

**The City University of New York Hearing with the New York City
Council on Higher Education Committee
“Oversight of the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program and College
Discovery”
December 10, 2014**

Written Testimony of

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There are two enrollment trends that have been of concern to the Percy E. Sutton SEEK Program at Baruch College for a number of years now. The first has been the diminishing number of underrepresented students enrolled in the SEEK Program. In fact, for several years, the Percy E. Sutton SEEK Program has had less black students enrolled than the college.

Table 1: Trends in black and Latino student enrollment at Baruch College

| | Black | | Hispanic | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | SEEK | College | SEEK | College |
| 1990 | 26.1% | 26.4% | 35.3% | 16.5% |
| 1995 | 23.7% | 23.8% | 37.5% | 20.1% |
| 2000 | 15.6% | 21.0% | 30.6% | 17.8% |
| 2004 | 10.9% | 15.1% | 28.8% | 18.1% |
| 2007 | 10.8% | 7.8% | 29.5% | 15.9% |
| 2008 | 9.3% | 11.7% | 28.5% | 15.9% |
| 2009 | 7.3% | 11.6% | 25.5% | 15.4% |
| 2010 | 9.1% | 11.2% | 27.3% | 14.4% |
| 2011 | 8.4% | 10.4% | 24.0% | 13.6% |
| 2012 | 7.8% | 9.8% | 24.0% | 12.9% |
| 2013 | 9.1% | 10.9% | 26.4% | 13.3% |

The second trend has been the lack of black and Latino males in the program.

When one considers that Latinos and blacks combined represent 72% of the students in the NYC Department of Education, the low numbers of underrepresented students in SEEK is alarming.¹ The SEEK Program was established to foster social justice through education by providing access to underrepresented groups and we were clearly not living up to our historical mission.

Further, the small number of males in the already limited Black and Latino SEEK student population was extremely worrisome.

The dearth of black and Latino males in SEEK paralleled what was happening nationally and at the other select senior colleges of CUNY.²

¹ Unintended Impacts: Fewer Black and Latino Freshmen at CUNY Senior Colleges After The Recession (May 2012) report by the Community Service Society of New York.

² The College Board Advocacy & Policy Center in their publication entitled, *The Educational Crisis Facing Young Men of Color* (January 2010), warns that the American educational system in the US has not been effective in educating Blacks and Latinos and if this issue is not addressed, the US will lose its standing globally. The economic future of the country depends on this- a sentiment echoed by the Lumina Foundation, and later President Obama's My Brother's Keeper's Initiative.

At Baruch, black and Latino males were performing academically stronger than their counter parts nationally but the enrollment was low.

Table 2

**Baruch 6-Year Graduation Rate of Full-time Freshmen, Fall 2004
entering cohort by Race/Ethnicity**

| Gender | Race/Ethnicity | Cohort N | 6-Year Graduation Rate % |
|--------|------------------------|----------|--------------------------|
| Women | White | 270 | 77.8 |
| Women | Asian/Pacific Islander | 319 | 74.3 |
| Women | Black | 95 | 68.4 |
| Men | Asian/Pacific Islander | 332 | 67.2 |
| Men | White | 324 | 60.2 |
| Women | Hispanic | 179 | 59.2 |
| Men | Black | 47 | 55.3 |
| Men | Hispanic | 124 | 39.5 |

At first glance, the graduation rates for Black and Latino males seemed to be less of an issue than their low enrollment because these graduation rates were high when compared to national rates and to the rates from other CUNY campuses. But what must be kept in mind is that **within** Baruch, Black and Latino men had the lowest six- year graduation rates as compared to their peers.

We made a commitment in 2009 to change this situation with the creation of an Urban Male Leadership Academy (UMLA) that would be housed in the SEEK Program and focused on increasing the (1) **enrollment** and (2) **graduation** of black and Latino males.

1) Increasing Enrollment of black and Latino students

We had been told that it was not possible to attract many Black and Latino students (especially males) who met the admissions' requirements specifically- the SAT's and high school GPA's, to be admitted into Baruch.³ There were only a small number of these high scoring students in the NYC population. Therefore, Baruch was competing with Ivy League and other elite institutions to enroll these students but it could not offer big financial aid packages. Furthermore, Baruch would **not** lower admissions standards because of concern about college rankings.

We reasoned that by state law, SEEK students are mandated to have lower admissions standards than regularly admitted students. There existed the opportunity to adjust the

³ Baruch Enrollment Management Advisory Committee 2007 meeting.

SAT's and GPA's to accommodate more underrepresented students. Further, since SEEK admissions standards are not calculated as part of the college's numbers, Baruch's rankings would not be affected. What is more, the creation of the UMLA we would assist the college in diversifying its total enrollment by admitting more underrepresented males.

Also frankly, we did not believe that the SAT's are the litmus test for successful college completion. We had admitted SEEK students who had lower SAT's as well as lower GPA's than regularly admitted students and they performed brilliantly. There are many examples: Mark Smiley, a black student who graduated with a 3.99 GPA won a \$300,000 Jack Kent Cooke scholarship for medical school and had his picture on buses all over the city in the "Study with the best" ad campaign for CUNY. This is a student who would not have been accepted into Baruch if it were not for the SEEK Program.

Table 3 Freshmen Admissions Profile for 2009

| College | | SEEK | |
|---------|------|------|-----|
| GPA | SAT | GPA | SAT |
| 87.4 | 1200 | 84.1 | 999 |

In addition, our retention rates had been and continue to be higher than for regularly admitted students and for all of CUNY and our graduation rates rival those of the college's. (See Table 4) Instead of merely relying on just the SAT we would broaden admissions requirements to include interviews, letters of recommendation and the writing of short essays as a way of tapping into student potential for success. We were confident that this would give us the opportunity to increase the pool of underrepresented male candidates.

Table 4: 1st Year Retention Rates

| Year | Baruch SEEK | Baruch College | University |
|------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| 2004 | 90.3 | 89.4 | 81.1 |
| 2005 | 89.1 | 89.6 | 81.5 |
| 2006 | 98.4 | 88.9 | 82.4 |
| 2007 | 91.3 | 90.6 | 82.8 |
| 2008 | 96.5 | 89.2 | 82.8 |
| 2009 | 89.3 | 92.3 | 84.7 |
| 2010 | 94.8 | 90.4 | 84.7 |

Mean= 92.8 %

90.0 %

82.8%

Another issue regarding the SAT that was disturbing to us was the practice of utilizing the combined SAT rather than looking at the math and verbal scores separately.

Table 5: Comparison of Admissions Criteria: SEEK and UMLA for 2010

| | SEEK | UMLA |
|------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Math SAT | 567 Range = 440 to 730 | 494 Range = 410 to 580 |
| Verbal SAT | 430 Range = 240-600 | 466 Range = 390-540 |

Mean SAT= **1003** **970**

By looking at just the combined score, students who were strong in math were more likely to be accepted into SEEK. We admitted students with as low as a 240 in the verbal SAT as long as they were strong in math. Many of these students had been in the country only a few years and needed a great deal of support with their written and oral English skills. The UMLA students had fewer problems with English but needed to work on their math skills. By only looking at the combined score, many potential students could be lost. The combined SAT score is not the best criterion for all groups.

Luckily, the Office of Special Programs (OSP) responded to our concerns by funding two RFP's submitted in 2009 and 2012:

1. In 2009, OSP provided seed money for the development of the Percy E. Sutton Leadership Academy (UMLA) to increase the number of black and Latino males.
2. In 2012, we received funds from OSP to pilot new recruitment and admissions models to better align our enrollment with our historical mission.

This has resulted in the slow but steady increase in the percentage of traditionally underrepresented students enrolled from **31.8%** of the total SEEK enrollment in 2012 to **35.6%** in 2014. Hence, since 2010 the percentage of underrepresented students in our freshman class has increased. This year's freshman class was **41%** Black and Latino.

Table 6: Enrollment trends in SEEK freshmen class

| Year | N | Black | Hispanic | Combined |
|------|-----|-------|----------|----------|
| 2010 | 155 | 4.5% | 31.0% | 35.5% |
| 2011 | 190 | 5.8% | 21.6% | 27.4% |
| 2012 | 68 | 8.8% | 29.6% | 38.4% |
| 2013 | 62 | 14.5% | 24.2% | 38.7% |
| 2014 | 95 | 10.5% | 30.5% | 41.0% |

We expect that the numbers will be even higher next year since the President of Baruch College, Dr. Mitchel Wallerstein has charged the college's enrollment management team to work closely with SEEK to get our 2015 freshman class enrollment up to at least 50% black and Latino.

Increasing Graduation of black and Latino males

We felt that the graduation of UMLA students depended on having a strong, engaging and effective program. Consequently, the UMLA was consciously built upon the best practices of a nationally recognized⁴ and successful SEEK program at Baruch College with the highest graduation and retention rates of SEEK programs in CUNY. These practices include counseling, advisement, academic support, a mandated 6-week Pre-Freshmen summer program, a January Math and writing program and a peer mentoring program.

Our vision for the UMLA was not only to increase the enrollment and graduation of black and Latino men but we wanted to:

- ▶ Develop socially conscious male leaders within an anti-racist and anti-oppressive framework.
- ▶ Provide life-affirming & transformative men of color-centered environments and programming.
- ▶ Create concrete leadership development opportunities and roles for UMLA students within the UMLA program.

We are also fortunate to enrich the UMLA with funds from the CUNY Black Male Initiative.

Thus, a UMLA student is also a SEEK student and is provided with all the support that every other SEEK student gets. But there are also added responsibilities and expectations made of these men. Additionally, a UMLA student:

- Is required to attend the Pre-freshmen Summer Program for 5 times a week (versus 4 times a week) to participate in Saturday workshops run by clinical Black and Latino social workers.
- After the Pre-freshman summer Saturday workshops, a UMLA student must attend one Saturday workshop a month. During this time he will take a workshop on topics such as what it means to be a responsible man of color, exploring oppressive language or understanding institutionalized racism.⁵
- Is required to take a two-credit course in Leadership (SP 2016).
- Is required to take a three-credit course in Black or Latino Studies.
- Is required to actively employ leadership skills. This has taken many forms. Students formed an Advisory Board that has been responsible for creating an UMLA logo, interviewing prospective UMLA candidates, visiting high schools as ambassadors for Baruch, SEEK and UMLA to encourage and help prepare students for college. Other students have become officers in students clubs and peer mentors.

How are we doing?

⁴ The Percy E. Sutton SEEK Program at Baruch won the 2013 NASPA (National Association of Student Affairs Professionals) gold award for Administration, Assessment, Professional Development

⁵ Inspired by the *Undoing Racism* workshops created by the *Institute for Social Justice and Beyond*. All SEEK staff are required to take this training.

Since 2010 we have enrolled 76 males. So there are 76 Black and Latino males enrolled in SEEK who otherwise would not have enrolled at Baruch College at all. These students come in generally with lower SAT's and lower GPA's than the other SEEK students but are flourishing.

Retention and GPA after 1st semester

The retention rate of the UMLA students averages **97.3%**. For regularly admitted students it averages **90.3%**. (See Table 7) UMLA students are less likely to drop out of college. UMLA students just like our SEEK students get higher GPA's after the first semester than the GPA's of regularly admitted students.

Table 7: Retention rates for UMLA, and Baruch Regularly admitted students

| Year | Cohort | Retention | 1 st semester GPA |
|-------------|---------|---------------|------------------------------|
| 2010 | UMLA | 95% | 3.02 |
| | College | 90% | 2.81 |
| 2011 | UMLA | 94% | 2.83 |
| | College | 92% | 2.92 |
| 2012 | UMLA | 100% | 2.85 |
| | College | 89% | 2.85 |
| 2013 | UMLA | 100% | 3.22 |
| | College | Not Available | 3.08 |

Math Performance Indicators

An important performance indicator for us has been UMLA students' performance in math. UMLA students are admitted with very low math SAT's as compared to regularly admitted students and even to their SEEK counterparts. Nevertheless, these students have continued to surprise us with their math performance outcomes. They are persistent, study together and encourage each other. As can be seen in Table 7 the UMLA 2012 cohort has gotten higher grades in most math courses than the regularly admitted students. Even the 2013 cohort, who has the lowest math SAT scores to date of any other UMLA cohort has performed better than expected.

Table 8: Fall 2012 UMLA and regularly admitted student math outcomes by course

| | Baruch Regularly Admitted Students (Not Including SEEK Or UMLA) | | UMLA Students Only | |
|---|---|------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Course | N | Average Grade* | N | Average Grade |
| CSTM 0120** Intermediate Algebra | 188 | 48.43% pass rate | 3 | 100% pass rate |
| MTH 1030 College Algebra | 422 | 1.78 | 3 | 2.90 |
| MTH 2003 Pre-calculus & Elements of Calculus | 990 | 1.77 | 8 | 2.15 |
| MTH 2205 Applied Calculus II | 499 | 1.54 | 3 | 2.33 |
| MTH 2207 Applied Calculus & Matrix Applications | 640 | 1.70 | 0 | N/A |
| MTH 2610 Calculus I | 127 | 2.75 | 0 | N/A |

Table 9: Fall 2013 UMLA and regularly admitted student math outcomes by course

| | Baruch Regularly Admitted Students (Not Including SEEK Or UMLA) | | UMLA Students Only | |
|---|---|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Course | N | Average Grade* | N | Average Grade |
| CSTM 0120** Intermediate Algebra | 199 | 40.201% pass rate | 3 | 33.333% pass rate |
| MTH 1030 College Algebra | 431 | 1.757 | 2 | 2.85 |
| MTH 2003 Pre-calculus & Elements of Calculus | 1003 | 1.764 | 9 | 1.92 |
| MTH 2205 Applied Calculus II | 462 | 1.878 | 4 | 0.925 |
| MTH 2207 Applied Calculus & Matrix Applications | 654 | 1.862 | 0 | N/A |
| MTH 2610 Calculus I | 193 | 2.863 | 2 | 2.65 |

N = Number of students

* Grades of Z or INC not included in this analysis; grades of WU counted as F.

** CSTM 0120 is pass/fail only

Graduation

Graduation at CUNY is measured by cohort and by progress after six years.

Baruch College has the highest graduation rate in CUNY. The SEEK Program at Baruch rivals the college's graduation rate and is above the average graduation rate in CUNY. (See Table 10)

Table 10: Six-Year Graduation Rates

| Year | Baruch SEEK | Baruch College | University |
|------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| 2004 | 61.8 | 66.4 | 53.4 |
| 2005 | 65.2 | 68.0 | 53.5 |
| 2006 | 69.4 | 67.1 | 52.8 |

Mean = 65.5% 67.2% 53.2%

The UMLA started in the summer of 2010 and thus does not have six-year graduation data yet but the data we do have is very promising. So far, **six out of the 20** young men from the 2010 cohort have graduated in **four years** and we are expecting most of the rest to graduate in the 2014-2015 academic year.

That would produce a graduation rate of **70% in 5 years**.⁶ The UMLA has a higher graduation rate in 5 years than the Baruch College has after 6 years. It goes up to 75% if one considers the UMLA student who transferred to an out-of-state private college for family reasons. He is still in touch with us, will be graduating in June and entering a masters program in business in fall 2015. Statistically, he is considered a "drop out" but to us he is a success. Similarly, is the case of the UMLA student who spent almost 18 months in and out of the hospital with a rare autoimmune disease. He is back in school this semester and will graduate a bit later than his peers. We expect that when that happens the **six-year** graduation rate for the 2010 cohort to be at least **85%**.

Clearly the UMLA is working. The question I am frequently asked is why? What are we doing that is different?

Uniqueness of UMLA

Many of the strategies that we utilize in the UMLA are considered best practices in the educational literature. These are effective not just for black and Latino males but for all college students and include learning communities, high expectations, counseling, advisement, informational support, mandated tutoring, supplemental instruction, leadership development, peer mentoring and accountability.

⁶ There is one student who was with the UMLA for one week during the summer but left before the class in the fall because of a business opportunity. We do not include him in these calculations.

What is different about the UMLA, based on the literature I reviewed, is the comprehensive support given to students not just as freshmen but also through graduation and beyond. This is unusual. Most strategies are a one shot deal with a limited scope and time frame. Placing the UMLA in the SEEK Program guaranteed the needed continuity and follow-up students need. We, then, were able to focus on augmenting rather than reinventing practices and policies that could target one population in particular, young men of color. Most of these additions were built into the structure of the UMLA and were made into program requirements. Having the CUNY BMI to supplement activities and to share community has also been an important variable in the success of the academy.

Other unique elements of the UMLA are:

- Distinctive admissions process and procedures including an interview, 4 short essays and 2 letters of recommendation.
- Mandated Saturday workshops with Black and Latino male clinical social workers. These sessions run 4 hours. This is an opportunity for men to speak up about what it is to be a man and a man of color.
- Provide an institutionalized racism frame so students can understand their experience from a different and more powerful perspective. Stereotyping, racial profiling and micro-aggressions are among the subjects that are explored.
- Furnish leadership development with the goal of students giving back to their communities. We are not just speaking about leadership in theory but in practice.
- Expect young men to be at the table, to be heard and to take ownership of the program.
- The UMLA was developed by social workers. The social work perspective is unusual in higher education and different from a student affairs or counseling lens. It is grounded in the values of social justice.
- Exposure to many Latino and black male role models.

Closing remarks:

As part of the public university system for the City of New York, the Percy E. Sutton SEEK Program at Baruch College believes that we have a unique mission and responsibility to have our student composition better reflect the make-up of the New York City public school population which is 72% Latino and black combined.

The UMLA is a great example of what can be accomplished if students are given an opportunity and support.

Finally, the urgency and need to provide quality access to higher education for Black and Latino students particularly for Black and Latino males exists today. SEEK and programs such as the UMLA can play a critical role in this.

I have included a link to a video that was created about the UMLA with funds from a small grant from the Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) that captures the spirit of brotherhood that is encouraged and fostered in the UMLA. Enjoy.

<http://www.baruch.cuny.edu/seek/umla/>

Oversight of the SEEK and College Discovery Programs at CUNY

Testimony of Cheryl Williams, University Associate Dean of Special Programs to the
City Council Committee on Higher Education, December 10, 2014

Good afternoon. My name is Cheryl Williams, and I serve as the University Associate Dean of Special Programs. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to speak to you about College Discovery and the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK programs. Preparing for this hearing gave me a chance to reflect on our 50 year history of commitment to access and success. We will be celebrating that history this coming Friday at the CUNY Graduate Center, and I hope you will all join us.

As an EOP graduate from SUNY Albany, I know firsthand how opportunity programs support low income students. It seems a lifetime ago when I arrived on campus, 19 years old, miles from family, friends, and all that was familiar; I was terrified of failing. I felt academically prepared, since I had the good fortune to spend freshman year at CUNY as part of an innovative program at the Graduate Center; however, socially and emotionally, I was definitely not ready for Upstate New York. Although my family supported my going to college, they couldn't offer options for the residential experience in an urban center that I craved. I chose Albany because I figured it had to be a big city; after all I reasoned, "it's the State capital." Saying I was a fish out of water is an understatement. If it weren't for the counseling and peer support that I received in EOP, I would have packed my bags and headed home after that first October blizzard.

For five decades, SEEK and College Discovery have played the same role for thousands of low-income, academically under-prepared students CUNY students. SEEK enrollment has been steady over the past five years and is currently 8,207. The annual budget is \$19,458,000 and has received slight increases from the State. Total CD enrollment stands at 2,509 students with a budget of \$5,133,631. The population is about 60% female and 40% male. Our students are more likely to have attended a public high school and are slightly younger than regularly admitted students.

Hispanics comprise the largest ethnic group in both programs—41% in SEEK, and more than half, 58%, in CD. Asians are the fastest growing ethnic group in SEEK and make up 29%; their numbers are smaller in CD at 12%. Black enrollment in the two programs is nearly equal—in SEEK 21% and 23% in CD. The same is true for Whites—they make up 9% in SEEK, and 6% in CD. More of our students come to us after earning GEDs than among the regular population. In fact the most recent student speaker at the prestigious Peter Jennings awards ceremony for GED high achievers is a graduate of Kingsborough CD and Brooklyn College SEEK. He wanted to address you today but is preparing for finals for the doctoral program he is enrolled in and submitting documents for a teaching stint in Germany.

I would be remiss if I did not stress that SEEK and College Discovery serve students who face both economic and academic need. While City University has long been a beacon of hope for poor students aspiring to transform their lives through education, it was only when CUNY established these two experimental programs that the definition of “deserving poor” was expanded to include students whom the public school system had failed. All of the program and student accomplishments that I share this afternoon should be placed within this context.

As I said, SEEK and College Discovery work with students who have both significant economic and academic needs. Let’s start with the economic need. It is now defined as having a family income of 185% of federal poverty guidelines. For a family of four, that means getting by in NYC on no more than \$44,123 a year. Income verification is a requirement for all freshmen.

Academic need is defined differently in the two programs. In the community colleges, CD students must have a high school college admissions average of less than 80; in SEEK academic need translates into being inadmissible at the enrolling college. The bottom line is that none of the SEEK freshmen would be studying at their campuses without SEEK. CUNY’s opportunity programs provide these high-potential, low-income students with exactly that: an opportunity to succeed in college.

To achieve that success, SEEK and College Discovery offer modest financial support and academic support. Moreover, they provide counseling that gives students the social support they need to adjust to and succeed in college.

The financial benefits our students receive are modest and include a \$50 per week living stipend during the pre-freshman summer, a book stipend of \$1,100 in SEEK and \$700 in CD, and payment of their student activity fees. The CUNY cost of study calculates a little over \$1,200 for books and supplies. SEEK and CD students are also entitled to receive an additional year of TAP if needed to complete their degrees.

Both programs use evidence-based approaches that help students strengthen their academic skills; our programs prioritize narrowing the academic achievement gap that separates them from regularly admitted students. In order to maximize the impact of the program offerings, students are required to be full-time throughout their time in the program and day students in their freshman year since we know students who attend college full-time are more likely to reach graduation.

In order to help incoming students make a smooth social and academic transition into college, they attend a 5 to 6 week pre-freshman summer program where they receive instruction in basic skills or core courses if they’ve met skills proficiency requirements. They meet in small groups with counselors and bond through workshops and educational excursions. The summer program sets the tone. Students learn about the responsibilities and benefits of program

membership. Students' sense of belonging and connection to the college and program is strengthened in freshman seminars that meet weekly with counselors.

Our approach is quite intrusive; students aren't left to decide whether they'll avail themselves of services. They must have minimum contacts with counselors and in academic support centers. Many complain initially, but ultimately admit by summer's end that they appreciate the requirements since they realize how much better prepared they are for the fall.

Importantly, they develop strong bonds with one another and with the staff, particularly the tutors and counselors. The relationship with their counselors is one of the most valued program components. Typically the College Discovery caseload is 80-100 students; the SEEK ratio is higher at between 120 and 150. When our students are asked about their experience in SEEK or CD, the number one thing they say is that they feel like they're part of a family. And that family extends beyond the walls of CUNY. The number two thing they say is that they want to give back to others in appreciation of the support they receive.

SEEK and CD provide ways for our students to do just that. Social justice and community service are part and parcel of the SEEK/CD experience. They view "Second Chances," the SEEK/CD documentary to learn the program history and purpose. They learn about the annual Student Leadership Academy and aspire to be selected. They are encouraged to participate in local SEEK/CD clubs and in the United Leaders of CUNY, an intercampus leadership organization of SEEK/CD students. Now in its third year, the ULC is making its mark, having worked in Staten Island to aid Sandy victims, participated in Somos el Futuro, and organized two university-wide career days. SEEK and College Discovery are developing a new generation of leaders for the City and the State.

Now, that is not to say it is always easy. The majority of CD students (80%) start needing remediation, and they enroll in basic skills classes until they meet CUNY proficiency standards and can succeed in college level courses. Our students are often the first in their family to go to college or are coming from a struggling public high school. However, despite these challenges, they consistently demonstrate personal growth and transformation. We are proud of our students and of our staff who support them.

In College Discovery we can boast a trifecta of success. Our retention, graduation, and bachelor's transfer rates are higher than for non-program students. Consider, one-year retention rates are nine percentage points higher for the program as a whole; three-year graduation rates are eight percentage points higher for CD students; and transfer to bachelor's programs is a full 23 percentage points higher. College Discovery students have the advantage of continued support when they complete their associate degrees as they are eligible to pursue a bachelor's degree with the support of SEEK, HEOP, or EOP. We attribute these successes to the atmosphere created in and services provided by College Discovery.

In SEEK, the major challenge we face is developing programming that will narrow the academic performance gap that exists between our students and regular admits. As in College Discovery, the process begins in the summer program where students build their academic skills in 5-6 week intensive sessions. I am proud to report that pass rates in two critical core curriculum courses, freshman composition and gateway math, suggest that SEEK students get off to a good start. In gateway math the fall 2013 pass rates were only two percentage points lower than for non-program students; in freshman composition, they were three percentage points higher. The first semester SEEK retention rates are consistently higher than for regular admits. What is perhaps the strongest indicator that the program is working is that the vast majority of program students, 89% are earning passing grades, despite the fact that they were judged too weak to be admitted to their home colleges.

Innovation has long been the hallmark of these two experimental programs. That legacy continues. Lehman SEEK currently helps its students to accelerate graduation by taking summer and intersession courses funded through a TRIO Student Support Services grant. The College of Staten Island SEEK operates two funded projects, the Research Associate Program enabling students to work with faculty members conducting original research. They also join student development with community service through *Strategies for Success*, a service project in which SEEK students serve as mentors and tutors for elementary and middle school children.

The Office of Special Programs also secures additional funding. In summer 2013, we were awarded a grant to offer a project called College Discovery Scholars, designed to further improve CD student first year academic outcomes. One hundred and fifty new CD freshmen on three campuses were given a more robust set of academic and financial support services, including cash incentives for grades. We set performance targets in retention, credits earned, GPA, and basic skills completion, benchmarking against historic performance. Students exceeded the targets set in each of seven areas. The most impressive outcome was in the number of credits students completed in the first year--24 as compared to the previous average of 18 credits. We will continue to monitor their progress and expect that the Scholars will have even higher graduation rates than their program peers. We were funded for a sophomore year and are conducting a study of the project with the goal of adopting the most impactful practices widely. The preliminary results suggest that cash incentives are not as valued as monthly Metro Cards and that studying together in learning communities was an important benefit of the experience. An unanticipated finding was the positive self-image students developed as a result of being called "scholars."

Another initiative is the annual Request for Proposals whereby the OSP awards seed money for projects designed to enhance student outcomes. Over the years, Program directors have expanded on successful projects and secured grants from major funders. Notable examples are

two FIPSE dissemination grants developed in Brooklyn and City Tech SEEK. This afternoon you will hear about one of the most successful projects we've funded, the Urban Male Leadership Academy. It was started four years ago to increase the Black and Latino male presence and success at one of the five highly selective CUNY senior colleges.

I think you will agree that SEEK and College Discovery are continuing to meet the mandate set five decades ago. Thank you.

Oversight of the SEEK and College Discovery Programs at CUNY
Testimony of John Galan
City Council Committee on Higher Education
December 10, 2014

I was born and raised in Elmhurst, New York to immigrant parents. As a first-generation college student I faced many hurdles including whether or not to attend college. Growing up, higher education was more an aspiration than an expectation and in a neighborhood where over 50% of high school students dropped out I was destined to follow suit. Everything changed when I received my high school transcript and 4-years of failure hit me at once. I knew that it was time for me to change the path I was headed and it required a certain level of discipline. I matriculated into Queensborough Community College with one goal in mind: Success by any means necessary.

While at Queensborough I had the opportunity to become a part of a family known as the College Discovery program and eventually went on to lead the CD club, an extension of the program. The CD program played a quintessential role in my success while at Queensborough and was the perfect platform for me to give back. Thanks to my advisors in the CD program I had the opportunity to participate in a plethora of academic activities. One thing that was key in my development was their investment in my success, they believed I had the potential to do great things and put me in front of the right people. Being put in these leadership roles and having my own personal board of directors through the CD program helped me develop the confidence to do things I saw as being out of my reach.

I was selected to join both Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society and Alpha Beta Gamma International Business Honor Society for my academic achievement. Through my hard work I was selected as a 2013 Fellow at New York Needs You a non-profit organization that helps the career advancement of first-generation college students. I interned at Mercury Capital Advisors Group a leading global private fund raising and investment advisory firm. This Fall I had received an offer with J.P. Morgan within their Investment Banking Summer Analyst class of 2015 with a \$10,000 scholarship reward. This all couldn't have been possible without the guidance and my mentors and close friends Cynthia, Kat, Sandra, and Winston. They inspire me every day to continue to succeed so I may in turn invest in a student much like myself and paint a clearer path for them.

I am currently attending Baruch College majoring in Finance and Investments with a double minor in Mathematics and Economics. I am also a student in the SEEK program at Baruch College.

- Thank you College Discovery for a wonderful and fulfilling life experience. I am greatly indebted to you all. Especially my counselors Cynthia, Kat, and Sandra.

Testimony of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Frank D. Sanchez

**The City University of New York Hearing with the New York City Council on
Higher Education Committee**

“Oversight of the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program and College Discovery”

December 10, 2014

Good afternoon Chairperson Barron and members of the New York City Council Higher Education Committee. I am Frank Sanchez, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the City University of New York (CUNY). It is my distinct pleasure to address you today regarding a long and proud history of two important CUNY Opportunity Programs, College Discovery and the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program. I am joined by Cheryl Williams, Associate Dean of Special Programs; Dr. Angela Anselmo, Associate Professor and Director of the Baruch College SEEK Program, and student Gia Blackwell from the Borough of Manhattan Community College, College Discovery Program.

The Higher Education Committee has chosen an ideal time to review the oversight and status of these programs as later this week we will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the creation of College Discovery. In 1964, at the height of the Civil Rights movement, the then CUNY Board of Higher Education established the College Discovery program as an experiment at each of the community colleges. Two years later SEEK was authorized by the NYS Legislature.

The mission of both programs was, and is, to demonstrate that, given proper support services, students who were being excluded from the University because of existing admissions criteria could attain a college degree. In their five decades of existence, College Discovery and SEEK have lived up to the promise, enrolling thousands of students, transforming their lives and advancing their educational and professional trajectory.

I would now like to turn to a short video that was produced in 2006 to commemorate the 40th birthday of SEEK. It encapsulates much of the history, passion, and hope that marked the establishment of College Discovery and SEEK programs at CUNY. (SHOW VIDEO) Then introduce Cheryl Williams.

Testimony for Committee on
Higher Education
December 10, 2015

Gia N Blackwell
66 Rogers Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11216

Oversight: SEEK and College Discovery Programs at CUNY

Good Afternoon Committee Members. My name is Gia Blackwell and I am in support of SEEK and College Discovery Programs. I, like many high school graduates, filled out my college application indecisive on future career goals. Once accepted into the College Discovery Program, I became a part of a community that supported me through my higher education journey.

I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to be a part of this historic program. Not only was I given extra support to excel academically but I was exposed to a dynamic team of people who I knew had my best interest in mind. My counselors instilled a "can do" attitude within me which built my self-esteem and prepared me for my future endeavors.

Being a part of the College Discovery Program changed my life forever. I was able to graduate from Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) and go on to graduate from City College without any financial drains. College Discovery and SEEK is close to my heart, I am proud to say that I am giving back to the place that gave me my educational foundation. I served as a tutor of English for over six years and now oversee the academic component of the College Discovery program at BMCC.

The challenges of affording a higher education can be burdensome. Obtaining a degree is essential to student's future. This special program makes it possible for inner city students who are experiencing financial difficulties and/or those who struggled academically to achieve a higher education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gia n Blackwell

Our Mission

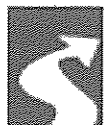
We seek to engage and empower young Black and Latino male students through opportunities for leadership, mentoring, professional and personal development.

History

The Percy E. Sutton Urban Male Leadership Academy was created in 2009 to increase the enrollment of Black and Latino young men in the Percy E. Sutton SEEK Program at Baruch College.

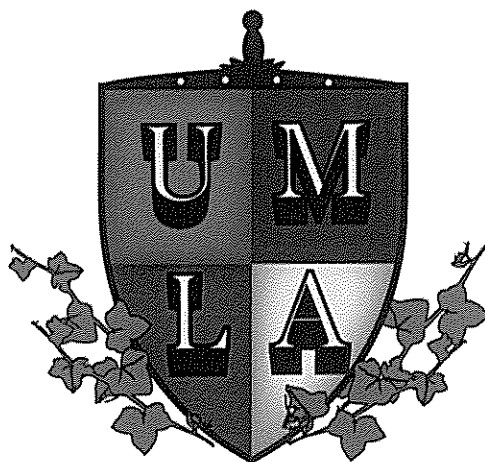
Spearheaded by Dr. Angela Anselmo and supervised by Kristy Perez, MSW, the program helps young men succeed by providing intensive academic and personal support, and ongoing opportunities for personal and professional development.

UMLA falls under the umbrella of the CUNY Black Male Initiative (BMI), which strives to increase enrollment of African American young men in CUNY schools.



Percy Ellis Sutton **SEEK PROGRAM**

Search for Education Elevation Knowledge



The City
University
of
New York

*Baruch College
One Bernard Baruch Way
(55 Lexington Avenue at 24th Street)
New York, NY 10010 (646) 312-1000*



What We Offer

Intensive support through weekly freshmen seminars, in addition to regular SEEK tutoring

Monthly wrap sessions facilitated by two male social workers of color

Peer mentoring and professional networking opportunities with other men of color

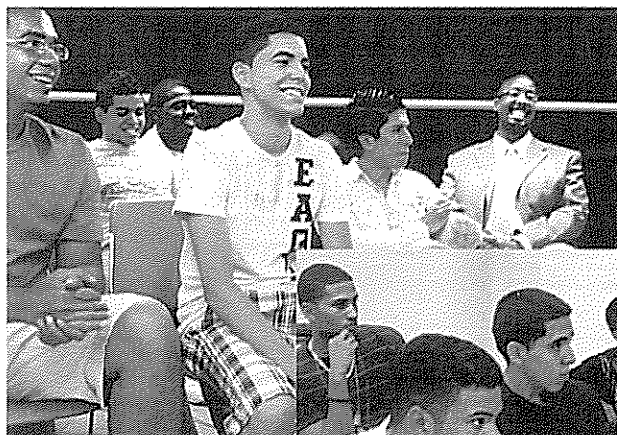
A Men of Color Dialogue Series featuring academic, cultural, and professional development workshops

Leadership opportunities through the student run UMLA Advisory Board

A two-credit leadership course and a three-credit Black and Latino Studies course built into the freshmen spring schedule

Workshops on topic such as:

- ❖ Character Building & Values Development
- ❖ Reflections on Being a Responsible Man of Color
- ❖ Social Action & Contribution
- ❖ Negotiating Our Complex Relationships



How to Apply

To be a part of the Percy E. Sutton Urban Male Leadership Academy, interested students must:

- ❖ Apply to Baruch College
- ❖ Qualify/apply for the Percy E. Sutton SEEK program at Baruch
- ❖ Complete a separate UMLA application and interview

For more information contact:

Kristy Perez
UMLA Program Director
(646) 312-4630
Kristy.perez@baruch.cuny.edu

To find out if you qualify for SEEK, contact your high school college advisor or visit the CUNY SEEK website: www.cuny.edu/seek

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Galan

Address: 93-35 Lamont Ave, Elmhurst, NY

I represent: College Discovery Program

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VICE CHANCELLOR FRANK SANCHEZ

Address: UNIVERSITY DEAN CHERYL WILLIAMS

I represent: DR. ANGELA ANSELMO, BARUCH COLLEGE

Address: MS. GIA BLACKWELL

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gia Blackwell

Address: 66 Rogers Ave Bklyn NY 11216

I represent: _____

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 12-10-2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gustavo K. Navarro Munoz

Address: 393 Dumont ave apt 9D Brooklyn NY 11212

I represent: LaGuardia Community College College Discovery

Address: 31-10 Thomson Avenue Long Island City NY 11101

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jesus Benitez

Address: 42 Elliot Place Bronx, NY 10452

I represent: La Guardia Community College

Address: 30-10 Thompson Avenue
Long island city NY 11101

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 12/10/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brianna Hamilton

Address: 1048 E 239th Street Bronx, NY 10472

I represent: Kingsborough Community College

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adonis Felix

Address: 1216 OGDEN Avenue Apt 1, Bronx, NY, 10454

I represent: LaGuardia Community college/college Discovery

Address: 31-10 Thomson Avenue, long island city

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 12/10/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tatimato Jawara

Address: 200 Marcy Pl #2F, Bronx, NY 10456

I represent: College Discovery LaGuardia community college

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 12/10/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sundeese Borden

Address: 170-40 Highland Ave

I represent: College Discovery - LaGuardia Community College

Address: 30-THOMSON Avenue L.I.C. NY 11101

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jessica Chauca

Address: 10012 35th Avenue Corona NY 11368.

I represent: LaGuardia Community College

Address: 30-20 Thomson Avenue

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jakessie Marquez

Address: 506 West 162 Street apt. 3A New York, NY
10032

I represent: College Discovery Program LaGuardia CC

Address: 30-30 Thompson Avenue Long Island City

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀