

**Dr. David Smith**

**Upstate Medical University**

—I want to thank you for making the trip to be here today and for listening to us. And I especially want to thank you for your service to the state on behalf of all New Yorkers. I know you have difficult decisions to make as we move forward during this budget process.

—Between now and March, during this legislative process call on us for clarification, with questions and we will continue to reach out to you.

The recent news in Central New York is not encouraging:

—Syracuse China plans to close up shop in March; 275 jobs gone

—New Process Gear will layoff more than 200 workers

—Development on a downtown convention center stalled

—But SUNY institutions can help the region and the state weather the economic storm and create that “New Economy” that is not “Wall Street centric.”

—We are major employers, we are engines of economic development and we are vital to the region in the support we offer the public. The re-engineered workforce will walk through our hallways and the laid off workforce will be revitalized in our laboratories and classrooms.

—We are one of the state’s best investments. Here are SUNY Upstate, it’s estimated that we return in excess of 8 dollars for every 1 dollar the state invests. That is an incredible rate of return especially in current market conditions.

—We help the state attract some of the top names in medicine and science. In the past year, top physician-scientists have joined the SUNY family from such prestigious places as the Cleveland Clinic NYU and the Moffitt Cancer Center in Florida. (and today announcing a recruit from Harvard)

—We and other campuses are helping New York stem the brain drain. A strong SUNY can attract—and retain—top scholars, scientists and physicians.

—Our research and clinical trial programs bring more than 40 million dollars in external support to the state, funding investigations into delivering medication with nano-spheres—a project we are collaborating on with Syracuse University—the role of exercise on osteoporosis, the use of technology to deliver healthcare to the outermost regions of the state.

—One our faculty's most recent discoveries that received national media attention was the use of special stem cells—pluripotent stem cells—taken from the skin to grow retina cells in frogs. This significant breakthrough brings us closer to finding cures for various types of eye diseases.

—We are educating more and more students than ever before. Our largest class of students was enrolled this fall in our College of Nursing. More New York state students are enrolled in our medical school today than before. We understand our role in helping the state stem the shortage of healthcare workers not just in our region but across New York.

—To further our relevance and responsiveness to Central New York, we've developed new programs that have been well received across this region. We're educating nurses to be nurse practitioners with an expertise in mental health to help with the lack of mental health providers across the state. We've created a special program for nurses in the Ithaca area to help them receive more advanced education in nursing. We are launching a PA program for rural practitioners and doubling the size of our Rural Medicine Program (R-Med) and Rural Scholars Program.

—The boundaries of programs are not solely Syracuse and the immediate area. Our designation as a hub for stroke care by the state puts the expertise of our neurologists into community hospital emergency rooms in places like Schuyler and Cortland County, so

residents there can get the very best care at home. Our Psychiatrists are reaching out from Binghamton to the North Country.

—We've reached out to Fort Drum and are working on ways our mental health staff can assist the military in supporting the needs of our service men and women.

—In our hospital we provide one of a kind services for the most complex cases of our areas most compromised patients. Our trauma center and burn center see patients all across the region and our specialized pediatric services, in neurodevelopmental pediatrics, cancer and blood disorders and other areas bring not only outstanding care, but hope and reassurance that we are here for families when they need us most.

—And I would be remiss if I did not speak of the support our employees provide and give back to the community. We organize coat and blanket collections to warm those who are cold, we field large teams for walks and runs to cure disease, we tutor city school kids on science and hopefully ignite their interest in this field, and we generously give our hard earned dollars to community service agencies: SUNY Upstate Medical University employees have given almost \$2.5 million dollars to local human services agencies in the past five years as part of the SEFA campaign.

—The amazing thing is that all of this and more has been accomplished with declining state support. Several years ago, we received 14 percent of our budget from the state; now we receive just about 11 percent. We have done well to continue our public mission in the face of a significant decline in State support, meanwhile the demands for our service continue to rise.

—And we have seen the economic crises with our patients: Main Street and Wall Street is now in my ER.

—We are at the crossroads of a failing economy and an increased need for health care.

— But the state funding is critical. It pays for the most essential members of our workforce: our faculty and staff. They not only see patients but teach our future professionals. Our Hospital is their classroom. That state support is the funding that primes the pump for everything else to happen here.

—The cuts compromise our patient safety net — and even our ability to educate for the health care shortage. As an employer the cuts compromise our ability to be an economic safety net for the region.

—First, we need to ask you to do all in your power to lessen the cuts. The cuts threaten our very public mission and they come at a time when more people are asking for our help. Our uncompensated care reached 38.7 million dollars last year.

—Second, we need to have a serious discussion on flexibility to get SUNY out from under the most labyrinthine web of regulatory constraints that adds costs and time to our mission.

—It has been said that it is easier for a Vet School to purchase imaging equipment for a horse that it is for our hospital to get a similar piece of equipment to treat our patients.

—We also object to how the tuition increase will be used—not to strengthen our campuses—but to reduce the deficit. Our students have selected SUNY for the outstanding quality we offer at a price that enables the pursuit of education of all. But on behalf of our families and the children, we must ensure that the price they pay to SUNY continues to buy the a quality product.

—Third, we need to get creative and also look to the Federal Government for some relief. In a recent edition of the Times Union, I wrote of a plan to bring more support for healthcare and education to New York, by suggesting the federal governor increase its support of Medicaid.

—Finally, we will all be patients some day. Who will take care of us? We're answer to that question in our education of doctors, nurses, technicians. We're making healthcare better through research and new procedures. We're helping the state through outreach.

—In closing, I want to thank you again for your past support for our mission and to say that we want to work closely with you in this legislative process.