MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Deans Council
FROM: Eric F. Spina
Interim Vice Chancellor and Provost
DATE: December 21, 2006
SUBJECT: The Burton Blatt Institute

In November 2005, Chancellor Nancy Cantor established The Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University to advance the civic, economic and social participation of persons with disabilities. Named in honor of Dr. Burton Blatt, the legacy on which BBI was founded has a long and proud history at SU. Dr. Blatt, dean of the School of Education and Centennial Professor at Syracuse University, was a pioneer in humanizing services for people with mental retardation and a national leader in special education.

BBI has become a vital and unique University-wide institute, resource, and partner for advocates, educators, businesses and legislators working to better the lives of people with disabilities. Chaired by University Professor Peter Blanck, the Institute has a growing staff and an expanding reach, with satellite offices in New York City, Washington, DC, and Atlanta, as well as other national and international operations on the horizon. It exemplifies the Chancellor's vision of Scholarship in Action and is working with faculty from across our schools and colleges.

I have asked BBI Chair Peter Blanck to initiate an internal advisory group to ensure that the opportunities inherent in BBI are made available across the University. The internal advisory group will meet several times each year and be composed of a representative, appointed by their dean, from each school or college.

I expect that the advisory group will deal with issues related to BBI such as:

- How best to promote cross-disciplinary collaborative opportunities among SU students, faculty and staff to advance knowledge and understanding of individuals with disabilities and their families as part of an inclusive campus and society;

- How to further the Chancellor's vision of Scholarship in Action by sharing and disseminating information about SU projects, grants, and initiatives and to identify and propose strategies toward a global society inclusive of people with disabilities in educational settings, workplaces, housing, and other social, recreational, and community opportunities.
• How to distribute BBI seed money (for instance, BBI Innovation and Fellows grants) for activities in or across SU schools or colleges to promote new knowledge and understanding that will advance social and economic independence for individuals with disabilities and their families.

For more information on BBI’s activities, please see the Institute's website (http://bbi.syr.edu).

I ask you to designate a representative from your school or college to the BBI internal advisory board; someone who will engage collaboratively to further our joint mission. I have asked Peter and BBI Executive Director Brian McLane to convene the first meeting of the BBI Advisory Group early next year, so please email the name of your designee to Peter (pblanck@syr.edu) and me by the start of the semester.

Thank you in advance for your support and participation.

cc: Peter Blanck, BBI Chairman
    Brian McLane, BBI Executive Director