with Stony Brook University, you have joined a proud institutional family that is committed to academic excellence and dedicated to professional service.

I would like to take a moment to specially recognize two of our new faculty members, **Dr. Crystal Fleming** and **Dr. Serene Khader**, who are joining us this year as Faculty Diversity Program Award Winners through the SUNY Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. If you are here, please stand. **Dr. Fleming**, who is joining the Department of Sociology, received her Ph.D. in 2011 from Harvard University. Her research has focused on African-American Identity and anti-racism in the United States and she will be adding to our academic efforts in the areas of Race, Ethnicity and Immigration. **Dr. Khader** received her Ph.D. in Philosophy in 2008 from Stony Brook. Her research focuses on women's empowerment in cross-cultural contexts, and she brings expertise on human rights, transnational feminism and global justice to Stony Brook.

Stony Brook's Commitment to Diversity

It is important that you know that fostering an environment which **supports diversity** is not just a SUNY commitment; it is one that Stony Brook genuinely embraces as well. I am proud to say that, with a sizeable international and ethnic minority student population, as well as employees who range in age from 18 to 82 and hail from more than 100 countries and all 50 states, Stony Brook is proud of its commitment to diversity.

RECOGNITION OF NEW ADMINISTRATORS

At this point, I would also like to take the time to briefly recognize some of the newest members of the University's leadership team. The individuals that I will introduce have had to hit the ground running in their new roles here at the University, and I might add that they have been doing an outstanding job

Administrative Appointments

As most of you know, just before the end of the spring semester, our former Provost, Eric Kaler, left to become President of the University of Minnesota. While so many of us had mixed emotions about Eric's departure, we recognize what a wonderful opportunity it was for him to return to Minnesota, where he will celebrate his inauguration tomorrow. After a very successful national search, we are pleased to present to you today our new Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, **Dr. Dennis Assanis, and his wife, Helen.**

Dr. Assanis, who will also serve as Vice President for Brookhaven Affairs, will officially join us on October 3. Although you may have already read all about him in my campus announcement related to his appointment, since he is here with us today, I just thought that I would briefly mention that he is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and holds four degrees from MIT, including three master's degrees and a Ph.D. in Power and Propulsion. A distinguished scholar, teacher and leader, Dennis comes to us from the University of Michigan and is widely recognized for his outstanding work in the field of energy, particularly in the automotive arena.

Dennis, we are thrilled that you and Helen could join us today, and we look forward to extending a more formal welcome to you and your family when you arrive in October. In the meantime, I want to thank, **Dr. Nancy Squires**, who had just been named the new dean of the College of Arts and Sciences prior to our last Convocation, for her outstanding work as interim Provost. I would also like to thank **Dr. Axel Drees**, who has been serving as the interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences while Nancy has been at the helm of the Provost's Office.

Other additions to the Stony Brook University community since our last Convocation include:

- **Dr. Minghua Zhang**, Dean of the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences
- **Dr. Manny London**, Dean of the College of Business
- **Ms. Elaine Crosson**, Vice President for External Relations
- **Mr. Dexter Bailey**, Vice President for Advancement
- **Mr. Christopher Kiehl**, Chief Information Officer
- **Dr. Ken A. Dill**, Founding Director of The Louis and Beatrice Laufer Center for Physical and Quantitative Biology
- **Dr. Vincent W. Yang**, Chair of the Department of Medicine

Please join me in welcoming all of these distinguished leaders to Stony Brook University.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the pending departure of **Mrs. Karol Kain Gray**, our Vice President for Finance and Administration, who will soon be leaving us to take on a new role as Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We are extremely grateful for Karol's service to Stony Brook, which extends more than 30 years. Karol, we will miss you and wish you all the best in your new role.

Finally, I can't help but think back to this segment of my address during last year's Convocation in which I recognized former Stony Brook University President **Dr. Jack Marburger** as our recently appointed Vice President for Research. Unfortunately, Jack passed away a little more than two months ago, and we had a memorial celebration in his honor this past Friday. Jack's contributions to this University, and more recently to our research enterprise, will be long remembered, and he will be sorely missed among his colleagues and within the research community.

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"There is no question in my mind that our faculty is the core strength of this institution."

ADDRESS

When John Toll came to Stony Brook University as its second President in 1965, only three years after the campus opened here, he came with an unreserved vision for change that would forever alter the course of this institution to create a state and national leader in higher education. At the time, we had only 2,800 students, nine graduate programs and 18 buildings. It was not only a period of great growth but also of the beginning of our commitment to excellence, as our fledgling campus began to attract the likes of world renowned biologist Bentley Glass as the University's first distinguished professor and Academic Vice President; C.N. Yang as the Einstein Professor of Physics; and a 30-year-old Jim Simons to create a world-class mathematics department (photos).

The **University that you see today** has come a long way and continues to flourish on some of the same fundamental principles of excellence that were established under President Toll and the other outstanding leaders of this young but vibrant institution. I am extremely proud to carry the torch of this esteemed University as its President because I believe, like others before me, that we are destined for a level of academic prominence and student success beyond where we are today.

All hype aside, we are a world-class institution, with world-class students, faculty, and staff, and we will continue along a pathway that may sometimes seem as if it is a series of never-ending periods of transition. But, we will, and we must, keep moving forward. Our destiny demands it.

Student Profile

I know that you expect to hear this every year, and I never get tired of saying it, because it's true: Stony Brook University continues to attract better and **better and better students** each year.

Once again, our freshman class ranks among the best in our institutional history. Almost **27,000 first-year students** applied for a class of approximately 2,500 freshmen, and this year, we accepted **only 39% of those who applied**. As one indicator of the increasing quality of our students, the **SAT scores** of regular admitted Stony Brook freshmen have continued to improve over the past decade. Preliminary data show that the scores of this year's class are 16 points higher than those of last year's students, and we have witnessed an increase of nearly 100 points in our freshmen SAT scores since the year 2000.

The **ethnic and geographical diversity** of our incoming class of students is outstanding. According to admission records, 32% of our freshmen are Asian, which equals our population of white students; 9% percent are Hispanic, 9% are of other international origin, and 5% are black. The remaining percentages include students of two or more ethnicities or are unknown. Additionally, the number of **out-of-state freshmen** increased to 21% from 18% last year.

While our performance in this area has been outstanding, we will be facing new challenges in continuing to attract the best and the brightest students to Stony Brook University. The number of high school seniors in New York State and the nation will be declining significantly over the coming decade, so competition will increase for the best students. I will be working with our new Provost, Dennis Assanis, the Vice President for Student Affairs, Peter Baigent, Matt Whelan, our Associate Provost for Admissions and Financial Aid, and Bill Arens, Dean of International Studies, as we make a significant investment in new recruitment initiatives, designed to target outstanding high school students in selected regions in the U.S. and abroad.

Faculty Accomplishments

Along with taking pride in the quality of our students, we are also extremely proud of our faculty and the distinction that they bring to this institution. I am proud to take a few moments to share with you some of their noteworthy accomplishments since our last Convocation. If any of these individuals are present, I ask that you stand when I call your name:

- **Dr. John Milnor**, Professor of Mathematics and Co-director of the Institute for Mathematical Sciences, was awarded the \$1 million Abel Prize by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters "for pioneering discoveries in topology, geometry and algebra."
- **Drs. Agnes Weiyun He, Sachiko Murata, and Jeffrey A. Segal** were chosen from among a group of almost 3,000 candidates as 2011 Guggenheim Fellows. Currently Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Asian and Asian American Studies, **Dr. He** is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics and Asian Studies; **Dr. Murata** is Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Program in Japanese Studies; And **Dr. Segal** is a SUNY Distinguished Professor in the Department of Political Science.
- Stony Brook professors **Jorge L. Benach, Jessica Gurevitch, and Dmitri E. Kharzeev** were recognized early in the spring as 2010 American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellows. Dr. Benach is Chair of the Department of Molecular Genetics and Microbiology and Director of the Center for Infectious Diseases; Dr. Gurevitch is Professor and Chair of the Department of Ecology and Evolution; and Dr. Kharzeev is Professor of Physics and Astronomy and a prominent scientist at Brookhaven National Laboratory.
- **Dr. Alfredo Fontanini**, an Assistant Professor of Neurobiology and Behavior, was named by President Obama as a recipient of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and

Engineers (PECASE), the highest honor given by the U.S. government to science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers.

- **Dr. Danny Bluestein**, Professor of Biomedical Engineering, was awarded a five-year, \$7.5 million grant by the National Institutes of Health. The award marks the first time a Stony Brook professor received a Phase II Quantum Grant, given by The National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB), a division of the NIH.
- **Dr. Balaji Sitharaman**, Assistant Professor of Biomedical Engineering, was a 2010 recipient of the NIH Director's New Innovator Award. Only a select group of early-career biomedical researchers nationwide receive this award, which includes a 5-year \$1.5 million grant.

There is no question in my mind that our faculty is the core strength of this institution. A challenge going forward is our need to recruit and retain outstanding faculty members, even when our resources are limited. I will address that issue in more detail in just a minute.

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"We have made the decision that ... tuition increases, while modest, will not effect the ability of our state's most economically dis-advantaged students to attend Stony Brook University."

Budget

When **Dr. Toll assumed the presidency at Stony Brook**, our state budget was a little more than \$7 million. We had 253 faculty, about 530 staff members and research activity was at \$878,000. By the time President Toll left in 1978, the **state budget** had increased by 12 times to \$86.5 million; **research activity** had jumped to more than \$21 million; the University had four times **more faculty**, six times **more staff**, nearly **16,000 students** and 35 graduate programs. This is remarkable growth, and an amazing testament to Dr. Toll and all who aided him in these early days.

Stony Brook University's **total budget today** is 2.1 billion dollars, of which 1.4 billion is associated with our medical center complex, and the remaining 700 million on this side of Nicolls Road. Of our total budget, \$295.1 million comes in the form of **state allocation**, which is made up of \$147.5 million in the form of state tax support and \$147.6 million from tuition and miscellaneous revenue. These figures do not count monies that come from the State to support our fringe benefit costs. While \$295 million would seem to be significantly higher than the \$86.5 million we had 33 years ago, in fact, if one accounts for inflation, we actually had more "buying power" in 1978 than today.

Last year, I spoke of our tremendous budget challenges, and unfortunately the State's fiscal crisis led to even more cuts this year. As shown in the next slide, we have now had to deal with more than **\$82 million dollars in cuts** over the past four years, a cut of nearly 27% in our State support. We have coped by aggressively pursuing cost savings, reducing adjunct faculty, consolidating programs, freezing and reviewing staff hiring, using state wide and locally developed voluntary separation plans, and implementing shared services. We continue to make significant progress towards our goal, developed as part of **Project 50 Forward**, to reduce our non-academic spending by \$27 million annually. But these cost-cutting efforts have come with a price, in terms of fewer class sections, larger classes, and we cannot forget that our efforts to improve administrative efficiencies have led us to make an already lean organization even leaner, with those remaining shouldering even more of the work effort. We have worked hard to avoid lay-offs, and I am very grateful to all of our faculty and staff who have risen to the occasion, and been willing to take on more to keep Stony Brook moving forward. What we do at Stony Brook really matters, and I am proud of each and every one of you, and your unique and vital contributions to this University.

But as everyone knows, despite these severe cuts, our budget picture today looks far brighter than last year. This year Stony Brook University and all of our supporters helped lead the fight for something historic, **NY SUNY2020**. This groundbreaking legislation contains the first 5 year tuition plan in State history, and will allow the 4 University Centers to charge an academic excellence fee in recognition of their higher costs to educate, to initiate annual increases in out-of-state tuition, and to receive 35 million dollars in capital for a project of their choice. Within the NYSUNY2020 act is also the commitment by the legislature and the Governor to work to avoid further cuts in SUNY's budget which would counter the effect of the tuition increase. The NY SUNY2020 act is a game changer. For the first time ever, we know our future revenue, and can engage in long-range fiscal planning. We achieved recognition and support for the higher cost of educating a student at a research institution. And we will use the capital funds to help us build a \$194 million state-of-the-art Translational Medical Research Building on the East campus. The **MART** will be a 250,000 square foot, eight-level building that will house 25 cancer labs, a 30-room cancer clinic, a 300-seat auditorium and new classroom space. This building will be transformative for Stony Brook University and our region, helping us to recruit new researchers in cancer and imaging, and helping our physicians and staff provide better clinical care for cancer patients.

Before I leave this topic, there are two critical points I want to make about NYSUNY2020 and Stony Brook University. Our intention is to use much of the increased revenue from tuition and fees to directly benefit students by hiring more than 250 new faculty, and 800 new staff. More faculty mean smaller classes, more class sections, (helping students get the classes they need to graduate on time) and more research opportunities for our students. However, while we will receive significant increases in our revenue from tuition and fees under this plan, those increases will not offset the cuts we received to our base budget until the 5th year of the plan. So, we will achieve our faculty hiring goals only if we are successful in dealing with the ongoing effects of the prior years' budget cuts by continuing to reduce administrative costs, increasing revenue from other sources, or obtaining an increase in the State allocation.

The second point is about access. We have made the decision that these tuition increases, while modest, will not effect the ability of our state's most economically disadvantaged students to attend Stony Brook University. Among all of the SUNY schools, **only Stony Brook will completely cover the TAP gap** (the difference between the tuition increase and the maximum provided by the State's Tuition Assistance Program) for New York students with family incomes of \$75,000 or less. Why are we doing this? Because we believe that access to a quality education is at the heart of what we do, because we are proud that we have the second highest proportion of economically disadvantaged students in the AAU, and because it is the right thing to do.

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"Stony Brook faculty and students are doing amazing things, ... and we will work tirelessly to raise the funds to help support their efforts to achieve excellence and impact."

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NYSUNY2020 provides us with a tremendous opportunity to stabilize our finances and resume our positive trajectory. But as I have emphasized it will not be enough to help us achieve the truly top tier status ("the Berkeley of the East") that John Toll envisioned in the 70s, and I see on our horizon today. What do we need?

First, we must do a better job of obtaining philanthropic support for the University. Fundraising, support from our alumni and friends, is absolutely vital to our future. We have a wonderful group of supporters, individuals who truly have transformed this University, and I know all of us are grateful to them for believing in this University and what we do. But we need to do even more in this realm. We have a tremendous advantage as a State school, the money donors give does not need to help us keep the lights on (the State does that). Instead, it can go directly to helping us achieve excellence—investing in recruiting or retaining the best faculty by creating an endowed professorship; providing a scholarship so an outstanding undergraduate or graduate student can attend Stony Brook and devote themselves full time to their studies; providing an endowment to ensure that a critical academic program or institute will remain relevant and vital for years to come, or creating a new landmark on our campus, whether a recreation building for our students, or a laboratory where new discoveries will be made.

Coming from a private institution, I have seen how essential fundraising is for today's University. We need to improve our efforts, and with Dexter Bailey in place, I am committing to significant new investments in Advancement. We are developing a strategy to better engage our alumni, to do a better job in telling our story, and to better identify and create programs of excellence and distinction that merit support. Stony Brook faculty and students are doing amazing things on this campus, and around the world, in **academics, research, health care, community service, and athletics**, and we will work tirelessly to raise the funds to help support their efforts to achieve excellence and impact.

Second, we must improve our sponsored research support. In 2009-10, for the first time Stony Brook **surpassed \$200 million dollars** in sponsored project expenditures, and we ranked first among SUNY's 64 campuses in research expenditures. This figure was increased by one time funds from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA)—and as those funds phase out in 2011, our dollars have decreased. As everyone knows, this is shaping up to be an extraordinarily difficult time for our funding agencies, NSF, NIH, DOE, DOD, etc., with budget reduction efforts dominating the current climate in Washington. Monday, I was at an advisory meeting for one of the major institutes of NIH, and they are preparing for the possibility of very significant reductions in their funding dollars. So, growing or even maintaining sponsored research support in this environment is going to be very challenging.

Nevertheless, I believe we have opportunities. We still have not fully leveraged our partnerships with **Brookhaven National Laboratory and Cold Spring Harbor laboratory**, and this must be a high priority for us moving forward. One area of particular interest is imaging. Human beings are visual creatures, and seeing is critical to understanding. Microbiology depended upon the discovery of the microscope, astronomy the telescope, and today's structure based drug design comes from X-ray crystallography. The building of **the NSLS-2** at Brookhaven National Laboratory, and the continuing advances in PET/MRI and other imaging modalities provide us with unique opportunities in this realm. I have committed significant resources to exploring a new imaging initiative that is designed to bring together scientists on this campus (and by that I mean both sides of Nicolls Road) and at **BNL** to push the frontiers in several areas. Under Ken Kaushansky's leadership, our first phase is focusing on neuroimaging, looking at the brain, not just its anatomy, but visiting its function at the cellular and molecular level. More initiatives will follow, and we will work to create a new imaging institute that can serve as a focal point (pun intended) for collaborations between BNL and Stony Brook in this vital area. We also are working with Brookhaven National Laboratory to re-vitalize our Joint Photon Sciences Institute, an effort designed to position Stony Brook to better utilize the extraordinary capabilities of the NSL-2.

We also have tremendous opportunities in energy research—our new **Advanced Energy Center** should be the catalyst for new collaborative efforts with BNL, and other partners on the Smart Grid, on improved storage devices, and on renewable energy sources. We have strengths in a number of these areas, but will need to build critical mass if we are to be competitive for major awards. We also have the opportunity to grow our efforts in marine and atmospheric sciences. The expansion of our **marine research station** at our Southampton Campus represents just one part of a strategy to increase our research portfolio in this vital area.

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"Academics are paramount, but the safety and well being of our students will continue to be our highest priority."

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I want to mention just one more thing in the research realm. Stony Brook University will be a founding member of the New York Genome Center, a sequencing and bioinformatics center, designed to serve the top scientific and medical research institutions in the city, to compete with the best sequencing centers, the Broad Institute, Baylor, and Washington University, for large-scale genome sequencing projects, and to provide affordable sequencing for hospitals and clinical needs. More details will be forthcoming, but this new genome center may be a tremendous resource for research and clinical care for Stony Brook University.

These are just a few examples of opportunities, but each will require some level of investment, including strategic faculty recruitment, but the potential returns for Stony Brook, our region, and our nation, are significant.

Third, we must grow our international efforts. We must be able to recruit outstanding students and faculty from abroad, we must provide better international opportunities for our students, and we want access to international research and academic collaborations. This is one area that will require investment but also real focus in the research and service areas. Obviously, there are opportunities everywhere, but we must identify those programs where we can create the scale necessary to actually make a difference. We have some signature international programs already ([Turkana Basin Institute](#), [efforts in Madagascar](#), and [our new SUNY Korea initiative](#)), ones that have tremendous potential and can really differentiate us from other Universities, and one of my highest priorities over the next year is to make sure our current programs are the best they can be.

Fourth, we must renew our commitment to providing an outstanding learning and student life experience on our campus. Our new classrooms and planned IT infrastructure improvements will be important first steps, but we must also find ways to improve our content delivery, and to reward faculty who develop innovative ways to help our students learn. Our new Provost has a particular interest in online learning, and I am looking to him to take a lead role in helping us develop groundbreaking initiatives in this area. To state the obvious, today's students simply learn and gather information in new ways. And we must adapt.

Academics are paramount, but the safety and well being of our students will continue to be our highest priority, and we will do everything we can to make this a welcoming and supportive environment for each and every member of the Stony Brook community. Our new [recreation center](#), plans to remodel the [Student Union](#), our outstanding [athletics program](#) under the direction of Jim Fiore, and the wonderful offerings at the [Staller Center](#), are all integral parts of our commitment to our students and our community to make Stony Brook University a vibrant recreational and cultural center. We have come a very long way since the days of [Mudville](#) and the [Bridge to Nowhere](#), but we are not resting on our laurels, there is much more to do.

Finally, we must be strategic. We will have the opportunity to hire new faculty and staff, we will have the opportunity to increase our enrollment, and we will need to make significant infrastructure investments. But, we will have to do this in a relatively scarce resource environment. We will not be able to hire new faculty for every department, and we will not be able to fund every center or institute that is proposed. This is where the strategic plans that you developed will be critical—they will help provide the template for this effort. And since things always evolve, we will also be looking for new ideas from faculty, departments, and schools for how to best invest in the future. We need to develop areas of excellence, areas of differentiation for Stony Brook in the arts, in the humanities, in the social sciences, and in the natural and life sciences. This will be a challenging task, and will involve difficult choices, but how wonderful it will be to talk about growing programs, instead of cutting them.

I want to conclude by thanking all of you for your attendance, by thanking each of our speakers for their eloquent tributes to John Toll, and by once again, paying tribute to that remarkable man, who moved us forward so fast, yet so well.

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