



**TESTIMONY ON INDEPENDENT HIGHER EDUCATION
SUBMITTED TO
THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE FISCAL COMMITTEES BY
LESLEY A. MASSIAH-ARTHUR
ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT FOR GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
AND URBAN AFFAIRS
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY
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Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell, distinguished members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees, on behalf of Fordham University, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to formally submit testimony concerning Fordham's views on the impact of the 2015-16 Executive Budget on independent higher education. Since events do not occur in a vacuum, my views on this Budget take into consideration the policy decisions of the last decade. Each year, more than 370,000 students depend on state student aid programs to pursue their college aspirations. Yet, state investment in important and highly successful financial aid and access programs like the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), Liberty Partnership, the Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP) and its collegiate counterpart, the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP), has not kept pace with need – leaving the futures of many of our most talented minds in doubt. It is time to make our students and their futures budget priorities. For the fiscal year 2015-16 Budget, we urge Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature to:

- Raise the maximum TAP award to \$6,500
- Restore TAP funding for New York State's graduate students
- Increase funding levels for the Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), Liberty Partnership, the Science Technology Entry Program (STEP) and the Collegiate Science Technology Entry Program (C-STEP) programs by 30%

For the record, Fordham is supportive of the current administration's overall intention to streamline wasteful, government spending while investing resources towards the building of a healthy New York State economy. It is clear that if New York State is to remain the center for research, technological development, and job creation, it must wisely steward its investments for the better. With that said, we can think of no better investment than our college students and their families - nor a better time to make such an investment than when the state is operating at a growing \$5 billion+ surplus. As educators, we are deeply concerned that the State's fiscal policies continue to stress society's obligation and willingness to ensure continued access to higher education for all students, regardless of their economic status.

As it pertains to the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), let me begin by thanking you, the members of the Legislature, for making some progress in enhancing TAP as part of last year's budget. It is very much appreciated. Further, Fordham goes on the record in support of the Governor's recommendation to increase the overall TAP appropriation by \$27 million in support of the DREAM Act. Since 1841, Fordham University has been the institution of the new immigrant experience. Not only was Fordham built by immigrants, its very presence enduringly represents the collective dreams of the immigrant experience. If one worked and strived and, in doing so, achieved an education, not only did one achieve entrée into the economic mainstream but the opportunity for future generations to do better, move farther and achieve an excellence otherwise not known could be realized.

We, at Fordham, honor our immigrant past and recognize its future. We recognize that the face of the immigrant movement has changed and that the movement itself has shifted and evolved with the developments of the 21st century. Despite those changes and shifts, the collective dream of the immigrant movement remains the same: to do better, to thrive and to succeed once given the chance and opportunity to compete. Access and opportunity still remain the keys to future success. And universities have their role to play. Like my colleagues who have testified before this body, we at Fordham University support the DREAM Act and what its supporters hope it achieves.

That said, there is much more that needs to be done. TAP grants haven't kept pace with rising tuition, and student loan debt is reaching a crisis level: 2.7 million New Yorkers now hold outstanding student loans, and 60% of New York college graduates last year borrowed an average of \$25,537 to pay for college. While it may be argued that New York State expenditures for TAP have significantly increased within the last decade, the percentage of tuition that TAP actually covers for an independent college student significantly decreased within the same time period. In 2005, the maximum TAP award covered 28% of the independent sector's weighted average tuition. In 2012, however, the maximum TAP award covered approximately 20% of the independent sector's weighted average tuition. Not only have such reductions placed undue financial burdens on many independent sector institutions but, more importantly, they have fostered an economic climate that does not make attending a New York State independent college or university a viable option for many qualified residents. To ensure the existence of continued educational opportunities within New York State, Fordham goes on record in support of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities' (cIcu), the New York Public Interest Research Group's (NYPIRG), the Coalition to Reform TAP's respective recommendations to increase the maximum TAP award for a full-time undergraduate student to \$6,500.

Fordham is also encouraged by the Governor's recommendation to increase the funding levels of the opportunity and academic pipeline programs (HEOP, Liberty Partnership, STEP and C-STEP) by 3% as part of his Executive Budget submission. It is our hope that the programs' maintenance suggests a recognition of the importance of these worthwhile and successful programs on the part of the Governor. As you are aware, the access programs have provided the opportunity for many talented minority and economically-disadvantaged students to receive a quality education. Over the past decade, however, the State's commitment to educating these students has waned. State funding for these programs has either remained stagnant and not rising with the cost of inflation or has been reduced. As a result, the costs of maintaining the access programs have grown substantially for our sector. For example, the independent sector's contribution to the Higher Education Opportunity Program alone has risen from four dollars to eight dollars for every State dollar received. For Fordham, the contribution is twelve dollars for every state dollar received. In lieu of increased funding, many institutions are now placed in the dilemma of attempting to conserve limited resources without destroying a qualified, economically-disadvantaged student's opportunity to complete his/her education. It is our hope that independent sector institutions will no longer be forced to make such a choice. Fordham goes on the record in support of the Association for Program Administrators of STEP and CSTEP (APACS) and Higher Education Opportunity Program and Officers (HEOPPO) respective recommendations to raise opportunity and pipeline program funding by 30%. In addition, we ask the Legislature to correct an oversight in the Executive Budget by increasing opportunity and pipeline program funding to accommodate the newly created programmatic but unfunded use by Dreamers.

As you are aware, Direct Institutional Aid (otherwise known as Bundy Aid) reflects the historical relationship between the State of New York and its independent sector institutions of higher education.

This relationship is based on the fact that the independent sector has contributed greatly to the intellectual, economic, social and political progress of New York State and its citizens. In no other state could one find the concentrated level of affordable, highly ranked and, in many instances, world-renowned independent sector colleges and universities as we have in New York State. Direct Institutional Aid represented New York State's commitment to maintaining the fiscal stability of its independent sector institutions in lieu of the escalating costs of educating its citizenry.

Public accountability is assured since funding is dependent upon the number of students each independent sector institution graduated. Despite a successful sector-wide graduation rate of approximately 91,000 students per year, the funding level of the Direct Institutional Aid program has dropped precipitously from a 1989 funding level of \$114 million to a 2014 funding level of \$35.1 million or 68%. In light of this fact, it is important that the State begin to make a concerted effort towards increasing the funding levels of Direct Institutional Aid. Fordham goes on record in support of increasing the funding level of Direct Institutional Aid by \$6,000,000.

Lastly, Fordham has submitted a capital budget request of \$5 million towards the renovation of its science laboratories, facilities and supporting utilities, and building infrastructure (Regional Science Facilities). While this project represents Fordham's vision to provide its students and faculty the resources to engage in cutting-edge scientific discovery, ultimately, its creation is representative of the University's fundamental commitment to continue its service to New York City. Once completed, Fordham's Regional Science Facilities will assist in addressing the educational, technological and economic needs of the University and the community it serves, including: 1. Linking Fordham University research resources, including faculty and academic facilities, with those of area secondary schools to facilitate the enhancement of math and science education opportunities for area teachers and their students; 2. Creating a vibrant and identifiable science community within the University, area schools and the region; and 3. Encouraging the development of entrepreneurial partnerships between the University and interested public and private entities towards the betterment of the region. Fordham is in the process of submitting its application for START-UP NY and we believe that our proposed renovations would be attractive to a prospective partner. In addition, the project will generate about 300 union jobs of varying types, ranging from laborers to engineers, over the course of the project. Locally-based subcontractors will be hired, with a preference going to New York City based firms. It is our hope that, upon your review, we may have legislative support for this important endeavor.

In conclusion, we are aware that in times of great fiscal constraint, many difficult decisions had to be made during the annual rite of budget deliberations. With this year's unprecedented surplus, it is our hope and belief that the 2015-2016 State budget marks the beginning of a more vigorous and productive relationship between the State of New York and independent higher education institutions such as Fordham University. This renewed relationship will contribute to New York State's continued progress as a center for culture, technology and business. On behalf of Fordham University, I thank you for your time and consideration and for allowing us to be a part of this conversation.

We look forward to continuing to work with you in the future to pursue an agenda which ensures that quality educational choice is available to New York State's students through its independent sector of higher education institutions.