

New York Policy Agenda

While a college degree is one of the most powerful drivers of economic mobility, students from low-income backgrounds and communities of color in New York face disproportionate structural and financial barriers to accessing and completing postsecondary education. These inequities result in reduced access to educational and employment opportunities, increased student debt, and limited pathways to economic security—further exacerbating the racial wealth gap in the state. Informed by the lived experiences of students, uAspire is committed to transforming systems of financial aid and higher education to be more equitable, simple, and transparent.



New Deal for CUNY ([S2146A](#) / [A4425](#))

New Deal for CUNY is a bold step toward dismantling systemic inequities in higher education by making CUNY tuition-free for in-state undergraduates, expanding faculty and mental health services, improving infrastructure, and strengthening student support systems. This legislation prioritizes low-income students and communities of color, ensuring that financial barriers no longer dictate access to opportunity. By investing in full-time faculty, critical campus resources, and holistic student services, S2146A seeks to transform CUNY into a true engine of upward mobility, affirming that higher education is a public good and a fundamental right for all New Yorkers.



Proven Student Support Programs ([S6280](#))

Proven Student Support Programs would benefit from sustained state-level support. S6280 would secure full state funding for the City University of New York's (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) and Accelerate, Complete, Engage (ACE) programs. ASAP and ACE provide wraparound financial, academic, and career support, tackling systemic barriers that disproportionately impact students of color and those from low-income backgrounds. Passing S6280 is a step toward closing achievement gaps, increasing degree attainment, and ensuring that CUNY remains a powerful engine of social and economic mobility for New Yorkers.



New York State Tuition Assistance Program

New York State Tuition Assistance Program continues to be a critical resource for students in New York, aimed at easing the financial burden of tuition and making higher education more accessible, especially for low-income, first-generation, and students of color. The New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is one of the most powerful tools for expanding college access, but it must evolve to meet the needs of today's students. There should be increased outreach and awareness efforts so more students know about TAP. The application process should be simplified, and TAP should be increased to cover expenses beyond tuition.



Early College Pathways

Early College Pathways allow high school students to earn college credits at no cost, reducing both the time and financial burden of obtaining a degree. By investing in Early College expansion, sustainable funding, and stronger partnerships between K-12 schools and higher education institutions, New York can create clear, debt-free pathways to postsecondary success.



Solutions to Resolving Institutional Debt

Solutions to Resolving Institutional Debt are crucial to college completion for students of color and low-income students. This debt refers to money owed directly to a college or university by current or former students, arising from charges like unpaid tuition balances, library fines, or parking fees. Many students accrue institutional debt due to financial aid shortfalls, unexpected costs, or institutional errors beyond their control. New York is one of five states that allow public colleges to send past-due student debt directly to the state attorney general office. There should be alternatives to aggressive debt collection and state-level reforms that offer clearer pathways for students to resolve their institutional debt and get back on track with their education.



Emergency Aid

Emergency Aid is a vital resource for colleges to dispense beyond students' financial aid. A single unexpected expense—whether a medical bill, family emergency, or food insecurity—can force students to pause or abandon their education. Too many students are one emergency away from being pushed out of college. Without immediate and flexible financial support, these crises become barriers to degree completion. By investing in dedicated emergency aid funding, streamlining access, and removing restrictive eligibility requirements, New York can ensure students stay enrolled and on the path to success.

Join us in the fight for college affordability!