



Testimony for SUNY BOT Public Hearing on December 3, 2025

First to present at 9:00 am: NYCCT Chair George Cushman, *Finger Lakes Community College*

[Agenda](#)

[View public hearing here.](#)

Chair Tisch and Members of the Board; thank you for the opportunity to speak today and thank you for your continued leadership on behalf of SUNY and our community colleges.

On behalf of the Community College Trustees, I want to begin by expressing sincere appreciation, to this Board and to Governor Hochul, for the increased attention and investment in community colleges this year. Initiatives such as **SUNY Reconnect**, the expansion of **ASAP/ACE**, strengthened **basic needs supports**, and renewed commitments to **student success** are making a real difference on our campuses. You have recognized the essential role community colleges play in providing access, opportunity, and workforce preparation for New Yorkers in every corner of the state.

And it is paying off.

Community colleges are leading SUNY in **enrollment growth**; not only because of new initiatives, but because our campuses have been rebuilding and growing steadily for the past several years. That momentum reflects the trust our communities place in us and the value New Yorkers see in affordable, high-quality education close to home.

But with this growth comes change... and responsibility. Our student population looks different than it did even five years ago. We are seeing **more adult learners**, many returning to college through Reconnect; more students who are **working full-time or supporting families**; more students who are the backbone of the *working poor* in their communities. These students bring extraordinary determination, but they also bring challenges that require us to rethink how we deliver education and support.

Today our students need flexible scheduling, stronger advising, access to mental-health and childcare resources, food assistance, and clear workforce and transfer pathways. They need broadband, transportation, and programs aligned with local and regional employers. And because our colleges serve communities that are uniquely diverse including rural, urban, suburban, immigrant, and first-generation; our solutions cannot be one-size-fits-all.

This is where the partnership between the SUNY Trustees and the Community College Trustees matters most. We share the same goals: **more students entering SUNY, more students completing SUNY, and more students succeeding because of SUNY**. And we know that none of that can happen without strong, vibrant community colleges.

So today, I simply want to say: thank you for your leadership, thank you for the renewed focus on the students who need SUNY the most, and thank you for recognizing that community colleges are central to the state's workforce, economic mobility, and equity agenda.

We are proud of the progress we are making. We are honest about the challenges ahead. And we are eager to continue working closely with you to ensure that every community college, and every student we serve, has the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you.