1. A proud history of transforming social systems for people with disabilities

Syracuse University (SU) enjoys a rich tradition of fostering inclusion of people with disabilities into the mainstream. In 1971, Burton Blatt of our School of Education testified in the landmark right-to-education law case, PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, arguing that all children could benefit from an education. Blatt and his colleagues had studied and exposed horrific conditions of abuse and neglect in state institutions that warehoused children and adults with disabilities. In 1972, University professors led by Blatt gathered with attorneys, medical doctors, social workers, parents and others on Staten Island to help formulate the groundbreaking deinstitutionalization law case of Willowbrook. Blatt's and others' work led SU to play a critical role in advocating for inclusion of young children with disabilities into preschool and daycare centers, of school age children with disabilities into classrooms and schools with their nondisabled peers, and of adults with disabilities into workplaces and residences where they could interact with the community at large. Blatt understood that placement in the community had to include being part of the community, of being known and appreciated by the community.

> *"We insist that a society which claims to be civilized can find the proper ways and means to include the people who have been institutional inmates in decent community environments"*[1]

Since Burton Blatt wrote these words in 1979, society has made progress in its treatment of people with disabilities. The populations of state institutions have declined at a steady pace. In New York State alone, the number of people at state developmental centers declined significantly from a peak of approximately 20,000. Now, as never before, people with

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[1] (Blatt, in Taylor & Blatt, eds. 1999, p. 27)

developmental and psychiatric disabilities have opportunities to live and work in inclusive community settings. Successful models of school inclusion and the inclusive workforce can be found throughout New York State and the nation.

Despite the strides made over the past several decades, Blatt's vision of the inclusion of people with developmental, psychiatric, intellectual and other disabilities in community environments has yet to be fully realized. In 1990, the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed; people with disabilities gained their civil rights ensuring accommodation and full inclusion in workplaces, communities, commerce and all spheres of public life. As of 2010, 1,981 people remain in New York State developmental centers and nearly 5,500 additional people with developmental disabilities live in intermediate care facilities for persons with developmental or intellectual disabilities, which can be as restrictive as state institutions. Thousands of other people with disabilities are placed in nursing homes and sub-standard community settings. Far too many adults and children with developmental and psychiatric disabilities remain segregated in school and day programs. Many lack the opportunity to exercise their voting rights and citizenship privileges. Incidents of abuse and neglect have lead some to question the State's commitment to decency and justice for its most vulnerable citizens.

The commitment advocated by Blatt and his contemporaries continues today at SU through innovative programs that include, but are not limited to: (1) examining inclusive models of civil rights, employment and entrepreneurship, community participation, asset accumulation and economic empowerment, and access to technology (*Burton Blatt Institute*); (2) preparing students for careers in advocacy and policy research, producing research, working to train and support self-advocates locally and nationally (*Center on Human Policy, Law and Disability Studies*, and *the Disability Rights Clinic*); (3) engaging in national research and advocacy on inclusive higher education (*Taishoff Center*); (4) providing legal advocacy and education to people with disabilities and their families (*Disability Rights Clinic*); (5) fostering inclusive higher education for persons with developmental disabilities (*OnCampus* and *ACCESS*); (6) creating model urban school transformation through full inclusion (*Schools of Promise*); and (7) evaluating access and inclusion on campus for students, faculty, and staff with disabilities (*Beyond Compliance Coordinating Committee* and the *Disability Rights Clinic*).

Our Chancellor Nancy Cantor knows well that the work of advocacy is never done, but is an ongoing struggle to which SU remains staunchly committed. Indeed, this reached a new level of prominence in 2011with the creation of a *Disability Cultural Center* to coordinate campus-wide social, educational, and cultural activities on disability issues for students, faculty, staff, and community members with and without disabilities. The first of its kind in the United States to be housed within a Division of Student Affairs rather than a disability services office, it is also the first to be run by a full-time professional staff member.

The University's response to CQC's Solicitation of Interest for the Protection and Advocacy/Client Assistance Program (P&A/CAP) designee is offered in the spirit of extending Burton Blatt's vision to promote personal freedom and community participation. It also resonates with the University's vision of *Scholarship in Action*, which drives us to forge innovative and sustained partnerships across our local and global communities. A unique and fresh opportunity exists to create greater access of people with disabilities to all sectors of society, from schooling to the workplace to our aging population, and to enlist and support people with disabilities in leading the way. Our interest in facilitating the State's leadership role in protecting and advocating for persons with disabilities is grounded in principles of self-determination, community inclusion, fairness, independence, transparency, and access. We applaud the State for exploring how best to take a fresh approach to this need through the provision of the highest quality P&A/CAP services. Our state is at a critical transition point, and we and others are motivated by the need to leverage this momentum and bring about systems change.

It has been said that disability transcends all ‘minority groups’ and that cultural differences make the process of creating and nurturing inclusion even more complex. The University has empowered, and continues to empower individuals with disabilities, including those traditionally unserved or underserved (e.g., those with intersecting characteristics defined by race and ethnicity, gender, type and severity of disability, age, veteran status, sexual orientation, to mention a few) by leveraging its legacy, capacity, capabilities and relationships within and outside the University to achieve integrated systems of support and opportunities for inclusion that are free from abuse, neglect and discrimination. We understand the diversity in disabilities. We have the capability to address them all as our work examines critical transition points across the lifespan, including: the school to higher-education transition; the school to work transition; the work to retirement transition; the transition from military to civilian life; the transition from prison to civilian life; the transition from homelessness to home ownership; the transitions associated with disability due to aging; and the transition from group and nursing homes to full independence. We are capable of responding to the many complexities impacting the quality of a person’s life with the input and insights of multidisciplinary experts who are scholars and community advocates on civil rights, inclusive education, long-term services and supports, public finance and administration, public policy, rehabilitation counseling, social work, public health, law, psychology, and aging.

2. Our proud history of empowerment, protection, and advocacy continues

The University’s focus on advocacy, dispute resolution, and evidence-based best-practices has been guided by core values underlying the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act (DD), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other related legislation. These federal and state laws recognize that "disability is a natural part of the human experience that does not diminish the rights of individuals to live independently, to exert control and choice over their own lives, and to fully participate in and contribute to their communities by participating in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream" (§101 of the DD Act). The University is uniquely positioned to bring together diverse constituencies to participate in the mission of protection and advocacy. Without ties to the provision of direct services and with decades of collaboration with families, people with disabilities, and state agencies and nonprofit organizations on the issues of inclusion and access,[2] we are in an excellent position to enlist broad support for the protection and advocacy mission required of the State's designee. Indeed, we have the ability to recruit leading practitioners and self-advocates from throughout the State and the country in an on-going campaign to conceptualize innovative systems and practices. Resources and expertise that could be applied to transform the P&A system/CAP include:

- ***The Center on Human Policy,*** founded for the study and promotion of open community settings by Burton Blatt in 1971. Since its establishment, the Center has actively supported advocacy efforts on behalf of people with disabilities. Originally funded by the U.S. Bureau of Education for the Handicapped to demonstrate model child advocacy approaches, it served as a back-up technical assistance center for the newly created federal P&A system for people with developmental disabilities in 1979. The Center has supported the development of self-advocacy

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[2] As part of the internal review to confirm eligibility, one pending contract with ACCES-VR was identified. This project would deliver services for ACCES-VR clients in central and western New York who require designs for needed vehicle modifications. Should discussions to explore the University's designation proceed, we would examine any potential conflict-of-interests arising from this service program, and with the Governor's Office develop an acceptable solution that meets the requirements of law and creates the necessary separation from the P&A/CAP operations.

groups since 1981 and works closely with self-advocates in New York State and nationally. With the support of the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research and other public and private sources, the Center has been a national leader in identifying and documenting innovative ways of support for people with disabilities and their families in the community. **Steven Taylor,** Director of the Center for Human Policy is professor of cultural foundations and co-director of SU Center on Disability Studies, Law, and Human Policy. He is the author of numerous books and articles, is an expert in deinstitutionalization, community inclusion, disability policy, disability studies, and qualitative research methods. Taylor is the recipient of the 1997 Research Award of the American Association on Mental Retardation, the 2003 Chancellor's Citation for Exceptional Academic Achievement, and the 2008 Senior Scholar Award of the Society for Disability Studies.

- **College of Law – Clinics.** The Disability Rights Clinic (DRC), a clinic within the Office of Clinical Legal Education of SU College of Law, is dedicated to providing representation to individuals with disabilities and groups representing this constituency in New York State who are unable to secure representation elsewhere because of disability or income in matters pertaining to employment, access to local and state government services and places of public accommodation, and prisons. Since the 1980s when the DRC was founded initially as a civil rights firm, its student attorneys have practiced under supervision of the Clinic’s director in federal and state courts and before administrative agencies in a broad range of civil rights matters, including race, gender, age and disability discrimination, sexual harassment, prisoner’s rights, immigration, and employment matters, access to private businesses open to the public, and special education on behalf of families of children with disabilities.

Michael Schwartz, Associate Professor at SU's College of Law, was hired in 2004 to direct the DRC. An expert in disability rights law, particularly the rights of people who are deaf, Dr. Schwartz focuses the Clinic's litigation and advocacy efforts on behalf of people with disabilities in the State of New York. He clerked for a federal district judge in the Southern District of New York; represented the People of the State of New York as an Assistant District Attorney in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office; served as a trial attorney for the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice; and worked as an Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights Bureau of the New York State Attorney General's Office. Dr. Schwartz has been a professor for over twelve years and has written a number of law review articles on disability related issues**.**

- ***The Burton Blatt Institute*** (BBI). Founded on the premises of inclusion and equal rights articulated by Burton Blatt, BBI advances the civic, economic, and social participation of persons with disabilities in a global society. It brings together the public and private worlds of academia, business, healthcare, law, technology, and education to help move toward achievement of the ADA's founding goals. BBI's mandate is to further the capacity to transform the law, policy, and most importantly the attitudes that hold people with disabilities back from their full realization. Since its launch at SU in 2005, BBI has received over $35 million in funding to identify best practices to enhance inclusive workplaces, improve access to technology, increase asset accumulation, and enhance community participation.

Peter Blanck, University Professor at SU, is Chairman of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI). He has served as court-appointed officer for the U.S. District Court, District of Wyoming, in the oversight of services such as health and safety, living conditions, education, and transportation for children and adults with developmental disabilities and persons with serious and persistent mental illness. He was the court-appointed Facilitator in settlement of the class action Chris S., et al. v. Jim Geringer, et al. (D.Wyo. Dec. 29, 1994) and as member of the Compliance Advisory Board in the settlement of the class action Weston v. Wyoming State Training School (D.Wyo. Apr. 27, 1994). Dr. Blanck's writings examine the Americans with Disabilities Act's employment provisions, workplace accommodations, and disability and aging. Blanck is lead-author of *Disability Civil Rights Law and Policy*, a leading legal casebook on disability law.

Michael Morris, Chief Executive Officer of BBI, has over 35 years of experience in research, knowledge translation and system change activities advancing community participation and economic self-sufficiency for individuals across the full spectrum of disabilities. He has served as an expert advisor on advancing employment and economic freedom for people with significant disabilities to the US Department of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, as well as the Social Security Administration, the IRS, the FDIC, the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, and the Office of Community Services in the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. In 1981, Morris was the inaugural Joseph P. Kennedy Fellow in Public Policy and worked for Connecticut Senator Lowell Weicker as legal counsel to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Disability Policy. He served as counsel to the U.S. Senate Small Business Committee and then worked at United Cerebral Palsy Associations as Director of Government Relations, as Director of Community Services, and finally as National Executive Director. During his tenure, his leadership put focus on assistive technologies in employment, education, communications and daily living. Morris' proposal for policy development led to passage by Congress of the Assistive Technology Act. Morris co-authored two publications for the National Council on Disability: *The State of 21st Century Long Term Services and Supports: Financing and Systems Reform for American with Disabilities* (2005) and *The State of 21st Century Financial Incentives for Americans with Disabilities* (2008).

- ***The Disability Law and Policy (DLP) Program*** part of the SU Center on Human Policy, Law, and Disability Studies (CHPLDS), offers students in the College of Law the opportunity to gain experience and expertise in disability law while still in law school. As students come to the SU College of Law with a variety of backgrounds, careers, and interests, the DLP Program offers the unique opportunity for students with interdisciplinary interests to take courses and conduct research in other SU graduate programs including the highly respected Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, the School of Education, and the School of Social Work in the Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics.

  Arlene S. Kanter, professor of law, founded and directs the Disability Law and Policy Program, which is the nation's first joint degree program in Law and Disability Studies and awards a Certificate in Disability Law and Policy to eligible students. She also co-directs the SU Center on Human Policy, Law, and Disability Studies, which is the nation's first multi-disciplinary center dedicated to research, advocacy, academic programming, and public education on issues of inclusion and equality for people with disabilities. Professor Kanter teaches courses on U.S., comparative, and international disability law and policy, education and special education law, legislation and policy, ethics, and professionalism. She is the co-author of the first casebook on international and comparative disability law and has published numerous articles and book chapters on disability law. Professor Kanter is founder and co-editor of the SSRN *Journal on Disability Law,* and co-founder of the Disability Law Section of the American Association of Law Schools. She is a former Commissioner of the American Bar Association's Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law. From 2001-06, Professor Kanter was invited to work with the United Nations on the process that lead to the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Douglas Biklen, is a founding faculty member of the Center on Human Policy, Law and Disability Studies, Dean of the School of Education, professor of cultural foundations of education and teaching and leadership, faculty in Disability Studies, and Director of the Institute on Communication and Inclusion at SU. His work involves teaching and research on the sociology of disability, inclusive education, and communication. He has produced and co-produced multiple award winning documentaries that have aired on CNN, PBS, HBO, and in theatres and film festivals worldwide. Biklen's current research focuses on whole school reform, autobiographies of autism, disability policy, and school inclusion. He is author of Autism and the Myth of the Person Alone *(*NYU Press, 2005), and has published a dozen other books including; Schooling without Labels; Communication Unbound; Access to Academics (with Kluth and Straut) and Achieving the Complete School.

- The **Lawrence B. Taishoff Center** works toward the full and equal participation of all college students with disabilities: in academics, the arts, extracurricular activities and campus life, career-related opportunities, and the vibrant social communities and cultures campuses can offer. It is committed to the inclusion of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have traditionally been excluded from higher education.

Wendy S. Harbour is the Executive Director of the Lawrence B. Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education at SU and Lawrence B. Taishoff Assistant Professor of Inclusive Education. She teaches in disability studies, inclusive K-12 education, and disability in higher education. Her areas of expertise are disability studies in education, universal design for learning, postsecondary disability services and accommodations, and transition from secondary to postsecondary settings. Recent publications include contributions to *Seeing Clearly: Ethical Considerations in the Education of Children who are Deaf* (Gallaudet University Press) and

Universal Design in Higher Education: From Principles to Practice (Harvard Education Press), as well as co-editing *Special Education for a New Century* (Harvard Education Press).

- **The Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC)** at SU's the Maxwell School is an interdisciplinary research center that advances theory and practice in the fields of conflict and collaboration. Founded by Dr. Louis Kriesberg in 1986 with Hewlett Foundation funding, PARCC was known for its breakthrough work in conflict transformation. With the addition of participating scholars, its areas of interest have grown to include advocacy and activism, and most recently collaborative governance. PARCC's commitment to practice can be seen in its Summer Institute, which has trained individuals in the skills of conflict resolution and collaboration for over 25 years, a graduate-level Certificate in Conflict Resolution, a Conflict Management Practice Group, and policy-relevant publications.

3. Overarching Conceptual Framework

To realize the *empowerment of people across the spectrum of disability, including traditionally unserved and underserved* , the University would ensure a strong voice for people with disabilities in the P&A system through a conceptual framework that has the following elements:

- Transparent processes, based *on fairness, due process, equal access, and meaningful and effective participation*;
- *Full inclusion, empowerment, and participation,* guided by the spirit and letter of federal and state law;
- Provision of *complementary supports* of legal, individual, peer, self, citizen, and system advocacy;
- *Proactive monitoring* of public systems and private providers, timely and thorough investigations of complaints, full resolution of the issues with legal and non-legal strategies;

- Development of *tools, resources and support systems* to enable people with disabilities to advocate for themselves;
- Implementation of a *statewide advocacy* system;
- *Information and referral processes* that are comprehensive and accessible, as well as systems for *monitoring and investigation* that are responsive, timely, continuous, and inclusive of self- and citizen-advocate participation;
- *Efficient processes* incorporating innovations in the use of technology and recognition of communications that optimize the use of alternate formats;
- *Information dissemination, training, and technical assistance* based on the knowledge of “state-of-the-art” approaches to inclusion, self-determination, communication access, and strategies for independent living, employment, and economic empowerment;
- *Diverse marketing and outreach strategies* to reach traditionally unserved and underserved populations within the community of people with disabilities; and
- *Independence from service organizations*, both public and private.

4. Syracuse University’s Vision for a Successful Protection and Advocacy/CAP

An integrated P&A/CAP under SU’s leadership would strive to implement an unprecedented New York system whose outcomes include: a high degree of consumer satisfaction as evidenced by a reduction in the number of complaints about treatment and/or services; greater voice for people with disabilities in the creation and delivery of community-based services; a better fit between what people *need* to be included in the social, economic, and civic mainstream of the State and the services and supports *provided*; broader and deeper engagement of those with disabilities; and a sustainable system of supports.

As the designated P&A/CAP, SU could strengthen effective delivery of services by:

- *Increasing understanding and awareness by the public and media outlets* about the power and benefits of inclusion across environments to change thinking and behavior;
- *Improving crisis communication* by training, technical assistance, and capacity-building;
- *Enhancing the capacity* of the public and private sectors to protect human rights and operationalize the vision of self-determination with more choice and control by people with disabilities and their families;
- *Developing priority setting* to focus monitoring, investigation, training and technical assistance activities that are inclusive, foster ongoing dialogue with persons with disabilities, and promote continuous quality improvements to P&A/CAP services; and
- *Facilitating mediation* as an alternative approach to formal dispute resolution to secure change at an individual and systems level.

5. Governance and Functions for Syracuse University's P&A/CAP

a. Governance and Structure

The University is aware of the federal requirements for P&A governance and is ready, willing and able to explore various models through which we may assist the State in realizing its goals for the P&A/CAP designee. Possible organizational models include:

- A new operating unit of SU (subsidiary corporation) that has an independent governing board consistent with federal regulation. An internal executive management group would be convened with BBI, the Center for Human Policy, and representatives of SU's schools and colleges and other relevant entities to optimize collaboration and impact; or
- A new non-profit organization to ensure oversight by an independent governing board in which a majority of the members of the board are individuals with disabilities, parents,

family members, guardians, advocates, or authorized representatives of individuals with disabilities who are acknowledged and independent leaders in New York State; or

- For the University to be a lead partner in a state-wide consortium.

Based on future discussions with the State, the governance structure may be any one of the above options, alone or in combination. One proposed leader of the Governing Board may be Brian McLane. McLane, former Strategic Advisor to BBI, works as Strategic Advisor to SU's Inclusive Campus Initiative, which involves every school and college at the University and all aspects of its operations. He was inducted into the National Hall of Fame for People with Disabilities in 2000. McLane is President and founder of Paradigm Solutions, a company which advocates for and advances professional solutions for individuals with disabilities.

As a non-profit, private institution of higher education that receives federal funds, we have in place the fiscal systems to support compliance with OMB Circular A-133 and the filing of IRS form 990. Our procedures and processes around management of public funds meets and often exceeds current federal and state requirements.

b. Core Functions.

In this section b., we present the kinds of activities that an SU-lead P&A/CAP would pursue to empower, protect and advocate with and on behalf of individuals with disabilities. Specific goals identified in the solicitation of interest (pg 4.) are included for ease of cross-reference.

i. Protect individuals with disabilities from abuse and neglect (a), and protect the personal and civil rights of individuals with disabilities (b).

Proactive communication and outreach approaches, and responsive investigation and monitoring practices based on citizen complaints are foundational to all activities. The University would use a multi-tiered and comprehensive system of protection that includes: 1. information and referral, 2. investigation and monitoring, and 3. public awareness strategies.

1. ***Information and Referral (e)***

A comprehensive system for providing information and managing referrals would be developed. Multiple, accessible and user-friendly channels for communicating complaints and concerns would be available; this comprehensive strategy would ensure that information and referral is timely and responsive. Channels would include a toll-free call-in line, an interactive accessible web portal, and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and user-friendly apps for download. In addition, a consistent schedule of in-person meetings at community venues across the state will provide opportunities for individuals to learn information and register concerns through public comment and private meetings.

The call center, web portal, and new media center would be supervised by licensed attorneys and expert operators and involve law students and graduates as well as social work faculty and graduate students who have received extensive training and mentoring. Systematic scheduling would ensure that full coverage is maintained across all channels at all times, and that no complaint or concern falls between the cracks. Use of a standardized but customizable information request form would facilitate the intake and referral process. Guidelines would be developed and implementation monitored to ensure that intakes and referrals are timely, thoroughly completed and fully documented. Processes for record-keeping would be developed to ensure consistency, accuracy, and confidentiality.

Resource materials would be developed for intake and referral staff and the general public and would be available via the web-portal, as well as by regular mail. Such materials would include: (1) information about the P&A's priorities, goals, and responsibilities; (2) referral lists for local organizations at the community level; (3) referral lists for state and private service agencies; and (4) guides and tools that promote citizen, system, peer, and self-advocacy, including information about federal and state disability laws and regulations. Materials would be updated regularly and evaluated by stakeholders, including the general public.

To identify trends in terms of who is requesting information and referral; types of information sought or concerns raised; and the populations and stakeholders concerned about specific issues, an evaluation team would examine de-identified databases of intake and referral contacts. Trends revealed would be reported to the public. Training and technical assistance materials would be tailored according to needs identified by these trend analyses and public policy system advocacy efforts updated in accordance with identified themes. The public will gain information about the rights of people with disabilities to be protected from abuse, neglect and discrimination, and how to register a complaint or raise a concern.

2. *Investigation and Monitoring*

The University would lead the statewide investigation and monitoring system built on a network of trained individuals across the state who are responsive to complaints and concerns raised in the community. Trained and supervised by University experts, teams of investigators and monitors would include attorneys, advocates, and individuals with disabilities.

The Governing Board would develop written policies and practices to ensure compliance with laws, regulations, rules and standards of practice; the team of investigators and monitors would receive regular training to ensure they are up-to-date and within guidelines. These guidelines will ensure appropriate documentation of advocacy and training efforts, maintenance of case files, and confidentiality. The system will include a mechanism for selecting and prioritizing cases and monitoring sites, and include regular review of calls.

The engagement of people with disabilities as active partners in monitoring and investigation activity, program evaluation, and public policy systems advocacy would be a priority. The University has a strong track-record of engaging people with disabilities and this prior experience would be adapted for use in the P&A's monitoring efforts to ensure citizen engagement for compliance and provision of quality service by providers in their communities. The BBI has successfully developed engagement methods in its examination of community accessibility and participation of persons with disabilities in an eight-state region in the Southeast US. The Center on Human Policy reviews and evaluates best practices in community integration and inclusion. Policies and procedures would be developed to guide the scope of monitoring efforts and set annual performance goals, identify settings, produce evaluation and outcome reports for the public regarding findings, and monitor settings to ensure change is implemented when required.

Another strategy to support investigation and monitoring would involve engagement of SU's Community Geographer for geographic and real-time mapping of a wide range of information, such as data from schools, community living centers, social service agencies, and telephone hotlines about complaints of abuse and neglect. This information can help visually identify critical areas of investigation to the benefit of persons with disabilities.

3. *Public Awareness Activities*

Another strategy to achieve personal and civil rights of people with disabilities would be a communications and awareness campaign. The University would tap into leading industry experts at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. Hill Communications, a public relations firm managed by faculty at the Newhouse School and supported by students, has produced award-winning marketing and public relations campaigns for clients across New York

State. The University envisions leveraging the resources of Hill Communications as part of the proposed communications plan. Faculty and professors of practice in the School of Education, College of Law, and School of Information Studies would be engaged to craft communication campaigns using traditional and new media that would provide:

- Public education about what civil rights are at the federal, state, and local levels;
- Self-advocacy training – allow individuals with disabilities to acquire the knowledge and skills to foster individual and group rights;
- Parent training enabling them to protect their children with disabilities;
- Provider and practitioner training across environments (classrooms, workplaces, healthcare facilities, community living sites) to help increase knowledge and skills in protecting legal and civil rights for people with disabilities.

ii. Raise public awareness of legal and social issues affecting individuals with disabilities and their families (g)

The communications campaign would also foster public awareness of the legal and social issues affecting individuals with disabilities and their families. By engaging people with disabilities and their advocates the impact of SU's P&A would be enhanced by using clear, consistent, and informative messaging through a variety of communications channels.

Evidence: The University creates, publishes, and maintains award-winning magazines, electronic newsletters, multiple websites, and informational documents for multiple audiences. Through media relations outreach, SU garners positive attention in regional and national news outlets. It engages with its audience by social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. These digital platforms are important vehicles to publicizing SU's disability work and create an online community that shares its passion and affinity for disability issues.

Accessibility: All printed materials would be offered in alternative format, such as Braille, large print and audiotape. Electronic communication vehicles such as e-newsletters or websites would be Section 508 compliant. In addition to an accessible HTML version, e-newsletters would be provided in one or more accessible formats: text, Word, or properly tagged PDF. Documents, videos, and multimedia materials available from the newsletter and websites will conform to accessibility requirements. All images will include alternative text explaining the image. Electronic newsletter and website templates are tested under different viewing conditions (i.e. without a mouse, small or low-resolution screens, with voice or text output, and color contrast for those who have low vision or color-blindness).

Communication Vehicles and Tactics

<u>Website:</u> As the P&A's "front door," the first point of contact most target audience members have is with the website, which is one of the important communication vehicles. The University would create and manage a fully accessible website for commenting on processes, providing input on initiatives, and lodging complaints for systematic investigation.

<u>Social/New Media:</u> Social/new media present an opportunity to directly access and engage people with disabilities, their families and others. Social/new media will be incorporated into other communication vehicles to provide a comprehensive story. The barriers to producing original content are reduced with new technologies and include: establishing Facebook and Twitter pages to promote the P&A's resources, mission, activities, and impact; producing short captioned informational videos (3-5 minutes) for the P&A's YouTube channel (based on a successful SU project where New York high school students were invited to develop an effective multimedia campaign to increase high school students' understanding of disability rights);

creating iTunes "P&A Conversations" informational podcast series; creating a P&A community blog to allow staff members and public contributors to create a dialogue about relevant topics.

Media Relations. SU would leverage its relationships with media across New York State. Media outreach will focus on relationship building, locally and nationally, with the goal of promoting the P&A's reputation in a positive light by communicating its role as a resource for people with disabilities and their families, among others.

Publications. Print and electronic publications present an additional opportunity to provide consistent updates on the P&A's work. Though many communication plans today rely less on traditional print newsletters in favor of less expensive electronic ones, there remains value in print publications, especially for populations that do not have sufficient access to the Internet. Electronic newsletter(s) will be distributed via listservs.

Community Relations. Community relations will be another vehicle to provide transparency and public accountability. By establishing meaningful linkages with people with disabilities and their families, advocates, civic leaders, and others, the P&A will position itself as a vital resource and partner for those working to better the lives of people with disabilities. The University's P&A/CAP would: (1) Prioritize stakeholders with whom to build and/or strengthen relationships, and arrange face-to-face meetings; (2) Hold monthly public forums in different areas of the state to allow for public comment/feedback. For those participants who do not wish to speak publicly, they will have the opportunity to meet privately with P&A staff at these forums; (3) Secure interviews on public radio and television stations in each region to make the public aware of the forums and P&A activities; and (4) Establish a toll-free hotline for public to comment on processes, provide input on initiatives, and lodge complaints to trigger systematic investigation.

iii. Provide legal support to traditionally unserved or underserved populations (c)

Several traditionally unserved and underserved populations can be well-served through various SU centers and institutes. The College of Law's Disability Rights Clinic (DRC) in collaboration with other law school clinical programs throughout the state could provide legal support to un/underserved populations. The DRC would lead the development of state-wide capacity for coordinating local P&A services through law schools across the state and their clinics that work in the area of disability. The DRC would also work with the local county bar associations to provide pro bono assistance to clients with disabilities and partner with law firms around the state to provide legal assistance and education. As part of other P&A efforts achieved through education and outreach, the DRC would disseminate information about legal rights and remedies. Its law students will provide education and consciousness-raising on issues related to disability culture. The Clinic will litigate cases that protect the rights of vulnerable New Yorkers, sometimes in partnerships with law firms and other organizations.

Many of SU's schools, colleges, centers and institutes have expertise managing a national network of organizations that conduct outreach, training, and provide technical assistance and support to homeless populations and prison re-entry populations. SU's Institute for Veterans and Military Families is providing services to the nation's increasing veteran population with disabilities and is well-positioned to ensure appropriate outreach and services. Another key demographic includes individuals aging with or into a disability. The University's Aging Studies Institute conducts research relevant to these populations and is positioned to expand its activities to conduct outreach that will ensure the P&A does not overlook their needs.

iv. Ensure that individuals with disabilities have the ability to exercise their rights to make choices, contribute to society, and live independently (d);

4. *Training and Technical Assistance (f)*

The University recognizes the multiple roles of the P&A system extends beyond the establishment, protection, and enforcement of legal and civil rights of people with disabilities. Its experts will provide training and technical assistance to constituencies statewide that builds awareness and understanding, and develops people's capacity to promote the right to family and community-based, responsive services and supports and protection of civil rights. Audiences for training and technical assistance include individuals with disabilities; their family members, friends and advocates; and service providers.

Training and technical assistance activities would be offered through multiple formats and mediums, and customized to respond to the needs and preferences of the constituencies seeking assistance. Training opportunities available for the community would include online and on-site opportunities across the state. Materials will be offered in multiple formats to respond to the accessibility needs of diverse audiences. Participants would be asked to respond to pre- and post-training surveys to assess customer satisfaction, knowledge gained, additional knowledge needs, and plans for knowledge use. Webinars would be archived on the website with supporting materials for easy access to participants and additional learners.

The University would offer a menu of relevant topics for knowledge and learning gains and skill development at a beginner, intermediate, and advanced level. Topics offered quarterly and then archived will reflect evidence-based practice and the current state of law and policy, including but not limited to: inclusive education; inclusive employment; ADA and other civil rights protections; fair housing; economic empowerment; access to technology; independent living; access to health care; alternative dispute resolution strategies; Olmstead settlements; access to Social Security benefits; web accessibility requirements; self-determination and informed decision making; self-advocacy; and peer advocacy. Requests for training and the setting of topic priorities specific to target audiences would be a transparent, inclusive process with input accepted via phone, online, and regional listening sessions. Feedback will be solicited from training participants as part of a continuous quality improvement process.

5. *Systems Advocacy*

The University recognizes the power and importance of promoting and effectuating change at a systems level through policy, rules, and laws to advance full community participation, greater independence, productivity, and economic self-sufficiency. Systems advocacy would be accomplished through multiple strategies: a) engaging in public comment on proposed state rulemaking impacting persons with disabilities and on draft state plans and waiver proposals to federal agencies, including CMS (Medicaid), RSA (Vocational Rehabilitation), Labor (Workforce Development System), and Education (IDEA); b) developing model legislation; c) drafting guidance and interagency memorandums of understanding; and d) creating annual goals for systems change activities with input on goals from all target audiences with special efforts to reach underserved populations (race, gender, rural locations, types of disability, age, cultural, military status, sexual orientation, and other groups).

The University's systems advocacy would include a capacity building component that targets self-advocates, family members, and representatives for training on systems advocacy and key skills for becoming engaged in policy analysis, media involvement, collaboration with other groups in pursuit of common goals, and direct negotiation and dispute resolution skills development that will impact groups or large numbers of persons with disabilities.

Established priorities for systems issues would be reassessed annually, based on governance board input, regional listening sessions, and input from people with disabilities and their advocates via phone and emails. Issues of importance may include use of restraints in school systems, voting access, sheltered work as unnecessary segregation, public housing affordability and accessibility, nursing homes versus independent living, accessibility of state government websites, state quality control in timely investigation of discrimination and/or neglect, and communication access in the legal, medical and financial contexts. Systems advocacy status reports would be posted on the website , reported in the P&As, E-Newsletter, and disseminated via media releases.

v. Establish a Client Assistance Program

The University proposes a robust customer service system of client and client applicant assistance to advise them of all services and benefits available to them through programs under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. SU would design and implement a multi-tiered and comprehensive system of information and referral, materials development and dissemination, training and technical assistance, and individual representation and problem-solving for clients and client-applicants who may be eligible for services under the Rehabilitation Act. The design and development of these services will be based on active engagement of the target audience to identify needs and gaps. Outreach strategies will be incorporated to reach traditionally unserved or underserved populations by vocational rehabilitation programs. Strategies to be put in place include one-on-one counseling and problem solving, peer support and development of peer mentor relationships, and skill building for self, peer, citizen, and systems advocacy. The framework for service delivery would focus on individualized solutions that support individual preferences, abilities, and needs that support access and effective and meaningful participation.

SU will train people with disabilities to become advocates and peer mentors to help advise and inform the target audience in their relationships with projects, programs, and community rehabilitation programs providing services under the Act.

6. Summary

The University has the capacity, expertise, and reach to establish a robust, comprehensive system that will address different sub-groups across the spectrum of individuals with disabilities and will effectively respond to the needs for support and services of the target populations as required in the seven protection and advocacy programs for (1) Persons with Developmental Disabilities; (2) Individuals with Mental Illness; (3) Individual Rights; (4) Assistive Technology; (5) Beneficiaries of Social Security; (6) Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury; (7) Voting Accessibility as well as the Client Assistance Program. For each of these programs, there is wide and deep expertise represented across SU that would be leveraged to create a multi-tiered program of information and referral, investigation and monitoring, awareness raising, and protection and advocacy (self, peer, citizen, and systems) and client assistance.

In addition to protection of fundamental civil and human rights, the P&A/CAP would focus attention on inclusive education and employment and community participation of persons with disabilities. With continuous input from all relevant stakeholders, other key issues deserving of attention include the lack of accessibility of public transportation; the lack of accessibility of information and communications technology; and challenges of access to healthcare, including issues of accessibility in public health clinics, as well as effective and meaningful participation in health plans, services, and treatment.

The University stands ready to support the State of New York and its citizens with disabilities. We look forward to discussing how together we might transform P&A/CAP services.