

TO: SUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS)
FROM: Operations Committee
RE: Excelsior Scholarship Review
DATE: Winter Plenary
LOCATION: Virtual
Resolution #:
Vote: For: X / Against: X / Abstain: X

Rationale

Whereas the economy of New York State requires an educated population, recruitment and retention of students by SUNY are important to developing an educated population, and student recruitment and retention is a major initiative for SUNY and is strongly supported by the University Faculty Senate (UFS); and

Whereas shortfalls of the Excelsior Scholarship identified in the attached white paper negatively impact the experience and retention of students as well as faculty and staff experience; and

Whereas flaws in the Excelsior Scholarship have been identified that inhibit recruitment and retention and prevent the achievement of intended Excelsior Scholarship program goals; and

Whereas the CUNY system has conducted research on the Excelsior Scholarship with similar findings as identified in the white paper.

Resolution

Therefore be it resolved that UFS requests that SUNY System Administration, in coordination with CUNY System Administration, conduct a detailed review of the Excelsior Scholarship Program within two award cycles, with such study to examine the issues identified in the White Paper¹(see also Addendum for summary) and to identify revisions to the program or its replacement:

- Credit Requirement
- Remedial Learning
- Residency Requirement
- Diversity and Exclusion
- Enrollments
- Retention

Therefore be it resolved that UFS requests that Chancellor King share the results of research with the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC), along with recommendations for revisions.

¹ SUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS). (2023). *Excelsior Scholarship*.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AmmueNL6jYmntpl9EjTGxs38S6dmapdc/edit?usp=sharing&oid=114246496580313180324&rtpof=true&sd=true>

ADDENDUM

The attached white paper takes no stand on the outcome. It is a review of commentaries and research that has been found and feedback from various SUNY campuses and is submitted to share issues that should be researched by SUNY. The following issues have been identified in the white paper².

- 1: CREDIT REQUIREMENT: The requirement is more stringent than any other state or federal program. It violates the SUNY Time on Task guidelines and may lead to forced college withdrawal by students who cannot handle the required credits. It may also be affecting the quality of students' programs of study and increasing social inequity for students who must work, including many Black and Hispanic students who must work to afford college.
- 2: REMEDIAL LEARNING: Research indicates that only 40-57% of students enrolling are ready for college, and the others require remedial learning to succeed. Excelsior's credit requirement makes it impossible for these students to use the program.
- 3: RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT: The requirement is based on erroneous assumptions about students leaving the state after graduation. In addition, the requirement may be difficult to enforce and administer.
- 4: DIVERSITY AND EXCLUSION: The goal of the program was to help develop a highly educated workforce for the benefit of New York State, yet Excelsior is of little or no benefit to those who need it the most and who could contribute to the state such as those in poverty, the disabled, and racial and ethnic minorities. Excelsior restricts use to only tuition paid for by other programs, whereas those who need help the most need assistance with other necessities (books, supplies, housing, etc.).
- 5: ENROLLMENTS: Excelsior was predicted to increase enrollments; however, the predictions were not reached because so many were excluded. Amendments making it more accessible could change this.
- 6: RETENTION: The last pay requirement may lead students to withdraw from college at the end of the award year. Campus financial aid offices have added warnings to students that they could have to pay for the second semester of the award year, leaving them with a charge that many cannot pay and forcing them to withdraw.
- 7: SUNY Campuses have reported negative effects on financial aid offices and advising. The white paper includes comments from the University at Buffalo, SUNY Geneseo, SUNY Empire State, and SUNY Brockport. There is also feedback from individuals who did not wish to be

named that students are being warned to “stay away from Excelsior” because of such things as the credit and residency requirements.