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A Special Supplement to the Sullivan County Democrat

A look at activities
at SUNY Sullivan
Community College

SCENE



Microcredentials at Catskill Hospitality Institute

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

SUNY Sullivan is using innovative microcredentials through its Catskill Hospitality Institute. This initiative, described by the Director of the Catskill Hospitality Institute, Justine Hoskin as “little appetizers” of the full degree programs, aims to equip students and adult learners with crucial skills in a condensed format.

Launching this fall, the microcredential program includes courses designed to enhance skills in specific areas such as culinary arts, restaurant management, event planning, basic bookkeeping, and tax preparation. These credentials, expected to be completed within a semester and totaling no more than 12 credits, provide a strategic pathway for those aiming to quickly boost their qualifications and job prospects.

Hoskin explained that these microcredentials are not only beneficial for current students but are also tailored for non-traditional, adult learners who are either currently employed in the industry or considering a career shift. “The goal is to provide education that can lead to immediate employment opportunities or advancement within their current roles,” said Hoskin.



SUNY Sullivan culinary students working and prepping dishes.

One key component of the microcredential offerings is the “Introduction to Culinary and Baking Basics,” which includes courses on sanitation and safety, food and baking introduction, and culinary theory and development. These are designed to meet the needs expressed by local employers for skilled workers in the hospitality and culinary sectors, which are particularly

vibrant in the Catskills region.

These credentials will be validated through digital badges, a system facilitated by SUNY Sullivan’s partnership with Credly, allowing students to showcase their achievements on professional platforms like LinkedIn and their resumes.

“With those, you can earn badges. Those badges are

PLEASE SEE HOSPITALITY, PAGE 10S



School Scene

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The Promise Scholarship

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

SUNY Sullivan has introduced the “Promise Scholarship,” a pioneering initiative designed to alleviate the financial burdens of higher education for local students. This program promises a more inclusive future for education by providing eligible students with the chance to attend SUNY Sullivan without the weight of tuition and mandatory fees.

The Promise Scholarship is specifically targeted at students scheduled to graduate from high school in 2024 or those who will earn a GED that year.

“This is essentially free tuition and fees, provided students complete the necessary steps to determine their eligibility.”

Eligibility criteria require applicants to have resided in Sullivan County for at least two years before enrollment and to have maintained a minimum GPA of 70. Furthermore, all applicants must engage in the financial aid process to qualify for the scholarship, which effectively acts as a “last dollar” award, filling any financial gaps left by other federal and state aid sources.

“This is essentially free tuition and fees, provided students complete the necessary steps to determine their eligibility,” said Christina Buckler Director of the Scholarship for SUNY Sullivan.

The comprehensive coverage of this scholarship extends to any unmet costs, ensuring that students are not deterred from higher education due to financial constraints. This includes support for students from families that do not typically qualify for



Christina Buckler, director of the Promise Scholarship for SUNY Sullivan

conventional financial aid due to higher income brackets but who still face significant challenges in managing college expenses.

Since its inception in the fall of 2022, the Promise Scholarship has seen a marked increase in applications. In its first year, the program received 140 applications, a number which soared to 239 by 2023. The growing interest in the scholarship underscores its critical role in making higher education more attainable and appealing, particularly for those unsure of their future academic paths.

The funding for this scholarship is provided by Sullivan County and represents a strategic investment in the county’s future by nurturing its young residents’ educational aspirations. By removing financial barriers to college, SUNY Sullivan is not only empowering individual students but also reinforcing the educational framework of the community at large.

One poignant testament to the impact of the Promise Scholarship comes from a local parent, who

initially expressed skepticism about the program’s benefits. This parent’s perspective shifted dramatically after their first child participated in the program, citing it as the key reason for their decision to keep their second child’s education local as well. “It’s a big decision-maker,” the parent noted, highlighting how the scholarship had fundamentally changed their family’s approach to college education.

The Promise Scholarship is indicative of SUNY Sullivan’s proactive approach to educational accessibility. By covering the complete cost of tuition and mandatory fees, the program helps mitigate the economic disparities that often hinder students from pursuing higher education.

The scholarship is particularly significant in light of the increasing costs associated with obtaining a college degree, which include not just tuition but also books, housing, and other living expenses—costs that can be prohibitive for many families.

School partnerships and direct

outreach initiatives ensure that high school seniors and their families are well-informed about the opportunities the Promise Scholarship provides.

In addition to easing the financial load, the Promise Scholarship also supports the academic and professional development of students. By enabling access to higher education, the scholarship opens doors to better job prospects, higher earning potential, and a more secure future. It also encourages students to invest in their local community by obtaining their education locally and applying their acquired skills within the region.

The success of the Promise Scholarship is a beacon of hope for many in Sullivan County, offering a tangible solution to the escalating challenge of college affordability.

Through the Promise Scholarship, SUNY Sullivan is not just promising free tuition; it is promising a brighter future for its students and the community it serves.

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EOP: Bridging the Educational Gap

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

The Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), designed to support students who face significant academic and financial challenges. This initiative, though long-established across various State University of New York campuses, marks its inception at SUNY Sullivan, promising a brighter educational journey for many.

Originating from the vision of Arthur O. Eve over fifty years ago, EOP has been a transformative force in the SUNY system, aiding students who are academically underprepared and financially disadvantaged.

By providing a structured environment over the summer, students can build confidence and acquire essential academic skills, setting a solid foundation for their college careers.

The program is lauded for its comprehensive support system which includes academic advisement, personal counseling, and financial assistance, crucial for students navigating the complexities of college life.

Esther Fitzgerald, the program's newly appointed director, SUNY Sullivan's EOP is taking shape with an inaugural group of 30 students expected this summer. The aim is to extend this to 20-30 additional students by the following year, highlighting the program's ambitious expansion plans.

Fitzgerald, reflecting on her new role and the EOP's potential impact, shared her aspirations for the program: "My freedom



Esther Fitzgerald, Director of SUNY Sullivan's EOP

dream for EOP is to have the students who are in EOP really be the leaders on campus."

This vision extends beyond academic success; it seeks to cultivate a supportive community and empower students through a sense of belonging and collective growth.

A cornerstone of the EOP at SUNY Sullivan is the pre-freshman summer program. Set to commence this July, the program aims to ease the transition from high school to college. Participants will engage in college readiness activities, including courses in English and math, and workshops designed to develop life skills such as cooking and networking.

This proactive approach addresses a common concern among college freshmen—

the stark transition from high school. By providing a structured environment over the summer, students can build confidence and acquire essential academic skills, setting a solid foundation for their college careers.

EOP's support extends beyond the classroom. It addresses various student needs from transportation assistance to personal counseling, ensuring students have what they need to succeed. This holistic approach is crucial, particularly for students from low-income backgrounds who might otherwise struggle with the hidden costs of college education.

Fitzgerald's community ties and her commitment to SUNY Sullivan run deep. A local herself, she brings a personal understanding of the community's needs and the

transformative potential of EOP. Her involvement in community services like Rotary during her college years at SUNY Sullivan underscores the importance of community engagement in her vision for EOP.

Looking forward, the challenge will be to sustain and expand the program, ensuring it can support more students and continue to break the cycles of educational disadvantage.

SUNY Sullivan's adoption of the EOP marks a significant step forward in making higher education accessible and supportive for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Applications are now open and can be found at <https://sunysullivan.edu>.



(607)-290-4315



New nursing opportunities at SUNY Sullivan

STORY AND PHOTO
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

SUNY Sullivan is on the verge of expanding its nursing program to address the acute shortage of nurses in Sullivan County and the larger Hudson Valley region. This expansion aims to adapt to the needs of the community by providing flexible scheduling options for prospective nurses, including evening and weekend classes.

This initiative reflects a strategic response to the ongoing national crisis in nursing availability, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent "Great Resignation."

The current nursing program at SUNY Sullivan offers a traditional format, where students, categorized as freshmen and seniors, participate in clinicals during the day. This program format, though beneficial, is restrictive for individuals who have daytime commitments due to employment or caregiving responsibilities.

Chryse Taylor, Director of Nursing at SUNY Sullivan, outlined the future direction of the nursing program, emphasizing inclusivity and accessibility. She detailed plans for an evening cohort and a weekend cohort designed to cater to working individuals, particularly Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) seeking to advance their qualifications to Registered Nurse (RN) status.

The evening cohort is envisioned to run classes from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., accommodating those who work standard daytime hours. This would allow students to continue earning a living while pursuing their nursing qualifications. The proposed weekend cohort is particularly innovative, offering LPNs the opportunity to attend intensive sessions on Saturdays. This could potentially expedite their educational journey, with the possibility of bypassing up



From left to right: Associate Professor Karen Faraci, a mannequin patient named Amy Jenkins and Chryse Taylor, Director of Nursing at SUNY Sullivan.

to two semesters of coursework based on credit-by-examination, depending on their performance in the entry exams.

These proposed programs are currently awaiting approval from the New York State Education Department, a process that has been slower than anticipated. Despite this, the initiative reflects a proactive approach to educational planning, directly targeting the regional nursing shortage. The Hudson Valley alone is projected to require an additional 40,000 RNs by 2030 to meet the healthcare needs of its population, according to estimates by the American Academy of Colleges of Nursing.

To facilitate these new programs, SUNY Sullivan is actively seeking to expand its faculty by hiring master-prepared nurses for full-time and part-time roles in lecturing, clinical supervision, and lab work. This recruitment is critical to the program's success,

ensuring that there are sufficient qualified professionals to educate and mentor the next generation of nurses.

The nursing shortage in the region has reached a critical point, highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic when the demand for healthcare workers surged. Many nurses left the field due to burnout or retirement, intensifying the need for a robust pipeline of new nurses.

The expansion plans also include a new approach to helping previous nursing graduates who have struggled to pass the NCLEX-RN—the national licensing examination for registered nurses. A summer review program is being introduced to specifically address changes in the NCLEX and improve pass rates among SUNY Sullivan graduates. This program is designed to refine the clinical judgment and case study skills essential for modern nursing.

As these programs develop and evolve, they promise to significantly alter the educational landscape for nursing in Sullivan County, offering more inclusive and flexible pathways towards a nursing career. This will likely attract a broader demographic of students, including those who might not have previously considered nursing due to logistical constraints.

Taylor says SUNY Sullivan's commitment to expanding its nursing program is a beacon of hope for the local community. It promises to enrich the healthcare system by equipping it with well-trained, competent nurses ready to face the challenges of the modern medical environment.

This strategic expansion will not only help alleviate the nursing shortage but also ensure that residents of Sullivan County and beyond have access to high-quality healthcare provided by highly skilled professionals.



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HOSPITALITY: Building the Sullivan County workforce for tomorrow through education

FROM PAGE 25

something great to share with employers to say, 'Hey, I've gotten some education within this concentration,'" said Hoskin.

Hoskin also highlighted the broader impact of these programs, noting their potential to elevate local workforce standards, which aligns with SUNY Sullivan's mission to respond effectively to the community's educational and professional training needs.

The institute is also planning to extend its educational reach by integrating these microcredentials into regular degree programs, providing students with both foundational knowledge and specialized skills that are immediately applicable in the workplace.

Apart from culinary arts, SUNY Sullivan is expanding its microcredential offerings to include areas like tax preparation and basic bookkeeping, which will also be available this fall. These programs are structured to



allow completion within a single semester, making them an ideal choice for individuals seeking rapid upskilling.

Engagement with local businesses is a key strategy for SUNY Sullivan. Although

there isn't a direct recruitment connection with local restaurants, the institute conducts various short-term courses like the two-day safety and sanitation course, which sees participation from local businesses like Foster Supply

Hospitality.

Looking forward, SUNY Sullivan is focused on expanding its impact beyond immediate educational outcomes. By collaborating with local high schools and community businesses, the institute aims to build a more robust educational framework that not only supports current industry needs but also anticipates future demands in hospitality and tourism.

The introduction of these microcredentials represents a significant step forward for SUNY Sullivan and the Catskill Hospitality Institute in their commitment to educational innovation and community engagement.

With these programs, SUNY Sullivan is poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the workforce of tomorrow, ensuring that graduates are not only well-prepared for their careers but also equipped with the knowledge and skills to thrive in a dynamic and ever-evolving industry landscape.



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