



RISE Conference: Higher Education Can Strengthen Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Efforts in the Face of Threats Posed by a Changing Climate

A recent U.N. report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns us that things are even direr than previously believed.

It stresses the catastrophe we witnessed with Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico two years ago was not an aberration. Climate Change is here, and we are on a trajectory for further catastrophe.

So, at a recent event where SUNY and CUNY convened universities and colleges from across the nation at the University at Albany for a three-day conference, our best and brightest faculty, administrators, and others from the academy explored ways higher education can strengthen preparedness, response, and recovery efforts in the face of growing threats posed by a changing climate and extreme weather as we strive to build a national platform.

To our credit, New York State, under Governor Cuomo's leadership, was actively involved in providing relief to the island. The Governor was there during six different trips to help and assess what more needed to be done. And I, along with members of my administration, campus presidents, and more than 1,000 SUNY and CUNY students, as well as skilled labor volunteers restored homes in the San Juan, Orocovis, Barranquitas, and Toa Baja regions.

Still, while these efforts to help communities in need were certainly well-intentioned, UAlbany President Havidán Rodríguez's own research showed the post-Hurricane Maria experience demonstrated several aspects of the university-community relationship in pre- and post-disaster environments that urgently need to be studied to be more effective.

The conference was a wonderful opportunity to build upon what we learned and what we can do to develop a set of strategies, protocol standards, and emergency response policies that are proactive and will lead to more efficient and comprehensive approaches when dealing with natural disasters.

SUNY's Police Chiefs Association 2019 Police Awards

The 2019 Police Awards honored lieutenants, officers, and staff who played a key role in life-saving events, as well as others on the New York University Police force for their outstanding professional service.

The recipients were celebrated in November by the SUNY Police Chiefs Association in a ceremony in Saratoga Springs. The awards recognized several outstanding officers, and extended an expression of our thanks and appreciation for all of our officers across our campuses for their hard work that allows us to deliver the highest quality education for our students.

By way of video, I shared with them that their presence across our university system reassures us all. It affords us the peace of mind needed to maintain a well-functioning, world-class, and remarkably safe institution.

And that is no easy feat. Yet, this commitment to safety is demonstrated every single day by these men and women from our various university police departments in both big and small ways. Whether it is respectfully managing an excited crowd of students on a weekend night on campus, or more dramatic encounters like two of this year's honorees who jumped into a ditch filling with water to free a man pinned by a burst pipe, each member of our university police is willing and ready to act in an emergency, when suddenly, lives can hang in the balance.

