

# This is the Place

BY MARY CARPENTER | PHOTOS BY JESSICA MCCAFFERTY

**IN A NORMAL ACADEMIC YEAR** (sans pandemic) SUNY Plattsburgh's student enrollment has been in excess of 5,200 students — approximately 1,100 from the North Country, more than 300 international students and the remainder from towns and cities across New York State.

Most students come to Plattsburgh, stay for four years (more if they earn a graduate degree) and then return home or relocate in search of job opportunities. Some make a different choice. They stay in our area, settle down and build their careers.

To learn what has attracted students to the North Country and what convinced them to stay, *Strictly Business* reached out to five SUNY Plattsburgh alums.

## THEY ARE:

**Jessica Castine**, originally from Clifton Park, majored in Education and English and earned her Master's degree in Literacy. She graduated in 2003/2004. Today she is a Middle and High School English teacher at Northeastern Clinton Central School.

**Evan Clark** who came to SUNY Plattsburgh from Oswego, majored in Marketing and Digital Media Production and graduated in 2018. He is currently a Content Development Specialist at Twinstare Technologies.

**Akemi Chen** traveled nearly 7,000 miles from her home in Japan to attend SUNY Plattsburgh. She majored in International Business, graduating in 1999. She is currently a Chartered Mutual Fund Counselor and Financial Paraplanner at Clute Wealth Management.

**Katherine Dermody** came to SUNY Plattsburgh from Amsterdam, New York. She majored in History as an undergraduate and Education for her Master's degree, graduating in 2004 and 2006. Kate is currently a Faculty Mentor for SUNY Empire State College and a teacher in the Upward Bound Program at SUNY Plattsburgh.

**Greg MacConnell** grew up in Bergen, New York (near Rochester). He came to SUNY Plattsburgh to major in Economics and graduated in 1972. He is now the CFO/Vice President of Champlain Telephone Company.

Following are excerpts from *Strictly Business's* Q&A exchanges with the graduates.



## Jessica Castine:

### Why did you choose SUNY Plattsburgh?

I had done some research on Secondary Education English programs that were close enough to home but far enough away to develop a sense of independence and freedom. I was also looking for an institution that offered a variety of extra-curricular activities and opportunities both on and off campus. SUNY Plattsburgh fit the bill.

### Why did you decide to remain in the North Country after graduation?

I was lucky enough to complete my student teaching placements in the North Country. Those experiences allowed me to view education from a different perspective. I had attended a high school with a graduating class of 650+. During student teaching, it

was refreshing to work in districts with students who could name all of their classmates.



## Evan Clark

### Why did you choose SUNY Plattsburgh?

My decision to attend SUNY Plattsburgh was easy. After driving through the mountains to reach Plattsburgh for my first campus visit and seeing the beauty of the Adirondack Park, I knew right away I wanted to spend my time here. SUNY Plattsburgh felt like a home away from home.

### Why did you decide to remain in the North Country after graduation?

I had a fellowship lined up in Boston but a few weeks before graduation, I landed an interview at Twinstare Technologies in Morrisonville where I met the CEO Devi Momot. Devi is an incredibly smart, kind and generous

leader and I could see how that had molded the character of the company. I had heard the advice, "Choose your boss, not your job." I knew right away I wanted to work for Devi, so I canceled my plans for Boston and started my career at Twinstate.

**What advice could you offer current SUNY students about career opportunities in the area?**

Get an internship and stay in town for at least one summer. Summer in Plattsburgh is amazing. Getting to know this community without the distraction of campus life will give you a new perspective and appreciation for the area. There are so many internship opportunities in and around Plattsburgh. Take advantage! The connections you make can help open doors for you.

**Akemi Chen**

**Why did you choose SUNY Plattsburgh?**

I am from Japan originally and I saw immense opportunities to experience college life and American culture at SUNY Plattsburgh as there were fewer international students in attendance vs. areas like New York City.

**Why did you decide to remain in the North Country after graduation?**

The cost of living is reasonable. I was able to save money to travel around the world and to have amazing cultural experiences while I was working and raising children. I might not have had as many opportunities, if I returned home.

**Kate Dermody**

**Why did you choose SUNY Plattsburgh?**

Growing up in the Capital Region, I wanted a different experience for college. As I drove up the Northway on my way to visit SUNY Plattsburgh, I knew this would be my new home. The Adirondacks, Lake Champlain, the City of Plattsburgh, and the campus all felt right. I fell in love and have never left.



**Tell us about your most memorable undergraduate experience.**

My most memorable experience was my Anthropology internship in Barrow, Alaska, 300 miles above the Arctic Circle. I spent the entire summer there working with Inuit families and children with disabilities.

**Why did you decide to remain in the North Country after graduation?**

Initially I stayed because I was able to find a teaching job that I loved, which blossomed into my education career. I also chose to remain because of the warmth in our community and the opportunities in our region, and it is an ideal place to raise my family.

**Greg MacConnell**

**Why did you choose SUNY Plattsburgh?**

I chose SUNY Plattsburgh based upon its reputation as a solid state university and its exceptional location. After vacationing once in the Adirondacks, I found I liked the mountains and lakes.

**Why did you decide to remain in the North Country after graduation?**

One week after the start of my freshman year, I knew I wanted to remain in the North Country and Plattsburgh in particular. After a hiatus to attend graduate school I returned to Plattsburgh in 1982, primarily for quality of life reasons, to raise my family in a relatively safe environment, on Lake Champlain, in close proximity to skiing and winter sports.

**What advice could you offer current SUNY students about career opportunities in the area?**

Get to know the Plattsburgh-North Country area, meet as many local residents and business people as possible, consider an internship with a local company, attend a Chamber After Hours to see what is going on in the business community, and decide whether this area is where you would like to live. My motto has always been to locate where you would like to live and find a job/profession to accommodate your life style.

SUNY Plattsburgh is an inspirational force in the North Country, providing educational opportunities, jobs and cultural enrichment. We are grateful for its impact on our community. 

