



**2026**

**STATE OF THE  
UNIVERSITY  
POLICY AGENDA**

**CHANCELLOR JOHN B. KING JR.**

**CHANCELLOR OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

John B. King Jr., J.D., Ed.D.

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## MESSAGE FROM

# *The Board of Trustees*

It is an honor to serve and steward the largest comprehensive system of public higher education in the country. Each year, we come together as a SUNY community to celebrate the successes across our 64 campuses as Chancellor John B. King Jr. shares how we will continue to deliver for our students, our communities, and our state.

The 2026 State of the University agenda pledges to continue our commitment to affordable excellence, to serving as an engine of upward mobility and economic impact, and to offering a place for every New Yorker to realize their full potential.

Over more than three years, under the leadership of Chancellor King, SUNY has achieved record enrollment gains and soared to new heights in student success, research and scholarship, providing opportunities for upward mobility for all New Yorkers, and partnership in the economic development of our state. The initiatives and programs outlined in the pages that follow will help SUNY's 64 campuses continue to address the needs of students, while also preparing them with the tools they will rely on to thrive after graduation.

Through the strong support of Governor Kathy Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, and our State Legislature, SUNY has committed to new initiatives that will continue to support our students, expand our research, improve our academic opportunities, and grow our state economy. We thank our Governor and state leaders for their investment and unwavering faith in SUNY.

With our steadfast commitment and the excellent work of our campus leaders, faculty, researchers, students, and staff, we will meet this moment of transition in higher education, our economy, and our entire society.

Sincerely,

The SUNY Board of Trustees



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## MESSAGE FROM

# *Chancellor John B. King Jr.*

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I have always believed that the health of our democracy and the health of our institutions of higher education are inextricably linked. I am tremendously proud to lead a place where we make thriving lives and thriving communities possible, where we educate and serve, and where we deliver value by living our values.

Our results over the past year reinforce that SUNY is an extraordinary engine of upward mobility and economic impact—and transformative for our students, our communities, our state, and our democracy. For three years in a row, enrollment is up, State investment has grown at historic levels, and we continue to build on our promise of affordable excellence in so many ways—from maintaining the tuition freeze at our State-operated campuses to Governor Hochul’s free associate degree program for adults, SUNY Reconnect.

But our excellence also lies in the ways we deliver on the belief that public higher education is a public good. We do that by remaining faithful to the four key pillars the SUNY Board of Trustees and I set to define our work: student success; research and scholarship; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and economic development and upward mobility.

And while we are still living through a moment of remarkable uncertainty—politically, economically, and technologically—I am reminded every time I visit one of our 64 campuses that SUNY holds a unique power to shape lives and societies for the better. I need only to visit a riveting classroom discussion, stop by a food pantry, see our extraordinary Empire State Service Corps in action, meet one of our inspiring Educational Opportunity Program graduates, or talk to faculty conducting groundbreaking research—seeking cures for life-threatening diseases or ways to ethically use artificial intelligence—to marvel at the breadth of ways SUNY is shaping our world.

In the following pages, you will read about the outstanding results we've seen over the past year, as well as our plans to expand on our progress and support our students, faculty, and staff in the year ahead. Thanks to the unwavering commitment of the SUNY Board of Trustees, Governor Hochul's leadership, and the support of Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Heastie, the state legislature and SUNY's champions across the state, SUNY is both the largest comprehensive statewide system of public higher education in the country and an example of what's possible when we invest in public higher education and hold tightly to our belief in its unique power.

I also want to recognize our extraordinary SUNY team that ensures the policy implementation described in this agenda is carried out with fidelity and urgency on behalf of the students we are privileged to serve. While there are too many dedicated colleagues to name individually, I want to note the leadership of Senior Vice Chancellor for Operations & Management Anne Bink, Vice Chancellor for Community Colleges Valerie Dent, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Policy Implementation & Access Initiatives Jamie Frank, Interim Chief Diversity Officer Christa Grant, Senior Vice Chancellor for Health & Hospital Affairs Val Grey, Senior Vice Chancellor for Capital Facilities Robert Haelen, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Julie Hartley-Moore, Senior Vice Chancellor for Student Success Donna Linderman, Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs & General Counsel Kapil Longani, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and System Provost Ram Ramasubramanian, Senior Vice Chancellor for Policy Implementation & Chief of Staff Ian Rosenblum, Chief Financial Officer Josh Sager, Senior Vice Chancellor for Research, Innovation & Economic Development Shadi Sandvik, Chief Sustainability Officer Carter Strickland, and Vice Chancellor for Workforce Development & Upward Mobility Chris White.

At SUNY, we continue to open doors to all New Yorkers, uplift the aspirations of our students, faculty, and staff, and shape the future of communities across our state and nation. It remains a profound privilege to lead and serve.



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## Student Success

Student success remains at the heart of everything we do at SUNY. Our highest calling is to support New Yorkers in pursuing the affordable, excellent education of their dreams—from recruitment to retention to completion. This commitment requires ensuring that our students thrive through strong academic and non-academic supports, including addressing housing, food, transportation, mental health, and other basic needs of our students.

SUNY is fulfilling the promises made in the 2025 State of the University policy agenda:

- ✓ Thanks to SUNY’s partnership with the Governor and Legislature, and guided by the SUNY Board of Trustees’ Finance and Administration Committee chaired by Trustee Staller, SUNY campuses have been able to **make vital investments** in a range of academic programs and student support and services thanks to four consecutive years of historic State funding for SUNY.
- ✓ SUNY’s implementation of **Advancing Success in Associate Pathways (ASAP) and Advancing Completion through Engagement (ACE)**—the nation’s leading college retention and completion models—achieved the Fall 2025 semester [enrollment goal of more than 7,000 students](#) at 34 SUNY campuses. Ongoing research continues to reveal the positive impact of these programs: ASAP and ACE students attempt more credits, earn more credits, and are more likely to stay enrolled or attain a degree in the three semesters following joining ASAP|ACE compared to their peers. With funding in the 2026-27 Enacted State Budget, ASAP and ACE will grow to support 10,000 students this fall.
- ✓ As advanced in the SUNY Board of Trustees’ Student Success Committee led by Trustee Varlack, SUNY launched a System-wide **Academic Momentum Campaign**, which provides SUNY campuses financial support and technical assistance to [strengthen student retention and completion rates](#). Each campus has its own, locally driven academic momentum plan developed in consultation with shared governance and supported by SUNY’s [Academic Momentum Faculty and Staff Fellows](#).

- ✓ With support from nationally recognized technical assistance experts at Lumen Learning and the Charles A. Dana Center, SUNY launched a community of practice to assist 24 campuses to **redesign gateway English and math courses**. Gateway courses are the initial college courses that students take during their first year of college and serve as the “gateway” for subsequent course work. However, they often have high failure and withdrawal rates and can serve as gatekeepers rather than gateways for many students.
- ✓ The **SUNY Military Tuition Rate Program**, a new System-wide initiative that will make SUNY’s [undergraduate programs more affordable](#) for active-duty service members, members of the National Guard, and members of the Reserves, launched at 21 campuses in Spring 2026 and will extend to all SUNY campuses beginning in Fall 2026. SUNY campuses automatically apply an institutional scholarship that aligns tuition for eligible service members with the federal Department of Defense Tuition Assistance, making SUNY tuition-free.
- ✓ Six SUNY campuses have partnered with the Defense Health Agency’s **Medical Education Training Campus** to [develop Degree Bridge Partnerships](#) from training programs to academic programs of study. Through the Degree Bridge Partnership, SUNY campuses will recognize military medical training for academic credit, enabling military students to graduate sooner ready for healthcare careers. The partnerships will be fully operational by Fall 2026.
- ✓ SUNY’s **Mental Health First Aid** [Grant Program awarded funding](#) to 27 campuses to strengthen campus-wide approaches to student mental health and well-being. Each campus received up to \$8,000 to expand training capacity—making it possible to train nearly 3,000 faculty, staff, and other non-clinical personnel to recognize and respond to students experiencing mental health crises or substance use challenges.

- ✓ SUNY launched a free, asynchronous **suicide prevention training** program for all 64 campuses. Campuses are beginning to incorporate the [module into student-facing programming](#) and Residence Life training. These efforts will ensure that suicide prevention skills are directly reaching student leaders, faculty, and staff across campus communities.
- ✓ Building on the appointment of a Homelessness Liaison at every campus, SUNY has continued to provide technical assistance to campuses so they can increase support for **students experiencing homelessness** and address gaps such as [inter-session housing and food access](#).
- ✓ Through the **SUNY Child Care Expansion Initiative**, SUNY invested nearly \$2 million to support [student parent retention and degree completion](#) by removing child care as a barrier to higher education access. These investments expanded child care access at 11 community colleges, creating more than 100 new child care slots and increasing evening, weekend, infant, and toddler care options for student-parents across the state.
- ✓ SUNY hosted the System's first-ever **Basic Needs Summit** and [launched a pilot program](#) to purchase and maintain refrigerated locker systems, which facilitate 24-hour, discreet access to perishable food items and prepared meals at campus food pantries. SUNY also received a \$60,000 grant from the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) for the Basic Needs Data Academy. [The grant will be used to create a cross-agency team](#) with the Governor's Office and the New York State Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance to use basic needs data to improve policy and directly support students.
- ✓ Five SUNY campuses participated in the second phase of a pilot program to **address transportation issues**. Each campus received [\\$10,000 to support critical infrastructure and services](#), including fuel subsidies, peer-driver training, and necessary equipment to reduce transit-related barriers for students.

- ✓ SUNY's ambitious Civics & Service Agenda expanded to include the **Building Bridges Student Grant Competition**, which [supports projects that bring students and community members together](#) across lines of difference. These student-led projects include community dialogue and constructive conversation events, creating and disseminating resources for conflict resolution, and community engagement and service projects.
- ✓ In the 2025-26 academic year, SUNY's landmark **Empire State Service Corps** [expanded to more than 500 students participating](#) in paid service opportunities at 45 campuses. In response to community needs, the program added early childhood education and veteran support as additional service areas and established more roles to address food insecurity.
- ✓ To better support campuses advancing **civil discourse and civic engagement**, SUNY partnered with the leading non-profit Citizens and Scholars to provide faculty training on three pilot campuses. The goal of these trainings is to build lasting capacity among SUNY faculty to foster dialogue across lines of difference in classroom settings.

**Building on SUNY's momentum, the 2026 State of the University policy agenda includes:**

**Strengthening Academic Momentum**

SUNY has achieved three consecutive years of enrollment gains across all SUNY sectors for the first time since 2007-2009 and is on track to enroll 10,000 students in the nation-leading retention and completion programs ASAP and ACE this fall. SUNY campuses currently outperform national public college graduation rate averages for both two- and four-year schools, with affordable excellence that demonstrates the strong value of a college degree.<sup>i</sup>

SUNY is committed to scaling opportunity even further. We are continuing to build on our Academic Momentum Campaign and Transfer Task Force policies to ensure more students make it to and through the SUNY campus of their choice.

**In the coming year, SUNY will:**

- **Continue to strengthen the pipeline from high school to college success across a wide range of SUNY campuses.** SUNY will expand guaranteed admission opportunities for high school students, ease the transfer process from associate degree to Bachelor's degree programs, and provide more opportunities for students to earn graduate and professional degrees through 4+1 programs in high-demand fields.
- **Establish SUNY College Access Ambassadors.** SUNY is committed to ensuring that every student has access to an affordable education. More than half of SUNY resident undergraduate students attend tuition-free thanks to financial aid, and 36% of SUNY students receive Pell grants. But students can only receive financial aid if they complete the necessary paperwork, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

High school counselors play an essential role in closing this gap: One study of 23,000 college-bound high school students found that 87% of those who met with a counselor completed the FAFSA compared to 59% who did not meet with a counselor.<sup>ii</sup> The impact was even larger for first-generation students.<sup>iii</sup> SUNY will strengthen college-going and FAFSA completion efforts across New York State by recognizing, elevating, and leveraging the expertise of high school counselors doing exceptional work in these areas by naming an inaugural cohort of SUNY College Access Ambassadors.

- **Strengthen academic advising.** Holistic advising has emerged as a top priority across campuses as they work to boost students' academic momentum. A national survey of college students found that only half of students reported that they had received advising on course progression to make sure they were on track to graduate—decreasing to 40% for students who said they had a full-time job.<sup>iv</sup> In addition, a national study found that for the most vulnerable students, only around a quarter saw an advisor within a term.<sup>v</sup>

Inspired by the importance of advisors in the successful ASAP|ACE retention and completion model, SUNY will strengthen advising more broadly by establishing a professional learning community, technical assistance, and tools and resources to help advisors support students so they stay on track and complete their degrees.

- **Help students start strong with an excellent, supportive first-year experience.** As SUNY continues to strengthen completion, the importance of first-year retention cannot be overstated. In fact, a study from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center found that persistence from the first year to the second year is one of the most important early indicators of on-time completion.<sup>vi</sup> Creating a sense of belonging on campus—including academic, social, and emotional connections—is necessary for retention, academic success, and mental and physical well-being. Research has found that onboarding and orientation directly impact student success. Students who have a positive orientation experience are 17% more likely to report a positive overall college experience.<sup>vii</sup> As SUNY campuses work to strengthen retention as part of the Academic Momentum Campaign, SUNY will help campuses bring together faculty and staff to replicate and scale existing best practices in first-year experiences across the System.
- **Use “reverse transfer” to ensure students receive the degrees they earned.** Reverse transfer is the process through which a student who transfers to a four-year college from a community college before they complete an associate degree can earn that degree retroactively. Streamlining and significantly automating reverse transfer has emerged as a top priority for community colleges to ensure that students who transfer before graduating still have the opportunity to receive their associate degree if they have accumulated sufficient and appropriate credits.

Research indicates that reverse transfer significantly increases credential attainment, improves student employment outcomes, and provides momentum toward Bachelor’s degree completion. However, nationally, most students transferring from a two-year campus to a four-year school do so without a degree.<sup>viii</sup> Many systems and

states have implemented automated reverse-transfer initiatives, including Texas, Tennessee, Nebraska, and Oregon. SUNY will enhance the reverse transfer process to identify eligible former students who have earned sufficient credits, evaluate those credits, and more efficiently confer associate degrees.

## Helping Students Meet Basic Needs Like Food, Housing & Transportation

Following ongoing emphasis on the importance of addressing basic needs by the SUNY Board of Trustees' Student Life Committee chaired by Trustee Lewin, SUNY continues to focus efforts on supporting students who face basic needs insecurity so they can thrive academically and pursue their dreams. To support and hear directly from campuses, this year SUNY hosted the first SUNY Basic Needs Summit—bringing together campus student support teams and national experts to solve problems and create basic needs action plans.

### In the coming year, SUNY will:

- **Support campus Emergency Aid Funds and develop a System-wide Emergency Aid Policy.** A 2022 study conducted by the Hope Center found that nearly 60% of undergraduate students would have difficulty meeting an unexpected \$500 expense.<sup>x</sup> Emergency Aid Funds can assist in offsetting an unexpected event such as a car breakdown, laptop failure, emergency housing situation, medical crisis, or death in a family. In 2018, The Heckscher Foundation for Children commissioned a study of the SUNY Student Emergency Fund, finding that 94% of the students who received an emergency grant were still enrolled a semester after the emergency.<sup>x</sup> Nearly seven years later, 67% of SUNY community college campuses have an active Emergency Aid Fund. In 2025, SUNY was awarded a Gates Foundation grant to support Emergency Aid Funds at 10 community college campuses, with the goal of scaling effective emergency aid practices. In addition, the 2026-27 Enacted State Budget includes funding to support campus Emergency Aid Funds with first-ever State funding.
- **Expand access to meal “Swipe” donation programs.** Across the country, nearly 900 college campuses have partnered with the organization Swipe Out Hunger to support campus swipe drives where students with excess

meals from their meal plan can donate the unused meals to a campus bank for students facing food insecurity. A new State law will make it possible to establish these programs in New York State, and SUNY will work with campuses to implement meal swipe donation programs to further address student hunger.

- **Expand access to fresh and local food options at campus food pantries.** SUNY will work with campuses to provide after-hours access to fresh and local health food options, including through campus food pantries. Food lockers can store fresh food for up to 72 hours, allowing students to access food from the food pantries in private and when convenient for them. SUNY will expand our food locker pilot program to three new campuses—for a total of 10 campuses—with a focus on those with the greatest levels of student financial need and limited pantry hours.
- **Expand SNAP education and training opportunities on campuses.** The Supplemental Nutrition Access Program (SNAP) allows low-income families and individuals to receive additional funding to spend on groceries. While there are significant limits on student eligibility due to federal rules, SUNY is focused on ensuring that all eligible students can access SNAP benefits—including through hands-on support by Empire State Service Corps participants and by making it easier for students to access necessary paperwork. In addition, every SUNY campus now has a SNAP lead who is responsible for sharing information and conducting outreach.

Recent federal changes make it more difficult for New Yorkers to access SNAP, and they also increase the need for campuses to be designated as SNAP Employment and Training programs. SUNY will provide training and support for community colleges to partner with county governments to be approved SNAP Employment and Training providers.

- **Expand transportation support to improve student access and well-being.** Transportation challenges are among the leading uses of Emergency Aid Funds and

frequently prevent students from completing their degree. Common issues include the inability for students to get to campus (particularly for evening and weekend classes), to access student teaching and internships, to get to medical appointments, and to return home on breaks. SUNY's transportation pilots have led to early wins for students across the state, including at SUNY Oneonta—where the campus worked with Greyhound Trailways to move a bus stop to their campus. This year, SUNY will work with a leading technical assistance provider to support campuses to adopt quick, practical solutions to enhance their transportation services for students accessing campus, off-campus experiential learning, and travel home for breaks.

## Increasing Student Engagement and Mental Health Support

Mental health concerns among college students are widespread, with sense of belonging and connectivity among students being a primary area of concern for many campus leaders and staff. In 2023, then-Surgeon General Vivek Murphy identified loneliness as a public health crisis for Americans. This is especially true for college students: Nearly 60% of undergraduate students surveyed in Trellis Strategies's Student Financial and Wellness Survey reported that they were sometimes or always lonely—with higher rates of loneliness for LGBT students, former foster youth, and students facing basic needs insecurity.<sup>xi</sup> This is particularly concerning because research from Active Minds has found that college students who report feeling lonely are four times more likely to experience severe psychological distress.<sup>xii</sup> Experts have identified strategies to combat campus loneliness, including mental health centers, counseling, and more peer interactions or clubs. In addition, some colleges are creating device-free spaces to support face-to-face interactions.<sup>xiii</sup>

### In the coming year, SUNY will:

- **Combat the loneliness epidemic through increased student engagement.** Thanks to Governor Hochul's investments in SUNY, the SUNY Board of Trustees has been able to allocate \$10 million in ongoing operational funds to support mental health services across State-operated campuses and \$3 million for mental health services at community colleges. As championed by the SUNY Board of Trustees'

Student Life Committee, these resources enable the hiring of additional mental health staff, extension of hours for mental health counseling availability, and expansion of access to tele-counseling. Additionally, SUNY is preparing the next generation of the mental health workforce with programs like the EOP Scholars mental health program and internships for community college students at NYS Office of Mental Health licensed sites.

Building on the existing supports for mental health, SUNY will provide micro-grants to campuses for a variety of strategies to support student involvement in clubs and support services, and to ensure space for low-pressure social engagements including tech-free spaces.

SUNY will also expand the new Mental Health First Aid grant program and work toward ensuring every campus has the opportunity to support certified instructors that help faculty, staff, and students identify and respond to signs of mental health challenges in others.

In addition, SUNY will convene a statewide Mental Health Summit that will focus on current challenges and opportunities to improve mental health and wellness and highlight best practices across the SUNY System. This summit will summarize the findings, insights, and recommendations from the Student Mental Health & Wellness regional roundtables that are being held throughout the state.

- **Establish the Chancellor’s Student Engagement Excellence (SEE) Awards.** Students are most likely to thrive when there are adults on campus who understand their strengths and their needs, and can help them navigate the questions and challenges that inevitably arise. This importance of connection undergirds the mentoring that occurs through ASAP|ACE and the Educational Opportunity Program. Outside of these programs and the opportunity to engage faculty, the sports teams, performance groups, and clubs that students participate in represent a significant part of campus life—and an opportunity to build connection.

Research has found that clubs and student group participation can affect retention. One survey of students who have dropped out of college found that 60% of students who stopped out were not involved at all in any extracurricular activities, compared to 35% of students who persisted.<sup>xiv</sup> Extracurricular activities can also affect career

readiness, as one study found that students who were highly involved on campus were considered more career-ready than those who were minimally or not involved.<sup>xv</sup>

Statewide, SUNY has more than 85 NCAA Division I, 290 NCAA Division III, and 385 NJCAA athletic teams, as well as hundreds of non-competitive athletics clubs. In addition, the SUNY Esports League, which allows students to play highly competitive video games, includes more than 2,000 student players from 23 SUNY colleges and universities across New York State, and SUNY hosted the first-ever SUNY Esports Tournament last year. Outside of sports, there are thousands of clubs, student groups, and music ensembles for students to participate in.

Starting the year, SUNY will annually recognize excellence in non-academic units that contribute to student success in areas including music, athletics, and other activities. The Chancellor's Student Engagement Excellence (SEE) Awards will highlight the importance and the value of the non-academic aspects of student life towards ensuring students feel a sense of connection to their campuses.

## **Instilling Civics and Service Through a SUNY Education**

SUNY recognizes that civil discourse is an essential skill for our students and that civic engagement is a vital outcome of higher education. Over the past three years, SUNY has taken several actions to increase civics and service opportunities on SUNY campuses. One of the most important missions of public higher education—and one that is integral to student success—is to help students develop their civic muscles and build a sense of community. SUNY's Civics & Service agenda is designed to provide students with hands-on civic education and engagement skills and experiences.

### **This year, SUNY will:**

- **Double the Empire State Service Corps.** The Empire State Service Corps was founded in 2024, and since then, more than 500 students each year have served in paid public service opportunities in fields such as K-12 tutoring, basic needs support, peer mental health, and sustainability. In the first year of the program, Corps members completed more than 100,000 service hours and impacted the lives of more than 75,000 New Yorkers. Student interest has far exceeded available spots, with 2,000 students applying for

the 500 spots in the Empire State Service Corps in the first year alone. The Empire State Service Corps is now New York State's largest AmeriCorps program.

Thanks to Governor Hochul's leadership, the Empire State Service Corps will expand to 1,000 Corps members in Fall 2026 and have a presence at more than 50 SUNY campuses. Governor Hochul also directed the Corps to launch the disaster response team, which will receive citizen preparedness training and be prepared to deploy in the case of a natural disaster. In addition, due to philanthropic support from the Ibis Group, 25 additional Corps members will be specifically trained in the Science of Reading to support high-quality tutoring and increase literacy in the early grades.

- **Recognize the service of AmeriCorps alumni and other service programs through Credit for Prior Learning.** More than 5,000 AmeriCorps alumni “graduate” every year in New York State. SUNY campuses will actively welcome AmeriCorps graduates and ensure they have a clear opportunity to receive credit for prior learning aligned with their chosen academic program. To recognize the value of their service, SUNY will once again partner with the National College Credit Recommendation Service to develop a set of credit recommendations for awarding academic credit for AmeriCorps experiences, with an emphasis on applying that credit meaningfully within students' selected fields of study. This work builds on SUNY's existing credit for prior learning initiatives supporting military-connected students and veterans, as well as a new partnership with City Year that enables eligible participants to earn up to 10 academic credits in their chosen academic program at participating campuses. Starting this year, every AmeriCorps alumnus will have their service evaluated for potential credit at SUNY campuses.
- **Support nonpartisan voter participation.** In partnership with the State Board of Elections, SUNY will launch automatic voter registration this summer. Thanks to a new State law, every eligible SUNY student will be given the opportunity to update their voting address when registering for classes. Nearly 40 SUNY campuses are also participating in the nonpartisan national ALL IN initiative to encourage voter engagement.

## Research and Scholarship

In her first State of the State agenda, Governor Hochul charged SUNY with doubling research expenditures. SUNY continues to progress towards this goal, building on strong national leadership in areas such as artificial intelligence, biological sciences, climate change and sustainability, quantum information science and technology, and semiconductor microelectronics and packaging. In addition, SUNY faculty demonstrate their excellence in research and scholarship across a wide array of disciplines—supporting peers and students in building knowledge, exploring new ideas, and conducting groundbreaking research.

### **SUNY is fulfilling the promises made in the 2025 State of the University policy agenda:**

- ✓ To advance our research priorities, SUNY brought together more than 335 faculty researchers, educators, and practitioners from across the SUNY system to help shape strategic directions in areas critical to New York State’s future. Through highly collaborative and interdisciplinary engagement, the **STRIVE Task Forces** [developed recommendations spanning artificial intelligence, biotechnology and biomanufacturing, microelectronics and packaging, quantum science and technology, and climate research and sustainability](#). The STRIVE process has strengthened connections across campuses and disciplines while helping identify opportunities to better align research strengths, infrastructure, education, workforce development, and external partnerships. These efforts—which include the leadership of SUNY Trustees Burke and Staller—are positioning SUNY to accelerate discovery, innovation, economic development, and public impact across New York State.
- ✓ SUNY continues to demonstrate leadership in the **responsible use of artificial intelligence**. Areas of focus over the last year include:
  - Naming the inaugural **SUNY AI for the Public Good Fellows**, made up of 20 SUNY faculty and staff across disciplines ranging from health sciences to sustainable resources management. The [Fellows serve as a resource to colleagues](#) working to update courses and learning activities to incorporate AI literacy, including the effective and ethical use of AI and teaching students to critically evaluate AI-generated content.

- Updating SUNY’s General Education Framework **core competency in information literacy** in order to reflect the rise of emerging technologies and AI. As a result of this change, [all students will develop skills to evaluate information from a variety of sources](#), with an awareness of authority, validity, bias, and origin, and demonstrate an understanding of the ethical dimensions of information use, creation, and dissemination.
- Hosting Governor Hochul’s **Empire AI** consortium, which [provides supercomputer access to researchers working to advance the public good](#). Empire AI is housed at the State University of New York at Buffalo and includes the State University of New York at Albany, at Binghamton, and at Stony Brook, along with the state’s other leading research institutions.
- Establishing **Empire AI campus partnerships** between SUNY’s University Centers, university colleges, technology colleges, and community colleges to advance AI research and education for the public good. The [partnerships leverage Empire AI to increase research experiences](#), professional development, and other opportunities for SUNY students and faculty.
- Launching the nation’s **first independent AI research center at a public university**. The [New York Center for AI Responsibility and Research](#) at the State University of New York at Binghamton will be the nation’s premier academic hub for creating the science and engineering of responsible, repeatable, and transparent artificial intelligence.
- Launching **Departments and Centers of AI & Society** across [eight SUNY institutions](#)—which foster collaboration across disciplines to provide inclusive AI research, address ethical concerns in the use of AI, and advance responsible data use.
- Spearheaded by the SUNY Board of Trustees’ Audit Committee chaired by Trustee Spiro, establishing a **System-wide Artificial Intelligence Policy Framework**—based on feedback from faculty and staff, campus leaders, and other partners—to establish a [common set of expectations for acceptable and responsible AI use](#) and lay the groundwork for additional guidance and technical assistance.

- ✓ SUNY launched the **SUNY Brain Institute** with a [\\$10 million investment connecting SUNY's research-intensive campuses](#) to fund shared equipment and research infrastructure. The SUNY Brain Institute will foster collaborative neuroscience research among SUNY's more than 600 active neuroscience faculty researchers to investigate topics such as brain aging, stroke, mental health, neurodegenerative disorders, and neurotechnology.
- ✓ SUNY launched the **Research Connect** website to shine a spotlight on System-wide research while engendering discovery, collaboration, and innovation, to advance one of the key themes of the SUNY Board of Trustees' Research & Economic Development Committee chaired by Trustee Burke. [SUNY Research Connect](#) includes profiles of 7,000 active SUNY researchers, along with more than 34,000 sponsored awards and 300,000 research outputs. The platform catalogs information on specialized research equipment to increase access to robust, innovative research infrastructure and showcases SUNY's world-class contributions to strategic research areas.
- ✓ The **Technology Innovation Institute**—a partnership between SUNY and NY CREATES—is [strengthening collaboration between industry and SUNY campuses](#). The Institute's Strategic Advisory Committee and Industry Advisory Board include leadership from across the semiconductor industry. In September 2025, the Institute hosted its inaugural workshop to bring together industry partners alongside campus research and academic leadership to identify priority areas for collaboration and to foster workforce development.
- ✓ Eleven **Sustainability Faculty Fellows** from across SUNY are working to foster a culture of sustainability across the System. The [Fellows provide support and resources](#) to peers who are interested in incorporating sustainability into their courses as part of SUNY's commitment to provide education in sustainability-related topics in a wide variety of disciplines.
- ✓ As New York State's largest teacher preparation provider, SUNY is ensuring that all programs that prepare future educators are fully aligned to the **Science of Reading**. As part of Governor Hochul's "Back to Basics" initiative and with deep engagement by SUNY faculty, SUNY's new policy framework ensures [future educators across the 16 SUNY campuses](#) with preparation programs are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed

to provide strong, evidence-based literacy instruction to students statewide. The framework includes an update to SUNY's program review process across all new, revised, and current educator preparation programs by the end of 2026.

**Building on SUNY's momentum, the 2026 State of the University policy agenda includes:**

**Expanding SUNY's Research Leadership**

Even as the current federal administration has abandoned the longstanding—and enormously productive—commitment to federally funded academic research, SUNY continues to deepen our research expertise and make progress towards the goal of doubling research expenditures. Researchers at the State University of New York at Albany, at Binghamton, at Buffalo, and at Stony Brook, along with researchers at SUNY Poly, ESF, Upstate, Downstate, and other campuses, are driving the future of AI, quantum, semiconductors, sustainability, energy storage, and biotech—among so many other fields. From the RNA Institute at the State University of New York at Albany to the latest State investment in Mass Timber research at SUNY ESF, SUNY's research leadership continues to grow.

**In the coming year, SUNY will:**

- **Make additional groundbreaking investments in research infrastructure.** In the 2026-27 Enacted State Budget, Governor Hochul and the Legislature are providing \$100 million to continue constructing and enhancing world-class laboratories and other research facilities at SUNY. Following an investment of \$460 million in last year's Enacted State Budget, these new resources will make it possible to launch research investments across the University Centers, as well as expand the SUNY Brain Institute and make critical gains in agritech research. This infusion of research capital will continue to prepare the next generation of research leaders and make SUNY campuses even more competitive for federally funded and industry-funded research opportunities.
- **Establish the Undergraduate Excellence in Research Award.** Building on the success of the Chancellor's Distinguished Ph.D. Dissertation Award, SUNY will annually recognize excellence in undergraduate research. Highlighting the success of SUNY undergraduate researchers will underscore the importance of research at all SUNY campuses and increase the visibility of SUNY research and researchers.

**Strengthen the Statewide Quantum Network.** In 2024, Chancellor King launched the STRIVE Quantum Task Force—composed of 56 expert researchers—to connect SUNY’s distributed quantum strengths into a coordinated research, infrastructure, and workforce ecosystem aligned with state and national priorities. Last fall, Governor Hochul made it possible for SUNY to take a major step forward in quantum leadership with the announcement of the Quantum Research and Innovation Hub at the State University of New York at Stony Brook—a \$300 million effort dedicated to advancing quantum computing, communication, and networking. In the coming year, through the leadership of Stony Brook University, SUNY will use this historic investment to help create the nation’s first multi-campus quantum internet.

Stony Brook University will lead the initial development of SUNY’s Quantum Internet of Things (SUNY QIoT) initiative, advancing a statewide quantum networking infrastructure intended to position SUNY and New York State at the forefront of quantum communication and networking technologies. During the first two years of implementation, SUNY QIoT will focus on establishing foundational quantum networking capabilities critical for connecting all four SUNY University Centers.

## **Recognizing and Extending SUNY’s Faculty Excellence**

Thanks to Governor Hochul and the Legislature’s investments in SUNY, we have been able to increase the number of full-time faculty at State-operated campuses alone by 6.7% since 2023. SUNY faculty lead the way in scholarship from the humanities to STEM fields, social sciences to fine and performing arts, teacher preparation to agritech advancement. By recognizing and supporting SUNY’s faculty—including through SUNY’s deep commitment to shared governance—SUNY continues to demonstrate the unique power of public higher education to improve lives and expand opportunity.

### **In the coming year, SUNY will:**

- **Build on SUNY’s responsible AI leadership.** SUNY is working to ensure that academic programs and degrees across the curriculum reflect the increasing demand for college graduates who can effectively utilize AI tools in their professional work. In pursuing this goal, we recognize the essential role of faculty leadership and that faculty will

need support as they update programs. Through funding to cover faculty time and resources, and with support from the AI for the Public Good Fellows, SUNY will support cross-campus collaborations of faculty as they identify how AI is transforming discipline-specific professional expectations and map specific AI-enabled skills into student learning outcomes across the curriculum. In addition, SUNY will continue to pilot and deploy the AI tutor and AI in advising initiatives to further support faculty and staff in helping students succeed.

- **Celebrate America’s 250th by elevating research and scholarship on the United States’s democratic experience.** In celebration of the 250th anniversary of the nation’s founding, SUNY will launch the United States 250th Anniversary Faculty Research Fellowship. Through this fellowship, faculty will have the opportunity to engage in public-focused research and scholarship related to understanding and amplifying the history of the United States and the promises and tests of democracy. Faculty from a variety of discipline including history, sociology, and political science will be encouraged to apply. The fellowship complements SUNY’s efforts to support civil discourse and civic learning and democracy-building, while advancing our complete commitment to an honest and complete history of the nation.
- **Invite the next cohorts of SUNY’s Academic Affairs Faculty Fellows.** One of SUNY’s greatest strengths is our nearly 30,000 outstanding faculty members, and SUNY is committed to ensuring that faculty have greater access to professional support. To continue to build on SUNY’s faculty excellence and provide peer support to faculty, SUNY will launch the next cohorts of the Civil Discourse and Civic Education & Engagement Fellows; Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Social Justice Fellows; Sustainability Faculty Fellows; and AI for the Public Good Fellows. SUNY will also work with shared governance leaders—including Trustees Simon and Vacin—to establish a professional learning community on evidence-based teaching practices.
- **Serve as the state’s leading educator preparation and support provider.** Research from the Learning Policy Institute has found that K-12 teachers with access to affordable, high-quality preparation are more likely to stay in the teaching profession.<sup>xvi</sup> SUNY takes very seriously our role in preparing current and future teachers for success—especially in persistent shortage areas in New York State school districts and in the face of

ongoing challenges ensuring K-12 students are college-ready by the time they earn their high school diploma.

Through the Science of Reading Center at SUNY New Paltz, SUNY has established a leading microcredential for current educators to enhance their early literacy education skills. Thanks to the 2026-27 Enacted State Budget, SUNY will expand access to the Science of Reading microcredential for more teachers and school districts, and develop additional microcredential course offerings in the Science of Reading. In addition, SUNY will launch a complementary Science of Math Microcredential to ensure that teachers have the opportunity to receive adequate training and support in high-impact evidence-based mathematics practices.

SUNY will also enhance educator preparation program support for current teachers to align with the state's new climate education standards and financial literacy standards, and will establish a microcredential in trauma-informed teaching. According to the 2016 National Survey of Children's Health, 46% of children in the United States have faced at least one adverse childhood experience, with the figure increasing to 55% among those aged 12 to 17.<sup>xvii</sup> Students who have been exposed to traumatic experiences may require additional support to succeed in the classroom. According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, only about one-third of teachers feel adequately trained to handle challenging student behaviors.<sup>xviii</sup> Trauma-informed training can help teachers identify students who are struggling and understand the strategies to effectively support them.

- **Utilize the expertise of SUNY researchers to solve public good challenges.** One of the charges in SUNY's statutory mission is to "share the expertise of the state university with the business, agricultural, governmental, labor and nonprofit sectors of the state through a program of public service for the purpose of enhancing the well-being of the people of the state of New York and in protecting our environmental and marine resources." In order to advance SUNY's mission and deepen our partnerships with State and local government, SUNY and the Rockefeller Institute of Government will develop innovative approaches to help connect SUNY expert faculty and researchers with State and municipal agencies to help solve their most challenging problems, including through the use of Empire AI.

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

DEI is in SUNY's DNA—literally ingrained in our founding legislation, which describes SUNY's mission “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 in a complete range of academic, professional and vocational postsecondary programs....” SUNY has worked to ensure that every student, from any and all backgrounds, feels welcome, wanted, and safe at all SUNY campuses.

### **SUNY is fulfilling the promises made in the 2025 State of the University policy agenda:**

- ✓ SUNY continues to **demonstrate zero tolerance for all forms of discrimination and harassment through strong Title VI enforcement.** SUNY has implemented [System-wide mandatory Title VI training](#) for all faculty and staff and for all student organization leaders at State-operated campuses. In addition, SUNY has appointed a Title VI Coordinator at every campus and provided training and support to ensure all investigations are taken seriously and completed expeditiously.
- ✓ SUNY is providing training to educate faculty, staff, and student leaders in **supporting students with disabilities**, with a [particular focus on neurodiversity](#). The training was developed by Universal Design for Learning at SUNY in partnership with the SUNY Center for Professional Development and the Center for Autism Advocacy: Research, Education, and Supports at SUNY Empire State University.
- ✓ SUNY launched the inaugural **Disability Support Leadership Institute** in January 2026. The mission of [the leadership institute](#) is to identify, foster, and support the development and retention of current and emerging leaders committed to meeting the needs of students with disabilities. Five fellows from both State-operated campuses and community colleges were selected for this 10-month institute, benefiting campuses that collectively serve thousands of students with disabilities.
- ✓ To **help first-generation students thrive**, SUNY provided funding to campuses to establish dedicated orientation programming to ensure students who are the first in their family to attend college feel supported, prepared, and connected as they begin their academic journey. In addition, SUNY launched an inaugural virtual mentoring convening for first-generation doctoral students—bringing together dozens

of students, faculty, and administrators to discuss the unique experiences and needs of first-generation students pursuing advanced degrees.

- ✓ Beginning with first-year students who enrolled in Fall 2025, as advanced by the Board of Trustees' Student Life Committee, SUNY will ensure that **every student enrolled in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) can participate in a paid internship** or [other applied learning opportunity](#) by the time they earn their degree. SUNY has now awarded more than \$2 million to support new paid internship opportunities for nearly 900 EOP students.
- ✓ In partnership with campus professionals, SUNY established voluntary guidance for **inclusive dining** strategies, which includes template language campuses can include in their food service contracts. The guidance emphasizes opportunities to expand kosher and halal food services, [culturally relevant food, and locally grown and sustainable ingredients](#).
- ✓ SUNY launched **EOP Scholars Programs** to support students pursuing [teaching careers in shortage areas and in the nursing field](#). These programs will support hundreds of students through comprehensive recruitment, credit-bearing coursework, field placements, mentoring, and barrier-reduction strategies that strengthen pathways to high-demand careers. The two new EOP Scholars Programs join existing EOP career preparation programs in pre-med, mental health, and engineering.
- ✓ The SUNY **Outdoors for All** initiative is dedicated to fostering inclusivity, sustainability, and wellness among students, while cultivating a vibrant sense of community on campuses in the beautiful State of New York. This program strives to [transform outdoor spaces and enhance outdoor activities offerings](#), making them more accessible and welcoming to every SUNY student.

**Building on SUNY's momentum, the 2026 State of the University policy agenda includes:**

### **Improving Civil Discourse Across the SUNY System**

SUNY is committed to increasing understanding, bridging across differences, and protecting free speech—all of which are essential

components of civil discourse. In a recent nationwide survey of college students, 94% agreed that students should listen with an open mind.<sup>xix</sup> It is also important for post collegiate life: in a survey of U.S. employers, 71% wanted colleges to place more emphasis on intercultural competence.<sup>xx</sup> However, it takes work to bring civil discourse to life and to help students develop real-world civil discourse skills. Public higher education is uniquely positioned to help achieve this national civil discourse need—as SUNY’s new general education requirement demonstrates.

### **In the coming year, SUNY will:**

- **Provide proactive training to admissions offices, tour guides, and residence life staff.** SUNY will launch a new civil discourse training initiative for campus teams on the “front lines” of making prospective and current students feel welcome and included on our campuses.
- **Support student organizations in collaborating across lines of difference.** SUNY has been selected by the national non-profit Interfaith America to participate in the inaugural “Advancing Campus Pluralism Cohort.” This partnership will award grant funds to build civil discourse capacity at 10 pilot SUNY campuses, allowing them to develop a set of pluralism practices that are designed to bring together campus groups to collaborate and engage in dialogue across lines of difference.
- **Expand the Building Bridges student grant competition.** The Building Bridges student grant competition has provided grants to groups of students working to build bridges across differences on their respective campuses in areas such as civil discourse, anti-hate and bias, and fostering constructive dialogue for students. Due to the high demand of the program in its inaugural year, SUNY will expand the program to provide awards to 25 student groups to support bridge-building and civic engagement.

## **Strengthening Students’ Sense of Belonging**

There is a place at SUNY for every New Yorker, and SUNY’s responsibility is to help students feel welcomed and supported so they can thrive academically, personally, and in their future pursuits.

A sense of belonging is important for students’ overall well-being, as well as for student success. One study of more than

21,000 college students found that even small gains in a sense of belonging can increase on-time college graduation.<sup>xxi</sup> In addition, the feeling of belonging was associated with positive mental health outcomes for first-year students.<sup>xxii</sup>

**In the coming year, SUNY will:**

- **Launch the First-Generation Ambassadors program.** Nearly half of SUNY's undergraduate students are first-generation students, which means their parents did not earn a college degree. Research shows that first-generation students require additional support to graduate on-time, including access to financial aid,<sup>xxiii</sup> and the importance of expanding support for first-generation students has been a consistent theme of the SUNY Board of Trustees' Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee led by Trustee Crespo. Based on the success of the EOP Ambassadors and Disabilities Ambassadors programs, First-Generation Ambassadors will work within their campus community and serve as a liaison to support first-generation efforts. This may include participation in open houses, first year experience seminars, orientations, and student government. In addition, First-Generation Ambassadors will serve as navigation resources, mentors to their peers, and advocates. Ambassadors will receive a stipend for the academic year, ensuring that they are compensated while completing an applied learning program.
- **Expand the EOP Scholars Program to computer science, cybersecurity, and AI.** Building on the success of SUNY's existing EOP Scholars programs, SUNY will launch new efforts to help EOP students prepare for careers in dynamic computer science, cybersecurity, and AI fields. The EOP Scholars program provides comprehensive academic, financial, and mentoring support to ensure student success. By focusing on computer science, cybersecurity, and AI, the new EOP Scholars programs will strengthen retention and completion for participating students and provide more pathways to upward mobility.
- **Launch a veterans-focused orientation.** New York has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting veterans and military families through initiatives such as the Veterans Enrollment and Support Internship Program,

expanded access to higher education benefits, workforce development partnerships, and collaboration with agencies like the New York State Division of Veterans' Services. SUNY campuses have made meaningful strides in building veteran-friendly environments and expanding support services.

Despite this progress, military-connected students—many of whom are first-generation students—continue to face unique challenges when transitioning into higher education. The American Council on Education has found that student veterans benefit significantly from structured onboarding and clear credit transfer pathways,<sup>xxiv</sup> and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families reports that peer connection and early engagement are critical predictors of retention and completion.<sup>xxv</sup>

To address these gaps, SUNY will implement a military-connected student orientation framework. This initiative will ensure that every military-connected student receives tailored, high-quality onboarding that supports academic success, strengthens community, and advances SUNY's commitment to educational equity.

- **Provide a “college essentials kit” for foster youth and former homeless students.** In 2023, SUNY became the first system in the country to establish Homeless Liaisons at every campus as a designated point of contact to support students facing housing insecurity. In addition, for the past decade, SUNY has served students participating in the Foster Youth Success Initiative. A recent study from the Rockefeller Institute of Government found that the students who receive additional support from this program are more likely to finish their degree on time.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The transition from high school to college for homeless students, as well as foster youth, represents a pivotal moment. Homeless students and foster youth often face severe financial challenges, which can be exacerbated by not feeling a sense of belonging on campus. For example, the National Center for Homeless Education found that students who were homeless in high school often arrive at college feeling out-of-place or worried about whether they belong there.<sup>xxvii</sup> In guidance for the transition from high school to college, SchoolHouse Connection—which

provides technical assistance to SUNY campuses— advised that campuses consider the items and supplies students may need to live on campus, which may be an unexpected expense.<sup>xxviii</sup> Nationally, the average student spends \$1,200 on back-to-college costs.<sup>xxix</sup>

In order to better support foster youth and students who experienced homelessness and foster a greater sense of belonging, SUNY will support a program to provide “college essentials” like extra-long sheets and other basic supplies to help equip students’ residence hall rooms while preserving student choice and dignity.

- **Help campuses take practical steps to increase inclusion.** Sometimes feelings of isolation occur through no deliberate action of a campus, such as when a student is unable to access familiar and culturally relevant food or a hair stylist with experience with their hair type. There are simple, low-cost steps that campuses can take to address these gaps, and SUNY will provide micro-grants for campuses to increase students’ sense of belonging through practical solutions such as vending machines with diverse hair care products.
- **Continue to make the outdoors accessible to all.** Last year’s Outdoors for All initiative demonstrated the high level of demand for inclusive outdoor recreational and learning opportunities, with proposals exceeding available funds by almost four-to-one. Renovations to accessible trails, the creation of outdoor classrooms and collaborative learning spaces, equipment rental programs, and community partnerships all enhance students’ engagement with each other and with the outdoors. Recognizing the high level of campus interest, SUNY will launch another round of Outdoors for All in the 2026-27 academic year.

## Supporting Students with Disabilities

SUNY is proud to enroll more than 41,000 students with disabilities across our 64 campuses. New York has taken significant steps to expand support for students with disabilities across the SUNY System, including a \$10 million annual investment in disability services at State-operated campuses. This funding has enabled campuses to hire disability services coordinators, learning specialists, physical accessibility specialists, and electronic information technology accessibility officers.

Despite this progress, students with disabilities continue to encounter barriers in academic and campus environments. Targeted training for faculty has been shown to increase knowledge of neurodiversity, reduce stigma, and improve attitudes toward inclusive teaching practices.<sup>xxx</sup> In addition, trained faculty report feeling better informed and better equipped to respond to students' needs.<sup>xxxi</sup> While professional development has been shown to significantly increase faculty knowledge and application of inclusive strategies, knowledge alone is not sufficient.<sup>xxxii</sup> Translating inclusive practice into the classroom requires continued support beyond the initial training experience.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

### **In the coming year, SUNY will:**

- **Expand neurodiversity training to go beyond the basics.** Following the Spring 2026 launch of SUNY's System-wide training, "Supporting Neurodiversity Across SUNY: Practical Strategies for Our Campus Communities," SUNY will expand this initiative into a sustained, role-specific professional learning program. New modules targeting faculty and student engagement professionals will deepen application, while integration with existing professional development programming will ensure ongoing visibility and learning.
- **Create an Inclusive Post-Secondary Education program at a SUNY campus.** An Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) program is designed to enable students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to thrive on college campuses alongside their typically developing peers. These programs support students taking or auditing classes with other students and include opportunities to fully participate in campus life. Despite strong evidence of the programs' success,<sup>xxxiv</sup> there are still very few such programs in New York—approximately 10 institutions serving 260 students. SUNY will provide technical support and start-up funds for a campus to launch a pilot IPSE program. The goal is for this program to be federally recognized as an approved comprehensive transition postsecondary program, so that the students could be eligible for federal student aid, and to serve as a model for other SUNY campuses.

- **Expand adaptive sports on SUNY campuses.** College athletics is an important part of the collegiate experience, and research has found that adaptive sports play an important role in reducing social isolation for people with disabilities as well as improving health outcomes.<sup>xxxv</sup> It is estimated that 90% of students with disabilities do not engage in campus recreation.<sup>xxxvi</sup> While there are many factors influencing this, one very clear one is lack of opportunity. SUNY will provide start-up funding and support for campuses to launch adaptive sports teams.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND UPWARD MOBILITY

SUNY is New York State’s engine of upward mobility—making it possible for students to earn degrees, certificates, microcredentials, and other credentials that help New Yorkers get the jobs they want, achieve their aspirations, and change the economic trajectory of their lives.

In addition, according to a study by the Rockefeller Institute of Government, SUNY generates \$35.5 billion in economic impact annually for New York State. SUNY supports more than 165,000 direct and indirect jobs statewide, and more than 70% of SUNY alumni are employed in New York State five years after graduation—all of which underscore that SUNY is a major driver for New York’s economic and workforce growth.

## **SUNY is fulfilling the promises made in the 2025 State of the University policy agenda:**

- ✓ In Fall 2025, SUNY launched **SUNY Reconnect**, Governor Hochul’s transformational program that provides [free community college tuition, fees, books, and supplies](#) to adults ages 25-25 without a college degree who pursue a career in a high-demand field. Nearly 5,600 students participated in the first semester, seeking degrees in subjects like nursing and allied health, advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, IT, green and renewable energy, engineering, technology, and pathways to teaching in shortage areas. To support the initiative, SUNY community colleges [invested \\$4 million](#) in advising, enrollment, outreach, credit for prior learning awards, student services, and other campus implementation needs, and SUNY launched a statewide marketing campaign to invite prospective students to apply. SUNY also invested \$1 million to help community colleges create 800 new slots in high-demand programs.
- ✓ SUNY is continuing to **expand access** to paid internships towards the goal of [an internship or other experiential learning opportunity for every undergraduate student](#). SUNY has established regional coordinators to work with their local campuses and build internship pipelines with regional employers and industry groups. We have also expanded partnerships with State and local government agencies that provide real-world internship opportunities and may lead to future careers in public service. Over the last year, SUNY has

launched an [internship program with the NYS Insurance Fund](#), expanded SUNY participation in the New York Power Authority [internship program](#), and leveraged partnerships with the Workers' Compensation Board and NYS Department of Labor. Additionally, SUNY launched a [county government internship program](#) in partnership with the New York State Association of Counties.

- ✓ Since Fall 2024, SUNY has worked with higher education institutions across the country to **embed industry-recognized credentials** within academic coursework. The initiative began with an initial cohort of 11 SUNY campuses in Spring 2025, and then featured a second cohort of 12 campuses that is integrating credentials into disciplines where career pathways are sometimes less explicit, particularly in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. To date, the initiative has engaged more than 2,000 students in courses embedding industry-recognized credentials, with several campuses reporting completion rates at or above 80%. These efforts aim to create a scalable model that allows students to graduate with both a valued academic degree and workforce-relevant credentials that strengthen career readiness.
- ✓ As New York State celebrated the 15th anniversary of the first **Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH)** spearheaded by Trustee Litow, SUNY partnered with K-12 school districts, community colleges, State-operated campuses, the Governor's Office, and other stakeholders to expand successful intensive dual enrollment and early college high school models like P-TECH to reach more students and serve as a pathway to success in postsecondary education and the workforce. This includes hosting an all-day convening with national experts, institutions of higher education, and K-12 partners on high-quality early college programs.
- ✓ In addition to increasing access to industry-recognized credentials, SUNY is helping campuses that specialize in **arts, humanities, and social sciences programs** demonstrate and enhance the value of these important academic fields. SUNY launched a professional learning community for campuses to work with national technical assistance experts to support the work of faculty and staff in connecting arts, humanities, and social sciences programs to a wide range of valuable post-completion outcomes that enable students to pursue their aspirations and enhance economic opportunity.

- ✓ SUNY's Academic Medical Centers prepare the state's healthcare workforce while providing essential services to their communities. Through the leadership of Governor Hochul, the Legislature, and the SUNY Board of Trustees' Academic Medical Centers & Hospitals Committee chaired by Trustee Corngold, SUNY has secured a **historic reinvestment in our hospitals**. This includes a \$1.1 billion State investment to revitalize SUNY Downstate's University Hospital—with the design phase now underway for projects that will repair infrastructure, modernize inpatient rooms, expand the emergency department, and create a new hospital annex, including a state-of-the-art ambulatory surgery center that expands services in cardiology and oncology. At SUNY Upstate, where the design phase is also underway, a \$450 million investment will result in a new, expanded emergency department and burn unit to serve the Central New York Region.
- ✓ The **SUNY Agritech Center** is a System-wide initiative launched in 2025 to coordinate and elevate SUNY's agricultural technology education, workforce, and research capacities. It represents a [mobilization of SUNY's comprehensive agricultural strengths](#), aligning with State agencies, industry, and regional stakeholders to better prepare for the next-generation agricultural sector. As part of the initial work of the Center, SUNY has engaged more than 150 individuals covering all regions of the state and hosted stakeholder meetings that included state lawmakers, SUNY campus leaders, farmers and producers, industry groups, agriculture non-profits, small business advisors, faculty, students, and K-12 partners.
- ✓ SUNY expanded the reach of the **career counseling microcredential** at SUNY Oneonta to serve additional counselors throughout the state. The College and Career Counseling Advanced Skills Microcredential will provide educators with the opportunity to develop career pathway advising and the use of workforce data in support of students.
- ✓ SUNY has **reduced directly controlled greenhouse gas emissions** from burning fuel in vehicles and buildings and purchased electricity from utilities by over 40% between 1990 and 2025. Whenever SUNY builds a new building or undertakes major renovations, that work has to meet rigorous net zero carbon or deep energy retrofit energy use intensity standards. Investments in the capital renewal of the SUNY

System have significantly ratcheted down energy use, with leaky windows and inefficient equipment from the 1960's replaced with modern, airtight finishes, insulated fixtures, and efficient equipment. SUNY is also switching to cleaner fuels and is moving to electrically-powered heating equipment whenever possible, with geothermal heating at 23 campuses and on-campus solar at 17 campuses generating 2.6% of System needs. Recognizing that SUNY is the place to start growing the geothermal industry in New York, Governor Hochul and the Legislature have provided \$270 million in design and construction funds to advance SUNY projects. In addition, SUNY has undertaken targeted energy efficiency projects, including 950 separate projects in the last decade alone. On transportation, SUNY has already replaced over 265 gas cars with zero emission, or electric, vehicles and is building out a network of EV chargers. These changes benefit both the environment and SUNY's financial sustainability.

- ✓ As part of implementation of **SUNY's Sustainability & Climate Action Plan**, SUNY conducted a climate hazard assessment of all 64 SUNY campuses that could potentially [save SUNY millions of dollars in infrastructure damage](#) and lost operations. The assessment indicates the exposure of more than 3,800 buildings to the hazards of extreme wind, heat, cold, fire, precipitation and sea level rise. The tool provides necessary information for informed decision-making and grant applications in capital planning, capital project design, facility operations, and emergency management. In addition, students across the SUNY System were [awarded with scholarships and micro-grants](#) to recognize their efforts in sustainability and to execute a sustainability event or program on their campuses. Together, their efforts are involving more than 500 additional students over the Spring 2026 semester spanning five sustainability topics: Research, Reducing our Environmental Footprint, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Arts and Communication, and Environmental Justice.

**Building on SUNY's momentum, the 2026 State of the University policy agenda includes:**

### **Continuing to Ensure the Value of a College Degree**

In Chancellor King's first State of the University address, SUNY set the ambitious goal that every SUNY student will graduate with a high-quality internship, service-learning experience,

or other experiential learning opportunity connected to their academic pursuits. Research has found that these experiences are associated with benefits for college completion and can help close the employment gap for students from low-income backgrounds.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Currently, approximately two-thirds of SUNY students complete a recognized experiential learning opportunity before graduation, and the SUNY Board of Trustees' Workforce Development & Upward Mobility Committee led by Trustee Haddon has prioritized closing the gap to reach 100% of undergraduate students.

**In the coming year, SUNY will:**

- **Implement Governor Hochul's Career Connected internship initiative.** The 2026-27 Enacted State Budget includes \$7.4 million for the SUNY Career Connected initiative. SUNY will invest these resources to support additional internships at State-operated campuses and community colleges, including research internships, public service internships, and industry internships. SUNY campuses will prioritize internships for students who are participating in EOP and ASAP|ACE programs, as well as students pursuing arts, humanities, and social sciences degrees.
- **Strengthen campus capacity to support high-quality internships.** Based on the success of SUNY's other Faculty Fellowships, SUNY will launch the Career Connection Fellowship to engage faculty and staff across the System to work with their peers to build successful internship and career development programs. In addition, SUNY will enhance capacity for campuses to award credit for prior learning to students who participate in non-credit internships that are connected to their academic pursuits.
- **Expand access to career preparation.** SUNY will partner with the New York State Department of Labor to host on-campus and virtual workshops for students to promote best practices in job search, resume development, and interviewing. Working in partnership with national experts and building on excellent work already underway across many SUNY campuses, SUNY will also establish clear best practices for career counseling and support.

## Improving Support for Adult Learners

Governor Hochul's SUNY Reconnect initiative that provides a free associate's degree in high-demand fields is a game-changing engine of upward mobility and economic development for New York State. Research from Jobs for the Future found that more than half of students nationwide in fields such as construction trades and healthcare were over the age of 25, yet across New York State only 22% of students in Fall 2025 were 25 or older.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The potential adult learner population in New York includes students who have never attended higher education, as well as the 1.25 million New Yorkers with some college and no degree. The SUNY Board of Trustees' Community College Committee chaired by Trustee Duffy has identified serving this population as an essential opportunity to advance the state's workforce agenda.

Adult students often need specific supports to thrive in college. The major reasons adults learners give for dropping out are conflicts with work, physical and mental health needs, and family obligations.<sup>xxxix</sup> Recent research found that students who had stopped out are less likely to know services were offered, with less than half recognizing that academic advising was available and only a third aware of mental health supports.<sup>xl</sup>

### In the coming year, SUNY will:

- **Expand SUNY Reconnect to serve more adult learners in more high-demand fields.** The 2026-27 Enacted State Budget incorporates Governor Hochul's plan to expand SUNY Reconnect to include additional fields such as emergency management, air traffic controllers, and logistics. Adults who already have a degree will also be eligible for SUNY Reconnect if they wish to pursue a career in nursing. In addition, beginning in Fall 2026, SUNY Reconnect will expand beyond community colleges to also include eligible associate degree programs at State-operated campuses.

To encourage more New Yorkers to benefit from SUNY Reconnect, SUNY will launch a re-enroll campaign for students with some college credit to return to any SUNY campus, as well as offer more tools to encourage campuses to help adult learners enroll, persist, and complete their degrees. Evidence-based strategies include clear academic and career pathways, proactive

advising, flexible and predictable scheduling, and timely access to financial aid and wraparound supports.

- **Increase the number of community college evening and weekend courses in high-demand fields.** National data indicate that 64% of college students work—including 41% who work full-time—which can create a conflict between students being able to earn wages to support themselves and their family, or completing their degree.<sup>xii</sup> With students working or having child care needs, ensuring required courses are offered on nights and weekends can help ensure that students do not get shut out of a course or drop out altogether. Thanks to the 2026-27 Enacted State Budget investment in additional operating aid support for community colleges, SUNY will work with community colleges to dedicate a portion of these resources to expand evening and weekend academic programming.
- **Provide additional support for student-parents.** In recent years, SUNY has expanded access to child care and increased support for student-parents. For example, SUNY has invested \$10.4 million in creating additional child care centers and expanding more slots, especially for infants and toddlers. This spring, SUNY announced the expansion of evening and weekend child care hours for SUNY child care centers. The GAO estimates that one in five college students are parents, and at least 14% of SUNY students have self-identified as a parent.<sup>xiii</sup> According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, about half of all college students earn a degree or certificate within six years, while only 33% of student-parents do the same.<sup>xiiii</sup> However, despite their lower graduation or degree completion rates, student-parents typically earn similar or better grades than their non-parenting peers.<sup>xiv</sup>

In order to ensure student-parents feel welcome and supported, SUNY will create a micro-grant program for campuses to improve support for student-parents such as by investing in child-friendly lounges, study areas, child care assistance payment access, and financial aid training so campus staff can maximize financial assistance.

- **Launch a statewide microcredential access and discovery initiative.** New York has led the nation in scaling university-based microcredentials aligned to in-demand workforce skills. SUNY currently offers 550 microcredentials in significant, in-demand industries for New York State—which presents significant opportunity for New Yorkers now that the new federal Workforce Pell program will expand financial assistance for short-term programs. For example, SUNY’s Direct Support Professional Microcredentials program, in partnership with the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), has already reached nearly 2,000 New York workers who serve in the title of Direct Support Professional, supporting and advocating for those with developmental disabilities.

Of the hiring managers responding to the 2024 NYS Workforce Survey by the New York State Department of Labor, 63% of employers cited an inability to find qualified workers as their number one challenge. In that same survey, job seekers cited “not having enough experience in the field” or “not having the right degree, certificate or credential” as their top two barriers to employment.<sup>xlv</sup> SUNY microcredentials, with pathways to certificates, initial and advanced degrees, are powerful tools to address both challenges. A separate study found that participating in a microcredential program was positively associated with employability.<sup>xlvi</sup>

SUNY will launch the System’s first-ever paid communication campaign dedicated to microcredentials to expand awareness, improve access, and boost enrollment. SUNY will connect more New Yorkers to its growing catalog of high quality, in-demand microcredentials—including a tailored suite of microcredentials for young adults looking to upskill as they enter and advance through their early careers.

- **Help more students earn credit for their prior learning and professional experience.** The SUNY Board of Trustees’s 2023 credit for prior learning policy, led by the Academic Affairs Committee chaired by Trustee Litow, positioned SUNY as a national leader in recognizing college-level learning earned outside the traditional

classroom. Since this policy update, SUNY has launched credit for prior learning opportunities for students who completed training at fire and police academies, trained all campuses on credit for military service, and worked with campuses to provide credit for City Year experience—among many other areas. As a result, in the 2024-25 academic year, campuses awarded 369,344 credits for prior learning credits to 45,035 students—a nearly 11% increase in credits awarded over the prior year.

National evidence confirms credit for prior learning as a high-impact student success strategy: Students who receive credit for prior learning are 30% more likely to complete their degrees, with even greater completion lifts for students of color, community college students, and Pell Grant recipients.<sup>xlvii</sup> However, research has also found that lack of knowledge about the credit for prior learning process can be a significant barrier to access.<sup>xlviii</sup>

SUNY will provide more tools to campuses to guide students in documenting prior learning, match that learning to campus-specific credit for prior learning options and credential-to-course crosswalks, and support advisors and faculty with structured workflows and a shared equivalency database. By embedding credit for prior learning into admissions, advising, and evaluation processes, SUNY will highlight opportunities for students earlier, reduce administrative burden, and better connect credit for prior learning to enrollment and workforce strategies, including enhanced support for veterans and military-affiliated students.

## **Leading the Way on Sustainability**

New York is a national leader in sustainability and smart climate policies, including through the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, Executive Order 22, and Executive Order 32. SUNY is committed to helping New York State meet its climate and energy goals. SUNY hired its first Chief Sustainability Officer in 2023. Less than two years later, the first System-wide [Climate and Sustainability Action Plan](#) was approved by the SUNY Board of Trustees in January of 2025.

**In the coming year, SUNY will:**

- **Commit to an electric vehicle fleet where appropriate.**  
New York State mandates a 100% zero emission vehicle (ZEVs) fleet by 2035, and this goal was reflected in the SUNY Climate and Sustainability Action Plan. In order to advance towards this objective, SUNY will update System policy to move to EVs for light-duty vehicles as replacements occur with appropriate exceptions to ensure feasibility. SUNY will also continue to expand EV infrastructure, including by seeking funding to support campus implementation and by ensuring that charging stations are part of every SUNY capital project that includes parking areas. In this way, SUNY seeks to prepare our students to thrive and lead in a world moving to full adoption of electric vehicles, buildings with zero carbon heating and cooling, and zero waste.
- **Launch the SUNY Eco-Ambassador Program.**  
Sustainability often brings to mind facilities, operations, and utilities. Although these are crucial to the overall goal of sustainability, our students' own passion for environmentalism and climate action remains a largely untapped resource. Students are familiar and ready with solutions to environmental challenges like climate change, plastic waste, or air and water pollution. Moreover, these solutions empower and prepare students for civic engagement and future careers.

To amplify the energy and commitment of our students, SUNY will name 100 Eco-Ambassadors across the SUNY System. Eco-Ambassadors will serve as knowledgeable peers to their fellow students—across a range of academic disciplines—on environmental and sustainability issues. The Eco-Ambassador Program will serve as a paid community service opportunity to help students develop their knowledge and skills while improving their campuses.

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