

CAMPUS EMAIL to be sent at 10 a.m. on 7-19-16

SUBJECT: Message from President Jones

July 19, 2016

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students:

I'm writing to you today with mixed emotions to inform you that I will be leaving the University at Albany this fall to assume the dual positions of Chancellor of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Vice President of the University of Illinois System. My last day in the office will be Friday, September 30.

This decision wasn't easy for me and my family. In fact, it was one of the most difficult dilemmas I've faced in more than 37 years in higher education. I hope you all know how much I've really enjoyed and loved serving this institution and working with all of you and the leadership team to advance the University at Albany to the next level of excellence. Although I had planned to retire in this position, the opportunity to lead one of the most highly-regarded land-grant institutions among America's public research universities and the flagship campus of the University of Illinois System is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

When I came here in 2013, I found a campus that was still reeling from the aftermath of budget cuts and the closing of academic programs and unsure of where it was heading. Working together, we built an ambitious vision and regained our confidence. We have taken many, many strides forward and that has caused people across the region, the state and the nation to proclaim that "The University at Albany is on the move!"

I am very grateful for your support, and I am proud of the work we've done together. We have launched the largest and most strategic expansion of the University's academic programs in 50 years, with two new colleges and a deep affiliation with historic Albany Law School. We are laying the foundation for a major health sciences initiative and starting the conversation about reinvigorating the arts and humanities.

We have increased the size of the faculty, begun to address the challenging issues of adjunct pay and graduate student stipends, and expanded our support for faculty research, scholarship and creative activities.

We've taken major steps to enhance the student experience, both inside and outside the classroom. We have created new research and experiential learning opportunities for students, increased our commitment and services to assure that all of our students have high-impact learning experiences such as applied learning opportunities and internships, and the opportunity to hone their entrepreneurial skills to launch their own businesses. And we have added new opportunities for students to engage in campus life and enjoy the arts, cultural and athletic events.

We are building new ties internationally and expanding our global reach. We have attracted one of the most diverse and talented student bodies in the SUNY system, and we are supporting our students as they do amazing things.

Together, we've generated a lot of momentum – and it is being noticed. News media coverage of the university has grown substantially. Our faculty are competing successfully for major grants, like the \$10 million NIH endowment to address minority health disparities and the more than \$23 million contract to build the New York State Mesonet, the most advanced weather detection system in the nation.

Our alumni, friends, and faculty have responded enthusiastically to this compelling vision – donating more than \$52 million in my time here, including the two largest gifts in university history with more to come in the months and years ahead.

I urge all of you to keep this momentum going, for the excellence the University at Albany seeks and so richly deserves is well within reach. It has been a great privilege to serve as UAlbany president and to be a part of the SUNY leadership team at such an exciting time in public higher education. I want to thank Chairman H. Carl McCall and Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher for this opportunity, and for their strong support over the years.

Chairman McCall and Chancellor Zimpher expect an interim president to be appointed at the SUNY Board's next meeting in September. I know that you will give that person the same enthusiastic support you have shown to me.

Thank you for all you have done, and continue to do, to make the University at Albany an outstanding public research university. I will watch with great pride as UAlbany continues to strive toward its strategic goals.

Best regards,

Robert J. Jones, Ph.D.  
President