Ban the Box Resolution

Action Requested

That the University at Albany Graduate Student Association Assembly adopt the following resolution to remove "the box" from SUNY college applications that applicants must check if they have ever been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor.

Resolution

Whereas, all 64 SUNY campuses currently require applicants to disclose whether they have been convicted of a felony offense; and

Whereas, research conducted by the Center for Community Alternatives indicates that asking this question has caused 62.5% of prospective students to drop out of the applicant pool; and

Whereas research of sociologists (e.g. Devah Pager at Harvard University) have shown that there is a stigma attached to incarcerated individuals which limits employment opportunities, particularly for African American and Hispanic/Latino job applicants; and

Whereas, a campus can request any range of documents, often costly to obtain, which may contain sealed information including dismissed charges and youthful offender status, such as a Division of Criminal Justice Services report; and

Whereas about one in three American adults estimated to have some sort of criminal record; and

Whereas, college admission and attendance is a major factor in reducing rates of recidivism; and

Whereas, removing barriers to higher education results in better economic opportunity, increased civic engagement, less reliance on public benefits, a safer community, as well as a diver academic environment rich in varied experiences and perspectives; and

Whereas, there is no evidence that admission of those with criminal records diminishes classroom or campus safety; and

Whereas, the CUNY system has developed a model worth following that does not require applicants to disclose their criminal histories; and

Whereas, Article 23-A of the New York State Correction Law, prohibits employers (except under special circumstances) from denying employment to persons because of the previous criminal convictions; and
Whereas, the SUNY system has demonstrated a commitment to the value of equal access to higher education through its in-prison programs, and through the expression of its mission to make higher education accessible; and

Whereas the SUNY Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion mission states that it seeks to “achieve the holistic integration of New York’s underrepresented and economically disadvantaged populations into the academic culture of higher education,”;

Resolved that the University at Albany GSA Assembly call on SUNY System Administration to eliminate criminal history screenings from the general SUNY application, and that they encourage each of the 64 SUNY campuses to do the same; and, be it further

Resolved that the University at Albany GSA Assembly recommend that criminal history screenings should only be implemented after a student has been admitted, and that they should never be used to revoke admission; and, be it further

Resolved that copies of this resolution be distributed widely, but not limited to, the SUNY Board of Trustees, SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher, University Faculty Senate, Faculty Council of Community Colleges, SUNY Student Assembly, SUNY Campus Presidents, and SUNY Student Government Associations.