



SUNY Diversity Conference Opens Amidst Rising Student Concerns over Intolerance

As institutions of higher learning, we take seriously our unique responsibility to our nation to pass on culture to the next generation, educate professionals, train a workforce, and prepare future leaders to serve in government and non-profits and work in corporations. That means providing the broadest access to a high quality education to an ever-increasingly diverse and multicultural society.

At the same time, it is difficult to learn if you don't feel safe, valued, or welcomed. This is exactly how our students, faculty, and staff feel when they experience acts of aggression, intolerance, and bigotry or bias. My vision as Chancellor for SUNY is individualized learning for our students, which by definition means our students, faculty, and staff learn in an environment where everyone is appreciated for who they are as individuals.

Earlier this month, SUNY hosted the 2019 SUNY Diversity Conference to convene campus representatives working on diversity and inclusion initiatives to discuss best practices and share lessons learned in achieving this vision. The conference opened with a compelling video on the importance of diversity featuring SUNY Board of Trustees Vice Chair Cesar Perales, Trustee Eunice Lewin A. Lewin and Trustee Robert Duffy. [Here is the video.](#)

The theme of the three-day event was "Envisioning Change in an Evolving Landscape." It was timely, as our nation and higher education systems continue to struggle with the issues of diversity and tolerance among students, faculty, and staff.

As noted, SUNY is taking action by launching a Task Force to tackle these complex issues head on. However, the issue of how SUNY manages diversity is not isolated to interaction among students. The conference also discussed our PRODiG initiative, which focuses on diversifying SUNY's faculty and staff.

That is why this annual conference is so important to us. It is an opportunity for our institutional experts to come together and bring forth new ideas, renew our commitment and energy for diversity, and develop a plan of action to follow through on SUNY's promise of creating a fair, equitable, and accessible higher education system for both students, faculty, and staff.

We are deeply appreciative of our partners who co-sponsored the event, including the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, McGraw Hill, National Grid, NYSUT, Sodexo, STEAMSuccess.com, Syracuse Cultural Workers, SUNY Press, TIAA, The Ph.D. Project, McLean Consulting Group, and SUNY University Faculty Senate.



UAlbany President Havidán Rodríguez Appointed Executive Director of Hispanic Leadership Institute

We talk a lot about inclusivity, diversity, and mentorship as major priorities for our university system. As our student body becomes increasingly diverse, we must ensure that our executive leadership teams reflect that change. SUNY's Hispanic Leadership Institute (HLI) is integral to that goal. Its stewardship is crucial.

That is why I am so pleased that University at Albany President Dr. Havidán Rodríguez will begin his term as Executive Director of the HLI on January 1. He will be charged with developing and supporting the next generation of executive-level Latino leaders across our system. Governor Cuomo announced President Rodríguez's appointment at the SOMOS Conference in Puerto Rico last month.



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