

Operating Budget Submission

For five of the last seven years, Suffolk County has asked the College to formulate its operating budget without providing any increase in the County's contribution. During this period, I have charged the College's administration to be fiscally prudent, including taking actions such as: holding the line on purchasing and maintaining a restrictive hiring practice; monitoring enrollment and expenses to yield efficiencies; renegotiating collective bargaining agreements; tracking the number of sections offered each semester; and managing its master schedule. Through these efforts, the College has ended each fiscal year with a balanced budget. We have accomplished this by implementing very tight controls, and we have shared with the County that such effort is not sustainable indefinitely.

The College finished the 2013-2014 fiscal year with a surplus that was returned to the College's reserve fund. The Board of Trustees authorized $4.3 million from reserves to be used to balance the 2014-2015 operating budget. I directed College administration to continue its practice of prudent fiscal management and close monitoring of expenses. While we will not close the books on 2014-2015 until the fall, we are trending toward ending the year with a small budget surplus at this time.



The college community is updated about the budget process through Town Hall meetings at each campus.

2015-2016 Operating Budget

The allocation of budgetary resources is closely tied to the College's Strategic Plan and Institutional Goals. Planning and program assessment guide the establishment of budgetary priorities. Our Operating Budget continues to be under considerable pressure, due to projected cost increases related to employee pensions, healthcare, contractual salary agreements and the operation of new buildings. We also anticipate future reductions in the number of graduating high school students, increased costs to maintain an aging infrastructure, and – without a new arrangement – revenue shortfalls caused by reduced or flat State and local sponsor contributions.

Given that our budget model projects increases in costs and the potential for the leveling-off of enrollment, I directed College departments to submit "no growth" budgets for the 2015-2016 fiscal year that assumed zero-percent increases over the total bottom line funding provided for each unit during the 2014-2015 academic year. Exceptions to the no-growth scenario were: 1) costs associated with new facilities, 2) enhanced assessment efforts to align College operations with the Comprehensive Assessment Plan for institutional Effectiveness (CAPIE) and the College's Strategic Plan, and 3) programmatic impacts as a result of assessment efforts to achieve institutional goals.

The College's 2015-2016 operating budget request totaled $215 million, an increase of $6.8 million or 3.3% over the prior year's budget. The increase was directly related to: 1) a $2.3 million increase in employee benefits, of which $2 million was to cover additional health insurance costs due to an increase in the County plan's rates, 2) $3.7 million in personal services for contractual salary related expenses, and 3) increased costs related to the operation of the new William J. Lindsay Life Sciences Building, which opened for classes this past spring.

To support this request, the adopted New York State 2015-2016 budget provided an increase in State Base Aid per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) student of $100 per FTE. This translated to $2 million in additional revenue for Suffolk County Community College. To ensure that the College operates with a structurally balanced budget that contains sufficient recurring revenue to meet recurring expenses, the Board of Trustees submitted a budget request to the County that included an annual tuition increase of $180 that brought full-time annual tuition to $4,570; authorized a transfer of over