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STATE OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

April 26, 2004

Mr. Robert King  
Chancellor  
State University of New York  
State University Plaza  
Albany, New York 12246

Re: Report 2003-F-42

Dear Mr. King:

Pursuant to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article V, Section 1 of the State Constitution; and Article II, Section 8 of the State Finance Law, we have followed up on the actions taken by officials of the State University of New York (SUNY) to implement the recommendations contained in our audit report, State University of New York, Student Computer Resources at University Colleges and Technology Colleges (Report 2002-S-3).

**Background, Scope and Objectives**

The State University of New York (SUNY) is the largest public university system in the nation and offers a complete range of academic, professional and vocational programs. SUNY comprises 4 university centers, 13 arts and science colleges (university colleges), 6 agricultural and technical colleges (technology colleges), 4 specialized colleges, 5 statutory colleges, and 2 independent health science centers. Each of SUNY's university and technology colleges maintains computer resources to benefit students. Colleges also provide varying levels of information technology (IT) support for student computing. Each SUNY campus has significant autonomy in determining the manner by which it allocates funds and provides programs and services to students. SUNY System Administration provides overall leadership, policy direction and support for the campuses.

In November 2001, the Chief Information Officers at each of the SUNY campuses formed the Council of Chief Information Officers (CCIO). CCIO goals include identifying emerging IT issues and trends and apprising senior campus management and SUNY System Administration of these matters; proposing strategic solutions to key IT issues based on best practices, benchmarks and shared experiences; and coordinating campus information technology concerns with SUNY System Administration.

Our initial audit report, which was issued on December 31, 2002, examined student computer resources at university colleges and technology colleges to determine whether campuses have adequate computer resources that are sufficiently accessible to students, adequately supported by IT staff, appropriately protected from theft and misuse and guided by a strategic plan. Our report identified that SUNY did not have general standards for measuring the adequacy and accessibility of student computer resources and related IT support. We did, however, identify some best practices and improvement opportunities for the management of campus student computer resources. Also, we found that improvement could be made to protect student computer workstations from possible theft and misuse and that three campuses did not have written strategic plan for future implementation of IT including student computer resources. The objective of our follow-up, which was conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards, was to assess the extent of implementation as of March 11, 2004 of the four recommendations included in our initial report.

### **Summary Conclusions and Status of Audit Recommendations**

We found that SUNY officials have made limited progress in implementing the recommendations. Of the four prior audit recommendations, two recommendations have not been implemented, and two recommendations have been partially implemented.

### **Follow-up Observations**

#### **Recommendation 1**

*Request that the CCIO formulate, or help campuses formulate, general standards for measuring the adequacy and accessibility of student computer resources and related IT support.*

Status - Not Implemented

Agency Action - SUNY did not request that the CCIO help formulate standards for measuring the adequacy and accessibility of student computer resources and related IT support. Officials stated that the responsibility to decide whether the CCIO should help campuses formulate general standards for measuring the adequacy and accessibility of student computer resources and related IT supports has been devolved to the campuses. SUNY officials indicated that as part of SUNY Mission Review 2, which will begin sometime in 2004, SUNY will have a series of discussion with campuses regarding technology initiatives, general standards for measuring adequacy and accessibility and related IT support.

#### **Recommendation 2**

*Enlist the help of the CCIO in evaluating the best practices and the improvement opportunities identified in the report. Share any resulting findings, as appropriate, with the campuses.*

Status - Not Implemented

Agency Action - SUNY System Administration officials did not contact the CCIO and have not been working with the colleges to evaluate best practices and improvement opportunities for sharing with other campuses. SUNY officials stated that they plan to begin working with CCIO to develop an approach for sharing best practices with the campuses.

### **Recommendation 3**

*Follow up to make sure that the campuses cited in the report correct their security control weaknesses for student computer resources.*

Status - Partially Implemented

Agency Action - In 2002, in response to our original audit's preliminary findings, SUNY's University Auditor contacted the eleven university colleges and technical colleges cited in the audit report and requested comments regarding the audit recommendations. Two campuses did not respond to their request. Two campuses agreed with the recommendations, but did not identify any steps they would take to correct the weaknesses. Seven campuses responded that the problems cited in the audit report were corrected. Since our final audit report was issued, SUNY University Audit officials indicated that they had not visited the campuses, or taken any other action, to make sure that the remaining weaknesses were corrected.

### **Recommendation 4**

*Follow up to confirm that the campuses cited in the report perform necessary steps to establish, update, finalize or date IT strategic plans.*

Status - Partially Implemented

Agency Action - In 2002, in response to our original audit's preliminary findings, SUNY's University Auditor contacted the twelve university colleges and technical colleges cited in the audit report as needing to establish or improve their IT strategic plans. Four campuses did not respond to their request. Two campuses responded that they already had current plans, while another campus stated that its plan was approved in November 2002. One campus agreed with the recommendation but did not provide comments on their plan's status. Two campuses indicated that they are in the process of developing IT strategic plan, and another two campuses indicated that they are revising and reviewing existing plans. SUNY officials did not confirm the information provided and have taken no other action to address this recommendation.

Major contributors to this report were Brian Mason, Bill Clynes, and Alexander Marshall.

We would appreciate your response to this report within 30 days, indicating any actions planned to address the unresolved issues discussed in this report. We also thank the management and staff of SUNY for the courtesies and cooperation extended to our auditor during this process.

Very truly yours,

Steven E. Sossei  
Audit Director

cc: Robert Barnes, Division of the Budget  
C. Kevin O'Donoghue, University Auditor