



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Malcolm Smith

Commencing to Commencement

MALCOLM A. SMITH May 15, 2009

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I have the honor of giving the commencement address tomorrow at [Morrisville State College](#), one of the jewels in our State University of New York (SUNY) system.

I have visited Morrisville several times in the past and have been impressed by their campus, faculty, students, [President Ray Cross](#), and most especially their School of Agriculture & Natural Resources.

I went about twenty-seven years between degrees myself, following various callings. But in my heart, I always yearned to return to the classroom. I finally did so in 2005, gaining my M.B.A. from Adelphi University.

Tomorrow, as I reflect back upon the pivotal role that higher education has played in my life, I will convey to the graduating class how important it is to follow the Japanese principle of Kaizen, or continual improvement. I will also be reminded of the role that government plays in helping people achieve their dreams.

I am a longtime and proud supporter of our [Tuition Assistance Program](#), which helps eligible New York residents pay tuition at approved schools in New York State like Morrisville State

College.

This year, despite very challenging fiscal circumstances, we restored \$49.9 million to the TAP Program. These funds will ensure that students will continue to receive their full TAP awards. This restoration maintains current award levels and current law in relation to:

- The definition of “full time” as 12 credits per semester for full TAP awards (rejecting the Governor’s proposal to increase the requirement to 15 credits per semester)
- Academic standards for non-remedial students
- Enhanced TAP awards for families with multiple students in college
- Graduate student TAP awards
- TAP awards for students in default of federal education loans

To all the students graduating this season: congratulations. I wish you all the best in your endeavors.