

Presentation to Budget Committee, NY Legislature  
By Cliff L. Wood, President  
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State University of New York  
February 6, 2014

Good morning, I am Cliff L. Wood, President of Rockland Community College, and I am pleased to be here to speak on behalf of New York's Public Community Colleges. I represent SUNY and I am here representing NYCCAP, the New York Community College Association of Presidents, SUNY's 30 community colleges and CUNY's 7 community colleges, who educate more than a quarter of a million New Yorkers each year.

New York's public community colleges are the doorway to higher education and job training for so many of your constituents. This is why all of our public community colleges have collaborated on our request for funding. We are the colleges that have consistently opened our doors to all adults, regardless of their backgrounds, circumstances, or prior education. Over half of the students enrolled in public higher education in this great state are enrolled in a public community college.

Each fall when I speak to students and to their parents, I tell them to be proud of their decision to attend a public community college. Community colleges are America's contribution to the world of higher education and help expand America's promise of access and opportunity for all: a quality education and solid career opportunities.

To achieve this goal of access and opportunity and to maintain our open doors, community colleges must also offer "affordability." It is you who can assure that your constituents have the opportunities that our community colleges provide. We need your support as we seek to help students in your respective communities. You, who represent the citizens of New York, are responsible for a significant portion of our budgets. The major portion of what you provide is called "base aid." The long-term goal for community colleges is for the state to fulfill the promise of State Education Law and provide at least 33 percent of our funding. This goal has never been achieved.

Several years ago when New York established guidelines for a rational tuition plan for four-year State-supported colleges and universities, community colleges asked for rational funding/base aid in a plan that in five years would have brought us to that 33 percent funding. Unfortunately, this was not done. By not receiving the 33 percent base aid, we have had to continue to look at increases in tuition and in local support.

Because of decreases in past years, our funding is now less than it was ten years ago. This brings us to today, and we ask that you increase the base aid by \$250 per FTE.

Community colleges continue to meet the demands of our local communities and the challenges of the State to help put New Yorkers back to work. Many of my colleagues and I are actively involved with our Regional Economic Development Councils to be sure our constituents are qualified for the jobs that are and will be available. We also are actively involved in helping our communities in creating new jobs and opportunities for our students. For example, this January in Rockland, RCC opened a Business Services Center and a state-of-the-art three-Dimensional Design Center to assist the 378 advanced manufacturers in the region who are also small businesses with fewer than 50 employees each. These centers assure access to the training opportunities that these businesses need to keep their companies competitive. Initiatives like this are occurring from Rochester to Westchester and from Clinton to Broome.

Community colleges have also used the Job Linkages funds that you have provided and will provide again to answer the Chancellor's call to change the way we provide remediation that is so critical to the success of our students. With only 40 percent of our students coming out of high school deemed college ready by our own State Education Department data, we know that we must be prepared to provide students with the support they need to successfully complete our programs in a timely manner and to enter the work force or continue their education. It is with this understanding that SUNY formed a Task Force on Remedial Education, chaired by Senior Vice Chancellor Johanna Duncan-Poitier. She has guided us to use our Job Linkage Funds to create new ways to provide remedial help for our students. She certainly helped Rockland Community College in becoming involved with the Carnegie Foundation Center for the Advancement of Teaching and their Quantway Pathway, an accelerated model that moves students through math with a focus that assists them in making sense of the world around them, using mathematical and numeric reasoning. In short,

in this program, students learn that math is critical for the jobs they seek. This new approach has been piloted very successfully at RCC, and students are spending significantly less time in remedial coursework. This is a national, research-based initiative that has three times the success rate in half the time. RCC has also piloted a very successful program in English remediation by enrolling students in the first college-level English course rather than a remedial course but offering them support modules to help them gain the skills they are lacking. These students, who previously would have spent a semester in remediation, have now completed their first college-level English course with an 85 percent success rate and reduced the time spent in remediation.

Additionally, we have adopted alternative ways of assessing students' abilities to do college-level work. These pilots have been possible because of the Job Linkage funds, and we are pleased these funds will again be available, seed funding that we are using to build a systemic infrastructure for change. We are committed to making a difference for large-scale college completion and meeting the workforce needs of our economy.

We are also concerned about the reduction in aid for Child Care. We all heard the President talk about the need for the best early childhood education possible. Community college child care centers are models of quality education and serve as laboratories for our students. We need to restore the \$653,000 that was taken from the 2013-14 budget for child care. Providing child care is an important service for many of our students as 40 percent of them are adults returning to college for career opportunities. Many of them have families and providing child care assists them as parents and also provides quality early childhood education for our youngest citizens.

And, finally, I want to address capital funding. As you know, our local sponsors must bond 50 percent of the cost of construction, major restoration, and renovation. This budget does not include \$57.3 million dollars for 13 projects needed by nine of our local colleges. These are projects that are ready to go. A perfect example is the Collaborative Learning Center that is needed at Jefferson Community College, which has had no new construction since 1995. Jefferson is a college that serves over 600 Veterans and that has worked hard to secure the 7 million dollar match that is needed to add classrooms and to renovate the library to create a Collaborative Learning Center.

This is just one more example where funding from the state for community colleges is vital to help us achieve an important goal: a quality education that is accessible and affordable for all citizens of New York.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you and please know that our community college presidents appreciate you and the support you continue to provide.