

Front

Merger Proposed for Three SU Schools

Vice Chancellor and Provost Deborah A. Freund has announced plans to explore the development of a new school that would combine the College for Human Development, the College of Nursing, and the School of Social Work into a single, multidisciplinary academic unit specializing in human services and health. "These three units already share a commitment to improving humankind and the quality of life through their academic concentrations," Freund says. "By bringing the various disciplines together into one unit, we can create a school that is on the cutting edge of research, teaching, and practice."

Plans for the new school must be presented to and approved by the University Senate and the Board of Trustees. Freund says the multidisciplinary nature of the school, and the facilitated collaboration between faculty members with similar academic and research interests, would help create an environment that fosters personal and professional development and maximizes learning for faculty as well as students. Freund also envisions an overall strengthening of programs and increased potential for funding from such sources as the Centers for Disease Control and private foundations.

Freund's belief in the potential for a strong new school is shared by many of her colleagues across campus. "This is an opportune time to consider ways to build a stronger University," says School of Social Work Dean William L. Pollard, who would serve as dean of the new academic unit. "The proposal for a new school presents a chance for all three units to move forward in a positive direction, to become better and stronger, and to make the University better and stronger as a result."

Pollard says the common interests of human development, nursing, and social work represent the new unit's greatest source of strength—a foundation upon which the new school would be built.

"Through our various programs and majors, we all deal with some of society's weightiest issues—things like mental health, child care, primary care, long-term care, nutrition, health care, and family

therapy," he says. "By pooling our respective strengths, we can take a stronger, more efficient approach to these issues. We can raise—and answer—the important questions. And we can create a significant tool for education in the 21st century."

Freund acknowledges that the proposal for a new school may be greeted with wariness by many of the individuals involved. "I am well aware that some faculty members are concerned about their programs and departments," she says. "I want to assure them that their professional identities will be maintained and that we will work together on these areas of concern as we go through this process. In the long run I fully believe that the intellectual lives and practical training of our students would be greatly enhanced by the creation of this school."

Freund says the new school would have the potential to meet several long-term goals, including the development of a shared Ph.D. program and the formation of two University-wide research centers: one focusing on issues relating to children and families, the other focusing on scholarship and practice.

She says faculty from other SU schools and colleges that share common interests also would be invited to play a role in the new school. And she hopes to see the new school help foster a connection between the University and the SUNY Health Science Center by "building a bridge of research and teaching."

Freund notes that students currently enrolled in human development, nursing, or social work would not be negatively affected by the merger; majors and degree programs would continue uninterrupted.

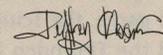
Freund will convene a planning committee consisting of faculty, students, staff, and members of the three units' boards of visitors and consultants. Committee members will work together to define various aspects of the new school, including its title and its administrative organization.

"I want the future of the new school to be charted by the students, faculty, and staff who will be a part of it," says Freund.

—WENDY S. LOUGHLIN

United States Postal Service Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

(Required by 39 USC 3685) **1.** Publication Title: Syracuse University Magazine. **2.** Publication No.: 009-049. **3.** Filing Date: 10/1/99. **4.** Issue Frequency: Quarterly. **5.** No. of Issues Published Annually: 4. **6.** Annual Subscription Price: 0. **7.** Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 820 Comstock Ave., Room 308, Syracuse, NY 13244-5040. Contact Person: Jeffrey Charboneau. Telephone: 315-443-5428. **8.** Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: Same as above. **9.** Publisher: Sandi Tams Mulconry, Office of University Communications, 820 Comstock Ave., Syracuse, NY 13244-5040. Editor: Jay Cox, 820 Comstock Ave., Syracuse, NY 13244-5040. Managing Editor: Jeffrey Charboneau, Director of Institutional/Administrative Publications, 820 Comstock Ave., Syracuse, NY 13244-5040. **10.** Owner: Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-5040. **11.** Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None. **12.** The Purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months. **13.** Publication Title: Syracuse University Magazine. **14.** Issue Date for Circulation Data: Fall 1999. **15.** Extent and Nature of Circulation (Average No. of Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months/Actual No. Copies of Single Issues Published Nearest to Filing Date): **a.** Total No. of Copies (Net press run): 129,239/134,776. **b.** Paid and/or Requested Circulation: **(1)** Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, and Counter Sales (Not mailed): N/A-N/A. **(2)** Paid or Requested Mail Subscriptions (Include advertisers' proof copies and exchange copies): 129,239/134,776. **c.** Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation [Sum of 15b(1) and 15b(2)]: 129,239/134,776. **d.** Free Distribution by Mail (Samples, complimentary, and other free): 0/0. **e.** Free Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers and other means): 0/0. **f.** Total Free Distribution (Sum of 15d and 15e): 0/0. **g.** Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15f): 129,239/134,776. **h.** Copies not Distributed: **(1)** Office Use, Leftover, Spoiled: 600/600. **(2)** Returns from News Agents: N/A-N/A. **i.** Total [Sum of 15g, 15h(1), and 15h(2)]: 129,239/134,776. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c/15g x 100): 100%/100%. **16.** This statement of ownership will be printed in the Winter 1999-2000 issue of this publication. **17.** I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including multiple damages and civil penalties).



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