



**THE POWER OF STONY BROOK**  
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## Inaugural Address

**Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D.**  
**Friday, October 23, 2009**

Fifty-two years ago on October 4, a new object began orbiting the Earth, the world changed, and the concept behind Stony Brook was born. Sputnik became a symbol for scientific and technical supremacy and awakened the United States to the need for investment into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education and research.

The State University of New York (SUNY) system under then Governor Nelson Rockefeller responded by transforming a teacher's college on Long Island into a university, one with a mission of excellence in science and technology, founded to become a Berkeley for New York, to be a great public research university. Its first president, John Lee, was appointed on January 1, 1961—this was the birth of Stony Brook University.

The original strategy for building Stony Brook was simple. It was not about the buildings, it was about the people, and from the beginning it was about attracting top faculty. Within years of its founding, Stony Brook had attracted a Nobel laureate to its faculty. That was a statement. The caliber of the faculty defines the university, plain, simple, and as true today as it was then. I will return to this theme in a minute, but it bears repeating. Stony Brook's goal was to become a great public research university. It is the scholarly and research activity of the faculty, its ability to generate and transmit new knowledge, that creates the foundation for all of our endeavors.

And that investment in outstanding faculty proved to be a very strong foundation for building a university. Today we have the most honored and distinguished faculty in the SUNY system. Our faculty have been the recipients of the Nobel Prize in medicine, physics, and economics, and four shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore for their work on climate change. Their scholarly activity encompasses the most important questions of our time: How did the universe begin? Is it really constructed of strings? What are the origins of man? What does it mean to be human? How do we think? How do we achieve world peace? How do we deal with climate change and still meet our energy demands? How do we improve human health and quality of life?

### The Road to Discovery

Think about it. On any given day, Stony Brook faculty are searching for fossil clues to the origins of man and other primates in Kenya, interpreting data from an atomic collision at the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider at Brookhaven National Laboratory, at sea collecting samples to use forensic DNA analyses to stop illegal trade in great white sharks, restoring movement to a stroke victim by reperusing his or her brain at Stony Brook University Medical Center, developing new ways to transfer and store imaging data to help more rapidly diagnose heart attacks, searching for ways to expand understanding between members of the major religions in the world, evaluating interventions to reduce infant mortality in socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, pursuing a new insight into James Joyce, and creating an original screenplay. This just scratches the surface. And, of course, the wonderful thing about a research university is that we do this in harmony with our educational mission. Our students benefit from the opportunity to learn from the leading scholars in the field, but they also get the chance to experience firsthand the excitement and satisfaction that comes from discovery. Stony Brook faculty and students have helped develop and test quantum field theory, discover the agent of Lyme disease, identify distant galaxies, find a new mammalian species, and develop the technology behind magnetic resonance imaging, to name a few from a very long list. And every day in humanities and social sciences classrooms our students make new discoveries about critical thinking, cultural and gender sensitivity, ethics, politics, economics, history, philosophy, human behavior—some of the tools necessary to be a good, productive, and effective citizen. But Stony Brook provides an education that will take you even beyond that. Our graduates become leaders that recognize obligations to others that go beyond the responsibilities of citizenship. They take seriously the value of human life and particular human lives, and exhibit both universal concern and respect for individual differences.



Inauguration of Stony Brook's fifth president, Samuel L. Stanley, Jr., M.D. (Left: SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher)

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And we have not been stingy with the opportunity to receive a Stony Brook education. We've gone from 148 students enrolled in 1957 to nearly 25,000 today, with 16,000 undergraduates and 9,000 graduate students. Stony Brook now has 138,000 alumni, about 83,000 with a bachelor's degree, and about 55,000 with a graduate degree or certificate. Our students simply get better every year, and our undergraduate class of 2013 is the best, in terms of SAT scores and GPA, that we have ever had. They take advantage of academic offerings at three colleges (Arts and Sciences, Business, Engineering and Applied Sciences) and eight schools (Dental Medicine, Health Technology and Management, Journalism, Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, Medicine, Nursing, Professional Development, and Social Welfare).

#### A Worthy Campus

An exceptional faculty and outstanding students deserve a great campus. Our main campus has transformed from the Mudville of the '60s to what is at once a spacious, serene, energetic, and truly lovely campus, capped by the solemn beauty of the Charles B. Wang Center. And we are no longer bounded by our original 1,100 acres. We have gone east to Southampton and west to Manhattan to create new centers for learning, and we remain determined to use any and all means necessary to further our academic mission and develop programs of education and scholarship—programs of excellence that benefit our students, faculty, and the public.

That's the quick view, the three-minute elevator speech, the executive summary. All of these things have been driven home to me during the first phase of my Inauguration Week marathon. I sat in the Staller Center, a true treasure of the campus and our community, joined by faculty, students, staff, and members of the community, and heard extraordinary performances from our music faculty and staff, including members of the Emerson String Quartet. In the same building I saw one example of the remarkable creativity and scholarship within our Art Department, and last night sat enthralled at our Southampton campus while Jules Fieffer and other contributors to our M.F.A. program in writing shared their new work with community, students, faculty, and staff. I toured a health fair at our medical campus, sponsored by all of our allied schools, and went to the Student Activities Center to learn about the many ways our students are giving their time, energy, and expertise to our community. I played basketball with the students, including some of our student-athletes, and this reminded me of the importance of our recreational facilities and the high quality—and I mean quality in terms of the students they attract—of our athletics program. Finally, in the presidential lecture series, I have had the privilege of hearing some of the leading scholars in their fields describe research that puts Stony Brook at the forefront of some vitally important areas.

Let me sum up this section of how far we have come. Because of the efforts of a superb and dedicated faculty, an energetic and enormously talented student body, an accomplished and loyal staff, farsighted and committed political leaders who have championed our cause, the citizens of New York who have funded so much of our efforts, and the outstanding stewardship of three great presidents who have collectively led Stony Brook University for more than 42 years, John Toll (who could not be here today), Jack Marburger, and Shirley Strum Kenny, Stony Brook has become one of the premier public research universities in the world. I salute you, and all you have accomplished.

Now, take a deep breath and stretch for a second because I want to talk about Stony Brook University and why it matters so much. I believe that Stony Brook University and the State University of New York have never been more important in any time in the history of this state than they are right now. Let me say it bluntly. We are the best investment the state can make to address the economy and many of the critical issues that face us today—energy, climate change, health, social justice, and globalization.

Winston Churchill said a pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty. I am by nature an optimist, but we must face some very hard facts. We are in the midst of the most serious economic crisis our country has faced since the Great Depression. New York, which built much of its economy on the financial markets, is facing record deficits. Even before this crash, there were signs that the economic leadership of the United States was eroding. The world's richest man is a Mexican, the tallest building is in Dubai, Shanghai will be home to the world's largest carbon capture project, and Bollywood is bigger than Hollywood. We cannot match China or India or many other countries for cost of production; rather, we must compete in the arenas of innovation and productivity. This is the cornerstone of the new economy, this is what drives our needs for a highly educated work force, and this is one of the things that makes SUNY and Stony Brook so important for our future.



*Stony Brook and SUNY are ready, willing, and able to play a central role in creating the Long Island and New York of the future.*

Great research universities are a home for innovation and innovators. Innovation is the creation of a new device or process resulting from study and experimentation. This is scholarship. This is research. This is what we do. And because we are universities, not just research institutes, we help create the next generation of innovators. We are not the only source, but increasingly as the private sector pulls out of the research arena (witness the disappearance of Bell Labs, the Skunk Works, and the slashing of pharma's budgets), research universities and higher education as a whole become more and more vital to our economic future. Who gets this? China, for one, Singapore for another. China has created 900 universities during the past 20 years and made significant investments in its flagship schools. Yet public universities in the United States find themselves with reduced budgets and a significantly declining proportion of state support.

Unfortunately, SUNY and Stony Brook are in that position. Stony Brook is currently dealing with \$13 million out of more than \$28 million in cuts to our state support component, and have yet to determine how much more we face from the recent \$90 million cut just announced by the governor.

Let me be blunt again. Cutting SUNY's budget is fundamentally the wrong strategy. SUNY and Stony Brook are solutions to the economic crisis. They are not a quick fix, they are very much a long-term solution, but they are an absolutely vital part of what needs to happen if New York is to regain its economic strength and develop its quality of life. Why do I say this?

If Long Island and New York are going to recover, we need a highly educated workforce; we need sites of innovation as well as more innovators; we need to create new companies and attract existing business to our region and state; we need individuals who understand global markets and different cultures and who can be effective in this "flat" world; and we need new approaches to energy, climate change, health, and disease. We, and every other community, also want cultural and recreational activities that enrich people's lives, health care that we can afford, and citizens who think critically and who can see beyond shouting and demagoguery.

Stony Brook and SUNY are ready, willing, and able to play a central role in creating the Long Island and New York of the future. We know that higher educational attainment correlates with increased worker productivity. At Stony Brook we are educating New Yorkers (85 percent of our students are in-state) to give them the skill sets for the jobs of the future. But what makes Stony Brook special is the kind of students we serve. More than 30 percent of our current students are Pell Grant-eligible (which means family income is less than \$60,000 annually), and we estimate that over Stony Brook's life, nearly half of its graduates were Pell and or TAP Grant-eligible, meaning that we are providing access to New York's poorest students. At Stony Brook we are very proud to be a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU), the most prestigious organization of research universities in the world. But I am particularly proud to say that among all of the 62 members of the AAU, only one institution educates a higher proportion of Pell-eligible students than Stony Brook University. Many of our students are the first generation to go to college, many are the sons and daughters of immigrants, or new arrivals to the U.S. themselves. We all know the numbers: A B.A. degree adds between \$300,000 and \$1 million to lifetime earnings over a high school diploma, while an M.A. or doctoral degree add significantly more. Stony Brook is fulfilling its mission as a public university, providing a world-class education for deserving students. And we do it very well. Our graduation rates for our Pell-eligible students are higher than they are for our other students. When it comes to our students, we are not about elitism but about excellence, we are not about privilege but about potential. We are helping these talented young people become important contributors to society. And that's what Stony Brook should do.

But that's not the whole story about what our students mean to this region. More than 70 percent of our graduates stay in the Long Island, New York City area. This is huge. Between 2000 and 2008, Long Island lost nearly 146,000 people between the ages of 25 to 44. Imagine what that number would look like without the influence of Stony Brook. At a time when brain drain and the loss of the future workforce are absolutely critical issues for Long Island and the State of New York, Stony Brook is a powerful anchor for our graduates and our region.

If we are to further innovation truly and grow the regional and state economies, we must grow and expand our research efforts. This is one area where numbers speak for themselves and the coin of the realm is external funding support. Every time we get money from the federal government for a research project, it is like starting a small business; we hire skilled workers, we purchase supplies, we add administrative support, and as we grow we build new facilities. And, of course, the fruits of our basic and applied research are the foundation for new technologies, new processes, company formation, and ultimately, economic growth.

#### **Moving Forward to Excellence**

Unfortunately, in recent years, Stony Brook's external funding remained relatively flat, while that of our peers grew significantly. While some areas in our research portfolio have been extraordinarily successful, others have not kept pace, including our funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NIH is the largest provider of sponsored research support, and Stony Brook and its academic medical center must become more competitive in this critical realm. This will require investment in new faculty, new facilities, and maximization of our clinical revenue in difficult economic times. I say today that I am committed to making this happen, and will find the leaders and the resources necessary to move life sciences and medical research at Stony Brook University forward to excellence.

And we will not have to do this alone. One of the bright spots on the horizon is the SUNY REACH Program being developed by the four SUNY academic medical centers and the College of Optometry. This is a comprehensive program designed to really stimulate research at SUNY by leveraging our strengths in infectious diseases, neurosciences, cancer, and diabetes and cardiovascular disease. This is potentially a truly transformational initiative that focuses on new faculty recruitment and shared infrastructure. All of the five schools and the chancellor have already committed seed money to get this off the ground, and it represents a new way of doing business for SUNY. I want to thank SUNY Trustee Michael Russell and SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher for their leadership in developing and encouraging this program.

Stony Brook is well positioned to take a national and international leadership role in several research areas. Stony Brook University won the privilege of managing Brookhaven National Laboratory, the only Department of Energy laboratory in the Northeast. With an extraordinary infrastructure and superb faculty (including many with joint appointments), Brookhaven Laboratory is a terrific partner and resource. Pioneering research in imaging, nuclear physics, energy, nanotechnology, and the upcoming new second-generation National Synchrotron Light Source provide tremendous opportunities for Stony Brook and Brookhaven to grow together.

Brookhaven Director Sam Aronson and I are actively developing new collaborations that will mutually benefit each of our institutions. But we are not alone in moving research on Long Island forward. We are working with Bruce Stillman, the president of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, one of the world's pre-eminent private research institutes, to create a research alliance that will change the game for research on Long Island, in New York, and nationally. The talented faculty at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory bring cutting-edge research in molecular biology, basic cancer research, genomics, and more to the table. Together the three institutions have more than \$750 million in annual external funding, and by collaborating, leveraging current programs and infrastructure, identifying economies of scale, developing strategic hiring practices, and creating joint proposals for funding agencies that build on the unique capabilities of each institution, we will create a powerhouse. Stay tuned in the next few weeks for another announcement about the Alliance and what it could mean to the economies of Long Island and New York. This is another

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area that will need investment, but let me say now that the Alliance represents a tremendous opportunity to move Long Island—and New York—forward.

The state made an important investment in innovation at Stony Brook and in Long Island's economic development when it allocated the funds for two important buildings at our new Research and Development Park. Our Center of Excellence in Wireless and Information Technology (CEWIT) is a beautiful building and a remarkable interdisciplinary research hub, where engineers, physicians, mathematicians, physicists, and biologists come together to apply the latest technologies and algorithms to critical problems in medicine, energy, communications, data storage and analysis, imaging, and much, much more. CEWIT does not just house faculty and students; young entrepreneurs, including Stony Brook graduates, are getting the opportunity to develop their businesses in proximity to outstanding scientists and mentors. I have to mention that my spouse, Ellen Li, a biochemist and gastroenterologist, found the atmosphere there so stimulating that she stole an office and is now squatting on the premises. I want to make it clear that you can evict her if you want. And next door, our Advanced Energy Research and Technology Center (AERTC) is pushing toward completion. We are striving for a LEED-Platinum Certified building (the first on Long Island), which would house many of our efforts toward developing the next generation of batteries (funded by a large frontier grant from the Department of Energy), improving existing and identifying new renewable energy sources, and improving the efficiency and environmental impact of conventional sources. Both CEWIT and AERTC are at the heart of our Smart Grid Consortium. This is a remarkable partnership of public and private utilities; top corporations; the City and State of New York through several agencies; Brookhaven National Laboratory; and public and private universities, including SUNY Buffalo and Stony Brook; designed to drive research and generate innovative approaches to the critical problem of improving power delivery. The Smart Grid Consortium is an inspired concept, and provides a blueprint for how academia, industry, and the state need to collaborate to push our research agenda forward, and more effectively compete against other states for federal funding. Bob Catell, the chairman of the Consortium, is here today, and I thank him for his leadership.

#### **Tackling Critical Issues**

Few institutions are better prepared to deal with issues surrounding climate change, the environment, and our oceans than Stony Brook. We are New York's Sea Grant institution, and whether it is global warming and the associated risk of sea level rise, shore erosion, alteration in the ocean's nutrients, or sustaining fish populations, scientists from our School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences are leaders in this field. To state the obvious, Long Island is an island, and New York City a port, making research in this area absolutely key to future policy, planning, and interventions. It's hard for me to imagine a more important area for inquiry in terms of this region's future. Environmental issues, public policy, natural resource management, ecological diversity, GIS, communications, as well as marine science are front and center at our Southampton campus. This is a truly unique place, where students live what they learn, with real-world projects in renewable energy, recycling, landscaping, and engagement in green design and programs. Under Mary Pearl's energetic leadership, the campus continues to grow and evolve, working to become a valued asset for Stony Brook, SUNY, and our Long Island community.

#### **A Global University**

Globalization is not new but it is increasingly realized in all of our spheres of activity. Banks in Iceland failed because subprime loans in Arizona collapsed, SARS contracted in China was in Toronto within days, and radiologists in India read X-rays for patients in Palm Beach. Stony Brook has long been an international university. We were among the first to partner with Chinese universities, and we continue today to attract some of the best international students in the world to our campus. Students from 105 countries are here, and they add greatly to our academic and campus life. Because we are such a diverse student body, our international students have a chance to see firsthand the wonderful cultural and ethnic tapestry that is the United States, while educating us about their cultures and experiences. I am particularly excited at the potential to create a campus in Korea. It fits with our commitment to being a global university. We as a university and SUNY as a system must lead the way in this realm.

Stony Brook is doing amazing things, and we do matter in so many ways. Our physicians and hospital provide medical care for many Long Islanders, and we truly have become the home to the best ideas in medicine. I cannot tell you how many people have come up to me to tell me a story about the experience of a loved one, or even their own experience with Stony Brook University Medical Center, our Veterans Hospital, or our Long Island State Veterans home. These stories almost invariably end with profound thanks to someone who restored them to health, perhaps literally saving their life, or their mobility, their livelihood, or their independence. This undoubtedly reflects my bias as a physician, but to me nothing is more valuable than health, and I am proud to lead the dedicated physicians, nurses, and health sciences staff who deliver high quality and compassionate care to so many Long Islanders.

I want to conclude this section about why Stony Brook matters by talking in more detail about our economic impact. We are the largest single-site employer on Long Island, with more than 12,000 full-time employees. And these are generally high-paying jobs with mean salaries higher than \$76,000 annually, compared with the Long Island average of approximately \$48,000. Our annual operating budget is approximately \$1.9 billion, with about two-thirds of that allocated to the Medical Center (that figure is matched by the revenue generated from those operations). In a study done using 2007 numbers, our economic impact on Long Island was estimated at \$4.65 billion annually and nearly 60,000 jobs. Put another way, one out of every 12 jobs in Suffolk County is dependent upon Stony Brook University. But the really amazing figure comes when you look at return on investment. Stony Brook's state allocation is approximately (with the recent budget cuts) \$300 million. That translates into a return on investment of 1,600 percent, or put differently, for every dollar invested by the state, it gains \$16 in economic output. My son is trained to be a lawyer, and my favorite legal Latin term is *res ipsa loquitur*. The thing speaks for itself. For every dollar invested by the state, \$16 go back to the economy. *Res ipsa loquitur*.

#### **Fulfilling Our Destiny**

Stony Brook matters. It is central to economic development and the quality of life of this region and the state. The wonderful thing, and the reason I came to Stony Brook, is that we can be even more. You have built the foundation to fulfill our destiny and become the great research university that our founders dreamed of 50 years ago. I know each of us—faculty, students, staff, alumni, and friends—all want us to reach that goal. I want to put out four things we will need to be successful, four for the future.

First, we must return to a strategic vision that has as its core the recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty. John Toll had it right—it all begins with great faculty. At Stony Brook we have a faculty deficit. Compared with the schools in the AAU, the group we proudly call our peers, we are at the bottom in faculty/student ratio. Our enrollment increases over the past years, designed both to improve our accessibility by giving more students the opportunity to have a Stony Brook education and to increase revenue, have not been matched by increases in faculty. We need to remedy this now. There is a tipping point, where large classes and recitation groups hinder the educational process. And where the inability to provide classes delays the ability of students to graduate. Our students deserve more. But equally important, I expect our faculty to engage in outstanding scholarly work that obtains external funding support—innovative work in the sciences, humanities, social sciences, and fine arts—that will help transform our economy and our quality of life. This is absolutely essential to our success and our commitment to the future of this region and state. But that requires protected time, time away from teaching and administrative responsibilities.

#### Strategic Recruitment

So let me be specific. My No. 1 priority is to recruit more than 400 faculty over the next eight to ten years. This level of recruitment would bring us in to the middle of the AAU peers in terms of faculty/student ratio, and I know the existing Stony Brook faculty, who have done so much with so little over the history of the University, will outperform their peers. And over this period, we will strive to create 40 endowed professorships designed to help us recruit and retain outstanding faculty. This will be a focal point of fundraising activities.

But let me be very clear about one thing. This will not just be a process of simply filling vacancies. We will be strategic. We will identify those areas where Stony Brook can lead scholarship, where we can develop programs that differentiate us from other universities, those nascent or burgeoning areas that can transform a field. I think of our new Simons Center for Geometry and Physics, where we are bringing together leading faculty in mathematics and physics to look at the interface of geometry and theoretical physics. It's interdisciplinary, innovative, unique, and potentially transformative.

We will focus on building from existing strengths, taking good to great, but where necessary, where the story is compelling, we will develop new programs. I think of the example of our Turkana Basin Institute, a cornerstone of Stony Brook's efforts to be at the forefront of understanding the human story. It's interdisciplinary, innovative, unique, transformative, and global in its scope and benefits.

And as we recruit new faculty and develop new programs, we will work with our partner schools in SUNY and the Alliance members—Brookhaven National Laboratory and Cold Spring Harbor—to ensure that we are leveraging our tremendous resources and not duplicating programs. I think of a new program in biological imaging, one that would build on strong programs at Stony Brook, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, the New York Blue supercomputer, and the new National Synchrotron Light Source-2 (which, when complete, will be the world's brightest and most intense light source). New imaging approaches often lay new pathways to discovery and create or transform fields. The microscope made possible microbiology, the telescope transformed astronomy, the MRI changed neurology. Stony Brook and its partners could be at the forefront of new imaging approaches that will illuminate fundamental biologic processes, ranging from the role of individual atoms to watching the mind work.

So we will recruit, but this will not be business as usual, this will be cluster hiring, identifying outstanding faculty that will impact more than one department, whose work will bring together faculty and students across departments, schools, and campuses. This is not just about the sciences; innovative programs in the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts will be subject to the same rigor and targeted investment. Not every department will grow, but every department, faculty member, and student will benefit. And SUNY, Long Island, and New York will be all the stronger.

Of course, many things follow from this course of action. We will need resources to provide the infrastructure necessary to allow our strengthened faculty to successfully pursue their scholarly work. And let me make one thing perfectly clear. While I have put faculty at the front, this is also absolutely about our students. Great faculty attract great students, great students attract great faculty. We will not have one without the other. So we will need to provide additional resources to help recruit and support the graduate students and postdoctoral students that are so vital to the research and educational mission of the University. Bringing to campus outstanding faculty and improving the quality of both our education and research will also help us continue to attract outstanding undergraduate students from New York and beyond. We will want to expand our undergraduate research programs, one of Stony Brook's great strengths, to take advantage of the amazing intellectual capacity, energy, and drive of our great students.

And I want to make it clear that part of attracting great students is maintaining the outstanding infrastructure of student support services, tutoring, mental health, career guidance, and programs like EOP that show students, parents, and the public that we truly care about each Stony Brook student, we want them to succeed, and we will do everything possible to help them reach their potential. And to every extent possible, we need to continue our efforts to make the quality of life on



*No university can afford to be great in all areas. We must be focused and strategic if we are to survive the present and build for the future.*



*We are an engine for economic development and the creator of a pathway for upward mobility for the best and brightest and most diverse students.*

our campus a plus, and not a minus. It's hard not to be positive when you see thousands of cheering students at LaValle Stadium for Stony Brook football or lacrosse, or experience what I call enthusiasm personified, the Stony Brook University Marching Band. And Wolfie, well, there will always be a budget line for Wolfie. I also want to use this moment to acknowledge our great staff and their vital role as our partners in supporting our students, faculty, and patients, and their critical role in fundraising, facilities, communication, and so much more.

Second, and it is an essential component of the first priority, we need to define Stony Brook's rules of engagement moving forward. What do I mean by that? Focus, focus, focus. Where do we invest, where do we put human and capital resources? To do that we must be able to articulate our definition of a successful program, a productive initiative, an outstanding school, and ultimately, a great research university. We need to establish metrics for success and hold our leaders, including me, responsible for performance. Central to this process will be a strategic plan that begins with a careful review of all of our academic programs, our support services, our administrative structure, and all of our off-campus activities. The current budget crunch makes this essential but it also will be extraordinarily valuable as we move forward. We are fortunate that we can do this planning in conjunction with the development of the SUNY Strategic Plan. I am pleased to be a member of the steering committee for the plan and thank Chancellor Zimpher for including me in this vital activity. One planning process will inform the other, and we anticipate that the SUNY plan may help us identify Stony Brook programs that might be better sited elsewhere, and areas of need that Stony Brook, as a research university, should address. I used to say no university, except maybe Harvard, could be great in all areas; now, after the financial crisis, I say no university can afford to be great in all areas. We must be focused and strategic if we are to survive the present and build for the future.

Some of you are probably wondering how in the world I can propose fixing our faculty deficit and pushing forward to greatness in the midst of our current budget woes. I do believe the budget crisis will eventually resolve. But I am less certain about the ability of the state to maintain its support. Therefore, if we are to become a great research university, we need greater flexibility in all of our financial affairs. The current situation, where state support continues to erode yet we are unable to increase revenue through rational increases in tuition or easily engage in creative public-private partnerships, is not sustainable. If the state cannot maintain its level of support for SUNY, and it has fallen consistently over the past decade in constant dollars, then it must unshackle us from the rules and regulations that hinder our chance to be great. Without relief, we will become mediocre, and the lofty goal of our original founders, Stony Brook as a great research university, will be forever deferred. We need SUNY-FLEX, the plan now proposed for the six research-intensive universities (Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, Stony Brook, and Upstate and Downstate Medical Centers), that would allow the SUNY Board of Trustees to set tuition increases within a defined range, and would keep all of the increased tuition revenue at the campuses. Currently, our tuition is nearly the lowest of all of the schools within the AAU, and our out-of-state tuition is lower than the in-state tuition of many of our peers. But more importantly, our tuition is too low to allow us to provide the best education for our students. And a plunge to mediocrity will only decrease the value of a Stony Brook degree, both in terms of the job market and acceptance into post-baccalaureate programs. We cannot allow this to happen. There are two absolutely key components to how Stony Brook would implement SUNY-FLEX. First we would ensure that our most economically disadvantaged students would be held harmless by any tuition increase. We would do this by placing a proportion of the increased tuition revenue into scholarship funds for our needy students. We estimate that somewhere around one-third to two-fifths of the money would be used in this way. Second, we would be completely transparent about the use of the increased revenue and pledge that it would be used for items that directly improve the education of our students. First on this list would be faculty recruitment, because this will lower class sizes and provide more research opportunities. SUNY-FLEX would be transformative, for us and the other research institutions. This is an idea whose time has come, this is what Stony Brook and the other research centers need to move forward.

So I have talked about faculty (and students), focus, and flexibility. I want to close by talking about philanthropy. We have been very fortunate at Stony Brook to have a number of visionary friends whose generosity has transformed this institution. Their names can be found on some of our most important structures, they are linked to some of our most valuable faculty members through endowed professorships, they help make the dream of a Stony Brook education a reality through scholarship programs, and they underwrite so many of our most important activities. I speak for all of us now when I say thank you for believing in Stony Brook, and I know in my heart that you will help make our vision for Stony Brook a reality.

In conclusion, I stand before you today, proud to be the fifth president of Stony Brook University. We are young and vibrant, and we stand for all that is best about public universities—we are a home for research and innovation, a center for learning and scholarship, a champion of the arts, a center for outstanding and compassionate health care, and an engine for economic development and the creator of a pathway for upward mobility for the best and brightest and most diverse students. Our fundamentals are strong but we must now weather a perfect storm of reduced state support, a difficult climate for philanthropy, and very real restrictions on our ability to obtain new revenue. Yet never has Stony Brook and SUNY been more important to this region and this state than now. I ask all of you, our faculty, our students, our staff, parents, friends, supporters, legislative leaders, and informed members of the public, to unite together in common cause to renew the promise of our founding, to work to give us the tools to become the great research institution this region and state so desperately needs. Together we can do this, together we will do this. My thanks to you all.