



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: The Honorable the Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: Elizabeth R. Berlin *Elizabeth R. Berlin*

SUBJECT: Regents 2017-2018 State Budget Priorities

DATE: December 8, 2016

AUTHORIZATION(S):

SUMMARY

Issue for Decision

The Regents advance state budget priorities every year. At the October and November meetings, the relevant committees of the Board reviewed proposals to be advanced during the 2017-2018 budget cycle, other than State Aid to school districts and other Aid to Localities programs, which are handled separately through the Regents Subcommittee on State Aid. At the December meeting, the relevant committees of the Board will approve certain proposals to be advanced during the 2017-18 budget cycle.

Reason(s) for Consideration

Regent's approval of certain 2017-2018 state budget priorities.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Regents approve budget priorities as follows:

State Aid Modeling and Facilities Planning Systems	\$2 million
Special Education and Related Services Data System	\$700,000
Support for Targeted School Districts	\$675,000
Charter School Office	\$1.5 million
Excessive Teacher Turnover Prevention Grant Expansion	\$4 million
Enhancing the Achievement of English Language Learners	\$12.4 million
Building Oversight and Support Capacity at SED	5% set-aside
Regents Exams in World Languages	\$1 million
Erasure Analysis of Test Results	\$500,000
Project-Based Assessments	\$8 million
Expansion of Teacher Exam Vouchers and Shanker Grant	\$960,000
Higher Education Opportunity Programs	\$11.67 million
Sustaining ECHS and P-TECH Programs	Fully fund
Institution Accreditation	Spending Authority



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Improving State Aid Modeling and Facilities System Services

THE ISSUE:

The Department oversees the statistical data modeling of nearly \$24 billion in state aid to public school districts annually. A critical role for the Department is to provide estimates of school aid throughout the budget process to the executive and to the legislature, a process that involves calculating 15 or more formulas for nearly 700 school districts using more than 2.1 million data points. The current system is highly accurate and effective but was developed over 30 years ago, and has relied heavily on one highly skilled operator. The program, written in COBOL, currently runs on a dated Unisys mainframe reaching the limits of its useful life.

In addition, the Department oversees facilities planning and distributes building aid to school districts. The software used to review, approve, and issue building permits and assist in the calculation of building aid for public school district capital construction projects is currently tracking more than 100,000 projects, with a value exceeding \$75 billion. The system first went on line in 1987 and runs on an obsolete DOS-based platform. The software is no longer supported by the company and there is a substantial risk that the Department will be unable to run it in the near future or the maximum number of records supported by the software will be exceeded. Failure to run the software would cripple the Department's ability to issue building permits, track and report on the status of capital projects, and pay building aid.

2017-18 Budget Request- \$2 million additional state funds to support:

Conducting the analysis and stakeholder outreach necessary to develop a roadmap-inclusive of cost and resource need estimates- and architectural design of IT system improvements, that would lead to the establishment of:

- A new state aid modeling system that meets the following business requirements:
 - Speed – The current model can process calculations in under five minutes and it is expected the new model would maintain the same capability.
 - Flexibility – Formulas are changed or added every year and the model must be able to accommodate new data elements quickly.
 - Accuracy – School aid represents approximately 30 percent of state operating funds, so accurate calculations are of paramount importance for the State's finances.
 - Reporting – The system must be able to quickly export data to EXCEL and other reporting packages to support the variety of reports for purposes of public reporting.
 - User Interface – The new model must feature a graphical user interface that supports drop down menus and selections.
- A new facilities planning system that would:
 - Replace outdated business practices with state of the art management practices.
 - Decrease the timeline for processing applications significantly through electronic submission of materials.
 - Enable districts to check the status of their projects on-line, receive updates via email, and see if any additional information is required to be submitted.
 - Provide districts with instantaneous notification of project approval and receipt of building permits.
- The seamless and accurate integration of data between multiple systems, and to allow SED offices to answer school district and legislative inquiries more quickly and efficiently.

For more information contact the

Office of Governmental Relations, New York State Education Department, (518) 486-5644



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Creating a Public Special Education Provider Data System

THE ISSUE:

The Department oversees special education programs for students with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21, ensuring that the State is in compliance with federal requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and that monies are used for the maximum benefit to students with disabilities. Although most school-age students with disabilities attend their public school district of residence or district BOCES, in 2013-14, 43,828 students attended an approved private school (853 school), Special Act School District, or State Supported School for the Blind and Deaf at a cost of \$832 million in total State and local tuition reimbursement for these programs. Preschool students with disabilities are served by approved 4410 programs including Multidisciplinary Evaluation (MDE), Special Education Itinerant Services (SEIS), Special Class in an Integrated Setting (SCIS) and Special Class (SC) and related service providers, and in 2013-14, 106,648 preschool-age children were served at a cost of \$1.5 billion in State and local reimbursement (including MDE, related services, SEIS, SCIS, SC, and transportation).

Through several program offices, the Department collects extensive student related and cost data directly from placing school districts, special education providers, and municipalities. Although the Department has various data systems, they are not consolidated or coordinated into one database that can be shared among the multiple program offices which have oversight responsibilities. A significant amount of information and essential data is collected and stored in paper form and is not available electronically. As a result, data is not in a format that is readily or easily accessible internally to staff and there is no platform to publicly report educational and cost data for the benefit of external stakeholders.

2017-18 Budget Request – \$700,000 in additional state funding to:

Establish and maintain an integrated public data system. This money would fund positions in the Offices of Special Education and Information Technology dedicated to establishing and maintaining an integrated data system resulting in the ability to collect, use and disseminate programmatic and fiscal information relating to the provision of special education by approved special education providers in New York State. Responsibilities would include:

- Analyzing existing databases and information collected by multiple offices and creating a fully compatible data system.
- Establishing standard statewide and regional data reports.
- Develop a system and process to post approved special education provider information on the NYSED website necessary to better inform stakeholders regarding the availability and provision of special education services statewide.
- Institute a process to bring the NYSED website into compliance with American with Disabilities Act accessibility standards and to ensure ongoing adherence.
- Increase the accessibility of data to improve NYSED's administrative functions.

Advancing the availability and accessibility of approved special education provider data will improve oversight by the Department and better inform parents, students, school districts, municipalities, and other governmental agencies regarding the preschool and school-age special education services offered throughout the State.

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Enhanced Support and Oversight in Targeted Districts

THE ISSUE:

In June 2014, following years of unrest and concern regarding the condition of the East Ramapo School District, the Department appointed Hank Greenberg as monitor of the District in order to conduct a comprehensive review of the conditions of the district and make recommendations for actions that could resolve those conditions. Following Mr. Greenberg's report and the failure of legislation to implement the recommendations of the , a subsequent monitoring team headed by Dennis Walcott was appointed in August 2015. Following the report of the team led by Mr. Walcott, the legislature enacted legislation and provided new funding to the district in alignment with the recommendations of the report by Mr. Walcott and his team. In fact, while much progress remains to be made, since the Department's actions to appoint Mr. Greenberg, through the report by Mr. Walcott's team, and the subsequent appointment of Charles Szuberla as the current monitor for the district, the conditions within the district have shown signs of improvement.

This recent example of the Department's intervention in East Ramapo can serve as a model for future targeted oversight and support in districts where this level of support is needed. While Mr. Greenberg and the first portion of Mr. Walcott's teams' work were financially supported by the realignment of resources within the Department, the legislature provided funding to continue the work of these monitors when it became clear that the Department could no longer do so without new dedicated resources.

By continuing to provide dedicated funding to allow the Department to recruit and retain experts that can help address the particular needs of districts in distress, the Department hopes to replicate the early track record of success in East Ramapo wherever similarly challenging situations may arise in the future.

2017-18 Budget Request – \$675,000 in new state funds to support:

- Continuation of the East Ramapo monitors (\$225,000); and
- Capacity building to address emerging issues in distressed districts, expected to be primarily through the ability to recruit and retain experts in various fields of education, and determined by the needs of the particular districts for which these resources are deployed (\$450,000).



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Ensuring Capacity and Support for SED's Charter School Office

THE ISSUE:

The Department's Charter School Office (CSO) has four main statutory responsibilities that are critical to safeguarding students' wellbeing, strong oversight, and fiscal monitoring. These essential responsibilities are:

- **Academic Oversight-** academic monitoring as well as charter school renewals, non-renewals, and charter revisions;
- **Legal and Regulatory Compliance-** ensuring all students, including English language learners, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students, have access to educational programs and due process, handling public complaints, corporate document creation for all charter schools, and monitoring of compliance with all applicable state laws and regulations;
- **Fiscal Oversight-** fiscal monitoring of all charter schools, federal charter school grant maintenance and monitoring, audit coordination with other state offices and agencies, and charter audit guide preparation; and
- **New Charter School Development-** coordination of the new school process with at-risk communities and districts, quality control, application review, pre-opening monitoring, and year one oversight.

In order to meet these important responsibilities, the Charter School Office must provide a high level of oversight for a system of over 300 schools that impact over 150,000 students. Prior funding for the CSO primarily came from a \$113 million federal Charter School Program grant awarded to the Department in 2011. After the 2015-16 school year, the Department expended all of the administrative funds allocated in this federal grant (\$1 million per year). This is compounded by the fact there is no direct state support to the Department for charter school monitoring and oversight. In contrast, SUNY's Charter Schools Institute receives \$848,000 in direct state support for the oversight of 167 schools.

The capacity to carry out these mandated oversight responsibilities for all charter schools in New York State and provide meaningful monitoring and oversight for the charter sector- including the 81 charter school authorized by the Board of Regents as well as significant oversight of the 53 charter schools authorized by the NYC Department of Education Chancellor and the Buffalo Board of Education- could now be at risk due to inadequate state funding.

2017-18 Budget Request – \$1.5 million in additional state funds to provide:

Adequate resources for charter school monitoring and oversight back to the annual amount allocated to the Department's Charter School Office prior to the federal Charter School Program grant administration allocation being exhausted.



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Excessive Teacher Turnover Prevention

THE ISSUE:

Federal and NYSED data of recent years have evidenced a shortage of Special Education Teachers and Bilingual Special Education Teachers in New York State. This shortage exists at all grade levels in the Big Five City School Districts (New York, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers) and statewide data demonstrates a particular concern in the number of available Special Education Teachers in the middle/secondary school grade levels and Bilingual Special Education Teachers across all grade levels (see USDOE *Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide*: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oep/pol/tsa.pdf>).

The Special Education and Bilingual Special Education Teacher shortage is impacting the recruitment and retention of qualified staff to serve students with disabilities who are placed in approved special education programs. Regional averages show that salary differentials between public school teaching staff and comparable staff teaching in approved special education programs range from approximately 20% to 50%. The statewide teacher shortage combined with this salary differential has caused teacher turnover to become a significant problem eroding the ability to maintain quality faculty and programming in schools serving some of the state's students with the greatest needs.

Since the 2000-01 school year, the State Enacted Budget has provided a targeted adjustment of compensation for teachers providing direct instructional services to students attending Chapter 853 Schools and Special Act School Districts. In 2007 additional funding was provided for this purpose for school-age and preschool providers. The allocation of the existing \$4 million in funding is distributed among the approved special education schools that have average teacher salaries below the salaries provided for similarly qualified teachers in public schools in the region in which the approved special education school is located. The funding to each school is based on its number of full-time equivalent teaching staff, with schools having salaries further from the regional public school salaries receiving a higher share of the total funding. Each school's chief administrator certifies to the use of the funds with an assurance statement that this revenue will supplement, not supplant, existing teacher compensation.

2017-18 Budget Request –\$4 million in additional funds:

The Regents recommend adding \$4 million to the existing \$4 million in funding for Excessive Teacher Turnover Prevention. Funding would be allocated to school-age and preschool providers using the same methodology directed by the enacted 2016-17 Aid to Localities Budget Bill, and would be included in each eligible school's 2017-18 tuition reimbursement rate. As tuition reimbursement for school-age and preschool special education providers is shared among the State, placing School Districts and Counties of residence, there would be a fiscal impact to each.



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Enhancing the Achievement of English Language Learners

THE ISSUE:

In support of the large number of Spanish-speaking English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELLs/MLLs) in the State, the Department has established a policy goal to support and foster bilingual programs in schools statewide. One key characteristic of this policy goal is that core content is taught in both English and Spanish. Development of Native Language Arts assessments would assist in supporting this goal. While there is much diversity in New York's ELL/MLL population, with over 200 languages spoken, for 62.7 percent of ELLs/MLLs, Spanish is their home language. As such, the initial development would be for a Native Language Arts assessment in Spanish, with the possibility that other languages could follow at a later date.

A Native Language Arts assessment would provide ELLs/MLLs the opportunity to test in their native language while they transition to English proficiency. Rather than being a translation of an existing English Language Arts assessment, or an assessment of English-language ability, this assessment would be an original assessment that is developed in Spanish for native Spanish speakers.

The Regents and Department are also committed to ensuring that the entire assessment program is productive and contributes to improved teaching and learning opportunities for ELLs/MLLs students. In order to support these students, translations of Grades 3-8 Math assessments and the Regents Examinations have been offered for many years in five languages: Chinese (Traditional), Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish. In addition, Elementary- and Intermediate-level Science assessments have been translated into Chinese (Traditional), Haitian-Creole, and Spanish.

Over the last decade, the statewide ELL/MLL student population has shifted and, as a result, these languages no longer completely align with the languages most commonly spoken and read by students today. In response to this change in top home languages and a growing ELL/MLL population, the Department has already begun translating parent and public materials into the top ten languages spoken by ELLs/MLLs. The Regents support creating additional assessment translations to provide ELLs/MLLs students with the opportunity to test in their native language.

These assessments will better inform school districts and NYSED on students' knowledge and abilities and will assist the field with future instructional strategies, improving teaching and learning opportunities.

2017-18 Budget Request – \$12.4 million in additional state funds to support:

- Native Language Arts test development and implementation supports to provide districts with the option of offering this assessment when it would best measure the progress of Spanish-speaking ELLs/MLLs students (\$11.4 million); and
- Offering translations of all required assessments in the eight most common home languages of ELL/MLL students- Spanish, Chinese (Traditional), Haitian-Creole, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (Simplified), Korean, and Russian (\$1 million).

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Building Oversight and Support Capacity at SED

THE ISSUE:

Following the end of the Race to the Top program, the Department lost significant capacity to provide districts with implementation support and technical assistance. While the vast majority of the state's nearly \$700 million award was passed through to school districts in the form of grants and direct assistance, the Department did receive administrative funding that provided critical staff capacity, which was lost at the end of the grant term.

A 2011 study by the Center for American Progress found that New York state had the least organizational resource capacity of any other state based on the number of staff to students. Since 2011, state budgets have only exacerbated the Department's limited capacity by including several laudable new education programs for which the Department has received no additional state support. These programs include several new prekindergarten programs, several rounds of P-TECH schools, receivership, community schools, extended learning time, performance improvement grants, management efficiency grants, and the Smart Schools Bond Act. All of these new programs were stood up and are supported with no new additional state resources. As districts are faced with the complex implementation of these various programs, they rely more and more on the technical support and expertise at the Department. In addition, the taxpayers of the state deserve to know that these funds are being wisely spent and that adequate oversight is conducted.

In the 2015-16 budget, the state general fund contribution to the operations of the Department accounted for only 9.7 percent of the agency's budget, compared to 26 percent for the Department of Health, and 56 percent for the Office of Children and Family Services.

It is common in federal programs for administering agencies to be allowed a 5 percent set-aside from grant awards to allow for proper oversight, support, and technical assistance. It is time that the state recognize the constraints that have been placed on the Department following years of flat funding combined with expansions in programs, and implement a similar mechanism to ensure that districts can receive adequate and timely support from the Department, and that New Yorkers trust that their tax dollars are being wisely spent.

2017-18 Budget Request – Enact a 5% set-aside within all new programs for administrative oversight and technical assistance:

- The Department proposes that as part of major local assistance programs, such as prekindergarten grants, community schools, receivership, and other similar programs, the Department would receive a 5% set-aside from all awards in order to provide technical assistance and support to the grantees.
- The scope of the Department is quite large, encompassing over 2.6 million public school students, attending nearly 4,500 schools, located in over 700 school districts. The positive impact of adequately funding the Department would benefit all areas of the state.

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Development of Regents Exams in World Languages

THE ISSUE:

The teaching and learning of world languages and cultures helps to ensure that our students have a deep and enduring understanding of cultures, including their own, and acquire functional proficiency in the target language(s). These competencies will provide our students with the ability to view the world through multiple lenses, participate fully and responsibly in the 21st century as global citizens, and contribute to our students' college, career, and world readiness.

For well over a century the Department developed and oversaw the administration of Regents Exams in world languages to provide a uniformly high standard for instruction in the tested languages in high schools across the State. Unfortunately, starting with the 2011-12 school year, the provision of these exams had to be discontinued owing to a lack of available State and/or federal funding to support the development of standardized exams in world languages and in other subject areas not required at the time by the federal law.

The lack of availability of Regents Exams in world languages has been a detriment to English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners and other students, who through their diverse backgrounds develop proficiency in languages other than English in addition to educational, religious and/or cultural experiences that occur outside of the regular in-school instructional environment. Without Regents Exams in world languages, these students cannot challenge for credit by exam, and are subject to inconsistent local standards for the awarding of high school credit for work done at other educational and cultural institutions and for work done through independent study.

The Board of Regents have recognized the importance of engaging students' interest in world languages by establishing the Languages Other Than English (LOTE) pathway under the "4+1" option. In addition, the earning of three units of credit in a world language is the most popular pathway to achieving a Regents diploma with advanced designation. The resumption of Regents Exams in world languages will provide a uniform, high standard for this component of diploma requirements and add credibility to these credentials.

2017-18 Budget Request – \$5 million in additional state funds to support:

The development of Regents Exams in the four world languages — Spanish, French, Italian and Chinese (Simplified) — that are taught most frequently in NYS high schools (according to 2015-16 data).



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Erasure Analysis of Test Results

THE ISSUE:

Erasure analysis involves statistical analysis of student answer sheets to identify irregular patterns of changed responses. These analyses typically focus on whether there is a statistically unlikely frequency of incorrect-to-correct answer changes within a sample of students, with an irregularly high number of changed responses providing evidence of possible test security violations, such as student, class, or school level cheating. Erasure analyses are among the most commonly used and respected tools for identifying possible testing irregularities, in part because these analyses are considered cost-effective compared to other forensic and audit techniques.

The Department will continue to work with regional information centers to collect the necessary data and seeks to retain additional expertise to perform analysis of the data.

2017-18 Budget Request – \$500,000 additional state funds



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Project-Based Assessment as a Pathway to Graduation

THE ISSUE:

The Regents and the Department are committed to developing mechanisms that provide students with different ways to demonstrate that they have met the high standards for high school graduation. Use of project-based assessments has been supported by stakeholders to provide an additional alternative way for students who cannot pass Regents examinations, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners, to demonstrate proficiency toward the State's learning standards. Project-based assessment is an increasing method being used to assess students' knowledge and skills without the use of traditional paper-and-pencil multiple-choice questions, and are often extremely useful tools for enhancing both student learning and teaching practice.

A New York State project-based assessment program would include untimed teacher-created projects of the same rigor as the corresponding Regents exam, but measure the standards by allowing students to demonstrate their abilities through a set of tasks or performances. Such interrelated tasks would build upon one another and get increasingly more challenging as the student progresses through the project, which would be delivered to students through a secure online portal where the student would be able to experience innovative performance tasks and would be able to consistently interact with their teachers/tutors for support and guidance.

The Regents support the establishment of a project-based assessment program that is designed to support closing the achievement gap and increasing the graduation rate in the State.

2017-18 Budget Request – \$8 million in additional state funds to support:

Infrastructure development for a project-based assessment program at both the State and local level, consisting of but not limited to: a secure on-line portal; training, technical assistance and help-desk support; a state scoring rubric and local scorers; test administrators and computer-based technology for test administration; and tutorial staff to provide supplemental instruction to students.



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Eliminating Barriers to Teacher Certification

THE ISSUE:

Significant changes to teacher certification requirements have been made by the Board of Regents in recent years to ensure that professionals entering New York schools have an appropriate pedagogical and content knowledge needed for success in the classroom. One of those initiatives included strengthening the assessments for certification by creating a teacher performance assessment and increasing the rigor of content specialty exams. These changes, however, increased costs for teacher certification candidates and many have identified this cost as overly burdensome and a barrier to the profession.

The Regents support a significant increase in the number of vouchers provided to candidates to cover the cost of these assessments as well as increasing the income threshold by which distribution to teacher preparation programs is determined to ensure both the quality of the assessment program as well as access to this important field.

In addition, while a recently issued report stated that while over 1,750 teachers in New York currently have National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (National Board) certification, more can be done to engage our professional educators in this national certification process which allows teachers to hone their practice, provides professional development, and enhances teacher effectiveness. The report highlights a concern that current funding supports are inadequate- available funding this year could support only approximately 150 of 241,000 potentially eligible teachers, and cost deters many educators from participating and continuing participation in the National Board process.

The Regents support expanding the Albert Shanker grant to provide assistance to public school teachers in New York in seeking National Board certification to encourage and enable teachers to continue to engage in improving their practice.

2017-18 Budget Request – \$960,000 in additional state funds to support:

- Doubling the number of teacher certification exam vouchers available to 10,000 and increasing the income threshold from PELL eligibility standards to TAP eligibility standards (\$800,000); and
- Increasing Albert Shanker grant funding and expanding allowable expenditures to component retakes as well as renewal or maintenance of National Board certification (\$160,000).



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Supporting NYS Access & Opportunity Programs

THE ISSUE:

Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP): HEOP serves over 4,800 students through 53 programs by providing financial aid, pre-freshman summer programs, remedial/developmental courses, tutoring, and counseling to students attending independent colleges. HEOP students, who do not meet the traditional academic criteria when they are admitted to college, typically earn their degrees at rates that equal or exceed general admission students.

Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP): STEP provides academic enrichment in science and mathematics with the purpose of increasing the number of historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students prepared to enter college, and improving their participation rate in mathematics, science, technology, health-related fields and the licensed professions. STEP serves over 11,000 students through 59 programs.

Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP): CSTEP provides academic enrichment and research experience in STEM content areas in order to increase the number of historically under-represented and economically disadvantaged undergraduate and graduate students who complete programs of study that lead to professional licensure and to careers in mathematics, science, technology, and health-related fields. CSTEP programs serve over 7,400 students through 55 programs.

Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP): LPP offers comprehensive pre-collegiate/dropout prevention programs and services to over 13,460 youth through 41 programs across New York State.

2017-18 Budget Request- \$11.67 million in additional state funds:

The Department supports the following funding increases, above 2016-17 funding levels:

HEOP: An additional **\$4.5 million** to support and enhance current programs and serve approximately 100 additional students. For every \$1 New York State spends on HEOP, independent colleges have a \$6 or (often) higher match.

STEP: An additional **\$1 million** to provide existing projects the opportunity to serve additional students and/or increase the number of projects supporting student participation in STEM-based research, internships, or exploratory career opportunities at facilities such as Brookhaven National Laboratory, regional STEM-hubs, etc.

CSTEP: An additional **\$2.5 million** to fully fund one partially funded institution, fund an additional six projects, provide existing projects the opportunity to serve additional students, and/or increase the number of projects supporting student participation in STEM-based research, internships, or exploratory career opportunities at facilities such as Brookhaven National Laboratory, regional STEM-hubs, etc. The additional projects would serve approximately 700 additional students.

LPP: An additional **\$3.67 million** for the beginning of a new five year funding cycle and to allow for more projects to be funded. This would serve approximately 5,000 additional students.

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Increasing Access to College and Reducing the Cost to Students - Early College High Schools & NYS P-TECH

THE ISSUE:

Traditionally underrepresented and academically at-risk students in postsecondary education need strong, innovative programs designed to increase engagement in their high school education and boost levels of participation in college while also reducing the need for remediation- programs that successfully support these goals remain a priority of the Regents and the Department.

Early College High Schools (ECHS) are partnerships between high schools and institutions of higher education that allows students to simultaneously obtain their high school diploma and earn up to 60 transferable college credits (and a minimum of 24 college credits) as part of an organized rigorous four-year program toward a postsecondary degree or credential at no cost to the student or the student's family. There are currently 24 ECHS (soon to be 23) four-year programs to which the Department administers funding. In the 2014-2015 school year (SY), approximately 6,000 students were enrolled in the Smart Scholars ECHS Program. Of these students: 74% were free and reduced meals eligible; 88% were students of color; and 11% were students with disabilities. Of the 980 seniors, 78.5% graduated high school or met their high school graduation requirements. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the graduating seniors enrolled in postsecondary education. Those seniors who attempted college credit earned an average of 20.7 college credits.

NYS P-TECH high schools are partnerships between high schools, institutions of higher education, and businesses that create individual pathways for students to simultaneously obtain their high school diploma, earn an associate's degree, obtain workplace learning/experience as well as be first in line for a job with the program's STEM related industry partner. There are currently 32 NYS P-TECH six-year projects to which the Department administers funding. In the 2015-16 SY the first two Cohorts of 26 NYS P-TECH schools completed the year with approximately 2,000 students. In Cohort I there are 51 degree/career pathways being pursued; 66% of students were free and reduced meals eligible; 58% were students of color; 9% were students with disabilities; and there was an average daily attendance rate of 93.3% with minimal disciplinary actions taken against students in these programs. For those Cohort I students completing their second year of the program: 97% passed at least one Regents exam; 91% passed two or more Regents exams; and 85% have earned college credits. In Cohort II there are 24 degree/career pathways being pursued; 65% of students were free and reduced meals eligible; 67% were students of color; and 6% were students with disabilities.

THE SOLUTION:

The Department will create a committee to review the structure, levels of success, and funding needs/sustainability of these programs as well as review alternative dual enrollment program proposals in order to make possible recommendations moving forward.

The Department recommends extending funding for each of the ECHS and P-TECH Cohorts to cover all classes of students recruited through the life of the grant and allow for the redistribution of funding that will no longer be used by projects converting/ending to current projects in that program.

For more information contact the
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Ensuring the Future of New York State's National Institutional Accreditation Authority

THE ISSUE:

The Regents have been engaged in the evaluation of quality in higher education in New York since 1787. The federal government has recognized the Regents and the Commissioner as a national institutional accrediting agency since 1952. New York is the only state with this recognition. Currently, 19 New York colleges and universities hold institutional accreditation by the Regents.

Institutional accreditors must meet the federal government standards for accrediting agencies and ensure that accreditation and accreditation renewal processes and decisions are made consistent with those standards. These processes, which include review of voluminous documents and extensive site visits to the institutions, are time and resource intensive for the accrediting agencies.

Other institutional accrediting agencies in this region, (e.g., the Middle States Commission on Higher Education or "Middle States") support their functions by charging their participating institutions. For example, Middle States charges its participating institutions both annual dues, calculated on the institution's total educational and general expenditures, as well as fees for various accreditation-related activities (information session fees, application fees, site visit fees and expenses, etc.).

Currently the Department does not charge for institutional accreditation. While there are many benefits of this accreditation function carried out by the Office of Higher Education through its Office of College and University Evaluation, accreditation activities divert limited financial and staff resources from other important functions (e.g., program registration and institutional oversight).

THE SOLUTION:

The Regents propose enactment of an appropriation that allows the Department to spend the fees related to supporting accreditation services, which would include the addition of dedicated accreditation staff, and expenses incurred in order to support and enhance conducting accreditation of institutions of higher education.

Absent the establishment of a fee and the corresponding spending authority, the Department will no longer be able to continue this function.