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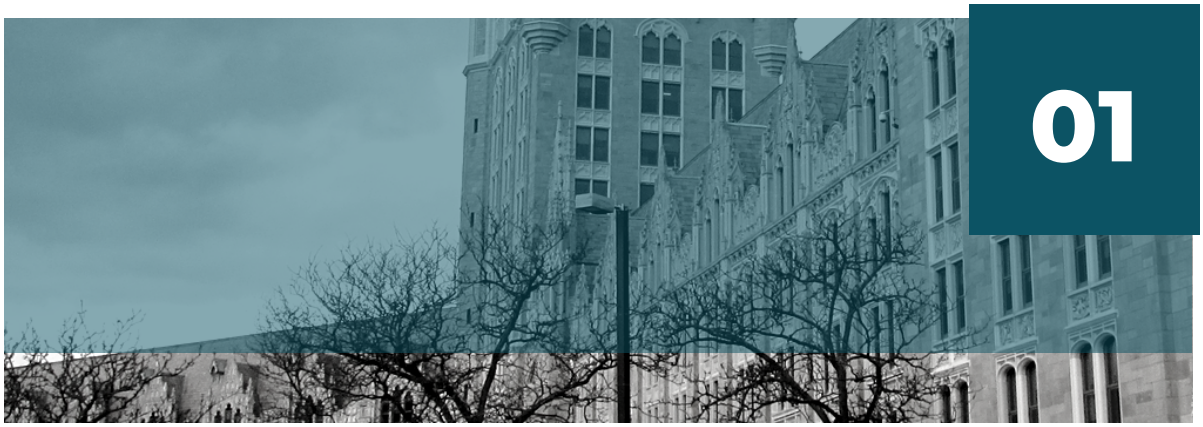
SUNY: AN ECONOMIC ENGINE OF NEW YORK

Prepared by:

The Fiscal Policy Institute
Andrew Perry, Senior Policy Analyst



01

The State University of New York (SUNY) system is responsible for nearly 180,000 good jobs throughout New York State, which make up nearly 5 percent of total jobs in counties where a SUNY school is located. This report examines the economic impact of the SUNY system in terms of the number of jobs created (directly and indirectly), the wage share of those jobs, and the regional location of those jobs.

Statewide Employment

The SUNY system itself employs 63,400 New Yorkers. This amounts to 1.7 percent of all jobs in the counties that are home to a SUNY institution.[1] The wages created directly by the SUNY system are also above average for their respective counties, with an average SUNY employee wage of $84,200. This is 22 percent higher than the overall average wage of $69,200 in counties with a SUNY institution. These wages represent 2 percent of total wages in counties with a SUNY institution.

SUNY institutions boost their local economies, creating additional jobs in industries that serve campuses (for instance, food vendors and textbook sellers) and businesses patronized by employees and students. In total, the SUNY system is responsible for 115,500 of these "indirect" jobs throughout New York State, which would not exist in the absence of a local SUNY institution.[2]

Taken together, the SUNY system's 179,000 directly and indirectly supported jobs account for 4.7 percent of all jobs and 4.9 percent of wages in counties that host a SUNY institution.

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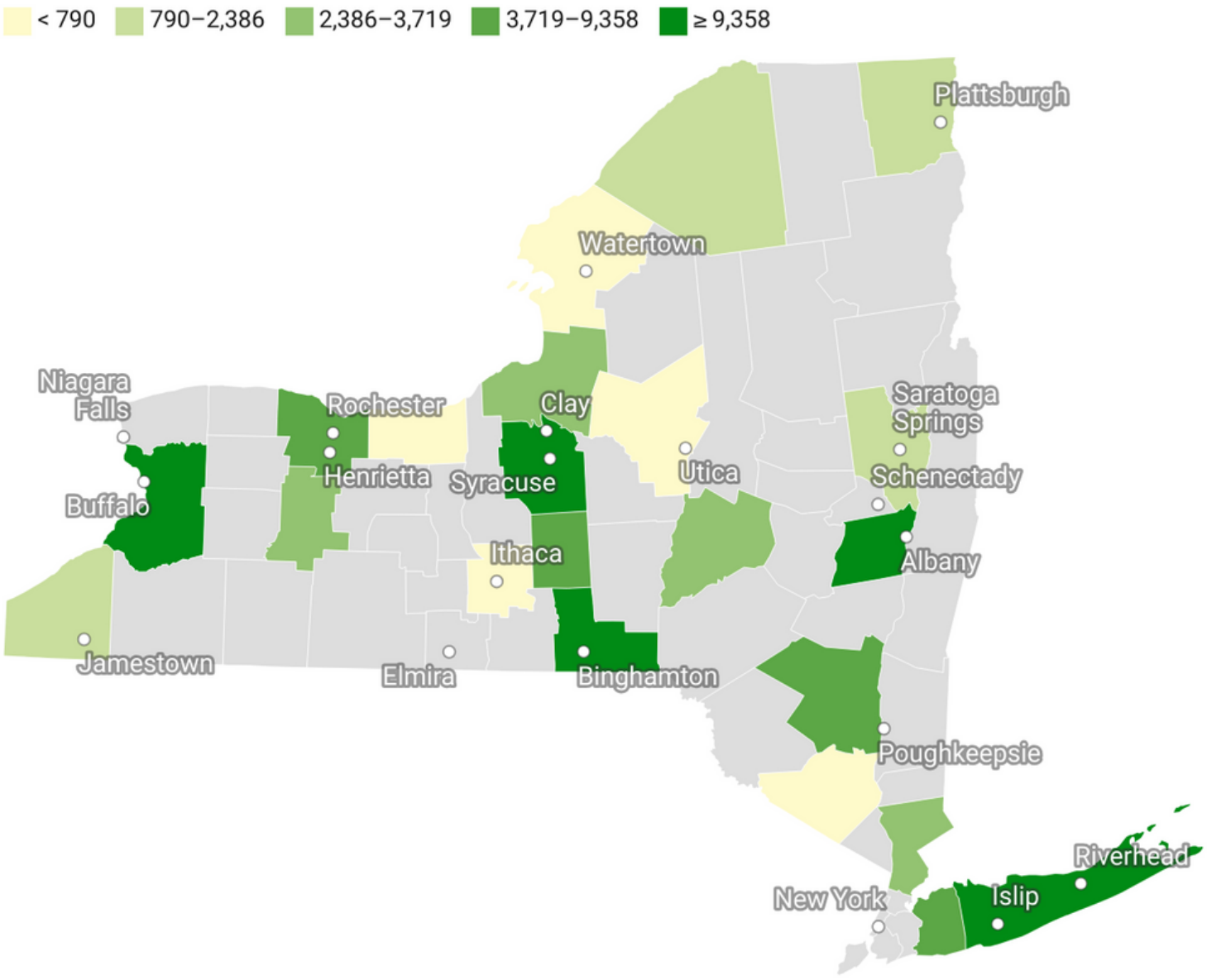
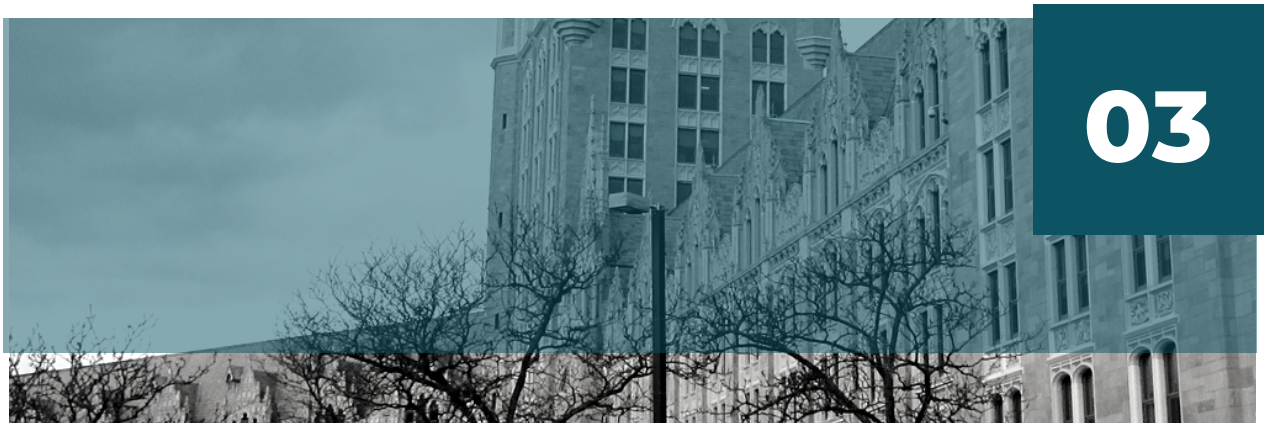
Figure 1. Direct and indirect SUNY jobs by county

The SUNY system creates jobs throughout the state, with the largest number of jobs created in those counties that host a SUNY University Center.





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The Importance of SUNY Schools to Local Economies

The SUNY system is an economic engine in both large, urban counties as well as smaller rural counties.

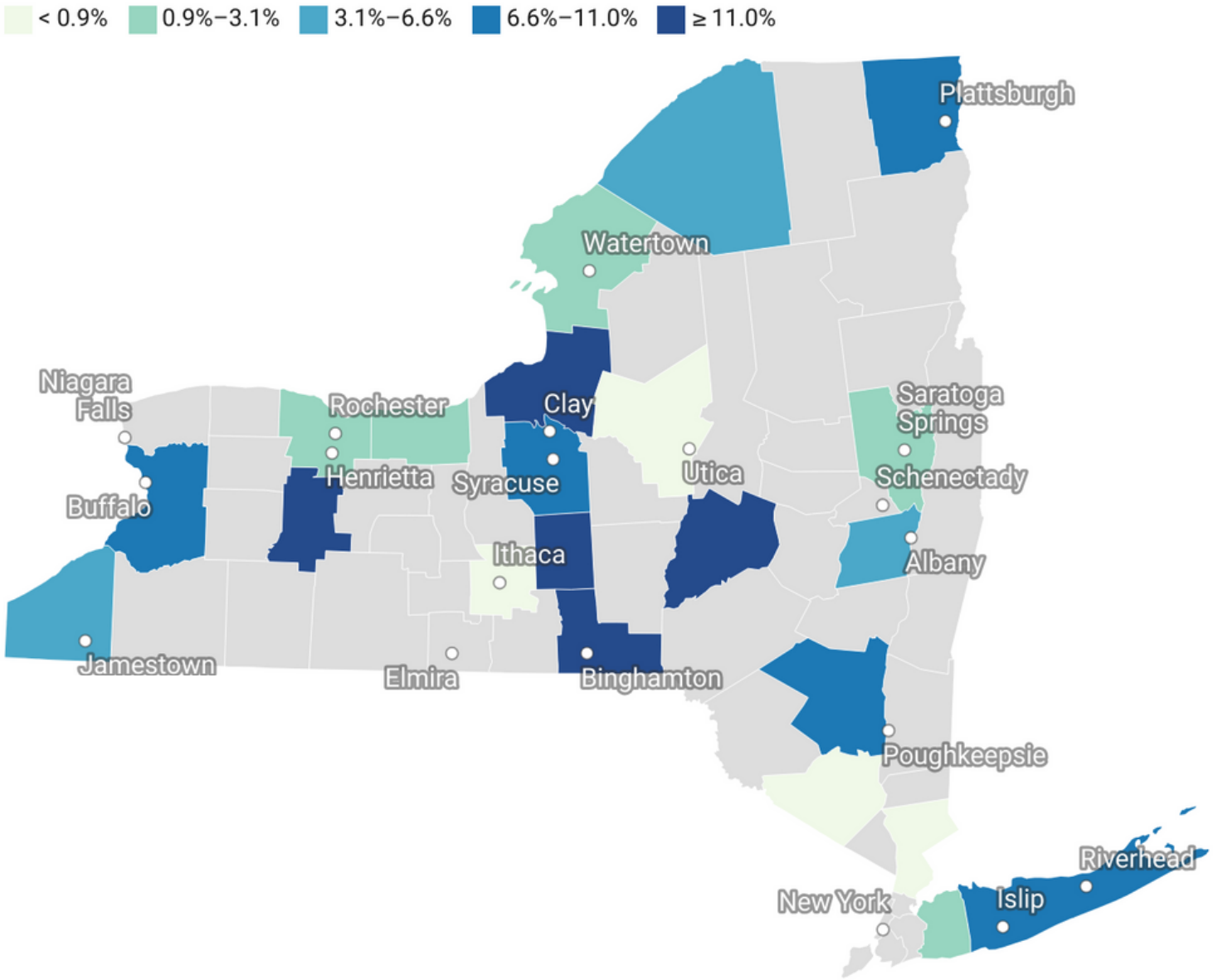
The highest numbers of SUNY-supported jobs are in the four counties with one of the University Centers (University of Buffalo in Erie County, Binghamton University in Broome County, University at Albany in Albany County, and SUNY Stony Brook in Suffolk County). SUNY is also a major employer in Onondaga County, which is home to multiple SUNY institutions, including Upstate Medical Center and the School of Environmental Science and Forestry. Together, these regions counties account for over 135,000 jobs created by the SUNY system. Binghamton University (in Broome County) and the SUNY institutions in Onandaga County are responsible for over 10 percent of all jobs in those counties, and a slightly larger share of total wages in those counties due to the above-average wages paid by SUNY institutions.

However, the counties in which SUNY has the greatest economic footprint relative to the rest of the size of the local economy tend to be smaller, more rural counties that are home to the system's comprehensive colleges. SUNY supports nearly one-quarter (23.8 percent) of jobs in Cortland County, home to SUNY Cortland – the highest share of any county. Similarly, SUNY supports 10 to 15 percent of all jobs in Otsego County (home to SUNY Oneonta), Livingston County (SUNY Geneseo), and Oswego County (SUNY Oswego).

The SUNY institutions in these smaller, more rural counties tend to also support a disproportionate share of total wages, as SUNY jobs tend to be better paid. In Cortland County, for instance, where SUNY supports 23.8 percent of all jobs, those jobs are responsible for 29.3 percent of all wages.

Figure 2. Share of all jobs created by SUNY, by county

The SUNY system is particularly important to the local economy in many rural counties.



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Conclusion

In addition to providing high-quality, affordable post-secondary education, the SUNY system is an important job creator throughout the state. Because the SUNY system pays above-average wages and consists of many campuses spread throughout many different regions of New York State, SUNY schools are an essential part of both the state's economy as a whole and many different local economies.

As an engine of economic development in New York State, the SUNY system provides benefits beyond its role as an anchor for local economies across the State. Public universities in the U.S. are engines of social mobility, supporting students from low and moderate income families to earn higher incomes as adults. This is especially true and New York, and several SUNY institutions are among the leading higher education institutions for furthering social mobility, according to research from economist Raj Chetty. [3] For students of all backgrounds, college educated workers tend to earn higher wages than non-college educated workers – a gap that has increased in recent decades.[4]

By equipping students, especially those from low and moderate income background who may not otherwise have pursued post-secondary education, with a college degree, the SUNY system supports high lifetime wages for its graduates. These higher wages generate a persistent return on investment for the State's economy. A study from the Rockefeller Institute estimated that each $1 of state investment into the SUNY system generated an economic return of $8.17.[5] This estimate eclipses the employment multipliers used in this analysis, which capture the effect of SUNY-created jobs, but not the value of a more educated workforce. While SUNY institutions serve as the anchor of local economies across the State – from smaller counties, like Cortland, to cities, like Syracuse – their collective economic impact educating New Yorkers is even larger.

Table 1. Jobs supported by the SUNY system by county

County	Direct Jobs	Indirect jobs	Total jobs	SUNY share of all jobs
Cortland County	1,433	2,608	4,041	23.8%
Otsego County	1,122	2,042	3,164	15.4%
Livingston County	957	1,742	2,699	14.0%
Broome County	3,498	6,366	9,864	12.4%
Oswego County	1,226	2,231	3,457	11.0%
Onondaga County	9,584	17,443	27,027	10.9%
Suffolk County	19,522	35,530	55,052	8.5%
Erie County	11,368	20,690	32,058	6.8%
Ulster County	1,381	2,513	3,894	6.6%
Clinton County	675	1,229	1,904	6.6%
Albany County	4,453	8,104	12,557	5.3%
Chautauqua County	772	1,405	2,177	4.9%
St. Lawrence County	517	941	1,458	4.6%
Wayne County	196	357	553	2.1%
Monroe County	2,600	4,732	7,332	1.9%
Nassau County	2,115	3,849	5,964	0.9%
Saratoga County	289	526	815	0.9%
Jefferson County	109	198	307	0.9%
Westchester County	1,130	2,057	3,187	0.8%
Oneida County	278	506	784	0.8%
Tompkins County	113	206	319	0.7%
Orange County	101	184	285	0.2%

Table 2. Wages supported by the SUNY system by county (in millions of US dollars)

County	Direct wages	Indirect wages	Total wages	SUNY share of all wages
Cortland County	$ 120.9	$ 133.1	$ 254.0	29.3%
Otsego County	$ 100.3	$ 113.2	$ 213.6	18.7%
Livingston County	$ 78.4	$ 86.0	$ 164.4	17.3%
Broome County	$ 292.3	$ 367.0	$ 659.3	14.3%
Oswego County	$ 102.2	$ 134.1	$ 236.3	12.5%
Onondaga County	$ 808.4	$ 1,082.6	$ 1,890.9	12.2%
Suffolk County	$ 1,735.6	$ 2,568.4	$ 4,304.0	9.2%
Erie County	$ 936.4	$ 1,309.2	$ 2,245.6	7.5%
Ulster County	$ 123.3	$ 142.1	$ 265.3	8.0%
Clinton County	$ 57.6	$ 63.5	$ 121.2	8.1%
Albany County	$ 377.0	$ 576.0	$ 953.0	5.6%
Chautauqua County	$ 58.5	$ 68.6	$ 127.2	5.8%
St. Lawrence County	$ 43.4	$ 49.8	$ 93.2	5.5%
Wayne County	$ 8.9	$ 19.2	$ 28.0	1.9%
Monroe County	$ 171.6	$ 294.1	$ 465.7	1.9%
Nassau County	$ 169.6	$ 289.4	$ 458.9	1.0%
Saratoga County	$ 18.4	$ 34.7	$ 53.0	0.9%
Jefferson County	$ 3.9	$ 10.0	$ 13.9	0.8%
Westchester County	$ 105.0	$ 199.1	$ 304.1	0.8%
Oneida County	$ 17.5	$ 27.8	$ 45.3	0.8%
Tompkins County	$ 5.1	$ 12.0	$ 17.0	0.6%
Orange County	$ 5.7	$ 10.7	$ 16.4	0.2%

End Notes.

[1] FPI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI), 2022 data. Because QWI data does not differentiate among public higher education institutions, this analysis excludes New York City from all estimates. While New York City does host SUNY institutions, these institutions' local footprints are far smaller than the City University of New York (CUNY) system.

Similarly, QWI data does not differentiate between public community colleges and four-year colleges and universities. Employment data for community colleges may be affected by an undercounting of adjunct professors. Adjunct professors are generally entitled to unemployment insurance (UI), and should therefore be included in QWI data, which records the number of employees covered by UI at the beginning of each quarter. Because adjunct employment is often intermittent, it may be undercounted. This would especially affect community colleges, which rely more heavily on adjunct instructors.

Potential employment undercounts for community colleges are especially relevant to the four counties in this dataset with only community colleges, and no four-year colleges or universities: Orange County (Orange County Community College); Wayne County (which is home to a satellite campus of Finger Lakes Community College); Tompkins County (Tompkins Cortland Community College; Cornell University's statutory colleges are not recorded as public employment in this data); and Jefferson County (Jefferson Community College).

Further, it is worth noting that QWI data records workers by place of work, not place of residence.

[2] FPI analysis of QWI data. FPI uses employment multipliers published by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI). Employment multipliers estimate the number of jobs created by the addition of jobs in a given industry. Multipliers estimate "supplier jobs," which are created as a result of industry linkages (e.g., a new teaching job would create new demand in related sectors, such as academic publishing and facilities management), and "induced jobs," which are created as a result of greater economic demand (that is, higher consumer spending associated with added jobs).
This analysis uses both supplier and induced jobs multipliers for the educational services industry.

For more on EPI's multipliers, see: Josh Bivens, "Updated employment multipliers for the U.S. economy" Economic Policy Institute (January 2019), https://www.epi.org/publication/updated-employment-multipliers-for-the-u-s-economy/.

[3] Opportunity Insights, "Preferred Estimates of Access and Mobility Rates by College" (accessed March 2023), https://opportunityinsights.org/data/?topic=0&paper_id=536.

[4] David Autor, "Work of the Past, Work of the Futute" AEA Papers and Proceedings Vol. 109 (May 2019), https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pandp.20191110.

[5] Laura Schultz, "The Economic Impact of the State University of New York" Rockefeller Institute of Government (November 2018), https://rockinst.org/issue-area/the-economic-impact-of-the-state-university-of-new-york/.