

Charge to the Summit

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What a magnificent audience – it's a gathering of the leaders of the most comprehensive system of education in the nation!

And we also have the future leaders with us – more than 30 students. Thank you for coming.

Our charge is to mobilize *as a system* to raise achievement and close the gaps in achievement that are visible at every level.

But we are already in motion, you say. And achievement is up. So why have this conversation now?

Achievement is up and you made that happen. More graduate than before. More pass Regents exams. National Assessment results for New York over the last decade show that the gaps between racial and ethnic groups are closing. New York leads the nation in the proportion taking SAT exams and earning qualifying scores on AP. More persons with disabilities complete high school and college.

All sectors of higher education have shown distinction. We are on our way to a million licensed professionals. The collections in the libraries, archives, and museums are unmatched, and those institutions use their collections to teach young people and adults.

Every sector of USNY has improved. Every sector has bold plans for further improvement.

So again, why have this conversation now?

First, while achievement is up, many students are not fully educated. Almost 80 percent of white 4th graders meet the ELA standards, but only 54 percent of black students do. Only two thirds of those who enter 9th grade graduate from high school four years later. And only 70 percent of those who attempt a BA achieve that goal by the end of the 6th year. The rest have the debt but not the diploma. At every level we see a divide along lines of race and income. The gaps remain. The gaps are unjust. The gaps are indefensible in economic terms.

Here's a second reason for this conversation: We all need to know more for work, citizenship -- for life. So we must raise the achievement overall.

And then there is the global context – China, India, the EU, and others. Nations that can afford it are racing along the same path we are. The future belongs to those with the skills. Let's look at one example.

Shanghai has a population equal to that of the whole *state* of New York. In 1985 there were no skyscrapers there. Today there are more than 2000.

China is providing an elite secondary education in mathematics and science to the top 5-10 percent right now. They are on a path to a solid basic education for everyone by 2020. They intend to have 100 world-class universities. China has 1.3 billion people. They could get it wrong most of the time and still have more people ready for the high skilled jobs of tomorrow than we will.

Since the late 70's, China has dispatched waves of young leaders to the west for an education. Those who returned are the leaders of today. Zhou Ji, the Chinese Minister of Education, is a SUNY graduate. He understands the link between a high standards education and China's economic future in a global environment. What's

remarkable is that middle school students in Xi'an also understand. Both the students and the leaders I talked with share a global view that is a profound advantage for China.

USNY is our advantage. It's a pipeline of opportunity. New York is the only state where all the educational and cultural institutions are in one structure, and under the care of one Board – the Regents. We are loosely coupled, as we should be, but we are connected.

Yet our advantage is not fully realized. We see heroic behavior at every point in the system. But if USNY is a pipeline of opportunity, it is a pipeline that leaks. We do not think and act with the awareness that the parts are interdependent.

In eight regional meetings this year, we developed some shared aims for USNY. They seem easy to embrace, but hard to achieve. Achievement requires joint venture. Can we commit to those aims?

Do we agree that our achievement of those aims is not as it should be?

Those regional discussions suggested three points of opportunity: early education, high school, and higher education. Should we concentrate on better results there?

And those discussions posed some actions. Are they the right actions? And do we commit to them?

We have wonderful speakers. Their task is to prepare us for the real work at this Summit. This Summit will be a success if everyone talks in the table discussions. Please don't leave until you have heard all the speakers, had your say, and listened to your colleagues.

At the end of the day, we will share some commitments. What will *you* do, with your organization behind you, to close the gaps and raise achievement?

And be ready for years of follow through.

As we begin, let me thank those who prepared this day. The Regents, first of all. They are the hosts, and they have been preparing for months by listening to USNY leaders across the state. The District Superintendents convened those regional meetings, and they are here as leaders today. The Deputy Commissioners helped convene this Summit by reaching out to you, and their policy recommendations to the Regents helped build the foundation.

We thank our partners in the business community, and in particular, Linda Sanford, Chair of the New York Business Council. We thank the advisory panel members who helped prepared the way. And I thank Rebecca Kennard of SED, who led the staff team that planned this and executed the plan.

Thank you all for being here and for the work we are about to do together.

Let me now introduce David Gergen...