



The Commission on  
**INDEPENDENT**  
Colleges & Universities  
in New York

17 Elk Street  
Albany, NY 12207

518-436-4781  
518-436-0417 fax  
mail@cicu.org

www.cicu.org  
www.nycolleges.org

## For Immediate Release

## Contact:

Cailin McKenna  
[cailin@gramcomm.com](mailto:cailin@gramcomm.com)  
(518) 396-7787

### **Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities Unveils Plan to Make College More Accessible for all New York Students**

*In response to the Governor's proposal to expand Excelsior, CICU introduced a four-pronged approach  
to make higher education more accessible for lower income students*

ALBANY - The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU), which represents more than 100 private, not-for-profit colleges across New York State, is urging Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and state lawmakers to invest in the future of all New York students, regardless of whether they choose to attend a public or private institution. In response to the Governor's proposal to expand the Excelsior Scholarship to households who earn more than twice the median income in New York, CICU has proposed a four-pronged approach to make higher education more accessible and target financial support to New York students who need it most.

In order to make higher education affordable and accessible, in particular for lower income students, CICU is calling on the Governor and the Legislature to:

- Increase funding for proven student aid programs, including the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP);
- Invest in students currently enrolled in opportunity programs, including the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP);
- Invest in programs, including the STEM Incentive Program, that prepare today's students for the workforce of tomorrow; and
- Support New York's diverse higher education ecosystem and student choice by increasing funding for Bundy Aid and restoring funding for the Higher Education Capital (HECap) Matching Grants Program.

"New York students are the future of our great state. It's essential that we focus our efforts on supporting all low- and moderate-income students, whether they choose to study at private, not-for-profit or public institutions. While the Governor and many state lawmakers rightly call for state funding to be targeted to the lowest income students in primary and secondary schools to close the 'education gap,' it's our responsibility to ensure that the same is true for college students. That's why we have unveiled a proposal that will target aid to students who need it most and invest in the future of our state's diverse workforce," **said Mary Beth Labate, President of CICU.**

New York's private, not-for-profit colleges and universities educate 40 percent of the state's 1.2 million students, including nearly 300,000 New Yorkers. The Governor's recent proposal to expand the Excelsior Scholarship does not help these New Yorkers nor does it provide additional help to thousands of other low- and moderate-income families. Instead, it provides aid to families that earn double the median family income in New York State and more than triple the median income for African American and Latinx households. In a world of finite resources, financial aid needs to be better targeted. New York State already faces a considerable disparity in college attainment by ethnicity, with only 23 percent of African American adults and 18 percent of Latinx adults having earned a bachelor's or graduate degree. Financial aid programs that help to close attainment and income gaps should be the focus of this year's State Budget.

Investing in student aid programs, such as TAP, is an equity-based, progressive response to making college more affordable and more accessible for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. TAP currently assists an estimated 320,000 low- and moderate-income New Yorkers, including nearly 64,000 New York residents at private, not-for-profit colleges. However, the decades-long failure to update TAP in a meaningful way has eroded the buying power of this program. **Today, New York spends \$92 million (9 percent) less on TAP than it did in 2014-15, with 13 percent fewer beneficiaries than in 2014-15. Unless action is taken to expand TAP, this alarming decline is projected to continue.** New York has slipped to 17th nationally in the per capita needs-based aid that it provides low- and moderate-income students in private colleges. Today, New York trails behind states like New Jersey, Kentucky, South Carolina and Alaska in this critical metric. Failure to update TAP has also created the TAP Gap in New York's public institutions

New York's Independent Sector of higher education is already doing its part to make college more accessible and affordable for students, including providing financial aid to 85 percent of students and awarding more than \$6 billion in institutional aid to students in the last year alone. Those receiving financial aid pay, on average, \$26,888 annually to attend a private, not-for-profit college. **CICU is calling on New York State to do their part too, and urging the Governor and the Legislature to invest in TAP over a three-year phase-in period and increase the minimum TAP award to \$1,000 (from \$500), increase the maximum TAP award to \$6,000 (from \$5,165) and increase the TAP income eligibility ceiling to \$110,000 (from \$80,000).** In addition to TAP, opportunity programs such as HEOP, Science Technology Entry Program (STEP) and its collegiate counterpart (C-STEP), and the Liberty Partnerships Program, can open the door to higher education for many of New York's neediest students. These programs show the impact an education can have on economic mobility. **CICU is calling for a 20 percent increase in funding for these transformative programs.** Funding would be used to strengthen the existing programs by increasing the amount available to serve each participant.

While we appreciate the Executive Budget's proposal to expand income limits for the Enhanced Tuition Awards (ETA) for students at private, not-for-profit colleges and universities, other student aid programs, such as TAP, can serve the greatest number of needy students. Even under the proposal to increase the income eligibility, ETA still does not provide students who attend private institutions with comparable assistance to the Excelsior Scholarship. While the Excelsior Scholarship provides "last dollar" full tuition assistance to SUNY and CUNY students who meet all of the program's requirements, New York students who choose to attend private, not-for-profit institutions can only receive up to \$3,000 in support from the state. Additionally, other restrictions on the program have forced many colleges to opt-out of participation.

By increasing TAP and other opportunity programs, New York State is continuing to invest in the future of the state's workforce. CICU is also calling on state lawmakers to prepare students of today for the workforce of tomorrow by funding the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Incentive Scholarship. Currently in New York State, there are 1.7 STEM jobs for every one person looking for that type of work. In the 2018-19 State Budget, the Governor and the Legislature gave students at New York's private, not-for-profit colleges access to the STEM Incentive Scholarship. Independent Sector colleges and universities awarded 52 percent of the bachelor's and 75 percent of graduate degrees earned in STEM fields in the state, and this program recognizes the benefit to New York's economy of supporting more STEM degrees. Unfortunately, the Governor's Budget does not fund this program for students who choose to pursue a STEM degree at one of New York's private colleges. The state must continue funding this critical program and invest in a second cohort of students in order to prepare tomorrow's workforce today.

Private, not-for-profit colleges and universities are an integral part of New York's diverse higher education ecosystem, create more opportunities for student choice and play an important role in the statewide economy. In 2017, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities generated \$88.8 billion in economic impact statewide and were responsible for 415,600 jobs. Bundy Aid, the only source of unrestricted aid for private, not-for-profit colleges, plays an important role in supporting this public-private partnership. **CICU is asking for an increase of three percent for Bundy Aid, commensurate with the increase in support for nonpublic K-12 institutions that is recommended in the Executive Budget.**

HECap Matching Grants also helps private colleges make job-creating infrastructure investments with institutions matching state funding 3:1. Since the program's inception, the state has awarded \$290 million in grants that private colleges have matched with more than \$870 million - this means the state has leveraged more than \$1 billion in

total infrastructure spending. CICU commends Governor Cuomo for his focus on infrastructure, including his historic \$175 billion five-year state infrastructure plan and his plan to spend \$9 billion on SUNY and CUNY infrastructure over the next six years. Against this ambitious backdrop, **CICU is requesting \$30 million be restored for HECap funding to support institutions that generate more bachelor's and graduate degrees than any other arm of higher education.**

“New York’s private, not-for-profit colleges and universities play a vital role in economies in every region of the state. As New York State continues to invest in infrastructure projects, HECap grants are a way to further leverage the state’s dollars while spurring economic growth and investing in our campuses to continue attracting top students from across New York State, the nation and the world,” added Labate.

### **About The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities in New York**

Founded in 1956, The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU) in New York represents the chief executives of New York's 100+ independent (private, not-for-profit) colleges and universities on issues of public policy. Member colleges compose the largest private sector of higher education in the world and confer 50% of bachelor's degrees, 73% of master's degrees, and 78% of doctoral and first-professional degrees earned in New York State.