



March 29, 2023

Hon. Helene Weinstein
Chair, Assembly Committee on Ways
and Means
New York State Assembly

Hon. Toby Ann Stavisky
Chair, Senate Committee on Higher
Education
New York State Senate

Hon. Liz Kreuger
Chair, Senate Finance Committee
New York State Senate

Hon. Patricia Fahy
Chair, Assembly Committee on Higher
Education
New York State Assembly

Dear Chairpersons:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at the Joint Legislative Higher Education Budget Hearing. Below please find additional information relating to questions that were asked but time did not permit me to answer in full.

Assemblymember Epstein raised valid concerns regarding the decline in college enrollment; enrollment in both public and private colleges have unfortunately declined across the state over the past decade, primarily among undergraduate students. In the Independent Sector, there were 12% fewer undergraduates enrolled in 2021 compared to ten years ago (355,000 in 2011 to 311,000 in 2021). This decline is the result of many factors including shifting demographics and the COVID-19 pandemic. There is some good news: during the same period, graduate and first professional enrollment increased by 5%. I am attaching a report CICU released in Fall 2022 regarding post-secondary enrollment trends in New York that will provide more information.

The Assemblymember also asked why some students drop out of college before completing their degree. While the six-year completion rate in the Independent Sector is almost 75%, there are undoubtedly still challenges associated with degree completion. Our member institutions are committed to ensuring that all students thrive on their campuses. We believe that increasing support for student aid and opportunity programs is the key to student success.

Assemblymember Simon inquired about retention and attrition data for students with disabilities. CICU member institutions are committed to ensuring that all students thrive, and we closely track retention and completion rates. While statewide enrollment has dropped by 7% since 2019, the six-year completion rate in the Independent Sector



remains steady, at almost 75%. For students with disabilities specifically, 71% of those studying in the Independent Sector attain their degrees within six years, which is 2% higher than the statewide average. Only 13% of these students leave without transferring to a different institution or attaining an associate degree.

We are grateful for the inclusion of \$2 million in funding for the Enhanced Support for Students with Disabilities (SWD) in Higher Education Program in last year's budget. We urge the Legislature to grant NYSED's full request for \$15 million in funding for students with disabilities in the FY 2024 budget; the Senate included \$5 million in its one-house budget proposal while the Assembly included \$2 million. I would like to emphasize the importance of this funding as it enables institutions to expand support services for students with disabilities, assist incoming students to navigate the campus facilities and systems, and provide faculty and staff with appropriate training. More importantly, it enables these students to be successful in college.

Lastly, Chairperson Fahy inquired about best practices in student mental health during the hearing. Mental health is an increasingly critical issue; students across New York are struggling with their mental health, and college counseling centers are overwhelmed. In a national study, 95% of college counselors reported that mental health is a growing concern on their campus; and 75% of college presidents reported that spending on mental health has increased. Many of our member colleges have implemented programs to address mental health issues over the past year such as developing health and wellness courses for credit or partnering with nonprofit organizations to expand the range of mental health services they can provide to their students. Several are utilizing technology to develop apps and online services to provide students with maximum flexibility and 24/7 access to mental health care.

Thank you for your questions and for your unwavering support to enable New York's colleges and universities, both public and private, to continue to be sources of economic and social mobility for students from all backgrounds.

I look forward to continuing to work with you.

In partnership,

Lola W. Brabham

Lola W. Brabham
President

Cc: Hon. Harvey Epstein, NYS Assembly
Hon. Jo Anne Simon, NYS Assembly