

The Honorable Sean Ryan
NYS Assembly Member
LOB 540
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Assemblymember Sean Ryan,

We all agree that helping New Yorkers achieve a higher education makes economic sense. A well-educated population is vital to New York's successful future. The proposed Executive Budget has helped focus attention on higher education and how to assist families with paying for college. However, the much discussed "free tuition" proposal limits educational choices for New Yorkers, and would be doing a disservice to New York's taxpayers. It creates two classes of students in New York State and also presents a competitive imbalance that would jeopardize **D'Youville College's** ability to compete for students. The impact on enrollment and hence the economic vitality of our institution would be seriously compromised. It also represents a departure from a long held public policy goal of New York State — student choice.

The proposed Excelsior Scholarship Program signals an interest from state government to make a significant new investment in student aid. An infusion of support for financial aid is welcome news, and would be most effective if directed to the proven state Tuition Assistance Program known as TAP. New York families know and trust TAP to help them meet their college expenses, and investing in expanding the amount of funds for each student and extending the program's eligibility so more students can receive support would be a timely, cost-effective and wise move. Currently at **D'Youville College, one in two families rely on TAP** to finance their education.

New York's Independent Sector provided \$5.1 billion in student assistance in 2014-15, leading to an average net tuition of \$12,700, well below "sticker" price. **At D'Youville College alone, \$35.9 million in aid in addition to TAP is awarded to our students.** Since the Great Recession, nearly every new dollar in tuition revenue has gone for financial aid. Our private, not-for-profit colleges and universities work hard to remain affordably competitive, while providing a quality education that places a premium on student completion. We want to continue our partnership with the state so students have limitless learning opportunities.

Students, taxpayers and our community's economic base all win when students are given financial aid from the state and are able to use it at the college, whether public or private, that best meets their academic, social, career, and financial needs.

I know you appreciate the importance of **D'Youville College** to the Buffalo Niagara economy. The College is responsible for more than **\$121 million annually** in total economic impact. Before signing onto the Executive Budget proposal I urge you to learn the facts and to consider the impact that "free" tuition at SUNY and CUNY would have on student choice, the communities in which we are located, and our taxpayers.

The Independent Sector and **D'Youville College** will continue the College's core mission: providing access, diversity, and **choice for all New Yorkers.**

Sincerely,