



Call him Dr. Malatras: Former state ops director lands at Rockefeller Institute

By Casey Seiler
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Gov. Andrew Cuomo's former state Operations Director Jim Malatras on Monday officially became president of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, an Albany-based think tank that's part of the SUNY system.

The position is newly created. A spokesman for the institute said he did not know what Malatras' salary would be, but would inquire. Update: Malatras will earn \$290,000 a year, which is roughly \$107,000 more than he earned as state ops director, according to the most recent data on SeeThroughNY.com.

In his new role, Malatras "will oversee an expanded mission for the Rockefeller Institute to better assist state and local governments, higher education, and other policy stakeholders in effectively navigating complex systems, programs, and public policy," the institute said.

Outgoing SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher, who was Malatras' boss during [his year-long break](#) from Executive Chamber service spanning 2013 and 2014, said she was "thrilled that we are welcoming three-time SUNY alum Dr. Jim Malatras back to SUNY."

Malatras holds a Ph.D. in public policy from UAlbany, though this might be the first time he has ever been referred to as "Dr. Malatras" in public. His 242-page dissertation, "[A Tale of Two Movements: Collective Legal Consciousness](#)," looked at the evolution of

grassroots campaigns to shut down the Indian Point nuclear plant (a deal to do just that was struck during Malatras' final month on the second floor) and to block the development of a mushroom factory in Sullivan County.

Malatras, long viewed as one of the governor's most trusted aides, was among the half-dozen members of the administration whose actions were the subject of [last spring's federal subpoena](#) into upstate development projects. Cuomo's former Executive Deputy Secretary Joe Percoco was the only one from that list to face federal charges in the eventual criminal complaint, which didn't include a whisper of allegations against Malatras.

He earned qualified plaudits last June from arguably the toughest audience for a Cuomo staffer: a group of Hoosick Falls residents who after attending a Capitol protest were granted [an extended meeting](#) to discuss the state's response to the PFOA contamination crisis.

"Jim is uniquely qualified to serve as president of the Rockefeller Institute of Government as we look to expand its role in service to SUNY and New York State," Zimpher continued. "I have every confidence that under Jim's visionary leadership, we will continue to raise the Institute's profile as a nationally recognized public policy think tank that helps SUNY recruit top-tier talent and train the next generation of thought leaders."

Beginning in 2007, Malatras first served Cuomo as a policy adviser during his attorney general and gubernatorial tenure. He previ-

ously worked as a legislative staffer for former Assemblyman Richard Brodsky.

The institute said Malatras will “work closely with Director Tom Gais, a long-time Institute researcher.”