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OUR TOWNS

FARMINGDALE

College seeks support for a \$53M academic building

BY KESHIA CLUKEY

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Farmingdale State College has proposed a new \$53 million academic building, a critical step as it struggles to house its rapidly growing student population.

The building, for applied sciences, would require an investment from the state and take three years to construct, college President John S. Nader said.

In the interim, the more than 10,000-student institution is considering recommendations from the space utilization task force — formed by Nader last winter — that include converting conference rooms into classroom space, adjusting its academic schedule and increasing support for online and hybrid courses, he said.

“We’re trying to get out and speak to our legislators and civic organizations here on Long Island to tell them the story of the college’s success. That success has led to growth that is now straining the capacity of the college for students who qualify for admission here,” Nader said.

Enrollment at the four-year college has increased nearly 47 percent from 6,858 students in fall 2010 to 10,059 enrolled this fall, according to SUNY data. There are 10,007 undergrads enrolled this fall, 7,839 of whom attend full-time, and 2,168 who attend part-time, according to the college. There are 52 graduate students.

Nader attributed the rise in enrollment to growth in programs, particularly in its School of Engineering Technology and

School of Business, as well as the college’s location on the border of Nassau and Suffolk counties. Nader noted that the college has been increasing its selectivity while increasing its enrollment.

College officials announced their plans for the new academic building Friday appealing to state and local representatives at the institution’s annual Legislative Breakfast.

The announcement comes after Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul earlier this month announced the school would receive \$790,000 — as part of a \$6 million distribution to 10 SUNY campuses — to provide apprenticeships, internships and educational programs to train workers in emerging clean-energy jobs.

The building, critical to the school’s ability and desire to grow enrollment, would have approximately 11 classrooms and three labs, and house the departments for applied psychology, applied economics, and geographic information systems — all areas with high employment rates or projected high employment rates, the school said.

With the building, enrollment could increase by more than 800 students, Nader said.

The additional classroom space would also help as the college embarks on a more than \$30 million project to renovate Lupton Hall, built in 1952, he said.

Nearly half of the 64-campus system’s academic facilities — about 45 percent — was built between 1965 and 1975, according to SUNY.

SUFFOLK COUNTY

\$500G grant for sewer tax study

BY DAVID M. SCHWARTZ

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Suffolk County will get a \$500,000 grant to study the possibility of creating a countywide taxing district to pay for sewer and wastewater upgrades, officials said Monday.

A consultant will look at taxing options for a water quality improvement district and costs to connect 370,000 homes to sewers or individual systems designed to reduce nitrogen pollution.

Kevin McDonald, conservation project director for public lands at The Nature Conservancy on Long Island, said the work would “put meat on the bones to a concept that has been kicked around for awhile.”

But Legis. Tom Cilmi (R-Bay Shore), minority leader, said the county already collects money for water quality projects.

“If there is a better way to spend that money, let’s discuss it, but our taxpayers cannot afford another tax,” Cilmi said.

Nearly 75 percent of Suffolk homes are on cesspools or septic tanks. But putting sewers in denser areas or advanced treatment systems in other areas throughout Suffolk would cost \$8 billion, according to previous county studies.

Richard V. Guardino Jr., executive director of the Long Island Regional Planning Council, said the group will vote on the grant at its meeting Oct. 2.

The county would issue an RFP for a consultant to study the possibility of a taxing district and enter into an agreement by the end of the year or in early 2019. The work is part of the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan, a state-run initiative with Nassau and Suffolk counties to reduce nitrogen, which has been blamed on algal blooms harmful to marine life.

Jason Elan, spokesman for the Suffolk County executive, said, “We look forward to studying the feasibility of this proposal, its impact to the taxpayer, and if it will be helpful to our overall water quality efforts.”

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