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RESOLUTION 1516-126

TO: General Assembly of the Student Assembly of the State University of New York

FROM: Lori Mould, Immediate Past President/Graduate Student of SUNY Empire State College

DATE: April 15, 2016

TITLE: SUNY Solution for our Military/Veteran Students

Action Requested:

We call on Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher, the SUNY Board of Trustees, the SUNY Federal Government Relations Team, the New York State Senate and Assembly, with the help of others, to come together to develop a SUNY Solution to aid our Military/Veteran students with the increasing cost of tuition.

Resolution:

I recommend that the members of the Student Assembly of the State University of New York (SUNY SA) adopt the following resolution:

Whereas our Military/Veteran students have provided a great service to our country and keeping the tuition cost low is one of the best ways to thank them for their service and help them complete their degrees in order to transition into productive careers in the civilian world;

Whereas the State University of New York (SUNY) has numerous Military/Veteran students currently enrolled across the system;

Whereas in 2016, 36 SUNY campuses have been recognized as "Military Friendly"

(2016 Military Friendly Schools, 2016);

Whereas the Federal Tuition Assistance is paid to eligible members of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. This program has the ability to pay up to 100% for the tuition and fees; not to exceed \$250 per semester credit hour, \$166 per quarter credit hour, and/or \$4500 per fiscal year (Military Tuition Assistance, 2016);

Whereas the current rate of undergraduate tuition for SUNY's state-operated universities/colleges is \$270 per semester credit hour with NYSUNY2020 and rational tuition still in place through the end of the 2015-2016 academic school year;

Whereas we want to thank Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the NYS Legislators for the March 31, 2016 tuition freeze for the next academic school year; the climate for future SUNY tuition is still unclear;

Whereas our Military/Veteran students should not just be considered a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) but their retention and success should be SUNY's primary concern as per Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher's: Access + Completion = Success strategy;

Whereas our Military/Veteran students and their respective institutions should not have to subsidize the difference in the Federal Tuition Assistance Cap and the cost of tuition; and therefore, be it

Resolved that according to SUNY's Mission Statement to be "fully representative of all segments of the population" and to "establish tuition which most effectively promotes the university's access goals" we need to work together to find a SUNY Solution for our Military/Veteran students;

Resolved that the SUNY Federal Government Relations Team continue to work with and step up the pressure on all parties involved with the Federal Tuition Assistance Program to raise the cap pursuant to the 21st century tuition rates;

Resolved that in order to continue to be classified as "Military Friendly" that all parties work together to ensure a viable solution; such as charging Military/Veteran students a rate no higher than that set by the Department of Defense Federal Tuition Assistance Program so that our Military/Veteran students can continue with and be successful in

their educational endeavors without the stress of additional tuition expenses; and finally,
be it

Resolved that the Student Assembly of the State University of New York shall forward copies of this resolution to the Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, SUNY Board of Trustees, SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher, New York State Senate and Assembly, University Faculty Senate, Faculty Council of Community Colleges, SUNY Federal Government Relations Team, SUNY Campus Presidents, SUNY student governing bodies, all Military and/or Veterans' Affairs offices, SUNY System Counterparts, and all other parties deemed necessary and proper.

Background:

The term “Military/Veteran students” is used throughout this resolution. Military students incorporate our Active Duty, National Guard, or Reserves and all of them are able to use the Federal Tuition Assistance Program along with our Veteran students. The Federal Tuition Assistance Program no longer has the ability to cover all of the tuition costs for our Military/Veteran students within the SUNY and CUNY systems because the cap is set at \$250 per semester credit hour. The current rate of undergraduate tuition for SUNY’s state-operated universities/colleges is \$270 per semester credit hour with NYSUNY2020 and rational tuition still in place through the end of the 2015-2016 academic school year. Just a reminder, this does not even factor in the difference between the Federal Tuition Assistance Cap and the cost for SUNY graduate tuition for those Military/Veteran students who wish to continue on with their education.

Veteran students often, but not always, have funding that does not have the \$250 per semester hour cap stipulation. But this resolution supports funding all former, current, and future Military/Veteran students with the same tuition cost for logistical, financial, and philosophical reasons. Logistically, it can be very hard for schools to track the military status of students—they can switch from Active Duty to National Guard to Veteran and back to Active Duty within the course of a few semesters. Financially, not all Veterans have access to the generous Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits. Philosophically, a set \$250 per semester hour tuition rate would thank all former, current, and future Military/Veteran students for their valuable service to the country in the same way across the board.

Being a university/college institution that is truly “Military Friendly” is providing the Military/Veteran students with the best chance of graduating from their institution of choice. If our Veterans do not make a successful transition back into their civilian careers/lives then they are at a higher risk of suicide, unemployment, lower paying and less satisfying jobs, etc. (Facts & Figures, 2016) They are less likely to be contributing their positive skills to the larger community; skills that they learned while in the military; such as: leadership, teamwork, getting the job done, and service to others.

At the time of writing this resolution, NYSUNY2020 has not been renewed by the NYS Senate and/or Assembly. This leaves the future of our SUNY tuition unclear. Even if NYSUNY2020 is reinstated, the SUNY Board of Trustees has the ability to raise our SUNY tuition by a maximum of \$300 per academic school year and if not reinstated, all SUNY students will be at the mercy of the NYS Senate and Assembly for tuition increases. This means that our Military/Veteran students and/or their institutions will have to make up the growing difference

between what the Federal Tuition Assistance Cap will cover and the actual cost billed per credit hour. This will adversely affect Military/Veteran students and/or their institutions.

Last but not least, it is understandable that many people are not happy with the past and current US military interventions but it is important to note that even though our military is voluntary it is our elected officials whom have sent our Military Service Members into the war zones. We need to learn from Vietnam and not confuse the difference between the warriors and the wars they are sent to fight.

References:

2016 Military Friendly Schools. (2016, March 21). Retrieved from Military Friendly:

<https://militaryfriendly.com/2016schools/>

Facts & Figures. (2016, March 21). Retrieved from PBS WXXI:

<http://www.pbs.org/coming-back-with-wes-moore/about/facts/>

Military Tuition Assistance. (2016, March 21). Retrieved from Military.com:

<http://www.military.com/education/money-for-school/tuition-assistance-ta-program-overview.html>