

**Accelerating Excellence and Impact:
Our Shared Journey to Stony Brook 2035**

**President Andrea Goldsmith's State of the University Address
September 29, 2025**

Good afternoon, esteemed students, faculty, staff, elected officials, State University of New York leadership, members of the Stony Brook Council and Foundation Board, alumni and friends.

To all of you attending either in person or online today, welcome!

I am so delighted to present my first state of the university address as the seventh president of Stony Brook University – The State University of New York flagship – and, the #1 public university in this great state!

I am deeply grateful and humbled to be entrusted with this role.

There is no more important time to serve as a university president, and no better place for this entrepreneur at heart to do so than right here...at Stony Brook...alongside each of you. Together, we will accelerate Stony Brook's excellence and impact across all dimensions of education, research, healthcare and service to our community, the great state of New York, the country, and the world.

Like many of you, my accomplishments resulted from a combination of hard work, the support of family, friends, mentors, teachers, and colleagues, and of course, at times, a bit of luck. As an academic, innovator and leader, my professional journey has been defined by three key things:

- Believing in myself;
- Forging new paths, and;
- Embracing high-reward risks.

In so many ways, I see Stony Brook has the same entrepreneurial spirit that I do: one that is ambitious...optimistic...and bold.

I started to see myself as Stony Brook's president as I began the interview process. The more I learned about Stony Brook, the more excited I became about the opportunity to lead it. In

fact, my kids cautioned me to not become too excited in case I wasn't selected because I would be so disappointed.

Despite the great wisdom of my children, it was too late.

I was hooked.

With every conversation I had and each story I read about Stony Brook's drive to excel, to innovate, and to elevate every person associated with this university, these characteristics resonated deeply with me.

It was clear this was the place I wanted to lead.

The sense that Stony Brook and I had the same spirit continued to grow as I moved forward as a finalist for the position...in the incredibly joyous moment when I learned I would become your next president ... and in all my engagements with this special community since that day.

During my first visit to this beautiful campus on a very cold day in January for my second interview, I stopped at the bookstore looking for a hat to keep me warm. The student who sold me the hat was so warm, much more so than the hat, and of course she had no idea I was there interviewing for the presidency. Like so many interactions that day and those that followed, the warmth of the people and the welcoming spirit at Stony Brook touched me. Since moving here in August, I've experienced that same affection as I've connected with people across Long Island. Whether I am enjoying a jazz concert, shopping in the village, or walking along the Sound, I have encountered so many kind-hearted people who make this place truly special.

You have welcomed me and my husband, Arturo, with such kindness, for which we are truly grateful. Thank you for making us feel at home. And thank you to my husband Arturo - my biggest cheerleader, best friend and the love of my life - for embracing this university and our new life here with great enthusiasm.

The Stony Brook presidency is so much more than just a job for me.

It is a dream opportunity for this lifelong academic who wants to make a significant positive difference to our students, faculty, staff, patients, community, country and the world.

One aspect of Stony Brook that makes me so proud to lead this great university is the commitment it has made to creating opportunities for all of our stakeholders. We do this by offering an outstanding accessible education at a tuition of \$7,000-a-year for in-state residents, which makes college affordable for our students, many of whom are the first-generation to go to college, and their families.

We create opportunities for our scholars to advance the frontiers of knowledge in their fields that drive life-changing impact. And we create opportunities for our healthcare providers who develop and practice leading-edge medicine with skill and deep compassion, which in turn creates opportunities for our patients to receive the best possible care...and for their families to benefit from the health, healing and hope that come with that care.

This university has created the opportunity for me to grow and learn as your leader, working alongside each of you to drive lasting impact as we fulfill our mission together.

But to me, success is not just defined professionally. The opportunity to be your president has also enriched my personal life through the new friendships Arturo and I have formed since moving here, and by bringing us closer to our children, Daniel and Nicole, who both live in New York City. Coming to Stony Brook allows us to see our kids often, forge lasting connections with the special people in this community, and introduce our family and longtime friends to the magic of Stony Brook and Long Island. While I knew when I accepted the position that becoming your president was a remarkable professional opportunity, I did not know how much joy it would bring to our personal lives as well, for which I am profoundly grateful.

Stony Brook's public mission speaks to me, as my own education has been exclusively in public schools, from kindergarten through graduate school. I am so grateful for the outstanding public education I received at a price I could afford, which served as the bedrock for all my future successes. And serving as your president is an opportunity for me to give back to public education.

My professional and personal journeys have been very much influenced by my parents. I credit them — specifically my mom's vibrant creativity and my father's mathematical and systematic rigor — for my ability to think technically, imaginatively, and broadly. Their influence helped me become a creative engineer and an innovative leader.

But the path to engineering, academia, and leadership was not apparent to me when I was young. My journey unfolded as I continually forged my own way, embracing high-reward risks and gradually building a strong belief in my own capabilities. From leaving a K through 12 public school system where I felt uninspired by the education I was receiving in order to enroll full-time at the local community college. To seizing the opportunity my community college offered to leave the United States for the first time ever to attend a month-long summer program in Paris, which I extended into a year of travel throughout Europe, mostly in Greece, where I found work as a Greek Bouzouki singer despite not having sung professionally and not knowing a word of Greek. Each bold move paid off in transformational experiences that became part of my broad education that continues to influence my personal and professional life to this day.

By the time I applied to UC Berkeley from Greece, and declared engineering as my major at my father's encouragement, a dream for my future was taking shape. But I wasn't sure I

could achieve that dream. My freshman year was hard. I didn't have the prerequisites for my engineering classes. I was working full-time as a waitress to pay for college. My grades were poor. Few people around me thought that a young woman struggling academically belonged in such a challenging major. I almost dropped out of engineering.

But I decided that, rather than listen to those voices who didn't think I could be an engineer, I would give myself the chance to succeed.

I worked hard, devoted more time to studying, and found a mentor. And things started to click. My grades improved. I enjoyed my classes. And I decided to stay in engineering as it would be a good foundation for whatever professional journey I would embark on after college. I graduated with an engineering math degree and went to work at a small startup in Silicon Valley.

It was there that I fell in love with wireless communication, which was a risky proposition at the time. This was long before Wi-Fi, and cellular technology had just burst on the scene with these huge, heavy, brick-like phones that could only make phone calls - no texting, photos, video, or apps - and which few people could afford.

But, to me, wireless wasn't about making calls from those big phones.

It was about infinite possibilities.

Channeling my mom's creativity, I could imagine the great potential for the future of this technology. I wanted to increase the depth and breadth of my knowledge about it in order to be part of the wireless revolution that I saw coming.

So I decided to go back to graduate school. I got my PhD in electrical engineering, and I became a professor like my dad...first at Cal Tech, and later, at Stanford. A few years after getting tenure at Stanford, I was enticed to make another bold high-risk move: to start a Wi-Fi semiconductor company based on my research.

After a roller coaster journey, the start-up went public. And as part of the reward of this bold adventure, when I returned to academia, I brought new knowledge and perspectives acquired through my startup experience to my research and teaching.

My next bold endeavor was moving across the country, having, to that point, been a life-long Californian. Moving in the middle of COVID for a new role at a new university was risky but also compelling. Serving for five years as dean of engineering and applied science at Princeton allowed me, as an academic leader, to make an impact beyond my own research, teaching, and field of electrical engineering.

When presented with the opportunity to come to Stony Brook, I was drawn by the chance to build on the university's momentum and the opportunity to make an even greater impact. I immediately recognized the parallels between the values that define me and those that shape this remarkable institution.

At Princeton, my leadership focused on one discipline – engineering; at Stony Brook, I have the privilege of guiding a much larger, more complex organization...one that spans engineering, the sciences, the social sciences, the arts and the humanities, a world-class medical center and the health sciences. The depth and breadth of Stony Brook's prestigious accomplishments and reputation across these areas appeal to me because they serve as a strong foundation to increase our excellence and impact going forward.

Although I did not know it at the time, each step in my journey—those I have shared and the many more I don't have time to cover today—have led me to this moment of becoming the seventh president of the #1 public university in New York State.

Finding out I got the job at Stony Brook, planning our move from New Jersey, and preparing for my first day on campus was exhilarating. But I could never have imagined the feeling I would have once I finally arrived and felt your deep enthusiasm to welcome me as your new president.

I'll never forget seeing over 700 Seawolves gathered on the Staller Steps for an ice cream social on my first day as your president, despite it being on a Monday during summer break. We held that event because, from the very beginning, I wanted to send a clear message to all of you:

I am here to support you, and I want to hear your stories, aspirations, and ideas.

The warmth and excitement of every single person I met on that day...who waited in a long line under the hot sun to say 'welcome to Stony Brook' was truly moving. I asked people what brought them here...what they aspired to...and how we could support them in achieving those aspirations.

In those conversations I heard again and again: people love it here at Stony Brook.

Now in my eighth week here, I cannot imagine a more fulfilling place to be — and across our East, West and Southampton campuses — people are telling me they feel that same way. Campus Lifetime has become one of my favorite Stony Brook traditions because I get to meet so many students. That has given me the chance to hear what matters to them and understand how we can support them. I have found our students to be truly amazing. Their energy, spirit and diverse talents make our campus vibrant and inspiring.

As a new Seawolf myself, I joined students and families last month for my first New Seawolf

Welcome Week, and wow! I was so impressed by the compelling set of diverse events to welcome our students, and by the heart and dedication of our Student Affairs team in putting them together. I myself had a busy and joyful week: helping students move into residence halls along with Wolfie, welcoming them at First-Year Convocation, celebrating the season ahead with our student-athletes, and joining the fifth annual Community Service Day where the great Class of 2029 began its journey as first-year students by giving back to our local community. Then, and now, I have found the generosity of Seawolves to give back to be an integral part of our vibrant Stony Brook spirit.

Stony Brook is my seventh university where I have been a student, a faculty member, or a leader. And of all of the campuses I've been part of, I find our Stony Brook undergraduates to be the most inspiring. Not only are they highly aspirational and extremely talented, but they are also truly grateful to be here. They have told me that they so appreciate they are getting an excellent, affordable education at a place where they feel they belong, and where they can thrive.

I hear regularly from parents, most recently on Saturday at the Family Weekend Breakfast, how much Stony Brook means to them. They're grateful for the exceptional education their students are receiving that is preparing them so well for their personal and professional journeys ahead...at a place that is welcoming and safe. I reassure parents when I speak with them that their students are in the care of people who truly value and support every student. As a parent myself, I understand that it deeply matters to their families how we care for our students.

As an engineer, I'd like to share with you some statistics. Stony Brook is one of the best universities in the country for upward mobility according to U.S. News and World Report. More than forty percent of our undergraduates are federal Pell Grant recipients — meaning they are students from families least able to afford college. Stony Brook is second in the Association of American Universities, or the AAU, for the proportion of undergraduates who receive Pell Grants. Our high share of Pell Grant recipients and their high earnings upon graduation, is the reason why Stony Brook was one of only three AAU institutions to be designated an "Opportunity University" in the new Carnegie Classifications.

Moreover, our four year graduation rates have increased by 21 percentage points since 2014. As a result, over this period of time, an additional 5,500 students have graduated within 4 years with a combined economic benefit to them estimated at \$430 million dollars - \$75 million in tuition and fees that they didn't have to pay for a fifth year of college, and an additional \$350 million in earnings. Though impressive, we aren't satisfied with these numbers; we aspire to help every one of our students graduate on time and debt-free with the ability to get a fulfilling well-paid job.

A moment ago, I mentioned our inspiring Class of 2029. They represent a Stony Brook

first...for the first time ever, over 53 percent of entering first-year students earned a high school grade point average of 95 or above.

All of these statistics reaffirm what a powerful role Stony Brook has, in partnership with the State University of New York, in making excellent, affordable education accessible to students from every single background.

This commitment to access and excellence extends to every corner of our university. Stony Brook University Hospital is listed among the Top 10 hospitals in New York by U.S. News and World Report and was named number one in New York State for pediatric care by Money Magazine. During a recent Stony Brook Medicine Town Hall Meeting, a video showed a family whose daughter was being treated for a terminal illness. In it, our clinicians, caregivers and staff hosted a party in this young patient's honor.

As the video played, it was hard not to feel the love from the caregivers whose lives this young woman had touched, the gratitude of her family for the compassionate care she received, and the joy from the uplifting party in the midst of the dire prognosis...At the video's conclusion, the pain of loss for everyone who cared for this patient was deeply felt when the final slide noted her passing.

This video captured the essence of Stony Brook Medicine. It's not just about the exceptional care that is delivered every day. It is how it is delivered: with skill, compassion and kindness that deeply touches peoples' lives.

It is, no doubt, a challenging time for higher education in the United States. As your president, I look forward to using my voice to advocate for the importance of Stony Brook, the State University of New York, and higher education broadly in helping to lift up all citizens and to ensure we continue to thrive as a country for current as well as future generations.

As your president, I will be Stony Brook's #1 storyteller - championing the stories we must tell about the positive impact of our education, research and clinical care. Because what we do here at Stony Brook — and across all of our State University of New York campuses — is essential to our nation's prosperity, security and upward mobility.

Together, here at Stony Brook, we have an opportunity to model for the world the special power of university life by fostering a caring and respectful environment where every Seawolf feels the spirit of belonging...an environment that will propel us to even greater heights of excellence and impact. Meaningful learning and growth happens when we engage with perspectives different from our own.

Throughout my life, I've learned the most through conversations and engagement with people whose experiences and perspectives challenged and expanded my thinking. I want

Stony Brook — our university — to be the gold standard for higher education where people come together to learn from each other, to have respectful discussion, and to be compassionate and empathetic to people that they don't agree with, because those conversations are the very essence of university life and learning.

In his State of the University Address this spring, Chancellor King spoke of SUNY's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, emphatically noting that "DEI is in our DNA." In my experience, I have seen that diversity drives excellence because bringing together people with different perspectives leads to better outcomes and greater satisfaction across academia, business, and government. I am so proud to be part of a university and a system that articulates regularly the importance of diversity to achieve excellence.

Our university, Stony Brook, is a university of infinite possibilities. Though we are young, especially in comparison to most of our peers in the AAU, we know what excellence looks like...and we know how to achieve it.

As I think about the impact we can have, I want us to think big.

I envision a greater presence...a greater impact...across our region than we have today. Just think what would be possible if we execute our strategic vision for Stony Brook from the heart of New York City, the greatest city in the world, to the eastern tip of Long Island. We have a desire to ignite our Southampton campus with expanded educational and cultural programming and by building a new hospital there. In New York City on Governors Island, we are leading the New York Climate Exchange and its bold aspirations to unlock solutions for mitigating climate change at speed and scale. And we expect to expand our presence in New York City to increase our reach and influence. As we do, we will accelerate Stony Brook's access, impact and excellence from Manhattan to Montauk.

Now as a life-long educator, I have an assignment for all of you: I want you to help craft a shared strategic vision for Stony Brook. That is why, since February, I've had hundreds of conversations that will continue throughout the academic year with students, faculty, staff, administrators, clinicians, alumni, donors, elected officials, SUNY system leadership and our important community partners to determine what Stony Brook should aspire to, and how we can achieve these aspirations together.

These conversations have pointed to the outlines of a strategic vision that I'd like to frame for you under three simple letters: A, B, C. The very foundation of education begins with these letters and makes it easy to remember the key pillars of our strategic vision for the next decade:

'A' stands for accelerating our excellence...in research, education, healthcare, and service to our communities and beyond. We must prepare our students not simply for their first jobs but for lifelong professional and personal success. That includes education in the liberal

arts, which cultivates curiosity and perspective. In my own personal and professional life, I have benefited from a well-rounded, liberal arts education. We must ensure our students get a broad education that will serve them well in all their future endeavors. In particular, in an era of AI, our graduates will thrive because we will teach them to think critically and broadly, to adapt, and to lead. Thus AI won't replace our students, it will amplify them.

When our students graduate, they become a part of our strong network of Seawolves helping Seawolves. Stony Brook alumni hold powerful positions across academia, business, and government. And these Stony Brook alums want to pay it forward by mentoring and helping our students land internships and jobs, which is especially important for our first-generation students who may not have family connections for networking. As we ignite and grow a strong alumni network, we're not only advancing student success, we're elevating Stony Brook's prestige and reputation.

During Governor Hochul's recent visit to our campus, which was an incredibly exciting day, she announced a \$300 million investment in Stony Brook's Quantum Research and Innovation Hub, a transformative initiative that positions Stony Brook, The State University of New York flagship, to become one of the world's premier centers for quantum information science and technology.

This investment and partnership is an example of accelerating our excellence that will elevate our research, as well as education, economic development, and workforce opportunities throughout the great state of New York. Despite recent external challenges to conducting research, Stony Brook will report a record \$340 million of research expenditures this year. That's a remarkable testament to the creativity, brilliance, and impact of Stony Brook researchers.

And that brings me to our second pillar, B. **'B' stands for build** - build new facilities to support our research and education mission ... build our faculty and student populations to educate more New Yorkers and to advance the frontiers of knowledge in more dimensions...and build on Stony Brook's successes to further elevate our excellence and impact.

We must build new education, research, and clinical facilities as well as upgrade our existing ones across science, technology, medicine, social sciences, humanities and the arts in order to support our state-of-the-art education, research and healthcare, elevate our prestige, and enhance our ability to recruit the very best faculty and students. And we must elevate the beauty of our campus by creating inspiring spaces and facades for our students, faculty, staff, and visitors to inhabit. Finally, we need to build facilities outside of Stony Brook, like the New York Climate Exchange and a new hospital in Southampton, to expand our reach and impact.

In addition to facilities, we must build our student body in order to expand access to

high-quality, affordable education for more New Yorkers. And we will support this growth by building places to house those students here on our campus or through other creative solutions to meet our housing needs.

Also essential to accelerating our excellence is to grow our faculty: retaining our exceptional faculty while attracting new faculty to provide an expanded student body an outstanding education while also advancing the frontiers of knowledge across more areas where Stony Brook can lead.

Which brings me to the last letter - “C” - in our strategic pillars. **‘C’ stands for catalyze**, which is about leveraging our research excellence and remarkable people to ignite innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic growth, from Manhattan to Montauk and throughout this great state. By catalyze, we mean the use of ground breaking research to accelerate solutions to important challenging problems. To achieve this, we will build an ecosystem where research translates into real-world impact, in technology and medicine and other disciplines. By fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among our students and faculty, we will create a culture not just for companies and non-profits to *start* here...but also to thrive and *stay* here.

There’s so much opportunity for Stony Brook to bring big companies, startups and every in-between size of company to New York State. Increasing our ties to industry, from major established companies like IBM and Micron to new start-ups, including those launched right here at Stony Brook, will allow us to leverage our research and education as a public good that fuels economic growth, prosperity, security, and well-being. As our reputation grows, we will attract companies of all sizes not only for our research and education excellence but for the opportunity to partner with a university that’s shaping the future.

There’s already so many ingredients at Stony Brook to help grow a hub of innovation and discovery around us. Our research park is already incubating new start-ups in technology areas spanning wireless, biotech, renewable energy and others. Brookhaven National Laboratory, one of the nation’s top research facilities, is a close partner right up the road. We are particularly proud of our role in managing the lab for the Department of Energy as well as the many collaborations we have with the lab that have contributed to our leadership in quantum networking, resulting in the state’s remarkable 300 million dollar investment, and in other areas such as nuclear physics, energy storage, and nano-technology.

We recently entered into a public-private partnership with Empire State Development and onsemi, a global leader in semiconductors that will construct a leading-edge research and development facility on our campus. Talk about a small world, my Wi-Fi semiconductor startup that I described earlier was bought by onsemi. So this partnership brings part of my professional journey full circle. More importantly, it positions Stony Brook, and New York State, to be at the forefront of critical semiconductor technology for U.S. innovation, economic development, and national security.

Across our campus, we have amazing faculty who are advancing the frontiers of knowledge in their fields and using new discoveries for positive impact...to create new medicines and advance technologies that significantly benefit humanity. And our history shows we know how to move foundational research out of the lab and into practice.

Research conducted right here at Stony Brook created an entirely new industry. Stony Brook Professor Paul Lauterbur was awarded the 2003 Nobel Prize for his ground breaking research in chemistry that led to the invention of the MRI, a medical imaging technique widely used around the world for disease diagnosis and tracking. We have repeated this history of translating our pioneering research into practice across many areas. Going forward, we expect to catalyze more of these translations to expand our positive impact on humanity.

These three pillars, ABC, A – accelerate, B – build, C – catalyze are the foundation of our blueprint for not simply driving impact and innovation, but super-charging it, accelerating enduring excellence now and long into the future.

Our collective vision for Stony Brook's future will be accomplished over the next decade and beyond. The path won't always be straight, and as I mentioned earlier, failures can be part of the process of setting and achieving high aspirations. I hope – and expect – to have a long presidency here at Stony Brook so I can look back many years from now with great satisfaction on all we have accomplished to accelerate, build, and catalyze.

Stony Brook continues to excel, bolstered by our strong partnership with the State University of New York. I am incredibly proud to be leading this university and I am truly optimistic about what lies ahead for Stony Brook. This afternoon, I have drawn parallels between my own entrepreneurial journey and the one Stony Brook is on. In both cases, being bold, setting high aspirations and taking risks to achieve them are essential for accelerating excellence and impact. Even in times of great disruption, we have the resilience to navigate challenges, and to thrive. We'll do this by setting a bold vision and clearly defining the steps to achieve our highest aspirations.

Throughout the fall and into the spring, I will continue my deep engagement and conversations about what we should aspire to be with members of our university and broader community, including Chancellor King, the SUNY Board of Trustees, our elected officials and our community partners.

We plan to have a series of town halls and small group discussions, to hear from all of you, starting with our first university-wide session on October 21 at 2 pm in the Bauman Center. Much like the inquisitive nature that has propelled me as an entrepreneur, an academic, and a citizen of the world, I want these discussions to be about thoughtful discourse, provocative questions, and testing of ideas. Your input through these exchanges will be instrumental in helping shape our shared vision for Stony Brook's future.

Later today during the reception, there are video kiosks where you can share your ideas and aspirations for our university with me.

Please be bold.

If we want to continue attracting the brightest minds, inspire elected officials and engage donors, we must show them what Stony Brook *can* be. And then we must build it together. Together we can make Stony Brook one of the best universities in the country and the world.

And so I ask you: how do we bring 2035 into focus today so that others can see, and feel and believe in our future as much as we do?

Think of it as Stony Brook in virtual reality, with no headset required. An immersive preview of a university that, 10 years from now, will be transformed.

What should we aspire to be?

What would Stony Brook look like in 2035?

I often tell our students and alumni that my goal is to elevate the value of a degree from Stony Brook University even further so that 10 years from now...when they say they studied at Stony Brook... the response will be *...wow, you studied at Stony Brook? You must be incredibly brilliant and talented to have studied at such a prestigious university.*

I want Stony Brook to signal excellence and impact across every discipline for everyone in the U.S. and around the world.

To achieve this bold vision requires all of you to be all in.

And we're going to start right now. I will need some help from all of you in the audience and from the most adorable mascot in the country – Wolfie!

Come on up, Wolfie, and help us look into the future!

Together with Wolfie, we are asking you to applaud if you believe we will see these headlines a decade from now:

- Stony Brook Provides Free Tuition for Every First-Generation College Student
- Powered by Stony Brook Entrepreneurs, New York State “Eats the Lunch” of California, Surpassing It as the Nation’s Fastest-Growing Innovation Hub

- Stony Brook's Endowment Surpasses \$5 Billion Dollars
- The New Hospital at Stony Brook's Southampton Campus Leaps to the Top Five in New York State in Its First Year of Operation
- Stony Brook's Adorable Mascot Wolfie Becomes a National Icon for Education and Research Excellence

And finally...

- Stony Brook University Ranked #1 Public University in the Country!

I want to hear from you. What is your headline to show that we have elevated our excellence and impact?

These headlines aren't just about hoping or planning.

They are about projecting.

Looking back from the future we're building together.

I invite all of you to envision Stony Brook in 2035.

Help shape it.

Help build it.

Help lead it!

I so look forward to working with all of you to set the highest aspirations for our excellence and impact and to achieve them together!

Thank you!