



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## College Bound? Here's How to Cut Costs

PATTY RITCHIE January 20, 2014

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION, CONTINUING EDUCATION, FINANCIAL AID**

### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

It's that time of year again. The time when high school seniors weigh their options and try to find that higher education opportunity that's the right fit for not only their interests, but also for their bank account.

It's no secret, college can be costly. According to the College Board, the average cost of tuition and fees for the 2013-2014 school year was \$30,094 at private colleges, \$8,893 for state residents at public colleges and \$22,203 for out-of-state residents who are attending public universities.

Here in New York State, the month of January has been designated "Student Financial Aid Awareness Month" by Governor Andrew Cuomo in an effort to inform students and families about various financial aid options that can make the cost of higher education more manageable.

A great resource for information on how college can be made more affordable is [StartHereGetThere.org](http://StartHereGetThere.org). To receive student financial aid, students need to fill out a Free Application for Federal Student Aid—also known as FAFSA—every school year. [StartHereGetThere.org](http://StartHereGetThere.org) offers easy to follow guidelines and tips for completing the application.

In addition, the Tuition Assistance Program—also known as TAP—helps eligible New York residents pay tuition at approved schools across New York State. Annual TAP awards can be up to \$5,000, and because it's a grant, you don't have to pay it back.

One great option for keeping college costs low is attending one of our state's SUNY schools, which are consistently ranked among the best colleges in the nation. As a proud SUNY graduate, I know what a great value our state's public colleges are and encourage those who are looking to take the next step in their educational career to consider a SUNY school.

Recently, our SUNY system announced some exciting changes. The university system is adding new online degree programs and enhancing its technical support for students who are taking courses via computer. The program is called "Open SUNY" and will offer eight new, online degree programs at six campuses, including nearby SUNY Oswego.

In many fields of work, a college education is a key component when it comes to achieving success. As your state senator, I'm looking forward to continuing to work to create new opportunities for students at all age levels that help to put them on paths to brighter futures.