

SUNY Student Assembly Partners With CUNY Student Senate, Starts Student Advisory Committee in Chancellor Search, Discusses Legislative Agenda

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ALBANY -- Historic initiatives were discussed at the University at Albany and SUNY headquarters last week for the second Executive Committee meeting of the new administration.

"We're in month three of the new administration and have already achieved so much," said Student Assembly President and SUNY Trustee Marc J. Cohen. "From newfound collaborations with our partners in CUNY and ensuring effective student voices are at the table for the Chancellor search, to visiting campuses and engaging in critical topics of conversation surrounding higher education, this year is shaping up to be among the most productive ever in the history of SUNY SA."

Since the last transitional meeting in June, Cohen has made historic bounds for the organization. At the meeting, Cohen mentioned his recent visit with CUNY Student Senate President Joseph Awadjie. The two leaders are currently organizing to push forward the first large-scale collaboration between the Student Assembly and Student Senate in recent history.

"SUNY and CUNY students can and must collaborate on issues like sexual violence prevention, environmental sustainability, state support for public higher education, and college affordability," said Cohen. "Sitting down with President Awadjie and his Cabinet was a significant step in the right direction."

Along with efforts to move both systems forward, the Student Assembly will also support a new collaboration initiative to bring SUNY student input into the process of selecting the next chancellor. The Student Advisory Committee, comprised of SGA Presidents from across the system, was established to assist the Chancellor Search Committee.

"To me, it's common sense to have students intimately involved with the selection of the next leader of their university system. What is essential to remember is that our next Chancellor will represent the great diversity of our system; I don't think that can be achieved without student input," said Nicholas Simons, Student Assembly Chief of Staff. "The Student Advisory Committee will ensure that the most important stakeholders, the students, have a vital role in solidifying the future of our schools and our state."

At the first half of the business meeting in SUNY headquarters, Student Assembly leaders met with government leaders and educational leaders to discuss SUNY's path forward to tackle issues such as state funding for the upcoming year.

Rey Muniz, Student Assembly Director of Legislative Affairs, is confident in the work ahead for the Legislative Affairs Committee.

"This year is going to be all about taking real action. We are tackling the toughest issues and working hard to not only identify problems that students face, but also to devise effective solutions that put students first," said Muniz. "I'm very excited to be working with the best in the system, and with their help, we are going to deliver the best legislative agenda to date."

Student Assembly Vice President Bridget Doyle was encouraged by the tone of this past weekend. "Our August Executive Committee meeting at UAlbany has truly helped launch us into the next phase of our term," said Doyle. "We hope to get every SUNY SGA signed onto the 'It's On Us' campaign to prevent sexual violence on our campuses. We are planning to walk in the 'Out of the Darkness Walk' to raise awareness of the impact that mental illness and suicide has on our student body. Additionally, we will make great headway on our Fall and Spring SUNY SA Conference planning."

Looking to address issues facing SUNY students outside of the state legislature, two new subcommittees, the Disability Advocacy Subcommittee and Online Learning Subcommittee, were formed at last week's meeting.

"The disabled community is currently the largest minority group in the world. Yet we are also one of the most overlooked groups," said Burgandi Rakoska, Chair of the Disability Advocacy Subcommittee. "We will ensure that SUNY is listening to its students with disabilities. We will also minimize the physical, emotional, and societal barriers that students with disabilities face on an everyday basis. In short, we will work to ensure that higher education is accessible to all."

"I'm excited to see the work that the Online Learning Subcommittee will undertake in the coming year," said Arthur Ramsay, Deputy Director of Academic Affairs, whose department oversees the Online Learning Subcommittee. "The subcommittee is looking forward to getting input from SUNY students on issues related to online learning and related programs."

The Student Assembly will host its next Executive Committee meeting at SUNY Fredonia next month.

About the Student Assembly of the State University of New York

The Student Assembly of the State University of New York (SUNY SA) is an organization comprised of student leaders elected by their peers from across SUNY's 64 campuses. Empowering students throughout the state, the SUNY SA is committed to student life and ensuring the representation of its members on the state and national level as well as throughout the SUNY system.

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