

Dear ESF community,

As we get to the end of a beautiful September summer, I'd like to share some updates. Yesterday's ESF Board of Trustees meeting focused on the state of our college, its financial outlook, and the opportunities before us as one of the nation's pre-eminent institutions focused on the study of the environment and building a sustainable future. ESF is a community committed to ensuring that we continue to carry out our mission, and at the heart of this mission is our students, our unrivaled academic programs, and our faculty and staff.

To secure a stronger future for ESF, it is essential for us to take steps to improve our long-term fiscal health. The plan presented to the Board focuses on key growth strategies. These include steps to increase undergraduate enrollment, generate graduate school revenue, and continue our Carnegie R2 research. This plan also includes expanding both summer and winter programming, increasing online learning offerings, and doubling down on experiential learning that ESF is uniquely qualified to deliver for our students.

It is important to note that balancing our budget also requires looking at our entire campus operations for efficiencies. As you know, we are currently offering a [Voluntary Separation Program](#) with support from our College Foundation. Through the VSP and other staffing adjustments over time, we are targeting a reduction in total staff by 38 full-time employees in the next five years. We are also assessing and making adjustments to faculty workload to ensure we are operating efficiently and increasing our students' access to renowned ESF faculty.

We have worked closely with experts at SUNY to fine tune our stability plan and are thankful to receive generous support to maintain facilities in the Adirondack Park and the Ranger School. These facilities are and will continue to be critical to our mission. This funding is on top of \$6 million in increased operating aid we have received over just the last three years, including the 25-26 fiscal year, a 33% increase in state support. Our levels of state support are a testament to our collective advocacy and a commitment by the state to deliver the resources ESF needs. The most responsible use of those funds is to address the structural deficit we face at a local level. We are equally committed — as we always have been and will continue to be — to graduate offerings and ensuring that we are able to attract and support students who can benefit from our high-quality, high-value offerings. Changes we intend to make to the level of scholarships and stipends provided to graduate students are designed to ensure fiscal sustainability while still enabling us to deliver access to the resources students need to be successful.

ESF is fortunate to be enrolling brilliant students and graduating people ready to address some of the most pressing challenges of our time. Rest assured that I and the entire ESF leadership team, with the support of SUNY and the Chancellor, are committed to continuing to do exactly that.

I am confident that through constructive conversation and decisions we make here at the campus level, we will continue to position ESF for a strong future.

Sincerely,  
Joanie Mahoney  
President