

## Debbie L. Sydow, Ph.D., President Onondaga Community College

*I chose to dedicate my professional life to community college education because of my absolute conviction that every citizen in every community—regardless of socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, or academic background—should have access to higher education. As a first-generation college student, I am acutely aware of the power of learning to transform a life. Community colleges with their core mission of access to high quality, affordable educational programs and services are in the business of transforming lives through learning.*



Dr. Debbie L. Sydow, the 7th president of Onondaga Community College, has served as a community college educator and administrator for 20 years. Throughout her career, she has worked in support of high quality educational programs and comprehensive support services for students seeking college transfer, job training, continuing education, or basic skills education. In her various administrative and faculty roles, she has actively worked with all college stakeholders to ensure curricular quality and program alignment with community need.

As president and CEO of Onondaga Community College, which is one of 64 institutions comprising the State University of New York (SUNY), Dr. Sydow leads one of the State's largest community colleges. She has guided record enrollment growth and capital improvements in excess of \$50 million. Opening the college's first residential facilities, housing 500 students, represents just one of many transformative projects that Dr. Sydow has initiated and led at Onondaga. Others include the highly successful Arts Across Campus program, the award-winning Center for Continuous Improvement Strategies, and a comprehensive strategic enrollment management program. In addition, she has expanded community access to higher education through distance education and flexible program offerings, and secured gifts and grants totaling more than \$4 million.

An active professional and civic leader, Dr. Sydow serves as President of the Association for Presidents of Public Community Colleges in New York, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Institute for Community College Development at Cornell University, and former Chair of the American Council on Education's Commission on Leadership and Institutional Effectiveness. She serves on several community boards, including ProLiteracy Worldwide, the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, the Metropolitan Development Association, Syracuse 20/20, CNY Works, Success by Six, and the M&T Bank Syracuse Regional Board.

Dr. Sydow began her career at Southwest Virginia Community College as an English professor where, as a result of scholarly achievement, she was awarded the Faculty-Scholar Award. Later, as Dean of the Humanities and Social Sciences Division at the same college, she initiated successful programs in faculty development, outcomes assessment, and distance education. Dr. Sydow served as lead researcher and writer for the Virginia Community College System's highly acclaimed professional development program. Just prior to assuming the presidency at Onondaga Community College, Dr. Sydow served as Vice President of Academic and Student Services, and for a time as Acting President, at Mountain Empire Community College.

A native of Virginia, Dr. Sydow earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Virginia's College at Wise, a Master of Arts degree in English from Marquette University, and a Ph.D. in English from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She completed post-graduate work in community college administration at Virginia Tech, and she is an alumna of the American Council on Education's Fellows program.