

**New York State Senate - Standing Committee on Higher Education
"The Cost of Public Higher Education"**

**Testimony from SUNY Oswego President Deborah F. Stanley
Thursday, October 31, 2019**

Good afternoon. I am Deborah Stanley, President of SUNY Oswego. Welcome to the SUNY Oswego *Syracuse* campus: We are honored by your presence here today.

I want to thank Chairperson Stavisky, Senator May, honorable members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education, and distinguished staff members for the opportunity to speak at today's hearing. I applaud you for the time and attention you are devoting to the challenging issues of affordability and accessibility in public higher education. These are issues that, in one way or another, our students and our college wrestle with every day. I hope my remarks will shed additional light for you as you pursue your important work in addressing them.

First some context: SUNY Oswego enrolls nearly 8,000 undergraduate and graduate students — 7,392 of them are from New York state. They are attracted to our highly ranked programs, which include the newly ABET-accredited programs in Electrical and Computer Engineering and Software Engineering, the AACSB-accredited MBA program, Broadcasting, Human-Computer Interaction, Biomedical & Health Informatics, Strategic Communication, Education and online programs in Health Services Administration and Business Administration.

Our main campus, 40 miles from here in the more rural north, is the largest employer in Oswego County. Here in Syracuse, a city in need of effective paths out of poverty, we offer urban and suburban adult students and working professionals the cost- and time-saving opportunity to earn a college degree at a public price point.

More than 40 percent of our undergraduates at our main campus and here in Syracuse, have enough financial need to qualify for federal Pell Grants, and SUNY Oswego enrolls nearly eleven hundred Excelsior Scholars this year. That is an exceptional start for a program still so new.

Our campus has embraced the Excelsior Scholarship since its announcement, and we applaud and thank Governor Cuomo for creating this scholarship as a model for the nation. I also want to thank you, Senator Stavisky for being a partner in making it a reality for our campuses. With help from life-changing programs like this one and the Educational Opportunity Program, SUNY Oswego's graduation rate has risen significantly in recent years. This striking [14-point] rise in the graduation rate also can be attributed to SUNY Oswego's investment and attention to each student, and our unwavering commitment to them, as outlined in our Oswego Guarantee. That is a promise we made to our students, dating back to the 1990s. It pledges that the necessary classes will be available to complete a baccalaureate degree in four consecutive years, while also guaranteeing availability of small classes and stable room and board costs.

At SUNY Oswego, our core is our students. We measure our success by theirs. Oswego's student body has evolved with the demographics of New York and our efforts to recruit a diverse and talented student body. More than 30% of our students are from underrepresented groups. More

than one in four of our undergraduates are first- generation college students. We are inspired by their grit and determination to compete and succeed. They know that as the first person in their family to get a higher education, they can pull the whole family ahead and advance their communities, too. They promise themselves, "I WILL find a way."

Nationwide, today's students are experiencing burgeoning student loan debt and often juggling multiple jobs along with their classes. And still they struggle to buy textbooks, to afford transportation — to get to and from class, to work, to an internship or student teaching site – and also to feel secure about their next meal. Here at SUNY Oswego, we benefit from New York's history of leadership when it comes to college affordability. That is something students in many states have not been able to count on. And when we see our students struggling with these basic expenses, we have sought out ways to support them so that they can stay in school and complete their degree. We promise ourselves, "WE will find a way."

- To help reduce the cost of textbooks, we invested in the Digital Direct Access All-Inclusive eTexts Initiative; a program that addresses textbook affordability and day one access to classroom materials. Last year, this innovative program saved our participating students nearly a quarter of a million dollars. SUNY's Open Educational Resources project also provides online learning materials to students at no cost and our faculty and students are taking advantage of that as well.
- To help students with transportation, we added buses. First, it was for prospective students and their families from downstate to visit our campus. Then for our students to go home for the holidays. Then to bring New York City students to their first day of classes. We bought a van to transport student teachers to their assigned schools. And we will probably keep adding buses and vans.
- To address food insecurity, our college started a food pantry a few years ago. And then it expanded to offer clothing, too, so that students can have the attire suitable for the changing seasons in Oswego. Thanks to our faculty, we now also have an art supplies pantry.
- To assure that all first and second year students and transfers are on sure footing with degree requirements and academic choices, we have initiated a completely new paradigm for advisement, hired new advisors and enhanced the role of faculty as mentors.
- To serve the much greater need for mental health counseling SUNY Oswego has invested in educating our community in regard to mental health issues by opening dialogues and providing training programs for students, student clubs and organizations, faculty and staff as well as investing in counseling center staff.

- To counsel each student who owes substantial amounts at the end of each semester and find resources to help them, we deploy integrated teams from Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, Development and Finance in intense financial interventions so students may return the next semester.

Yet there is still great need to open the doors of opportunity to the college-age residents of our state. Continued support for successful programs like the Educational Opportunity Program and the Excelsior Scholarship will enable tens of thousands of high-need and high-potential students to have enough resources — enough, to be frank, to not go hungry, not go homeless. It will enable them to buy textbooks and supplies as well as participate in internships, summer research opportunities, and study abroad experiences that they need to compete on a level playing field in the professional world that awaits them once they graduate.

We strive for maximum efficiency in administering these important state-funded programs to help students reap their full benefits. We practice intrusive advisement with our Excelsior Scholars, as with the longstanding Educational Opportunity Program, in an extra effort to make sure students receiving these funds stay on the path to their degree. For example, our goal is that an increasing percentage of Oswego's EOP students graduate in four years.

I am reminded of the words of one of our EOP students, Henry Leon, a recipient of SUNY's new McConney Award for EOP Student Excellence. His advice to his peers was, "Value every single penny ... and take the most advantage of it." Like Henry, we do.

New York's many initiatives in support of access to high-quality public higher education are effective for our SUNY system. The Tuition Assistance Program has funded the educations of hundreds of thousands of New York citizens over its long history. Through legislative action the more recent Rational Tuition policy has provided modest and regular increases in tuition, protecting our students and their families from unplanned large increases which could bring their studies to an abrupt end. It has also been significant in helping our campuses maintain high-quality programs as we keep up with the challenges of our times, from the necessity to continually update our technology and infrastructure, to the newer, critical need to attend to the mental health of our students with early interventions. Each of these programs, TAP and Rational Tuition, serves an important purpose.

SUNY is an asset that cannot and should not be eroded or wasted. The future for our students and our future as a thriving democratic society are assured with a strong public higher education that is SUNY and we must keep pace with offering an education that is still a great value.

In the sphere of public higher education, New York has accomplished an abundance of good for individuals and our communities across the state. We need to adequately fund

the programs we have, refine them, and — as our population and environment continue to change — carve out new paths, new solutions, and make sure that we WILL find a way to provide the best education for rising generations.

Our students are worth every penny.

Thank you for taking the time today to hear how SUNY Oswego addresses the financial hurdles facing our students and to better understand the resources we need to reach our full potential as the work begins on the next state budget. I am grateful for your dedication to ensuring that the State University of New York remains a vital and sustaining asset for the people of our state. I welcome any questions you may have.



Onondaga Community College
Report to the Senate Higher Education Committee
“The Cost of Public Higher Education”
October 31, 2019

Dr. Casey Crabill, President



Senator Stavisky and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony as you consider the wide range of issues facing higher education in the State of New York and thank you for your support of community colleges. Thank you, Senator May, for your careful attention to Central New York's higher education ecosystem and being a steadfast champion for our students.

I have the privilege of serving as President of Onondaga Community College (OCC), a public two-year member campus of the State University of New York. We are sponsored by Onondaga County, and in fall 2019, we enrolled a total of 9,399 students. 7,358 of our current students come from Onondaga County; 1,932 from the rest of New York; 109 students from outside of New York, including 37 international students and a substantial veteran population. Like most community colleges, we are quite local.

Community Colleges have unique missions. They are open enrollment, meaning anyone in possession of a high school credential can enroll for courses. They have an array of degree types designed to prepare students either to transfer to another institution to complete a baccalaureate or to enter a particular job field. In addition, the open enrollment nature requires that community colleges provide academic support to build the skills necessary to pursue the desired degree. In short, I believe we are democracy's colleges, offering access to post-secondary education to all who desire it, providing pathways to a stronger economic future.

We all recognize that the cost of higher education is a concern for families. New York's community colleges are on the front lines of the effort to ensure that higher education remains financially within reach. We appreciate our partners in state government who, over the years, have helped keep college within reach for students through creation of programs like TAP, EOP and the Excelsior Scholarship. At OCC, we ensure that our tuition falls well below the TAP limit to be certain that our neediest students can continue to pursue higher education. New York has always made sure that its public institutions remained within reach, understanding and embracing the public good in higher education.

Beyond financial aid, thanks to support from Governor Cuomo and state legislators through the Community Schools grants programs, our campus has established a Community Care Hub (CCH), a central service designed to link students with support to help them accomplish their educational goals. During the winter and spring 2019 semesters, 882 students were served in the CCH with 487 using the food pantry; 472 bus passes distributed; 390 individual meal tickets distributed; 3 students utilizing emergency housing; and 46 students receiving assistance for books. Cumulatively, we have served 2,571 students with over 2,331 students benefiting from the food pantry, 2,772 students receiving bus passes, and 3,786 meal tickets distributed since spring 2016. We know that financial instability contributes to students' failure to complete higher education, and we know that the service we provide in our CCH helps to alleviate some of that instability.



At OCC, we have a Strategic Plan that challenges us to:

1. Work closely with K-12 partners throughout the region;
2. Provide students with equitable access to a clear and well-aligned path to their goals for success; and
3. Position students for success by implementing research validated methods for support.

Underlying these 3 goals is the recognition that whatever the cost of college may be, showing up without adequate preparation, not having clear pathways to complete, and not having effective support to complete creates the high probability that any money spent will not be spent wisely or effectively. I will address efforts that OCC has developed to ensure the effectiveness of our work.

College Readiness - a student ready for college will waste less time and fewer resources.

58.5% of our first-time students are first generation college students, meaning nobody in the family is available to provide insight and guidance in preparation for college. Despite the challenges of making a solid economic life without education beyond high school, a significant percent of students in Central New York do not have family help in approaching higher education. Our first challenge is to help students get ready for college and to assist their families with the transition.

We have programs to support college readiness and preparation with our regional high school partners. Partnering with New York State, we established 4 innovative PTECH programs in both Onondaga and Oswego Counties as well as 3 Early College high schools in partnership with Syracuse City, East Syracuse-Minoa, and Solvay School Districts. In addition, we have developed early college programs with 8 other school districts whereby students travel to our campus to take courses on our campus with our college faculty, which works really well for those students, for example, who have maxed out all of their high school's math offerings or want to explore subjects not available at their local high school. These programs, along with providing early exposure to careers and majors, also provide knowledge about post-secondary education to support college readiness and help build the skills to support student success.

Because PTECH and Early College high schools serve select populations, we also created a program called OCC Advantage. Now in 5 high school districts, this program is available to all students beginning in 9th grade to support the development of college knowledge and success behaviors. Working with the school districts, we establish benchmarks in 3 areas of behavior consistent with success in post-secondary education: attendance, performance, and engagement. We also provide a great deal of college information and work with students and their families over 4 years, providing OCC faculty-supported workshops and field trips. The school districts monitor a student's progress on the benchmarks. Those who fall behind have access to additional programs to help them catch up. Students who complete have demonstrated the ability to attend regularly, perform academically, and participate actively. Students who complete can earn their



first year's tuition at OCC paid for by private scholarship dollars we raise with the help of community volunteers under the auspices of the College's Foundation. Continued success at OCC will enable the students to earn the second year of tuition. The goal of the program – whether a student attends OCC or another institution – is to help them become ready for the demands of college so that the resources they do expend will take them further.

Equitable access to a clear, well-aligned path.

Students' resources are used most wisely when they are able to complete their goals efficiently. Toward that end, OCC has taken a number of significant steps to ensure that students can achieve what they plan within the time and money available to support them.

To meet the needs of today's students, OCC developed and launched a streamlined mobile application as well as implemented an enterprise text messaging platform to increase early communication and interaction with students, ensuring a connection that supports retention.

Equitable access is enhanced by a student-focused enrollment and registration effort, "One Team OCC." Launched in spring 2019, this strategy provides each student who submits an application with individualized attention from the point of admission and proactive guidance to complete all enrollment, financial aid, and registration processes. The One Team member remains with the student through the start of their second semester at OCC. Early results indicate that new students are registering earlier, a factor positively correlated with retention.

A well-aligned path requires a clear road through any needed developmental coursework. OCC continues as the lead campus of SUNY's Developmental English Learning Community, also known as the Accelerated Learning Program, which has grown to include 27 SUNY institutions, 23 of which are community colleges. In this capacity, Onondaga has hosted a number of state-wide professional development workshops, most recently an event focused on trauma-sensitive pedagogy, and Onondaga faculty have offered training workshops at nine SUNY campuses; to-date, over 360 SUNY faculty representing 30 campuses have been trained through these learning community events. In the process, Onondaga has helped participating campuses impact over 6,500 students and increase their developmental writing pass rate by 18% and their first-year composition pass rate by 83% (aggregate data across cohort one of the learning community). Students at OCC who need developmental coursework can complete it, along with the first-level college courses, shortening time-to-degree and supporting retention.

Position students for success by implementing research validated supports.

OCC received a federal Title III award for a project entitled Guided Pathways to Success (GPS) which serves as a significant cornerstone of our efforts to support student success. This includes the implementation of a new model of academic programs and advising housed in eight schools, the implementation of a GPS coaching model, and the continued



refinement of One Team OCC to further personalize the student experience. A member of SUNY's initial Guided Pathways cohort, OCC has been able to use national research to support this redesign of services.

OCC became the first public college in the nation to create a new model of affordability for students. Announced in March, "Box of Books" is an inclusive access program that provides students with flat-rate, predictable pricing for textbooks and access codes at \$21.50 per credit hour, as well as an affordable Chromebook, all designed to level the playing field. OCC worked closely with its bookstore partner, Barnes and Noble, to develop this first-of-its-kind program—as a first step toward addressing another economic barrier to college completion and student success. Early data from this fall's implementation shows that 74% of students had all of their books on or before the 1st day compared to fall 2018 when fewer than 45% had their textbooks at the end of the semester.

The College boasts a Learning Center that offers academic support services that encourage students to continue in classes, even when struggling. A total of 2,612 students used Learning Center services in the fall 2018 and spring 2019 semesters, which included embedding tutors in specific gateway courses because failure to complete a gateway course means that a student can't move forward in the desired degree. In courses with embedded tutoring, more than 60% of students completed their registered courses. Supplemental in-class support was fully scaled and implemented for all sections of Anatomy and Physiology I – the gateway course for health careers - with 59% of students completing the course and nearly half earning a "C" or higher. More than 90% rated their overall experience with a tutor as "satisfied" or "very satisfied."

OCC's Career Services office supports students seeking assistance with career exploration, applied learning opportunities and employment services such as résumé reviews, interview preparation, and job search. This year, more than 3,000 students have sought career assistance. In addition, 1,101 job applications were submitted through Purple Briefcase, the College's job search portal. Finally, Career Services partnered with the OCC Foundation and the Greater Syracuse Association of Realtors (GSAR) to open a clothes closet, "Suited for Success," that provides students with men's and women's professional clothing appropriate for career fairs, job interviews and other work-related needs. Area realtors donated the clothing, which was organized and sorted by the College's chapter of the American Association of Women in Community Colleges.

Through federal grants and State support, our Children's Learning Center (CLC) provides subsidies to low-income student parents who would be unable to enroll and complete their degrees without support. OCC's CLC serves about seventy-five children each semester ranging in age from 6 weeks to 5 years old. Approximately half of the children are brought to the center by OCC student parents. The facility has 6 classrooms: 2 for infants, 2 for toddlers, and 2 for preschoolers. Since opening its doors in 1989, the CLC has provided critical child care for families and learning opportunities for students taking classes in the Human Services and



Teacher Education department. Sixteen students complete student teaching experiences each semester and forty complete observations. The CLC also serves as a community partner with Onondaga Head Start and Early Head Start.

Aside from our credit-based college program, OCC also works with employers (Feldmeier; Bristol-Myers Squibb) and area agencies (CNY Works, Center for Community Alternatives) and employment sectors (manufacturing and health care) to develop and deliver workforce programs that are typically non-credit and competency-based. In the last year, more than 400 individuals participated in training, leading to both jobs and apprenticeships, including medical billing, medical assistant, phlebotomy, line cook, welding apprentice, and bioprocess apprentice.

At OCC, we continue to follow developments in research to ensure that students who begin their education can continue. Starting and stopping college is incredibly expensive and can result in non-completion accompanied by student debt, which I trust all would accept as a terrible outcome. Preparation, care in programming, and appropriate supports are necessary to support the investment that students, their families, and the taxpayers of New York make in higher education.

I am proud of the work of our faculty and staff, and I believe we are careful stewards of the funds we receive to support our students. Toward that end, I note that our per FTE expenditure, including all costs, is \$14,180 (2016-17), significantly lower than any other institution in Central New York despite the fact that by our mission, we don't select students to attend OCC – we welcome all who seek a future for themselves and their families that is uniquely made possible through higher education.

The efforts I have detailed today are made possible with state support (PTECH, Early College High School Smart Scholars, Community Schools, and SUNY PIF), federal grants (Title III/USDOE) and privately raised funds done by our leadership (OCC Advantage, Community Care Hub). These initiatives have enabled OCC to connect with research, bring in new efforts that require staff training, and in part support the time and investment necessary to align K-12 and college efforts.

Thank you for having this important conversation here in Central New York, and while I know the budget process is only beginning, I look forward to working with you over the months ahead.



MORRISVILLE
STATE UNIVERSITY
OF NEW YORK

Senate Higher Education Hearing Testimony
“The Cost of Public Higher Education”

President David E. Rogers, Ph.D.

October 31, 2019

I am David Rogers, President of SUNY Morrisville.

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

SUNY Morrisville's mission is to offer diverse learning experiences so that graduates may pursue rewarding lives and careers, become engaged citizens, and contribute to our collective future. Our vision is that SUNY Morrisville aspires to be a recognized leader in innovative applied education.

Since its founding, Morrisville has had a mission of providing access and improving regional communities and economies. Originally started as an institution to help farmers and their households improve their own operations, Morrisville has been dedicated to making practical, hands-on education accessible and affordable.

As the needs of Central New York have changed, so has Morrisville. We began offering two-year degrees, then four-year degrees, and now we are on the cusp of introducing our first graduate degree, a proposed master's degree in food and agribusiness. Each of these changes has been in response to the needs of our students and the communities we serve.

SUNY Morrisville is an institution focused historically on access to underserved populations, especially those living in rural areas and, more recently, to first-generation students from larger urban areas. As a college of applied learning, our students benefit from distinctive hands-on learning in fields, facilities, shops and labs filled with specialized equipment, technology, living plants and animals that bring different requirements than other more traditional program areas.

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

For 40 years before SUNY was formed, Morrisville worked closely with individuals and communities to adapt and employ new technologies and methodologies to become more efficient and effective. As part of the SUNY system, we have continued to benefit from public officials who have believed and invested in quality higher education as an instrument of strengthening communities and lifting up individuals.

Initiatives like the Excelsior Scholarship and the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) are evidence that Governor Cuomo and our legislators are leaders in prioritizing access for students who can realize their potential through quality public higher education.

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

We recognize the growing needs of students, whether they are physical or mental health needs, tutoring, advising or coaching to help them succeed in all aspects of life. We make significant efforts to properly recruit students for whom Morrisville is the right fit. We provide orientation to help them start on the right foot. We provide summer bridge programming for those who need additional preparation. We have monitoring and alert software and programs to identify when students need helpful intervention before their educational pursuits are endangered by obstacles or challenging circumstances. We connect them with field experiences, job shadowing, apprenticeships and internships with industry partners so they have a real experience in their chosen field. We work with employers to help graduates begin meaningful work as soon as possible after their time with us.

All of this support is important, because it enriches the core classroom, lab and field learning that is central to how we teach students. Our work-integrated approach is all the more important for students who know that they must have an affordable education that leads to gainful employment. It also helps them prepare for changes in industry and their own careers as the world continues to evolve at an ever-increasing pace.

SUNY Morrisville has been recognized for its impact on the social mobility of its graduates. Last month, *U.S. News & World Report* announced that we achieved Top 10 status as a “Best College” in the North for “Top Performers on Social Mobility.” Prior to this year’s ranking in this new category, SUNY Morrisville was recognized through research published in *The New York Times* that reviewed institutions’ ability to promote the social mobility of their graduates. Morrisville ranks 14th out of 68 nonselective, four-year public colleges on the overall mobility index, which indicates students who move up two or more income quintiles.

The Morrisville College Foundation and the Morrisville Auxiliary Corporation are our close partners in providing services, scholarships and other services that enable students to have rewarding and fulfilling educational experiences during their time at SUNY Morrisville. We have worked ever more closely to provide more support, reduce expenses and otherwise boost the quality of a Morrisville education. Without their help, fewer students would have access to fewer services.

These entities and others on campus have helped us address additional needs of students, from food insecurity to use of free or low-cost textbook materials, and from on-campus childcare to reduced-cost laptops. We know that investment in student success is a complicated and resource-intensive endeavor.

I am thankful again to Governor Cuomo and the legislators who support our efforts, provide meaningful leadership and implement effective initiatives that aim to provide affordable access to education for our students while ensuring quality in our system of statewide higher education.

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

Thank you.



**TESTIMONY
OF THE
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP
BEFORE THE
NEW YORK STATE SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE
REGARDING
THE COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION
OCTOBER 30, 2019
Syracuse, New York**

Good afternoon. My name is Joshua Chandra and I am a member of the New York Public Interest Research Group and a student at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. As you know, 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 solely consists of college and university students elected from campuses with NYPIRG chapters across the State.

We appreciate this opportunity to share our perspectives on the costs of higher education in New York. As we have stated in previous testimony, NYPIRG intends to present testimony at each of the Committee's hearings. Today I will focus both broadly on higher education as well as specific issues regarding the Tuition Assistance Program and the Excelsior Scholarship program. In addition, as we are here within the shadow of Syracuse University, I will comment on TAP reforms that can benefit college students attending independent institutions.

NYPIRG thanks the Legislature for passing the Jose Peralta DREAM Act this year, for restoring funding to critical higher education programs cut in the executive budget, and for advocating for the elimination of the "TAP Gap" and more robust "maintenance of effort" legislation.

Starting in 2017, NYPIRG has been interviewing students who were experiencing difficulties funding the costs of their education, from tuition and textbooks, to related costs like food and childcare. Scores of interviews later, we have gathered insights into the impacts of state divestment in higher education; state and federal financial aid, scholarship, and grant programs; and who benefits from current programs and who is still left out.

Current State Financial Aid Programs Fall Short – And Students Fall Through Cracks

Robust financial aid programs exist to safeguard low and middle income students from the financial barriers which can impede college completion. However, restrictive eligibility requirements, inflexible award schedules, and small budgets hamstring the support these programs are able to provide – and students pay the price.

Reform the Excelsior Scholarship: Two years ago, the state created the Excelsior Scholarship. The program provides free tuition to students attending SUNY and CUNY two-year and four-year programs. Students with a family Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) equal to or less than \$125,000 and who meet other eligibility criteria would benefit from this program.¹

Excelsior is a scholarship program that would be available to students who (1) enroll in at least twelve credits per semester, but earn at least thirty credits each academic year; (2) remain on track for on-time graduation; (3) agree to live and work in NYS upon graduation for a certain period of time; and (4) sign a contract with HESC to have his/her scholarship converted to a loan if the student fails to fulfill this requirement. Tuition rates for Excelsior recipients would be frozen at the year they enter the program, until their on-time graduation.

Here, the state acknowledges the burden that tuition places on low and middle-income students. But, the scholarship does not cover everyone and is designed to minimize costs for the state. The scholarship is a “last dollar” program, meaning it will only apply once all other forms of government aid have been applied. New York’s financial aid programs already offer tuition coverage for the poorest public college students. Further, tuition is not the only financial responsibility associated with obtaining a college degree and Excelsior does not address those costs. If the Excelsior Scholarship was not a “last dollar” program, other aid that students qualify for, a Pell Grant for example, could be used to offset textbook, housing, or transportation costs.

The program has credit and performance limitations as well; if a student doesn’t obtain 30 credits in one year, for example, they lose the scholarship and would likely be forced to take out a loan to pay for the credits they did receive. Inflexible award schedules do not support on-time graduation. Excelsior Scholars are limited to accessing their aid in fall and spring semesters alone. The Excelsior Scholarship mandates 30 credits per year to maintain eligibility but the award is not available for summer and winter sessions. While scholarship recipients can maintain eligibility by taking 12-credits per semester in the fall and spring, they must pay out of pocket for the additional 6 credits in the winter or summer sessions. Meaning, the state’s “free tuition” scholarship is not always tuition-free, even for those who qualify, maintain eligibility, and receive the award.

Sarah Pulinski, a SUNY New Paltz and Excelsior scholar shared her experience:

“I received the Excelsior Scholarship. The problem with Excelsior is that it’s more difficult to qualify for than initially advertised and there’s a lot of hoops you need to jump through in order to get it.

¹ See: <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/excelsior/>

I have been on the phone with Excelsior this semester a total of 4 times. The financial aid office here has even gotten involved and I still have not received the money. It's very frustrating and it's like they want you to struggle to get it even if you do qualify. Tuition increases would mean more people wanting to receive this money and probably put more pressure on HESC which already seems to be struggling to help students get the money promised."

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to provide the Excelsior Scholarship during winter and summer sessions**
- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to expand aid for use beyond covering tuition.**
- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to change the Excelsior Scholarship's "Last Dollar" structure.**

Reform the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP): While TAP is an important and robust program – funded at over \$1 billion for 2019-2020 – it must be reformed to meet the needs of a 21st century student. TAP recipients are eligible for the award in the fall and spring semesters as long as they take a minimum of 12 credits per semester. However, with the exception of some opportunity programs or for some students with disabilities, the award is only available for up to 8 semesters. In order to ensure on-time graduation, a student must take 30 credits per year. However, with limited financial aid options in the summer and winter, students are forced to take on 15 credits per semester, risk a delayed graduation, or pay out of pocket. For working students, or those with other obligations, that load can be prohibitive.

Chelsea Grate, a SUNY Cortland student, was worried about graduating on time but still elected not to take summer classes and pay out of pocket:

"This is my second year of college, but my first year at SUNY Cortland. I transferred here from Hudson Valley Community College. I'm a Political Science major with a minor in Communications, and I'm somewhere between a sophomore and a junior because of the credits I transferred in with from HVCC and high school.

I am concerned about graduating on time. If I had six more credits I'd be considered a junior right now. I didn't want to do classes over the summer because I didn't want to have to pay for that out of pocket on top of everything else. Once I do graduate from Cortland I'm going to grad school, preferably at U Albany or Syracuse. I pay for school with financial aid, TAP, and the Pell Grant. I also work at Target and Market 32 on breaks to pay for textbooks and food for the semester. If I didn't get financial aid, I would probably be working full time at Target, and I don't think it'd be possible to go to school at the same time as that."

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to provide TAP during winter and summer sessions.**

TAP for Incarcerated Individuals: Despite prisons being called "correctional facilities," they do a dismal job in turning lives around. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, nationwide about two-thirds of released state prisoners were re-arrested within three years and three-quarters

within five.² Too often, prison is a revolving door. And it's a revolving door that impacts certain communities worse than others. According to the Cuomo Administration, nearly half of New York inmate population is African American, nearly one quarter is Hispanic, and nearly one quarter is white.³

The currently high recidivism rate helps no one. The connection between higher education and reduced recidivism has been well established. A study conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles found that "[a] \$1 million investment in incarceration will prevent about 350 crimes, while that same investment in education will prevent more than 600 crimes. Correctional education is almost twice as cost effective as incarceration."⁴

While prisoners can sometimes get access to educational courses now, they are ineligible for the federal Pell Grant program as well as TAP. Since the vast majority of inmates are low income, they usually cannot afford college courses while in prison.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to provide TAP eligibility for incarcerated individuals.**

Graduate TAP began in 1974-1975, helping 22,253 New York graduate students with an average award of \$302 with a maximum award of \$600. The program has fluctuated greatly over the years with regards to the number of students receiving the award, the maximum award available, average award distributed, and the amount of money the state invested in the program. Before TAP for graduate students was completely eliminated in 2009-2010, it served 7,251 students.⁵

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that jobs requiring master's degrees and professional degrees will grow by 22% and 20%, respectively, from 2010 to 2020 – faster than any other level of education.⁶ According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, a worker with a high school diploma can expect to earn \$1.3 million over a lifetime, while a worker with a bachelor's degree will earn \$2.3 million and a worker with a master's degree will earn \$2.7 million over a lifetime.⁷ While the benefits of advanced degrees are clear, financial aid programs are either non-existent or uninviting to prospective graduate students, many of whom already hold

² U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "3 In 4 Former Prisoners In 30 States Arrested Within 5 Years Of Release," April 22, 2014, see: <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/press/rpris05p0510pr.cfm>.

³ New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, "Under Custody Report: Profile of Inmate Population Under Custody on January 1, 2013," see: http://www.doccs.ny.gov/Research/Reports/2013/UnderCustody_Report_2013.pdf.

⁴ Audrey Bazos and Jessica Hausman, UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research Department of Policy Studies, "Correctional Education as a Crime Control Program," p 2, March 2004, see: <http://www.ceanational.org/PDFs/ed-as-crime-control.pdf>.

⁵ New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, "Graduate Level TAP AY 1974-1975 thru 2009-2010," Neal Warren, September 2013.

⁶ United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Occupational Outlook Handbook, Projections 2010-2020," <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/about/projections-overview.htm>.

⁷ The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, "The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings," Page 2, August 15th 2011, <http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/collegepayoff-summary.pdf>.

student loan debt.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to expand TAP to eligible graduate students.**

Expand the New York State Part-Time Scholarship: Last year, the State also established a New York State Part-Time Scholarship (PTS) Award Program to provide scholarships to students attending a SUNY or CUNY community college on a part-time basis. Awards would cover the cost of six credit hours up to \$1,500. Eligible students must maintain a 2.0 GPA and take six to twelve credit hours per semester. Awards would be distributed by a lottery system in the event there are more applicants than available awards in the first year. Going forward, priority would be based on financial need and given to students who received awards previously and are in good academic standing; awards would be proportionate to the total applications received. Aid for part-time students is woefully limited and this award is a step in the right direction, but a small one.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to allow eligibility of part-time students for TAP and the Excelsior Scholarships rather than administering this limited separate scholarship.**

Protect Bundy Aid: This program provides funding directly to independent colleges to supplement student financial assistance and general operating support. The state has funded Bundy Aid at \$35.13 million.⁸ However, the Governor has proposed to limit Bundy Aid in previous years in his Executive Budget. The program provides needed support to students at independent colleges and deserves continued support.

Students Succeed In Proven Opportunity Programs – Why Are They Routinely Cut in The Executive Budget?

Opportunity programs, which are designed for educationally and economically disadvantaged students, have a steady track record of success in increasing graduation rates among the most at-risk students.⁹ In general, students in opportunity programs are individuals who have come from low-income communities and often rank low on traditional measures of collegiate admissions standards, such as SAT scores, high school GPA, and class standing.

New York State has several opportunity programs in place to help increase access to higher education: Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK), Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), College Discovery, Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), and Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). These programs take a comprehensive approach to college access and affordability by building in academic counseling, mentoring, and coverage of related costs such as free metrocards, textbooks, and child care. This approach works, and increases graduation rates. All students deserve this model of a holistically supported education and New York State and City must make the investments to make it happen.

⁸ The Commission of Independent Colleges and Universities in New York, Direct Institutional (“Bundy”) Aid, <https://cicu.org/legislation-policy/state-aid/direct-institutional-“bundy”-aid>, accessed July 11, 2017.

⁹ For an example of the success of opportunity programs, see State University of New York’s Office of Opportunity Programs, <http://system.suny.edu/oop/>.

Ariyah Adams, a SUNY New Paltz student, credits the Education Opportunity Program (EOP) for their success in college.

“I am currently a junior majoring in communications with a concentration in public relations and double minoring in theater and business. I pay for tuition through TAP and Pell Grants, as well as take out loans to cover the rest of my bill. After I graduate, I plan on attending graduate school at either SUNY New Paltz or a different SUNY. I am still undecided about that. I plan on paying for graduate school through applying for grants and scholarships.

Right now I am working two jobs, I work at the dining hall on campus and I have a work study job. I don't depend on money from my parents so usually I pay for my textbooks and food on my own or a split the cost of the textbook with a friend or classmate in the same class as me. I am also a student at the Educational Opportunity Program at my school which has helped me a lot, getting through navigating financial aid. If this program didn't exist, I'm not sure if I would be in college. The EOP program has helped me grow into a strong individual and has offered me tutoring, mentors and advisors that always have my back.”

Despite the track records of the successes of these programs, each year the Executive Budget proposes cuts and forces the Legislature to fight to restore programs instead of building on them.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to expand funding to the opportunity programs listed above.**
- **NYPIRG recommends that the state looks to programs such as CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) as a model for free public college which addresses the all-in costs of higher education and has proven to increase graduation rates.**

Budget Short Falls Translate into Reduced Services for SUNY Students

Through years of underfunding, New York State has starved CUNY and SUNY campus budgets and put student support services and educational quality at risk. One problem cutting into CUNY and SUNY budgets has been the growing “TAP Gap.” The tuition price per student at senior colleges (\$6,930 at CUNY 4-year schools and \$7,070 at SUNY 4-year schools)¹⁰ continues to outpace the maximum Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) award (reimbursed to schools at a rate of \$5,000 per full-TAP recipient)¹¹ resulting in an increasing “TAP Gap.” While students who receive the full TAP award haven't had to pay the difference, the individual colleges have had to absorb the loss in revenue. Last year, CUNY reported a \$74 million TAP Gap.¹²

Another problem has been the state's underfunding of mandatory cost increases. While the state promised in 2011 to maintain its funding levels from year to year as it raised the tuition burden on

¹⁰ Supra 4.

¹¹ New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, The New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/apply-for-financial-aid/nys-tap.html>.

¹² City University of New York, 2019-2020 Operating Budget Request and Four-Year Financial Plan; January 14, 2019, http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/budget-and-finance/FY2020-Budget-Request_for-OBFSite-1.pdf.

students, the state has not included funding for inflationary or other mandatory cost increases like electricity and staff contracts. That has created another gap in state funding for mandatory costs.

According to SUNY New Paltz Vice President for Administration and Finance in 2018, revenues are simply not keeping pace with necessary increases in expenditure. One factor among others cited was no increases in direct state support since 2012.¹³ As a result of budget shortfalls, Binghamton University cut their library budget and administering a hiring freeze on all staff positions aside from Adjuncts and Teaching Assistants.¹⁴ The university is not replacing two retiring faculty members in the Department of Art and Design and put a temporary suspension on the graphic design minor.¹⁵ Stony Brook University has enacted a hiring freeze as well, citing an \$18.5 million budget shortfall, and are eliminating their undergraduate pharmacology program.¹⁶

The erosion of state support and the creation of growing funding gaps is translating into an erosion of student services and quality of education. Students have experienced firsthand, the 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.

Evelyn Marks, a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) major at SUNY Cortland, is also concerned about graduating on time. With some of the classes that she needs conflicting with other required classes, she may have to push her graduation date out a year. Haley Gray, a SUNY New Paltz student, had difficulty enrolling in the classes she needed to graduate and felt her education was being compromised. Luisa Garcia, a Nassau Community College student, shared her difficulty getting the advisement she needed to prepare to transfer to a 4-year school.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to enhance funding for CUNY and SUNY by closing the “TAP Gap” and include mandatory costs in its base funding equation in order to help students get the classes they need to graduate, reduce class sizes, and bolster student advisement.**

SUNY Students Struggle with Rising Tuition and Other Costs

Despite the clear benefits of public higher education for the health and prosperity of the state, students have been shortchanged: the state routinely underfunds CUNY and SUNY and costs get pushed onto students and their families. Beginning in 2011, nearly constant tuition hikes have

¹³ The New Paltz Oracle, “Budget Cuts Costs on SUNY New Paltz Campus,” November 8, 2018, <https://oracle.newpaltz.edu/budget-cuts-costs-on-suny-new-paltz-campus/>.

¹⁴ Pipe Dream, “Running Low on Revenue Binghamton University Struggles to Cover Employee Raises,” November 26, 2018, <https://www.bupipedream.com/news/101083/running-low-on-revenue-binghamton-university-struggles-to-cover-employee-raises/>.

¹⁵ Pipe Dream, Kerr, Jake, “Department of Art and Design to Temporarily Suspend Graphic Design Minor,” November 26, 2018, <https://www.bupipedream.com/news/101025/department-of-art-and-design-to-temporarily-suspend-graphic-design-minor/>.

¹⁶ The Statesman, Liebson, Rebecca, “College of Arts and Sciences Cuts Undergraduate Pharmacology Program,” February 25, 2018, <https://www.sbstatesman.com/2018/02/25/college-of-arts-and-sciences-cuts-undergraduate-pharmacology-program/>.

raised tuition rates by more than 42%.¹⁷

Recently, NYPIRG released an analysis of the overall financial impact of the SUNY2020 legislation. It found that New York State has charged public college students nearly \$4 billion more as a result of scheduled tuition hikes at SUNY and CUNY. Even when considering additional assistance provided by the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and the new Excelsior Scholarship program, students have paid \$2.5 billion in additional tuition.

The added tuition dollars have added up over an approximate 9-year period resulting from passage of the “SUNY 2020” law first enacted in 2011 and actions by local governments impacting community college costs. This year’s tuition increases will drive that number even higher.

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. We’ll review some of these shortfalls later. With every tuition hike, New York continues to rely on students and families, many who struggle to keep up with rising costs, rather than addressing years of state underfunding.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to freeze all tuition rates at senior and community colleges to protect college affordability.**

Vulnerable Students Need Support Services to Access Higher Education

The goal of effective college aid shouldn’t be to just cover tuition, but to cover the added costs that can hamstring student success. If costs including textbooks, transportation, food, housing and childcare are standing in the way of a student’s educational success, then they must be addressed.

The cost of child care can be a significant barrier toward accessing a degree. According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, just 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.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

While the average cost of private child care or daycare in NYC can be prohibitively expensive (roughly \$25,000 a year²⁰), enrolling a child in daycare at CUNY can cost as little as \$5 a day. It’s

¹⁷ SUNY tuition for Academic Year (AY) 2010-2011 was \$4,970, and CUNY was \$4,830. 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 Final State Budget for AY 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 allowed for three \$200 dollar increases, bringing tuition to \$7,070 at SUNY and \$6,930 at CUNY, hence tuition has increased 42%. See: <http://www.suny.edu/smarttrack/tuition-and-fees/> and <http://www2.cuny.edu/financial-aid/tuition-and-college-costs/tuition-fees>. Calculations performed by NYPIRG.

¹⁸ 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/>.

¹⁹ 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/>.

²⁰ Bernard, Tara Siegel. “Choosing Child Care When You Go Back to Work.” *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 22 Nov. 2013. www.nytimes.com/2013/11/23/your-money/choosing-child-care-when-you-go-back-to-work.html

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. CUNY and SUNY child care centers are a unique and powerful tool for socio-economic mobility.

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

NYPIRG commends the work of CUNY and SUNY staff, often in collaboration with our campus NYPIRG chapters, student governments and the community at large, to stock and maintain food pantries in compliance with the mandate from Governor Cuomo that every CUNY and SUNY campus create food pantries. That mandate came in part as a response to a report by groups including NYPIRG entitled *Hunger on Campus*. The report looked at food insecurity on campus, and how that may undermine the educational success of untold thousands of students.²¹ Consistent with prior studies, 48 percent of survey respondents reported food insecurity in the previous 30 days.

Taking a closer look at the approximately 1,800 students who reported experiencing food insecurity, thirty-two percent believed that hunger or housing problems had an impact on their education, from foregoing textbook purchases, to missing or dropping classes. Students that are hungry and homeless must get the services they need.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to include monies in the budget to support operating expenses food pantries across campuses at SUNY and CUNY.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

[work.html](#).

²¹ NYPIRG, *Hunger on Campus, The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students*, October 2016. http://www.nypirgstudents.org/reports/Hunger_on_Campus_NYPIRG.pdf, accessed November 30, 2016.

For Carson Fox



NYS Higher Education Committee

Testimony of Trustee and President Austin Ostro

State University of New York Student Assembly (SUNY SA)

October 22, 2019

NYS Higher Education Committee
Testimony of Trustee and President Austin Ostro
State University of New York Student Assembly (SUNY SA)

October 22, 2019

On behalf of the SUNY Student Assembly, and the 1.4 Million students of our great University system, I very much appreciate the tireless efforts of Senator and Committee Chair Stavisky for hosting a series of hearings across the State of New York to address the cost of public higher education, financial aid programs, and other challenges to the student with respect to affordability and accessibility.

The Student Assembly is the recognized system-wide student government supporting the students of SUNY. We are comprised of Student Leaders from across the state and represent the students of the many University centers, colleges, technology colleges, and community colleges. In addition, we are also involved in advocacy on the local, state, and federal level. The President of the Student Assembly serves as the head of the organized student government for all 64 campuses in the system and holds the position as the only student member of the SUNY board of trustees. Twice annually the Student Assembly brings together hundreds of student leaders from across the state and beyond to participate in student leadership conferences, where the organization's advocacy priorities are finalized, and members are offered the opportunity to network and learn leadership skills from students, campus and system administration, and world class faculty through various workshops and lectures.

Additionally, Student Assembly representatives meet on a monthly basis to coordinate advocacy efforts and further refine strategies towards the advancement of quality and affordability in public higher education. We operate a variety of committees focused on promoting academic excellence throughout the system and highlight areas of campus safety, disability services, gender equity, and sustainability.

The Student Assembly urges the state to recognize and act upon the magnitude in which under funding public higher education has on the delivery of services and the quality of education across the system. The Committee clearly identifies the benefit to the state as an accessible State University due to the return on investment made by students pursuing higher education in New York. 'Graduates of SUNY are more likely to work and live in New York and continue to stimulate local and state economies through employment and taxes; currently SUNY campuses contribute \$28.6 billion annually to New York's economy. Adequately funding higher education holds the potential to yield a greater return on investment for the state as students, faculty, and staff from across the SUNY system continue to enhance the quality of life and economic prosperity in their communities.

¹ Schultz, Laura. "The Economic Impact of the State University of New York." www.rockinst.org, Nov. 2018, Pg3, rockinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/11-1-18-BTN-SUNY-Drives-NYS-Economic-Engine.pdf.

State and federal financial aid programs continue to greatly benefit the students of SUNY. Above all, the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), New York's largest grant program, administered by the Higher Education Services Corporation aids eligible students in attending in-state postsecondary institutions.² TAP Grants are based upon New York State family taxable income at the maximum level of \$80,000. For qualifying students, Tap provides grant funds up to \$5,165 to cover the costs of tuition. As the panel can imagine this is enormously helpful in covering the cost of tuition for middle and low income students. The Number of SUNY students at state-operated campuses and community colleges have risen to represent 40 percent of the total number of TAP recipients across the state.³ This participation rise represents both a silver-lining in covering the cost of education, but a bleak future for campus operating budgets.

There continues to be a consistent gap in the funding mechanism which penalizes campuses for accepting and matriculating students who utilize the Tuition Assistance Program. Institutions of public higher education across the state are obligated to cover the difference between the maximum TAP award and the cost of tuition at each campus. Currently, SUNY resident undergraduate tuition reaches \$7070⁴, while the maximum TAP award is \$5,165⁵, leading to a \$1905 gap in funding per student.

This combined figure cost SUNY and CUNY statewide a total of \$139 million dollars last fiscal year.⁶ A funding shortfall of hundreds of millions of dollars over the last 8 years. Individual campuses must finance this funding shortfall through operating costs before they are able to allocate funding for measures of quality education and critical student services.

There are two aspects of public higher education in New York State that remain true. The cost of tuition and the gap in funding for the Tuition Assistance Program both continue to rise.⁷ Since 2009, tuition at state operated campuses has risen 63%, contributing to an increase in the SUNY TAP gap from \$20 million in 2012 to nearly \$65 million in 2018. The shortfall in funding for the program has required SUNY and CUNY to allocate millions of dollars of operating costs over the years in which the gap has existed. Overall, the gap has resulted in students and their families paying more for less. The lack of

² "TAP Eligibility & Income Limits." *NYS Higher Education Services Corporation - TAP Eligibility*, www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/grants/tap-eligibility.html.

³ The State University of New York, *An Analysis of the Tuition Assistance Program* <https://www.suny.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/meetings/webcastdocs/Attachment%20C1%20-%20Tap%20Report.pdf>

⁴ SUNY Smart Track - Empowered Financial Planning, Tuition and Fees <https://www.suny.edu/smarttrack/tuition-and-fees/>

⁵ Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC), TAP Award Amounts <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/grants/estimate-your-tap-award.html>

⁶ It is time to fill the GAP in TAP, PSC CUNY https://www.psc-cuny.org/sites/default/files/GAPTap_Coalition.pdf

⁷ Reichman, Hank. "A New Deal for SUNY and CUNY." *ACADEME BLOG*, 2 Jan. 2019, academeblog.org/2018/12/24/a-new-deal-for-suny-and-cuny/

investment by the state to provide funding in this matter has severely diminished the ability of individual campuses to provide services to students and enhance the quality of education offered. For example,⁸ SUNY Fredonia's core operating budget has declined from an all-time high of \$17.8 million in 2008-2009 to approximately \$11.3 million in 2018-2019, for a cumulative loss over the last ten years of roughly \$53.2 million. This is due to the combination of stagnant funding, a widening TAP gap, and rising institutional operating costs, and Fredonia is not alone.

With increased investment by the state in institutions of public higher education students can receive quality services such as mental health counseling, academic advisement, and gender and sexuality resources at an affordable cost. It is imperative that the state invest in SUNY as the students have selected the State University for its commitment to providing the people of New York educational services of the highest standard, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population in a complete range of academic, professional and vocational postsecondary programs.

No hearing would be complete without drawing attention to the plight of graduate students who suffer from insufficient support for stipends. Stipends aid students in offsetting tuition costs to advance their education. We urge the committee to review graduate student financial support and invest in research opportunities for students who are pursuing advanced degrees. Similarly, important programs such as EOP and CSTEP deserve your continued support.

With respect to loan programs, state policy should focus on enhancing grant availability, and accessibility, thus minimizing the burden of student debt. Availability for Excelsior Scholarships, NYS TAP, and New York Aid For Part-Time Study should be enhanced, and thresholds lowered to increase participation. We should concentrate our efforts on defining access to higher education as an economic investment in the future of the state of New York.

The Excelsior Scholarship, in conjunction with other student financial aid programs, allows some students to attend a SUNY or CUNY college tuition-free. This program continues to succeed as it aids students in graduating on time and with less debt. The Student Assembly urges the state to expand the promise of the Excelsior Scholarship and implement measures that would allow for a greater number of students to apply the scholarship to their academic success. Alterations regarding the course credit minimum for the scholarship would allow for typical students to pursue their education free from the 30-credit calendar year mandate in which it may not be viable for all. Furthermore, expansions of the program to cover additional costs associated with pursuing a degree such as fees, books, room, and board would alleviate excessive student debt and the need for additional employment while matriculated.

The Student Assembly urges the state to invest in public higher education by funding the shortfall created by the Tuition Assistance Program, making amendments to current financial programs available to students, and recognizing its fundamental role and responsibility to offer a world class education at an affordable cost. With an increase in funding and expansions of aid programs campuses across the state

⁸ "Fredonia Budget Issue 'Serious'." *Fredonia Budget Issue 'Serious'* The Post Journal ,26 Dec. 2018, www.post-journal.com/news/page-one/2018/12/fredonia-budget-issue-serious/.

will be equipped to provide a higher quality education and student services that address the backgrounds and needs of all students.

**Statement by Dr. Guillermo Linares
President
New York State Higher Education Services Corporation**

**To the
New York State Senate Committee on Higher Education
on
Challenges to College Affordability and Accessibility**

October 31, 2019

**New York State Higher Education Services Corporation
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www.hesc.ny.gov**

Chairwoman Stavisky, and members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am Dr. Guillermo Linares, President of HESC, and I'm joined today by HESC's Executive Vice President, Elsa Magee.

State Overview:

New York State is home to two of the nation's largest public university systems, and the most four-year degree-granting institutions of any state in the nation. Postsecondary education options for New Yorkers or those looking to attend college in New York range from vocational training schools to small liberal arts colleges and large research university centers -- all of which can be found in urban, suburban and rural settings across the State.

In 2018, more than 1.2 million students were enrolled in higher education programs in New York State across all sectors. Nearly 700,000 postsecondary students attended a SUNY or CUNY college or university, and over 500,000 were enrolled at a private college or university.

2018-19 tuition and fees at our four-year public colleges were 20 percent lower than the national average, and lower than 40 other states. To put this in perspective, average SUNY and CUNY tuition and fees (at \$8,190 for 2018-19) were 17 to 24 percent lower than peer states like Ohio, California and Texas, and 36 to 51 percent lower than neighboring states like Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Vermont.

Financial Aid Overview:

Since 2012, State spending for higher education has increased by 28 percent. In all, New York invests \$7.7 billion annually on strategic programs that help New York students access in higher education each year.

In addition to its competitive public college tuition rates, New York State offers an array of need-based and merit-based student financial aid programs to support the attainment of a college degree. Our programs provide educational support for targeted populations including veterans and their family members, and survivors of disasters that have touched our State; and our loan forgiveness programs support college graduates with loan repayment. Collectively, these financial aid programs provide more than \$1 billion to help ease college costs for hundreds of thousands of students and families throughout the State.

Since 2011, under Governor Cuomo's leadership, New York has implemented an unprecedented number of new student financial aid initiatives and programs, including: the Excelsior scholarship, the nation's first free tuition program covering two and four-year colleges and the Enhanced Tuition Awards programs; groundbreaking programs such as the Get on Your Feet (GOYF) Loan Forgiveness Program – which assists new college graduates in managing their student loan debt as they transition from college to career; and the recent implementation of the Jose Peralta NYS DREAM Act, which expands college affordability to thousands of deserving immigrant students who attend and graduate from New York State high schools.

Through the longstanding Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), the State of New York provides one of the most generous need-based financial aid programs in the nation. In 2017-18, the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) awarded more than \$900 million in college tuition grants to

more than 337,000 students attending a public, private or proprietary college in NYS. Of the more than \$900 million awarded, more than 70 percent was awarded to students attending one of New York State's 84 public sector colleges.

Student Debt:

The Institute for College Access & Success reports that, nationally, 65 percent of 2018 college seniors graduated with student loan debt. In comparison, 59 percent of New York State college seniors graduated with student loan debt. With average loan debt at \$31,127, New York State college graduates fared better than students from every other Northeast state, including Connecticut (\$38,669), Maine (\$32,676), Massachusetts (\$31,882), New Hampshire (\$36,776), New Jersey (\$34,387), Pennsylvania (\$37,061), Rhode Island (\$36,036) and Vermont (\$31,431). At SUNY and CUNY, 67 percent of first-time full-time students that graduate from a public institution leave debt free (55 percent SUNY, 79 percent CUNY).

Since 2011, New York State has made significant investments in higher education to ensure college affordability. First, we have the TAP program which is among the country's most generous grants providing over \$900 million to the students with greatest need. Then to further assist middle-class families we created the Excelsior Scholarship to enable families making \$125,000 or less to attend a SUNY or CUNY school tuition-free. In that time, the Governor has increased the maximum TAP award, enhanced TAP to better serve people attending part-time, youth-in-care and persons with disabilities, and established programs designed to benefit the educational needs of students and encourage on-time completion. All of these efforts serve to minimize the total cost of a postsecondary education. Newly implemented programs such as the Part Time Scholarship offers significant financial assistance to support students who are unable to attend college full time.

Programs such as TAP, the Excelsior Scholarship, and Veterans Tuition Awards, each provide full tuition awards for students who opt to attend a public college or university. As a result, 55 percent of public college students are now attending a SUNY or CUNY institution tuition free.

To assist students who have graduated from a New York State college or university with student loan debt, New York State makes available a number of targeted and general loan forgiveness programs. While the Get On Your Feet Loan Forgiveness Program provides up to two years of loan payments up to any amount for every eligible college graduate, and the Doctors Across New York Loan Forgiveness Program awards up to \$120,000 to physicians who serve for 3 years in shortage communities, most loan forgiveness programs provide between \$20,000 and \$50,000 in loan forgiveness awards to those whose care and services support our State's diverse populations.

Conclusion:

New York State has consistently sought to ensure college accessibility and affordability to State residents based on need and merit. New York is one of only two states to offer a need-based entitlement grant program, and the only state to offer a need-based entitlement loan forgiveness program. Our strong and longstanding support for higher education is repeatedly evidenced in national reports on higher education, such as Grapevine's Fiscal Year 2018-19 survey—which identified New York as one of nine Mega-states whose 2019 fiscal support for higher education,

together, accounted for over 50 percent of the nationwide total support. Collectively, our efforts have served to benefit our students and families by offsetting more than \$900 million in college costs each year. And New York is the only state with a free tuition program for four year college students. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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

My name is Gwen Kay, and I am president of the State University of New York (SUNY) University Faculty Senate (UFS). In this role, I am a member, *ex officio*, of the SUNY Board of Trustees, but I do not represent the board. I am on the chancellor's cabinet, but I do not represent the chancellor.

The University Faculty Senate advocates on behalf of the faculty and staff on the 34 state-operated campuses of SUNY, which is to say, 13 comprehensive colleges, 5 colleges of technology (and agriculture), 8 specialized and statutory campuses, 5 health science centers, and 4 doctoral institutions, with the leadership of SUNY on all matters related to the academic mission of the institution. This is a process which we call 'shared governance'

When I say that UFS "advocates" I am *not* referring to labor-management issues – I leave those issues to the unions. Instead, I am talking about shared governance: faculty and staff share with the administration, on both campus and System-level, governance over issues that are uniquely our purview.

The first clear articulation, and perhaps best definition, of "shared governance," is in a 1966 statement from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Collaboratively Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB). In this definition, General Educational Policy – what an institution will do, how to get there – is one key area: faculty should determine curriculum and policies of student instruction. Another area is admissions (size of the student body, and standards for admission). Beyond curriculum, there are larger, operational questions that are the purview of shared governance. These include long-term planning (development of new courses and/or new spaces) and budgeting, as well as selecting a new president. Selecting other academic administration (deans, chief academic officers) should be done by the president in consultation with shared governance. Faculty status – hiring, re-appointment (or, not), promotion, tenure or dismissal are all the purview of faculty because faculty in a discipline are able to assess the work of colleagues. The chair or head of a department should be selected by election or consultation with a department.¹

"Shared governance" means faculty and staff working collaboratively with administration.² "Shared governance" means we have primary responsibility for curricular decisions, but in consultation and collaboration with college leadership, whereas leadership has primary responsibility, in consultation and collaboration with faculty (and staff and students, if you want to take it to the full level we support) over budgetary and other administrative functions.

Finally, a key distinction in shared governance is larger than, and different from, "faculty." Shared governance means that faculty, in a specific and organized process, are asked to participate, often in a representational way (as per bylaws), as opposed to asking a random (or specifically selected) faculty member for their opinion, or guidance on a committee.

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

¹<https://www.aaup.org/report/statement-government-colleges-and-universities>

² Gary Olson, "Exactly What Is 'Shared Governance'?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 23, 2009. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Exactly-What-Is-Shared/47065>

each of these arenas, shared governance has come to the table and worked with others across SUNY to aid our students. In each of these areas, our collaborative work helps our students succeed.

Applied learning, or a hands-on education experience, is something integral to almost every program, every discipline, and every major. This could mean laboratory work; this could mean research in a library or archive; this could mean creating art; this could mean performance; this could mean an internship; this could mean student teaching; this could mean volunteering. *What* applied learning is, is virtually endless. For some fields, such as teaching, it is in fact required for certification, with a certain number of hours specific. For other fields, it is built into the major, such that every student in a Bachelor of Fine Arts program must participate in displaying their work in a show or gallery space. As such, this is a curricular matter, of instruction, of instructional design.

Several years ago, the governor required every SUNY to clarify whether it would require applied learning as a graduation requirement. Working with System Administration, the University Faculty Senate (and our counterpart at the Faculty Council of Community Colleges) asked each campus governance body to affirm whether applied learning was a graduation requirement or not (graduation requirements are also a local, collaborative decision through shared governance). Ultimately, some campuses did require applied learning and some did not, *as a graduation requirement*. Those campuses that did not stressed that they had many arenas in which applied learning was happening, and is valued.

A second space where collaboration has been helpful, and had significant impact on cost for students, is open educational resources. The cost of books is a perennial concern. Open education resources are freely available (or very inexpensive) text sources that are wholly online. We were already working on open education resources (OER) when the governor also mentioned OER and the cost savings for students. Choosing course materials is part of our purview, in curricular design; some areas might lend themselves better to open education resources than others, such as introductory chemistry or English composition. A dean or provost should not unilaterally decide that everyone on their campus will use OER in lieu of more traditional books, but they can encourage faculty to do so, and to be mindful of cost regardless of the method of course material. The University Faculty Senate worked to get the message out, we worked with the provost's office to help find the best tools, and balance students' financial needs with faculties' course materials needs. In addition, we have encouraged faculty to develop these materials, often collaboratively with colleagues at other institutions across SUNY, and to have compensation for this work (text book authors receive royalties, by comparison).

A third arena where collaboration has been fruitful is educational expectations. As mentioned above, graduate requirements are specific to each campus, and that is good: within overall limits, there are unique aspects of each campus that should be celebrated. The more general framework however, those core competencies that everyone should have for graduation, are very much benefitted by collaboration, consultation and working together. Those core requirements, commonly referred to as general education requirements, are taught by faculty but are standards upon which everyone should agree. These requirements, currently under discussion, are very much evolving in a collaborative way. In all of these spaces, we are mindful of our responsibility to our students.

Faculty and staff at our campuses are concerned about the cost of education, and are concerned about the impact on our students. We recognize the costs of higher education. Over the past decade, we have had to raise tuition –a decision “made” by the governor and legislature) because there has been no alternative if we want to continue to offer, and build on, the quality

education that the people of New York State deserve.

We appreciate state-funded programs including TAP (the Tuition Assistant Program) and Excelsior. We are also mindful of the “gap” between what TAP and Excelsior will fund and tuition costs. Campuses need to make up those shortfalls; the more students a campus has, the bigger the gap. But since we are committed to all students, we cover this widening and widening shortfall. Also, as a reminder, these program only cover tuition, *not* room, board, books or fees.

We are mindful of rising costs on our campuses. We do not want increased costs to mean increased burden to our students, nor do we want increased costs to mean no hiring, as this will negatively impact course delivery. Tuition cannot cover all costs on a campus. On some campuses, there are hiring freezes in place. There may be fewer faculty and staff to do the work, but the work still needs to be done. This often means increasing work load (from 12 or 15 credit hours/faculty to 18-21) without compensation, without expectation of that load decreasing any time soon, and possible impact for students.

We are concerned that increasing tuition, and associated, costs will negatively impact our students. At the same time, these budget pressures impact faculty hiring. Adjunct, or part-time, faculty, absolutely are valuable members of our community, and in some cases can offer special knowledge or skills. However, part time faculty do not have the same commitment –nor should they, given the pay rate and clear (limited) job description to our students. Full time faculty mentor, advise, and in general serve as a presence to help students in their time on our campuses. The shift to more part time faculty may be cost-expedient but has negative impacts for our students in terms of student success and retention.

Yes, we are deeply concerned about the rising costs. We are also deeply committed to serving our students, and the quality of higher education that New York State deserves.

Thank you.

UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

Chairperson Stavisky and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education, thank you for providing the opportunity for United University Professions (UUP) to testify at this hearing regarding the cost of public higher education in New York State, its effect on the Tuition Assistance Program and other important student aid offerings, as well as the affordability and accessibility of a SUNY education.

My name is Dr. Frederick E. Kowal and I am the president of United University Professions. UUP is the largest higher education union in the U.S., representing more than 37,000 academic and professional faculty and staff at 29 State University of New York campuses, System Administration, Empire State College, and SUNY's public teaching hospitals and health science centers in Brooklyn, Buffalo, Long Island and Syracuse.

Our members serve hundreds of thousands of students and patients at our colleges and universities, health sciences centers and state-operated public teaching hospitals directly administered by SUNY.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continuing support and approval of programs and initiatives that we see as vital to the students and patients we see and serve every day.

And as we seek to incorporate everyone into a diverse society and a prosperous state, I thank you for your support for SUNY's opportunity programs and your decision to vote to restore funds cut to these incredibly successful programs in the 2019-20 Executive Budget. We thank you and other legislators for your keen interest and support in closing the "TAP gap"—the difference in state State's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) aid and SUNY tuition that must be made up by colleges. Details about the situation follow further into this testimony.

And thank you for this chance to address the issue of funding for public higher education in New York state.

The cost of education

SUNY's mission statement requires the State's University to "provide to the people of New York educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population in a complete range of academic, professional and vocational postsecondary programs including such additional activities in pursuit of these objectives as are necessary or customary."

Yet, access to SUNY is a major obstacle for thousands of New Yorkers, some of whom simply can't afford the cost of a SUNY education. Others don't receive—or don't qualify for enough—student aid and are forced to take out tens of thousands of dollars in student loans as they work toward their college degrees.

In its May report on student debt, the U.S. Federal Reserve reported that 54 million Americans took on debt—including student loans—for education. U.S. student loan debt surpassed \$1.6 trillion in 2019. Last year, 2 in 10 students who still owe money were behind on their payments, the Reserve report said.

In New York, the average student-loan debt per borrower expanded to 36 percent from 2007 to 2017, rising more than \$8,000 to \$30,899, according to report by LendEDU, a student loan finance company. Our state is No. 7 in LendEDU's ranking of the 10 states with the highest student debt.

Students must also factor in room and board, books, incidental expenses, lost income, and other related costs of attending college—which far exceed SUNY's tuition. Full-time student fees and room and board at SUNY state-operated campuses total to roughly \$19,000, more than two and a half times tuition. Tuition itself accounts for about a quarter of the total costs to students of attending college each year.

Lack of state support

As student debt rises, so does the percentage SUNY students pay for their education—in large part because of the lack of new state funding for SUNY. In 2007-08, tuition and fees from SUNY students accounted for 25 percent of SUNY's operating budget, with the state providing the rest of the funding. In 2019-20, students are paying 65 percent, with the state

chipping in the remainder. This is unfair to students and is unsustainable formula for SUNY.

SUNY's state-operated campuses have never recovered from a series of slashing state funding cuts that took place during the Great Recession; aid dropped from \$1.36 billion in 2007-08 to \$700 million this year—that's a decrease of nearly 50 percent, or a third of its core operating budget.

Of all state agencies, SUNY took the greatest hit in terms of budget cuts—and unlike other agencies, the University has never been made whole. Several years of flat funding for SUNY has only served to harm and financially hamper cash-strapped campuses even further.

These cuts have caused financial chaos at campuses like Fredonia, where the college last year considered cutting undergraduate and graduate programs to help close a nearly \$13 million budget deficit. In May, Fredonia officials proposed an academic reorganization that could help the college save about \$1.6 million which still leaves a large budget gap.

Stony Brook University, which faced a \$35 million deficit in 2017, instituted a hiring freeze. Last year, the university merged three foreign language programs into a single department, and suspended admission to undergrad programs in theatre arts, cinema & cultural studies, comparative literature, adapted aquatics and pharmacology. Binghamton University also ordered a hiring freeze in 2018 to help reduce a \$12 million budget gap.

In January, SUNY Downstate Health Science University's College of Health Related Professions was cash-strapped to the point where there wasn't enough funding for it to hire enough staff and faculty. This could jeopardize the school's reaccreditation.

The need for support

With proper state funding, SUNY's focus can move to expanding programs and hiring more full-time, tenure-track faculty, initiatives that will make the University more accessible to New Yorkers seeking a quality public college education. These moves will also help SUNY campuses attract—and more importantly—retain students.

One way to achieve that is by increasing funding for SUNY's successful Educational Opportunity Program. These are proven, life-changing programs that provide clear paths to a college education—and often, good-paying jobs—for those who might otherwise be denied access to college.

Through the EOP, students—many of whom are from some of the state's most economically distressed areas—receive specialized advisement, counseling, tutorial services, and summer programs. These students, who are mostly underprepared for college work when they enter the program, thrive in the EOP.

The EOP graduation rate exceeds 65 percent, exceeding the national average for public higher ed colleges and universities. More than 70,000 EOP students have earned SUNY degrees. And with smart, targeted investments in this critical program we can do even more.

Thirty-three percent of SUNY's state-operated campuses have EOP graduation rates ranging from 70 to 88 percent. Not surprisingly, the EOP is a program in high demand; SUNY annually receives more than 30,000 applications for just 2,500 available EOP seats. More funding will allow the programs to expand, increasing access to thousands more students each year.

TAP gap woes

More state funding is also necessary to close the TAP gap—the portion of SUNY tuition that campuses must waive for TAP awardees. The gap has swelled to \$70 million. TAP and other state financial aid programs help provide accessibility to a public college education, which is still out of reach for many qualified students.

About a quarter of students at state-operated campuses receive the maximum TAP grant of \$5,165—which covers only 75 percent of SUNY undergraduate tuition. SUNY campuses must cover the remainder out of their budgets. In many instances there is a correlation between the SUNY Campuses that accept the most TAP eligible students and our campuses that are facing financial shortfalls.

From 1974 to 2010, TAP covered 100 percent of SUNY tuition at state-operated campuses. But the gap has grown as state aid funding to SUNY has dropped. More than 40 percent of TAP students attend SUNY schools; over one-third of SUNY students at state-operated campuses receive TAP aid.

The TAP gap is equal to the annual salaries of over 500 new full-time, tenure-track faculty. These additional hires could increase advising, counseling, tutoring, and course offerings necessary for students to complete their education, and complete on time.

SUNY medical schools hurting

Our state-run academic medical centers in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse hold dual roles—as safety net hospitals serving all who walk through their doors regardless of their ability to pay, and as teaching hospitals that provide accessible, affordable medical education to student doctors and medical professionals.

Both are important, and both require adequate funding to serve their students and the tens of thousands of patients they treat each year. Yet, state support for the hospitals was reduced in the 2019-20 budget due to the elimination of \$87 million of state operating funds in 2018.

Our hospitals rely on this funding—which was at \$153 million before the Great Recession—to help offset costs associated with caring for large numbers of underinsured and uninsured patients and fund the medical schools by more than \$200 million annually.

This show of support from the state wasn't without a price; in return for this funding, SUNY's academic medical centers pay for their employee fringe benefits and debt service costs, a total annual expense nearing \$500 million.

The elimination of this portion of operating funds will undoubtedly impact the ability of the medical schools to provide an affordable, accessible education to thousands of students each year. SUNY's state-owned hospitals do not turn a profit and shouldn't be expected to do so. That is not their purpose.

Without full state support, the hospitals will be hard-pressed to properly fund their medical schools, which attract most of their students from the Empire State.

For example, Upstate Medical University enrolls about 1,600 students its medical school each year. Of those, 80 percent are New York state residents; half are women and half are men. Upstate recently signed agreements with Adelphi University and Rochester Institute of Technology to funnel their students into Upstate's medical programs.

As a medical center, Upstate is Central New York's largest employer, with nearly 9,000 workers from almost 30 counties. The medical center is a huge economic engine for Central New York, injecting \$2.3 billion into the economy. The health center's service area reaches north to Canada, and south to Pennsylvania. The economic benefit to the region goes hand in hand with Upstate's presence as the region's largest employer with nearly 9,000 people from nearly 30 New York counties.

Upstate's University Hospital has downtown and community campuses in Syracuse, as the medical center has its state-of-the-art Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital. Upstate's clinical services serve a 19-county area. Upstate houses the area's Level One trauma center and poison control center, the Clark Burn Center, the Occupational Health Clinical Center, and a regional perinatal center.

Focus on transparency at SUNY campus foundations

In February 2018, the state Comptroller issued a hard-hitting report that found that more than half of SUNY campus foundations haven't been audited by SUNY over the last 10 years. Of those foundations, two of them—the UB Foundation and the Stony Brook Foundation—control as much as \$1.1 billion in assets, which is more than half the assets of all the campus foundations combined.

The Comptroller found that contracts bid by the UB and Stony Brook foundations—including services for lobbying, fundraising and entertainment—were not bid competitively and were awarded based on referrals or companies they had worked with before. The report said that the UB Foundation paid nearly \$240,000 in salaries and fringe benefits to

two retired UB staff members who returned to work, allowing the employees to bypass Retirement and Social Security law finance caps.

Since SUNY isn't auditing the foundations on a regular basis, the inner workings of these organizations are murky, to say the least. The public has a right to know how much money the foundations have, where it came from, where it's going and how it's being used.

Our cash-strapped campuses need help, and the foundations are doing precious little to provide that help, even though they were established to serve the academic missions of our colleges and universities. In fact, most people who donate to the foundations don't know—or realize—that these non-profit organizations are private; many believe they are donating to the campus.

The foundations use their SUNY affiliations to raise funds, which are invested in higher risk, higher reward investments. It helps them avoid regulation and transparency requirements that other state entities must adhere to.

UUP has been behind AO4367/S06275, which if approved would compel CUNY and SUNY campus foundations and their subsidiaries to submit annual reports and to post them on the SUNY website. Those reports would include financial information, contract vendor data, and a list of foundation and SUNY employees, including salaries, job titles and descriptions.

What we have now is a situation where the issue is not just the lack of transparency, but serious concern over how these hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent. These dollars should be used to help campuses and aid students in their pursuit of a college degree—and a better life. Making SUNY foundations accountable and transparent is a solid step toward making public higher education a priority again.

Conclusion

On behalf of the entire UUP membership, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

Our union appreciates this opportunity to provide the committee with detailed information to help it examine and address these important issues.

Our hope is that the information we've provided will help shine a spotlight on these problems and explain why it's imperative that the state make a solemn commitment to investing in the future of public higher education in New York state.

We greatly appreciate your time.

Thank you.

TESTIMONY REGARDING THE SUNY BUDGET FOR 2020-2021

Henry Steck (SUNY Cortland)
United University Professions (UUP)

2 -- October 2019

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My name is Henry Steck. I am a SUNY Distinguished Service Professor *emeritus* and a Professor of Political Science *emeritus* on the SUNY Cortland faculty.

Today, I am here representing UUP – United University Professions. UUP is our faculty union representing academic and professional faculty in the State operated campuses of the State University of New York. I have served several terms as Vice-President for Academics for UUP.

I am honored to speak for UUP and to share our deep concern for our university. I thank you for the opportunity of addressing you.

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I will address two issues of policy that are of vital importance to SUNY and therefore to the people of the State of New York.

- The first involves TAP, the Tuition Assistance Program – a program that provides vital support both to SUNY students and to SUNY itself.
- The second involves SUNY’s four teaching hospitals. These health science centers not only educate medical professionals but engage in ground-breaking scientific research *and* in delivering high-quality, specialized medical care to many counties in both the upstate and central New York region.

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First, with respect to the Tuition Assistance Program – TAP – and to what is known as the TAP GAP. Basically, SUNY faces two serious issues with respect to TAP.

First, as you know, TAP provides significant financial assistance to students in need, Yet today the reality is that TAP falls short in the support it should be

providing for students. In the 2018-2019 academic year, SUNY tuition was \$6,870 while maximum TAP support was only \$5,165. Thus, TAP support falls short by \$1,705 or 75% to the student. For SUNY this short-fall adds up to the institutional equivalent of salaries for an estimated 800-1000 new full-time faculty.

We should not underestimate the important of TAP: more than 40% of students throughout the state who receive TAP are SUNY students and about a third of students on state operated SUNY campuses receive TAP.

The significance of TAP to family finances or what students must provide on their own is significant. Over four years this is a shortfall of \$6,820 for each TAP student. While I have no data on this – I have to believe that this forces all too many New York students to fall into the student loan debt swamp that we hear so much about nationally.

This is the student TAP GAP.

Second, the annual loss of \$1700 in tuition support per TAP student is also a considerable fiscal loss for individual campuses. SUNY campuses rely on tuition revenue to supplement state budget appropriations that support programs and staffing. In short, the TAP shortfall in annual tuition revenue of \$1705 per TAP student is the institutional TAP GAP. It represents and represents a significant funding loss of approximately \$70 million this year.

SUNY's 29 state operated campuses must absorb this loss by reductions in faculty and staff, library, laboratories, libraries, and student services and the like.

When campuses do without, they compromise SUNY's statutory mission of providing (quote) "educational services of the highest quality with the broadest possible access, fully representative all segments of the population." (*NYS Education Law, setion 351*)

UUP has heard from Senator Shelley Mayer and from Senate leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins that SUNY's budget has been flat for a very long time while costs increase. Thus, the TAP GAP condemns SUNY to ever greater austerity with incalculable impact on its mission to teach, to search, to serve.

Let me now turn to our concern with SUNY's Health Science Centers. My geographic frame of reference is SUNY Upstate here in Syracuse and its satellite centers throughout our region. But what I will say applies to all four SUNY health science centers: Upstate, Downstate, Stony Brook, and Buffalo.

While I speak today representing UUP, I must tell you that I also speak from personal family experience. Over the years in several times of crisis my family turned to SUNY Upstate. We have been just one among thousands of New York families served by Upstate as well the other three HSC's. Overall, SUNY's four HSC's provide first-rate medical education and research and top-flight health care when we call on it.

In our region there is strong reliance on the educational and health services provided by Upstate and its outreach locations. Upstate provides services for both our urban and our isolated and vulnerable rural communities.

As you know, Upstate Medical University is the only major academic medical center in Central New York. It enrolls around 1700 students in some 47 accredited residency programs. It has a Level-1 trauma center, a new and essential cancer center, a distinguished children's hospital, and an all-important burn center.

When I have had to travel to Upstate's ER from Cortland, I find an ER that is invariably packed with families and children. Upstate's outreach services are life-savers for our underserved urban and rural populations. As a SUNY institution, its faculty and staff also engage in ground-breaking research and medical education that enhances the first-rate quality of the American scientific community and its overall health system.

In short, SUNY Upstate does so much in so many ways that defy brief enumeration. It educates students in the health sciences at the graduate and undergraduate levels; it has a faculty of 2400 including about 1500 volunteers. It is among the largest employers in the central upstate region with a \$600 million payroll. Currently, 4000+ SUNY HSC graduates practice medicine statewide. UUP estimates that Upstate's fiscal impact runs \$3.5 billion annually and it provides outreach services across the region. Our other SUNY HSC's are equally first-rate distinguished institutions.

Why, then, we ask, have our HSC's been put on such austerity budgets – especially given the crisis in the American health system? Like SUNY overall, SUNY HSCs need much better funding to do their job.

Thus, UUP urges the Legislature to:

- Allocate \$87 million to return the hospital subsidy to SUNY's teaching hospitals – for meeting fringe benefits.
- Earmark \$36.1 million to cover the debt service of our SUNY hospitals
- And to ensure that SUNY is a leader in medical diversity – serving a more diverse state – we urge the creation of a Medical Educational Opportunity Program.

In conclusion, yes, UUP is mindful that the governor wants a 2% spending cap on agencies and departments. Nonetheless, for SUNY to serve New York even better, we urge you

(1) to close the TAP GAP *and*

(2) to ease the fiscal burden on SUNY's HSC's.

Thank you for the privilege of addressing you today.

Contact information

Henry Steck

UUP: SUNY Cortland Exec Board member; Statewide Delegate; Cortland Retiree Rep

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Higher Education Public Hearing
Senate Standing Committee on Higher Education
October 31st, 1:00 PM
SUNY Oswego

Written Testimony
Respectfully Submitted by Julia Rizzo
Director of Individual Studies
SUNY Morrisville

To the Senate Standing Committee on Higher Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my written testimony and thank you for your attention to college affordability, an issue that impacts hundreds of thousands of college students across the state, including the 383,000 undergraduates attending SUNY colleges.

I am writing to express my support for closing the TAP gap and my support for Senate Bill S5821, which expands the criteria under which students may remain eligible for the Excelsior scholarship.

Before I begin I would like to take a moment to thank Sen. Stavisky for her legislation that would ensure that all students have the opportunity to be tested for Gifted and Talented programs. I believe this initiative could have a direct impact on increasing the diversity of students attending selective colleges and universities.

I would also like to thank Sen. May for her service to the 53rd district - the district where I live, work, and grew up. The 53rd district is home to 515 of our current students and 4,700 alumni and we appreciate your service to the region.

By way of introduction, my name is Julia Rizzo and I'm the Director of the Individual Studies degree program at SUNY Morrisville. The individual studies program is a flexible associate's degree program that serves more than 400 students at our Morrisville and Norwich campuses, including several Excelsior scholars. Before stepping into my current role, I served as the founding director of our campuswide academic advising office and as an academic advisor. Everyday, I speak with students who are facing the possibility of having to leave college because they aren't able to meet the cost of attendance. It is not an exaggeration to say that over the last six years I have had thousands of conversations with students on this topic and it's an honor to write to you on their behalf.

The students we serve at SUNY Morrisville have a high degree of economic need. In 2017-2018, 97% of our incoming students received financial aid. That year, 76% of our students received state aid. (To put that in perspective, 46% of students at Binghamton University received state aid.)

I'd like to join the New York State United Teachers and the New York Public Research Interest Group in urging the Legislature and the governor to close the \$67 million TAP

gap, a cost borne by SUNY campuses across the state. SUNY Morrisville is proud to serve many students from low and middle-income backgrounds, and we urgently need the Legislature to close the TAP gap so we may have the funding needed to support these valued students.

I would also like to express support for Senate Bill S5821, currently in committee. This bill is very exciting for those of us who serve Excelsior Scholarship students. If passed, the bill will lower the number of credits Excelsior students are required to earn from 30 per year to 24, allow part-time students to qualify for the Excelsior Scholarship, and extend the required time-to-graduation.

Lowering the number of credits from 30 credits per year to 24 will bring the requirements in line with what most institutions consider the baseline number of credits for full-time study. It will relieve pressure on students who do not pass a course or need to retake a course, especially since many of our students are not able to afford out-of-pocket costs for summer or winter courses. It will lower the number of students who qualify for the Excelsior Scholarship only to lose it. Once Excelsior is lost it cannot be regained, and this loss can have dramatic financial ramifications. If students fail to meet the scholarship requirements, they are left very literally holding the bill, and the often large outstanding balance makes it difficult or impossible for students to continue their studies. I've personally worked with students who have faced this difficult loss.

The next group that will benefit from this update to the legislation is part-time students. Allowing part-time students to qualify for the Excelsior scholarship will facilitate access for the many students who need to work while they are attending college, including parents, adult learners, and all those who work full-time out of financial necessity.

Expanding the required time to graduate from two years to two and a half years (for an associate's degree) and from four years to five years (for a bachelor's degree) is crucial for students who change their majors during their studies. According to the National Center for Data Statistics, within three years of first enrolling, about 30% of undergraduates changed their major at least once.

Like all of what I've touched on today, these issues impact my program directly. In individual studies, about a third of our students are hoping to change their major to nursing. Our nursing associate degree has stringent entrance requirements. Many students apply to the nursing program but are not admitted directly into the program because they haven't taken the requisite levels of high school math and science or they have not yet taken the standardized test required (the TEAS test). These students plan to spend one or two semesters taking courses to meet the entrance requirements and then change their major. However, the clinical parts of the nursing curriculum take four semesters to complete. If a student spends one semester preparing for entrance into the nursing program and then is successfully admitted, they will need five total semesters to graduate (their preparatory semester plus four semesters in the nursing program). In other words, they will no longer be eligible to earn an associate's degree in the four semesters dictated by the language of the

Excelsior Scholarship requirements. For these students, meeting their high academic goals means losing their scholarship, a position that no student should be placed in.

Expanding the expected time to graduation will also benefit students in highly structured or specialized programs. If a student gets a C-minus instead of a C in a key pre-requisite class in one of these programs, they may not be able to retake that class until the following fall, putting them a full year behind. In highly technical or clinical programs, retaking that course at another institution may not be an option. For these students, just one C-minus can mean the loss of Excelsior.

I would like to conclude by advocating for one group of students who are not covered in the new bill: adult learners who are hoping to return to college to finish their degree. As the director of a very flexible academic program, I received several excited phone calls after Excelsior was unveiled from working adults and full-time parents who believed that Excelsior could give them an opportunity to achieve a long-time goal: finish their college education. It's difficult for folks who are excited to return to higher education that they are not eligible for Excelsior because of college credit earned decades before. Making part-time students eligible for Excelsior is one step in the right direction - allowing students who are returning to school to qualify for Excelsior is the next step.

For this reason and all of the reasons I've outlined, I urge you to support Senate Bill S5821.

Vince Tinto, the noted higher education scholar from Syracuse University, wrote "Access without support is not opportunity." Thank you for working to ensure that every SUNY student has not only access to higher education, but also financial support and opportunity.

Respectfully Submitted,



**Julia Rizzo
Director, Individual Studies Program
SUNY Morrisville**

Mary Hess, SUNY Oswego: Testimony

I've been asked to testify concerning the state of our campus at SUNY Oswego. My estimation of where our campus stands in the SUNY system is that while we are doing a good and effective job of educating our undergraduates, we accomplish this despite privation and a fair amount of neglect on the part of Albany. I speak, of course, primarily of the reliance on adjunct labor without proper compensation, which of course is my own concern as the Officer for Contingent Faculty for United University Professionals.

If that were the only problem, that of campus inequity, it would be in itself a significant issue, but the effects of that inequity have reached our students, the very people whose interests we all serve. The way this occurs is in the lack of courses required for them to complete their degrees in a timely fashion. Over and over I have listened to students explain to me why their course progress was delayed or blocked by unavailable required courses.

It usually goes like this: a student who is finally taking my required course in English composition, normally taken in the first semester of their first year, tells me matter-of-factly that they were unable to find a place in this class until perhaps their junior or even senior year, far too late in their college experience for a foundational course. Those terms - junior and senior - are themselves antiquated since we now know that because of these conditions the norm has often been six years to degree, a direct result of the courses filling before the first-year students can secure a place, any place.

Retention is the word all faculty are exhorted to remember and to keep in front of us in all advisement matters. There are simply fewer students entering now, and the competition for them with other public and private institutions is fierce. With the often chaotic process of registration, those new and inexperienced college students quite simply don't always get what they need to survive in an unfamiliar college environment, much less to thrive. The time to graduation for an undergraduate is painfully long, not unlike a graduate degree where the end goal seems too far away. Add to that the soaring costs brought on in part by the very destructive practice rampant in higher education of expanding administration at the expense of faculty: for example, deans are no longer enough - "deanlets" proliferate, and administrative assistants have their own assistants!

Many campuses, private and public, are struggling to attract students, and much energy is expended being "planful" for their benefit: a clunky term used in our administration building that says much about how those administrators see the problem. Plan to build, to burnish, to draw them to a campus that has its own spectacular setting: the lakefront of beautiful and often stormy Lake Ontario. Look away, though, from the grim towers of the nuclear plant adjacent to campus, and from Oswego itself, a struggling, gritty blue-collar upstate city.

So, Oswego does attract students, but it isn't easy to keep them. Programs do get cut to the bone; faculty get non-renewed even in fields that need their expertise. Promises made can't be fulfilled because the funding just isn't there. Those of us who regularly teach first-years as I do know that there is a significant influx of transfer students beginning as soon as Spring semester. But there are also significant departures of

students who found they just couldn't get what they were promised. They even leave the state, further accelerating the "brain drain" from New York we hear about year after year. This is simply counterproductive: New York needs these students to graduate and take their place in our economy.

I am not unaware of the constraints placed upon you by the state and taxpayers. But those very taxpayers deserve to receive what they have invested in with their tax dollars, and who have sacrificed to send their children to Oswego in the hope that they can fulfil their own promise. As tuitions rise, students are more stressed and distracted from what should be their only responsibility, their studies. The "Tap gap" wreaks havoc on lives. Students fail to return, not because they want a different school, but because the expense is not manageable. I hear it constantly, and it is heartbreaking.

When budgets need to be balanced, our administration reacts by cutting faculty. This is not only wrongheaded but incredibly difficult for us, the surviving faculty, to manage the demand placed upon us by students who simply need the courses they must have to complete their programs and to get the quality education they were promised. Faculty complain of "job creep," where the expectations placed on faculty continue to expand without appropriate compensation. There is often a gender disparity in full-time faculty pay, a risible situation in the year 2019. This semester, our campus saw a mandate to cut adjunct positions by 11% across the board. The move was not justified and was steadily denied by management until it was a fait accompli. The fact that adjunct labor is shamefully ill-paid and exploitative and should be brought into line with economic reality and in acknowledgement of the contribution contingent faculty bring to our college was

never addressed. It can be done: SUNY Oneonta has recently crafted a plan, an MOU that should be used as a model throughout the system as a means to address this issue.

So many times, the issue of adjunct labor comes down to numbers, faceless numbers. Let me put a face to that issue. I am in my ninth year as an adjunct here at SUNY Oswego. It is not my only academic position, only the most recent: beyond instruction, I served as an advisor and an administrator at five other institutions, two of them private, over the last 22 years, and all of those long-term and in the state of New York. I am myself a SUNY product, a graduate of the University of Buffalo. My parents were graduates of institutions that became part of Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's grand plan to create a great state system of higher education: My father received the *summa cum laude* degree in the School of Pharmacy at the University of Buffalo. My mother received her Bachelor's degree in Education from Buffalo State Teacher's College. They were very proud to have their oldest child attend UB, and three more siblings subsequently received degrees at Fredonia, Geneseo, and Oswego, in large part made possible by the late and lamented Regents Scholarships. My sister, Dr. Laura Brown, is a full professor in the Human Development program, and its first chair. My father, a successful small business owner and a medical professional, often commented that he paid to build SUNY with his state taxes, and he expected us to take full advantage of that. He was not joking, I can assure you. So, I can claim to be third generation SUNY, and proud of it. My graduate degree is from Michigan State University, itself a part of

another great state education system. There the Land Grant legacy was impressed upon me, as well as the serious mission of public education.

Where is that mission today? It is your charge to keep true to what Gov. Rockefeller intended when he expanded the system, granting the opportunity for a quality higher education to all New Yorkers, and one worthy of the Empire State.

Unfortunately, I see that dream of the engine of social mobility slipping away from our students every day, in small and large ways, as that retention mandate looms larger.

The very faculty, adjuncts, who do the work to prop up the system, who help those students learn and get their footing at a crucial time in their development, are kept on semester to semester contracts. The administration has steadily resisted any call to normalize our position and has instead created more visiting assistant professor positions, which are what I refer to as a "poisoned chalice" - a heavy teaching schedule for slightly more money with an end date that may well spell the end of their time at Oswego, depending on the current needs of administrators. This further reduces the number of adjuncts employed and creates confusion and frustration for students when a relied-upon professor is suddenly no longer available to consult.

I do believe that you want to fulfil your responsibility to all New Yorkers, and request consideration of the concerns I have enumerated. Do not follow the ruinous example of former Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, whose budget cutting and hostility towards academe resulted in the erosion of another of America's best public educational

systems. This is the Empire State; SUNY Oswego is a productive and effective part of SUNY. Support us as we deserve to be supported. Ensure the future of the New York. Recognize beyond mere words the accomplishments and dedication of our faculty, all our faculty.

Thank you.

**NYS Higher Education Committee Testimony
Elizabeth Dunne Schmitt, Ph.D.
Professor of Economics
SUNY College at Oswego
10.31.2019**

Good afternoon and thank you to Chairperson Stavinsky, honorable members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education, and distinguished staff, for hearing my testimony today. I am Elizabeth Schmitt, Professor of Economics at SUNY Oswego, and I am privileged to have the opportunity to advocate for my students, who inspire me with their resilience, their enthusiasm, and their never-ending ability to surprise and delight.

In my 24th year at Oswego, I am also known affectionately as “Dr. Liz” to many of my students at SUNY Oswego. Born and raised in the Mid-west, the Empire State became my adopted home when I joined the Oswego economics faculty in 1995. I would go on to make this beautiful Central New York area my home with my husband and two sons.

In these 24 years, I look back in awe at the power of serendipity to bring me half-way across the country to a place where, everyday, I get to do exactly what I was meant to do, exactly where I should be doing it. This serendipity brought me to an institution that understands that while getting an education is a great privilege, it is not only for the privileged.

In the STEM fields, the Greek letter “delta” is often used to signify changes in the value of a variable. At SUNY Oswego, it is all about the delta: To take all types of students and make them stars, rather than just mark time with students born with advantages that make them destined for success. We are here to meet students where they are, but bring them to where they need to be—to match their drive and efforts with our support and resources.

It is with that understanding that, in these 24 years and its many changes, one of the most heartening changes is how higher education welcomes a broader, more diverse group of students to its campuses. Among our Oswego undergraduates,¹

- Pell recipients are up over 50% since 2008 (from 27% to 42%);
- The fall first-year class of 2018 was the most culturally diverse (including all races and ethnicities and international students) ever to enroll at SUNY Oswego at 34%, a 150% increase compared to a decade ago;
- An expansion of our accessibility and mental health services breaks down barriers for many students;

¹ Sources: IPEDS, SUNY Oswego Office of Institutional Research, SUNY Oswego’s 2019 Annual Report

- There is a growing contingent of first-generation students and Americans. In one of my classes this semester, with 31 students, I have 7 different countries of origin represented by their parents;

Yet for those seeking need-based aid, their unmet need remains at about 25% of their total calculated need. The ever-widening TAP gap continues to strain operating budgets and forces campuses to make hard choices about student needs.

Despite these changes, what remains unchanged is our commitment to educating these students and converting access to success. At Oswego, a wide group of faculty and staff, under President Stanley's leadership, have taken action to remove barriers, financial and otherwise, that work against our most vulnerable students on a timely path to graduation. These include rethinking fee structures, advance deposits, and registration holds. It includes providing walk-in advisement, immediate textbook access, and even a student-run food pantry.

I am one of many colleagues with specific language in my syllabus about students facing food insecurity and housing emergencies. In our latest UUP contract, there are specific responsibilities for faculty and professional staff to promote a safe environment through mandated reporting. As of the Fall 2019 semester, Oswego has mandatory syllabus language to inform students of this commitment.

But the work is yet undone, and we cannot do it alone, in an environment of shrinking state support—shrinking support in real dollars, as a percent of mandated costs in our operating budgets, as a percent of institution needs, as a percent of student needs. We need legislative partners. We need champions.

Let me put on my economist hat for one moment: We know that education generates a social return, something economists refer to as a "positive externality." Studies have shown that education leads to public health benefits, increased civic engagement, decreased probability of criminal behavior, and productivity "spillover" to those working with educated employees. In an era where limited resources bring painful choices, education remains the engine that powers economic opportunity for the betterment of all society. In an economy of ideas, human capital is our most precious resource.

SUNY Oswego's mission is all about this social return as we "*contribute to the common good by lighting the path to wisdom and empowering every person in the college community to pursue meaningful lives as productive, responsible members of society.*"

So, again, I come here today to ask for your support and advocacy, we need your partnership for the common good:

- Close the TAP gap as we welcome students from financially vulnerable households. Do not make us choose between funding these students and other parts of an operating budget with no fat to trim.

- Going forward, as a rule, as an expectation, provide us enhanced maintenance of effort for mandatory operating costs. These costs rise annually, and state operating aid does not match this. It is not sustainable and not consistent with a state's commitment to public higher education.

Neil Postman, author, educator and SUNY Fredonia graduate, once wrote,

"Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see."

For this parent and educator, I think this applies to both my children and my students. It is easy not to prioritize an investment in SUNY when today brings many pressing needs, but recognizing the needs of higher education now is perhaps one of the greatest gifts we offer to the future, and a great act of faith in what that future will be.

So once again, I thank the committee for their time and attention, and hope you will join me in advocating for the sons and daughters of New York so that they can realize their potential and be an inspiring message to that time we will not see.

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Dunne Schmitt, Ph.D.
Professor of Economics
SUNY College at Oswego

Public Hearing UUP Testimony given by Dr. Steven Grassl

Oct. 31, 1 p.m. - Senate Standing Committee on Higher Education

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

Chair: Senator Toby Ann Stavisky Co-Sponsor: Senator Rachel May

(This testimony regarding the 2019 – 2020 Executive Budget was prepared by UUP and presented to Senator Liz Kruger and Assembly Member Helen Weinstein, Jan. 28, 2019.)

Increase oversight over college campus foundations and affiliated nonprofit corporations

We congratulate the governor for proposing that the state comptroller be given the ability to audit and approve SUNY construction and construction-related contracts for more than \$250,000, and to also review SUNY Research Foundation contracts that exceed \$1 million. We strongly support these moves, which will provide access and accountability. However, the comptroller's oversight does not extend to the awarding of contracts by SUNY-affiliated nonprofits such as the Fort Schuyler Management Corp., which was at the center of the scandal involving bid-rigging on state contracts worth more than \$850 as part of the "Buffalo Billion" initiative. It also fails to give the comptroller purview over SUNY campus foundations and auxiliary entities, which are conduits for hundreds of millions of dollars, with a significant portion of those funds coming from public funding and student fees.

Many of these organizations contribute little to the academic missions of their campuses, despite being established to fill that purpose. Further, these foundations can create subsidiary corporations—like Fort Schuyler—make investments and partner with corporations, with little accountability. The very nature of these entities demands oversight. A 2018 state Comptroller's report found that more than half of all SUNY campus foundations haven't been audited by SUNY in the last 10 years; some haven't been audited in more than a decade. Cash-tight campuses should have access to the public funds in their foundation's coffers, which could be used to expand programs; hire full-time, tenure-track faculty; and provide vital student services. We strongly believe that campus and SUNY administrators, as well as the state comptroller, should have the ability to oversee these foundations and hold them accountable.

To accomplish this, UUP urges the Legislature to approve legislation that would:

Require campus foundations to submit annual budgets to SUNY for approval. Foundations and affiliated corporations would also provide yearly budgets for comment and approval by campuses, SUNY System Administration and the Legislature. These public documents—which would include budget statements, vendor information, employee salaries and other pertinent data—would be subject to the state's Freedom of Information Law.

I want to thank Senators Stavisky and Senator May for hosting this event and inviting me to speak.

I also want to thank the Senators for their past support of UUP's advocacy efforts on behalf of SUNY.

I am here today to speak to you about the need for direct State support of the three SUNY-operated hospitals located at Stony Brook HSC, Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, and here in Syracuse at Upstate Medical University. Together, these three hospitals provide over 25,000 jobs, provide medical care to 1.3 million patients from diverse and underserved populations from Long Island and Brooklyn, to Central New York from the Pennsylvania border to the St. Lawrence regardless of their ability to pay. They've trained thousands of physicians who continue to practice throughout New York State and are the economic engines of their communities, all while providing life-saving care and essential medical services found only at these public teaching hospitals.

The Stony Brook Hospital, University Hospital at Brooklyn, and the Upstate University Hospitals here in Syracuse have continued their health care, educational, and research missions without any direct State Hospital support after the elimination of the state hospital subsidy of \$87 million in 2018. The term "subsidy" is at least partially misleading. A subsidy, by definition, is a sum of money provided by a government to keep the price of a service or product low or competitive to help a business or organization (SUNY hospitals) continue to function. All of this is true, but this definition also implies that this is a gift or a grant that is not necessarily essential to the recipient organization. This latter part is not true. Starting in 2001, the NYS Department of Budget relinquished itself of the responsibility of paying the employee benefits, utility costs, and debt services for the three SUNY-operated hospitals by agreeing to provide a "subsidy" to SUNY to help offset those obligatory costs of those hospitals. Prior to the Great Recession of 2008, those hospital subsidies were as much as \$28 to \$153 million annually. Since then the state hospital subsidy has been reduced or restored to the amount of \$87 million annually until its elimination from the State budget in 2018. In this changing health care environment of the last decade, our three public teaching hospitals have struggled, but continued admirably to survive and serve their educational, research, and health care missions of their communities.

For example, the University Hospital at Upstate Medical University, Upstate University Hospital continues to provide the only ACS (American College of Surgeons) certified Level 1 trauma center for a 17 county region in Central New York from St. Lawrence County to the Southern Tier. The Golisano Children's Hospital serves an even larger 22 county area that reaches to parts of Vermont and northern Pennsylvania. The Clark Burn Center serves 37 counties stretching west towards Rochester and east to Albany. And, if a NYS citizen in any of the 54 counties north of Westchester County picks up the phone to call about a medical emergency due to an accidental poisoning, that call goes to the Upstate New York Poison Center here in Syracuse at Upstate Medical University. Upstate University Hospital provides additional specialty medical services that no other hospital in the area provides (e.g. hyperbaric oxygen therapy). Many of the specialty medical services that Upstate provides are not major revenue generators, but are necessary to provide comprehensive medical care for the people of central New York. UUH provides medical care for the underserved rural areas in northern and central New York and urban areas right here in Syracuse. Syracuse is one of the most impoverished cities in the nation and xx% of patients it serves on an annual basis are un- or underinsured. The inner city of Syracuse relies on UUH for medical care. To reach the rural areas of NYS, Upstate is associated with 29 regional hospitals.

This is not a recipe for fiscal success, this is compelling evidence for a service-driven industry designed to meet the needs of 1.8 million central new Yorkers regardless of their ability to pay for the life-saving services provided. This is evidence of the need for fiscal support from the State of New York.

There are over 1,600 students enrolled at Upstate Medical University ranging from medical school, nursing school, ten health-related professional programs, or one of 7 Ph.D. granting programs. Over 600 residents are also currently training at Upstate Medical University, University Hospital, and affiliated clinics. Currently, there are 400 ongoing clinical trials at Upstate and the University and Hospital interact and support each other in countless ways that cannot be operationally separated without inflicting irreparable harm to both.

Upstate Medical University is the largest employer in Syracuse and Onondaga County, with over 10,000 employees and an annual payroll of \$625 million. The operating revenue of Upstate Medical University is \$1.8 billion annually, \$1.2 billion generated by University Hospital. The total economic impact of Upstate here in CNY is \$2.5 billion annually and it is growing by 300-500 jobs annually. As a result, employment in the area has increased by 30% and state and local taxes revenues have increased by 86% since 2008. Upstate Medical University is the major economic engine for the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County.

Last year UUH was predicted to finish the fiscal year \$90M in debt, but managed to end the year with a surplus of \$1.2M. What does that mean? You might say that this means that UH does not need the NYS subsidy since it operated with a balanced budget without any direct state support. I'd say it means just the opposite, with a total annual revenue of \$1.2B, \$1.2M accounts for 0.1% of all hospital revenues. That is an extremely thin margin of safety. What it actually means is that UH needs every penny, every fraction of a penny, it earns, to keep operating in the evolving health care environment. There is no margin for error, no margin for growth, and no margin for dealing with an unsuspected crisis.

What you also don't know is that some regular routine maintenance at Upstate has been delayed over the last year in order to help balance the budget. Now I assume many of you own homes. What is the long term cost of not performing yearly routine maintenance of your house? You may be able to delay a particular repair project for a year or so, but eventually that water, heater, furnace, roof, whatever else is going to need to be repaired or replaced. If not, the infrastructure begins to crumble and the long term costs are far greater than the short term costs. It is not sustainable. With a 0.1% annual surplus, all you can do is maintain the status quo and hope that nothing breaks until you can afford to make those needed repairs. Upstate University Hospital has been able to meet all necessary accreditation standards and actually improve its hospital quality rating to above the NYS hospital average.

All of this has occurred without any direct State support to the University Hospital for the current fiscal year. The State SUNY operated University hospitals are the only state agency that are required to pay their own debt services, utility bills, and benefit costs. Now, without the State support promised in the 2001 agreement, this amounts to an unfunded mandate to a State agency providing the most critical of medical care to New Yorkers across the state. From an economical and health care perspective, New York State cannot afford to have the University Hospitals fail. We implore the New York State Legislature and Governor to allocate \$87M to return the hospital subsidy to SUNY's teaching hospitals to ensure their continued operation and provide the best and essential medical services possible and cover the cost of the hospitals debt services. Thank you for your attention.

**New York State Senate Committee on Higher Education
Hearing on the Cost of Public Higher Education
October 31, 2019**

Testimony by Samuel Rowser, Executive Director and Kevin Marken, Utica Director
Representatives of On Point for College, Inc.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the impact that rising costs at public colleges are having on the lower-income, first-generation students that On Point for College serves. Since On Point was founded in 1999, we have helped more than 2,500 students from Central New York graduate from college. Most of the more than 2,000 enrolled students we are serving this semester attend public colleges across New York State. We have a great deal of experience in helping students navigate the SUNY system. On Point's advisors visit students on campus frequently during the school year—once per semester at SUNY's 4-year colleges and university centers, and once per month at community colleges and technology colleges. We have a large number of students attending local community colleges, so we are there more often: once per week at Mohawk Valley Community College and Herkimer Community College; and twice per week at Onondaga Community College. These visits give our students the opportunity to receive advice; assistance with finding resources on campus; and tangible assistance, such as paying for textbooks, fees, or figuring out how to pay for supplies not carried by the campus book store. These visits also help us to understand the policies, procedures, and conditions at most of the campuses in the SUNY system—especially those circumstances that have the most significant effects on our students.

Lower-income, first-generation students face many challenges on their higher-education journeys. Without assistance, these challenges can turn into barriers that lead students to stop out, or to never attend college. On Point helps students develop plans to address challenges before they become stumbling blocks. But some of these issues are systemic—the same things affect a wide cross-section of our students. We would welcome your assistance in addressing these:

1. The cost of textbooks—Textbooks are prohibitively expensive. Programs like Onondaga Community College's new "box of books," which controls the textbook cost per credit hour, is a step in the right direction. However, all of the books are rentals, which students cannot keep at the end of the semester. While this is a great way to help reduce the cost of books for students, if a student desires to keep a book, they must then purchase it at its retail cost.
2. The rising cost of tuition—SUNY tuition increased by \$300 per year from 2011-2016—a 30% increase, and has been authorized to increase by up to \$200 per year for students who do not qualify for the Excelsior program. The maximum TAP award has not increased since the 2014-15 school year. The maximum Pell grant has not increased since the 2015-16 school year. This leaves our students with financial aid awards that do not go as far as they used to, which means that they will almost certainly need loans to finance the amount of their bills that financial aid cannot cover.
3. Rising cost of fees that colleges charge—TAP can only be used for tuition. And while Pell can be used to cover fees, some colleges are charging several thousand dollars in fees

every year. For example, a first-year student at a couple of SUNY colleges may pay more than \$2,500 in fees on top of tuition, housing, and meal plan. Some of these fees, such as enrollment fees and housing deposits, must be paid before financial aid is available. On Point provides financial assistance to students who are unable to afford those fees. This assistance amounted to \$10,249 in the 2018-19 school year; some years the figure has been in the \$12,000 to \$15,000 range. This amount reflects what On Point has paid for its students, which are only a fraction of the number of students on each campus. Efforts to cap tuition increases do not address the prolific increase in the number of fees, and the growth of the dollar amount of the fees. Colleges are balancing their budgets at the expense of the students who can least afford to pay these fees.

4. Student loan interest rates have gone up every year since 2016—Subsidized and Unsubsidized Direct and Stafford loans are now at 5.05% for undergraduates; Direct PLUS loans are now at 7.6%. While the NYS Senate may not be able to control federal interest rates, addressing the overall cost of attending colleges in New York will go a long way toward reducing the need for students to take out loans.
5. Unpaid back bills prevent students from re-enrolling—if a student is enrolled, but decides not to attend college, they owe 25% of their bill, even though they never went to class, if they fail to formally withdraw prior to the first week of classes—which many of our students are not aware that they must do. If a student attends the first week, and decides college is not for them, they owe 50% of their bill if they withdraw during the second week. Students are often unaware that these bills exist, until they decide to try college again later. If a student fails to appeal the charges within the academic year in which they are incurred, it is too late to get the charges dropped or reduced. While a year may seem like a reasonable amount of time, for many students with extenuating circumstances, it is not. Students who are incarcerated right before the semester starts may not be available to contest these bills, if they are even aware that they exist. Students who are grieving the loss of a loved one, or who have been traumatized by a violent death in our community, simply do not have the capacity to attend to these matters, and again, may not even be aware that they have incurred a bill at all. Colleges' practices of turning these bills over to collections agencies further restrict the ability for students to appeal the bill or negotiate lower payments once they do become aware of the bill.
6. Most of our students are not eligible for the Excelsior program because they are students from the lowest-income families and are eligible for full TAP and full Pell; after these are applied, there is no remaining unpaid tuition. For students from families who make too much to qualify for full TAP or full Pell, Excelsior can be very helpful. However, the easing the tuition burden stops short of addressing all of these students' needs. These students still have to take out loans to cover housing, books, fees, etc. Expanding Excelsior to cover college costs beyond tuition could have a dramatic impact on many more students.
7. Affordable meal plans—many of our students are food-insecure. The costs of meal plans are prohibitive. And campuses that only have a la carte offerings in their cafeterias exacerbate the situation. Students can spend \$10 or more on a simple lunch of a sandwich, fries, and a drink.

On Point is also aware of solutions to some of the issues our students face. We would like to share those with you as well, in the hope that you can help to make this assistance available more broadly:

1. Community colleges are an important way to make affordable higher education available to so many students in lower-income communities, especially if students go to the college near home, and are commuters. There is often a stigma among students about attending community college. A marketing campaign to raise the profile of community colleges in these target communities could help students choose the most affordable path to a post-secondary degree. We suggest that something like the documentary One Step Closer, produced by Roadtrip Nation (<https://roadtripnation.com/roadtrip/community-college>) could help.
2. On Point has developed expertise in assisting students who transfer to four-year colleges after attending community colleges. Through our participation in a FIPSE First in the World grant from the US Department of Education, we learned that one key strategy that would relieve the financial burden for more students who transfer is the development of articulation agreements and transfer pathways between community colleges and four-year colleges. When courses from the community college do not count toward the four-year degree, students have to spend additional time and money to finish their bachelor's degrees than they would if all of their credits transferred. We recommend that colleges develop explicit, written documents that show students which courses to take while in community college so that their prerequisites will be fulfilled.
3. Co-requisite classes to replace pre-requisite (remedial) courses: Some lower-income students are academically under-prepared for college. When students place into non-credit-bearing classes that are the prerequisite for Math 101 or English 101, they spend their financial aid dollars on courses that do not count toward their degrees. Some colleges have multiple levels of remedial courses. Students placing into the lowest levels could be in their fourth semester (of a two-year degree) before they take a credit-bearing, required core math course. Research has shown that more than half of the millions of students who must take developmental courses in college never graduate.¹ Strategies to address this situation include co-requisite remediation support for students enrolled in credit-bearing math and English courses, self-paced learning models, and compressed developmental courses. We strongly encourage colleges in the SUNY system to implement these strategies, or to look into placing Educational Opportunity Centers on the campuses of community colleges, so that students can take developmental courses at no cost to them and without spending any of their financial aid package.
4. Using technology to flag students who might be harmed by dropping classes: When students consider dropping courses if they have poor grades, in order to preserve their GPAs, there can be other issues that should be considered. If a student drops below the required number of credit hours, their financial aid package will be reduced the following semester. Students must be made aware of all of the implications, including financial ones, of the decision to drop courses before they do so. We encourage colleges to use technology to alert students whose financial aid will be impacted when they submit a

¹ Bailey, Thomas, Dong Wook Jeong and Sung-Woo Cho, "Referral, Enrollment and Completion in Developmental Education Sequences in Community Colleges," *Economics of Education Review*, 29:2 (255-270), 2010. Cited in Elizabeth Zachry Rutschow and Alexander K. Mayer, "Early Findings from a National Survey of Developmental Education Practices," Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness, 2018.

withdrawal form so that the people on campus who provide academic advising can help our students avoid costly mistakes.

5. **Student housing deposit and emergency fund**—On Point for College worked with Herkimer Community College to establish a fund on campus that can be used to pay students' housing deposits, which are due in advance, before financial aid is available. This system allows students who cannot afford to pay a deposit to reserve their on-campus housing before the deadline. The fund can also be used to help students address other emergencies. The fund is replenished when students pay it back after they receive their financial aid disbursement. We recommend that colleges consider allowing On Point to create a fund like this on their campuses.
6. **College Access and Success Programs**—like On Point—help students apply to, enroll in, and persist at college through graduation. But On Point is unique in the nation for the holistic approach we take to helping students. We offer services that other organizations do not: On Point is an open enrollment program and does not turn students away, regardless of grade-point average. On Point takes hundreds of students each year to visit 70 colleges throughout the state. On Point helps with the financial aid process; provides some college supplies to students who complete our college orientation sessions; and provides transportation to any college in New York State using a corps of dedicated volunteers. On Point partners with a dentist who does pro bono root canals. We provide winter coats and eyeglasses. On Point even partners with a local college and a housing agency so that students at risk of homelessness have a safe place to stay during the summer and winter breaks when the dorms close. We help students pay for textbooks, summer courses, outstanding bills that prevent re-enrollment, housing deposits, and fees when financial aid is unavailable, or has run out. Our program works: On Point students persisted from freshman to sophomore year at a rate of 77%, which is significantly higher than the average SUNY community college retention rate of 60%. We humbly suggest that providing state funding for On Point's programs will have an impact on thousands of lower-income, first-generation students each year—helping people consider going to college who might otherwise not have thought college was possible, and providing wrap-around services to support students on every step of their journeys toward their degrees.

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FOR COLLEGE

Transforming lives. transforming communities.



Constituency: On Point for College provides direct services to Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, Cortland, Herkimer, Madison, & Oswego Counties. On Point partners with downstate agencies to extend services to New York City. Since 1999, more than 9,700 students have enrolled in over 200 colleges and universities with the support of On Point for College staff and more than 150 volunteers.

Economic Impact: More than \$13 million in increased SUNY/CUNY tuition is generated each year to support 3,000 active students. On Point has worked with over 200 employers to connect students and alumni to job, internship, and co-op opportunities.

ROI: Since 1999, 2,600 students have earned college degrees, resulting in \$1+ billion in increased lifetimes earning for bachelor's degree holders and \$650+ million in increased lifetimes earnings for associate degree holders.

College Access	College Success	Career Services
<p><i>OPFC accepts all students, making higher education accessible to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-income • Single/no parent households • Homeless • Refugees/immigrants • Unemployed/not in school <p><i>95% of students are among the first generation of their families to attend college</i></p>	<p><i>OPFC provides holistic support from application through graduation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-on-one counseling throughout college • College supplies and help with housing deposits • Transportation to/from school • Transfer Services 	<p><i>OPFC helps students make the leap from college to careers that match their skills and education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job/internship placement • Resume/cover letter assistance • Mock interviews • Mentorship • Networking • Job fairs and career slams • Soft skill building

Program Overview

Since 1999, On Point has helped more than 8,700 first-generation youth to get into college, stay there, and succeed afterwards.

We help students identify and apply for their best fit post-secondary educational opportunities, whether that's college, a certificate program, or another type of program. We also help them connect to the campus and community resources needed to succeed.

And since 2008, we've helped them develop the tools and skills they need to transition into careers.



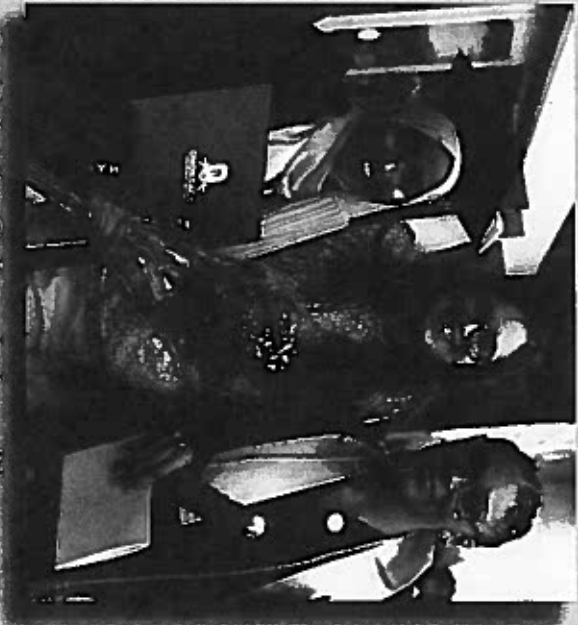
"As a professional educator, I am in a position to recognize On Point for College as one of the most successful community-based college access and success programs in the nation.

— *Lorrie Cierno, President, D'Youville College*

"Colleges in New York State know that if On Point for College students are enrolled at their college, these students will receive the support and guidance they need to help them succeed."

— *Linda LeMura, President, Le Moyne College*

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On Point for College helps with every step of the college and career journey, from application through graduation and beyond!

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Tiffany C. Rush
Director of Advancement & Completion
tiffanyrush@onpointforcollege.org
315-418-0254

For Cayuga, Cortland, Onondaga,
& Oswego counties contact:

Nicole Burnett
Lead College & Career Success Advisor
nicoleburnett@onpointforcollege.org
315-418-0173

For Herkimer, Madison, Oneida
counties contact:

On Point for College Utica
315-790-5588

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and opening lives, transforming communities.

Education Services

Serving Cayuga, Cortland,
Herkimer, Madison, Oneida,
Onondaga, & Oswego Counties.

Program Eligibility

On Point for College is an open enrollment program. We work with students interested in pursuing post-secondary opportunities, including two and four year degrees, certificate, and training programs.

Our ideal candidates are:

- High school juniors or seniors
- High school graduates, recent or otherwise
- GED/TASC recipients or in TASC classes
- Planning to attend college or a vocational or certificate program
- Interested in taking college prep classes

On Point for College Today:

8,700+ Students have gone to college with On Point's help since 1999.

95% Of On Point students are the first in their families to attend college.

3,000+ Of On Point students are enrolled in college currently.

73% Of On Point complete freshman year & return for sophomore year.

2300+ On Point students have earned at least one college degree.

86%+ Of each dollar donated goes towards student services.

Our Services



On Point for College provides a comprehensive suite of services that allows us to meet our students wherever they are along their post-secondary journeys. To do this, we offer:

- One-on-one advising, including help with preparing college & financial aid applications
- Campus tours during the spring & fall semesters for prospective students
- Transportation to & from non-local colleges for semester breaks, emergencies, and placement exams
- A set of basic college & residence hall supplies so no student arrives unprepared
- Ongoing support and advisement throughout their college careers, including visits from On Point staff and connection to on-campus resources
- Career planning, including guidance in selecting a course of study, help with resumes, interview skills, job shadowing, internships, and networking

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Transforming lives, transforming communities.

Program Sites

For site schedule contact **Tiffany C. Rush** at tiffanyrush@onpointforcollege.org or 315-418-0254 or visit onpointforcollege.org/mobile

Cayuga County

Booker T. Washington Community Center
23 Chapman Ave., Auburn, NY 13021

Cortland County

Cortland Youth Bureau
35 Port Watson St., Cortland, NY 13045

Herkimer, Madison & Oneida Counties

On Point for College Utica
500 Plant St., Utica, NY 13502

Onondaga County

On Point for College Syracuse
488 W. Onondaga St., Syracuse, NY 13202

Oswego County

Catholic Charities of Oswego
808 W. Broadway, Fulton, NY 13069

From the Students

"On Point gave me an opportunity to be more than what society hoped for me to be. They are more than a resource to me. On Point is my family!"

- Antwann Kearse, A.A.S. SUNY Morrisville, B.S. University at Buffalo

"My wife and I are examples of how On Point helps students to break barriers through advisement, financial aid, transportation, college visits and more. We wouldn't be where we are today without On Point."

- Bkash Regmi, B.S. and M.S. SUNY Poly