



UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

A FAIR DEAL FOR SUNY

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

2026

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A FAIR DEAL FOR SUNY

UP's 2026 Legislative Agenda lays out a fair deal for SUNY's state-operated campuses, public teaching hospitals and the students and patients we serve. Our agenda includes funding proposals and public policy solutions that will strengthen the entire university system and the communities it serves.

The federal government has brazenly attacked higher education institutions, academic research, students, health care and patients. It is imperative that New York State take countermeasures to ensure that SUNY campuses are fully funded and its hospitals are held harmless to enable these institutions to continue to provide a first-rate higher education and quality health care.

We strongly believe that our plan for SUNY in 2026 makes sense for all New Yorkers and is one that legislators can support. We look forward to working together to achieve a fair budget for all of us, so we can build a strong future for everyone.



Frederick E. Kowal
President, UUP



STATE OPERATING AID

Campus State Support

UUP requests a total increase of \$148.8 million in operating aid to SUNY state-operated campuses in this year's state budget. Of that amount, we request \$100 million be provided for general operating support across the university system and \$48.8 million be provided in restricted operating aid to address the financial deficits of five state-operated campuses.

We urge the Legislature to make SUNY a funding priority in this year's state budget. While we are grateful to the governor and the Legislature for providing increases



Increased state investment is even more crucial given recent federal actions that will negatively impact SUNY.

in state aid over the last three years, SUNY has been underfunded for the last 15+ years. The university system has not been made whole for the substantial state aid cuts it endured during the Great Recession, and from the austerity budgets it suffered for over a decade under the Cuomo administration.

Moreover, increased state investment is even more crucial given recent federal actions that will negatively impact SUNY. These actions include the freezing of NIH and NSF research grants inconsistent with the adminis-

tration's ideological agenda; capping reimbursements for indirect costs; gutting the Department of Education and transferring the nation's \$1.6 trillion student loan portfolio to the Small Business Administration; and restructuring and placing limitations on student loans, grants and the duration of status for international students. Taken together, these actions will have negative financial impacts on SUNY campus operations, research and student enrollment. This will hit SUNY comprehensive and tech campuses—which are already struggling financially—especially hard.

In fact, most of the SUNY comprehensive and tech campuses are operating with financial deficits. Five campuses—SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (\$8.3 million), SUNY Buffalo State University (\$16 million), SUNY Fredonia (\$11 million), SUNY New Paltz (\$7 million), and SUNY Potsdam (\$6.5 million) are facing significant financial distress and need increased state funding to stabilize their operations. To address this problem, we urge the Legislature to allocate increased funding directly to these five campuses to close their deficits.

Let's not follow Washington's horrible example. Let's lead by example. We must protect opportunities for education and upward mobility for all New Yorkers. While the federal government is attacking higher education institutions, New York should elevate them. New York should set itself apart from the destructive policies enacted in Washington and continue to invest in its university system and its students, faculty and staff.

UUP requests an increase of \$148.8 million in state operating aid: \$100 million for general operating support across the university system and \$48.8 million in direct aid to address the financial deficits of ESF, Buffalo State, Fredonia, New Paltz and Potsdam.

Expand the New York State Opportunity Promise Scholarship Program

We thank the governor and the Legislature for making public higher education a reality for more New Yorkers with the enactment of the New York State Opportunity Promise Scholarship initiative for our public community colleges. UUP urges the state to expand this program to include every SUNY college and university that offers



associate degrees in academic programs that have been identified as high-demand. Currently, nine state-operated campuses offer associate degrees and nearly 100 of those degree programs would likely qualify as high demand. Like all state-operated colleges and universities, these nine campuses have endured over a decade of austerity state budgets—and they’ve seen their enrollments decline as a result. Expanding this program to more SUNY campuses will provide a greater number of students the opportunity to attend college while helping financially struggling campuses grow their enrollments.

UUP requests that the New York State Opportunity Promise Scholarship Program be expanded to include every SUNY college or university that offers associate degrees in high-demand programs.

Full-Time Faculty and Professionals

UUP requests \$53 million to expand and retain full-time faculty and professional staff at SUNY campuses. We applaud Gov. Hochul and the Legislature for providing funding for full-time faculty in the last three state budgets. We ask that this funding be expanded to include professional staff as well. Doing so 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 support individuals from underrepresented groups.

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

STATE SUPPORT FOR SUNY'S TEACHING HOSPITALS

UUP thanks Gov. Hochul and the Legislature for providing state support for our SUNY hospitals in last year's state budget. That funding includes \$1.1 billion dollars in capital funding and \$100 million in operating aid to SUNY Downstate University Hospital and \$450 million in capital funding for SUNY Upstate Medical University.

Federal cuts to Medicaid, the New York Essential Plan, Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) payments and the elimination of the managed care organization tax will have severe financial impacts on our state and our SUNY hospitals.

When fully implemented, these cuts could cost the state tens of billions of dollars annually. The NYS Fiscal Policy Institute projects that 70 of New York's hospitals are at risk of closing. That number includes SUNY's hospitals, which are safety net hospitals that depend on federal Medicaid dollars to function.

Downstate ranks #1 out of all hospitals in New York state for Medicaid revenue as a share of net patient revenue. Current Medicaid rates for providers do not meet the cost of care, and federal cuts will make rate increases highly unlikely, keeping our SUNY hospitals in untenable financial situations. These hospitals provide health

care for millions of New Yorkers and are an essential part of our state's health care system.

UUP urges the governor and Legislature to ensure that our SUNY hospitals are financially secure and held harmless from recent destructive federal cuts. Specifically, we call upon the state to provide financial operating support to these hospitals to offset federal cuts and to:

- Pay for employee fringe benefits
- Cover the debt service costs on capital construction projects
- Reappropriate unspent portions of last year's capital funding to Downstate University Hospital and Upstate Medical University Hospital.

New York should ensure that communities continue to have access to quality, affordable health care regardless of federal cuts. Investing in core inpatient services and infrastructure at SUNY's hospitals is the best way to ensure New York residents receive the critical health care services they need and deserve.

UUP asks the Legislature to hold SUNY hospitals financially harmless from federal cuts and provide equitable treatment to SUNY's three public teaching hospitals by paying for employee fringe benefits and covering debt service costs.





STUDENT OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS

Expand SUNY's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)

UUP encourages the state to increase funding for the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) so it can serve more students. For over 50 years, EOP has provided access to higher education for economically and academically disadvantaged students. EOP provides comprehensive support for students, including financial aid for tuition and non-tuition costs, a pre-freshman summer program experience, individualized academic and career advisement, tutoring, skill development workshops and a strong sense of community, among other benefits.

Data reflect the immense success of EOP. According to 2023 SUNY data, the first-year retention rate for EOP students is 82%, compared to the SUNY-wide average of 71%. Additionally, 74% of EOP students complete their bachelor's degree in 6 years, compared to 66% of SUNY students. Furthermore, over 78% of EOP graduates stay and work in New York state. An investment in EOP is an investment in hard-working, disadvantaged students who show a strong potential to succeed. It is also a smart investment in New York's future workforce.

Student demand for EOP far outpaces SUNY's resources, and additional funding is needed for the program to offer a transformative experience to more students. SUNY only has the financial resources to accept approxi-

mately 20% of qualified EOP applicants, or roughly 3,000 out of 15,000 applicants. Increased state investment in EOP will provide life-changing opportunities to more state residents while supporting our state's future.

UUP requests an increase of
\$20 million for EOP.

Grow SUNY's Pre-Medical Opportunity Program

Like EOP, the Pre-Medical Opportunity Program has proven successful since its inception. The program supports EOP students on a pre-medical track. In addition to the support provided to all EOP students, pre-med EOP students benefit from clinical and laboratory experience, Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) preparation and research opportunities. The Pre-Medical Opportunity Program helps students overcome barriers to a career in medicine and promotes greater diversity in the field of health care. Given the shortage of health care professionals New York is facing, the Pre-Medical EOP is a crucial program that warrants expanded funding.

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



Establish a Mental Health Educational Opportunity Program

UUP encourages the Legislature to establish the Mental Health Educational Opportunity Program (MHEOP) in statute. UUP advocates for the enactment of S.2046 (Webb)/A.3607 (Kelles), which the Senate already passed in 2025. Additionally, a \$5 million appropriation is needed to implement the program.

In 2024, SUNY began to offer a pre-professional opportunity program via administrative action to students pursuing a degree in mental health or engineering; however,



we would like to see the MHEOP enacted in statute and have dedicated recurring funding to ensure long-term stability of the program.

Americans—especially young people—are facing a mental health crisis. Intensified by the pandemic, the crisis has been compounded by a severe shortage of mental health professionals and a lack of diverse providers, such as those who speak languages other than English. MHEOP will address this issue by supporting a diverse population of students in programs leading to careers in the mental health field, including mental health counseling, social work and psychology.

UUP asks the legislature to pass S.2046 (Webb)/A.3607 (Kelles) and provide \$5 million to implement the Mental Health Educational Opportunity Program.

Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs)

SUNY's Educational Opportunity Centers (EOCs) are celebrating their 60th anniversary in 2026. SUNY's 12 EOCs, situated throughout the state, provide free programs and services that meet New Yorkers' diverse educational and professional needs. EOCs offer high school equivalency diplomas, college preparation, English classes, and career training and certifications. EOCs are vital to the communities they serve, helping low-income New Yorkers advance toward their educational and career goals while also addressing barriers such as housing and food insecurity. Additional funding will ensure EOCs can continue to serve their communities and propel New Yorkers forward in their lives and careers.

UUP requests a \$5 million increase in funding for EOCs.

SUSTAINABILITY

A Greener SUNY for a Greener New York

SUNY's Climate and Sustainability Action Plan calls for the implementation of campus-specific Clean Energy Master Plans (CEMPs). The vast majority of state-operated SUNY campuses have finalized CEMPs. These plans set a pathway to dramatically decarbonize facilities to net zero emissions by implementing geothermal heat pumps, district thermal energy systems, and full electrification of building heating and cooling systems. UUP commends the governor for her 2025 investment of \$100 million in Bond Act money and \$200 million in Sustainable Future Fund money to support renewable energy and thermal energy networks at three SUNY campuses.

UUP calls for \$200 million in additional funding for thermal energy networks and renewable energy projects at additional 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.

Expand Access for Reuse and Recycling Funding to State Agencies and SUNY Campuses

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation administers state assistance for Recycling Coordinator salaries and for public education programs conducted by municipalities. This funding helps expand local recycling programs and increases participation. State agencies,

including SUNY campuses, are not able to access this funding. UUP supports the expansion of this program, with additional funding, to support staff and programs at state agencies, including SUNY campuses, to improve reduction, reuse and recycling programs.

UUP urges the NYS DEC to expand access to its Waste Reduction and Recycling Program to state agencies, including SUNY campuses, and to expand the program scope to include reduction and reuse in addition to recycling programs.

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 transferred to pre-approved non-profit 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.

Ensure the State's Leadership in Sustainable Manufacturing

UUP supports legislation that would fund the development, dissemination and implementation of occupational and community health, worker safety and environmental sustainability programs for semiconductor manufacturing in the state. These programs should apply to educational and clinical settings for SUNY and New York state, both of which have heavily invested in advanced research and workforce development for semiconductor manufacturing. With semiconductor-related teaching, training and research across most of its campuses, SUNY is well positioned to play a leading role in ensuring sustainability in advanced manufacturing across New York state.

UUP urges the Legislature to fund sustainability education for high-tech manufacturing.

MAKE
YOU
IT UP!

MAKE
BIG
OIL
PAY.


NYPIRC

REVENUE


Create a Permanent Millionaire's Tax

UUP encourages the state to implement a permanent millionaire's tax to provide a steady funding stream for public goods—like public higher education. The top Personal Income Tax (PIT) rates, implemented in 2021, are only in place through 2032. Increases to the top PIT rates raise approximately \$3.6 billion annually, used to support recurring operating expenses. PIT receipts comprise 80% of all receipts, and the expiration of top tax rates will result in cuts to public goods.

UUP also encourages the state to consider increasing the top PIT rates. New York has the worst income inequality of any state, and the state's tax structure should



New York will be able to fill the gap in its budget created by federal cuts and support high quality public goods that benefit the entire population.



be made more progressive to allow investment in public goods and services that benefit everyone. New York's highest rate is a 10.8% tax imposed on income over \$25 million. Several other states have even more progressive tax structures. For example, Hawaii imposes an 11% tax on income over \$200,000. California, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Washington, D.C., all impose their highest tax rate on income over \$1 million, with rates ranging from 9% to 13.3%.

The tax cuts in the federal "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" (OBBBA) disproportionately benefit wealthy individuals. The nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation estimated that in 2027, 70% of the \$545 billion in tax cuts will benefit the top 20% of earners. Since the wealthy are receiving massive benefits from federal tax policy, an increase in state taxes will not be an excessive financial burden on them; the two will balance each other out. In turn, New York will be able to fill the gap in its budget created by federal cuts and support high quality public goods that benefit the entire population.

A common argument against raising taxes on high-income earners is that wealthy people will move out of the

state to avoid the higher taxes. This argument has been consistently debunked. Research shows that wealthy individuals migrate at lower rates than the general public and that millionaires' social networks often keep them rooted where they already live and work. For instance, the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) has repeatedly found that higher tax rates on high-income earners do not cause outmigration. In fact, the FPI reports that the top 1% is the least likely of all income groups to leave New York. And, when the wealthy do leave New York, they tend to move to other high-tax states. High housing costs are a stronger driver of outmigration than taxes, according to the FPI.

The "tax flight" myth has been disproven in other places—including in Massachusetts and Washington, D.C.—after taxes were increased there. Other sources that have dispelled the tax flight argument include the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Institute for Policy Studies, the Economic Progress Institute, the Maine Center for Economic Policy, and the book *The Myth of Millionaire Tax Flight: How Place Still Matters for the Rich*.

UUP requests that the state implement a permanent millionaire's tax.

Permanently Increase the Corporate Franchise Tax

UUP urges the state to permanently increase the Corporate Franchise Tax (CFT) rate. In 2021, the top CFT rate increased to 7.25% on corporations with over \$5 million in profits, raising an additional \$950 million annually. This top rate is due to expire in 2026. This top rate should be made permanent, and an even higher top rate would raise additional needed revenue. Corporate profits have risen significantly since 2020. Raising this tax would not incentivize corporations to relocate out of New York because the tax is only imposed on the corporation's sales revenue in New York state, a process known as single sales factor apportionment. The location of the corporation's offices or employees has no impact on the tax.

UUP asks the state to permanently increase the top Corporate Franchise Tax rate.



**WE DEMAND
FAIR
FUNDING
FOR
FREDONIA**

uup

NON-BUDGETARY PRIORITIES

State Governmental Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Chapter 96 of the Laws of 2025 provides labor protections to state employees in the classified service regarding the use of automated employment decision-making tools by state agencies. UUP members in the unclassified service are not afforded these protections. UUP urges the Legislature to amend the current law to add SUNY to the definition of state agency and to provide unclassified state employees with the same labor protections provided to all other state employees.

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. Additionally, UUP supports S.668 (Jackson)/A.3289 (Pheffer Amato), which 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 receive 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 S.6745 (Stavisky)/A.5733 (Hyndman), which would 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, transparency for these foundations is crucial.

SUNY Board of Trustees Reform

UUP supports S.5695 (Skoufis)/A.7732 (Hyndman), which would 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 also supports S.627 (Stavisky), which would 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 S.2058 (Webb)/A.9175 (Gonzalez-Rojas), which would require every SUNY and CUNY campus to have at least one vending machine containing affordable emergency contraceptives.

Calculation of Full-Time Employment for PSLF

UUP promotes legislation that would alter the eligibility calculation formula for the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program. Currently, many adjunct faculty do not qualify for PSLF because they do not meet the definition of a full-time employee. State law credits adjunct faculty 3.35 hours per week for each course





credit they teach. This recognizes the several additional hours of labor faculty spend outside of the classroom on lesson planning, grading, assisting students and fulfilling other professional responsibilities.

UUP supports increasing this multiplier from 3.35 to 5.0 hours, recognizing adjunct faculty's hard work and allowing more to qualify for PSLF. Colorado and Oregon increased their credit-hour multiplier in recent years. This change would only be for the purpose of determining eligibility for PSLF and places no obligation on institutions to assign more work hours or increase pay.

SUNY Research Fund

UUP calls for the creation of a state-sponsored research fund for SUNY. Federal cuts to research funding, such as NIH grants, have had a devastating impact on research at SUNY institutions. Additionally, the federal government has used research funding as a bargaining chip to force institutions to comply with its ideological agenda. SUNY conducts groundbreaking research in the fields of medicine, technology and the environment, to name a few.

SUNY faculty conduct life-saving research on diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease. Research at SUNY also serves as a vital training experience for students. New York should establish a SUNY Research Fund to fill in federal funding gaps and ensure this important work continues. The SUNY Fund would support research at all sectors of state-operated campuses. Furthermore, the fund would maintain the independence of research from federal policy influence and would uphold faculty's academic freedom.

Freedom of Information Law

UUP supports legislation to reform the processes that state agencies must follow when responding to Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests. We support legislation that mandates when a portion of a record may be denied, the agency can redact that section but must disclose the rest of the document. Additionally, UUP advocates for legislation that would establish reasonable timeframes for agencies to respond to FOIL requests. Together, these reforms will improve government transparency and enhance New Yorkers' right to access public information.



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