



2026 ESF State of the College Address

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Transcript

President Joanie Mahoney:

Good afternoon.

It's nice to see so many of you here today for the 2026 State of the College. I am Joanie Mahoney, for those of you that don't know, and I will get started. Please find seats.

There is the beautiful Thousand Islands Biological Station. I've been trying to feature some of our beautiful remote campuses. That's where John Farrell and his students do amazing research all summer long in the beautiful St. Lawrence Seaway.

I am here to deliver the state of the college, and before I get started, I'd like to acknowledge "Where We Stand."

We have the privilege of meeting today in the ancestral lands of the Onondaga Nation, the center of the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee, Iroquois Confederacy, who we honor for their many contributions, including the original philosophy and practice of environmental stewardship.

I will start with something I'm sure you're all very proud of. Syracuse is going to win the Golden Snowball again this year. We're not even close. 135 inches of snow has fallen in Syracuse, New York this year, and this is what it has looked like for the last several months.

And these are the people that have been busy cleaning the snow. Yes! While we're all out snow skiing and ice skating and snowshoeing.

Matt Garlick, Andy Saunders, Mitch Spara, Sean Sterling, Luis Suatoni, Noah Sutphin, and Mike Vargason. Our appreciation for some very early cold mornings clearing things for us. They put the salt down, and then we carry it into the buildings and this is the team that has been trying to stay on top of all of that. Thank you to our wonderful custodial staff. I see some of them here in the audience, thank you very much.

I don't want to forget the regional staff: Justin Duchano, Brad Fisk, Tim Johnson, Jody Larabee, John O'Donnell, Mike Petitpas, Tim Potter, Jeremy Rifenburg, John Russell, Brian Whitford, and Eric Wixon. Thank you all.

And some of that really serious weather has led to some equally serious power outages. Which have meant all hands on deck here from our tradespeople. There has been a big job for you, Tyler, to make sure that our researchers know when the power goes out and what the status is and Jim Sahm, to make sure that when the power comes back on, we don't destroy all of our electronics.

Here's the mechanical trades who have been doing that with Pete Vandemark, Jim Sahm, Mike Amadori, Rustan Petrela, and a special thanks to Mark Lichtenstein for corralling all of these teams for us. Thank you all for the work you've done.

So, I'm here to answer the question, what is the state of our college? This is a good opportunity for us to take a 50,000-foot view.

Sometimes it's easy to lose sight of the big picture when the day-to-day work feels relentless. Sometimes the incremental progress is hard to see.

The national news has been troubling for higher ed in the last year, and now we're at war again in the Middle East, and its increased anxiety for everybody. I do want to acknowledge and thank the staff and students who work in our military and ask everyone to extend patience and kindness to our colleagues, who are being affected by these ongoing conflicts.

Closer to home, our ongoing budget issues and stability planning have interjected fear, anxiety, and a dampened morale.

For many years, ESF blindly spent more money than it had. In the recent past, thanks to advocacy from UUP and others, New York State and SUNY have allocated more resources for us, and while their request that we live within our budget sounds simple, the reality of doing so is proving a little more difficult for us, and that's why today, I want to take a few minutes to remember how far we've come, and then share with you what's next.

So, the state of our college...we are making progress, and I often tell people ESF gets the big things right, and that has always been the case, and it's still the case today.

We have had our R2 status confirmed. We have a 97% job placement rate for the hundreds of climate warriors that we graduate every year. And we are doing the work we need to do to close our budget deficit with a balanced budget projected starting in July of 2027.

So how have we done it? Here's some examples. Accessory instruction is a big lever that's been pulled. This is just shared with you so you can get a little bit of a flavor from how things work when something comes from our friends at SUNY System. So, June of 2024, we were told that the SUNY Board of Trustees had approved an accessory instruction fee for us. I will say that is the first that I heard that there was an accessory fee being considered and ushered through the board process. And so we had a very short amount of time to stand this program up, which meant adding elective courses so our students would have more options on this side of the street and adding the course fee for the electives. And there were a lot of people here on campus that came together quickly to do that, and this is an example of some of the classes that have been added over here on our side of the street.

One of the big ones was physics, and we brought physics over in the fall of 2025. For years, ESF sent almost a million dollars every year to Syracuse University to teach physics to our students. We were told we did not have room here on our campus for physics, and that we had to send our students across the street. But thanks to our facilities team, and to Steve Shaw for his leadership, we now have a physics lab on our side of the street, and here's the important part.

Our accessory instruction payment for the fall of 2024, the money we had to send to Syracuse was \$724,000.

In the fall of 2025, that same invoice was for \$182,000. We are saving a significant amount of money every year because we now are able to offer physics on our campus.

And the classes that we all said were free, you know, ESF students can take classes at Syracuse for free, they never really were free. The College was always paying for those classes.

Our students are happy now with the classes being offered here, and it's been a win all the way around, but it was a lot of work, and I want to thank the people that made that possible.

We also implemented Timely Care, and you'll see down at the bottom of the screen. The \$600,000 represents the contract that we had with one of the local hospitals to provide walk-in service for our students who needed healthcare. We paid \$600,000 a year. We now have Timely Care, and that contract is \$80,000 a year, so we have significant savings, but we also have a better service. We have 24-7 access, even when our students are on break, or they're not here on our campus. They have access to health, mental health, and psychiatry services. They can pick their own providers.

The Timely Care folks can prescribe medicines, and our students can go right to the Barnes Center to have those prescriptions filled. The data is showing us about half of our students are enrolled in timely care, and our students are rating their providers a 4.9 out of 5. So, I want everybody to know that our students are happy with this timely care alternative, and it's saving money. And we do have times when our students want to go to the doctor, whether they have their own personal doctor or a need for a specialist and we are providing free Uber rides for our students to get to those providers.

Through this week, we have provided 1,203 rides for 123 different students, and all of those services are still far less costly to us than the contract that we had.

Another area we've made tremendous progress is marketing. Tyler, I want to give you and your incredibly talented, creative staff credit for some of the marketing that we're seeing now that's coming out of the Communications and Marketing Office.

Here's some examples of some of the things they've created. We are now on buses. I don't know if you've seen ESF on buses, and we are now on billboards.

There's a very important effort, and it took a lot of people to pull off, but we became the first SUNY campus to participate in the College Tour. You can, through YouTube, Prime, Fire TV, all of them, you can access a video featuring our students talking about their experience here at ESF.

That program is available across...

Hi Vita, I'm sorry. Welcome. Please come. No, I'm sorry. I should have waited for you.

The College Tour is available for guidance counselors, so when a student has a particular interest, they can see what our college is like without having to make their way here. And with our ongoing effort to attract some out-of-state students, this is a good tool in our tool shed.

And because we're doing such a great job with marketing, SUNY has provided a marketing grant to the college of \$145,000 this year. I wanted to highlight this because we are spending millions of capital dollars, and I still hear a little bit of concern from people about whether that is evidence of SUNY's support for us. But when SUNY is giving us money like this to market the ESF brand, it's a pretty good indication that they are very supportive of our long-term health. They have long-term plans for us.

Another thing that we did this year that's new is we hosted a local media day, and I've been wanting to do this on our ongoing effort to do away with the hidden part of our status, but also because the news about our finances, our stability planning, our budget issues, have really dominated the news. And it's such a small part of what's happening here, and I wanted to make a deliberate effort to get balance with those stories, so we had come visit us here, right in this room, Syracuse.com, Spectrum News, Central Current, and WRVO, and we paired them with faculty that talked about the research that they were doing.

This local media was very interested in turning some of those stories into features that will help us with that balance for families that are concerned because of the news of our budget. It's really reassuring when you hear about the incredible work that's being done. This is the group of faculty that took time out of their busy schedules to meet with the media, and I want to thank all of them for doing that.

Another big accomplishment was standing up an Auxiliary Services Corporation here at ESF. So, for whatever reason, ESF did not have one. It might have to do with our relationship with Syracuse, but most of the other, if not all of the other campuses in the SUNY system have an Auxiliary Services Corporation, and we didn't have one.

One story you might be interested in is Tom LeRoy was Chief of Police when I started here, and he gave me a folder that had, like, 6 or 7 handwritten pages with lists of names of people in the community that had asked for free parking for the Dome for different sporting events, or concerts, or... and that's what our system was. If you knew who to call and you called, we would give you a pass. And we now, with this Auxiliary Services Corporation, are able to sell that very valuable asset and generate money that we can pour back into the operations here on the campus. We're supporting things like the Women's Caucus, or some student events, food for AG awards ceremonies, things like that.

To stand this Auxiliary Services Corporation up, it took creating the corporation, getting a tax ID number, getting tax-exempt status, writing new bylaws, obtaining workers' comp insurance, and entering a staffing agreement so that we could have employees of the services agreement. So, I get why it was never done. Jobs like that are a giant hassle, but it is done, and now we can do things like host the SUNY Faculty Senate here in-house, where people had a wonderful dinner provided by our chef extraordinaire, Steve Morrison.

Steve has done \$400,000. Steve has done \$400,000 in catering, and that is providing an opportunity for students to be paid to work here on campus, so keeping that money circulating here has been a benefit that keeps paying over and over.

And now that all of the administrative part is done, and we have an Auxiliary Services Corporation, I'm very grateful that Brenda has agreed to take on the oversight of the Auxiliary Services Corporation, and I know your Foundation Board members are here. I hope I'm not telling them something they haven't heard, but thank you very much. The Foundation has the infrastructure already in place, and I think you'll see even bigger and better things from the Auxiliary Services Corporation with that move. It should not be part of the state operation, it's a separate entity, and I'm grateful to you, Brenda, for offering to do that.

Timbuctoo is a huge success. This was the brainchild of Paul Hai, and you'll see here that Paul brings police and students from New York City. No, I'm teasing about the police, but they do jump out at me at the campfire there. And this, you'll see on the screen, Timbuctoo has generated \$7 million in state support.

There were 100 applications the first year the program was run. There were triple that last year, and we're on track for even more this year. We have participants in this program from 66 different high schools representing all five of the boroughs in New York City. It was expanded, the program, into a Brooklyn component last year. This year, it's being expanded again into Rochester. And the biggest benefit of this program is to the students who get to come and have a life-changing experience.

But it's also so valuable to us in terms of getting our brand out to more people. And then, really, the cherry on top is that more and more students who go through this program are applying to be students here at ESF. These are high school students and when the time comes, they're applying to come to ESF because of this experience. So, I appreciate what Paul, the initiative and the work it took to stand this program up, and I want to thank, too, our state representatives for their support for the program.

And also, while I'm on, Paul and Mariann Johnston, too, thank you for hosting the DEC's Ranger Academy again. This generates over \$300,000 in revenue, because the DEC Rangers use our Ranger School, not to confuse things, and our Newcomb campus, and at a time when they're not being used, it's wonderful to use those properties this way and have this partnership with DEC that generates revenue for us.

With respect to the career fairs, John Turbeville, thank you very much. We have had our first career fair in the JMA Wireless Dome. It's amazing if you think about an institution our size needing the dome to have a career fair. We had a record 604 students go through this career fair, and John wasn't done building on the very successful DEC day that we've had in the past.

He created the Empire State of Work, and all of the New York State agencies came for a special day of their own where our students had access to them as an Empire State Agency career fair. So thank you, John, for doing that. These efforts are what gives us the ability to brag about the fact that we have a 97% job placement.

And then with internships, this is what Chancellor King said about internships:

“SUNY's goal is to work toward ensuring every undergraduate has access to an internship or research opportunity before walking across the graduation stage.”

It is a lofty goal, and he sent his team around the system to assess how we're doing. And when SUNY's Workforce and Experiential Learning team visited us in October, they highlighted ESF's exceptional status with nearly 95% of our students already engaged in high-impact practices. So, we are well on our way with experiential learning.

The Capital Campaign, I'm going to touch on a little, but I know it's not officially over and I'm hoping that we'll hear from Brenda and the Foundation in a more formal way, but I will give you a sneak peek that we are well on our way of meeting what is a significant increase in our goal of

\$40 million and that includes a record \$6 million in cash contributions just last year. And more than \$15 million raised to support student scholarships, and \$21.5 million to support academic programs. We also have 100 members of the 1911 Society, which Brenda tells me is the most we've ever had, so this is something that makes it possible for us to do things like balance our budget and support our students, and Brenda, thank you very much for the work you and your team have done.

I'd like to highlight one of our very important donors who's here with us today. Vita, I'm glad you made it. Vita made a very generous contribution. She is one of our Board of Trustees members since 2008 and she made a very generous contribution to the College that is supporting the Digital Storytelling Studio, some of our ESF academic departments, and the programs in Puerto Rico. And those experiences, I had the opportunity to go to Puerto Rico with Vita and Mark and the team, and the experiences... Dan, right? You were on that trip with us. The experiences that our students get to have are amazing, and Vita, thank you for making it possible.

And I'm going to announce again, because I was premature last time I got to announce things that Dr. Lindi Quackenbush has now made her way through the process more properly, and she received unanimous support from Academic Governance in support of her becoming our permanent Provost and VPR. Thank you very much, Lindi.

I'm going to highlight this classification through 2027 for R2, and that's because with the budget talk and the stability plan talk, there has been talk about our commitment to our R2 status. It has not wavered. SUNY has not wavered. It is very important to us as an institution that we are certified as an R2 institution, and we are now classified through 2027, but I'm going to go even further to reassure you and tell you that classification requires on average, in a single year, that institutions spend at least \$5 million on research and award at least 20 PhDs. And in the year that got us certified, we awarded 28 research doctorates, and we did over \$32 million in research, so we are very solidly in the R2 category, and there is not any wavering of commitment to that going forward.

Likewise, our Middle States accreditation has been reaffirmed, so we had this patchwork of assessment on campus, and when we went through the self-study and Middle States visited us, it landed us with a warning.

And I was very pleased and grateful to see everybody on campus come together to put that assessment together in a cohesive, system-wide series of planning and meetings, and when the team came back, they were pleased with what they saw. There are no additional monitoring reports due, and we are officially off warning, and our next self-study will be in 2029-2030.

I want to tell you a couple things. Jeremy is now gone from ESF, and he led us through the process. Going forward, Lisa Brancato will be our Assessment Coordinator. She is here; she was working with Jeremy. She will lead assessment efforts, including planning, training, coordination, and the collection of those assessment plans. And for now, Zora is going to be our

Accreditation Liaison Officer. And the institutional research part of Jeremy's role is now going to be part of Yoshi Guy's portfolio as our Chief Data Officer.

So, thank you to everybody. That was a campus-wide effort, and we did it, and starting next year, steering committees will be appointed, and we'll be off again for the next round. But on much more firm footing.

One of the big accomplishments we've had is that landscape architecture went through the process to turn its 5-year bachelor's degree into a 4-year degree, making us more competitive, and we're seeing it in the enrollment numbers. I want to thank Margaret Bryant—I think I saw her come in. Margaret, that was a significant accomplishment, and I appreciate that you did the legwork to make that happen, and here's one of our marketing pieces to support the landscape architecture program.

And while summer session has been going strong for the last few summers, we add more and more, and you're seeing a lot more activity here in the summer, for those of you that are here, I'm very happy to see that courses are being added specifically to support retention and academic progression, so our students have an opportunity to catch up or get ahead, and these are in addition to a really robust list of offerings in the summer.

This has been one of the things that's talked about with respect to our retention rate. If a student struggles in a class, and we don't give them a second bite at the apple right away, we sometimes lose them, so this is good for the students, it's good for the College, and I'm happy with everybody that's agreed to teach these classes over the summer.

We had a Chancellor's Distinguished PhD Dissertation Award. This is an award that the Chancellor only gives to two people in the SUNY system, and for ESF to have been awarded one of those is amazing. ESF's own Dr. Zhang received this award, I tried to put what he does in layman's terms, but congratulations to Dr. Zhang.

And this is, this has been happening, and Katherina Searing brings this Grad School Retreat together, and our students have a fabulous time up at Cranberry Lake. I know Terrence Caviness has helped with the logistics of that program, but what a fantastic opportunity for community building for our grad students.

And this grad writing retreat that just happened again, where there is support for thesis and dissertation writing, research proposals, publications. And this was gratifying for me to add to this presentation, because I feel like I've been completely mired in talk of the budget, and worried about, you know, SUNY and our fiscal stability plan. It's so satisfying to know that students are still front and center, and that the services that we offer are being improved constantly, so thank you, Katherina, for keeping your eye on the ball with us, with the grad students.

So, you've heard, this is this year. This does not count Illick, and this is the investment that SUNY is making in capital dollars on our campus. If you missed it, Mark led with MOSA and Rick, I think you participated? Rick Fedrizzi, thank you, on a Facilities Town Hall on February 17, 2026. That presentation is available online, so I won't go through it all again, but there's great things happening. I'll give you a couple little examples—there's the Goodnow Fire Tower restored. I think it should be tradition here that everybody who graduates from ESF makes it to the top of Goodnow Mountain before they do that.

Here's a classroom improvement I wanted to highlight. This is 210 Walters. And I'm just going to let you pause and realize that I said Walters. That is just... I know, it's amazing that that's the work of our facilities team, and we're making those kind of improvements all across campus. Coming up is a total rebuild for Baker 154 for one of our fastest growing majors, Construction Management, and Paul Crovella raised private dollars to help match our dollars so that we could do the same kind of total rebuild of Baker 154 for Construction Management.

You have heard that there's improvements coming to Moon. I'm very excited to tell you that we are finally available to students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at Moon. And I think I saw Matt Smith in the back—yes, Matt, thank you. You have just been a fantastic advocate for our students and making this and all the improvements in Moon happen, so thank you very much.

And that includes Beth's Bounty. So, again, one of the things I asked when I arrived here about a food pantry for our students, I was told that our students are welcome, and that they use the food pantry at Syracuse University in the basement of Hendricks Chapel, but we didn't have a pantry here, and it took work by a lot of people to stand one up, and we had a fledgling pantry in the basement of Bray. That has been moved to this better location, and just this academic year so far, we've had 321 visitors, so it's really important that we have it, and I know that we asked for donations, so anybody who brought donations today to Beth's, to support Beth's Bounty. Thank you very much.

And there is also a Health and Wellness vending machine, which is pretty cool. It provides everything in the vending machine is free, so I don't know if we should call it a vending machine, but it's free. And it's all health and wellness products, and Kitty has reported 2,500 of these packets have been used by our students already. So, thank you.

That is our... did I skip over? I think I did, but anyhow Faculty and Staff In-Service. That was a priority of mine, and we have had, I think, 3 of them, and those were created to launch us all together at the beginning of semesters in a place where I could share information and further my goal of transparency and build community as we started the new semester, and I'm happy with how we are progressing with those. Some of the breakout sessions have been very valuable, and people have asked for more.

Here's another example of something that we didn't do because everybody was too busy to stand it up, but we now, thank you to Bryan Smith and Amy. We implemented Jaggaer. I started out by telling you that for many years, ESF blindly spent more money than it brought in in

revenue. Well, we are no longer blind. This is what I can see anytime. This information makes it so much easier for us to manage our budget. We can see what's being requested, and how long people have had to wait, and who the vendors are, and what department needs it, and it, you know, I appreciate everyone's patience, because we keep going back and asking for justifications, because every dollar is so important to us, but taking the time to implement Jaggaer has made our operation better, and it's what's going to make it possible for us to share services with other colleges that are using Jaggaer.

Another big win for us was the Voluntary Separation Program. Ragan, thank you for spearheading that, and Ellen Brown, who took a lot of meetings with people and the whole HR staff. That is netting us \$2.5 million in annual savings. And the gross amount was 3.6. But we do have some backfills that I'll tell you about in a minute.

Being able to offer people an incentive, and not have to go through something more draconian here was a pleasure, and we couldn't have done it if the Foundation didn't provide the resources to offer the incentive, and we didn't have an incredible HR team that unfolded this program for us, and all of you. A lot of people in this room availed yourselves of that, and that will make things better for ESF going forward.

So that's a lot of things that I just ran through, and it's not everything, but it's an opportunity for me to just stop and talk about our collective achievements.

And as I say, you know, all the talk of the budget has taken a lot of the air out of the room, but we're accomplishing really good things that are going to mean good things for ESF for years to come. So, I want you to give yourselves and each other a big round of applause for all of the accomplishments that we've had.

Okay, celebration is over. Here's what's next. The work continues here, and first on the list is enrollment, and second, third, fourth, fifth, 6th, 7th on the list is enrollment.

We, and I'm sure you, are reading regularly about other institutions that are adding environmental science programs. The world has changed for ESF, and we can be very proud of this 100-year history that we have in this space, but with what's gone on in the whole higher ed sector, and then specific to the addition of environmental science at so many other colleges, we need to be aggressive to keep our leadership position.

And there will be fewer high school students coming up, and they have more choices. So, I'm very grateful that Chris, who I saw back there, Chris Tacea, has agreed to serve as the Acting Executive Director for Enrollment Management and Recruiting, and we're putting a real emphasis on recruiting. It used to be if a student wanted an environmental science program, they would find us.

But now we have to be competing for each and every one of those students, and Chris has agreed to do that for us, so thank you, Chris. And here's your first job.

These are our enrollment targets. And these are targets that I would say, sort of, Kitty, would you agree, negotiated with SUNY, so we have to put revenue dollars into our stability plan, and they reflect tuition dollars that we expect to collect. And so, we can't just you know, blow that number up, and then turn it into revenue, and then just be surprised if we miss it. There's a real negotiation, for lack of a better word, with SUNY, and these are the targets that we've agreed on together. So, the enrollment team will have its work cut out for it.

And SUNY has started an academic momentum initiative, and that is what we're using now as a framework for our retention conversations. And they, again, sort of in a negotiated way, but they looked at all of the college's current data and then helped us set goals. So, here's four-year retention rates, four-year graduation rates. And you'll see that ESF has a 58.3% graduation rate for our students to graduate in four years. The SUNY average, 52.8%, and we have set as our goal 68.2%.

When I met with Chancellor John King, he talked specifically about our graduation rate. He said, given who we are as an institution, that we should be leading the pack, and they are really challenging us to do better on our four-year graduation rate. Here's our six-year graduation rate, and you'll see that we have work to do there. And this is Fall to Fall. This is where we do best, and we still have set a goal a little bit higher.

The Academic Momentum Committee is now, it's, you know, it's great to have things that we can measure and set goals and work toward those goals as a group, and Academic Momentum is off and running. I showed you this before, but I'll remind you in this conversation what moving the retention percentages can do to the bottom line. If we increase by 3 percentage points our retention rate, we can generate \$1.6 million over the next five years. So, the most important reason to focus on retention is because we owe it to our students. Our students' families save their money, their child's entire life, to send them to college. And we have an obligation to make sure that they succeed here, and that they leave with something reflective of that investment. That's why we do it, but when we do it, we will generate more revenue to be able to put those supports in place to help the next generation.

AcMo is what we affectionately call the Academic Momentum Campaign, and it is one of several initiatives that have come from SUNY. These come fast and furious, and I get the emails, and I pass them on to Lindi, and I pass them on to Kitty, and she passes some on to Renee, and it's become almost a full-time job itself to manage the initiatives, and to keep track of deadlines, and who's working on what, and so, therefore, I'm very happy that Sarah has agreed to help us corral, thank you, Sarah, to be stepping into the Director of Strategic Initiatives role, and will help the whole campus manage these initiatives, and serve as our Public Information Officer.

Tyler and the communications and marketing operation, because they work so closely with enrollment, are going to be moving over and reporting as part of the enrollment team. And then I broke off this part where local media that reaches out to us, that has questions or wants quotes on things, that should really stay in the President's Office, and Sarah's going to help us coordinate those responses. So, thank you very much, Sarah Yurka.

And we listened, at the Town Hall that the students hosted. Thank you very much for that. We heard that transfer students want a more robust orientation, and we are going to deliver them a more robust transfer orientation. It'll be longer, and it'll include the ability for students to register for classes earlier than they have in the past.

The transfer population is crucial to us, and we need to make sure that we're serving them as best we can, and this was a good idea that one of the students had, and I know Renee and Kitty are working on it.

And we have coming up this summer, for the first time, in partnership with the Syracuse Pulp and Paper Foundation, we are offering a pre-college summer engineering program for high school students interested in STEM, so stay tuned for that.

And the long-awaited winter session. So, I just told you how fabulous summer is, and all the great things that it does, provides to our students and to the College as a whole.

Winter is available, too. Most of the college campuses have a winter session. It's complicated here because of our relationship with Syracuse, but I knew we could do it. And in the winter of 2026, you will see the beginnings of the programming for a winter session here at ESF. I think Lindi says American history is one of the offerings for the winter session, and then there's a couple one-credit math classes, there's some refreshers on biology and chemistry, and it's a great start, but I hope you will start to see really robust offerings in the winter to provide our students with that bite at the apple that they might need.

I am realigning the college president's office, and the light green under the bar there, those are the direct reports that I will have going forward. It's fewer than there used to be, believe it or not. And then I added those blue, not to confuse people. Everybody in the blue box reports directly to the light green box above them, not through the one above them. And they are the titles that are being added to an expanded cabinet.

So we'll have the Executive Cabinet with the light green, and then we're inviting the Director of Facilities, the Chief Information Officer, the Dean of the Grad School, the Dean of Students, and the HR Director to all participate in the cabinet. I have the benefit of Ragan having served presidents who had other models of cabinets, and this is, I think, closer to the one that Neil used to have, with an expanded cabinet, an executive cabinet, and we're going to try this out. I think it's going to be good.

And then, we're all going to meet with you, Dan, and Molly, and the students. Thank you for inviting us. We're looking forward to a social. I know the Board members really reported good things about their invitation to a student social, so we're looking forward to that.

All right, one other big, important area of work to do is emergency management. I have heard people, and I know we can do better than we're doing in the area of emergency management.

Staff and students have been asking really good questions about our emergency planning, about our training, and about the security measures that we're using here on campus.

I attended the WSM training recently, and in 2026, this role requires deliberate attention every single day. So, our emergency plans have to be updated. We have a 2025 plan, but it needs to be updated. We have to train constantly, and we have to make sure we have the technology in place to keep people safe.

So, I am happy to tell you all that Pete Vandemark has agreed to serve as the Emergency Manager. I'm not sure that's exactly the right title, Pete, but he will be in charge of all of those things I just listed. He will help us update our plan, schedule trainings, and then help with the implementation of the \$4 million in security upgrades that are coming imminently to our campus. So, I put fiscal stability plan... thank you, Pete.

So, I put fiscal stability plan in our list of accomplishments, but it's back here on things to do, because we now have a lot of real, actual data that we need to use to update that fiscal stability plan. This is, this is it. I've shown this to people a lot. That is the plan. The part that matters, really, is this.

The two red towers are the current year and next year, and then we move July 1st of 2027 into the green. That is still the plan. There will be some adjustments made. And I will, I think coming up, I will tell you that I'm going to, with Matt Millea and Amy Brown, dive deep into the fiscal plan at tomorrow morning's Finance Committee for the Board of Trustees. And so, tune in, or attend, but for purposes of this conversation, the first red column is the current year, the second red column is next year with a much smaller deficit, and then we move to the green in 2027.

I also want to give a shout out and thank the Stability Planning Advisory Committee, SPAC. Jon Owens, I saw you come in, thank you very much. I think Colin is your co-chair, maybe? Colin, Dr. Colin Beier, thank you. This is a list of some of the things that that committee has been meeting and talking about. I attended the Town Hall that Andrea Parker hosted, it was fabulous, and I'm looking forward to the full report in the beginning of April.

And here is where I'm telling you, if you want more detail on the Fiscal Stability Plan, tomorrow morning, tune in.

This is on our to-do list, VSP Voluntary Separation Program backfills.

These are searches that are either ongoing or imminent. We will need to fill a Bursar, an HR Director, that's well on its way, Ragan tells me, and a search for the Executive Director of Enrollment Management and Recruiting.

On the academic side of the house, we will be hiring, you can see the numbers of new faculty in those academic departments, and an Environmental Science Director, which Lindi plans to have

an internal search to fill, because Russ Briggs is also retiring and we will have a new Environmental Science Director.

Also coming up is the 2026-2027 budget. I'll remind all of you, our fiscal year starts July 1.

Here's the schedule. You can write it in pen in your calendar; it's not going to change. This is the schedule. Monday, you are going to get your worksheets. And on August 17th, when we submit the budget to SUNY, we're going to give everybody back their budgets. I know there was a delay because SUNY had a lot of questions for us, but we will give them back to everybody on August 17th. I just said the fiscal year starts July 1st. This is SUNY's process, so we don't give them our final budget until we're well into the fiscal year. Just telling you.

Okay, and a new strategic plan, so much has transpired since our last strategic planning process, and Lindi's been thinking about how to refine the current plan. And instead of twisting ourselves into pretzels to fit into that plan, we've decided to just hold on to a lot of the great work and the great ideas that are part of that current plan, and then conduct a new process to have a more streamlined plan that will take into account our budget, which is far more clear and transparent today than it was when we put that last stability or strategic plan together. So, stay tuned for information about committees and about the process that we're going to use to develop this new strategic plan. Lindi's going to have a draft of a strategic plan available for the campus to react to January of 2027 and then taking into account all of those comments a fully adopted plan ready to launch in May of next year.

And we had this separate Middle States process to put assessment back together and deal with the Middle States process, and then we've had this separate stability planning process, and we had a standalone strategic plan process, and I want all the information that we have learned over these last couple years to come together so that all of this is working together. That the assessment goals are driving the budget, so we know where we have to put our resources, and that all of it keeps in mind that stability plan that we have that gets us into a balanced budget next year.

So, before we go, I want to talk for a minute about our friends in Albany, and in the last few years, they have been very friendly. There is an ESF alum, Senator Rachel May, and she has played a big role in the Senate One-House Budget, and the fact that it includes a lot for ESF, so I want to acknowledge and thank Rachel. Bill Magnarelli, on the Assembly side, has done the same, and we're grateful for the time and attention and support that we get from those two and the entire delegation.

Pam Hunter, Al Stirpe, Chris Ryan, and this Dr. Anna Kelles, who I was not familiar with until I saw that she had written a letter to her caucus in support of ESF. And I think it's because she is a scientist, and she knows what we do here at ESF, and she knows what we need, and she has really championed ESF in this budget process. So, thank you to all of them.

And thank you to UUP. There's Fred Kowal, and UUP has kept SUNY as a whole in the forefront of the conversations in Albany about funding, and specifically, they've paid a lot of attention to ESF. This panel that was really a panel of rock stars was very well received, and I know things like that take a lot of time and effort, and I want to thank UUP for their ongoing advocacy.

All right, so, you didn't think I would ever end. The state of our college. So when I come here next year, as president of the college, and I deliver the State of the College to all of you, I will be reporting on a fully accredited, healthy R2 Carnegie-rated institution with a fresh, new strategic plan on the verge of implementing the first balanced budget that this college has had since Neil Murphy was its President.

It has been... thanks, thank you.

It has really been a tough year for everybody, but I don't want to lose sight of the progress that we have all made by working together. I am grateful for your help, and for your guidance, and your support along the way. This is a job that's taken work from everybody on this campus, and I think we're doing a great job.

So, the state of our college is steady, it is strategic, and it is forward-looking.

The state of our college is more financially stable, more transparent, and most importantly, academically thriving.

So, thank you all very much for your attention, and I will see you at the reception.