

# **Executive Summary – Select Accomplishments and Example Future Initiatives: SUNY ESF Administration**

**President Quentin Wheeler**

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This is a summary of some accomplishments at ESF occurring during the past couple of years, and a few examples of planned future initiatives. These build on years of excellence in research, teaching, and service at the College. The accomplishments do not suggest our work is done; however, the accomplishments and initiatives described here reaffirm for me that we are headed in a very positive direction and making substantial gains.

## **Closing the Gap: Stabilize, Invest, and Grow**

A financial plan has been put into place to increase revenues to close the structural budget deficit. A few sources of revenue and/or efficiencies are the main focus of effort; however, many more have been identified and will be pursued as opportunities arise. The primary sources include increased proportion of out-of-state students, expanded development efforts through the hiring of three new staff members, online tuition, and energy management savings. With focused attention to this plan, we can eliminate the structural budget deficit within a few years.

## **ESF – Syracuse University Relationship**

Our relationship with SU is excellent. With a new five-year contract in hand, we continue our long standing relationship with SU as we build even more collaborative initiatives.

## **Collaborative Leadership, Shared Decision-Making, and Shared Governance**

I am a strong believer in collaborative leadership—a style of leadership that informs much better decision-making. Collaborative leadership, shared decision-making, and shared governance are foundational pieces of my administration. Input by faculty, staff, and students continually and directly inform decisions and priorities made by me and by the Executive Cabinet. Some examples of shared decision-making include several Presidential Advisory Groups I've formed or are in the process of forming, a number of College-wide Committees and Task Forces we've created, and numerous other initiatives.

## **National Visibility**

- *We recently received a number two ranking in Princeton Review's "Top 50 Green Schools Guide"—up from 33 the year before.*
- *We also have a number two ranking in the Sierra Magazine's "Cool Schools" issue—up from 104 the year before.*
- *ESF is one of 21 institution of higher-education listed on Princeton Review's "Green Honor Roll Schools."*
- *This summer, we achieved a STARS sustainability rating system Gold Rating for the first time, putting ESF in the top-tier of institutions.*
- We are listed in the American Association of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) guide to green schools.
- The College is one of nineteen founding members of *The Conversation*.
- I was invited to serve on the board of Planet Forward.
- We've had numerous faculty and staff gain national attention through a multitude of national and international media outlets.
- We are working on many efforts targeted toward differentiating ourselves from hundreds of other environmental science programs.
- We are working on ideas and initiatives that are so big, compelling, and potentially transformative that they entice donors to partner with us. This includes programs that have existed here for years as developed by creative faculty, staff, and students, as well as new initiatives that position us in new niche areas.
- A shift toward transdisciplinary approaches to science has been underway for more than twenty years. Important new and existing initiatives are essential for us to invest in, such as those in Chemistry and Paper and Bioprocess Engineering surrounding renewable and bio-materials, environmental health and environmental justice, and a renewed and elevated focus on urban areas, systems, infrastructure, and design, like those led by Landscape Architecture and Environmental Resources Engineering.

## **Conclusion**

I am confident that we are headed in the right direction and making spectacular progress. We are pursuing parallel tracks any one of which or a combination of initiatives could permanently close the budget gap. We are shifting ESF toward more collaborative leadership and shared decision-making and governance. We are acting on my commitment to make ESF more diverse, inclusive, and welcoming to everyone. And we are making progress increasing ESF's national visibility, such as our stellar sustainable campus rankings and engagements with new national-level partners. I will continue to focus on these positive issues of critical importance to the future of ESF. Imagine how much we can accomplish and how much faster we can accomplish it if we work together, and share our constructive feedback and best ideas.