

Executive Summary

Background

The New York State Commission on Higher Education (“the Commission”) was established by Executive Order No. 14 of former Governor Eliot Spitzer, dated May 29, 2007. The former Governor asked the Commission to broadly examine long-term policy issues facing higher education in the State. The examination included the City University of New York (“CUNY”), the State University of New York (“SUNY”), and New York’s private colleges and universities.

The Commission reviewed the reports of all previous higher education commissions in the State, sought the insights of state, national and international experts, received testimony from citizens and leaders throughout the State, and generated in-depth working papers on the issues identified in the Governor’s Executive Order. The Commission developed its recommendations through comparative analysis, wherever appropriate, of the policies and practices in seven “peer states,” and considered the perspectives of all ten regions of New York State, all communities, and all populations, especially the most vulnerable.

This is the Commission’s final report.

Among the Commission’s major recommendations are the following:

- Establish a \$3 billion research fund, the Empire State Innovation Fund, to support meritorious research important to New York's future.
- Create a low-cost student loan program for residents attending college in New York State.
- Establish the New York State Compact for Public Higher Education to clearly delineate shared responsibility for public higher education resources.
- Rebuild CUNY and SUNY faculty ranks by strategically hiring an additional 2,000 full-time faculty from diverse backgrounds, including 250 eminent scholars, over the next five years.
- Modify SUNY's governance structure and system administration to provide more focused attention and support for the research campuses.
- Provide meaningful regulatory relief for SUNY and CUNY, by removing restrictions that impede campuses' ability to adapt quickly and promote quality.
- Develop Educational Partnership Zones in high-need school districts, bringing together higher education and P-12 resources to improve student outcomes and enhance college participation.
- Ensure that high school graduates are well prepared for college through a College Readiness Act.
- Strengthen articulation and transfer throughout SUNY and CUNY with a goal of system-wide articulation of comparable courses and seamless transfer into parallel programs by 2011-12.
- Address the backlog of critical maintenance at SUNY and CUNY with a sustained program of capital reinvestment.

These and all of the recommendations offered in the report focus on building excellence across New York State's higher education system—public and private.