

# Connection *uup*

Binghamton Chapter, United University Professions

## From the Chapter President

# Open SUNY: Whose Needs Will Be Met?

by **Benita Roth**  
**Sociology**

Hi all. I've been settling into the new job of Chapter president, although if there were a phrase "unsettling in" I would prefer to use that. In between teaching and running meetings, I've been trying to educate myself on the challenges facing UUP members. My new position has forced me to think about things that I didn't necessarily need to think about in my daily dealings as a faculty member. In just the few months that have passed since I became chapter president, many conversations and many web searches have illuminated for me just how many challenges those of us who work in higher education face.

In a nutshell, we are dealing with increasing demands on us as faculty and professionals in an era of declining resources. As I noted last in my last newsletter column, in New York state, the percentage change in funding for higher education from 2010-2011, to 2011-2012, was -7%.

At the same time that resources have been declining, we know that Binghamton University and SUNY are seeking to grow and educate more and more students. The very size of SUNY—there were more than 467,000 students in the system in 2012—is daunting.

SUNY has the huge responsibility of educating students so that they are knowledgeable, critical, accomplished participants in larger society. We want a SUNY degree to have value—and I mean value in all the



senses of the word. It makes little sense to pretend that a degree is not a credential that has value in a market; at the same time, none of us want that degree to be nothing but a credential.

It seems to me that there are inexorably opposing forces at work that impact those of us in UUP. Our national educational policy is that we want high school graduates to go to college, and they do; the number of postsecondary enrollments in some college grew 37 percent from 2000 to 2010, from 15.3 million to 21.0 million. Study after study tells us that those with college degrees earn more over the course of a lifetime. At the same time, we know that the costs of college have risen faster than household incomes, and that household incomes themselves have been falling in absolute and real terms from their peak before the 2008 recession.

While the growth rate of the costs of in-state tuitions has slowed, those costs are still daunting for our students. Families face rising college costs in an unstable economy where parents worry about their jobs. Ad-

ditionally, a large percentage of rising college costs are being shifted to students who take on increasing unsustainable amounts of personal debt to finance their educations. So young people (and others) face an economic mandate to get the increasingly unaffordable college degree.

This clash between aspiration and ability has led leaders to look for quick fixes to the problem. One such quick fix is online education. The initial and unearned excitement about MOOCs (massive open online courses) has died down after the data showed just how few people who sign up for one actually finish one. Still, the idea that online education will help institutions lower the cost of conferring degrees on students has not disappeared. Instead, public educational systems are running headlong into developing online educational alternatives to the traditional face-to-face model of college education.

I should be clear that I am not against online education as such—some of my best friends have taken such courses, teach them, etc. But I have grave concerns about the quality of the educational process in online courses, and have questions about how and to what extent online programs will be integrated with "offline" education.

My questions loom large because SUNY has, in March of this past year, announced a huge system-wide undertaking, called Open SUNY, to "bring all online courses offered at

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# Connection

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors or of the Binghamton Chapter and are not necessarily the opinions of United University Professions.

The editor welcomes letters and other comments of interest to the Binghamton Chapter.

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## Editor's Notes

# Thoughts on Leadership

by Lisa Havtur

*Example is leadership.*

Albert Schweitzer

It is no secret that there is an endless supply of information, training, and support available on the subject of leadership. Yet, there are somehow still pockets of *not good leadership*—an uncomfortable, unsightly quandary in many an organization.

What to do with those who are technically or otherwise proficient, are promoted, but in the end turn out to be average or sub-average leaders? Or even worse, flat-out *bad* leaders?

Although it was with much anticipation that we welcomed the roll out of our campus's own pilot *Leadership Development Program*, in the back of my mind, I can't help but think about those not-so-good pockets. Undoubtedly, the good leaders (of which we have a great many!) will smile wide and jump right in. And although it is good for the good to get even better, what can we do as to assist our less effective, yet still valuable, leaders improve? And how can we do so effectively and with sensitivity and grace? Because in my experience, poor leaders are generally unaware of this fact and, if they are, they are not especially likely to step forward and ask for help—a hesitation I suspect most can understand.

Obviously this is not an issue to be resolved here in this newsletter introduction, but nevertheless a thought to bear in mind as we watch our new leadership program unfold. To be truly successful, it must address those pockets. I am happy to



note that “buzz” about the new program has been very positive (see related article outlining participant feedback on pages 4 and 5) and I look forward to watching the impact to come from this very welcome venue.

Our centerfold also includes seven simple thoughts I came across from a Navy Seal about how to implement Albert Schweitzer's famous quote, “Example is leadership.”

And about this edition of “Connection,” *be excited!* We have some new faces and perspectives for you, in addition to a wide collection of articles and information. Please remember that this is *your* UUP newsletter and your thoughts and articles are not only welcome, they are necessary to keep it going. So please contact me any time at: lhavtur@binghamton.edu or at 777-3734 with your ideas.

Best wishes to all for a safe, happy, and enjoyable spring semester!

## EAP Now Offers Confidential Consults Via Telephone

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) will now be available 10-11:30 a.m. Wednesdays for phone assessment and referral consultations for faculty, staff, graduate students, retirees and family members who are looking for help.

The EAP program is a confidential, free and voluntary labor/management negotiated benefit.

EAP coordinators Diane Campbell and Mary Ellen Neifer can be reached at 777-6650 or 777-6655 for phone consultation or to schedule a confidential appointment.

You may also want to view the EAP website to learn more about the program: [www2.binghamton.edu/eap/about.html](http://www2.binghamton.edu/eap/about.html)

—Diane Campbell and Mary Ellen Neifer, EAP coordinators

# Open SUNY: An Invitation to a Conversation

by **Heather DeHaan**  
History Department

About two months ago, I participated via Skype in a discussion of Russian Studies across the SUNY system. After a survey of past and present international partnerships, as well as domestic SUNY programs, we discussed how we might leverage existing resources to strengthen Russian Studies throughout SUNY. To my surprise, our discussion soon turned to Open SUNY as a platform through which to offer a SUNY-wide Russian studies major.

For faculty operating in isolation on SUNY campuses that have lost their Russian majors, Open SUNY holds out the possibility of enduring relevance—that is, of working toward a program rather than teaching a “one-off” course here or there.

Frankly, Russian studies have been in decline elsewhere. Whereas Binghamton is about to revive its Russian major, other SUNY campuses are grappling with its loss. So, although we were invited to discuss



*Heather  
DeHaan*

international as well as domestic programs, the conversation focused on weakness—and on Open SUNY as a potential way to overcome it.

That faculty were invited to

discuss the possibility of Open SUNY was a plus—in fact, UUP has been demanding this sort of consultation for quite some time. Yet, the event left me uncomfortable. In theory, I suppose one might be pleased to think that Open SUNY might bolster campus-wide Russian studies, helping retain programs and links that benefit our own. But, too many thorny questions arose. Should the program at SUNY Binghamton, soon to offer the only Russian major in the SUNY system, be the standard-bearer for a SUNY-wide major? What would this mean for the distinctiveness of other campuses and their

programs or for individual freedom of creativity in the classroom? Could we provide “consistent standards” across SUNY without falling into the trap of standardization? If a Russian major were created, would this not duplicate (and render obsolete) our own distinctive program? Additionally, would faculty retain intellectual property rights to materials presented online using Coursera?

I mention this discussion because it illustrated many of the issues related to Open SUNY. Faculty who are involved in such discussions (and there may be more) need to think carefully about intellectual property rights, the potential impact on campus and department programs, faculty workload, and the likely cost to the student’s quality of education.

This is a conversation in which campus administrators, faculty senate, union members, and faculty all have a stake, and it’s essential that participation be broad, that all stakeholders work together, and that all involved be well informed.

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## Open SUNY: Whose Needs Will Be Met?

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each of the system’s 64 campuses onto a shared and comprehensive online environment,” making the elements of that environment accessible to all of its students. You can read about the SUNY Board of Trustees’ intentions in their press release ([www.suny.edu/sunynews/News](http://www.suny.edu/sunynews/News)). But I urge members to also read UUP’s response to this unprecedented, helter-skelter embrace of online education as the quick fix to the serious financial problems that face us in higher education (<http://uupinfo.org/reports/guides/>).

UUP has serious reservations about Open SUNY’s lack of clear

plan for implementation, about SUNY’s stated goals to confer three-year online degrees to a full 25% of students through Open SUNY by 2015, about the extreme standardization of courses that would likely result from the initiative, about the consequences of a rise in cross-registration for campus autonomy and the list goes on. I’ll just note in passing one relevant statistic about degree costs here—SUNY is actually *better* than the national average at getting students to finish their degrees in four years—45% versus 31%. Do we really want to up our percentages for completion rates by offering students less?

I urge you to educate yourself about Open SUNY and make your thoughts known to me, our UUP Executive Board members, BU’s administration, Fred Kowal, UUP statewide’s presidents, the Board of Trustees, and anybody else who will listen. I personally took the “webinar” offered by the Open SUNY folks, and encourage people to go to the website, <http://www.open.suny.edu/>, and tool around. SUNY needs to hear from the people charged with implementing Open SUNY. The Open SUNY initiative may yet be an effort that is built from our campus’ needs up—it’s too soon to tell. Participation will help make it so.



# Thoughts from Participants in Binghamton's Leadership Development Program

by Lisa Havtur,  
Human Resources

Our campus piloted a *Leadership Development Program* in the fall of 2013. Participants are selected from among the direct reports that you and other supervisors nominate. You also may nominate yourself. New employees who will be supervisors will also be considered.

Three interrelated components are at the heart of the training program: interactive classroom sessions, online training modules, and mentoring. For more information, visit: [www2.binghamton.edu/uctd/leadership/index.html](http://www2.binghamton.edu/uctd/leadership/index.html)

I wrote informally to all UUP participants, requesting that they share their experience and the following is a collection of their responses. Thanks to **Carol Bell, Eric Booth, Mariah Lane, Peter Nardone, Sharon O'Neill, and Matthew Tompkins** for their professional initiative and feedback.

## What were your expectations/hopes for the Leadership Development Program?

■ I hoped to gain new insight into improving my leadership and supervisory skills and get a better understanding of Binghamton University.

■ I was looking forward to learning some new supervision techniques and connecting with other professionals across campus.

■ My hope for the program was that it would help me better define my personal leadership style. Going into it, my expectations would be that I had a chance to learn from others and develop new strategies.

■ By participating in this program, I hoped (and expected) to gain new strategies for motivating and supporting the student employees I supervise. I also hoped to make connections with professionals in other functional areas of the University in order to broaden my perspective on—and strengthen my connection to—BU. I'm pleased to say that the program did meet these hopes and ex-

pectations.

■ I was excited to be able to work closely with a mentor and get advice/training on some of the specific issues I face in my day to day work.

■ I was hoping for a more facility-specific curriculum. The instructors were engaging and interesting. I feel the environment we work in has minimal correlation to real work circumstances. Having spent close to 40 years in a competitive environment, I struggle with the attitude of being entitled. I was hoping for insight on how to get more out of what I have to work with.

## What were the highlights of your accomplishments/activities?

■ The highlight for me was talking with other supervisors and getting their perspective on challenges we all face. The program gave me a new outlook on working/supervising others and what it means to be a real leader. The sessions were well organized, presented by excellent speakers, and fostered new perspectives and outlooks.

■ I think my highlight was the

opportunity to connect with other supervisors across campus—to learn from their experiences and be able to offer advice based on my past experiences. Equally, I think the mentor connection was outstanding.

■ In terms of highlights, I was able to learn from several motivational and guest speakers as well as set short- and long-term goals for the summer. In addition, I was able to build connections with my mentor and other professionals.

■ Learning from others' experiences and knowledge and applying that knowledge to my work.

■ Susan Kerr was the star of the show. Her presentation was excellent. Sue did an excellent job of getting people to interact. I have a different perspective of some of the folks I work with and appreciate them on a different level.

## Tell us about your mentor experience.

■ My mentor was extremely helpful, easy to talk to and provided me with advice and materials to support my efforts.

■ As mentioned, I really appreci-

## Leadership Smarts: Lessons from a Navy Seal

*"7 Simple Ways to Lead by Example," by Navy Seal Brent Gleeson, Inc.com*

**Get your hands dirty.** [Successful leaders know their stuff; this can't be faked.]

**Watch what you say.** [It is not only sticks and stones that derail projects, squash morale, and demotivate employees; hasty, careless words can have the same effect. Though not a Navy Seal, I would also add, **Watch where you say**—constructive feedback should be private and offered when the giver is not "in the moment."]

**Respect the chain of command.** [This has a Navy Seal-like ring, though definitely applicable for all; as a rule, follow protocol, with no level jumping.]

**Listen to the team.** [This should be obvious and yet . . .]

**Take responsibility.** [Good leaders understand that mistakes happen and when they do, that blame rolls uphill.]

**Let the team do its thing.** [Micromanaging is counterproductive and extremely vexing to all—don't do it.]

**Take care of yourself.** [Respecting yourself in this way is quintessential; "example is leadership."]

—Summarized by Lisa Havtur

# Leadership Development Program

ated the mentor assignment. I was assigned someone who I had worked with on committees in the past and had always respected and admired. This was the perfect conduit for opening the lines of communication beyond our committee work to a broader range of topics.

■ I loved my mentor experience. I thought we connected really well and I learned down-to-earth strategies and build a strong foundation to help move and motivate me.

■ I have never had a mentor in my life so I have no background to compare to. That said, I enjoyed the candid one-on-one conversation and the feedback I received. This would relate to the biggest lesson I learned from the whole experience. I am not alone in my frustration with the attitude of some of the staff. Although they are a small part of the bell curve, they require a disproportionate amount of time and effort compared to the entire curve.

■ My mentor experience was useful for two primary reasons. First, I am a relatively new employee at BU, and the mentor to whom I was assigned has been working here for over three decades. This meant that, through our meetings, I benefited from my mentor's 30-plus years of institutional knowledge—a cumulative wealth of experience and observation that only comes with time. Second, my mentor works in a completely different functional area than I do, so I was exposed to an aspect of the University that I would otherwise rarely, if ever, have occasion to interact with. This broadened perspective helped me to better understand the University from a bigger-picture perspective—to transcend, in some small way, the individual “silo” in which I work.

■ Wonderful! It was great to be able to sit down and really get to know my mentor and to take advantage of all of her knowledge.

**Were your expectations/hopes for the program met?**

■ Yes, and beyond. I felt the pro-

... leaders are not  
born. Leaders are  
made, and they  
are made by effort  
and hard work.  
—Vince Lombardi

gram hit on all the right topics and I especially enjoyed the fact that they were from a Binghamton University perspective.

■ Yes. I enjoyed my experience and have recommended one of my staff members for the next class.

■ I really did not know what to expect. My one hope was a better understanding for the discipline process and nothing was really addressed in this regard. As far as value for time invested, it was worth the time. BU is such a large place that I would never have met the people I did. That alone is a big plus. There is such a diversity of people and I enjoy the interaction with them. That is part of what drew me to BU. That is the best part of my job.

■ Overall my hopes and expectations for the program were met. I learned new strategies and found ways to incorporate them day-to-day and in the long term. I thought the presenters did an excellent job connecting with the class.

■ Yes, my hopes and expectations for the program were met.

■ Yes! I thought it was an excellent program and was by far the most interesting, useful leadership program I'd been a part of.

**What component of the program spoke/speaks most to you as a leader?**

■ I believe the session on *idealized influence behavior* was the most

valuable for me. This dealt with ethics, trust, decision making, responsibility, and leading by example.

■ The part of the program that spoke to me the most about being a leader was the motivational piece. I think that is the core of my style in terms of building a team, so this part of the program really stuck with me.

■ The network that we were able to build within the class. Getting to know my fellow classmates that work across campus in different roles, but that face many of the same issues.

■ What speaks most to me is the idea of treat as you would expect to be treated. It was not said in quite that way, but that is the message I got.

**If you had a few words of advice/encouragement for members of next Leadership class...?**

■ Set up meetings with your group and meet regularly. Our group meetings added to the experience.

■ Really take the time to get to know the other people in class – where they work, what their strengths are in their roles and how you can help them with any challenges they are facing.

■ I would tell them to go in with an open mind. Were all connected on the campus, and can learn from one another.

■ Go with an open mind and listen.

■ I would encourage anyone who is curious about the program to go ahead and apply—the risk/cost of attendance is low, and the opportunities provided (to reflect on your leadership strengths and weaknesses, to adopt new strategies, and to meet and speak with other professionals from all over campus) are valuable.

■ Take advantage of this program! It is so worth the work and time investment.

**Any other thoughts, suggestions, or comments about the pilot program?**

■ I would like to see follow up sessions every year or two.

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## **A Quick Refresher Course on Performance Programs**

**by Fran Goldman  
Asian and Asian American  
Studies**

I just returned from a UUP Delegate Assembly meeting in Albany where the issue of performance programs was discussed. It was interesting to hear the various issues prevalent on other campuses concerning performance programs, including the lack of them, or even what should be in them.

Given that discussion, and the fact that professionals on our campus have recently contacted me about the lack of a performance program (or an up-to-date one that truly reflects their duties and responsibilities), let's consider all of the parameters that programs should include.

As a professional, your job (workload) is defined by your performance program. It is this document that outlines your duties, responsibilities and objectives. The purpose of a performance program is to provide a road map of what you are expected to do during the course of a year and the criteria upon which your evaluation will be based. The performance program also serves as a guide to re-evaluate your job functions.

Having said that, however, your performance program is not written in stone and can be altered as your duties and responsibilities increase or change over the course of the year. When kept up to date, it also serves as a guide for re-evaluating your job and as a means for an increase in salary or a promotion.

While your supervisor has the final say in defining your duties and responsibilities, there are some proactive mechanisms that you can use to avoid the "other duties as assign" syndrome. These include:

■ Meeting with and providing consultation to your supervisor prior to the finalized version of your performance program;



■ Reminding your supervisor to provide you with a current and accurate performance program that includes any additional assigned duties and responsibilities;

■ Keeping your supervisor in the loop about tasks you are doing that may not be reflected in your performance program;

■ Avoiding being placed in a "mission impossible" situation by requesting timeliness for the year;

■ Clarifying where you have no authority to carry out duties;

■ Exercising your right to attach an addendum to your performance program.

In addition, when new duties are added, you should request that some be taken away or, alternatively, provide your supervisor with statistics on the increased demands being placed on the same or continuing duties. Finally, be sure to put in writing requests for remedies for temporary and/or permanent increased assignments such as extra service pay, compensatory time, salary increases or promotion.

## **IDA Applicants Selected**

The IDA committee met in January to select the awardees for the Individual Development Awards. There were a total of 119 applicants which included 57 academics, 5 librarians, and 57 professionals. Of these, 107 were full-time and 12 were part-time.

Fifty-two of those that applied received awards from the \$44,219 allocation of which 15% is guaranteed to be disbursed to part-timers. The total amount was allotted to Binghamton by the New York State/UUP Joint Labor Management Committees Professional Development Committee through the provisions our current Agreement.

I want to thank the IDA committee, Benita Roth, Beth Kilmarx, Susan Siebold-Simpson, Desai Kalpesh, Denise Yull, Janet Keesler and Jean Dorak for reading and choosing from among a wide variety of deserving projects. A special thank you to Brandy Emm who kept track of the applications and provided a summary report

—Fran Goldman

## **Leadership program feedback**

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■ I hate to see it end. I would like to see our group reconvene a few times a year so that we don't lose touch.

■ Overall, I thought the pilot program set a solid foundation that was relatable and relevant to the group being addressed.

■ This is a tough one. The school of management theory is put to the test in this setting. There are rewards for effort on a professional level, but the incentive for many of the employees does not exist due to the structure of the unions. If good employees could be rewarded for their efforts, it would help in developing a better attitude.



## *Coming Soon:* New endorsed shopping program



### **NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to announce the endorsement of the member shopping program powered by PayCheck Direct for roll-out this spring 2014.**

This program – part of the national retail powerhouse Bluestem Brands, Inc. family, which also includes Fingerhut and *Gettington.com* – allows individuals to purchase what they want now and pay interest-free over 12 months.

Through PayCheck Direct, NYSUT members & their families will have access to more than 7,000 name-brand products such as appliances, televisions, computers, electronics, furniture, and much more.

Members would have the option of paying for any items they purchase interest-free over a 12-month period; bi-weekly payments would be made via automatic checking account withdrawals.

PayCheck Direct offers a 30-day in-home trial on many products; flexible return policy; no interest fees, credit checks, down payments, or

finance charges; and toll-free customer service representatives located in the U.S.

As part of this endorsement, PayCheck Direct will mail merchandise catalogs to the NYSUT membership four times per year.

NYSUT members are encouraged to shop and compare prices before making a purchase with this program and consider it as an alternative to using their credit card.

We are excited to be launching this new program in spring 2014! Join our MAP (Member Alert Program) Alert email service to be among the first to learn more about this program (visit the Member Benefits website for sign-up instructions).

You can also visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) in the coming weeks for details on how to use this service or call **800-626-8101** with any questions.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

# So, There You Have It

by **Jim Dix**  
**Chemistry Department**

OK, so there you have it, Stenger's vision for the next six years at Binghamton.

The presentation a few Fridays back was something different from those of previous years, but I have to confess I did not attend the presentation in person. I started out with good intentions, walking toward Osterhout Theater, coffee cup in hand, on the new day (good) and toward new venue (good), and I could live with the light refreshments being served after, instead of before, the presentation.

But what stopped me was how the audience was funneled into particular parts of the theater by ushers and roped-off sections of seating. I realize that Stenger wanted to control this State of the University presentation much more than previous presentations, but this was a little too much control for me. So, I turned around and walked back to my office. I caught the video presentation and slides a few days later when they were posted on the Internet.

Stenger eschewed the traditional behind-the-podium presentation, and instead opted for the Jobs-Balmer-Zuckerberg model of walking around on a bare stage. In his suit and tie, he looked a little out of place in that format. He should have



worn a hoodie. A few other tips: lose that microphone contraption, press the suit, and powder the forehead.

I guess the key words from the presentation reflect that growth is good.

In the 2011 plan, the University was to grow to 17,000 students, with 150 net new faculty and an unspecified number of staff by 2017. Now we are to grow to 20,000 students, 180 net new faculty, and 100 new staff by 2020.

The key section in the printed brochure accompanying the presentation is on pp. 14–15. Here Stenger outlines three ways to grow: increase undergraduate enrollment, which plays to our “greatest strength” but is “cost-prohibitive;” bring in more doctoral students which “enhances our reputation in the long run” but is “even more expensive” than undergraduates; and invest in master’s programs which would “do little to enhance our reputation in the short term” but the “students pay for themselves.” Hmm. A cynical person would say that BU should increase the number of master’s students to make more money.

And what does Stenger propose? A Graduate Growth Initiative to tar-

get the development of “new career-oriented master’s programs.”

The bottom line is that the new growth at Binghamton will be in the graduate program, and the majority of growth in the graduate program will be at the master’s level.

This growth and mix is driven by the administration’s comparison to its self-defined “aspirational peers,” which include UC Berkeley and UCLA. Binghamton has always been different. Do we now really want to aspire to be like a UC school?

The kind of new staff was not specified in the presentation. Are these only UUP-represented staff, or do they include CSEA-represented staff? Anyway you count it, it seems like 100 new staff for 180 new faculty and 6,000 new students is woefully inadequate.

Where is the new staff going to be assigned—upper administration or down in the trenches? Does it seem that whenever there are new job responsibilities for upper administration, there is an announcement for an additional position, but new job responsibilities for the rest of us are subsumed into our current workload?

Case in point: as part of Zimpher’s mangled rollout of seamless transfer, the Chemistry Department has to track down five course descriptions at each of 63 campuses. If I were an upper administrator, I could just run an ad for a “course tracker downer” and not have my workload increase. As it is, I have to decide what I am not going to do so that I can do this extra tedious work.

The disadvantage of not attending the presentation in person is that I did not get to ask questions. I had prepared a question (“President Stenger, is it true that you and your senior staff preside over animal sacrifices in the basement of the Administration Building to assure success of the Roadmap?”), but after hearing the question, I would have asked, “What are the additional resources that will be provided to support our core mission: to provide the people of New York with educational services of the highest quality?”

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