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It was an incredible show of solidarity in a short span of time, and I was proud to be part of it. Now, we’re continuing that momentum to raise $1 million to support degree completion initiatives for our military-aligned students, veterans, and their families—the largest effort of its kind in the college’s history.

SUNY Empire currently serves 1,300 military students and their family members. Students like Jess Peck ’19, an aircraft loadmaster in the Air National Guard, who completed her degree while stationed in Antarctica and Greenland for three seasons. Or like Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 3 Douglas Sherman ’17, who completed a degree after multiple tours in Afghanistan, Japan, and Germany, a career in the wireless technologies industry, and raising a family.

Whether active duty or veteran, these students, as well as their families—who are too often overlooked in terms of educational benefits—have sacrificed more than most of us can imagine to serve our country. I think it’s our duty to do all we can to ensure they have the support they need to earn a college degree.

If you would like to learn more or contribute to this unprecedented campaign, go to www.esc.edu/MilitaryGiving.

We showed that we could pull together to reach an ambitious goal in September. Now let’s come together to close the gaps for our service members, veterans, and their families.
We want our students, staff, and faculty members to walk into class or workplace with a feeling of pride and the knowledge that they’re part of a world-class educational institution.

Our First Winter Commencement
We are thrilled to have New York Gov. David Paterson deliver the commencement address at SUNY Empire State College’s 2019 Winter Commencement on Dec. 15 in the Empire State Plaza Convention Center. This will be our first college-wide commencement held in winter, in response to students’ desire to have more options. It follows summer commencements at our campuses across New York state and around the world.

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We have an unmatched footprint across New York state, with close ties to our communities and the resources to make positive contributions. Our Commitment to Community initiative leverages those strengths to help build stronger, more vibrant communities.

Before, we were an open computer labs to help our neighbors participate in the 2020 Census, serving as early voting sites, hosting public art exhibits, and addressing the opioid epidemic in community conversations, with plenty more to come in 2020.

Get in Touch
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SUNY Empire State College’s New Look
This fall, we unveiled a new look for SUNY Empire State College. The new logo wraps a burning torch in the tradition of a SUNY Empire shield to embody the SUNY Empire system’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are the college of the Empire State—now, we’ll draw on the powerful iconography of New York, and the Statue of Liberty as a beacon of opportunity and hope for all. We have also incorporated a new color palette and visual design kit to give our college a modern, unified look across all of our locations and communications.

Investing in the Student Experience
We cut the ribbon in Selden—our new $14 million, 6.6-acre Long Island campus—on Nov. 13. Joined by state and local leaders, we were excited to launch our state-of-the-art facility that was built to high standards for environmental sustainability, features public nature trails that connect to Suffolk County’s comprehensive hiking and biking trail network, and provides students with leading-edge learning facilities for both in-person and distance learning. It also will be equipped with performing arts spaces for programming under our innovative Arts Empower initiative.

We’re proud of this new facility and beautiful campus, and we look forward to it being a hub for students and the community.

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Questions with Jennifer Pettis ’12, ’17
Jennifer Pettis is a two-time graduate with both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree, of the college, a member of the Alumni/Student Federal Board of Governors, and a member of the Nurses West Club, which represents the college’s most dedicated supporters. Pettis was recently named an Alzheimer’s Ambassador to New York Sen. Charles Schumer, in recognition of her involvement as a leading expert in the area of aging and her work in supporting the college’s long-term-care program at Niche (Nurses Improving Care for Health system Elders) at the NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing, an adjunct faculty member with SUNY Empire’s School of Nursing, serves on the boards of the National Alliance on Wound Care and Ostomy (NAWCO) and the Alzheimer’s Association of Northeastern New York, and served as president of the Tau Kappa At-Large Chapter of Sigma, the Honor Society of Nursing.

Q. You received both an undergraduate degree in Health Care Management and a graduate degree in Nursing Education at SUNY Empire State College’s School of Nursing and Allied Health. How did you first come to SUNY Empire State College?
A. I transferred to SUNY Empire from an online program at another institution. SUNY Empire offered me the opportunity to customize my undergraduate degree to better meet my needs as a nurse. At the time, I was teaching, training, and involved in policy work. I wanted to learn about human resources, financial management, and facilities operations, while supporting my work as a teacher and a trainer. I was traveling throughout the country every week, so I really couldn’t study at a traditional brick-and-mortar school. SUNY Empire allowed me the flexibility to customize my degree and put me in a situation of learning with other adults, which was more personally fulfilling than studying with a cohort of young adults who were not in the same place in life as me.

Q. You were a member of the first cohort of students enrolled in the M.S. in Nursing Education program, which started in 2014. Although it is offered entirely online, did you find that the graduate program offered a more communal experience than the undergraduate program did?
A. After I finished the undergraduate program, I heard about the M.S. program, which was relevant to my work training nurses in long-term care. I really wanted to enhance my ability to evaluate learners and teach adults in a meaningful way. It was a very different experience from when I designed my own undergraduate degree. With the graduate program, it was amazing how much of a community I experienced in an online environment. I was shocked at how being immersed in nursing education again reignited my passion for my profession. It was such a joy to learn from my classmates’ experiences, while learning from my instructors. Through the faculty at SUNY Empire, I have really learned and understood the power of mentoring. Bridget Nettleton, dean of the School of Nursing, and Kathy Nye, one of the adjunct instructors in the graduate program, are special mentors to me; without their mentorship, I wouldn’t be in this amazing job I am in right now.

Q. While still enrolled as a graduate student, you served as president of the local chapter of Sigma, the Honor Society of Nursing. How did that come about?
A. I became involved with Sigma through the encouragement of Bridget Nettleton, and it’s ended up being an amazing experience. Serving as president as a student broke the mold, as faculty from one of the chapter’s schools traditionally served in the leadership role. It was an incredible opportunity to invite my wonderful colleagues and mentors and have them experience first-hand what it means to be a part of the honor society, including at international conferences, where I have met nurse leaders from around the world.

Q. You demonstrate a passion for Alzheimer’s research and treatment through your service on the board of the Alzheimer’s Association of New York and your role as an Alzheimer’s Ambassador to New York Sen. Chuck Schumer. Why is that so important to you?
A. My best friend’s mother died of Alzheimer’s, so it is her picture I wear at events. As board members of the Alzheimer’s Association, we have the opportunity to go to Washington, D.C., to meet with legislators to talk about the importance of Alzheimer’s research and education. As Sen. Schumer’s Alzheimer’s Ambassador, I, along with a team of advocates, work with the senator and his staff around the state, develop an understanding of the issues that are important to those living with Alzheimer’s and their families, and work to have the Alzheimer’s Association move those priorities forward. Most people have a connection to Alzheimer’s through either a family member or friend, so we enjoy very strong bipartisan support for our issues. Alzheimer’s is a public health crisis. Right now, 5.8 million people have Alzheimer’s disease in our country, it is the costliest disease to treat. The cost for treatment is expected to grow exponentially by 2030, as our population ages, to affect 14 million people. This year, Alzheimer’s will cost our nation $250 billion; it will be over a trillion by 2050. We need research support and care for those impacted by Alzheimer’s and we need legislators and the public to recognize the urgency of addressing the disease.

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A. It’s been wonderful to connect with other alums from different programs and different parts of the state. To have the School of Nursing and Allied Health represented on the board speaks to the growth of that program. I know that Nursing has grown immensely over the last several years under Bridget’s leadership. I think that my presence on that board speaks to the validation of the program as a significant part of the future of SUNY Empire.
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Learn more about the winter commencement ceremony at www.esc.edu/commencement

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