



The State University
of New York

Joint Legislative Hearing on Higher Education

**Senate Standing Committee on Finance
Assembly Standing Committee on Ways and Means
Senate Standing Committee on Higher Education
and
Assembly Standing Committee on Higher Education**

**Testimony Provided by Dr. John B. King, Jr.
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Good morning, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky, and Fahy, and Ranking Members O'Mara, Ra, Griffo, and Smullen. I am John B. King, Jr., and I have the privilege of serving as the 15th Chancellor for the State University of New York (SUNY). I appreciate the opportunity to share the ways in which SUNY students, faculty, and staff are benefiting from the investments made by the Executive and Legislature in the last year, and to discuss Governor Kathy Hochul's SFY23-24 Executive Budget proposal with you today.

Since I began as Chancellor on January 9th, I'm often asked what drew me to this opportunity. Without question, it was the vision set by Governor Hochul and our Board of Trustees, enabled by the Legislature's support, to ensure SUNY is the most accessible, most affordable, and best state system of public higher education in the country. As SUNY prepares to celebrate our 75th anniversary this year, I am proud that the Executive Budget reflects a once-in-a-generation opportunity to further SUNY's legacy of equity and excellence for every student.

As some of you know, I am only here today because of the role public education played in my own life. Both of my parents were career New York City public school teachers, but they both passed away when I was a kid – my mom when I was 8 and my dad when I was 12. During the period when it was just my dad and me, my father was struggling with Alzheimer's and home was incredibly difficult and scary. I am alive today because of the New York City public school teachers who made me feel supported, nurtured, engaged, and safe. From being a classroom teacher to serving as United States Secretary of Education for President Obama, I have focused throughout my career on maximizing opportunity for all students.

Now it is my priority to empower all students to thrive on our SUNY campuses. To that end, four pillars guide our work: (1) student success, (2) research and scholarship, (3) diversity, equity, and inclusion, and (4) economic development and upward mobility for our students – including, for example, dramatically increasing the number of SUNY students who participate in internships before they graduate.

My remarks today will underscore how state investment lays the foundation for SUNY's success.

Among my highest priorities since I became chancellor has been to visit our campuses – 16 so far, with 48 to go by the end of the semester. Each stop is an opportunity to spend time with students, faculty, campus leaders, employer partners, and community members. Over the course of these visits, I've had the chance to meet Yubie, a four-legged robot at UB's AI Institute; see the nursing simulation labs at Binghamton University and SUNY Adirondack; and learn about Westchester Community College's nationally award-winning cyber-security program – among so many other highlights.

But I have been most inspired by my conversations with students. Our students are extraordinary, and it has been so powerful to hear their stories about the difference SUNY is making in their lives – especially for first-generation college students. At campus after campus, I've heard from students who have found their community and thrived through the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and met with Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) alumni who shared their stories about how SUNY created economic opportunity for their families.

Our shared success requires that SUNY rise to complex challenges to ensure opportunity and success for every student while competing for world-class faculty who reflect the rich diversity of our students. It requires that we expand the academic options available to students at all levels and respond to regional economic development needs, while enhancing the wraparound services many need to continue and complete their degree or certificate.

Being the best state system of public higher education in the country requires resources.

SFY23-24 Executive Budget Proposal

In her first State of the State address one year ago, Governor Hochul unveiled a plan for SUNY's transformation. With your partnership, the Enacted Budget included historic investments. I'd like to share just a few examples of how SUNY has been able to invest those funds in ways that matter to students:

- **With \$60M for enrollment initiatives and student success**, some SUNY campuses are reimagining coursework with flexible 7-week schedules for workforce development programs, while others are funding transportation to help students get to campus and complete their studies.
- **With \$53 million for new full-time faculty**, campuses are competing for respected and diverse faculty, reversing the longstanding trend of campuses having to turn away qualified students from critical programs like engineering and nursing solely because there were not enough faculty to teach them.
- **With closure of the TAP Gap**, our four-year campuses are no longer paying nearly \$49M out-of-pocket every year and instead reinvesting that money into new opportunities for scholarship.
- **With support for the Hispanic Leadership Institute**, SUNY just welcomed our sixth class of professionals from across the system as we continue to develop, retain, and foster the success of Hispanic/Latinx leaders as they rise to the highest ranks of management.
- **With your unprecedented expansion of TAP to part-time students and students who need workforce development credentials**, we are changing the trajectory of thousands of New Yorkers who must balance school with work and family obligations.
- **With funding for Future of Workforce Centers and Targeted Corporate Training Programs**, tens of thousands of employees and hundreds of businesses have benefitted

from specialized trainings that help people grow their career while meeting regional workforce demands, reinforcing SUNY's role as an economic engine for opportunity.

This year's Executive Budget builds on last year's foundation with bold investments to encourage student success and ensure SUNY provides the best possible educational experience. Vital investments included by the Governor are:

- **Continuing the \$53 million for faculty hiring and the \$60 million initially provided for enrollment initiatives**, which benefits students, faculty, and staff, and positions SUNY to expand access and better compete for research dollars while investing in the supports and services students need to succeed through completion of their degree or certificate.
- **\$75 million Transformational Initiatives Fund**, which will support innovative workforce development programs across all sectors of our system in emerging industries like semiconductor technology and renewable energy.
- **\$200 million Digital Transformation**, which is a long overdue investment needed to improve the experience of every student, make it easier to enroll for the first time or re-enroll to complete a degree, transfer credits, and access resources such as mental health and disability services.
- **\$1.5 billion Research Endowment for University Centers**, which will bring tremendous returns in additional federal research dollars and new economic development opportunities. For every \$2 raised by the campuses, the state will invest \$1. This is not one-time funding, but a long-term investment providing resources on an annual basis to support the recruitment of world-class faculty, scholarships for diverse, top-notch graduate students working alongside those faculty, and the labs and laboratory equipment essential for cutting-edge research.
- **Community College Funding Floor**, which has been a life preserver for many campuses at a time when national community college enrollment is down even as we know workforce training needs have never been greater.
- **Increased Capital Funding**, which ensures SUNY has the resources necessary to provide a high-quality and safe educational experience for every student, including the construction of new lab space in STEM fields.

The Executive Budget also makes proposals with respect to tuition that would yield \$97 million per year. These proposals recognize that our campuses need resources at a time when costs are rising and our students need more support than ever:

- **Rational and predictable tuition for our State-operated campuses**, which will help to provide the academic programs and wraparound services needed for student success, such as advising, mental health care, and other services and supports that students rely upon.

- **Differential tuition for the university centers.** Differential tuition recognizes the unique needs of our university centers which have more students, more faculty and staff to support world-class research, and each of which serves as an engine of upward social mobility due to the exceptional quality of their academics.

I want to emphasize that no one offers a high-quality education as affordably as SUNY and our partners at CUNY. Indeed, 53% of all resident undergraduate SUNY students attend tuition-free and half graduate debt-free. The Governor's proposal will sustain that figure because the Executive Budget provides that TAP and Excelsior will increase to cover added tuition costs. As a result, SUNY students who receive full TAP awards or an Excelsior scholarship will not pay any additional tuition.

SUNY respectfully asks our champions in the Legislature to accept all SUNY investments proposed in the Executive Budget. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the needs of SUNY's students, faculty, and staff with you today, and thank you for all the measures you have championed over the years to ensure every student finds a home – and success – at SUNY. I would be happy to answer any questions.