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## *FPI Cost Analysis*

# The True Cost of Tuition Hikes on SUNY & CUNY Students

### Key Findings

- At the State University of New York's (SUNY) four university centers — which more than 40% of SUNY undergraduates attend — the executive budget authorizes 9% annual tuition increases starting in Fall 2023.
- By 2027, the cost of a four-year undergraduate education at a SUNY university center could rise by 52%, or \$22,300.
- Both in-state and out-of-state tuition for SUNY university centers could become among the most expensive for public flagship universities in the U.S.
- Tuition increases would hit the CUNY system as it faces a hiring freeze and \$175 million in cuts — five to six% of its total budget — in fiscal year 2024, potentially decreasing enrollment.

### Introduction

The Governor's executive budget for fiscal year 2024 aims to increase funding for New York State's public university system, in part through sharp tuition increases. For the State University of New York's (SUNY) four university centers, the tuition increases could result in a 51 percent tuition increase over five years. Tuition hikes of this size would represent a generational shift in New York State's higher education landscape, moving its public universities from among the most accessible in the U.S. to among the most expensive. In doing so, these hikes could jeopardize the universities' role as engines of upward economic mobility.

### The Executive Budget's Tuition Hikes

New York's public university system includes 64 SUNY colleges, 4 SUNY university centers, and the City University of New York (CUNY). The SUNY university centers are Binghamton University, Stony Brook University, the University at Albany, and the University at Buffalo. Over 363,000 students are

enrolled in the SUNY system, including community colleges. Of the 157,400 SUNY undergraduates in four-year programs, 64,600 (41 percent) attend the four university centers.<sup>1</sup> Over 240,000 students are enrolled in the CUNY system, of which around 132,200 are undergraduates at the system's colleges.<sup>2</sup>

The Governor's executive budget authorizes both the SUNY and CUNY boards of trustees to increase in-state tuition by up to 3 percent annually for each system's colleges. At the four SUNY university centers, tuition could be increased by an additional 6 percent, or by as much as 9 percent total, per year.<sup>3</sup>

The Senate and Assembly one-house budgets reject these proposed increases.

### *SUNY University Centers - In-State Tuition*

The executive budget allows a far higher rate of tuition hikes for SUNY's four university centers: Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, Stony Brook. Each year, university center tuition would be allowed to rise by 9 percent (an additional 6 percentage points on top of the 3 percent tuition hikes authorized for all SUNY campuses). The proposal limits university center tuition to no more than 30 percent above the SUNY base tuition, which would allow a total increase over five years of 51 percent. The proposal would authorize the SUNY board of trustees to increase undergraduate tuition rates beginning in academic year 2023-24, and continuing indefinitely.

### *SUNY University Centers - Out-of-State Tuition*

The proposal further increases out-of-state tuition at the universities. For academic years 2023-24 through 2027-28, SUNY would be authorized to set out-of-state tuition at the university centers to levels "competitive with rates of tuition charged by peer institutions." Out-of-state tuition increases are permitted to rise by 10 percent per year.

### *SUNY Colleges and CUNY Tuition*

Under the proposed hikes, the base undergraduate tuition rate for SUNY and CUNY colleges may rise annually by 3 percent or the higher education price index (HEPI, which rose 5.2 percent in 2022), whichever is less in a given year.<sup>4</sup> The proposal would authorize SUNY and CUNY trustees, respectively, to implement these increases beginning in academic year 2023-24, and continuing indefinitely.

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<sup>1</sup> SUNY System Administration Office of Institutional Research and Data Analytics, "SUNY Enrollment" (Fall 2022), <https://tableauserver.suny.edu/t/IRPublic/views/Enrollment2012-2022/CampusEnrollment?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y>; "SUNY Fast Facts" <https://www.suny.edu/about/fast-facts/>.

<sup>2</sup> "College" here refers to CUNY's senior colleges, which does not include community colleges. *CUNY Office of Applied Research, Evaluation, and Data Analytics*, "Student Data Book" (Fall 2021), <https://insights.cuny.edu/t/CUNYGuest/views/StudentDataBook/Enrollment?%3Aembed=y&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y>.

<sup>3</sup> New York State Division of the Budget, Fiscal Year 2024 Executive Budget Education Labor, and Family Assistance Article VII Legislation— Part B (February 2022), <https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/archive/fy24/ex/artvii/elfa-bill.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *Commonfund Institute*, "2022 HEPI Report Released" (December 2022), <https://www.commonfund.org/research-center/press-releases/2022-higher-education-price-index-hepi-report-released>.

Figure 1. Executive Budget Proposals & Enrollment

Category	Budget Proposal	Enrollment
SUNY University Centers - In State	- Increase an additional 6% on top of the base tuition hikes authorized for all SUNY campuses - Limits university tuition to no more than 30% above the SUNY base tuition	58,800
SUNY University Centers - Out-of-State	- Annual increases of up to 10% per year to levels “competitive with rates of tuition charged by peer institutions.”	5,800
SUNY Colleges	- Base tuition rate may rise annually by 3% or the higher education price index (HEPI, which rose 5.2% in 2022), whichever is less in a given year	92,800
CUNY	- Same as SUNY Colleges	132,200

Figure 2. Potential Annual Tuition Increases

Category	Current Annual Tuition	Annual Tuition in 5 Years	5 Year Cost Increase (\$)	5 Year Cost Increase (%)
SUNY University Centers - In State	\$10,800	\$16,200	\$5,400	51%
SUNY University Centers - Out-of-State	\$28,700	\$46,200	\$17,500	61%
SUNY Colleges	\$8,600	\$9,900	\$1,300	16%
CUNY	\$6,900	\$8,000	\$1,100	16%

Figure 3. Potential Tuition Increases for a 4-year Degree<sup>5</sup>

Category	Current full tuition cost	Full tuition cost in 5 years	5 Year Cost Increase (\$)	5 Year Cost Increase (%)
SUNY University Centers - In State	\$43,100	\$65,400	\$22,300	52%
SUNY University Centers - Out-of-State	\$114,800	\$195,000	\$80,200	70%
SUNY Colleges	\$34,200	\$40,300	\$6,100	18%
CUNY	\$27,700	\$32,600	\$4,900	18%

<sup>5</sup> For students enrolled 2027 through 2031

## SUNY Tuition in the National Context

The average SUNY tuition is currently \$8,600. After five years of tuition increases under the executive budget proposal, the base tuition rate across SUNY campuses could reach \$9,900 per year, a 16 percent increase from its current rate. At the university centers, tuition for in-state students could reach \$16,200 per year, 51 percent higher than its current level. Out-of-state student tuition could rise as high as \$46,200, a 61 percent increase.<sup>6</sup>

SUNY is currently among the most affordable public university systems in the U.S., with the eighth-lowest average tuition cost. The proposed SUNY base tuition hikes would move it closer to the national average (see Figure 4). The effect for SUNY's university centers would be more dramatic: after five years of increases, in-state tuition would vault from the most affordable quarter of public flagship universities in the U.S. to the most expensive quarter (see Figure 5).

A four-year education at a SUNY university center currently costs \$43,100. Under the proposed hikes, this cost could rise \$22,300 for students graduating in 2031, a 52 percent increase. For out-of-state students, the cost of a four-year education could rise \$80,200, or 70 percent. An increase of this magnitude would likely depress SUNY's already low share of out-of-state students. At 9 percent, SUNY's share of out-of-state students is the third-lowest in the U.S.<sup>7</sup>

The Executive Budget authorizes increases to out-of-state tuition for SUNY university centers that would be competitive with "peer institutions". Because New York's neighboring states, including New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and Vermont have among the highest out-of-state tuition rates in the U.S., out-of-state tuition at these SUNY schools could rise to the 4th most expensive in the country – comparable to U.C. Berkeley (see Figure 6).

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<sup>6</sup> FPI analysis of College Board data. Public university average tuition used for base tuition calculation; public flagship tuition used for university estimate. *College Board*, "Trends in College Pricing 2022: Data in Excel" (October 2022), <https://research.collegeboard.org/trends/college-pricing>.

<sup>7</sup> *College Board*, "Trends in College Pricing 2022: Data in Excel" (October 2022), <https://research.collegeboard.org/trends/college-pricing>.

Figure 4. Public University Average In-State Tuition

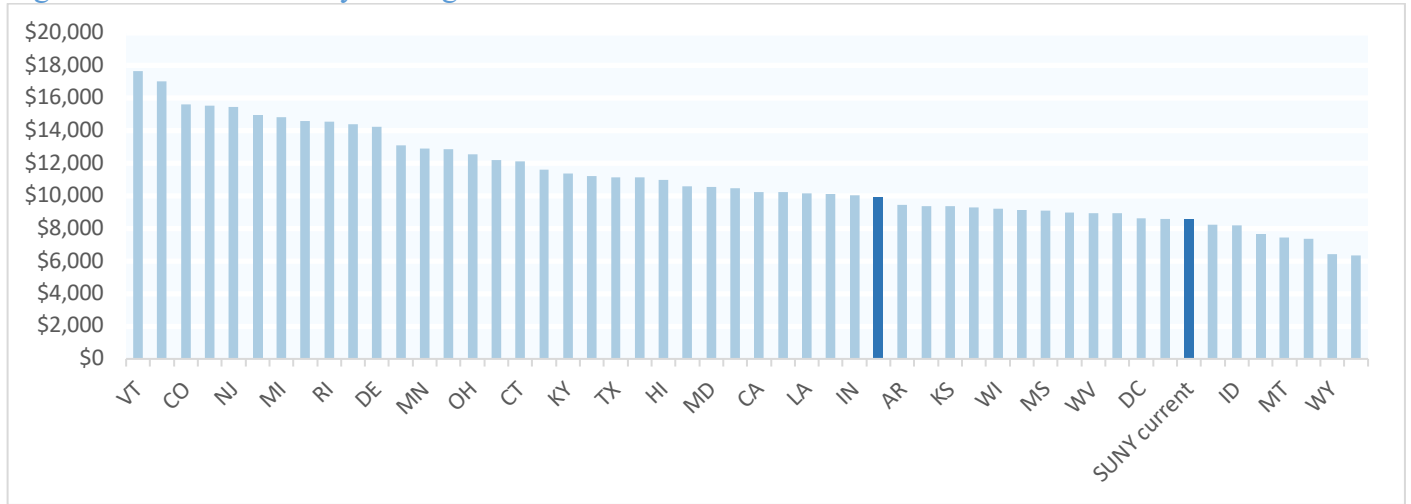


Figure 5. Public Flagship University In-State Tuition<sup>8</sup>

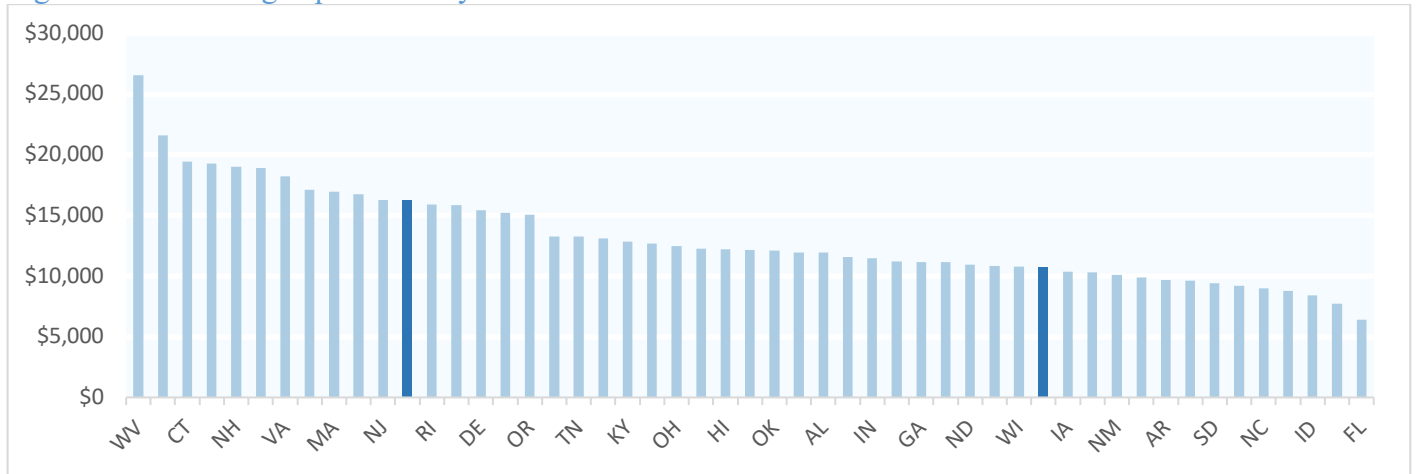
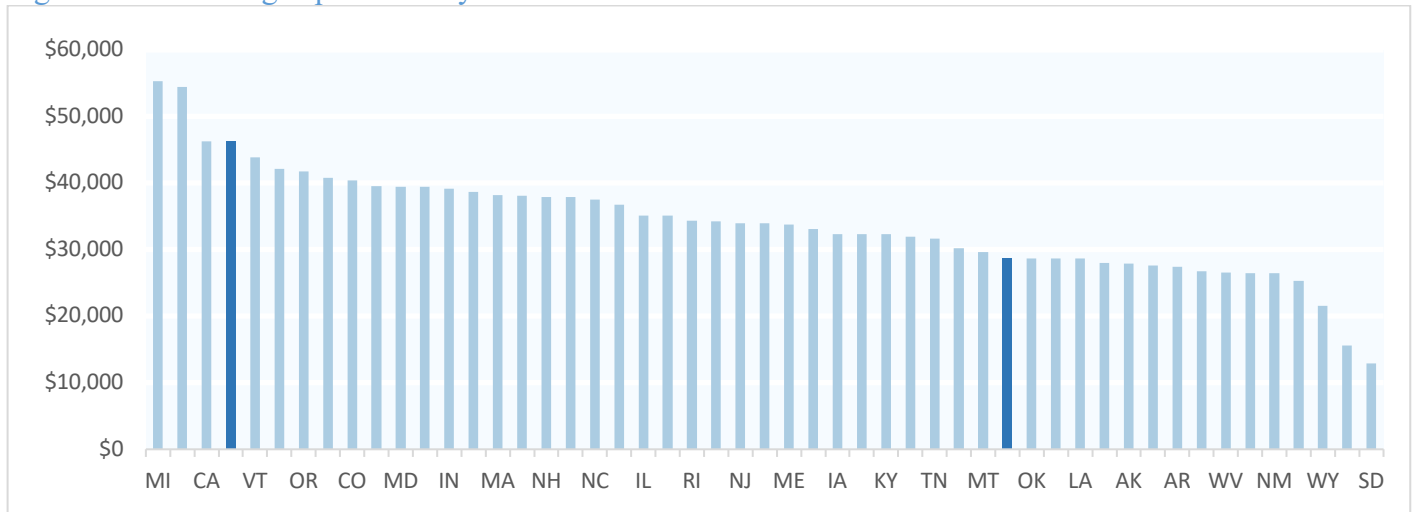


Figure 6. Public Flagship University Out-of-State Tuition



<sup>8</sup> While SUNY does not have a designated flagship university, other states designate a large public research university as its flagship. These schools are typically costlier. This analysis compares SUNY university centers to other public flagships.

## CUNY Tuition Hikes Amid Challenging Fiscal Conditions

The executive budget proposals would allow CUNY tuition to rise at the same rate as SUNY base tuition — as high as 3 percent or HEPI. These tuition increases will hit the CUNY system as it faces deep cuts imposed by New York City. Amid broad-based cuts imposed by New York City, the university system is imposing a hiring freeze and targeting \$175 million in cuts — five to six percent of its total budget — in fiscal year 2024.<sup>9</sup> Budget cuts and tuition hikes may continue pushing enrollment down for the system, which has seen enrollment fall in recent years.<sup>10</sup>

Weakening the CUNY system and raising the cost of attendance threatens economic opportunity in New York State. **In economist Raj Chetty’s study of intergenerational economic mobility at U.S. colleges, CUNY colleges were found to be national leaders in upward economic mobility.** Among the 2,200 colleges included in the study, ten CUNY campuses were in the first percentile of schools in supporting children from the lowest-income families to earn high incomes as adults. Baruch, City College, and Lehman College were the second through fourth U.S. colleges, respectively, at economically advancing students from low-income families. A plurality of CUNY campuses were in the top tenth percentile for driving upward economic mobility.<sup>11</sup>

SUNY campuses performed similarly well. SUNY Stony Brook, which would be affected by the sharpest tuition hikes, was the ninth-highest U.S. college for economic mobility. The three other SUNY universities (Albany, Binghamton, and Buffalo) as well as three other SUNY campuses were all in the top tenth percentile. Raising the bar to entry for these colleges and universities blunts New York’s most effective policy tool for advancing economic opportunity. For an economy that is already the nation’s most unequal, this risks deepening inequality and dampening the state’s long-run economic prosperity.

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<sup>9</sup> David Lazar, “CUNY set to cut budget and implement hiring freeze, school says” *Spectrum News NY1* (February 2023), <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/education/2023/02/11/cuny-set-to-cut-budget-and-implement-hiring-freeze--school-says>.

<sup>10</sup> Sophia Chang, “CUNY enrollment declines as billions in repairs are delayed” (September 2022), <https://gothamist.com/news/cuny-enrollment-declines-as-billions-in-repairs-are-delayed>.

<sup>11</sup> *Opportunity Insights*, “Preferred Estimates of Access and Mobility Rates by College” (accessed March 2023), [https://opportunityinsights.org/data/?topic=0&paper\\_id=536](https://opportunityinsights.org/data/?topic=0&paper_id=536).