



# 2022-23 Executive Budget Testimony

**Interim Chancellor Deborah Stanley**

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**Joint Legislative Public Hearing  
New York State Assembly Committees on Ways & Means and Higher Education  
New York State Senate Committees on Finance and Higher Education**

Good morning Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky, and Glick, as well as all members of the Senate, Assembly, and staff.

I am Deborah Stanley. Since January 15<sup>th</sup>, I have had the privilege of serving as the Interim Chancellor of the State University of New York (SUNY). I have come to know several of you over the course of my 25 years as President of SUNY Oswego, and it is good to see all of you today. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss Governor Kathy Hochul's vision for the SUNY System for both the 2022/23 year and beyond, and to share the perspective of our students, faculty, and staff on the proposed Executive Budget.

I am joined today by both Bob Megna, SUNY's interim Chief Financial Officer and President of the Rockefeller Institute of Government, and Cheryl Hamilton, SUNY's Student Advocate and Executive Director of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), who heads our work on many of the most important issues that ensure student success.

Before I begin my budget remarks, I'd like to take a moment to thank all of you and our other partners in the Legislature, Governor Hochul, the Division of the Budget, New York State Department of Health, and New York's federal Congressional delegation. As you can imagine, the past two years have been an extraordinarily trying time for the SUNY community. Support from you and our other partners through formal guidelines and expert information, as well as financial infusions, made it possible for our campuses to keep their doors open, for students to safely return to campus to continue their academics and extracurricular activities, and for our institutions to contribute to the battle against COVID-19, especially our hospitals. This was done through caring for COVID-19 patients, producing groundbreaking research, as well as hosting mass testing and vaccination sites.

In terms of the Executive Budget, it is important to note the atmosphere within which it is proposed. The pandemic came at a time of major change within the field of higher education. It brought into even greater light concerns over access and affordability that have been expressed in the general public and by prospective students, especially those from underserved communities. This is a particular concern of mine, and one which you share, as SUNY is respected as one of the greatest institutions for creating upward social mobility. In addition, the pandemic accelerated enrollment challenges for many institutions of postsecondary education, including SUNY. However, I would like to point out it has not affected every sector equally. In fact, our University Centers and many four-year degree granting institutions have kept enrollment stable or seen modest growth in the number of students they serve.

Finally, the pandemic hastened changes needed in *how* higher education serves these students. Studies indicate that by 2027, 70% of all new jobs created in the U.S. will require postsecondary education, and the students of today seek a different approach to receiving their education, and SUNY is on the forefront of doing so.

I share these realities because they are central to understanding Governor Hochul's vision for making SUNY the greatest comprehensive system of public higher education in the nation. We share her vision and know that with the right assets, investments, and partnerships, we can achieve it. SUNY cannot continue with the same policies and practices of the past, and we are on a path to continue SUNY's academic leadership in the world. As we move forward, we recognize that many changes will need to be supported by Legislative action.

Given how comprehensive and complex SUNY is, with 64 colleges and universities including research and doctoral granting institutions, four-year degree institutions, 30 community colleges, three hospitals, a law school, a veterans' home, and partnership with a national laboratory, change does not come over night.

Recognizing this, the Governor has directed SUNY and its partners to work collaboratively across the sectors to develop a wide-ranging and detailed action plan. Objectives include increasing enrollment and redesigning our academic models to meet the needs of every student; including not only students straight out of high school but also the returning professionals who need flexibility and affordability to earn a certificate or degree to advance or change their career.

This year's Executive Budget is the foundation to begin that work – and a strong foundation it is. This proposed budget is the most significant Executive proposal of investment into public higher education in more than 20 years, and underscores the Governor's understanding of, and commitment to, the ways that SUNY is inextricably linked to the well-being of New York's economy, workforce, health care system, and much more. Something which is no surprise to those of us who have had the opportunity to work with the Governor over the years.

**We respectfully urge the Legislature to support all funding provisions pertaining to public higher education within the Executive Budget proposal, including:**

- **Eliminating the TAP Gap in 2022/23.** We were delighted to see action in the last budget to close the TAP Gap within three years. The TAP Gap drains tens of millions annually from campus budgets and we applaud the Executive's proposal to close it for good this coming year.
- **Funding maintenance and new capital projects.** To attract students and provide the excellence that allows our graduates to compete with graduates from across the state and country, our campuses need the classroom and lab space that private institutions provide. The Executive's plan will provide SUNY campuses the resources necessary for much-needed and shovel-ready projects.
- **Increasing faculty.** Just as SUNY needs the physical assets to compete, we need the ability to attract world-class faculty who reflect the diversity of this state. This funding will help us build ranks, with a priority on hiring underrepresented minorities.

- **Implementing 100% community college floor.** Our greatest enrollment challenges are within the community college sector, where enrollment ebbs and flows nationally and here in New York as we face declining demographics and increased competition. This will stabilize funding to allow for plannability at our colleges, affording them opportunities to manage fixed costs and make longer term plans versus the volume model of the past.
- **Establishing a real Part-Time TAP Program and reinstating TAP for incarcerated individuals.** This expansion will provide financial assistance to those part-time students juggling work and childcare needs, while reinstating TAP for incarcerated individuals can reduce recidivism.
- **Expanding the opportunity programs.** The funding you provided last year 1) created 1,000 new spots within EOP, 2) established a medical EOP program to create a pipeline to diversify medical professions, and 3) increased financial support for every student. The 10% increase included in this year's budget will help support those efforts and allow for further growth, giving even more students an opportunity to succeed.
- **Reforming the academic program review process.** In order to compete, our accredited campuses must be in position to respond quickly changing demands just as campuses in other states can do. I applaud the State Education Department for working with us over the past year to enact efficiencies in their process as well as our own. It is my hope the Legislature will support the Executive's proposal this year.
- **Providing SUNY hospital and mental health workers a heroes grant.** It is imperative to show our appreciation for their exceptional work on the frontlines of the state's COVID-19 response.

I look forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature to find collaborative ways we can implement the Governor's vision for SUNY and ensure the continued and increased success of the SUNY System.

Before I close to take your questions, I'd like to note that this year's SUNY alumni legislative class is one of the largest in history. In all, 63 of your colleagues in the Senate and Assembly graduated with one or more SUNY degrees. Several more have taken courses at one of our campuses.

Your success is something we are all very proud of. Thank you for all that you do in support of our students, faculty, and staff. I would be happy to discuss the Executive budget proposals previously noted – or any other items of interest to you – in greater detail.