

New York State Public Higher Education Conference Board

Public Higher Education in New York State: *A System Out of Balance and in Distress*

CUNY and SUNY have suffered from an insidious slippage in state support over the last decade. This has been manifest in the state not keeping up with rising costs, failing to meet the demands of higher enrollment and actually supplanting state support with higher tuition and fees. With a student enrollment of over 600,000, CUNY and SUNY have managed to keep the universities viable throughout this period by resorting to extreme measures such as increasing tuition to among the highest levels in the country and reducing the number of full-time faculty. And all this is occurring as student enrollments climb to the highest levels in history.

As tuition has increased, the affordability of higher education in New York State has decreased. A recent national study has given New York State an “F” in affordability over the last decade. And, as the staffing needs of the universities have been met increasingly with part-time faculty, the question of ensuring academic quality comes into the forefront. The issue of quality becomes of concern because of larger classes, fewer full-time faculty, and more and more part-time faculty who, no matter how well intentioned and hard working, do not have the time beyond their teaching assignments to be on campus with students or their colleagues.

This paper examines three key issues: community college state support, full-time faculty staffing and state support for senior colleges. This paper concludes that as state support has slipped, more and more of the financial burden has been picked up by student tuition and fees at the community colleges and senior colleges. And, full-time faculty staffing levels have fallen while adjunct faculty levels have grown as colleges are forced to operate with scarcer funds. In sum, community college support is out of balance as state support slips and students pay higher tuition and fees; faculty staffing levels are out of balance as more and more adjuncts are hired as full-time faculty retire and enrollments grow; and, like community colleges, senior college funding is out of balance as state support slips and tuition and fees assume a greater burden.

A summary of the important facts tell the story:

- Under state law, CUNY and SUNY Community Colleges are to receive 40 % of their funding from the state, while counties and student tuition and fees are to share the remainder. The law also calls for tuition and fees to be capped at one-third of operating costs. The reality is that the state is not paying 40%, the state is not even paying one-third but, in fact, for the 2004-05 school year at SUNY the state is only paying 29% and at CUNY the state is only paying 31.2%. Tuition and fee revenue is at 39% for SUNY and 38.2% for CUNY.
- Full-time faculty members are the critical necessity for ensuring quality instruction and research at our public colleges and universities. NYSUT, UUP, PSC, NEA/NY, and CUNY’s Chancellor Matthew Goldstein have called for a faculty of 70% full-

time vs. 30% part-time. In fact, the numbers are 42 % full-time at CUNY and 49% at SUNY. These percentages are far from the 70% goal. As the universities deal with scarcer resources, both CUNY and SUNY have resorted to increased employment of part-time faculty.

- Finally, tuition and fees have risen in New York State at our senior colleges and are ranked 14th highest nationally because of the lack of state support to meet costs of public higher education. In 1990-91, New York State's public college tuition was ranked in thirtieth place. As state support has slipped, tuition has risen. The Center for Public Policy and Higher Education gave New York State an "F" in affordability even after the state's Tuition Assistance Program is applied. Tuition is high because state has backed away from its support.

Continuing the practice of allowing state support to slip leads to raising tuition and fees and reducing full-time faculty staffing. This practice is bringing the universities ever closer to crisis. CUNY and SUNY are in distress and need an infusion of state support now and for the foreseeable future to bring back full-time faculty and make our colleges affordable.

Let's look at the facts in greater detail:

— COMMUNITY COLLEGE SUPPORT —

EDUCATION LAW

The New York State Education Law, Section 6304a, states that state financial aid shall be one-third of community college operating costs. The aid, however, is to be forty percent of operating costs when the community college has a full opportunity programs, i.e., admits all high school graduates in the community college region. Further, the Education Law, Section 6304d, states that tuition and fees shall not be more than one-third of the amount of the community colleges operating costs.

The reality of what is happening in community colleges and the requirements of the Education Law are quite different. In the current year, the average state share for SUNY community colleges has fallen to 29% while tuition and fee revenue is 39%.¹ Base aid for the current year was cut by \$65 from \$2,300 to \$2,235.² For CUNY, state support is 31.2% of operating costs while tuition and fee revenue is 38.2%.³

How can this happen if the Education Law calls for equal sharing of one-third among the state, the county sponsors and the students? And, how can this happen if the law requires 40% state funding if the community college has a full opportunity program which the community colleges do actually offer? The answer is that each year the Legislature enacts language in the

¹ NYSUT Briefing Bulletin 04-15, *Community College Base Aid Cut by \$65 per FTE*, October 2004

² Ibid

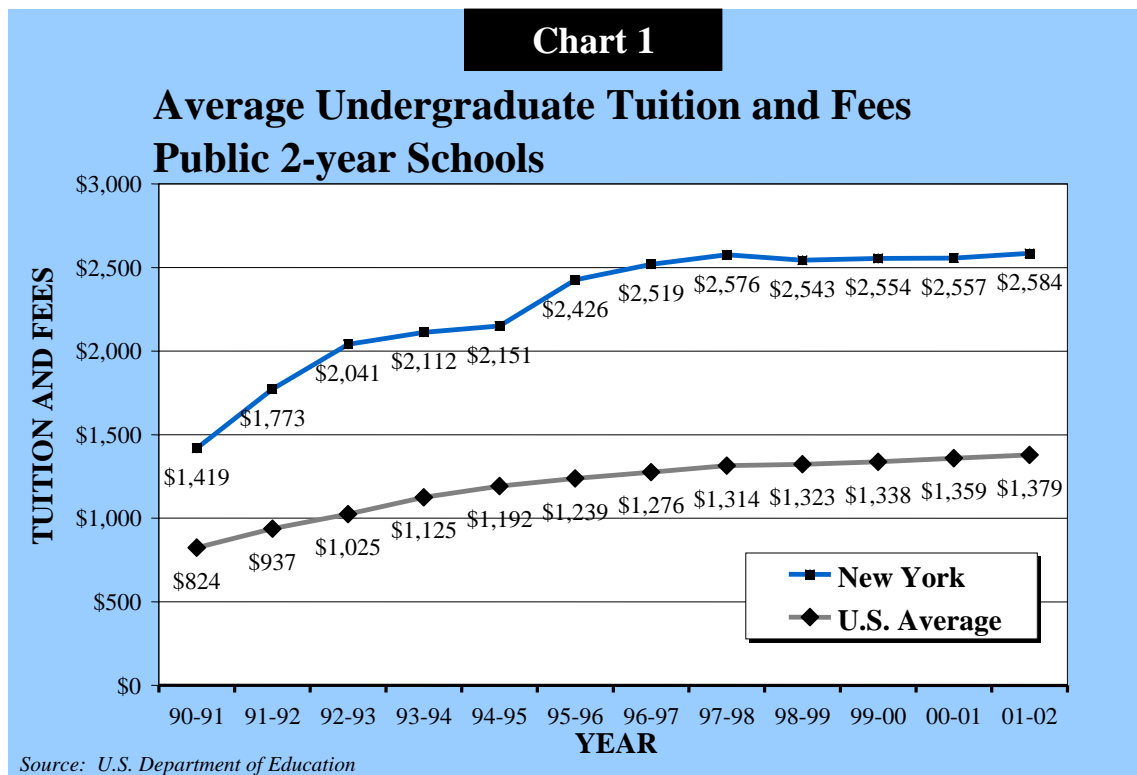
³ CUNY 2004-05 New York City Adopted budget and New York State Adopted Budget Preliminary Analysis, University Budget Office and the Office of Facilities Planning, Construction and Management, August 24, 2004

state Budget that waives the requirement of the Education Law and thereby allows tuition to exceed one-third of operating costs and for state aid to fall below forty percent, and, in fact, to fall below thirty three percent.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE TUITION

Because of the slippage in state aid for community college operating expenses, tuition and fees have climbed in recent years.

The United States Department of Education publishes an annual report, the most recent of which is entitled *Digest of Educational Statistics 2002*. The Report contains a national comparison of average community college tuition and fee figures for each state. New York State in 2001-2002 had an average community college tuition and fee cost of \$2,584. The New York figure is the fourth highest in the nation and almost twice the national average of \$1,379. These figures can be seen in Chart 1 below.



In 1990-91, New York State average was \$1,419 compared to the national average of \$824. New York was ranked tenth highest among the 50 states. Over the 11 years of the comparisons, New York which has moved to the fourth highest in the nation and is in the highest ten percent of student tuition cost.

Again, a greater financial burden is placed on students because the state does not live up to its own commitment as required in the Education Law for forty percent state funding. The

state's obligation is passed, in effect, to the students and as a result New York's tuition and fees are among the highest in the country. The funding for community colleges is clearly out of balance.

In *Measuring Up 2004*, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education gave New York State an "F" for affordability. The report stated:

New York has shown no notable progress in providing affordable higher education opportunities over the last decade.

The state does not offer low-priced college opportunities.

The state is a top performer in the very high investment it makes in need-based financial aid; nonetheless, the share of income, including financial aid, needed to pay for college is very large compared with other states.

— FULL-TIME FACULTY —

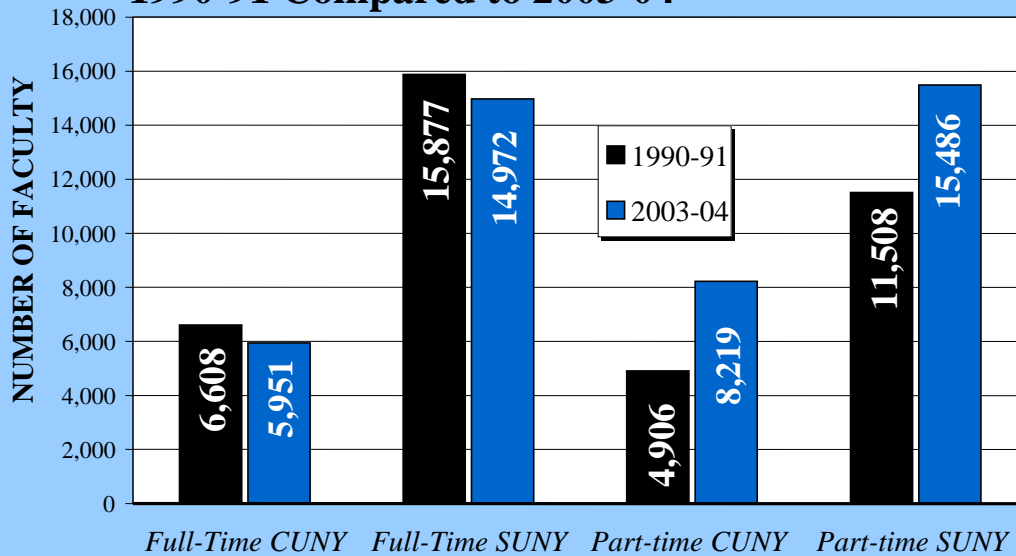
Throughout the period from 1990-91 to 2003-04, there has been a decline in the number of full-time faculty at both SUNY and CUNY. As full-time faculty staffing has declined, there has been an increase in the number of adjunct faculty.

It must be carefully stated that adjunct faculty make an important contribution to higher education. But, adjunct faculty, by definition, are only part-time. They often have other employment. Part-time faculty often do not have offices on campus. And, by virtue of their part-time schedule and lack of office space, they find it difficult to meet with students. Adjuncts are not paid to conduct research or advise students. Adjunct faculty do not participate in shared governance such as committees that support the academic life of their departments.

A look at faculty staffing is revealing. As Chart 2 illustrates, full-time faculty at both SUNY and CUNY declined from 1990-91 to 2003-04 while the number of adjunct faculty grew dramatically. This is happening because of the slippage in state support. As full-time faculty retire and enrollments grow, the college administrations meet their staffing obligations with these limited funds by employing adjuncts who receive less pay and little or no benefits. It is, unfortunately, all too simply a numbers game – how to cover the most student classroom teaching requirements for the least amount of money.

Chart 2

**Public Higher Education Faculty
1990-91 Compared to 2003-04**



Source: CUNY Central Administration and SUNY Institutional Research

A number of things can be seen from a review of Chart 2. They are:

- Full-time faculty at CUNY declined from 6,608 to 5,951, a decline 657 faculty or 9.9%
- Full-time at SUNY declined from 15,877 to 14,972, a decline of 905 or 5.7%
- Adjuncts at CUNY grew from 4,906 to 8,219, a 3,313 increase or 67.5%.
- Adjuncts at SUNY grew from 11,508 to 15,486, an increase of 3,978 or 34.5%.

In 2003-04, at SUNY community colleges, adjunct faculty constitute 68.2% of the staff compared to full-time at 31.8%.⁴ At CUNY community colleges, adjunct faculty are 66.2% of faculty compared to 33.8% for full-time.⁵ In other words, at both SUNY and CUNY community colleges, adjuncts are more than two-thirds of the faculty.

At CUNY senior colleges the percentage of full-time faculty is 45.7% compared to 54.3% for adjunct.⁶ At SUNY senior colleges full-time are 63.4% full-time and 36.6% part-time.⁷

⁴ Statistical Release 40B, Fall 2003 Employee Faculty Summaries, SUNY August 16, 2004

⁵ Staff Facts Fall 2003, the Office of Faculty and Staff Relations CUNY

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

As the data show, there is serious full-time part-time imbalance that is only getting worse over time. And, no matter how well intentioned and how hard working part-time faculty may be, their part-time status limits their ability to interact with students, and participate in the academic life of the universities. By any standard there must be a concern with the quality of higher education. Things are out of balance and in distress.

— SENIOR COLLEGE SUPPORT —

The senior colleges at SUNY and CUNY have seen a slippage in the level of support from the State of New York.

The level of state appropriations grew during the period from 1993-94 to 2003-04 by just 21.6%. An average of just over 2% a year does not begin to address the needs of the universities to meet the costs of collective bargaining contracts, and other costs, such as energy.

Further, this 21.6% growth ranked 41st in the nation.⁸ In other words, only nine states had a rate of growth in this period worse than New York States.

In addition, two other measures attest to New York's place in support of higher education. New Yorkers contribute \$5.75 per \$1,000 of personal income in support of higher education. This level of support is 42nd in the nation.⁹ Again, this is a low ranking.

And, New York's per capita support of higher education is \$210.48 which is 35th in the nation, another very low ranking.¹⁰

Tuition and fee comparisons can also illustrate what has been happening in New York State. Chart 3 below shows that in 1990-91, public college tuition averaged \$1,587 which was less than the national average of \$1,888 and ranked 30th in the nation. In other words New York's tuition was less than the national average.

In the period since then things have changed. For 2001-02 the latest available national data, tuition and required fees are now \$4,140 which is 14th highest in the nation and considerably **above** the national average of \$3,746.

And, we know that there was a major tuition increase in 2003-04 which exacerbated this situation, especially since the tuition increase in 2003-04 was in fact a substitution of tuition money for state money.

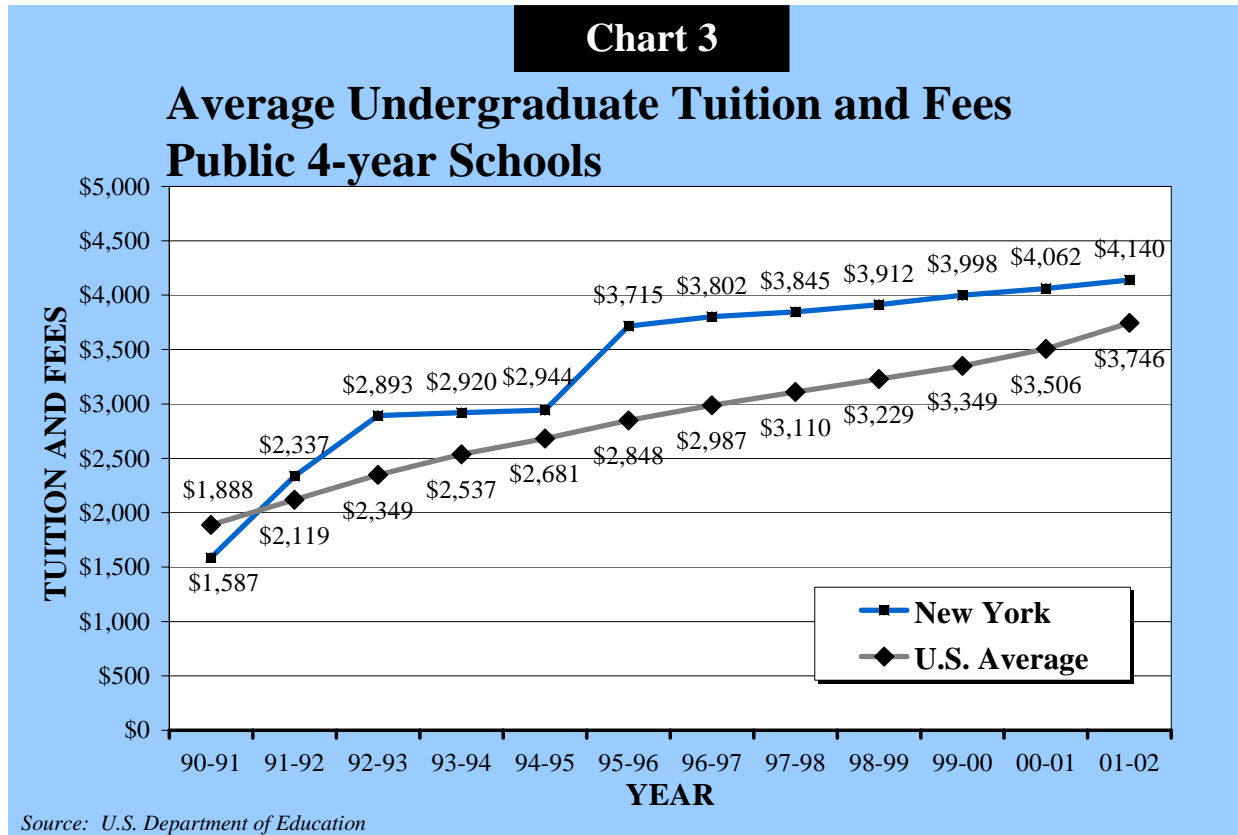
Tuition and fee increases are really the use of student's money to take the place of state money. And as tuition increases, state money is either slipping or being replaced altogether.

⁸ Grapevine Center for the Study of Education Policy, Illinois State University

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

Finally, this situation has been recognized by *Measuring Up 2004* The National Report on Higher Education. Over the last decade, the Report gives New York State an F in affordability for higher education.



— Conclusions and Recommendations —

Public higher education is a system out of balance and in distress:

- Community college funding is out of balance. The provisions of the Education Law for community colleges are not being carried out. Community college tuition is among the highest in the nation.
- Full-time faculty staffing is out of balance. The numbers of full-time faculty are declining and the numbers of adjuncts are dramatically increasing.
- Funding for the senior colleges is out of balance. State support is slipping and tuition and fees are increasing.

Public higher education needs an infusion of state aid in the near term to correct this imbalance, to ensure quality education, and make public higher education in New York State affordable.

- Community college aid needs to be increased to bring community college aid into compliance with the Education Law.
- Full-time faculty lines need to be restored and full-time faculty should be 70% of faculty staffing.
- State support needs to be restored and increased well above inflation to redress years of slippage in state support.

Public higher education in New York is a resource for the people that must be nurtured and strengthened especially in an era of high technology and the global economy.

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