



The State University of New York
Student Assembly

SUNY Student Assembly Pushes Comprehensive 2016-17 Legislative Agenda at Old Westbury Meeting

Immediate Release: Oct. 17, 2016

Contact: Tyler McNeil, Tyler.McNeil@sunysa.org

WOODBURY, NASSAU COUNTY -- The Student Assembly unanimously passed a historical legislative path forward for the future of the SUNY system over the weekend at SUNY Old Westbury.

"Never in our history has the Student Assembly had such a comprehensive agenda," said Marc J. Cohen, Student Assembly President and SUNY Trustee. "I couldn't be more enthusiastic about our advocacy plan and I feel confident that we will be successful in effectuating real change in the months ahead. What an honor to lead this organization at such a critical juncture in higher education."

Rey Muniz, Director of Legislative Affairs, presented the plan during the business meeting. During his presentation, Muniz mentioned that the plan would be a pathway towards a debt-free SUNY system.

"We worked with dozens of student leaders from across the system and sought input like never before to make sure our agenda is comprehensive, inclusive, and progressive," said Muniz. "I couldn't be any prouder of the work that we have done. I'm looking forward to meeting with our legislators as we work toward implementing our agenda for the betterment of students everywhere."

The agenda touches upon issues such as rational reinvesting, textbook affordability, support for childcare centers, mental health, food security, disability access and sustainability measures across the SUNY system.

"Accessible higher education for all people, regardless of their socioeconomic background, is crucial to addressing societal issues like inequality and slow economic growth," said Patrick Gareau, Student Assembly Treasurer and Tuition Task Force Chair. "We look forward to continue working with thousands of students, from SUNY and beyond, to call for policy makers to recognize the importance of investment in higher education."

What's inside the plan?

- Advocating for government subsidization on all fees
- Supporting greater investment into innovation and efficiency to maximize the impact of every dollar spent and cease unfunded mandates
- Encouraging efforts to secure greater state aid for all SUNY campuses
- Supporting a commitment from the state to maintain support for natural increases
- Efforts to ensure that increases in federal funding move towards a debt-free option
- Increase the overall income cap for TAP eligibility, the maximum TAP award for low income families, reinstate TAP for graduate students, and expand TAP access through the DREAM act
- Advocating to increase the overall award for PELL grants and modernize eligibility metrics
- Pushing forward that PELL grants will be reinstated for summer courses to encourage on time degree completion
- Advocating for new efforts the possibility of expanding waivers in a need-based fashion for all fees associated with attending college
- Pushing for lower interest rates across the board for borrowers
- Urging the legislature to explore new repayment options such as a better pay-as-you-earn system to avoid burdening graduates
- Working closely with the next presidential administration to develop new programs
- Encouraging the state to launch a task force to identify new ways to lower textbook costs
- Urging budget increases to support SUNY campus childcare
- Ensuring the state makes a multi-year fiscal commitment to bolster the budgets of SUNY mental health resource centers and counseling services
- Supporting a mandate that all SUNY campuses to develop a long term plan to reduce or eliminate food insecurity on their campuses
- Advocating for the state to push forward increased fiscal commitment to college preparedness programs
- Ensuring an increase in Student Assembly funding
- Advocating for the state to cease unfunded sustainability mandates through 2020

About the Student Assembly of the State University of New York

The Student Assembly of the State University of New York (SUNY SA) is the recognized student government organization representing the nearly 600,000 students of the State University of New York. Comprised of student leaders elected by their peers from across SUNY's 64 campuses, SUNY SA is committed to empowering students throughout the state, and ensuring the representation of its members on the state and national level, as well as throughout the SUNY system.

###