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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**NYSC AAUP Lauds Proposed Budget and Establishes Additional Priorities**

*Albany, NY—January 26, 2022*

The New York State Conference of the American Association of University Professors (NYSC AAUP) recognizes and applauds the work Gov. Kathy Hochul put forth in providing much needed funding for higher education in New York State. We are excited to work with her in our collective support of higher education in New York State.

State-level budget cuts have severely strapped NYS TAP (Tuition Assistance Program) and EOP/HEOP (Educational Opportunity Program/Higher Education Opportunity Program). These programs help to provide funds and resources for students in NYS who, for any number of reasons, would otherwise be unable to attend a higher education institution. Gov. Hochul’s proposed budget takes a step toward ensuring students across the state continue to have opportunities by restoring much TAP and EOP/HEOP funding.

“We applaud Gov. Hochul’s commitment to higher education in New York State, and encourage the state legislature to accept her funding priorities.” said Fred Floss, Chair of the Department of Economics and Finance at Buffalo State College. “We are also excited to see the budget emphasize workforce development. Funding higher education – whether it is community college or four-year institutions - is a critical step in any workforce development program.”

Gov. Hochul’s proposed budget returns significant monies to TAP programs and does provide expanded Excelsior aid, making the cost of higher education for middle- and low-income households more attainable. Normally, TAP grants may be used for up to eight semesters. Given the toll Covid has taken on higher education and the concerns faced by many students in New York State, the NYSC AAUP would like to see an extension of TAP and other grant aid to accommodate students and help alleviate the stress associated with the pandemic and trying to complete a degree.

“It is so important for us to be able to support all students, regardless of background,” said Mary Rose Kubal, Chair of the Department of Political Science at St. Bonaventure University and President of the NYSC AAUP. “By providing funding for these vital programs, we can continue to provide robust higher education in New York State.”

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Covid-19 has also highlighted inequities in obtaining mental health counseling. Campuses across the state are experiencing higher than normal demand for counseling, while at the same time they are cutting back services due to Covid-related financial constraints. Already over-taxed faculty in some programs are being called upon to act as counselors as well as to do the work of educating students. The NYSC supports funding for mental health initiatives to support faculty, staff and students.

“Students are being called upon to work to support families in new ways, such as babysitting and home-schooling younger siblings, while many also hold employment as essential workers (nurses, day care, and grocery workers). It is incredibly difficult for them to deal with all that is being thrown at them at this time,” said Sally Dear-Healey, Executive Director, NYSC AAUP.

NYS AAUP Conference is happy with the steps Gov. Hochul is taking and looks forward to working with her in providing an exemplary education for New York State students.

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*About the AAUP:*The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), with over 50,000 members and 500 local chapters, champions academic freedom; advances shared governance; and organizes to promote economic security for all academic professionals. Since 1915, the AAUP has shaped American higher education by developing standards and procedures that uphold quality education.

The New York State Conference promotes the activities and values of the AAUP on the state and campus level. It has a Chapter Service Program to assist local chapters in the areas of recruitment, tenure, academic freedom, governance, leadership training, lobbying, legal referrals, and the economic welfare of the profession. The NYSC AAUP publishes its newsletter, *New York Academe* and has two Business Meetings and Conferences each year, one in the spring and one in the fall.

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**NYS AAUP Conference Higher Education Funding Priorities**

NYS AAUP Conference supports three main New York State budget initiatives and progressive taxation measures to pay for them:

1. A fully-funded TAP (Tuition Assistance Program) and EOP/HEOP (Educational Opportunity Program/Higher Education Opportunity Program).

* TAP, New York’s signature financial aid program, is structured to progressively serve New York’s lowest-income families across public and private higher education.
* Up until the “Great Recession” the maximum TAP award fully covered SUNY and CUNY tuition. Today the maximum award is $5,000 while tuition has grown in SUNY/CUNY to $7,070/$6,930 or about 70% of tuition. This has put NYS families at risk of not being financially able to send their children to college.
* Flat funding of HEOP/EOP is pricing our most needy students out of higher education.

The State is funding the declines in revenues on the backs of families, many of them frontline and essential workers, who are least able to pay:

* The state of New York saw its total student loan debt increase by 89% from 2008 to 2018, growing from $47.2 to **$89.3 billion**.
* The average debt is $31,155 per student with 58% of students in NYS carrying debt.

AAUP ASKS TO RESTORE TAP FUNDING TO THE FULL SUNY TUITION LEVEL OF $7,070 OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. EOP/HEOP FUNDING SHOULD BE INCREASED TO KEEP UP WITH INCREASED COSTS.

1. CONTINUE FUNDING FOR A DIVERSE FACULTY

* NYS faculty do not represent the diverse students they teach. According to the National Center for Economic Statistics, only 5.15% of instructional faculty are African American, while Hispanic faculty represent 4.52%, compared to 17.6% African American and 19.3% Hispanic in the general population.
* We are concerned that progress made in the SUNY system with the PRODiG program will be lost if cuts to programs have to be made due to Covid-related financial stress. Diversity related initiatives in faculty hiring are also threatened on private and CUNY campuses. This is why fully funding TAP and EOP/HEOP programs is crucial.

1. SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING AND PROGRAMS

* Students in NYS are facing unprecedented challenges that require mental health support. Even before Covid and other social crises, the need for increased mental health services on college campuses has been well-documented by the American College Health Association.
* Covid-19 has revealed serious social and economic inequities in our society and higher education and mental health services are an important part of the picture.
* Given the financial strains facing our public and private institutions across the state, fully funding TAP and EOP/HEOP programs are crucial as cuts to higher education funding will result in further cuts in mental health counselling services on our campuses.

1. SUPPORT PROGRESSIVE TAXATION MEASURES TO FULLY FUND HIGHER EDUCATION

* Billionaires’ and ultra-millionaires’ taxes
* Pied-à-terre tax
* Reinstate the stock transfer tax