

APC Colleges TAP the Future

*Testimony delivered to the New York State Division of Budget by
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Introduction

Good morning. My name is Dr. George Santiago, and I am president of Briarcliffe College in Bethpage. Today I am representing both my college and the Association of Proprietary Colleges (APC).

Briarcliffe is located here on Long Island with three campus locations in Bethpage (Nassau County), Patchogue (Suffolk County), and Queens, an enrollment of 2,400 students, and program offerings that include certificate, two- and four-year degree-granting programs designed specifically to move our students directly into the workforce after graduation, often categorized as career colleges.

The organization, APC, represents for-profit, degree-granting colleges with 30 locations across the State on 36 campuses from upstate to the Hudson Valley, downstate and Long Island.

As you develop next year's budget, I am asking that you support our students by reforming the Tuition Assistance Program, otherwise known as TAP. APC colleges, including Briarcliffe College, receive no direct subsidies from government. As such, we pay our own way. We pay sales and real estate taxes, salaries for thousands of employees statewide and make all capital improvements at our own expense. We contribute to the fiscal health of our state and ask that you reform TAP so that our students, the most diverse and financially needy of all higher education sectors, can afford college so that they too, can contribute. By doing so, you will help many students who may currently be receiving government assistance for food, shelter and healthcare move to a job with family-sustaining wages.

APC Colleges urge you to "TAP the Future," of New York State's economy by making the following reforms to the TAP program:

First, make part-time TAP available to ALL students. It is unreasonable that students attending SUNY, CUNY and Independent colleges receive part-time TAP, but proprietary college students are excluded. Our students, many of whom are working adults with families, attend college on a part-time basis; need part-time TAP to afford college.

Second, make TAP available to fiscally needy independent students. Change the TAP funding schedule for independent adults. Currently, those who are single and childless must earn less than \$10,000 in net taxable income a year to be eligible for even a small TAP award, yet dependent students are eligible for TAP with a net taxable income of \$80,000. This simply encourages greater reliance on social programs.

And third, increase the maximum TAP award. The maximum TAP award has been \$5,000 per year since 2000. The TAP award levels have not kept pace with inflation or tuition costs. The Spitzer administration has placed a high priority on education. By increasing the maximum TAP award, he will demonstrate his administration's commitment to making a college education accessible and affordable.

Education is clearly the solution to reducing the cost of public benefit programs, increasing the number of skilled workers available for new and growing businesses and expanding the economy.

And I think we can all agree that a well-educated, diverse citizenry, and workforce are critical to our continued democracy and quality of life.

Thank you