

March 11, 2015

Dear Leader Skelos, Senator LaValle, Speaker Heastie, Assemblymember Glick:

On behalf of our SUNY campuses and the students and families we serve, we are writing to seek your support in requesting an extension of the highly successful Rational Tuition plan through the year 2020.

Over the past four years, NYSUNY 2020 has – for the first time ever – allowed our students and their families to plan for the cost of all four years of their education. It has also provided our campuses with vital resources to ensure excellence, while at the same time remaining one of the most affordable systems of higher education in the nation.

Extending rational tuition is critical for our students and their families, who are planning today for the 2016-17 academic year and for their four-year college experience. With this extension, tuition would increase at the same rate (no more than up to \$150 per semester), and campuses would be able to maintain investments in need-based financial aid.

As has always been our commitment with rational tuition, we are committed to investing revenues directly into students and their undergraduate experience.

We are committed to a higher degree of access. We know that the unparalleled affordability that SUNY offers is a gateway to a better quality of life for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Through NYSUNY 2020, we have invested in need-based financial aid as well as in student support initiatives that enhance opportunities for under-represented students. In fact, more than 25 percent of rational tuition revenues at our campuses were reinvested to cover the gap between tuition and the maximum TAP award, ensuring full tuition coverage for our neediest students. And we have all implemented SUNY's Smart Track program, which improves financial literacy and encourages fiscal responsibility.

We are committed to a higher degree of completion. We know that the best way to combat student debt is by supporting on-time graduation. Through NYSUNY 2020, our institutions have hired over 500 faculty and instructional staff in high-demand fields. We have expanded our network of online courses and degree programs through the new Open SUNY platform, making education available to those who need it on their schedule, wherever they are. And we have expanded undergraduate and graduate course offerings with over 100 new academic programs.

We are committed to a higher degree of success. We have an obligation to provide our students with access to a world-class education that will prepare them for success in the 21st-century global economy. We are better preparing our students for life after graduation by enhancing academic and career advisement. And we have created more hands-on or applied learning opportunities through internships and cooperative education as well as research, service-learning and entrepreneurial experiences.

Collectively, these investments have increased four-year graduation rates and retention, while lowering student debt and loan default rates. In fact, student debt and loan default rates among our graduates are below the national average. SUNY is creating the campus environment, the academic support, and the experiential learning opportunities that ensure our students are ready to join the workforce and contribute to New York's ongoing revitalization.

As Chancellor Zimpher has traveled across the state to talk directly with students, we heard again and again that they want curricular and extra-curricular programs that prepare them to be leaders in their chosen professions. Our students come to SUNY campuses because they are seeking a world-class yet affordable education that will prepare them for long-term success. And because of the investments they have made through the NYSUNY 2020 program, we have been able to provide them with exactly that.

The leadership and support of both the Senate and the Assembly were vital to the implementation of rational tuition and have driven its demonstrated success on our campuses and across the SUNY system.

We know you join us in our commitment to ensuring that all of New York's students have access to high-quality education right in our state so that they will continue to live and work here. We remain the most affordable public higher education system in the northeast, and the extension of NYSUNY 2020 provides the predictability students want while enabling our campuses to invest further in the educational excellence students deserve.

We urge your support of an extension of NYSUNY 2020 to continue our record of success.

Sincerely,

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