

Excelsior: Greater Access to Public Higher Education Must be Accompanied by Greater Funding

1 Whereas, the Excelsior Scholarship Program was created to promote greater access to CUNY and SUNY
2 for families with an income up to \$125,000 by providing a “last dollar in” scholarship for eligible NYS
3 residents, and

4 Whereas, the City University System announced on December 24th that there were 50,546 freshman
5 applications, an 11% increase, and SUNY indicated an increase of 18,000 freshman applications, a 6%
6 increase from the prior year, and

7 Whereas, CUNY announced that “Gov. Cuomo’s Excelsior Program played a significant role in the
8 increase of applications, enrollment and credit taking,” and

9 Whereas, Excelsior’s provision of greater access to CUNY and SUNY has not been coupled with an
10 increased investment in the operational side of their budgets, and

11 Whereas, in addition to an increase in applications, the number of first-time freshman taking 15 or more
12 credits at CUNY increased by 10%, a spike CUNY also attributed to the Excelsior Scholarship Program,
13 and

14 Whereas, for the next fiscal year the Governor has proposed \$118 million for the Excelsior Scholarship
15 Program to cover the additional 27,000 CUNY and SUNY students he projects will qualify for the award
16 and is proposing greater access to the award by raising the ceiling of eligibility regarding annual family
17 income from \$100,000 to \$110,000, and

18 Whereas, New York State investment in CUNY senior colleges has experienced a decline of 18%, when
19 adjusted for inflation and measure per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student since the Great Recession of
20 2008, and

21 Whereas, this decline in investment has resulted in inadequate numbers of full-time faculty and support
22 staff, more difficulty for students in being able to take the classes students need to graduate on time,
23 and inadequate access to the resources in libraries and labs for students attending CUNY and SUNY, and

24 Whereas, these shortages had been chronic prior to the implementation of the Excelsior Scholarship
25 Program and

26 Whereas, more students and declining FTE investment will result in the further diminishment of
27 students access to courses needed to graduate on time, and reduced full-time or part-time faculty,
28 advising and counseling, and

29 Whereas, access to CUNY and SUNY must be accompanied by investment in State funding for their
30 operational budgets if students are to receive the quality of education they need and deserve.

31 Therefore be it resolved, that the chronic underfunding of CUNY and SUNY and the greater demand on
32 their operational resources as a result of the increased access provided by the Excelsior program

33 requires an increased investment in the instructional and support services needed to provide a quality
34 public college education;

35 Therefore be it further resolved NYSUT advocate for an increased NYS allocation of resources for the
36 additional full-time faculty and support staff necessary to make Excelsior a basis for access to a quality
37 public higher education for NYS students.