



The State University of New York  
Student Assembly

Office of Communications

State University Plaza  
Albany, New York 12246

communications@sunysa.org  
www.sunysa.org

## **SUNY Student Assembly Makes Push for Legislative Agenda, Teacher Certification Reform at Schenectady County Community College, Final Executive Committee Meeting**

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Contact: Tyler McNeil, [communications@sunysa.org](mailto:communications@sunysa.org)

At its final meeting this year, the SUNY Student Assembly's Executive Committee called for greater cooperation with policy makers -- elected and appointed -- to help tackle lingering university-wide concerns.

Committee leaders opened dialogue on issues stretching from water quality to academic policy at Schenectady County Community College, the first two-year school to host the Student Assembly this academic year.

"The Student Assembly works tirelessly to represent the 600,000 students of SUNY, and we were happy to be able to host them as a community college in the SUNY system," said Margaret Ketchen, SUNY Student Assembly Secretary and Schenectady's Student Government Association President. "It provided a neat opportunity to bridge the gap between student leaders on Schenectady's campus and those in the Assembly."

Schenectady is one of seven campuses to host the organization since August. Throughout the year, the Executive Committee has convened at the University at Albany, SUNY Fredonia, SUNY Old Westbury, the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, the College at Brockport, and SUNY Oneonta. Combined, these campuses account for nearly 50,000 students.

"It's been an honor to work with this group of student leaders this year, and I can't wait to welcome each of them to our Spring Conference next month," said Marc Cohen, Student Assembly President and SUNY Trustee. Cohen and Vice President Bridget Doyle have been hard at work planning the student Assembly's Spring Conference, themed as "Student Leadership: Driving the Dialogue Behind Diversity, Equity and Inclusion."

"It was such a pleasure to plan each meeting with this spectacular group of SUNY campuses," said Student Assembly Vice President Bridget Doyle. "The opportunity to see different campuses is such a treasure in our year. We are so grateful for their dedication to the students of SUNY, and for their hard work putting together our meetings."

The Schenectady event also stands as the last Student Assembly gathering before the next state fiscal year. With a pending deadline, Rey Muniz, director of Legislative Affairs, has advocated to fit SUNY-wide initiatives into the final budget. Passed in

November, the legislative agenda calls to increase Student Assembly support, base aid for community colleges, and Educational Opportunity Program funding.

Standing out from legislative prerogatives of the past, this year's agenda urges state dollars to accommodate a growing demand for mental health services on SUNY campuses. The plan was developed in coordination with Ricardo Azziz, Chief Officer for Academic Health & Hospital Affairs at SUNY, honored at Saturday's meeting.

"Dr. Azziz has made an incredible contribution to the Student Assembly's mental health initiatives this year," said Muniz. "As a result, we have a promising new proposal to employ new technologies to help treat mental illness across our system. As we speak, this proposal winding its way through the New York State budget process."

Beyond legislative demands, Student Assembly leaders are requesting academic policy changes. Introduced by SUNY Cortland leaders, the Executive Committee passed a resolution asking the State Department of Education and Board of Regents for an easier, less costly new teacher certification system.

"Students across the state work tirelessly to develop the capabilities to become certified to train the generations of tomorrow," said Michael Braun, SUNY Cortland SGA President and sponsor. "The barriers associated with the certification process has led to an inadequate measurement of the qualifications for prospective educators. These recommendations are a great step in the right direction to more accurately reflect the qualifications to enter into a teacher profession."

### **About the SUNY Student Assembly**

The Student Assembly of the State University of New York (SUNY SA) is the recognized student government organization representing the nearly 600,000 students of the State University of New York. Comprised of student leaders elected by their peers from across SUNY's 64 campuses, SUNY SA is committed to empowering students throughout the state, and ensuring the representation of its members on the state and national level, as well as throughout the SUNY system.

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