

1 BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE
2 STANDING COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

3 PUBLIC HEARING:

4 EXAMINATION OF THE COST OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION
5 AND ITS EFFECT ON STUDENT FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS,
6 STATE SUPPORT, TAP/GAP, STUDENT BORROWING, AND OTHER
7 CHALLENGES TO AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

8 SUNY Oswego Syracuse Campus
9 The Atrium, Suite 115
10 9 Clinton Square
11 Syracuse, New York

12 Date: October 31, 2019
13 Time: 1:00 p.m.

14 PRESIDING:

15 Senator Toby Ann Stavisky
16 Chair

17 PRESENT:

18 Senator Rachel May (Co-Host and Co-Sponsor)

19 Senator Robert E. Antonacci
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Executive Director
Kevin Marken
Utica Director
On Point for College

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1 SENATOR STAVISKY: I would like to welcome
2 everybody to the Senate Standing Committee on
3 Higher Education hearing that is being held on the
4 campus of the State University of New York at Oswego
5 downtown Syracuse Campus.

6 Today is October 31st, and the time is
7 1 p.m., for the record.

8 First, let me start by thanking Senator May
9 for co-sponsoring this hearing, and for the help of
10 her staff, Zach Zeliff and Jessica Bumpus.

11 And I would also like to thank
12 Clayton Eichelberger from the Senate Majority
13 counsel's office;

14 My staff, Sabiel Chapnick, Beth LaMountain,
15 Marilyn Dyer, and my chief of staff, Mike Favilla;

16 As well as folks from this campus,
17 Jill Pippin, the dean of extended learning, and,
18 Cindy do Rego -- if I mis -- the office manager.

19 If I mispronounce, I apologize.

20 This is one of the statewide hearings that we
21 are holding concerning the cost of higher education.

22 And we're here because Oswego is an important
23 part of our SUNY system.

24 And I thank President Stanley for her help,
25 and for the help of her office.

1 The purpose of this hearing is to listen to
2 testimony concerning affordability and
3 accessibility, and, particularly, such issues as the
4 TAP gap, such issues as student borrowing, student
5 debt, et cetera.

6 And before I start, let me just thank
7 President Stanley specifically, because, 10 years
8 ago -- and she's starting to smile -- 10 years ago
9 I chaired the Higher Education Committee, and we
10 were in Oswego.

11 The chair of the Education Committee at the
12 time was Susie Oppenheimer.

13 And she and I were at Oswego, and needless to
14 say, the snow started to fall, and it got worse and
15 worse.

16 My flight was canceled.

17 And I managed to get a seat on the last
18 JetBlue flight, except that we wound up waiting at
19 the airport.

20 But President Stanley went out of her way,
21 10 years ago --

22 She doesn't remember, but I do.

23 You do?

24 -- she and her staff drove us through that
25 awful snowstorm to the Syracuse airport.

1 And we -- I never forgot the kindness and the
2 sensitivity of our friends at Oswego.

3 And my husband taught at Oswego many years
4 ago.

5 In fact, he had a masters and a Ph.D. in
6 American history from Columbia.

7 He taught the first course, the first class,
8 in Black history at the State University at Oswego.
9 And many, many years later, he was invited back to
10 Oswego to deliver the Marian -- I forgot the last
11 name -- Memorial lecture. And he and I were there.

12 I've been to Oswego many times, and it's
13 really a wonderful campus.

14 And, lastly, let me mention the fact that
15 Senator May arranged a tour today of Syracuse.

16 And for the English majors who were here,
17 Thomas Wolfe was wrong, you can go home again,
18 because I spent four years at Syracuse, I finished
19 in the four years. And, in fact, did my student
20 teaching at T. Aaron Levy Junior High School.

21 And I'm delighted to be here.

22 So, first, let me start by introducing my
23 colleague, who has done a wonderful, wonderful job
24 in the state Senate.

25 People respect her ability and her

1 intelligence and her concern for the import -- the
2 things that are important to the people, not just in
3 her district, but in the entire state.

4 Senator May.

5 SENATOR MAY: Well, thank you,
6 Senator Stavisky.

7 And thank you to everybody who's here, and
8 especially to SUNY Oswego for hosting this.

9 We really appreciate this, President Stanley,
10 and all of your staff.

11 It's been really wonderful to be able to do
12 this here, and kind of call attention to this little
13 gem in our community that a lot people don't know
14 about.

15 I'm very pleased to serve on the
16 Higher Education Committee with Senator Stavisky,
17 partly because I have a background myself in higher
18 education.

19 My first teaching job was at SUNY
20 Stony Brook, where I taught Russian language and
21 literature.

22 And then, many years later, I came to
23 Syracuse, and I enrolled at SUNY College of
24 Environmental Science and Forestry, and got a
25 master's there.

1 And then I worked at SUNY ESF and at Syracuse
2 University in sustainability education.

3 So I have a personal history with the state
4 university system, as well as higher education, but
5 also because I represent, I believe, the district
6 with the most higher-education institutions anywhere
7 in the state.

8 There are five private colleges and
9 universities in the 53rd District, including
10 Hamilton, Colgate, Le Moyne, Syracuse University,
11 and Cazenovia College.

12 But, four SUNY campuses; this one, SUNY
13 Upstate Medical University, SUNY College of
14 Environmental Science and Forestry, and
15 SUNY Morrisville, are all in the 53rd Senate
16 District.

17 So I consider my job, as I'm, to a certain
18 extent, the senator for higher education, and I take
19 that very seriously.

20 So I really -- and I should say,
21 Onondaga Community College isn't in my district, but
22 it's very close. And a lot of my constituents
23 attend OCC too. So, I sort of consider it one of
24 mine as well.

25 So I am thrilled that we're able to have this

1 hearing here, and be able to hear from people in
2 this part of the state.

3 I want to acknowledge Senator Stavisky for
4 coming here, and many of my colleagues.

5 I know there was a concern, when the
6 Democrats took the majority in the Senate, that
7 upstate was going to be ignored in the state
8 Legislature because so many of the majority members
9 are from New York City.

10 But I can say, categorically, that is not
11 true. And, fully, half of my Majority colleagues
12 have come to this district in the past year, for
13 hearings, for roundtables, for tours, for the
14 State Fair... for all kinds of reasons.

15 But I have made sure to give them an
16 introduction to what a small city is about compared
17 to a metropolis, what our rural areas experience.

18 And so I really am deeply grateful that we're
19 having this hearing, and I consider it one a series
20 of events that we've had here, that are really
21 showcasing Central New York and the concerns of
22 Central New York, and the voices of Central
23 New York, for the state Senate.

24 So I'm grateful to all of you for being here,
25 and looking forward to our discussion today.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

2 SENATOR MAY: Oh, and just let me add,
3 because Senator Stavisky thanked Zach Zeliff, who is
4 my chief of staff, and Jessica Bumpus, but I also
5 want to thank Eric Vandervort, my legislative
6 director, who's been very helpful here; and
7 Carol Boll, who is my senior policy advisor, who
8 mostly works on Aging, because I'm the Chair of the
9 Aging Committee. But Higher Education is the other
10 main part of her brief.

11 So I'm happy that she's here as well.

12 And also the guys from central staff who have
13 come and staffed every one of these hearings --

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes.

15 SENATOR MAY: -- and do an amazing job.

16 So this is being live-streamed, and also will
17 be available on the Senate website in the future as
18 well, for people who want to -- want to find out
19 about everything that's being said here today.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: And so will the testimony,
21 that will be available also on-line.

22 And did I -- I think I neglected to mention,
23 but the Senate media-services folks have really --
24 they've been on the forefront of the hearings.

25 We've had hearings in Brooklyn College and

1 part of CUNY.

2 We went to New Paltz, Buffalo.

3 Today is Syracuse.

4 Tomorrow is Garden City, Nassau Community
5 College.

6 And so we've tried to hit the
7 geographically-diverse areas.

8 And they have been at every hearing, and we
9 certainly appreciate it.

10 Let me caution you about the microphones.

11 They are pushed back deliberately.

12 So just speak into the microphone, don't pull
13 it forward.

14 That was the request from media services.

15 SENATOR MAY: Oh, okay.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay.

17 All right, first we have Deborah Stanley,
18 president of SUNY Oswego;

19 Dr. Casey Crabill, president of
20 Onondaga Community College;

21 And, Dr. David Rogers, president of
22 SUNY Morrisville.

23 You will each speak, and then we will have
24 the questions.

25 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: Good afternoon.

1 I'm Deborah Stanley, president of
2 SUNY Oswego.

3 Welcome to the SUNY Oswego Syracuse Campus.

4 We are also very grateful that you came up to
5 see us in Upstate New York, in Syracuse, and we're
6 honored by your presence here today.

7 I want to thank Chairperson Stavisky,
8 Senator May, honorable members of the Senate
9 Committee on Higher Education, and distinguished
10 staff members for their opportunity to speak.

11 I applaud you for the time and attention you
12 are devoting to the challenging issues of
13 affordability and accessibility in public higher
14 education.

15 These are issues that, in one way or another,
16 our students and our college wrestle with every day.

17 I hope my remarks will shed additional light
18 for you as you pursue your important work in
19 addressing them.

20 For some context:

21 SUNY Oswego enrolls nearly
22 8,000 undergraduate and graduate students. 7,392 of
23 them are from New York State.

24 They are attracted to our highly-ranked
25 programs, which include:

1 The newly ABET-accredited programs in
2 electrical and computer engineering and software
3 engineering, the AACSB-accredited MBA program,
4 broadcasting, human-computer interaction, biomedical
5 and health informatics, strategic communication,
6 education, and online programs in health-services
7 administration and business administration.

8 Our main campus, 40 miles from here in the
9 more rural north, is the largest employer in
10 Oswego County.

11 Here in Syracuse, a city in need of effective
12 paths out of poverty, we offer urban and suburban
13 adult students and working professionals the cost
14 and time-saving opportunity to earn a college degree
15 at a public price point.

16 More than 40 percent of our undergraduates at
17 our main campus, and here in Syracuse, have enough
18 financial need to qualify for federal Pell grants.

19 And SUNY Oswego enrolls nearly 1100 Excelsior
20 scholars this year. This is an exceptional start
21 for a program still so new.

22 Our campus has embraced the
23 Excelsior Scholarship since its announcement, and we
24 applaud and thank Governor Cuomo for creating the
25 scholarship as a model for the nation.

1 I also want to thank you, Senator Stavisky,
2 for being a partner in making it a reality for our
3 campuses.

4 With help from life-changing programs like
5 this one, and the Educational Opportunity Program,
6 SUNY Oswego's graduation rate has significantly
7 risen in recent years.

8 This striking 14-point rise in the graduation
9 rate also can be attributed to SUNY Oswego's
10 investment and attention to each student, and our
11 unwavering commitment to them, as outlined in our
12 "Oswego Guarantee."

13 That is a promise that we make to our
14 students dating back to the 1990s.

15 It pledges that the necessary classes will be
16 available to complete a baccalaureate degree in
17 four consecutive years, while also guaranteeing
18 availability of small classes and stable
19 room-and-board costs.

20 At SUNY Oswego, our core is our students. We
21 measure our success by theirs.

22 Oswego student body has evolved with the
23 demographics of New York in our efforts to recruit a
24 diverse and talented student body.

25 More than 30 percent of our students are from

1 underrepresented groups.

2 More than one in four of our undergraduates
3 are first-generation college students. We are
4 inspired by their grit and determination to compete
5 and succeed.

6 They know that as first person -- as the
7 first person in their family to get a higher
8 education, they can pull the whole family ahead, and
9 advance their communities too.

10 They promise themselves, I will find a way.

11 Nationwide, today's students are experiencing
12 burgeoning student-loan debt, and often juggling
13 multiple jobs along with their classes.

14 And, still, they struggle to buy textbooks;
15 to afford transportation, to get to and from class,
16 to work, to an internship, or student teaching site;
17 and also to feel secure about their next meal.

18 At SUNY Oswego, we benefit from New York's
19 history of leadership when it comes to college
20 affordability.

21 This is something students in many states
22 have not been able to count on.

23 And when we see our students struggling with
24 these basic expenses, we have sought out ways to
25 support them so that they can stay in school and

1 compete for their degree.

2 We promise ourselves, we will find a way.

3 We will find a way to help reduce the cost of
4 textbooks.

5 We invested in the digital direct access,
6 all-inclusive E-textbook Initiative, a program that
7 addresses textbook affordability and day-one access
8 to classroom materials.

9 Last year, this innovative program saved our
10 participating students nearly a quarter of a million
11 dollars.

12 SUNY's Open Educational Resources Project
13 also provides online learning materials to students
14 at no cost, and our faculty and students are taking
15 advantage of that as well.

16 To help students with transportation, we have
17 added buses.

18 First, it was for prospective students and
19 their families from downstate to visit our campus;

20 Then, for our students to go home for the
21 holidays;

22 Then, to bring New York City students to
23 their first day of classes.

24 We bought a van to transport student teachers
25 to their assigned schools.

1 And we will probably keep adding buses and
2 vans as the need arises.

3 To address food insecurity, our college
4 started a food pantry a few years ago. And then it
5 expanded to offer clothing, too, so that students
6 can have the attire suitable for the changing
7 seasons of Oswego.

8 Thanks to our faculty, we now also have an
9 art-supplies pantry.

10 So, people are recognizing that students are
11 in need.

12 To assure that all first- and second-year
13 students and transfers are on sure-footing with
14 degree requirements and academic choices, we have
15 initiated a completely new paradigm for advisement,
16 hired new advisors, and enhanced the role of faculty
17 as mentors.

18 To serve the much greater need for
19 mental-health counseling, SUNY Oswego has invested
20 in educating our community in regard to
21 mental-health issues, as -- by opening dialogues,
22 and providing training programs for students,
23 student clubs and organizations, faculty and staff,
24 as well as investing in counseling-center staff.

25 To counsel each student who owes substantial

1 amounts at the end of a semester, and find resources
2 to help them, we deploy integrated teams from
3 student affairs, academic affairs, development, and
4 finance, the intense financial interventions so
5 students may return the next semester.

6 Yet, there is still great need to open the
7 doors of opportunity to the college-age residents of
8 our state.

9 Continued support for successful programs,
10 like the Educational Opportunity Program and the
11 Excelsior Scholarship, will enable tens of thousands
12 of high-need and high-potential students to have
13 enough resources, enough, to be frank, to not go
14 hungry, not go homeless.

15 It will enable them to buy textbooks and
16 supplies, as well as participate in internships,
17 summer research opportunities, study-abroad
18 experiences... all that they need to compete on a
19 level playing field in the professional world that
20 awaits them once they graduate.

21 We strive for maximum efficiency in
22 administering these important State-funded programs
23 to help students reap their full benefits.

24 We practice intrusive advisement with our
25 Excelsior scholars, as with the longstanding

1 Educational Opportunity Program, in an extra effort
2 to make sure students receiving these funds stay on
3 the path to their degree.

4 For example, our goal, is an increasing
5 percentage of Oswego's EOP students graduating in
6 four years.

7 I am reminded of the words of one of our EOP
8 students, Henry Leon [ph.], a recipient of SUNY's
9 new McConney Award for EOP Student Excellence.

10 His advice to his peers was: Value every
11 single penny and take the most advantage of it.

12 Like, Henry, we do.

13 New York's many initiatives in support of
14 access to high-quality public higher education are
15 effective for our SUNY system.

16 The tuition-assistance program has funded the
17 educations of hundreds of thousands of New York
18 citizens over its long history.

19 Through legislative action, the more recent
20 rational tuition policy has provided modest and
21 regular increases in tuition, protecting our
22 students and their families from unplanned large
23 increases which could bring their studies to an
24 abrupt end.

25 It has also been significant in helping our

1 campuses maintain high-quality programs as we keep
2 up with the challenges of our times, from the
3 necessity to continually update our technology and
4 infrastructure, to the newer critical need to attend
5 to the mental health of our students with early
6 intervention.

7 Each of these programs, TAP and rational
8 tuition, serves as important purpose.

9 SUNY is an asset that cannot and should not
10 be eroded or wasted.

11 The future for our students, and our future
12 as a thriving democratic society, are assured with
13 the strong public higher education that is SUNY, and
14 we must keep pace with offering an education that is
15 also still a great value.

16 In the sphere of public higher education,
17 New York has accomplished an abundance of good for
18 individuals and our communities across the state.

19 We need to adequately fund the programs we
20 have, refine them, and, as our population and
21 environment continue to change, carve out new paths,
22 new solutions, and make sure that we will always
23 find a way to provide the best education for rising
24 generations.

25 Our students are worth every penny.

1 Thank you for taking the time today to hear
2 how SUNY Oswego addresses the financial hurdles
3 facing our students, and to better understand the
4 resources we need to reach our full potential, as
5 the work begins on the next state budget.

6 I am grateful for your dedication to ensuring
7 that the State University of New York remains a
8 vital and sustaining asset for the people of our
9 state.

10 Thank you.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

12 Dr. Crabill -- Crabill, I'm sorry.

13 DR. CASEY CRABILL: Thank you.

14 Senator Stavisky, Central New York's
15 Senator May, good afternoon.

16 Thank you for the opportunity to provide
17 comments as you consider the wide range of issues
18 facing higher education in the state of New York.

19 Thank you for your ongoing support of our
20 community colleges.

21 And, Senator May, thank you for your careful
22 attention to Central New York's higher-ed ecosystem.

23 You are a steadfast champion for our
24 students.

25 Senator Stavisky, you've been a leader in

1 this field for a long time, and we appreciate that.

2 My name is Casey Crabill, and I've had the
3 privilege of serving as president of
4 Onondaga Community College since July of 2013.

5 I am a native Upstate New Yorker, and a proud
6 SUNY alum, having received both of my graduate
7 awards from UAlbany.

8 OCC is a public two-year member campus of the
9 State University of New York. We are sponsored by
10 Onondaga County. And in the fall of 2019 we
11 enrolled 9,399 students, only 109 of whom came from
12 outside the state of New York.

13 Like most community colleges, we are
14 substantially local.

15 Community colleges, as you know, have unique
16 missions.

17 They're open enrollment; meaning, anyone in
18 possession of a high school credential can enroll
19 for courses.

20 They have an array of degree types designated
21 to prepare students either to transfer to another
22 institution to complete a baccalaureate or to enter
23 a job field.

24 In addition, the open-enrollment nature
25 requires that community colleges provide academic

1 support to build skills necessary to pursue that
2 desired degree.

3 In short, I believe community colleges are
4 democracy's colleges, offering access to
5 post-secondary education to all who desire it,
6 providing pathways to a stronger personal economic
7 future.

8 We all recognize that the cost of higher
9 education is a concern for families.

10 New York's community colleges are on the
11 front lines of the effort to ensure that higher
12 education remains financially within reach.

13 We appreciate our partners in state
14 government who, over the years, have helped keep
15 college within reach for our students through the
16 creation of programs like TAP, EOP, and the
17 Excelsior Scholarship.

18 At Onondaga, we ensure that our tuition falls
19 well below the TAP limit, to be certain that our
20 neediest students can continue to pursue their
21 education.

22 New York has always made sure that its public
23 institutions remained within reach, understanding
24 and embracing that public good of higher education.

25 Beyond financial aid, and thanks to the

1 support from both the Governor and the state
2 legislators, through the Community Schools Grant
3 programs, our campus has been able to establish a
4 community-care hub, a central service designed to
5 link students with support to help them accomplish
6 their educational goals.

7 Cumulatively, we have served 2,571 students,
8 with over 2,300 benefiting from a food pantry,
9 2700 students receiving bus passes, 3700 meal
10 tickets distributed from our community-care hub,
11 addressing issues of transportation and food
12 insecurity.

13 We also provide transitional housing for
14 students who find themselves homeless.

15 We know that financial instability
16 contributes to students' failure to complete higher
17 ed. And we know that the service we provide in our
18 community-care hub can help to alleviate some of
19 that instability.

20 At Onondaga, we have a strategic plan that
21 challenges us to do three things:

22 To work closely with our K-12 partners;

23 To provide students with equitable access to
24 a clear and well-aligned path to success;

25 And to position students for success by

1 implementing research-validated methods of support.

2 Underlying these three goals is the
3 recognition, that whatever the cost of college may
4 be, if you show up without adequate preparation, if
5 you don't have a clear pathway to complete, or if
6 you don't have effective support programs, it
7 increases the probability that any money that you
8 spend will not be spent wisely or effectively.

9 I would like to spend my time this afternoon
10 talking about some of Onondaga's efforts to increase
11 the effectiveness of our work.

12 To support college-readiness, we have
13 programs to work with our regional high school
14 partners.

15 Partnering with the State, we established
16 four innovative P-TECH high school programs in both
17 Onondaga and Oswego counties, as well as three
18 early-college high schools in partnership with
19 Syracuse City, East Syracuse Minoa, and the
20 Solvay School District.

21 These efforts are supported by State awards
22 to the school district.

23 Outside of the structure, we have developed
24 eight early-college programs with other high school
25 districts, enabling students to travel to our campus

1 to take courses during the day.

2 These programs provide early exposure to
3 careers, to majors; they provide knowledge about
4 post-secondary education to support
5 college-readiness; and they help to build skills to
6 support student success.

7 Because P-TECH and early-college high schools
8 serve select populations, we have also created a
9 program called the "Onondaga Advantage."

10 Now in five high school districts, this
11 program is available to students and their families,
12 beginning in the 9th grade, to support the
13 development of college knowledge and success
14 behaviors.

15 Working with the school districts, we have
16 established benchmarks in three areas of behavior,
17 consistent with success in post-secondary education:
18 attendance, performance, and engagement.

19 We also provide a great deal of college
20 information, and work with students and their
21 families over four years, through workshops and
22 field trips.

23 School districts monitor a student's progress
24 on the benchmarks. And those who fall behind are
25 given access to programs to catch them up.

1 For students who complete this program, they
2 can earn their first year's tuition at Onondaga,
3 paid for by private scholarship dollars we raise, in
4 the event that they qualify for no financial aid.

5 Continued success at Onondaga will enable the
6 students to earn the second year of tuition.

7 The goal of the program, whether a student
8 attends Onondaga Community College or another
9 institution, is to help them exit high school ready
10 for the demands of college so that the resources
11 they do expend will take them further.

12 Our second goal aspires to provide an
13 equitable access to a clear, well-aligned path.

14 OCC has taken several significant steps to
15 ensure that students can achieve what they plan
16 within the time and money available to support them,
17 using both technology and staff support.

18 To meet the needs of students, we developed
19 and launched a streamlined mobile application, as
20 well as implemented an enterprise text-messaging
21 platform, to increase early communication and
22 interactions with students, ensuring a connection
23 that supports retention.

24 We developed a student-focused enrollment and
25 registration effort, providing each student who

1 applies with an individualized contact person from
2 the point of admission, and proactive guidance to
3 complete all enrollment, financial-aid, and
4 registration processes.

5 The support remains with the student through
6 the start of their second semester, helping the
7 student move forward.

8 A well-aligned path requires a clear road
9 through any needed remedial education.

10 And Onondaga Community College continues as
11 the lead campus of SUNY's developmental
12 English-learning community, known as the
13 "Accelerated Learning Program."

14 To date, Onondaga has helped participating
15 campuses impact over 6,500 students statewide, and
16 increased the developmental-writing pass rate by
17 18 percent, and the pass rate in the first year of
18 composition by 83 percent in one cohort alone.

19 Completing necessary remediation concurrent
20 with first-level college courses supports retention,
21 it shortens time to degree, and it makes the best
22 use of available resources.

23 Our third goal challenges us to position
24 students for success by implementing
25 research-validated student supports.

1 Through a federal Title III award for a
2 project entitled "Guide to Pathways to Success," the
3 college is implementing a new model of academic
4 advising, a research-validated coaching model, and
5 the continued refinement of our front-door services.

6 Through this work, we are involved in the
7 very active national conversation about how to best
8 move students through a program, taking full
9 advantage of the research on student supports.

10 I'd like to point out a couple of specific
11 efforts.

12 The first is our Box of Books.

13 It's not a very impressive name, but it's an
14 impressive program.

15 It's an inclusive access program that
16 provides students with flat-rate predictable pricing
17 for textbooks and access codes, at the rate of
18 \$21.50 per college credit.

19 Early data from this fall's implementation
20 shows that 74 percent of our students had all of
21 their books and materials on or before the first
22 day, compared to fall 2018, when fewer than
23 45 percent of our students had their textbooks at
24 the end of the semester.

25 Other efforts that support our students

1 include a learning center to offer academic support
2 services, to encourage students to continuing
3 classes even when struggling.

4 Last semester, that center served
5 2,600 students.

6 OCC's career services offers support and
7 students seeking assistance with career exploration,
8 applied-learning opportunities, and employment
9 services, such as resume reviews, interview
10 preparation, and job search.

11 This year already, more than 3,000 students
12 have sought career assistance and submitted over
13 1100 job applications.

14 Finally, career services partnered with
15 OCC Foundation and the Greater Syracuse Association
16 of Realtors to open a clothes closet called
17 "Suited for Success," to provide students with men
18 and women's professional clothing appropriate for
19 career fairs, job interviews, and other work-related
20 needs.

21 Area realtors donated the clothing which was
22 organized and sorted by college staff.

23 We provide child care through our on-campus
24 children's learning center.

25 And we provide a whole host of workforce

1 development activities, working with employers, such
2 as Feldmeier, Bristol-Myer Squibb; and area
3 agencies, such as CNY Works and the Center for
4 Community Alternatives; and employment sectors in
5 manufacturing and health care, to deliver workforce
6 programs.

7 And in the last year, more than
8 400 individuals participated in that training.

9 That training led to jobs and apprenticeships
10 in medical billing, medical assisting, phlebotomy,
11 line cook, welding apprentice, and bioprocess
12 apprentice.

13 At OCC, we continue to follow developments in
14 research to ensure that students who begin their
15 education can continue.

16 Starting and stopping college is incredibly
17 expensive, as is non-completion, particularly
18 non-completion accompanied by student debt.

19 So we work very hard to make sure that
20 students who begin can complete.

21 We believe that preparation, care in
22 programming, and appropriate supports are necessary
23 to support the investment that students and their
24 families do make, and that the taxpayers of New York
25 sustain in higher education.

1 I'm proud of the work of our faculty and
2 staff. I believe we are careful stewards of funds
3 we receive to support our students.

4 I'm particularly proud that our per-FTE
5 expenditure -- that's "full-time equivalent
6 student" -- including all costs for everything at
7 the college, is \$14,000 per FTE, significantly lower
8 than many institutions you would find in New York,
9 despite the fact that our -- by our mission, we
10 don't select students to attend OCC.

11 We welcome all who seek a future for
12 themselves and their families that is uniquely made
13 possible through New York's higher-education system.

14 The efforts that I detailed today are made
15 possible with State support, P-TECH, early-college
16 high schools, Smart Scholars, community schools, and
17 the SUNY PIF grants, as well as federal grants,
18 Title III through the U.S. Department of Education,
19 and substantially -- substantial amounts of
20 private-raised -- privately-raised funds through our
21 foundation.

22 These initiatives have enabled OCC to connect
23 with research, bring in new efforts that require
24 staff training, and, in part, support the time and
25 investment necessary to aligning with K-12.

1 Thank you for having this important
2 conversation here in Central New York.

3 And while I know that you're at the very
4 beginning of a budget process, I look forward to
5 working with you over the months ahead.

6 Thank you very much.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we have
8 Dr. David Rogers, president of SUNY Morrisville.

9 DR. DAVID E. ROGERS: Good afternoon.

10 I'm David Rogers, president of
11 SUNY Morrisville, assuming that position in June of
12 2015.

13 Thank you to Chairperson Stavisky,
14 Senator May of our district, and members of the
15 Senate and legislative staff for providing this
16 venue to discuss the importance of providing a
17 high-quality and affordable education to all
18 New Yorkers, and others, who seek it.

19 SUNY Morrisville's mission is to offer
20 diverse learning experiences so that graduates may
21 pursue rewarding lives and careers, become engaged
22 citizens, and contribute to our collective future.

23 Our vision is that SUNY Morrisville aspires
24 to be a recognized leader in innovative applied
25 education.

1 Since its founding, Morrisville has had a
2 mission of providing access and improving regional
3 communities and economies.

4 Originally started as an institution to help
5 farmers and their households improve their own
6 operations, Morrisville has been dedicated to making
7 practical hands-on education accessible and
8 affordable.

9 As the needs of Central New York have
10 changed, so too has Morrisville.

11 We began offering two-year degrees, then
12 four-years degrees. And now we are on the cusp of
13 introducing our first graduate degree, a proposed
14 master's degree in food and agribusiness.

15 Each of these changes has been in response to
16 the needs of our students and the communities we
17 serve.

18 SUNY Morrisville is an institution focused,
19 historically, on access to underserved populations,
20 especially those living in rural areas, and, most
21 recently, to providing first-generation students
22 from larger urban areas.

23 As a college of applied learning, our
24 students benefit from distinctive hands-on learning
25 in fields, facilities, shops, labs, labs filled with

1 specialized equipment, technology, living plants,
2 and animals, that bring different requirements than
3 other more traditional program areas.

4 Our students benefit from distinctive
5 facilities designed to prepare them for industry;
6 whether it's the family farm, a major automotive
7 manufacturer, solar and wind power installation and
8 maintenance, cybersecurity firms, reemerging
9 cannabis markets, health-care providers and
10 hospitals, or a number of other enterprises
11 essential to everyday life throughout the great
12 state of New York, and beyond.

13 For 40 years before SUNY was formed,
14 Morrisville worked closely with individuals and
15 communities to adopt and employ new technologies and
16 methodologies to become more efficient and
17 effective.

18 As part of the SUNY system, we have continued
19 to benefit from public officials who have believed
20 and invested in quality higher education as an
21 instrument of strengthening communities and lifting
22 up individuals.

23 Initiatives, like the Excelsior Scholarship
24 and the tuition-assistance program, are evidence
25 that Governor Cuomo and our legislators are leading

1 in prioritizing access for students who can realize
2 their potential through quality public higher
3 education.

4 Investments in our facilities, such as
5 massive utility improvements that we have undertaken
6 this year, and major building projects in the
7 upcoming year, contribute significantly to ensuring
8 that the educational experience of our students is
9 workforce-ready and can enhance the dynamic needs of
10 New York State.

11 We recognize the growing needs of students,
12 whether they are physical or mental, health needs,
13 tutoring, advising, or coaching, to help them
14 succeed in all aspects of life.

15 We make significant efforts to properly
16 recruit students for whom Morrisville is the right
17 fit.

18 We provide orientation to help them start off
19 on the right foot. We provide bridge -- summer
20 bridge programming for those who need additional
21 preparation.

22 We also have monitoring and alert software
23 and programs to identify students need helpful
24 intervention before their educational pursuits are
25 endangered by obstacles or challenging

1 circumstances.

2 We connect them with field experiences, job
3 shadowing, apprenticeships, and internships with
4 industry partners so they have a real experience in
5 their chosen field.

6 We work with employers to help graduates
7 become meaningful work -- begin meaningful work as
8 soon as possible after their time with us.

9 All of this support is important, but it
10 enriches the core classroom, lab, and field learning
11 that is central to how we teach students.

12 Our work-integrated approach is all the more
13 important for students who know that they must have
14 a an affordable education that leads to gainful
15 employment. It also helps them prepare for changes
16 in industry, in their own careers, as the world
17 continues to evolve at an ever-increasing pace.

18 SUNY Morrisville has been recognized for its
19 impact on the social mobility of its graduates.

20 Last month, "U.S. News and World Report"
21 announced that we achieved top-10 status as a best
22 college in the north for top performers on social
23 mobility.

24 Prior to this year's ranking in this new
25 category, SUNY Morrisville was recognized through

1 research published in "The New York Times," that
2 reviewed institutions' ability to promote the social
3 mobility of their graduates.

4 Morrisville ranked 14th out of
5 68 non-selective four-year public colleges on the
6 overall mobility index, which indicates students who
7 move up two or more income quintiles.

8 The Morrisville College Foundation and the
9 Auxiliary Corporation are our close partners in
10 providing services, scholarships, and other services
11 that enable students to have rewarding and
12 fulfilling educational experiences during their time
13 at SUNY Morrisville.

14 We have worked evermore closely to provide
15 more support, reduce expenses, and otherwise boost
16 the quality of a Morrisville education.

17 Without their help, fewer students would have
18 access to fewer services.

19 These entities, and others on campus, have
20 helped us to address additional needs of students,
21 from food insecurity, to free -- to use of free or
22 low-cost textbook materials, and from on-campus
23 child care, to reduced-cost laptops.

24 We know that investment in student success is
25 a complicated and resource-intensive endeavor.

1 I'm thankful again to Governor Cuomo and the
2 legislators who support our efforts, provide
3 meaningful leadership, and implement effect
4 initiatives that aim to provide affordable access to
5 education for our students, while ensuring quality
6 in our system of statewide higher education.

7 I look forward to our continued work together
8 to pursue these endeavors.

9 Thank you.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

11 Senator May, do you have questions?

12 SENATOR MAY: Sure, yeah, I do.

13 I thank you all for your testimony.

14 And I -- I was struck during the budget
15 hearings last year.

16 I asked the chancellor about the relationship
17 between tuition and the actual cost of attending
18 SUNY.

19 And the -- she said that tuition covered
20 about 25 percent of student costs at SUNY.

21 I know at OC -- at the community colleges,
22 that would be different.

23 But -- but what that means is that, fees, and
24 room and board, I assume those are the two main
25 things that make up the rest.

1 I have a daughter at Cornell in one of the
2 land-grant colleges, but I would say tuition is
3 75 or 80 percent of the cost there. The way -- they
4 sort of fold all the fees into the tuition.

5 And SUNY seems to do it differently.

6 So, anyway, I'm grateful that all of you have
7 programs to address the costs of textbooks and the
8 various other related fees.

9 But I -- I guess I would like you to speak,
10 at your own institutions, what would you say is the
11 relationship between tuition and the actual cost of
12 attending?

13 And is there -- I gather each of these
14 programs takes a lot of work to organize, whether
15 it's making it easier for them to afford textbooks,
16 or something like that.

17 Is there a SUNY-wide effort to -- to sort of
18 reduce the administrative burden on you to develop
19 these kinds of programs, or, is each college,
20 each -- is each institution, putting all that effort
21 into making -- making the additional cost of
22 attending college lower?

23 Does that make sense as a question?

24 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: (Microphone off.)

25 Well, there's the additional costs, that --

1 I mean -- and it's fairly -- we're running fairly
2 current with what we understand to be the need.

3 So, the need to us is something that we
4 ascertain differently almost every year, and it
5 presents itself in a different way almost every
6 year.

7 In fact, for us, this year, we received
8 several phone calls at the beginning of the
9 semester, this fall semester, from students who were
10 not able to make opening because they had yet to
11 be -- to -- to nail down a way to get to campus from
12 distant places, such as New York City and the
13 New York City area.

14 So that's why we're thinking, like, we're
15 going to have to put more transportation in place.

16 We also know that, for parents who come up to
17 graduation, they often do not have a means to stay
18 anywhere other than with their student in a room or
19 in a student apartment.

20 And they are traveling by bus, home. And we
21 recognize that the central bus schedule was not
22 adequate to take them home to -- not even to the
23 transportation center in Syracuse.

24 So there are things that we're kind of moving
25 with the need, and that is costly for us to do.

1 SENATOR MAY: Is there --

2 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: You talk about --

3 SENATOR MAY: Is there any centralized, sort
4 of, SUNY-wide, effort to address things like
5 transportation, or is it down to each institution,
6 to each campus to (parties cross-talking) --

7 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: (Microphone off.)

8 It's not SUNY-wide yet if there's a way to do
9 it.

10 But what we are doing on our campus is
11 mobilizing all sources of revenue.

12 So we are looking towards auxiliary services,
13 which often gives back to campus in many ways,
14 because the students purchase services from
15 auxiliary services, and we -- and auxiliary services
16 pays rent.

17 So we're setting aside a piece of that rent
18 to help defray some of these expenses.

19 For others, we have worked with all of our
20 donors of private scholarships for students, and we
21 have moved them to the more inclusive for what their
22 scholarships will cover beyond tuition.

23 So naming tuition used to be effective, but,
24 Excelsior covers tuition, TAP covers tuition, Pell
25 covers tuition.

1 Now we need those scholarships, those private
2 dollars, to cover other costs on campus, such as
3 room and board, so that students can feel that they
4 have a right to be there, and they can stay on
5 campus when they are -- especially during their
6 first and second year.

7 So we're moving those kinds of dollars.

8 As a matter of fact, two weeks ago I launched
9 a new campaign called the "Path Forward."

10 We are looking to double the private-support
11 scholarships on our campus over the next two years.

12 So we're in a quick-moving effort here, and
13 we're taking it out throughout the country, to
14 double the private support available for students of
15 need.

16 It's such a striking thing that has hit us,
17 completely new.

18 We -- we -- we knew there was need. We did
19 not think it was an unaddressed need to the extent
20 that it is.

21 So it's pretty difficult to cover all of it.

22 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

23 DR. CASEY CRABILL: Senator, you were right
24 when you said community colleges are a little bit
25 different.

1 Just for some context there:

2 Our tuition, as I said, is about \$4900 for
3 the year.

4 Our fees for the year are \$592, unless you're
5 in a course that has some consumable materials, or
6 you're in a nursing program which has an ancillary
7 fee to cover some of the clinical costs.

8 What we do to try to address the ancillary
9 costs for students is a couple of fold:

10 Number one: We do an awful lot of
11 financial-literacy education, because students who
12 do get refundable Pell, we want to help them think
13 about the things that they need to buy, to use that
14 effectively.

15 We raise private dollars and subsidize
16 central bus passes for students who need them.

17 As President Stanley said, the central
18 transportation system is not adequate to move
19 students to campuses when they need to be there,
20 especially if they need to come to campus, and then
21 actually go to a job, and maybe even come back to
22 campus.

23 So -- and that's very expensive for students,
24 so we do subsidize that.

25 And with our book initiative, we've moved the

1 textbook costs for students who participate down to
2 about \$640 a year for a full-time student, for all
3 texts and materials.

4 So like President Stanley, we look for the
5 privately-raised external funds to support those
6 kinds of things.

7 Our community-care hub, which was a community
8 schools' grant, did come with some SUNY effort
9 behind it, did help us, I think, think strategically
10 as a campus about the kinds of ancillary supports
11 students need, and how best to address them.

12 SENATOR MAY: And just so you know, we met --
13 I think I met yesterday with (indiscernible), to
14 figure out how to get more funding (indiscernible).

15 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: (Microphone off.)

16 These are students who are more than
17 adequately academically prepared when they come to
18 Oswego.

19 DR. CASEY CRABILL: Absolutely.

20 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: (Microphone off.)

21 Oswego has -- has pretty strenuous admission
22 requirements.

23 We're not waiving admission requirements.

24 These students have worked very hard. They
25 are strivers, they want their college degree.

1 But, even at a SUNY school who -- that is
2 hyper-focused on keeping costs down for students, it
3 is still very difficult for them to meet the costs
4 to complete their degree.

5 DR. DAVID E. ROGERS: So let me offer,
6 Senator, a couple of insights.

7 On the one hand, it's a simple summary of
8 services that system administration can offer to
9 small colleges like ours, that reflects economies of
10 scale.

11 So there's a wide variety of services that
12 Morrisville benefits by being part of a larger SUNY
13 system.

14 Certainly relates to everything, from
15 applications and information-technology services, to
16 legal services, and identification of pilot projects
17 that SUNY system might fund, that individual
18 campuses can embrace.

19 So through a variety of
20 performance-improvement funding opportunities,
21 campuses apply for and receive funds to increase the
22 efficiency of their local operations.

23 But it's very clear that Morrisville can
24 never offer some of the services that are offered
25 except through Albany and a largest system.

1 My background in economics does suggest that,
2 at some point, when you bring those services to
3 scale, the economies of savings can be offered to
4 students.

5 At another level, you asked about the
6 relationship between tuition and academic program
7 costs.

8 So Morrisville is different, again, in some
9 respects, because of the unique programs involving
10 agriculture and technology, that -- and keep plants
11 and animals alive and technology on the
12 cutting-edge.

13 So it's difficult to keep animals and plants
14 alive and prospering.

15 So take a program like dairy, which I know
16 that you are very familiar with.

17 The cost of the dairy program is much higher
18 because of the overhead associated with running the
19 operation. Running the operation is important as a
20 critical part of instruction.

21 But when milk prices fall from \$24 a hundred
22 weight, to 18.50 or lower, it can decimate not only
23 the industry, but it can make it difficult for us to
24 offset costs associated with those programs.

25 We run these operations in horticulture and

1 dairy and equine.

2 In hort -- in hort -- in agriculture -- in --
3 agriculture, to grow and sell products.

4 We have a -- Nelson Farms is a farm incubator
5 that our auxiliary runs.

6 We're very entrepreneurial in that regard.

7 So when we sell products, and ice cream and
8 beer, when we sell those products, we're teaching
9 students not only how to manufacture them and sell
10 them, but we realize profits that can offset the
11 cost of these programs.

12 The problem is, that when the milk prices, or
13 other prices, fall from our operations, it becomes
14 an especially difficult way to offset the costs of
15 those programs.

16 And so we cross -- we track the cost of all
17 of our academic programs substantially.

18 And from a more traditional, kind of,
19 classroom-based delivery, compared to some of these
20 more expensive programs, there can be a cost factor
21 of eightfold between the cost per credit hour of
22 some of our programs, and others.

23 SENATOR MAY: But the tuition is the same
24 for --

25 DR. DAVID E. ROGERS: The tuition is exactly

1 the same for every program.

2 We do charge course fees where students
3 engage in certain consumables for certain courses.

4 But we do not charge a program fee that might
5 reflect those offsetting expenses.

6 So it's -- we run these businesses, both as a
7 means of offering education and as a means
8 subsidizing the cost.

9 But in that regard, it's very realistic.

10 Our academic programs are not immune from the
11 vagaries of the -- of other markets.

12 And so when those prices rise, the programs
13 benefit, enrollment increases.

14 When those prices shrink, our enrollment
15 shrinks, as well as our ability to offer quality
16 programming, to keep pace.

17 So it's an especially difficult moment.

18 We're incredibly pleased at the efficiencies
19 we can achieve by being aligned in SUNY, but it's
20 very problematic if we charge a single-price tuition
21 for programs that vary in cost by a factor of eight.

22 SENATOR MAY: I don't want to take too much
23 time, but I had one other question, which was a
24 short-answer question:

25 Do you track how many of your graduates stay

1 in New York?

2 And do you -- do you know, to what extent are
3 you educating future New Yorkers?

4 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: We track them on
5 First Destination. And about 80 percent at this
6 point that stay in New York. But, certainly, that
7 changes over time.

8 There's mid-career and late career, and all
9 of those numbers change.

10 Also, the methodology of tracking those
11 numbers is changing and getting better as we move
12 forward, finding ways to really track down our
13 graduates to see what they're doing.

14 We want to -- it's become important because
15 colleges are judged by destination, by earning
16 power, and where -- you know, what types of changes
17 their careers made over time.

18 So we're very interested in being in that
19 space as well.

20 DR. CASEY CRABILL: We track our transfer
21 students. A large majority of them go to my
22 colleague to the right.

23 We also look at national research, which
24 tells us, about 85 percent of community college
25 graduates live within a 25-mile radius of their

1 campus for the rest of our lives.

2 But we don't track our students specifically,
3 going forward.

4 DR. DAVID E. ROGERS: So in an effort to
5 raise increased funds from development
6 opportunities, we have invested recently in finding
7 out where our alums live, and reaching out to them
8 in increasing ways.

9 It depends, because we offer two-year
10 degrees, and, historically, have offered those.

11 Those students stay more closely aligned with
12 Madison County in Central New York and New York
13 State.

14 The four-year degrees, especially those in
15 cybersecurity, can, sort of, go anywhere they want.

16 We want to track them wherever they may go
17 because they tend to be, obviously, pretty
18 successful.

19 But, it varies considerably.

20 But the vast majority of the students in our
21 two- and four-year programs stay within
22 New York State.

23 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: President Stanley spoke
25 about the Excelsior program. And they require you

1 to put in -- to stay in New York State.

2 And that's -- came up -- this issue came up
3 in -- at the New Paltz hearing, where some of the
4 students questioned whether they should be required
5 to, I think it's four or five years.

6 And I totally support that, staying in
7 New York, because New York is funding their
8 education. And I think we have an obligation.

9 And we do that with many of the scholarships
10 also, whether it be in the health-care fields in
11 particular, where we ask them not only to stay in
12 New York State, but also in an underserved
13 community.

14 And I think that is a perfectly legitimate
15 requirement.

16 Let me ask you just a couple of questions,
17 because I don't want to prolong it.

18 Where do you recruit your -- from where do
19 you recruit your students?

20 DR. DAVID E. ROGERS: At Morrisville,
21 approximately 30 to 35 percent come from the
22 seven counties contiguous to Madison County,
23 Central New York.

24 Another 30 percent come from downstate,
25 (indiscernible) the counties of New York City.

1 Another 30 percent or so, almost a third,
2 come from areas in New York State outside those
3 areas I mentioned.

4 And then the rest is, only about 5 to
5 7 percent come from either out of New York State or
6 international.

7 Increasingly, though, we're partnering -- we
8 just signed -- I've signed a contract with a company
9 that's going to bring international students here.

10 And so if you're an economist and at all
11 interested, that improves our balance-and-trade
12 payments because, when we import students from
13 abroad, it's an export of education.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: And I represent,
15 incidentally, one of the high schools in my
16 Senate District has a large agricultural program,
17 John Bowne High School.

18 DR. DAVID E. ROGERS: We send admissions
19 counselors there specifically.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Good. That's just what
21 I wanted to hear.

22 They have both a plant and an animal program.

23 It's a wonderful, wonderful resource, really.

24 And those kids are terrific.

25 They have -- it's really on the campus of

1 Queens College.

2 DR. DAVID E. ROGERS: Happy to go back and
3 share information about Morrisville with you.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: I think they're going to
5 have a new assistant principal. The previous one
6 just retired.

7 President Stanley, let me ask you one other
8 question.

9 I was reading about a program you either have
10 or had, where students who complete their degree in
11 four years receive a bonus.

12 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: (Microphone off.)

13 An ROI (a return on investment).

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Right.

15 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: Yes.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: How has that been working
17 out?

18 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: (Microphone off.) well,
19 we have -- we have raised our four-year graduation
20 rate by 4 points in the last two years, and we're
21 thrilled with it.

22 We -- you know, we track our graduation
23 rates.

24 And most campuses are judged by their
25 six-year graduation rates. That's national data

1 that is comparable across the country.

2 And we've been doing okay on that data. We
3 were pretty close to the SUNY level, the SUNY mean
4 as well.

5 But -- now, when you really think about it,
6 and you think about the economics of today and what
7 we're talking about, it means so much for students
8 to be able to get out in four years. That means
9 they enter the workforce. It means that they don't
10 take another loan. It means they don't pay another
11 tuition bill.

12 It's so important for them to do so.

13 We had to get their attention.

14 And when the tuition was going up, we decided
15 that we would share the wealth with them, and we
16 would rebate them \$300 if they graduated within
17 four years.

18 We thought it would be a small amount of
19 money to get their attention, or maybe their
20 parents' attention.

21 It has -- it's gotten their attention okay.

22 Students start asking in April, "When do
23 I get my \$300? I'm going to put a down payment on
24 an apartment. I'm going to do this."

25 And we close the books sometime around the

1 end of August, of course, when that degree period is
2 over, and then we pay out the money, that \$300.

3 And it's been really an important program for
4 us.

5 We can't point to really anything else that
6 has increased the focus on getting out in
7 four years.

8 It allows us to have this conversation with
9 students, to talk to their parents right up front in
10 the beginning when they come to Oswego, to talk to
11 them about the importance of moving through the
12 curriculum of pace; getting out in time, saving
13 money, starting that next career path.

14 And, really, it changes economically (parties
15 cross-talking) --

16 SENATOR MAY: I guess we do need for you to
17 speak into the microphone a little bit better
18 (indiscernible).

19 Sorry.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay.

21 SENATOR MAY: I have one other question,
22 can I?

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes.

24 SENATOR MAY: We've been hearing about
25 for-profit colleges.

1 And I ask this question, I feel like it's
2 only fair to ask the public institutions the same
3 question.

4 We've talked a lot about how you help your
5 students, but I'm curious about the faculty too.

6 The reliance on adjunct faculty seems only to
7 be going up in higher education. And I'm concerned
8 about faculty who can't pay off their student loans
9 because they're not earning a living wage, educating
10 the next generation of students.

11 So I'm wondering what you -- are you
12 confident that you're paying your faculty a living
13 wage?

14 And how would you estimate that impact on
15 your faculty?

16 And I am going to have to ask you to move
17 that microphone a little bit when you -- between the
18 two of you.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: No, they can just turn up
20 the volume, I think.

21 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: (Microphone on.)

22 We have -- we have -- well, two things are
23 happening on our campus as far as our full-time
24 faculty are concerned.

25 Two years ago we began a salary study, a

1 regression analysis, to talk about compression and
2 salaries, to make sure that our salaries were
3 competitive by discipline, by length of time and
4 service.

5 And we hired a consultant to do it.

6 We did it through a committee that had
7 faculty on it, as well as administrators. They
8 reviewed all of the information.

9 And we put aside a particular amount of money
10 to start to defray the inequities that were
11 resultant -- that we noticed from that study.

12 But, certainly, the United University
13 Professors -- Professionals contract has also now
14 got a piece of it that is based on equity, and
15 looking at compression.

16 So one half of 1 percent, we're going through
17 that process right now. And it will allow us to
18 address equity again and compression again, and that
19 is a very good thing for our campuses.

20 We -- you know, when you invest in a faculty
21 member to come, you invest in lots of different ways
22 other than salary. And you hope that they are
23 affiliating with the institution you hope, if
24 they're beginning a research career as well, and
25 that they're bonding with students, and bringing

1 ideas to mix with the ideas that are already there,
2 that make the institution palpably different and
3 better.

4 And we don't want to waste that investment by
5 having them go off somewhere else because they don't
6 feel they're being treated responsibly.

7 As far as adjuncts are concerned, we are
8 always asked at the labor-management table to review
9 the amounts that we are paying adjuncts.

10 And, as a matter of fact, we do comparable
11 studies for adjunct pay as well.

12 And we are, by contract, required to give
13 certain raises to adjuncts, and we do give raises to
14 adjuncts that way.

15 We also try at Oswego to keep the level of
16 adjuncts low.

17 We are not trying -- we do need a particular
18 amount of adjuncts to mount the curriculum.

19 But, in fact, we live in Oswego for most of
20 our classes. We don't have a ready catchment area
21 of adjuncts. And that's probably a good thing for
22 our institution.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: What's your percentage?

24 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: I don't know the
25 percentage off my head right now.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: What does the average
2 adjunct make in terms of salary?

3 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: The average adjunct is
4 well over the beginning salary.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: What's the beginning
6 salary?

7 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: The beginning salary is
8 under \$3,000, I believe --

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Per course?

10 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: -- per course.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: So that's --

12 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: So an adjunct --

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: That's about \$15,000 a
14 year.

15 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: -- well, adjuncts who
16 come on board for two classes, that's a half-time,
17 they are afforded their health benefits as well out
18 of the contract.

19 At our campus, if we hire an adjunct for
20 three classes, we do not pay an adjunct salary any
21 longer. We pay a percentage of full salary so that
22 we're not doing piece work with adjuncts at that
23 point.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: Because that was a major
25 ingredient in the City University of New York's

1 recent contract, which was -- has not been ratified
2 yet, with their union, the Professional Staff
3 Congress. And the average at CUNY was about \$3500 a
4 year.

5 And it's going up -- it's being phased in
6 because you can't really do it all at once, but this
7 is a substantial increase.

8 A very serious issue because, quite frankly,
9 even in Central New York where the costs may be
10 lower than the big cities, 15,000 a year, it's not
11 enough; that's not a living wage.

12 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: Right, it's not, it's
13 not a living wage.

14 And it is always an issue that bears looking
15 at --

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes.

17 DEBORAH H. STANLEY: -- as far as use of
18 adjuncts on our campus, for many reasons, but
19 certainly for the adjuncts themselves.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Any other questions?

21 SENATOR MAY: Thank you, no.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: All right, thank you all
23 very much for coming.

24 Sorry to delay you, but --

25 DR. CASEY CRABILL: Thank you for the

1 opportunity.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- we do thank you.

3 And thank you for what you do for our
4 students.

5 SENATOR MAY: We should force a time limit on
6 this.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes, we've got --

8 Do me a favor.

9 Maybe the clock should be turned around.

10 In the meantime, we have Peter Huber,
11 SUNY-ESF, president, Undergraduate Student
12 Association;

13 Joshua Chandra from NYPIRG, ESF;

14 And, Carson Rowe, the treasurer of the SUNY
15 Student Assembly.

16 And you notice that we're having the students
17 early on, because, with all due respect, throughout
18 the hearings, they have been the stars of our
19 hearing -- the hearings that already have taken
20 place.

21 Thank you.

22 You can decide amongst yourselves.

23 All right, Peter.

24 PETER HUBER: Thank you, and good afternoon.

25 I would like to thank Chairman Stavisky,

1 Senator May, and the entire New York State Senate
2 Committee on Higher Education for allowing me to
3 share my story about how increasing funding to the
4 SUNY system will impact the students that I'm here
5 to represent.

6 My name is Peter Huber. I'm a resident of
7 Rochester, residing in the 61st Senate District
8 represented by Michael Ranzenhofer.

9 I'm a junior, studying environmental
10 education and interpretation, with a minor in
11 management, at SUNY College of Environmental Science
12 and Forestry in Syracuse.

13 There, I serve as the president of the
14 undergraduate student association, representing the
15 1800 undergraduate students that are impacted by a
16 SUNY education every day.

17 The money that New York State gives to SUNY
18 doesn't just impact our academic programs.

19 The funding you give to us provides students
20 with services that allow them to succeed while in
21 college and after they graduate.

22 One particular service that has impacted my
23 colleagues is ESF's counseling services.

24 Mental-health services are becoming more and
25 more necessary as time goes on, especially for

1 people my age.

2 12 percent of ESF students utilize counseling
3 services as a means to better their mental health.

4 Some of these students suffer from severe
5 mental-health problems that can inhibit their
6 academic performances, affect their student life,
7 and even their home life, making ESF's counseling
8 services all the more necessary.

9 ESF has been making strides in the past years
10 to increase the amount of outreach from counseling
11 services, to ensure that students are receiving the
12 attention they need to stay healthy throughout their
13 college experience.

14 Students love our counselors, and they love
15 the services that they provide to them.

16 They love them so much that they're asking
17 for more.

18 The American School Counselors Association
19 recommends a ratio of 250 students per 1 counselor.

20 Our counseling center has three full-time
21 counselors to serve our 2200 undergraduate and
22 graduate students, making the ratio for
23 students-to-counselors to be 734-to-1.

24 On top of that alarming ratio, at ESF,
25 students are only allowed six visits to a counselor

1 per semester; or 12 a year.

2 After the allotted visits are reached,
3 counselors ask students to find external sources for
4 long-term care.

5 And while counselors will help these students
6 find these resources, students are often unable to
7 afford these services, or are uncomfortable seeking
8 said services, since these students are most
9 comfortable with the ESF counselors that take the
10 time to build their presence and their reputation at
11 ESF, which the students value above all else.

12 SUNY students need a long-term mental-health
13 care in their colleges in order to succeed in their
14 school work, and intern, and out in the New York
15 State workforce.

16 I have had more students come up to me,
17 begging me for longer-term mental-health care at ESF
18 than I care to tell you.

19 And even in the past two days, as I was
20 telling about my testimony this afternoon,
21 five students came up to me, expressing the
22 importance of this issue.

23 I now bring these pleas to you, and ask for
24 funding for SUNY, so colleges can accommodate
25 long-term mental-health care for the ever-increasing

1 population of students that require these service
2 that they so desperately need.

3 Thank you again for your time.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

5 CARSON ROWE: Next?

6 So, good afternoon.

7 My name is Carson Rowe. I am the SUNY
8 Student Assembly Treasurer. I'm also a junior at
9 SUNY ESF, majoring in environmental studies, with a
10 focus on policy planning and law.

11 And on behalf of the SUNY trustee and Student
12 Assembly President Ostro, as well as --

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: He was at our hearing in
14 New Paltz.

15 CARSON ROWE: Yeah.

16 -- and as well as the 1.4 million students of
17 our great university system, we very appreciate the
18 efforts of Senator and Committee Chair Stavisky, as
19 well as Senator May, for hosting the hearings across
20 the state of New York to address the cost of public
21 higher education, affordability, and accessibility.

22 The SUNY -- or, excuse me.

23 The student assembly is the recognized
24 systemwide student government supporting the
25 students of SUNY.

1 The student assembly is comprised of student
2 leaders from across the state, and represents the
3 students of the many university centers, colleges,
4 technology colleges, and community colleges, and
5 advocates on the local, state, and federal level.

6 The president of the student assembly serves
7 as the head of the organized student government for
8 all 64 campuses in the SUNY system, and holds the
9 position as the only student member of the SUNY
10 Board of Trustees.

11 Twice annually, the student assembly brings
12 together hundreds of student leaders from across the
13 state, and beyond, to participate in
14 student-leadership conferences, where student
15 advocacy priorities are finalized, and members are
16 offered the opportunity to network and learn
17 leadership skills from students, campus, and system
18 administration and faculty, through various
19 workshops and networking opportunities.

20 Additionally, student-assembly
21 representatives meet on a monthly basis to
22 coordinate advocacy efforts, and further refine
23 strategies towards the advancement of quality and
24 affordability in public higher education.

25 The student assembly operates a variety of

1 committees, focused on ensuring academic excellence
2 throughout the system, and highlights the areas of
3 campus safety, disability services, gender equity,
4 and sustainability.

5 The student assembly urges the State to
6 recognize, and act upon, the magnitude in which
7 underfunding public higher education has on the
8 delivery of services and the quality of education
9 across the system.

10 The committee clearly identifies the benefits
11 to the state -- or, the benefit to the state from an
12 accessible state university, due to the return on
13 investment made by students pursuing higher
14 education in New York.

15 Graduates of SUNY are likely to work and live
16 in New York, and continue to stimulate local and
17 state economies through employment and taxes.

18 Adequately funding higher education holds the
19 potential to yield a greater return on investment
20 for the state, as students, faculty, and staff from
21 across the SUNY system continue to enhance the
22 quality of life and economic prosperity of their
23 communities.

24 Various state and federal financial-aid
25 programs greatly benefit the students of SUNY.

1 The tuition-assistance program aids eligible
2 students in attending in-state post-secondary
3 institutions; however, there is a consistent gap in
4 the funding mechanism that penalizes campuses for
5 accepting and enrolling students who utilize the
6 tuition-assistance program.

7 The shortfall in funding by the State to
8 provide the support has severely diminished the
9 ability of our campuses to provide quality education
10 and critical student services.

11 With increased investment by the State in
12 tuition -- or, State -- yeah, by the State in
13 institutions of public higher education, students
14 can benefit more from quality education; services
15 and programs, such as mental-health counseling, food
16 pantries, EOP, academic advisement, and gender and
17 sexuality resources, at an affordable cost.

18 Additionally, the Excelsior Scholarship, in
19 combination with other student financial-aid
20 programs, allows eligible students to attend a SUNY
21 college tuition-free.

22 This program is successful, as it aids
23 students in graduating on time and with less debt.

24 The student assembly urges the State to
25 expand the promise of the Excelsior Scholarship, and

1 implement measures that will allow for a greater
2 number of students to apply the scholarship to their
3 academic career.

4 The student assembly urges the State to
5 invest in public higher education by funding the
6 shortfall by the tuition-assistance program, making
7 amendments to current financial programs available
8 to students, and recognizing its fundamental role
9 and responsibility to offer a world-class education
10 at an affordable cost to all.

11 With an increase in funding and expansions of
12 aid programs, campuses across the state will be
13 equipped to provide greater quality education and
14 student services that addresses the backgrounds and
15 needs of all students.

16 And I'd like to thank my colleague beside me
17 for expanding on the importance of some of these
18 points that I previously mentioned.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Joshua.

20 JOSHUA CHANDRA: Good afternoon.

21 My name is Josh Chandra, and I'm a member of
22 the New York Public Interest Research Group, and a
23 junior at SUNY College of Environmental Science and
24 Forestry, with a focus in environmental studies.

25 As you know, NYPIRG is a statewide,

1 non-partisan, non-profit organization founded by
2 college students in 1973 to engage their peers in
3 civic life.

4 Our board of directors solely consists of
5 college and university students elected from
6 campuses with NYPIRG chapters across the state.

7 We have submitted a more substantial version
8 of this testimony for the record, and I would like
9 thank you for the opportunity to testify at today's
10 hearing.

11 We appreciate this opportunity to share our
12 perspectives on the cost of higher education in
13 New York.

14 As we have stated in previous testimony,
15 NYPIRG intends to present testimony at each of the
16 Committee's hearings.

17 Today I will focus both, broadly, on higher
18 education, as well as specific issues, regarding the
19 tuition-assistance program and the Excelsior
20 Scholarship program.

21 In addition, as we are here within the shadow
22 of Syracuse University, I will comment on TAP
23 reforms that can benefit college students attending
24 independent institutions.

25 NYPIRG thanks the Legislature for passing the

1 Jose Peralta Dream Act this year, for restoring
2 funding to critical higher-education programs cut in
3 the executive budget, and for advocating for the
4 elimination of the TAP gap, and more robust
5 maintenance-of-effort legislation.

6 Robust financial-aid programs exists to
7 safeguard low- and middle-income students from the
8 financial barriers which can impede college
9 completion; however, restrictive eligibility
10 requirements and flexible award schedules and small
11 budgets hamstring the support these programs are
12 able to provide, and me and my fellow students are
13 left to pay the price.

14 Two years ago, the State created the
15 Excelsior Scholarship.

16 The program provides free tuition to students
17 attending SUNY and CUNY two-year and four-year
18 programs.

19 Students with a family adjusted gross income
20 equal to or less than \$125,000, and who meet other
21 eligibility criteria, would benefit from this
22 program.

23 Excelsior is a scholarship program that would
24 be available to students who enroll in at least
25 12 credits per semester, but earn at least

1 30 credits each academic year, remain on track for
2 on-time graduation, agree to live and work in
3 New York State upon graduation for a certain period
4 of time, and sign a contract to have his or her
5 scholarship converted to a loan if the student fails
6 to fulfill this requirement.

7 Tuition rates for Excelsior recipients would
8 be frozen at the year -- at the year that they enter
9 the program, until their on-time graduation.

10 As I was entering ESF, I was considering
11 applying for Excelsior as a member of the first
12 freshman class to have the program available.

13 Even though my family's income level made me
14 eligible for the program, the terms and requirements
15 were so confusing that I did not choose to accept
16 the scholarship.

17 My mother and I were under the impression
18 that, by accepting the scholarship, I would have
19 been ineligible for TAP and other financial-aid
20 programs that would have been able to provide
21 greater assistance for me at the time.

22 Due to this lack of clarity in how Excelsior
23 worked, we were first -- forced to take out loans to
24 pay for my first year as an ESF student.

25 Not only does the last-dollar system used for

1 Excelsior limit the amount of aid that students can
2 receive, it creates a situation where families, such
3 as my own, think that the program will actually be
4 harmful.

5 The program has credit and performance
6 limitations as well.

7 If a student doesn't obtain 30 credits in one
8 year, for example, they lose the scholarship and
9 would likely be forced to take out a loan to pay for
10 the credits they did receive.

11 Inflexible award schedules do not support
12 on-time graduation.

13 Excelsior scholars are limited to accessing
14 their aid in fall and spring semesters alone.

15 The Excelsior Scholarship mandates 30 credits
16 per year to maintain eligibility, but the award is
17 not available for summer and winter sessions.

18 While scholarship recipients can maintain
19 eligibility by taking 12 credits per semester in the
20 fall and spring, they must pay out of pocket for the
21 additional 6 credits in the winter and summer
22 sessions, meaning the State's free-tuition
23 scholarship is not always tuition-free, even for
24 those who qualify, maintain eligibility, and receive
25 the award.

1 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to provide the
2 Excelsior Scholarship during winter and summer
3 sessions.

4 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to expand aid
5 for use beyond covering tuition.

6 And NYPIRG urges the Legislature to change
7 the Excelsior Scholarship's last-dollar structure.

8 The State must also make major reforms to the
9 tuition-assistance program, known as "TAP."

10 While TAP is an important and robust program
11 funded at over 1 billion for 2019-2020, it must be
12 reformed to meet the needs of a twenty-first-century
13 student.

14 TAP recipients are eligible for the award in
15 the fall and spring semesters as long as they take a
16 minimum of 12 credits per semester.

17 However, with the exception of some
18 opportunity programs, or, for some students with
19 disabilities, the award is only available for up to
20 8 semesters.

21 In order to ensure on-time graduation, a
22 student must take 30 credits per year.

23 However, with limited financial-aid options
24 in the summer and winter, students are forced to
25 take on 15 credits per semester, risk a delayed

1 graduation, or pay out of pocket.

2 For working students or those with other
3 obligations, that load can be prohibitive.

4 This need to take a full class load to
5 maintain eligibility for TAP and other financial-aid
6 programs has put a huge strain on many of my
7 friends.

8 Most of my friends have to work at least
9 20 hours a week in order to eat and live their
10 lives, in addition to taking five classes a week,
11 many of which are extra lab classes.

12 They have to balance passing their classes in
13 order to ensure that they will be able to afford
14 their education, with working as much as they can so
15 they can have a roof over their heads and something
16 in their stomachs.

17 Forcing New York students to take as many
18 classes as they can to keep their financial aid
19 makes it so hard to be a student, and puts us in a
20 position where we cannot win.

21 We need to see a reform on TAP so students
22 can have more balance and be put in a position to
23 succeed.

24 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to provide TAP
25 during winter and summer sessions.

1 We also need to extend TAP to incarcerated
2 New Yorkers.

3 Despite prisons being called "correctional
4 facilities," they do a dismal job in turning lives
5 around.

6 According to the U.S. Department of Justice,
7 nationwide, about two-thirds of released state
8 prisoners were rearrested within three years, and
9 three-quarters within five.

10 Too often prison is a revolving door, and
11 it's a revolving door that impacts certain
12 communities worse than others.

13 According to the Cuomo Administration, nearly
14 half of New York's inmate population is
15 African-American, nearly one-quarter is Hispanic,
16 and nearly one-quarter is White.

17 The currently high recidivism rate helps no
18 one.

19 The connection between higher education and
20 reduced recidivism has been well-established.

21 A study conducted by the University of
22 California at Los Angeles found that a
23 one-million-dollar investment in incarceration will
24 prevent about 350 crimes, while that same investment
25 in education will prevent more than 600 crimes.

1 Correctional education is almost twice as
2 cost-effective as incarceration.

3 SENATOR MAY: Can you finish up your --

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah.

5 SENATOR MAY: -- your comments, because
6 you're well over time.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes.

8 And we have copies of your testimony.

9 JOSHUA CHANDRA: Yeah, sorry about that.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Why don't you just cover
11 the bullet points.

12 JOSHUA CHANDRA: Sure.

13 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to freeze all
14 tuition rates at senior and community colleges to
15 protect college affordability.

16 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to robustly fund
17 CUNY and SUNY child-care centers.

18 And NYPIRG urges the Legislature to include
19 moneys in the budget to support operating expenses
20 for food pantries across campuses at SUNY and CUNY.

21 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

23 Questions?

24 SENATOR MAY: Well, I was going to ask, after
25 the first two testimonies, if you had -- what

1 experience you've had, so I'll ask the two of you,
2 about the Excelsior program.

3 And are the -- are you ex -- hearing from
4 people that the requirements are onerous for people
5 to be able to take advantage of that?

6 PETER HUBER: I personally do not have any
7 experience with the Excelsior program, I'm not
8 eligible for it.

9 But I hear a lot from my friends that, they
10 are eligible, but they don't get onto the program
11 itself because the requirements are confusing, or
12 limiting in some way.

13 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

14 CARSON ROWE: I was eligible for the
15 Excelsior Scholarship. I opted out of taking it,
16 just simply because I was beneficial enough to
17 actually receive enough aid from the college to not
18 have to utilize it.

19 However, I have had similar experiences to
20 Peter, in hearing that sometimes it can be a
21 difficult process to sort of navigate.

22 So, I mean, I think that would be really
23 beneficial for the students, at least to even have a
24 guide there.

25 PETER HUBER: And I think the biggest thing a

1 lot for students, as we mentioned earlier in the
2 testimony, that a good chunk of the expenses that we
3 pay as students are not tuition. They're room,
4 they're board, they're food.

5 So the Excelsior Scholarship only covers for
6 that tuition, but people still have to take out
7 loans or receive TAP, or whatever they may need, to
8 get the rest of those funds (indiscernible).

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: And the folks from HESC
10 are going to testify next.

11 SENATOR MAY: Yeah, so we'll hear about that.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: So...

13 SENATOR MAY: Let me ask about the
14 mental-health coverage.

15 Right now it's capped at six...?

16 PETER HUBER: Per semester, yes.

17 SENATOR MAY: ...per semester.

18 And do you have a recommendation for what
19 that should rise to?

20 Because it would have to be capped at
21 something.

22 PETER HUBER: Yeah, of course.

23 So I'm recommending that SUNY colleges have
24 the long -- have long-term mental-health care,
25 I don't -- at least once a week for students.

1 I know that it's extremely frustrating for a
2 lot of my -- my very close friends that need the
3 mental-health counseling, that, consistently, that
4 after six visits, they're told that they're unable
5 to go back, just because of the sheer volume of
6 students that require these services.

7 So -- and, in fact, I believe it also
8 discourages people from even starting the counseling
9 services in the first place, knowing that it will
10 only be for a short time.

11 So -- there are students out there that need
12 that longer term care, once a week, sometimes
13 emergencies happen, sometimes daily... whatever the
14 case may be.

15 We just -- at the end of the day, we need to
16 ensure that our students are taken care of mentally,
17 so they can succeed in their education, they can
18 succeed in their student life, and, in turn, after
19 they graduate, they can have the resources,
20 hopefully, necessary to join the New York State
21 workforce.

22 CARSON ROWE: And if I can add on to that as
23 well, you know, it can often be a very challenging
24 task to become comfortable with a new counselor,
25 especially in a very transitional time, coming to

1 college -- going to college, from your hometown,
2 leaving a counselor that you were very comfortable
3 with.

4 So putting that limit of six per semester,
5 and asking them to go and find another counselor
6 afterwards, can often be a very challenging thing to
7 do, especially when, a lot of times, the counselors
8 that these students work with for these six sessions
9 often become very familiar with them, and the
10 students very familiar with the care they're
11 receiving.

12 So it's -- it can be very challenging for
13 students.

14 SENATOR MAY: And we cut Joshua off, and we
15 didn't get to talk about child-care centers.

16 But what -- what would you estimate is the
17 demand of just -- your experience I guess is all at
18 ESF, but, are you aware of a lot of unmet need for
19 child care at SUNY?

20 JOSHUA CHANDRA: I'm -- personally, I'm not
21 sure. I don't know anyone at ESF.

22 But, yeah, I'll pass it to you guys.

23 CARSON ROWE: At least on a SUNY-wide level,
24 there is a relatively high demand for it. And
25 I think it often varies between the campuses.

1 I would be more than happy to follow up with
2 some of my counterparts within the student assembly
3 to get you some more exact, sort of, testimony and
4 numbers on that.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: In the past, child care
6 was covered with a memorandum -- a
7 maintenance-of-effort legislation, not in the last
8 couple of years, but that's generally where we put
9 it.

10 I didn't mean to interrupt.

11 SENATOR MAY: That's okay.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Do you have any more
13 questions?

14 SENATOR MAY: All I wanted to say is, I was a
15 proud stumpy when I came in here. But I'm even more
16 so now after all of your testimony.

17 You all did SUNY ESF proud.

18 Thank you for your testimony.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Let me ask you the
20 question about, since Senator May raised the issue
21 of the counseling issue.

22 There is a pilot project based out of Upstate
23 for telecounseling.

24 Have you made use of that?

25 PETER HUBER: I was not aware that that

1 program exists.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: It was not a large
3 appropriation of \$600,000, but, nevertheless, there
4 is a program at Upstate.

5 PETER HUBER: I can certainly take a look.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: Take a look.

7 PETER HUBER: I will.

8 Thank you.

9 CARSON ROWE: Thank you.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you very much.

11 And now to answer all the questions that have
12 been raised about the Excelsior program, we have
13 the -- we have the president of the Higher Education
14 Services Corporation, Dr. Guillermo Linares;

15 And we have, Elsa McGee, the executive
16 vice-president of HESC, who, I must say, was
17 extremely helpful --

18 She's smiling.

19 -- when the issue first came up.

20 We had many discussions by phone about the
21 program.

22 And I thank you publicly for your help.

23 This was several years ago.

24 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Good afternoon,
25 Chairwoman Stavisky, Senator May, and members of the

1 Senate Committee on Higher Education.

2 Thank you for the opportunity to provide
3 testimony today.

4 I am Dr. Guillermo Linares, president of
5 HESC.

6 And I'm joined today by HESC Executive
7 Vice President Elsa McGee.

8 New York State is home to two of the nation's
9 largest public university systems and the most
10 four-year -- the most four-year degree-granting
11 institutions of any state in the nation.

12 Post-secondary education options for
13 New Yorkers or those looking to attend college in
14 New York range from vocational training schools, to
15 small liberal art colleges, and large research
16 university centers, all of which can be found in
17 urban, suburban, and rural settings across the
18 state.

19 In 2018, more than 1.2 million students were
20 enrolled in higher-education programs in
21 New York State across all sectors.

22 Nearly 700,000 post-secondary students
23 attended a CUNY -- a SUNY and CUNY college or
24 university, and over 500,000 were enrolled at a
25 private college or university.

1 2018-19 tuition and fees at our four-year
2 public colleges were 20 percent lower than the
3 national average and lower than 40 other states.

4 To put this in perspective, average SUNY and
5 CUNY tuition and fees, at \$8,190 for 2018-19, were
6 17 to 24 percent lower than peer states, like Ohio,
7 California, and Texas, and 36 to 51 percent lower
8 than neighboring states, like Connecticut,
9 New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont.

10 Since 2012, State spending for higher
11 education has increased by 28 percent.

12 In all, New York invests \$7.7 billion
13 annually on strategic programs that help New York
14 students access in higher education each year.

15 In addition to its competitive public
16 school -- public college tuition rates,
17 New York State offers an array of need-based and
18 merit-based student financial-aid programs to
19 support the attainment of a college degree.

20 Our programs provide educational support for
21 targeted population, including veterans and their
22 family members, and survivors of the disasters that
23 have touched our state, and our loan-forgiveness
24 program support college graduates with loan
25 repayment.

1 Collectively, these financial-aid programs
2 provide more than \$1 billion to help ease college
3 costs for hundreds of thousands of students and
4 families throughout the state.

5 Since 2011, under Governor Cuomo's
6 leadership, New York has implemented an
7 unprecedented number of student financial-aid
8 initiatives and programs, including:

9 The Excelsior Scholarship, the nation's first
10 free-tuition program covering two- and four-year
11 colleges;

12 And the enhanced tuition award programs,
13 groundbreaking programs, such as the "Get On Your
14 Feet" loan-forgiveness program, which assists new
15 college graduates in managing their student-loan
16 debt as they transition from college to career;

17 And the recent implementation of the
18 Jose Peralta New York State Dream Act, which expands
19 college affordability to thousands of deserving
20 immigrant students who attend and graduate from
21 New York State high schools.

22 Through the longstanding tuition-assistance
23 program (TAP), the State of New York provides one of
24 the most generous need-based financial-aid programs
25 in the nation.

1 In 2018 -- '17-'18, the tuition-assistance
2 program awarded more than \$900 million in college
3 tuition grants to more than 337,000 students
4 attending a public, private, or proprietary college
5 in New York State.

6 Of the more than \$900 million awarded, more
7 than 70 percent were awarded to students attending
8 one of New York State's 84 public-sector colleges.

9 The Institute for College Access and Success
10 reports that, nationally, 65 percent of 2018 college
11 seniors graduated with student-loan debt.

12 In comparison, 59 percent of New York college
13 seniors graduated with a student-loan debt.

14 With average loan debt at \$31,127,
15 New York State graduates fared better than students
16 from every other northern states, including
17 Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire,
18 New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

19 At SUNY and CUNY, 67 percent of full-time --
20 of first-time full-time students that graduate from
21 a public institution leave debt-free; 55 percent at
22 SUNY and 79 percent at CUNY.

23 Since 2011, New York State has made
24 significant investment in higher education to ensure
25 college affordability.

1 First, we have the TAP program, which is
2 among the country's most generous grants, providing
3 over 900 million to students with greatest need.

4 Then, to further assist middle-class
5 families, we created the Excelsior Scholarship, to
6 enable families making \$125,000 or less to attend a
7 SUNY or CUNY school tuition-free.

8 In that time, the Governor has increased the
9 maximum TAP award, enhanced TAP, to better serve
10 people attending part-time, youth-in-care, and
11 person with disabilities, and established programs
12 designed to benefit the educational needs of
13 students and encourage on-time completion.

14 All of these efforts serve to minimize the
15 total costs of post-secondary education.

16 Newly-implemented programs, such as the
17 part-time scholarship, offers significant financial
18 assistance to support students who are unable to
19 attend college full time.

20 Programs such as TAP, the
21 Excelsior Scholarship, and Veteran Tuition Awards
22 each provide full-time -- full tuition awards for
23 students who opt to attend a public college or
24 university.

25 As a result, 55 percent of public college

1 students are now attending a SUNY or a CUNY
2 institution tuition-free.

3 To assist students who have graduated from a
4 New York State college or university with
5 student-loan debt, New York State makes available a
6 number of targeted and general loan-forgiveness
7 programs.

8 While the Get On Your Feet loan-forgiveness
9 program provides up to two years of loan payments,
10 up to any amount, for every eligible college
11 graduate, and the Doctors Across New York
12 Loan-Forgiveness Program awards up to 120,000 to
13 physicians who serve for three years in shortage
14 communities, most loan-forgiveness programs provide
15 between 20,000 and 50,000 in loan-forgiveness awards
16 to those who care -- whose care and services support
17 our state diverse population.

18 In conclusion:

19 New York State has consistently sought to
20 ensure college accessibility and affordability to
21 state residents based on need and merit.

22 New York is one of only two states to offer a
23 need-based entitlement grant program, and the only
24 state to offer a need-based entitlement
25 loan-forgiveness program.

1 Our strong and longstanding support for
2 higher education is repeatedly evidenced in national
3 reports on higher education, such as Grapevine's
4 fiscal-year 2018-19 survey, which identified
5 New York as one of the nine mega states whose 2019
6 fiscal support for higher education, together,
7 accounted for over 50 percent of the nationwide
8 total support.

9 Collectively, our efforts have served to
10 benefit our students and families by offsetting more
11 than \$900 million in college costs each year.

12 And New York is the only state with a
13 free-tuition program for four-year college students.

14 Thank you very much for the opportunity to
15 testify, and I will be happy to answer any questions
16 you may have.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

18 Before I call on Senator May --

19 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Glad to see
20 Senator Antonacci.

21 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Nice to see you.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- I want to recognize
23 Senator Robert Antonacci from Syra -- from this
24 area.

25 SENATOR ANTONUCCI: Thank you.

1 Just briefly, I -- first of all, I'd like to
2 apologize for my tardiness.

3 I was actually over at the Syracuse EOC --
4 the Educational Opportunity Center -- for their
5 rebranding and marketing seminar.

6 It was great, and there's a lot of excitement
7 over there.

8 And this is a heck of an education week.

9 I joined Senator May earlier in the week,
10 with Senator Mayer, to talk about -- mayors, to talk
11 about funding for our public schools.

12 So I think we're all focused on education.

13 And I want to welcome Senator Stavisky to
14 Syracuse.

15 It's great economic --

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Back.

17 SENATOR ANTONACCI: -- oh, back.

18 Okay, back.

19 -- well, it's great economic development.

20 I hope you're staying in a hotel and going to
21 our fine restaurants.

22 But I'm not on any of the --

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: I'll be in Garden City
24 tomorrow morning --

25 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Oh.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- so I'm taking the --

2 SENATOR ANTONACCI: The train or the plane?

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- the 9:00 flight back to
4 Kennedy.

5 SENATOR ANTONACCI: All right, well, take a
6 sandwich with you.

7 But I have...

8 [Laughter.]

9 SENATOR MAY: I took her out to breakfast.

10 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Oh, did you?

11 Okay, Senator.

12 I am not on either of the education
13 committees, but I was on the Finance Committee.

14 I believe you actually testified in Albany
15 before.

16 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: That's right,
17 I thought so.

18 But I also have two kids in college, well,
19 one a freshman. One that just graduated, who's
20 going to be going back for his MBA.

21 So I think, like everybody, we're very
22 concerned about these issues.

23 So I welcome everybody.

24 And I plan on staying through the end of the
25 hearing.

1 And if I missed anybody that needs to get to
2 me in particular with an issue, please feel free to
3 reach out to our office.

4 But thank you, Senator.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Why don't you start with
6 the questions.

7 SENATOR MAY: Sure, yeah, thanks for your
8 testimony.

9 I -- I know you were here, and heard from
10 the -- from the presidents of the different
11 institutions about all of the support they provide
12 for costs beyond tuition and fees; so,
13 transportation, textbooks, child care, even food,
14 and clothing to some extent.

15 And I'm wondering, following up on the
16 question I asked before, about, kind of, the
17 economies of scale, are those kinds of programs that
18 should be organized and administered systemwide?

19 Would that be a more efficient way to do
20 that?

21 And -- and -- or, is that already being done
22 and I'm just not aware of it?

23 And -- and -- well, just, I would like your
24 thoughts about that.

25 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Yeah, well, as you

1 are aware, we are in charge of implementing
2 28 programs to really help access college for
3 New Yorkers, and, to the extent possible, make it
4 affordable.

5 And the programs that we run, which are
6 approved by the Legislature and the Governor, focus,
7 in a great part, on tuition, which is about
8 25 percent of the cost.

9 And TAP being, in the nation, one of the most
10 generous need-based programs that we have, I think
11 we're blessed to be able to spend close to a billion
12 dollars to really help access and help pay for
13 tuition.

14 And as you are aware, you know, the inception
15 of the last program, Excelsior, expands on what TAP
16 offers for families that are struggling to be able
17 to pay tuition.

18 So, all in all, what we're looking, is that
19 about 47 percent of students attending the colleges
20 and universities, both SUNY and CUNY, attending
21 full-time, will increase to about 55 percent with
22 the addition of Excelsior being a reality now.

23 So that means the majority of students
24 attending public universities are now able to attend
25 tuition-free.

1 And so, all in all, a lot of what we have
2 driving focuses on bringing relief, in the context
3 of helping provide free tuition for students across
4 the board, two-year and four-year.

5 SENATOR MAY: Right.

6 So I appreciate that, and that's really
7 important, obviously.

8 But we heard, for example, SUNY Oswego is
9 organizing buses and transportation so people can
10 just get to campus.

11 And I -- it raised the question for me:

12 Is it the most efficient way to do it, to
13 have individual campuses putting administrative
14 effort into that, and, you know, doing those on a
15 kind of an ad hoc basis?

16 Or is it something we should be thinking of,
17 systemwide, you know, the food pantries or the child
18 care or the textbook help?

19 Each one is clearly putting a lot of effort
20 into figuring out, how do we make this affordable
21 for our students, and could we do it better as a
22 whole system?

23 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: I think that we all
24 recognize how challenging it is, you know, to help
25 pay for college.

1 And what we're doing is really focusing,
2 based on what has been approved for us to implement,
3 focus primarily, and centrally, on bringing some
4 relief on the tuition side, which, by the way,
5 many -- many families across the state, that may not
6 qualify, or get enough to pay tuition through TAP,
7 are now able to benefit from through this.

8 So it's -- it's also another recognition
9 that -- that 25 percent of the cost is being
10 addressed, when those families that are now getting
11 Excelsior don't have to pay out of pocket, which is
12 some relief.

13 It's not that -- you know, it doesn't solve
14 all the problems, but it adds significant relief,
15 which we're glad that we're able to do that.

16 ELSA MCGEE: I think the systems are separate
17 entities from our agency, but we know that CUNY
18 really does have a more centralized system.

19 SUNY tends to be more decentralized, in many
20 aspects, of how their campuses operate.

21 But that wouldn't be under our purview.

22 SENATOR MAY: Wouldn't be under your --

23 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Right.

24 SENATOR MAY: -- okay.

25 Thank you.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: We heard students testify.

2 We heard one young man say that his friend
3 has to work 20 hours a week, and, therefore, can't
4 accumulate the 30 credits that are required.

5 How do you address that issue?

6 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Well, you know, the
7 main purpose of Excelsior is to not just help pay
8 for tuition, but, in requiring full-time credit is
9 in line to in-time completion.

10 And so, when you're able to complete college
11 in time, you save money and you save time, but,
12 also, it means that, at the same time, you have to
13 fulfill those requirements.

14 We do have, for students that have
15 extenuating circumstances, flexibility, in order for
16 them not to lose if they are eligible and receive
17 the scholarship.

18 But we also have, for students who are not
19 able to carry a full load, and are able to attend
20 part-time, we have a part-time scholarship, which is
21 a new program that we established.

22 We also have the TAP part-time program, and
23 also the work-study program.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: But we're talking about
25 Excelsior.

1 So there is no solution for the student who
2 has to work 20 hours a week?

3 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Well, the only
4 flexibility that we have, and that's provided for
5 students that are already accepted for Excelsior, is
6 if they have extenuating circumstance.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: That's what I'm talking
8 about.

9 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Yeah, they -- they --
10 they would -- they would have -- there is
11 flexibility built in, in the statute, that allows
12 for extenuating circumstances related to health, or
13 unexpected work-related circumstances that may have
14 come.

15 And those are considered individually, so
16 that the student does not lose the scholarship.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: And to the issues that the
18 speaker from NYPIRG addressed, do you have his
19 testimony?

20 We'll get you the suggestions that are coming
21 from NYPIRG.

22 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Okay.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay?

24 But their questions I think should also be
25 addressed.

1 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: If I recall, you
2 know, from their testimony, we have an
3 implementation of Excelsior this -- which concluded
4 the second year. And we've worked very closely with
5 all the colleges and universities to address the
6 needs of the students that are already accepted and
7 getting the scholarship.

8 And we do have a great relationship
9 established, to make sure that any additional
10 support that the students may have as they carry on
11 to fulfill the responsibility, is taken care of.

12 And with regards to Excelsior, or any other
13 program, I'm available to attend anywhere, and see
14 anyone, to really speak about the program and/or
15 other offerings.

16 And if you have an organization in your
17 district that you want me to come and speak, I'm
18 available.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

20 And you did come to one of the intermediate
21 schools in my district back in 2017 -- 2017,
22 I believe, yes, to explain the Excelsior program.

23 Senator Antonacci.

24 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Thank you very much.

25 Doctor, I came in a little late, so if

1 I can't articulate my questions succinctly, and if
2 I've covered something that's already been asked,
3 please let me know.

4 But my colleagues did touch on the
5 Excelsior Scholarship.

6 I know there's been recent articles about
7 the -- I guess the lack, or my perception, that it
8 was going to help more students than it did, and
9 I think a lot of it had to do with part-time.

10 Also, the fees.

11 And, again, just going through this
12 experience with my daughter, I thought I knew what
13 the tuition bill was, I thought we could budget for
14 that. And then, all of a sudden, we get fee'd to
15 death with, you know, science fee, health fee... you
16 name it.

17 Why can't we just have one bill that's
18 covered by these programs?

19 Why do we have --

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Those fees are assessed by
21 SUNY, not HESC, if I'm not mistaken.

22 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Yeah.

23 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Right.

24 SENATOR ANTONACCI: I'm not necessarily
25 blaming you. I'm, more, just trying to -- because

1 that's what we're here for. Right?

2 We're here to get to the bottom line of what
3 the cost of a public higher education.

4 And, is there a gimmick?

5 I mean, do we -- do we say, well, tuition's
6 been held steady, but, you know, your science tech
7 fee went up 40 bucks?

8 I mean --

9 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Yeah.

10 SENATOR ANTONACCI: -- so --

11 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: But there is a
12 distinction, and --

13 SENATOR ANTONACCI: But it's not covered by
14 the excel -- but it's not covered by the tuition.

15 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: -- it's not covered
16 because, the Excelsior, and the -- you know, the
17 statue, the program was enacted to address and focus
18 on tuition, and so that is the driver.

19 And with regards to other fees, that -- you
20 know, that's more a function of the colleges
21 themselves.

22 SENATOR ANTONACCI: But we're trying to give
23 a scholarship, and I know there's some merit behind
24 it, and some good intent.

25 But it doesn't cover anybody under

1 12 credits, and, it doesn't cover the fees, which
2 can be substantial.

3 Because these articles that I'm seeing, one's
4 in the Syracuse newspaper, one was in the
5 "Times Union," that, basically, out of
6 200,000 possible students, many, many less were
7 helped by the Excelsior Scholarship program.

8 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Initially was, for
9 the first year, there were 103,000 students that
10 applied.

11 SENATOR ANTONACCI: And how many -- and only
12 about 20,000 of those were actually helped?

13 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Actually, about half
14 of that number.

15 It was 46,000 were found eligible for the
16 program.

17 However, due to the generosity of the TAP
18 program, that students received another scholarship.
19 A significant number of them already were getting
20 full tuition.

21 So we ended up, in the first year, with
22 over 20,000 students that benefited from the
23 Excelsior Scholarship.

24 And, by the way, of the over 46,000, in the
25 second year, that we just looked at the number, the

1 number has gone up. Over 25,000 students are now
2 receiving the scholarship for the second year.

3 We'll have more information for you later on.

4 But it shows that what we were projecting
5 with the rollout of the program, we're doing very
6 well.

7 It is increasing, and we're targeting, that,
8 by the full implementation of the third year, we
9 will reach, 55 percent of all the SUNY and CUNY
10 students will be attending college tuition-free.

11 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Okay.

12 All right, thank you, Doctor.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14 SENATOR MAY: Actually --

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

16 Oh, (inaudible).

17 SENATOR MAY: -- I had one other question,
18 which was about, one of the issues that the student
19 from NYPIRG raised was about extending TAP to
20 incarcerated New Yorkers.

21 And I wondered if that's something that
22 you've thought about?

23 What -- what would be the barriers to that?

24 And, I mean, what would it cost?

25 But, also, would that be a difficult thing to

1 implement?

2 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: There was a recent
3 dialogue/conversation that took place a couple of
4 weeks back in New York City, at John Jay, with key
5 stakeholders, to address the question of higher
6 education coming to incarcerated populations.

7 And so that was a very preliminary
8 conversation that took place.

9 I don't know what steps have been taken after
10 that.

11 But I attended that, and there was -- it was
12 a very positive discussion, that clearly points to
13 the importance of addressing the needs of
14 incarcerated individuals.

15 And so we'll see what other steps follow with
16 that.

17 SENATOR MAY: Okay. Thank you.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

19 DR. GUILLERMO LINARES: Thank you very much.

20 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Thank you, Doctor.

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: Before we take the break,
22 Gwen Kay, the president of SUNY Univer -- the SUNY
23 Faculty Senate.

24 Good to see you again.

25 GWEN KAY: Good to see you again as well.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: I know we met a little
2 while ago.

3 GWEN KAY: We did.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: Do you want to begin?

5 GWEN KAY: Sure.

6 Thank you for inviting me to speak at the
7 Senate Higher Education Committee's hearing on the
8 cost of higher education in Syracuse, especially at
9 my home campus of SUNY Oswego.

10 My name is Gwen Kay, and I am president of
11 the State University of New York University Faculty
12 Senate.

13 In this role, I am a member ex-officio of
14 SUNY's Board of Trustees, but I am not here as a
15 trustee.

16 I am also on the chancellor's cabinet, but
17 I am not here as a member of the chancellor's
18 cabinet.

19 The University Faculty Senate advocates on
20 behalf of the faculty and staff of the
21 34 state-operated campuses; which is to say,
22 13 comprehensive colleges, 5 colleges of technology
23 and agriculture, 8 specialized and statutory
24 campuses, 5 academic health centers, 4 doctoral
25 institutions.

1 We talk with the leaders of SUNY on all
2 matters related to academic mission of the
3 institution.

4 This is a process we call "shared
5 governance."

6 When I say that the University Faculty Senate
7 advocates, I am not referring to labor management.

8 I leave those issues to my colleagues from
9 UUP who will be speaking after me.

10 Instead, I am talking about shared
11 governance: faculty and staff share with the
12 administration on both campuses and system level,
13 governance over issues that are uniquely our
14 purview.

15 "Shared governance" means that faculty and
16 staff work collaboratively with administration.

17 "Shared governance" means faculty and staff
18 have primary responsibility for curricular
19 decisions, but in consultation and collaboration
20 with college leadership, where leadership has
21 primary responsibility, in consultation with faculty
22 and staff, over budgetary and other administrative
23 functions.

24 Finally, a key distinction in shared
25 governance, shared governance is larger and

1 different from faculty.

2 "Shared governance" means that faculty in a
3 specific and organized process are asked to
4 participate often in a representational way, as
5 opposed to asking a random or a
6 specifically-selected faculty member for their
7 opinions or guidance on a committee.

8 There are many positive outcomes of shared
9 governance, specifically to help our students
10 succeed, including applied learning, open
11 educational resources, and educational expectations.

12 In each of these arenas, University Faculty
13 Senate and shared governance have come to the table
14 and worked with others across SUNY to aid our
15 students.

16 In each of these areas, I believe that our
17 collaborative work helps our students succeed.

18 Applied learning, or a hands-on experience,
19 is something integral to almost every program, every
20 discipline, every major.

21 This could mean laboratory work;

22 This could mean research in a library or
23 archive;

24 This could mean creating art;

25 This could mean performance;

1 This could mean internship;

2 This could mean student teaching;

3 This could mean volunteering in the
4 community, on campus, outside the country.

5 What applied learning is is virtually
6 endless.

7 For some fields, such as teaching, it is
8 built into the major and required for certification.

9 For other fields, such as art,
10 (indiscernible) students must display their work in
11 order to graduate.

12 As such, applied learning is a curricular
13 matter of instruction -- of instructional design.

14 Several years ago, the Governor required
15 every SUNY institution to clarify whether it would
16 require applied learning as a graduation
17 requirement.

18 Working with system administration, the
19 University Faculty Senate and our counterparts at
20 the Faculty Council of Community Colleges asked each
21 campus governance body to affirm whether applied
22 learning was a graduation requirement or not,
23 because graduation requirements are held -- are also
24 local collaborative decisions through shared
25 governance.

1 Ultimately, some campuses did require applied
2 learning, and some did that.

3 The campuses that did not require applied
4 learning stressed that they had many arenas in which
5 applied learning was happening and highly valued on
6 their campuses.

7 A second space where collaboration has been
8 helpful, and has had a significant impact on cost
9 for students, is open educational resources.

10 The cost of books is a perennial concern to
11 faculty.

12 Open educational resources are freely
13 available or extremely inexpensive text sources --
14 that you've heard about earlier from students --
15 that are almost wholly online.

16 We had already been working on issues facing
17 open education resources when the Governor also
18 mentioned OER (open educational resources) and the
19 cost-savings for students.

20 Choosing course material is part of faculty
21 purview in curricular design.

22 Some areas might lend themselves better to
23 using open educational resources than others, such
24 as an introductory chemistry class or English
25 composition.

1 A dean or a provost should not unilaterally
2 decide that everyone on their campus must use open
3 educational resources, but they can encourage
4 faculty to do so, and be mindful of cost regardless
5 of the method of course-material delivery.

6 The University Faculty Senate worked to get
7 this message out. We worked with the provost's
8 office and SUNY system administration to help find
9 the best tools, and balance students' financial
10 needs with the provost's office to balance what
11 faculty needed as well.

12 In addition, we have encouraged faculty to
13 develop these materials, often collaboratively with
14 other colleagues at other institutions across SUNY,
15 but we also want faculty to be compensated for this
16 work.

17 Textbook authors receive royalties.

18 People who work in open educational resources
19 should receive money as well.

20 A third arena where collaboration has been
21 fruitful is educational expectations.

22 Graduation requirements are specific to each
23 campus, and that is good. Within overall limits,
24 there are unique aspects of each campus that should
25 be celebrated.

1 The more general framework, however, those
2 core competencies that everyone must have for
3 graduation, have very much benefited by
4 collaboration, consultation, and working together.

5 These core requirements across all SUNY,
6 commonly referred to as "general education
7 requirements," are taught by faculty, but are
8 standards upon which everyone should agree.

9 These requirements, currently under
10 discussion, are very much evolving in a
11 collaborative way. In all of these spaces, we are
12 always mindful of our responsibility to our
13 students.

14 Faculty and staff at our campuses are
15 concerned about the cost of education and are
16 concerned about the impact of this on our students.

17 We recognize the costs of higher education.

18 Over the past decade, we have had to raise
19 tuition, a decision made by the Governor and the
20 Legislature, because there has been no alternative
21 if we want to continue to offer and build on the
22 quality education that the people of New York State
23 deserve.

24 We appreciate State-funded programs such as
25 TAP and Excelsior. We are also mindful of the gap

1 between TAP and Excelsior, which you have just heard
2 about.

3 Campuses need to make up these shortfalls.

4 The more students a campus has that are
5 benefiting from these programs, the bigger the gap.

6 But since we are committed to students, we
7 cover this widening and widening gap, which becomes
8 a shortfall.

9 Also, as you've also heard, these campuses --
10 many of these programs only cover tuition; not room,
11 not board, not fees, not books.

12 We are concerned about increasing tuition and
13 associated costs.

14 We do not want increased costs to mean
15 increased burden on our students, nor do we want
16 increased cost to mean no hiring of faculty and
17 staff as this will negatively impact course
18 delivery.

19 Tuition cannot cover all costs on campuses.

20 On some campuses there are hiring freezes in
21 place. This means fewer faculty to do the work that
22 must be done.

23 This often means increasing the workload.

24 Some faculty on campuses had a 12- or
25 15-credit expectation per semester. They're now

1 regularly doing 18 to 25 credits per hour, without
2 extra compensation, without expectation of that
3 workload decreasing, and, there's a negative impact
4 for students.

5 We're concerned that increasing tuition and
6 associated costs will negatively impact our
7 students.

8 At the same time, these budget pressers
9 impact faculty hiring.

10 Adjunct, or, part-time faculty, absolutely
11 are valuable members of our community, and, in some
12 cases, offer special skills or knowledge.

13 However, part-time faculty do not have the
14 same commitment, nor should they, given the pay rate
15 and their clear limited job description for our
16 students.

17 Full-time faculty, mentor, advise, and, in
18 general, serve as a presence to help students in
19 their time on our campuses.

20 The shift to more part-time faculty may be
21 cost-expedient, but has negative impacts for our
22 students in terms of student access and retention.

23 We are concerned with affordability and
24 quality.

25 We view higher education as the path to

1 social mobility.

2 Several of our campuses are among the top 25
3 in the country for student mobility, moving students
4 from the lowest quartile to the highest and
5 second-highest quartiles of economic success.

6 Yes, we are deeply concerned about the rising
7 costs.

8 We are also deeply committed to serving our
9 students and the quality of higher education that
10 New York State deserves.

11 Thank you.

12 >> Sen. Stavisky: Thank you.

13 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

14 Yeah, this is great.

15 And I appreciate your covering a lot of the
16 bases in terms of the real costs of providing the
17 kind of education.

18 When you talk about applied learning, and
19 I know that people of college age are really focused
20 on that, of coming out with some actual skills and
21 hands-on experience.

22 When there's discussion about whether to make
23 it a graduate requirement, is there also discussion
24 about training the faculty to provide a kind of
25 education that they might not have originally

1 trained to -- it seems like a lot of what's going on
2 in higher education is the expectations on --
3 students' expectations of what they're going to get
4 out of their education are changing pretty rapidly,
5 and it puts a pressure on the faculty to be changing
6 their skills all the time too.

7 I'm wondering how that gets recognized in the
8 whole process?

9 GWEN KAY: It is assumed that faculty will be
10 continually upgrading and improving their skills
11 without compensation to do that.

12 But on applied learning, it turns out that,
13 on most campuses, 90 to 95 percent of every camp --
14 every program or discipline has applied learning
15 built into it.

16 The reason that some campuses chose to not
17 make it mandatory, was it might be difficult for
18 students with limited means; no cars, and locations.

19 To even volunteer might require a car or a
20 bus ride on a campus that doesn't have good bus
21 service.

22 So, to require something might be a barrier
23 to some students who otherwise have been able to do
24 these things, and they've been able to do applied
25 learning in a different way in other courses.

1 But if they haven't, through whatever fluke,
2 that shouldn't be a barrier to them graduating.

3 But faculty are continually thinking about
4 ways to incorporate all of these methods to get
5 hands-on experience for their students.

6 SENATOR MAY: Right.

7 Also, when you talk about the hiring freezes
8 and the increased workloads on the faculty, it's
9 also true, when adjuncts get hired, they -- as you
10 mentioned, they're not doing the advising, they are
11 not doing a lot of the committee work, and things
12 that -- so more and more falls to the full-time
13 faculty.

14 Is there a discussion about -- seems to me
15 that, you know, the -- the people just looking at
16 the economics of the school, the finances of the
17 school, see a benefit to just hiring more adjuncts,
18 but need to be also taking into account the
19 additional costs that it places on other -- on
20 full-time employees.

21 It -- I'm just wondering, do you talk about
22 that?

23 Is there -- is there a mechanism for
24 compensating faculty when they have to do more of
25 those outside-of-classroom activities?

1 And, how do those costs get internalized, is
2 the question?

3 GWEN KAY: They don't -- those costs aren't
4 easily calculated.

5 It is assumed that full-time faculty, part of
6 what they do, includes service on a campus, service
7 with students.

8 So there's no cost, per. So it is a very
9 invisible work that faculty do, but critical to our
10 students' success.

11 We want to retain students, we want them to
12 graduate.

13 SENATOR MAY: Right.

14 I guess my question is: Have you figured out
15 mechanisms for making it more visible?

16 GWEN KAY: We have tried, but, on campus
17 after campus, the economic argument wins in the end
18 over the service that must be done for students,
19 increasing the burden on faculty and staff who are
20 full-time and already present.

21 SENATOR MAY: Is it -- are you noticing that
22 it's harder to, say, recruit or retain faculty
23 because of these additional burdens that they're
24 taking on?

25 GWEN KAY: Yes.

1 I mean, faculty, especially in certain areas,
2 can make much more in private industry than in
3 higher education, and they can make much more at
4 private institutions than public institutions.

5 And with the burden of this uncompensated
6 extra work, people are leaving.

7 And part of the reason is, they could do what
8 they really want to do, and not have to do the
9 increasing work that's not being compensated and not
10 being recognized on their campuses.

11 SENATOR MAY: And the solution?

12 GWEN KAY: If I had a magic wand, I would
13 make it quantifiable in an easy way. But, not every
14 campus is paying attention to that.

15 SENATOR MAY: Okay, thank you.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

17 I must say, I have had this similar
18 discussion with a major higher-education official.

19 And perhaps we can work on those issues.

20 GWEN KAY: Wonderful.

21 Thank you.

22 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Yeah, thank you.

23 So I -- I was an adjunct, and I had a couple
24 different careers as an adjunct.

25 I actually worked for a for-profit school.

1 And I also worked for a not-for-profit
2 school, and I'm happy to say that that's -- I'll use
3 their name, but, Le Moyne College. So I was up
4 there about six years.

5 So I'm very familiar with the adjunct model.

6 But just to follow up on that last comment,
7 is it a money issue?

8 And if it is, obviously, no matter what your
9 business, you're looking at your labor costs.

10 And it costs more to hire a full-time
11 professor, and I'm sure there's more demands on that
12 full-time professor's time.

13 And an adjunct's, probably, and I hate to use
14 the word "cheaper," but, certainly, there's -- I was
15 happy to do it. I had a full-time job. I just did
16 it as more of a hobby and advocacy; I loved doing
17 it.

18 But, you know, costs are costs. Right?

19 Are we really examining?

20 And I know Upstate is here, and I've had
21 conversations with them.

22 I mean, do we need four years in college?

23 Do we need brick-and-mortar?

24 We're trying to educate our young people,
25 make sure they have an opportunity for advancement,

1 and, sometimes, I don't want to say it's just the
2 sheep's skin that they need.

3 Or at least that's what I used to call it.
4 I don't know if they still call it that anymore.

5 You know, are we adjusting with the times?
6 And we've got Twitter and Facebook.

7 Are we using those as teaching methods?

8 I mean, we've got Skype.

9 Are we -- are we -- my wife just went back
10 and got her nursing degree after being out of the
11 workforce for many, many years. She had a lot of
12 classes online.

13 Is that driving down costs?

14 So, you know, are we looking at cost drivers?

15 Not that I want to see anybody work for less
16 than what they're worth, but how is that all being
17 factored into the -- you know, I hope there was --
18 you know, are there accountants here from the --
19 from Oswego that are going to tell us what really
20 goes on in the back rooms?

21 So I -- I don't know if that's more of a
22 comment, or just a generalization, but feel free
23 to...

24 GWEN KAY: Well, an economist from Oswego
25 will be talking. I'm not sure what they will be

1 saying.

2 SENATOR ANTONACCI: An economist?

3 GWEN KAY: Yes.

4 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Okay.

5 That's different than an accountant, but
6 that's okay.

7 GWEN KAY: This is true, which might have a
8 better big picture.

9 I think that costs are critical.

10 And I know that labor costs are one of the
11 highest pieces of any campus being in business and
12 being open. And some things are non-quantifiable.

13 And -- but we also want students to complete
14 in four years.

15 And we know that the things that help a
16 student complete in four years, or three and a half,
17 or three, are making relationships.

18 And so we have lots of online classes. We
19 are using lots of technology in classes all across
20 the SUNY system. We have a whole online space.

21 We'll see --

22 SENATOR ANTONACCI: You got a downtown
23 campus; right?

24 I mean --

25 GWEN KAY: Right.

1 And we'll see --

2 SENATOR ANTONACCI: -- you can go --

3 GWEN KAY: -- how those relationships --

4 SENATOR ANTONACCI: -- to SUNY Oswego without
5 going to Oswego.

6 GWEN KAY: -- we can see how those
7 relationships work.

8 But, we would like students to graduate in
9 whatever -- as quickly -- I mean, ideally, in
10 four years, which was part of what Excelsior is
11 driving, is that four-year completion rate.

12 If cost is the issue, yes, we need to be
13 expedient. But there -- the service piece that
14 faculty do is critical to making campuses work
15 successfully.

16 And if that's not happening --

17 SENATOR ANTONACCI: So let me just --

18 GWEN KAY: -- campuses don't run as well.

19 SENATOR ANTONACCI: -- let me throw this out,
20 because the theme of the week has been, everybody
21 needs more money, and everybody would like more
22 money.

23 But let's just say there was more money.

24 Does it -- do you become more efficient?

25 Do you get kids out of school quicker,

1 smarter?

2 Or let me -- is it pay raises for staff, and
3 not just -- not just professors, but, you know,
4 maintenance workers, you name it, right up and down?

5 It's a business; right?

6 I mean, what is the -- what is the answer to
7 helping make it more affordable?

8 GWEN KAY: There are spaces where money could
9 be well deployed.

10 Having advisors who really understood all the
11 pieces, and could answer all the questions that
12 students had, would be critical to getting students
13 the information they need, so they don't take a
14 class that they're not really sure why they're
15 taking it, and, ultimately, it is three credits, or
16 four credits, but it doesn't get them to completing
17 their major or minor or second major.

18 Getting technology to faculty, and having
19 supports for faculty to be able to use all the new
20 technologies that Senator May asked about, would be
21 very helpful.

22 No campus has enough IT support, and
23 enough -- enough people doing instructional design,
24 to help us make our courses the best that they can
25 be. And faculty weren't trained in that space.

1 So those resources would be well deployed and
2 could help us be bigger, better.

3 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Okay. All right.

4 Thank you very much.

5 GWEN KAY: Thank you.

6 SENATOR MAY: I just had one other question
7 about the open educational resources.

8 Is there a quality issue, that if you sort of
9 go that route, you're foregoing the most recent
10 textbooks, or the, you know, most up to date, or --
11 or, you know, prestigious kind of sources of
12 information?

13 I'm just trying to figure out how that works.

14 GWEN KAY: Most open educational resources
15 are updated, not perhaps every day within every
16 semester. But they're updated much more frequently
17 than is possible with physical textbooks, in many
18 cases, to incorporate the latest information and
19 knowledge that they have.

20 SENATOR MAY: Okay.

21 Thank you.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

23 We are going to take a 10-minute break.

24 It is twenty after three, and we will resume
25 promptly at three thirty.

1 (The hearing stands in recess.)

2 (The hearing now resumes.)

3 We are resuming the hearing of the Senate
4 Committee on Higher Education.

5 And, Dr. Kowal, will you introduce your
6 fellow panelists.

7 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Okay, I will do so.

8 Thank you, Senator Stavisky.

9 And, actually, in the interest of time,
10 I will have them quickly introduce themselves as we
11 move along.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Good.

13 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: What we have done is,
14 broken up our nine individuals who are testifying
15 into two groups.

16 This group will include those from the
17 Upstate Medical University and from Morrisville.

18 And then the second group will be Cortland
19 and Oswego.

20 So we'll have the comprehensive campuses
21 together, the tech and the SUNY hospitals' academic
22 medical centers together.

23 For the record, my name is Fred Kowal. I'm
24 the president of the United University Professions,
25 the union that represents the faculty and staff at

1 approximately 30 SUNY campuses, and system
2 administration. That's what gives us the number of
3 "30," though, system is not, technically, a campus.

4 With 37,000 members, UUP is the largest
5 higher-education union in the country, and we have
6 been in existence for over 45 years, nearly
7 50 years, and have, throughout our history, been the
8 major voice advocating for SUNY, for public higher
9 education, and, for accessible, quality health care
10 at the three SUNY hospitals in Syracuse here, and
11 at -- in Brooklyn, and out at Stony Brook.

12 We have always felt very strongly, regardless
13 of who is president of UUP, that SUNY has always had
14 great potential to serve the state of New York and
15 the nation;

16 To create access to public higher education
17 for all;

18 To take the lead in guaranteeing medical care
19 for all, through the hospitals, and through the
20 exceptional medical schools that educate a large
21 number, in fact, the greatest concentration, of
22 doctors within the state of New York;

23 And, presently, to take on the issues of
24 racism and the climate crisis, like few other
25 institutions can in New York State.

1 However, the lack of funding has led to,
2 quite frankly, an inability to take on these issues
3 and these efforts.

4 And I think the crux of the issue, as you
5 have heard previously today, is that so much of the
6 burden is placed on students through tuition as
7 opposed to State funding.

8 I should say that, we are thankful to you,
9 Senator Stavisky, Senator May, Senator Antonacci,
10 because you have been in the state Senate, and in
11 the Assembly, very strong supporters of public
12 higher education, consistently.

13 And we appreciate that.

14 Right now, students are paying approximately
15 65 percent of the cost of a SUNY education, or the
16 cost of SUNY, in general.

17 That heavy burden on students turns SUNY into
18 more of a private institution with some public
19 support, which was not the intention when it was
20 founded.

21 In evidence of the dramatic impact that a
22 slight drop in enrollment can have:

23 Just two weeks ago I was at the University of
24 Albany, where they were briefing the faculty and
25 staff about the fact that enrollment had dropped

1 just by 2.3 percent this year. And that resulted in
2 a loss of \$11 million in revenue, leading to the
3 suspension of searches and the potential loss of
4 programs.

5 That's how small a drop in enrollment can
6 have such a dramatic impact on the finances.

7 And then we get to the hospitals, and you
8 will hear from two of my colleagues at Upstate
9 momentarily.

10 But I feel very strongly that, for too long,
11 our university hospitals have been treated unlike
12 any other state agency or public authority.

13 They have the obligation to pick up the
14 fringe-benefit costs and the debt servicing. And
15 that is something, again, that no other agency has
16 to do.

17 These centers of health care and learning are
18 not just the governor's hospitals, they are not the
19 chancellor's hospitals, I don't even like to refer
20 to them as state hospitals; these are the people's
21 hospitals, both in terms of serving communities and
22 all patients who need help, but also in educating
23 the next generation of health-care providers.

24 A return of the State's investment in the
25 so-called "subsidy" -- and my colleague Rich will

1 refer to that subsidy in a more correct fashion in a
2 minute -- even just at the 2017 levels, which show a
3 commitment to communities of color, rural
4 communities that have been left behind, while also
5 showing a commitment to our citizens.

6 We believe in health care for all regardless
7 of your ability to pay.

8 That's would be -- would be exhibited by such
9 an investment.

10 It would be a statement from our government
11 that New York is the progressive leader in this
12 country, and that health care is a right.

13 Regardless of what the structural system may
14 be, quality health care will always be available at
15 New York State's university hospitals, our people's
16 hospitals.

17 In closing, I would just add one item that
18 has surfaced through the course of the discussion
19 more recently in the questions to Dr. Kay concerning
20 the extra burdens that have been falling on faculty
21 and staff.

22 Technically, under our contract, an increase
23 in duties is supposed to be compensated for.

24 Oftentimes, as Gwen was saying, the reality
25 is, it's difficult to measure. But it's also a

1 case, sometimes, where our faculty and staff are so
2 devoted to the colleges they serve, that they take
3 on the work voluntarily.

4 And that is a benefit to the institution, but
5 to the detriment of the workforce, and, for that
6 matter, the scholarship and the quality work that
7 goes on.

8 So with that, again, I want thank you for the
9 hearings that have taken place across the state.

10 And we look forward to continuing our work
11 together for the benefit of our state and our
12 students.

13 So, with that, I will turn to
14 Dr. Rich Veenstra.

15 DR. RICH VEENSTRA: So, thank you, Fred.

16 And thank you Senators May, Stavisky, and
17 Antonacci, for your support, and for the opportunity
18 to speak to you here today.

19 I'm here to talk about the direct need for
20 direct State support for the three SUNY-operated
21 hospitals at Stony Brook Health Science Center,
22 Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, and here in
23 Syracuse at Upstate Medical University.

24 They all have a tripartite mission.

25 One is health care;

1 Second is education, training the new
2 health-care professionals and doctors of the future;
3 And also, research; so they have research
4 institutes.

5 I myself have been a researcher here for
6 30 years.

7 So as it was mentioned, the term "subsidy" is
8 kind of -- is really misleading.

9 And, "subsidy," by definition, is a sum of
10 money that's provided by a government to keep the
11 price of a service or product low so that a business
12 or organization, like the SUNY hospitals, can
13 continue to function.

14 But it also kind of sounds like it's a gift
15 or a handout that's not really necessary.

16 That part is simply not true, it is
17 necessary.

18 In 2001, the New York State Department of
19 Budget relinquished the responsibility of paying the
20 employee benefits and debt services to the three
21 SUNY hospitals in exchange for providing a, quote,
22 subsidy to SUNY to help offset those obligatory
23 costs.

24 Prior to the recession in 2008, the hospital
25 subsidies were as much as \$153 million annually.

1 In 2009, just looking at Upstate, the direct
2 State support defrayed 7 percent, or, \$37 million,
3 of the operating expenses of our university
4 hospital.

5 In 2017, that direct State support dropped to
6 3 percent, or, \$26 million, of those operating
7 expenses.

8 And now it is zero.

9 So during the same time period, Upstate
10 hospital's expenses have doubled, from \$546 million
11 in 2009, to \$1.18 billion in 2019.

12 This is due to changes in the health-care
13 market and the obligatory state costs.

14 Both of these are beyond Upstate's control.

15 In 2019, University Hospital is expected to
16 lose \$90 million, but it achieved a balanced budget.

17 It did this mostly by improving internal
18 efficiencies, and enacting cost-saving measures,
19 such as deferring some routine maintenance costs for
20 the time being, which, eventually, you can't keep
21 delaying.

22 So, with a total revenue of \$1.2 billion, the
23 University Hospital balanced its budget with a
24 safety margin of 0.1 percent.

25 That means that the hospital needs every

1 fraction of a penny it earns to keep operating in
2 the current climate.

3 There's no margin for error, no margin for
4 growth, and no surplus for dealing with an
5 unforeseen crisis.

6 So Upstate University Hospital serves the
7 17-county region.

8 The Golisano Children's Hospital serves
9 22 counties in Central New York, from St. Lawrence
10 to the Pennsylvania border.

11 The Clark Burn Center serves an even larger
12 community of 37 counties, extending west towards
13 Rochester and east towards Albany.

14 And if a New York State citizen in any of the
15 54 counties outside of Westchester County calls
16 poison control center because of a medical
17 emergency, that call comes here to the Upstate
18 Poison Center here in Syracuse.

19 These are all services that are provided, and
20 they're not all money-generating. Most of them cost
21 money to operate, but they're here for the citizens
22 of New York.

23 So it's a people's hospital.

24 University Hospital serves underserved rural
25 areas in Northern and Central New York, and also

1 urban areas right here in Syracuse.

2 Syracuse is one of the most impoverished
3 cities in the United States, and still is.

4 Two-thirds of the patients that come to
5 University Hospital for treatment are either on
6 Medicare or Medicaid.

7 And those costs are not fully reimbursed,
8 which is why the disproportionate share moneys,
9 which are a federal program, are also so critical to
10 the operation of all three of these hospitals.

11 The inner city of Syracuse really relies on
12 University Hospital for its medical care.

13 And to reach the rural areas of New York
14 State, Upstate is associated with 29 regional
15 hospitals throughout the North Country and
16 Central New York.

17 Upstate Medical University is also the
18 largest employer in Syracuse and Onondaga County,
19 with over 10,000 employees and an annual payroll of
20 \$625 million.

21 A total operating revenue of the university
22 is \$1.8 billion annually, and the total economic
23 impact here in Central New York is 2.5 billion.

24 And it's growing by 300 to 500 jobs per year.

25 As a result, employment has increased by

1 30 percent, and state and local tax revenues have
2 increased by 86 percent, since 2008.

3 Thus, Upstate Medical University is a major
4 economic engine for the city of Syracuse and
5 Onondaga County.

6 So Upstate University Hospital has met all
7 necessary accreditation standards, and actually
8 improved its hospital-quality rating to above that
9 of the New York State hospital average, all of this
10 without direct State support, the University
11 Hospital, for the current fiscal year.

12 So it is the hospitals, these three
13 hospitals, are the only state agency that are
14 required to pay their own debt services and
15 state-benefit costs.

16 So without that State support promised in
17 2001 agreement, this amounts to an unfunded mandate
18 to the state agency that provides the most critical
19 of medical care to New Yorkers across the state.

20 So this is not a recipe for fiscal success,
21 it's not sustainable.

22 It is evidence for the need for direct fiscal
23 support from the State of New York.

24 So, from an economic and health-care
25 perspective, New York State cannot afford to have

1 the University hospitals fail.

2 And we urge the New York State Legislature to
3 allocate \$87 million to return the direct State
4 support to SUNY's teaching hospitals, to ensure
5 their continued operation, to provide the best and
6 essential medical services possible, and cover the
7 cost of the hospitals' obligatory state operating
8 expenses.

9 Thank you.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

11 Can we ask the panelists to be a little more
12 concise.

13 You have a clock, I believe.

14 SENATOR MAY: I think you can see it over
15 there on the table.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Can you see it?

17 Okay. Thank you.

18 Because we have, obviously, copies of your
19 testimony.

20 And I have my own marked-up version of some
21 of the issues.

22 It says, "SUNY hospitals' history of state
23 support," and I have the charts and so forth.

24 STEVE GRASSI: I'm next.

25 So I want thank Senators May, Stavisky, and

1 "my son, my son," Antonucci -- Antonacci, excuse me,
2 for the opportunity to speak today.

3 I am a faculty member at SUNY Upstate Medical
4 University for 34 years.

5 I am the academic vice president of the
6 upstate chapter of UUP.

7 I've been a longtime activist in faculty
8 governance on our campus.

9 And I'm here today to speak for the need to
10 pass the transparency legislation, to require SUNY
11 campus foundations and their subsidiaries to submit
12 annual reports and post them on the public SUNY
13 website.

14 So I think the office of the state
15 comptroller has looked at some of the state campus
16 foundations, and has found some problems there, that
17 need to be remediated -- remedied and remediated.

18 And this legislation will go a long way
19 towards doing that.

20 And I'm thankful for the sponsorship that we
21 have here today for this important legislation.

22 And I yield my time to my colleagues from
23 Morrisville.

24 Thank you.

25 JULIA RIZZO: Hello.

1 Chairwoman Stavisky, and Senators, thank you
2 for the opportunity to speak today.

3 And thank you Senator May for your service to
4 the 53rd District, which is the district where
5 I grew up, where I currently work, where I live, and
6 where 515 of our students and 4700 of our alums also
7 are constituents.

8 So, thank you.

9 I'm here today to talk about closing the TAP
10 gap, briefly, but I also want to support New York
11 Senate Bill S5821, which I believe is currently in
12 committee, that will expand Excelsior. And
13 I believe this bill is sponsored by Senator Metzger.

14 Oh, by way of introduction, my name is
15 Julia Rizzo, and I am the director of the individual
16 studies program at SUNY Morrisville.

17 The individual studies program is an
18 associate-degree program. We have 400 students.

19 And, at SUNY Morrisville, 76 percent of our
20 students receive State aid, so we serve a number of
21 students from low-income backgrounds.

22 So I want to reiterate my support, and the
23 support of my colleagues, for closing the TAP gap.
24 It's essential to our institution's success.

25 So to speak briefly about New York State

1 Senate Bill S5821, it regards Excelsior, and it
2 would lower the credit requirement, from 30 credits
3 per year, to 24 credits per year. It would expand
4 the number of semesters that students have to
5 graduate, and it would allow part-time students to
6 qualify, among other elements which you're familiar
7 with.

8 But those are the three I wish to speak to.

9 So lowering the number of credits required,
10 especially, is something that was very exciting to
11 my colleagues and I.

12 We're the folks who have the teary students
13 in our offices when they can't meet the
14 requirements, or, when they discover they need an
15 extra semester to graduate.

16 And when you've seen a six-foot-four, you
17 know, NCAA athlete just tearing up in a chair in
18 your office, it sticks with you.

19 And so Excelsior has been a source of
20 frustration at times.

21 SENATOR ANTONACCI: I would say aggravation.

22 JULIA RIZZO: Aggravation, frustration, at
23 times.

24 So lowering the number of credits required
25 benefits students who may not pass a class or who

1 need to retake a course, especially because our
2 students can't afford to catch up in the summer, for
3 reasons that the students spoke about earlier.

4 And, once lost, Excelsior cannot be regained,
5 and students are often left, literally, footing the
6 bill for the semester, or the semesters, where they
7 lost Excelsior. And that can prohibit them to --
8 from continuing.

9 And, so, because we want to encourage
10 students to graduate faster, I think sometimes we
11 end up -- they end up losing Excelsior. They can't
12 afford to continue. And then, rather than
13 graduating on time, they don't graduate at all.

14 I also support the inclusion of part-time
15 students under Excelsior in this bill.

16 And these are students who are caregivers,
17 who need to work full-time, and these are parents,
18 adult learners, people who badly want to continue
19 their education.

20 And, finally, increasing the number of
21 semesters covered by Excelsior, from two years, to
22 two-and-a-half years, for associate-degree students,
23 and from four, to five years, for bachelor's-degree
24 students.

25 This is key for students who want to change

1 their major.

2 And, nationwide, a third of students change
3 their major in the first three years.

4 It's very important for our nursing students,
5 because many of them start in my program, individual
6 studies, and they spend a semester meeting the high
7 entrance criteria for nursing.

8 But then, as soon as they switch into
9 nursing, they're no longer eligible to graduate in
10 four semesters because they've spent an additional
11 semester.

12 So, they've met their high scholastic goals,
13 and as a result, they lose their scholarship, which
14 seems backwards.

15 So giving them this additional time allows
16 them to take that preparatory semester before
17 switching into nursing.

18 And I want to conclude by advocating for a
19 group that's not covered under S5821, and that's
20 adults returning to school.

21 If your education has been interrupted,
22 you're no longer eligible for Excelsior.

23 And when Excelsior was first announced, we
24 were all very excited. And I received a number of
25 excited phone calls from adults who saw this as

1 their opportunity to fulfill a dream and finish
2 their degrees.

3 And it was challenging for me to field these
4 calls and tell them that, because they had
5 previously received financial aid, sometimes many,
6 many years ago, they were not eligible for
7 Excelsior, even though they qualified financially.

8 So, I urge you to support this bill, and
9 I thank you for your time and attention.

10 MARGARET HOOSE: Good afternoon, Senator --
11 Senator Stavisky, Senator May, Senator Antonacci.

12 I'm Margaret Hoose from SUNY Morrisville.

13 I'm here today as a SUNY faculty member;
14 former campus governance leader; UUP member;
15 taxpayer; parent of a former student -- SUNY
16 student; and a SUNY alumni of both Oneonta and
17 Cobleskill.

18 So I've been around for a while, as well as
19 an employee at those institutions.

20 As we work together, as citizens and
21 legislators, to navigate the course of New York
22 State's future, many figures and testimonies have
23 been reviewed.

24 But I really want us to consider some
25 additional thoughts and information as you move

1 forward.

2 What type of public higher education system
3 does New York State want to support?

4 What can we do to revamp the economic engine
5 of New York, and create opportunities for skilled
6 employment while being responsible stewards of our
7 environment?

8 How can we make this affordable and practical
9 for all?

10 I would tell you that SUNY is doing that, and
11 the challenge that we have right now is that SUNY is
12 doing it with flat funding.

13 And you're losing the opportunity to continue
14 to build what's there.

15 New York has some excellent land and water
16 resources.

17 And at Morrisville, and other SUNY
18 institutions, we're teaching our students how to
19 respect and use those resources wisely in career
20 programs, but also in the liberal arts, so that
21 every student comes back with the sense of respect
22 for the environment.

23 We've got programs that are related to the
24 food system, alternative energy, automotive,
25 wildlife management, forestry, building and

1 residential construction.

2 Those are just a few of the many options that
3 are provided to our students, and all of those
4 degrees are important within New York State, and
5 they are the skills that you want us to teach our
6 students for the future.

7 We have strong school districts in New York,
8 and we've just heard the challenge of addressing
9 racism.

10 Well, higher education, teaching students to
11 work together, is the best opportunity that we have
12 to address our racism issues, but also the
13 opportunity to collaborate, since New York has
14 64 campuses throughout it.

15 That's an opportunity to collaborate with
16 many K through 12 partnerships.

17 Again, you can't do that without the money.

18 There's little things that you can do, but
19 you can't do it in the systemic way that creates the
20 change you want.

21 New York has businesses that are ready to
22 support and hire the skilled workers with the -- but
23 they want to live in strong, safe communities.

24 The best opportunities that we have for these
25 businesses are to hire students who have learned

1 here at our SUNY schools and have sound
2 business-management skills.

3 Many people will struggle with the balance
4 that we have between public higher education and
5 private colleges; however, you've heard that SUNY
6 provides opportunities to the widest range of
7 students.

8 We've heard data about how students who may
9 have the least access to resources come to SUNY.

10 Students who have the least amount of support
11 to succeed in school often find themselves in a SUNY
12 school.

13 But we also have students who sometimes have
14 the strongest of abilities to pay, as well as the
15 strongest support systems within their families, but
16 those students also are attracted to the specific
17 degrees that are at SUNY schools, and are not at
18 private schools.

19 Those students are attracted to the value of
20 a public higher education, and they should be here
21 as well.

22 Many will say that we can't afford to operate
23 the SUNY we currently have.

24 I would say, we can't afford not to.

25 I would say, we have to consider how to use

1 our current funding for the best outcomes, as well
2 as how to expand the State's financial support, to
3 ensure we build with quality as SUNY creates new
4 online opportunities that we've heard about,
5 learning models, and new degrees, so that we can
6 truly be the economic engine for tomorrow.

7 A wise educator once told me, that we need to
8 look at doing the right thing even if -- when it's
9 hard.

10 And I understand that you're stressed, and
11 the importance of careful, prudent spending is
12 important.

13 But if we don't look to build a future the
14 right way, we probably will not have a future where
15 our state is the leader in ways that we've led
16 before, so we won't have that strong future.

17 Thank you.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

19 First, I assume, folks from Upstate, that the
20 testimony you have given today about the SUNY
21 hospitals and the support applies to all three SUNY
22 hospitals?

23 Because I've heard the same thing from
24 Stony Brook, and the fact that so much money is --
25 you're so heavily in debt.

1 I understand the issue very clearly.

2 I've had meetings, I took notes.

3 I tried, during the budget negotiations, to
4 have the debt service included in the capital
5 budget, because it's not an operating issue. It
6 really is capital.

7 They would not -- it just wasn't going to
8 happen.

9 But it wasn't through lack of trying on the
10 part of our Conference.

11 And yesterday, in Buffalo, people from
12 Jacob Medical School in Buffalo -- UB, Jacob,
13 singular, I think -- they spoke about -- obviously,
14 they don't have a hospital, but they spoke about the
15 need for operating aid.

16 And this has been a theme I've heard from
17 UUP, and from others, really, since I became Chair
18 back in January.

19 And tomorrow we're going to be in
20 Nassau County, and I think people from Stony Brook
21 are going to testify on that issue also.

22 I do have a question.

23 It's been mentioned, online learning has been
24 discussed, both, just now, but also with previous
25 speakers.

1 And is there somebody who can indicate
2 whether this is a cost-saving device, or, how
3 students can benefit from the online learning?

4 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yeah, we have a couple
5 different avenues, where we are examining and
6 working with SUNY and the State on -- regarding
7 online education.

8 As part of our most recent
9 collectively-bargained agreement, there is a
10 requirement that SUNY and UUP meet to discuss the
11 variety of issues that arise as SUNY is implementing
12 what they are now calling "SUNY Online," an
13 aggressive program to develop online programs,
14 totally online.

15 And I, as one who taught online for six years
16 in a variety of different programs that existed at
17 Cobleskill at the time, I will tell you that, the
18 first myth, is that it's easier for the students and
19 the faculty.

20 And it's not.

21 In fact, it's -- there's a greater amount of
22 work that has to be committed to this, this type of
23 work.

24 Second, it is not a cost-saving.

25 It actually turns out to be more expensive,

1 because what is an absolute requirement is the
2 staffing, especially in IT (information technology),
3 so that the computer support is there, network
4 support is there.

5 I can tell you a personal experience.

6 I was teaching a course during the winter
7 session between the fall and spring semesters, and
8 the campus network crashed, and, meanwhile, papers
9 were due.

10 Students could not submit papers.

11 I could not reach the students.

12 We had one individual who was responsible for
13 academic computing at the college, and she was,
14 literally, working 24-hour shifts to try to keep up
15 with the issues as they arose.

16 And so in order for it to be done right, and
17 I believe very strongly that, SUNY, in our meetings
18 with the provost at SUNY, he has made it clear that
19 they are committed to making this a quality effort.

20 It's got to be; otherwise, the degrees will
21 be meaningless. They won't have the value that, you
22 know, people are, literally, paying for.

23 I think that online courses are a means of
24 reaching a sector of the public that needs to be
25 brought in because the demographics are changing.

1 The classic 18- to 22-year-old student, those
2 numbers are diminishing.

3 We have to be able to, as a university
4 system, reach lifelong learners, not what are
5 typically called "nontraditional learners."

6 And in order to do that, there has to be a
7 mix of delivery systems, whether it's
8 bricks-and-mortar or whether it's through online.

9 But if it's done online, and if it's done
10 with quality as the most important factor, then the
11 cost is at least equivalent, and sometimes will be
12 more because of the additional staff, the training,
13 and the follow-up that's required.

14 There are also issues of security.

15 To be frank, there were times when I was
16 grading papers that students had submitted, there
17 was no way that I could sit down with the student
18 and question that student to make sure that the
19 paper hadn't been plagiarized.

20 And, therefore, you know, there are those
21 added factors.

22 In some online settings there are
23 requirements that exams be taken at select locations
24 so that they can be proctored.

25 But, again, that's an additional burden.

1 So this is -- it is a very complex process if
2 we're going to take advantage of it, and we're going
3 to ensure the quality.

4 Our union is not opposed to utilizing the
5 newest technology.

6 What we are opposed to is that, if it is
7 utilized simply to increase numbers of students
8 without the commensurate increase in quality, so
9 that the reputation of our universities and colleges
10 does not suffer.

11 SENATOR MAY: Thank you all for -- as a
12 former UUP member, I'm very happy to see all of you
13 here.

14 I -- I have a couple questions for you,
15 Julia, because I appreciate your advocating for
16 students in the Excelsior program, but, I'm
17 wondering about the costs associated with making
18 some of those changes.

19 For example, if you go from 15 credits, to
20 12 credits, but more semesters, is that -- I just --
21 I should know this, but I don't -- in some places
22 you pay full tuition whether you're taking 12 or
23 more credits.

24 I don't know where that cutoff is at SUNY, or
25 if there is one.

1 And so I would like you to talk about how it
2 changes the cost of the program, because that's,
3 obviously, going to be the barrier to making these
4 kinds of changes.

5 JULIA RIZZO: Yeah, absolutely.

6 So at SUNY Morrisville, students pay the same
7 amount of tuition whether they take anywhere between
8 12 and 18 credits. That's all a flat fee.

9 So increasing the number of semesters that
10 students were able to attend would increase the cost
11 of the program, but it would bring the program in
12 line with the requirements of TAP and Pell which
13 require 12 credits per semester.

14 And it would still be fewer semesters than
15 TAP and Pell cover in total.

16 So for two-year students, TAP covers
17 three years, and Excelsior would cover two and a
18 half.

19 So if the goal is to expediate graduation,
20 even extending it a little bit would still meet that
21 goal.

22 SENATOR MAY: Okay.

23 And there were a couple of other changes that
24 it made.

25 So, the part-time students.

1 Oh, returning students, that was what
2 I wanted to ask about.

3 So I feel like we need, in higher
4 education -- or, higher education needs to really be
5 thinking about this, because people -- we know that
6 people graduating now are going to end up, you know,
7 not going into one career for a lifetime, and
8 there's going to be a lot of retraining happening.

9 And I feel like higher ed ought to be
10 thinking about that up front.

11 So, I support this idea of having Excelsior
12 extend to people who are coming back to school.

13 But, it's very degree-oriented now, rather
14 than training for some particular goal or skill that
15 might not be getting a degree.

16 Would you -- do you think that it should
17 be -- that part of it should be changed, or should
18 it still be a very -- you know, aimed at completion
19 of a particular program?

20 JULIA RIZZO: Well, I know that the bill --
21 I didn't not address this directly, but the bill
22 also addresses BOCES.

23 So I think that may address part of your
24 question around career- or job-specific training.

25 And, to be a little more specific, the

1 students that I've heard from -- or, the prospective
2 students that I've heard from are folks who are
3 hoping to complete a degree that they started, and
4 never had the opportunity to complete, rather than
5 folks who have already have a degree and are hoping
6 to receive a second degree for a new career.

7 Some of them are hoping to change careers,
8 but most of them had their degree interrupted, and
9 are hoping to resume and complete college work.

10 SENATOR MAY: Thanks.

11 And then my other question is about Upstate.

12 So, this past budget was the first time I had
13 really grappled with the state budget in any way.

14 But one of the things that startled me on the
15 Higher Education Committee was seeing the graph of
16 how, you know, the budget for the medical schools
17 and hospitals was at least -- well, it was very
18 close to half, if not more than half, of the total
19 higher-ed budget.

20 And it seems to me that that -- that places
21 the hospitals and the medical schools in a
22 precarious position, because they're being compared
23 to the other SUNY schools instead of to other
24 hospitals, or other, you know, things that cost a
25 similar amount to them.

1 So I just wondered, has there ever been talk,
2 that you're aware of, of shifting where that goes in
3 the budget, and, comparing apples to apples rather
4 than comparing, you know, Upstate University
5 Hospital and Medical University to SUNY Morrisville?

6 Because they are really different things.

7 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yeah, actually, that's
8 an excellent question.

9 There has been talk about shifting the
10 hospitals to the health table, and, thereby, also
11 removing the cost factor that occurs with the
12 higher-ed table.

13 At the same time, you know, it's a catch-22,
14 because they are academic settings.

15 And so we don't want to have a situation
16 where they become even more marginalized within what
17 I call the "SUNY community."

18 I have been deeply troubled that our
19 chancellor has not been very vocal about the
20 hospitals.

21 And we have pressed her on that topic because
22 these are important teaching and learning
23 institutions as much as they are hospitals.

24 And it really is a case where, you know, we
25 were out in Buffalo yesterday, and there is talk

1 about the Jacob's school, and how they don't have a
2 hospital. So maybe we can have medical schools
3 without hospitals.

4 But, in fact, first of all, academic medical
5 centers and teaching hospitals are much more
6 effective.

7 And these gentlemen can tell you about that
8 much more than I can (indicating).

9 But also, in the cases of the three teaching
10 hospitals, the symbiotic relationship between the
11 medical schools and the hospitals, it's impossible
12 to disentangle them at the financial level, the
13 teaching level, the patient-service level, research.

14 They, literally, you know, beside the fact
15 that the hospital subsidize the medical schools,
16 without the hospitals, the burden on SUNY, in terms
17 of the cost of those medical schools, would
18 skyrocket.

19 So I think it would be beneficial to have the
20 hospitals financially dealt with on the health
21 table, as long as they weren't disassociated from
22 the role in public higher education.

23 I think that's the fine line.

24 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: And it's like a hybrid.

1 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yeah, exactly. Yep.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: And I did discuss the --
3 with the folks at UB before the hearing, the issue
4 of the relationship between -- they use a number of
5 different hospitals, primarily Erie County Hospital.

6 They provide the training, and the patient
7 population.

8 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Right, yep.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: No, I had asked that
10 question.

11 The fact that I didn't bring it up at the
12 hearing doesn't mean that I have not been discussing
13 these issues, and, particularly, the fringe
14 benefits.

15 We used to do that, and we have not been able
16 to do that.

17 I think that's an important one, and,
18 certainly, the DSH hospitals, particularly.

19 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yeah.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: I happen to have -- it's
21 not affiliated -- well, maybe it is -- one in my own
22 district.

23 And we're not really doing very much.

24 All we're doing, really, is guaranteeing
25 the -- advancing the money.

1 That's really all we've done, and that's not
2 really helpful, because it's not new money. It's
3 money that they were -- are going to receive, and
4 we're just giving them an advance on it.

5 STEVE GRASSI: I'd like to take the
6 discussion in a different direction for a moment, if
7 I may, just briefly.

8 I don't know if you've noticed, that the
9 private medical schools have started offering free
10 tuition to medical students.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: You mean NYU?

12 STEVE GRASSI: NYU, and Cornell now.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: And Cornell, yes.

14 STEVE GRASSI: And there may be others coming
15 soon. Right?

16 So what we're -- and, at the same time, the
17 SUNY public medical schools are raising tuition.

18 And we're reaching a point of inversion now,
19 where the actual cost of attending a private medical
20 school in New York State may be less than it is at a
21 public medical school.

22 And, you know, what consequence that has for
23 the ability of the SUNY medical schools to attract
24 the highest-quality applicants to attend their
25 medical schools, this is something we have to keep

1 an eye on.

2 SENATOR MAY: That's a great point.

3 I do you want to say, about Cornell, I think
4 it's not free, but debt-free.

5 So they're -- so it's --

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: I think it's (parties
7 cross-talking) --

8 SENATOR MAY: -- free for people who have
9 need.

10 STEVE GRASSI: Yeah, but they're moving in
11 that direction.

12 SENATOR MAY: Yeah.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Probably looking for a
14 benefactor, another Langone.

15 STEVE GRASSI: I earned my Ph.D. at Cornell
16 Medical College, and I get my alumni publication
17 from the school. And every publication, there's
18 another 10 to 20 million dollars of endowment that's
19 being added to under -- to fund, underwrite, these
20 scholarships.

21 DR. RICH VEENSTRA: So if I could make a
22 comment?

23 So the model has been, for the last decade,
24 approximately, that, to generate more revenue for
25 SUNY has been the "increase the tuition."

1 So Upstate Medical University doesn't have
2 undergraduate. It has other colleges, it actually
3 has four colleges, about 1600 students total.

4 But raising tuition doesn't generate much
5 revenue for Upstate Medical University, so it's got
6 to get its support other ways.

7 So, the hospital subsidy is critical for
8 that.

9 And as Fred mentioned, called it a "symbiotic
10 relationship" between the hospital and the medical
11 school, our CFO of the hospital called it like
12 conjoined twins. You can't separate the two without
13 killing both of them --

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah.

15 DR. RICH VEENSTRA: -- because they've
16 operated together for 60-plus years, they've grown
17 together; they are together. You can't just
18 separate them.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: And the request was made
20 by the -- certainly by Stony Brook, that the State
21 absorb the debt service.

22 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Yep.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: It's a really -- and
24 I said to them, but if we do it for Stony Brook, we
25 have to do it for Upstate and Downstate.

1 And that's a very -- it was very, very
2 expensive.

3 DR. RICH VEENSTRA: And I'd like to add that
4 that's already done for all the other SUNY campuses.

5 It's only the hospitals --

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yep, the hospitals.

7 DR. RICH VEENSTRA: -- that it's not done
8 for.

9 SENATOR ANTONACCI: So, my turn?

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator. Sorry.

11 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Yeah, thank you.

12 Oh, that's all right.

13 Thank you.

14 Let me get to the first topic.

15 I know -- well, first of all, I wasn't a UUP
16 member like Senator May, but I would love to be one,
17 because I know that you guys are very passionate.
18 You've been into my office several times.

19 And I apologize if we missed something on the
20 transparency act.

21 Do we need a bill on that?

22 Because I -- I think -- I'm supportive of
23 that. And I don't remember where that discussion
24 ended, but that seems like a quick fix.

25 I know it has nothing to do with higher

1 education, but it's something that you guys have
2 been advocating for.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: It has to do with the --
4 each --

5 SENATOR ANTONACCI: The donation.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- many of the 64 campuses
7 have their own research foundation, as well --

8 STEVE GRASSI: Campus foundations.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: I'm sorry?

10 STEVE GRASSI: Campus foundations.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- yeah, the --

12 STEVE GRASSI: Not -- don't confuse it --

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- there are two --

14 STEVE GRASSI: -- with the research
15 foundation.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- exactly, that's the
17 point I'm making; it's exactly what I'm about to
18 say.

19 You have the SUNY Research Foundation, where
20 the controller has done many, many audits.

21 And it's far better than it used to be.

22 It used to be, I called it an "ATM machine."

23 It just -- it was bad.

24 A lot better.

25 But you also have the campuses, individual

1 campuses, with a research -- their own research
2 foundation.

3 And this is true of the City University of
4 New York as well.

5 There are reasons for them to have it, but
6 there's no excuse for not having the transparency.

7 STEVE GRASSI: So there's \$181 million at the
8 SUNY Upstate Campus Foundation.

9 How is that money being spent?

10 SENATOR ANTONACCI: So do you need a bill to
11 get that done?

12 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yeah, it's Senate
13 Bill 6275. Senator Stavisky is the sponsor, and
14 Senator May is co-sponsor.

15 We have a number of co-sponsors, and we would
16 certainly welcome your support, Senator --

17 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Sure. Perfect.

18 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Absolutely.

19 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Perfect.

20 I mean, you have it. Now it's just a
21 question of getting it passed or presented.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: I got it very late in the
23 session, if my memory is correct.

24 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: It was very late in the
25 session --

1 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Good, good. No, that's
2 great.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- yeah, after the
4 committees had ceased.

5 SENATOR ANTONACCI: No, that's great,
6 Senator. I'm happy to work with you on that.

7 I will tell you, though, that I voted against
8 the capital budget because it didn't properly fund
9 SUNY.

10 So did Senator LaValle and so did
11 Senator Flanagan because those hospitals down there
12 are in their respective districts.

13 I don't know what the answer is, other than,
14 I support you, you know that, we've met.

15 It just -- you know, there's a lot of
16 head-scratchers in Albany, and one of them is, you
17 know, some of my colleagues believe in single-payer,
18 they believe the cost of health insurance needs to
19 come down, it needs to be more accessible, and yet
20 we've got the finest teaching hospital, in my
21 opinion, in the country, and we don't properly fund
22 you.

23 I don't know what else to tell you guys,
24 I really don't -- guys and girls, other than, at
25 some point, we're going to have to stand up to the

1 Administration and say, No other money is coming to
2 you unless we properly fund this teaching hospital.

3 I think what has to be stated is, I don't
4 believe the Administration believes in the mission
5 of the teaching hospital.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Inaudible) --

7 SENATOR ANTONACCI: I don't if
8 privatization --

9 I'm sorry. Go ahead, Senator.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- I think we're a little
11 off topic.

12 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Well -- okay.

13 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: If I could respond,
14 Senator, I think, our approach, and I've got to
15 strike the balance between my role as UUP President
16 and then my role as a scholar in public policy, UUP
17 is on record as supporting single-payer.

18 At the same time, what we have been
19 discussing over the last few years, and, also, as we
20 are rolling out a major program of initiatives,
21 including hospitals and medical education,
22 regardless of where we go with the structure of
23 health care, that's how I refer to, you know,
24 single-payer --

25 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Yeah, I don't want this

1 to be a single-payer discussion.

2 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: -- right -- no.

3 SENATOR ANTONACCI: The bottom line is, we're
4 not properly funding you now.

5 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: What is an absolute
6 necessity is that these hospitals thrive and grow.

7 SENATOR ANTONACCI: You employ almost 10,000
8 people in Central New York. You are an economic
9 engine.

10 You bring in individuals that are in need of
11 medical care from, what 22, 23 counties, depending
12 on the service, and, again, you are not properly
13 funded.

14 So how does that, to the Senator's point, all
15 right, we're here to talk about higher-education
16 costs.

17 So let's bring it back to the medical
18 student.

19 How are we going to get these medical
20 students out of -- we -- by the way, it's -- you
21 can't open up an auto repair shop without an auto
22 mechanic.

23 You can't have, whatever the method is,
24 single-payer, you name it, without doctors, nurses,
25 nurse practitioners.

1 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Correct.

2 SENATOR ANTONACCI: So if we're not -- if
3 we're driving up the cost, these kids don't want to
4 come out of these schools with hundreds and hundreds
5 of thousands in debt, how do we drive down that
6 cost?

7 And I don't know if that needs to be answered
8 today, because I only got about -- you know, a
9 little bit of time left here.

10 But my question is: Is there a preference
11 for New York State residents in the medical schools
12 to be admitted to the medical schools?

13 DR. RICH VEENSTRA: So, actually -- so what
14 Upstate has done is -- to increase revenue, is to
15 increase the class size.

16 It's gone from -- up to 170 now. I think in
17 Buffalo it's 180.

18 So, actually, out of state -- out-of-state
19 tuition is more costly, so it actually brings in
20 more money to bring in out-of-state students.

21 I don't think that's necessarily a priority,
22 but, it's something that we look at at the bottom
23 line: If we bring in more out-of-state students, we
24 bring in more revenue to the medical school.

25 What's happened, a couple years ago, the

1 graduating debt of the medical students was
2 \$200,000, on average.

3 Now it's gone down a little bit. It's
4 \$192,000.

5 I was talking to some members of our --
6 SENATOR ANTONACCI: That's an appendectomy.
7 Right?

8 DR. RICH VEENSTRA: Yeah, yeah, a small
9 amount.

10 -- but, Upstate Foundation, a private
11 foundation, said that that was evidence that they're
12 helping in some ways.

13 One thing I will want to mention is, so the
14 governing board for the practice plans here just
15 passed that they are going to fund two scholarships
16 for underrepresented minorities to medical school.

17 Now that's two.

18 That will raise the diversity level by
19 1 percent of the total class.

20 So -- but they recognize that it's a problem.

21 The problem is, just don't have the money to
22 offer those scholarships.

23 We need more philanthropy, or we need other
24 resources, we need more ways of offering
25 scholarships and financial aid to these medical

1 students.

2 That's why it's becoming inverted.

3 Private schools, yeah, they have higher
4 tuition, but they also usually have more
5 scholarships and financial aids available to them.

6 They have endowments; they have huge
7 endowments.

8 I come from Iowa. It has one medical school.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: A very good one.

10 DR. RICH VEENSTRA: Yeah, a very good one.

11 Thank you.

12 I'm a graduate, I'm an alumni.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: I happened to be in
14 Iowa City at one point, many years ago, and we had
15 occasion to visit.

16 DR. RICH VEENSTRA: It's the best city in the
17 state, really, it is.

18 STEVE GRASSI: So there's a consequence of
19 this increase in tuition at Upstate, and that is,
20 that we're not able to recruit the highest-quality
21 students as we once were.

22 We've raised the class size from 100, when
23 I started at Upstate, to 170 now. Right?

24 The tuition has gone up.

25 We can't recruit the highest-quality

1 students.

2 So we look elsewhere to get those
3 highest-quality students.

4 California, which has, I think, six medical
5 schools for the entire state.

6 Right?

7 So not only do we maintain the high-quality
8 of the students, but we also get a little bit more
9 money from the out-of-state tuition, and that helps
10 to defray the costs.

11 SENATOR ANTONACCI: And are these kids
12 staying once they get their medical degree?

13 STEVE GRASSI: No. They go back to
14 California.

15 SENATOR ANTONACCI: And last question, if
16 I can, another quick second:

17 When you -- you need -- to be a medical
18 doctor, you got to go to a residency program.

19 So if the hospital is jettisoned, for some
20 reason, where is the medical students going to go to
21 do their residency?

22 STEVE GRASSI: Exactly. There's no other
23 place in Syracuse for it.

24 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Okay. Thank you.

25 DR. RICH VEENSTRA: Yep. The teaching

1 hospitals train the residents too.

2 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Yeah, I'm a big fan of
3 "Gray's Anatomy," so...

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you very much for
5 coming.

6 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: And our representatives
7 from Oswego and Cortland will quickly join us.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we have Cortland,
9 Oswego, Oswego.

10 SENATOR MAY: I just wanted to mention that
11 I've got a bill for creating an endowment fund for
12 the SUNY system --

13 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Good. Right.

14 SENATOR MAY: -- with dedicated funding
15 stream.

16 So, you know, at least, something.

17 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: That would be helpful.

18 SENATOR ANTONACCI: I don't want to offend
19 anybody, but I may have to leave.

20 But, anybody can call my office if there's
21 anything you want to talk about.

22 But I appreciate everyone's testimony.

23 ELIZABETH SCHMITT: You'll miss your chance
24 to talk to the economist.

25 SENATOR ANTONACCI: Oh.

1 ELIZABETH SCHMITT: I'm an economist, so you
2 know we kept our promise.

3 SENATOR ANTONACCI: I took an economics class
4 from a banker, and he says, If you line up every
5 economist, end to end, they'll never reach a
6 conclusion.

7 But that was --

8 ELIZABETH SCHMITT: Oh, but it's
9 (indiscernible).

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Who was it that called it
11 "the dismal" --

12 ELIZABETH SCHMITT: "The dismal science."

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- "science," yeah.

14 I took economics also.

15 HENRY STECK: I grew up in Washington, D.C.,
16 so this is a happy day, after -- I was going to say
17 the Senators -- the Nationals won the World Series.

18 And I feel like the three of us here are
19 coming to bat in the bottom of the 9th.

20 SENATOR MAY: You're not even the last.
21 We've got --

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: No, we have two more after
23 you.

24 HENRY STECK: Okay, top of the 9th.

25 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: So I will yield to

1 colleagues.

2 Why don't we start at the other end and work
3 this way.

4 MARY HESS: Good afternoon, Senator Stavisky
5 and Senator May, and Senator Antonacci.

6 I've been asked to testify concerning the
7 state of our campus at SUNY Oswego.

8 My estimation of where our campus stands in
9 the SUNY system is that, while we are doing a good
10 and effective job of educating our undergraduates,
11 we accomplish this despite privation and a fair
12 amount of neglect on the part of Albany.

13 I speak, of course, primarily of the reliance
14 on adjunct labor without proper compensation, which,
15 of course, is my own concern as the Oswego Officer
16 for Contingent Faculty for the United University
17 Professions.

18 If that were the only problem, that of campus
19 inequity, it would be, in itself, a significant
20 issue, but the effect of that inequity have reached
21 our students, the very people whose interests we all
22 serve.

23 The way this occurs is in the lack of courses
24 required for them to complete their degrees in a
25 timely fashion.

1 Over and over, I have listened to students
2 explain to me why their course progress was delayed
3 or blocked by unavailable required courses.

4 It usually goes like this:

5 A student who is finally taking my required
6 course in English composition, normally taken in the
7 first semester of their first year, tell me, matter
8 of factly, that they were unable to find a place in
9 this class until, perhaps, their junior, or even
10 senior year, far too late in their college
11 experience for a foundational course.

12 Those terms, "junior" and "senior," are
13 themselves antiquated, since we now know that,
14 because of the conditions, the norm has often been
15 six years to degree, a direct result of the courses
16 filling before the first-year students can secure a
17 place, any place.

18 The Oswego promise is a fine opportunity, but
19 it only works when students remain on track.

20 If you know the 18- to 22-year-old cohort,
21 you know that that can be hard to achieve.

22 "Retention" is the word all faculty are
23 exhorted to remember and to keep in front of us in
24 all advisement matters.

25 There are simply fewer students entering now,

1 and the competition for them with other public and
2 private institutions is fierce.

3 With the often chaotic process of
4 registration, those new and inexperienced college
5 students, quite simply, don't always get what they
6 need to survive in an unfamiliar college
7 environment, much less to thrive.

8 The time to graduation for an undergraduate
9 stretches painfully long, not unlike a graduate
10 degree where the end goal seems too far away.

11 Add to that the soaring cost brought on, in
12 part, by the very destructive rampant in higher
13 education of expanding administration at the expense
14 of faculty; for example, deans are no longer enough;
15 "deanlets" proliferate, and administrative
16 assistants have their own assistants.

17 Many campuses, private and public, are
18 struggling to attract students, and much energy is
19 expended being "planful" for their benefit, a clunky
20 term used in our administration building that says
21 much about how those administrators see the problem.

22 Plan to build, to burnish, to draw them to a
23 campus that has its own spectacular setting: the
24 lakefront of beautiful and often stormy
25 Lake Ontario.

1 Look away, though, from the grim towers of
2 the nuclear plant adjacent to campus, and from
3 Oswego itself, a struggling, gritty, blue-collar
4 upstate city.

5 So, Oswego does attract students, but it
6 isn't easy to keep them.

7 Programs do get cut to the bone.

8 Faculty non-renewed, even in fields that need
9 their expertise.

10 Promises made can't be fulfilled because the
11 funding just isn't there.

12 Those of us who regularly teach first years,
13 as I do, know that there is a significant influx of
14 transfer students beginning as soon as spring
15 semester.

16 But there are also significant departures of
17 students who found that they just couldn't get what
18 they were promised, they even leave the state,
19 further accelerating the brain-drain from New York
20 we hear about year after year.

21 This is simply counterproductive.

22 New York needs these students to graduate and
23 take their place in our economy.

24 I am not unaware of the constraints placed
25 upon you by the State and taxpayers, but those very

1 taxpayers deserve to receive what they have invested
2 in with their tax dollars, and who have sacrificed
3 to send their children to Oswego in the hopes that
4 they can fulfill their own promise.

5 As tuitions rise, students are more stressed
6 and distracted from what should be their only
7 responsibility: their studies.

8 The TAP gap wreaks havoc on lives.

9 Students fail to return, not because they
10 want a different school, but because the expense is
11 not manageable.

12 I hear it constantly, and it is
13 heartbreaking.

14 When budgets need to be balanced, our
15 administration reacts by cutting faculty.

16 This is not only wrong-headed, but incredibly
17 difficult for us, the surviving faculty, to manage
18 the demand placed upon us by students who simply
19 need the courses they must have to complete their
20 programs and to get the quality education they were
21 promised.

22 Faculty complain of job-creep, where the
23 expectations placed on faculty continue to expand
24 without appropriate compensation.

25 SENATOR MAY: Excuse me, Mary.

1 Can we ask you to wrap up?

2 MARY HESS: Certainly.

3 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

4 MARY HESS: I do believe that you want to
5 fulfill your responsibility to all New Yorkers, and
6 request consideration of the concerns I've
7 enumerated.

8 Do not follow the ruinous example of former
9 Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, whose
10 budget-cutting and hostility towards academe
11 resulted in the erosion of another of America's best
12 public education systems (hits microphone).

13 Excuse me.

14 This is the Empire State.

15 SUNY Oswego is a productive and effective
16 part of SUNY.

17 Support us, as we deserve to be supported,
18 and ensure the future of New York.

19 Recognize beyond mere words the
20 accomplishments and dedication of our faculty... all
21 our faculty.

22 Thank you.

23 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

24 ELIZABETH SCHMITT: Thank you.

25 Good afternoon, Senator Stavisky,

1 Senator May, and thank you for having me today and
2 listening to my testimony.

3 I'm Elizabeth Schmidt. I'm a professor of
4 economics at SUNY Oswego.

5 And I'm really privileged to have the
6 opportunity to advocate for my students who inspire
7 me with their resilience, enthusiasm, and the
8 never-ending ability to surprise and delight.

9 I'm in my 24th year. I'm affectionately
10 known as "Dr. Liz" to many of my students.

11 I was born and raised in the Midwest, so I'd
12 like to echo the "Go Hawkeyes" sentiment earlier.

13 And -- but I've made beautiful
14 Central New York my home since 1995, with my husband
15 and my two sons.

16 So I marvel at the serendipity that brought
17 me halfway across the country to a city that,
18 frankly, I had never heard of before, on the
19 glorious shores of Lake Ontario, because it brought
20 me to the exactly right place where I'm doing
21 exactly what I should be doing, it's exactly the
22 place, that understands that education is a great
23 privilege, but it's not just for the privileged.

24 So in the STEM fields, the Greek letter
25 delta, the capital delta is used to signify rate of

1 change.

2 And so -- and public education is all about
3 the delta.

4 You take regular students from a lot of
5 challenging backgrounds and we make them stars.

6 And that's very different than taking
7 students with advantages, who are going to be
8 successful in their own right, given the enormous
9 support that was actually available for them to draw
10 from.

11 We meet students where they are, but we bring
12 them where they need to be.

13 So we take their effort and their drive and
14 we match it with our support and our resources.

15 So that's why, in these 24 years, with so
16 many changes that have taken place, it's really
17 heartening to see this broader, more diverse group
18 given this opportunity.

19 At SUNY Oswego, our Pell recipients are up
20 over 50 percent. And we have the most diverse fall
21 of 2018 class than the 150-year history of this
22 institution.

23 The expansion of accessibility in
24 mental-health services has broken down some barriers
25 that should have never existed in the first place,

1 and now we're chipping away at them.

2 And there's a growing contingent of
3 first-generation students and Americans that are
4 recruited up here.

5 In my class this semester, I have
6 31 students, and their parents hail from 7 different
7 countries of origin, and that's very exciting.

8 But, still, there remains -- unmet need
9 remains at 25 percent of the total, and the TAP gap
10 continues to strain operating budgets and force
11 campuses to make hard choices.

12 And, I'm going to echo President Stanley's
13 earlier words to say, that we're doing our part.

14 So I come here to ask you for money, but I'm
15 actually want to talk to you about: Well, what are
16 we doing here?

17 And we're, actually, under her leadership,
18 there have been actions taken to remove all kinds of
19 barriers, financial and otherwise.

20 Rethinking fee structures;

21 Advancing deposits and registration holds,
22 clearing those holds, so that students can actually
23 register;

24 Walk-in advisement;

25 Immediate textbook assets;

1 And the student-run food pantry.

2 We have specific languages in our syllabi
3 referring to students with food insecurity.

4 Faculty are -- agreed to a mandated
5 reporting, to make sure we're doing our part for the
6 public safety on this campus.

7 And Oswego has mandated language in the
8 syllabus that speaks to this issue, but the work is
9 yet undone, and we cannot do it alone.

10 And, we need legislative partners.

11 I need a champion.

12 And if I put on my economist hat, I would
13 really advocate for the social return generated that
14 is the theme here today.

15 Studies shown that education leads to other
16 benefits, not just private higher earnings. Public
17 health, civic engagement, reduced criminal activity,
18 that spill over to other employees -- of educated
19 employees.

20 It remains the engine that powers economic
21 opportunity for the betterment of all society.

22 And human capital, and an economy of ideas,
23 is our most precious resource.

24 So I come here to ask you to close that TAP
25 gap as we welcome students from

1 financially-vulnerable households.

2 Don't make us choose between funding students
3 and other parts of our operating budget.

4 And the rule, the expectation, should be
5 enhanced maintenance of effort.

6 These costs rise annually, State operating
7 aid doesn't match.

8 It's not sustainable, and it's not consistent
9 with the Empire State's commitment to higher
10 education.

11 Neil Postman was an author and educator, and
12 a SUNY Fredonia alum, and he once wrote, "Children
13 are the living messages we send to a time we will
14 not see."

15 And I love that quote as an educator and a
16 parent, because I think it applies to, it's not easy
17 to prioritize when we have many pressing needs, but
18 recognizing the needs of higher education now is
19 perhaps one of the greatest gifts we offer to the
20 future.

21 And it's a great act of faith, and what that
22 future will be.

23 So I thank you for your time and attention
24 today, and I hope you will join me as we advocate
25 for the sons and daughters of New York, so they can

1 realize their potential, and they can be an
2 inspiring message to the time we will not see.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

4 ELIZABETH SCHMITT: And I would -- on a
5 related note, if you have questions later about
6 inclusive access and online learning, I have
7 personal experience with both of those.

8 So I'd be happy to answer any questions.

9 HENRY STECK: My name is Henry Steck.

10 I'm a SUNY distinguished-service professor
11 emeritus and a professor of political science
12 emeritus on the SUNY Cortland faculty.

13 I'm honored to join my SUNY and UUP
14 colleagues today to share our deep concern for our
15 university.

16 I hope you will both find time to visit
17 SUNY Cortland.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: I've been there.

19 HENRY STECK: I'm going to address two
20 issues, and I'll be, I hope, not reproducing what
21 others have said, but amplifying or giving more
22 insight.

23 The first involves TAP (the
24 tuition-assistance program), a program that provides
25 vital support both to SUNY as an institution and to

1 the students.

2 The second involves -- I'm a Ph.D. doctor,
3 not a medical doctor.

4 The second involves SUNY's four medical
5 schools and three teaching hospitals.

6 These health science centers not only educate
7 medical professionals, but engage in groundbreaking
8 scientific research and delivering high-quality
9 specialized medical care to the many counties in
10 Upstate New York.

11 First, with respect to TAP:

12 First, as you know, TAP provides significant
13 financial assistance to students in need, yet,
14 today, the reality is that TAP falls short in the
15 support it should be providing.

16 In the 2018-19 academic year, SUNY tuition
17 was 6870, while maximum TAP support was only 5165;
18 thus, TAP fell short for each student by \$1705.

19 For SUNY, the shortfall adds up to the
20 institutional equivalent, we estimate, of somewhere
21 between 500 and 1,000 new faculty members,
22 much-needed new faculty members, I should add.

23 We should not underestimate the importance of
24 TAP.

25 More than 40 percent of students in the state

1 who receive TAP are SUNY students, and about a third
2 of students on State-operated SUNY campuses receive
3 TAP.

4 TAP is a major part of the SUNY institutional
5 profile.

6 The significance of TAP to family finances,
7 or to what students must provide on their own, is
8 quite significant.

9 I still remember the student who called me on
10 a Sunday morning about his Monday exam, because he
11 was called in because of a sick co-worker at the
12 pizza joint, and he had to put in 12 hours the day
13 before a final.

14 Over four years, the gap between TAP and
15 tuition comes to somewhat over 6800 additional
16 dollars, and that includes Pell, Excelsior, work
17 study, and all the other forms.

18 That is the student TAP gap.

19 Second, the annual loss of 1700 in tuition
20 per TAP student is also a fiscal loss for the
21 individual campuses itself.

22 SUNY campuses rely on tuition revenue to
23 supplement state budget appropriations.

24 In short, the TAP shortfall in tuition
25 revenue of \$1700 per TAP student is an institutional

1 TAP gap, as well as a student TAP gap.

2 It represents an annual loss of somewhere
3 around \$70 million.

4 And so how do we make it up?

5 We cut our faculty, our staff, our library,
6 our labs, libraries, student services, and the like.

7 And when they do that, they compromise SUNY's
8 statutory mission.

9 UUP recently heard from your colleague
10 Senator Shelley Mayer and Senate Leader
11 Andrea Stewart-Cousins that SUNY's budget has been
12 flat for a very long time; thus, the TAP gap
13 condemns SUNY to even greater austerity with
14 incalculable impact on its mission to teach, to
15 serve, to search.

16 Let me now turn to the health science
17 centers, and I took this up to talk to you about
18 because I have personal family experience with
19 Upstate.

20 Over the years, in times severe medical
21 crisis in my family, we turned to SUNY Upstate, our
22 regional local hospital.

23 I remember once, when my wife was in the
24 emergency ward, the -- one of the personnel came out
25 and said, "We're calling an ambulance to take your

1 wife to Upstate."

2 I mean, it turned out not to be
3 super-serious, but serious enough.

4 We are just one, my family, of thousands of
5 New York families served by Upstate here, Downstate,
6 Stony Brook, and the medical education in Buffalo.

7 And more than that, there's a strong reliance
8 on the economic health, as well, by the services
9 provided by Upstate.

10 It's the only major medical center in
11 Central New York reaching almost as far as
12 Rochester, which I think also has a medical school.

13 It enrolls about 1700 students a year.

14 That's a lot across a number of medical
15 professions, not just doctors.

16 And it has 47 accredited residency programs;
17 Level 1 trauma center; cancer center, where my wife
18 was; a distinguished children's hospital; and an
19 all-important burn center.

20 When I travel from Cortland where I live,
21 Homer, New York, actually, to the ER at Upstate,
22 I find an ER that ever is invariably packed with
23 families and children, especially toward the end of
24 the day when the mothers are out of work.

25 Its outreach services are lifesavers for our

1 underserved rural and urban populations.

2 And as you know, they engage in
3 groundbreaking research and medical education that
4 improves the American health system overall.

5 Once, I went out of my wife's room and said
6 to the doctor, We're also seeing doctors at
7 Brigham and Women's and Dana-Farber in Boston.

8 She said, Yes, I know. I talked to your
9 doctor last week.

10 And I felt, Oh, we are an elite institution
11 at that level.

12 And my wife was well on that occasion.

13 In short, Upstate does so much, so well, and
14 in so many ways, that defy brief enumeration.

15 It educates students. Has a faculty of 2400,
16 which includes 1500 volunteers, doctors who come in
17 and mentor students and work with them without pay.

18 It's the very large employer, as my colleague
19 pointed out to you.

20 SENATOR MAY: Dr. Steck, can we ask you --

21 HENRY STECK: It's fiscal impact probably
22 runs about 3.5 million.

23 So my question to you is: Why have our
24 health institutions been put on austerity budgets?

25 So, three quick requests, which I think

1 you've heard.

2 We hope the Legislature will:

3 Allocate 87 million to return the hospital
4 subsidy;

5 Will earmark 31 million to cover our debt
6 service;

7 And also, additionally, innovate and assure
8 that SUNY is a leader in medical diversity -- in
9 medical diversity, in serving a more diverse state,
10 we urge the creation of a medical Educational
11 Opportunity Program.

12 Close the TAP gap, help our hospitals, and
13 thank you for the privilege of speaking with you.

14 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

15 I had one question, following up on what some
16 of the SUNY ESF students said -- talked about, which
17 had to do with mental health of students on campus,
18 and faculty too, I'm sure.

19 But, what is your experience in that regard,
20 and what are the needs that you see?

21 ELIZABETH SCHMITT: Sure.

22 Well, I'm very proud of the expansion of
23 mental-health efforts that's happened on this
24 campus, and -- in Oswego.

25 But, you're right, there aren't incoming

1 funds. They come from somewhere else.

2 The pie is the same, and we slice it
3 differently.

4 We found creative ways to deal with it as
5 well.

6 I mean, in one respect, student residence
7 halls' moneys can be used for things that are
8 exclusively available to residential students, you
9 know, exclusively for them.

10 So, in some cases, we have actually hired
11 additional mental-health counselors that just serve
12 in -- they're embedded in the residence halls.

13 And that is allowed under funding rules, and
14 it's just -- and that actually frees up other
15 counselors to serve a wider variety.

16 We are -- SUNY is well-represented in the
17 mental-health task force that's going along
18 SUNY-wide as well.

19 And we have really stepped up our distressed
20 student -- we have a distressed-student protocol.

21 And, really, faculty have been educated to
22 try and figure out where to direct and best help a
23 student when we see signs of distress.

24 And there's been optional, kind of,
25 mental-health first-aid, which I have partaken of as

1 well, in terms of professional development.

2 SENATOR MAY: Uh-huh.

3 Thank you.

4 HENRY STECK: If there's a major problem at
5 Cortland, and I've heard nothing about it, so
6 I suspect it's not, but if there is, it's the
7 privacy protocols have kept -- no student has come
8 to me where I end up saying, let me help take you to
9 counseling.

10 But we also have an excellent and devoted and
11 hard-working counseling staff.

12 So, if the students need help, they get it.
13 And if they need referral to outside professional
14 psychologists, psychiatrists, what have you, I'm
15 sure they get it as well.

16 We're a small city, so there's a lot of
17 connections with us in the community.

18 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

19 And on the issue of extending TAP to
20 incarcerated New Yorkers, is that something any of
21 you -- I just am wondering how that actually gets
22 implemented, in terms of how -- where the -- where
23 the education -- who -- who provides the education?

24 HENRY STECK: Yeah, prison wardens would
25 probably like the additional money, and it might

1 reduce the long-term --

2 SENATOR MAY: Recidivism.

3 HENRY STECK: -- lessening of the crime rate.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: Can I answer that
5 question?

6 SENATOR MAY: Oh, okay. Happy to know that
7 we don't have to (parties cross-talking) --

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Use to have it; used to
9 have TAP for incarcerated.

10 And, obviously, it makes a lot sense, in my
11 opinion, because, if somebody has a job, they're
12 less likely to commit a crime.

13 However, during the budget crisis, it was
14 eliminated.

15 SENATOR MAY: I also just want to say one
16 other thing, because we cut your testimony off,
17 but -- and you didn't get to talk about the
18 experience of being an adjunct.

19 And I feel like that's a really important
20 voice that needs to be heard here.

21 I have asked a number of questions about it,
22 but I'm keenly aware of the problem of overreliance
23 on underpaid faculty.

24 MARY HESS: Well, I'm grateful that you
25 mentioned the student-debt crisis that applies to

1 us.

2 I did not have any, I was fortunate.

3 But my cohort, all those people that I work
4 with, that is their life, and a ruinous payment on
5 top of, you know, the cost of life.

6 And I happen to be a single person, but many
7 of my -- you know, my colleagues are raising
8 families.

9 I gave a statement just at our -- yesterday
10 at our labor-management meeting, about a student --
11 excuse me, well, had been a student at Oswego, who
12 became a faculty member, an adjunct, who had to quit
13 teaching, entirely, because he simply could not make
14 a living.

15 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

16 MARY HESS: And thank you for saying that
17 \$15,000 is not a living wage.

18 Thank you.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Incidentally, in your
20 written testimony, you talked about your parents
21 with the Regent's scholarship.

22 MARY HESS: Yes.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: I had one too.

24 MARY HESS: It was wonderful.

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: Professor Kowal will

1 verify, that is a question I ask the SUNY and CUNY
2 chancellor every budget hearing: What is the
3 percentage of adjuncts?

4 Because, obviously, it's too high.

5 HENRY STECK: We have two categories. It's
6 somewhere over 50 percent.

7 We have people who are, quote, part-timers,
8 but we all have what we call "full-time lecturers";
9 that is, they do full-time work, they're not on
10 tenure-track lines.

11 And I will add this, that many of them, a
12 large number of them, are there year in and year
13 out, and you don't often know that they're not
14 full-time tenured people.

15 They are very good. They are credentialed,
16 they publish, they write, they advise students; they
17 do far more than they're paid for because we are a
18 university community.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes.

20 I asked President Stanley that question about
21 the adjuncts too.

22 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: And you always do, yes.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: They know ahead of time.

24 And I -- sometimes at the budget hearings,
25 and I serve on Finance as well, I will let them know

1 the questions ahead of time so they can't give me,
2 I think the worst answer at budget hearings is,
3 "I'll get back to you."

4 That happened at some of the prior hearings
5 here, particularly, I think it was at the
6 Brooklyn College hearing, where I had a lot of
7 "I'll get back to you" from the faculty -- from
8 the presidents of the colleges.

9 HENRY STECK: Faculty do their homework.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: So do legislators.

11 [Laughter.]

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Are we good?

13 SENATOR MAY: I have to tell you a story
14 about that.

15 I had an interview the other day, and
16 I called my staff and said, Oh, I'm not prepared for
17 this.

18 And they go, You know more than this person
19 does about (indiscernible).

20 But I'm an academic. I need to write a
21 dissertation on it before I'm willing to talk about
22 it.

23 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Thank you.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: We thank you for your
25 patience, and I'd like to call Samuel Rowser, the

1 executive director of On Point for College, and
2 Kevin Marken, Utica director, On Point for College.

3 And I did my homework, and I looked you up
4 online, so, there you go.

5 SENATOR MAY: And you are the bottom of the
6 ninth --

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: And you are --

8 SENATOR MAY: -- bringing us home.

9 SAMUEL ROWSER: That also makes it quick and
10 easy.

11 A lot of what's been said, it's
12 (indiscernible) in here. So we'll give you just a
13 little introduction, and then some pointers, and
14 we'll be done.

15 Chairwoman Stavisky, Senator Rachel May,
16 thank you for allowing us this opportunity to
17 provide feedback on the impact of the rising cost
18 that public colleges are having on lower-income,
19 first-generation students that On Point for College
20 serves.

21 Since On Point was founded in 1999, we've
22 helped more than 2500 students from Central New York
23 graduate from college.

24 Most -- of more than 2,000 enrolled students
25 we are serving this semester attend public colleges

1 across New York State.

2 We have a great deal of experience in helping
3 students navigate the SUNY system.

4 On Point's advisors visit students on campus
5 frequently during the school year. Once per
6 semester at SUNY four-year colleges and university
7 centers, and once per month at community colleges
8 and technology colleges.

9 We have a large number of students attending
10 local community colleges, so we are there more
11 often. Once per week at Mohawk Valley Community
12 College and Herkimer Community College, and twice
13 per week at Onondaga Community College.

14 These visits gives our students the
15 opportunity to receive advice, assistance with
16 finding resources on campus, and tangible
17 assistance, such as paying for textbooks, fees, or
18 figuring out how to pay for supplies not carried by
19 the campus bookstore.

20 These visits also help us to understand the
21 policies, procedures, and conditions at most of the
22 campuses in the SUNY system, especially those
23 circumstances that have the most significant effect
24 on our students.

25 Low-income, first generation students face

1 many challenges on their higher-education journey.

2 Without assistance, these challenges can turn
3 into barriers that lead students to stopout or to
4 never attend college.

5 On Point helps students develop plans to
6 address challenges before they become stumbling
7 blocks, but some of these issues are systematic, the
8 same things that affect the wide cross-sections of
9 students.

10 And we would welcome your assistance in
11 addressing these:

12 The cost of textbooks;

13 The rising cost of tuition;

14 Rising cost of fees that colleges charge;

15 Student-loan interest rates have gone up
16 every year since 2016;

17 Unpaid back bills prevent students from
18 re-enrolling;

19 The expansion of the Excelsior program to
20 adjust -- address just living costs and affordable
21 meal plans.

22 On Point is aware of solutions to some of
23 these issues our students face, and we'd like to
24 share those with you as well, in hopes that you can
25 help to make this assistance available more broadly.

1 Community colleges are an important way to
2 make affordable higher education available.

3 On Point has developed expertise in assisting
4 students who transfer to two -- four-year colleges.

5 Co-requisite classes to replace
6 pre-requisites or run them concurrently to address
7 remedial courses.

8 Using technology to flag students who might
9 be harmed by dropping classes.

10 Student housing deposits and emergency funds.

11 College access and success programs, like
12 On Point, help students apply to, enroll in, and
13 persist at college through graduation.

14 But On Point is unique in the nation for its
15 holistic approach we take on helping students. We
16 offer services that other organizations do not.

17 On Point is an open-enrollment program and
18 does not turn students away regardless of GPA.

19 On Point takes hundreds of students each year
20 to visit 70 colleges throughout the state.

21 On Point helps with the financial-aid
22 process, provides some student supplies to students
23 who complete our college-orientation session, and
24 provide transportation to any college in
25 New York State using a corp of dedicated volunteers.

1 On Point partners with a dentist who does
2 pro bono root canals -- a couple dentists.

3 We provide winter coats, eye glasses.

4 On Point even partners with a local college
5 and a housing agency so that students at risk
6 of homelessness have a safe place to stay during
7 the summer and winter breaks -- that's
8 Le Moyne College -- when the dorms are closed.

9 We help students pay for textbooks, summer
10 courses, outstanding bills that prevent
11 re-enrollment, housing deposits, and fees when
12 financial aid is unavailable or has run out.

13 Our program works.

14 On Point students persist from freshman to
15 sophomore year at a rate of 77 percent, which is
16 significantly higher than the average SUNY community
17 college retention rate of 60 percent.

18 We humbly suggest that providing State
19 funding for On Point programs will have an impact on
20 thousands of low-income, first-generation students
21 each year, helping people consider going to college
22 who might otherwise not have thought college was
23 possible, and providing wraparound services to
24 support students in every step of their journey
25 toward their degree.

1 Thank you.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

3 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

4 And thank you for the great work that
5 On Point does.

6 As you know, I'm a big booster.

7 Thinking in terms of what we should be
8 advocating for in -- as funding for the public
9 universities and colleges, what -- can you identify
10 one or two things that are really critical to
11 allowing the students that you serve to really
12 finish college, that could use some additional
13 funding?

14 SAMUEL ROWSER: Well, one of the issues that
15 our staff talked about is, you know, our students,
16 sometimes the problem is before they get to college.

17 And if they register for college, they get
18 accepted, they get admitted, and they get a
19 schedule, and then they don't attend, they still
20 have a bill.

21 And, you know, I heard someone earlier
22 talking about how, you know, they try to take care
23 of those situations, but they don't always do it.

24 And because of no fault of the student's own,
25 maybe they had some personal family issue, and they

1 didn't realize they had a bill because they never
2 went.

3 And then when they decide to go back, is
4 there a way for us to be able to forgive those
5 bills?

6 Because they go to collection within 6 to
7 12 months. And so, within 6 to 12 months, those
8 students, they owe all this money and they have no
9 idea.

10 So that's one of the issues that we could
11 address.

12 I heard earlier, you know, the new book deal,
13 and OCC's doing a terrific job with the new book
14 deal.

15 Students don't get to keep the books.

16 But bringing the price of those books down,
17 so that even if I'm in the area of my expertise,
18 I want to be able to keep my book.

19 And if I do the book deal, I don't get to
20 keep the book; I only get to rent it.

21 So bringing the cost of books down are a
22 couple things that jump out at me immediately.

23 I don't know if Kevin wants to add.

24 KEVIN MARKEN: That's very well -- very well
25 said.

1 SENATOR MAY: So we're talking about
2 forgiving tuition if they enrolled, but they didn't
3 actually attend.

4 Uh-huh.

5 Okay, that's good.

6 SAMUEL ROWSER: I think one of the other
7 things that we really have lost is the importance of
8 the community college.

9 And one of the things, that when we go out
10 and do presentations to young people about attending
11 college, is we try to talk about how important it
12 is.

13 If you -- if you go to a community college,
14 and I'll just say, personally, I have two daughters.
15 One just graduated in May from Brockport, and the
16 other is in her senior year at Buff State.

17 But when I talked to my daughter that
18 graduated from Brockport about going to OCC, she ran
19 out of the room in tears. Like, it's, just, I could
20 never do something like that.

21 I graduated from Onondaga Community College.
22 I'm lost as to why you couldn't go there.

23 But it's this perception that, somehow, the
24 two-year school is not a good place to be. It's not
25 someplace you should think about going.

1 We need to put a real effort into making
2 two-year community colleges a positive place for
3 students to want to go.

4 That would bring down the cost significantly
5 because, if one of -- our students, low-income,
6 first generation, if they go to OCC, Pell and TAP
7 cover their expenses because they're not living on
8 campus.

9 Once you live on campus, then, you know, it
10 costs more to sleep and eat on campus than it does
11 to go in the classroom.

12 So you got to, you know, add that in.

13 But if you can go to a community college for
14 two years and not incur those costs, then, when you
15 finish your degree, you'll be in a lot less debt.

16 KEVIN MARKEN: As we detail in the work, too,
17 about smoothing out the transfer process, that's one
18 thing On Point for College got a First in the World
19 grant to create the model, nationally, for college
20 transfer.

21 And so that's -- many of the things in there,
22 from transfer agreements, and other things, to make
23 that seamless, efficient.

24 And some of the electronic models now that
25 are out to make that transfer process, so that they

1 look ahead to the colleges they're going to, as well
2 as from where they were; all sorts of good things to
3 make that community colleges then a way to
4 affordably get through, and to graduate -- more,
5 like, graduate on time, but also with minimal debt.

6 And so I think that's all ties into the
7 comprehensive package of the wonderful goal today.

8 SAMUEL ROWSER: And so we're working now, as
9 Kevin is talking about, they're working now with
10 Guided Riverside, the options program in Manhattan,
11 and New Settlement Apartments in The Bronx, to
12 create a statewide network.

13 So it's these three college-access programs.

14 We have about 20 colleges we're trying to
15 work with.

16 We're putting together a funding opportunity
17 with ECMC out of California, to enlarge the
18 five-year project we did with Oswego, Onondaga
19 Community College, Cayuga Community College, and
20 Mohawk Valley Community College, so we can create
21 this transfer program to help students transfer more
22 smoothly.

23 70 percent of our students start at a
24 two-year school.

25 So we've got some expertise in helping those

1 students transfer from two- to four-year schools,
2 and we would like to make it a statewide initiative
3 to help those students across the state.

4 SENATOR MAY: Do you think there's a need for
5 better training of advisors and counselors?

6 Well, I don't know about guidance counselors
7 in the high schools, but then advisors within --
8 academic advisors at the colleges, so that they
9 understand the population that we're talking about?

10 SAMUEL ROWSER: Well, understanding the
11 population, yes, and understanding the ramifications
12 behind a student withdrawing from a class, because
13 that has, you know, depending on what their
14 financial situation is, if I drop below 12 credits,
15 I lose my TAP, I lose my -- part of my Pell, and
16 there's a cost associated with that, or, if I don't
17 complete enough credits in a timely fashion.

18 So there needs to be, absolutely, some more
19 training around, you know, if you're talking to an
20 advisor, they have to understand the financial
21 impact of a student withdrawing from a class, not
22 just the academic impact.

23 KEVIN MARKEN: That could precipitate the
24 downward spiral where they end up dropping out and
25 never going back.

1 And one of the reasons (indiscernible) the
2 persistence rate with On Point for College is so
3 much higher, even (indiscernible) the general
4 population, when we're talking about low-income,
5 first-generations, half the students are ones that
6 aren't traditional high school students.

7 The -- many more challenges face them, and
8 yet they're succeeding at a higher rate because
9 On Point always looks to find a way to say yes, to
10 try to address whatever the problem is.

11 If they need dental help.

12 (Indiscernible), we don't do dental.

13 Find a way in dental, is to partner.

14 Take a look at some of the SUNY resources out
15 there, but other resources in the community, try to
16 link everything, so that, anytime, it could be \$20,
17 200, 2,000, that could cause a student to stopout
18 and not succeed.

19 So there are hundreds of points along the
20 way.

21 And to your good point, Senator May, is that
22 many of these things, the advisors, whether they're
23 academic, whether they're other types of advisors,
24 success, access, whatever they are, to be fully
25 aware of all of these courses of action. And that

1 not solving the problem, telling a student, no, we
2 can't help you, or, not helping them find the route
3 they need, (indiscernible) could stop them out.

4 And for the lower-income students, which is
5 95 percent of the ones we serve, it's not only
6 stopping out. That can be, then not only do they
7 stop out, they don't have the degree, they have debt,
8 and they and their family do not have the financial
9 resources to address that.

10 So it can create a lifetime legacy, help keep
11 people trapped in poverty, rather than lifting them
12 out.

13 So that success rate is absolutely critical
14 to helping make sure that, not only get into
15 college, but also succeed at a very high rate,
16 whatever the challenges facing those young people.

17 And we've had, one brief example, the last
18 thing I want to make sure to slip in on my remarks,
19 was:

20 We had a couple that came over as Bhutanese
21 refugees. Never able to go to school. 17 years in
22 the refugee camp.

23 2009, with On Point's help, they started with
24 a CNA class, worked their way up. Now they both are
25 family nurse practitioners. They both received SUNY

1 Chancellor's Awards, graduating from SUNY Poly.
2 Have a family, a house here in Syracuse. Are
3 working with a patient load.

4 Both are also teaching at our SUNY
5 universities. And one is also simultaneously
6 pursuing a doctorate degree -- a Ph.D. degree.

7 So there are wonderful ones (indiscernible).

8 And they say that, without On Point there
9 with them every step of the way, they never could
10 have made it.

11 And that's the thing: We want to try to
12 encourage some of the things that On Point does, the
13 things that Sam and Ginny and others have figured
14 out how the system works, to be able to address all
15 these problems comprehensively, holistically, so
16 that each and every student is looked at as an
17 individual, and find a way so that they can succeed
18 and contribute back to the state of New York.

19 93 percent of our graduates from the Utica
20 region (indiscernible) stay in the region after
21 graduation.

22 SAMUEL ROWSER: And to Kevin's point, just
23 one more little issue is that, some of the problems
24 happen before the student even gets to college.

25 And if I could give you just one little quick

1 story.

2 We had a young man and his mom come into our
3 office because he had gotten three scholarships.

4 He's got a scholarship for \$100, 150, and for
5 \$2,000.

6 And he needed to go to college the next day,
7 but he needed to go cash the checks.

8 And so he went to the bank to cash the check,
9 and he only had his student ID from high school.

10 So the bank said, We can't do it with that.
11 Just go get your birth certificate and we'll be able
12 to do it.

13 So they went down to the County to get their
14 birth certificate, and they said, Oh, yeah, we'll
15 give it to you for \$30.

16 They don't have \$30.

17 So they came to our office, saying, We don't
18 know what to do. We're not going to have the money
19 that we need to give to school because we don't have
20 \$30.

21 So we gave them \$30, and they were able to go
22 cash the checks and go off to school and pay their
23 bill.

24 So it's things that happen before they even
25 get to the campus that college-access programs, like

1 On Point, can help with.

2 So more partnerships with the colleges and
3 with the college-access programs, as we have them
4 around New York State.

5 We've trained the two in New York City to do
6 it. And there's a bunch more down there, that we
7 can work with to help facilitate some of this.

8 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Well, thank you for what
10 you do.

11 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

12 SAMUEL ROWSER: Our pleasure.

13 Thanks for giving us the time.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: It is 5:10, and this
15 hearing is adjourned.

16
17 (Whereupon, the public hearing held before
18 the New York State Senate Standing Committee on
19 Higher Education concluded at 5:10 p.m., and
20 adjourned.)

21 --oOo--
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