



UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

# A FAIR DEAL FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

# 2025

# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION..... 3

STATE OPERATING AID..... 4

STATE SUPPORT FOR SUNY'S  
TEACHING HOSPITALS..... 6

STUDENT OPPORTUNITY  
PROGRAMS..... 10

SUSTAINABILITY..... 12

REVENUE..... 14

NON-BUDGETARY PRIORITIES..... 15



# A FAIR DEAL FOR SUNY

**A** fair deal for public higher education is exactly that: a fair deal from the state when it comes to funding SUNY, our state-operated campuses across the state and our life-saving public teaching hospitals in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse.

Our students deserve a fair deal. So do the communities that depend on SUNY as a strong economic engine and the people who work at our colleges, our universities and our hospitals.

Our 2025 Legislative Agenda lays out UUP's Fair Deal agenda, which includes policy solutions for our workplace and communities in Education, Healthcare, Student Opportunity Programs, Sustainability and Revenue.

We strongly believe that our plan for SUNY in 2025 makes sense for all New Yorkers and is one that legislators can strongly support. We look forward to your review and your thoughts about our Fair Deal.



Frederick E. Kowal  
President, UUP



# STATE OPERATING AID

## Campus State Support

UUP requests a total increase of \$212.1 million in operating aid to SUNY state-operated campuses in this year's state budget. Of that amount, we request \$102.1 million in restricted operating aid to address the financial deficits of 17 state-operated campuses, and \$110 million for program enhancements and costs associated with enrollment growth.

Total enrollment at state-operated campuses grew 2.7% since fall 2023, and 3.3% since fall 2022. First-time enrollment for these campuses is up 3.4% annually, which shows that SUNY continues to attract and enroll recent high school graduates. With a total enrollment of 210,926 students, state-operated campuses have regained more than 1 in 3 students lost during the coronavirus pandemic.

We are grateful to the governor and the Legislature for maintaining the 2023-2024 state fiscal year increase of \$163 million in SUNY's base budget and providing an increase of \$114 million in the current fiscal year's budget. Unfortunately, for the second year in a row, the SUNY chancellor and the Board of Trustees chose to allocate this funding inequitably, directing most of it to already well-off university centers. As a result, 17 campuses still have budget deficits. UUP has repeatedly called on SUNY to allocate state funding to address campus deficits, yet SUNY leadership refuses to do so. The resources have been available to solve this problem. It's a matter of making this troubling issue a priority.

To immediately address this problem, we urge the Legislature to allocate the \$102.1 million requested increase directly to those campuses with deficits, rather than giving the SUNY Board of Trustees the discretion to allocate a lump sum of money. This action is necessary to support the vital educational mission of each SUNY campus and to prevent further unnecessary cuts to faculty, staff and academic programs.

State action to significantly increase investment in SUNY is even more crucial given the outcome of the presidential election and the incoming administration's general hostility toward higher education institutions. With federal support for higher education uncertain, New York state should be proactive and provide increased funding to SUNY based primarily on campus need and not heavily weighted on campus enrollment.

While the SUNY system has experienced enrollment gains—including at 14 of the 19 campuses with reported budget deficits last year—incremental enrollment rev-

enue is not enough to fix the structural problems many campuses face. SUNY campuses that have seen record enrollment gains are still sounding alarms of financial distress, with some planning new rounds of budget cuts. It is time to abandon the notion that campuses must turn a profit through tuition revenue to be worthy of adequate state support.

SUNY is a public institution. Public higher education is a public good. We must ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enroll in a SUNY campus and earn a college degree in the region where they live. We must protect opportunities for education and upward mobility for all, no matter what the federal government does. We need more educational opportunities for people in this state. Not fewer.

UUP requests an increase of \$212.1 million in state operating aid, with \$102.1 million allocated directly to campuses with deficits and \$110 million for program enhancements and enrollment growth.

## Full-Time Tenure-Track Faculty and Professionals

UUP requests \$53 million to expand and retain full-time faculty and professionals at SUNY campuses. We applaud Gov. Kathy Hochul and the Legislature for providing funding for full-time faculty in the last two state budgets. Moving forward, we are advocating for this aid to include professionals at SUNY as well. Expanding this funding to include professionals will go far in helping campuses attract and retain talented public employees who teach and support students at SUNY. Moreover, we respectfully request that this funding be equitably distributed across the 29 state-operated campuses and should also support individuals from underrepresented groups.

UUP requests \$53 million to support full-time tenure-track faculty and professionals.



# STATE SUPPORT FOR SUNY'S TEACHING HOSPITALS

## Brooklyn Needs Downstate: Save SUNY Downstate University Hospital

UUP is calling for the governor and the Legislature to approve a modernization and revitalization plan for SUNY Downstate University Hospital (Downstate) that maintains the medical center as a SUNY state-operated hospital at its current location. We also call on the state to maintain and enhance inpatient services at Downstate.

In January 2024, the SUNY chancellor announced a secretly developed plan by SUNY to close Downstate. If implemented, this closure plan would have shuttered a hospital that provides vital healthcare services to more than 400,000 patients, many of them from the Central Brooklyn community that relies on Downstate. A large number of Downstate's patients have little or no insurance coverage and cannot afford to pay for care. Fortunately, as a public teaching hospital, Downstate provides care to all who walk through its doors.

Moreover, this closure plan would have done irreparable harm to Downstate's medical school.

In response, the community rallied against this ill-conceived plan and stopped its adoption. In its place, the 2024-2025 state budget provided Downstate with \$300 million in capital funding and \$100 million for hospital operating aid. It also established a community advisory

board charged with making recommendations for the modernization and revitalization of Downstate. The advisory board's report is due April 1, 2025.

Now more than ever, it is imperative that the state approves a plan for the future of Downstate that invests in its operation and modernizes its physical plant. The elimination of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is on the agenda of the incoming Trump administration. Ending the ACA would threaten the well-being of millions of New Yorkers who depend on this life-saving program for healthcare coverage. Even if attempts to eliminate the ACA are unsuccessful, there will likely be cuts to federal Medicaid funding—especially in blue states with robust program services such as New York. These cuts could destabilize our already fragile state healthcare system.

Despite the state's ongoing financial neglect of Downstate, this public teaching hospital has played a vital role in providing Brooklynites with high-quality healthcare. That was no more apparent than during the pandemic, when Downstate was designated as the sole COVID-only hospital in New York City—for which it received no state support.

There is a demonstrated need in the Central Brooklyn community for Downstate and its specialized inpatient services.

Downstate serves a community of working-class New Yorkers who suffer from high rates of chronic health conditions and who often cannot





**Now more than ever, it is critical that the state approves a plan for the future of Downstate that invests in its operation and modernizes its physical plant.**

afford to pay for healthcare. As a state-operated hospital, it is Downstate’s duty to serve all patients, regardless of their ability to pay for care.

Many individuals and families in this community rely on Medicaid to pay for their healthcare. The vast majority of Downstate’s patients—nearly 90%—are on Medicaid, are underinsured or have no health insurance. The hospital ranks No. 1 out of all 143 hospitals in New York state for the percent of its revenue that comes from Medicaid—meaning the most vulnerable and underserved populations would suffer from Downstate’s closure.

That’s why it is so important for the state to invest in the care and core inpatient services at Downstate that the community needs and deserves. Those services and investments include the kidney transplant center, upgrading the emergency department, cardiovascular services, oncology services, maternal and pediatric

care, among others. This will necessitate a significant capital investment.

In December 2024, Brooklyn for Downstate—a community coalition made up of faith leaders, civic groups, business owners and unions—released an analysis and plan for the future of Downstate. This analysis looked at healthcare services in Kings County and those provided at Downstate and called for the hospital to maintain its core inpatient services. It also measured the impact that Downstate has on the community it serves and concluded, “closure or significant service reductions would harm community health, increase mortality rates, overwhelm nearby hospitals already at capacity, and devastate the medical school.”

New York must step up to ensure its communities continue to have access to quality, affordable care no matter what happens at the federal level. Investing in core



inpatient services and infrastructure at the state’s public hospital at Downstate is the best way to ensure Brooklyn’s residents receive the critical healthcare services they need and deserve.

UUP urges the state to approve a plan for SUNY Downstate’s future that maintains it as a state-operated hospital at its current location, invests in its core inpatient services and modernizes its infrastructure.

## Permanent State Support for SUNY’s Teaching Hospitals

It is time to put the public back into SUNY’s public teaching hospitals. SUNY’s three public hospitals—SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University, Upstate Medical University and Stony Brook University Hospital—are the only state agency entities required to pay for their own debt service and employee fringe benefits. This discrimination should end.

State critical mission funding (state subsidy) for SUNY’s hospitals was instituted to rectify this inequitable treatment and provide financial support necessary for them to carry out their public safety-net missions. The Cuomo administration, however, steadily cut this subsidy and eliminated it in 2018. Consequently, SUNY’s public teaching hospitals have been treated by the state as private entities and have been forced to stand on their own.

This unequitable treatment is wrong, and permanent changes to rectify this situation should be adopted in

this year’s state budget. UUP urges the Legislature to provide equitable treatment and support for the SUNY hospitals by permanently covering their debt service and employee fringe benefits costs. The state should take pride in its public teaching hospitals and value them like the public assets they are.

We must do everything in our power to mitigate likely federal changes to healthcare funding, such as cuts to the Medicaid program. It is imperative that our SUNY teaching hospitals receive fair and adequate financial support to help meet future increased demands for healthcare services.

UUP asks the Legislature to provide equitable treatment to SUNY’s three public teaching hospitals by permanently covering debt service and employee fringe benefits costs.

## Capital Funding for Upstate University Hospital’s Emergency Department

Upstate University Hospital (Upstate) requires a capital investment of \$150 million to build a new emergency department. Upstate’s emergency department is outdated and far too small for the volume of patients it serves. The Syracuse-based public teaching hospital is a safety net hospital, often treating the most seriously ill and injured. It is the only academic medical center in Central New York and the region’s largest employer. Upstate serves 17 counties (about one-third of New York state) and operates the region’s only Level 1 trauma center, burn center and poison control center.

Upstate’s patient volume is expected to increase in the coming years, especially due to an influx of new employees at the Micron manufacturing hub in Syracuse. Upstate is already spread too thin. The state should invest in capital improvements to ensure Upstate New York has a strong healthcare infrastructure.

UUP requests \$150 million in capital funding to build a new emergency department at Upstate University Hospital.





BROOKLYN  
NEEDS  
DOWNSTATE  
uup

BROOKLYN  
NEEDS  
DOWNSTATE  
uup

BROOKLYN  
NEEDS  
DOWNSTATE  
uup

BROOKLYN  
NEEDS  
DOWNSTATE  
uup

NEW YORK  
NEEDS  
DOWNSTATE

BROOKLYN  
NEEDS  
DOWNSTATE  
uup

PUBLIC  
EMPLOYEES

# STUDENT OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS

## Expand Funding and Secure the Future of the Educational Opportunity Program

SUNY's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) has fostered the success of academically underprepared and economically disadvantaged students for over 50 years—with 85,000 alumni since its founding in 1967. It is one of the highest-performing college access programs in the country. As of 2023, the first-year retention rate for EOP students is 82%, while the SUNY average is 71%. Additionally, 74% of EOP students complete their bachelor's degree in 6 years, compared to 66% of SUNY students overall.

EOP needs additional funding so it can continue to provide life-changing opportunities for more New Yorkers. SUNY receives 15,000 qualified applicants annually but only admits 20% of them due to financial constraints. This highlights the immense need for additional resources for EOP, which currently serves 55 SUNY campuses.

We must ensure that EOP is not overshadowed or does not lose funding due to the recent rise of ASAP/ACE at SUNY. While ASAP/ACE provide necessary support to students who demonstrate financial need, EOP serves a different population—students who demonstrate financial need and academic under-preparedness. EOP offers a pathway for students who otherwise would not have been admitted to college, thereby supporting the most disadvantaged students and delivering the greatest positive impact. EOP also offers unique benefits like a summer program, typically 4-5 weeks long, that gives students rigorous academic preparation and connects them to specialized resources and the EOP community.

UUP requests an increase of \$20 million for this vital program.

## Pre-Medical Opportunity Program

Motivated by the exponential growth and success of SUNY's Educational Opportunity Program, UUP proposed a Pre-Medical Opportunity Program, which was launched by SUNY in 2021 with 23 students enrolled that summer at the tail end of the pandemic. The pandemic exposed the fragility of our state's healthcare system and the desperate need for more healthcare providers and professionals.

With continued funding and support, the Pre-Medical Opportunity Program will help provide a robust pipeline of diverse healthcare professionals for New York state. It will provide disadvantaged students interested in medical fields with financial and academic support so they can achieve their educational goals. It will further advance the diversity of our state's healthcare professionals so they can meet the various needs of patients in every part of our state.

UUP requests an increase of \$5 million for the Pre-Medical Opportunity Program.

## Mental Health Educational Opportunity Program (MHEOP)

UUP urges the establishment of the Mental Health Education Opportunity Program (MHEOP). We support legislation introduced by Sen. Lea Webb and Assemblymember Anna Kelles that would establish this program. The Education Opportunity Program (EOP) has been a growing, successful program within the SUNY system for decades. The Pre-Medical Opportunity Program has also proven successful.

The creation of the MHEOP will expand and enhance the mental health workforce as well as the diversity of mental health professionals across the state of New York. There is a concerning disparity between the demographic makeup of these professionals and the general population. We call for more counselors who best reflect the diverse student body within SUNY communities. The MHEOP will support students pursuing degrees that create a pathway to careers in mental health, including social work, psychology, mental health counseling, psychoanalysis, marriage and family therapy and creative arts therapy.

UUP urges the Legislature to statutorily establish the Mental Health Educational Opportunity Program and provide \$5 million for its implementation.

## Expand Funding for Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs)

SUNY's Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs) play an increasingly vital role in supporting New York's workforce and providing opportunities to low-income students who wish to enter higher education or gain the skills necessary to build a better future. EOCs provide free services that reflect their community's needs and values. College preparation programs, English as a Second Language and high school equivalency are some of the programs offered through EOCs. The centers play an important role in addressing workforce needs across the state. They need more funding to continue to carry out their important community missions.

UUP asks the Legislature to expand funding for Educational Opportunity Centers by \$5 million.



# SUSTAINABILITY

## A Greener SUNY for a Greener NY

Each year, the impacts of climate change are increasingly felt across New York state. We must act now to meet the 2030 goals outlined in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA).

SUNY campuses are ideal sites for microgrids and solar arrays. Approximately 40% of all state-owned assets are on SUNY campuses, with more than 1,800 buildings covering nearly 60 million square feet. It is imperative that campuses transition to clean energy. SUNY campuses are well positioned throughout the state to play an important role in expanding the state's sustainability efforts.

UUP requests that microgrids and solar arrays be sited on SUNY campuses.

## Hire Sustainability Professionals at State-Operated SUNY Campuses

UUP supports legislation proposed by Sen. John Liu and Assemblymember Anna Kelles that would require SUNY to hire a proportionate number of sustainability professionals in waste management, energy management, and

education and outreach. These professionals would play an integral role in implementing and managing sustainability policies, helping the state to combat the growing climate crisis.

UUP encourages the Legislature to allocate \$15 million annually for the hiring and retention of sustainability professionals across SUNY.

## Amend the State Surplus Property Program

UUP supports legislation that would revise the state's antiquated Surplus Property Program to allow for items in good condition to be donated to pre-approved nonprofit organizations. This would allow for an additional avenue of reuse and potentially keep thousands of usable goods out of our landfills. Additionally, this would save the state money as there is a cost to store and dispose of these unsold items.

UUP urges the Legislature to amend the outdated State Surplus Property Program.





IN THE SUPERFUND ACT

CLIMATE SUPERFUNDS \$3.20B  
COASTAL WETLANDS RESTORATION  
RESILIENCY FOR FISHES  
BARNES & SHARPER  
BUILD SEAWALLS

GOVERNOR HOCHUL  
SIGN THE CLIMATE SUPERFUND ACT  
NOW!

OFF FOSSIL FUELS  
CLIMATE IS 2024

Gov. Hochul:  
Sign the Climate Change Superfund Act

Gov. Hochul:  
Sign the CLIMATE SUPERFUNDS

LABOR ST  
115m  
1000  
2000  
\$2

Gov. Hochul  
Do you  
job

GOVH STEP UP!

OFF FOSSIL FUELS  
TEXT CL

Make Big Oil PAY

OFF FOSSIL FUELS  
FOOD & WATER WATCH  
TEXT CLIMATE TO 23321

PASS THE NY HEAT ACT  
CLEANER HEAT - LOWER BILLS

PASS THE TACT

TROPIC STORM  
FL

an effective Superfund Act.  
Your friends  
Urban Forests

CLIMATE SUPERFUND NOW

OUR FUTURE IS ON THE LINE

PLANET OVER PROFIT

PASS THE CLIMATE SUPERFUND

## **Millionaire’s Tax, Stock Transfer Tax and Climate Change Superfund Tax**

It is imperative that the state increase its revenue to fund the important public goods and services it provides, including public higher education.

In terms of income and wealth, New York state is the most unequal state in the nation, according to a 2022 report by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy. The state’s tax structure has become more regressive over time; the wealthy pay a lower combined state and local tax rate than taxpayers in middle-income brackets and about the same rate as the poor, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute. The state is missing out on billions of dollars in potential revenue.

We ask the Legislature to consider a millionaire’s tax to make New York’s tax structure more progressive. This tax would only apply to the extremely wealthy who have abundant excess income, not the working or middle classes. Increased taxes on those at the top of the income bracket would not cause excessive burden on these individuals and it would allow New York state to create a more just society with fully funded public goods and services.

UUP also urges the Legislature to reinstate the stock transfer tax, which has been on the books since 1905 and successfully brought in revenue for 75 years until the Legislature enacted a rebate in 1981. UUP supports legislation to repeal this rebate. The stock transfer tax assesses a small fee of up to 5 cents per share and would

target high-frequency traders like giant Wall Street firms, not the average individual. This tax would yield approximately \$13 billion in new revenue annually, which would provide a steady stream of revenue to support New York’s public goods and services like public higher education, infrastructure and green energy.

Under the Climate Change Superfund Act, a cost recovery program would be established to force large fossil fuel companies doing business in New York to pay their fair share to help clean the mess they created. Companies that have “contributed significantly to the buildup of climate-warming greenhouse gases” would have to pay a total of \$3 billion each year—or \$75 billion over the next 25 years.

That revenue would be used to pay for climate change adaptation measures, including infrastructure upgrades in areas affected by climate change—including adapting to rising sea levels and dealing with the increasing frequency of extreme storms and other weather events.

The Climate Change Superfund Tax would provide a mechanism to collect payments from large fossil fuel companies. UUP urges the creation of this tax to make large polluters accountable for their actions and shift the cost of these necessary upgrades away from taxpayers and onto the companies responsible for the climate damage they’ve caused.

**UUP requests that the Legislature implement a millionaire’s tax, restore the stock transfer tax and create the Climate Change Superfund Tax.**

**In terms of income and wealth, New York state is the most unequal state in the nation. The state is missing out on billions of dollars in potential revenue.**

# NON-BUDGETARY PRIORITIES

## Amendments to the State Finance Law

UUP supports changes to state Finance Law to provide automatic approval to SUNY employment contracts by the state comptroller.

UUP supports legislation proposed by Sen. Robert Jackson and Assemblymember Stacey Pheffer-Amato that would create fair proceedings for state employees who have allegedly been overpaid by the state. The legislation creates a minimum threshold for recovery and ensures that employees are provided notice and an opportunity to respond before the state seeks recovery.

## Transparency of SUNY Research and Campus Foundations

UUP urges the state to improve transparency of the SUNY Research Foundation and campus-based foundations, which together hold assets of hundreds of millions of dollars. We support legislation proposed by Sen. Toby Ann Stavisky and Assemblymember Alicia Hyndman to require an annual report to be published online and the disclosure of financial records, including vendors, employees and general accounting information. These foundations are meant to support the mission of the state's public higher education institutions. With the state providing up to \$500 million in matching funds to the

research foundations at the university centers, it is crucial that there is transparency for these foundations.

## SUNY Board of Trustees Reform

UUP supports legislation to reduce the number of trustees the governor appoints to seven and allow the Temporary President of the Senate and the Speaker of the Assembly to each appoint four trustees.

UUP supports legislation to give voting rights to the two faculty members on the Board of Trustees.

UUP also supports legislation proposed by Sen. Toby Ann Stavisky and Assemblymember Khaleel Anderson to ensure that gubernatorial and mayoral appointees to the SUNY and CUNY boards of trustees are independent of the appointing entity.

## Emergency Contraceptives in SUNY Campus Vending Machines

UUP supports legislation proposed by Assemblymember Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas that would require every SUNY and CUNY campus to have at least one vending machine containing affordable emergency contraceptives.





## UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

Frederick E. Kowal, President

[uupinfo.org](http://uupinfo.org)

FOLLOW UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS  
ON SOCIAL MEDIA



[facebook.com/uupinfo](https://facebook.com/uupinfo) | [twitter.com/uupinfo](https://twitter.com/uupinfo)  
[www.instagram.com/uupinfo](https://www.instagram.com/uupinfo) | [uupinfo.org](http://uupinfo.org)