BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE
AND ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES

JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING

In the Matter of the
2020-2021 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON
HIGHER EDUCATION

Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York

February 2, 2020
9:35 a.m.

PRESIDING:

Senator Liz Krueger
Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein
Chair, Assembly Ways & Means Committee

PRESENT:

Senator James L. Seward
Senate Finance Committee (RM)

Assemblyman Edward P. Ra
Assembly Ways & Means Committee (RM)

Assemblywoman Deborah J. Glick
Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee

Senator Toby Stavisky
Chair, Senate Higher Education Committee

Senator John C. Liu

Assemblywoman Barbara S. Lifton

Assemblywoman Karen McMahon

2020-2021 Executive Budget
Higher Education
2-4-20

PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

Senator Kenneth P. LaValle

Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy

Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright

Senator Anna Kaplan

Assemblyman Al Stirpe

Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

Senator Rachel May

Assemblyman Harvey Epstein

Assemblyman Doug Smith

Senator Andrew Gounardes

Assemblyman Charles D. Fall

Senator James Gaughran

Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte

Assemblyman John T. McDonald III

Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon

Senator Brad Hoylman

Assemblyman Jake Ashby

Assemblywoman Judy Griffin

Assemblyman Victor M. Pichardo

Senator Robert Jackson

2020-2021 Executive Budget
Higher Education
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PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblyman William Colton

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CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: If people could take their seats.

Good morning. I am Helene Weinstein, chair of the New York State Assembly Ways and Means Committee and cochair of today's hearing.

Today we begin the sixth in a series of hearings conducted by the joint fiscal committees of the Legislature regarding the Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2020-2021. The hearings are conducted pursuant to the New York State Constitution and the Legislative Law.

Today the Assembly Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee will hear testimony concerning the Governor's budget proposal for higher education.

I'll introduce members of the Assembly majority, and Senator Krueger, chair of Senate Finance, will introduce members from the Senate.

So we have with us our chair of the Higher Education Committee, Deborah Glick; Assemblyman Pichardo, Assemblyman Epstein,

Assemblyman Stirpe, and Assemblywoman Fahy.

Senator Krueger?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good morning. Thank you, everyone.

I'm joined by the chair of Higher Ed, Toby Stavisky; the ranker on Higher Ed, John {sic} LaValle; the ranker on Finance, Jim Seward; Senator Andrew Gounardes; and Senator Anna Kaplan. And I know I saw Senator Liu, but I think he's disappeared and will come back.

Thank you. Oh, I'm sorry, Ken LaValle, how -- excuse me, Ken.

SENATOR LaVALLE: That's all right.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Nobody will forget, Senator.

So before introducing the first witness, a couple of ground rules for all of the hearings that we've gone through at the beginning. We have these countdown clocks, both for the witnesses and for the members to pay attention to. There will be a green light when your time starts. When there's one minute left, the light turns -- as the

clock goes down to one minute, the light turns yellow. And when it's red, it means thank you and goodbye.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No. But you can always finish your last sentence, please.

And witnesses, particularly those nongovernmental witnesses, are reminded that we do have your testimony, which was submitted electronically in advance, it's been circulated to all the members. So we encourage you to not read your testimony, but summarize.

A lot of people think they can get through several pages in five minutes. We're here to tell you you can't. And if you have your important point at the end of your testimony, you'll never get to it. So make sure to highlight your important parts.

And to the members, just timing, chairs of the relevant committee have 10 minutes. They are the only ones allowed a follow-up of five minutes after everyone has gone. All other members have five minutes.

And when we get to the nongovernmental witnesses, the members have three minutes. And the time is for both questions and answers.

So now I'll introduce our ranker, Assemblyman Ra, to introduce his Republican colleagues.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

We're joined this morning by Assemblyman Doug Smith, our ranking member on the Higher Education Committee, and Assemblyman Jake Ashby.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So with that, we are anxious to begin our hearing. And our first witness, Kristina Johnson, chancellor, State University of New York. Please.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you.

Good morning. It's a pleasure to be here. And I'd like to start off by saying that I will keep to the time.

And I'd also like to thank you for all your support that you've provided, both the Governor and the Legislature. I really feel SUNY has tremendous momentum. And so what

I'd like to do today is, for the record, I am Kristina Johnson, the 13th chancellor of the State University of New York. And I'd like to personally thank Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky and Glick, members of the Senate and Assembly and legislative staff, for the opportunity to share with you our perspective on Governor Cuomo's proposed Executive Budget, the progress we've made since last year's hearing, and our plans for the future.

I'd also like to acknowledge and thank Chairman of the Board Dr. Meryl Tisch and our entire Board of Trustees for their leadership and support, and particularly our student trustee -- who's president of the Student Assembly of the 1.4 million students in the State University of New York -- and that is Austin Ostro, who is here today as well; my leadership team, who is seated behind me; and of course all of the people that keep our system moving forward -- the students, the faculty, staff and our leadership teams across the system.

Last fall I had the pleasure of finalizing visits to every single one of the SUNY institutions, all 64, and really got a chance to see the size, the scope, the breadth and the diversity of the quality that goes into the 30 community colleges, the 29 state-operated colleges, the five statutory, the law school, the medical schools, the hospitals -- even the national laboratory.

We are involved in all kinds of activities, ranging from scholarship research to workforce development, carrying out the Governor's robust initiative. We deliver 320,000 non-credit-bearing courses to our community college students. That's in addition to the couple of hundred thousand community college students that are enrolled, and the couple of hundred thousand enrolled in our four-year institutions as well.

Now, I'm an engineer by training, so for me it comes down to data. And what I'd like to do is try and put a few words with some of those numbers to show you some of the

progress we've made and the impact that we're having on the State of New York.

So the first thing is social mobility. Almost a third of our students have TAP or an Excelsior scholarship. Think about that. A third of our students, more than half go tuition-free. And that's measured by a social mobility index where 18 out of 29 of our state-operated campuses rank in the top 10 percent nationally for taking large numbers of low-income students and graduating them into high-paying jobs.

In fact, on PayScale's recent index, Maritime College ranked 11th in the entire country, including all the Ivys, for the kind of careers that those students get right out of college and then again their salaries at mid-career. So SUNY is certainly a gem in the constellation of the State of New York.

SUNY is known for the quality of education we provide and of course the sheer size of the largest comprehensive system of higher education in the country. And it is a game-changer for New York's economy. When

you think about it, almost a third -- actually, a little more than a third of every college-educated individual in the State of New York has a SUNY degree.

This year we received 371,000 applications, and we have roughly 3 million alums. And three out of four of our alums, within three to five years of their graduation, are still working and contributing to the State of New York.

SUNY hospitals are the heartbeat of the local healthcare in the underserved communities they call home. They're also the economic engines of Brooklyn, Central New York, Long Island, Buffalo -- including the hospital of Buffalo, of course.

Each SUNY hospital serves higher percentages of people covered by Medicaid and Medicare than the general population seen at other hospitals. Collectively they serve 1.2 million individual patients and 2 million visits a year. They contribute $6 billion to their local economy. And in fact, Downstate Health Sciences University -- we just changed

the name from Downstate Medical Center to Downstate Health Sciences University -- they're number two in START-UP NY, with 24 spin-off companies in the Governor's START-UP NY program.

So yes, we do serve those that don't have another option for healthcare. We're also driving the local economy in these communities.

Our community colleges are critically important to providing the State of New York an educated workforce for our dynamic economy. For many, it's the first stop to realizing their dreams and aspirations for social mobility. We look forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature throughout this budget process to restore the community college funding floor that you included in last year's budget, and I thank you for that.

SUNY's Educational Opportunity Programs are life-changing as well. I didn't realize this, but the Educational Opportunity Programs, the average income of the families

these students come from is $21,000. At our Educational Opportunity Centers, the average income for those students that come from families making less than $15,000 a year. If you want to talk about how you get into the middle class in this country, you do it through SUNY. And we're doing it through our EOCs, our EOPs, our community colleges, our tech sector, our comprehensives and our doctoral institutions. So I'm so proud of it.

Today we've got 10,274 students within 48 campus-based programs in our EOP programs. And we've had about 75,000 students over the 52- or 53-year horizon of the EOP program. And this last fall, we started the Norman McConney Award for outstanding EOP students. And I want to tell you about one of these students. This is a student that's at Dutchess Community College -- I will not mention the name -- but she is a mother of five, with students with special needs, and she had a 4.0 full-time community college grade point average. I never had a 4.0 grade

point average. This is stunning.

But those are the kind of students that EOP attracts. I couldn't be prouder of her and every one of those 42 students that we honored. And the Speaker also was there to recognize them.

Results from two years of the Excelsior Scholarship Program. I want to say that enrollments are increased 20 percent. We had 20,000 SUNY and CUNY students in the first year and increased to 24,000.

Let's look at the results. Our community college first-year retention rates went up 20 percent. And they're also up in our state-operated. That means the program is working as designed, which is to get more students out faster with less debt. And they do have less debt. We're excited about increasing the cap on family income eligibility to 150,000.

So I said I'd talk about some of our results from last year. With your support of our Open Educational Resources, since the fall of 2017 we have reduced textbook costs

to our students a cumulative $47 million. As a result of the Provost Innovation Fund, we have re-enrolled 8,000 students who dropped out before their loans became due. So they have the best opportunity to repay those loans because they will have a degree which will garner them a higher wage.

And with rising rates of anxiety, depression and suicide among our young adults nationwide, we launched the SUNY Mental Health and Wellness Task Force this last fall, chaired by two of our presidents, Dr. Wayne Riley of Downstate and Dr. Deborah Stanley at Oswego.

I know you know this; we did establish, under Governor Cuomo's leadership, a Food Insecurity Task Force in 2018 which resulted in, over the last year, having students having access to food pantries who are food-insecure at every single one of our campuses.

In all, about 150,000 students are impacted by one of our SUNY Achieve programs, which is to get students into credit-bearing

courses faster. And that's our corequisite model. We've been able to get students to pass basic math and English, a barrier to completion, in half the time -- twice as fast.

And speaking of half the time and twice as fast, I have a minute 23 seconds left, so I'm going to skip to just a couple of quick accomplishments.

One of the pillars of my chancellorship is not only individualized education, which is our SUNY Achieve, SUNY Online -- which I can talk about in a minute -- it's research and innovation. This last year SUNY, partnering with Empire State Development, brought $5 billion to the State of New York, working in partnership with IBM, Applied Materials and Cree. We've increased our research expenditures $136 million. We will reach, we believe, in 2019 more than $1.7 billion. I set a goal, when I first became chancellor two and a half years ago, of reaching $2 billion.

And then with 42 seconds left, just

let me conclude that we're excited about the SUNY Global Cannabis Center in the Governor's budget. We are excited about the Education Opportunity Programs, the EOCs and the Attains.

And we ask that you consider restoring the community college funding floor, restoring the childcare at community colleges, our Mental Health Tele-Counseling, the Small Business Development Centers work, our graduate diversity fellowships, and support for all our graduate students, the Hispanic Leadership Institute, and continue support for our hospitals.

I would like to thank you for inviting me here to testify, and with that I will conclude.

(Timeclock chiming.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Perfect.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Let that be a lesson to all here.

We've been joined by Assemblywoman Seawright.

And we go to our Higher Education chair, Deborah Glick, for some questions.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We've also been joined by Robert Jackson in the Senate.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much.

Chancellor, appreciate your testimony.

The budget -- the Executive Budget calls for regular annual increases in tuition, authorizing regular annual increases of $200 per year through the year of 2024-2025.

If we agree to that, what does the final tuition wind up being? And with that escalation, what would be the impact on the TAP gap that the university is already struggling with? As we increase tuition, we increase the TAP gap. And so that seems like it is almost ice in winter.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you very much for your question.

So an increase of $200 per year for the next four years would be $800, on top -- at our state-operated institutions, the

tuition right now is $7070, so that would be $7870.

The TAP gap right now is $1905. So adding 800 to that, that would be 2700 for the TAP gap. Right now the cumulative TAP gap -- we have about 100,000 students getting -- mostly full-time students getting TAP support. It's about 82 million. So this would increase -- that's the TAP gap, the gap between what our campuses need to educate a student and what the tuition pays.

So it would be, just bottom line, $2700. It would increase the TAP gap unless we got some sort of relief.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I'm sorry, what was that?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Unless we got some sort of relief, it would be $2705.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And you already have some built-up TAP gap on the books. What is that at the --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: That's $1905 at the state-operated. I want to be clear, at the state-operated, where the tuition is 7070

and the TAP support is 5165. So the difference is every student on TAP has a gap that the campuses need to pay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: We know what that is, it would be -- rather than by student, what is the current burden?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Eighty-two million.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Eighty-two million, thank you.

And you indicated that you have 10,294 EOP students.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Those students come from families with an average of $21,000 in family income. How many applications do you get for those spots that you obviously don't have room for?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right. So we get 12,000 applications a year, and we have room for 4,000 students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. Now, the Governor is proposing to expand Excelsior, which is viewed as a completion program. I

think TAP is viewed as a completion program too, since it's only available for eight semesters. From my perspective, it's a completion program. Even though you can be viewed as full-time even if you're carrying 12 credits, you wind up on your own if you don't graduate on time. So -- which of course I didn't, so -- not that I was eligible for TAP, but ...

The Governor's proposal for increasing Excelsior to $150,000 of household income -- and that tuition would be frozen. So the system gets a student in, and their tuition stays the same for the four years. Other students, who for whatever reason -- work or whatever -- can't carry 30 credits a year, they pay an extra $200 in tuition.

And the difference between those students -- now, the students who are in EOP, they generally graduate at the same or better rate than students who come in without. What is that graduation rate, do you know offhand?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I do. It's actually higher. I will get the exact

number, but it's roughly -- I want to say 78 percent for the state-operated, compared to 71 percent. But I'll make sure you get the right -- the exact numbers.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I appreciate that.

So we have a fairly high completion rate from families that are making $21,000, with the additional supports that they get. And now we're suggesting that students who are kind of in the middle get tuition increases, but not the families that are up to $125,000, $150,000. Does that seem that there may be a better use of those resources?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So I think the opportunity to increase the aid to all students attending SUNY would be welcome. And there's many different ways, as you mentioned, that we do that -- with EOP, with TAP, with the PTS program, with Excelsior. And now expanding Excelsior will allow more students to go with less debt.

We would be grateful for any increase in EOP and some of the other support programs

as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

The Governor has repeated his -- the critical maintenance piece from last year. At this point, what's the -- that's $550 million. Do you have a backlog in critical maintenance across the system? And will the 550 actually meet the need?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: We do have a backlog. The 550 is part of a five-year plan. So that's very helpful, and we're very appreciative to the Governor and the Legislature for giving us a multiyear critical maintenance plan.

We estimate that probably to take care of the backlog in a timely manner for our roughly 850 state-owned-and-operated buildings that we take care of, we probably need a few hundred million more per year. So we are looking for something in the 750 to 850 range.

What we're very excited about is the opportunity to have appropriations for new construction, because several of our

campuses are bursting at the seams for the high-demand sort of STEAM and STEM programs. So we're very thrilled about the opportunity to have new construction.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And speaking of the new capital, it seems to be somewhat of a matching program. How do you envision being able to make full use of the dollars that are available if there is in fact a match required? What's been the record for SUNY being able to attract those capital dollars?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So there's several different ways that we could come up with the match. So I know you all know this: It's 300 million, 200 million from the state and 100 million from the individual campuses. Now, that could be in the form of philanthropy dollars, it can be in the form of reserves, it can be in the form of dollars, we believe, supplied by some of the auxiliary operations. So -- as well as savings.

We have launched, in anticipation of being able to develop those sort of resources

through efficiencies, for example, a print initiative, a print conservation. We believe we can take 25 million out of the costs, across SUNY, of printer and paper and toners from printing. And so we're really going to push this electronic initiative. I believe we'll be as successful as we were with the Open Education Resources, where we are saving our students 47 million.

So I think it's a combination of efficiencies, philanthropy, reserves, and other resources from our campuses to come up with that particular match.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: In view of the fact that 40 percent of the state buildings are in fact SUNY buildings, how much need is there? So if we're looking at you having to come up with 100 million and this year 300 million would be available, what is the real need?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So I think it's a two-part answer, if I may.

One is there's a need every year for about 300 million of new construction. The

important thing is to be able to plan over a larger horizon. So we'd be very excited about, just like the critical maintenance, having a multiyear of the -- 550 a year for five years, is to be able to have the 300 million per year for five years would be a billion from the state and we'd be raising a third of that on top of it.

So it's two things. One is we probably need about a billion dollars over five years from the state, and we need to match that with about 330 million.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Before we go to the Senate, I just wanted to acknowledge we've been joined by Assemblywoman Lifton, Assemblywoman Buttenschon, and Assemblywoman Simon.

Now to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

The chair of Higher Ed, Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Thank you, Chancellor, for your

service. We certainly appreciate your enthusiasm and dedication and background. It's I think going to be a great relationship between you -- I know you've been here several years, but it's I think going to be a positive relationship.

Let me ask you a couple of questions. You spoke about the various programs. What is the university spending on remediation for those students who are not able to provide the necessary background for admission?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So we've really put a lot of effort into helping get students ready for college. And give me just a minute to explain what I mean by that.

If you go back to 2014-2015, there was about 77,000 of our students -- so think about that, on a base of roughly 450,000 at that time -- 77,000, almost 80, out of 450 that required some sort of remediation. And at that time the way we determined that was the students would come in and they'd take an exam. And based on that one piece of information we'd put folks into --

individuals into our remediation math or remediation English.

And as I said in my State of the University System, how more discouraging can that be than to have to go back and repeat? And it's not credit-bearing.

So working with the leadership of Johanna Duncan-Poitier, who's here, and the campus presidents, and the coalition of the willing, we have grown a corequisite English and a math. So we've changed the way we look at this. We say, okay, in English you're going to go into a credit-bearing course but we're going to provide non-credit-bearing, another unit of non-credit-bearing but help with preparing for English.

And here's what we found. This is really fascinating. It turns out that if you set the expectation that you will be able to pass a credit-bearing course and you provide the resources, we're finding that those students actually pass that class faster and on the first try.

So today, instead of 77,000 students

going into remediation, we have less than 40,000 students. I think last year it was 44,000, now we're down to 39,000. I believe there will come a time when that is something that is -- we'll either figure out something even better to do than the corequisite model that's working, or that model will take care of the math and the English.

Now, you can do an estimate -- and I tried to do an estimate just now kind of off the top of my head -- what that means if you're providing that extra instructional support. So if you'd allow me to not give you a number now off the top of my head, but we'll come back with you, we'll get together with the team and noodle out what that is costing us.

SENATOR STAVISKY: That was my -- the second part of the question, obviously, was the price tag.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yeah.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I know it's preferable to have classes taught by full-time experienced faculty. But

unfortunately, colleges have to rely on part-time or adjunct faculty.

Can you tell us the percentage of adjuncts who are teaching, let's say at the four year colleges?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yup. Yes. So if I could start with the top-line number and then I'll disaggregate the data.

So it's 50.6 percent of our faculty are adjuncts. That's up. If you look at the four-years, the comprehensives and the tech, it's almost 50 percent exactly. It's like 49.6 percent. If you look at the doctoral and the community colleges, they're almost flipped. What do I mean by that? The doctoral are basically 71.5 percent -- just call it 70 percent for round numbers -- full-time, 30 percent adjunct. Community colleges are just flipped, they're 30 percent full-time, 70 percent adjunct.

SENATOR STAVISKY: And what about the community colleges?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: And that's the community colleges, I'm sorry, 30 percent

full-time and 70 percent part-time.

That's interesting, right? I mean, it's ...

SENATOR STAVISKY: About a year ago an article appeared in the Times Union discussing the question of the Confucius Institute at the University at Albany. And at the time the article -- the reporter had called me, it was Rick Karlin, and I said we've got to check into the situation.

And then Sunday the Daily News had an op-ed by a SUNY professor outlining the dangers -- and I thought it was a fairly balanced article. It presented the arguments both for and against the Confucius Institute. And in fairness, this is a nationwide program by the government of the People's Republic of China. It's been -- I happen to support, as you know, international programs, and I think they are excellent.

But could you explain or respond to some of the questions concerning academic freedom, First Amendment, and all of the other issues that have been raised?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Certainly.

So this is something that I started looking into when I first became chancellor. And I looked into it for several reasons. I think one of the reasons it's coming up now is the concern, as you mentioned, about academic freedom, transparency, and being open about what's going on where. All very valid and very important.

At the same time I was asked to go to Washington to join in classified briefings -- of which I will not, obviously, divulge any of the briefing -- but with senators, and to learn about what their concerns are. And I also made some recommendations in the general area of intellectual property protection.

So this is something that we have been thinking about and working on for a couple of years. Turns out we have six Confucius Institutes. Some of the information in the article wasn't accurate, we'll correct that. There is no longer a Confucius Institute at SUNY Global, but that is being -- pending a move to Nassau Community College. So there

are still six.

We are reviewing each one of the contracts. We want to ensure that if we do continue, which is contemplated at some of them, that we'll be transparent, you'll know what is being funded by when and the faculty members have control over the content and the curriculum, which was one of the main issues.

And it's really an issue -- as a chancellor of the State University of New York, you want to make sure your faculty owns the curriculum, owns the content in their classroom. And that's federal law, that's SUNY policy, and that's the way those particular contracts will read.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I was particularly troubled when I read -- and perhaps it was inaccurate -- that the contract between the Confucius Institute at Binghamton was not with the university, but with the Research Foundation.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Would you comment on that? Because I think there's certainly a

lack of -- the Research Foundation is far better than it was when I first joined the Legislature, and in fact asked questions at the budget hearing about 10 years ago. It is far better, but it's still very -- to me, very troubling.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So the Research Foundation, as you know, was established I think in 1977 to support the -- maybe '57, one of those "seven" years -- to support the research enterprise of the State University of New York and to monitor and to track. And we have put in place in the last few years a very strong board, on which SUNY has representation, and they monitor and manage all of our research contracts.

So because these contracts have to do with international exchange and they are a funded research contract, that would be the vehicle by which SUNY engages in any contract with anyone, is through the Research Foundation.

Having said that, I just want to reiterate, we are going to be open,

transparent, and make sure that we account -- and we'll be glad to get back to you with all the funding that's going through the Research Foundation, in particular for the Confucius Institutes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

One last quick question. I received a memo from the University Police, and it was troubling because of the attrition, the fact that we spend time and money training these officers and they leave. And there are -- apparently they have some issues with the university, and I think you ought to have an opportunity to respond.

Have you seen the --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I have not. But I'd be more than happy to receive the letter.

SENATOR STAVISKY: We'll provide you with a copy. Oh, you'll hear their testimony, I think, today. But I will provide you with a copy.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Great. Thank you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We've been joined by Assemblywoman Bichotte, Assemblyman Fall. And we go to Assemblyman Epstein for questions.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

And thank you for being with us today. I do appreciate your testimony. But I just have some real concerns about what you're proposing. And just, you know, along those lines with Assemblywoman Glick was talking about where we're seeing so much food insecurity on our campuses, people struggling to make ends meet, people going part-time because they can't afford to continue to go to school -- and then we're making choices around expanding Excelsior but cutting other programs where students have much greater need.

And I'm wondering what the logic is to expand a program from 125 to 150 when we see students who can't afford the tuition increase that we're proposing, students who tell us every day they can't drop out. My daughter attends a SUNY, and there are so

many friends of hers who will not be able to eat each month on campus because they don't have the resources.

So I'm just concerned around this choice. And why not expand the EOP programs? Why not put resources for people who have deeper need? Why not get from a thousand to 5,000 for those people we know it will make a difference in their lives. And that we -- we talked about getting people at lower economic situations to higher, that's an exact opportunity to do it. And I'm just not -- I'm baffled, really, by the choices here.

So I'd love to hear what the logic is to making these choices around expanding Excelsior but not really expanding for programs with deeper needs and students who are struggling on our campuses every day.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So, first of all, thank you very much for the question. And look, it resonates with me, being able to go to college and come out debt-free. Because I went to university on a full scholarship, both tuition and room and board. I could not

have gone otherwise. So you're speaking exactly to this kid 40 years ago.

That said, I don't think we need to make a choice between one or the other. I think we need to do it all. And I think I was -- well, we were all thrilled that the EOP program, the EOC program and the Attain programs were all continued in the Executive Budget. So I think that's showing the Governor's strong support for exactly the individuals that you're talking about that we care greatly about. And I would love to see those programs increased.

At the same time we have a lot of need for students -- you know, depending on where you live, those levels are meaningful and are challenging. Going to food insecurity, that's exactly why we put a food pantry or access to a food pantry -- and I've visited many of these, in fact, and they're wonderful. In fact at many of our campuses they're run by students, which is just awesome.

So we need to continue to be vigilant.

We need to continue to bring resources to SUNY. And that's why, you know, I'm quite interested -- one of my top priorities is really philanthropy and helping our campuses or working very hard to bring outside resources to bear for our campuses so that we can continue to create the kind of programs we need if we're going to be that social mobility engine.

And that's, I think, the thing that's quite interesting now. When we look at the cost of educating the student -- and I said this in my testimony, but I think it bears repeating, if I do say so myself -- 18.3 new net jobs created since we started emerging from the Great Recession 10 years ago, 18.3. Eighteen of those went to individuals with some kind of college education. And more than that, 2 million jobs that were there for students who only had a high school education vanished.

So everyone needs a college degree. Everybody has to have access to this. We have to support all our students going

forward and particularly, of course, the most vulnerable. I can't tell you how awesome it was to go to that ceremony and see 42 outstanding students that had special needs, families struggling, and were doing fabulously because of the support of the EOP program.

So I support what you're saying. We should increase --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Good, I would love to see ways to expand that.

Same thing when we passed the DREAM Act. And I know a lot of students have applied. How many students have applied for DREAM and TAP funding, how many students applied versus how many got it? It would be great to know what the differential is and what's going on there.

And the last thing I'll raise, because I know I'm out of time, is I would love to see dedicated funding streams for CUNY and SUNY. I'd love to see real dollars going. And I know we have a concern about additional revenue, but we've got to close that TAP gap,

because we need to do that.

And we'd love to see you partner with us to -- I've got legislation and other people have legislation to direct funding to CUNY and SUNY. And we just need to have dedicated funding streams, because we're going to be in this fight where we expand the TAP gap every year with tuition increases as you're proposing.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Totally agree. And in fact if I may just --

(Timeclock chirping.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Sure.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Can I? May I, Chairpersons? Okay.

I think that there's even something more we need to do. Because I think that it's not good enough now just to educate students in the kind of fields that they love and aspire -- which we need to do that. We also need to layer on top of that entrepreneurship, innovation, the way that we can help. When you've got a SUNY -- I mean, this is, I think, the big idea. Right?

It's -- you've got a SUNY campus with an -- almost 90 percent of every New Yorker within 30 miles. And we have this outmigration from upstate to downstate. Right? We all know this. And the Governor has put together the REDCs to get at that.

Now, imagine that the students -- you know, I said during my testimony that 75 percent after three to four years are still living in the State of New York. Suppose we unleash their innovation, their entrepreneurship, and we help them stay in place and create those companies. It would be phenomenal.

And I highlighted one of those at the SOTUS, which is Ben Conard, who did Five North Chocolate. He learned about entrepreneurship at Geneseo; he's using a kitchen at Stony Brook. That's what we need to unleash in this state, and we can do it. With a little more support.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We've been joined by Assemblyman McDonald.

Now to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next, Jim Seward, ranker on Finance.

SENATOR SEWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you, Chancellor. It's been a real pleasure working with you since you came here to New York and the SUNY system, on behalf of the many SUNY campuses I have in my district and the system as a whole.

I wanted to return to a discussion of the proposed tuition authorization hikes that are included in the budget. How much revenue will be generated if these proposed tuition increases are implemented?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So for every $100 increase in tuition, the net, net of the TAP gap and Excelsior, is about $9 million. So a $200 increase would generate about $18 million net each year.

SENATOR SEWARD: Per year.

You know, with the proposed increase in the income eligibility for the Excelsior scholarship, and with these proposed tuition

hikes only being paid by non-Excelsior students, what percentage of SUNY students will actually be paying the increase? Do you know offhand?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So I don't know offhand, but we'll get back to you on that. We can calculate it.

And the reason why is in part, as you know, Excelsior is the last dollar. And so when it looks to increase, you need to back out students that would be eligible for TAP, students that would be eligible for Excelsior. You know, we just have to do a little bit of sharpening a pencil.

SENATOR SEWARD: Do you have any concerns -- for those students who do not qualify for Excelsior, do you have any concerns about as the tuition goes up, that their average student loan debt will also go up upon graduation?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Well, we're very concerned about, you know, the debt of our students.

And you may know this, but the average

debt -- so half of our students graduated debt-free, roughly -- 47.3 percent. Call it a half for now. The other students, on average, will have upwards about 27K in debt when they graduate, like on average.

So we're very concerned about that. We want to keep a SUNY education -- you know, it's a balancing act -- affordable but also high quality. And that's where, you know, the support is so -- you know, so appreciated from the Legislature and the Governor to be able to do that.

SENATOR SEWARD: I wanted to shift gears to the community colleges. You know, last year the enacted budget included a hold-harmless provision to offset some of the enrollment declines on many of our community college campuses. And actually there was a base aid increase of $100 as well.

Neither of these are included in the Executive's proposal. Do you have concerns about how our community college campuses are going to absorb both the flat base aid funding that's included in the budget as well

as dealing with anticipated loss of funding due to, you know, some additional projected enrollment declines?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So of our 415,000 -- that's head count -- students, 192,000 are community college. So roughly half. A little less, but about half. So we're very concerned about that.

We would very much like to see the floor be put back in place, and that sort of the held harmless, as well as an increase in per-head count.

As I said earlier in the testimony, for many of our students this is the first entree into higher ed. And a lot of our students commute, so the real cost for them of education is tuition. And so it would be very helpful to re-look at the floor.

And, you know, the way I think I described it maybe even at last year's hearing was, you know, it's a little bit like -- there are base costs and variable costs of education. And I know you know all that. It's like going into a restaurant, you

know, and no matter if one person comes in the door or 10 go in the door, you've still got to pay the rent, you've got to keep the lights on, and you still have to have the -- so those pay for the fixed costs. And that's what the floor helps us do.

And then the $100 increase for some of our community colleges that are increasing, that helps them pay with -- you know, like the salad and the main course and all that, which is more variable.

So we really think that it was a terrific vision and insight from the Legislature to put that in, and we'd be very grateful to see that restored.

SENATOR SEWARD: You would advocate that we do it again this year.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I'm sorry?

SENATOR SEWARD: You would advocate that we do that again this year.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yes.

SENATOR SEWARD: Just one final question on capital. You've outlined the great needs that still exist out there on the

various campuses. Do you have any concerns about that two-for-one matching program that's in the budget that there will be, shall we say an uneven availability of these capital funds depending on whether or not a campus could meet the match?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So we are looking very carefully at each and every campus to see what the ability is to do the match. We do believe that the majority of our campuses will be able to do that. In fact, the great majority of our campuses will be able to do a match from a variety of sources, whether it's philanthropy or reserves or auxiliary services or help from the SUNY system.

And so we look forward to working with the campuses to get the new construction, you know, moving that we really need for some of these high-need programs.

SENATOR SEWARD: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We've been joined by Assemblywoman Hyndman.

And we go to Assemblywoman Lifton.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And we've been joined by Senator Rachel May.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: Good morning, Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: I want to just second the concerns about the childcare centers on campus, Small Business Development Centers, the Veterinary College at Cornell, all very important investments for the state and critical for people attending both two- and four-year colleges.

I was glad to hear Senator Stavisky talk about the full-time versus adjunct faculty issue. As the daughter of a SUNY professor and --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Can you talk more into the -- or pull the mic a little closer?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: -- and a leader in SUNY for many years, secretary of the State Faculty Senate many years ago, he would not be happy if I didn't ask further about

that.

You know, we did the tuition increases over how many years, we did the rational tuition policy increases that were four years. And I think we were sure that that was going to work to improve the education for students. That was going to go towards improving the quality of students' education.

I have to assume you would agree that having full-time faculty and having good numbers there would be an important piece of that. And I know this is -- I'm not laying this at your doorstep, I lay it very much at the state government's doorstep in terms of support for SUNY. But -- and we're talking about another tuition increase. Is it just holding even? Is it talking about progress? And, you know, 50 percent adjunct faculty is not a great number. I was told eight years ago, six years ago, five years ago that we are working on it, we are improving it, we are improving it. And these don't look like improved numbers to me at all.

Do you have goals on that? Do you

have a plan, given -- you know, if that tuition increase comes through here, is some of that going to go towards truly -- not just wishful thinking, but truly looking at the issue of full-time versus adjunct faculty?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Well, first of all, thank you very much for the question.

Absolutely, I would love to see more full-time faculty. Because when you have full-time faculty, they're full-time. So you get extra -- the benefit of someone that's there often for the mentoring and the office hours and those sort of things. Although I must say that our adjunct faculty are very dedicated as well. And so converting some of those positions to full-time would be a goal.

What I'd like to do is come back and look at the history and look at what progress we have made. I know through some of the innovation fund that I mentioned earlier, we are actually using those funds to attract full-time faculty.

Also something that I noticed my first semester here at SUNY is that, you know,

somewhere between a third and 40 percent of our faculty could retire over the horizon of when I'm chancellor. So therefore we have initiated a program called PRODiG, as you may have heard about, where we've set a goal to hire a thousand underrepresented minority and women faculty over the next decade. And we want to hire them early so that they can learn from the existing faculty and understand -- you know, get mentored at that time.

So we think it's a really important program. It's gotten off to a great start in the first six months. I mean, we announced it at the SOTUS last January, we started to stand it up with workshops in March, and then proposals were due in July. So we're really in the first six months of this. But we've already hired 74 faculty through PRODiG, and we expect that we'll be able to increase that.

So this is a big focus of mine, not just the -- it's demographics writ large. It's the do our students that are 35 percent

underrepresented minority, are they seeing someone in the classroom that looks like them? So that they see it, they can be it. Well, when you only have 9 percent of your faculty underrepresented minorities, they're not seeing it, as much as we think that it would be helpful.

So that's one reason why we launched this. We've put a number out there, a thousand over a decade. We don't think it's too aggressive. We will accomplish that. And so, yes, faculty and supporting our faculty is one of the highest priorities you can possibly have as a leader in the institution.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: Of course I support that program. It sounds like a very important program to be doing. I know you've spoken about it before.

Are we going to see a bump up in those numbers from 50 percent to 55 percent or 60 percent over the next five years, especially --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So we are

about -- yeah. No, it's a good question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: -- especially with a tuition increase?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: And let me apologize, we should come back to that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: That's all right.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So if you look at the national averages, we are about 4 to 5 percent lower than we should be. So I think last year we provided some information about what it would cost -- what it would take to move the numbers by 10 percent. I don't remember that number off the top of my head. But I -- then we looked at the data and we saw that really we're national average probably low -- more on the order of 4 or 5 percent than 10.

So if it would be okay, we'll come back with an estimate on what it would cost and how that would work with a tuition increase from that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LIFTON: Thank you, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

To the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

We've been joined by Senator Brad Hoylman, and Senator John Liu is next up for questions.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chancellor, we've got issues. Oh, I apologize. I'm a proud graduate of SUNY Binghamton.

We have issues, Chancellor. And the issue is that we're not -- we're not investing enough money in this state for education. There's a great deal of focus on I guess what some people call lower education, the elementary through high school education, and the need for more Foundation Aid. But it's clear that we also need more money for our higher education, both SUNY and CUNY.

I have some questions because, you know, it's been difficult to get some very clear numbers out there. So perhaps you would have them off the top of your head.

And if not, then you can ask your staff to follow up with me.

But basically, what's the total operating budget of SUNY, the whole system?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: The whole system. I think it's around 3, 3.5 billion? Eileen?

SUNY CFO McLOUGHLIN: {Inaudible.} Thirteen billion.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yeah, 13 billion.

SENATOR LIU: Yeah, 13 billion. And how much of that is state support versus tuition?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I think that's the number that's about 3.5.

SUNY CFO McLOUGHLIN: Thirty percent.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thirty percent. So it's about 3.9 billion, direct and indirect.

SENATOR LIU: Yeah, that's very close. I mean, I've got a chart here that says state support is 32 percent, and the remaining 68 percent is supported by tuition.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right.

SUNY CFO McLOUGHLIN: {Inaudible.}

SENATOR LIU: Right, that's a -- what's that?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: In-hospital revenues, patient visits and so forth.

SENATOR LIU: Okay. But that's a small amount, right?

(Overtalk; inaudible.)

SENATOR LIU: Twenty-five -- so it's 25 percent hospital revenues, 32 percent state support and the remaining 43 percent would be tuition?

SUNY CFO McLOUGHLIN: Tuition, fees, yes.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Tuition, fees. Would some of that be auxiliary services too?

SUNY CFO McLOUGHLIN: It's in the fees.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yeah, it's in the fees, okay.

SENATOR LIU: And that 43 percent from tuition and fees is much higher -- it's a much higher percentage than it was perhaps 10 years ago.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: We can look that

up. I don't know that number off the top --

SENATOR LIU: Okay. Well, I mean, I don't -- I have some numbers here. It says here that the state support was 46 percent nine years ago. So it's down to 32 percent. So we're clearly -- I mean, the state is just not coughing up where it should. And that's not your fault, Chancellor, I'm just putting it out there.

So what do you think the trajectory is with these tuition increases? Is it -- with the tuition increases, is it even going to be more than 43 percent tuition-supported? Is it -- is more than 43 percent -- is even more than 43 percent of the SUNY operating costs going to be paid for by student tuition and fees? And what's the trajectory here?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I think the trajectory will depend, you know, on some of the ways that we can work together to improve not just -- actually, to create new revenue streams. So that's one of the reasons why I'm really pushing philanthropy. It's another reason why we are working at SUNY

Online, which is our online platform, to launch that.

Because if you look at the trajectory -- and we've done this in great detail. From where we are now with 415,000 students in 2020 to where we're going to be in 2025, if we don't have some sort of intervention with regard to garnering more out-of-state students or increasing the number of students that go to higher ed in the state, or through our online platform, then we will be down probably tens of thousands of more students.

Which will be harder to make up with tuition and fees if you're losing, you know, enrollment. So enrollment is a laser focus for us right now as well.

SENATOR LIU: You're -- you're afraid that enrollment will decline?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Well, you see that for the first time, I think over the last four years it's -- actually, over the last 40 years there's been outmigration from the state. I mean, this is not a new

phenomenon. The state has been losing population, and it isn't being offset by immigration and new natural births. So we are having a statewide, you know, decline in population.

SENATOR LIU: But tuition is being increased not to make up for a declining or at least a flat level of enrollment, right? Tuition is being increased because of increased operating costs.

It just feels like the tuition increases are higher than the increases in operating costs. Which is why that percentage keeps growing larger.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So I think that -- I am very sensitive to increasing costs for our students. I think that one gets a little bit of a contextual view of that if we look at what's the tuition in-state at Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and our border states, our so-called border states. So it's about 4,000 to $5,000 more per year.

SENATOR LIU: Okay. Thank you.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So -- I mean, but that's the real -- so our -- if we charged -- our out-of-state tuition is $18,070. The in-state tuition of our border states is about 12,000. Which is about 5,000 more than our in-state and about 5,000 less than our out-of-state.

SENATOR LIU: Regardless of whether they're coming from in-state or out-of-state, it's -- you said 75 percent of the graduates do stay in New York.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: That's right. So we want to attract them to the state. And SUNY can be that engine that attracts students to the state because of outstanding institutions like your alma mater.

SENATOR LIU: And attract corporations and employers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Fahy.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

Thank you. A pleasure to see you and

have you here, Chancellor.

A few things, not to repeat some of the questions, but I just -- one of the first questions and comments was on the TAP gap, and I just want to reiterate those concerns. I share the concerns that we really need to address that and hear it all the time, not just from the students, but also from the universities, so want to reiterate that.

Also love the continued graduation rates and good feedback on the EOP program. So I just wish it was there for everybody that applied. So I want to also share in those comments and support for the EOP programs. I have to wonder why we're not doing a little more there.

Finally, your comment on the credit-bearing courses is just -- that's really good news. For years we had heard about the remedial courses, we were losing students being saddled with remedial courses and then not making it or giving up on them.

Couple of questions. In the community colleges, the cut -- can you explain the cut

and can you address the charge-back issue? There's a reduction of 22 million on the community colleges. Is that all due to enrollment? And do we know how that will affect Hudson Valley here?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So the 22 million, you're saying, without having the floor or an increase of $100 per student, that will be a net of about 22 million.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: That's what's in the books.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So -- well, we're hoping that the floor will get reinstituted.

And we'd also like to have an increase in the head count. So I will have to do some good work on advocacy to see if we can put back the floor.

I don't know how it will specifically impact Hudson Valley. Some of that will depend on enrollment. Some of that will depend on -- but we can certainly get you that information.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay. And I'd love the update on the chargeback issue,

which becomes -- it's an annual issue I bring up between Rensselaer County and Albany County, and would appreciate the feedback on that, because Albany County gets hit and yet we have more students there at Hudson Valley, a terrific community college.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: If I could -- can I just say one thing on the chargeback?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Sure.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So we have put together a working group studying the chargeback, seeing how we might be able to be helpful there, and we can come back to you with where that is.

That's one thing that I promised we would do last year at the hearing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay. And we've had working groups before on that, so I really am anxious to see the update.

Childcare, that's been mentioned, the cut. Serious concern. Childcare is just a crisis throughout the state.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yes, absolutely.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: And I was very

concerned to see that even we would cut that. I know that's been mentioned before, so I want to get that in.

Sustainability, along with capital funding. I know since you've been here, sustainability and energy efficiency of the SUNY buildings -- which I understand are 40 percent of the state-owned buildings in the state. I know you keep mentioning it. I'm pleased that the Governor has proposed a $200 million increase. Tell me how much that it is in comparison to what the needs would be.

As you know, I've talked before about expanding on the bond, the Environmental Bond Act, so that we can address SUNY and CUNY needs. But what do you need to get at this sustainability issue that I know you've championed since you've been here?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right. So we proposed -- we have 550 for critical maintenance. And last year we proposed an additional 200 a year in order -- the best time to do -- and I know you all know this,

but energy efficiency and upgrade is when you're doing critical maintenance. So if you're going to replace the roof anyway, then that's when you want to put in the insulation, because you're going to increase, you know, the better insulation because you're going to be having to replace it. So it's just more efficient to do it at that time.

So additional funding in order to address the energy efficiency through critical maintenance would be great. The match also allows us to get at the need for new construction.

So we have between, say -- well, I'll just say a couple of billion and I'll get back to you -- over a period of time like five years of new construction on the drawing board. So it's new engineering buildings, you know, at Stony Brook and at Albany and Buffalo and Binghamton. There are new buildings at the university centers. There's new buildings at Purchase. And then there's a renovation, which is more like a new

building, of the natural sciences at Old Westbury. We have tremendous needs in the STEM area and we need -- and it's on the order of billions over a period of time.

And it's that surety of knowing those fundings will be there year after year so that we can plan it, design it, construct it and move in. And that whole process can take four to five years. So having that support there is just very important.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay, Chancellor, I really would love to hear more on this. I'm almost out of time. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention our own parochial need here in that engineering building at UAlbany. But I'd love to hear what the overall number is to get at this retrofitting and energy efficiency for the SUNY buildings. Because again, I think we need to go beyond what is proposed.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: And we'll get back to you on that in detail.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Good morning, Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Good morning.

SENATOR JACKSON: It's always good to see you.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: It's good to see you too.

SENATOR JACKSON: And I'm surprised you don't have other staff up there with you, but it appears as though you're so knowledgeable about the fact that -- the statistics that you're putting out. And I clearly believe you're a highly qualified professional doing the best job that you can.

But let me ask you a question. I'm looking at some of the highlights. So the Higher Education Services Corporation is being cut 5.3 percent. What impact is that going to have on children, young adults, getting into college, in your opinion?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So HESC obviously, and I saw Guillermo here, supports

all of our Excelsior and supports many other programs such as STEM programs. And they're very important to the success of both SUNY and CUNY. So I --

SENATOR JACKSON: But it will have an impact, though. I would --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yes, it will. Yes, sir.

SENATOR JACKSON: What are they cutting, 64 what?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I'm not -- I don't know the exact number, but --

SENATOR JACKSON: Sixty-four million dollars, I think, out of an $18 billion budget. Clearly it's going to have an impact when you're cutting that much money out. I mean, I'm looking at SUNY overall is an increase of 6.5 percent, is that correct? That's what it says here. Am I right or wrong?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: SUNY overall would be 1.9 percent, we had requested in our budget, from base aid. I'm sure more than that, because of the benefits and the costs

there.

SENATOR JACKSON: So with respect to that, knowing this budget is -- a lot of talk was about tuition, so -- and there is a proposal on the table to continue the $200 per year for the next five years. Would you be in favor of freezing it where it is now, with no increase, and let the State of New York pick up -- you said it's $18 million per year, is that right, TAP?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Eighteen million, that's net, yeah. That's taking into account the gap.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay, 18 million. But will you be willing to just charge no additional tuition for students coming in and the State of New York would just pick up that cost factor? When you look at a $178 billion budget, that's not a lot of money, would you agree?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Sorry --

SENATOR JACKSON: That is not a lot of money to freeze it and just whatever the cost factor is, in order to continue to provide

the colleges and universities the monies that we'd get from normal tuition that students are paying for.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: We certainly would love to work with you on exploring the ability to make SUNY even more affordable to our students as well as get the support we need for the ongoing operations, including the well-deserved and long overdue pay raises to our faculty and staff, our operations, and also putting in place the floor for the community colleges. So we would look forward to having a conversation.

SENATOR JACKSON: And talking about the operations and talking about staff, what is the situation with your unionized staff? I think your -- most of the staff at SUNY is represented by UUP, is that correct?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: That's correct, yes.

SENATOR JACKSON: Has that contract expired? What's going on with that?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: No, it was just renewed -- I think it was last year? And

therefore it's -- there is a retroactive piece for two years and then going forward for four years, and it's a 2 percent base and a 1 percent merit.

SENATOR JACKSON: And how was that covered in the budget process? I mean, did the State of New York then give that additional money to cover that contract, or it would expect to be taken out of the hides of the colleges?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Well, we would love to work with you to explore ways that we can make SUNY even more affordable.

SENATOR JACKSON: I understand. I know you will -- I know you want to work with me. I asked the question, was the -- did the State of New York pick up that and pay for that, or is it expected to come out of the hides of the colleges? That's my question to you. That's a direct question.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yeah. The direct base aid has been flat over the last, I think, so many years.

SENATOR JACKSON: So in essence,

then, it has not been picked up by the government overall.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Well, base aid has remained flat. But of course our debt service and our benefits are paid for, and we're very grateful for that, from the state, because that's an expensive -- as you know, the increase in the overall budget is, as you said, over 6 percent because of the increased costs and because of the debt service that we're very, very happy to receive.

SENATOR JACKSON: But, I mean, you would say that all of your staff deserve a raise in order to live appropriately and -- from a normal point of view, is that correct?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I do support our staff receiving raises, absolutely.

SENATOR JACKSON: Uh-huh. So overall, from a capital point of view, my understanding in hearing all around that the capital amount of money needs to be increased. Do you agree with that or disagree with that? Or you have --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I believe there's

300 million in the Governor's budget for capital, and we're very excited about that.

SENATOR JACKSON: You're what?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: There's 300 million in appropriations --

SENATOR JACKSON: You said you're satisfied with that or you're happy about that?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I'm happy about that. Two hundred of that is new capital, and 100 of that is match from SUNY.

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, I don't -- I'm not happy about that.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Well, then I'm -- okay.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You get to remain unhappy about that, Senator Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And we go to Assemblywoman Buttenschon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you,

Chancellor, for being here today. I appreciate your efforts, as a SUNY graduate also.

My colleagues have brought up many issues that are very concerning, I know, to you also, the TAP gap, EOP, and many aspects. I do just want to touch back on the adjunct ratio. You said it was 70/30 in our community colleges.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Correct.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Is that something we're looking at to change? My rationale, obviously, is many of these students, this is their first time coming into a higher educational setting, and the need for those faculty that are experienced and working full-time.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So, you know, adjuncts -- there's many different ways that an adjunct works with us at SUNY. Some of the adjuncts are what you might call professors of the practice. As you said, they are full-time or they're part-time in the workforce or retired, and they have such

a wealth of experience we definitely -- you know, we love all our adjuncts, and those are a particular set of experiences that we relish.

You know, I think the opportunity to capture newly minted Ph.D.s or masters in the community college who want to make a career out of teaching with SUNY by converting those adjunct positions to full-time would be really terrific. So I think that's something that we really need to look at.

I think without a funding floor or a per -- and/or the increase in the individual state support for the students, it would be difficult to do that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: I guess so the question is, are you looking to change those numbers? Or you're just going to continue to remain at 70/30 and feel, I guess as my colleague stated, satisfied or happy?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Sure, yeah. Well, I'd like to increase the full-time faculty, absolutely.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: And then a

question regarding mental health obviously facing so many of our institutions. You have created a task force. Is this a new task force or is it a task force that's been in place? And when do you anticipate hearing recommendations from this task force?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Certainly. So this is a task force that I put in place in the fall. It's had already two meetings, and I've attended one of them. It will come back with recommendations. And, you know, it's borne out by the fact that according to the one survey by Healthy Minds, about 39 percent of the students that responded are experiencing some significant mental health issue.

Well, that's a high percentage. I mean, you know, you have to ask, well, how many base and what was the survey response, and I get all that. But it's still a significant number. And this is, you know, part of the challenge, is that we know that our students, to be successful, need all kinds of support. They need academic

support, they need food security support, mental health, in some cases, support.

So these are things we want to be there to provide. Childcare. That's one of the reasons why we would like to see the telehealth mental counseling funding restored. So yes, it's very important to us.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: And as my colleague Fahy stated about the numbers, I would be interested in those numbers --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Okay, very good.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: -- of students that are in.

And then just a little bit on the connection with workforce development in regards to new initiatives that you see this year, possibly at different colleges, four-year and two, that you find have helped gap that link, possibly, for the need of workforce within expanding industry.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So over the last year, and one of the successes that we've had -- and again, this is really due to the work of our senior vice chancellor Johanna

Duncan-Poitier, working with Department of Labor Commissioner Roberta Reardon -- we've garnered about 17 million in support altogether. About half of that is from the state, and half of that is from federal and philanthropic organizations.

So these are programs where we're increasing the number of apprenticeships, the number of companies. We now have I think over 300 companies that we're working with in order to give that internship, that apprenticeship. Because what we've found is if a student in business, IT, or the performing arts gets an internship, their starting salary is $26,000 more with IT, it's $9,000 more in business, and it's $13,000, if I are remember that right, for the performing arts. That's phenomenal. That's a very large percentage of their starting salary.

So it's -- part of my commitment to individualized learning and education is those applied learning experiences, which is really the hallmark of what SUNY is known for.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Gounardes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Good morning. Thank you. I want to just start off by echoing some of the comments that were made earlier about, you know, the TAP gap funding and how -- you know, maybe we should look to redirect more funds to closing that gap instead of expanding Excelsior.

And to Senator Liu's point about, you know, the drop in public support for SUNY, you know, nationwide, since the Great Recession, funding for public education at the higher education level has dropped by $9 billion. And we clearly have not met that -- restored funding to that level across the country, and clearly here in New York as well, and that's very, very concerning.

And so I think we absolutely need to be looking to see other ways to increase

support for both SUNY and CUNY and public funding for that. Because to keep pushing the burden onto students' shoulders is just not tenable.

But I do want to kind of revisit the question about mental health that has been talked about a little bit. How many -- what's the ratio we have of mental health counselors to students right now across the system?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I'll have to get back to you on that. It's going to be different at different campuses. And of course it's going to vary depending on the size of the campus. So I think that we want to normalize it by the number of students.

I think that's one of the reasons why we were pretty excited about the -- and we are pretty excited about the telemedicine mental health program that we had in place, because we had have ten campuses involved with that. And that was being staffed by psychiatrists at Upstate Medical University. And it was very effective, but it got

oversubscribed pretty quickly. So we're hoping to expand that program, and that's why we're asking to restore some of the funding, or all the funding for the telecounseling program.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: That's the $500,000 that was proposed to be cut?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: That's correct, yes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: I think nationwide the average is one counselor for every 1200 students. And I think that where we are in New York, I think it's significantly higher than that. According to the numbers I've seen, it was like 2,000 in some cases, you know, systemwide. That's a very, very big discrepancy. And I think we need to do a lot more to address that. Because as you point out, there are a large number of students who need that type of support service.

I want to transition a little bit. Do you have a sense of what percentage of our graduates from SUNY end up entering the

public service workforce or civil workforce, systemwide?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: You know, I don't, off the top of my head, but I'll get you those. We have those numbers. We can get them for you.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: And what is SUNY doing to create pathways for its graduates into the public sector, if anything? Do we have programs that currently exist? Are we doing things to recruit students to put them onto these pathways? Can you speak to that a bit?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Sure. I know that obviously the University at Albany has a pretty big pipeline through to the Legislature, and we meet a lot of alums when we go through, you know, and make our visits. So I know that that's one program for sure.

We do meet other students, obviously, from some of our other SUNY campuses. But let me get you an inventory and I'll come back to you on that -- both of those questions. One is the number of mental

health counselors per student, and also what our programs do with regard to public service. Both very important.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: And do you have any data as to how many students who have graduated with debt are enrolled in the public service loan forgiveness program?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: No, I don't. But we'll come back to you on that.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Is that data that you think that you might be able to collect in the future or, find a way to get some type of measure of that from your graduates?

SUNY CFO McLOUGHLIN: Let me come back to you. I think that would be a good thing to collect.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Because it's very concerning, you know, with what's happening with this program -- it's obviously a federal program -- that only 3 percent of students who are enrolled and eligible have been granted forgiveness. And so if we have a large number of our own graduates who are not -- who are being screwed by the system,

we should know that and find ways to help address that.

SUNY CFO McLOUGHLIN: Absolutely. Thank you. Great points.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: All the questions I have for you. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Smith.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you.

And thank you, Chancellor. Our students are so lucky to have you, with your great background and your passion for this new job.

So the campuses must make up the TAP gap somehow. If the state were to step in and close the TAP gap, I assume that would leave more money to spend on education. What are some of the things that could be done, or what are your thoughts on that?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right. So it's a good point. So with 82 million -- and that would be distributed throughout all the campuses. So, you know, locally, I mean, you

know, if you divide it by 64, you'd come up with a number that -- but again, it's going to be based on the number of students.

So some of the things that you would use it for, if you were at a university center, those funds -- so let me just step back for a minute. Where that money comes from is from tuition and fees. Right? And some probably philanthropy. So if those dollars were relieved, right, as you said, they could go back into the academic mission. So you could do things like more full-time faculty. You could renovate classrooms and have them be more in line with sort of the high-tech classrooms that many of their peer institutions are seeing.

You could look at the operations that could maintain some of the new facilities that we desperately need to build for these high-demand courses. You could do curricular development. We looked at -- and I can get you these numbers. We have something like 3,000 labs and classrooms throughout SUNY, and many of them need to be renovated. They

need to be wired, they need to be high-tech, there need to be smartboards, they need access to the internet. And we've done an estimate of what that would cost. So that's just to mention a few.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Okay, great --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Also, you know, one of the things that I'm personally invested in and personally passionate about is increasing the support at our comprehensives for their master programs; at our colleges of technologies and at our community colleges, student scholarships and fellowships.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Great. Now, is SUNY going to be pushing for a representative on the Medicaid Redesign Team, or is there any push -- because as you mentioned in your written testimony, that our SUNY hospitals are safety net hospitals and they serve a very important role. So is that going to be -- are you going to be pushing for that or do we know if there's going to be an appointment representing public hospitals?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I don't know if there is, but we'd be willing to serve. Of course I'm recommending someone back there (gesturing), right.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: I see Bob shaking his head.

Now, in terms of the $500,000 cut to the telecounseling, is that something that consistently students mention that they support? I see, you know, some head nods. Is that something that could be made up at all -- you know, obviously I know many of us are going to be advocating to get that funding back in. But any federal funds that you think could be available to help with that? Because I think above the 500,000 -- I think it should be expanded, really, given the need.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yeah. I think we do need to expand it. We can look for those kinds of programs. I'm not aware of any. But we certainly are -- in fact, one of the things that the SUNY system does is that we focus on trying to garner external support,

both from foundations and philanthropy sources and the federal government, to leverage our scope, size, scale and breadth in order to bring those resources to the state, do pilots, expand those pilots, and then be a leader for the rest of the country. So certainly that's within what we value and what we focus on.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Now, with the Strategic Needs Capital Matching Program, where's that funding coming from? So would it come from a foundation -- you know, if it's not necessarily tuition or -- you know, where would a SUNY campus be expected to --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So we would look at philanthropy, we would look at reserves, we would look at auxiliary services, we would look at synergies and efficiencies.

Let me give you an example. We have been reducing our energy use over time. In fact, one of the things that I'm very proud of, and I just want to share all this, is that in 1990 the greenhouse gas emissions from our SUNY campuses were a million metric

tons. Today we've reduced them to 600,000. That's a 40 percent decrease by 2020 -- 39 percent, I'll be precise -- ahead of the State Energy Plan, that was in 2015, which called for the 40 percent reduction by 2030. We're on track to -- we're right now probably 60 percent of our electricity is from renewable sources. We've made a goal that by the end of SUNY at 75, we'll be 100 percent from renewable sources.

So some of those will create savings, some of those initiatives where we are conserving and not wasting. So it's an entire sustainability program that we're going after. Not printing paper, saving 25 million with not printers and toners and paper. You know, that's just one aspect of the kind of savings that we're trying to provide.

So, you know, there are many resources that we're going to be pulling and trying to get very conservative so we can afford the new facilities that we need.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Rachel May.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

Good morning, Commissioner. Nice to see you again.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Good morning. Good to see you too.

SENATOR MAY: So this is -- I may sound like a broken record from last year, but because I represent four SUNY campuses and five independent colleges, I'm always concerned about policies that are pitting them against each other. Because they're all important employers in my district, they all serve students in different and unique ways.

And so the Excelsior expansion is one that concerns me. I know it concerns a lot of the independent colleges. And especially when the TAP gap is increasing, it just seems like maybe we're putting our resources in the wrong place.

So I'm wondering -- there's been an pretty steep decline in the number of

students taking advantage of TAP over the last six or seven years. You look surprised by that, so maybe you can't answer this --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: No, I'm trying to make a note.

SENATOR MAY: -- question, but I'm wondering if that's just a demographic shift or if you think that that's because the money just isn't going far enough, it's not worth it to the students or if -- even if SUNY campuses might be turning students down because it costs them more to bring TAP-eligible students in.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: No, I will take it on, the question, so thank you very much.

We have 60,000 students at our state-operated campuses that receive TAP, Tuition Assistance Program, and about 40,000 are community colleges. So that's -- and then when you add on the 20,000 from Excelsior, that's about 120,000 out of our 400 and some thousand. So it's a large -- which is great. I mean, a majority of our students are going tuition-free.

So that's extremely important to us because, you know, just think about our founding DNA in 1948. We were founded because higher ed wasn't always open to everyone who wanted to attend. And so as a result, that's really core to our mission. So that's why I was a little surprised. But we'll look at the numbers.

We -- our campuses don't turn away people because they're TAP. Absolutely, that's not -- again, that wouldn't be in our DNA either. It does mean, though, that the campuses do provide financial aid to those students. And we're providing something like $229 million of additional support. Some of that is the TAP, of course, which is helpful, but some of that is the -- filling in the TAP gap.

So making college affordable is one of my number-one priorities. Making it excellent is the other. They're the yin and yang. You can't really have one without the other, or else you're paying for anything that isn't worth anything. So that's why

it's critically important that we continue to -- and thank you for the support and the Governor for the support for higher ed, including our benefits and our debt service. And also any additional things that we can do will be put to great use.

We love working with our private school colleagues as well. And so I think that's one of the things -- in fact, I don't know if you know this, but we have -- part of our sustainability initiative is the large-scale energy purchase, 150,000 megawatt hours. We have 20 campuses, four of which are private, our private colleagues. So there are many different ways that we work with our private colleges and they work with us, so we need to continue to do that and --

SENATOR MAY: So -- so let me follow up with a question about that, because I also have two Centers of Excellence in my district, and the Centers of Excellence are facing pretty drastic cuts in this budget. SUNY ESF and Clarkson have a collaboration that they just got approval for last year,

but now they're -- it looks like the way the new definitions are created that that collaboration may be threatened.

So I'm wondering if you are -- what you think about what's going on with the Centers of Excellence.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So that's -- it's -- I'm glad you raised that, because it's interesting, there was a study that was done in the U.S. -- now, this is going back maybe a decade, but the important thing is that if you look at the places that are thriving, they're characterized by a great public university and a great private university.

Think about RTP, you've got Duke and North Carolina. Think about L.A. Think about Berkeley in the Bay Area. All those places are characterized by that partnership between a public and a private university. So I think that whatever we can do to maintain those partnerships is really, really important.

I think the other thing with the

Centers of Excellence and the Centers for Advanced Technology -- you know, there is a continuum of R&D development. There's fundamental work that needs to go on -- the kind of work that won Stanley Whittingham the Nobel Prize in Chemistry this last year, to the actual implementation which may preserve civilization as we know it in terms of bringing grid-scale storage to bear, and the continuum in between.

We have to support it all, because if you just focus on the development and the implementation, then you have eaten your seed corn for the next generation of technologies that are required, whether it's in drug discovery or in IT or in energy.

So I think that we, you know, need to be mindful that we need big R, little D, reasonable size R, reasonable size D, and then big D and little R. And we need it all. We can't ignore any of it. So that would be my comment.

SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Assemblyman Pichardo.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: Good morning.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Good morning. How are you?

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: Hi, how's it going, Chancellor? Appreciate your time.

To my colleagues, to the respective chairs, thank you for convening this hearing.

So I want to add my voice to many of my colleagues who have mentioned the issue of the TAP gap. I'll just sort of use a football analogy -- we just had the Super Bowl this Sunday -- it's like putting up two brand-new goal posts but there's a giant crater in the middle of the field and we're asking our students to play around the crater.

So we need to fill that gap, we need to fill that hole, and we need to figure out a better investment than upping the ante with the Excelsior scholarship. I think we need to take care of those high-needs first and then move forward.

But the thrust of my question -- I

just want to make sure that this is mentioned, Madam Chancellor -- so there's a $600,000 decrease in the Graduate Diversity Fellowship, there is a $200,000 elimination of the SUNY Hispanic Leadership Institute, there's another $200,000 elimination of the SUNY Institute for Leadership and Diversity Inclusion. And right now I know that you have made strides yourself to create a much more diverse faculty and leadership within the SUNY system. So I don't understand, if we're moving in a better direction, why does the Executive see that it's necessary to cut these programs when we need more support?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Well, thank you for the question.

Let me pick up on the first one that you mentioned. And that is something that, you know, obviously I feel very passionate about, and that is the support for our graduate students and specifically our Graduate Diversity Program. You know, we would be grateful to have those resources restored. And one of the reasons why is it's

the same thing as the little R -- I mean, big R to little R and little D to big D. It's -- it's -- you need that whole continuum of the pipeline in education.

So we're focused on PRODiG and trying to hire and diversify a thousand faculty over the next decade. But where are they going to come from? They're going to come from our graduate ranks. So I'm so proud of our comprehensive colleges, because they got together as a sector and proposed a program by which they would support -- well, working together with us, we would support postdocs and near-terminal-degree-ready graduate students of color, and women in STEM, that then could become the PRODiG faculty of tomorrow. And that's the beautiful thing about taking a 10-year view of this. Our high school students today that we're recruiting to our SUNY schools are the PRODiG faculty of 2030. So having these programs where we can support the graduate students is really, really critical.

And, you know, I was a graduate

student. I didn't have other means of support. You know, frankly, in the Bay Area my stipend was less than the rent I had to pay. So I had -- you know, that made it difficult. I had to borrow money. It was a challenging time. So I'm, again, very sensitive. I see these students, I want to increase their money. I want to raise money, philanthropic resources.

One of the things that I talked about in my State of the University System and that I'm very passionate about, again, is going back to entrepreneurship: How are we going to attract those students to stay and create the companies here. A lot of times it's the postdocs and the graduate students of our faculty members that want to be close to their mentor, and they start their company close to their university.

And so that's the kind of opportunity, if we can give the kind of -- attract the best and the brightest graduate students here, as well as keep our rising seniors thinking about going on to graduate school,

it's that whole continuum that we have to be concerned about.

So that's just one piece of the puzzle that you mentioned, and that is supporting our graduate students and particularly the Graduate Diversity Program.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: I cannot emphasize this enough, that we need to make sure that we continue to support and fund these programs to support the ability for SUNY to continue to diversify. So I know that my colleagues here on both sides of the aisle in the Legislature, that we'll continue to support those programs. But more importantly --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: You're welcome.

-- I just wanted to ask and mention this about the FTE issue. I had a meeting with your equivalents at CUNY, and they mentioned that there is a lack of enrollment on the community college side. So if we maintain flat, it's an effective cut.

How exactly are we going to be dealing

with the lack of enrollment if the FTE number stays flat at this point?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right. So I'm glad you mentioned that, because there's many sides to the enrollment story.

One thing just to note is that we report head count. We're going to start reporting also FTE at our state-operated. Our FTE has been flat if not slightly up. It's our community colleges that in FTE are down. Also in head count, right?

So what we're going to do about that. First of all, we know the demographics of the State of New York has been declining in the 18-to-24-year-old, but we also know that the demographics of the 24-to-44-year-old is increasing. And so that's with our real push behind SUNY Online.

So right now there are 40,000 students in the State of New York that are going outside the State of New York for their online education. Well, that's crazy. Especially when we have such outstanding systems like CUNY, like SUNY and our

privates. We've got to capture that here because we want to keep those students here, thriving, and we also want to serve them. They are ours.

So we're going to put a lot of effort into online. And what we found out already, in a little pilot that we ran, is that the majority of those online students are in that demographic of the 24-to-44-year-old. So that's one of our strategies.

A second strategy is to be -- really communicate more the value of a higher education degree. We know over the lifetime of someone who has a degree versus someone who doesn't, it's about a million bucks. How many people really know that? How many 18-to-22-year-olds or 24-to-44-year-olds really appreciate that? So we have to do a better job.

We've started a program which I give a lot of credit to our CFO, Eileen McLoughlin, who's behind me, which is financial literacy -- teaching our students how not only to manage money, but what their loans

mean and how that they can pay them back and manage that.

So a lot of this is putting in place the kind of services that will help our students be successful. And that's really what we're passionate about.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Ken LaValle.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Chancellor, I'm going to start with an easy question. This is your what time before this committee?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Third, sir.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Third time, good. I want to start with a SUNY hospital question. Is there any operating deficits projected for our hospitals?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So our hospitals, as I put it in the written testimony, provide about 6 billion in economic activity. About 2 million patient visits, 1.2 million distinct patients visit. There's Upstate,

Downstate, Stony Brook. The mix of Medicaid and Medicare at Upstate and Downstate is maybe -- I know Downstate is close to 80 percent. Upstate is -- I can get the number for you, but it's over 50 percent. And at Stony Brook it's about 50 percent.

In terms of operations, I think Stony Brook is operating in the green, and we have some challenges at Downstate and Upstate that we're working on in terms of being more efficient. And a lot of that has to do with the facilities, which is why I'm so excited that the -- in the Governor's budget there's 150 million for capital, 50 million for each one of our hospitals. So that was really terrific.

And so we're -- but we've got great leaders and we're working with the leaders and we're making great strides. These are very important to the communities they reside in, both as our safety-net hospitals but also as our engines of economic activity.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Have you had an opportunity to visit our hospitals?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I have, each one of them. In fact, if I could just say one thing, we were just at Downstate last week. And I was -- it was amazing the care that they give. They have about 1200 births a year, Stony Brook has over 4,000, Upstate about 1200 births. To see the care in the infant NICU was amazing. These are little -- I mean, the kids would fit in your hands. And the kind of care and dedication of that team was phenomenal.

So I can't say enough about the work that our hospitals and faculty and staff are doing. And, you know, it's also important for the entire state. I know you know this, but one out of three nurses, one out of three docs are educated at a SUNY. And one out of -- I think of eight licensed physicians in the state are SUNY, and one out of five dentists are educated in SUNY, and one out of like seven, I think, are a licensed dentist. Actually, no, it's more like one out of eight. So we're really important in terms of the healthcare for all citizens.

SENATOR LaVALLE: I know you've been using a lot of superlatives to describe, you know, the hospitals. And I don't think we spend enough letting the public know what we have and what we do at these great institutions. As a matter of fact, even the campuses we don't really highlight -- because word of mouth is one of the best advertisements. And so anyone who's gone to a SUNY campus is always very proud and lets the world know about their campus.

I also had a question that Senator Stavisky had, dealing with our SUNY police. So I just wanted to mention that, because it's important that we continue to attract and maintain people who keep our students safe.

Going on to safety. Suicides, number of suicides in 2018-2019?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I can -- I can get you that number. I don't have that off the top of my head. Unfortunately, more than one.

SENATOR LaVALLE: I'm sorry, I

couldn't hear that.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I said unfortunately, more than one. Even one would be too many.

SENATOR LaVALLE: You know, I've always -- and to this day -- feel mental health services are critically important. What are we doing to maintain and expand our mental health services?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I couldn't agree more with you. And that's why this fall I established a Mental Health Wellness Task Force led by Dr. Wayne Riley at Downstate and also Dr. Deborah Stanley at SUNY Oswego. So they've been meeting often, and I'll have a set of recommendations in the spring. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that we set up the telecounseling mental health network with 10 campuses involved. That was very well received and supported by students, so we're hoping that the funding will be restored with that.

I will get back to the Senator about

the number of mental healthcare professionals that we have on campus per student, so we'll come back to you with that.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Thank you.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: And that will inform what are the resources that we truly need to meet the needs.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Some time ago we were joined by Assemblywoman Griffin, and we go to Assemblywoman Bichotte for some questions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE: Hello, Chancellor. Thank you for being here.

As you know, I'm a proud alum of Buffalo State College and SUNY Buffalo.

I had a few questions. First I want to say that I'm really happy to see that some of the programs have been maintained, like CSTEP, HEOP, SEEK. These are programs that we've been fighting every year that's been threatened to be decreased, so I'm happy that they are maintaining their budget.

I do have some concerns with the childcare centers being cut significantly, 813,000. Certainly we'd like to know the driving force of that.

I do have some questions around TAP. You know, was TAP really having an enrollment problem? It seems as if TAP is being decreased by over 10 percent. And there has been -- has there been a corresponding fall in the numbers of low-income students to warrant this? If anything, we should be increasing the services for the number of low-income students and their opportunities.

Can you give specifics on TAP enrollments? Is TAP making itself aware to the population it's supposed to be working with? And all of this cut, again, is addressing -- widening the TAP gap. I thought there was a commitment to narrow the gap.

In addition to that, what percentage of the TAP funds that are falling are going to Dreamers? And I'll stop here.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Okay. Well,

thank you very much, and it's good to see you again as well.

I'll have to get back to you on some of the specifics on TAP. What I can tell you is that I know we have 100,000 students that are getting TAP. The majority of those are full-time. They're split about 60-40 between state-operated and community college. I don't have the year-on-year number, so I will get back to you on that.

We do have a TAP gap of about 82 million. And as tuition went up this year, that widened the gap. I think last year it was 60-some million, but the increase in tuition created another gap.

So we would like to, you know, start to narrow that gap. So that would be certainly something we would be supportive of.

The other questions I'm --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE: So is the percentage of the TAP funds, the fall, are they going to Dreamers?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Oh. So I don't

have numbers on the Dreamers. We don't keep that data. So maybe I can find out if it's available, but we tend not to track DACA students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE: With the enrollment increasing, why is the total of 176 FTEs staying the same? Why is that consistent and not increasing as well?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right. So our enrollment in the state ops has been pretty flat on an FTE basis. I mean, it's slightly, slightly, slightly up. It's really, at the community colleges, been in decline, both in head count and FTE. So that may be one of the reasons there's a change in the TAP students. I'll have to look at it, and I'll definitely get back to you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE: Okay. I know you were very highly impressed with the progress made in diversity leadership and the target of increasing diversity in our faculty and adjunct professors on the campus.

However, you know, I did have some concerns with all of these programs being

cut, these diversity programs being cut. And, you know, let's be honest, it's really a small, tiny amount, so why are we targeting these diversity programs that are servicing our students?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yeah. I think what I was really thrilled to see in the Governor's budget was the support for EOP and EOC and Attain. So I thought that was just really excellent. And then the decrease in the Graduate Diversity Fellowship is on a base of, you know, 6.6 million, so it was a decrease of 600,000. And we would like to ask to restore that, because I think it's important, again, for that education pipeline, to make sure that all along the way that we increase our diversity.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE: Okay. Speaking of diversity, I also saw that about $1.4 billion is being allocated to SUNY capital programs. What's the percentage of these capital programs going to be MWBE-certified or be dedicated to MWBE vendors?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right. So MWBE, we actually exceed the Governor's goal of 30 percent. So we will continue to keep our record, you know, really strong in that regard. I think last year -- I'll get you the exact numbers, but it was over 30 percent went to MWBE contractors.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE: Over 30 percent?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yeah. Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

I think I'm the closer, and then it will be Toby Stavisky, second round.

So we talked about the fact that the number of students getting TAP is actually going down in SUNY. We talked about the fact that you, like many of us, are a big fan of HEOP, EOP, other programs that are serving exceptionally low income students with family incomes of 15,000 to 21,000 and how valuable a college degree is for exactly this population.

So you have fewer poor students coming to you. Is it because they're not college-ready when they're getting out of our high schools, hence can never even get into the SUNY system?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So if I understand the question, are there students that are not graduating from our high schools college-ready? Is that the question?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yeah.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Certainly what we see is there are a number of students that need additional support to be college-ready.

The good news -- and again, this is something that we've discovered in our pilots and are very pleased with -- is that if you set an expectation for success, students will meet it. You have to provide the resources and the support, and we do do that through the corequisite English and math programs that are being pioneered not just at our community colleges -- although the majority at our community colleges -- but also at our colleges of technologies as well as our

comprehensives and university centers.

So I think that we have, through -- we have an umbrella program for student success called SUNY Achieve, and that includes things like corequisite math and English. So it's not remediation, but it's augmentation. This works, and we're going to continue to really focus on it.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So to follow up -- actually, it was on Senator Jackson's concern that because we fail to provide adequate Foundation Aid funding for K-12, our students aren't college-ready when they leave school. Do you actually know whether you're seeing fewer poor students applying, or you're just not letting them in?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Oh, our admission -- well, as you probably know, our community colleges are open enrollment, so all students are going to be admitted. There are admission criteria for the colleges of technology and the comprehensives, but I'll have to get back to you on just where those admissions are.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Mm-hmm. Okay.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: But we have a mix of -- and I think that's the strength of SUNY, is that we have a mix of -- I mean, if you look at the head of the EOC program in Rochester, Roosevelt started as getting his GED at the EOC. And then he got his associate's and then he got his four-year and then he got his E.D. Then he came back and he's now the dean running that program.

You can start at SUNY and we will meet you where you are and bring you along.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So looking at the other side of the equation -- and we've had a number of questions there around the Governor's proposed expansion of the Excelsior credit scholarship, so going from 125,000 to 150,000 in family income.

Do you know currently what percentage of your students fall into the 125 to 150? I don't expect you to know it off the top of your head, so probably get back to us.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: We'll get back to you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So the questions are what percentage of your students now are in the 125 to 150 population? What percentage of them appear to have trouble finishing school within four years? And what's the average student debt they're carrying when they end SUNY?

Because I do think there's been quite a bit of questions about how does the state prioritize those in greatest need. And of course it's both looking at can they get into our schools, can they complete the work of our schools, and what kind of debt they might be carrying.

And we know the numbers for -- and the issues for lowest-income, but these would, I assume, fall into some of the higher-income families that are throughout the SUNY system.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: We'll get back to you on that. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I appreciate that.

And then also I know you partly answered this question, but I'm not sure it

was asked directly. Do you agree with the independent colleges that this program specifically will lead to some of the smaller independent liberal arts colleges closing in this state?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I haven't really focused on that, just because I'm -- you know, let's just say I have all I can say grace over at the public sphere. And I don't mean to be flip about that at all, but I really haven't looked at it and I haven't seen the data. But again, we're happy to have a conversation. Let's -- we can put the data out and just see what really is going on.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Stirpe.

ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Good morning.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Thanks for being here and addressing all our questions.

I have a question from one of my

colleagues that I'm supposed to carry to you, and it involves the new STEAM regional high school that was approved in Syracuse. And it's sort of been changed a little bit; now it also includes workforce development. And she wants to know how that will affect the Syracuse EOC, which is one block away from that potential new school.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right. So I think that there's a natural synergy between the EOC -- again, if we look at that pipeline, high school students could go to the EOC, could get particular training around workforce development. Right now they're not -- they're near each other, but they're not collocated, so it would be interesting to see how this evolves. And we'll do whatever we can in support from SUNY to make it successful.

I think that that's -- I had a chance in the fall to go up to the central region and sit down and spend time with five of our SUNY presidents as well as the head of economic development in that area, and

learned that there are something like 5,000 unfilled skilled jobs.

So, you know, I think the exciting thing about what SUNY can do is that you could actually, using machine learning, sit down and say okay, what's the criteria that these jobs are needed, what are the skill sets, what's the skill set of the resumes of the individuals who aspire and want to be in that industry, and then figure out for each particular job what's the skills that are needed and point that individual to a SUNY class, a microcredential, vocational training, EOC or some other program that we can develop and provide. That's what individualized learning is about. That's where we need to focus going forward.

So I'm excited about that, and working -- we will work and do whatever we can, as SUNY, to support those efforts.

ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Okay. In the beginning of your tenure you came around and visited all the regions and talked about some of your goals. And one of the big ones was

around research dollars, and especially AI. And can you talk about what's happened in the last few years and where some of this research might be going on right now?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Sure. Absolutely. We have seen an increase year over year in our research expenditures by $136 million. And a lot of that is focusing on -- and this is really the great work of Senior Vice Chancellor Grace Wang, who's sitting behind me, and her team and the RF Foundation and our colleagues.

So it's really being cognizant about where is the future of the future of work? What's the kind of research and development that our students need to go through in terms of training to be ready to go into those industries? Then what are the -- you know, if you look at where research is going -- when I started out a long time ago, it was one professor and a few students working in a lab on your own. Then we evolved into groups where you get -- you know, maybe if you're a chemist you invite a physicist over for

coffee and maybe work together. Then we had these larger interdisciplinary programs, and I ran one in Colorado which was in optical AI. So it was chemists and physicists and engineers, psychologists, cognitive neuroscientists working together to figure out how could we built smarter, faster, better computers that emulate the organizational properties of the human brain. Right? Well, that's really kind of what AI is today.

The problem was when we were doing that 30 years ago, we didn't have the sensors and the computational power because Moore's Law hadn't continued on for 30 years to where we are today, which is sort of done. But wow, you know, a thousand times -- on every single dimension -- better. Now we have the capability to actually design the kind of programs I talked about to do that career matching with the vocation and the avocation of every student.

And I have to say just one little quote by Mark Twain {sic} which I think

brings it all together, "Two Tramps in Mud Time": When you can bring an avocation and a vocation together like two eyes in sight, that's what our goal is. And we have now the capability and the desire to do that.

So we started a new center in AI at Stony Brook, we have a center in AI up in Buffalo. Grace Wang, Dr. Wang, is coordinating all the AI activities across all of SUNY. And the way that we're increasing our research expenditures is to be able to develop group multidisciplinary and now convergent research where you're really like a partner in the labs. You get rid of the ego, and you work together for the greater purpose. That's why we're being successful, in my opinion. We'll do 1.7 billion in research expenditures this year. I want to get to 2 billion.

ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Great, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Toby Stavisky to close for the Senate.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Real quick, let me just follow up with some of the questions. The Higher Ed Committee in the Senate held hearings throughout the state, there were six of them, in the fall. And the students, I must tell you, I think were the stars. And many of them talked about the mental health issues that were discussed here today. And in fact, as you know, the recommended ratio is about one counselor for every thousand students.

You said you didn't -- weren't sure of the ratio, but let me ask you if you have any idea of the waiting time. The students spoke about long waits for counseling.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: It's too long. It's too long.

SENATOR STAVISKY: One other --

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: But I'll quantify that. But I know from talking with some of the students it's too long.

SENATOR STAVISKY: And I know you have your task force with two of your experts, and we await what they say.

One other quick question. What has been the enrollment projection -- what are the enrollment projections for the future for the four-year -- I know a lot depends on the economy, obviously -- but the four-year and the community colleges?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So our four-year colleges are pretty steady. And where we're seeing the decrease is in the community colleges, in part because our economy has been growing, on average, 2 percent a year. We have a very low unemployment rate.

So what we are putting in place, three or four -- actually, six different strategies. And this is the great work by our still fairly new provost, Dr. Tod Lauersen.

SENATOR STAVISKY: He is, I must tell you, very responsive in many ways.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Terrific.

SENATOR STAVISKY: It's appreciated.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So we are looking at many different strategies. One is the individualized learning. So it's the

Re-enroll to Complete, it's the corequisite English and math, it's reducing the cost of our textbooks, it's bringing financial literacy to our students.

Then there's the research and innovation and the apprenticeships and internships. I think when you create the opportunity for our students to learn, how to apply what they're learning in the classroom in a real world environment, they get turned on, they get super excited. And then that also helps with completion.

And then the emphasis on entrepreneurship, sustainability, partnerships. I mean, this is all part of the ecosystem that we're trying to put together to, you know, create that student success program.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. And your stability programs have really -- I hope are going to be very successful. Thank you.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Griffin.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Good morning, Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: As a SUNY graduate, I am grateful for the success and continued growth of SUNY. But I do have a couple of questions.

I was wondering, are there statistics available to show geographic usage of the Excelsior Scholarship Program?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I'm sure there are. I don't know them off the top of my head.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: You know, I'd be very interested if we could get a breakdown by Assembly and Senate district, because I think it's important to know. Like in my district, a lot of people can't use it, aren't using it, find there's challenges with it. So it would be important to have those numbers to see the success. You know, are a lot of people using it would mean a lot,

especially that we're expanding it at this point.

My other question is I understand that community colleges are experiencing a massive reduction in enrollment directly related to these Excelsior scholarships. And as a result, you know, they are experiencing various decreases in their funding.

So what is being done to address this impact, and how is this underusage impacting taxpayers?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So I mentioned earlier in the testimony, we have about 24,000 students between SUNY and CUNY that are attending on Excelsior. It's not clear that there's massive decreases in the community college due to Excelsior, so I think that we really need to look at the data there to see.

When you consider that we have about 200,000 students attending community college, I'm not sure that the decreases that we're seeing would be attributed to that. I think more what I would say in our community

colleges, if you plot the decrease in population over the last year, the slope went a little sharper. We're running into a time when the population is experiencing an even bigger decline, and that's borne out by I think in the last maybe four years, we've had a net loss of about a million -- maybe it's a little longer period of time, but just particularly decreasing right now.

So what we're doing is we're putting in place a number of different programs in order to recapture those students. Like the one I mentioned, Re-enroll to Complete, which returned 8,000 students who had dropped out. And we got them back before their federal loans came due so that they now can complete their degree and then garner the type of salary that will help them repay.

So we're putting together a -- you know, I would say a multiprong -- we have put together a multiprong strategic approach to the enrollment which I think will really help our community colleges.

So, you know, when we think about the

success of Excelsior -- and we'll get the breakout -- if you think about the majority of the students going to community colleges that are on Excelsior are retained at 20 percent higher than non-Excelsior, it's working.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Right.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Now, I'm not saying that anything is perfect. But I think, you know, it would be good to get the data and to see, you know, are there particular places where it could work better. So we'll do that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I know I represent -- a lot of my constituents go to Nassau Community College, which is a very large community college. But they are struggling with their finances as a result.

And quickly, I just wanted to echo the comments on the TAP gap. Of course, you know, I'd really love to be able to resolve that because I think our independent and private colleges are very important to every community in New York State. I happen to

have Molloy College in my community, and I know a lot of constituents use that university.

Mental health, I echo the support for much more to be done for mental health for students.

And then also the university police officers. I know there's a little bit of a challenge with the attrition rate with the university police officers, and I wondered have you met with the New York State PBA to see what can be done about that attrition rate?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Well, they haven't contacted me, but I would be delighted to meet and to talk about it. But I wasn't aware of any large attrition rate, so.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Oh, okay. Yeah, they are -- they report to me that it was a 30 percent attrition rate, so they are -- that's a concern to them, yeah.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Is that from one particular campus or overall? That seems

high.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: I believe that's from all.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thirty percent. Hmm. Okay. Well, we'll look at it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay, thank you so much.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: By the way, Nassau Community College, you have a great new president there, so we're really excited about {inaudible} Dr. Williams --

(Overtalk.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Yeah, really great, it seems like he'll be a fantastic proposition. Thank you so much.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: You bet.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Since the Senate doesn't have any more questioners, we go to Alicia Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

Thank you, Chancellor, and thank you to your team. I know you don't do this alone.

So I am in agreement with my colleagues; I fully support TAP gap. And I have my comments on Excelsior, which most of my colleagues said.

I wanted to talk about OER, because you mentioned it in your report. You said over 59 campuses are utilizing it and it's been a savings of about -- or reduced textbook costs of 47 million. Do you have a breakdown per campus?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: We can get that for you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. So from the research that we've found, a lot of required textbooks that are in or available in OER are from professors that are teaching in SUNY. Are you aware of that? And a lot of the books that they're also using are also recommended by some of their colleagues.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So I can certainly look at that. It's not unusual to have a professor write a textbook, especially when they're a leader in their particular field, and then have the students use it.

But --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I know.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yeah. But I'll look into it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Is there a way you can ensure that more resources or more textbooks that are not by college professors are available in OER?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So generally the textbooks that are written for college are written by college professors. But there are other materials that are available that -- that's I think one of the things we're trying to put in place with OER that has saved our students 47 million bucks over three years, is equivalent materials, maybe materials that are prepared -- you know, as a former professor myself, I know that I did often prepare my own materials and then provide them to the class, and that's what we see our professors doing as well.

There are some times when a particular textbook is sort of, you know, the standard of that particular course. Sometimes it's

developed by someone at the particular college, sometimes it's at another university. So our goal is to keep cost of textbooks low independent of, you know, who wrote or provided them for our students. And I think that we're making a lot of great headway there, so we'll continue to be vigilant.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I'm glad New York State is using it, because as a parent of a child who's in college, once everything's paid, the tuition and the housing, then comes the textbooks. And I'm always looking for -- she's always looking for ways to cut down costs.

With telehealth, is that occurring now, or is that something that you're looking at doing?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: It is occurring now, and it started a couple of years ago. We are, I believe, in our second year, and we've expanded it to 10 campuses. And it's being run by psychiatrists from our Upstate Medical University, where students at these

10 campuses can call and make an appointment and then get help.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: How do you know if that's successful? And how many campuses does SUNY have, and you're only using it at 10 right now?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So there's 10, and we're hoping, with -- you know, to restore the funding so that we can look at expanding. So we would love to expand that opportunity for all of our students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we go now to Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Am I on? This little red light doesn't really light up very well.

Thank you, Chair Weinstein and Senator Krueger and Chancellor.

I have a couple of questions. You know, I want to sort of just add my voice to the concerns about the TAP gap. It is a

persistent problem that's only getting worse. And we have to find some way of addressing this issue, and we need somebody -- we need to put our heads together and figure this out.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Right. Right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I'm also concerned about the kind of separation that -- we address this issue of the Excelsior Scholarship Program, but we're not addressing the other issues that students face. So, for example, the problem with books, transportation, food insecurity. It's nice that we have food pantries on campus, but we really shouldn't have to have food pantries on campus. We shouldn't be putting our students in a position where they are food-insecure because their tuition is going up.

And I think that it's an issue that I think is a big problem in higher education, it's a big problem in New York State. And it seems to me that the way we are addressing the increase in tuition and not addressing

these other issues that go hand in hand with trying to make our schools more accessible to people who need that education so we can move them forward -- we're kind of just dancing around this.

And so I'm curious what, if anything, SUNY is doing to look differently at this situation and come up with a way that perhaps through varied policies we can start tackling this issue on the ground in the way that students are experiencing it.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yup. Well, absolutely. And we look forward to working with you during the next few months in the legislative session to see about coming up with ways to address this.

I think one of the things that we're doing internally is looking at efficiencies of scale. I know I already said it once, maybe I said it twice, but there are ways that we believe, through the print initiative that our CFO is leading, that we can take some costs out of SUNY which then will allow us to put the resources into the academic end

and the other resources that we need for our students.

And that's not an insignificant amount of money we think we can recapture for the campuses. So I think it's, you know, looking at making sure that we don't waste anything, whether it's food, whether it's water, whether it's energy, whether it's our other resources, so that we're great stewards of the taxpayer dollars.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Another question I have is about students with disabilities. There has not been an increase in the per-capita rate that is paid or allocated for students in about 30 years. And clearly the cost of serving students with disabilities is greater.

And we are happy that we have more and more students with disabilities taking part in the education in New York State, but we are really undercutting the ability of our SUNY campuses to provide for their needs so that they can graduate and -- because we're just not funding that. And so everything is

on a shoestring. And I'm curious what your office is doing to help think through a way that we can address that issue.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So we do know that we have at least 32,000 students, probably around 32,000 students with disabilities, of which about 22,000 of those are neurodevelopmental, so whether it's ADHD, autism and other issues.

So we are working with those students day in and day out to have them become successful. We have resources on our campuses to provide support. In fact, I think we -- we can get you some numbers because recently we looked at what are we spending on and allocating to help all of our students be successful, particularly students with disabilities. So I'll get back to you on that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay. Because it may be staffing issues as well, there's not enough staff to go around.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yup, it could be.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: That's a big

issue on these campuses, as well as technological advances.

And then one other issue I'd like to address is our schools of education, and SUNY has a number of schools of education. And the issues that have been raised with students who need remedial work and the education that we're giving our kids from K-12.

(Protestors chanting in background.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay. And the issues about adequate teacher preparation, that our schools are not teaching our teachers how to teach reading and if scientific ways that we know are the -- that we know are validated. And it seems to me that this all feeds into this problem.

And I would like to talk about what it is the SUNY schools are doing in their colleges of education to change that picture.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Okay. And I'll come back to you. I know we have 16 or 17 colleges of education. So we can certainly get you the information.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay, thank you.
CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you.
ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Appreciate it.
CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.
We go to Assemblyman Ra.
ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good morning, Chancellor.
So I just wanted to go back to Excelsior and TAP. How many students have applied to Excelsior last year and how many are receiving awards under Excelsior?
CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: I think the number in SUNY is 20,000 are receiving awards. I'm not sure how many applied, but I could ask -- {inaudible exchange}.
We'll get back to you on that. I know for sure, though, at least 20,000 are at SUNY. Which is a 20 percent raise over the year before.
ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. So really my question, then, is when we look at -- I mean, any student that we can help go to school and alleviate, you know, the debt issue and all of that is a good thing. But when we look at

the students impacted by the program, by Excelsior, versus TAP, which we haven't, you know, modernized in years in terms of income levels and everything, I guess my question is if we -- you know, in an ideal world we would fund all of these things. But if we are going to put, you know, a set of resources of whatever it is, doesn't it make more sense to put it towards TAP, which gives those students, you know, the opportunity to go to school, pick where they want to go? And it seemingly, to me, impacts a lot more students.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So we'll come back to you on the numbers and just look at, you know, how many students would be impacted potentially with this change. We'll definitely get back to you. I don't know those numbers right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: What I will say -- and again, I know you all know this -- our ability for offering students TAP support coming from families with incomes of less

than 80,000, Excelsior -- and I know you know this -- was provided to hit the next tranche. You know, the 80 to the 125. And now the Governor is looking at the 125 to 150. So that is a different segment of the population for sure.

I think that with the campuses providing the TAP gap, any relief on that would be very much appreciated and would help the campuses tremendously. So we'll look forward to working with you to see what we can come up with. I think I've heard pretty clearly that's something that would be a good thing for all of us to think about.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And then just as -- and, you know, I don't necessarily expect you to have this information right now, but with following up on the number of applications. If you can provide any information regarding, you know, students that are applying or maybe losing it because they have to drop a class or -- you know, because we know that the stringent requirements of Excelsior have, you know, caused some issues with students. I've

had constituents who I've worked with to try to get hardships and stuff, who have had illnesses that have come up, you know, family situations that are have come up.

And I think that, you know, that has been a source of frustration for many who otherwise would qualify and get an award that obviously would be a financial benefit to them and their families but have, for whatever reason, not been able to meet that requirement. I know we have a little more flexibility than we perhaps had initially with this, but I think that's something we need to look at as we're looking at expansions, is making sure that this is available to as many students as possible who, you know, may have something come up, through no fault of their own, that makes them not eligible for those very stringent requirements.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Agreed. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to our final questioner,

Assemblywoman Glick, for a second round.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much.

Not to belabor it, but just to make clear, Excelsior is the last dollar. So students who have TAP, Pell, can apply if they can meet those 30 credits a year, and it makes up for the difference. That delta, you know, eats up their Pell so they don't have money for books, transportation and the like.

So it is clearly intended, as you say, to hit the higher income bracket, and those are kids who perhaps have sufficient support to ensure that they have family support that makes it easier for them. They may not have to have a job in order to go to school. That's not your -- I know they need to reset the timer -- that -- so I'll just continue.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Yeah, go ahead.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: On the STEM scholarship, we had a bill that got vetoed, because we wanted to make a change. If you have a STEM scholarship, it's like Excelsior, but you have to graduate in the top

10 percent of your class. You don't have that requirement from Excelsior.

If you are in that top 10 percent, you're pursuing STEM, we tried and had vetoed the work requirement for the years after in that specific field, because we had students from largely upstate who said they wanted to go home, but they couldn't get a job in that specific field. So it converts to a loan.

So what happens is now you're coming from a family that maybe makes $50,000, you worked hard, you got your scholarship, and now you find out that you can't get a job in Malone, so it turns into a loan. And now you have a loan, you don't have the job prospects in your area where you wanted to live, so now you move to Boston, where you can perhaps get a job in the field that you studied.

So you're talking about the advisement that helps students make good choices. And it seems to me clearly there have been some students who have made -- you know, they believed our rhetoric that these are the jobs of the future, but the future hasn't arrived

in a lot of places. And so now we have lost a kid who graduated in the top 10 percent, focused on STEM. And somehow we've got other kids who come from families with higher incomes who don't have the same work requirement, and they go home and do flower arrangements with mom and they stay in the state, but they're not necessarily the kids that we were hoping to support.

So what is SUNY going to do to make certain that we don't have any more kids talking to their representative, who then talks to me about this problem in terms of matching students with what is actually available should they actually want to return home?

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: So I think that one of the things that I'm very, very focused on is increasing the number of internships and apprenticeships for our students so that they don't have to make those choices that you're talking about. And one of the things is -- you know, I always think about Excelsior is one of the tools in

the toolbox. TAP's another one. Pell grants. All -- we need to increase the number of fellowships and scholarships to give a broader set of choices and opportunities for our students, without a doubt.

The second thing is I think we are making inroads on using the strength and the quality of our SUNY schools to attract industries that then provide those internships. To give an example, Cree. Cree is going to invest a billion dollars -- Empire State Development and the state is going to invest funding as well to attract them -- to put a major silicon carbide fab next to SUNY Poly in Utica that will create 600-some careers -- not just jobs, but careers, a lot of overnight jobs. But they're already hiring our students for those summer internship programs.

So I think it's that marrying of the opportunity for our companies that need a talented workforce and skilled workforce to meet with our campuses, develop the kind of

curricula and programs, create those summer opportunity programs.

And so one of the things that we're going to do is invest in a position where we actually really help Senior Vice Chancellor Johanna Duncan-Poitier and Senior Vice Chancellor Grace Wang go out and develop more of those kind of partnerships. I mean, that's really what it's going to take.

And we've been successful at doing that. We have many of these companies. We just need another order of magnitude and scale. So we need to put some more resources into it, and that's what we're going to do.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: For the cost of accommodation, what is the need, do you think, for students who have disabilities, especially if we're going -- you know, we have a lot of outreach to veterans and stuff, and there's a range of accommodations that are needed. And I've been to some schools where they say they just have to do some really basic things like widen areas so that people in wheelchairs can get through.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Sure, yeah. You know, I can come back to you on the number of projects that we're doing throughout SUNY. I do know we have 32,000 students that are coming to SUNY, which I'm so proud of that we have this opportunity for all students to be successful here. We can break it down by campus and we can look at the kind of projects and investment that we're doing to accommodate.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: That's very helpful. Thank you so much, and thank you for your very responsive answers.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So, Chancellor, thank you so much for being here. We look forward to having some of the follow-up answers that members have asked for. And look forward to continuing to work with you as we go forward. Thank you so much.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: And I with you.

Thank you all very much. Thanks so much for your interest and for your support.

It means the world to us. As I said when I started, we got momentum.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And for your endurance.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHANCELLOR JOHNSON: Thank you all.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So next we'll have Felix Rodriguez, the chancellor of the City University of New York. We'll just give people a couple of moments to stretch their legs and leave as we wait for the chancellor.

(Pause.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: If we can settle down. And the people who are leaving, if you could leave, because the voices carry.

So, Chancellor, feel free to begin.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

Good morning, buenos dias, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky and Glick and members of the Senate Finance, Assembly Ways and Means and the Senate and Assembly Higher Education Committees, staff and guests. My name is Felix Matos Rodriguez, chancellor of the City University of New York.

I am joined this morning by Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost Jose Luis Cruz, and Senior Vice Chancellor and our Chief Financial Officer Matthew Sapienza.

I am now in my tenth month as chancellor, so this is my first appearance to provide testimony before this body. For those of you who do not know me, I am a historian by training and started my CUNY career 20 years ago as a professor at Hunter College and director of its Center for Puerto Rican Studies. I later served for five years as the president of Hostos Community College and then five years as president of Queens College.

After two decades in a variety of roles on several CUNY campuses, I am honored to oversee the premier and largest urban public university in the United States, serving half a million students, 20,000 faculty and 25,000 staff at our 11 four-year colleges, seven community colleges, and seven graduate and professional schools.

On behalf of the entire CUNY

community, I want to thank Governor Cuomo, the State Senate, and the State Assembly for your past support, which has enabled CUNY to deliver strong results for our students and the citizens of New York.

I am pleased to share with you some of our important recent achievements and to outline our priorities, plans and goals for the coming fiscal year and beyond.

In my first year as chancellor, I have built an exceptional leadership team of experienced and diverse professionals who mirror the students and the city we serve. In addition to the two members of my leadership team sitting here, let me introduce you to two other members who are here today. Sitting in the audience are Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer Hector Batista, and Senior Vice Chancellor and Special Counsel Glenda Grace.

My administration will also have the rare opportunity to shape the future of CUNY leadership for years to come. We have nine presidential vacancies, and yesterday I named

the first of those nine: The Board of Trustees approved a new president for Baruch College, Dr. David Wu, currently the provost and executive vice president of George Mason University. Dr. Wu is an accomplished scholar who makes history by becoming the first Asian-American president of a CUNY school. I expect to make about half a dozen presidential appointments this year.

At a time of growing inequality, CUNY has become a national leader in promoting upward social and economic mobility. In 2019, six CUNY colleges placed in the top 25 nationally on collegeNET's 2019 Social Mobility Index, with Baruch College ranking number one for a fifth straight year. CUNY also dominated both the Forbes and Wall Street Journal's "best-value" college rankings.

Our history of delivering high-quality, affordable education and promoting social mobility help explain why freshman enrollment rose 3 percent this past fall, countering the national trend. It was

part of a 17 percent increase since 2010 -- a decade in which freshman enrollment for both public and private universities nationwide remained largely flat.

Also in my first year we made a vital investment in the future with our historic agreement with our largest union, the Professional Staff Congress, which provided well-earned increases for our faculty and, perhaps most notably, reaffirmed the importance of adjunct faculty -- not only with substantial pay increases, but with provisions that advanced our efforts to further integrate them into academic and campus life. With these advances, we are blazing a trail for higher education nationwide.

We have also started to identify key priority areas that establish a foundation for a bold vision for CUNY over the next 10 years. We will be laying out our ideas in the coming year with input from all our stakeholders. But even before then, we will get a head start with moves that increase our

focus on pedagogy and improve the craft of teaching, and others that expand career-engagement initiatives so that CUNY students have the same opportunities for internships and career paths that young people from more affluent families have.

We are pleased that the Governor's Executive Budget includes an increase of $24.3 million in funding for employee fringe benefits and continues current-year funding levels for our critical Opportunity Programs, SEEK and College Discovery. The budget proposal also continues to include $4 million for Open Educational Resources, which is funding that we have leveraged to significantly reduce the costs of textbooks for our students. Our students saved $49 million in textbook costs from 2017 to 2019, which amounts to students saving $7 for every $1 invested by the State of New York.

We are also grateful that the Executive Budget proposes to raise the income-eligibility cap for the Excelsior Scholarship and that it would make more

community college students eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, or SNAP. The Governor's budget moves us closer to a future in which quality higher education is accessible to all low- and middle-income New Yorkers at no cost, and we thank him for his leadership.

For our community colleges, we are very thankful that the Legislature has supported base aid increases in recent budget cycles. The university seeks your help in this again.

Now I would like to take a few minutes to address tuition. The capacity to adapt and plan ahead is critical to effective leadership, and we welcome the flexibility that the Governor's proposal to extend the Predictable Tuition Policy through 2025 gives us. The current proposed tuition increase of $100 per semester would generate $36 million for the senior colleges for the next fiscal year.

Students who are in the most need will have any additional out-of-pocket tuition

costs significantly defrayed or covered completely by New York State's generous financial aid programs -- TAP, Excelsior, SEEK, College Discovery, and the Peralta DREAM Act -- along with federal Pell grants.

We are proud of our affordability and the value that we are able to offer our students. Two out of three CUNY undergraduates do not pay for tuition out of pocket, and three of four of our graduates leave debt-free. As such, even with the proposed adjustments, CUNY's tuition will remain of high value, even as it will continue to be much lower than any other university systems throughout the country.

As I mentioned, CUNY has earned high regard as a national model in promoting social and economic mobility. For it to remain so in a rapidly changing world, the university must maintain our ability to innovate and serve our core mission. With the continued support of the Governor and you, I am confident that we can do so.

Regarding the university's capital

program, we appreciate the Governor's Executive Budget commitment to CUNY's infrastructure needs, including its $284 million investment in critical maintenance for senior colleges and the $64 million in matching funds for community colleges. These will continue to make a significant difference in upgrades and replacements for aging, mission-critical elements of these buildings.

We are excited by the opportunities offered by Governor Cuomo's proposal for a two-to-one capital matching program, which offers a unique opportunity for our senior colleges to leverage private funds to generate state support for new building initiatives.

We have always been at the forefront of integrating sustainability and energy efficiency into our campus operations, our curriculum and our research. That is why CUNY is currently investing over $340 million in dozens of energy performance capital projects on its campuses that will

significantly reduce emissions. But we have a challenge with our aged building stock, which includes 300 buildings, totaling 29 million square feet. They range in age from one year old to over 100 years old, with the average building age exceeding 50 years. That is why, over the past 10 years, CUNY has focused on retro-commissioning a process to improve the efficiency of an existing building's equipment and systems.

Looking to the future, CUNY continues its focus on leveraging its capital funds in the upcoming five-year capital plan for projects that will reduce CUNY's carbon footprint and energy consumption. CUNY's capital program and initiatives reflect the university's commitment to sustainable technology and energy efficiency, including CUNY's commitment to develop a plan to meet the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act goals.

CUNY is an unparalleled resource for the state and the city. The increasing investments that our funding partners have

made over the past few years have paid undeniable dividends. CUNY is finding new ways to help more students succeed academically, earn their degrees on time, and acquire the skills they need to build successful careers and fulfilling lives. There is also no question about the powerful impact that a dynamic CUNY has on all our citizens. Now is the time we need to be an even better and bolder university, and we ask for your continued support in that aspiration.

That concludes my testimony, and I'll be very happy to answer your questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So thank you. We're going to go to Deborah Glick, our Higher Ed chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: It's great to see you, Chancellor.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Good to see you too.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you for being here, and thank you for your testimony, which covered a number of areas.

In the capital, obviously you have a lot of owned space but also leased space, and I'm wondering, considering the money that has been allocated, what's your backlog, how long do you think it will take, how many years of providing this level of resources, for you to bring the campuses up to where you would like them to be? So it's nice that we've done this, hopefully we could add more. What is the trajectory for capital needs at CUNY, both the critical maintenance and really any new builds?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So thank you so much for your question, and you know, thank you also for your leadership in the Higher Ed Committee. And always, you know, proud to be talking to a Queens College alum, and bring you greetings on behalf of the 663 CUNY students who live in your district and are happy for your leadership.

We believe that the $284 million provided in critical maintenance is about the same amount that we received last year, and it's a great step in moving to sort of build

up our critical infrastructure needs. I'll be happy to provide you -- because I think it's something that is in the five-year capital budget request that we put together, we have the actual number of what, you know, what that capped critical maintenance need is, so I can provide that to your office later.

One of the things that we've been exploring too is also the capacity to be able to spend all those dollars in an efficient way too, so that we can -- when we receive funding from the state for capital, that we can move quickly on the projects and get to them.

So I'll be happy to provide you -- because we have quantified that number of sort of what it will take to be in a state of good repair, and I can provide that number to your office.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And include in that if there are additional specific areas that have to do with accommodations for students with disabilities. CUNY has been a

very open door, but sometimes the door isn't wide enough.

So we'd like to know what additional specific dollars are needed for -- whether it's technological upgrades for kids with either hearing impairment or visual impairment. So we understand that what you do for one cohort doesn't necessarily meet the need for others, so we would very much like to --

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: We'd be delighted to do that.

And in my previous life I -- for example, at Queens College I can tell you how important some projects that would seem fairly basic to some others -- about sort of making sure that our bathrooms are ADA-compliant, small other things like making sure that the ramps on the sidewalks are done in the right way so that students with disabilities that have to use their wheel equipment can move forward.

We know how much that means to really create an accessible campus, so we're doing

work all across our campuses to do that. We'll be happy to quantify that. And we also know how critical that is.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Obviously the ASAP program has been a model across the country, and we have to fight for it all the time. There's always a cut.

So perhaps you could provide the committee with how many students have moved through ASAP over whatever particular period of time, how many are currently enrolled, how many have graduated, how many have moved on to a four-year school. We want to make the case that this is a model that should be replicated. I know a lot of the other schools, some of the private schools, see that and say, That's the kind of thing we need to do to get some of our at-risk students over the finish line. So that would be very helpful.

You had some specific details on how many -- what you're doing around the sustainability. And again, when you're talking about you're investing 340 million --

and I assume that a lot of that is energy-efficiency either in lighting, weatherization, that sort of thing -- it would be helpful for us to have a clearer understanding of where you've spent the money and how much more in that particular arena you need to go to meet your goal for having sustainable campuses.

Because to some extent fixing up science labs, which may be a very big part of your capital plan, is not the same as making certain that you don't have drafty windows everywhere where you're losing out on both air-conditioning or heating or whatever. So that would be helpful to understand where you are in that goal.

And you also talked about the faculty. We're always interested in knowing the percentage of full-time faculty to adjuncts and to graduate assistants. So do you have any of that information available now, where you are in terms of your percentage of full-time faculty to adjuncts?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So yes, we --

systemwide, the number of full-time faculty is a little under 40 percent, and the number of adjuncts is a little higher than 60: I think like 39-61.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Do you have a large number of graduate teaching assistants?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Yes, we do. I mean, I don't have the exact number of those; we can provide that to your office.

And again, the issue of the adjuncts that you bring -- actually, on your first question of ASAP, I do have at least some -- three out of four of your questions, I know the answers. So we have about 25,000 currently, students on ASAP. They're about 38 percent of our entire community college enrollment. So a very robust part of our community colleges are benefiting from ASAP. We have graduated about 58,000 students from ASAP over the duration of the program.

The data that you requested on their, you know, graduation and where they're going, that I don't have recorded to memory so we can clearly provide that.

We have been investing in leveraging resources. For example, we have a million-dollar grant from the Bank of New York Mellon to provide transfer scholarships for ASAP students, sort of continuing the success of those students that have successfully moved through ASAP, and they're able to go to one of our four-year institutions.

As you know, ASAP has doubled the graduation rate of students who are comparable from a three-year graduation rate of 53 percent for the ASAP students and 25 percent for comparable students over that.

So it's been an incredibly successful program. We are actually providing technical assistance to several states, there are about seven states that are replicating ASAP-like programs, and CUNY is their technical assistance partner. Three community colleges in Ohio just got a grant to do that. And we continue to learn from our ASAP program to see what parts of that are things that we can replicate with other student groups.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: A lot of colleges are facing pretty wholesale retirement age for an awful lot of faculty. Being in New York City, you may have a better record on diversity than perhaps SUNY, which is far-flung. But where are you in terms of a diverse faculty?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So there's -- there's two ways to address that. One is that our numbers compare extremely favorably to universities all over the nation. I mean, we have an extremely diverse faculty, and we can provide the exact numbers and the breakdown by groups -- I know I have that in a table here someplace.

But we have a higher responsibility precisely because we serve New York City, and we're not where we need to be. So we need to have faculty, students -- I mean, we do have faculty and staff that look like the students that we have in the classroom. We need administrators that can do that too. The great thing is that we'd be making a significant investment systemwide in that.

And in the last five years, the numbers of new faculty that we hire, which is the key engine that's going to get that percentage higher, has increased by over 50 percent. So in the last five years, a vast majority of our hires have been coming from underrepresented groups, and so that's continued to move the dial. And we're very proud of the work that our college presidents have been doing in that front.

On that question, that is why I also began my testimony making reference to the importance of having a diverse team. If I'm going to be holding presidents accountable, if I'm going to be talking to the system about hiring more diverse faculty and staff, the team that's around me has to represent that diversity. The presidents in the system have to represent that diversity. And I'm very proud of the record that we have built so far in getting individuals of great credentials to join the administrative team, and I think that sets the tone for the rest of the system.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Higher Ed Chair Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Welcome back.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Great to see you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Good to see you, and thank you for mentioning Queens College.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: First of all, you indicated you would provide follow-up information to the Assembly, and I ask that you send a copy to the Senate also, because some of those issues are issues that I was going to bring up.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Absolutely.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Real quick, remediation. Because I'm -- I know the numbers are getting better, but I don't think

we're there yet. What are the percentages or the costs of remediation, both at the four-year and two-year colleges?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So remediation is a very, very important topic and there's been a significant investment in CUNY to move away from remedial courses and more to co-curricular courses, which is where the field indicates is the better approach to get students up to speed more quickly and actually allow them to go into regular courses in a timely fashion and spend less of their financial aid with remedial courses.

We can provide you details on the numbers in each of our community colleges, and we're very proud of the progress that we have made in moving from remedial courses to co-curricular courses. We are hoping that in the near future we can be in a place where all of our formerly remedial courses are done in a co-curricular way. So we're talking to our community college presidents. And I have some experience, having served as the president at Hostos Community College, about

how important it is to do that in a timely fashion, so we can provide you those figures.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: I'm also very proud of our partnerships with the DOE.

We just began a pilot program, it's CUNY On Track, with funding from the Carnegie Endowment, and that is a way to see if we can use some of the lessons that we have learned with some of the programs like CUNY Start, Math Start, that we have shown that they're very good at remedial, can we start with our schools in 10th grade, in 11th grade, letting the students know whether they're on track or not -- and then, if they're not, do some interventions, in partnership with the DOE, that would get them to be college-ready by the time they graduate, meaning there would be less remediation when they get to us. So we're very excited about those partnerships with the DOE.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. Yes, I've always felt that this should not be a cost on CUNY but on DOE.

You mentioned the Governor's 24 or $25 million allocation for the maintenance of effort to fund the contract, et cetera. But there are additional costs mandated through the contract and not funded. How do you propose to fund all of those other costs? Traditionally we've done it in an MOE bill or a pay bill, as we used to call it.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So thank you for your question, and let me begin by saying how important it was for me and how proud I was to be able to work with our partners in the Professional Staff Congress early on in my tenure to get that contract done.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Good.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: I mean, we have now, you know, five years of stability on the labor front. I believe that we have also all of the other contracts with the rest of our labor unions also ratified, so I'm very, very proud of that track record. I think it was an important signal to our adjuncts to show that we value them, and to be able to compensate them in a fairer way.

We included the cost for the contract in our budget request, and we look forward to working with you all throughout this legislative session to be able to sort of meet all those needs.

SENATOR STAVISKY: You discussed the ASAP program, which I think is -- it's got the funding, the additional 2.5 million, I think -- the funding has to be found, whether it's with the city or with the state.

But there are other programs -- the childcare, the College for Labor and Urban Studies, CUNY LEADS, there were other costs. How do you propose to take up the gap that's caused by these program -- the budget cuts?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Thank you for that question and bringing those very important issues to bear.

On the issue of childcare, as those of you who are in the -- who are part of the hearing and know me, very dear to my heart. As a former commissioner of family service for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, I was in charge of certifying childcare and day

centers in Puerto Rico and made it my habit then, as commissioner, and at Hostos in our childcare center, and at Queens, to go read and visit and spend time, because I know how important that is for our students to be able to know that their children are taken care of so they can study.

I know that now I need to find a place where I can go read because, you know, the child center offices have a daycare, I have to visit some of the campuses to do that. So we look forward to working with all of you to be able to restore those vital funds.

We're also looking into other partnerships so that we can expand the work that we do around the issue of childcare. I am part of an Aspen Institute group that works on two-generational strategies to combat poverty. So we're looking into some funding to be able to be creative to work in our centers and also with our students who are parents.

SENATOR STAVISKY: We touched upon the capital, the 200 million for CUNY, the

capital two-for-one match. Which means that you're going to have to raise the $1 million. And you and I discussed that briefly prior to this hearing, because I certainly don't want to see that go unmatched, so to speak.

How do you propose to raise -- that's a lot of money for the -- raising that $1 million match for the construction. And I must say I think it's extremely critical because so many of the buildings at CUNY, they were built 50, 60, 70 years ago, and critical maintenance is not sufficient. You need some shovels in the ground, and you need some new construction. How are you going to do this?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So thank you for your question. And I know the interest in capital funding for CUNY has been an interest of you historically, so you've been a partner with us in advocating for those resources.

I believe that the Governor's proposed two-for-one program presents a great opportunity for us at CUNY. First, we've

been able -- now we'd be able to go to donors that would have an incentive to support some because they know their dollars are going to go a longer term, right? We didn't have that incentive before when we go out there talking to potential donors about that. Donors like to donate to capital. They like to have buildings and rooms and spaces named after them.

So I think that the combination of that, the philanthropic spirit that combines many of our alumni that have been supportive of the work that we do at CUNY -- and now we have an added incentive to be able to do that. We look forward to working with all of you and with the Executive in creating the most flexible terms for that matching program so that we have the utmost flexibility, and concur with you that the capital needs are really critical.

As I mentioned to you, our enrollment has increased significantly in the last decade. Our campuses are anchor institutions in all those communities, so it's not just

that they're used for classroom space, but they're used for outside community groups that use our space that convene there. Many of the elected officials also, you know, use our facilities for town halls and things like that. So those buildings take an extra beating, so they need to be repaired. So I would look forward to working with you on that.

But we think that the two-for-one presents a great opportunity to tap into resources that now would now be motivated to give.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

At the December hearing at 250 Broadway, the students spoke very graphically about the crumbling infrastructure. They spoke about how they learn -- classes were being held in trailers and all sorts of situations. And I sent you the material, and I appreciate your response. But I emphasize that these students should not have to try to study under very trying -- it's hard enough if they are -- have food

insecurity, housing insecurity, and then come to school and don't have a decent classroom.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: I couldn't agree more with you, Senator. Thank you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Chancellor, thank you for being here. I really appreciate all your dedication.

So just -- are you happy with the state funding the Governor has proposed for CUNY?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So thank you for your question, and great to see you again.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: You too.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: And I bring you greetings on behalf of the 1,690 CUNY students that are in your district.

(Laughter.)

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So thank you

for your support and representing them well.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: The budget provides some exciting opportunities for us. The -- the funds for the Opportunity Programs is very, very dear to my heart, and I've seen at the campuses how important the SEEK program, for example, is to so many of our students and opening the door --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Chancellor, I'm sorry, I only get five minutes --

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: -- so I don't -- so you think it's fine, it's adequate, is that what you're saying?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: We're excited and we look forward to working with all of you here to continue to find additional resources.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Because, as you know, Baruch is in my district -- and thank you for the appointment, I look forward to working with him in this stark moment that we have.

But I go to the buildings and, like we hear, crumbling infrastructure, students who are telling us they won't eat today, right? Students are saying, I can't afford to either pay the books fee or the mental health services fee. And when they are now paying a new fee, they don't even have access to real mental health services. So the waiting list is forever, and people who have serious mental health needs are being unmet.

So I want to know, really, can we rely on you to come push for real funding? Because students really need additional funds to be able to have a high-quality education.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So again, thank you for the question and for your commitment. I look forward to introducing you to President Wu at the appropriate time. I think that I'm very proud of that first appointment and I'm sure he's going to do great things for Baruch and take it to the next level.

We have been working very, very hard in making sure that many of those needs that

you identified are met throughout the system. If you look at programs that help students with their transportation costs, right, in ASAP those 25,000 students all get free MetroCards.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: But -- but the -- I do appreciate that. But the kids outside of ASAP and the kids who we hear from, from the part-timers, right. You know, I -- I -- I don't want to make it -- I appreciate a rosy picture, but it's not what we're hearing from students or from faculty. We're hearing the opposite story.

So is there something that we're missing here where the students and the faculty are saying "We're struggling" and you're providing a real rosy approach to it?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: I -- I -- I -- I wouldn't necessarily characterize my approach as rosy. I'm just telling you all the efforts that we're doing in the different fronts, on transportation, on the cost of books. I mean, the Open -- the funding, as I mentioned to you, $48 million saved on

students' -- on books, that's about $100 per student in the past two years. That investment from you all, it goes to allowing students to free up that money to do other things.

On the food insecurity front, we are fighting that on a number of fronts. We have an initiative, a pilot program that we're doing with the City Council that provides a thousand students with vouchers of $400 per semester to address food insecurity.

The work that we've been doing in making food pantries available, we have funding from the Petrie Foundation for the food pantries. We have funding from the Petrie Foundation to explore more ways to support the students.

One thing that in our budget request, when it put the category of more resources into wellness, we want folks on our campus -- we have data that 70 percent of our students who are eligible for SNAP might not be seeking that benefit. We need additional staff to be able to connect the students to

all those things. And that is why our budget request talks about exactly those kinds of issues.

And I want to point out other things that we're doing, and we are conscious that we need to do more.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So great, I do appreciate it. And you know you have partners here to help you do more.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Just -- I wonder if there -- you know, with additional resources and dedicated funding, I know we hear that a lot, with the TAP gap, really closing the TAP gap, helping expand ASAP -- do you think if we had dedicated funding you'd be in a position to be able to expand ASAP, provide additional resources to students for books, food insecurity, housing insecurity -- we hear story after story of kids who are homeless who are just trying to go to school, kids who just aren't eating and trying to get to school. These are real stories that I know you know about, and we

want to make those stories that the experience of that doesn't happen, so people can actually graduate and not have these insecurities and really become productive members in our society.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So we're totally on the same page. And that's why in our budget request we have an entire category sort of dedicated to precisely providing that kind of support.

On the issue of the TAP gap, which you address, also in our budget request we know that the -- that the gap is -- it would be an $86 million estimate on the next year, 78 in this current year. And we know that that's a big, that's a big number, so in our budget request we suggested beginning with 9 and sort of phasing it in to be able to get additional resources.

So again, at the end of the day, we concur that if we have more full-time faculty, if we have more advising, more counselors, more individuals to be able to connect students to resources, you know,

we'll have the university that we all aspire to.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator John Liu.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome, Felix.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Good to see you, sir.

SENATOR LIU: We've known each other for a long time.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: That's correct.

SENATOR LIU: Congratulations, or my condolences, take whichever one you like.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR LIU: Even though we've known each other for a long time, nothing's personal here because we've got issues. Right? And let me ask, who -- who appointed you?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: The Board of Trustees.

SENATOR LIU: The Board of Trustees, okay. Interesting.

Who nominated you?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Nominated me for the job?

SENATOR LIU: Yes.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: I don't know. That is -- you have to ask the search firm.

SENATOR LIU: Okay. All right, good answer.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR LIU: I think we -- I think we know the Governor had something to do with it too, right? A little bit. Yes, the Governor had something to do with it?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: I -- I -- I have the full support of the Governor and of the Mayor, yes.

SENATOR LIU: Okay. And the Governor is proposing this budget that Assemblymember Epstein asked you about.

So look, I'm just saying that we know you have to be a gentleman here, but I know deep in your heart you are deeply upset and

disappointed at the paltry amount that the Governor is proposing for CUNY funding. You don't have to answer that.

But Harvey, I really believe that, all right? Because the funding is not enough. It's just not enough. And we keep asking our students to pay more and more and more. I mean, for goodness sake, they're resorting to having to hold bake sales, bake sales, so that they can take care of their tuition.

The problem is this. The problem is that for too many years, operating costs for CUNY has -- the percentage of operating costs for CUNY paid out of tuitions and fees keeps going up. So does your administration think that at some point this could be reversed, or is it just going to keep going up and up and up?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So let me talk to you from the bottom of my heart. Right? And first, I'm deeply proud of serving as the chancellor of the City University of New York. I think there's no institution of higher ed in the country that has a better

track record of social mobility, of moving individuals that come from the lowest socioeconomic index to the middle class and above. That's been documented. That is the core of our mission, which is done through a formula of a high-quality education and access.

The State of New York has been a champion nationally in investing in higher education, and that is the work of the Governor and that's the work also of the Assembly and the Senate in providing funding for all of us. So I am happy and proud for that support and will continue to advance that cause moving forward.

I am also proud of a university where two out of three students do not pay any tuition. Right? That is the national model for our country. Three out of four of our students graduate debt-free. Right? Very few --

SENATOR LIU: I know, but we keep hearing that --

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Very few

college presidents can actually make those numbers.

So from the bottom of my heart, I am very proud of those numbers. I wake up every day to help to continue to transform this university, in partnership with you, with additional --

SENATOR LIU: Is the implication of that to say that the $200 or $100 per semester tuition increases don't really matter, that they don't hurt? Because two out of three don't pay tuition or three out of four graduate debt-free, is that what you're trying to imply?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So what I'm saying is that in the last four or five years in which we also had the discretion to raise tuition, right, the City University of New York has used that discretion very, very thoughtfully.

For four years there was no tuition increase in the community colleges. Right? That we had the authority to do that, it didn't mean that we used it all the time.

Every year we did a detailed budget analysis and we looked at the reality of our fiscal responsibilities and our student body, and we have used that authority judiciously, in a way that provides investments to the campuses.

I want to make sure that the record is clear, those are the facts, that we have -- at different times we have decided not to increase tuition. So --

SENATOR LIU: I'm just trying to get a better handle about why tuition is being relied upon more and more to pay a larger share of the operating costs. That's what I'm trying to get at here.

Is there any way to at least -- you know, is there any breakdown between the classroom aspect of CUNY costs and kind of administrative CUNY costs? Is there any kind of breakdown there?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: In terms of the cost?

SENATOR LIU: I think your deputy is nodding his head like "yes."

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, we can provide you those figures, yes.

SENATOR LIU: What I mean, what's -- what percentage, roughly? Administrative costs 30 percent of the overall CUNY costs? Twenty percent? To the nearest 10 percent. We don't have to be that precise here.

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: Administrative costs are, I would say, less than 10 percent of the overall costs.

SENATOR LIU: And has that been decreasing or increasing over the last, say, 10 years?

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: I would say it's probably been stable --

SENATOR LIU: About the same.

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: (Nodding.)

SENATOR LIU: About the same. So CUNY costs overall continue to increase. But because tuition keeps paying -- is funding more and -- a larger and larger share of the overall costs, CUNY tuition is going up faster than these operating costs.

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: Well, Senator Liu,

the one thing I just want to point out is that the budget request that we put forth for fiscal year '21 that was approved by a Board of Trustees, one of the things that we really looked at and that we were pleased that we were able to accomplish in the budget request is the amount of money that comes from our operating budget from tuition would stay stable within our budget request.

SENATOR LIU: Even though the last nine years it's gone up --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, John, I'm sorry, you can't continue. He can just close.

SENATOR LIU: All right, thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Pichardo.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: Thank you, Chancellor. Welcome. Congratulations again.

So I don't want to -- we're short on time, but I want to reiterate the concerns

that both my colleagues Senator Liu and Assemblymember Epstein have mentioned. So I add my voice to theirs.

But with that being said, I kind of want to get a sense of -- you know, we passed the DREAM Act last year, which was a fantastic victory for this state. So in your sense and estimation, do you have a sense of how many students -- how many CUNY students have participated or taken advantage of the Jose Peralta DREAM Act so far?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: We don't -- we don't have those numbers exactly. And that is, you know, sort of still a moving target.

We work very closely with Dr. Linares and the entire team at HESC in making sure that -- you know, particularly as a new program that's being launched, there's always initially some kinks. So we're working very closely with that team to make sure that if we identify issues, we share them with them quickly so they can make the adjustment.

One of the things that referred to our campuses, we also continue to -- but we've

been out there letting students know about the opportunity. I was particularly concerned about students that might have been at CUNY before and might have left -- right? -- because they didn't have funding. And I assume that because the program is new, it only included new students. Right? So we are very aggressive in targeting the communications to both students who will be starting now, to some students that might have, you know, sort of left and come back.

But we're very, very excited. I know that all of you worked very, very hard to get that funding approved. And obviously being named after a CUNY and Queens college alum and a dear friend means a lot to me personally too.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: Thank you. And, last question, I know it's been mentioned about the Opportunity Programs, especially ASAP. I think we mentioned that the Governor zeroed out the program. It's important that obviously we all raise our voice to make sure that we re-implement those

cuts, that this is a priority for not only the Legislature, but for the Executive.

And I know that for CUNY itself, it's important that we continue to support these students, particularly students who need the most help. Like in my district, I have the opportunity and the honor of representing Bronx Community College. So we need to make sure that they stay in the forefront.

Also, speaking of Bronx Community college, I've met with Dr. Isekenegbe many times on, obviously, the concerns of the capital needs for the campus. And I know CUNY has invested heavily within the Bronx Community College, but there's still a lot of pretty big capital needs, particularly on the issue of the central heating and cooling system. So I know we are trying to move forward and figure out investments and pathways to fund that.

But right now, where do you think is the biggest need in terms of Bronx Community College in terms of its capital needs?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So again, thank

you for your support. And again, on behalf of your 4,181 CUNY students in your district --

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: You're really good at this.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: -- I bring you greetings. And I know you know them, because I know that you are a presence in our campus and you've been a higher ed supporter and champion.

And ASAP is particularly important for Bronx Community College because as you know, we are trying to use Bronx Community as a flagship of what a college would look like if almost, you know, most of the students could be supported by ASAP. And that experiment continues very, very well, that program of President Isekenegbe and his team. So it's very, very important for the future of ASAP that what we're doing at BCC continues to go well.

BCC is one of the most beautiful campuses, and the investments in

infrastructure sometimes are the things that nobody sees, like the steam pipelines and the things that are not attractive, because you don't get to cut a ribbon when you do HVAC and those things. But they're indispensable to be able to support our students. So we're happy that the current budget provides critical maintenance funding to be able to continue those programs by the matching funds for the community colleges. It's important to put that up-front so that we can get the rest of the funding from the city.

You and I were there in the ribbon-cutting for the renovated swimming pool also at BCC, so we continue to invest in Bronx Community and our other campuses too.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: All right, my time is up. Thank you.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Before we go to the Senate, I just wanted to acknowledge that Assemblyman Colton, member of the Ways and Means

Committee, has been here for some time. And we also were joined by Assemblywoman McMahon.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great. And we've been joined by Senator Jim Gaughran.

But our next questioner is Senator Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chancellor, good afternoon.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon. Great to see you.

SENATOR JACKSON: Good seeing you. And I'm happy that you're the chancellor of the City University of New York. And I say to you, I'm looking at some of your staff there -- and I know some of them -- and I'm looking at the diversity of the people that are sitting there. And that's a very positive sign, in my opinion.

But I wanted to touch base with you about the budget. Do you think that the Executive Budget put forward by the Governor is enough in order to move forward CUNY in the direction that you want it to go?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: I mean, clearly we're excited about the funding to be able to advance the agenda we've laid out as chancellor. As I mentioned in my testimony, there are some areas like career engagement which are very, very clear and important to me. I know that Chancellor Johnson in her testimony about SUNY spoke about the importance of internships, and it's something -- a passion that we both have. Internships, for example, we have examples that students who participate in paid internships, right, when they go get jobs, they get that job faster and their first-time pay is higher. Right?

When 50 percent of the students you serve are students who are the first one in their family to go to college, that opportunity is something that we need to advance.

Also, if you think about our price point at the City University of New York, if we have students going out there, getting paid between $3,000 and $5,000 for a paid

internship, right, if you're a community college student, that's a year of tuition. Right? If your tuition is paid for, that's your money for transportation, for food insecurity.

So I'm excited about the chances that this budget allows to make investment in those areas, yes.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you. Thank you. Chancellor, I'm just going to try to ask some quick questions --

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Sorry.

SENATOR JACKSON: -- because my time is limited. I would love to have a dialogue with you, maybe I'll come to your office.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: The door is always open. Or I'll go to yours.

SENATOR JACKSON: But with respect to I asked a question -- I'm asking you the question, the Professional Staff Congress just negotiated a contract, and you have a lot of adjuncts that were working and they were paid peanuts, in my opinion, and so they got an increase.

In the Executive Budget, was their contract paid for in the Executive Budget, or it must come out of the hides of all of the colleges?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So again, I am extremely proud of that contract, to be able to provide a 71 percent increase in the salary of the adjuncts. It's national news.

SENATOR JACKSON: It's about damn time. You know that, right?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: I agree with you. And also to create some mechanisms to allow them to be more integrated. I mean now, for example, they're going to be getting paid for their hours -- their office hours and things that we did not include before.

SENATOR JACKSON: But I just asked you, is it covered -- was that money for the contract put into the Executive Budget, or it's not? Because if not, then it has to come from somewhere. And so if I'm the president of City College, which is in my district -- along with Bryan Benjamin -- then I'm going to either have to cut staff or cut

programs.

So my question is, it wasn't covered, an increase in the budget? So how do you expect them to then deal with that if in fact it was not put in the budget?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So we put -- in our budget request, we requested funding to be able to pay for our mandatory cost increases. We also included a request for the funding to be able to provide for the increase in our regular salary costs too. And I'm very confident that throughout this process, at the end of the journey, with your support, we'll be able to get a budget that I'll also be able to fund all those needs.

SENATOR JACKSON: Well -- and I read your statement as far as -- and I have CUNY PSC's testimony. They say, from a capital point of view, the needs are like $5 billion. And the labs are so outdated, it's not really functioning at the level that they're supposed to. Do you agree or disagree with that?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So we're happy

to have about $284 million in critical capital needs -- to address needs like the ones that you identified. I'm sure that our good colleague Barbara Bowen will also identify when she provides her testimony.

And we're trying to address all those needs and make sure that the students have the facilities that they need. We're also working very hard with our campuses to expedite the usage of the funds when we get them, to be able to get to those construction projects and renovations quickly.

So we're aware of those needs and I look forward to, with your support, addressing them in the future.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and to Chancellor Matos Rodriguez, congratulations.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Great to see

you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I've -- we've come to know each other very well over your trajectory from Puerto Rico to the Bronx to Queens and now as the chancellor.

So one of the things you mentioned is that you have to fill vacancies for nine CUNY presidents?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Now eight.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Now eight.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: How close are you for -- I don't have a college in my district, but how close are you to the one that is close to my district, in making a decision there? That was one of my questions.

The other question is, of the ASAP program that you talked about, you know, it's great. I don't think CUNY should have ever needed a program to make sure students are graduating on time, but apparently we did.

What about the students that are not part of ASAP -- food equity, transportation?

A lot of these students are part-time; Excelsior doesn't apply to them. What is your take on those students and the remediation courses that I know you're trying to get away from, but we know are necessary. That's my second question.

And when it comes to OER, how -- I'm glad that the increase -- you've been able to save money on the increase from 2017 to 2019 of those individuals. So you said $1 for every $7 is what you're saving?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: The students -- the students saved $7 for every dollar that the State of New York put into the program.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Oh, okay. How do you audit the materials that are in OER as a system? And how many CUNY students in my district?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So for some reason, I need to get the number of students in your district, and we'll have that in a second. So let me take all your questions in turn.

First, we cannot do eight searches at

the same time, it would be impossible given the staffing that we have and also the number of trustees and others that determine those committees.

So we are currently about to conclude the searches for the Graduate Center and Queens College. We've seen the final list for those searches. This week we just began the searches -- I was just at Borough of Manhattan Community College, LaGuardia Community College, and Queensborough Community College, so we began those three searches for community colleges this week.

In April we will begin the searches for Lehman College, your college, and Guttman Community College. So -- and I am hoping that after that, no more of my presidents decide to retire and we catch a little break on the search business.

(Laughter.)

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: You were asking about ASAP. One of the great things about being a university that really cares about its students is that we're always thinking to

see what lessons from ASAP we learned that we can apply in some of the other colleges. Right?

So for example, a lesson from ASAP was the importance of the MetroCards. So at Guttman Community College, the 1,000 students that attend Guttman, through support from the City Council, get a free MetroCard. It's something that we learned, we replicated at Guttman.

Twelve thousand CUNY students have been able to benefit from the first phase of the Fair Fares program that New York City started. Right? Now the program will sort of roll out big, so we assume that we're going to have a substantial number of our students that are going to have a reduced transportation cost as a result of that program.

Overall, right now at CUNY between Fair Fares, ASAP and Guttman, about 38,000 students have their MetroCards paid for free. So we're trying in every place that we can to learn what we learned from ASAP and see how

it applies to other students and other populations to be able to continue to advance our Student Success Agenda.

You asked about OER, right? Those programs are implemented with the help of the campus library and the faculty. The faculty who participate, participate voluntarily. And I am proud to say that when faculty have seen the kinds of resources available and the impact it has on the students, the number of faculty who are interested in participating keeps increasing.

But it is something that is done with full faculty input. Nobody is told, you know, which books they need to use. But I think that given the faculty that we have that come to CUNY in part because they want to teach the students that we have and they're committed to public higher education, they've been embracing this initiative. And the kinds of success and savings that you're seeing there couldn't have been done without the support of our faculty, and we hope that we can continue to expand that.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Gounardes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Good morning.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Good morning, Senator.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good afternoon.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Good afternoon, jeez. We'll be here all day. Good afternoon.

My parents met at Brooklyn College, I graduated Hunter College, and I had the privilege of teaching at Hunter College this past semester, so CUNY runs through my blood.

I want to ask what is the dollar amount for CUNY's budget today that is covered by student tuition or private sources? And what percentage is that of the total operating budget?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So the percentage of -- your question is student --

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Student tuition and private support versus public support, essentially. So the dollar amount and the

percentage.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So the undergrad percentage is 13 percent. The graduate percentage is 4 percent.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Four percent.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: And what's the dollar amount for that?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Do you want that now?

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Well, I guess --

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: We can get that to you. We have it here.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Yeah, I mean I'd like to see that number now. Because I think it's relevant when we're talking about what it's going to take to fully fund the City University and what type of investment we should be making.

If we're talking about 13 or 4 percent, that's not a lot that we can't make up through a robust public investment. So I want to know what that dollar amount is and what we should be thinking about in terms

of fully funding the operation of the university.

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: The total amount that supports our operating budget -- which is 3.7 billion -- that comes from payments from students is $736 million.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Seven hundred thirty-six million. So if we found 736 million, we could wipe out student tuition, essentially. Is that a fair assessment, a fair way of thinking about that?

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: Seven hundred thirty-six million is the amount of money that students pay out of pocket.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay. That's helpful, thank you.

I want to come back to the notion of the, you know, three-fourths of students graduate debt-free. And that sounds really great, but I guess at what cost is that? You know, if a student has to work two or three jobs or has to elongate their education by a year, two years or three years, does that --

how do we -- students shouldn't have to put themselves through wringer just to graduate on time and debt-free.

And the experience we've heard from students is that a lot of them are working two jobs. Students that I taught this semester working two jobs just to pay their rent and pay their tuition.

So when we say three-fourths graduate debt-free, it feels like it's a little disingenuous. And we need to be doing a lot more to make sure that we're fully supporting all of the needs of students and giving them an environment, both in the classroom and outside the classroom, where they can actually survive and thrive.

And I don't think we're doing that right now. That's based on my own observations, the testimony we heard at the hearings in the fall that Senator Stavisky led, and my ongoing conversations with students.

And so I too am very disappointed with the investments we're making in this budget,

or propose to make in this budget, that really goes to help students. And I'm very concerned about that.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So thank you for your concern.

And I've always said, since my experience at Queens College and previously at Hunter, where I was on the faculty, that if we had instituted a $5 alumni gift from all couples that met at CUNY, maybe, you know, some of this fiscal situation would have been addressed, because we have so many couples that met either at the campuses or between campuses. So great to have your story about your parents, and also your commitment to CUNY.

You talked about the needs of our students, and that's one of the things that we take very seriously. And it's very dear to the heart -- my heart, our presidents team. That is why on areas like food insecurity we've gone out there and secured funding for this pilot program with the City Council to be able to award food vouchers to

our students. We're beginning with a thousand students, and we're going to see how that has an impact on retention and graduation, and hopefully be able to expand it.

The investment in lowering the cost of books -- if you have to spend less on books, that's more money that you have to be able to spend on other things. And that's I think a significant investment.

The investment in cutting down the transportation costs, going back to the numbers that I provided Assemblywoman Hyndman in her question. So I think that --

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Just to respond there, you know, if we weren't raising tuition and if we weren't charging students fees for mental health services, if we weren't doing all these things, they could afford transportation, they can afford room and board, they could afford their rent, they can afford to buy themselves a meal.

I think we need to shift the paradigm of how we're thinking about funding higher

education. All these programs are great and we're spending a lot of money on them, but we can do more to make the costs lower for students on the education front and then find other ways to help them outside of that. I think we need to think very carefully and smartly about how we need to do this in the future, because it's not working, I guess is my overall point.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Senate.

Assembly?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go now for a second round to Assemblywoman Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

You must have sort of an overall view of the capital needs -- not year to year, but at some point I'd like to understand what your long-range projection is so we can have a -- you know, we've -- both houses have supported five-year capital plans. They aren't always embraced, the bill gets vetoed. So we'd like to know what the target is

overall.

Have you or the presidents been directed to increase your outreach for philanthropy? Do you have a target that you would like to hit in order to -- obviously now you have a recommended, suggested in the budget, a match. So already you're being told you have to go out and raise money in order to get some of the capital. That's public. We want to understand if there's been this suggestion for some time or if there's some target that the trustees would like you to hit that even might exceed what is in the Governor's budget.

And you have the ASAP program. It's wonderful. What is the equivalent in the four-year schools? Because clearly you have students who come in, they're doing well -- they may have some sort of family crisis, illness, what have you, and they start to struggle. Do you have a mechanism for identifying them? And then do you have a plan or a program in place that replicates ASAP, but for the four-year schools? I think

there is something, it's just the name is escaping me.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Yes. ACE.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: ACE, okay. If we could know a little bit more about how many students are getting supported in ACE, what's the -- how successful is it in the four years as compared to the ASAP program? So how big is it, how many have graduated, and how many students are being assisted?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Here in the Capital Region there's something called Universal Access. It's a combination of money that's been funded by some of the corporations, and SUNY Albany throws money in. And it -- on your ID card it's in -- you know, it's encoded and you can take a bus or -- it's covered.

The city has put out a new sort of low-income half-fare program. How many students are eligible for that? Do they know about it? If this is something that you're looking for additional money for One Stop, I

assume, is --

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Single Stop.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Single Stop. And so is this one of those things that students are assisted in? I assume you have to apply for it. Everything has to be applied for. So you have to know about it in order to benefit. That's okay. So is this one of those things that students might be able to access?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So let me take your questions in order. You're making reference to the Fair Fares program. CUNY was one of the target populations in the initial rollout. In that initial rollout, already 12,000 students already signed up for a discount MetroCard. Now the city is going out citywide, and it's based on income eligibility. That's a city program.

So we assume that thousands of CUNY students will be able to benefit from that program, and we've been out there publicizing, you know, working with the city in letting our students know that they need

to take advantage of this program because it will be a significant benefit for them.

In the community colleges where we have your Single Stop, which you made a reference to, that is one place that we've been partnering, getting the message out to get the students to know about all these programs.

The connection of students to programs -- you made a reference that students need to know, that they need to apply, they need to know the rules -- is one of the reasons why in our budget request we asked for additional resources to be able to support staff that can connect students to all those opportunities and can serve as liaisons with the city agencies that provide the rulings.

I'll send you the information on ACE. ACE is a pilot program, we've done it for three years now at John Jay. We just began a cohort at Lehman. We can provide you with the numbers. The initial numbers are very, very promising. Modeled after ASAP. We --

in the same way that we built ASAP, we want to do that, test it, research, make sure that we're getting it right.

To your question of philanthropy, all the presidents are expected to fundraise. And actually the ACE version at Lehman got a philanthropic gift to be able to expand the number of students. Based on the prestige of ASAP, they said they want to invest in Lehman, so the president got a gift. Provost Cruz used to be the president at Lehman before I asked him to join us.

So we can send you more information. It's extremely promising. I've been charging the committees that are looking for presidents that an ability to fundraise is one of the criteria they need to have. It's an important thing. And the Governor's two-to-one matching program allows us to go to potential funders and have them further incentivized to give because their dollar is going an extra mile.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Ken LaValle.

SENATOR LaVALLE: Thank you.

Senator Stavisky told us about her concerns for students being in crumbling facilities. Senators Liu, Jackson and Gounardes told us of their concern for student costs going up, lack of funding. Now, Chancellor, we all have personalities and we show and express ourselves in different ways. I didn't get a sense -- I mean, students being in crumbling facilities? I would get a sense that you would be outraged by that.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Well, Senator, first I want to thank you for your years of service in the Senate and in higher ed. And all of us who are part of public higher ed owe you a big debt of gratitude for your commitment and your service.

To your question, I served 10 years as a college president and 10 before as a faculty member. Right? So I've been in the

buildings at Hunter, at Hostos and at Queens. I think my colleagues both at Queens and at Hostos will tell you that as president I was always very attentive to all our infrastructure needs to make sure that if there were issues about, you know, bathrooms that were not ready, you know, buildings that needed repairs, that they were looked after quickly and in a way that showed respect for the students.

We're doing the same thing at the City University of New York. We're trying to stretch every dollar that we get. We're trying to get additional dollars to be able to provide the facilities that our students deserve.

So I am clearly, clearly disturbed when I hear comments about things in our facilities that do not match the -- the respect that our students deserve. My mom and my dad in Puerto Rico are products of a public university. My dad became an engineer. I wouldn't be standing in front of you if it was not that that door of

opportunity was open for them, so I know what that means. And when I see our students, I see them. So I want for them the same kind of infrastructure that students at private campuses have.

SENATOR LaVALLE: You have requested a $120 a year health and student fee. What is a student going to get for that?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So thank you for your question.

First let me say that that will be the first fee that the City University of New York has added since 2002. Right? So when we think about tuition increases, when we think about increasing fees, these are things that we are thoughtful of when we do them because we want to be sensitive to our student population.

We have heard about needs of additional mental health counselors. We have heard about needs about expansion of hours in our wellness clinics. We have heard about additional support for students that have food and housing insecurity.

The proposed fee will work in this way. We'll take one-third of the funding from the fee, the central office, and we will tell the campuses to invest it directly and immediately in adding mental health counselors and in adding personnel so that they can help the students -- for example, if you're food insecure, to be able to apply for SNAP. If you have issues with housing, to be able to identify -- we need people on the ground to be able to connect the students to do that.

So the first third of that fee will begin to transform by providing, directly, mental health counselors and other staff to the campuses.

The other two-thirds will work in the same way that the tech fee works now, which means that it will go to a committee on the campus, a committee with student voices, faculty voices, and they will determine what campus needs they have. It won't be the central office. It will be, in each campus, how do we supplement, what are some of the

priorities that students have. Right? Because the fee will be coming from the students. So this will be a very direct way.

We're also, you know, going to request -- we're asking the city and state for additional funding in the area of wellness, right? So it's a comprehensive way.

But the fee will directly go to address some of these things we've been hearing about in a very direct way, with two-thirds of the funding going to the campuses with student input into how the funds get to be spent.

SENATOR LaVALLE: I'm glad to hear mental health was highlighted by you -- critical in today's world on our campuses.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: We're in agreement. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Nope, we're done.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, the

Assembly's done.

So Senator Jim Seward.

SENATOR SEWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And Chancellor, welcome.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

SENATOR SEWARD: I wanted to return to the discussion on tuition-free students at CUNY. You mentioned that two out of three students are tuition-free?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: That's correct, sir.

SENATOR SEWARD: Does that mean that with the tuition increases that we've seen as well as projected for the next four years, does that mean that those increases in tuition are falling onto that third student?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So about 70 percent of our students pay full tuition. And so again, I want to remind you that the proposed authority in our history at CUNY -- for example, we had it for the past four or five years -- every year we determine whether we want to be to able to -- we want to

proceed with a tuition increase. For four years in our community colleges we didn't do it. Right? So the fact that we're given the flexibility to move forward to do this -- right? I want to make sure that is clear, that every year we make an assessment as to whether we need that amount to be able to, you know, be part of our full funding structure or, like we've done in the past, we decided that maybe in that year that's not necessary.

So I want to make sure that we remember that is the flexibility to do that, and that we have a history at the City University of at times deciding that we're not going to do it.

SENATOR SEWARD: If the proposed tuition increases become part of the final budget and you have that option, do you have any concerns about how that will affect the TAP gap moving forward for your various campuses?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Absolutely.

And as I mentioned in reference to

another question too, in our budget request we propose that -- just sort of a partial movement of restoring the TAP gap. The amount that we put in the budget request was to begin with 9 million.

You know, we know that 86, which is the total predicted for next year, is a large number. We also know that you have many individuals coming to you with different requests, right, so we want to be judicious in that. But we hope that over time we're able to sort of fill that TAP gap, yes.

SENATOR SEWARD: Okay. Getting back to the capital program and that issue, do you maintain a backlog of projects that are needed in regard to the facility condition index, which measures the current conditions of facilities requiring capital investment? Can you give us some idea of what that backlog is in your system?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So I don't know the number offhand, but we'll be happy to provide that to your office.

SENATOR SEWARD: Can you share with us

what your budget request for capital projects and strategic initiatives were this year?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: I'm going to defer to our CFO, who knows those numbers a little better than I do.

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: Senator, this is our capital project request book (indicating). I hope all of you have it. If you don't, we can certainly make sure we can provide it to you. It's 185 pages, very comprehensive. There's capital projects in here for every single campus that are fully detailed.

In our request for the next five-year plan, we are seeking $5.2 billion: 3.8 for the senior colleges, 1.4 for the junior colleges.

SENATOR SEWARD: Well, if it was up to the Legislature, we would have a five-year plan for both CUNY and SUNY.

I just wanted to shift gears quickly to the community colleges in your system. Are you experiencing enrollment declines?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: We have. And I

think that it is something that -- you know, I served five years as a community college president at Hostos from 2009 to '14.

First, it is not atypical at a time when the unemployment numbers are low and the economy is perceived to be better, the enrollment numbers in higher ed, but particularly in community colleges, are sort of countercyclical in that regard.

So we have seen -- we have been able, in the past year or so, to sort of put some of the brakes on that decline, but the numbers have been going down for the past two, three years.

SENATOR FELDER: Even in declining enrollment, the community colleges, both CUNY and SUNY, do a tremendous job in terms of workforce training and development.

And would you anticipate an increase -- the need to increase community college tuition based on the enrollment levels of today?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So we are asking for, first, additional support. In

this process in the past, the increase to the base aid I think is a continuing component, and we look forward to working with you to be able to restore that.

We did, in this year, after four years of not having any increase in our community college, ask for an increase. That increase would still be below the maximum TAP award. So we anticipate, you know, 90 percent of our students in the community colleges not being affected in terms of having to pay out-of-pocket for that increase.

And again, as someone who served five years in a community college, I also concur with you about how important they are as a door of opportunity, as a gateway, and also as a key partner to the business community in the workforce area.

SENATOR SEWARD: Thank you.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

I'm going to take my questions and then we'll let Toby Stavisky close for the Senate.

So tuition goes up each year, but you're reporting that students aren't finishing school with debt. So are we seeing an impact on their retention and how many years it takes them to finish schools if in fact they're still completing school without debt?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So thank you for your question. And obviously we're very proud of the success we've had over the last couple of years in increasing both our graduation rates and our retention rates. It's been really a remarkable story, both at the community colleges and the four-year colleges, of advancing an agenda of student success, making sure that students keep academic momentum, that they take as many credits that they possibly can, that they stay on track, that we provide support for them.

In preparation of the budget, we actually also looked at the past and we looked at the students that were paying out-of-pocket, and we didn't find a direct

correlation between students that were paying the tuition increases and students that were stopping out or not graduating. Right? So we're very thoughtful in our analysis to do that request.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So we know that you've gotten your -- well, we don't know for sure, but we think you have resolved your adjunct situation for a while, that there is capital money for the first time in a while.

What if you didn't do an increase in the next couple of years? What would be the impact on your university?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So the -- let me just make a reference to the adjunct issue because it's something that I know is of interest to many of you, and it's a big concern of mine, and that's why we moved aggressively at the beginning of my tenure to work with the PSC to be able to bring the contract to resolution and, in that, provide a historic increase to the adjuncts.

Putting on my hat as a former college president, right, when we moved to the point

where the adjuncts at the lowest rate of compensation receive $5500 as their salary -- when you do the math, you would not be too far away of what the salary would be for a full-time lecturer. Right?

So it is my hope and it was part of the aspiration of this contract that you begin to see a move of having the campuses, for example, hire more full-time faculty -- the full-time lecturers are part of the full-time faculty -- in a way that advances student success and makes us to be less dependent on adjuncts.

So the contract was both a way to do justice to the adjuncts in terms of payment but also part of our longer-term strategy to sort of bring down the reliance on the number of adjuncts and continue to increase the number of full-time faculty that we have.

As I mentioned before, every year we do an analysis of where our fiscal needs are and what we would need to be able to get there. And in the past there's been times in which we have decided to go ahead with

tuition increases; there have been times when we have decided not to do that.

The tuition revenue this year that we get at the senior colleges is 36 million. Right? So if you can project that moving forward, there would be a comfortable amount in the outlying years that we have to be able to address to be able to think about different forms of tuition increases or not.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So you don't necessarily have to know this now, but I'm very interested in you getting back to us. You know how many students came in on Excelsior scholarship so far. It wasn't that many.

If we jump 125 to 135 to 150 in three years, can you project for us, one, how many additional students that will bring in versus how many students who already were coming and graduating on time will now just get full freight, so to speak, for college?

And then I'm assuming that you, CUNY, have to pick up that cost.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: In the TAP gap,

you mean?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So if another 300 students come in with Excelsior at 125 up, they've not been eligible for TAP at all up until now, so they're going to get 100 percent of TAP. So is that billed against your colleges, as opposed to the state comes up with that money separately?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So we have now about 4500 students in CUNY that benefit from the Excelsior program. And our estimate is about another $1,400 when the eligibility moves to the $150,000 in household income. I have to make sure I get those numbers right.

The 400,000 is an estimate based on the number of students currently that their families make that amount. I think it's fair to estimate that there might be another number of students who now are not thinking of CUNY as an option, right, who might consider CUNY as an option as a result of Excelsior, who are in that bandwidth that now are deciding to go elsewhere. And making a projection of that is really tricky.

So the number that we share with you is a number based on the number of students that we do have now that fit that household income data.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I'm from Manhattan, so whenever anybody talks about building anything, we're talking air rights.

Are we talking that you can count air rights against the half that you have to come up with to get the matching money from the state?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: That if you count air rights --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Against -- so you have this two-to-one match assignment for the capital money. So in Manhattan, almost anything that gets built as a public building, a public amenity, has some piece of an air-rights deal tied into it. Is it the assumption that that's what you were going to be working with and that the sale of those air rights will count towards the matching funds you have to come up with?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: That -- I mean,

that is an interesting proposition. I mean, if you think about it as a private source, right, that would count as a private source because the air rights would come with, you know, whatever developer or company you're dealing with.

So we'll definitely suggest that that kind of creative thinking -- and if you're doing it -- which is, you know, part of the Manhattan real estate sense, is something that is part of the matching program.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. And crumbling buildings. The nursing students on 25th Street have been in an untenable situation now for years. Do you have any good news to share with me?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: We are looking into that as something that we discuss. And for the public record, I want to show that the Senator is equally committed to those students in the public hearing as she is privately when I went to meet with her in her office.

We are also very fortunate, as part of

the new team that we have in the office -- and I think he's in the audience -- Allen Lew, our new senior vice chancellor for facilities and planning. One of the tasks that he has -- and he is a City College alum who decided to come back after being the city manager in D.C. and running all the public infrastructure programs in D.C.

So he's been charged to begin to look at situations like that to see if we can expedite solutions to be able to advance the situation for the nursing students at Hunter and some of the other capital needs that we have in Hunter and other parts of the city. So it is one of his first assignments as our new senior vice chancellor for facilities and planning.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And how many students live in my district? I'm feeling a little hurt.

(Laughter.)

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: No, no, no, no, we have that.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Twenty-eight.

Senate District 28.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: No, no, I know.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: It's okay, I wasn't really trying to put you on the spot.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: No, no, no, this is -- I want to make sure that -- 2,129. So I want to make sure that you feel the love too.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Toby Stavisky to close.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I'm not going to ask you that question. Or maybe I will.

Since the Governor's -- really for the past year and a quarter that I've been chair of the Higher Ed Committee, I've been meeting with everybody, all aspects of the education community. And the one theme that I hear, in addition to the underfunding of public higher education, is the TAP gap. And I hear it from the students, but I hear it from the faculty and I hear it from constituents.

How do you propose we deal with the TAP gap?

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: So thank you, Senator, and --

SENATOR STAVISKY: You've thanked me for every question I've asked.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: To be an equal-opportunity chancellor, thank you on behalf of the 11,268 CUNY students that live in your district. And which used to be --

SENATOR STAVISKY: You mean CUNY students --

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: CUNY students in your district, yes.

The TAP gap is a concern. If you look at our budget request, it is one of the things that we addressed. And we propose a scale way to sort of get back to restore that number, which would be projected at $86 million next year. Our request was $9 million to begin.

And again, that is something which, you know, we recognize that presents a sort of a structural issue. And we look forward to working with all of you in trying to address that.

SENATOR STAVISKY: We brought up the issue of students learning in temporary facilities, whether they be trailers or prefab buildings or whatever. Can you give us a number -- I'm sure you don't have it at hand -- how many classes are being taught or how many students are being taught in these temporary structures?

Because the testimony from -- I think it was the student leaders, I think it was Medgar Evers, if I'm not mistaken, at the December 16th hearing, was very compelling.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: And I received your letter after the hearing. Thank you. And we're getting the information for that. And I can get you that information.

SENATOR STAVISKY: And lastly, it was discussed a little this afternoon the issues concerning the mental health fee that is being charged the students. Which I must tell you, it seems to me this is an issue that should be borne by the college, not by the recipients of the services. And that's really what's happening.

And I think the students themselves throughout the hearings, whether it be in Buffalo from SUNY students, in Syracuse, we went to New Paltz, we went to Brooklyn College, Nassau Community College, 250 Broadway. And mental health issues have been a rising concern, particularly in today's day and age. And I really urge you to try to resolve that issue without charging the students for the fee.

And lastly, along those lines, we had a pilot project where students were able to work with other students, graduate students in psychology were able to -- I think it was teleconferencing, and I think they used Upstate Medical School students to try to provide services, really a listening device, I guess, for students with mental health issues. And I think this is an issue that calls for creative solutions.

And I thank you, and I thank the chairs.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Just to close, I would be remiss if I didn't say if it wasn't for Brooklyn College, I probably wouldn't be here. Both my parents were graduates at a time when obviously it was -- tuition was free.

And I think some of those buildings they took classes in are still there and probably need some of this capital improvement. So I appreciate your work there.

A question about Brooklyn College. There's a program, Lifelong Learning, which has allowed seniors to come and take classes, really courses. It's not -- they run their own courses, lectures. And it was very popular. They lost their space at Brooklyn College. So perhaps we can work together to find a way for them to have some space.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: What is the name of the program?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: It's called Brooklyn Lifelong Learning.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So it was local people would come and teach a program, teach a class. They were using the space on the campus, and it was very worthwhile.

And I know you didn't tell me the numbers of how many students I have, but I know I have some of the highest numbers of CUNY students in Brooklyn.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Four thousand two hundred and seventy-seven.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And they are very good students. And I have -- I think most of my staff actually are CUNY graduates, for either undergraduate or actually with master's degrees. So I know the kind of quality of learning that goes on over the years at CUNY. And obviously we're committed to make sure that continues for the next generation of students.

Thank you for being here.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Thank you for your support. I'll look at the information about that program and get back to you. And thank you also for being such a great higher

ed ally over the years.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So that's it. We're finished with questions. And to the extent that there are any follow-ups, we'll share them with all the members.

CHANCELLOR RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Our next witness, as people are leaving, is going to be the New York State Education Department's Interim Commissioner, Shannon Tahoe.

(Pause.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Commissioner, why don't you begin. Thank you.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Good afternoon, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky and Glick and members of the Senate and Assembly here today. My name is Shannon Tahoe, and I am the Interim Commissioner of Education.

I am joined today at the table by Senior Deputy Commissioner for P-20 John D'Agati, Chief Financial Officer Phyllis

Morris, Deputy Commissioner for the Office of the Professions Doug Lentivech, and Deputy Commissioner for the Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services Kevin Smith.

You have my full testimony before you.

Before I begin, I also want to welcome members of the Board of Regents who are in the audience today, including Chancellor Rosa, Regent Cashin, and Regent Mead.

The Regents' priorities in higher education are laser-focused on equity and access to postsecondary education opportunities, particularly for our underrepresented students. We know from multiple indicators college completion leads to better employment opportunities and higher income.

In order to support this critical priority of increasing equity and access, as you can see on slides 3 through 7, the Regents recommend an increase of $10 million for our Higher Education Opportunity Programs. These programs provide access to

postsecondary education for students who are at the highest risk of either not graduating from high school, not attending college, or not completing a degree.

We were pleased to see that the Executive Budget proposal included last year's additional funding for these programs in this year's proposed amount. Over 39,000 students are served by one of these programs. We would reach even more students across the state with these additional recommended investments.

Under our CSTEP and STEP programs, for example, we would provide students with opportunities to participate in STEM-based research, internships or exploratory career opportunities at area facilities.

We appreciate the strong support you have demonstrated for our Opportunity Programs. These programs work, and your support and funding has made a difference.

Another Regents priority proposal aimed at increasing equity and access, described on Slide 8, is to enhance supports

and services for postsecondary success of the over 75,000 individuals with disabilities attending New York State institutions of higher education.

The Regents are requesting a $15 million grant program that would be designed to supplement funding for support and accommodations of individuals with disabilities, support summer college preparation programs to assist individuals with disabilities with the transition to college, provide full- and part-time college faculty and staff with disability training, and improve the identification process of individuals with disabilities and enhanced data collection capabilities.

Another priority related to ensuring equity and access in higher education is on page 9, the Readers Aid Program, which provides funding to institutions of higher education on behalf of students who are blind, deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing.

Thanks to your support, in 2017 the Legislature and Executive provided an

increase in the amount of the maximum reimbursement rate per student and allowed for the purchase of assistive technology. Last year over 200 students from 28 colleges and the universities received Readers Aid funding.

Unfortunately, the current annual appropriation for this program is insufficient to meet the needs of the increased number of eligible students. That is why the Regents are requesting a total of $1 million to serve approximately 400 students per year. We need to start this critical conversation of how, as a state, we can better support individuals with disabilities to be successful in college.

Continuing with our focus on equity and access, one of the top Regents priorities is funding programs that support teacher diversity in our classrooms. This means ensuring access to higher education as well as recruiting, preparing and supporting students in teacher and leader preparation programs and thereafter.

Aligned with the department's December 2019 Educator Diversity Report, on Slides 10 and 11 we emphasize the need for our teaching workforce to be as diverse as our student population. Our Teacher Opportunity Corps II program has been funded by the My Brother's Keeper initiative, and we want to thank all of you again, especially Speaker Heastie.

We are asking for $3 million in new funding to establish a separately appropriated Teacher Opportunity Corps II program to increase the number of certified educators of color, who are underrepresented and underserved in the teaching profession. This program also aims to better prepare teachers to address the learning needs of students in high-need districts and to become culturally responsive and sustaining educators.

To address teacher diversity needs, the Board of Regents also recommends that $2.5 million in funding be provided to create innovative birth to Grade 3 teacher preparation programs and birth to Grade 12

teacher leader programs. These programs would better serve as transformational models through collaborations between institutions of higher education, school districts, community-based organizations, and health and mental health systems. This funding would provide opportunities for approximately 240 individuals from New York State historically underrepresented and underserved populations to become teachers and leaders.

Finally, in order to eliminate potential barriers and to promote teacher diversity and encourage more candidates to join the teaching profession, the Regents have prioritized, on Slide 12, $1.2 million in new funding to provide more fee-waiver vouchers to assist economically disadvantaged students to pay for their certification exams.

As you negotiate this budget, please remember that our workforce and the workforce pipeline are the state's most important investment. A state-of-the-art workforce pipeline does not depend only on traditional

college pathways. Ensuring equity and access to other successful pathways for our out-of-school youth and adults is also a priority of the Board of Regents.

As you can see on Slide 13, the Regents are requesting a $3 million investment in Bridge Programs to enable out-of-school youth and adults to obtain essential basic skills, a high school equivalency diploma, industry-recognized credentials, and preparation for postsecondary study and careers.

The programs would consist of partnerships between an adult education program and colleges or training providers of demonstrated effectiveness. This proposal could pilot up to 10 Bridge Programs across New York State.

Ensuring public health and safety of New Yorkers and enhancing customer service in our Office of Professions are the final priority areas of the Board of Regents that I would like to highlight today. On Slides 14 through 18, we provide you with updates on

the efforts of the Office of Professions as our work and responsibilities continue to grow in this area.

In the last two years, the Office of Professions has seen a 10 percent increase in the number of new licenses issued. Notably, this included approximately 6,000 additional applicants from non-registered programs whose education must be individually reviewed, increasing this workload by 50 percent.

These increased responsibilities and complex reviews, coupled with challenges in hiring, training and retaining qualified staff to replace positions lost due to retirement, promotion and previous budget constraints, have made it challenging to timely meet the growing demands placed on this office.

I want to bring particular attention to this office's modernization and electronic licensing activities on Slides 17 and 18, which, when fully implemented, will help to improve cycle times in both licensure and discipline.

In 2009, the Legislature and Executive approved a 15 percent registration fee increase so that we could replace a 30-year-old COBOL-based licensing system and enhance our customer service. We have begun that work and are using these funds to develop user-friendly online applications in nearly 50 professions, implement a more robust call center, and begin the complex work to replace our antiquated mainframe system.

We ask for your support in the Executive Budget proposal to allow us to use $25.4 million in capital spending authority to continue these efforts.

Finally, on Slide 21, we ask the Legislature to pass and the Governor to enact the enhanced disciplinary authority bill, to ensure we can protect patients and consumers in a timely manner while still maintaining important due process protections.

This bill would provide the department with similar authority already granted to the Department of Health's OPMC to authorize the

commissioner or his or her designee to order a temporary suspension of practice privileges when there is an imminent danger to public health or safety, require all licensed professionals to report moral character issues upon application for licensure, and require that all licensed professionals report to SED any record of conviction of a crime in a timely manner.

Before I take your questions, we want to thank you all for the opportunity to discuss our priorities and for your support last year. We look forward to working with you again on our shared goals and in this important discussion.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Deborah Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: First of all, thank you very much for your very comprehensive presentation. Lots of the questions that one might ask -- how many programs, how many students -- you have in there, as well as the additional requests that you need.

Overall, since the Opportunity Programs you've asked for additional resources in a number of these areas. And you may not have this immediately, but how many slots are you short in these different areas? You're asking for a certain amount of money so you can add -- I don't know if it's students or programs, so --

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Sure. So we have four Higher Education Opportunity Programs. First is our Liberty Partnerships Program. We're requesting a $2 million increase to provide projects with the opportunity to serve an additional 1300 students for Liberty Partnerships.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. I see that's down in the -- thank you.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: The student ed programs, some years ago linked to the measuring teachers by student test scores -- one of the things that got slipped in was the requirement that in order to get into a master's program in order to be a teacher,

you needed a 3.0. We put in a bill to eliminate that because, you know, we think that there probably are people with a 3.2 who really can communicate information to students. But somebody who may have taken a tough course early in their career in college, maybe they have a 2.8, but they are dynamic, they're engaging, they're motivating -- and yet they can't get into a program.

Do you have any thoughts about whether there's going to be a teacher shortage, if we have a teacher shortage, if we are making it impossible for qualified students to get into these programs to address a teacher shortage?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: I think this is one of the main priorities of the Board of Regents and the department for this coming year.

I think teacher shortages is a major issue. I think it's a statewide issue. I also think it's a regional issue. We're seeing certain shortage areas at the state level that are common across like special ed

and bilingual. We also have individual areas in pockets of the state where they have individualized regional needs and regional shortages in certain subject and certification areas.

One of the things we're working on internally is talking to our higher education partners about ways in which they can communicate directly with school districts in their regional areas to say where are your demands, or where are your needs? Let us support you in these areas and try to work on creating teacher education pipelines for the shortages that exist in those regionalized areas. This is something the department is very committed to.

We're also engaging in a workgroup across the state, and the ECB is about to put out recommendations on the teacher shortage issue. We're looking at those recommendations and creating a statewide workgroup with all of our stakeholders to come up with solutions on specific statewide issues as well as how to resolve those

regional issues that are appearing throughout the state.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I think that there was some desire not to erode standards. I think the department sort of went to war a little bit, if you'll pardon the expression, over allowing charter schools to just certify their own teachers.

So do you see some sort of disconnect between this policy? Have you had outreach from campuses around the state complaining about this restriction on accepting students based on the 3.0?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Right. On the 3.0 specifically, I'll refer to John D'Agati, our deputy commissioner for P-20, on that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Good to see you back, John.

(Laughter.)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AGATI: Thank you, Assemblymember.

If I recall correctly, the 3.0 provided -- it was put in place, but it also

provided an opportunity to -- if you had -- it did provide flexibility in that if you had students who didn't quite meet that, you had like a 15 percent -- 15 percent of your admits did not have to meet that requirement.

So I have not -- recently I have not heard that as being a barrier to getting into graduate programs. I haven't -- nobody's reached out to me to say directly that that's causing people not to be able to get in.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. You have a lot of information here on the e-licensing. That -- there is some additional capital provided. What more will that do?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: The $25.4 million in additional spending authority, that's through fees we've already collected through our registration and licensure fees. It's just a spending.

That additional fee, we are looking to do a comprehensive OP modernization of our website, our application process. What we're looking to do is have an automated system wherein essentially applicants for any of our

over 50 licensed professions can go online, they can upload their different, varying educational documents, experience documents. And there would almost be -- the computer is going -- it's a system where it's going to be able to automatically, essentially, be able to tell whether or not they've met the licensure requirements in some of these cases, which will streamline our backlogs and our situations where we have, you know, significant delays in the licensure process.

We're also creating a comprehensive new call center and redoing our complete website modernization for the Office of Professions. So it would do all of those things.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I suspect that this will be an answer from Doug.

There are several proposals in the Executive Budget regarding changes to professions that would normally go through the Legislature. There was an article just last week, I think, in the New York Times, fairly extensively, about concerns that

pharmacists, particularly those who work for chains -- which in a lot of places are the only game in town -- are concerned about the metrics that are being used. They have to have X number of contacts with people, they have to produce X number of refills. Doctors are saying, I don't want to refill that prescription, and they're getting these calls from pharmacists who are required to make the calls.

And the proposals focused on pharmacy seem to expand the number of people who a pharmacist would have to supervise.

Are there any concerns that the department has about proceeding in the budget with proposals that -- we've hardly measured the changes we made with pharmacy techs in the last session. Do you have any concerns about we're moving too quickly on some of this?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Yes, Chair Glick. And I think that's -- thank you for bringing that up.

I think some of these proposals are

really included in the budget proposal which actually need more intensive thought. And we have some technical concerns with a lot of the Office of Professions bills that are currently embedded in the Executive proposal, and we would work with the Legislature on solutions to those problems.

But we do find that sometimes it's best to put it out of the budget conversation.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: So you would recommend that the Legislature sort of say, you know, let's have this conversation post-budget and vet these.

Have you had any opportunity to review what we've already done in terms of pharmacy techs?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Yes, we have. Currently the pharmacy techs are limited to the Article 28 institutions, and the Executive proposal bill would expand that and allow registered pharm techs outside of the Article 28 facilities.

This is something that we're greatly

concerned with. We're just getting off the ground with initial enactment of the pharmacy tech bill for Article 28 facilities, and we'd like an opportunity to see how that goes first before expanding that any further.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Are there other issues that impact your department that where -- that in the course of the budget, other than these dollar figures that you've included, that you think we should be paying attention to?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Yes. I think any time the Legislature adds a new program or a requirement on SED, we would respectfully request a 5 percent set-aside of funds for those programs to be administered so that the department could have, you know, sufficient funds to administratively provide the oversight and monitoring that are necessary to implement these new programs with fidelity.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

And I just want to thank you -- the staff is always very available, and they're

very helpful in working through some of the questions that we have or getting us an answer if they are, you know, unable to do it personally. So I want to thank you for the close association.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Thank you, Chair Glick.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We now go to the Senate Higher Ed chair, Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

And thank you for what you're doing during the -- I guess you could almost call it the interregnum. I think the department has been really responsive and helpful on so many occasions. And perhaps we forget to say thank you, but we do appreciate it.

And I too have concerns about the question of pharmacy techs, because we did pass the bill and it was chaptered last year, but it dealt only with hospital pharmacy techs. And in fact, until that time, there was no definition of what a pharmacy tech is or could do, what their scope could be, and

how many a licensed pharmacists could supervise.

And I'm a little troubled by the proposal in -- I believe it's the Health and Mental Hygiene Law, which does talk about a pharmacist supervising six technicians. And I think your position --

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Yes, we share those concerns. And we would like to actually get the chapter that was enacted last year off the ground before expanding it in any way so we can determine the impact of, you know, the new profession itself.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Without question.

And that took a long period of time of negotiation with all of the stakeholders. And to put it in the budget like this I think is maybe doing our consumers a disservice.

I have a couple of other questions. What's not in your presentation, incidentally, is the issue of the CPAs. And I was curious because it talks about the $300 fee. Would that fee go to SED or into the General Fund?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Thank you for raising that very important point, Senator.

That provision for the public licensure accounting firms -- obviously we've been working with the Legislature over the last couple of years on that proposal and will continue to do so and provide our comments and support on that proposal.

However, we are very concerned with the fee, because the fee will be going right to the General Fund, even though the State Education Department is responsible for administering and overseeing the public licensure firms. So that is something that is very concerning to us. Thank you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: And do you see associated costs that would be incurred by the department as a result of that fee, implementation of that fee?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Yes, there will be significant costs on the department for overseeing that program without -- if we don't receive those fees.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. You didn't mention it in your presentation.

Getting back to the pharmacy tech issue -- and I saw the story in the New York Times, it was last Saturday. And it was, I know, a front page and then a two-page full-page spread in the Times about the mistakes that are being made, particularly in the chain pharmacies.

Do you want to comment? I'm not sure we have that problem in New York; it was primarily reported throughout the country. But it's certainly something that could develop here. Has anybody seen the story and --

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Yes, we have seen the stories. And I will actually ask Doug Lentivech, our deputy commissioner for the Office of Professions, to respond to that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LENTIVECH: Thank you. We see pharmacy discipline cases on a regular basis in New York, as they do in every state.

And, you know, it's a very challenging profession, because what you go to a pharmacist for is being exact and detailed in what you're asking for. It's like if you have a prescription for a certain medication and for a certain dosage of that medication, you want that dosage and you want that medication to be in the vial. And most of us are not sophisticated enough to protect ourselves, so that's what we look for.

As the demands of the practice, of the -- and in pharmacies, these are corporate practitioners. These are not PCs or PLLCs, these are corporate practitioners. And they're very expansive and very large. And to be competitive in our society, this is a profession that really, really sustains huge demands on their professional time. And we see these regularly in our disciplinary system, and I don't know that it's different in New York. But it's something we've been concerned about for a long time.

And I think that the proposals before us are something you've got to look at in

terms of those constraints are being put on our licensees.

SENATOR STAVISKY: And I assume, on a totally different issue -- but I'm sure you remember discussions during budget hearings of the processing time for some of these applications. I assume that the time has increased dramatically, am I correct, the time is takes SED to process?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: So that is something we're looking at very seriously, Senator. It's something that we have actually shifted resources to. Where we have backlogs in our Office of Professions, we're actually taking staff from other units and targeting them toward the backlogs. We've been paying overtime for individuals to get through the backlog.

As we stated before, with the $25.4 million investment in our OP Modernization Act, we believe that that's going to dramatically reduce the online processing because it will all be automated instead of paper.

Also, we have noticed a significant increase in the number -- we went from 10,000 to 16,000 applications from non-New York-registered programs, so individuals coming in from out of state or a foreign country, where it takes a significant amount of time to review those educational credentials to ensure that they meet the requirements of our licensure requirements. This takes -- it's a very timely process, and so that has been a dramatic increase in the number of applications too.

But like I said, this is a priority for the department. We are targeting resources in that area, doing everything we possibly can to address the backlogs, because we know individuals deserve timely feedback on their applications.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. Because I represent -- well, Queens County is a county with a lot of immigrants and a lot of people who practice various professions in other parts of the world. They come here to live, and it is important to process their

applications in a timely fashion.

Two more quick questions. Number one, the time it takes to process approval programs for new programs at colleges. I spoke to Commissioner D'Agati -- and it's great to see you back -- about this just before -- I guess it was last year. And others have complained that it takes colleges a long time to get approval on new programs.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: This is another issue which sometimes people forget exactly what we're trying to make sure. We want to ensure that the students that are in these programs receive a quality education and that their tuition is going to good use.

And sometimes when we're receiving these new program approvals, we're looking at it from the bottom up. We're looking at the entire curriculum for every program that they wish to offer, the resources within the institution to ensure that they have the stability that the institution needs to best serve those students. We're looking at the administration, the faculty, to make sure

that they're being taught by competent, qualified teachers. This is an extensive review. We're also doing site visits at the campuses to ensure that what's happening on the ground is what's reflected in their application.

So yes, it does take a significant -- you know, it's a timely and detailed process. But again, we have actually streamlined our process in the last couple of years under Leslie Templeman, our director in that unit. And I think -- I'm really proud of the efforts that that unit has made in improving their times on these program approvals.

But yes, you're right, oftentimes some of them do take a longer amount of time. We're going back and forth for additional information from the individuals and the applicants and the institutions of higher education. Sometimes we don't get all the information we need up-front and we have to keep going back and forth with the institution until we get what we need to ensure that that's a quality program for

these kids.

SENATOR STAVISKY: It was suggested that there be a blind kind of study with names and specifics redacted, and then use volunteer administrators at various colleges for approval or preliminary approval to cut down on some of the time-consuming approval process. And I had spoken to Commissioner D'Agati about this.

And I still think it's a way of making sure that nobody knows the college involved -- because you certainly don't want to have your competition, so to speak, approved. But on the other hand, you do want to approve the applications. And I think we should talk further about this.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: This is something we would be a little concerned with. We'd want to make sure of consistency in the review of the applications and ensure, as you indicated, that your competitors aren't reviewing your application. So we would want to make sure of that.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you very

much. And welcome to the Regents.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Thank you so much.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Tomorrow we're interviewing future Regents.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Senator Seward.

SENATOR SEWARD: Thank you.

I just wanted to follow up on the question that Senator Stavisky has been asking about, the approval process for new programs for our colleges. Is there an average time frame for new program approval that you can share with us? I know obviously it may vary, depending. But this is a -- continues to be a concern that we hear from colleges, is the length of time.

And do you have an average time frame for approvals?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: I don't -- I think it would depend on the type of program approval and for which specific type of registered program.

But I will defer to John D'Agati, our deputy commissioner for higher education. He may have more insight.

SENATOR SEWARD: I guess what I'm asking is, has the time frame improved or been shortened?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AGATI: I think, since we've streamlined the application process, it has improved significantly. I think where we -- as Commissioner Tahoe mentioned, some applications come to us incomplete, some are more complicated.

And also, to make a distinction when it's a program that is being reviewed by the Office of Professions where licensure is involved, there's even a more detailed review than what we would do as a general, you know, English program, for example. So there are distinctions to be made in terms of the application and the processes that it goes through.

But, you know, some applications are -- come in, they're complete, and they're reviewed within 30 days, and it goes through.

Others take somewhat longer. Others, because there's, you know, a lack of information, we need more detail, or there's concerns about who's teaching the courses, whether or not they're qualified or not, they take longer.

SENATOR SEWARD: Thank you, John. And it seems just like yesterday you were behind us here whispering in our ears.

(Laughter.)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AGATI: I know.

SENATOR SEWARD: One final question on proprietary colleges. Are there new regulations being considered in regard to our proprietary colleges?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: We have heard there may be new regulations. We have not seen those regulations. Obviously, it would depend on the details of what those regulations said, you know, what our position would be on those.

However, I would say that our proprietary colleges -- I think we have 24 in the state at this moment. And the graduation rate at our proprietary colleges is at I

think 44 or 45 percent, which is higher than the nationwide average for proprietary schools.

As we've indicated before, our program approval for our proprietary schools is just as robust as any other higher education institution in this state. So we believe State Ed has, you know, significant oversight and accountability for these institutions. So we would be, you know, wary of any proposal, you know, as to what that would look like. But I would need to see the details of any regulation first.

SENATOR SEWARD: Where would those regulations come from, if not from you?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: That's a great question. I would think that they would be coming from SED if there were going to be regulations on this. But we have heard something, as you've mentioned, but we haven't seen them yet.

SENATOR SEWARD: Okay. Thank you.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. Thank you very much.

And welcome to your first budget hearing.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I wanted to thank you, first of all, for requesting the additional funding to help provide supports and services to students with disabilities in New York schools. That's an area that has been seriously underfunded for many, many years, and we really need that money. So I want to thank you for doing that.

I also want to ask you a couple of questions about teacher education. We have identified and we know that there is a real lack of education in our schools of education on how to teach reading to our teachers. And this is an effort that I've been working on for some time, and I know I've worked with the department in connection with a bill a

few years ago requiring that students with dyslexia be able to use that word in their eligibility documents, IEPs, et cetera.

It's very clear that there are two issues that we need to address. One is early identification. And one good way to do that is to have teachers recognize the kinds of errors students are making so that they can help target instruction and identify those students.

And the other is making sure that we actually give our teachers the tools they need in order to do that job. Fifteen to 20 percent of kids have dyslexia or related learning disabilities, but they're in the same first and second grade, the same kindergarten, and the teachers don't know how to help them.

So I would like to know what efforts the department is undertaking to ensure that the training that is given to teachers in New York State's teacher education/preparation programs are addressing the science of reading and how we teach reading in this

state.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: This is something we're actually looking at right now, and our Early Child Blue Ribbon Committee has been evaluating the work in our birth to Grade 2 certificates in our teacher preparation programs in early learning. So I think this is something we'll be looking at as we're moving forward with our blue ribbon recommendations for early child learning.

This is something -- I agree with you, this is extremely important. We've also -- the department has issued guidance or is working on guidance on dyslexia and the identification of dyslexia. So this is something our office of Special Ed is currently involved with. And as I said, on the teacher ed side, this is something we will be reviewing as part of our early child workgroup recommendations and what to do in our birth to Grade 2 pathways.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. I want to just stress, if I can, that while teachers in special education need this

training as well, it's general ed teachers, because that's where the kids are so often.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: You're absolutely right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And just ensuring that the work that is done is really consistent with the science as we know it in terms of the way the brain works, and that so many kids need direct instruction in reading who are not necessarily students with disabilities but still need the same methods used in order for them to learn.

Thank you.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: You're absolutely right. Thank you for bringing this to our attention. And we will definitely consider this as we move forward with our changes to the birth to Grade 2 programs. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you very much.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: To the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank you for being here. I'm sorry I ran out for a few minutes.

So you run through your testimony, you list out a number of different programs for low-income students going to our colleges and STEM programs and an additional million here, an additional 2 million -- very small amounts of money.

Do you agree that college has proved to be the most successful model for helping people move into jobs and out of poverty?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: I think that's an interesting question. And I think that's something that we're looking at -- I mean, obviously we know and the data reflects, and I think it's reflected in our slides that we provided today, that students who graduate with a high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma receive 1.5 percent more wage earnings than those who do not. And those with an associate's degree, it's 2 percent more -- or two times more.

So I think that there is some evidence to show that going through college, you know, you earn higher wage limitations.

However, I think there's other pathways as well for students, and that's something we're considering as part of our graduation measures project is, you know, what are the additional pathways or what does it mean to have an meaningful high school diploma. And not all kids, as we know, are geared to go to college, and they may have other additional pathways that may suit their needs and keep them in school for longer, you know, through our CTE pathways or additional pathways.

So this is something we're actually looking at and reviewing right now with the Regents' graduation measures project.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: But again -- so maybe I asked it slightly wrong, because I'm just pointing out you're talking about serving 500 kids with a million dollars, serving 4450 kids with 4.5 million.

Next week, if you want to come back

for our Economic Development Hearing, you'll hear me asking why are we spending a million dollars a job, $500 million for 500 jobs at an LED factory in upstate New York. And I just wanted to highlight for the record -- not that you have to answer -- that I think there's something very wrong with our priorities when you have to literally beg us for nickels and dimes for models that have been successful in higher ed, and through our economic development budgets we blow money by the billions.

So it's a rhetorical statement, not a question --

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Yes, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Unless you'd like to jump in and go, you're right, Senator Krueger, that's outrageous.

(Laughter.)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: You're absolutely right, Senator Krueger.

(Laughter.)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: I would

say that you're absolutely right. These are our most successful programs. And we know that these kids without these programs, they're underrepresented youth who they may never have gone to college, and these programs keep them in college, give them the remedial supports that they need while they're in there, put them into summer training, giving them, you know, additional supports that they can graduate.

So thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Hi. Good afternoon, and thank you for being here for so long.

First I want to thank you for putting the priorities of $15 million in your request for students with disabilities. And I wanted to see what you thought that $15 million would offer. Obviously we have 72,000 students with identifiable disabilities

across the state, and there's such a huge need. And I wonder, do you think 15 million -- what does it get you? I know we haven't seen any new money for 20 years. What are the needs for students with disabilities right now across the state? And how do we ensure that those students who have disabilities can be successful and graduate from college and then move on to fulfilling employment?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: I think one of the things we're noticing is that we're always worried about students with disabilities in our K-12 world. And one of the things is that when they get to college, we still need to be worried about those students with disabilities.

There's 75,000 individuals with disabilities across this state in our higher education community, and I think what we're seeing is we need -- the 15 million is to do a number of things. One is to ensure that we have the data collection that we need to know who those kids are, what types of

disabilities they have, what supports are needed, what are effective supports for those students. The monies are also used for summer training to get those kids who may not have ever even thought about going to college, but getting them ready to get it going and giving them the pre-college experience they need over the summer to get them ready for college. It's also to provide remedial supports and accommodations for those kids once they're in school so that they can be successful in college.

So I think it's for a number -- for all of those purposes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And 75,000, as you said, students and 15 million, it doesn't seem that we're -- per student, it's not a lot of money. So --

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: It's not a lot of money. If you'd like to give us more, we would love that too.

(Laughter.)

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: I'm just kidding.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And so I want to move on to -- and I would love to give you more, so I -- you know, obviously we're not the only players in this conversation. But I think it's well-needed.

I want to talk more about disclosure of information you mentioned from proprietary schools, and the government might be coming forward with regulations. But more of my interest is making sure the students across the state have good access to good information, whether they choose to go to a proprietary school, CUNY or SUNY, or a nonprofit institution.

Do you feel like there's enough information out there for people to make informed choices about what the default rates are three, five, 10 years out, you know, what money is being spent on student education versus paying for advertising, what money is -- in the for-profit context, how much profit is being taken out of the system?

I wanted to get a sense of if there's enough public disclosure for students to make

informed choices around decisions they're making.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: I think more public disclosure is always best. And the more transparent you can be so that students know exactly where they're going and what they're going to get out of their educational experience, I think that's always helpful.

I'll turn to John D'Agati as well, our deputy commissioner for P-20, to see if he has any additional thoughts on this.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AGATI: Yeah, I do believe there's a lot of information out there. I worry that people don't always know where to go to find it. But there is an abundance of information about graduation rates, about employment, about costs associated with attending.

But oftentimes people don't know how to access it. And we probably in the department can help with that in trying to consolidate a lot of that information and put it someplace where it's easily accessible and

also understandable.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So when you say put it someplace, you mean put it on your website or have the universities put it on theirs, or what are you thinking?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AGATI: All of the above. Particularly put it on the university's website and making it more readily available.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah, I think that would be really helpful. Because I -- you know, I have actually a daughter in college right now and a son who's in high school, and for their decisions, you know, they -- it wasn't readily accessible to them, like what this would cost them versus like how do you -- you have to compare apples to apples, right, and it's really hard to do that, especially for some institutions, when people don't really understand the options that are available and they don't have parents, you know, who are fortunately educated and can help them navigate the system about loans, what it means, programs,

access, all those things that come up that people don't really understand. So great to -- happy to partner with you on that.

And my last question is I'm really thinking about dedicated funding for public education. So I know we have this dance where you come ask us for money and then we have to figure out if we can work with the Senate and the Assembly and the Governor to get a budget. What do you think about having a real, dedicated funding stream to go directly to institutions of higher ed and not have to have this dance up here in Albany, there are dedicated streams.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: I will defer to Phyllis Morris, our chief financial officer, on that one.

SED CFO MORRIS: So there's pros and cons to that, as with everything. If you were to do that, I would just suggest having something very specific in statute that -- so that your intended purpose is actually achievable.

Having the funds come to the State

Education Department for distribution, you know, we can ensure that the funds are distributed in a way that meets the legislative intent. And so that would be the only caveat we'd put on that.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Commissioner Tahoe, I think you're doing a tremendous job for someone who's interim acting, so you're very knowledgeable.

Mr. D'Agati, I thought you left.

(Laughter.)

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER D'AGATI: I thought I did too.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: They pull you back in.

So this is more of an observation over the years. I note that your proprietary school supervision is under access, under Deputy Commissioner Smith. It used to be higher ed.

And the reason why I'm bringing this up is because I know that when it comes to that sector, there's a lot of misinformation, there's a lot of lumping proprietary schools, non-degree-granting, into the degree-granting proprietary school sector.

And how would we discuss or have an opportunity to discuss putting that back under higher ed? Just because a lot of the legislators don't really know about that sector until there's a problem. Not you, Chair Glick. But a lot of us don't -- I do -- a lot of members don't always know about that sector till there's a problem.

And it is postsecondary. We're talking about adults, those who are -- maybe have received a TASC instead of the GED, and those who are looking to change careers. The information they provide, the amount of jobs that stay in New York State because people have further education. That's something that used to be under higher ed, and I would really like to talk about how do we get it back under higher ed. I see Dr. Owen is here

too, so I understand, you know, that this is a particular area of interest and it's not under -- and we don't get to really scrutinize that sector and talk about it as colleagues, about what those schools are doing and how they're educating our residents here in New York State.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: I think you're right, we do receive a lot of different questions regarding the differences between our BPSS schools and our proprietary schools and our proprietary colleges. They're two very different things.

And so traditionally, you know -- and I will defer to Kevin on this, obviously, because he may have more history than I do on this issue. But we can definitely work with you on this.

But like I said, they are two very different things. They're -- you know, adult education has traditionally been seen as in our access unit, and that is something where we think of these licensed private career schools as more adult education and getting

them toward careers, where the colleges and universities are somewhat in a separate world that are higher education, and that's how they've been treated.

But this is something we can definitely explore with you moving forward. But I would defer --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I also bring it up because you talk about -- in one of these you talk about alternative pathways. And so I think as New York State, as we've grown and evolved, we're seeing that a lot of students who go and get a four-year degree may not get a job in that career. Right? And whatever debt or whatever issues that they are dealing with, then they look to that sector to change their career or get a job or make -- the shorter-term training gets them into the workforce.

So that's why I do think -- it is different, but we're talking about adults, and we recognize adults as those who are 18 who may not go to college and use those schools in order to get into the workforce,

and may go on later -- to get an income, go on later and then decide to go to a four-year degree-granting institution later. That's why.

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: You're bringing up a very good point. I mean, and this is something that we can definitely talk about later. And I don't know if Kevin has any additional thoughts on this.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SMITH: Well, only to say I know you're not suggesting that you want to move it to higher ed because I'm doing a bad job with it.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: No, no. Not at all.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SMITH: Just to give you a sense of size and scope, 391 licensed career schools, non-degree, over 200,000 students. Programs, career programs ranging from coding -- which is growing astronomically every day in the New York City metropolitan area and across the state -- a full range of allied health programs, dog

grooming, cosmetology. You name it, we do it in the proprietary schools sector.

It is an important postsecondary destination. I wish all of our school counselors would recognize the opportunity to send and advise students to attend those programs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Glick to close.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Just to go back to the potential or existing teacher shortage, what are -- and you say you're having conversations with regional partners about what kind of shortages they're facing and so forth.

What more can we be doing to -- you know, I'm not sure that people realize that there is a teacher shortage if they don't have kids in school. That's a large number of the population. They're older, they don't like paying school taxes as it is, so can't we get by with fewer teachers, and so forth.

So what exactly could or should we be doing to address this issue, and why do you think we have a teacher shortage? What are the issues that prevent people from pursuing teaching?

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: I think that's a very loaded question and one which I will answer in several different ways.

First I'll say I think the teaching profession, over the last few years, unfortunately, it doesn't have the reputation that it did once have. And I think that's the first thing that needs to change.

I think the way strategically across the state the way that everyone, including parents, other teachers and administrators in school buildings, it's all in how we think of the profession and treat those teachers and the way that -- the respect that they feel in the classrooms and how we're raising our kids to say going into the teaching profession is, you know, a wonderful thing, you can help other children or students.

I think it's the way we talk about the

teaching profession and the teaching profession in general in the mindset of people in the education field.

So I think, first thing first, we need to change the way the profession is viewed in public.

Secondly, I think that we need to -- State Ed is taking a look at our regulatory requirements on our certification pathways to see if there's ways in which we can, you know, provide more flexibility, additional pathways for teachers to get certified and licensed in the classroom.

I think other ways is our fee voucher program where we're asking for $1.2 million in getting certification fee waivers so that people -- you know, disadvantaged students might be able to take those exams without paying for them, because we've heard that the fees are a barrier.

Another issue is I think we're looking at our higher ed institutions and we're talking to them regularly -- and John and I are having conversations about really looking

at the regional needs and trying to ensure that you're opening teacher ed programs where there's an actual need, rather than having an oversupply of early childhood programs.

Looking at if your regional need is special ed, open a special ed program, open a bilingual program. We're really trying to, you know, have people in programs think about ways to -- and talking about data sharing. John and I have been discussing ways in which we can try to share data with various regional partners to say: This is where the needs in your region are, take a look at these needs and try to design programs that meet those needs.

And really taking a look at -- we're looking holistically at this, literally how the teaching profession is viewed, our certification requirements, our higher education partners. We're working with our stakeholder groups to say, you know, how can we make -- how can we change this dynamic?

Because something has to change now. We're in severe shortages across the state in

areas where there shouldn't be. I mean, special ed and bilingual, we need certified teachers who are qualified in those areas to be serving those vulnerable populations of students.

And this is something that we're very concerned with and that we are addressing immediately and taking steps to address immediately.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Just one area that came to mind was some friends who are, you know, of a certain age -- and so some people actually have the great wisdom to semiretire or actually retire -- who have been college professors, they don't have a certification, they don't have -- they've taught in college, but they haven't taught and gotten a master's in ed. And they may be in some communities that are short of teachers, and there's no -- they're not, at age 63 or 66, going back to get a master's in education so that they can then apply to teach in a school in a community that they're living in.

Is that an -- is there -- I don't know that it's a huge number of people, but I think that there are a lot of folks who want to give back and --

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: And I think that the one pathway you're just describing is our Transitional G pathway, which is a certification pathway that we offer for faculty of higher education institutions to try to lessen the teacher certification requirements for those folks so that they can get into the classroom. Because that's something we've -- especially in STEM areas, as we have it in the science, technology, engineering and math areas, and I think we've expanded that as well.

So that's something that we currently have a pathway for. And if you want to refer us the names of those individuals, we'd be happy to help them work through this.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Yeah, maybe just learning a little bit more about that. Because I think there is a -- you know, a cohort of people who might be available in

some of these areas that -- you know, they've left the city and they're, you know, looking --

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: And I think you're right, Chair Glick. And we're trying to really think out of the box, like what other types of people would be -- have the education and experience, maybe in a nontraditional pathway, but still be qualified to serve those students. So that is something we're thinking through multiple -- you know, every way we can, into which, you know, non-alternative pathways.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thanks so much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. I believe that's all the questions we have. Thank you for being here --

INTERIM COMMISSIONER TAHOE: Thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- with us today.

Next we'll be hearing from New York State Higher Education Services Corporation,

Dr. Guillermo Linares, president.

Whenever you're ready to begin.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Good afternoon. Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky, Glick, and to all my former colleagues in the Senate and Assembly, thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the Governor's 2020-2021 Executive Budget recommendations that impact the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, HESC.

I'm Dr. Guillermo Linares, president of HESC, and this morning I am joined by my executive vice president, Elsa Magee.

HESC is responsible for administering more than two dozen New York State student financial aid and college access programs that help to ease college costs for New York State students and families, including the first-in-the-nation Excelsior Scholarship and the newly implemented Senator Jose Peralta New York State DREAM Act. Collectively, these programs provide nearly $1.05 billion in financial aid awards to support the

college costs of more than 343,000 students attending public and private colleges inside our state.

New York continues to be a leader in college access, including the nation's first free-tuition program, the Excelsior Scholarship. This milestone program has opened the doors of higher education to thousands of working- and middle-class families making $125,000 or less, while helping students complete their degrees on time.

In addition to providing free college tuition to more than 20,400 students in its first year and more than 25,000 students in its second year, the numbers are coupled with other promising outcomes, including higher graduation rates, increases in the percentage of students taking 15 credits, and higher retention rates. This suggests that these students will incur less total costs in completing their degrees and begin their careers sooner.

To expand this transformational

opportunity to more middle-class families, the Governor has proposed to raise the Excelsior eligibility threshold from $125,000 to $150,000 for New York's families. By increasing the threshold, more than 230,000 -- or nearly 58 percent -- New York resident students will be able to attend SUNY or CUNY tuition-free.

But it's not just Excelsior. New York spends over $1 billion each year on aid for the financially neediest students through TAP, Opportunity Programs, and the Aid for Part-Time Studies program. New York ranks first in the nation in support for undergraduate need-based student financial aid. And the recent implementation of the Senator Jose Peralta New York State DREAM Act has further opened the door to higher education, allowing thousands of undocumented New York State students access to TAP and all other state award and scholarship programs available to their citizen peers.

To date, nearly 75 percent of the reviewed applications have been determined

eligible to receive TAP, Excelsior, ETA and other New York State financial aid awards. Our investment in higher education continues to open doors to all New Yorkers.

In closing, Governor Cuomo is a leading voice in protecting access to higher education for everyone. Since 2012, funding for higher education has increased by nearly $1.8 billion -- 29 percent -- from $6 billion to $7.8 billion in the fiscal year 2021 Executive Budget. This investment includes nearly $1.3 billion for strategic programs to make college more affordable and encourage the best and brightest students to build their future in New York.

The Governor's recommendations for higher education programs continue to pave a path to an affordable and high-quality college education, and HESC is pleased to play a vital role in providing New York State students with a gateway to a successful academic and professional career.

Thank you, and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much. It's good to see you, both of you.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Same here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: How many students -- I think you said that there are 45,000 students who have gotten into Excelsior. In your testimony, in addition to providing tuition to more than 20,000 students in the first year and more than 25 {sic} students in its second year -- did that not refer to Excelsior?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: The second year is 25,000 students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Right. The first year was 20, and then it was 25. So is that --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Those are the first two years. We're in the third year.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Right. Out of those 45,000, how many students fell out of the program?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We don't --

we don't have that information at this point.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: It's a cumulative 25,000 are currently receiving. Between Year 1 and Year 2, some have graduated who received awards in Year 1. And then we have new --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Could you just pull that a little bit closer? Elsa, you're such a soft-spoken person.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: Sorry.

So the net number is 25,000 for the current year, and growing for 2019-2020.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Do we know how many students each year fall out of TAP eligibility because they haven't maintained their prescribed program of study?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: We can get you that data. I think what we find more with TAP is that there are fewer students who are failing to meet the standards for academic progress than there are who just don't come back for another term.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. Well, it would be helpful to know how that's going.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: Yeah, we can --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And also I am concerned about students who go into a scholarship program, they and their families assume that they will be without a debt on that portion. Obviously if they go to a school out of town, they're going to have a room and board cost. But they assume that their tuition is covered. And then they fall out of the program for any number of reasons, and it turns into a loan. Which, you know, sort of after the fact is a shock. It's like, you know, buying a car that was a gift from a relative who then says, You know what, you changed the oil, now you've got to pay for the car.

That's sort of like a little bit of a problem. It may be only for a very small percentage, but it is of concern to those individuals. And we've had that happen with students in the STEM scholarship who are unable to find work.

So what are the forbearances that are allowed -- and what are the hardships -- in

Excelsior, in TAP, and in the STEM program?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: I'd say, first, if there's a student who you know of who has had their award converted to a loan because they weren't able to find a job, they should contact us, because we do have -- there are qualifications under which they would not have to repay the loan.

So we do have provisions in the law for students who really cannot find a job in New York State, and other hardships that -- where it would not convert to a loan.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Are --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: And what I -- what I would add to that is that one thing that we -- in communicating with both SUNY and CUNY, for Excelsior students, be mindful of the 30 credits that they have to carry. There's been sensitivity to really lend, in the college where they attend, extra guidance and support and to be able to guide them to the possible way so that they don't lose the scholarship.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, you know,

stuff happens in life. And so a parent could die, which disrupts -- you know, in some ways college is the least of their problems, except they've gone for two years and then their parent dies, and then there's this upheaval. They may be sick themselves. A friend of mine has -- not going to a school in this state, but the kid had to withdraw because of a health problem.

So these things happen in real life. And I'm wondering how flexible we have -- you know, and whether there's on your website, if somebody has been looking and saying, hey, this looks like the right thing for me, and then it turns out it didn't work out, is there anything there that lets them know you don't have to know Assemblymember So-and-so or Senator So-and-so, that you can actually reach out to HESC for an amelioration of this -- what is a crisis?

If somebody -- and I -- we did a bill specifically because of some problems people had upstate on the STEM scholarship. It was very upsetting, and the reaction from

Executive -- members of the Executive who I spoke with about the veto around the STEM scholarship, doing something to change some of the postgraduate requirements, was, you know, not overly encouraging.

So how do people know that if they've had a crisis they can reach out to you? Is there something specific like "in the event of a problem, call us"?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: Well, what we do each year for anyone who's receiving a scholarship that has a post-graduate service requirement, we reach out to the students every year to see if they're still in the right program, et cetera. But if they're not when they respond back to us, that's the time that we really try to identify the reason for that and if they're really eligible for one of these hardship exemptions or not.

So we do have annual contact with these students to make sure they did attend for the year in the program, met those requirements, and if they're going to continue further or if there's a reason why

they were not able to remain in the program.

If it is medical hardship for a student or death of a parent, disability of a parent, disability of the student, those are all already exemptions that we take into account.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: And we look at it on a case-by-case basis. Obviously we maintain very close relationship and communication with colleges where the students attend. And, you know, extenuating circumstances may be health-related, they may be something unexpected but grave that may have impacted the student and their family. So it's on a case by-case basis.

But there are triggers. Because if you are receiving an Excelsior scholarship, obviously you don't want to lose it. If something comes underway, then you want to negotiate with your college and also with us. And we are very sensitive to when those circumstances come. But again, it's a case-by-case situation.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: But there are --

perhaps you can get us some information if in fact there have been scholarships that have turned into loans. I'm not sure how much of an issue it is.

But they contacted their Assemblymember, who then contacted me. So clearly somehow they didn't know that there was help through you all. So that's -- you know, we want to just make certain that when students think that we've made a pact with them and they've, you know, signed on and then they have a problem, they -- I just want to be sure they know. And, you know, we'll check the website. Maybe there's something there that should be added into this -- not where you have to hunt for it, like now you're in deep trouble, now you can call us. But something a little bit more closer up to where they're signing up for this but should there be a crisis, you can contact us. I mean, that I think would be helpful.

Thanks very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Good to see you again, Dr. Linares, Ms. Magee.

Eleven days ago I sent a letter to HESC, dated -- and it was emailed and I think regular mail. And it said, and I'll just read the first paragraph: "In anticipation of the February 4, 2020 budget hearing, I want to provide you with the opportunity to gather information because I will be asking questions relevant to HESC. I would like to avoid 'I'll get back to you' responses. If it's easier, substitute the calendar year instead of the academic or fiscal year."

I never got any of those answers. So I don't want to read you the questions that I gave you ahead of time. I'm looking at your testimony, and I don't see -- you know, I see sort of a sketchy response.

We want to know about the DREAM Act, Enhanced TAP, Excelsior, and how it's working -- the number of students that are applying, the number that are rejected -- broken down by program -- the number that are

rejected and the reason that they're rejected. And all of these questions I think should be answered in anticipation of budget negotiations.

I have no further questions.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Madam Chair, I am in receipt of your letter, or of the questions that you posed. We want to be able to provide to you all the specific numbers that go with each one of the questions that you posed. I am prepared to give you a general sense of some of the questions that you posed now. And immediately follow up with you, responding with specific numbers that we are looking into.

As you understand, the DREAM Act is just being rolled out now, so the numbers are fluid, but we are preparing to respond with your request.

With regards to Excelsior, we do have the numbers for the first and second year in general terms. We do have a clear sense now of where the third year will take us, which we fully anticipate we are now at 28 -- over

28,000 students will benefit from Excelsior. By the time this fiscal year -- the school year ends, we fully anticipate about 30,000 students will be receiving the Excelsior Scholarship.

I can tell you that the projected funding for Excelsior is around 120 million to cover the program. That is the projection that we have.

I can share with you that the specific question that you asked regarding the DREAM Act -- first let me preamble, before I give you the number, to share that we had a very successful rollout for the DREAM Act. We were aggressive in approaching the vast network of organizations that provide services to immigrant communities and engage them, understanding how important it was to address the fear factor that so many Dreamers and immigrant communities, with aggressive federal intervention, have.

And we engaged those institutional -- along with our partners, CUNY, SUNY, and other universities, in helping prepare a

simplified application for the Dreamers. Bear in mind that many of them are not experienced filling out financial aid applications, so we wanted to simplify it.

The other thing we did was to change the platform to address the issue of fear but also safety, and also confidentiality with them. We did away with Social Security numbers, which is the system we have to provide financial aid across the state, and we now use ID numbers for students. That was quite an undertaking. And in an eight-week time frame we launched the application, also crafted guidance, step by step, for the students to be able to successfully apply. And over 5,000 Dreamers applied for the scholarship.

Of those that we have reviewed thus far, 75 percent are eligible to receive financial assistance, primarily through TAP, but also a number of them were able to apply for Excelsior and ETA. The vast majority, though, TAP.

But we are now in the middle of

reviewing all of those applications. Given how short a time frame we had, I have to say the rollout has been successful, and we have worked very closely, again, with many partners to make sure that any issue -- we have no issue whatsoever in terms of the rollout or the program. And whenever we had any issue or concern, they were addressed as we needed.

SENATOR STAVISKY: That's why I sent the letter.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah. Regarding the other question that you posed, which I'd like to respond to now, in terms of the time frame for applying for Excelsior, once we do the residency and the income questions, we are able to have a 48-hour turnaround for the majority of those that apply, particularly if they're freshmen.

If they have been attending school previously, we then have to rely on the college that they attended to provide that information.

And for the DREAM Act, once a Dreamer

submits an application and fulfills all the requirements, we have a response, a turnaround of 10 days to be able to get back to them.

SENATOR STAVISKY: You will provide the information.

Let me ask a question. I understand that the appropriation on the DREAM Act, as an example, is about 27 million, something like that. What happens if the money is not expended in that particular budget year? What happens to the unused money that has been appropriated?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, the application for the DREAM Act is year-round. So we've seen over 5,000 have applied, but this is an ongoing process.

SENATOR STAVISKY: That's not my question. My question is what happens if you do not allocate all of the $27 million?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: Those are General Fund dollars.

SENATOR STAVISKY: What happens to the money? Does it go back to the General Fund,

does it go into your -- is it reappropriated? What happens to it?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: The funds will stay in the General Fund if they're not utilized --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Right, in the General Fund.

(Overtalk.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: They'll stay in HESC --

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: Yeah, they're there and that's where they would remain.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: But if there are awards that are owed in the future for this current year, there are reappropriations. So the funds -- the student would still get the payment, correct.

SENATOR STAVISKY: It doesn't go back to the General Fund.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: It -- it's in the General Fund. It's never come to us, it's paid out of the General Fund in all instances. So it would sit there.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Through the colleges where the Dreamers attend.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Mr. Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you for being here and taking the time to talk to us about these really important issues.

Just, I know, with Senator Stavisky's issues, how many people applied for the DREAM Act?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: How many people applied?

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: This year for --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: This year.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: -- Excelsior or DREAM?

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: DREAM.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: DREAM. Over 5,000 initiated the application.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Right. And how

many people applied for --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Seventy-five percent of those completed.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: When you say "completed," they were awarded? When you say "completed," what do you mean?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: There are 5,000 completed applications.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And those 5,000 were awarded TAP?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Mostly TAP has been awarded for those that have been processed. And we're currently in the process of --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Of those 5,000, how many were rejected?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: So 5,000 have completed applications. Some are pending review. Of the ones that have been reviewed, 75 percent -- it's really 73 percent -- of the reviewed applications have been deemed eligible.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And how many have been reviewed?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: We've had -- about 4,000 of the 5,000 have been reviewed. So we have about 2100, 2200 students who have already been deemed eligible for --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So out of 5,000, 2100 or 2200 have been deemed eligible.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: Yeah. And some of those -- we have about a thousand that really have not been reviewed yet. So they could also be eligible. And students are continuing to apply as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

How many people have applied for Excelsior?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: About 52 -- this year?

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: This year.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: About 52 -- over 52,000 have applied. We have identified eligible about 28 -- over 28,000.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

Have you thought about -- we've heard a lot around TAP being at an insufficient level at this point, with tuition over

$7,000. Would you advocate increasing the TAP award for students?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, as you know, TAP is the bulk of the funding that we provide across the state, nearly a billion dollars. And of course I understand that there are discussions taking place about how best to use or change the TAP --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Do you believe TAP should go up for students?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: The need, for students, is always there. We -- we have specific populations that could benefit from that. But the answer is yes, but it's a question that the Legislature and the Governor need to address.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

And I'm wondering, the TAP dollars, what percentage of it goes to for-profit schools, nonprofit schools, versus public schools?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, we can provide you with a breakdown of --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: That would be

great.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: -- of all of that breakdown. You know, across a billion dollars is significant in all three sectors, the for-profit, nonprofit and also --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And do you maintain default rates for all three sectors separately?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I'm sorry?

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Do you maintain default rates for all three sectors separately?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: Not by sector. We have, by colleges, default -- cohort default rates by college.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I'm sorry, I couldn't hear that.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: We have cohort default rates by college but not by sector.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Not by sector, but you do by college. And how far out do you do? Do you do three years or do you do five and 10 years?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: It's a three-year

look.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Do you keep information five and 10 years out as well?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: No, the national -- we use the national formula, and it's always a --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: But if they're not paying back, you don't -- you don't have any data that says what happens after three years? There's nothing that you maintain?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: We don't.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And is there a reason you don't, just to see post-three years how people are doing with their loan repayment?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: We don't -- we don't touch all of the students who have student loans. We only have information on students who either got loans with us, now going back more than 10 years ago, or --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So why don't you just maintain that record five, 10 years out so we know past the three years how people are doing just with your loans? It would be

great to have that information as well.

Yeah, I'd appreciate, if you have that information, it would be great for you to gather it.

And I know my time is up, so thank you both.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you.

Senator Jim Seward.

SENATOR SEWARD: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And Dr. Linares, Ms. Magee, thank you for being here.

In terms of the rollout of the DREAM Act program, am I correct in saying that the undocumented students do not have to fill out the FAFSA forms?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: That's correct.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: That's correct.

SENATOR SEWARD: Now, my question is, how is income eligibility being verified for students who receive a -- you know, pursuant to the DREAM Act? Is there an income eligibility check?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah. They self-report and fill out an affidavit specifying, if they have income, what that income is. And that's a provision that we provide within the application process. And so it's a self-reporting because there's no way of knowing whether they generate income or not. But we use that to determine eligibility.

SENATOR SEWARD: So that's part of the application process, is what you're saying?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes. Yes.

SENATOR SEWARD: Can you share with us how many individuals have applied for financial aid because they qualify under the DREAM Act? How many students have applied for financial aid because they qualify?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: The vast majority -- we anticipate, because we don't have the final numbers, because we are in the process of reviewing all of the applications.

But we -- of those who complete all the requirements that they have, and after we have done the review of those, we find about

75 percent of those that we complete the review are found eligible for financial aid.

SENATOR SEWARD: Thank you. No further questions.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Assemblymember Pichardo.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: Good afternoon, EVP Magee and Dr. Linares {in Spanish}.

So I just want to make sure, just out of curiosity, is there a sense or a way where we can -- this committee in our respective houses can receive the exact number of applications, the failure rate in terms of applications for both Excelsior and for the Jose Peralta DREAM Act, by any chance?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: Okay. We'd love to see those numbers. Because again, I know that -- first of all, sir, appreciate your service, and you and I both served with Jose. And, you know, if he wasn't around, if he wasn't here with us, he would be here

asking these same questions of us. So, you know, it's important that we make sure that this program is successful and that, if there is a slack of funding or a lack of funding, that we are able to make up the shortfall.

So in terms of just asking, what else do we need to make sure that every single eligible student that is eligible for not only Excelsior but for DREAM Act, that they get the word out? How else can we be helpful in that endeavor?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: That's a very good question. Because, you know, as the original sponsor when I was in your chair of the DREAM Act in 2011, this program is close to my heart.

So my biggest fear, as we had it finally approved, thanks to you, is that the aggressiveness with which Washington is approaching particularly our state brings to higher levels the level of fear in many immigrant families and Dreamers. So that's why we were so aggressive in engaging trusted institutions across the state, knowing that a

large portion of undocumented families and students find themselves in the five boroughs and also Long Island, Westchester, but they're also present in other parts of the state. And engaging in a proactive way with those diverse institutions working with immigrant families was key and instrumental in approaching the number that we have received so far.

We have to continue to spread the word. And this is now a renewed effort that we're undertaking using all media that is accessible, TV, but by and large the ethnic media and also the community-based organizations across the state. Because the only way to address the fear factor is really to have the word of mouth but also trusted individuals and institutions.

And so having Dreamers know that when they provide information to us, it comes to us and it is highly confidential by law, federal and state, and that that information goes nowhere. The only connections we've made as an agency is to the institution where

they're attending to get a degree, for the purposes of providing the financial aid. And that alone goes a long way in them not being hesitant and concerned about applying when they're undocumented under these circumstances.

So we are engaged in a campaign and using all those that can help us make sure that every Dreamer that's eligible to attend one of our universities has that opportunity without fear.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: Well, thank you. And again, I want to reiterate my point to you, Dr. Linares, that we would love to -- if we can share those numbers with the committee. Just obviously the raw totals, not confidential information, just to see how we can continue to support Dream specifically and making sure that it's a successful program.

And thank you for your time and your service.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

To the Senate, Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dr. Guillermo Linares, let me thank you for your leadership. Obviously we -- you and I go back a long way. Community school boards, fighting for the children in District 6. I remember loud and clear when parent voters -- parents were allowed to vote even if they were noncitizens. And we, along with other community leaders, registered 10,000 parent voters to vote in school board elections. And so --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: In three months.

SENATOR JACKSON: Three months. So you've been a fighter, and I think you're in a great position to help students to access higher education.

I think you may have been here earlier when I asked about looking at the budget as far as the decrease in the Higher Education Corporation's funding. Have you -- your budget has been decreased, am I understanding, yes or no?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I'm not aware that that's the case. In fact, what my understanding is that is -- there is an increase in terms of the funding for the programs that we administer. And in terms of our operation as an agency, we're whole.

SENATOR JACKSON: You're whole?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. Because I think it's so important that students have the opportunity to go into higher education. Obviously they indicate this is the Empire State. Someone said to me, we need this to be the progressive state, that Governor Cuomo says he's progressive, so let's call this a progressive state and make sure that our children receive a progressive education and not the opportunity for a sound, basic education which is not being funded -- which has been challenged in the courts and we won. So obviously that's important for me, and you know that.

But with respect to your subject area -- and I'm sorry I walked in late, I was

in conference dealing with the presentation on education. Can you tell me what effect, if any -- to the best of your knowledge, what effect does it have on children, students going into higher education if in fact they do not receive a good education? What effect does that have on them entering college and life beyond?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, the Governor usually says that a college degree today is what 50 years ago a high school diploma was. And never in the history of our country has there been such an urgent need in getting a two- or a four-year degree and beyond for the workforce demands that we have. And earlier we had both CUNY and SUNY chancellors speaking to that.

Sixty-five percent of the jobs that are most promising in terms of income when you hit the workforce require -- 65 percent require a college degree. And so we cannot afford, when we have a student enter the doors, to not to get to the finish line. So that's why one of the things that we're doing

now in a very aggressive way is to engage K-12 -- but I say to K to 3rd purposely because it is not engaging only the guidance counselors in the high school level, but if by fifth or sixth grade there has not been engagement with our young people about planning and expecting to attend college, it's too late. So we need to really engage K-12, but also engage other partners at the higher education level.

SENATOR JACKSON: Sure. So with respect to your agency, what is the primary role of your agency as far as to help students get into college?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I am -- I am working -- when I arrived to my agency three years ago, I found that it did a very good job processing scholarships and grants and so forth. I have now engaged in trying to make the agency a service-oriented agency for students and families, and by extension communities, leveraging as much communication as possible, a strategy in communication leveraging the new technology that we have.

We're having soon a director of communication coming on board, because the 27 programs that we have to provide financial aid and provide assistance to students -- the information of those programs needs to be in the hands of students and families. And they need to be aware of what exists for them, what's available to them, in order for us to be fully successful.

So it's shifting the agency to be service-oriented to students and families, working closely with very trusted and strong partners that we have -- CUNY, SUNY, the private colleges --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Guillermo, I'm going to cut you off so that the Assembly can ask you more questions.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Dr. Linares.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Assemblymember Ra.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good afternoon,

Dr. Linares. Good to see you.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Good to see you.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I just have a quick question, and if you don't have this information, perhaps you can get it to us. But last year there was a new kind of small scholarship that was put into the budget, the Child Welfare Worker Incentive Scholarship and the Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness Program, which was designed as, you know, an incentive to an industry that's having a lot of trouble with recruitment and retention of staff.

And if you'd be able to get us some information just in terms of -- you know, they're looking to expand that; I think there's a need there. But just in terms of how many people have participated in these programs, how many have applied for these programs, just to get a real sense of what the demand is for those programs.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Be glad to send you that information.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Continuing with the Assembly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Assemblymember Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

Good afternoon. I have a couple of questions that really go to TAP and our use of TAP. Obviously there's the TAP gap that we've been talking about, but I'm also concerned about part-time TAP and -- part-time TAP and how our policies require students to be a full-time student for a year before they can access part-time TAP, instead of the other way around.

Because we know so many students start school -- and often in community colleges it is the entryway for 75 percent of students with disabilities, is to begin their college careers, postsecondary careers in a community college, and they are pretty much foreclosed from taking advantage of TAP if they are starting out part-time.

Can you give me some sense of the

decision-making behind that and what you're doing to look at that issue?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I'm going to ask Elsa to respond to this specific question, but we also have the part-time scholarship that we just initiated, right, which complements those students who need financial aid to -- because they attend part-time.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: But specific to students with disabilities, they do not need to meet the full-time requirement to receive TAP. So for any student who has a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act, they -- it doesn't matter whether they start off part-time or they can enroll for 12 credits, they are always eligible for TAP. And we'll just prorate so that they continue to receive the award while they're in attendance at school.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And I know there had been an issue where they would be foreclosed after four years if they needed additional years, and that has been fixed.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: That would be prorated so they'd get it for as many years as they --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: That's the way it works for Excelsior also.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: But outside of students with disabilities, there are still plenty of students who start off in community colleges who can't access TAP unless they go full-time for a year.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: But as Dr. Linares said, for students we do have the part-time scholarship program for students attending a SUNY or CUNY college, where they can continue to take anywheres from three to 11 credits, and they can receive $3,000 under that program.

And then there's also the Aid for Part-Time Studies Program, where there's $14 million available, and that's administered by the college directly as well, for part-time students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And how do students find out about this? How do

students find out about this?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: The colleges --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: The availability of these programs, how are they communicated to students? Because -- and obviously if they're beginning -- you know, how is that information getting down to the high schools, for example, to help parents to know that this is a resource available to their children?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: I think, interestingly, we don't typically market part-time programs to high school guidance counselors. But we can begin doing that, certainly.

The schools -- we work directly with financial aid officers, and they tend to be -- because the students are there in their offices. They know about our programs, and they're usually the ones -- they administer the Aid for Part-Time Study Program right on their campuses. So they're usually the ones, when they see that a student is part-time and meets the eligibility requirements, they make

the students aware of those requirements.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And how many students have accessed that part-time scholarship program?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: Part-time scholarship? I'd have to get you the actual numbers.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. I'd be interested in learning more about that.

Thank you.

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: Sure.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly continues.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblymember Fahy to close.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

Thank you, Dr. Linares, it's good to see you here, former colleague. And thank you for all your service here and at HESC.

I want to share -- just briefly share the concerns about the expansion of TAP and the serious and growing need for TAP. So I just -- I'm not going to reiterate some of the comments, but even the part-time TAP I

know is something very much in demand. So thank you for all you can do to try to address that, as well as the demand across the board for the financial aid.

I have a smaller question, and happy to follow up with you on it. The master's and teachers program, it's a bill that I've had the last few years to try to expand that. And if I understand correctly, it's -- the number of scholarships awarded for that master's and teachers program has kind of held steady, I think it's allocated at $5 million. It hasn't broken a million dollars. And yet, as you know, we have a very serious teacher shortage, and I think it could be quite instrumental in helping teachers.

We've also added that not just public universities could access that, but private nonprofits could as well. Do you happen to know where -- it seems to be consistently around that 60 range. Do you know where -- is it just that certain universities are marketing it better, or is there something that we can do to increase those numbers,

given that we haven't even broken the million dollars, yet we know there's a need for those master's degrees?

HESC EXEC VP MAGEE: We have not really focused so far. But as Dr. Linares said, we are getting a new communications director in, and this is one of the programs where we really want to work with SUNY and CUNY at their colleges that are educating our teachers, to make sure that the students do know about it, because we do know that we can award 500 each year, and we're not at that mark yet.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Yes, that's right, up to 500, and I think it's allocated at 5 million, yet we're in and around the 60 range.

Again, I have the bill to try to expand that to make sure that we are using those monies, given the critical shortages. I welcome the opportunity to follow up with you to see which schools are using it, and maybe it's somewhat of a marketing issue, as well as I would contend an expansion of that

program.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah. Part of what we want to do is really raise awareness of all of the programs that we have, whether it is Get Off Your Feet or this particular program, just to raise awareness about them that they are there to take advantage of, and this is a big priority.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank you very much for your testimony here today.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You are now free.

(Laughter.)

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

(Discussion off the record.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Next up, Andrew Pallotta, NYSUT president, along with Frederick Kowal, president of United University Professions, and Barbara Bowen, president of Professional Staff Congress. And there might be a fourth -- Alithia Rolon, NYSUT legislative director.

Good afternoon.

MR. PALLOTTA: Good afternoon, Chairperson Krueger, Chairperson Stavisky, Chairperson Glick.

I first commend you for your stamina. This is amazing, and we've heard some great testimony today.

I am Andy Pallotta, president of New York State United Teachers. We represent 600,000-plus members around the state involved in education and healthcare. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am joined by Fred Kowal, UUP president, and also Barbara Bowen, president of the PSC. They will testify today, and I will make sure that I do not repeat too many things that we've heard for the last day.

So public higher education, as we all know, provides a pathway out of poverty and into the middle class for so many families throughout New York State. We've heard how many folks have gone through the system, and I would start off by saying I went to Kingsborough Community College and then

Brooklyn College for my master's in education.

When the state doesn't invest in public education, it's harmful to all of our students and our communities. Worse still, these effects most strongly impact low-income communities, and thus this impact is borne by those who can least afford to shoulder it. This year the Executive Budget once again holds SUNY and CUNY's instructional core budgets flat from last year. The negative impact of all this is too familiar to us and is felt by our students and the educators in the field.

When we refer to investment, we are asking the state to cover all mandatory costs, which include collective bargaining increases, energy and other inflationary costs, as well as tuition credit waivers. Without state funding to cover these rising costs, SUNY and CUNY are forced to absorb them, which often necessitates reductions in academic programs and student supports. We would like to thank you for continuing to

support the legislation that requires the state to reimburse all mandatory costs.

At this time I'll just discuss quickly about community colleges, and I thank you for your support for these campuses around the state. As you well know, community colleges educate and prepare students for the workforce and provide the necessary foundation for students moving on to four-year campuses and universities or into the workforce. They often collaborate with regional businesses and employers to develop and provide training to access specific local workforce needs.

The Executive Budget proposes flat funding per FTE for community colleges, which will likely force many campuses to raise tuition and/or eliminate programs and student services.

We believe now is the time to provide baseline funding to financially stabilize our campuses. Accordingly, we are asking for a base aid increase of $250 per FTE and for SUNY community colleges. In addition to the

$250 FTE, we are also continuing to advocate for the hybrid FTE funding methodology for SUNY community colleges that would provide funding based on a model that will insulate them from enrollment fluctuations. This methodology will provide our SUNY community colleges with some level of security and allow them to strategically plan for the future, as well as provide them with additional support.

And before I wrap up, I wanted to talk to you about the need to eliminate the TAP gap. We've heard a lot about this today, and I'm glad that everyone -- everyone -- seems to be talking about the TAP gap today, so this is excellent. And this has resulted in serious educational inequality issues within SUNY and CUNY. The nature of the tuition credit is such that schools that serve poorer communities where students are more likely to receive the maximum TAP award are forced to bear the heaviest hits to their operating budgets.

We appreciate the state's desire to

increase student access to public higher education, and we must focus on providing the funding to preserve and enhance the quality of the education offered by CUNY and SUNY. We understand that the table target typically allotted to higher education is limited and does not allow for new investments after funding is restored to programs such as student Opportunity Programs.

Also, NYSUT is aggressively pursuing a campaign to secure stable revenue streams to fund the futures of our students. It is time to close the ever-widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. It is time to hold billionaires and ultra-millionaires accountable and demand that they pay their fair share in taxes. Funding generated from these revenue streams could be used to make much-needed improvements and investments in education and help reverse the years of flat funding and ensure that we are providing the students with a first-rate education.

We have much polling to support the public support for taxation, and I will now

turn it over to Dr. Fred Kowal.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Very well-timed.

MR. PALLOTTA: That was -- I practiced all day.

(Laughter.)

DR. KOWAL: Thank you, Chairperson Krueger, Chairperson Weinstein, Chairperson Stavisky, Chairperson Glick, members of the Senate Finance Committee, Assembly Ways and Means Committee, and the Higher Education Committees. I would like to thank you for the opportunity for United University Professions to testify on the 2021 Executive Budget for higher education.

My name is Dr. Fred Kowal, and I'm the president of UUP. And I do have the distinct honor and privilege of representing more than 37,000 academic and professional faculty and staff doing their work across New York State at SUNY.

With regard to the Executive Budget proposal, quite simply, the Governor's proposed budget fails to provide the necessary funding for SUNY. The spending

plan is essentially flat, which will only make things worse for our cash-tight campuses. A 3 percent increase for public higher education is earmarked for the cost of state fringe benefits, an increase in capital bonded costs, and a planned expansion of the Excelsior Scholarship Program.

We heard a great deal this morning from the chancellor, Chancellor Johnson, concerning the need for philanthropic -- philanthropy, sorry. I should have known how to pronounce it, I heard it so often.

As a state we must never, never become dependent on private sources of money to accomplish the important public mission of our state universities. This has never been more evident than in a newly proposed two-to-one capital construction matching program, a SUNY budget request proposal that was then incorporated in the Governor's proposal.

This proposal will divide SUNY campuses into groups of haves and have-nots: Campuses that can afford to access the

matching funds, and campuses that can't. This will create a vicious cycle. Campuses with private dollars will utilize the match and build impressive new buildings, hopefully attracting new students. Those that can't raise the funds will continue to deteriorate and see their enrollments decline. A system will result that will become more and more tuition-dependent, and these campuses will fall further and further behind.

We are not a quasi-public higher education system. We are the State University of New York, a public higher education system. The time has come to remind and continue to remind the Chancellor and the Governor that these are their campuses, their hospitals, but at the same time, this is the people's SUNY. We are a system, not a collection of franchisees.

We have heard a great deal specifically in terms of funding about the TAP gap. The TAP gap in fact is a major burden for our campuses. Allow me to share with you a couple of specific cases as to how

the TAP gap has impacted, for instance, the campus at Plattsburgh, which is suffering right now under a $3 million deficit. The TAP gap there in the last year was slightly over $2 million. If it is addressed, that would diminish deeply the gap that that campus faces.

My home campus of Cobleskill has a $2 million deficit. Its TAP gap is approximately $1 million. Again, a long way to solving the budget problems facing our campuses could be achieved by addressing the TAP gap.

I would be remiss if I did not share with you the serious situation facing the SUNY hospitals. Once again, the Governor has chosen to propose a budget that includes no money in what is referred to as the "SUNY subsidy." We need to recall that when a patient comes to a SUNY hospital or an academic medical center, regardless of that individual's ability to pay, the color of that person's skin, the country of that person's origin, the level of that person's

education, all will receive the best care possible anywhere.

However, when we look at what has happened over the last couple of years in terms of the subsidy, there have been direct impacts on patient care in the hospitals. Just this past week -- today, as a matter of fact, I received word from our chapter president at Upstate Medical University that in one of the trauma care centers there was a leak in the ceiling which was taken care of by the use of a trash bag and a trash barrel to catch the water.

There is such a demand for the trauma and emergency room services at Upstate that patients are being kept in physical therapy gymnasiums and in the hallways. This is totally unsafe, while at the same time undermining, for instance, HIPAA requirements that these institutions must follow.

The hospitals need the subsidy, we need to support them, it is part of the central core mission of SUNY. And that mission calls on all of us to be committed to

building a better future for our students and our state.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: You're knocking it out of the park on the timing.

MR. PALLOTTA: Professors.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: It's a high mark -- a high bar now, Barbara.

(Laughter.)

DR. BOWEN: I'll try. I'll try.

Good afternoon -- almost good evening -- Senate Chairpersons Krueger and Stavisky and Assembly Chairperson Glick. And thank you all, those of you who are here, those of you who have been here for most of the time, for your time and your questions.

And also thank you for your support for CUNY, for the nearly half-million students we educate, and for the 30,000 faculty and staff whom I represent. Legislators on both sides of the aisle have fought to increase funding in the past for

community colleges, you've protected Opportunity Programs year after year, and you've understood the need to stabilize the public funding for CUNY and SUNY senior colleges, and we thank you for that.

I'm proud to be here with my colleagues and also two colleagues from the PSC, Andrea Vasquez and Mike Fabricant. We deeply appreciate, the PSC, your efforts to increase funding for CUNY and your support last year -- and the Governor's support -- for the PSC's landmark contract that we just settled. And you've heard quite a bit about it.

But I need to tell you that CUNY cannot withstand another year of New York State's current funding policy. New York's policy on CUNY funding is planned poverty, impoverishment by design. State budgets that consistently fail to cover even mandatory costs and collective bargaining increases amount to a policy of sabotaging CUNY and sabotaging CUNY students. There's no other way to say that. Not everyone here today has

said that. But year after year of underfunding adds up to a policy. And that policy is deliberate underfunding for the students we teach and the students we love.

So to make up for missing state funding, CUNY either cuts resources or increases tuition or both. Neither approach is acceptable or sustainable. Incremental cuts and flat budgets may look innocuous, but repeated year after year, they amount to a policy of destroying the university's capacity to provide the education and support CUNY students need. On a per-student basis -- and I don't think you've heard this yet in all the statistics -- on a per-student basis, state funding for FTE students, adjusted for inflation, for CUNY senior colleges, has declined by 21 percent in the last decade alone.

How is a university supposed to continue to educate students when operating funds have been cut by more than a fifth, if one in five students cannot get into a class needed for graduation, if college libraries

have to close one day in five, if one in five full-time faculty positions is cut, if every advisor is responsible for hundreds more students, if buildings are dilapidated, roofs leak, rats and mold endanger the classroom, and students have to navigate around buckets catching rainwater as they try to make their way to class?

That any state would allow or even cause such shortfalls is regrettable, and I would say shameful. But it's especially so here in New York. This state prides itself on leading the nation in progressive policy, and in many areas it does. The Legislature, you showed last year that you could do things against the odds, you made breathtaking changes in policy. But in fiscal support for public higher education, that has yet to happen. New York is far from a progressive leader. It's actually failing CUNY students.

The consequences are heaviest for those least able to bear them. And you've heard about our students today, and we can say more later. And we know that you stand

with us, and you have stood with us. But this year we're asking for a higher level of commitment because nothing else will serve.

So we are calling on you to make sure that full funding for CUNY's essential needs is a priority -- one of the few priorities in your conference -- and that the leaders of each house take a stand in favor of the new revenue necessary to achieve it. We ask you to refuse to pass a budget -- I know this is a heavy lift -- refuse to pass a budget unless it includes new revenue from progressive taxation and covers CUNY's basic operating costs without raising tuition.

So the requests that we've made you've seen in our written material; they concentrate on funding the unmet mandatory needs. The basic year-to-year costs of our contract are not funded yet. The chancellor mentioned that he hopes that they will be funded in the final budget. We hope they will. But basic contract increases.

Filling the TAP gap. That is a gap at every college -- $8 million at Hunter,

$7 million at John Jay. Each of those places, the more students of economic need the college accepts, the more they are punished. That is a structural deficit; it should be removed.

We call on you to restore the legislative funding that you generously put in last year to increase the community college base aid. And let me just mention again this must be done without raising tuition. The tuition increase generates $36 million. The state should put that public money into a public university, should not extend the authorization for endless tuition increases.

And we certainly stand with UUP on the issue of capital. It should not be based on private funding match.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

First up, chair of Higher Ed for the Assembly, Deborah Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much.

We -- you know, those of us who are here and many who are in session now understand that the issue of the TAP gap is a very -- it's not going to get fixed in a year. We would like to see a plan to eliminate it in a shorter period of time.

But you've mentioned the collective bargaining costs, which fall to each campus. Do we have a figure for what needs to be added to cover that cost?

DR. BOWEN: CUNY gives a cost in their breakdown of mandatory costs that are unmet, and I'd rather use their figure since they've worked it up. And it can be divided by campus. And they give a figure for this year. But the increases across the board were the same ones that the state has insisted on, I'll say, for the other unions, a 2 percent increase.

But we were able to do a much bigger increase for adjuncts because of two things. We redistributed some of that money, and also we do have support from the Governor's office -- which is very important -- and from

the Mayor of New York City to pay adjuncts for hundreds of thousands of additional office hours, time with students. So that cost we're expecting to be funded in. And that's not visible on CUNY's sheet.

DR. KOWAL: And we're in the -- presently in the fourth year of our collective bargaining agreement. And similarly, we got the 2 percent increases. We also have had new minimum salaries established for adjuncts, and they go up every fall semester.

However, calculating what that is, again, I would take the same tack as my colleague Dr. Bowen, and that is I would depend on SUNY's number because we don't know how many of the adjuncts will be in the workforce and in our bargaining unit when those increases go through. So the calculation can be a little tricky.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: This is a more abstract question. We've heard that, you know, there are literally millions of New Yorkers who have gotten their education,

as I did, from CUNY or SUNY at a very reasonable cost. They're out there. The systems are in an awkward position to reach out to alumni and say "Write to the Governor and say there's not enough money," even though I wish they would. But, you know, they send me a very lovely little note that, you know, it was nice of you to go to Queens College, can you send us a check? And it's like, I can, I will, but you're not going to get very far on it, so.

But I do think that we have missed the boat on reaching out and having a concerted effort to reach out to alumni and ask them to participate. Maybe through, you know, some of your organizations you have some folks who have come through the systems. But you're located everywhere, and there should be some thought given to how we can harness and do an outreach program together -- I'm more than willing to participate in that -- in order to get people to speak up. I don't want to hear from somebody who's a very lovely individual, who's an ophthalmologist and I'm sure is

making a very good living, coming to me personally and saying, You have to save SUNY. And I've said back, I'm glad you've gone on for, you know, all of this additional training and education, but maybe you're the one who should be pointing out to the powers that be above me that you, in fact, are successful in paying your taxes at a higher rate because of this education.

So I know I'm speaking to the choir, but we haven't done it.

DR. BOWEN: I have an idea, if I may. I would love to work together. As the union, we have access, of course, to the addresses and emails of our members, but we don't to the alumni. The colleges have not shared those addresses. If they'd be willing to share them with you in a respectful, non-badgering collective effort to stand for CUNY, we would love to do that. We do collect alumni names when we can, and we reach out to people. One in 16 New Yorkers is a CUNY student right now -- and then think of how that multiplies with graduates and

workers. You know, every subway car you get on, there are probably eight people who are involved with CUNY.

So we would love to partner with you, and I say this quite seriously. It's a brilliant idea, and perhaps there's a way with the Legislature that would be respectful of people's privacy and not intrusive that we could draw on that very wide network of people who love this university. I mean, it changes lives. There are so many people who say: CUNY made my life, CUNY saved me. They should be a strong force with us. And I would love to partner with you in an appropriate way to do that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Toby Stavisky, Higher Ed chair in the Senate.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

As I was sitting here at the hearing this morning at 10:01 a.m., my email came in and it said "This is the weekend to be in Syracuse, Toby," and it tells me all the

reasons. And at the bottom it says, "Make a gift." Enough said. Let me get to my questions.

We've been hearing a great deal about the TAP gap. Are there any structural changes in the governance of CUNY and SUNY that we should look at to avoid this -- to mitigate, perhaps, some of the effects of the TAP gap?

DR. KOWAL: I would offer a couple of different ideas on that. I think it's an important question.

One of the problems at SUNY, and it has grown to be, I think, a very serious problem, is that -- and I use the term franchisees. Unfortunately, SUNY seems to be less and less of a system than a collection of semi-independent colleges that are left on their own.

And so the cases that I highlighted -- and that was just a couple, in the interests of time. These campuses are out there on their own dealing with, you know, enrollment challenges, in part because of where they're

located, far upstate, and then secondly because of the structure of the TAP program. And they take a lot of TAP students, a lot of our upstate campuses do, and they are also the ones that are suffering the most.

What we find is within SUNY, instead of there being a collective effort to address the structure of the TAP program so that we get rid of the ceiling in terms of what campuses get for full TAP awardees and all TAP awardees, there is instead, you know, a situation literally where campuses, if they fall into financial difficulty, are offered the opportunity to take loans from the system.

I don't understand that. SUNY is not a bank. SUNY is one university system. And if there are campuses or the system has the resources, then it must be used to assist those campuses who are taking more TAP students, more full-award TAP students, which means the students who can least afford to go to SUNY. And they're doing the good work, and they should be rewarded for that and not

punished.

So that would be the initial thing in terms of this structure that's become far too decentralized. And with SUNY, with this laissez-faire approach, until the campuses become really troubled economically or financially and then SUNY steps in and says, Well, if you want a loan, we will give you a loan. That is not how the SUNY system ought to operate.

DR. BOWEN: I would just add, if I may, that I think the main problem is -- at least as far as CUNY is concerned, is not in the governance of the university but in the structure of the law itself, which mandates that the students don't pay the cost above the maximum TAP award but the colleges absorb that cost, which is about $2,000 a person.

And so really it's the law that needs to change. The consequence I'm sure was unintended, and it's punishing the colleges for each student they take who's on a TAP or Excelsior award, and all the new DREAM Act students. So it was not the intended

consequence, and I think it really needs to be changed.

And I would also suggest that before the state considers an extension of the SUNY 2020 ability to raise tuition $200 every year in advance of the 2025 version, that we look at TAP. And that the tuition-granting authority to raise tuition should not be permitted, should not be incorporated this year. It should be done -- we think it should not be done at all, and it certainly shouldn't be done as a stand-alone before the rest of the law comes in.

MR. PALLOTTA: And this had been only an issue for the four-year campuses, and now the community colleges are also seeing the same thing. Because state support is 25 percent; it should be 40 percent. And the students are putting in more.

SENATOR STAVISKY: One quick question. Actually, I have another. Two quick questions.

The contract that was just signed by -- fortunately just signed and ratified by

Professional Staff Congress, are there any suggestions in terms of the payment or coverage for the mandated costs as well as some of the other costs, the rentals and -- you know, and the maintenance of effort, if you --

DR. BOWEN: Certainly the union -- the PSC and CUNY administration are united in calling for those costs to be covered. That is the cost across the board of across the board increases.

And in the past, what the colleges have had to do is sequester 2 percent out of their budgets to cover that anticipated cost. That means that something is being cut, or else tuition is being imposed, an increase --

SENATOR STAVISKY: That's my point.

DR. BOWEN: That is not fair. We -- the purpose of our contract was not to raise students' tuition. We are in solidarity with them.

Nor is it to cut another program, because the benefit of your raise is diminished if then you come to your

department and find that you have no Xerox paper and you can't hire anyone. You don't feel so -- that your raise is so valuable when your working conditions every day are sabotaging your work.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Assemblymember Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I want to really thank you all for highlighting some of the structural problems we have here and really advocating to deal with the TAP gap and raise the TAP payment for students.

I wanted to focus on a different topic, because we've heard a lot around mental health services for students and the dire need that we see students placed in, and the ration that currently exists. Can you tell us what's going on on campuses and what you're hearing from students around the lack of adequate mental health services and what impact that's having on our students across the state?

DR. KOWAL: Well, I would just basically share two things.

One is with the -- certainly with the economic stress that students are under, these issues have become more and more severe. We have heard, through the course of today, the electronic communication system for counseling, well, that's based at Upstate. And the amount of the money that is budgeted for that is only $700,000. The number of calls they get, you know, it's off the chart.

And so again, the lack of funding becomes a problem. And if we are serious in ensuring that students have the best possible setting for their education and for their lives, there needs to be a greater investment for that sort of resource.

DR. BOWEN: The national accrediting organization on psychological mental health counselors recommends at college a ratio of one counselor to 1,000 students, assuming that students have other forms of support -- one to a thousand.

At CUNY the current ratio is one to 2,700. So I think that tells a story.

Then add to that the fact that most of our students suffer tremendous odds, encounter tremendous odds. And of course the biggest stressor, one of -- the biggest, certainly, material stressor of all is poverty. So we strongly support the premise that there should be more mental health counselors.

But the union opposes the way that CUNY has proposed to address that, which is a kind of ironic imposition of a mental health and wellness fee, an additional $120 fee, that many students simply can't afford to pay. And when one of the biggest stressors is poverty, together with, you know, working at low-wage jobs, being a parent, the constant racism in our society -- and then to address it, you add a fee -- that's not the appropriate way to address it. So we need to -- the state needs to step up and invest there.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Well, thank you

for saying that. I agree that the fees aren't appropriate, and there are so many fees -- book fees, miscellaneous fees that TAP doesn't cover and students have to pay out of pocket. I think if we move towards reducing those fees, that would be great.

I know I'm out of time, but I want to ask you about looking for dedicated funding streams for CUNY and SUNY, what you think about having dedicated streams of funding that could go directly to our public higher education system.

DR. KOWAL: I think that Barbara put it best, in terms of the necessity for us to address the revenue side. If we are committed to a public good, which is what public higher education is, then the society must invest. And right now we have the resources to do it. It's just a matter of making sure that the instruments are put in place. And it's over time, it's past time for this to be done.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Robert Jackson, I didn't ask

you in advance, but I bet I know you do have a question.

SENATOR JACKSON: And you're right.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I know you very well.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

So very quick, I understand that there's been no increase in the budget this year compared to last year. So when it talks about maintenance of effort, is there enough money to run your programs and give all of the raises that educators rightfully deserve? Can you do that, in your opinion, without cutting back on staff and cutting back on programs?

DR. BOWEN: I'm not in charge of that, but my answer would be no. The budget is essentially flat. There's an increase in the fringe benefits part of the fringe benefit increase; $24.3 million is covered. There are some other increases the chancellor spoke

about to a program here and there. Those are all good.

But when the costs of rent and electricity that go up, when other licensing costs go up and are not covered, and when a 2 percent increase across the board for 30,000 people is not covered, that money has got to come from somewhere.

SENATOR JACKSON: So how much more money would you need in the budget -- I think in your testimony you said you needed --

DR. BOWEN: Right, we said 208 million for unmet mandatory needs and the TAP gap at the senior colleges. Just the unmet mandatory needs, the way that CUNY management puts them together, I think they have 126 million. So it's --

SENATOR JACKSON: And that's just to meet CUNY.

DR. BOWEN: Just CUNY. And that doesn't cover the community college base aid. This is a -- so for the community colleges, another 25 million.

SENATOR JACKSON: And with respect to

SUNY -- when the chancellor for CUNY was there, he talked about people in the district that were employees or graduated from CUNY. Well, there are four members of my family that have graduated from SUNY -- three from SUNY New Paltz and one from the University at Buffalo.

So with respect to the SUNY budget, how does that impact, from your perspective as the president of UUP, with respect to your staff?

DR. KOWAL: It's incredibly difficult to see any kind of optimistic future, I hate to say it, when I travel across the state. And I have visited all of the campuses many times, as the chancellor has said she has visited the campuses. I hope she's listening to what people are saying, because campuses are suffering. They have budgets that are requiring, even at the university centers, to have hiring freezes? There is not enough money to pay the necessary costs.

And when you look at the SUNY hospitals, as I described the situation just

at Upstate -- and Upstate is in good shape financially -- there is a real danger in terms of services not being done and, in terms of the hospitals, lives endangered. That's the reality.

SENATOR JACKSON: So here's a question for both of you. And I only have 19 seconds. With respect to the TAP gap, if in fact the proposal to continue tuition increase through '24-'25, if that was eliminated and we freeze it, what impact would that have on both CUNY and SUNY? That's my last question.

DR. BOWEN: It would freeze the amount of the TAP gap. Of course it's dependent on enrollment. But of course every time that the -- so it would freeze the amount of that. And the real solution, of course, is I would say to eliminate tuition. But certainly that would stop some of the growth.

SENATOR JACKSON: SUNY?

DR. KOWAL: Yeah, exactly. It would freeze the growth of the TAP gap. And that would be a help, but the gap would still remain in terms of lost resources.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Assemblymember Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Chair.

Just a quick question, because some of my other questions were asked. For Andrew, do you keep a number of how many of your members are SUNY or CUNY grads?

MR. PALLOTTA: Off the top of my head, I don't know. And we certainly -- we could certainly -- we don't because those records would be kept by SUNY in their HR offices, so we don't know where individual faculty members, for instance, get their terminal degrees or where they receive their undergraduate --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: No, it was just along the lines of the questions that Chairwoman Glick was asking about, you know, making sure that the masses realize what's at

stake here.

I mean, I went to SUNY New Paltz -- yay -- so I often get solicitations for --

MR. PALLOTTA: Right, when we're out in the halls of the Capitol and the LOB, we see the posters that say all these folks went to SUNY and all these folks went to CUNY. So we know that there's a lot out there, but we don't actually have that stat. That would be an interesting --

DR. KOWAL: We could survey members, but -- you know, and it's getting back to the earlier question. What I would like to see is for us to find those alumni of SUNY and those especially who are at the higher income levels and get them involved in a campaign where they exert pressure and say they are willing to pay more in taxes to support the public university system. I think that could go a long way to help as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Anyone else? I have just one question. So I'm reading a paper put out by the Center on Budget and

Policy Priorities, a well-respected liberal think tank, and it's showing me that all the states have cut funding for higher education over the last decade. But it's showing New York basically at the least cuts; we're like only down 2 percent.

So I'm wondering, besides the fact that we don't invest enough and we probably didn't 10 years ago either, are we spending it wrong? Because if you look at their data, we aren't doing as badly as most of the other 50 states. So I'm really curious whether we also think that when we have the money, we're not using it correctly for our colleges.

DR. BOWEN: No, I think what has to be factored in there is TAP. We'd have to look carefully at those statistics because many of them put TAP as the Governor's budget does, put TAP right in there as an allocation. And also as the Governor's budget does, as you know, puts any authorization for an increase in tuition as an increase in the budget.

So you are great at reading these, so we should look at them together. Because TAP

is a program that covers many students: 56,000 students at CUNY. New York has an unusual program with TAP -- remember, it goes to the private colleges and for-profit colleges as well as the public colleges. But that's where our spending is concentrated, and not in the operating budgets.

And that's why we're cutting classes. I mean, that's why at Queens College the semester began with telling them they'd have to cut a thousand seats out of basic English courses. I mean, we are hurting already, let along what would happen next year.

So I think we'd have to look at those figures and consider TAP in there.

DR. KOWAL: I think the other part of this is that some other states have just, you know, gone through some draconian cuts. We saw what happened at the University of Alaska, but other states where there have been massive cuts. And so, you know, if we set the bar low enough, then New York is going to look okay.

I think the other problem too is --

and we heard some pointed questions this morning concerning the issue of diversity in SUNY, in the faculty and staff specifically. One of the problems that we see all the time is because of the inability or the unwillingness of campuses to recruit and retain faculty members from communities of color -- and that means paying them competitive salaries because there's a great deal of demand across higher education for these highly skilled individuals. Which is why UUP has proposed taking the successful EOP program, providing a program like that specifically for medical education, to get more diversity into our medical schools and in the medical profession.

And by the way, I just want to make that note as well. Though we are thankful that the Governor did not cut the Opportunity Programs this year, I for one am not going to celebrate that. I think that, you know, having four straight years of flat budgets in Opportunity Programs is not a good thing. I think that what's necessary is for those

programs to grow. They're very successful, and they help address the issue of access.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you for all being with us here this afternoon. Appreciate it.

MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you.

DR. BOWEN: Thank you so much.

DR. KOWAL: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

All right. And our next is a panel of CUNY University Student Senate -- oh, I'm sorry, excuse me. Blair Horner, NYPIRG -- thank you -- before we get to the panel. And there may also be Santana Alvarado --

MS. ALVARADO: Hello.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Hello.

-- chairperson, NYPIRG. Sorry, I turned the page too quickly.

MR. HORNER: Ready?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes, when you're ready.

MS. ALVARADO: Good afternoon. My name is Santana Alvarado, and I am the chairperson of the New York Public Interest

Research Group's Student Board of Directors and a City University of New York Hunter College student.

With me today is Wali Ullah, a NYPIRG policy associate and a student at City College, as well as Blair Horner, NYPIRG's executive director.

NYPIRG is a statewide nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded by college students in 1973 to engage their peers in civic life. NYPIRG's broad programmatic work provides students with a range of opportunities to participate in public affairs and advance responses to social problems that matter most to them.

Our board of directors consists of college and university students elected from the State University of New York, CUNY, and independent college campuses with NYPIRG chapters.

Before I get into our testimony on behalf of NYPIRG, thank you so much for last year's approval of the Senator Jose Peralta DREAM Act. We worked closely with Senator

Peralta for years, and thank you for broadening financial aid eligibility to undocumented immigrant public college students.

You have our written testimony, and I'd like to underscore some recommendations for your consideration. In terms of tuition policy, as you will see in our testimony, the financial impact of New York's policy of annually increasing public college tuition has increased the costs of attending SUNY and CUNY by billions of dollars. Yet from anecdotal evidence that we've seen and heard, the state's commitment to maintain financial support has fallen far short.

As you will see in our testimony, public colleges across the state have reported declining services and cutbacks to meet the educational needs of students. In short, it looks like students are paying a lot more and not getting enhanced services. In fact, at least in some cases we are getting less. The clearest evidence of this problem is the TAP gap, which we urge you to

close.

Tuition hikes should be stopped. NYPIRG urges you to freeze college tuition rates and to reject the Governor's proposal for additional annual hikes for the next five years.

In terms of financial aid, as you will see in our testimony, there are a number of issues we would address. In our view, the most critical step that you can take is to modernize the state's TAP program. The current system creates campus-specific budget gaps resulting from the growing difference between the maximum TAP award and the mushrooming tuition costs.

In addition, deserving students, such as graduate students, have lost public support. TAP needs to be modernized to help today's college students to provide coverage for graduate and part-time students and incarcerated individuals, as well as other enhancements. Such changes will benefit both the public and independent sectors.

MR. ULLAH: We applaud the Governor's

proposal to maintain the funding levels for the state's various Opportunity Programs. Financial aid should, first and foremost, help low- and moderate-income college students and their families to make it through their studies.

As you know, there has been an annual budget dance, so to speak, in which the Governor proposes less funding for Opportunity Programs and the Legislature adds it back in. But the result has been simply status quo funding -- essentially a cut, when factoring in inflation.

The Governor's support for these programs is important. His plan opens the door to further enhancement of these incredibly successful efforts. Just a few observations from our written testimony. First-year retention, where a student re-enrolls for a second year, for SUNY senior college EOP students is 91 percent, whereas first-year retention students from the general student body at senior colleges in SUNY is approximately 84 percent.

Secondly, the six-year graduation rate for EOP students is 73 percent, whereas the rate for non-EOP students at SUNY is 68 percent.

Clearly these programs work, and they deserve additional support. And SUNY's ASAP should also be restored.

MS. ALVARADO: NYPIRG urges you to restore cuts to the community colleges.

As you will see in our testimony, the situation in CUNY and SUNY is dramatically different. The City University of New York has maintained low tuition and has a stable community college system. SUNY community colleges, on the other hand, have seen plummeting enrollments and have had to hike tuition in order to meet financial obligations. The CUNY system should not be penalized for its support and its efforts, and the SUNY system needs help. We urge restorations.

In addition, we urge restorations to SUNY and CUNY childcare programs, which are vital to students.

Lastly, we live in an era of rapid climate changes which could easily lead to climate catastrophe for the planet. We urge and support the sustainability efforts in both SUNY and CUNY as well as the independent college sectors.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

First up, Deborah Glick, Higher Education, Assembly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: You've heard that the TAP gap is an enormous amount of money. It's not going to happen -- if we were able to make adjustments, it would cost something like $50 million a year for several years.

Do you have thoughts about what -- how the government should view eliminating that?

MR. HORNER: Just to add, we talk about in our testimony that the best way to deal with it would be to restore the TAP program. Prior to SUNY 2020, the deal was when tuition went up, the maximum TAP award

went up, and you didn't have a TAP gap.

And so if it ultimately comes down to that, that would be our preference, and certainly in the short term to fill the gap with student resources is one way to sort of deal with it, but it does turn into sort of an annual problem. And as tuition goes up, the gap gets bigger and the hit to the colleges gets bigger. And you've heard the -- all morning, all afternoon, and into the evening how the TAP gap causes problems on college campuses, and we document some of that in our testimony.

But again, we think the best solution would be to just start dealing with the TAP program and do what it's supposed to do.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: NYPIRG over the years has done a very effective job of raising awareness of issues, and thank you for doing that. And I've talked to some of my friends in labor about how do we reach out to alumni, and some of the students -- not all -- many of the students are first in their family to go to school, but they may

have neighbors who are not.

Do you have suggestions or thoughts about what we can do to raise awareness and activate alumni to take a more active role in advocating? Since you've obviously been able to get students engaged.

MS. ALVARADO: Right. So I'm graduating, upcoming in June, so I'll soon be an alumna. And I don't know, I feel personally on campus, as a student, there's a lot of isolation going on about what we can talk about and what we feel like we're going through alone versus other students.

And I feel like that would continue on into alumni realm. I feel like people are dealing with trauma from going to CUNY and SUNY. They're dealing with anxiety and they're dealing with not having college work out the way they thought it would in the economy as it changes and as, you know, the market changes and technology changes.

So I feel like engaging them on like how they actually felt about going to CUNY and SUNY, I think you'd be a little surprised

about what people say about the colleges that you all went to. And that shouldn't be -- you know, you shouldn't just reach out to alumni to be like, Yo, we want to know what you have to say and we want your money -- we want to actually know how they felt and what they would have changed. Because we're encouraging students from high school to go to CUNY and SUNY, and are we going to still have those same problems when they graduate?

So I think just meeting them heart to heart and saying, honestly, I'm sorry you had to go through what you went through when you were a student.

MR. HORNER: Just --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Do you have to prove that you have health insurance when you go to school?

MS. ALVARADO: Yes? No, I don't believe I've had to prove that I've had health insurance. I also don't go to my campus at all to get any health services.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, I'm just wondering that -- this institution of a fee

for mental health services was the latest little wrinkle. So I'm wondering whether or not students are being asked to pay a fee for which they already have coverage, and like what's that about.

MR. HORNER: Again, we -- there's a lot of issues with various fees. I mean, as you know, under state law and federal law, people are covered up to the age of 26 and 29 respectively, if their parents have insurance and they're willing to pay the rider to do it. If they're low-income, they're eligible for Medicaid.

The fee is, you know, certainly from our view the kind of thing that should be coming out of tuition. And if you're going to have tuition, which we don't even like that either. But not that it would be a separate fee.

So again, I defer to their experience in college. And I'm not, as you can tell. But in terms of sort of the structure of those issues, that's the way we'd look at it.

Let me just mention one quick thing

about the alums. You asked the unions about it before. The tricky part is how do you get the list. And then in an organization, little organization like ours, how do you work through the students to get to build a list.

What we have done in the past, which has been somewhat successful, is working with the community near the campus that benefits from the existence of it, in the same way as you would with any large employer. There's many, many, many small businesses. And because they're in a contained geographic area, it's easier to get to them than it is to a diffuse alum situation where, you know, people could be anywhere and it's hard to track them down and may be more expensive.

So that's the way we've sort of tried to attack in terms of broadening the sort of the coalition effort around these issues, is to look at the various community elements that are connected to the campus itself and close enough by that you could get them activated. And they understand why it's

important.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Toby Stavisky, Senate Higher Ed.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

I know NYPIRG very well, as Blair knows, and I know you not only are speaking for the college students, but you've also done a lot of work over the years in terms of environmental issues.

And how do you -- any suggestions for SUNY and CUNY and the independent colleges in terms of protecting our environment, sustainability issues?

MR. HORNER: Yeah, we offered some detailed testimony on that, I think it was last month or the month before. I'll gladly send it to you, Senator, in terms of these ideas. I mean, it's -- it's the -- I mean, when I talk to people on colleges, this is the single biggest thing they bring up because it's their future. If you believe science, their future is threatened.

And so it's the same across the board,

no matter what institution we're in, that's what you hear the most, is about climate change. And so we had specific suggestions reacting to I think the SUNY chancellor's ideas in the hearings that occurred, and I'm glad to get them to you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly? Anyone else?

MR. HORNER: Could I just mention one quick thing before I go? Assemblymember Epstein brought up the questions about the breakdown in TAP. The HESC annual report which is out breaks it down very detailed in terms of numbers of recipients by sector, by how much money they get.

And there was an issue brought up about how many -- the percentage of people that benefit from the Excelsior program that apply. Syracuse.com put out an analysis a few months ago that showed about half of the people who applied for Excelsior get it, and of the remaining half, half of them do not get it for other reasons. So about a quarter

of the people who apply receive it.

And then we have some interesting data on Excelsior on page 12 of our testimony which looks at the current academic year and compares it to last year, to look at the numbers that might be useful in terms of your deliberations.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

MS. ALVARADO: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Now we go to a panel of CUNY University Student Senate: Timothy Hunter, Nicole Agu, and Juvanie Piquant.

Hi. You're sharing five minutes, so make sure that you don't cut each other off -- or don't go on too long so that the other can't speak a little bit. Okay?

MS. PIQUANT: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, members of the Senate and Assembly. Thank you for holding this hearing. I see many --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Hold the microphone a little closer.

MS. PIQUANT: I see many familiar faces. I'm pretty sure you know why we're here. But quite frankly, I don't think we should be here. We have classes, and we're missing class to go advocate for a quality and fully funded higher education, where I quite frankly think it's ridiculous. But allow me to divulge into the list of issues that we have over at CUNY.

My name is Juvanie Piquant. I am a sophomore at City Tech majoring in law and paralegal studies. But this journey hasn't been easy. I pay every single dollar out of my own pocket for tuition. Yes, 70 percent of our students go to college for free, but I'm a part of that percentage that does not. Even the percentage that does go to school for free are still impacted by the TAP gap and these irrational tuition increases.

For us to be here on a Tuesday afternoon pleading for the investment we deserve in a quality higher education is quite frankly ridiculous. Fully funded higher education is a right, and it is not

something we should be begging for.

Amongst the many problems we are facing at CUNY senior colleges, our community colleges are also being affected as well. We've been experiencing a drastic enrollment decrease in community colleges. However, that doesn't mean quality resources should be decreased as well.

With the new faculty contract, we need the State Legislature to step up for additional funding or else the burden will fall on the backs of students. We are calling for an increase in base aid funding for community colleges. The Executive Budget maintains base operating aid for community colleges at $2,947 per full-time equivalent student. However, the 98 percent funding floor that was included in the enacted budget is not continued, resulting in a $3.6 million decrease in base aid funding.

We support CUNY's budget requesting a funding increase by $250 per student in community college funding and restore 98 percent funding for the 2018-2019 level.

This brings me to my second point. Childcare center funding --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And you've used up half the time for the three of you. So I'm just letting you know.

MS. AGU: Hi, everyone. My name is Nicole Agu, and I'm an international student at the College of Staten Island in the City University of New York.

I'm studying dual majors in accounting and international business, and minoring in finance and business data analytics, and I currently serve as a student government senator, club commissioner, and the University Student Senate delegate on my CUNY campus. In addition, I serve as the vice chair for international students in the University Student Senate in CUNY.

And I also want to appreciate every Senator here for holding a hearing to listen to students' testimony on how urgent it is that you should consider funding CUNY entirely.

So as an international student, we are

required by the federal government to show to the college that we can support ourselves financially in the United States. That is sufficient funding based on the projected tuition and fees at that time.

And why am I emphasizing on this? Because the tuition hikes every year, it affects the projected tuition that we are supposed to show for it, you know, as a financial aid throughout our college journey. But with the projected tuition, it's overshadowed when the tuition keeps increasing, and so that creates a really heavy financial burden on us, as we already pay three times more than the domestic students.

So I'm trying to share my story that it has not been easy for me, considering that I've been here on my own, catering for myself, applying for scholarships, contributing to the economy in the best way that I can, and it is very important that higher education should be invested, because every student, regardless of their status,

deserves an affordable college education.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And then I'm going to move over to our third testifier.

MR. HUNTER: So my name is Timothy Hunter, and I'm the student trustee for the City University of New York and the University Student Senate chairperson. I'm also the student government president at New York City College of Technology, which Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon represents.

So, you know, I think -- again, Senator Liz Krueger, I think that it's so sad and kind of sickening for me personally that we bring students all the way from the city to come here to Albany to fight for something that they deserve. And for us to only get five minutes to speak, I think that's something that we should strongly consider. After sitting here and having to listen to the chancellor and other people dancing around questions, direct questions, like Assemblymember Epstein asked, do you appreciate the funding that you got in the

budget, and people couldn't even give a straight answer.

So I think that the only -- I had some things that I wanted to say, but the only thing I'm going to say is this is not just a funding issue, this is an equity issue. I think that CUNY serves a population of students a majority of which are black and brown students, a majority of which are immigrant students. And to have international students who pay almost triple the price and students who go for, quote unquote, free through TAP awards, still not getting the same education, I think it's sad. My library closes at 8 o'clock now because of the TAP gap, so I get out of class at 8:30 -- all my classes get out at 8:30 or 9 o'clock because, you know, I do this as my day job. And for me to not even have a library to go to -- like if I don't have internet at home, if my public library is closed, how do I even study for class?

You know, and I think that -- again, I'm going to just reiterate, this is an

equity issue. Cuts to ASAP? ASAP only helps students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. There's an ASAP student behind me, right, that went from a 2.4 GPA to the Dean's List because he started receiving ASAP.

And I think that it's super important that we try to like, you know, preserve these programs. And it's not just the he said, she said, the Republicans, the Democrats, the Governor, the Budget Director -- this is the time where the State Legislature steps up and does what they can. It's not waiting for a veto-proof majority, this is doing what we need to do to fund public higher education and make sure that it's a right.

So thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Deborah Glick, Higher Ed, Assembly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I very much appreciate your referencing the impacts, the real-life impacts. So if you are working, you take classes -- I spent a lot of time working full-time, going to -- of course I didn't have to worry about tuition.

So you said your library closes at 8. What is the general circumstance, that on most classes where the limitation that you have on accessing the same services that some other student who can go during the day full-time isn't facing?

MR. HUNTER: So I think that this is something that is a campus-by-campus basis. Because of the TAP gap, which disproportionately affects schools that take in more TAP recipients -- and I'm pretty sure you know this. So let's say if School A takes in 80 percent TAP recipients and School B takes in almost 40 percent, and like, you know, School B has more students coming in paying that full tuition and therefore would have more revenue. But then looking at School A that says, Well, I'll take in more of these TAP recipients, they're being disproportionately affected.

So schools like City Tech, when I last spoke to President Hotzler, I think it's like 60 percent. That's where like the TAP -- like the amount of students that are coming

with the TAP.

And I think the worst part about it is City Tech is a comprehensive school -- and I'm pretty sure Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon knows this -- so they offer associate degree programs and bachelor degree programs. But at CUNY, our associate degree tuition is around $4,000 and our senior college tuition is around $6,900. So guess which price the students that are going to City Tech for an associate's degree program are paying? Of course that senior college amount.

So now even if you're -- like you get an associate's degree and you're receiving this TAP award for your associate's degree, you're still paying more just because you went to a comprehensive school rather than going to a community college.

And I think when it gets into the tit for tat city versus state, who's going to put in what for what, I think that like the students are at the fray of all this. And we heard from an international student who is battling home insecurities right now. And

you would think because she pays triple she'll get triple the education, but she's dealing with the same problems that we are. You know?

So I think it's really sad and disheartening that, you know, we have to deal with this. Because if you ask any other administrator from CUNY or SUNY or from anywhere, straight up, they're like, Oh, well, you know, there's this percentage and this percentage. But it's real people, and I think that's what we need to look at in the State Legislature.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Are there other -- it's not just tuition, because there's also fees.

MR. HUNTER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Which are the most difficult fees to justify from your point of view?

MR. HUNTER: I think --

MS. PIQUANT: Fees? I think all fees are a little ridiculous for us to justify. I just want to put it on the record, for the

mental health fee, we students are not here for it. Why do we have to pay for mental health services or health and wellness or whatever that becomes, and it takes six months on some campuses to see a counselor? Is that really seeing a counselor? I mean, these are human beings that we're dealing with. We are real people.

You know, we have a student like my colleague, she was battling home insecurity and she had to spend her whole winter break trying to figure out where she's going to put a roof over her head. But she's still here today. So --

MR. HUNTER: I think that -- like just piggybacking off what the vice chair of legislative affairs, Juvanie Piquant, had stated, the health and wellness fee is something that kind of caught us off guard as students because, you know, you're coming in thinking okay, we're going to fight tuition hikes, we're going to try to get this money for the TAP gap, and then out of left field you're seeing this health and wellness fee.

Because we spent the whole of the year prior talking about the lack of mental health services on our campuses, so it's like, Oh, wait, so we talk about it so you can shift it on us to pay it?

And I think that right now we're still waiting for -- because if you look at CUNY's budget proposal, the breakdown isn't really there. So like, you know, it's kind of interesting, you know, like -- just like three or four sentences on the health and wellness fee. So the board and everybody is still kind of waiting for those documents. I've got a chance to look at some. But, you know, we're still working on whatever that is.

But I think that it just shows that the state disinvestment is too -- it's too like -- it's just so distant, you know? Even with the telecounseling, I know that there's been cuts to that at the SUNY side too, which is truly disappointing. You know, because it's like you're going to try to shift it onto students and if enrollment declines,

that means that we're going to lose a guidance counselor? Like -- like, you know, I think that it just doesn't make sense, especially for our smaller schools. I wonder how that's going to help them, you know.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you. Thank you very much, A, for being here waiting all day and for the fact that you're, you know, still working hard to get through school. And I appreciate that.

MR. HUNTER: Thank you so much, Assemblymember Glick.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: We've spent a lot of time together. I said earlier, I don't know if you were here, that the Higher Ed Committee in the Senate held hearings throughout the state, from Buffalo to Nassau County, and without question the students were the stars of the testimony that we received. And Tim and our -- his colleagues and I have discussed many of these issues, and I thank you.

I also asked about the fees, because I thought they were a little bit unfair.

Is there anything you want to add to your testimony? Because I really appreciate your coming not only here, but also to the EI hearings and for your work as student government leaders.

MR. HUNTER: There are some -- oh, I'm sorry, you get to go first.

MS. AGU: So as an international student, it's very obvious that we are not eligible for any of the financial assistance that CUNY offers to their students, like TAP, ASAP, financial aid and all that. So -- and even scholarship opportunities are very, very -- stressing the "very" -- limited for international students, because even students who receive scholarship opportunities, they still pay half of their tuition or more than half of their tuition.

So I'm in this position as a vice chair representing all international students because I was once an international student peer advisor, and I counseled international

students like myself, and I heard their own stories. And it's -- like Tim said, it's sad that the financial pressure is just so much on the students that sometimes the option is to drop out. And I feel like if we were to come in terms with, you know, ideas and strategic plans in order to close this gap, which you've mentioned time without number that it can't happen in a year, that would help international students to, you know, plan strategically for their projected tuition budget, and would also provide more scholarship opportunities for them.

MR. HUNTER: I think that, you know, in addition to what Nicole has said, there's two things that I definitely want to highlight for like, I guess, the State Legislature. Number one being that the DREAM Act, even though I think it was a really great program, I think that there's still some kinks to work out in terms of like transparency of information.

But our student leaders on campuses, some of these student leaders are Dreamers as

well, and they're undocumented students. But because they're undocumented, they're not eligible for some of the stipends from the student activity fee, because I think they're treated as tax-levy dollars.

So I think that this is -- I think my predecessors have tried to get it into the DREAM Act in terms of allowing Dreamers to have access to a stipend. Because what we're doing is we're saying, hey, listen, you're going to pay this fee but you're not going to be able to benefit if you serve as a student leader.

And I know that on this panel we have some former student leaders as well. And I think that sometimes a small compensation can help with paying tuition if you're in that, what is it, like 25 percent of like students that get rejected by HESC. You know, I think that like if you're in that group, I think the least that we can do is provide you with some sort of stipend.

There's actually a predecessor that served in this position as a student trustee

that did not get paid at all. And I think that like it's kind of disappointing that someone's out here putting their life on the line for students, traveling to Albany every other week, talking with so many elected officials. And for you to just not have any means, you know, I think that's something that's a stand-alone bill that I'm pretty sure right here we can probably pass. But I think that's something to consider.

The second thing that I would take a look at is those portables at Medgar Evers College. I'm pretty sure like, again, Senator Stavisky had asked the chancellor about it and kind of got a little tap-dance about it or whatever the case is. But I think that for us -- my mom attended Medgar Evers College in 1993. She had class in those portables. Students are still taking classes in those portables, those same ones that my mom attended. Right? And then she went to New Paltz afterwards. Right?

So I think that like seeing that, you know, like it's just, to me -- again, it's

a -- it's an equity issue. If we're going to be equitable across the board, you know, I think that this is something that we need to take a real serious look at, which students aren't getting their end of the deal.

SENATOR STAVISKY: And your mother, I can assure you, is very proud of you. I say that as a mother.

MR. HUNTER: I'm proud to be her son.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Assemblymember Epstein, to be followed by Assemblymember Smith.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I also want to really thank you for everything you're doing. And obviously we all need to work harder to ensure that public education is available for people. And to see, you know, doubling of tuition over a 15-year or 20-year period is outrageous.

And so I guess one is -- I just want to be clear, your position is no tuition

increase or no tuition increase without a TAP increase? Which is your general position?

MR. HUNTER: Free CUNY. Okay, I think that --

(Laughter.)

MR. HUNTER: -- what we need to do is --

MS. PIQUANT: No, free CUNY. Free CUNY. It's coming soon.

(Laughter.)

MR. HUNTER: I think that what we should definitely take a look at is freezing -- I think that -- actually it was Thomas DiNapoli I think said it yesterday at NYSUT, he said it shouldn't be education or healthcare, it should be both.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Right.

MR. HUNTER: Right? And I think the same thing applies to tuition increases and TAP. It shouldn't be like a tuition increase or TAP reform, it should be both. We should try to freeze tuition and do that.

And I think another thing to highlight, just to echo Senator Stavisky's

standpoint, if we decide that, okay, let's get some money for a TAP gap, let's fill the TAP gap together -- great. Tuition -- if that hike gets approved by the board, we're right back where we started. You know? Let's say you fill that gap but it's not enough to cover the TAP gap for the following year. Basically what we're doing is just playing the game of catch-up, and we'll just always have a deficit.

So if you don't put enough to offset the upcoming year tuition increases, or -- which I suggest -- put 36 million up front and freeze tuition and then start trying to fund the TAP gap separately, you know, I think that makes more sense. You don't run a business by just saying like, okay, well, I'm not going to take in like, you know, any revenue and somehow save crumbling infrastructure. You want to be able to get the state to put in that money in substitute of the backs of the students that made --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Timothy, I'm

almost out of time, so I don't know if someone else wants to -- we all have time limitations. I don't know if anyone else wants to add to it.

And I know we wanted to -- so all fees, all additional fees. You know, mental health fees, book, the additional fees -- we feel like we should be eliminating those, that people should be able to go to school and tuition through TAP should cover all expenses. Is that everyone's position --

MR. HUNTER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: -- that we should have no additional fees?

MS. PIQUANT: And ultimately moving towards a strategic planning of how we can go back to free and fully funded CUNY.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great. And then you can start -- support my legislation to allow tuition-free education.

And so just one last thing, because I know we talked a lot about mental health issues and a lot of students who are struggling with mental health. Can you on

the ground just tell us what you're hearing from students around lack of access to mental health providers and what impact that might be having on students?

MS. AGU: Well, students whom I've told about this mental health increase in the tuition, they think that it's very unnecessary because even -- even -- it has already been implemented, there is already an increase in the tuition. The Board of Trustees have approved it.

But the thing is that they keep increasing the fees, but the resources are still going to be stagnant, and we all know that. There will be more understaffed, you know, mental health counsel offices, there will be more long waiting hours to see a counselor. So I feel like nothing will actually change, even with this increase. That is why they deem it to be very unnecessary, every student that I've talked to. No one has supported this fee as far as I've mentioned it.

MR. HUNTER: And lastly, it doesn't

come out of TAP. You know, it would have to come out of your Pell grants or any other grants that you get. So if you thought you were going to use your money to get books, it's going towards something that we still have yet to see.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And moving to Assemblymember Smith.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you.

So my question is quick. If you had an additional three minutes to speak to us, what would you say, in closing?

(Laughter.)

MS. AGU: Okay, so I took this position as vice chair to represent international students, like I said, and there is one thing that resonated to me was international students in CUNY -- we all fight for all students in CUNY and SUNY, but I feel like sometimes we, you know, forget the other small percentage of students which are international students, and so we don't really consider them when we're trying to like talk about budgets and, you know, the

rest of it that benefits other students.

So that is why I had to show up today, to, you know, appeal to every one of you that whenever you're making decisions for CUNY or SUNY, please include international students in your plan, because we are still students in the City University of New York.

MS. PIQUANT: I have one minute, but I would like to get a little bit personal. Without CUNY I wouldn't be where I am today. To serve as the vice chair of legislative affairs and to represent 500,000 students is really an honor, especially as a young woman of color. My parents are immigrants. My father was an adjunct at Brooklyn College. Without CUNY I would not be here today, and I hold education dearly to my heart.

And I would like you to think about all the CUNY students, the CUNY students who are at Medgar, you know, in trailers taking classes, the students who are sleeping on campuses, the students who are food insecure. Just think long and hard when things come across your desk. That's all I have to say.

And you'll be seeing us much more very soon.

MR. HUNTER: Assemblymember Smith, I appreciate you giving us the extra time to just even like voice some of our concerns.

I think one of the easy wins this year, definitely the DREAM Act, like whatever that is in terms of helping those students to get that like additional funding. I have friends that are undocumented that are student leaders that I don't -- I don't -- like I don't know how they're going to be able to get through the semester without some sort of additional help.

And I think that, you know, as we look at, again, those trailers, looking at our students, the morale is really low. So it's really hard to get students like organized. And if we can come away with some sort of win, this is the second year on like a real trailblazing front for the State Legislature.

And I think that the last thing I would say is that ASAP -- well, two last things. The ASAP program that got cut, please don't let -- don't put politics over

people. Please let's advocate for ASAP to get back in the budget before the end of the budget session.

And lastly, this TAP gap thing, it's affecting more people than we know. And I think it's important that we take a real, real close look at it and put the pressure on HESC, put the pressure on the chancellor -- he's on both sides -- and figure out what we can do to help the students in New York State. Because pretty much everyone here has benefited from public higher education.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you all very much for being with us today --

MR. HUNTER: Thank you.

MS. AGU: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- and for missing your classes. But they'll give you credit for this.

MS. PIQUANT: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Or we'll give you credit.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We'll give you credit.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So next we have the State University of New York Student Assembly: Austin Ostro, trustee, president of the SUNY Student Assembly; and Bryce Mac, Student Assembly treasurer. And two other people. Is one of you Brad Hershenson?

MR. HERSHENSON: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Takeena -- well, just introduce the other people. I believe Austin and Bryce are the two who will be --

MR. OSTRO: Absolutely.

So thank you so much for inviting us to be a part of this important day. My name is Austin Ostro. I am a graduate student at the University at Albany and the president of the SUNY Student Assembly, which represents the 1.4 million full- and part-time students across 64 SUNY campuses.

I'm joined on my left by Bryce Mac, who's our Student Assembly treasurer and a student at SUNY New Paltz; to my right by Takeena Strachan, who is the student government president at SUNY Oswego; and

further to my right, Brad Hershenson, who is our director of legislative affairs.

So we, as the SUNY Student Assembly, are charged with representing all of those voices. And given the charged political environment we all exist in, those voices have been louder than ever.

Higher education has been thrust into the national policy spotlight like never before. Every major Democratic candidate for president has some sort of plan to offer at least partial free tuition for public higher education. And I think students are tapping into that national enthusiasm for investment in higher ed in ways that we've never seen before, and that's juicing our advocacy like never before.

But what I think is lost in that national conversation about higher ed, particularly about public higher ed, is that it's not just about affordability. An affordable degree is great, but a degree is only worth as much as the education that degree provides you and the skills you leave

with that -- that you gain over the course of your education. And in order to get a high-quality education, in order to make that degree mean and be worth something, New York State needs to invest in the academic success of students.

And the Student Assembly has identified a number of key funding priorities for this budget cycle where we believe the state's investment could help enhance the student experience, enhance the academic success of students, and continue to build on the promise of a SUNY education for all.

And my colleagues will hit on some of those key priorities. Bryce?

MR. MAC: Before I begin, I would like to thank the entire panel for letting me come here today and speak.

Like Austin said, my name is Bryce Mac. I'm a student at SUNY New Paltz with the hopes of one day running for public office. So I hope to be where you are today.

But one of our key advocacy points is the reform of the community college funding

model. Community colleges in New York State are funded one part by the state, one part by the county, and one part by the students. However, for the past several years, students have had to hold the burden of increases in tuition and fees when it's the state's investment that is needed.

This is something that needs to be addressed, and soon. If it isn't, students, faculty and staff will suffer tremendously.

Community colleges are a hidden gem, not only in this state but across the country. They are the foundation for many students, including myself. However, if the state doesn't increase their investment, these schools both in SUNY and CUNY won't be able to uphold the messages they were founded on.

This past summer, my family and I had to go through one of the hardest situations in New York State -- homelessness. My family and I were homeless. And during those rough months, we had to choose between living on the streets or living in a hotel. My

grandmother is a stroke victim, and I am a Type I diabetic, so of course we had to choose the hotel. But everybody knows hotels aren't cheap, so we exhausted all of our money.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Bryce, I'm sorry --

MR. MAC: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- can we just stop the clock, and we'll put more time.

Can someone up there shut the door? Because we're hearing the voices from the hall come down and it's echoing, and we'd like people to hear what you have to say.

MR. MAC: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Why don't you put the clock at three minutes, give you a little extra time since we were having difficulty hearing. But we need you all to follow the time. Thank you.

MR. MAC: Thank you so much.

As you know, hotels aren't cheap, so my family exhausted all of our money. I had to make a Go Fund Me page to make sure we

stayed in that hotel and we wouldn't end up on the streets.

I remember walking up to my mother and asking her "Should I drop out of school and work full-time?" to help her pay for that hotel. She said "Absolutely not." She said I should continue to go to school and obtain my education.

During these times, because we had no money, we had to rely on my former school's food pantry. If it wasn't for that food pantry, I wouldn't be sitting here today.

Also, since we couldn't afford food, I couldn't afford any textbooks for the past fall semester. But I am blessed to say that I finished all those fall courses with straight As.

However, not every student can do that. I am one of the lucky ones. I have a great support system; I survived. But the reality is not every student can do that and, sadly, I am not the only student who has been homeless. There will be other students who has, is, or will be homeless in the future.

If you do not properly fund higher education, schools both in SUNY and CUNY won't be able to uphold the messages they were founded on. If you do not properly fund higher education, the youth of tomorrow will be at a standstill. If you do not properly fund higher education, that same food pantry that saved my life won't be able to save another. If you do not properly fund higher education, dreams will die.

Please make sure higher education is properly funded this legislative session.

MS. STRACHAN: Good afternoon. My name is Takeena Strachan, and I represent the thousands of students enrolled at SUNY Oswego, as the Student Association president.

Today I will highlight a few of the experiences of myself and my colleagues at SUNY Oswego and speak upon the importance of investing in higher education.

My institution successfully administers a variety of student support services and should be seen as a role model for all institutions of higher education in

the state. The mental health services available to students at SUNY Oswego are imperative to students' success. As a student myself, I know the Counseling Center does the best it can with the resources available and the limited staff employed.

After hearing feedback of other students and witnessing the increase in mental health rates of young adults on my campus and also nationwide, with the help of the staff of our Counseling Center we are working to provide more accommodating resources to all students. We anticipate accomplishing more as the semester continues.

Just like other student campuses, we are determined to strengthen the mental health resources on our campus by pushing towards telehealth counseling alternatives, diversifying our counseling team, and providing more opportunities for students to educate themselves on mental health issues that they might encounter either personally or by association with a peer.

Additionally, all students have the

ability to reap the benefits of SHOP, or Students Helping Oswego Peers. SHOP is our student- and community-supported clothing and food pantry on campus. Although this resource is a positive for all students, it is not accommodating for everyone. To find that our students on my campus were struggling to access food and clothing encouraged myself and my colleagues, through constructive discussions, to identify how we would increase support to students in need.

Currently the Oswego Student Association is looking to provide an extension on our pantry's operating hours and, in collaboration with the administration of Oswego, to advocate for an increase in public donations to increase our inventory.

Our campus has encouraged our school's alumni association to give back and to help end our campus-wide issues, but their donations are not measuring up to the number of students deciding to eat their first two weeks of school or to purchase their books for class.

There is more work to be done now, as this is not just an issue on the campus of SUNY Oswego but an opportunity to invest in all institutions of higher education within the State of New York.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Brad, would you like a minute to say something?

MR. HERSHENSON: Sure, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We'll do a minute, sort of a family courtesy.

MR. HERSHENSON: Good afternoon. My name is Brad Hershenson. I am a student at the University at Albany and the legislative director for the Student Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Move that closer, or slide into it.

MR. HERSHENSON: I'd like to touch upon the importance of capital investments, specifically the element of sustainability.

At SUNY we need infrastructure investment. One, because much of SUNY was built decades ago, we need to make the

appropriate upgrades. A lot of SUNY is deteriorating at the same rate, and we need investment to make the upgrades to bring SUNY to where it can be.

And two, we need investment in our communities. We need buildings that properly use resources, electricity efficiently, water efficiently, to invest in geothermal heating, green roofs, solar and wind where appropriate. And what we can do with that when we're demonstrating that on our campuses, on our infrastructure, is we can educate students and we can use the faculty, students and staff on our campus to build the new generation workforce that is going to prioritize sustainable development.

I also want to mention that elements of resiliency are demonstrated in our communities when we do that. A lot of our campuses have stormwater management plans that are in collaboration with the different regions across New York, and 40 percent of public infrastructure in New York is accounted for by SUNY. That's almost half of

the public infrastructure across the state, is just the State University of New York alone.

And when demonstrating those elements of resiliency, whether it's the natural landscape or the built environment or the public health benefits, we're talking about investment into our system. And as President and Trustee Ostro has said time and time again, investment in SUNY is investment in New York.

And we bring elements of resiliency to our community. SUNY pays that back through the property taxes, through our income taxes, through the houses that our students, faculty and staff buy. Students and faculty and staff from SUNY are likely to live in New York, to stay in New York for decades, and we pay that back, we pay that investment back to New York.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you very much, all of you, for being here. It's good to see that we have a future generation that

will be taking our place eventually.

Thank you. Let me see if there are any questions. Assemblywoman Glick?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: It's not so much a question except to thank you. And, you know, we stay in constant contact about the issues.

And, you know, I want to congratulate you. There was never a term that I got straight As, so to do that with all of the challenges and barriers, I just want to take the hat that I don't have on off to you.

And to say that, you know, the student government from SUNY has been an incredibly vibrant resource for us, and we hope we can continue to do that and figure out how we can reach out, within the community and beyond, for alumni to step up and say -- as you say, yes, you stay here, you pay taxes. We want the Governor to know that. We need to get people to communicate that directly -- not through the students, but through folks writing their own note, letter, email, phone call, whatever.

Thanks.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Alicia? Alicia Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Really quick, I just wanted to say I'm a SUNY New Paltz grad. And I never planned to run for office, and you are planning to run for office, so let's keep in touch.

(Laughter.)

MR. MAC: Definitely. Most definitely.

And thank you, Chair Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I really -- the alumni association, a lot of us will be up there in May. I really hope we could connect and be helpful to you.

MR. MAC: I will love that. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. Thank you all for --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you all.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- for being here. Good luck in your studies.

Next we have the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, Mary Beth Labate, president.

MS. LABATE: Good afternoon, everyone.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good afternoon.

MS. LABATE: I thought we'd have the results of the Iowa caucus by now, but we don't, so I'm sorry, guys.

(Laughter.)

MS. LABATE: Good afternoon, Chairpersons Krueger and Weinstein and Higher Ed Chairpersons Glick and Stavisky. Thank you for your leadership, your fortitude during these hearings, and the opportunity for me to share my thoughts with you and the committee today.

I'm Mary Beth Labate, president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, representing more than a hundred private, not-for-profit colleges and universities and nearly 500,000 students across the state.

New York State is home to the largest independent sector of higher ed in the

nation, educating 40 percent of the state's 1.2 million students, including nearly 300,000 New Yorkers, and playing a vital role in our state's diverse higher education ecosystem.

Few other states rely so heavily on its private, not-for-profit colleges to confer degrees and fulfill dreams, yet New York ranks 17th in the nation in its per-capita, needs-based support for students at private, not-for-profit colleges.

New York's independent sector is also an integral part of the statewide economy, responsible for more than 415,000 jobs across the state and nearly $90 billion in economic impact. For centuries we have embraced the call to educate students of every background while bringing jobs, talent and energy to communities across the state from Long Island to Buffalo. Those of you with campuses in or near your districts know that better than anyone.

Our students represent -- let me tell you a little about our students. Our

students represent the diversity of our state. Almost 50 percent of all African-American and Latinx students who receive a bachelor's or graduate degree earn them at a not-for-profit college. Our students represent every income level. Two-thirds of our New York students are from families that earn less than $125,000 annually. Our students have higher graduation rates and lower loan-default rates than any other higher education sector in the state.

Eighty-five percent of our students benefit from financial aid directly from our schools, bringing the average net price to attend one of our schools down to $26,888. Our students are making an investment in themselves and their future, and our colleges are with them every step of the way, providing $6 billion in financial aid from our own resources.

This year, as our state faces a looming multi-billion-dollar deficit, it is more important than ever that we target our

resources towards students with the greatest need. For this to happen, New York must increase support for the state's low- and moderate-income college students and restore funding for programs that allow not-for-profit colleges to remain a vital part of their communities and the higher education landscape.

Our most important ask is for the long-overdue expansion of the state's Tuition Assistance Program, TAP, which will benefit New York's neediest students regardless of which college in New York they choose to attend, and will help to close the TAP gap at CUNY and SUNY. For nearly 50 years, TAP has helped students from New York's lowest-income families realize their college dream. Today the program supports roughly 320,000 recipients, including 64,000 students for whom a not-for-profit college is their choice.

Unfortunately, in recent years TAP has been helping fewer and fewer students, in part because the income eligibility has not

been adjusted in 20 years, and the size of the award has been adjusted only once in those same 20 years. Today New York spends 9 percent less -- $92 million less -- on TAP than it did in 2014-2015, and serves 49,000 fewer students.

Unless action is taken to expand TAP, this alarming decline is projected to continue. In my testimony you'll see an appendix that highlights this startling trend.

While the proposed budget proposes to expand the Excelsior Scholarship for households who earn more than twice the median income in New York, and three times the median income of African-American and Latinx households, I urge you instead to focus on TAP, an equity-based solution to college affordability that provides the most support to families with lowest incomes and the widest attainment gaps, and helps students regardless of what college, public or private, they attend.

Our colleges have almost doubled the

amount of financial aid we provide over the past 10 years. Now, New York State, we are asking you to do your part by increasing TAP over a three-year phase-in period as follows: Increase the minimum award to $1,000 from $500, the maximum award to $6,000 from $5,165, and the income eligibility ceiling to $110,000 from $80,000. These actions will help the neediest students at SUNY, CUNY and not-for-profit institutions.

In addition to TAP, Opportunity Programs like HEOP can open the door to higher education for many of the state's neediest students. We're grateful that the Governor did not cut the programs, and we ask them to be expanded.

Finally, I ask that you ensure that our state's diverse higher education ecosystem continues to thrive. This can be done by supporting a small increase in the Bundy Aid, a $35 million program and the only source of operating aid for not-for-profit colleges.

We're also requesting that the

$30 million be restored for the Higher Education Capital Assistance Matching Grant Program, or HECap. Our schools provide a three-to-one match to HECap and pay prevailing wage on all work funded from the grant.

The Governor has proposed a historic $175 billion state infrastructure plan, including $9 billion for SUNY and CUNY infrastructure over the next six years, and that is fantastic. But in this context, $30 million to support a sector that educates 40 percent of all students is a modest but important investment.

In closing, I call on you to renew our state's commitment to the higher education landscape in New York that has for generations been a hallmark of our greatness. I look forward to working with you and your legislative colleagues to ensure that low- and moderate-income students are not overlooked and that our campuses can remain vibrant members of their communities.

Thanks, and I welcome any questions.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Smith.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you.

Can you expand a little bit on the Enhanced Tuition Awards? Do you know offhand how many colleges are participating or what the --

MS. LABATE: There are a total of 38 colleges participating; 30 are not-for-profit colleges. It's been a little tough to get data, but I believe there are about 2,000 recipients of the award and it's been about an average award of something a little shy of $2,000 per recipient.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Okay. And then in terms of the HECap, what are some of the projects that right now the proposed $30 million cut -- obviously that would really make it a little bit harder to do some of these capital improvements. But can you expand on some of the things that we're looking to do this coming year?

MS. LABATE: Sure. It's a competitive

process, so it really will be up to the colleges to put forward the capital projects that they want to move with.

I can tell you in the past we've built -- we've helped to build buildings, HECap has helped to build buildings that have a focus on sustainability. Sometimes it's helping to equip those buildings with the latest technology that is needed to, let's say, serve in the nursing profession. So it's all over the board.

I know on Long Island there have been several schools that have benefited from it, and I'd be glad to get you a list of all the Long Island schools that have been able to leverage HECap.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you so much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, real quick.

I know the colleges are just starting the application process, I assume for the 2019 money, for the HECap money.

MS. LABATE: That's correct.

SENATOR STAVISKY: So I assume all of it -- none of it has been really expended.

MS. LABATE: Correct.

SENATOR STAVISKY: How would you improve Enhanced TAP? In a minute.

MS. LABATE: I think there are a few things. I think -- first and foremost, we -- our preference is the TAP program.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I know that.

MS. LABATE: We think it's more progressive, it focuses on all students.

On the Enhanced Tuition Awards Program, I think there are a few issues that we take -- have some concern with. One is it's not really the equivalent of Excelsior. The maximum award that a student can receive from the state is $3,000. The maximum award that a student under Excelsior can receive is the full cost of SUNY tuition and CUNY tuition. We know that's infrequently the case, but the fact is the award levels are significantly different. So that would be one big change.

I think the other thing that gives us pause is this requirement that you freeze tuition. Because what that tells our schools is for the relatively few students who can get an Enhanced Tuition Award and who have their tuition frozen, someone needs to make that up somewhere, and that unfortunately is the majority of students who are not receiving an Enhanced TAP award. And I think that is really the same in the public institutions as well.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Jim Seward.

SENATOR SEWARD: Well, Mary Beth, it's good to see you.

MS. LABATE: Nice to see you, Senator.

SENATOR SEWARD: You've already shared with us the number of campuses that are participating in the Enhanced Tuition Awards. Can you share with us how many campuses that are currently participating in that program that actually may be setting limits on the number of students that will receive an award

due to having to provide that up to $3,000 match?

MS. LABATE: That's a great -- I don't have that exact number. I can get that for you.

Several of them, though, because they do not -- I think they're concerned about the equity of having some students guaranteed their tuition frozen and others not. And often you might have a higher-income student who is guaranteed their tuition is frozen and a lower-income student who cannot benefit from ETA who does not.

So I'll get you that information.

SENATOR SEWARD: That would be helpful.

And is the match the issue here?

MS. LABATE: The match is not so -- the match is not the issue. Our schools -- especially when the award is up to $3,000, our schools are very generous in the amount of financial aid they provide. So our schools have always put a lot of skin in the game. So the match is not the issue so much.

SENATOR SEWARD: Just for the record, I appreciated your comments in terms of increases in enhancement of the Tuition Assistance Program, the TAP award. You know, my conference has been big supporters of that effort over the years and certainly share your goals there this year.

One final question, and that is on Bundy Aid. That has been kind of frozen for many, many years. Are you seeking an increase in Bundy Aid this year?

MS. LABATE: We are. We're seeking a small increase --

SENATOR SEWARD: Could you give us a number for that?

MS. LABATE: We're seeking an increase of 3 percent. What we looked at was private K-12 in New York State receives about $200 million from the state every year, and every year the amount of operating support to private K-12 is increased equivalent with school aid increase. So this year school aid is increased by 3 percent, private K-12 is increased by 3 percent, we're suggesting

Bundy Aid be increased by 3 percent. It would amount to about $1.3 million.

The statute itself on Bundy Aid -- which is supposed to award money based on the number of degrees, so it's a degree-completion incentive -- if the statute were allowed to prevail, funding for Bundy Aid would be about $160 million.

SENATOR SEWARD: Great. Well, just in conclusion, not a question but a comment, we spent a lot of time today talking about SUNY and CUNY, and those are important, important issues. But I'm very pleased to have you come forward because no question that the independent sector in higher education serves so many students in New York State, and very often from lower-income levels as well.

MS. LABATE: Absolutely.

SENATOR SEWARD: And that's making a tremendous contribution not only educationally but economically, and we thank you.

MS. LABATE: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank

you for being here.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

MS. LABATE: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we have Association of Proprietary Colleges: Donna Stelling-Gurnett, president, Christopher Barto, vice president.

And they'll be followed by On Point for College, to be followed by College & Community Fellowship.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And while they settle in, with 62 percent reporting, Iowa seems to be in the following order: Pete, Bernie, Elizabeth, Joe. More to come.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: All right. Late-breaking news, that's great. All right.

So Senator Stavisky, Senator Krueger, members of the Legislature, thank you for this opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the Association of Proprietary Colleges.

My name is Donna Stelling-Gurnett. I'm the president of the association. And I'm here today with Christopher Barto of

LIM College.

Christopher and I have had the opportunity to participate in this hearing in the past, and I know you've heard us talk about APC's 12 family-owned member colleges that are -- have very strong student outcomes and are really committed to educational excellence, access and affordability.

Before I start our testimony today, though, I'd like to start by just saying thank you sincerely for your support and leadership last year as you helped us push back against the Governor's proposed For-Profit College Accountability Act. We feel his proposal was misguided and essentially would have closed an entire sector of higher education here in New York.

As we moved through the budget process last year, though, APC certainly learned a few lessons. We realized that there seems to be a lack of understanding of the current regulations that are already in existence, perhaps a lack of understanding about what data is already available, and probably most

importantly, what does it mean to truly be a family-owned institution, and how are they different than the large publicly traded for-profit colleges that you may hear about at the federal level.

So as we were heading into this legislative session, we took a look at what we have available on our website. We have a very robust facts and figures page, but we also added a new section to our website where you can now see individual member profiles for each and every APC member. So you can click on that link and you can find out information about what family owns that institution, what year were they founded, who are they accredited by. We provide a link to their college scorecard page so you can get an understanding of their outcomes. And we also provide a student demographic section so you can see what types of students are attending that institution. And there's also a financial section so you can see what that college's 90/10 ratio is, what their fiscal composite score is, what their cohort default

rate is.

And our hope is that having all of this information will help foster a more constructive dialogue as we move through this legislative session.

So before I turn it over to Christopher to talk about some of our recommendations, I would just ask that you use the association as a resource as we go through this session.

So Christopher?

MR. BARTO: Thank you, Donna. Members of the Legislature, thank you for the opportunity to join my colleague in testifying today.

I'd like to speak about continued support for expanding TAP. TAP has served as the cornerstone of New York State's financial aid program, providing financial support to help ensure that thousands of students complete their degrees in a timely manner every year.

APC member colleges share the state's commitment to keeping college affordable. In

2018, the average tuition at APC member colleges increased less than 1 percent over the previous year, and in 2017 APC member colleges provided over 95 million in institutional grants and scholarships, more than double the amount of TAP funds received by all New York State proprietary colleges.

Together, institutional support and TAP funding provides significant life-changing opportunities for students attending APC member colleges. Further, APC member colleges focus on ensuring that students progress towards their degrees while graduating on time, which helps to keep their student loan debt as low as possible.

APC respectfully requests your consideration for the following enhancements to the TAP program.

Increase funding, actually, for one of the ancillary programs, the Enhanced Tuition Award program. The ETA program is the private institutional counterpart, as we know, to Governor Cuomo's signature Excelsior program. The Governor has proposed

increasing the maximum income eligibility threshold to $150,000 for both programs. While we appreciate the Governor's proposal to support a greater range of students, we also encourage lawmakers to increase the overall funding for the ETA program.

We join with many of our other colleagues who have testified today in pushing for increased funding for the TAP program. We feel that the TAP program is currently constrained in fulfilling its promise to students. We should be increasing the number of students served under the program, yet the Governor has proposed a $60 million reduction in the program funding.

Increase the minimum TAP award to $1,000, increase the maximum TAP award up to $6,000. As has been noted today, the TAP maximum has not appreciably increased in over 20 years, yet cost-of-living increases during that time have gone up almost 50 percent.

We also would support increasing the maximum net taxable income for TAP eligibility to $110,000 and restoring maximum

TAP awards for two-year degree programs.

Investments in TAP are well established and proven investments in the future vitality of New York's workforce and the economic development of local communities around the state. Let's continue to ensure the efficacy of the TAP program in supporting New York's neediest students across all four sectors of higher education.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

To Assemblymember Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I see that you've chosen to highlight some of your student veterans, and I'm just wondering, is there -- what's the percentage of veterans that attend the proprietary colleges?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: It's actually relatively small, honestly.

So we serve approximately 27,000 students in our 12 APC member colleges; less than 700 of them are veterans that are using GI benefits. So maybe 2 percent, I think.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Did you say

27,000 students?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Mm-hmm.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And roughly around 700 are --

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: The graduation rate?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: For those GI --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: For -- on average, your general graduation rate across the 12 colleges.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: A good question, actually. Let me just take a quick peek at our testimony.

On our last page of the testimony we give -- our on-time associate degree graduation rate is 29 percent.

MR. BARTO: And bachelor-degree graduation rates are higher than that. I can share that at LIM College our graduation rate is 54 percent.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Thank you for being here today. Thank you.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we will hear from On Point for College, Samuel Rowser and Kevin Marken, then College & Community Fellowship, followed by the Hispanic Federation.

MR. ROWSER: Good evening. I'd just like to thank Chairperson Stavisky on her way out and Assemblyperson Weinstein and Assemblyperson Glick for this opportunity, the budget hearing on higher education, for allowing us this opportunity to share.

My name is Samuel Rowser. I'm the executive director for On Point for College, and with me is our Utica director, Kevin Marken. Not with us today are our partners from New York City, Goddard Riverside Options Program and New Settlement Apartments in the Bronx.

I just want to thank you for this opportunity to talk with you about investing a million dollars in New York's future workforce. Since On Point for College was

founded in 1999, we've helped more than 2700 students actually graduate from college. Over the course of their working lifetime, they'll earn over a billion dollars, which will be spent in their communities.

About a year ago we did an assessment in Utica of the number of individuals that graduated that year, how many came back to the community, and it was 93 percent of those students came back to the community that they graduated from.

Right now we're serving in Onondaga, Madison, Cayuga, Cortland, Oswego, Oneida and Herkimer Counties, and also with our partners in Manhattan and the Bronx.

On Point provides college access, college success and career services to help young adults ages 17 to 29 to apply to, enroll in, and persist at college through graduation, while building skills and pre-professional experiences to help launch their careers.

On Point is unique in the nation for the holistic approach we take to helping

students. Earlier you heard many of the students talk about a lot of the issues that they were having on the campuses and they have going through the process of education, and there are just a couple of things I really want to highlight.

On Point takes hundreds of students each year to visit colleges all over New York -- over 70 colleges throughout the state. In New York State we use a corps of dedicated volunteers or bus tickets to help students get to and from campus. On Point also partners with two dentists. Someone asked the question earlier, do you have to have healthcare? Most colleges require you have healthcare, but not dental. So what happens if you get a toothache and you're low-income? We have dentists that we go pick you up, bring you home, fix your teeth, take you back to college. Lose your eyeglasses, we get you an eyeglass exam and two pair of glasses.

On Point even partners with local colleges and we have housing at a private

college, Le Moyne College in Syracuse. For 15 years, any students that are housing-challenged have the opportunity to stay on campus the entire summer semester, free of charge. And during the winter breaks we have an organization that they own apartments and they allow us to use their apartments over the short breaks for students to stay who are housing-challenged.

We also help students pay for textbooks, summer courses, outstanding bills that prevent them from re-enrolling, housing deposits and fees, when financial aid is unavailable or has run out.

We just want to say that an investment in On Point is also an investment in New York's higher education institutions. Seventy percent or more of our 2400 students that are enrolled now, we're serving this semester, attend public colleges across New York State. That's about 23 million -- over $23 million in tuition and fees and room and board at the community college, CUNY, SUNY system as well as some of the private

schools.

We have a great deal of experience in helping students navigate the system. On Point's advisers, we actually go to the campus and visit the students frequently throughout the year. At the community colleges we're there once a month. Our local colleges, we're there a couple of times a week.

On Point students persist at a higher rate -- 77 percent higher than the average at the community colleges, which is 60 percent. Our students bring TAP, Pell awards as well as student loan dollars to the campuses, and our generous donors help us to support these students.

If it had not been for On Point, many of our students would not be attending college. So we believe that providing the $1 million in state funding for On Point's program will have an impact on thousands of low-income first-generation students each year, helping people consider going to college who might otherwise not have thought

college was possible and providing wraparound services to support students on every step of their journey toward their degrees.

Investments in these young people will immediately support colleges across the state and will bring long-term fruit as our graduates bring their degrees and skills to the state's workforce.

I just want to thank the members of the Higher Education Committee for this wonderful opportunity to share this information with you. And at the end of the day, we ask everyone to keep it On Point.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony today. Thank you.

So next we have College & Community Fellowship, followed by Hispanic Federation, followed by Police Benevolent Association of New York State, followed by SUNY student Mac-Olivier Lalanne. So people, if I called your organization, your name, you should make your way to the -- you should make your way

down. Thank you.

MS. GILESTRA: Hello. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and provide testimony.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Pull it close to you. The acoustics are lousy.

MS. GILESTRA: Yes. My name is Ivelisse Gilestra, and I am the community organizer for College & Community Fellowship.

And we have been providing services for 20 years for formerly incarcerated women, direct services, and helping them achieve a college degree. We also have noticed that in the work that we do, we also approach many barriers from a systemic level.

And I'm here to talk today about the Turn on the TAP campaign that we are launching, and we seek the passage of Bill S790, championed by Montgomery, and A3975, by Aubry, to restore the Tuition Assistance Program, or TAP, for those incarcerated.

We have a broad collaboration of partners in this work. And just to give you a little history that I'm pretty sure that

you all know, TAP was operating successfully in New York State until 1995, a year after Pell Grants were banned at the federal level as well.

So in the Executive Chamber Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Briefing Book it states that New York is leading the nation in expanding access to a quality and affordable college tuition. But this is false, because Tuition Assistance Program are not in New York for people incarcerated.

There are 19 states that do provide state financial assistance, but New York is not one of them. And this is people that need it the most. This is a population that is usually excluded from conversation of education. And I want to talk a little bit about predictors or factors that lead to pathways to people to prison.

One of them is growing up in a marginalized community, which is usually characterized by low rates of education attainment, criminalization of poverty. We have youth that drop out of high school,

which makes them 47 percent more likely to end up in prison. So we need to uplift these communities that need it the most.

Access to higher education also produces a multigenerational effect, disrupting that intergenerational poverty. We have parents that partake in college-in-prison models and education inside, there's a likelihood their kids will be motivated to do the same, even if their parent is incarcerated.

So education usually provides better employment, autonomy, which reduces the reliance on government assistance, and upward mobility. So education provides a myriad of benefits and has the potential, like I said again, to uplift a community that has been marginalized, excluded. So restoring TAP in general is just smart fiscal policy. It is a win-win.

In the Executive Budget for fiscal year 2020 there was a proposed increase of $154 million in higher ed. But for less than 10 percent of this, and even less than

2 percent of the total TAP, we can be providing that to people incarcerated, people behind bars that really, really will benefit from this.

So since this is an entitlement program, this will not take from nontraditional students, which is something that we -- it's a myth that we need to debunk. This does not take from non -- non-incarcerated students.

So this is an issue of educational equity. Since 1995, New York State has removed access to this opportunity, an opportunity that has proven not only as a need, as a benefit to marginalized communities -- I know personally the powerful benefits of education as being transformative. I am a formerly incarcerated woman. While in prison, I used education as a catalyst to that transformation.

And not only education gave me the tools to navigate the many barriers that I have encountered in transitioning back into society, but it has equipped me -- it has

really -- it has really built me in order to understand the factors that led me into prison. So this has been transferred to my family and to my community. People that obtain an education are very much involved with civic engagement, because you want to give back that gift that was given to you.

So to me it is an urgent necessity. It affects mostly the people that are disproportionately represented in prison, which is black and brown communities. So I have seen, I have seen the effects of people obtaining their education inside. And I wish we could restore TAP as it was before 1995.

I think everybody goes into prison with already some trauma, but nobody leaves unaffected. So I think as a society we benefit from people leaving out with an education.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for being a strong advocate and example for the cause that you are advocating.

MS. GILESTRA: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for

being here. It's much appreciated.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

MS. GILESTRA: Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next, the Hispanic Federation, Diana Cruz, followed by Police Benevolent Association of New York, followed by Mac-Olivier Lalanne.

MS. CRUZ: Thank you, Chairwoman Krueger, Chairwoman Weinstein and other committee members for taking the time to listen to the testimony drafted by Hispanic Federation. I know it's been a long day, so your presence and commitment is vital to the support for us to move forward the policies that we want to present.

The Hispanic Federation is a nonprofit organization seeking to empower and advance the Hispanic community's programs and legislative advocacy. My name is Diana Cruz, and as the director of education policy for the Hispanic Federation, I am here to advocate for Latinx students in New York

State struggling to attain a postsecondary degree.

Currently New York State is failing to graduate Latinx students that are college and career ready. From 2007 to 2017, in New York City, Latinx young adults ages 18 to 24 have increased their college enrollment by 9 percent, from 29 percent to 38 percent. In the same decade, the Latinx completion crisis has risen from 13 percent to 23 percent, demonstrating that the Latinx non-completion rate is growing slightly faster than the increase of college enrollment.

In order to address this, the Hispanic Federation strongly urges the Legislature to include and prioritize the following budget and legislative recommendations in their one-house budgets.

Starting with the Senator Jose Peralta New York State DREAM Act, the Hispanic Federation asks the Legislature to secure the same funding as last year of $27 million to ensure undocumented students continue to have

access to higher education.

I know that we have heard from Dr. Linares earlier today, and he mentioned the number of students that have been applying to the DREAM Act. But approximately 146,000 young people are eligible for state financial aid through the DREAM Act. It is our hope that as we develop more trust from the community, this opportunity will make students want to utilize this new path to receive financial aid.

However, it is important to acknowledge that unfortunately the undocumented and mixed-status families are still fearful and have misconceptions about what the DREAM Act entails. Further, school counselors and professionals are also confused on how to best help their students. HESC is using its resources to the best of its ability and yet does not have the capacity to create and implement a plan to educate families and educators on the New York State DREAM Act.

We strongly believe that HESC needs a

minimum of $1 million to properly put the law into action and spearhead community outreach, along with CBOs to launch a statewide campaign to dispel misunderstandings about the New York State DREAM Act.

Moreover, HESC alone cannot provide enough outreach to communities and high schools. SUNY and CUNY must participate in increasing marketing and recruitment efforts to assist new students in understanding the DREAM Act. We ask that SUNY and CUNY receive $500,000 to increase outreach and recruitment efforts.

When the Excelsior Scholarship came into effect, SUNY made clear efforts in marketing to assist new students in understanding the Excelsior Scholarship. It even explored the use of Smart Track targeted emails to assist scholarship recipients. Further, SUNY distributed information about the Excelsior Scholarship to more than 8,000 high school students at college fairs.

We insist that both institutions provide intentional outreach to high school

and college students to guarantee the right understanding to apply for the New York State DREAM Act.

Additionally, as we have heard from a lot of other advocates here today, Opportunity Program funding has been proven to increase retention and graduation rates, especially for first-generation students. Many of those students are low-income students of color that need additional academic and financial supports to graduate college.

These programs change generational wealth disparities and in some cases set students up to be the first ones in their families to attain a college degree. We urge the legislation to allocate the necessary funding to these programs, and you can find a direct budget ask and recommendations in the testimony provided.

Moving forward, the shift in student demographics attending higher education demands institutions to take a closer look at developing resources and acknowledge how

representation in their faculty and staff also matters. Research studies consistently show that when students of color have faculty of color to learn from and lean on, the success of their educational outcomes increases dramatically.

We strongly support the creation of the SUNY Office of Diversity and Educational Equity and urge $500,000 in funding to be allocated to SUNY for this purpose. This office will be tasked with drafting a report to the Governor and Legislature on diversity efforts that must include enrollment from underrepresented students, staff and faculty.

In summation, New York must continue to fund the Senator Jose Peralta New York State DREAM Act and invest in its implementation, as well as ensure that HESC and higher education institutions are receiving enough funding to educate and dispel misinformation to fearful undocumented communities.

Additionally, Opportunity Programs are specifically designed to benefit

first-generation college students. New York must increase the funding for these programs to end generational wealth inequities.

Lastly, as we acknowledge that student demographics become more diverse, there is a high need of a center that specializes in capturing data that reinforces diversity and inclusion.

I thank you for your time and re-emphasize how critical it is to prioritize this budget ask for the benefit of many students, communities and the whole state.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you for being here.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next, the Police Benevolent Association of New York State, Ryan Law, PBA president and University Police Officers director.

MR. LAW: Good evening, respected members of the joint committee. My name is Ryan Law, and I am the director of the

University Police Officers and the current president of the Police Benevolent Association of New York State.

The PBA of New York State is a law enforcement labor union representing approximately 1200 members of the bargaining unit representing the New York State University Police, New York State Environmental Conservation Police, New York State Park Police, and New York State Forest Rangers.

I submitted a lengthy written testimony, but in the interests of time I will speak on the highlighted areas here.

The four units of the PBA are comprised of the second, third, fourth and fifth largest units of police officers employed in New York State. The officers live and work in your districts. We are keeping you, the students and staff of SUNY campuses, the visitors of our parks and other public lands, as well as New York State's natural resources, safe. We are all extraordinarily trained and have specialized

skill sets to respond to a crisis anywhere in the State of New York.

I am here today advocating for all four police agencies of the PBA, but as today's hearing is on higher education, I will focus on the PBA members who are New York State University Police Officers and the attrition crisis facing the departments they work for.

The dedicated men and women who have worked for New York State University Police protect students, staff and general campus communities of 29 of our SUNY campuses from Long Island to Buffalo, the Southern Tier and the North Country. That includes three campuses in New York City. If we don't have a campus in your district, we most certainly have one near it.

Gone are the days where SUNY campuses were staffed with unarmed peace officers. Today SUNY campuses are protected by professional police officers who are fully certified, trained and expect to protect campus communities from active shooters with

rifles to terrorists with even more dangerous weapons. We had a shooting with two deaths yesterday at Texas A&M University. These are serious, real concerns of ours.

We take our job to protect students and staff seriously. And if you have a child or a loved one attending or working on a SUNY campus, you can sleep better at night knowing we are going to defend these people with our lives.

There is, however, a notable weakness in the State University Police of our 29 campuses, and that is our alarmingly high attrition rates. Specifically, I am talking about the constant resignations of recently hired young police officers who leave the New York State University Police to join other police departments, municipal or state, thereby creating vacancies in their respective University Police departments.

New York State University Police are bleeding officers at an astonishing rate, which is resulting in dangerous attrition numbers. The same applies to New York State

Park Police. Young, diverse officers fresh out of the Police Academy routinely leave PBA of NYS to join other law enforcement units that offer better pay, retirement and benefits.

Research conducted by the PBA of NYS indicates that over the last six years, a total of 410 officers left the University Police forces. One hundred eighteen of the total departing 410 UPOs specifically went to other law enforcement units at the state and local level. This is an astonishing attrition rate of over 30 percent.

The main factor in attrition rates for UPOs transferring to other law enforcement is the lack of a 20-year retirement option in the units represented by the PBA. The departments they are transferring to have 20-year pensions. Attrition, however, fosters the development of other problems, such as diversity. Unfortunately, as research indicates, the attrition trend lines are moving in the wrong direction and are becoming more severe.

Yes, there is a cost to the 20-year retirement legislation for this unit, but the savings from the stemming of attrition will offset that. New York State spends between $100,000 and $120,000, depending on location, to hire, train and equip just one officer from the academy to their first year of service. Simple math reveals a total attrition cost of over $12 million, significantly offsetting the fiscal costs of this bill.

More importantly than the cost savings are the intangibles. SUNY campuses, like other educational institutions, are considered potentially vulnerable to active shooters and terrorists. If we can't have stable and well-staffed police departments, how can these departments adequately protect SUNY communities? They can't. And the high attrition rate is a public safety issue that must be addressed.

There's also a diversity issue here. Competitive pay and benefits are invaluable to retain and recruit female officers as well

as young UPOs of color. New York State takes great pride in the diversity of its SUNY campuses and system. Shouldn't SUNY police officers reflect the campuses they serve? With the current substandard 20-year pension, SUNY campuses are at a point that they have poorly staffed police departments and lack diversity.

I want to thank the Legislature for understanding this and effectively addressing it. Last year the Senate and Assembly overwhelmingly passed Senate 5207-Gounardes, same as Assembly 4431-Abate, which would have provided the PBA members a 20-year retirement plan. This body addressed the dangers of unstable SUNY police forces and their lack of diversity but, sadly and inexplicably, Governor Cuomo vetoed the bill -- see Veto Message 265 of 2019.

The legislation was simply about parity, safety and diversity as New York State Troopers and over 400 statewide municipal police forces who are currently entitled to a 20-year retirement plan. You

also passed and the Governor also vetoed the PBA's three-quarter accidental disability bill and the SUNY heart bill, which also harmed our morale and ultimately affects attrition losses as well.

In closing, the PBA of New York State encourages the Legislature to provide University Police, Park Police, Forest Rangers and Environmental Conservation Officers with the proper tools and give us parity with other law enforcement, such as a 20-year retirement and three-quarters accidental disability benefits. This will assure the PBA of NYS can continue to keep the public safe and maximize the public safety to take advantage of New York State's natural beauty.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We have a question from the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We have two questions from the Senate.

Senator Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: One question. I raised the issue of the attrition rate with

the chancellor, and she was not familiar with it. And I promised to get her the material.

MR. LAW: Okay.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay? Maybe you want to reach out as a result.

MR. LAW: Can I comment on that quickly?

SENATOR STAVISKY: Excuse me?

MR. LAW: Can I comment on that quickly?

SENATOR STAVISKY: Sure -- no, I -- I want the relationship to be a positive one between the police and the SUNY administration.

MR. LAW: I have a very positive comment.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Good.

MR. LAW: We did -- we were aware of the testimony from earlier today. I appreciate you raising that. And we did reach out to the chancellor's office today, and about an hour ago I heard back from the chancellor's office, who stated that she will be making an effort as early as tomorrow to

reach out to us, or us to reach out to her, to make a meeting.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Good. Good.

MR. LAW: Thank you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Glad to hear that.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator John Liu.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for testifying today. I know you've been waiting all --

(Mic off; discussion off the record.)

SENATOR LIU: There you go. I didn't even touch anything.

But I just wanted to thank you for your testimony. Obviously we have -- we have a lot of activity on college campuses nowadays, and SUNY is not -- it continues to be a hotbed of activism.

So I recognize the sometimes very difficult job that your members do to keep peace on campus while allowing students as much freedom as possible. And so I certainly support your attempts at parity, recognizing the very difficult work that you and your members do.

Thank you.

MR. LAW: Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for being here.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

MR. LAW: Thank you all.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Our next and final speaker, Mac-Olivier Lalanne, who I understand traveled here from Plattsburgh to be with us tonight.

MR. LALANNE: Actually, that was a quick run-down.

There was like a technical difficulty with me printing the copies, so if you see anything missing, I apologize for that.

And there's also -- not to repeat like stuff that people said beforehand, which is kind of most of the stuff I said on my testimony, so I can put some additions and summarize, since I have a short amount of time. So I'm going to start now.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay.

MR. LALANNE: Good evening, members of the Assembly and the Senate. My name is Mac-Olivier Lalanne. I am currently a sophomore at SUNY Plattsburgh, and I reside in Brooklyn, New York. I am here to testify on the need of funding for our college and universities on behalf of students like me attending college or preparing to attend college.

First I want to say thank you for your efforts to invest your time, money, and energy to help us students get into college, and thank you for allowing me to testify.

Next, I would like to say that although we appreciate the effort, we all believe that more can be done. Every year, colleges and universities tend to increase their tuition and fees, which the students tend to go through tough decisions on either continuing their education, apply and get a private loan to pay the increase, despite the consequences, in hopes to get an education, get a job to pay for the increase, serve in the Army via ROTC, or leave school. And the

list goes on.

During my time as a student, I have physically witnessed times departments within SUNY Plattsburgh have come over and talked about their budget and the importance of increasing their fees -- at which I was also a senator for the Student Association. And students were outraged, especially when the fitness or the recreation fee -- the Recreation Department came over to the student meeting, and the fee was approved through the SUNY Board of Trustees -- students were outraged and even blamed the Student Association for it despite the fact that we had no power to approve the fee.

One thing that I believe is worth considering is expanding the Excelsior Scholarship and also the TAP, the state aid, which I've -- to make it affordable for people regardless of where the student goes. Which as students who -- someone who goes to CUNY benefits from the scholarship more than a student who goes to SUNY. As we all know, the Excelsior Scholarship replaces the

financial aid that the students are going to obtain.

Another thing to consider is investing on a plan that would ensure students to pay off financial holds in their student accounts, as I too have seen many students who want to apply to classes next semester but can't do so because they have a hold in their account, thus penalizing and exploiting students to pay off the hold or risk not going to class or even school the next semester, which is not fair for those who suffer from financial difficulties or hardships.

Another thing I would say -- oh, I'm sorry. Another thing that you all should consider is granting aid for colleges and universities when it comes to diversity and inclusion, as I feel that yes, anyone can go to college after high school, there is a lack of diverse people and cultures which, depending on the location of the college, there is little to no resource or a voice for the misrepresented people.

During my times as a college student, I have heard stories and incidents that students like me have faced. To summarize it all up, college administrations throughout New York State didn't quite do a good job on addressing issues concerning racial issues or that involved misrepresented people. I know my school isn't the only one which -- actually, one example is that -- which is a true story.

A year before I came in, which was the year of two thousand -- well, the year I came in was 2018. But in 2017 there was a Snapchat incident which, to summarize it, was a student that kind of like -- there was a student that is currently not in school posted like a social media post that was kind of insensitive towards the black community in the school.

The administration didn't really quite do a good job and -- which led to like the school revitalizing the administration to include a diversity and inclusion position, to create a community room for unrepresented

people, and the list goes on.

Thank you for allowing me and other people to testify, and I hope this legislative session goes well for you all.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senator Krueger.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Just one question.

So in your testimony you talk about that the college that I think you're at is not necessarily handling diversity and differences that well. But you also say you think that CUNY students' aid goes further than SUNY students'. I don't think there's a difference. So can you clarify that for me?

MR. LALANNE: Well, because like for the -- for like the Excelsior Scholarship, like you will benefit more because like for CUNY, people get to commute through -- like if I would, say, go to Brooklyn College, currently my time, I could like literally just like commute through the train and won't really cause as much of a problem.

But if I were to go to like a SUNY, it

would like deny all of my financial aid and then I would have to pay all of the fees for -- because I am also a on-campus student.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. So I guess I'll leave it there for tonight. Because I didn't think we had different standards -- just the room and board difference --

MR. LALANNE: Yes, room and board and fees.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- not the other amounts.

Okay, thank you very much. Thank you for your testimony.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Just a quick question. What part of Brooklyn are you from?

MR. LALANNE: I am from Crown Heights.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So walking distance to Medgar Evers, and you went all the way upstate.

(Laughter.)

MR. LALANNE: Yup.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. Well, you're getting a good education. Thank you

so much for being here and helping to be the face of the students that we are working to make sure can succeed at college. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

MR. LALANNE: And also I actually didn't read this in my testimony, which -- sorry to hold the time over. I would also like to consider more aid and funding when it comes to food pantries and also more aid and funding when it comes to the civic engagement and voter participation, as I feel like yes, colleges can grant students those services, but voter registration there is not completely enough for those types of services.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So thank you for being here, and feel free to -- you can -- everybody, not just you -- people can have up to seven days after the hearing ends to submit additional testimony or new testimony if they haven't yet done so.

So this concludes the Higher Education

hearing. The joint budget committees will be reconvening at 9:30 tomorrow morning for the Workforce Development budget hearing and at noon for the Housing budget hearing.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the budget hearing concluded at 6:02 p.m.)