Talking Points / Messaging re: SUNY Free Tuition Audience: Donors and Prospects

Many implementation details of the Excelsior Scholarship are currently still under discussion, but will be finalized by New York State’s Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) on or about July 1, 2017. Below, we summarize what we currently know about the program and its implications for private scholarship support at Stony Brook. 5/17/17

New York State’s Excelsior Scholarship program offers free in-state tuition — up to $5,500 — to eligible New York undergraduate students, beginning Fall 2017. The application process begins June 7 and ends on July 21, 2017. The application period will re-open in the fall. The program, approved by the state legislature and included in its fiscal year 2018 budget, is designed to improve academic achievement and four-year graduation rates.

Eligible students:

• Are from families with household incomes of less than $100,000 the first year. Income eligibility ramps up to $125,000 in 2019 when the program is fully rolled out.
• Must register for a minimum of 12 credits per term and 30 credits a year
• Graduate in four years
• After graduating, must live in New York State for the equivalent number of years they were funded. This requirement can be deferred if students choose to transfer to out-of-state schools to complete undergraduate, graduate or medical residency.

Students who fail to meet the credit requirements must repay their last semester, not the entire year. If a student fails to stay in state for the required time after their graduation, the award converts to a 10-year loan without interest.

Why Should I Continue to Support Scholarships at Stony Brook?

For eligible students at Stony Brook, the Excelsior Scholarship will bring much needed relief.

However, the Scholarship covers only tuition and not additional expenses associated with attending a renowned public research university with an emphasis on research.

Excelsior Scholarship students must still pay for comprehensive fees, college fee, books, room and meal plans, transportation, internet access, etc. that can add up to over $17,000 a year at Stony Brook—nearly three times the cost of Stony Brook’s annual tuition.
It’s estimated that only 2,800 of Stony Brook’s 17,000 undergraduate students this fall will be eligible to apply and opt into the Excelsior Scholarship program. These students are from families with household incomes between $76,000 and $100,000 (income eligibility ramps up to $125,000 in 2019 when the program is fully rolled out). Tuition for students whose families earn below these amounts are covered by TAP and Pell grants. So, a considerable number of deserving students will still depend on privately funded scholarships and fellowships.

**Beyond tuition and expenses**

STEM students at universities such as Stony Brook also shoulder extracurricular costs associated with their programs, such as attending and presenting at conferences, investing in technology and resource materials and other tools, without which they would be at a disadvantage in competing for graduate programs and employment opportunities.

Another related cost of attending college is the expense of internship experiences. Employers want applicants who have not only a degree, but proven work experience. Many internships are unpaid or are offered only during the summer when many students typically work full time to replenish their bank accounts.

*Philanthropy will continue to have an important role in closing the access and opportunity gaps that exist for the 80 percent of students at Stony Brook University who require financial aid.*

**Bringing the Best Minds to Stony Brook**

Private financial aid helps to not only to close the gap between tuition and costs of attendance, but it helps Stony Brook successfully compete for the very best students.

Merit scholarships help us attract the best and brightest students. Without generous financial incentives to attract the best students away from better-funded publics and private universities, Stony Brook would be at a competitive disadvantage in attracting top faculty, academic partnerships and vital research dollars that have been the hallmark of Stony Brook.

Excellence breeds excellence. For six years in a row, we continue to see record number of applications from more and more students— and more students from the top of their class. As a public research university, Stony Brook is a research powerhouse and engine of activity impacting our regional economy. An elected member of the AAU, Stony Brook is a top research university in the nation and 10 of our programs are ranked in the top 25 of the country. We have the most faculty members in academic academies of all the SUNY schools combined and our alumni have gone on to distinction in public service, medical research, pioneering new products and solutions and new knowledge that is changing the world.

Clearly, philanthropy will continue to be a vital driver of our ability to deliver excellence. Whether financial aid is used to offset the costs of a top tier education or to attract and retain the top students and faculty.
What will happen to the scholarship funds I’ve donated to Stony Brook?
Scholarship dollars donated by private donors are currently at work on campus transforming lives and making a difference. The Higher Education Services Corporation is evaluating how to factor philanthropy into its equation for Excelsior Scholarship eligibility and will issue further details on or around July 1, 2017.

Where can I find out more about the Excelsior Scholarship Program?
Stony Brook created a web page (link below) that contains an overview of the program, basic eligibility requirements, links to prerequisite applications (FAFSA & TAP), links to SUNY and HESC FAQs, and a link to the HESC alert form, which will notify students and stakeholders when more information on the program becomes available.

http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/finaid/typesofaid/excelsior.html