



MANY VOICES, ONE CALL – The Strategic Plan to 2026

## **President’s Report**

February 19th, 2024

### **Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

#### Office of Diversity and Inclusion

On January 8, 2024, the College hosted its second annual DEI day: “Community of Care Symposium: Cultivating a Culture of Intentional Inclusivity. The event was organized by members of the DEI Professional Development Initiative: Jacquie Keleher, Director of Library Services; Dawn Jones, Assistant Director of Career Services; Ian Farmer, ECHS Success Coach; and Catia Laird de Polanco, HR Recruitment Specialist and Chief Diversity Officer. The symposium had 102 registered attendees. Dr. Mykee Fowlin delivered the keynote performance, which addressed the themes of intentional inclusivity, care, and belonging. Concurrent sessions included:

- “Document Accessibility Fundamentals”: led by Terry Martin, Voilà Technology, Inc., and Susanna Adams, Coordinator of ADA Transition Services and
- “Unconscious Bias and Inclusion”: presented by Capital EAP.

The symposium concluded with a participant panel facilitated by Dr. Babette Feahmel and included the following panelists: Maura Davis, TRIO Academic Specialist; Dr. Mark Meachem, Vice President for Academic Affairs; Milo Orr, SCCOC Outreach Assistant; and Dr. Debbie Warnock, Director of EOP.

From January 10-12, 2024, Catia Laird de Polanco, HR Recruitment Specialist and Chief Diversity Officer, attended the SUNY-wide Convening of Chief Diversity Officers in Albany, NY for three days of networking and professional development.

On January 25, 2024, Catia Laird de Polanco, HR Recruitment Specialist and Chief Diversity Officer, attended a NASPA Region II webinar entitled “Policy vs. Purpose: Navigating a Post-Affirmative Action World.”

#### Academic Affairs

Lou Aiossa, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice began teaching the First Year Seminar course to Zone 5 students at the Police Academy facility. This will be taught as a hybrid course featuring both in-person and online instruction. (Gen P1)

David Wolf, Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning has embedded [Tools in MS Word 365/LMS](#) that enable faculty to produce helpful feedback that can inform their ELL students of common mistakes and help many to overcome challenges unique to speakers of their native language (the tools feature over 70 languages). (1.3, 1.4, 1.5)

David Wolf, Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning produced a short training video and materials reviewing how to access three Accessibility Checkers in Brightspace that are available to College faculty and staff. He released the video to the Deans to disseminate to faculty to improve accessibility. (1.1, 1.3, 1.4)

Jacquie Keleher, Director of Library Services, and member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Professional Development Initiative, helped plan and implement the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual DEI Conference Day held on January 8, 2024. There were over 100 attendees, and the day included a keynote address from Mykee Fowlin, Ph.D and breakout sessions that afternoon. (1.1, 3.3)

Jacquie Keleher, Director of Library Services, presented “OER = Equity and Support” to the College community as part of the Spring 2024 Institute Week on Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup> to highlight how using Open Educational Resources (OER) builds equity. (1.1; 1.4)

Dr. Sine Rofofsky, part-time Librarian, has completed two curriculums (programs) from Deque University and is working on the following three: Accessibility Program Management 2.0, Designers 2.0, and Customer Service for People with Disabilities 1.0. He looks forward to using what he has learned when creating materials for the library and elsewhere, and sharing what he has learned with others. (Gen P1)

This month, David Wolf, Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning is participating in a cross-institutional collaboration on DEI and online course design. This collaboration was highlighted in Educause’s [2023 Horizon Report: Holistic Student Experience Edition](#) (1.1, 1.3, 1.4).

### Strategic Initiatives and Planning

EOP Director, Dr. Debbie Warnock, served on a DEI discussion panel as part of Institute Week (1.1).

EOP Director, Dr. Debbie Warnock attended the Foster Youth Success Advocacy Day in Albany to network with professionals serving foster youth to share about and recruit for our program (1.4).

Multiple members of the SI&P team the DEI day on Monday, January 8, 2024 (1.1).

Amy Student, Academic Advisor, attended the JEDI meeting on January 12<sup>th</sup>. This meeting was to continue to work on the ELL project (1.1; 1.2; 1.3; 1.4; 1.5; 2.3).

Anna Westerman, Academic Advisor II/ VA Certifying Official, collaborated with the Registrar office to ensure all VA paperwork is up to date and deferrals are on student accounts (1.3; 1.5; 2.3; 3.1).

Michelle Ragucci, Director of Academic Services, attended the day-long, campus-wide DEI professional development day held on January 8<sup>th</sup> and applied information from the session on Document Accessibility to forms used within the Learning Center and Testing Center (1.1; 3.3).

EOP co-hosted a Scholarship Workshop with TRIO, sponsored by the SUNY Schenectady Foundation, to inform students about scholarship opportunities and completing the Foundation application to apply for these. Leanna Liuzzi, Academic Advisor/Foundations Scholarships Coordinator, provided the presentation (1.3; 1.5; 2.3; 3.1).

Laura Sprague, Director of Admissions, Dale Miller, Director of Institutional Research, Karen Tanski, Executive Director of Marketing and Public Relations, Robyn King, Director of Wellness, Sean Mullen, Counselor, Mark Bessette, Assistant Dean of Financial Aid and Access, and Steve Fragale, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs, collaborated to identify ways to connect SUNY Schenectady with SNAP resources (2.3, 3.5).

#### Financial Aid:

SUNY Schenectady is one of five SUNY community colleges chosen to partner with Benefits Data Trust (BDT) in a pilot program aimed at connecting students with public food assistance programs. [Benefits Data Trust's](#) mission is to help “people live healthier, more independent lives by creating smarter ways to access essential benefits and services”. BDT has supported us in crafting communications and identifying students that may be eligible for SNAP benefits. Our college will be offering one-on-one assistance to support students in completing their SNAP applications and providing guidance on how to navigate the application process. Targeted messaging was sent out to students the week of January 29<sup>th</sup>, and appointments will be available starting February 6<sup>th</sup> and then every two weeks thereafter. Staff supporting the project include: Laura Sprague, Karen Tanski, Robyn, King, Dale Miller, Sean Mullen, and Mark Bessette.

#### Schenectady College and Career Outreach Center

Schenectady College and Career Outreach Center (SCCOC), in partnership with Mr. Ron Gardner of the City of Schenectady's Office of Affirmative Action, launched the 11<sup>th</sup> Construction Training Cohort with seventeen trainees. The trainees will earn NCCER, OSHA 30 and EPA RRP Lead Initial certification. SCCOC staff provides educational and employment preparatory services and wrap-around support to trainees enrolled in the program.

Ms. Christine Goss, Associate Executive Director of SCCOC, met with representatives from Schrader & Co., Schenectady ARC, 1-800-Got-Junk and MVP to discuss opportunities for partnership relative to direct referral of SCCOC participants for employment consideration and their willingness to support professional workshops.

Ms. Christine Goss, met with representatives from Young Parents United and SiCM to discuss best way to support referrals for SCCOC services and ways to improve our partnership and community engagement through their organizations.

SCCOC staff, attended the Cohoes High School Career Fair on January 10, 2024. Staff had the opportunity to engage with high school students and share with them how SCCOC can support them on their educational and employment journey.

## Delivering a Meaningful Student Experience

### Academic Affairs

Lou Aioessa, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice has partnered with the NY State Police Crime Laboratory System to enable interested students to attend the Forensic Investigative Curriculum School. Lectures are offered monthly at local colleges from Jan – April 2024, culminating with a NYSP Forensic Lab Tour at the end of April. (2.3, 2.5)

Dawn Jones, Assistant Director of Career Services, Dr. Hope Sasway, Dean of MSTH and Dr. Lorena Harris, CSTEP Director began planning for this year's STEM Day (scheduled for April 24) and are hoping to make it an interdivisional event that showcases how different disciplines intersect with STEM. Students will have opportunities to interact with Career Services, four-year institutions, and learn about internship opportunities. (2.2, 2.3, 2.5)

Melanie Uebele, Liberty Partnerships Program Administrator, and Dr. Lorena Harris, CSTEP Director, are planning to facilitate the first 6 modules of Techbridge (SEL and Equity in STEM) curriculum with a group of 15-30 Middle School/High School students on Thursdays after school at Mont Pleasant Middle School and Schenectady High School. Students will engage in some engineering experiments, keeping in mind the developed Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies including self-awareness, empathy, and relationship skills. (2.3, 2.4)

Dr. Paul Amy, Assistant Professor of Physics has volunteered to run the Grattidge Competition again this year. He ran it for the first time last year. Last year, four students attempted to measure the magnitude of the fundamental charge (the electric charge carried by the proton and the electron) using a modern version of the oil-drop experiment done by Robert A. Millikan in 1910. The winner received \$1000 deposited into their student account. (2.2; 2.5)

The recent closing of Cazenovia College and the pending closing of the College of St. Rose have created an opportunity for Tammy Calhoun, Professor of Early Childhood Education (ECE) to engage with SUNY Empire to design an articulation agreement for ECE students to attain a 4-year applicable educational based degree. Discussion is ongoing. (2.2, 2.5)

Dr. Richard Simons and nine students have continued leaf and tree identification as part of the Vale Park Research project. 2 additional students have expressed interest and have begun the identification process by learning about the taxonomy of trees and plants and by running the key characters through different databases and computer simulations. This is ongoing research and presentation of their progress and findings is planned during the MSTH division STEM day which is scheduled on April 24. This is preparation for the upcoming SUNY Undergraduate Research Conference (SURC) in April. (2.2, 2.3, 2.5)

Tracey Donovan, Math Tutor and Dan Holz, Assistant Professor of Math are creating a Math Club. 18 interested students signed up at the Club Carnival held on Thursday, January 25. (Gen P2)

David Wolf, the Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning developed an AI teaching template form for faculty. It illustrates the caveats of using AI in course assignments and possible solutions for faculty to combat plagiarism while simultaneously improving student information literacy. This template also assists in creating a uniform policy for AI usage in courses to protect the innocent. (Gen P2)

### Strategic Planning and Initiatives

Michelle Ragucci, Director of Academic Services, along with numerous individuals across all divisions, schools, and departments, took part in New Student Orientation on January 10<sup>th</sup> to welcome incoming/new students, answer questions, assist them in completing pre-semester tasks, and sharing student support information (2.1; 2.3).

Mitzi Espinola, Assistant Director of Academic Advisement and Retention, along with the academic advisors, completed 20 readmission academic plans to be reviewed by the readmission committee (1.3; 1.5).

Michelle Ragucci, Director of Academic Services, developed a Learning Center/Tutor evaluation tool via Slate to assist the Learning Center and its tutors with improved, real-time feedback from students (2.3).

ECHS staff, in collaboration with Schenectady City School District staff, held final information session at SUNY Schenectady for all students and families interested in participating in the Early College (Smart Transfer, Smart Scholar and Smart Tech (P-tech) programs on January 11<sup>th</sup> (1.3; 1.4).

### Student Services

#### Financial Aid:

The FAFSA Simplification Act was passed in December 2020 and will go into effect with the 2024-2025 academic year. The most significant change within the Act is the redesign of the FAFSA which has streamlined the income verification process and reduced the number of questions within the application. Due to this overhaul, the opening of FAFSA was delayed until January 2024 with application results expected to be sent to colleges by the end of January. (note: on January 31<sup>st</sup> the Department of Education announced that the distribution of application results will be delayed until Mid-March.) The Financial Aid Office spent the month preparing for receipt of application results. This included updating application instructions for students and families, updating our setup in Banner to process the applications once received, and providing necessary training to staff to ensure they are able to assist students in navigating the new FAFSA application.

#### Athletics:

Members of the Royals bowling team are gearing up for the annual Schenectady Invitational on Feb. 3 and Feb. 4 at Boulevard Bowl, welcoming bowling teams from throughout the conference. Jared Wachenheim, second-year bowler, holds the top spot on the team with a 215 average, and Rich Pitsas, also a returning bowler for the Royals, holds the second highest average with 212. Pitsas, a Criminal Justice major, is Co-Captain of the Royals this season, along with Tyler Drexel, a Business Administration major. Currently with a 3-6 record, the Royals are heading into their final conference matches.

#### Wellness and Support Services:

Director of Wellness and Support Services Robyn King is coordinating efforts on our behavioral intervention team to support students with serious issues. It is a multi-disciplinary team with members of Campus Safety serving as well.

#### Workforce Development and Community Education

The Office of Workforce Development and Community Education commenced the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The Office Workforce Development and Community Education enrolled and supported 11 students in the new Last Mile Logistics training class.

#### Information Technology

Constituo Slate integration and syncing for College in the High School (CHS) records. This significantly automates a labor-intensive process. The new procedure rolls out live Feb 5 as all CHS students begin their next registration period. Banner Self Service modules for faculty and students continue to be tested and modified. This is proving to be very labor intensive for the action team since every module has 100s of potential fields which we need to ensure only the appropriate content is shared on a need-to-know basis. Faculty now configured with biographical access to their student's profiles. Advisors will see the same information for students they are responsible for. Specific data fields are all vented by the action team to only show appropriate information. Student modules are configured now configured with biographical information, registration, graduation, prior education and testing, faculty, and advisor information. Once the action team is satisfied, we'll engage a test group of students.

#### Foundation

The Foundation will take three students to attend an upcoming event at Glen Sanders Mansion: *Mentoring Monday*, sponsored by the Albany Business Review. Vice President of Development & External Affairs and Stewardship Officer attended a meeting led by Matt Farron, Business Professor, to help chart a course for students to find internship opportunities and for employers to hire students. Vice President continues to serve on the search committee for Dean of Liberal Arts.

### **Building Organizational Effectiveness**

#### Academic Affairs

On January 3, we received the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) Visitor's Report from their November 6-7, 2023 on-campus visit. (Gen P3)

David Wolf, Director of Instructional Design and Online Learning continued his ongoing redesign of training to work within Brightspace. Self-paced modules now offer certification automation and an Assessment module has been added. (3.1, 3.3)

Giovannine Matheron, Collection Development & Electronic Resources Librarian began the Introduction to Project Management course offered through SUNY's Center for Professional Development. This is class number two out of three in the Library Leadership and Management Certificate. (Gen P3)

Lawrence Mullen, Instructor of English graduated in January with their MLIS in Archives and Records Management from San Jose State University. (Gen P3)

### Strategic Planning and Initiatives

Dale Miller, Director of Institutional Research, completed and submitted four federal IPEDS reports, three New York Department of Education reports and one SUNY Systems report. Mr. Miller provided data to the following offices: IREPO Grant data; TRIO data to the TRIO Director; School of Music accreditation data to the Dean; Math success data to the Dean; retention data for to the Vice President for Strategic Planning and Initiatives. (3.3).

Leanna Liuzzi, Academic Advisor/ Foundations Scholarships Coordinator, along with Jessica McHugh-Green, Graphics Designer II, and Heather Meaney, Public Relations/Publications Specialist II, updated the scholarship webpage to go live on January 29<sup>th</sup> (2.3; 3.1; 3.4; 3.5).

Michelle Ragucci, Director of Academic Services, attended a Slate Showcase Community Conversations webinar to enhance her understanding of Slate's capabilities and how other campuses are utilizing its features (3.3).

### Human Resources

Human Resources (HR) hosted three successful interactive Employee Wellbeing Events during Institute Week. The three events consisted of Welcome to Wellbeing, An Intro to Mindfulness, and Revamping Self Care. We were able to curate participant feedback comments and have started implementing employee ideas for wellbeing.

HR started sending Wednesday Wellness Messages to encourage wellbeing in the College. HR has included additional language to job postings to inform potential applicants of additional benefits for both PT and FT positions here at the college. This information is listed below the salary.

### Administration

Construction on the new Student Service Center in the Stockade Building continued during January. HVAC and ceiling work was underway and will be completed by the end of February. Furniture for the new space is anticipated to arrive in late February or early March. The new glass entry is to arrive in late March or early April. In late May, HVAC to the Stockade Building will be turned off for replacement of the mechanical systems. As a result, employee occupation of the space will occur in late July when the HVAC systems are returned to normal operating status.

Contracts for replacement of the Culinary Kitchen Fresh Air vents was signed and returned to the County. Replacement of the Elston Hall shingled roof is scheduled for this Spring. This includes replacement of the roofing material and dry rotted underlayment. These projects are to begin in March, weather permitting.

Drawings for replacement of the Elston Hall natural sciences greenhouse were reviewed and approved. The college is converting this space into a Biology Laboratory storage room with increased ventilation for the adjacent biology laboratory. The space will have an illuminated and branded façade facing the quad. Bid documents are being prepared for release in mid-February.

Construction specifications for replacement of the Elston Hall cafeteria skylights and side windows are underway. It is anticipated bid documents will be released in late March for construction to occur during the Summer of 2024.

Our environmental engineer firm performed an analysis of the Begley Building garage to develop a scope of work for replacement of the concrete floor. Structural steel reinforcement in the flooring is compromised by water intrusion and will require replacement. This major project will become part of the 2025 Capital request.

Preliminary concept drawings for renovation to the Elston Hall Cafeteria and Gathering Area were presented to the college community. This project may need to be broken into two phases due to the scope of work. It is anticipated Phase I will go out to bid in late March of 2024 with construction in Summer/Fall of 2024.

Planning for renovations the Student Affairs area continued with asbestos testing performed during January. The next phase of this project will be design meetings with leadership impacted by this project. Preliminary kitchen and serving equipment specifications were received for the Cafeteria kitchen project. This is a equipment replacement and refresh of the existing space. The project will make the cafeteria serving area into a flexible space that will permit expansion and contraction based on need.

### Foundation

Scholarship Applications are now open. Selections for 2024-2025 will commence in the summer. The Foundation received a \$19,652 bequest from Patricia Gioia for the Mary Regina Gioia Endowed Scholarship.

### **Ensuring Financial Sustainability and Self-Sufficiency**

#### Academic Affairs

In January, a student of Adjunct Instructor Dylan Canterbury (jazz) informed him that SUNY Schenectady was prominently featured in Downbeat magazine in their “Where to Study Jazz” issue published last October. Downbeat is the premier Jazz magazine in the nation. (Gen. P4)



Dr. Christopher Brellochs, Dean of the Music School has been invited to conduct an orchestra and speak in Newport, RI in February. His biographical information prominently features SUNY Schenectady. (Gen. P4) On January 11, Dr. Christopher Brellochs, Dean of the Music School gave a tour and held a Q&A session for a music class visiting from Albany High School. (Gen. P4) This January, Dr. Marshall Jones, a longtime SUNY Schenectady CSTEP friend, made a donation to the SUNY Schenectady Foundation. He sent a letter to thank Dr. Harris for all she does to support students and went out of his way to state “As you know my engineering education stems from being a product of a community college education.” (4.4)

### Strategic Initiatives and Planning

Michelle Ragucci, Director of Academic Services, in collaboration with other campus professionals and leaders, contributed program ideas and logistics, with an emphasis on adult learners, towards Phase 2 of the SUNY Enrollment Funds Grant application, submitted by Dr. David Clickner, Vice President for Strategic Initiatives & Planning, on January 22<sup>nd</sup> (4.3). At the EOP Scholarship Workshop, students were encouraged to consider how the scholarships are funded and to continue engaging with the SUNY Schenectady Foundation as alumni to support future generations of students (4.4). Lauren Gallo, Program Administrator-High School Partnerships, attended a P-Tech steering committee meeting with Schenectady City School District and partners (4.5).

### Workforce Development and Community Education

The Office and Workforce Development and Community Education in collaboration with Professor Lou Aiossa commenced the Police Academy training on campus. This facilitated an enrollment of 74 Police Officer Recruits in the First Year Seminar course.

### Administration

The Office of Administration received the 2024-25 Budget Requests from each of the College’s division/departments. Requests are under review and will be refined over the next few months.

In January, Governor Hochul released the 2023-24 Executive Budget which included a State support funding “floor” for the SUNY community colleges. All SUNY Schenectady capital requests for 2024 were included in the Executive budget. The budget now moves to the State Legislature for review and approval. The budget is due to be passed by April 1, 2024.

Lumsden and McCormick completed the college’s 2022-23 operating budget audit. The audit findings will be presented at the February 19, 2024 Board of Trustees meeting for discussion and approval.

### Information Technology

In Cyber Security, we are participating Institution Agreement (PIA) for SUNY Security Operations Center renewed. PIA with SUNY to supply a 3 year contract with free endpoint protection through a partnership with SUNY, significantly enhancing security beyond budget constraints.

## Foundation

The Foundation continuously builds and draws upon the strength of the Foundation Board members as advocates for the College. Vice President and Stewardship Officer working with board member Kristin Seaburg to bring a group of professionals from St. Peter's Health Partners to participate in an upcoming Speed Networking Event hosted by Career Services. Joe April from Convergent Non-Profit Solutions, provided the first of four scheduled training for the Foundation Board.

The Foundation is creating a bold, new, positive case for growing flexible funding to support our students. Alumni News with survey and annual report was sent to 15,742 with a 1% click rate. Community News with annual report was sent to 1,479 individuals with a 1% click rate. 4-Course Italian Dinner was sent to 448 individuals with a 13% click rate.

The Foundation is working to increase fundraising effectiveness to grow 5% annually by engaging alumni, businesses, and the community. January LinkedIn activity had 181 unique views, 198 new followers, 4 reactions. Vice President and Stewardship Officer attended SUNY Community College Advancement Officers Conference on January 10.

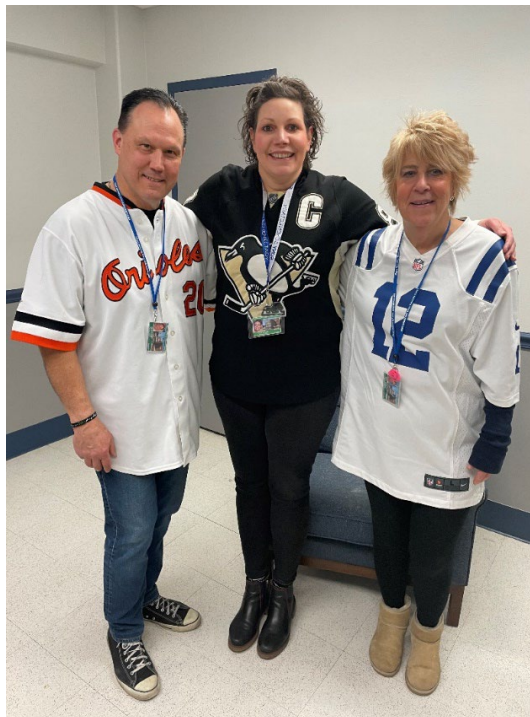
As for engaging our community supporters, Vice President met with Stan Blanchard and Johanna Petersen to report on their scholarship support. Stewardship Officer invited Joe Pigliavento from The Prime Companies to join the Steering Committee the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Food For Thought & All That Jazz event. Stewardship Officer is working to secure volunteers for Speed Networking and Job Fairs by working with Center of Economic Growth and Capital Region Chamber Young Professionals Network. Vice President and Stewardship Officer attending Elevate Albany, an Albany Business Review State of the Region Summit at Rivers Casino on 1/3.

As for engaging our corporate champions, Stewardship Officer worked with Ellen Sax, MVP Healthcare to hand sign over 500 solicitation letters to community leaders for Honorary Committee listing at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Food For Thought & All That Jazz presented by Marshall & Sterling Insurance. Matt Farron welcomed Alyssa Straub from Beekman 1802 to be a guest lecturer to speak on the field of Human Resources. Stewardship Officer solicited over 300 businesses for sponsorship support at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Food For Thought & All That Jazz Event. Vice President recruited and will work with student speakers for the Women's Fund of the Capital Region's *Trailblazers* event.

## President's Outreach



This photo was taken at Club Carnival held in the Royals Dining Center, Elston Hall on January 25<sup>th</sup>. Included in the photo are: Michael Norwood, Marcos Magris, Eric Fluty, Rani Deosarran, Lou Aioassa, Jocelyn Castaneda, and Joe Glasser.



Dr. Dean Brough, Dr. Hope Sasway, and Ann Shattuck are celebrating their favorite teams on Jersey Day, February 8<sup>th</sup>. Students, Faculty and Staff were encouraged to wear their favorite team jersey or collegiate sportswear to build team pride and college spirit!



New York Community College Trustees (NYCCT) and the City University of New York (CUNY) hosted a reception for college advocating on January 30<sup>th</sup> at the Swyer Theatre Lounge, in the Egg, to celebrate student trustees. In the photo are Christina Charette, Maureen Mbanga, Keith Becker, Tiombé Tatum, and Charles Williams.



Majority Leader Chuck Shumer speaks at the NYCCT National Legislative Summit on February 6, at the Capitol Building in Washington. Chair Ann Fleming Brown and Tiombé Tatum represented SUNY Schenectady and are photographed in the second row on the right side.