



# SENIOR NEWSLETTER

2011-2012



**SYRACUSE SAY YES TO EDUCATION (SYTE) offers comprehensive academic, social-emotional, and health supports that are critical to enabling every child to achieve his or her potential. These support programs culminate with the promise of free college tuition for Syracuse City School District (SCSD) students. This newsletter will assist students graduating in 2012 in understanding the benefits available to them through SYTE as well as the processes for determining Say Yes awards, eligibility, and information on student responsibilities.**

## SAY YES TO EDUCATION TUITION GUARANTEE

When a Say Yes eligible student\* enrolls at a participating college\*\*, Say Yes guarantees that the combination of grants and scholarships from federal, state, and/or private sources will cover the cost of tuition or the student will receive a grant from Say Yes to make up the difference.

### \*Eligible Students Must

- Be a resident of the city of Syracuse.
- Have continuous enrollment in a SCSD High School for three years; 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades [or be legally designated as having refugee status on an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)].
- Enroll as a full time student in a Say Yes eligible college or university within one academic year after graduation (in addition students must apply for and otherwise be eligible for federal and state financial aid programs).
- Graduate from one of the SCSD High Schools in or after June 2009.
- High school seniors in the SCSD who do not meet the Say Yes criteria due to extenuating circumstances may appeal by requesting, completing, and returning a "Request for Eligibility" form.

### \*\*Say Yes Participating Colleges

SYTE has partnered with almost 100 colleges, including most of the SUNY and CUNY colleges and over 20 private colleges. For a complete list of participating institutions and details, please visit [www.SayYesSyracuse.org](http://www.SayYesSyracuse.org) and look for the link under the "Say Yes to College" tab.

## WHAT STEPS MUST A SAY YES ELIGIBLE STUDENT FOLLOW?

### Step 1. Apply to a Say Yes College.

Say Yes students must apply and be admitted to a Say Yes college to be considered for Say Yes Grants. Students should work closely with their high school guidance counselor to ensure that they have taken the appropriate courses, standardized tests (SATs and ACTs), and met all admission requirements and deadlines of the colleges to which they are applying. **When applying to one of the Say Yes Private Colleges, students must inform that college's admissions office that they are part of the Syracuse Say Yes to Education Program.**

### Step 2. Apply for Financial Aid.

Say Yes students must apply for financial aid and meet all deadlines just as other students do. Keep in mind that different colleges may have different deadlines and forms to complete. All students must complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), NYS TAP application, and any other forms required by the college. Say Yes Grants are considered "last dollar scholarships" and can only be determined after a student has applied for financial aid at the college they are considering.

### Step 3. Complete a Student Certification Form.

When students know which college or university they will be attending, they must complete a Say Yes Student Certification Form available from their guidance counselor. Say Yes staff will use this form to determine students' Say Yes awards and/or grants and ensure that they are processed in time for the fall semester.

## HOW DOES SAY YES WORK AT THE SUNY AND CUNY PUBLIC COLLEGES?

Say Yes Tuition Grants are determined by the following calculation:

1. **Determine the cost of tuition** at the participating Say Yes College.
2. **Add together all the grants and scholarships** offered to the student. Subtract this amount from the cost of tuition.
3. **The remaining amount** will be the amount of the Say Yes Tuition Grant.

Students who receive a full Federal Pell Grant and reside on campus will automatically be considered for an additional Say Yes Opportunity Grant (up to \$2000). For more information on the Opportunity Grant, please see “Say Yes Grants Overview” on the following page.

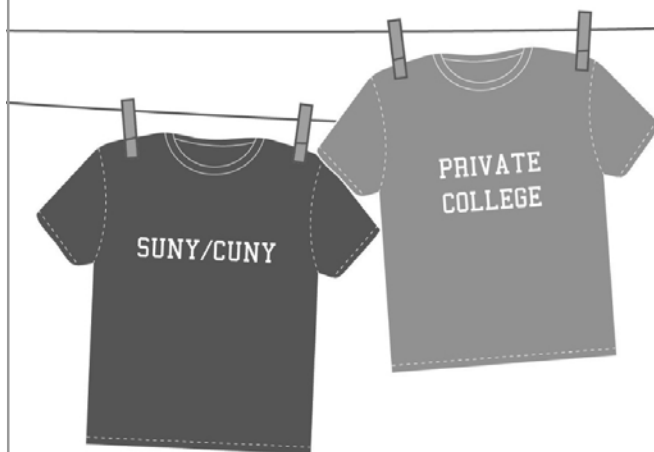
The Say Yes program will work with colleges to determine the amount of funding an eligible student will receive from Say Yes. Say Yes Grant money will be sent directly to the college (half during the fall semester and half during the spring semester). Students will receive an award notice from Say Yes via email once their eligibility has been confirmed in late summer. The college will be informed of the Say Yes Award the same time as the student and will generally provide a deferral on the student’s account (deduct the Say Yes award from any money owed to the college). Say Yes Awards will post to student’s college accounts 6-8 weeks into the semester once their full time enrollment has been verified.

## HOW DOES SAY YES WORK AT THE PRIVATE COMPACT COLLEGES?

The financial aid process will be slightly different for students applying to the private compact colleges. Just as in the SUNY and CUNY colleges, the SY Tuition Grant plus NYS TAP, Federal Pell Grant, and other grants/scholarships will total the cost of tuition. The funding to meet the Say Yes Tuition Guarantee will be coming from the private institution and therefore the Say Yes Tuition Grant should be part of the student’s initial financial aid award package. Depending on the college, the grants that make up the cost of tuition may have different names than “Say Yes Grant”.

Please note that most private colleges only guarantee full tuition to students from families with incomes of less than \$75,000. It is important that students work directly with the financial aid offices at the private college where they are applying to determine the total

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amount of financial assistance that the student is eligible to receive.

Students from families with incomes of more than \$75,000 who are attending a Say Yes Private College (and are not receiving a Tuition Guarantee Grant) may receive the Say Yes Choice Grant. The Choice Grant offers up to \$5000 per year. For more information on the Choice Grant, please see section “Say Yes Grants Overview.”

### REQUIREMENTS TO REMAIN ELIGIBLE FOR SAY YES Academics

- **Maintain satisfactory academic progress by completing a minimum of 12 credit hours for each semester (fall and spring) and maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or better.** If a student completes less than 12 credit hours in the fall or does not have a 2.0 GPA, then he/she can make up for it by taking additional credits in the spring and/or bringing their grade point average up. If, at the end of the spring semester, the student has not completed the required 24 credit hours and does not have a 2.0 or better, then the student will not be eligible for Say Yes funding for the following year. Students that do not meet the standards of academic progress at the end of an academic year can enroll in college courses over the summer to make up their deficiencies.

*Remember that Say Yes funding is not available to students over the summer.*

- **Apply for financial aid each year and complete the financial aid process at their college.**
- **Inform Say Yes of any changes in college plans.** If a student withdraws from college or takes a semester off, he/she may lose their Say Yes eligibility. Students should contact Say Yes regarding the circumstances of their situation.

### **Keep Say Yes Informed**

Say Yes will inform you of your award through e-mail. Therefore it is important that we have the e-mail address for graduating seniors and one for their parents on file. The best way of doing this is to send us an e-mail at [SayYesCollege@syr.edu](mailto:SayYesCollege@syr.edu). In the subject line type “E-mail Update” and in the body of the e-mail include your full name (if parent, indicate your student’s name as well), high school, and a phone number where you may be reached.

Once enrolled in college, students need to update Say Yes with a current and frequently checked e-mail address. This assures that students will be kept up to date of processes and procedures that may impact their access to Say Yes programs and future grant consideration.

### **Other Financial Aid**

Students need to be aware that SYTE Grants are considered “last dollar” awards. Students are required to inform SYTE of any additional grants and/or scholarships that they are receiving that were not taken into consideration when calculating the SYTE awards. A student’s SYTE award may be reduced if additional financial aid from sources other than Say Yes is received by the student. Failure to inform Say Yes of additional awards may result in a student becoming ineligible for future Say Yes award consideration.

### **Length of Study and Funding Availability**

Say Yes funding is available for 4 semesters at a 2-year college or 8 semesters at a 4-year college. While students will need to maintain full time status (at least 12 credit hours a semester) for fall and spring, they should try to complete at least 15 credit hours a semester to earn their degrees during the time requirement of Say Yes. Say Yes funding is not available for summer or winter semesters.

### **SAY YES GRANTS OVERVIEW**

The Say Yes Grants available to eligible students are designed to reduce the financial barriers that prevent students from starting or completing college. College

costs vary greatly by institution and every student’s financial need is different. In order to support these different needs, Say Yes students may qualify for any one of the following grants.

### **Say Yes Tuition Grant**

If a Say Yes eligible student enrolls at a Say Yes participating college and does not receive the cost of tuition from state, federal, and/or institutional grants and scholarships, Say Yes will provide a grant for the remaining tuition balance. The Say Yes Tuition Grant is available to all students, regardless of family income, at SUNY and CUNY colleges. Most private colleges only guarantee full tuition to students from families with incomes of less than \$75,000.

### **Say Yes Opportunity Grant– SUNY/CUNY Colleges ONLY**

The Opportunity Grant may be awarded to eligible students enrolled at a SUNY or CUNY college who have received the maximum Federal Pell Grant, reside on campus, and have high remaining need for financial aid. The Opportunity Grant offers up to \$2,000 per year and may be used for books, fees, or room and board.

### **Say Yes Choice Grant– Private Compact Colleges ONLY**

Students from families with incomes of more than \$75,000 who are attending a Say Yes Private Compact College (and are not receiving a Tuition Guarantee Grant) may receive the Choice Grant. The Choice Grant offers up to \$5,000 per year. Awards are determined by the difference between financial aid and the cost of full time tuition. Choice Grants, when combined with state, federal, and institutional grants and scholarships, are not to exceed the cost of full time undergraduate tuition. Please note, the Say Yes Tuition Grant is available to all students at SUNY and CUNY colleges, regardless of family income.



## Financial Aid Counseling Network

Many students require one on one help to complete the financial aid process for college. To do this, we have created the *Syracuse Financial Aid Counseling Network* to work with seniors and parents to complete financial aid applications and answer individual questions.

Financial Aid Coaches will work with high school seniors and their families in January and February to ensure that they complete the financial aid process in a timely manner and make informed decisions about college. Contact your guidance counselor for these TBD event dates.



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