



NATURAL SCIENCE COLLECTIONS ALLIANCE

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July 7, 2011

Merryl H. Tisch, Chancellor
New York State Board of Regents
Regents Office
89 Washington Avenue
Albany, N.Y. 12234

Dear Chancellor Tisch:

I write to express the deep concern of the natural science collections community about the most recent announcement of staff reductions at the New York State Museum. We recognize that budget conditions are difficult, however, the elimination of key professional-level Museum Scientists and Curators threatens the long-term quality and care of the resources entrusted to the State Museum for stewardship, research, and education related to the natural and cultural history of New York.

The Natural Science Collections Alliance strongly encourages you to consider how these positions may be maintained. The loss of these positions will hinder access to the Museum's collections and will jeopardize New York's ability to serve its citizens. The collections held by the New York State Museum are centrally important to research and education in the state and across the nation.

As I understand the current situation, the New York State Museum has been disproportionately targeted in the current round of State layoffs. The loss of five professional-level Museum Scientist positions, including the State Archaeologist and four Curators (one of which serves as State Paleontologist), will devastate research and collections care in archaeology, geology, and paleontology, making it impossible for the Museum to carry out its core legislated mandates: collections stewardship, research, and education related to the natural and cultural history of the state.

The Museum's Curator of Geology conducts research in mineralogy and ore deposit geology and oversees the largest and most complete collection of New York State minerals, rocks, ore specimens. The Curator of Paleontology conducts research on the deep history of the State's fossil resources and cares for one of the five largest fossil collections in North America, a unique record of the development of American natural science. As State Paleontologist, he monitors a

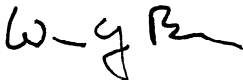
permit program for paleontological research on State lands. Both are highly involved in public education programs. The Curators of Archaeology and Historical Archaeology carry out a wide range of research and public outreach programs, and oversee the largest collection of New York archaeological materials in existence, representing 13,000 years of human activity and including the largest extant collection of early Dutch colonial materials. The State Archaeologist directs a multi-million-dollar, grant-funded cultural resource survey program as well as overseeing a permit program for archaeological work proposed on State lands, and carrying out public education programs such as a joint archaeology field school with the University at Albany.

Removing these positions will seriously jeopardize economically significant, ground-breaking programs in geology and paleontology that originated in the State's natural history surveys of the 1830s, and a highly respected, first-in-the-nation archaeology program initiated by the New York State Regents in 1847.

The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a nonprofit association that supports natural science collections, their human resources, the institutions that house them, and their research activities for the benefit of science and society. Our members are part of an international community of museums, botanical gardens, herbariums, universities and other institutions that house natural science collections and utilize them in research, exhibitions, academic and informal science education, and outreach activities.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me at wycbrown@gmail.com or NSC Alliance Director of Public Policy Dr. Robert Gropp at rgropp@aibs.org or 202-628-1500 x 250 if you have any questions or if we may provide additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W-Y-B' with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Y. Brown, Ph.D.
President