

**Regents and New York State Education**

**Statewide Plan for Higher Education**

**Public Hearing**

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**Albany, New York**

Testimony by:

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Good Afternoon:

I'd like to begin with telling you a little about myself. My name is Phyllis Breland, and I am a 1980 HEOP graduate of Hamilton College. I am also director of Opportunity Programs at Hamilton College, and the current president of the HEOP Professional Organization.

First and foremost, I'd like to express my sincere appreciation for the opportunity to speak before you today. I would also like to acknowledge your continued support and recognition of our work, and its importance to the healthy economy of New York State.

Back to my story; my journey began simply enough. I went to one of the poorest high schools in Syracuse, New York. My family had been on welfare, and my father was serving a term in prison. I was a smart child and graduated from high school at the age of 15. But no one spoke to me about my dreams, or my potential to excel at anything. Then someone in the community saw the possibilities in me, and directed me into the hands of C. Christine Johnson, then the Director of HEOP at Hamilton College. She saw in me more than I ever imagined, told me I had something to offer and introduced me to HEOP. I made history at Hamilton College by being the first woman inducted into their all male honor society, and being the first female class speaker. For the past 11 years I have worked as HEOP Director, extending the same hope and support that was extended to me. I stand before you as evidence that "HEOP Works!"

What I want to do today is not to beg for money, or plead about the many students that need our support. I know that you understand the need better than most. I extend an invitation to you to come to our campuses and get the same feeling of accomplishment that I have whenever a student crosses that graduation stage, accepts an award, or simply gives me a hug of gratitude for being there. What I offer you today is a glimpse of what we are doing that supports your efforts, demonstrates that we are in alliance with this plan, and work daily with our institutions to hold steadfast to our promise of opportunity through accessibility.

In addition to the vast services and support our HEOP professionals provide on a daily basis, the HEOPPO staff are working towards repositioning staff and approaches to programming that will enable

us to be even more responsive in service delivery. This includes addressing new trends, increased support needs, and anticipating real or implied obstacles to student success. Specifically we are working on:

- Professional Development: Developing a systematic approach to acquiring skill and knowledge for job performance that enhances service, and includes reviewing curriculum, blending technology, and conducting needs assessments with a focus on directives that promote positive change.
- Internal Communications: Enhancing our formal connections through which program staff are informed and updated in a timely manner, allowing greater and comprehensive impact.
- Assessment/Evaluation: Continuing our work with SED to provide and compile data that demonstrates program effectiveness, but also includes additional opportunities outside of Lobby Day for personal interactions between legislators, education leaders, and program participants; bringing “life” to the data collected.
- Branding/Marketing: Developing a marketing and branding plan that creates, reflects, and maintains the PO presence, reflects our responsiveness, aids in student retention, harnesses continuity to aid in career placement, fosters institutional growth, while elevating our role as experts and visionaries in the world of higher education.
- Allies/Re-building: Reviewing and refining our community partnerships and resource pool, alumni resources, community based organizations, sororities and fraternities, government entities, high schools, networking, forming new collaborations that encompass current trends of communication and accessibility.

All that I have mentioned is addressed in your education plan. It requires intense work, unwavering commitment, and increased resources. Your HEOP institutions and professionals understand this, just as you do. It is important that you know that we are willing to do the work. We understand the difference between hard work, and smart work. Your HEOP professionals have been your expert leaders in higher education for 43 years. With SED we have built a foundation for success and serve as a template for success at our institutions. We are strategically poised to embrace this plan, and stand on the front line with you to ensure our continued success.

Thank you.