

APC Colleges - Working for New York

Testimony delivered to the New York State Commission on Higher Education by

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Introduction

Good evening. My name is Phil Williams, President of the Utica School of Commerce. This evening I am representing both my college and the Association of Proprietary Colleges (APC Colleges). USC has been providing a business-focused education to students since 1896 when it was founded by my great-grandfather, Thomas J. Risinger. It is interesting to note that Dr. Peter J. Cayan, President Emeritus of this fine college, SUNY IT, where we are this evening, is the Chairman of our Board of Trustees.

APC Colleges number 30 schools with 36 campuses, in locations across the state from Buffalo to the Bronx, Jamestown to Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, Albany and the entire New York metropolitan area.

I'm here this evening to discuss the degree-granting proprietary sector and its role in New York's workforce. Economic development in New York State includes two crucial components; growing and maintaining existing businesses and attracting new businesses. Proprietary colleges play an important role in both. And both will have a measurable impact on the State's budget in the years to come.

I would like to make four brief but important points:

1. The proprietary sector is the only sector that exclusively focuses on preparing students for the workforce. We help remove people from reliance on government-supported programs and move them to the workforce where they become contributors to the tax base. Our colleges reduce the tax burden on the people of New York State.
2. Proprietary colleges are the most diverse of any sector. State-wide, over 52% of our students enrolled in 2-and 4-year programs are Black and Hispanic, compared to 49% at CUNY, 16% at independent schools and 15% at SUNY.
3. Proprietary colleges are the only sector of higher education that pays taxes and we are the sector that is least reliant on State and Federal subsidies. We employ thousands of people, pay millions in property and sales taxes and invest substantial sums into our campuses, all without direct government subsidy. We do not cost taxpayers money.
4. Proprietary college students need TAP reform to help them succeed. We are asking you to address the short- and long-term challenges faced by New York State's budget by helping our students:

- **Make Part-Time TAP Available To All Students**
Proprietary students are currently excluded from receiving part-time TAP even though their counterparts at SUNY, CUNY and Independent Colleges are eligible. Many of our students are working adults that are supporting families while they attend college, so attending college on a traditional semester schedule is not an option. Instead, they attend college on a part-time basis, year-round. In order for them to afford to attend college, they need access to part-time TAP funds.
- **Increase TAP Availability to Financially Needy Independent Students**
The TAP funding schedule for independent adults needs to change to accommodate the needs of financially-needy 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 with a net taxable income of \$80,000 are still eligible for TAP.
- **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 increasing tuition costs. For TAP to serve its intended purpose of increasing students' accessibility to higher education, the award levels should be increased enabling more people to become better skilled, competent employees.