



# New York Policy Agenda

College students are essential to New York's economy. Eighty percent of CUNY graduates work in the state, 85% of whom are students of color. For every dollar spent on a CUNY or SUNY student, \$8 goes back into the state budget. However, as the purchasing power of need-based aid diminishes, **students from low-income backgrounds and students of color are more likely to be burdened by debt and less likely to complete their degrees.** Informed by the experiences of the students in our advising programs, uAspire seeks to remove financial and systemic barriers to make higher education in New York a truly accessible means of economic mobility.

## Expand the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

TAP's eligibility requirements have not kept pace with inflation, the length of time it takes the average student to finish their degree, or the rising cost of college. Expanding TAP and increasing investment ensure New York's students obtain college degrees without the burden of debt.

## Universal Financial Aid Form Completion

High school students who complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are 84% more likely to attend college; and 127% more likely for students who identify as BIPOC and low-income. New York students leave \$152 million dollars of federal aid on the table because they do not complete the FAFSA. Requiring universal, supported financial aid form completion ensures that students maximize their financial aid opportunities.

## New Deal for CUNY

From its creation in 1847 until 1976, CUNY was free to all qualifying New York City students. Now, students from low-income backgrounds have to finance their degrees with debt. Fifty years later, we are calling for a New Deal for CUNY to make tuition free for low-income students.

## Baseline CUNY's Accelerate, Complete, and Engage Program (ACE)

ACE is a comprehensive academic support program designed to help students complete their bachelor's degree on time, but it does not have consistent funding. Baselineing it in the city budget will guarantee that 2,300 BIPOC, low-income, and first-generation students are able to attend 4-year CUNY colleges without financial burden.

uAspire is a national nonprofit with over 35 years of experience improving postsecondary outcomes for students of color, first-generation students, and students from low-income backgrounds.