



The State University of New York
Student Assembly

1617-SC08
Wolfe, Sanchez

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MEMORANDUM 1617-SC08

TO: Members of the Student Assembly

**FROM: Conner A Wolfe, University College Representative
Daniel Sanchez, Purchase Student Government Association**

**ENDORSED: Purchase Student Government Association, New Paltz Student
Association, Rules Committee**

DATE: April 8, 2017

SUBJECT: Tuition Policy Reaffirmation & Update

Action Requested

That the Student Assembly of The State University of New York reaffirm its dedication to a debt free future for all students enrolled in The State University of New York and calls upon the Board of Trustees of The State University of New York to ensure that all individual campus tuition increases be proposed in meaningful consultation with the students enrolled at that campus of The State University of New York.

Resolution

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

Whereas The State University of New York, as an affordable institution of higher education, has the potential to provide unprecedented opportunities for the students, faculty, and staff it consists of as well as the entirety of the State of New York; and

Whereas The mission of The State University of New York “shall be to provide to the people of New York educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population”¹; and

Whereas “In fulfilling this mission, the state university shall exercise care to develop and maintain a balance of its human and physical resources that...

¹ Mission Statement”, *The State University of New York*. Accessed March 6, 2017.
<https://www.suny.edu/about/mission/>

establishes tuition which most effectively promotes the university's access goals"²; and

Whereas in 2011, the New York State legislature approved the SUNY 2020 plan including the "Rational" Tuition policy vesting in the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York the ability to raise full time student tuition by a maximum of \$300 per year in conjunction with a Maintenance of Effort from the State of New York; and

Whereas Maintenance of Effort, as assured under SUNY 2020, pledged that tuition increases would be used to pay for support services for students while reinvestment in The State University of New York from the State of New York would pay for the contractual and mandatory operating expenses of SUNY member institutions; and

Whereas in December of 2015, Governor Cuomo vetoed the Maintenance of Effort bill; and

Whereas as the result of student direct action, the SUNY 2020 plan was not renewed as part of the 2017 budget of The State University of New York and a tuition freeze was extended to undergraduate students for the 2016-2017 academic year; and

Whereas a 10% tuition increase was extended to graduate and non-resident students for the 2016-2017 academic year; and

Whereas undergraduate tuition at The State University of New York has increased far past the maximum Tuition Assistance Program award of \$5,165.00; and

Whereas all 40,000 graduate students enrolled in the State University of New York are ineligible for the Tuition Assistance Program; and

Whereas part time students enrolled in the State University of New York are ineligible for the Tuition Assistance Program; and

Whereas the financial costs of pursuing a higher education often includes textbooks cost, possible room and board, meal plans, and other basic costs of living; and

Whereas the average debt of a graduate of The State University of New York is \$25,250³; and

² Ibid.

³ "SUNY opens door to tuition bumps", *The Daily Gazette*. Accessed March 6, 2017. <https://dailygazette.com/article/2016/12/01/suny-opens-door-tuition-bumps>

Whereas 60% of students enrolled in The State University of New York graduate with debt⁴; and

Whereas with continued divestment by the State of New York, the Board of Trustees of The State University of New York is left with no other apparent option than to increase the financial burden on students in an effort to continue providing educational services of the highest quality; and

Whereas on November 30, 2016, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York requested of the New York State Legislature that “the authority of the Board of Trustees is recognized in such manner that they will be able to annually set resident undergraduate tuition rate increases within four distinct “bands” as recommended by each individual campus. These bands shall be set at the a zero level, a \$100 level, a \$200 level, and a \$300 level (“NY-SUNY 2020: 0, 1, 2, 3”) and will be reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees following campus requests submitted to and approved by the Chancellor or designee”⁵; and

Whereas President Marc J. Cohen, as a Trustee of The State University of New York, voted against “NY-SUNY 2020: 0, 1, 2, 3” as it would allow for potential increases to student tuition; and

Whereas in response to the approval of “NY-SUNY 2020: 0, 1, 2, 3” by the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees of The State University of New York, President Marc J. Cohen said “I’m not convinced that students’ interests are at heart right now. Saying ‘raise tuition’ and ‘students accepting it’ is never going to be in our vocabulary; we appreciate that over the last five years with the tuition increases, we have seen hundreds of new programs ... we don’t appreciate a systematic increase in tuition to maintain those benefits. That’s not acceptable.”⁶; and

Whereas New York State Education Law - Section 355 (2)(h)(4) specifies “The trustees shall not impose a differential tuition charge based upon need or income. Except as hereinafter provided, all students enrolled in programs leading to like degrees at state-operated institutions of the state university shall be charged a uniform rate of tuition except for differential tuition rates based on state residency. Provided, however, that the trustees may authorize the presidents of the colleges of technology and the colleges of agriculture and technology to set differing rates of tuition for each of the colleges for students enrolled in degree-granting programs leading to an associate degree and non-degree granting programs so long as such tuition rate does not exceed the tuition

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “2017/18 Operating Budget Request”, *The State University of New York*. Accessed March 6, 2017. http://www.suny.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/meetings/webcastdocs/RESO_2017-18%20Operating%20Budget%20Resolution.pdf

⁶ “SUNY opens door to tuition bumps”

rate charged to students who are enrolled in like degree programs or degree-granting undergraduate programs leading to a baccalaureate degree at other state-operated institutions of the state university of New York”⁷; and

Whereas the adoption of “NY_SUNY 2020: 0, 1, 2, 3” would therefore require an amendment to New York State Education Law allowing for differential increases in tuition at The State University of New York; and

Whereas the Excelsior Scholarship as proposed by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo provides full-time undergraduate students from households making up to \$125,000 with the ability to attend SUNY and CUNY institutions tuition-free; and

Whereas NY-SUNY 2020: 0, 1, 2, 3 would allow for tuition increases for all students enrolled in the State University of New York; and

Whereas continuing increases to student tuition and fees without corresponding investment and support of the State of New York is counter to the dedication of The State University of New York to “broadest possible access,”; now, therefore be it,

Resolved that the Student Assembly of the State University of New York reaffirm Resolution 1516-127 in calling for “drastic reinvestment in the State University of New York... sufficient as to implement a long term tuition freeze for all students enrolled in the State University of New York and renew the financial sustainability of the 64 member institutions”⁸; and, be it further

Resolved that the Student Assembly of the State University of New York reaffirm its Rational Reinvestment Plan as outlined in Resolution 1617-46 and its supplemental Tuition Policy Brief as “multi-year affordability plan that freezes costs and provides a path toward debt-free college”;⁹ and, be it further,

Resolved that the Student Assembly of the State University of New York continue to dedicate itself to a debt free future for all students enrolled in The State University of New York; and, be it further,

Resolved that the Student Assembly of the State University of New York hereby oppose the continuation of tuition increases as allowed under the “NY-SUNY 2020: 0, 1, 2, 3” plan proposed by the Board of Trustees of The State University of New York; and be it further,

⁷ “New York Education Law § 355. Powers and duties of trustees--administrative and fiscal functions”, *FindLaw*. Accessed April 5, 2017. <http://codes.findlaw.com/ny/education-law/edn-sect-355.html>

⁸ “Resolution for Reinvestment in The State University of New York”, *Student Assembly of The State University of New York*. Accessed March 6, 2017. <http://sunysa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/1516-127ResolutionforReinvestmentinSUNY.pdf>

⁹ “Legislative Agenda Authorization”, *Student Assembly of The State University of New York*. Accessed March 6, 2017. <http://sunysa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/1617-462016-2017LegislativeAgenda.pdf>

Resolved that the Student Assembly of the State University of New York call upon the New York State Legislature and Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to recognize the need for universally accessible higher education in New York State and to seek and implement alternatives to increasing the financial burden on those seeking a higher education with the State of New York; and be it further,

Resolved that the Student Assembly of The State University of New York recognize and affirm the essential importance of the inclusion of student government associations in determining how best “to provide to the people of New York educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population”; and be it further

Resolved that the Student Assembly of The State University of New York call upon the Board of Trustees of The State University of New York to ensure that all individual campus tuition increases be proposed in meaningful consultation with the respective student government association(s) of that campus; and be it further,

Resolved that the Student Assembly of The State University of New York call upon the Board of Trustees of The State University of New York to ensure that all individual campus tuition increases be approved by the respective Board of Trustees/University Council/College Council of that campus with the explicit inclusion of the student voting member of that body; and, finally, be it

Resolved that within 20 days upon its passing, the Student Assembly of the State University of New York will forward copies of this resolution to the Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, Lt. Governor Kathleen C. Hochul, Higher Education Committee of the New York State Senate, Higher Education Committee of the New York State Assembly, SUNY Board of Trustees, SUNY Chancellor Zimpher, Executive Committee of the University Faculty Senate, Executive Committee of the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, the Deans of the Statutory Colleges at Cornell and Alfred, SUNY Campus Presidents, SUNY student governing bodies, the Executive Board of the United University Professionals, and all other parties deemed necessary and proper.