



The State University of New York
Student Assembly

For Immediate Release

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The Student Assembly of the State University of New York's Executive Committee and Student Government Leaders Call on Chancellor Jim Malatras to Resign

December 3, 2021 - Earlier this week the Office of the Attorney General of New York State released documents, transcripts, and other materials relevant to the sexual harassment investigation of former New York State Governor Andrew M. Cuomo. Some of these documents revealed conversations involving Chancellor Jim Malatras. His comments about a female co-worker, including the use of language such as, "go f*ck yourself", show a level of hostility and lack of professionalism that is unbecoming and should be disqualifying for the position of Chancellor. These comments and the behavior they demonstrate are reprehensible at best, and we find it necessary to call for the resignation and removal of Chancellor Malatras.

As the person charged with overseeing the largest public higher education institution in the country, the Chancellor should be held to the highest standards of integrity. In response to claims of a toxic work environment the Chancellor exacerbated and contributed to it by making other vulgar comments. It is imperative, now more than ever, that we support women and mothers (demographics that make up a significant portion of our system-wide student body) when they have concerns, and the Chancellor has demonstrated an inability to do so.

Legislators at the State and Federal level have condemned the behavior of the Chancellor and publicly called for his resignation. The Chancellor of the SUNY System should have the confidence of, and the credibility with, all levels of government. This is especially true for Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, who are responsible for allocating SUNY its budget each year. SUNY students themselves should have the complete confidence that whomever is serving as Chancellor holds the ability to successfully obtain the resources necessary to support the programs and services of our 64 campuses. As tuition paying students we have every right to expect that the highest standard of excellence will be adhered to by the University leadership.

The purpose of the Student Assembly is to represent the interests of students at the highest level, and across the state we are seeing the same sentiment emerge: critical action must be taken. In addition to all the specific reasons iterated thus far, many students are also worried

about the impact this will have on them personally. Allowing the Chancellor to remain in place damages the reputation of the system, detracting from our education and devaluing the degrees we are all working towards. Former Governor Andrew Cuomo resigned, in his own words, “because I work for you, and doing the right thing is doing the right thing for you.” We urge the Chancellor, a self-proclaimed pro-student Chancellor, to embody this mindset and do what is best not necessarily for him, but for the students he serves.

As we have seen consistently throughout the released documents, Chancellor Malatras is not opposed to personal retaliation, and it is highly likely that this will be made evident to us as elected student leaders because of this statement. Even before this, the agenda of system administration has always been to limit us financially, restricting our ability to operate independently in order to keep our advocacy priorities in line with the administration’s interests. This financial chokehold is likely to only worsen in the wake of this statement, but we understand that this advocacy is more important.

Should the Chancellor choose not to do the right thing and resign, we call on the Board of Trustees to remove him with a vote of no confidence at their next meeting, based on the concerns raised in our statement as well as those from the statements released by so many other organizations, policymakers, and influential figures across public higher education. Chancellor Malatras was approved by the Board of Trustees based on the influence of former Governor Cuomo and in spite of the objection of both the students and the faculty, and we have seen the negative outcome that this “process” created. Immediately following his resignation or removal, it is imperative that the SUNY Board of Trustees open a nationwide search process for the next Chancellor - a process that must incorporate student and faculty representation, involvement, and feedback and consider candidates of all backgrounds and all demographics.

About the SUNY Student Assembly

The Student Assembly of the State University of New York (SUNY SA) is the recognized student government organization representing the nearly 1.4 million students of the State University of New York. Comprised of student leaders elected by their peers from across SUNY’s 64 campuses, SUNY SA is committed to empowering students throughout the state, and ensuring the representation of its members on the state and national level, as well as throughout the SUNY system.