

Legislators forecast difficult fight for state funding

BY DARRYL McGRATH

In a year when New York is expected to have a small budget surplus, public colleges and universities may see a small increase in their state funding.

But it's unlikely that any SUNY campus will see a significant restoration of the nearly \$2 billion in state budget cuts to the SUNY system since the start of the Great Recession.

That was the assessment of four state lawmakers—all of them strong supporters of SUNY, and several of them SUNY graduates—who convened for a panel discussion at SUNY Fredonia on the prospects of public higher education funding in the upcoming Legislative session.

The Fredonia Chapter organized the event, which drew more than 100 students, faculty, administrators and unionists from Fredonia and the University at Buffalo, including Buffalo Center Chapter President Tom Tucker, co-chair of the statewide UUP Outreach Committee and a NYSUT board member, and Virginia Horvath, Fredonia's campus president.

"Since 2008, the SUNY budget has been cut by about \$2 billion," said Fredonia Chapter President Ziya Arnavut. "UUP, along with NYSUT, worked very hard last year to address budgetary problems. However, we still do not have sufficient funding."

FRIENDS OF UUP

The panelists were Senator Catharine Young, (R-Olean), a former UUP Friend of SUNY; and Assembly members Joseph Giglio (R-Gowanda), Andrew Goodell (R-Chautauqua) and Sean Ryan (D-Buffalo).



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ABOVE, ASSEMBLYMAN ANDREW GOODELL, CENTER, DESCRIBES SUNY AS A HYBRID BETWEEN A PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITY, AS ASSEMBLYMAN JOSEPH GIGLIO AND FREDONIA CHAPTER PRESIDENT ZIYA ARNAVUT, RIGHT, AGREE.

LEFT, FREDONIA CHAPTER LEADERS APPLAUD LAWMAKERS' PLEDGES OF SUPPORT FOR A STRONGER SUNY BUDGET.

model's changed and now we're on a year-to-year effort to just sustain. Unless the whole model changes, I think we're going to go through this year in and year out."

STUDENTS AS ACTIVISTS

One bright note: Students are becoming more activist and engaged, not just at Fredonia, but throughout the state, said Antonio Regulier, president of the Fredonia Student Association. Last year, the association worked with the campus University Senate on a joint statement of concern about the higher education budget.

This year, students will be even more involved and activist, Regulier said.

"I think students are pumped," he said. "There's a lot of conversations being generated by students about how they can be more proactive, addressing their concerns about tuition affordability and their careers."

All agreed with what UUP President Fred Kowal has stated many times about the public disinvestment of the SUNY system: With students footing the bill for almost 65 percent of operating costs, SUNY can no longer be called a true public university.

"You are really a hybrid, between a public institution and a private one," Goodell said.

Giglio said that the model upon which the SUNY system was founded is so broken that he's not sure it can be fixed.

"I think one of the problems is we don't have a delineated line of funding for public education," he said. "The