

## Should casinos be near college students?

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 09 October 2014 03:07 -

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An artist's rendering of the inside of Traditions Resort & Casino.(Photo: TRADITIONS PHOTO)

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Is locating a casino in Broome County, with more than 20,000 college students, a sound plan?

That's the primary focus of a letter that Douglas Barton, former director of economic development and planning for Tioga County, recently sent to the state Gaming Commission.

"Would the location of a gaming facility so close to these universities be consistent with the Gaming Commission's mission of addressing problem gambling?" Barton's letter reads. "Science tells us that the cerebral cortex of the brain is not fully developed until the age of 25 and that one of its functions influences a person's ability to reason."

But Barton is also doing community outreach on behalf of Tioga Downs, a Tioga County racino competing against Traditions Resort & Casino, in the Town of Union, and Lago Resort & Casino, planned for Tyre, Seneca County, for a casino license.

When asked whether Binghamton University supports the development of casinos in Broome or Tioga counties, spokesman Ryan Yarosh responded with an emailed statement.

"It is not our role to choose one casino proposal over another — and in fact, we never wish to choose sides in debates such as this," the statement said.

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SUNY Broome Community College, however, has been more liberal in the local casino race.

Earlier this year, the New York State Education Department officially granted the Associate in Applied Science degree program in casino management at SUNY Broome.

The 63-credit degree has two internships, a bartending and beverage management class, and a casino games course, among many others.

There is also a 15-credit casino management certificate, which includes classes on gaming surveillance and security, casino operations management and a casino internship.

For the program, SUNY Broome built a \$300,000 mock casino called "Casino Vespa" with a blackjack table, a 14-foot craps table, roulette and a shiny, full-service mahogany bar. The fancy classroom resides in the basement of SUNY Broome's Science Building.

In May, SUNY Broome hosted the Traditions team for a casino presentation and consequent question-and-answer session. Tioga Downs had a similar event at SUNY Broome in April.

Following the Traditions event in May, SUNY Broome President Kevin Drumm said the college will benefit as long as Traditions or Tioga Downs wins the license.

Traditions would expect to create an estimated 1,066 on-site jobs. By 2016, Tioga Downs would have 1,071 on-site jobs, a figure that includes an estimated 400 existing jobs.

Despite Barton's concern, Broome County Executive Debbie Preston wrote in a recent Guest Viewpoint that Traditions is the "clear choice" for a casino license.

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In the viewpoint, Preston touted SUNY Broome's casino management program as a place where students can learn the ins and outs of the casino industry.

BU, she wrote, is just a short drive from Traditions and would "provide faculty, staff, students and visitors with another entertainment option in our community."

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