



The State University of New York
Student Assembly



STUDENT, FACULTY AND STAFF HIGHER EDUCATION PLATFORM New York State Budget, Fiscal Year 2023

CUNY and SUNY are critical engines for NY's economy and for racial and economic equity. Governor Hochul's Executive Budget fully closes the TAP Gap and makes critical new investments in SUNY and CUNY, funding additional faculty lines, opportunity programs, childcare centers and more. But after a generation of state disinvestment, a decade of higher education austerity and two years of pandemic, our public universities need more. CUNY and SUNY can power New York's COVID recovery and build a stronger, more inclusive economy, if the Legislature enacts new programs of investment such as the New Deal for CUNY (S4461A/A5843) and the UUP HEALS agenda for Healthcare, Education, Access, Leadership, Sustainability at SUNY.

Increase state investment to reduce the tuition burden. New York's model of public higher education funding has relied on tuition hikes for too long. Annual tuition hikes for most of the past decade served mostly to cover costs that should rightly have been funded by the state. Tuition hikes far outpaced family income growth, student loan debt increased, and students who fell through the cracks of New York's financial aid programs struggled to afford SUNY and CUNY. **The Legislature should allocate funds to move New York toward a tuition-free future.**

Increase CUNY and SUNY senior college operating budgets by an ADDITIONAL \$250 million each. CUNY and SUNY need **\$250 million each**, in addition to the Executive Budget allocation, to rebuild their ranks of full-time faculty, add advisors and mental health counselors, rebuild student support services and academic departments, and restore critical mission funding for the SUNY teaching hospitals. CUNY's full-time faculty-to-student ratios are far below national norms for public universities. CUNY students, who contend with the pressures of poverty and systemic racism, have been at the center of the pandemic. Yet the ratio of mental health counselors to students at CUNY is close to 1:2,700, when the national standard is 1:1,000. SUNY's teaching hospitals train thousands of physicians and health care professionals and continue to provide the finest life-saving care during an unprecedented health crisis. As part of the \$250 million addition to SUNY funding, the state must provide **\$87 million** in critical mission funding and **\$68 million** for debt service relief for the SUNY hospitals.

Stabilize and increase community college funding. Community college enrollments are down, in part, because of the pandemic. Governor Hochul's Executive Budget holds community college funding harmless against recent enrollment losses, allocating the same level of funding they received in 2021-2022. But enrollments this year are at a COVID low; setting 2021-2022 as the reference year leaves community colleges in desperate need. The Legislature should set 2018-2019 as the reference academic year for the hold harmless provision, restoring all the funding lost from enrollment declines during COVID (**CUNY: \$21M; SUNY: \$35.7M**). Albany must increase funding to meet the state's statutory obligation to fund 40% of community college operating budgets.

Reform the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), Excelsior Scholarship, and other aid. Part-time students, graduate students, and individuals who are incarcerated are poorly served by TAP, and too few students benefit from the Excelsior Scholarship, New York's last-dollar free tuition program. Governor Hochul's Executive Budget extends TAP to part-time students and restores TAP eligibility for incarcerated individuals. TAP reform should go further, restoring Graduate TAP awards, extending eligibility for students with Intellectual Disabilities (A3032A/S1786A), and making aid available in the summer and winter. The Excelsior Scholarship should be expanded to cover non-tuition costs and eligibility should be less rigid. In FY 2022, **\$400 million** allocated to the Excelsior Scholarship went unspent – that money should be put to use. Finally, funding for Bundy Aid for

independent institutions should be increased to **\$100 million**.

Expand Opportunity Programs. Investment in SEEK, College Discovery, CUNY LEADS, the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) and the Higher Education Opportunity Program increases college success and completion rates. CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) and Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE) initiatives are national models for how wrap-around student supports can vastly increase college retention and completion rates. The Legislature should build on the increases to opportunity program funding in Governor Hochul's Executive Budget.

Expand student empowerment and support programs. Governor Hochul's Executive Budget provides funding to expand childcare centers to every SUNY and CUNY campus. We support this investment and urge the Legislature to take further action to enhance student support programs and empower students to advocate for their own interests. The Legislature should pass the Campus Free Hunger Act (S.1151b/A.6881b) and the Student Assembly Empowerment Act (S.5436/A.7054) and increase funding by **\$13.09 million** to the State Education Department's operating budget to enhance supports and services for students with disabilities.

Invest in infrastructure and fund sustainability. Classrooms, facilities and laboratories must be equipped to strengthen New York's workforce, especially in the fields of education, the sciences and healthcare. As students, faculty, and staff return to full-scale on-campus learning during the pandemic, investments in ventilation and other critical infrastructure are needed to mitigate virus transmission. Further, investing in sustainable facilities will help mitigate climate change and create high-paying construction jobs. We urge the Legislature to directly allocate funds to support CUNY and SUNY capital requests.

Support student debt relief. New York State currently has the eighth largest average student loan debt per student and the fourth largest total student loan debt in the country. According to a study by the Rockefeller Institute, 20.8% of CUNY students and 52.5% of SUNY students graduate with student loan debt, including 25.6% of bachelor degree graduates at CUNY and 63% of bachelor degree graduates at SUNY. The average student debt for graduating baccalaureate students at CUNY and SUNY is \$16,300 and \$27,000 per borrower, respectively. The CUNY University Student Senate calls on the Legislature to develop a Student Loan Debt Relief Tax Credit.

This platform has been endorsed by:

New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)

Student Assembly of the State University of New York (SUNY SA)

The CUNY Rising Alliance (CRA)

University Student Senate of the City University of New York (USS)

New York State United Teachers (NYSUT)

Professional Staff Congress/CUNY (PSC)

United University Professions (UUP)