

Protect Our Colleges and Universities from Federal Attacks

WHEREAS, decades of underfunding of public higher education have left colleges and universities vulnerable to financial shock, and cuts to Medicaid threatened in the Federal budget pose an existential threat to teaching hospitals; and

WHEREAS, the Federal administration's repeated, direct violations of academic freedom and shared governance, core principles of public higher education, have a chilling effect on academic research, scholarship, teaching, and curriculum development and undermine the public mission of our colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, the US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights "Dear Colleague" letter of February 14, 2025, claimed erroneously that programming involving diversity, equity and inclusion may constitute civil rights violations, and several Executive Orders have been cited to cancel or threaten federal funding, a clear attempt to curb institutional efforts to address historic inequities and delimit the terms on which research may be conducted and described; and

WHEREAS, a general freeze in federal grant funding and staffing cuts in granting agencies have caused uncertainty and chaos for principal investigators, suspended years-long research projects, imperiled the jobs of career research staff and graduate students, and undermined decades of accumulated research progress; and

WHEREAS, people shouldn't be targeted or punished for constitutionally protected speech – hundreds of students, including dozens of SUNY and CUNY students, have been threatened with cancellation of their student status, revocation of their visas, and possible deportation without due process or notification by the Department of Homeland Security to the individuals or their institutions; and

WHEREAS, massive staffing cuts in the Department of Education and plans to move student loan processing to the Small Business Administration have dismantled the application and award processes and could make federal student loans unattainable to most students, forcing them into the predatory private loan market or shutting them out of higher education altogether; and

WHEREAS the budget reconciliation options under consideration in Congress include the slashing of student aid, including Pell Grants and Parent PLUS loans, as well as the revocation of tax credits for higher education expenses, steps that would, if implemented, further suppress college access and enrollment; and

RESOLVED that NYSUT will urge administrators at higher education institutions, including the State University of New York and the City University of New York to, among other steps, coordinate to fight these attacks and defend academic freedom, institutional integrity, and the research enterprise, and direct resources to immediately notify any student or employee whose visa is forcibly revoked by the Department of

Homeland Security, and to provide necessary legal and material support to such students to the maximum degree possible under the law; and be it further

RESOLVED that NYSUT, through its national affiliates – the NEA and AFT – will urge accrediting agencies, such as Middle States, to resist the politicization of their work; and be it further

RESOLVED that NYSUT will advocate for colleges and universities in New York State to be “held harmless from federal attempts to drain resources from higher education,” including the state funding required by statute to community colleges; and be it further

RESOLVED that NYSUT will continue advocating for full funding for the educational and patient care missions of state hospitals and SUNY Academic Medical Centers, capital funding for expansion of Upstate Medical University Hospital and the building of a new hospital at Downstate, and the allocation of funding for deficit-burdened campuses in both systems; and be it further

RESOLVED that NYSUT will aggressively advocate with our elected federal representatives for the full maintenance and restoration of federally backed student loans and their processing infrastructure, student aid including Pell grants, and tax credits for higher education costs.