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I hope that you, too, are feeling hopeful and excited for fall 2021. The Stony Brook community has been through so much this past year — from our first response to COVID-19 to maintaining our enthusiasm through a year of remote work; from reinforcing our efforts toward diversity, equity, and inclusion to developing and implementing a thorough budget initiative to ensure our University's longevity — and yet, as a new president, I couldn't feel more galvanized for the future.

Starting my tenure when I did — in the summer of 2020 — created opportunities to get to know our community in ways that might normally take years or even decades. I saw our staff and faculty work together for the common good. I saw our healthcare professionals meet their highest potential. I saw our students take care of one another and show incredible accountability in the face of adversity. I saw our neighbors, supporters, and friends — like you — show up for Stony Brook University in a time of critical need.

On campus this year, we managed to hold a combined 29 percent of classes fully in-person or in hybrid form without any significant outbreak. Thus far, Stony Brook has been responsible for administering almost half a million vaccines at our sites across Long Island, and our hospital is a leader in Long Island's effort to stop the spread and enable our return to beloved traditions and ways of life.

It says something profound about our University that we were able to continue our mission of providing an accessible, world-class education, bolstering transformative research, and caring for our community in a year of tumult.

And your support as a President's Circle member continues to strengthen our impact. This year, Stony Brook was ranked the No. 1 best public university in New York by *U.S. News & World Report* and *The Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education*. In addition, QS USA University Rankings announced Stony Brook as No. 6 in the country on the diversity and internationalization index. This last ranking is especially rewarding for me, as it is my goal to keep Stony Brook University a haven for the most exciting and groundbreaking scholars from every corner of Long Island, the country, and the world.

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As our University continues to grow and advance its international reputation, it's important to have a strong leadership team. Since my last letter, it's been my pleasure to welcome our new provost, Paul Goldbart, PhD, to the Stony Brook family. A renowned theoretical physicist, Dr. Goldbart is a passionate advocate for public research universities, where he believes students can discover their unique abilities in a community of creativity and productivity.

I had the opportunity to see Dr. Goldbart's work at The University of Texas at Austin, where he showed himself to be a leader of strategic vision, with immense knowledge and experience working with a large and complex college. I am exceedingly confident in his ability to bolster our University's reputation while building an inclusive and equitable environment for students, faculty, and staff.

After a competitive national search, I'm also pleased to name Justin Fincher, PhD, as Stony Brook's vice president for advancement and executive director of the Stony Brook Foundation, effective August 23. Dr. Fincher is an experienced advancement leader who embraces collaboration and teamwork, and whose education and career have been shaped by public universities. In fact, Stony Brook University was the first university that Dr. Fincher ever visited as a Long Island high school student! Now he is coming back to his Long Island roots, ready to bring his leadership and expertise to our fundraising and alumni engagement.

Last year, I wrote to you about the obstacles that Stony Brook University had yet to overcome, including a series of compounding and systemic budget challenges. Since then, we have evaluated ways Stony Brook can and will reduce operating costs while continuing to expand its reach through innovation and revenue generation. Ultimately, we found more than \$15 million in savings, as well as areas in which we can streamline processes, invest in new technology, and better support our faculty researchers.

We were pleased to learn that New York State's predicted reduction in support has been averted. However, our appropriations are still nowhere near what they need to be if we want to continue to grow our University, fulfill our mission, and make Stony Brook a hub for groundbreaking research and academic discovery.

To this end, it is your generous support that has allowed Stony Brook's students and academic and medical communities to thrive ... even during the pandemic. **This year, we received \$102.1 million in support from a total of 12,490 donors like you. That's the second-highest fundraising year on record, and I couldn't be more grateful.**

The success of the Stony Brook Foundation's annual Stars of Stony Brook Gala reflected this inspiring generosity. Held virtually this past year, it raised \$2 million for student scholarships — something to be incredibly proud of — and I want to thank you for being a catalyst for dreams, ambition, and change.

The 2021 Discovery Prize competition, funded by the Stony Brook Foundation, was also held virtually but with no less excitement and innovation. It was my pleasure to hear about the stunning research projects of our ambitious, early-career faculty. Eszter Boros, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry, took home this year's award of \$200,000 for her research on the activation

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of anticancer drug molecules by using a radioactive light switch. I will continue to watch her career and that of our other finalists with immense interest.

The Discovery Prize is an emblem of all the groundbreaking work being done by Stony Brook scholars. I take seriously my responsibility to direct time, energy, and resources toward our research and academic innovations across disciplines — STEM, the arts, humanities, social sciences, and more. It is important that we work intentionally to support the careers of our faculty and doctoral students, especially right now.

While the talent and dedication of our researchers is higher than ever, our graduate students have faced a number of obstacles during the pandemic — including lab and archive closures, the sudden transition to online learning, financial insecurity, family obligations, personal health, and travel restrictions that delayed progress on their dissertations. The pandemic — and its broad range of issues and complications — has significantly delayed 40 percent of our doctoral students in their degree progress.

In the effort to help our bright scholars and future innovators get back on track, we have allocated \$1 million in Presidential Completion Awards. These funds have provided crucial stipends for support and research to ensure our doctoral students advance in their potentially transformative work.

At Stony Brook, we believe in helping each other and challenging each other to succeed. Yes, the pandemic disrupted the rhythm of our campus, but it also provided a meaningful learning moment in which we have had the chance to improve our accessibility, solidify our mission, reaffirm our values, and adjust our goals for this new era.

In 2021, our world is at an inflection point. It's a time of profound change and great potential. And I have seen firsthand that Stony Brook University is capable of making a positive impact — capable of reimagining how we treat each other, how we treat our planet, and how we navigate the next generation of research innovation.

Your confidence and support, especially this year, has been vital. It has boosted our morale and buoyed our spirits. And importantly, it has enabled us to continue to build a brighter future for all.

Thank you for all you do for this remarkable University and community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maurie McInnis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maurie McInnis  
President

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