



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Frank Padavan

Padavan: Higher Education Key Focal Point For State Budget

FRANK PADAVAN March 25, 2008

As the cost for a college education continues to rise, New York State Senator Frank Padavan (Queens) and his Senate Majority colleagues have taken steps in their 2008-09 state budget plan to help students obtain a college degree.

The first step taken by the Senate Majority in helping to restore affordability for higher education is the restoration of tens of millions of dollars in state aid for SUNY, CUNY community colleges and independent colleges and universities. Specifically, the Senate Majority budget plan restores \$34 million in cuts from the Executive Budget for SUNY while restoring \$16.7 million in cuts to CUNY's operating budget.

The plan also restores the Executive Budget proposed cut of \$50 per student base aid for community college and invests an additional \$8.3 million for SUNY community colleges and \$3.1 million for CUNY community colleges. Furthermore, the Senate Majority budget plan restores \$3.6 million in aid for independent colleges and universities in New York.

"An investment in higher education is an investment in New York's future," Padavan said. "A prosperous and stable workforce in New York depends on the commitment we make in providing the funding for higher education. My Senate colleagues and I are making it crystal clear in our state budget plan that we want to ensure that New York has a high quality and affordable higher education system."

Beyond restoring cuts from the Executive Budget, Padavan and his Senate Majority colleagues are proposing the establishment of new program aimed at further reducing the cost for higher education in New York. The Students Tuition Relief Initiative for Valued Education (STRIVE) program provides financial support to help cover tuition and fees for students who attend a college or university in New York and whose family has an annual net taxable income of less than \$150,000.

The STRIVE program limits student's contribution for any remaining cost of tuition and fees to ten percent of their families annual net income. College students in the program must participate in 20 hours of community service each year along with maintaining a GPA of 2.0 during their first two years and a minimum of 2.5 GPA their final two years of college.

"As the cost of higher education increases so does the debt of generation after generation of New Yorkers," Padavan said. "Each year, college students are taking out government and private loans that burden them with years of repayments after they graduate. With the STRIVE program we are giving middle class families the help they need to meet the cost of higher education while giving New York students a chance to stay in New York, get a college degree and remain here once they graduate."