



**TO:** Higher Education Committee  
P-12 Education Committee

**FROM:** John L. D'Agati  
Cosimo Tangorra, Jr.

**SUBJECT:** Panel on Opportunity Programs

**DATE:** November 10, 2014

**AUTHORIZATION(S):**   
**SUMMARY**

**Panel Presentation**

A four member panel consisting of: Phyllis Breland, Director of Opportunity Programs (HEOP) at Hamilton College; Dr. Geezer Ortega, a former Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP) student; Teneka Frost-Amusa, Esq., Associate Counsel, New York State Department of State, a former Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP) student and Taylor Blue Clarke, a current Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP) student. The panel has been convened and will address the Board to discuss their individual educational journeys and how their experience(s) in an opportunity program(s) had a positive impact on their lives.

**Background Information**

The State Education Department's Office of Postsecondary Access, Support and Success administers over \$55 million each year in competitively bid grant contracts to 130 colleges and universities to operate four opportunity programs (Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program, Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program, Science and Technology Entry Program, and the Liberty Partnerships Program) which provide support services and financial assistance to more than 26,000 students annually.

## **New York State Education Department Opportunity Programs**

### **Liberty Partnerships Program**

The Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP) was established in 1988 under Section 612, Subdivision 6 of the Education Law in an effort to address the elevated, high school dropout rate among New York's youth. The authorizing legislation stated *"the failure of many young New Yorkers to complete their secondary education limited their opportunity for a life of fulfillment, prevents them from advancing into postsecondary education and hinders the State's efforts to provide a well-trained workforce for business and industry in New York."* The Liberty Partnerships Program is included in the New York State Education Department's Statewide Plan for Higher Education as part of its strategy to maximize the successful transition of middle and high school students, who are at-risk of dropping out of school, into graduates, fully prepared for the rigors of higher education and the competitive demands of a fluid workplace in a global economy.

The Liberty Partnerships Program provides funds for higher education institutions to offer comprehensive pre-collegiate/dropout prevention programs and services to more than 11,000 students, grades 5 through 12, in through 39 funded projects with 55 different schools in urban, rural and suburban communities of Western New York, Finger Lakes, Central New York, Southern Tier, North Country, Mohawk Valley, Capital District, Mid-Hudson Valley, New York City and Long Island. The program works to guide young students to meet not only the academic rigor of a college program but to also focus on the social and non-cognitive skills which are critical to ensure that the student is college and career ready. Results indicate that more than 90% of LPP students complete high school with more than 99% transitioning from year to year until graduation.

### **Science and Technology Entry Program**

In April 1985, the New York State Legislature passed an amendment to Education Law Chapter 31, Article 130, Section 6454, to authorize the use of funds under the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP). The purpose of STEP is to prepare historically underrepresented or economically disadvantaged secondary school students for entry into postsecondary degree programs in scientific, technical, health related fields, and the licensed professions.

STEP engages higher education institutions to provide academic enrichment in science and mathematics content areas to nearly 9,000 students in grades 7-12 through 50 projects impacting more than 400 schools. Projects consist of academic year and summer components including: core subject instruction/Regents exam preparation; supervised practical training; supervised research training; college admissions counseling; standardized tests preparation; and career awareness/development activities. STEP students have a high school graduation rate of 97% with approximately 86% pursuing college study in science and technical fields.

## **Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program**

That same year, the New York State Legislature passed an amendment to Education Law Chapter 31, Article 130, Section 6454, to authorize the use of funds under the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP). The purpose of CSTEP is to increase the number of historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged undergraduate and graduate students who complete pre-professional or professional education programs of study that lead to professional licensure and to careers in mathematics, science, technology, and health related fields (hereafter referred to as CSTEP targeted professions).

CSTEP provides additional support to higher education institutions to improve student readiness through enriched science and mathematics instruction, delivering science content through research-based practical training, introducing inquiry based learning techniques, providing standardized graduate school test preparation, and assisting with the graduate/professional school application process for close to 6,000 students each year studying at 49 different higher education institutions. CSTEP also increases career awareness by providing practical training to link coursework to careers, convening career development conferences, displaying student accomplishments through presentations, competitions and awards, and providing graduate and professional school recruitment opportunities. 70% of CSTEP students complete their program of study in STEM fields. This is 11% higher than the national average for students completing college, which sits at 59%. On average more than 15% of CSTEP graduates enter the licensed professions.

## **Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program**

In May 1969, the New York State Legislature passed an amendment to the Education Law that authorized a program to expand educational opportunity in independent institutions of higher education. The primary objective of the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) is to help provide a broad range of services to New York State residents who, because of academic and economic circumstances, would otherwise be unable to attend a postsecondary educational institution.

HEOP provides funds to private higher education institutions to assist in the recruitment, screening, and testing of prospective students. Annually, HEOP provides structured support services to nearly 4,900 students through 53 programs at institutions located across the state. This includes a pre-freshman summer program to introduce students to college expectations, academic, financial and career counseling, one-on-one and small-group tutoring, and remedial/developmental coursework. In addition to the academic support systems, program participants receive financial assistance toward their college expenses. The average graduation rate of more than 81% shows that even those students who begin their higher education journey with academic and economic disadvantage can succeed when provided financial and academic support. Of these graduates 74% immediately proceeded to enter graduate school or the workforce.

## **State University of New York System Administration Opportunity Program**

The State University of New York's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) provides access, academic support and financial aid to students who show promise for succeeding in college but who may not have otherwise been offered admission. Available primarily to full-time, matriculated students, the program supports students throughout their college careers within the University. Educational Opportunity Program students may receive support services, such as academic, career, and personal counseling; tutoring and supplemental instruction. As part of a student's overall financial aid package, the Educational Opportunity Program provides financial assistance for non-tuition related expenses (e.g. books, supplies, etc.).

## **City University of New York Opportunity Programs**

### **Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge**

The City University of New York administers two Opportunity Programs. The first is the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK program. SEEK stands for Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge. It is the higher education opportunity program at the senior (four year) CUNY colleges. It was established to provide comprehensive academic support to assist capable students who otherwise might not be able to attend college due to their educational and financial circumstances. Students are admitted without regard to age, sex, sexual orientation, race, disability, or creed.

### **College Discovery**

The second Opportunity Program administered by the City University of New York is the College Discovery program (CD). College Discovery is the higher education opportunity program at the two year CUNY colleges. It was established to provide comprehensive academic support to assist capable students who otherwise might not be able to attend college due to their educational and financial circumstances. Students are admitted without regard to age, sex, sexual orientation, race, disability or creed.

### **New York State Education Department Opportunity Program Expenditures/Appropriations 2013–2014 and 2014-2015**

<b>Opportunity Program</b>	<b>2013 – 2014</b>	<b>2014 – 2015</b>
Liberty Partnerships Program	\$12,918,260	\$13,306,260
Science and Technology Entry Program	\$11,107,695	\$11,440,695
Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program	\$8,429,520	\$8,682,520
Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program	\$24,996,040	\$25,084,457

The tables below show the total cost of operating each of the four Opportunity Programs (Higher Education Opportunity Program, Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program, Science and Technology Entry Program and the Liberty Partnerships Program) by state, institution and other sources of funding for the program years 2012 – 2013, 2013 – 2014 and the current program year, 2014 – 2015.

Note: For each of the four Opportunity Programs (Higher Education Opportunity Program, Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program, Science and Technology Entry Program and the Liberty Partnerships Program), the 2012 – 2013 and 2013 – 2014 dollar amounts are actual expenditures.

**Higher Education Opportunity Program**

<b>Fund Source</b>	<b>2012 - 2013</b>	<b>2013 – 2014</b>	<b>2014 - 2015</b>	<b>Total</b>
State	\$22,621,578	\$23,768,623	\$25,084,457	\$71,474,658
Institution	\$136,306,655	\$144,652,018	\$134,563,670	\$415,522,343
Other	\$84,567,757	\$87,112,654	\$68,690,115	\$240,370,526
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$243,495,990</b>	<b>\$255,533,295</b>	<b>\$228,338,242</b>	<b>\$727,367,527</b>

**Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program**

<b>Fund Source</b>	<b>2012 - 2013</b>	<b>2013 – 2014</b>	<b>2014 - 2015</b>	<b>Total</b>
State	\$7,704,788	\$8,429,520	\$8,682,520	\$24,816,828
Institution	\$3,216,901	\$3,362,754	\$3,167,875	\$9,747,530
Other	\$609,990	\$688,850	\$694,456	\$1,993,296
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$11,531,679</b>	<b>\$12,481,124</b>	<b>\$12,544,851</b>	<b>\$36,557,654</b>

**Science and Technology Entry Program**

<b>Fund Source</b>	<b>2012 - 2013</b>	<b>2013 – 2014</b>	<b>2014 - 2015</b>	<b>Total</b>
State	\$10,445,778	\$11,107,695	\$11,440,695	\$32,994,168
Institution	\$3,579,855	\$3,501,914	\$3,348,096	\$10,429,865
Other	\$2,517,192	\$2,174,247	\$2,224,225	\$6,915,664
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$16,542,825</b>	<b>\$16,783,856</b>	<b>\$17,013,016</b>	<b>\$50,339,697</b>

### Liberty Partnerships Program

<b>Fund Source</b>	<b>2012 - 2013</b>	<b>2013 – 2014</b>	<b>2014 - 2015</b>	<b>Total</b>
State	\$11,418,843	\$12,918,260	\$13,306,260	\$37,643,363
Institution	\$1,511,494	\$660,661	\$1,011,691	\$3,183,846
Other	\$1,181,371	\$1,123,321	\$1,245,364	\$3,550,056
Total	\$14,111,708	\$14,702,242	\$15,563,315	\$44,377,265

#### **Phyllis A. H. Breland, Director Hamilton College Opportunity Programs**

Phyllis A. H. Breland is a 1980 Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity (HEOP) graduate of Hamilton College, and currently holds a Masters of Education in Instructional Design. Her work experience includes program development, marketing, empowerment/assertiveness training, volunteer recruitment, health education, quality assurance, motivational speaking and policy development. She is currently the Director of Opportunity Programs at Hamilton College. She begins her journey with students at the middle school level working on violence prevention, academic preparedness and the art of “dreaming big”. She works closely with junior high schools, high schools, churches, community groups and organizations throughout the State of New York in an effort to bring the hope of higher education to all students. Her favorite sayings are “if you are on time, then you are late”, and telling her students “I won’t ever ask you to do anything, that I am not willing to help you with”.

Phyllis is currently President of the New York State Higher Education Opportunity Program Professional Organization (HEOPPO), and Recording Secretary for the Tri-State Consortium (New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania). Her affiliations include the YWCA, Mohawk Valley Junior Frontiers, Boys and Girls Club of Mohawk Valley, Underground Café, Hamilton College Justice Project Initiative, and Young Scholars. Phyllis also works closely with colleges in the upstate New York region. Active in her college community, Phyllis has served on several committees, participates in activities in support of increasing ethnic diversity, and enhancing the student’s academic experience. She currently sits on Hamilton College President’s Inclusion Task Force, and is regularly invited to present on issues of time management, and developing individualized learning programs.

#### **Gezzer Ortega, MD, MPH Howard University College of Medicine**

Gezzer Ortega, MD, MPH is a General Surgery Resident at Howard University College of Medicine (HUCM). Previously, he completed a Surgical Research Fellowship with dual appointments in the Division of Pediatric Surgery at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and the Division of Minimally Invasive and Bariatric Surgery at HUCM. He obtained his medical degree from HUCM, a Master of Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and his Bachelor of Science in

Biochemistry from Syracuse University. As an undergraduate student, Dr. Ortega was named a Gates Millennium Scholar, CSTEP ARISE Scholar, and Ronald E. McNair Scholar. As a medical student, he served the LMSA (formerly NBLHO) as National Co-Chair. He is currently on the Executive Council of the National Hispanic Medical Association Council of Residents and on the Advisory Board of the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA). Dr. Ortega served as the President of the Surgery and Public Health Group while at Johns Hopkins.

Research, mentoring, and service are at the core of Dr. Ortega's endeavors. He has published articles in surgical journals including Archives of Surgery and the Journal of Pediatric Surgery focused on minimally invasive surgery, pediatric surgery, and general surgery. His passion for research and mentoring has led to a partnership with the Association of the American Medical Colleges on the "Building the Next Generation of Academic Physicians" initiative, focused on diversifying the academic medical workforce. In keeping with the belief that diversity is essential to excellence, he collaborates with orthopaedic surgeons at Nth Dimensions Educational Solutions, Inc. and the Hospital for Special Surgery to develop strategic mentoring tools that increase the number of underrepresented residents in orthopaedic surgery.

Dr. Ortega is committed to serving the local and global community and has conducted and planned surgical missions to the Dominican Republic and Ghana. He has served as the Planning Committee Co-Coordinator for the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Initiative for Emergency and Essential Surgical Care Biennial Meeting in 2011. The meeting convenes a global forum of stakeholders in surgical care, involving the participation of multidisciplinary experts and representation from low-and middle-income countries to develop solutions for providing surgical care in low-resource settings. Working with the WHO, and the Ghana Health Service, he has aided in the development of the Ghana Neonatal Quality Improvement Program focused on addressing the United Nations Millennium Development Goal 4 of reducing the child mortality rate in Ghana. Dr. Ortega is also locally engaged in mentoring students, facilitating workshops on academic medicine, medical school matriculation, and conducting research. He is also actively involved as a Big Brother in Big Brothers and Big Sisters of the National Capital Area.

**Teneka Frost-Amusa, Esq., Associate Counsel  
New York State Department of State**

Teneka Frost-Amusa, Esq. primarily handles issues of employment law, government procurement and ethics. Prior to that, she served as Director of Affirmative Action and Training Programs for the NYS Department of State for five years. Teneka has also held positions with the NYS Department of Civil Service, Government Law Center of Albany Law School, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York and practiced commercial litigation at the law firm of Lemery Greisler LLC.

Teneka received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and African American Studies from Syracuse University as a HEOP student. She then received her Juris Doctor from Albany Law School while pursuing a joint degree of Master in Public Administration at SUNY Albany's Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy as an EOP Student.

Teneka has been very active in her community. She is currently a board member on the City of Schenectady Industrial Development Agency and frequently speaks with young women encouraging them to live their full potential. Teneka also represents low-income clients on a pro bono basis with the Legal Aid Society. She has held leadership positions with the Capital District Black and Hispanic Bar Association, Delta Mu Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Sister to Sister's Keeper Corporation and Empire Christian Center.

Teneka has been the recipient of several awards: *Human Rights Award*, Schenectady County Commission on Human Rights; *Higgins Alumni Award*, the Black Law Students Association of Albany Law School, *Outstanding Alumna Award*, Tri-State Consortium of Opportunity Programs in Higher Education, *Honoree*, Citation for Outstanding Contributions to the Community, City of Albany, Common Council, and *Alumni Hall of Distinction*, Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities.

Teneka, the oldest of 5 children, is a native of Albany, NY where she attended Albany Public Schools. She was elected to the Board of Education of the City School District of Albany, November 2004 - March 2008 (*President*, January 2007- March 2008). She was a first generation college student. She currently resides in Schenectady, NY with her husband, Musiliu Amusa.

### **Taylor Blue Clarke, Student Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP)**

Taylor Blue Clarke attends Bishop Maginn High School in Albany, New York. He is a junior currently taking AP US History, College Calculus and Spanish 4 at the College of St. Rose and during the summer he took his first college course in pre-calculus through Hudson Valley Community College. Taylor participates in many different organizations and believes that the exposure to many different interests will help him with his future goals. He has been a part of the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP) at University at Albany for 5 years. While attending STEP he has participated in the annual STEP Student Conference with a robotic entry for three years. He has taken many college tours and they were all unique. STEP encourages Taylor and provides activities to explore the many opportunities in STEM. Experiences, like visiting the wind farm and SUNY POLY and attending Black Family Technology Awareness Day, have motivated his interest in the engineering field. His goals are to graduate high school with a Regents diploma, and go to college where he will study engineering and play college basketball.

Current activities include Junior Varsity basketball for his school and during the summer he plays AAU and coaches girls' summer camp. He is a certified Life Guard and works at the Bethlehem YMCA. He is a member of the Black and Latino Young Achievers club at the YMCA. Last spring, he received a Leadership Award from the Capital District YMCA for community service. Taylor says that his parents provide him with the opportunity to achieve his goals and encourage him to explore as much as he can as often as he can through participation. STEP provides the resources and direction for



underrepresented students to have careers in the STEM fields. Taylor would not hesitate in recommending this program to anyone.