

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Alumni,

March was a big month for us! We changed our name from SUNY Empire State College to Empire State University and the next day, I was inaugurated as the sixth president of this amazing institution. You can [watch the ceremony and see inauguration photos here](#).

The change to university status elevates the value of our degree for our students. It also acknowledges the important role that graduate education plays at SUNY Empire, enabling us to more readily reach a broader market with our incredible portfolio of graduate programs. If you have questions—including how to list our institutional name on your resumé—[please visit our college to university transition website](#).

SUNY Empire was founded on the belief that public higher education can and must always seek new ways to serve people. This democratizing vision is at the core of who we are and continues to drive every aspect of our work. Since 1971, we have been a beacon of opportunity and hope for people at all stages of life, whether they are working full time, raising a family, or serving as a member of the military.

Today, we continue to strive toward a future that is ever more just, hopeful, and equitable. We bring higher education to all corners of the state and to people around the world. We do that by being fully committed to always putting our students first and meeting them wherever they are.

SUNY Empire is uniquely positioned to deliver on this access mission as we are the only public online institution in the state of New York. We offer courses designed to be taught online, using the most innovative and up-to-date best practices. We provide a high-quality, affordable education that gives our students academic credit for their knowledge and life experiences.

During my inauguration, I announced two new programs that will expand our ability to support students:

- The Presidential Scholars Program will offer \$1,000 recruitment and retention scholarships annually for up to four years to students transferring with their associate degree from any community college.
- The Military Opportunity Program will provide wrap-around support in a cohort model for our military-affiliated students, including active service members, veterans, and their families.



SUNY Chancellor John B. King, Jr. center, with the six presidents of SUNY Empire. From left to right, Jim Malatras, Joe Moore, Jim Hall, President Lisa Vollendorf, Alan Davis, and Merodie Hancock.

Both programs will support people who may be left behind by traditional success efforts. Both will enable SUNY Empire to fulfill our role as the SUNY system's completion arm, helping students at other SUNY schools finish their degree. And both will help us achieve our mission to drive upward mobility and promote economic development.

I'm so excited for the opportunity to lead this great institution as we continue to educate, innovate, and elevate—SUNY Empire's three guiding principles.

I would love to hear from you about your experience at SUNY Empire. Please share your story on Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, or you can write to us at alumni@sunyempire.edu.

Warmly,



Lisa Vollendorf, Ph.D.
President

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CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Alumni Awards Program recognizes Empire State University's exemplary alumni who are making a lasting impact through outstanding professional, philanthropic, and volunteer accomplishments. Congratulations to this year's four award recipients:



Nichol King '17 of Brooklyn, NY is the recipient of the Emerging Leader Award, which recognizes an alumnus who graduated within the last five years and demonstrates leadership in their profession, community, or at SUNY Empire.



James Allan Matte '76 of Williamsville, NY is the recipient of the Veteran Service Award, which is given to a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces who has made a positive impact on their community, university, and/or fellow veterans.



Jawana Carter Richardson '16, '18, '21 of Hempstead, NY has received the Community Impact Award, which is given to a graduate who demonstrates leadership by providing exceptional service to SUNY Empire, their community, and beyond.



Melva Visser '81, '85, '96, of Buffalo, NY is the recipient of the Distinguished Leader Award, which recognizes a graduate who has provided outstanding service to the university and their community through philanthropic support.

[Read more](#) about the award recipients.



CHANCELLOR KING VISITS SUNY EMPIRE

SUNY Chancellor John B. King, Jr. paid a visit to Empire State University in March, and met with President Vollendorf, the cabinet, and our students, faculty, and staff. He praised SUNY Empire's access-driven mission and shared stories of his upbringing. King was appointed the system's 15th chancellor last December. He previously served as the U.S. Secretary of Education under former President Barack Obama. Before coming to SUNY, he was the president of The Education Trust, a national civil rights nonprofit that seeks to identify and close opportunity and achievement gaps for students from preschool through college.





JOIN US FOR A JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

Join Empire State University alumni, students, and staff for our Juneteenth celebration, featuring award-winning jazz artist Camille Thurman and a presentation by SUNY Empire Professor Emeritus Joseph Washington. The holiday commemorates the end of slavery in the U.S.

Saturday, June 17 @ 12 p.m.
SUNY Empire
4 Park Ave. (corner of 33rd and 34th streets)
New York, NY 10016
[Learn more and register.](#)



SAVE THE DATE: 27TH ALUMNI DAY AT THE RACES

Thursday, August 17
Historic Saratoga Race Course
Saratoga Springs, NY
More details to come! Contact alumni@sunyempire.edu with questions.



ALUMNI MIXER AT THE MILL ON ROUND LAKE

Kelly DiCarmine '18, '21 and Brian Sherman '17 were among the Capital Region alumni who gathered for the Alumni Mixer at The Mill on Round Lake in May. If you have an idea for an alumni event in your area, contact alumni@sunyempire.edu.

DONNA CARMODY '23 PROVES THAT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE



This spring, Donna Carmody will complete her B.S. in business administration and graduate with honors. As she walks across the stage during the commencement ceremony in Albany, NY on June 4, she will reflect on that hard-won accomplishment. Donna, who is a member of the [Empire State Opportunity Program](#) (ESOP) and recipient of the [Stewart's Shops Community College Scholarship](#), is grateful for all the support she has received at SUNY Empire.

While pursuing her associate degree at SUNY Ulster Community College, Donna became a single mother. When her son, now three, was diagnosed with autism, it could have derailed her educational plans, but she was determined to finish her bachelor's degree. She found SUNY Empire to be an ideal fit, allowing her to put her son's needs first and do schoolwork late at night or in spurts during the day.

"When I started this journey, I was nervous and still fairly new in my recovery from alcoholism," she said. "In my first semester, I found out I was pregnant, but I continued to attend school. I even started having contractions during my last final of the semester. When my son was four weeks old the next semester started, and I attended courses online. I was nursing him during exams and changing diapers in between lecture videos." Donna also received invaluable support from the ESOP, a

program she calls "a lifesaver." Among other resources, ESOP provides students with financial assistance, academic supports, mentorship and coaching, and early degree planning.

"The additional funding helped me attend school and pay for my internet access," she said. "My mentor was always there to answer questions or get me a learning coach if needed. It also held me accountable in my classes, as they do regular check-ins with the professors to make sure our grades and efforts are on track."

The high-touch, personalized ESOP program offers students the guidance and advice they need, which, coupled with the funding received from scholarships like the Stewart's Shops Community College Scholarship, enables them to be successful.

Earning a degree — much less two — while being a single mother and recovering alcoholic seemed insurmountable a decade ago. Today, Donna is proud of her accomplishments and wants to show her son that anything is possible. She hopes to one day earn her MBA and pursue a career in sales and marketing.

"In the 7-1/2 years I've been sober, I've become a woman of integrity and determination," she said. "I raise my son, help other people in recovery, and continue to set and reach new goals for myself. Empire State University, the scholarships I have received, and the support from professors and staff have helped keep me on track to achieve this goal that I never would have thought possible. It sounds so cliché, but if I can do it, anyone can do it!"



Meet Turhan Wilbon, a Fund for Empire State University Scholarship recipient from Buffalo, NY. Turhan is pursuing his B.S. in business, management and economics while working full time as a Walgreens pharmacy technician.

Turhan tried to get his degree a few years ago when he enrolled in Penn State’s biotech program, but he had to drop out to tend to his sick mother. Working to support himself and help his mother get better, Turhan impressed his managers who recommended he return to school and complete his education, but in business this time. On the advice of his managers, Turhan enrolled at SUNY Empire, where he received a Fund for Empire State University Scholarship.

“I really want to thank you for helping me out in this way,” Turhan said. “I have gone through many things in my life — I have married, sadly become a widower at too early of an age, traveled the world, and finally came back home. This scholarship will help me continue to grow as a person, a son, a manager, and a partner in the community.”

When he isn’t working, studying, or taking care of family, Turhan is a professional umpire for Buffalo’s inner-city tennis programs, a job that’s led to international travel. He looks forward to someday joining the board of the Eastern section of the United States Tennis Association, so he can help foster grassroots tennis programs, enrich young lives, and help those in need with community outreach and scholarship programs.

[Help students like Turhan find success, and make your gift to the Fund for Empire State University.](#) The difference one donor has on the life of one student is significant. Working together, we can make a positive impact on many students. Make your difference today!

HOW YOUR GENEROSITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The annual “Impact of Philanthropy” report provides an overview of the Foundation’s health and details the impact of generous donations from our alumni and friends. This investment in SUNY Empire provides the critical resources necessary to award student scholarships, initiate faculty projects, and develop new programs, among other initiatives. Thanks to your assistance, our students are “Learning, Leading, and Living” their best lives and achieving their potential.

[Read full report!](#)

MAKE YOUR GIFT TO THE FUND FOR SUNY EMPIRE TODAY!



OUR STUDENTS AT A GLANCE

15,268
Students
(total enrollment)*

23.8%
Pell
recipients

9.69%
TAP
recipients

29%
Black, indigenous
and people of color

A gift to the Fund can help support all SUNY Empire students.