

## NY25: A VISION FOR SUNY AND NEW YORK



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### *Aspiration Matched by Realism*

In May 1961, President John F. Kennedy announced plans that sounded audacious to most, unrealistic to some, and simply impossible to a few. Those plans committed the United States to landing a human being on the moon and returning them to the earth. From the start, the plan was pushed by Kennedy as aspirational. In fact, in a historic address at Rice University

after his initial announcement of the plans to a joint session of Congress, Kennedy called on the nation to embrace the plans “not because they are easy, but because they are hard.”

This past July, the world commemorated the successful completion of Kennedy’s aspirational promise. Despite the immense challenges of engineering, astrophysics, safety and budgetary costs, the United States was able to achieve what Kennedy challenged the nation to do years earlier. For our society to deal with the massive threats our nation and world face today – from the climate emergency to the deterioration of all aspects of our nation’s infrastructure – we must become daring, aspirational and ambitious again. And we must challenge each other to think and act in these ways.

Today, New York is fortunate to have the largest and still the best public higher education system in the world. The combined intellectual resources of SUNY and CUNY are immense and impressive. But what is lacking is a mission for these systems. Focusing on SUNY, we hear that the role of SUNY campuses is to be economic engines for the communities where they are located. Other voices call on SUNY to be a place where individuals are trained for the jobs of “tomorrow.” Some also call for SUNY to be the place where citizenship values, like tolerance, activism, and civic engagement are ingrained in the young adults of our state.

But, none of these missions or purposes is sufficient for the times we are living through. With NY25, United University Professions (UUP) is calling for SUNY become the lead institution in transforming New York into a sustainable, just and human society – including its political economy. The proposals we make will accomplish this role through SUNY’s ability to marshal the dynamic and diverse strengths of our state.

Like President Kennedy’s pledge to land on the moon at a time when the infrastructure and the science was not capable of accomplishing the goal, NY25 calls on SUNY to aspire to a set of goals to reach by 2025 which will be seen as audacious, unrealistic and impossible.

For UUP, however, the danger of not being ambitious and aspirational is much more threatening to our society. It would mean surrendering to limited vision, to a loss of faith in our society to reach for and accomplish great things for future generations. It would doom those future generations to a much more dangerous world to live in.

But in establishing these goals, we are also grounded in the reality of what we face in our economy and our society. As such, we call on SUNY to lead the way in taking on the salient issues of today:

- **The Education Crisis:** As costs continue to rise for students in higher education, and its value is challenged, the purposes of the institutions must be focused on the social imperatives of our day to create society-wide support for the institutions.
- **The Climate Crisis:** With the evidence growing that climate change has turned into a true global emergency, no institution – and certainly no academic institution – can sit on the sidelines or limit its role. These institutions must take the lead in analyzing and addressing the crisis.
- **The Health Care Crisis:** With growing health care deserts in New York State and a worsening shortage of providers, it is imperative that the education and training of the next generation of healthcare professionals be a central priority for the state. Also, the expansion of the Peoples’ Hospitals – SUNY’s Academic Medical Centers at Brooklyn, Stony Brook, and Syracuse – is imperative.
- **The Citizenship Crisis:** With our nation politically divided more so than at any time since the Civil War, and with those under 30 professing a lack of support for democracy, it is imperative that institutions of higher education take on the role of creating active, engaged citizens with the necessary critical thinking skills to ensure the survival of our republic.

All of these challenges can be met if the institutions that our members serve – SUNY in all of its university centers, comprehensive colleges, technical colleges, specialized colleges and academic medical centers – work towards a vision that will bring about the necessary changes in our state and nation.

The time is short. The need is dire for institutions that have been created to serve the state and its people step up to act in ways that promote a future that is just, sustainable and humane. SUNY must take on this mission. UUP stands ready to work with any and all to make the mission succeed.

We do so in the spirit of President Kennedy’s call at Rice in 1961: Not because it is easy, but because it is hard.



NY 25 is a proposal for an aggressive, macro-level financial policy package, which is keyed to achieving measurable goals by 2025. These goals will keep SUNY **accessible**, promote the **health of all New Yorkers**, create a **sustainable future for SUNY**, increase **faculty diversity**, and establish **long-term, reliable resources for public higher education**. Our students deserve a system that is looking to the future, and we are willing to fight and work for it. Our proposal includes:



### Keep SUNY Accessible:

- **Reduce student share of SUNY costs from 64% of direct state support to 25% by 2025.** Students come to SUNY because they know they can receive a high-quality, affordable education that will open doors to new opportunities. However, a continued shift of costs from the state to students has placed an additional financial burden on our students and reduced access to the high-quality education every New Yorker deserves. If we continue to reach into the pockets of our students instead of investing public dollars into higher education, we will not be setting our students up for success, but for years of student loan payments.
- **Provide access every two years to one free, SUNY-faculty-led course for all residents of New York State over the age of 16.** Access to education is a cornerstone of American democracy. New York should lead the way in expanding this access to learners in all stages of life through online, bricks-and-mortar, and hybrid classes, when space is available. This program would bring high-quality SUNY education to every household in New York, encourage lifelong learning, and strengthen ties between SUNY campuses and the communities they are located in.
- **Aggressively expand SUNY's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) by doubling the number of students, staff and funding by 2025.** EOP provides access and support to students who would not have otherwise been offered admission to SUNY. EOP has a proven record of success with more than 70,000 graduates, many of whom still live and work in New York. Restoring EOP funding can no longer be the answer. Funding must be systematically increased to expand programs and increase access to more students.

### Promote the Health of All New Yorkers:

- **Create a Medical Educational Opportunity Program (MEOP) with a target of 100 new students at the four SUNY medical schools in the next academic year.** Studies show that by 2032, there could be a physician shortage of up to 121,000 doctors nationwide. MEOP will draw students from underrepresented and under-resourced communities. With proper support, at an initial cost of \$5 million, more diverse cohorts of medical students will complete their medical education and practice primary care medicine in those same communities.
- **Reduce the total cost of SUNY medical school tuition to \$25,000 by 2025.** This will allow SUNY to remain competitive in the medical school market. Some medical schools, including New York University's Grossman School of Medicine, now offer all enrolled students full-tuition scholarships, so **students can focus on what's important—patient care. New York retains less than 45 percent of physicians who complete their graduate medical education here**, partially due to the high cost-of-living. We're training the next generation of health care professionals, and reducing the cost of earning a medical degree at SUNY's academic medical centers will allow graduates to stay in New York without the burden of large amounts of student debt. These new professionals become even more essential as older generations prepare for retirement. **Nearly 35 percent of active physicians in New York are over the age of 60.** We must ensure New York has a healthy future by keeping our SUNY medical schools affordable.
- **Create partnerships between SUNY's three teaching hospitals and 25 ambulatory care facilities across the state by 2025.** These partnerships will enhance student learning, increase access to high-quality medical care, and connect SUNY hospitals with the communities they serve.

## **Create a Sustainable Future for SUNY:**

- **Show the way to the carbon-free future by achieving a carbon-neutral SUNY by 2025.** To make this possible, **\$25 million per year** will be directed to retrofitting SUNY buildings. This funding would be targeted at implementing broad renewable energy options for campuses. A **cap and trade system** will allow campuses who reach carbon-neutrality to trade their excess carbon credits to other campuses for a funding bonus.
- **Establish a pilot program of microgrids and battery storage at five campuses next year.** Through the creation of energy microgrids and a partnership with "Green Machine" technology, SUNY campuses and the communities they are located in can **create and store clean energy**. New Yorkers living near SUNY campuses would have the opportunity to take part in such energy microgrids and help maximize the capture of solar energy, wind turbine generated electricity, and other renewable energy options. Energy generated would then be stored on SUNY campuses. In addition, SUNY maintenance and construction machines should be retrofitted to be run by clean energy batteries. When successful, the pilot program can be expanded to all SUNY campuses by 2025. **This partnership between community and campus will result in savings for taxpayers in addition to millions of dollars that can be redirected to educational programming.**
- **Make SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF) the lead institution nationally for dealing with our climate crisis.** SUNY ESF will expand and strengthen their Sustainable Energy programs to be dedicated to studying and solving our climate crisis. ESF should also include climate change mitigation research and education programs in their mission.
- **Direct \$5 million for a grant program to expand existing certificate, associate, and baccalaureate sustainability programs across SUNY.** Funding should increase \$5 million per year with a goal of \$25 million by 2025. This program will provide an education targeted to train and retrain professionals in green energy and sustainability jobs across New York.

## **Increase Faculty Diversity:**

- **Ensure that at least 25% of faculty and staff positions in SUNY are filled by individuals who are African American, Native American and Latinx by 2025.** The SUNY PRODiG ("Promoting Recruitment, Opportunity, Diversity, Inclusion and Growth") program launched last year begins this important work, but we can do more. **Less than 9 percent of SUNY faculty are racially or ethnically diverse while over 28 percent of SUNY students are diverse (as of Fall 2018).**

## **Establish Long-Term, Reliable Resources for Public Higher Education:**

### **1. SUNY Endowment**

- Establish a SUNY endowment to support the above programs with **a goal of \$25 billion in the endowment by 2025** with a public to private match requirement, with the private share never exceeding 25%.

### **2. Public Medical Higher Education Fund**

- Direct a portion of the taxes collected from the sale of marijuana to SUNY's three public teaching hospitals for the Public Medical Higher Education Fund.

### **3. SUNY Foundation Tax**

- Tax SUNY's campus foundations to ensure that they are fulfilling their purpose of supporting SUNY campuses rather than depleting their limited resources.

For more information on these proposals, visit [UUPinfo.org/NY25](http://UUPinfo.org/NY25).