



The State University of New York  
Student Assembly

**Patrick Gareau**  
**Treasurer & Chief Financial Officer**

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**TO: Members of the Executive Committee**

**FROM: Patrick Gareau, Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer**

**DATE: Saturday, March 4th, 2017**

**SUBJECT: SUNY Student Assembly Finances**

**ACTION REQUESTED**

The SUNY Student Assembly (SUNY SA) calls on the SUNY system to recognize that SUNY SA is severely underfunded to serve as a statewide advocacy organization representative of 600,000 students at 64 campuses, increase the SUNY SA budget as outlined in the attached budget request, and collaborate with SUNY SA on a multi-year effort to drastically increase funding for system-wide student governance.

**RESOLUTION**

We strongly recommend that the Student Assembly of the State University of New York (SUNYSA) adopt the following resolution:

Whereas; the SUNY Student Assembly is the officially recognized system-wide student governance organization of the SUNY System; and

Whereas; the SUNY Student Assembly is charged with representing the 600,000 SUNY students from across 64 campuses; and

Whereas; the SUNY Student Assembly's 2016-17 budget of \$55,958 represents a two percent decrease from 2015-16 and a major decrease from a high of \$68,300 in 2007; and

Whereas; this budget does not allow for adequate travel, programming, marketing, staffing, equipment, and meeting quality to best represent the student interests in the SUNY system; and

Whereas; the City University of New York United Student Senate collects a mandatory activity fee and has a budget upwards of \$600,000; and

Whereas; the California State Student Association collects a mandatory student activity fee and has a budget of over \$1,500,000; and

Whereas; the SUNY Student Assembly believes that system-wide student governments with larger budgets more properly reflect the resources required to represent hundreds of thousands of students; and



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Whereas; inadequate funding for the SUNY Student Assembly threatens SUNY's desire to be a system with a premier shared governance structure; therefore be it

Resolved; that the SUNY Student Assembly calls on the SUNY system to increase system-wide student governance funding to the maximum amount allowable by the enacted 2017-18 New York State Budget, as outlined in the attached budget request; and, be it further

Resolved; that the SUNY Student Assembly calls on the SUNY system to work with the SUNY Student Assembly on developing a multi-year plan to develop a funding model that incrementally increases the Student Assembly budget to a level more consistent with other statewide student government organizations; and, finally, be it

Resolved that copies of this resolution be distributed to the SUNY Board of Trustees, Chancellor Zimpher, SUNY CFO Eileen McLaughlin, SUNY Student Government Presidents and all other parties deemed necessary and proper.



## 2017-18 SUNY Student Assembly Budget Request and Financial Plan

### **Executive Summary:**

The students of the SUNY Student Assembly (SUNY SA) believe that we are drastically underfunded, especially compared with other system-wide student governance organizations. This document serves as a supplement to the formal SUNY SA budget request resolution, a framework for a multi-year plan to significantly increase funding, and a reference for why a larger budget for SUNY SA is necessary.

SUNY SA is the lowest funded university-wide program within the SUNY system in 2016-17 at \$55,958, a two percent decrease from 2015-16. It remained the lowest funded university-wide program in SUNY's budget request as passed by the Board of Trustees and in the 2017-18 Executive Budget released in January. The Student Assembly understands that SUNY suffers from financial strain and departmental cuts have been ubiquitous, and that the coming fiscal year will likely have similar conditions. However, we also believe that should the Enacted Budget include \$57,100 for system-wide student governance, it is reasonable for SUNY SA to receive an increase in funding equal to the maximum allowable by state regulation regarding shifting funds after the state budget is passed.

In addition to requesting the maximum increase possible by SUNY, we also request that SUNY work with SUNY SA in the coming year to develop a strategy to significantly and sustainably increase funding for system-wide student governance over a multi-year period.

To accomplish both a budget increase within realistic parameters and begin progress on a long-term pathway to fair funding for SUNY student governance, this document includes:

- A statement of purpose to establish the importance of adequate funding for students as a partner in shared governance in the SUNY system.
- An organizational summary of SUNY SA.
- An overview of SUNY SA finances for the current fiscal year (2016-17).
- Historical SUNY SA funding.
- A budget request within the SUNY parameters for 2016-17.
- Strategies for growing the SUNY SA budget in the coming year(s).
- Alternate budget scenarios to outline what increase funds could be used for.



## **SUNY Student Assembly Purpose:**

SUNY SA is charged with a monumental task of representing hundreds of thousands of students to the SUNY system, and governments at the local, state, and federal level. This requires statewide communication and presence, extensive travel, programming, regular meetings, marketing, and talented human resources. The endeavor of shared governance is critical to any system of higher education, and can not be conducted properly without adequate structures for students to organize their interests to be represented in policy decisions.

Currently, SUNY SA works hard with scarce resources to represent students to the best of our ability. We recognize that officials throughout SUNY are receptive to student input and that we do benefit from significant representation, which allows us to contribute to policy. However, the limitations on our impact by inadequate funds are severe. In order to be physically present on campuses throughout the state, engage in marketing campaign, improve our meetings and conferences, and effectively advocate student interests, significant additional funding is required.

Building a stronger system of statewide student-governance, in line with what is taking place in other systems in New York and the country, strategically benefits the SUNY system. A well-funded SUNY SA would contribute to the civic purpose of the university, expand high-level applied learning opportunities, provide premier leadership roles for students, and improve decisions at the campus and system level by having more informed and diverse perspectives from students.

We believe that the SUNY system should strive to have a shared governance structure second to none in the country. Given that the funding for student governance is a fraction of what it is in other systems, best practices in this area can not currently be claimed.

**SUNY Student Assembly Mission statement:** It is the mission of the SUNY Student Assembly to empower the students of SUNY—through advocacy—to seek continued access to quality and affordable higher education; to support the goals and initiatives identified by the students of SUNY that is paramount to their success; and to represent SUNY students at the state and national level.



## **SUNY Student Assembly Organizational Summary:**

Every student in the SUNY system is a member of the Student Assembly, and are represented in the following ways:

### **1. General Assembly Meetings:**

Each semester, SUNY SA hosts a conference where every SUNY campus has an opportunity to send voting delegates to participate in the General Assembly. These meetings set policy positions through the passing of resolutions and elect the Executive Board (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary). In addition to voting delegates, each campus can send additional student leaders to participate in a series of leadership workshops hosted by the Executive Committee members and other presenters. Each conference also includes caucus meetings, where campus meet by sector and elect representatives to serve as voting members of the Executive Committee.

### **2. Executive Committee:**

The Executive Committee is composed of the Executive Board, 15 representatives elected by sector at SUNY SA conferences, and an Executive Cabinet that is appointed by the President and confirmed by voting members of the Executive Committee. The structure of the cabinet is at the discretion of the President.

The Executive Committee meets every month during the academic year, except for the months when the conference is held, and once during the summer. Responsibilities of the Executive Committee include passing policy position resolutions between General Assembly Meetings, interacting with SUNY System Officials on a regular basis, discussing issues and formulating policy through committee meetings, and generally executing the day-to-day operations of SUNY SA between conferences.



**2016-17 Finances:**

The tables below show SUNY SA’s finances to date for 2016-17. In addition to the finances included in our account, SUNY SA received supplemental funding for events throughout the year from other SUNY offices. These included two Student Government President Summits and an advocacy trip to Washington, D.C.. It is the opinion of SUNY SA that funding for these events should be included in the SUNY SA budget because having to ask other departments to fund student advocacy is fundamentally contradictory to shared governance.

It is difficult for SUNY SA to meet its minimum obligations within the current budget. In 2015-16, other departments in SUNY had to cover for the Student Assembly overspending and additional funds were taken from the SUNY SA Research Foundation account to pay for outstanding bills after funds had been depleted. This year, SUNY SA has carefully planned to ensure that did not repeat itself and practiced fiscal restraint, seeking cost-saving measures often such as staying at dorms for a discounted rate for two Executive Committee Meetings.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
<b>Revenue</b>		
	SUNYSA State budget	\$55,958.00
	Student Leadership Account	\$7,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$62,958.00</b>
<b>Operating Budget</b>		
	Executive Committee Meetings	\$22,000.00
	Stipends	\$15,000.00
	Conference Expenses	\$18,000.00
	Transitional meeting	\$5,000.00
	Materials/misc.	\$2,958.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$62,958.00</b>



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<b>Expenses by category</b>	
Executive Committee	
Meetings	\$19,460.41
Stipends	\$12,500.00
Conference Expenses	\$18,000.00
Transitional meeting	\$0.00
Materials/misc.	\$80.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$50,040.41</b>

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<b>Projected Future Expenses</b>	
March EC Transportation	\$500.00
Merchandise	\$2,000.00
April Stipends	\$1,250.00
May Stipends	\$1,250.00
Transitional meeting	\$5,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$10,000.00</b>

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<b>Total Projected Spending</b>	
Spending to date	\$50,040.41
Unaccounted Spending to date	\$2,000.00
Projected Spending	\$10,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$62,040.41</b>

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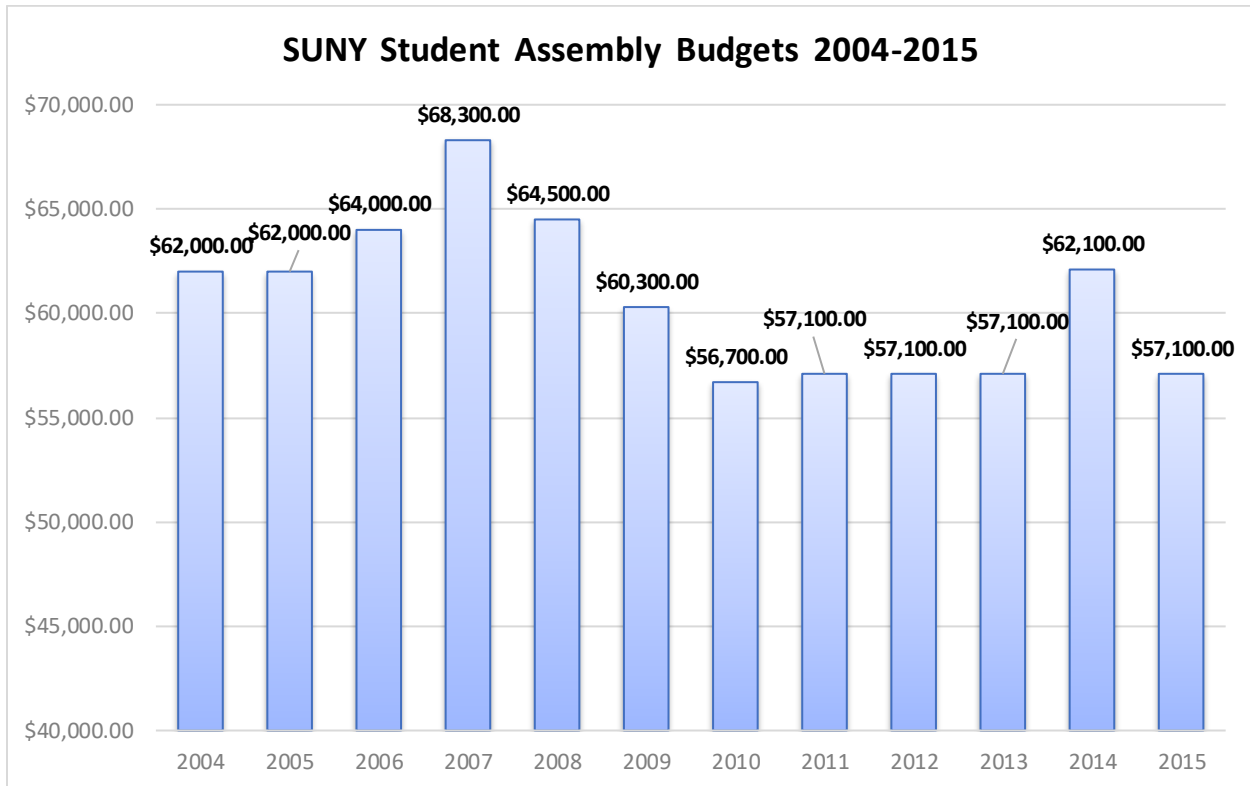
<b>Summary</b>	
Total Budget	\$62,958.00
Projected Expenses	\$62,040.41
<b>Difference</b>	<b>\$917.59</b>

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\*\*The difference shown below is a cushion in projections, as of early March, that will be spent on travel, merchandising, and marketing by the year's end.



## Historical Budgets:



## Budget Requests within two percent parameters:

In the 2016-17 fiscal year, SUNY asked each department to submit three budget requests: one with a two percent decrease, one flat, and one with a two percent increase. As of writing this document, the parameters for budget requests within the SUNY System Administration have not been released, so this request is under the assumption of the same parameters.

Within these parameters, the only adjustment is in the miscellaneous category as the others are mandatory expenses. Miscellaneous expenditures include additional campus travel, marketing, merchandise, and materials for events and conferences. Any additional funding in this category can make a big difference by allowing SUNY SA to improve our branding, events, and afford some additional travel outside of Executive Committee meetings to allow for better student representation. A 10% increase is also included below, which would allow a Campus Travel line to be created.





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However, funding within these parameters does not accomplish the type of structural changes necessary for SUNY SA to significantly improve representation. The types of high-impact activities that could be accomplished with significant additional funding are outlined in the growth strategies and increased funding scenarios below.

2% Decrease:

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<b>Revenue</b>		
	SUNYSA State budget	\$54,838.00
	Student Leadership Account	\$7,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$61,838.00</b>

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<b>Operating Budget</b>		
	Executive Committee Meetings	\$22,000.00
	Stipends	\$15,000.00
	Conference Expenses	\$18,000.00
	Transitional meeting	\$5,000.00
	Materials/misc.	\$1,838.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$61,838.00</b>

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Flat:

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<b>Revenue</b>		
	SUNYSA State budget	\$55,958.00
	Student Leadership Account	\$7,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$62,958.00</b>

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<b>Operating Budget</b>		
	Executive Committee Meetings	\$22,000.00
	Stipends	\$15,000.00
	Conference Expenses	\$18,000.00
	Transitional meeting	\$5,000.00
	Materials/misc.	\$2,958.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$62,958.00</b>

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## 2% Increase:

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<b>Revenue</b>		
	SUNYSA State budget	\$57,077.16
	Student Leadership Account	\$7,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$64,077.16</b>

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<b>Operating Budget</b>		
	Executive Committee	
	Meetings	\$22,000.00
	Stipends	\$15,000.00
	Conference Expenses	\$18,000.00
	Transitional meeting	\$5,000.00
	Materials/misc.	\$4,077.16
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$64,077.16</b>

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## 10% Increase:

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<b>Revenue</b>		
	SUNYSA State budget	\$62,700.00
	Student Leadership Account	\$7,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$69,700.00</b>

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<b>Operating Budget</b>		
	Executive Committee	
	Meetings	\$22,000.00
	Stipends	\$15,000.00
	Conference Expenses	\$18,000.00
	Campus Travel	\$4,700.00
	Transitional meeting	\$5,000.00
	Materials/misc.	\$5,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$69,700.00</b>

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## Growth Strategies:

There are a number of pathways to increasing funding for the SUNY Student Assembly, including:

1. Through request to the SUNY System Administration.

In recent years, this strategy has proven ineffective due to the budgetary strain within SUNY System Administration. However, SUNY SA is hopeful that a renewed push for the recognition of a need for additional funding among SUNY's Budget Review Team



can lead to an increase in the coming year and a first step toward long-term funding growth. This should include a maximum increase for SUNY SA based on the enacted 2017-18 NYS budget, and a significant increase in the 2018-19 budget request submitted by SUNY to the state later in the year.

2. Through legislative advocacy during the New York State Budget process.

SUNY SA is obligated to advocate for the full scope of student interests in a competitive environment, which makes prioritizing our budget line to the legislature difficult. However, increased SUNY SA funding is a part of our current legislative agenda and it will continue to be as long as necessary.

3. Through raising money from campus Student Government Associations.

A handful of SUNY Student Government Associations have expressed an openness to providing additional funding to SUNY SA. This could be a reasonable mid-term solution to increase funding and ensure that campuses can have their representatives and other SUNY SA officials visit them, contribute to new state-wide programming, and increase the visibility of SUNY SA throughout the state. However, because this would be voluntary, there is a risk that it would lead to inequitable financial representation among SUNY students. SUNY SA may be able to realistically raise \$1,000 or more from many of the Student Government Associations throughout the system, but it is likely that some would not contribute at all which would cause concerns from a fairness standpoint of who the Executive Committee is most representing.

4. Through a system-wide student governance fee.

Other system-wide student governments have instituted mandatory activity fees to fund their activities. These include the CUNY United Student Senate (\$.85 per student per semester) and the California State Student Association (\$2 per student per semester), which have budgets of over \$600,000 and \$1,500,000 respectively.

SUNY SA believes that exploring a system-wide fee should be part of the strategy for long term, sustained budget growth. This should require extensive outreach to students throughout the system to gauge support and practice transparency, and a resolution of support passing the General Assembly. Exploring a mandatory activity fee is a complex process that would necessitate collaboration between SUNY SA and SUNY System Administration officials to identify the challenges legally and structurally.

Implementing a fee, if supported by the students should be done in a careful manner with phases to ensure that SUNY SA has the organizational habits and capacity to effectively wield a budget that is on par with other system-wide student governments.



**Increased Funding Scenarios:**

The following tables are samples of how increased funding could be used effectively for SUNY SA as a guideline to conceptualizing the activities of the organization with a successful multi-year growth initiative. These are rough approximations that would be subject to approval by current members of SUNY SA in a given year.

Generally, increased funding would go to the following:

- All current activities, with reduced strain to plan inexpensive meetings and events.
- Increased travel to campuses, system-wide events, and conferences.
- Marketing materials.
- Stipends for the Executive Committee Representatives and Executive Cabinet.
- Increased stipends for the Executive Board.
- Increased state account support for the conference.
- Programming and advocacy events.
- Professional Staff.
- Targeted grants to campus Student Government Associations to promote and spread best practices.

Sample budgets:

\$120,000: \$0.10 per student per semester equivalent

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<b>Operating Budget</b>		
	Executive Committee	
	Meetings	\$25,000.00
	Executive Board Stipends	\$15,000.00
	Executive Cabinet Stipends	\$5,000.00
	Representative Stipends	\$5,000.00
	Conference Expenses	\$20,000.00
	Travel	\$15,000.00
	Advocacy Events	\$10,000.00
	Marketing	\$5,000.00
	Transitional meeting	\$10,000.00
	Materials/misc.	\$10,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$120,000.00</b>

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\$300,000: \$0.25 per student per semester

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**Operating Budget**

Executive Committee Meetings	\$30,000.00
Executive Board Stipends	\$20,000.00
Executive Cabinet Stipends	\$5,000.00
Representative Stipends	\$5,000.00
Conference Expenses	\$30,000.00
Travel	\$50,000.00
Advocacy Events	\$50,000.00
Marketing	\$20,000.00
Transitional meeting	\$15,000.00
Materials/misc.	\$10,000.00
Professional Staff	\$65,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$300,000.00</b>

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\$600,000: \$0.50 per student per semester:

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**Operating Budget**

Executive Committee Meetings	\$40,000.00
Executive Board Stipends	\$30,000.00
Executive Cabinet Stipends	\$10,000.00
Representative Stipends	\$10,000.00
Conference Expenses	\$100,000.00
Travel	\$65,000.00
Advocacy Events	\$60,000.00
Marketing	\$50,000.00
Transitional meeting	\$15,000.00
Materials/misc.	\$20,000.00
Performance Grants	\$100,000.00
Professional Staff	\$100,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$600,000.00</b>

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