

**NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF THE BUDGET
TOWN HALL MEETING**

**Buffalo, New York
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**Testimony of John J. Hurley
Executive Vice President and Vice President for College Relations
Canisius College**

Good morning Director Francis. My name is John Hurley and I am the Executive Vice President and Vice President for College Relations at Canisius College.

Canisius is one of New York's 100+ independent colleges and one of 28 Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States. With a total student headcount of about 5000 students, including more than 3200 full time undergraduates, 250 part time students and 1500 graduate students, Canisius is the place "Where Leaders Are Made." We say this because for a school of its size, Canisius has produced a disproportionately large share of the political, business, educational and professional leaders in the Western New York community.

I would like to address you today on the topic of higher education as a growth industry in Upstate New York. I think it is a topic that is sometimes overlooked as political and business leaders search for ways to stimulate our economy.

Canisius College has a vision. We want to be one of the top comprehensive colleges and universities in the Northeast. Over the past 14 years under the leadership of our president, Rev. Vincent M. Cooke, S.J., we have been pursuing a strategic plan that has propelled the college from its position as a solid local school into the top tier of

Northeastern schools in U.S. News & World Report's annual rankings. How have we done it? Here are the highlights:

- Canisius has invested more than \$120 million in its physical plant over the past 14 years. We have taken on several large renovation and construction projects designed to provide students with state-of-the-art educational, living and recreational facilities. In the process, we have literally transformed the face of Main Street in central Buffalo.
- Enrollment is up and the academic profile of our student body is increasing.
- We have added new programs in Bioinformatics, Digital Media Arts, Entrepreneurship and Health and Human Performance.
- Our students achieve nearly 100% acceptance rates when applying to medical, veterinary and law schools.

Simply put, there is no other business or institution investing its own money in the City of Buffalo as Canisius College does and we are justifiably proud of the results. We are transforming our neighborhood and all of Western New York has taken notice.

All of this demonstrates what Fr. Cooke has said since his arrival in Buffalo in 1993 – that higher education can be a growth industry in our community. With an \$86 million operating budget, Canisius would rank as the 20th largest company if it was a privately held company in Western New York. We employ nearly 1000 people, 35% of whom live in the city of Buffalo. We have recruited faculty from across the nation to come here to Buffalo and be part of the intellectual capital of our community.

Canisius College is now embarking on its most significant development challenge – the acquisition of the now-vacant HelathNow building that will be transformed into an

interdisciplinary science center. Our project will allow us to take an exceptional science program and make it even better. It will help Canisius to play an even greater role in the rapidly expanding medical/science corridor in central Buffalo – facilities where the state of New York is already heavily invested.

And one more factor cannot be overlooked – the development of an interdisciplinary science center by Canisius College in the heart of the city of Buffalo, in a building that would otherwise sit vacant, represents a significant economic development opportunity. It is a development that is among the largest now underway in the city.

Canisius College's \$47 million interdisciplinary science center project will be financed in the majority by funds that the college intends to raise from private sources. We have already secured some state and federal assistance but we have been working with the Governor's office and Sen. Volker on an additional capital budget grant that is absolutely critical to the success of this project. As the state proceeds with the development of its strategic economic development capital fund, we ask your consideration of this state capital grant to allow this important educational and economic development project to proceed expeditiously.

All across Western New York, independent colleges and universities like Canisius are pursuing strategic plans that will involve more buildings, cutting-edge academic programs, highly-qualified faculties and more jobs. In higher education today, institutions cannot afford to stand still because there is too much competition around.

Our eleven independent colleges in the region have direct expenditures of over \$412 million in the region and a projected economic impact of over \$1.125 billion. And we're currently working with the Western New York Consortium on Higher Education to

measure the economic impact of the entire Knowledge Industry – public and independent – in the region.

We know that 25,000 students are enrolled in the independent colleges. Without strong, viable institutions, these students would go elsewhere and not necessarily to the local SUNY units. At Canisius, we believe that every time we bring a student into Buffalo's center city to live and learn, we are strengthening the core of our region and developing people who can help lift Buffalo out of its problems. We need to educate students here and convince them that there is long term employment potential here.

With this record of achievement in mind, what can state government do to help? I call today for a reorientation in our thinking about higher education and the role that it can play in economic development. The economic impact statistics and the success stories like Canisius College should convince us that we need to look at higher education in a new light. We educate our students and prepare them to be leaders – that's our primary mission. But as institutions seek to grow and prosper, we become more and more significant components of our local economy. And most of us ask for so little from state and local government. Our eleven independent institutions in Western New York are jewels and their potential for job creation and economic impact is tremendous. Our institutions are extremely tuition-dependent in their operating budgets. In the case of Canisius College, we are eighty percent tuition dependent. As we attempt to expand, we encounter the same problems as any emerging small business. We need access to working capital to supplement our tuition revenues and private fund raising.

Current circumstances require that any measures proposed by the state be cost-effective, very targeted and above all, likely to succeed. As I hope my testimony has

indicated, higher education, particularly the independent sector, is a prime target that I hope you will consider.

John J. Hurley
Executive Vice President and
Vice President for College Relations
Canisius College
2001 Main Street
Buffalo, NY 14208
Tel. (716) 888-8200
E-Mail: hurleyj@canisius.edu