



TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate
FROM: Operations Committee
RE: Resolution: Costs of Administration Study
DATE: 191st Plenary, April 7-9, 2022
LOCATION: Tarrytown, NY
RESOLUTION #: 191-02-1
VOTE TALLY: For: 37 / Against: 3

RATIONALE:

WHEREAS the costs of administration in higher education are a continuous source of controversy, raised by multiple stakeholders, including members of the New York State Senate and Assembly, as well as stakeholders across many SUNY campuses; and

WHEREAS many years of reduced real support for core operations have far exceeded the significant tuition increases that have shifted costs to students, resulting in tight budgets that concern all stakeholders; and

WHEREAS in a Higher Education Joint Committee Hearing on Feb. 7, 2022, State Senator Liz Krueger (D 28th District) asked Interim Chancellor Stanley whether the ratio and cost of administration had increased, and the Interim Chancellor replied that she will gather the information and get back to Senator Krueger¹; and

WHEREAS Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and other data on the cost of administration appear to be limited and under-defined; and

WHEREAS many of these issues and concerns question whether or not there has been a gradual increase in numbers of administrators at the expense of resources for instruction; and

WHEREAS the various SUNY campuses have very different organizational structures and titles; and

WHEREAS the historical record of costs of administration in universities is unclear, and without proper data, assessment of these claims cannot be known; and

WHEREAS a proper study of these structures requires significant funding and support, and the authority of SUNY System Administration to put into effect;

RESOLUTION:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the SUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS) calls on the Interim Chancellor to establish a comprehensive study of the structure, numbers, ranks, state and local titles, and categories of administrators, and the cost of administration within SUNY and its campuses, in order to establish a rational basis of evaluation of appropriate costs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the SUNY UFS calls on the Interim Chancellor to include a UFS designee from among the members of the SUNY UFS Operations Committee (the Chair or Chair designee) and the SUNY UFS Executive Board to sit on the oversight committee of said study.

BACKGROUND:

The SUNY UFS Operations Committee has grappled with the costs of administration for many years. This has included a 2016 report prepared by David Vitt, Farmingdale State College², attempts at collecting administrative titles³, use of Educational Advisory Board (EAB) Academic Performance Solutions (APS)

analysis of academic administrative costs⁴, and of IPEDS data, among others.

Each of these is ultimately flawed. While there is some uniformity, each campus uses a different set of titles for many of its positions; thus, the true costs of administration can be opaque. This renders the efficiency of the SUNY structure unknowable for all stakeholders, from students, faculty, and staff to alumni, potential donors, and campus and system administration.

A proper study will take expertise, resources, and SUNY System Administration authority to plan and execute. Thus it is beyond the capacity of isolated scholars and observers.

Placing members of the SUNY UFS, along with other stakeholders, on an oversight board would be an act of shared governance and responsibility.

Context of State Support and Tuition Increases

The costs of administration are a significant portion of overall costs, and stakeholders are interested in responsible funding throughout SUNY. The recent history of State support for SUNY is relevant to this resolution.

As the SUNY UFS Executive Committee Statement on the Executive Budget notes, State support of core operations declined by a combined total of \$4.2B from 2008-09 to 2019-20, adjusted for inflation. The combined reduction of state support over this 13-year period averaged about 28%; however, the reduction for 2019-20 was a 38.57% reduction from the peak. The initial reduction and then flat operations funding in nominal dollars resulted in a huge reduction in real terms.⁵

An analysis of IPEDS data reveals that tuition and fees in 2008-09 were 49.4% of total funding; in 2019-20 they were 67.1%. Accordingly, the state share dropped from 50.4% to 32.9%. Since enrollment in 2019-20 was 99% of 2008-09 (after increasing and then decreasing), the enrollment level cannot explain the reduction of state support. The combined total state support plus tuition and fees shows a nominal increase from \$3,404,987,568 in 2008-09 to \$3,602,705,189 in 2019-20. But adjusting for inflation, the 2008-09 number would be \$4,043,180,571.90. That comes to a real reduction of \$440,475,382.90, and a percentage real reduction of about 10.89%. Thus even the increase in tuition and fees did not cover the reduction in state support, even as it shifted the financial burden from state support to students.

FOOTNOTES:

¹. New York State. Joint Legislative Public Hearing on 2022 Executive Budget Proposal: Topic Higher Education, 07 Feb 2022 (colloquy of Interim Chancellor Stanley and Senator Krueger 01:31:29 timestamp). <https://www.nysenate.gov/calendar/public-hearings/february-07-2022/joint-legislative-public-hearing-2022-executive-budget-0>

². Report on the Composition of State University of New York Administration 2007-2016 State University of New York University Faculty Senate Operations Committee Prepared by: David C. Vitt, Ph.D., Department of Economics, Farmingdale State College. http://www.sunyufs.us/uploads/1/1/6/9/116933050/composition_of_administration_report_final_operations.pdf

³. SUNY University Faculty Senate Operations Committee, "Academic Structure Across SUNY" (working document). https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qKnfN-Ug3B23T17rzXS-IsB_o4S-y0/edit

⁴. Education Advisory Board, Academic Performance Solutions. <https://www.nysenate.gov/calendar/public-hearings/february-07-2022/joint-legislative-public-hearing-2022-executive-budget-0>

⁵. SUNY University Faculty Senate Executive Committee, Statement on the Executive Budget, 22 March, 2022. http://www.sunyufs.us/uploads/1/1/6/9/116933050/ufs_ec_statement_on_executive_budget_2_22_2022.pdf