

STUDENT, FACULTY AND STAFF 2021 HIGHER EDUCATION PLATFORM

New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)
State University of New York Student Assembly (SUNY-SA)
The CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities (CCSD)
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)

CUNY and SUNY are critical for a just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, but New York's public higher education institutions and financial aid programs need an influx of additional state funding to make it happen, not another year of budget cuts, tuition hikes, and dwindling services. CUNY and SUNY need increased state funding. Yet the Executive Budget, which assumes \$6 billion in federal stimulus for New York State, would enact painful budget cuts. Even the rosier scenario laid out by the governor if there is \$15 billion in federal stimulus leaves our public university systems woefully underfunded: Staff shortages, tuition hikes, and reductions in student services were an escalating problem before COVID-19. In addition to federal stimulus funding, the state can end the years-long funding crisis at CUNY and SUNY by ending tax breaks for the ultra-wealthy and enacting other progressive revenue raisers, such as the Stock Transfer Tax. CUNY and SUNY can power New York's recovery and build a stronger, more inclusive economy, if the Legislature responds boldly to this crisis and enacts new programs of investment such as the New Deal for CUNY and the SUNY HEALS agenda for Healthcare, Education, Access, Leadership, Sustainability.

Increase State Investment, Not Tuition. When state investment does not keep up with rising operating costs, revenue from tuition hikes makes up the deficit. CUNY and SUNY students have paid billions in out-of-pocket increased tuition in the past decade. But that burden has not resulted in improved services or ended the shortages of faculty and staff. **Students fundamentally reject higher costs associated with college, and this coalition implores the state to reject "predictable" tuition increases and increase state investment, not tuition, by allocating funding to freeze tuition at current levels.**

Eliminate the TAP Gap and Reinvest in CUNY and SUNY 4-year Colleges. New York State's policy of not funding the full Tuition Assistance Program awards of CUNY and SUNY TAP recipients is accelerating disinvestment in CUNY and SUNY. By law, which is set to expire, the universities must waive the difference between tuition (CUNY: \$6930, SUNY: \$7070) and \$5000 for full-time students receiving maximum TAP awards. Students who receive partial TAP awards receive partial tuition waivers. This "TAP Gap" grows with every tuition hike. Since 2012, it has cost public colleges nearly \$1 billion. **This year, CUNY and SUNY will lose over \$147M, which we urge the State to cover (CUNY: \$78M, SUNY: \$69M).**

Stabilize and Increase Community College Funding. Both CUNY and SUNY community colleges are facing funding cuts due to enrollment declines. The impact has been exacerbated by the pandemic, even while un- and under-employment in New York State skyrockets. While the Legislature has increased per-FTE Base Aid for community colleges since 2008, the state is still not meeting its statutory obligation to fund 40% of their operating budgets. Instead of cutting community college funding, **the state should hold community colleges harmless against enrollment declines and increase the per-FTE Base Aid rate by at least \$250.** In addition, the formula for funding community colleges should be adjusted to set a minimum floor of State investment of 98 percent of the prior year's funding.

Expand and Protect Opportunity Programs. New York's opportunity programs need increased funding, not budget cuts, regardless of what comes down from Washington D.C. Investment in SEEK, College Discovery, the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) and the Higher Education Opportunity Program increases college success and completion rates. Restoration of **\$2.5M** is also needed for Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP).

Expand Student Support Services Amid the Pandemic. From isolation, to lost wages, and public health stress, the COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the anxiety and depression experienced by students. CUNY and SUNY need consistent adequate resources to mobilize a more robust university-based response. Hiring new on-campus mental health counselors and advisors and expanding tele-counseling programs must be a priority and must not burden students with additional fees. Additionally, we urge the Legislature to restore funding for campus child care centers, provide

additional funding for students with disabilities, and support initiatives to reduce textbook expenses and student food insecurity.

Reform the Tuition Assistance Program and Other State Financial Aid. Low-income part-time students, graduate students, and individuals who are incarcerated are poorly served by TAP, and too few students benefit from the Excelsior Scholarship. Both programs should be reformed so that more students can qualify, and that awards may be available in the summer and winter. Finally, Bundy Aid funding should be restored.

Restore Mission Funding to SUNY Hospitals. SUNY's teaching hospitals train thousands of physicians and health care professionals while providing care for everyone who walks through their doors. No one is turned away, even if they can't pay for care. Now the coronavirus pandemic has made it obvious that New York needs fully funded public hospitals. SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University in Brooklyn was designated a COVID-only hospital in the early months of the pandemic to help manage rising cases in the community, while SUNY Stony Brook University Hospital and SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse continue to battle the virus in their communities. Essential mission funding is required for their continued success. SUNY hospitals continue to be the only state agency or institution required to pay salaries, fringe benefits, and debt service for necessary hospital maintenance all while having lost over \$600 million in state support since 2011-2012. The state covers these costs for every other state government entity. The state must provide **\$87M** in critical mission funding to maintain the quality services delivered by these public hospitals every day.

Invest In Safe Campus Reopening And Fund Sustainability. As students, faculty, and staff return to full-scale on-campus learning, investment to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment are critical. From upgrades like better ventilation systems, to daily needs such as working bathroom facilities and soap, a detailed safe reopening plan will be important to instill trust among the public. Additionally, New York's colleges and universities have the opportunity and moral imperative to combat the global climate crisis by dedicating State capital funds for aggressive campus energy efficiency, sustainability, research, and training programs. We urge the Legislature to directly allocate funds to support CUNY and SUNY capital requests.