



**TESTIMONY
OF THE
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP
BEFORE THE
JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET HEARING ON HIGHER EDUCATION
FOR THE 2022-2023 BUDGET
February 7, 2022
Albany, New York**

Good afternoon. My name is Sadiya Hoque and I am the Chairperson of the New York Public Interest Research Group's (NYPIRG) student Board of Directors and a Brooklyn College student. NYPIRG is a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded by college students in 1973 to engage their peers in civic life. NYPIRG's broad programmatic work provides students with a range of opportunities to participate in public affairs and advance responses to social problems that matter most to them. In collaboration with and guided by professional staff—researchers, organizers, advocates and attorneys—students tackle pressing issues while learning and developing professional-level skills that will boost their prospects for success in college, the job market and throughout their lives. Our Board of Directors consists of college and university students elected from campuses with NYPIRG chapters across the State.

To summarize our reactions to the governor's executive budget, there is a lot to like in the plan, but it is far too little to reverse the damage done to higher education over the past decade. The governor proposes to eliminate the TAP Gap and expand operating funding, expand access to financial assistance to more college students, and enhance support for some college services. All are good ideas (we will go into each in more detail later), but the overall increase in state aid will not reverse the downward trend of significant portions of the SUNY system.

Given the state's stable finances, we recommend that this year a significant infusion of support be injected to all sectors of the higher education system. Our review of the system's finances focuses on public college tuition charged to full-time enrolled students as a key (though rough) measure. When student enrollment goes up, colleges generate more revenue. When it goes down, colleges lose revenue. Of course, there are other sources of revenues (from the state, alumni support, fees, etc.), but unless those sources cover losses that stem from enrollment reductions, the campus can suffer. And while many of its costs are fixed – buildings, energy costs, staffing, those losses can only be made up through cuts to the workforce. While replacing full-time faculty with adjuncts, for example, can help offset costs, it can also deter future college students from attending that institution. The fewer future students, the less revenue, and the downward spiral continues.

Nationally, during the pre-pandemic period, 4-year public colleges and universities saw a fairly stable undergraduate enrollment. According to federal data, enrollment in 7.8 million in Fall 2011 and in community colleges, 6.9 million. In the Fall of 2019, the four-year public college numbers were up slightly, to 8 million. But community colleges saw a significant drop to 5.4 million. By Spring of 2021, those

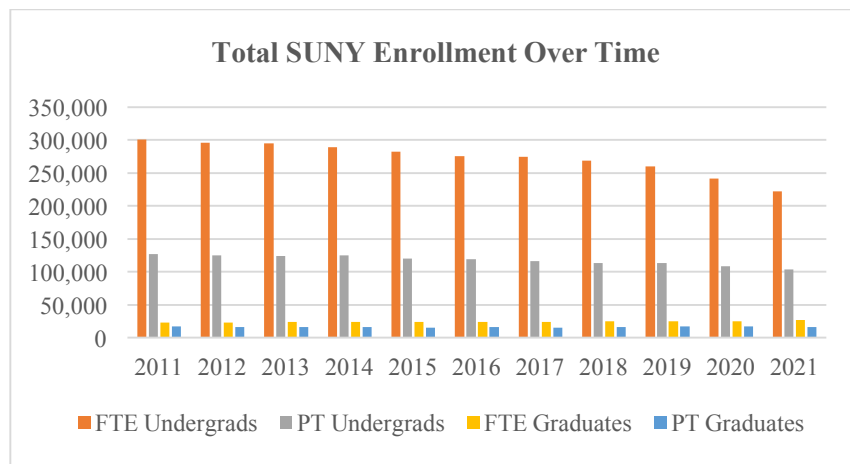
numbers had dropped, to 7.5 million at four-year public colleges and another big drop in community college enrollment to 4.5 million.¹

Of course, it is not surprising that there was a drop in enrollment that was resulting from the pandemic, but the four-year public colleges slide was clearly the result of the pandemic, while the drop in community college enrollment had been an ongoing problem during the pre-pandemic period.

Here in New York, with two of the three largest public college systems in the nation, the experiences were quite different. The State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY) had significantly different enrollment experiences during the pre-pandemic period, but both have been hit hard by the pandemic.

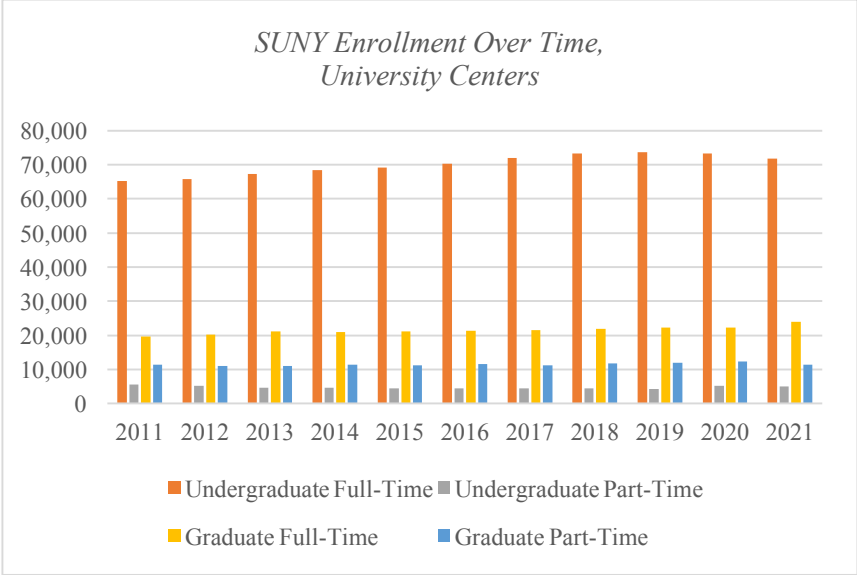
THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK IS AT THE FINANCIAL PRECIPICE, ITS ERODING FINANCES BEGAN BEFORE THE PANDEMIC HIT

As you see in the chart below, *prior* to the pandemic the SUNY system was losing full-time undergraduate enrollment – and the tuition dollars that go with them.

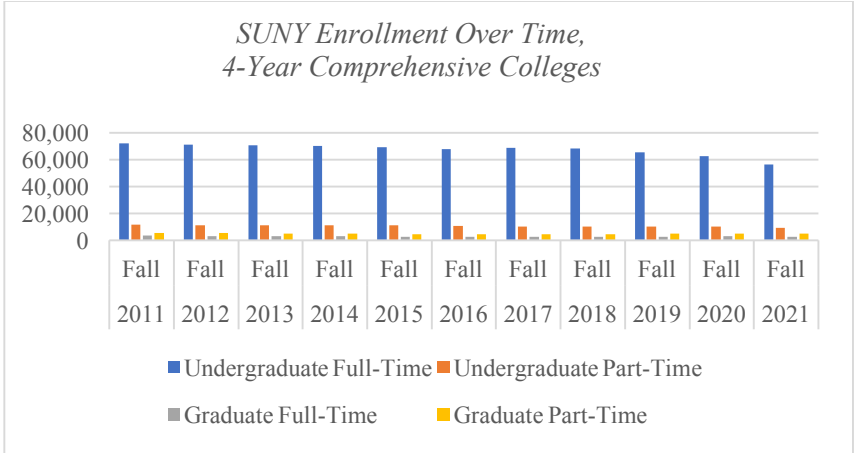


The enrollment trends, however, did not impact all sectors within SUNY evenly. As seen in the chart below, the University Centers were able to grow in the pre-pandemic period.

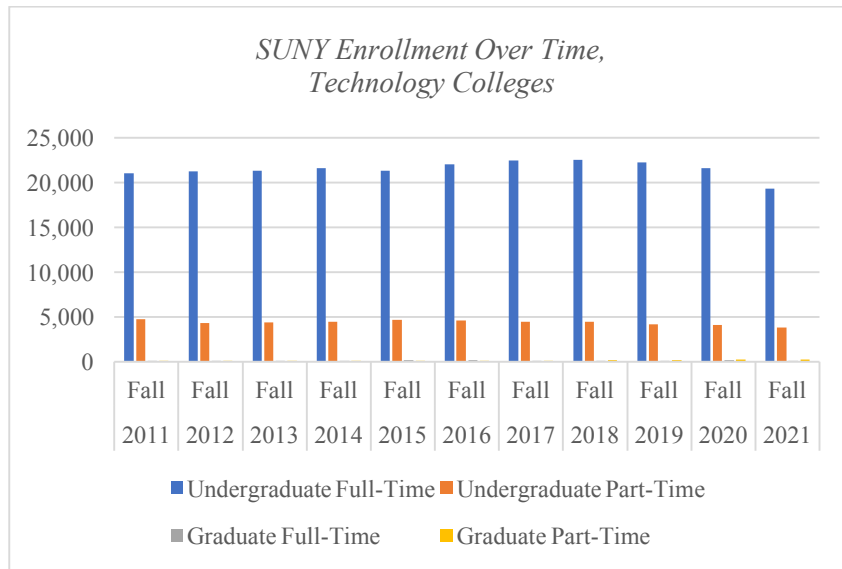
¹ National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, see https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Spring_2021.pdf.



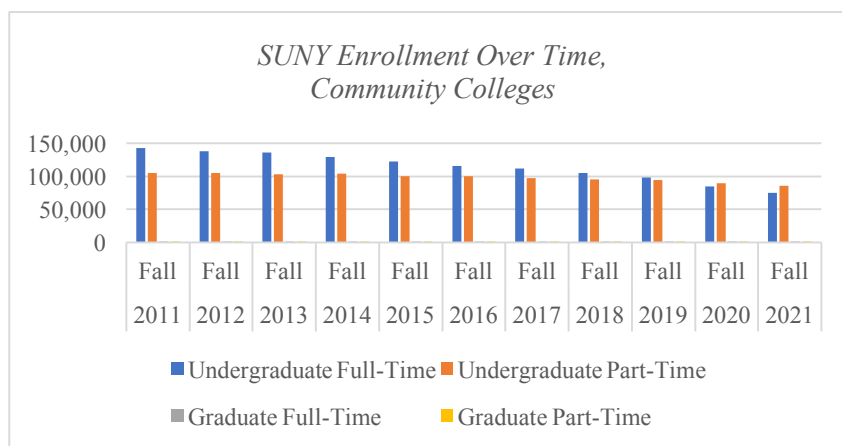
That growth was not seen in the other sectors of SUNY. As seen in the chart below, the four-year SUNY colleges suffered enrollment losses during the pre-pandemic period.



Technology colleges showed increased enrollments and then a slide starting just before the pandemic impacted.



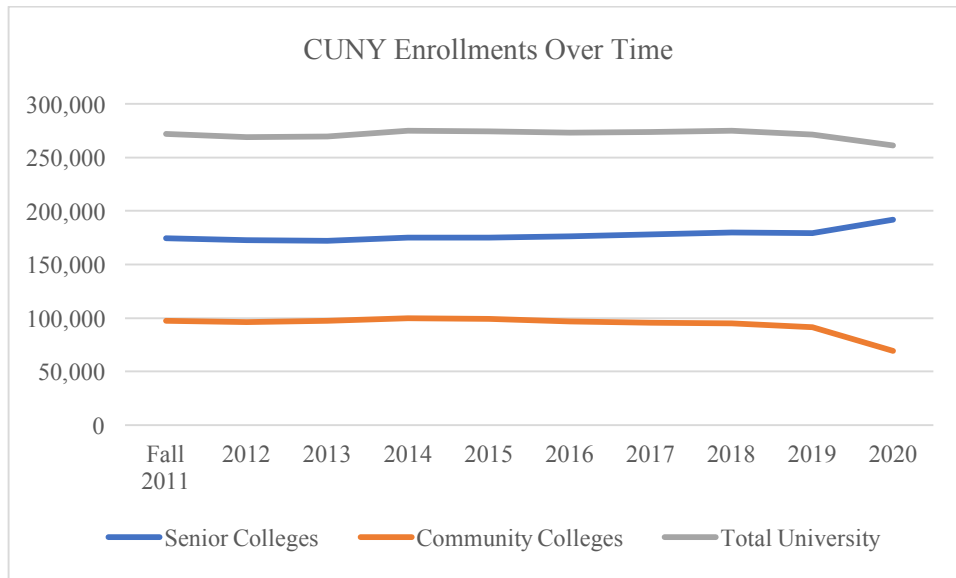
And most dramatically among the community colleges, which suffered the most significant enrollment losses in the pre-pandemic period. Here the trend is more like that experienced nationwide, a steep dropoff in enrollment, particularly among full-time enrolled students.



As you will see at the end of our testimony, we have calculated the enrollment losses in SUNY and estimated on a campus-by-campus basis, the size of a state subsidy to offset the loss of those tuition dollars.

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK ALSO NEEDS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT, BUT ITS FINANCIAL PROBLEMS ARE MORE CLEARLY TIED TO THE PANDEMIC

The City University, on the other hand, during the pre-pandemic period had a student enrollment experience at its four-year colleges more or less that tracked the nation's. Yet until the pandemic, its community colleges' enrollments (in the aggregate) were stable, unlike the national experience. Why CUNY's enrollments differed from SUNY's is not part of our analysis. Yet, as seen in the chart below, *once the pandemic hit*, CUNY saw significant drops in enrollment.



Of course, while the overall CUNY system showed stable enrollments going into the pandemic, not every campus saw increases. During the Fall 2011 through Fall 2019 period, Bronx Community College (15% reduction), the College of Staten Island (4%), Hostos Community College (7%), Kingsborough Community College (30%), LaGuardia Community College (8%), Medgar Evers College (14%), and Queensborough Community College (17%), saw reductions. Consistent with the national data that five of the seven colleges that suffered losses were *community colleges*. CUNY was not immune to the national trends of downward enrollment at community colleges.

Campus-by-campus enrollment data is not currently available beyond Fall 2019, but as seen earlier, while the four-year public colleges and universities have had stable enrollments, community colleges have seen significant losses (some even before the pandemic began), a roughly 25,000 full-time enrollment dropoff when comparing Fall 2019 and Fall 2020 (it is likely that such decreases have continued into the current academic year²). Just looking at that CUNY community college dropoff between Fall of 2019 and Fall of 2020, that change has resulted in a decline in tuition revenues of \$48.5 million.³

INDEPENDENT SECTOR

The experience in the independent sector is consistent with that of CUNY. In the pre-pandemic Fall of 2019, there were nearly 2.7 million full-time undergraduate college students attending private colleges and universities nationally. And that number tracked the total attending those campuses in the Fall of 2011, when there were 2.7 million full-time college students. Once the pandemic hit, attendance dropped. In the Spring of 2021, there were a bit more than 2.5 million college students.

² Sandoval, G., “CUNY Community Colleges Contend With Plunging Enrollment,” The City, February 1, 2022, <https://www.thecity.nyc/education/2022/2/1/22913309/cuny-community-colleges-contend-with-plunging-enrollment>.

³ While not final data, we did obtain the enrollment for Brooklyn College for Fall 2021, which appears to be about 10% less than the year before. Assuming a similar 10% reduction across the board, CUNY could have a 25,000 reduction in enrollment this academic year. NYPIRG calculated the difference and multiplied it by tuition at CUNY community colleges, \$4,800.

In New York, in the Spring of 2021 there were 377,420 students attending four-year independent colleges, a drop from 399,723 attending in Spring of 2019.⁴ Similar to SUNY, although not as dramatically as SUNY, in the independent sector, during the *pre-pandemic period* larger colleges and universities had seen growth in the student populations, where smaller ones have seen losses.⁵

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION ARE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT “ENGINES” THAT PRODUCE REAL BENEFITS, UNLIKE MANY OF THE HIGHLY-TOUTED PROJECTS THAT IN RECENT YEARS HAVE PRODUCED LITTLE, OTHER THAN SCANDAL

In addition to boosting racial and economic equity, public higher education helps to strengthen our economy. The research into the economic benefits of investing in higher education have been overwhelmingly positive. There successes are well-documented, but here are some highlights:

- SUNY’s economic impact in New York State is \$28.6 billion. For every \$1 invested in SUNY, New York State’s economy benefits the equivalent of \$8.17 and is responsible for nearly 2% of the gross state product.⁶
- CUNY graduates working in New York State earned a combined \$57 billion annually (\$67,000 on average) in 2019 – \$28.6 billion more than students would have earned without a post-secondary degree.
- CUNY graduates working in New York paid an estimated \$4.2 billion in State income taxes in 2019.⁷
- The average bachelor’s degree holder contributes \$278,000 more to local economies than the average high school graduate through direct spending over the course of a lifetime; and an associate degree holder contributes \$81,000 more than a high school graduate.⁸
- Private, not-for-profit colleges and universities contribute an estimated \$97.6 billion to New York's economy, based on 2019 data. This economic impact grew by 10 percent from 2017 to 2019.⁹

Yet, too often the state’s economic development strategies ignore those well-documented benefits and instead spend taxpayer dollars on programs that sound good in press releases, but rarely deliver. According to recent testimony by the Citizens Budget Commission,

“In New York State, various agencies and entities administer economic development programs with a total cost of \$10 billion annually in 2019. While New York is a leader in the scope and amount of its economic development spending, it is not a leader in job-creating projects. It fails to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of its economic development spending and does not demonstrate that this spending is producing sufficient results.”

The CBC goes on to comment,

⁴ National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, see https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Spring_2021.pdf.

⁵ Ibid, https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/CTEE_Report_Fall_2019.pdf, page 5.

⁶ Rockefeller Institute of Government, “The Economic Impact of the State University of New York,” <https://rockinst.org/issue-area/the-economic-impact-of-the-state-university-of-new-york/>

⁷ New York City Comptroller, “CUNY’s Contribution To The Economy,” https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/CUNY_Report.pdf

⁸ Rothwell, Jonathan. “What colleges do for local economies: A direct measure based on consumption.” *Brookings*, July 28, 2016, www.brookings.edu/research/what-colleges-do-for-local-economies-a-direct-measure-based-on-consumption/.

⁹ Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, “The Economic Impact of Independent Higher Education in New York,” <https://cicu.org/economic-community-impact>.

“CBC has previously found that the Regional Economic Development Councils, while conceptually an appropriate and productive structure, are not providing maximum value due to the lack of a comprehensive State and regional strategy that drives project selection, dispersed investment that reduces impact, and inadequate transparency and evaluation. We have also found that the film tax credit provides unnecessary subsidies to an established, profitable industry. We have noted that fossil fuel subsidies and tax breaks should be evaluated to ensure they effectively meet the range of State policy goals including greenhouse gas reduction targets. We have also identified other programs targeted to specific industries, such as horse racing, that should be more closely examined.”¹⁰

There have been, however, instances of well-documented abuses of the system. The most obvious was the investigation by the U.S. Attorney’s office into the “Buffalo Billion” which found that state contracts were rigged to benefit campaign contributors.

The Buffalo Billion is a planned to invest \$1 billion in the Buffalo area economy. The project uses a combination of state grants and tax breaks in an attempt to spur economic development. To this day, the project has been criticized for failing to deliver on its promises.

And worse, the effort led to a major corruption scandal. The former U.S. Attorney’s investigation alleged that LP Ciminelli, Buffalo’s largest construction company, paid Todd Howe—who was simultaneously a private lobbyist and on the payroll of the state’s Colleges of Nanoscale Science and Engineering (CNSE) —\$100,000 every year since 2013 to become the “favorable company” to develop the projects of CNSE. Moreover, “around the time LP Ciminelli was under consideration for CNSE projects,” Louis Ciminelli, head of LP Ciminelli, hosted a fundraiser for Governor Cuomo’s campaign, where \$250,000 was raised.¹¹ Top aides to then-Governor Cuomo and Ciminelli were convicted of corruption.

Of course, this is not to say that all economic development projects fail. Our point is that current policy in this area disregards the evidence that investing in the state’s higher education sector has some of the best bang for the buck. And that it is this disregard that starves a proven economic engine while steering resources into too often dubious projects.

Not only that, but college has benefits that extend well beyond individual economic returns. A primary function of postsecondary education is to develop college students’ involvement in the nation’s civic life and democratic processes, engender a sense of social responsibility, and develop an appreciation and respect for difference across cultures and peoples. College students are more likely to vote and volunteer, in addition to paying more in taxes upon graduation.

**RECOMMENDATION: THE STATE MUST DRAMATICALLY INCREASE ITS SUPPORT
FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR**

Given the importance of New York’s higher education sector – both in terms of educating the next generation as well as providing an economic stimulus to local communities – it’s hard to imagine revitalizing these important entities without significant additional state support. And this is the year that New York has it.

¹⁰ Citizens Budget Commission’s testimony before the joint hearing of the New York State Senate Committees on Finance, Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business, and Investigations and Government Operations, January 14, 2022.

¹¹ Whalen, R., “Buffalo Billion Executives Fighting Charges After Being Named in Federal Corruption Complaint,” *Time Warner Cable News*, September 22, 2016, <http://www.twcnews.com/nys/buffalo/crime/2016/09/22/buffalo-billion-executives-named-in-federal-corruption-complaint.html>.

Strictly using the loss in enrollment revenues as a measure, NYPIRG estimates that the state should provide at least \$600 million in additional aid (beyond that requested by the governor) to colleges and universities. Our analysis shows that in order for SUNY to have its loss in enrollment dollars offset, the state would have to provide about \$500 million in aid. The situation in CUNY is different, but the pandemic has resulted in a significant drop in enrollments. Since the latest enrollment is not yet publicly available, we estimate that to support CUNY, the state should provide at least an additional \$48.5 million (and likely considerably more). We urge that you examine the AY 2021-22 enrollment data, we would expect that the need for state support has grown beyond that.

For the independent sector, the state's Bundy Aid has become a far smaller source of support than in the past. Given the dire circumstances found among the smaller colleges, we recommend that Bundy Aid be restored to its original levels of support. According to the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, Bundy Aid has regularly been cut from \$106.1 million (1990) to today's \$35.13 million.¹² We urge that any increase in Bundy Aid be targeted to those colleges which are most financially stressed

RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT THE NEW DEAL FOR CUNY AND ANALOGOUS FUNDING FOR SUNY TO REDUCE THE TUITION BURDEN AND PROTECT QUALITY OF EDUCATION

NYPIRG applauds the Legislature's decision to freeze public college tuition – and Governor Hochul's support for that policy. But the road to recoup full funding to CUNY and SUNY is much longer. Beginning in 2011, nearly constant hikes have raised tuition rates by more than 42%. When factoring inflation, the automatic tuition hikes at both SUNY and CUNY have far exceeded the growth in the economy. These significant increases in tuition have resulted in students shouldering more and more of the costs of running NY's public college institutions. While New York's substantial financial aid and opportunity programs have shielded some students from these hikes, there are many who fall through the eligibility cracks or who cannot apply for reasons outside of their control.

New Deal for CUNY legislation (S.4461/A.5843 Gounardes/Reyes) would support CUNY students by phasing out tuition, setting better student-to-teacher ratios so that students can get the classes they need to graduate and receive adequate individual attention, and increasing the ratio of students-to-mental health counselors. The need for added mental health resources at college campuses could not be clearer. With limited counselors on campus, students may experience long wait-times for services or difficulty being connected to other resources.

Analogous funding for SUNY campuses is also needed to reduce the tuition burden and support student services like more class offerings, better advisement, and more mental health services.

RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL TO END THE "TAP GAP" AND ENHANCE THE MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT

The executive budget proposes to accelerate the phase-out of the so-called "TAP Gap." We urge your approval of this proposal. Closing the TAP Gap will provide \$48.8 million to SUNY and \$59.6 million to CUNY. As you know, this Gap is the result of deliberate policy decisions. The state's SUNY 2020 law de-coupled the maximum TAP award from public college tuition rates -- leaving the award virtually frozen while tuition rose -- and decreed that the colleges themselves would have to supplement financial assistance to the lowest income students.

As tuition has been raised, public colleges have had to dig deeper into their own resources – which have also been more or less frozen during this time – to provide necessary financial assistance. This deepening

¹² CICU <https://cicu.org/legislation-policy/state-aid-programs/direct-institutional-bundy-aid>.

hole – the “TAP Gap” – has shortchanged CUNY and SUNY for years, starving campus budgets and putting student support services and educational quality at risk.

We urge you to support the governor’s plan and to go one step further and renew the state’s pledge to match the maximum TAP award to public college tuition rates. In the meantime, additional state support to public colleges is needed to ensure that financial aid made to the poorest college students comes from the state, not the individual college or other students’ tuition dollars.

Budget shortfalls at SUNY and CUNY campuses have led to hiring freezes, department elimination, and the erosion of student services and quality of education. Students have experienced firsthand difficulty in getting into the classes they need to graduate, limited services such as library hours, and advisement gaps across the CUNY and SUNY system. According to a CUNY survey, over one-third of CUNY students reported not being able to register for a course. Of those students, nearly 60% couldn’t register because the class was not offered at all or there were not enough seats available.¹³

RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT THE GOVERNOR’S PROPOSAL TO BOOST STATE SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

As mentioned earlier, community colleges are facing dire financial circumstances, yet are vital to the state’s economy. The job training and re-training for under-employed and unemployed workers provided by community colleges is more critical than ever as New Yorkers look to a post-COVID future. NYPIRG supports Governor Hochul proposal to require that the state fund 100% base aid of the prior year’s funding for colleges facing enrollment declines.

The rate of community colleges’ tuition hikes over the past decade far outstrips inflation. Every community college in New York State has increased tuition in excess of higher education inflation.¹⁴ And community college tuition increases have exceeded those allowed for the four-year public colleges. Since the first year of SUNY2020, more than half of the SUNY community colleges (16 of 29) and all CUNY community colleges had tuition rate increases that exceeded the rate approved for the SUNY four-year public colleges and universities.¹⁵

The state should be covering 40% of the costs of educating a student at a community college. However, there is a huge discrepancy between the tuition paid by students and the aid provided by the state. In the current fiscal year’s budget, the state has pledged to provide \$2,947 in aid for each full-time student attending community colleges. None of the state’s community colleges have tuition levels set under \$4,300,

¹³ City University of New York, “2018 Student Experience Survey A survey of CUNY undergraduate students,” <https://public.tableau.com/profile/oira.cuny#!/vizhome/2018StudentExperienceSurvey/CoverPage>.

¹⁴ For tuition costs for the academic years 2010-11 through AY 2019-20, we relied on the National Center for Education Statistics (a federal agency) to obtain the data necessary to calculate our estimates. We used its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.” Using the option to “compare institutions,” we obtained student population and tuition data used to do the calculations. The data was obtained at <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>. Accessed September 2020. For tuition costs for AY2020-21, we reviewed each of the community colleges’ websites to obtain current charges.

¹⁵ SUNY tuition for Academic Year (AY) 2010-2011 was \$4,970. The so-called “rational tuition” policy allowed for \$300 annual increases for 5 years, or a total of \$1,500 by July 2016. NY’s re-instituted annual tuition increases for AY 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 by allowing for three \$200 dollar increases, bringing tuition to \$7,070 at SUNY, hence tuition has increased 42%. SUNY community college tuition increased, on average, 43%. Similar increases were approved for the City University systems as well. Its community colleges also exceeded increases beyond those approved for the four-year college and universities within its system. Calculations performed by NYPIRG.

much less \$3,000. In fact, average community college tuition is above \$5,000,¹⁶ roughly 70% higher than the amount of state support.

Much of what ails the state's community college system is the result of a stagnating population, particularly among young adults. However, there are steps that the state can take to bolster support for community colleges and offset the cost borne by college students and their families.

RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT EDUCATION EQUITY BY OVERHAULING THE TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR THE MODERN STUDENT

NYPIRG applauds the Governor's plans to provide \$150 million to expand TAP eligibility to 75,000 additional part-time students and \$5 million to restore TAP eligibility for incarcerated individuals.

New York State's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is a generous program that commits the state to aid the neediest college students—both in public and independent institutions. It is TAP that offers “free tuition” to the vast bulk of college students attending public college and contributes to the affordability of attending independent colleges and universities. In the nearly 50 years of TAP, the program has helped four million New Yorkers afford college.¹⁷ But a lot has changed since the program's founding in 1974, and TAP is behind the times. TAP grants haven't kept pace with rising tuition, and student loan debt is reaching a crisis level: 2.4 million New Yorkers now hold outstanding student loans.¹⁸ Updating it would have significant social and economic benefits. TAP should be realigned with the needs of the students and families of today. It should cover more of the cost of tuition for those who qualify and be flexible enough to meet the needs of all types of New Yorkers, not just the “traditional” straight-from-high-school-to-college full-time student that it was initially designed to serve.

NYPIRG urges the Legislature to fix TAP:

- Support the Governor's call to allow individuals who are currently incarcerated qualify for TAP.
- Support the Governor's proposal to eliminate the requirement that students attend college full-time for a year before becoming eligible for Part-Time TAP.
- Increase the TAP maximum award to at least \$7,700 with corresponding increases for all those who receive aid.
- Increase the highest income level for TAP award eligibility. Merely keeping up with inflation would increase the minimum award from \$500 to at least \$750 and families with incomes of upwards to \$120,000 should be eligible.¹⁹
- Increase the number of semesters of TAP eligibility for all students, recognizing that the majority of students take longer than four years to complete a baccalaureate degree, and allow for summer and winter TAP awards.
- End the \$100 per-year cut to students' TAP grants in their last two years of school.
- Restore eligibility for TAP to students in default on federal student loans.
- Restore TAP grants to graduate students which were eliminated in 2010.

¹⁶ *Supra* 6

¹⁷ New York State Sen. Jose Peralta And Assemblyman Francisco Moya, “Make college more affordable by making more Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) grants available,” New York Daily News, November 10, 2014 New York Daily News, <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/peralta-moya-students-tap-financial-aid-article-1.2003490>.

¹⁸ U.S. Senator Schumer, “Schumer Announces Plan To Immediately Cancel Up To \$50,000 In Student Loan Debt Per Student Across Upstate NY; With 2.4 Million New Yorkers Owing Almost \$90 Billion, Senator Leads Charge To Take Immediate Action In 2021 To Attack Student Debt Crisis,” September, 2020, <https://www.schumer.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/schumer-announces-plan-to-immediately-cancel-up-to-50000-in-student-loan-debt-per-student-across-upstate-ny-with-24-million-new-yorkers-owing-almost-90-billion-senator-leads-charge-to-take-immediate-action-in-2021-to-attack-student-debt-crisis>.

¹⁹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

RECOMMENDATION: ENHANCE OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS

NYPIRG supports the Governor's call for increased funding for New York's opportunity programs. Opportunity programs, which are designed for educationally and economically disadvantaged students, have a steady track record of success in increasing retention and graduation rates among the most at-risk students. NYPIRG urges your support of the governor's proposal to provide \$24 million, or a 10 percent increase, to fund higher education opportunity programs and training centers administered by CUNY, SUNY and independent colleges.

New York State has several opportunity programs: Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK), Linking Employment, Academics, and Disability Services (CUNY LEADS), Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), College Discovery (CD), and others. These programs take a comprehensive approach to college access and affordability by building in academic counseling, mentoring, and often providing waivers for related costs such as transit, textbooks, and child care.

SUNY's EOP provides access, academic support, and supplemental financial assistance to students from disadvantaged backgrounds, many of them the first in their families to attend college. According to SUNY, graduation and retention rates of Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) students compare favorably to that of the general student population at comparable schools. First year retention, where a student re-enrolls for a second year, for SUNY senior college EOP students is 91% percent,²⁰ whereas first year retention rates for the general student body at SUNY senior colleges is approximately 84%.²¹ The six-year graduation rate for EOP students is 73%,²² whereas the SUNY-wide senior college rate is 68% – similar results exist for opportunity programs found in the independent sector.²³

CUNY's ASAP assists students in earning associate degrees within three years by providing a range of financial, academic, and personal supports including comprehensive and personalized advisement, career counseling, tutoring, waivers for tuition and mandatory fees, MTA MetroCards, and additional financial assistance to defray the cost of textbooks. ASAP also offers special class scheduling options to ensure that ASAP students get the classes they need, are in classes with other ASAP students, and attend classes in convenient blocks of time to accommodate their work schedules. As students approach graduation, they receive special supports to help them transfer to 4-year colleges or transition into the workforce, depending on their goals. Graduation rates for ASAP students are more than double that of their peers who are not enrolled in these programs.²⁴

RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT THE GOVERNOR'S PLAN TO EXPAND CHILD CARE AT CUNY AND SUNY

NYPIRG urges your support of the governor's proposal to provide \$15.6 million to expand childcare to all SUNY and CUNY campuses that do not have on-site centers. CUNY and SUNY child care centers are a unique and powerful tool for socio-economic mobility in New York City. The cost of child care can be a significant barrier toward accessing a degree. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, just

²⁰ State University of New York's Office of Opportunity Programs, <http://system.suny.edu/oop/>.

²¹ Retention Rates for First Time, Full Time Students in a Program: SUNY Data Analysis and Trends SUNY System Administration Office of the Provost May 2014 Draft <https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/powerofsuny/performance-management-system/DRAFT-Retention-Rates-Background-Report.pdf>.

²² *Ibid*

²³ SUNY Fast Facts, https://www.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/FastFacts_2018-Flyer.pdf.

²⁴ City University of New York, "Significant Increases in Associate Degree Graduation Rates: CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) (March 1, 2018)," see: http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2018/03/ASAP_Program_Overview_March_2018.pdf.

8 percent of single mothers who enroll in college graduate with an associate or bachelor's degree within six years, compared with 49 percent of women students who are not mothers.²⁵ Single mothers with only a high school diploma are over three times as likely to live in poverty as single mothers with a bachelor's degree.²⁶ It's unsurprising that access to affordable child care increases degree completion rates. A study by Monroe Community College in Rochester, NY, found that student parents that used the child care center there were 30 percent more likely to stay in school.

RECOMMENDATION: EXPAND CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The pandemic has not only affected students financially but also physically and mentally. The pandemic has been an emotionally taxing time for students as they are isolated and had to quickly adjust to an online learning environment. Student support services have struggled to keep up with student needs. Whether it is grief counseling or help needed for juggling classes, work, and other responsibilities, students are struggling to schedule appointments with mental health experts on campus when they need them most.

Currently CUNY only has one mental health advisor for every 2,700 students.²⁷ Students like Randy Garcia, a sophomore at the City College of New York, struggled to schedule an appointment with a counselor when they felt stressed and burnt out, sometimes having to wait weeks or months to get an appointment. Anna Compton, a student at Hunter College, was continuously referred off campus despite asking for on-campus assistance, which then led to longer wait times for a counseling session.

Students are also struggling receiving proper advisement to be able to graduate on time. Melissa Dominguez and Anna Compton, two seniors from Hunter College both ran into trouble with long wait times and miscommunication when trying to schedule appointments with advisors to enroll in classes needed to graduate. Both were later caught off guard when they found out that they are a few credits short for graduation. This only then adds to stress and time it takes for students to graduate.

To remedy these issues students are facing and more, NYPIRG calls for the passage of the New Deal for CUNY legislation (S.4461/A.5843) and analogous funding to SUNY to, among other things, fund enough mental health counselors to meet the ratio recommended by the International Accreditation of Counseling Services of one advisor for every 1000 full time students.

RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT STUDENT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

We echo the call by groups including CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities (CCSD) for adequate **support for programs for students with disabilities** totaling \$15.09 million.

Food insecurity was already an epidemic before the pandemic. Startlingly, the number of food-insecure New York City residents has doubled since the onset of the pandemic, from 1.2 million to nearly 2.2 million, roughly 25% of the population.²⁸ Nearly 40% of Black families in NYC are struggling with food insecurity. The level of worry CUNY students have about running out of food because of lack of money is more than three times higher in 2020 than in 2018 and 54% of CUNY students reported a decrease in their own income due to COVID-19.²⁹ NYPIRG commends the work of CUNY and SUNY staff, often in collaboration with

²⁵ Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education: Costs and Benefits to Individuals, Families, and Society." <https://iwpr.org/publications/investing-single-mothers-higher-ed/>.

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Professional Staff Congress - CUNY, Executive Budget Testimony, February 4, 2020 <https://nyassembly.gov/write/upload/publichearing/001101/002253.pdf>.

²⁸ AARP, Disrupt Disparities 3.0, <https://states.aarp.org/new-york/disrupting-racial-ethnic-disparities>

²⁹ CUNY Urban Food Policy, The State of Food Security at CUNY in 2020: An Assessment and Recommendations, <https://www.cunyorbanfoodpolicy.org/news/2020/05/20/the-state-of-food-security-at-cuny-2020>.

our campus NYPIRG chapters, student governments and the community at large, to stock and maintain food pantries. NYPIRG urges the Legislature to support the Hunger Free Campus Act to include monies in the budget to support the operating expenses of food pantries across campuses at SUNY and CUNY.

Textbook costs are outrageous. Average costs are routinely \$1,000 a year. For the third year in a row, the State provided \$8 million to SUNY and CUNY (\$4 million to each system) for programs to make affordable textbook options available to students, such as open source textbooks. These are high-quality college texts with an "open" copyright license allowing the material to be freely accessed, shared and adapted. Open textbooks are typically distributed online at no cost and can be purchased in a variety of other print and digital formats at a low cost, including hard bound copies. On average, using open textbooks in place of traditional textbooks saves students 80%.

In conclusion, staff shortages, tuition hikes, and reductions in student services were already an escalating problem pre-pandemic. Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic runs through CUNY and SUNY, but New York's public higher education institutions and financial aid programs need additional state funding to make it happen. The State can save its social programs from suffering massive cuts without asking the most vulnerable -- and those suffering the most through the pandemic -- to pay for it. In order to provide a quality and affordable higher education for all New Yorkers, the State must commit itself to substantially increasing public funding this year and modernizing existing financial aid programs to meet students' needs.

Thank you.

APPENDIX

This chart looks at FTE undergraduate enrollment in Fall 2011 at SUNY, subtracts that from FTE undergraduate enrollment in Fall 2021, then takes that difference and multiplies it by Fall 2021 tuition only (not fees, or room and board). The campuses highlighted in yellow showed enrollment growth. Empire College doesn't have the same physical plant issues, so is not included. The specialty colleges (medical schools, ceramics, maritime, statutory) are not included.

SUNY Campus	Subsidy
Adirondack CC	\$4,919,280
Albany	\$940,310
Alfred State	\$1,307,950
Binghamton	
Brockport	\$11,128,180
Broome CC	\$9,295,776
Buffalo State	\$24,228,890
Buffalo Univ	
Canton	\$4,234,930
Cayuga CC	\$7,717,632
Clinton CC	\$5,887,706
Cobleskill	\$4,821,740
Columbia-Greene CC	\$3,199,392
Corning CC	\$6,182,960
Cortland	\$3,004,750
Delhi	\$4,666,200
Dutchess CC	\$10,568,750
Empire State	
Environmental Science and Forestry	\$2,544,500
Erie CC	\$23,478,644
Farmingdale	
Fashion Institute	\$1,880,620
Finger Lakes CC	\$8,773,488
Fredonia	\$34,989,430
Fulton-Montgomery CC	\$6,103,440
Genesee CC	\$9,761,250
Geneseo	\$7,501,270
Herkimer CC	\$6,845,208

SUNY Campus	Subsidy
Hudson Valley CC	\$24,830,400
Jamestown CC	\$7,883,200
Jefferson CC	\$5,756,256
Mohawk Valley CC	\$11,857,114
Monroe CC	\$29,765,450
Morrisville	\$8,575,910
Nassau CC	\$46,452,200
New Paltz	\$4,044,040
Niagara CC	\$10,421,952
North Country CC	\$2,872,320
Old Westbury	\$1,145,340
Oneonta	\$3,535,000
Onondaga CC	\$19,372,540
Orange CC	\$8,762,880
Oswego	\$9,346,540
Plattsburgh	\$11,156,460
Potsdam	\$11,142,320
Purchase	\$4,157,160
Rockland CC	\$11,351,736
Schenectady CC	\$7,082,496
Stony Brook	
Suffolk CC	\$31,348,570
Sullivan CC	\$2,869,608
Tompkins-Cortland CC	\$10,290,388
Ulster CC	\$3,245,200
Westchester CC	\$14,383,930
Total subsidy needed to offset enrollment losses	\$505,631,306