

Colleagues,

Many of you have asked how you can connect into the New York State budget process for FY 2021 that is in full gear now and in particular, how you can help our students.

In addition to teams working on advancing several research priorities that fund our centers and other academic enterprises, your personal support is particularly poignant this month for efforts to secure an increase in the state's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) which provides financial aid to students from low- and moderate-income. More than 650 Clarkson students access this aid that gives them the gateway to launch great careers from the education we provide.

The family income limits have not changed in 20 years and award levels have been adjusted only once (by \$165) during that same period. As a consequence, over the past five years, funding for TAP has decreased 13 percent and the number of beneficiaries has declined by 9 percent. This trend will continue until the Legislature acts to expand TAP. See below for proposals that are on the table now.

Now that budget negotiations are in earnest, there is an opportunity to help. CICU has created an [E-advocacy letter](#) platform, which can be personalized and used by any member of our campus community. If you would like to write your own letter, I've attached the list of elected officials for each of our campuses and a URL if you do not know who represents you. I've also attached several more background items on TAP to familiarize you with the issues as interested.

If you have any questions about how to lend your voice to this issue or want more background materials, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at [kchezum@clarkson.edu](mailto:kchezum@clarkson.edu) or ext. 4483.

Kelly O. Chezum '04  
VP for External Relations

### **Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)**

**The Commission for Independent Colleges & Universities is asking for a three-year phase-in to increase the income eligibility to \$110,000, increase the maximum award to \$6,000, and increase the minimum award to \$1,000.**

1. TAP is a critical source of aid for more than 330,000 New Yorkers at public, private, and proprietary colleges and universities.
2. The program is 50 years old and needs to be modernized.
3. The maximum income threshold has not been increased from \$80,000 since 2000, even though average family incomes in New York increased 7% from 2005 to 2017. That means fewer and fewer families are eligible for TAP each year.
4. The maximum award amount, \$5,165, and minimum award amount, \$500, have also been stagnant for many years.

### **Sending Your Letter**

You can do this electronically on the [E-advocacy site](#) which will locate your reps or to find the name and

mailing address for your New York State representatives based on your home address, please go to: <http://cqrcengage.com/cicu/?0> and insert your zip code and then full address as needed.

Below are the names and addresses of the representatives where it is most likely that our employees would be represented. If you are a student and not from New York State, please use one of the addresses as shared below based on the campus you attend for classes and advising.

**The Clarkson University Potsdam Campus is represented by:**

Hon. Joseph Griffo  
Senator S047  
172 State Street, Capitol Building Room 413C  
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Mark Walczyk  
Assemblyman H116  
940 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248



If you are not from New York State and live on campus in Potsdam, please use these.

**Elected representatives in the region around Potsdam (i.e. Canton/Ogdensburg and Colton are each represented by different Senators than Potsdam.)**

Hon. Pattie Ritchie  
Senator S048  
302 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Betty Little  
Senator S045  
711B Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Dan Stec '90  
Assemblymember H114  
439 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Billy Jones  
Assemblyman H115  
534 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248

**The Capital Region Campus is represented by:**

Hon. Angelo Santabarbara  
Assemblymember H111  
654 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. James Tedisco  
Senator S049  
515 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247



If you are not from New York State and are enrolled at our Schenectady Campus, please use these.

**Elected representatives in the region around**

Hon. Neil Breslin

**Schenectady include:**

Senator S044

State Capitol Building – CAP 430  
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. George Amedore  
Senator S046  
311 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. John McDonald  
Assemblymember –108  
417 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Pat Fahy

**The Beacon Institute Campus is represented by:**

Hon. Susan Serrino  
Senator S041  
613 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Assemblymember H109  
452 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Phil Steck  
Assemblyman H110  
820 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Mary Beth Walsh  
Assemblywoman H112  
725 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Jonathan G. Jacobson  
Assemblyperson H104  
628 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248

**Elected representatives in the region around Beacon include:**

Hon. James Skoufis  
Senator S039  
815 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Kieran Michael Lalor  
Assemblymember H105  
531 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12248



OPINION

# Commentary: Investing in Tuition Assistance Program will pay dividends

Mary Beth Labate  
Feb. 27, 2020

I witness daily the efforts exerted by presidents of private, not-for-profit colleges and universities to make a college education more affordable for every student, regardless of their ZIP code. For many students, access to New York's student aid programs, such as the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), can help make college dreams reality and open the door to new opportunities.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has made college affordability a priority, and we are grateful that this issue is receiving much-needed attention at the state level. However, we strongly believe that the state's limited resources should be better targeted toward low- and moderate-income families who need additional support.

The executive budget proposes expanding the income eligibility for the Excelsior Scholarship to families with incomes up to \$150,000, which is more than double the median family income statewide and more than triple the median income for African-American and Latinx households. In a world of competing demands and finite resources, the students and families who most need additional support will not be getting it.

Increasing TAP is the equity-based, progressive response to college affordability, in particular 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 who choose to attend 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, or 9 percent, less on TAP than it did in 2014-15, with 13 percent fewer beneficiaries. Unless action is taken to expand TAP, this alarming decline is projected to continue. That's why we're calling on Cuomo and the Legislature to increase both the maximum and minimum TAP award to \$6,000 and \$1,000, respectively, as well as to increase the income eligibility threshold to \$110,000.

New York's private colleges are doing their part to make college more affordable, and now New York state must do its part too. While TAP award amounts have remained virtually unchanged over the past two decades, private colleges have increased the financial aid they provide by 32 percent in the past five years alone. Together, New York's private colleges provide more than \$6 billion in institutional aid to 85 percent of our students, bringing the average cost to attend a private, not-for-profit college down to \$26,888.

When it comes to choosing a college, there is another issue just as important as affordability for the success of students — the right fit. We know that students fare best where they fit best, and TAP helps New Yorkers select the college that best suits their academic interests and career goals with confidence.

The breadth and quality of our independent higher education sector is one of the state's most compelling economic assets, an attraction for employers who covet the talent and skills that our faculty and students bring. Our institutions are also a major economic driver, generating \$88.8 billion in economic impact and supporting more than 415,000 jobs. Without investing in our higher education landscape and TAP recipients, we risk weakening an entire sector that has brought tremendous benefit



and pride to communities from Long Island to Buffalo and disadvantaging the low- and moderate-income students we serve.

Every New York student should be free to choose the college path that is right for them and should be supported by the state in their efforts. By investing in TAP, the future of New York state's workforce will be more competitive and inclusive, and our colleges and universities will be able to continue preparing the leaders of tomorrow right here in the Empire State.

*Mary Beth Labate is the president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU), representing more than 100 private, not-for-profit colleges and universities and nearly 500,000 students across New York.*

# THE DAILY GAZETTE

## EDITORIAL: Help poor kids attend college first

Expanding Excelsior Scholarship now is a poor choice with so many needs and a big budget deficit

Gazette Editorial Board

| February 6, 2020



Here's a litmus test for how government should allocate its money in a fiscal crisis:

Meet the needs of the poorest first.

That goes for healthcare. It goes for food and shelter. And it goes for education.

So while there are certainly benefits to helping all students in New York attend college, a state trying to close a \$6.1 billion budget deficit must first take care of the poorest students before giving breaks to those who can more easily afford it.



# THE DAILY GAZETTE

So it stands to reason that now is not the time for Gov. Andrew Cuomo to expand the family income cap for state Excelsior Scholarships from \$125,000 to \$150,000 to allow more students to secure free tuition at state colleges.

In fact, the state should be redirecting funds from that program to other programs that help lift needy students from the depths of poverty and help them gain a college education that they could never otherwise afford.

We've never been fans of the Excelsior Scholarship anyway, viewing it as too generous for already overburdened taxpayers and not helpful enough to poor students. (It only covers tuition, not room, board and other college expenses.)

Expanding the program to even more higher-income families — particularly now, when the state could instead be trying to close the budget gap or trying to meet the needs of others who require such assistance — is just ludicrous.

Instead, as some state lawmakers and government watchdog groups suggested at a hearing on Wednesday, the state should consider expanding its Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) which is based on demonstrated financial need and serves more than 300,000 low-income students.

By contrast, the Excelsior program only helps about 20,000 students, mostly from higher-income families.

The state also should invest more in the Higher Education Opportunity Program, another program that serves economically disadvantaged students and that turns away 8,000 needy students a year.

With SUNY tuition expected to increase \$200 a year for the next five years and TAP awards expected to remain flat, a college education will become even more elusive to poorer students in the coming years if the state doesn't devote more money to help them.

With limited resources available due to the budget deficit, and with New York's poorer families facing even more challenges, now is not the time to be giving more financial breaks to people who don't necessarily need them.

First help the people who need it most.

Expanding the Excelsior Scholarship program does just the opposite.



## **Proposed Excelsior expansion reopens old arguments about access**

By Nick Niedzwiadek

02/04/2020 08:07 PM EST

ALBANY — Gov. Andrew Cuomo's proposed expansion of his signature Excelsior Scholarship program cracked open longstanding fissures among legislators and higher education groups about how best to make college more accessible.

Cuomo's executive budget proposal would tack on \$26 million to help fund the first step of a two-year phase-in to raise the income eligibility threshold to \$150,000 from this year's cap of \$125,000. Nearly \$150 million would be devoted to the scholarship, which covers the cost of tuition at SUNY and CUNY institutions not covered by other financial aid programs.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers questioned whether it was a better use of financial aid compared with the Tuition Assistance Program — which has a much lower income threshold and is granted to more students than the 24,000 who received an Excelsior Scholarship last year — or SUNY's Educational Opportunity Program, which received about triple the number of applications than it could accommodate, according to Chancellor Kristina Johnson.

"Why not expand the EOP programs? Why not put it in the programs for people who have deeper need?" Assemblyman Harvey Epstein (D-Manhattan) said at Tuesday's higher education budget hearing. "I'm baffled, really, by the choices here."

Excelsior is available only to students who accrue at least 30 credits per academic year. The Cuomo administration has defended credit component as critical to ensuring students stay on track to graduation, but students said the requirement is a burden if they are juggling jobs or family responsibilities.

The Excelsior versus TAP argument also galvanizes the interests of progressives with Republican lawmakers and New York's private universities and proprietary, for-profit colleges. Unlike Excelsior, TAP can be used to subsidize tuition costs at both public and non-public schools, which argue they're put at a competitive disadvantage.

"Before expanding Excelsior, a program that by all accounts provides limited value to the state's neediest students, resources should be directed toward families that need the resources the most to close the yawning gap in degree attainment," Mary Beth Labate, president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, said in her prepared budget testimony.

Guillermo Linares, president of the Higher Education Services Corporation, which oversees the state's suite of financial aid programs, conceded that students would benefit from a boost in TAP.

“The need for students is always there,” he testified. “But it’s a question the Legislature and the governor need to address.”

Assemblymember Deborah Glick, who chairs the chamber's Higher Education Committee, said she and other lawmakers are also renewing their push for money to close the so-called TAP gap — or the difference between the maximum TAP award and tuition at SUNY and CUNY that campuses are forced to absorb.

“It’s not going to get fixed in a year,” she said. “We’d like to see a plan to eliminate it in a short period of time.”

Many of the same arguments were made in 2017 when Cuomo first proposed the Excelsior Scholarship, although the criticisms may be louder this year because of the program’s design. Unlike students of lesser means, families making \$125,000 to \$150,000 are not eligible for other state grants, meaning Excelsior would cover their full tuition bill. That makes the program more costly on a per-student basis, and exacerbates the disparity between wealthier and poorer families.

Johnson and her counterpart at New York City’s university system, Chancellor Felix Rodriguez, diplomatically acknowledged lawmakers' preference to bolster TAP and other initiatives targeting lower-income or underrepresented students while also supporting Cuomo’s proposal.

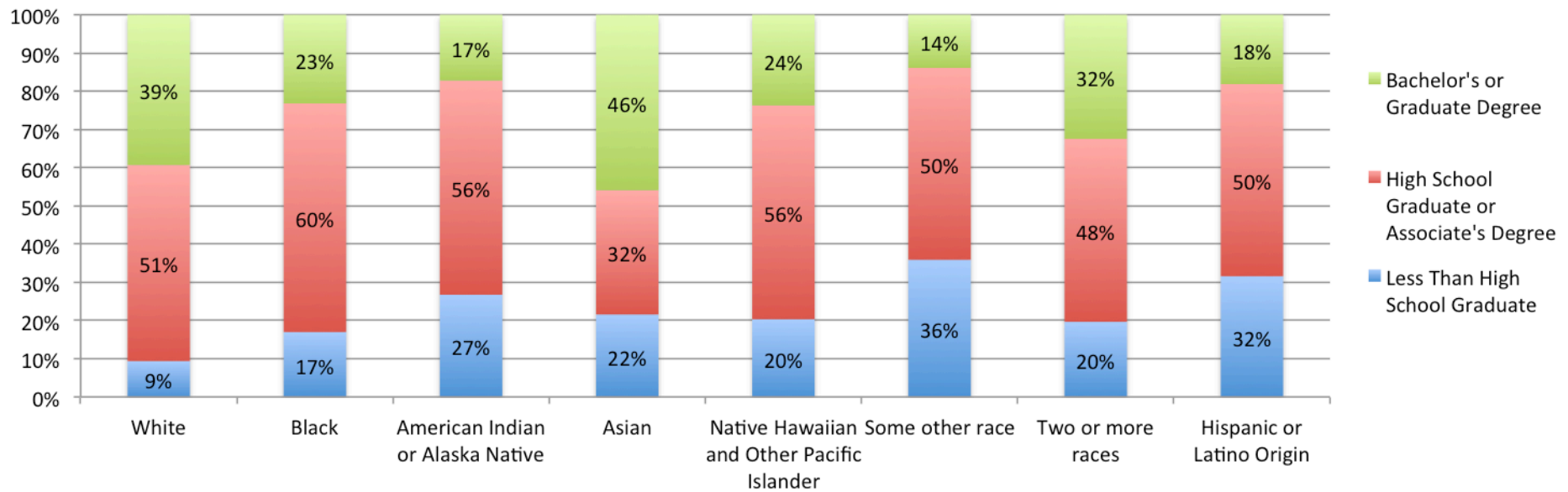
“I think the opportunity to increase the aid to all students attending SUNY would be welcome,” Johnson testified.

Beside the financial aid component, lawmakers devoted considerable time scrutinizing the executive budget’s funding for maintenance work at SUNY and CUNY and a proposed 2 for 1 matching fund for new construction projects. If enacted it would allow the pair to access up to \$200 million each in state funding, provided they’re able to chip in a proportionate amount.

“So many of the buildings at CUNY were built 50, 60, 70 years ago, and critical maintenance is not sufficient,” Senate Higher Education Chairwoman Toby Ann Stavisky (D-Queens) said. “You need shovels in the ground for new buildings.” Rodriguez said the capital fund presents a “unique opportunity” for CUNY to overhaul its aging facilities, though legislators and union officials raised concerns about whether it would disadvantage campuses that are less able to put up their side of the match. “State funding to fix and build New York’s public colleges should be allocated based on the needs of the colleges and their student bodies, not based on the private fundraising prowess of the college presidents, or the wealth of their alumni networks,” testified Barbara Bowen, president of Professional Staff Congress, the union that represents CUNY faculty and staff.

# Attachment A

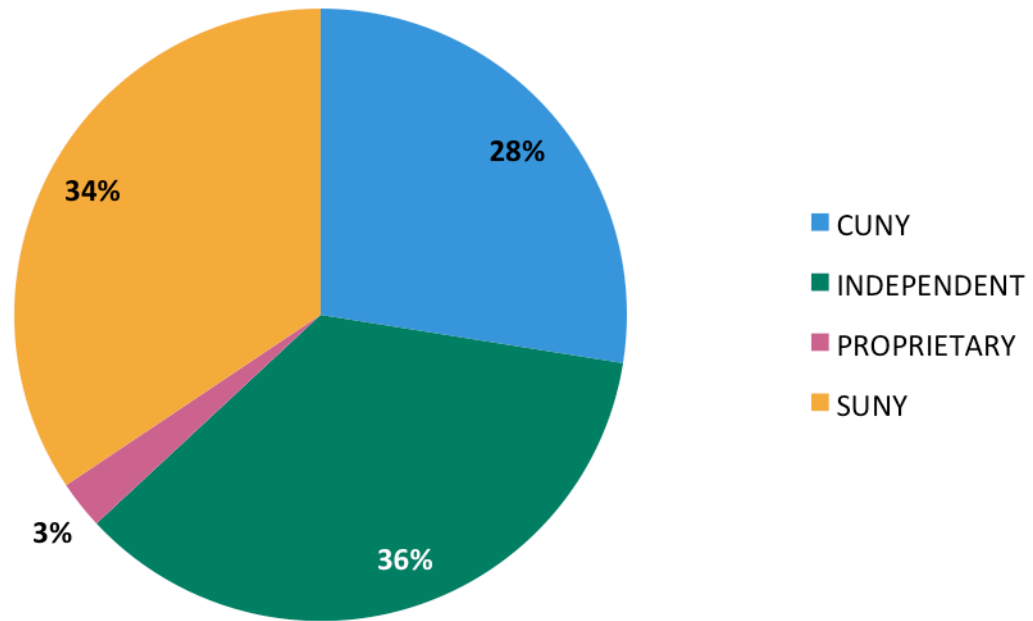
## Educational Attainment by Race and Ethnicity in New York State, 2017



Source: Estimates based on U.S. Census, 2017, population age 25 or older

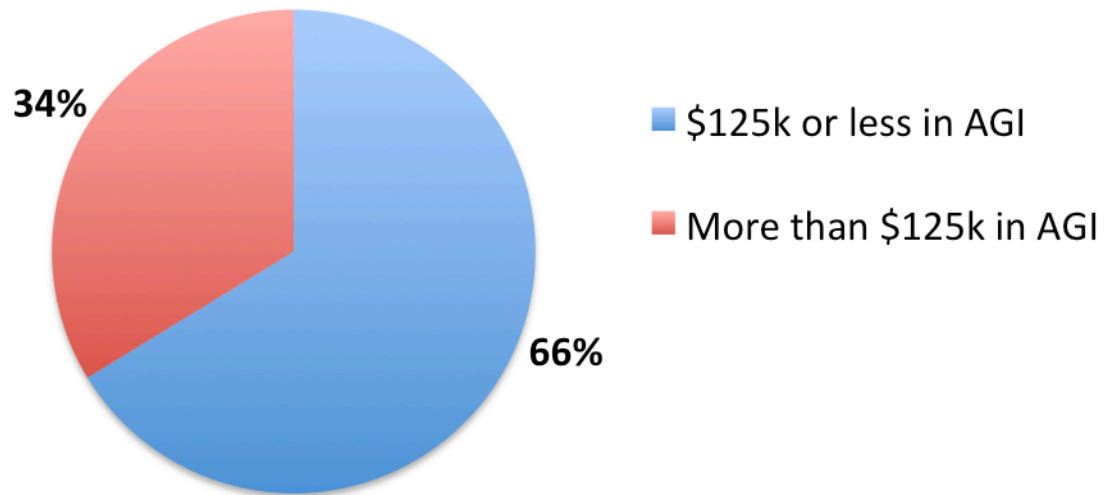
# Attachment B

## Estimated Share of Full-Time and Part-Time New York State Undergraduates Attending Four-Year Institutions



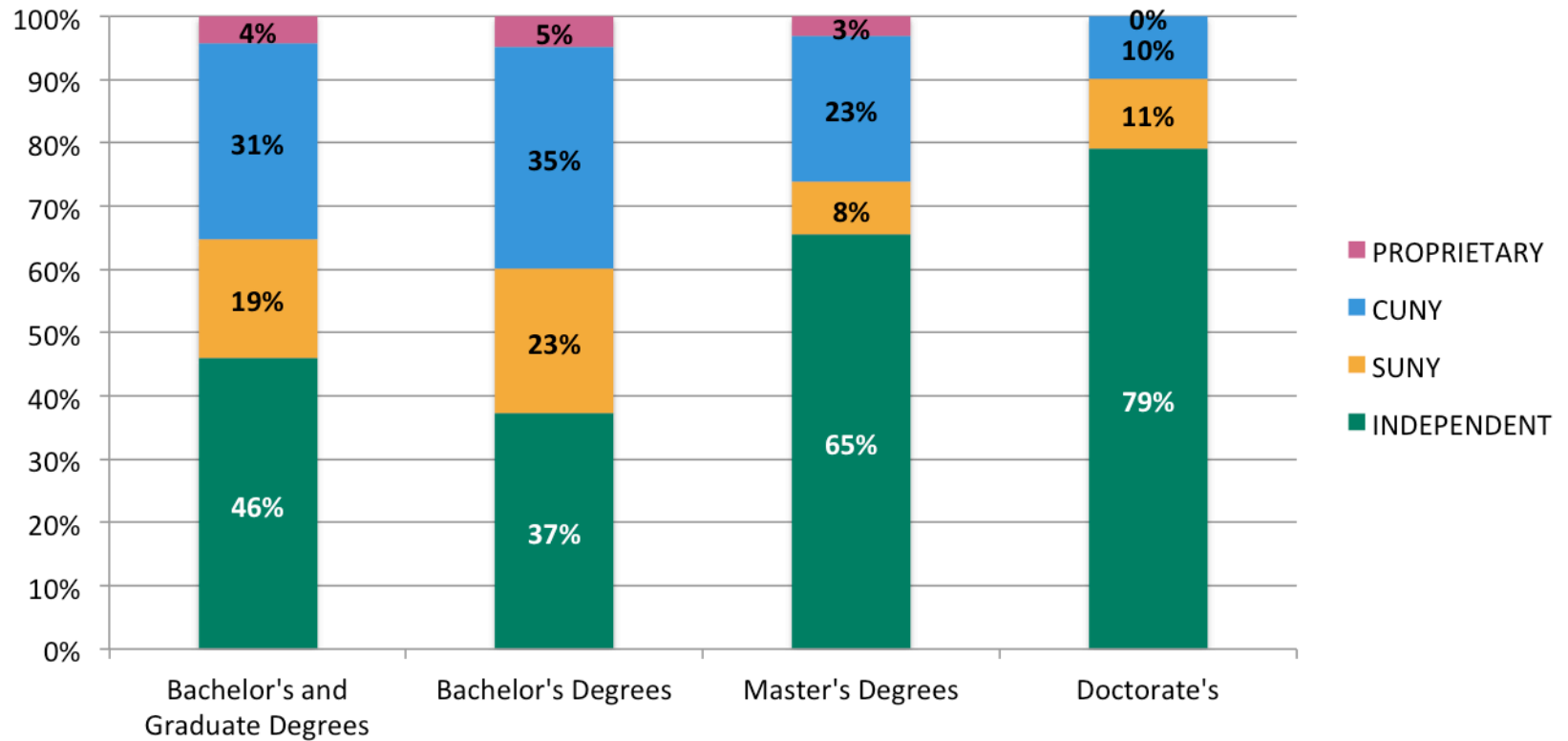
Attachment C

**Share of Full-Time Undergrad NYS Resident Students at 4-Yr Independent Sector Institutions by Adjusted Gross Income**



# Attachment D

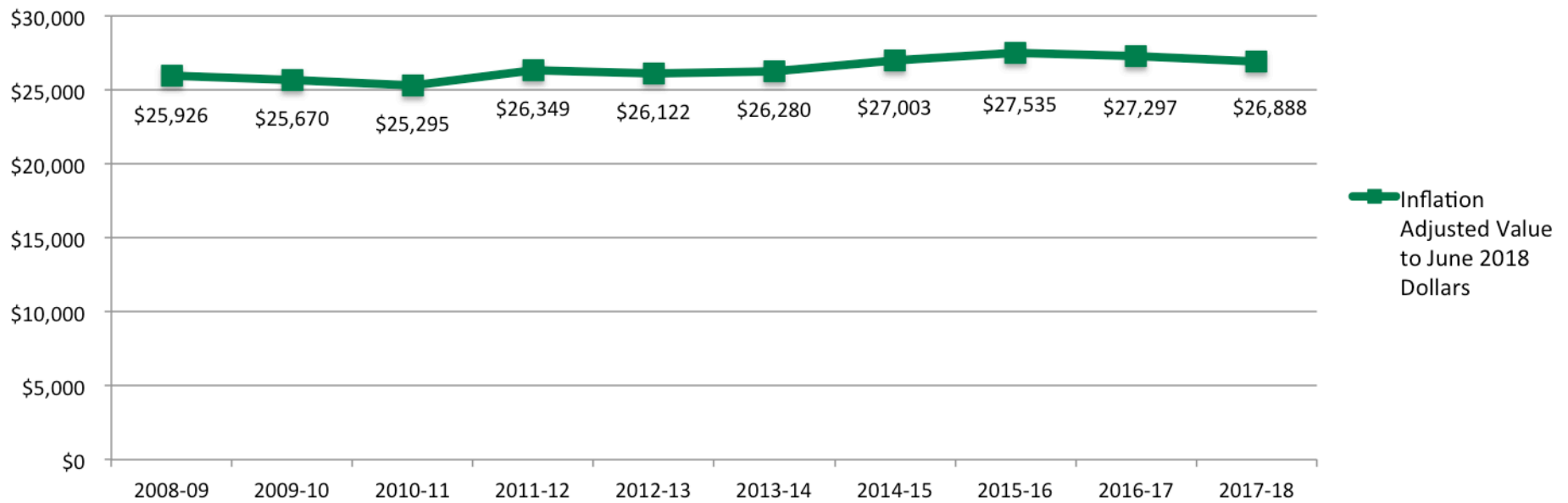
## Degrees Earned by African American and Latinx Students in New York State by Sector, 2017-18



Source: IPEDS, degree completions 2017-18  
Includes four-year / graduate institutions

# Attachment E

## Inflation Adjusted Average Net Price at Four-Year Private Not-for-Profit Colleges and Universities, 2009 to 2018

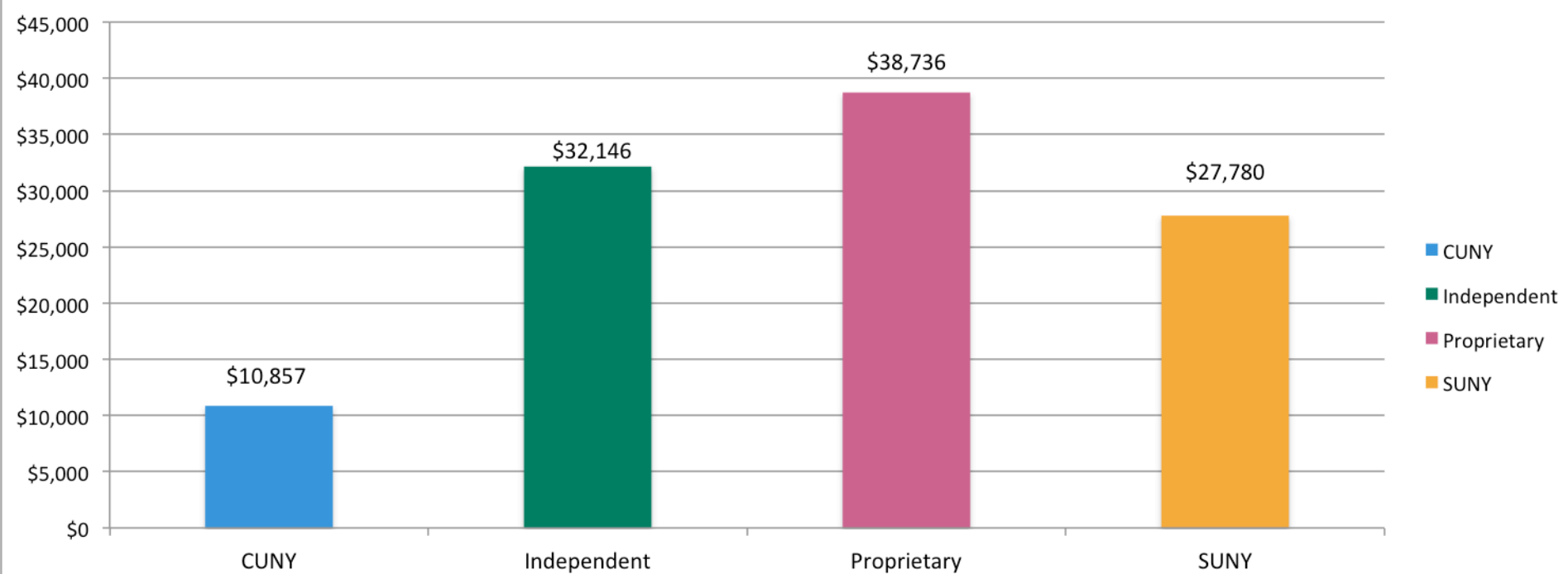


Source: Average net price for first-time, full-time students at four-year institutions is from IPEDS; inflation adjusted source is BLS. Average net price is average total cost of attendance minus average student financial aid.



# Attachment F

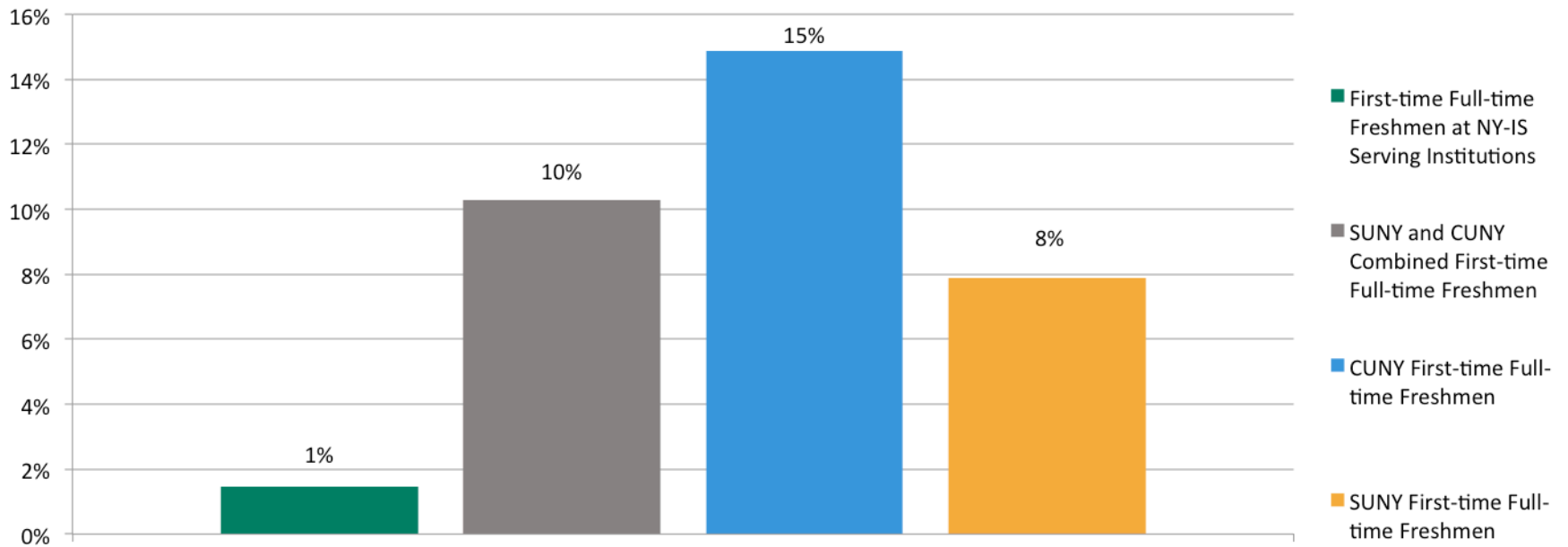
## Average Borrowing of Bachelor's Degree Recipients, 2017-18



Source: TICAS, 2017-18, four-year institutions

# Attachment G

## First-Time Enrollment Change Between Fall 2016 and Fall 2018



Source: NYSED  
Four-year institutions; rounded values  
New Yorker-serving: 65% or more NY resident undergrad enrollment