

Supporting Documentation

Stopping the Rise of Tuition and Fees

Tuition has increased dramatically system-wide since the 2008 financial crisis. The Student Assembly President routinely votes against tuition increases, but due to flat state support and increases in operating expenses, the SUNY Board regularly votes to raise tuition by the maximum allowable amount. The Student Assembly urges the state to appropriate funding to the state to offset the need for any increases in [tuition or fees](#).

Funding for Critical Maintenance and New Capital Projects

The Student Assembly supports a \$1.2 billion investment in SUNY infrastructure, to support critical maintenance needs on existing buildings, and the construction of new facilities. The current level of funding provided by the state for capital does not allow campuses to even keep up with scheduled repairs, let alone invest in expansion. Capital neglect can lead to unsafe conditions for students, faculty, and staff, and to buildings being taken off line from use. Additional [support for capital](#) would also allow campuses to make serious investments in the sustainability of their infrastructure.

Increase State Support for Students with Disabilities

The New York State [Education Department](#), on behalf of the Department's Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities, recommends that New York State provide \$15 million in funding for providing services to students with disabilities, and that SUNY's share of that funding be \$5.7 million, proportionate to the percentage of students with disabilities that the system serves. Such increased funding will allow campuses to provide wraparound services that include but are not limited to:

- Supports and accommodations for students with disabilities
- Summer college preparation programs to ease the transition to campus and help students with disabilities navigate facilities and systems
- Providing full-time and part-time faculty and staff with disability training
- Improved identification processes for individuals with disabilities and data collection services.

Reinstate TAP and Pell Grants for Justice-Involved Students

Prior to the 1990s, justice-involved students were eligible for federal pell grants and [state TAP awards](#). This eligibility was eliminated, in practice dramatically cutting support for college in the prison programs. Since the cancellation of TAP for such students for example, there has been a 79% reduction in college programs for incarcerated individuals in New

York State. Given the reduced rates of recidivism and public dependence associated with graduates of college prison programs, we urge the federal and state governments to reinstate eligibility for key financial aid programs to justice-involved students.

State Support for UUP Contract

The Student Assembly calls on the state to fully cover the increased collective bargaining costs associated with United University Professions [current contract](#). This would mean covering the remaining year of retroactive raises, and all future increases associated with the contract. While SUNY students support fair compensation for faculty and staff, students should not have to foot the bill.

Close the TAP Gap

The TAP Gap, as it is widely known, is the difference between the TAP award and the actual cost of tuition. According to a SUNY administered [report](#), the average annual tuition at a SUNY school averages to \$6,870, the TAP award provides up to \$5,165, creating a \$1,870 difference for each TAP student. This equates to a \$70 million dollar shortfall that SUNY campuses are required to close through their operating budgets. The Student Assembly urges the legislature to close the TAP Gap by reimbursing campuses for the \$70 million in lost revenue for tuition credits. According to a [projection](#), the Tap gap's annual increase will continue to rise, equating to \$2,555 for the 2021-22 school year. By closing the gap, the state would allow campuses to redirect spending towards other critical priorities, such as student support and comprehensive wraparound services.

Reinstate Pell Grants for Justice-Involved Students

We firmly support reinstating Pell Grants for justice-involved students for a number of reasons. Prior to 1994, incarcerated individuals were able to access federal financial aid to access higher education while imprisoned. However, in 1994, a ban was placed on inmates trying to access Pell Grant awards. A relic of the "tough on crime" era of the 1990s, this ban is still in place today, and negatively affects America's more than two million prisoners. The benefits of this program are wide-ranging and well documented.

According to the [Vera Institute of Justice](#), the recidivism rate for inmates drops precipitously after receiving Pell Grants and, if implemented nationally, would lead to a \$365.8 million cost-savings for states. Additionally, there is overwhelming support for criminal justice reform, with 91% of Americans believing there needs to be reform, as found by an [ACLU](#) poll. Lastly, we believe there is a unique opportunity for SUNY to take the lead rehabilitating prisoners as, according to the [Rockefeller Institute of Government](#), over

30 colleges and universities in New York provide college-in-prison programs, 12 of them being SUNY schools.

There are several pieces of legislation that policymakers can support in order to reinstate Pell Grants for justice-involved students. While we believe that the best way forward is including Pell Grants for justice-involved students in a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, other bills create the same benefits. [S.1074](#) and [H.R.2168](#) - Restoring Education And Learning Act of 2019 (the REAL ACT) are both examples of bills that we support.

Work-Study Reform

According to the [Federal Student Aid](#) office, Federal Work-Study (FWS) provides “part-time jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay education expenses.” There are [hundreds of thousands](#) of students who receive FWS every year, but students are severely limited in where they can use FWS dollars. Because of the restrictions on FWS, a paper published in the National Bureau of Economic Research found that FWS “...provides disproportionate support to students at elite private institutions...” This fact is unsurprising as wealthy universities are able to admit students who require more aid to attend school and also afford to create more jobs to take advantage of taxpayer dollars. However, FWS is an incredibly important program, and we believe that there are multiple solutions to issues with current allocation methods and restrictions.

One solution to the problems that FWS is facing would be to expand work-study dollars to be applicable in private-sector opportunities. There are a number of reasons to do this, but the primary reason is that it would empower low-income students to work jobs that are directly related to their careers. For example, instead of working a typical FWS job like serving food in the university-run cafeteria, a student would be able to work off-campus at a firm related to their major. This would help create an American workforce ready to tackle a changing global economy as [700,000 Americans](#) receive work-study, but many find themselves working administrative jobs unrelated to their field. Several pieces of legislation exist that would unleash the full power of Federal Work-Study dollars.

The best way to ensure that students receive the most out of FWS is through a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act that includes FWS reform. However, outside of the Higher Education Act, one example of a bill that appropriately reforms Federal Work-Study is a bipartisan bill sponsored by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA). [S.830 - Classroom to Careers Act of 2019](#) expands FWS dollars fully to the private sector and stipulates that work cannot be longer than a 6-month period and that the work must be related to your career of choice.

Expanding and Revising the “90/10” Rule

The “90/10” rule was established initially as an “85/15” rule by a series of reforms in 1992 to protect students and taxpayers from abuse by for-profit universities, and re-reformed to the 90/10 rule in 1998. The rule establishes a maximum of 90% of a for-profit institution’s revenues coming from federal financial aid from the Higher Education Act (HEA). For example, a for-profit institution with \$1,000,000 in revenue would only be able to receive \$900,000 in aid provided by the HEA. The 90/10 rule was established to protect students from predatory for-profit institutions that take advantage of students.

One report published in the [National Bureau of Economic Research](#) found that students who went to for-profit institutions perform worse in the labor market than those with just a high school degree. As written in the [Harvard Law Review](#), for-profit schools systematically target low-income and minority students, and burden students with expensive and useless credentials. In fact, the Brookings Institute found that 13% of for-profit schools would have to close down operations if the 90/10 rule were to be readjusted to the standard set in 1992. One notable exception to the 90/10 rule is the GI Bill. The 90/10 rule only protects federal financial aid in the Higher Education Act. As a result of this loophole, for-profit institutions have an incentive to [target student-veterans for their GI Bill benefits](#). Because of the industry’s predatory and abusive practices, we believe that the 85/15 rule should be reinstated.

One way to support reinstating the 85/15 rule is by supporting the [College Affordability Act](#) (CAA). The CAA is a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act that closes the 90/10 loophole for student-veterans, and also brings back the protective standard of 85/15.

Increasing Pell Grant Award Sizes and Maintaining the Pell Grant Surplus

[Pell Grants](#) are a form of federal financial aid for students whose total family income is \$50,000 a year or less. The majority of the Pell Grant budget goes to students whose family income is less than \$20,000 a year. Pell Grants are provided by the Higher Education Act (HEA) and are one of the most important programs from the HEA. Pell Grants offer [millions of college students](#) around the nation aid that they depend on to afford college. Pell Grants currently have the lowest purchasing power in the history of the program, down to [28% from 92%](#) of a student’s educational expenses. Pell Grants need to be expanded to both increase access to the program and the award amount.

The best way to support Pell Grants is to support the [College Affordability Act](#) (CAA).

Compared to most higher education Pell Grant proposals, the CAA establishes the boldest vision for the program. The CAA would increase the maximum Pell Grant award to by \$625 to \$6,820 in 2021. It would then automatically increase to \$8,460 over the next decade.

Protecting Title IX

According to the [U.S. Department of Education](#) (DOE), Title IX “protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance.” Title IX is a key component in protecting students from sexual violence. However, recent changes to [Title IX](#) have decreased the effectiveness of Title IX offices.

Secretary Betsy DeVos has made several changes to Title IX, and we take issue with many of her decisions. Firstly, we oppose removing the ability of student survivors of sexual violence to seek a campus judicial proceeding for incidents that occur off-campus. The ability for student survivors to seek a campus judicial proceeding for incidents off-campus is incredibly important as the violence can still be committed by a student. Additionally, we oppose mediation as a means to adjudicate cases involving accusations of sexual or interpersonal violence. Mediation forces survivors to relive trauma as they are forced to meet with the person that committed violence against them.

The best way to support our Title IX reforms is to support the [College Affordability Act](#) (CAA). In the CAA, the [bill stipulates](#) that Secretary DeVos abandon efforts to weaken Title IX enforcement. Specifically, the CAA forces Secretary DeVos to stop “enforcing the sex discrimination rules proposed in November 2018.”

Protecting Undocumented, Immigrant and International Students

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a program introduced in 2012 by President Obama that stops children brought to the US illegally from deportation. According to the [American Council on Education](#), There are approximately 1.9 million DACA eligible people, and 800,000 DACA recipients. 45% of DACA recipients are currently enrolled in school or college, and 72% of those enrolled in school are pursuing bachelor’s degrees. Further, 91% of all DACA recipients are currently employed and create [billions of dollars](#) in economic benefits in the United States annually.

There have also been a number of changes to F1 Visas that we disapprove of. [An F1 Visa](#) is a “nonimmigrant visa for those wishing to study in the U.S.” The Trump Administration has actively [made it more difficult](#) to secure this type of visa, and this contributes to a hostile climate for immigrant students. Lastly, we believe that the Federal Government must make

it clear to international students that they are welcome by decreasing restrictions on [Curricular Practical Training](#) (CPT) and [Optional Practical Training](#) (OPT).

Building on the Excelsior Scholarship Program

New York State can build on the promise of the Excelsior Scholarship by easing certain [eligibility criteria](#), which could open the program to more students. By streamlining the application process, guaranteeing fair treatment for students with disabilities, and offering more flexibility to transfer students during the credit verification process, more students would be able to take advantage of this important scholarship.

Year Round TAP

Currently, students can only utilize [TAP awards](#) during the Fall and Spring academic semesters. Students can use pell grants throughout the year however, creating a disconnect between what the state and federal governments allow. Allowing students to utilize their TAP awards during Winter and Summer sessions would allow New York students to complete their academic programs faster, and with less debt. The Student Assembly supports creating eligibility for TAP during all academic sessions

State Support for Community Colleges

SUNY's community colleges are funded by a combination of direct state support, appropriations from their sponsor counties, and tuition and fees. The state support piece is directly tied to enrollment, with colleges receiving a flat amount per full time equivalent student. This means that cyclical changes in enrollment can have dramatic effects on a college's level of state support. We urge the state to institute a funding floor, equal to the 2019-2020 appropriation to each community college, and enshrine that [funding floor](#) in state law. This would allow community colleges a greater degree of financial predictability, and reduce the need for increases in tuition and fees on students.

Increasing Graduate Student Wages

All graduate student assistants deserve to be compensated at a living wage based on their community of residence. Limiting graduate level study to those who have the means to support themselves financially throughout their course of study is unjust. Campuses must [increase stipends](#) and overall compensation packages to ensure that the best talent can be attracted to our institutions while maintaining equitable access.

Support for SUNY's Hospitals and Health Science Centers

SUNY's three hospitals and health science centers treat approximately 1.3 million patients annually, educate 12,500 students each year, generate over \$5 billion in economic activity, and support almost 26,000 jobs. The Student Assembly encourages the State to restart its commitment to the long term fiscal health of our hospitals by restoring the state subsidy and providing the full state match owed to the SUNY Hospitals through the [Disproportionate](#)

[Share Hospital \(DSH\) program.](#)

On-Campus Childcare Centers

The Childcare and Development Fund Plan (CCDF Plan) provides federal block grant funding for childcare centers. In the past ten years, such funds have decreased and subsequently plateaued, having gone from 3.9 million in 2009 to 2.2 million in 2012, where it has remained since. The Student Assembly supports an increase in funding back to its peak schedule of \$3.98 million. The [Institute for Women's Policy Research](#) also underscores the negative effects of this decreased funding on single mothers in college.

Educational Opportunity Program

The Educational Opportunity Program offers critical support to students who would not have been accepted ordinarily. Students who meet the program [criteria](#) are able to access critical academic resources and financial aid. The Student Assembly urges the state to protect the Educational Opportunity Program, which helps SUNY students from low-income families afford college. Additional funding for EOP would allow campuses to open more spots in the program to eligible students, expand the Foster Youth College Success Initiative, and offer increased student support services.

Educational Opportunity Centers

SUNY [Educational Opportunity Centers](#) (EOC) offer a second chance at a higher education to thousands across the state. EOCs offer academic remediation, vocational training, and certification programs at no cost in various communities around the state. The Student Assembly strongly believes it is essential that state funding for the EOCs be protected and strengthened.

Provide Free Menstrual Hygiene Products Across SUNY

International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics estimates that 500 million individuals across the globe experience period poverty on a monthly basis. The SUNY University Faculty Senate supported a [resolution](#) to Provide Free Access to Menstrual Products at All SUNY Campuses in All Restrooms. It is imperative that SUNY accommodates all students who menstruate.

Combating Food Insecurity

The Student Assembly supports Governor Cuomo's mandate that all campuses maintain an open access food pantry for student use. The state can build on its [commitment to combating food insecurity](#) by appropriating \$1 million to support the operation of food pantries across the SUNY

system. These funds could be used to better supply and staff the pantries, expanding their impact for students in need.

Open Educational Resources

[Open Educational Resources](#) (OER) provide free educational resources to students across the SUNY System. Academic use of OER helps limit the cost of textbooks and other materials for students. We urge the state to increase its investment in OER from \$4 million, which it has appropriated the past three years, to \$5 million for FY 20/21. This additional investment would allow for more students to benefit from the use of OER.

Student Emergency Fund

Several campuses currently operate [student emergency funds](#), which offer small grants to students who face unforeseen financial challenges. These grants can sometimes make all the difference for students who would otherwise have to leave school. The campuses that currently operate emergency funds, do so with private dollars. We urge the state to take the benefits of maintaining student emergency funds to scale, by appropriating \$4.5 million for a SUNY-wide emergency fund.

Mental Health Resources

The Student Assembly seeks a comprehensive investment in the mental well-being of students. It is essential that student psychiatric and counseling needs both be met. Towards these ends, we support expanding [SUNY's mental health telecounseling initiative](#), which currently offers psychiatric care to students on eight campuses. We also support additional funding to ensure that all campuses have at least one full-time mental health professional for every 1,500 students. Lastly, we support the creation of a SUNY-wide hotline for students with pressing needs, where students can seek counseling care 24/7.

Support for Incarcerated Students

Postsecondary correctional education has become a bi-partisan priority of the NYS and Federal governments. The Rockefeller Institute of Government released a [report](#) outlining the benefits of college-in-prison programs that allow incarcerated individuals to earn college degrees. There are numerous benefits to these programs, including reduced recidivism and crime rates and increased post-imprisonment employment rates. In correctional facilities that implement college-in-prison programs, inmates are 43% less likely to return to prison following their release. Overall, correctional education has a positive impact on incarcerated students, the community inside the prison, and society writ large. The Student Assembly is

committed to supporting incarcerated students by advocating for an increase in state funding to allow more SUNY campuses to provide college-in-prison programs and reinstate Pell Grants and TAP to incarcerated students.