

2015-J3406

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the State University of New York at Potsdam to be feted with a year-long celebration

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend those institutions of true purpose and high achievement whose exemplary programs and accomplishments clearly demonstrate an enduring pursuit of excellence in higher education for the youth of this noble Empire State; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the State University of New York at Potsdam, to be celebrated with a myriad of events and festivities planned throughout the year; and

WHEREAS, The State University of New York (SUNY) at Potsdam kicked off its bicentennial celebration during Welcome Weekend in the Fall of 2015; the college's 200th Birthday Party will take place in March of 2016, highlighting the signing of the charter of St. Lawrence Academy in 1816; and

WHEREAS, From its humble beginnings in a one-room schoolhouse, SUNY Potsdam has grown to become a leader in creativity, applied learning and educational excellence; and

WHEREAS, More than 200 years ago, settlers from the original colonies began to migrate to Northern New York; in need of new places to settle and farm, the New York Legislature posted lands which included Potsdam, for sale in 1786, two years before the colony became a state by ratifying the newly written United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, In 1806, the Town of Potsdam was officially incorporated; from that time on, the settlers and their families came, almost all from Vermont, pushing their way westward through the woods; and

WHEREAS, The early settlers in Potsdam lived a difficult and uncertain life, however, the urge for progress prompted an early movement for education; in 1811, Benjamin Raymond paid for the construction of a small one-room building, which would serve as a church, schoolhouse and meetinghouse; and

WHEREAS, On December 1, 1812, the residents of Potsdam sent a formal petition to the New York State Board of Regents to establish St. Lawrence Academy; unfortunately, the movement for incorporation coincided with the War of 1812; and

WHEREAS, Despite the uncertain times, residents were determined to raise both funds and support for their academy; a subscription drive continued through the war, raising "a liberal sum" by 1814, with 312 shares of \$100 each invested in the enterprise; in addition, the town set aside "literature lots," which could be leased for a fee, with the proceeds intended for the benefit of the new college; and

WHEREAS, On March 25, 1816, the charter founding St. Lawrence Academy was signed, and work could commence on the school; the trustees of the new institution had plenty of tasks ahead, first and foremost, hiring an instructor, as well as setting a curriculum, establishing tuition and finding room and board for students; and

WHEREAS, Environmental hardships, brought on by a shorter than normal growing season, coupled with economic hardship coinciding with a nationwide recession made for a meager first year for the new St. Lawrence Academy; with only one teacher, the school opened its doors to students for the first time on September 30, 1816; and

WHEREAS, Even though the people of Potsdam were struggling, they realized the importance of education and who gave of their meager earnings to make the endeavor a success; appreciating the sacrifice of the resi-

dents, New York State gave special funds to support its teacher education program and to help construct a much-needed new building; and

WHEREAS, As New York began to follow the Prussian-style model of

Normal Schools, it was fitting that Potsdam (named after the capital of Prussia) rallied to win designation for one of these institutions; from there, the campus was absorbed into the State Teachers College system and finally into the newly created State University of New York system; and

WHEREAS, As one of America's first 50 colleges, St. Lawrence Academy was at the vanguard of a new movement in education, as the curriculum shifted to meet the needs of new generations and a growing country; and WHEREAS, Through the years, SUNY Potsdam has always strived to be an innovator, pioneering new curricula in teaching, music education, mathematics and computer science; the school has a proud history of educating New York's and the Nation's future teachers and exceptional musicians; and

WHEREAS, Today, SUNY Potsdam continues to thrive on its founding spirit of perseverance and community engagement which has persisted since its founding 200 years ago; under the visionary guidance of President Kristin Esterberg, Ph.D., SUNY Potsdam stands proud and prominent, always looking to the future and the needs of those it serves; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the State University of New York at Potsdam, noting the propriety of its goals, the constancy of its commitment and the significance of its accomplishments in preparing the youth of today and leaders of tomorrow; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to President Kristin Esterberg, Ph.D., the State University of New York at Potsdam.