



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Frank Padavan

## Helping New Yorkers Face Higher Education Costs

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Year after year, students and parents throughout New York are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet when it comes to paying for a higher education. In order to help middle class families face this burden my Senate colleagues and I have passed a comprehensive plan so that college students today and for years to come can face the future with a little less stress and apprehension.

At the center of the plan is legislation that will make a number of enhancements to the state's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). As a key sponsor of the original TAP legislation I have seen how instrumental the program has been in helping generations of New Yorkers pay for college. However, since 2000, the maximum TAP award for students has not been increased even as tuition costs and expenses at both public and private higher education institutions continue to rise at staggering rates.

The legislation takes the necessary steps to help restore affordability for a new generation of college students in New York by significantly increasing the income eligibility thresholds and TAP awards for middle class families and all New Yorkers.

In addition to making fundamental changes to TAP, the plan also increases and enhances tax deductions and credits for college tuition, establishes a student loan debt relief program and raises the maximum tuition assistance grant to veterans of all wars.

Over the years, we have seen a steady decline in college graduates entering the professional workforce with a degree in math, science or engineering. Sadly, in most instances, college graduates with majors in these fields have fled New York to find work in more affordable regions of the country. In order to help curb this trend and help keep math and science professionals in our state, the plan creates the New York State Math, Science and Engineering Technology Retention Program. This new program would provide \$1,000 state grants to 1,000 undergraduate and graduate students living in New York for up to 5 years following their graduation.

From expanding tax credits for tuition costs to providing relief from student loans, my Senate colleagues and I are making it crystal clear that we are serious about enacting a long-term and proactive approach in reducing the burden of higher education costs for all families and students in Queens and throughout New York.

I am hopeful that the state Assembly will work with the Senate in the immediate future to enact a plan that will greatly strengthen higher education in New York.