

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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December 10, 2014  
Start: 1:20 p.m.  
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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,  
14th Fl.

B E F O R E:  
INEZ D. BARRON  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
James Vacca  
Fernando Cabrera  
Jumaane D. Williams  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Ydanis A. Rodriguez  
Vanessa L. Gibson

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Frank Sanchez

Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs  
City University New York

Cheryl Williams

Association Dean of Special Programs  
City University of New York

Dr. Angela Anselmo

Associate Professor and Director  
Baruch College SEEK Program

Gia Blackwell

Student

Borough of Manhattan Community College  
College Discovery Program

Cindy Spordan [sp?]

Counselor

Representing Jesus Benitez,  
College Discovery Student  
LaGuardia Community College

John Galan

Queensborough College Discovery Program

Jass [sp?] Marquez

Student

LaGuardia Community College

Fatoumata Jwala [sp?]

College Discovery Student

LaGuardia Community College

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Jessica Choca [sp?]

College Discovery Student

LaGuardia Community College

Adonis Felix

Student Ambassador of College Discovery

LaGuardia Community College

Gustavo Kevin Navarro Munoz

College Discovery Student

LaGuardia Community College

Brianna

College Discovery Student

Kingsborough College

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay; we ready?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah.

[gavel]

MALE VOICE: Quiet please.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good afternoon.

Good afternoon.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: My name is Inez Barron and I am the Chair of the Committee on Higher Education. Today's oversight hearing is on the SEEK, which is Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge and College Discovery programs at CUNY.

In the United States, before the 1960s, a college education was largely a privilege afforded to white people; that was as true in the City University of New York as it was anywhere. At that time, the vast majority of black and Hispanic students came from low-income neighborhoods where they were graduating from public schools that weren't preparing them to meet college admission standards or to perform at the college level. Students with potential and curiosity were being sent into the world as adults without the tools needed to enter the

middle class or exercise their rights as equal members of society.

Fifty years ago, in the midst of the civil rights movement, the CUNY administration began to address this injustice by establishing the College Discovery Program. This program provided black and Hispanic students access to the City's community colleges by providing them with academic tutoring to bring their skills up to the college level and counseling services to support and guide them through their college career.

Two years later, in 1966, the New York State Assembly Black and Hispanic Caucus, including then Assembly Members David Dinkins, Basil Patterson, Charles Rangel, Percy Sutton and Shirley Chisholm, working with Republicans in the New York State Senate, enacted legislation signed by Governor Nelson Rockefeller, creating the SEEK program to provide similar access to the City's four-year colleges.

To date these programs have enabled approximately 230,000 low-income high school graduates to matriculate as CUNY students.

Through this hearing we will examine the current status of these programs and the current

metrics for success. It's important that we remember that these are programs borne in the civil rights movement with the purpose of advancing human rights. I mention this because today is the 64th Human Rights Day, a day designated by the United Nations General Assembly to call attention to the universal declaration of human rights. Article 26 of that declaration provides: "Everyone has the right to education. Professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace."

We are called on this day to remember that the work of this Committee and of the City University of New York is fundamentally to advance all human rights; among them, the rights to liberty, life, security of person and the right to participate in the institutions of government.

This being the case, we must recognize today that 50 years after the creation of College Discovery Program and decades after protestors on college campuses accused the CIA of secretly committing war crimes in the name of security, we still live in a city where the police can kill unarmed black men in broad daylight and a country where the CIA can be exposed by Congress for running a sophisticate torture program, all without legal consequences.

The Declaration of Human Rights affirms the inherent basic rights and fundamental freedoms. The torturous, barbaric acts described in the Senate Report are demeaning and dehumanizing and outside the standards of international law. If education shall be directed to the strengthening of respect for human rights, then I ask; what will the CUNY community do to make sure this country does not torture people in our name.

Additionally, UN experts have expressed concerns over decisions not to bring to trial the cases of police officers in the killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, seen as victims of unlawful killings and further examples of lethal force being

disproportionately used against African-American men. The UN Working Group says that these cases have added to our existing concerns over the long-standing prevalence of racial discrimination faced by African-Americans, particularly in relation to access to justice and discriminatory police practices. What will the CUNY community do to stand in solidarity with the families of Mike Brown, Eric Garner and Akai Gurley to commit to ending police brutality and to affirm that black lives matter? Because at the end of the day we are here to make sure that everyone has access to education to use that power to fight for human rights everywhere. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says, "I call on states to honor the obligation to protect human rights every day of the year and I call on people to hold their government to account." And also, as the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King said, "We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now."

I want to recognize my colleagues that are here with me today, we have Council Member Jumaane Williams and Council Member Fernando Cabrera. And I want to thank my Legislative Director and CUNY Liaison, Ndigo Washington; my staff member Marge Cook



is here and staff member Anita Fisher and the Committee's Policy Analyst, Tonya Cyrus and the Committee Counsel, Jeff Campagna.

We will now call the hearing; we'll call the first panel. [background comments] The first panel will consist of Vice Chancellor Frank Sanchez, University Dean Cheryl Williams, Dr. Angela Anselmo from Baruch College, and Miss Gia Blackwell. So if they would come and I'd like to swear you in, please.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: If you would raise your right hands. Do you swear and or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to all Council Member questions? Thank you; you may begin. Please state your name for the record.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: It's on the back.

FRANK SANCHEZ: Frank Sanchez, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. 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 New York.

It is my distinct pleasure to address you today on the long and I think proud history of two important CUNY opportunity programs -- College Discovery and the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program. I am joined here this afternoon by Cheryl Williams, our 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 the status of these programs, as later this week we'll be celebrating our 50th anniversary of the creation of College Discovery. In 1964, at the height of the civil rights movement, 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 New York State Legislature.

The mission of both programs was and is to demonstrate that given proper 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, nearly half a century, College Discovery and SEEK have lived up to the promise, enrolling thousands of students, transforming their lives and advancing their educational and their professional trajectory.

I would now like to turn to a short video that was produced in 2006 to commemorate the 40th birthday of SEEK. I believe this video encapsulates much of the history, the passion and the hope that mark the establishment of College Discovery and SEEK programs at CUNY. [audio of video in progress]  
[laughter]

Thank you for giving us some time to show that video; it really is a powerful testament to the impact that the SEEK and CD programs have given our CUNY students.

I'm now gonna turn over to our next panelist, Cheryl Williams, who's our Associate Dean of Special Programs at CUNY Central. Cheryl.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Okay. 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, which is at the six community colleges, and about the Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK Program, which is at the 11 senior colleges.

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 the history, as Vice Chancellor said, this coming Friday at the CUNY Graduate Center and I hope that 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 had the good fortune to spend freshman year at CUNY as part of an innovative program at the Graduate Center, it was a program for freshmen students. 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've packed my bags and headed home after that first October blizzard. [laughter]

For five decades SEEK and College Discovery has played the same role for thousands of low-income, academically underprepared CUNY students. I would be remiss if I didn't stress that both programs serve students who face two obstacles -- 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 is only when CUNY-established SEEK and College Discovery that the definition of the "deserving for" 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 that context. Let me give you a brief overview of the size, funding and student profile in SEEK and College Discovery.

SEEK enrollment is currently 8,207 with an annual budget of a little under \$9.5 million. Total CD enrollment is 2,509 with a budget of \$5.1 million. The student population is about 60 percent female and 40 percent male. Hispanics comprise our largest ethnic group; 41 percent in SEEK, 58 percent in CD. Asians are the fastest growing group in SEEK and make up 29 percent; their numbers are smaller in CD, at 12 percent. Black enrollment in the two programs is nearly equal; in SEEK, 21 percent and 23 percent in CD. The same is true for whites; they are 9 percent in SEEK and 6 percent in CD.

Economic needs in the programs equals having a family income of 85 percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines. Living in New York, that translates to under about \$41,000 a year for a family of four. For CD, academic needs in the two programs are defined differently. For CD it means having a high school average of less than 80; in SEEK it means being academically inadmissible at the enrolling college.

Now how do we help students succeed? Both programs use evidence-based practices that help students strengthen their academic skills; this tone

is set in the Pre-Freshman Summer Program, where students receive instruction in basic skills or in core courses if they've met the proficiency standards. They also meet with counselors and bond in workshops and educational excursions. Once the semester begins they must have minimum contacts with counselors and in academic support centers. The programming addresses all facets of student life and includes freshman seminars, learning communities, academic advisements, skills-building workshops and student clubs; the counselors develop most of those activities. Typically, the counseling load is between 80 and 100 students in CD; in SEEK the ratio is higher at between 120 and 150 students per counselor.

Given their profiles on admission, you'll want to know how our students do. In College Discovery we've coined the phrase "trifecta of success." CD retention, graduation and bachelor's transfer rates from CD into SEEK are higher than for non-program students. One-year retention rates are 9 percentage points higher for the program as a whole; three-year graduation rates are 8 percentage points higher for CD students and transfer to bachelor's

programs is a full 23 percentage points higher in CD. College Discovery students also have the advantage of continued support from SEEK, HEOP or EOP, where they can complete their bachelor's degrees. In SEEK, the major challenge we face is developing program that will narrow the academics performance gap between our students and regular admits. Remember, inadmissibility means that they would not be at any of the campuses that they're studying at, if they come as freshmen.

We are proud that pass rates in two critical core courses that establish how well a student is likely to do, Freshman Composition and Gateway Math, suggest that students get off to a good start. In Gateway Math this past fall, pass rates were only 2 percentage points lower than for non-program students. In Freshman Comp, they were 3 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 percent, are earning passing grades, despite the fact that they



were judged too weak to be admitted at their home colleges.

How do we make it all happen? Innovation has long been the hallmark of our programs; directors write grants to secure additional funds, the Office of Special Programs also seeks outside funding and is currently using what we've learned from our College Discovery Scholars Project to replicate the findings in all programs.

Finally, the OSP also mounts an annual RFP, request for proposal, to give campus programs seed money for projects designed to enhance student outcomes. You will hear about one of the most successful projects we funded, the Urban Male Leadership Academy, which was started four years ago to increase the black and male Latino presence and success in our programs.

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

[applause]

ANGELA ANSELMO: Hello... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: To those of us who are here listening, we are not supposed to applaud,

1 and you didn't applaud for me after I gave my  
2 opening, [laughter] but we ask that, you know if you  
3 support what's being said that you give the sign  
4 that's used in the hearing-impaired community  
5 [waiving raised hands], which is hands, so you can  
6 all do that if you want. Thank you.

8 ANGELA ANSELMO: Good afternoon; my name  
9 is Angela Anselmo; I'm the Director of the Percy E.  
10 Sutton SEEK Program at Baruch College and the creator  
11 of the Urban Male Leadership Academy, which we refer  
12 to as the UMLA.

13 The UMLA was created because we were  
14 gravely concerned with the low enrollment of black  
15 and Latino males. The SEEK Program was established  
16 to foster social justice through education by  
17 providing access to underrepresented groups and we  
18 were clearly not living up to our historical mission.  
19 Luckily, the Office of Special Programs responded to  
20 our concerns by funding two RFPs; the first, in 2009,  
21 is seed money to start the program and the second, in  
22 2012, to pilot new recruitment and admission models  
23 to better align our enrollment with our historical  
24 mission. This has resulted in the slow but steady  
25 increase in the percentage of traditionally

underrepresented students from 31.8 percent of the total SEEK enrollment in 2012 to 35.6 percent in 2014. This year's freshman class was 41 percent black and Latino. 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 an anti-oppressive framework, provide life-affirming and transformative men of color-centered environments and programming, create concrete leadership development opportunities and roles for the UMLA students within the program. Fortunately, we also received support from the 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. A UMLA student must attend the Pre-Freshman Summer Program five times a week, as opposed to the four times that regular SEEK students are required to attend and to participate in Saturday workshops run by clinical black and Latino male social workers.

After the Pre-Freshman Summer Saturday workshops, the students 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. The students are required to take a two-credit course in leadership as well as a three-credit course in black or Latino studies and they are required to actively employ leadership skills, it's not just theory of leadership, and this has taken many forms -- students formed an advisory board that has been responsible for creating the UMLA logo, interviewing prospective UMLA candidates, visiting high schools as ambassadors for Baruch and SEEK to encourage and help prepare students for college; other students have become officers in student clubs and peer mentors.

How are we doing? Since 2010 we have enrolled 76 males that otherwise wouldn't have been at Baruch College. These students come in with lower SATs and lower GPAs than their fellow SEEK students. So in other words, the Baruch GPAs and SATs, SEEK; UMLA. But they are flourishing; the retention rate of the UMLA students averages 97.3 percent, compared to the 90.3 for regularly admitted students. UMLA students get higher GPAs after the first semester

than the GPAs of regularly admitted students. These students are admitted with very low math SATs as compared to other students, and even to their SEEK counterparts; nevertheless, the UMLA students have gotten higher grades in most math gateway courses that are higher than the regularly admitted students.

And graduation; Baruch College has the highest six-year graduation rate in CUNY; it is 67.1 percent for the 2006 cohort. The UMLA started in the summer of 2010 and does not have a six-year graduation data yet, but the data we do have is very promising. So far 6 out of the 20 young men from the 2010 cohort have graduated in four years and we are expecting many of the rest to graduate in the 2014-2015 academic year; that would produce a graduation rate of 70 percent in five years, which means that the UMLA will have a higher graduation rate in five years than the Baruch College has after six years and we estimate a graduation rate of about 85 percent in six years.

Clearly the UMLA is working and it's a great example of what can be accomplished if students are given an opportunity and support. 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 and the BMI can play a critical role in this.

I have included a link in my written testimony to a video that was created about the UMLA; it captures the spirit of brotherhood that is encouraged and fostered in the young men, and I hope that you view it and enjoy it. And thank you so much for this opportunity to share with you something that is very close to my heart.

[waiving of hands]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Quick learners.

[laughter][background comments]

GIA BLACKWELL: 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 interests 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 the Borough of Manhattan Community College and go on to graduate from the City College without any financial drains. College Discovery and SEEK are close to my heart; I am proud to say that I'm 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 students' 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.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much.  
I wanna thank all of you for your testimony and I do

1  
2 have some questions and I'm gonna ask my colleagues  
3 if they have questions; I'll be calling on them as  
4 well.

5 You referenced the fact that at Baruch  
6 your graduation rate for four years is... what did you  
7 say it was?

8 ANGELA ANSELMO: Six years.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

10 ANGELA ANSELMO: But for the UMLA I gave  
11 four years. Right. [crosstalk]

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right, for the UMLA.  
13 And what did you say that percentage was?

14 ANGELA ANSELMO: Well, so far we have,  
15 after four years, of the 20 students who came in,  
16 four have already graduated...

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

18 ANGELA ANSELMO: And we expect by the end  
19 of this academic year that a few more will be  
20 graduating and that graduation rate will be above 70  
21 percent. And we estimate, if this keeps going like  
22 this, a six-year graduate rate will be about 85  
23 percent.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I have a  
25 question; perhaps Mr. Sanchez could answer it. Why



do we talk about a six-year graduation rate when these are four-year programs? Why is it we talk about six-year graduation rates and a three-year graduation rate for CD?

FRANK SANCHEZ: Sure. You know, the use of just four-year graduation rate, five- and six-year graduation rate really is part of the national conversation in terms of success of higher education institutions; it's language that frankly, we're being asked to produce data on, because more and more students nationally are taking, five, six, seven plus years to graduate 'cause we know the expense of tuitions, students are having to get jobs, go part-time, their economic kind of situation sometimes requires them to not be able to go full-time, so you're seeing more students taking additional years in order to graduate and so the data we gather simply to show how our students are performing, we don't wanna say, for example, well let's just look at the four-year graduation rates; we may see a very low number, but when in fact these students are progressing, making good academic progress and graduating a year later, two years later; three years later because of their individual circumstances.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, so I understand that's a part of a national trend to give the data in those terms... [crosstalk]

FRANK SANCHEZ: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: and as timelines. What happens to -- and it's a little off topic, but it's related... [crosstalk]

FRANK SANCHEZ: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: what about the financial aid; doesn't financial aid... isn't it limited to a four-year period?

FRANK SANCHEZ: I'm sorry? [background comment] Go...

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Let me just say that for SEEK and College Discovery students get an additional year for financial aid in... of TAP, at least, because there is a recognition that they will take longer, so that's a benefit of those two programs.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay; that's important to know, but we'll come back to that some other conversations, in terms of the population and you know, in terms of my push to talk about having

1 CUNY return to free tuition, [laughter] no tuition  
2 and you know, again, for those of you who haven't  
3 heard the story, I -- oh good, I got some response  
4 for that... [laughter] yeah, because had it not been a  
5 free tuition/no tuition institution I would not have  
6 been able to go [background comment] because my  
7 parents both worked but didn't have money to pay a  
8 tuition for me to go to school, so it's good to know  
9 that there's an additional year that's for TAP; is  
10 that also for Pell; do you know?

12 CHERYL WILLIAMS: It's only for TAP.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Only for TAP. So  
14 what are the requirements to get into SEEK?  
15 Somewhere I read that for fall freshmen there were  
16 2,000 students accepted in SEEK and 27,000 had  
17 applied; for CD, 934 were accepted whereas -- oh,  
18 that's the wrong number; it can't be the same -- a  
19 larger number had applied. So what [background  
20 comment] what's the criteria for... [crosstalk]

21 CHERYL WILLIAMS: The numbers are the  
22 same because they apply... [crosstalk]

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh they are the  
24 same. Okay.

25

CHERYL WILLIAMS: at the same application.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Okay.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: So we are limited by what we call -- if you look there, the annualized... we look for a limited number, because that's the number we can serve, so in College Discovery 2,100 is the number for the annualized admissions and so we have to select them from a pool. What we have in SEEK is an annualized average that we look for of 8,100 and that's the number that we can serve.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: 'Kay. So what are the requirements to -- when a student fills out an application to get admission; what are you looking at... [crosstalk]

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Okay, when...

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: are there income requirements... go ahead... you know GPA requirements... [crosstalk]

CHERYL WILLIAMS: The incoming requirements -- what we do in SEEK and College Discovery; they are admitted on a first come, first served basis, at least of those students who apply. So in the case of -- for example, I'll start with

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four income [background comment] is about... in the area of about \$42,000 a year [background comment]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: and for CD the same income level applies, but the academic criteria is less than an 80 and they come [background comment] on a first come, first serve basis; we don't select our students typically, other than the UMLA, which is a separate admission.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So for SEEK, is it a requirement that it be at least an 80 and for CD it's less an 80?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: No. No.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: For SEEK a student has to be inadmissible; they can't meet the admissions criteria at the college and of course the colleges each have their own admissions criteria, so a student might be a SEEK student at one college but be inadmissible at another. So the Baruch student -- for example, Baruch has very high admission standards...

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: a student who applies to Baruch [background comment] as SEEK might not get

into let's say York, which has lower admissions criteria.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So they might not get into York, but they can get... [crosstalk]

CHERYL WILLIAMS: As a... they could get in... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: as a SEEK student...

CHERYL WILLIAMS: as a SEEK student; I'm sorry... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: they might get into Baruch as a SEEK student?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Alright.  
[background comments]. Council Member Cabrera; do you have any questions?

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so much, Madame Chair. Welcome. First of all I wanna commend you on that video; that was an incredibly made video, amazing video and I commend you and your program. Just a couple of questions. How much would it cost [background comment] if all 27,000 students were to be allowed to enter into the SEEK program?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: 'Kay. Okay.

[background comment] I would say...

[laughter][background comments] I haven't thought of that and I'm not the math person, but I will give you some data that should be helpful. [interpose, background comment] Okay. So what we are able to say is that the -- and we've calculated direct student costs; that is the cost of the services that they receive, and in SEEK that comes to approximately \$2,069 per student; in CD it's about \$1,800. So if you use those as multipliers of the number of students, then that'll give you a sense of the amount of money it would take to increase the enrollment.

FRANK SANCHEZ: If I could.. [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So you're talkin' about... [crosstalk]

FRANK SANCHEZ: Oh...

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: \$27 million... no, \$54 million? Where are all my math people?

[laughter] [background comments]

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Yeah, about 50... I would... [crosstalk]

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Yeah. Yeah.



COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: \$54 million.

Okay. Do you think that would be a wise investment and with the other students who are not eligible for the program -- it's a difficult question, but would they be able to handle the SEEK Program? I mean, are there students whose scores are so low that they wouldn't have the capacity at that moment to handle the requirements, the expectancy of a rigorous program like yours?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think that's a perfect question. And the reason the criteria in SEEK is inadmissibility, it's so that the students that we admit can be served well. So we have -- when I talk about the gap, the gap between the ceiling of SEEK and the floor for regular admits, we have to be sure that we calculate the widest gap that we can serve and there are students, unfortunately, who come to us from, usually from the public school system, who would not be served well and would be frustrated; for them, CUNY has programs, we have College Discovery, which has a lower admissions criteria; we also have the CUNY Start Program, which enables a student to go without using their financial aid and

to work strictly on building their skills before they come into the university.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: How many students are we talking about that you could calculate if you had unlimited funding; in a perfect world, what will fit the program, that will be a good match?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Right. Yeah. Well I can just tell you that our numbers have declined over the last few years; we once had a budged enrollment in CD, and I'm talking CD now...

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Yes.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: since you're City Council...

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Right.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: but we once served 2,600 students; we could, I'm sure, and you have many of the directors here today; they would attest to the fact that there are sufficient -- they could hand that number of students and if we were to restore the numbers to that, we've calculated that would cost nearly a million dollars...

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: That's it?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: of additional monies.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Madame Chair, this might be an initiative we could work together on coming up in the future. So let me ask you this question; let's say we could even double that, let's just suppose that; do you have the capacity to handle that level of students in your programs, 'cause you know, we're talking about capacity and room space, etc.?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: I would say absolutely we would. If we were able to secure those funds, we would make it possible, and we have done -- as I said, we have been at 2,600 as our number and if you were to say... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: But if I were to say 5,000, 5,400; let's say we were to double that... [crosstalk]

CHERYL WILLIAMS: If you would say 54, we would find a way and we would certainly get back to you and do a survey to see what we could realistically do, because I think your question is really an important one, because we have always been mindful of not reducing the quality of services...

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Right.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: so I know we could go back to the 26; we would have to do a scan to see and a study to see if we could double.

FRANK SANCHEZ: I think there are a number of ways that we can consider expanding or enhancing the program, particular CD, so right now, for example, as you may know, we have a new community college, Guttman community college; we have not received new funding for that community college, so currently Guttman does not have a CD program [background comment] and although they have a relatively small population of students, that would be a perfect approach or strategy to expand the CD Program.

Another thing could come in the form of additional funding for enhancements -- let me just give you an example -- right now, roughly, our counselors in these programs, the counselor to student ratio is about 1:150, but if you look at comparable other programs in the State, for example, EOP at SUNY, that ratio is 1:100; [background comment] if you look at private schools, funding for the HEOP program, that ratio is 1:50 students. And so if we were to look at potential additional funding

1  
2 for enhancement to the program, it may not  
3 necessarily expand the number of students, although  
4 we would like to do that as well, but to enhance the  
5 program could be investing in providing more  
6 counselor support for our students and I think in  
7 turn would see better success rates of our students.  
8 [interpose]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I would think it  
10 would be a wise investment of City funds because  
11 we're gonna ensure, at least create a path for more  
12 constituents to succeed; they succeed, our city  
13 succeeds and with the numbers that you've given us  
14 here, what I'm hearing is, that you -- and obviously  
15 because of the support that you're creating for the  
16 students, they they're gonna be able to do better;  
17 that actually will save us money and create more  
18 funding for the city.

19 I have one more question, 'cause  
20 otherwise I could just go on and on and I wanna give  
21 it back to Madame Chair, is in regards to.. have you  
22 done self-studies, evaluations and here's my direct  
23 question -- what do the students say that they most  
24 value about your program and what do they say that  
25 could make it better?

1  
2 CHERYL WILLIAMS: Yes we have and I would  
3 say the thing that students say consistently is how  
4 much they value the support they get from their  
5 counselors. [background comment] Having someone who  
6 they know has their best interest in heart, someone  
7 who they can go to about all their issues and helps  
8 them feel comfortable at the college, that is what  
9 they value. Interestingly enough, the second thing  
10 that they say generally is that they wanna give back  
11 because they are so appreciative. We are always  
12 innovating at CUNY and we have currently in College  
13 Discovery, on three campuses we have a grant that  
14 enables us to do -- I mentioned the CD Scholars --  
15 and we're studying that project right now and we've  
16 done focus groups with students and they talk about  
17 the value of -- they are the only group that  
18 consistently get MetroCards; they have gotten  
19 MetroCards, because for our students finances are a  
20 big issue and so when they were able to get the  
21 MetroCard, that is the single thing and we've priced  
22 that out to be about an additional \$2 million, if we  
23 were able to enhance that way. So we're looking at  
24 the model. The other thing, which isn't a tangible,  
25 a dollar amount, but they talked in their focus

1 groups, the CD Scholars, about how important it was  
2 for them and how it changed their idea about  
3 themselves to be called scholars and that is  
4 something that surprised us, but it speaks to how  
5 important the psychosocial, if you want to use that  
6 term, aspect of being in an opportunity program is.  
7 Yeah.

8  
9 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Well I tip my  
10 hat to you all, to all the directors that are here  
11 and especially to the students; you are our future,  
12 actually you are now, and to CUNY for the great work  
13 that you're doing. Madame Chair, thank you so much.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Before I  
15 call Council Member Williams, I just have some  
16 questions about Baruch. You talked about the  
17 graduation rate for the UMLA students and how it's  
18 exceeding or surpassing what had been and so we would  
19 hope that students are looking at the college itself  
20 to see how the acquisition of a degree can be  
21 manifested in a position perhaps in CUNY, and it has  
22 been brought to my attention through the diversity  
23 hearing that we had that Baruch has some issues in  
24 terms of not having an affirmative action plan in  
25 place and not having the same level of -- well we

1 know all of CUNY is challenged in terms of having  
2 black faculty, but there was a black professor who  
3 was an Ivy League-trained psychologist who applied  
4 for a position as a full professor and was not even  
5 given an interview. So I understand that each of the  
6 schools has their own type of internal mechanism for  
7 advancing people, but what do you say to students who  
8 are looking at this model on their campus of an  
9 imminently qualified assistant professor who is  
10 applying to the next level and not even given an  
11 interview, although she's infinitely qualified? What  
12 can we do; there's a problem in CUNY and I'm gonna  
13 continue to bring it up. We have a problem in terms  
14 of black and Latinos not being reflected on staff to  
15 the degree that we see as students in this city and  
16 in this university; what can we do?

18 ANGELA ANSELMO: Well your first  
19 question, in terms of the students, I don't know if  
20 students are so aware of what's going on; I mean our  
21 students -- first of all, are... [interpose]

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: But whether or not  
23 they're aware, the fact that it exists.

24 ANGELA ANSELMO: No, you're absolutely  
25 right... [crosstalk]



CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

ANGELA ANSELMO: you know. But yeah, we do have a problem and I... one of the things that -- there's quite a number of us at Baruch who have been working with the administration to see what we can do. Just recently we've had four different hires; I think what we call the affirmative... we do not have an affirmative action plan; that's number one. Number two, I think that the work of affirmative action is really more of a compliance issue versus a diversity officer and you're right, we really have not had a diversity officer at Baruch and that's something that's happening. I am a member of a council that was formed and I think because of some of these issues, in the spring, which is about diversity and what's happening on that council is really taking a look at how we can bring the community together to deal with things, such as how do we mentor and foster people of color getting their tenure, being able to be promoted. Back in the day -- I've been at Baruch for 41 years; we had a black and at that time Puerto Rican faculty and staff caucus and we have less faculty [background comment] than we did, we -- not so much staff; I think on staff we're okay; with

1 faculty [background comment] the numbers have gone  
2 down, especially the black faculty. Many of the  
3 people that made up that caucus retired; things have  
4 changed, but I think at this point what's happening,  
5 and I would love to report to you a year from now and  
6 let you know more in detail because this is new, I'm  
7 on that council; we are bringing different sectors  
8 across the college to see what we can do. I know the  
9 young woman that you're speaking about; this thing  
10 about academic freedom and different departments;  
11 departments can basically make the decisions; my  
12 understanding that that was investigated and nothing  
13 was found amiss, but that's the case that we had with  
14 the death. All I can say is that I hear you, I think  
15 that we are moving slowly, but I think a lot more has  
16 to be done. So if you have another question, I would  
17 be glad to come again and give you a report about  
18 this council that we just started.

19  
20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I have a few  
21 more questions, but... [crosstalk]

22 ANGELA ANSELMO: Oh please.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I'm gonna pass now  
24 to my colleague, Council Member Williams. And we've  
25 been joined by Council Member Vanessa Gibson.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you,  
3 Madame Chair. Thank you for your testimony. I'm  
4 very happy that we're having this discussion today,  
5 not just 'cause we have the 50th anniversary, but  
6 because of the discussion that's going on now;  
7 something that was alluded to [sic] by the Chair, and  
8 I've found that we spent a lot of time focused on  
9 reforming policing, which I think we have to, but I  
10 think the conversation is gettin' people so angry  
11 because it's much broader than policing; there's a  
12 whole host of institution and structural generational  
13 historic racism that goes on in these communities and  
14 in response to that we send just the police as a  
15 resource, but we need to focus on all the resources  
16 that are going or not going into these communities  
17 and I think the more we focus on the rest of those  
18 resources the less we actually need the police  
19 department in there to try to fix all the social ills  
20 that all agencies should be working on and education.  
21 So I always hear people say the police is there -- by  
22 the way, many of them I believe are there trying to  
23 do a good job and are doing a good job, but they say  
24 they're there because the communities have asked for  
25 them, which is true, but those same communities ask

1 for better housing, they ask for their streets to be  
2 cleaned, they ask for better education opportunities  
3 and we don't tend to hear that asked as much as we do  
4 and we don't tend to respond to it as much as we  
5 should. So I'm glad that this conversation is goin'  
6 on. And also, for some reason, these conversations,  
7 particularly around black males, are very  
8 uncomfortable; when we talk about the issues dealing  
9 with women, seems like it's very light and there's no  
10 problems, but when we start talking about the issues  
11 with the black community, particularly black males,  
12 just seems to be very uncomfortable and tense and I'm  
13 hoping, as we continue this discussion, it just  
14 happens to be a conversation that needs to happen and  
15 continues to happen the same way we discuss many  
16 other issues with many other communities.

18 Also, I am happy to hear about SEEK,  
19 HEOP, EO, CD; I personally think the FA program would  
20 be the best program and that's free admission,  
21 [laughter] because I think the decision to begin to  
22 charge came eerily close to the same time we had open  
23 admissions where the complexion of CUNY started  
24 changing; somehow, coincidentally, we started  
25 charging for tuition. And so I think that would be

1 the biggest thing that we can... if we can attack that  
2 hurdle; I've said it here many, many times, I think  
3 will have the biggest impact, as well as the biggest  
4 expansion of CUNY happened during the Great  
5 Depression, because people believed to get out of the  
6 depression we need to provide education and so the  
7 same thinking I think should go on here.

9 I wanted to get a better understanding  
10 the primary differences between SEEK and CD; there  
11 was a lot said, but are there three bullet points  
12 that kind of say what the difference is of CD and  
13 SEEK?

14 CHERYL WILLIAMS: Okay, the source of  
15 funding is different and that's a biggie, the CD came  
16 as a resolution, it's at the community colleges, it's  
17 a board resolution, it's a university program;  
18 started out as an experiment and then extended. So  
19 the funding for CD, College Discovery, comes into the  
20 base budget of the university. SEEK on the other  
21 hand is legislatively enacted and every year money is  
22 appropriated by the State Legislature for the SEEK  
23 Program and it's part of that triumvirate, the EOP,  
24 HEOP and SEEK; CD really is not part of the State  
25 funding.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay and remind me again, HEOP and EOP...

CHERYL WILLIAMS: HEOP is Higher Education Opportunity Programs; that's at the private colleges; EOP, Educational Opportunity Program is at SUNY.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. And I know for CDs it seems like something -- I'm trying to follow up on what Council Member Cabrera was saying, that the people who go to CD are primarily the people who would not get accepted; does that sound right?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: That's not true.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: CUNY is an open admissions university... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: at the community college level there's still open admissions and so a student who goes to CUNY -- as long as a student has a high school diploma they are admissible.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: High school from NYC?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: It doesn't have to be from NYC.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Oh, from  
anywhere?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Now I'm talking about  
CUNY as a whole. Now to get into CD, College  
Discovery, you need to be a resident of New York  
City... [interpose]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Just let me be  
clear... [crosstalk]

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I always  
thought if you had a high school diploma from New  
York City you can go to CUNY, but a high school  
diploma from anywhere in the country you have to get  
admitted?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Yeah, you... now you may  
pay a different rate; you may pay out of state  
tuition if you're from Jersey let's say or if you're  
a foreign student, but you are admissible. So in  
College Discovery you cannot have a high school  
average of more than 79; you need to have a high  
school. So again, what's important about opportunity  
programs is that they have two challenges, academic  
and economic. So... [crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So...

CHERYL WILLIAMS: so the students at NCD could be at a community college; they couldn't be in CD for example if they had an 85 or 90 high school average.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I see. Is there a floor that you have to have in terms of... [crosstalk]

CHERYL WILLIAMS: High school average?

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah.

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Not that I'm aware of with the community colleges; you need to have a high school diploma.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I see. So how do you... and then how do you differentiate between who gets in and who doesn't?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: If you apply early you get it and you're eligible, because all of our students are evaluated on -- not evaluated, but verified for financial eligibility. If you come late -- and community college students tend to come to college later and apply later, so their chances of getting into College Discovery are greater because you have more time. In the selective -- now I'm talking about SEEK -- in the senior colleges, they



close very early, so we're starting enrolling for the fall around now and within the first couple of months, usually around February or March the most selective colleges have shut down admitting new students because the numbers are so great of students who wanna go there and we are limited in the number that we can accept.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So for CD, are people turned away?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: There are students who are turned away, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: For eligibility or because you ran out of slots...? [crosstalk]

CHERYL WILLIAMS: You...

[background comments]

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I'm runnin' out of time?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: No, go ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Oh. Are people turned away because there's not enough slots or because of ineligibility?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: It can be both. They also have to attend summer school; if they come too late, if they apply too late to attend summer school,

1 we cannot take them because we've gotta make sure  
2 that we have time to work with them. But there are  
3 students who are turned away for eligibility,  
4 obviously and some also because they come too late to  
5 go through the summer program.

6  
7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Do you have  
8 enough slots for people who apply on time and are  
9 eligible?

10 CHERYL WILLIAMS: No.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. And in  
12 SEEK, I assume it's the same thing... [interpose]

13 CHERYL WILLIAMS: In SEEK we don't have  
14 enough slots for all who apply and are eligible.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And do those  
16 students just normally are not able to participate in  
17 the college... [crosstalk]

18 CHERYL WILLIAMS: They can go to the  
19 college. If they're at CD...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I mean do you  
21 have a record like of the people who aren't able to  
22 get into CD or SEEK; do they find another way to get  
23 their education or are they just not able to do it?

24 CHERYL WILLIAMS: I would say... well for  
25 one, usually they can, you know, they can go; they

1  
2 may not go -- in the case of SEEK, they can't go to  
3 the college they want to go to unless they're  
4 eligible for SEEK at that college, if they don't meet  
5 the admissions criteria. But a student who wants to  
6 go let's say to Baruch, has an 85 average SAT score,  
7 they may not get into Baruch as a SEEK student, but  
8 they could go to another four-year college, you know,  
9 if they've taken SATs... [interpose]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: As a SEEK  
11 student?

12 CHERYL WILLIAMS: As a SEEK student at  
13 some other campuses... [crosstalk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I see.

15 CHERYL WILLIAMS: Yeah. Yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And what's the  
17 tuition like with SEEK and CD; is there a tuition...  
18 [crosstalk]

19 CHERYL WILLIAMS: The tuition is the same  
20 as for any student; what we provide, and I'm glad  
21 you're asking that, because what we do, are able to  
22 provide our students is financial aid -- over and  
23 above, most of what they get is for financial aid,  
24 TAP, Pell; what we give them is a book stipend that  
25 is \$1,100 in SEEK for the year, \$700 in CD. What we

also give them is we pay their school student activity fees in both programs and because we require the summer program, we give them a stipend, a summer stipend. However, for the students at the level of need that we have, that is not enough and so we also, we have another program at the university in the community colleges called Single Stop and we make sure -- and what Single Stop does is it connects low-income people with benefits, public benefits that they're entitled to but not receiving. And so one of the first things we do is connect our students to Single Stop because they help them to make applications and we've gotten millions of dollars for that. When we did our CD Scholars program, we included in our ask to have an emergency fund, because emergencies happen to people of low income and I'm sure you all know that it can really offset their whole life and school may be the last thing you're thinking about when you're homeless and so we always make sure that we try to get funds for those students when they have an emergency and what we found is by connecting them with Single Stop we were able to give students monies that we had set aside for emergency funds; we were able to transfer that

money to transportation costs by getting them  
MetroCards.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And the last  
question for Baruch, and you may have mentioned it,  
but it looked like there was a precipitous drop in  
black enrollment in SEEK from 1990-2013... [interpose]

ANGELA ANSELMO: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: do you have an  
idea what caused -- I know you're trying to, I guess,  
fix it, but it's just real bad, it went from 26.1...  
[interpose]

ANGELA ANSELMO: It's terrible.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: to 9.1 percent...  
[crosstalk]

ANGELA ANSELMO: Yeah, it's terrible.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: any idea what  
caused that?

ANGELA ANSELMO: This is Angela Anselmo  
speaking; not [background comments] Baruch speaking;  
even SEEK; this is Angela Anselmo, and I think as  
long as we do not have control of the admissions  
process we're gonna be in trouble, because I don't  
believe the SATs are the litmus tests to be a  
successful college student, especially for black and

1 Latino kids and this thing about first come first  
2 served, typically a lot of our students apply later;  
3 some of the funds that we got from the RFPs is to  
4 reach out to some of the communities to connect with  
5 the high school counselors in high schools that  
6 Baruch would not necessarily visit, because that's  
7 not the schools that they usually connect to. But  
8 it's very painful to hear when high school counselors  
9 say that they never knew about SEEK, that this is...  
10 you know and the program's been around for a long  
11 time. So the thing about the UMLA and the power that  
12 we had was to be able to look at letters of  
13 recommendation, for short essays, an interview that  
14 started not just with the staff of SEEK, but then we  
15 included the UMLA brothers themselves who are  
16 interviewing the students. So I think that the  
17 admissions process for me is a flawed process...  
18 [interpose]

19  
20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Can you just  
21 explain that a little bit more... [crosstalk]

22 ANGELA ANSELMO: What I mean is...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: what's used in  
24 the admissions process and what we need to do...?  
25 [crosstalk]

1  
2 ANGELA ANSELMO: Well it's just straight,  
3 the GPA and the SAT and what I'm saying is that I  
4 don't think that's really the only way of admitting a  
5 student; it's cost-effective and it's a first come  
6 first served, okay, but I don't think it necessarily  
7 works for our kids, because if that were true, then  
8 we wouldn't be excelling the way we're excelling.  
9 The students who come in to Baruch through the SEEK  
10 Program have sometimes 2-300 points less than the  
11 regularly admitted students and lower GPAs and within  
12 the UMLA, which is even lower, what has worked there  
13 is really speaking to these young men, getting a  
14 sense of their potential, their fire in them, what  
15 they want to do and their commitment to be leaders.  
16 So you know, I'm speaking for that, and luckily with  
17 the RFP that we got from Central Office we were able  
18 to do something different and we proved that yeah,  
19 there's another way of doing this.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Well thank you  
21 for that, because I think it's important and you have  
22 the proof there that maybe those two things aren't  
23 the things that we have to use solely. I was lucky;  
24 I was a terrible student, but I was a good test taker  
25 and my mother actually paid for most of my schooling;

1 I had two really good semesters, the first semester  
2 and then coincidentally, the semester that my mother  
3 said she was not gonna pay anymore and I had to...  
4 [laughter] I ended up having to pay for myself; all  
5 of a sudden my grades got a little bit better and I  
6 was able to get out. [laughter] But that...  
7 [background comments] that actually took seven years,  
8 not just six. But I am concerned with people like me  
9 that may have just fallen in the cracks if they were  
10 not good test takers and did not have a parent who  
11 could assist in that manner and wanna make sure that  
12 these programs are there, 'cause far too often they  
13 are black and/or Latino and then they have to go into  
14 the world of other structural problems and  
15 institutional problems. So thank you very much for  
16 your testimony and for these programs. Thank you,  
17 Madame Chair.

18  
19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Before I  
20 move to Council Member Gibson, what is the  
21 relationship between College Now, DMI, UMLA; what's  
22 the relationship, if it exists, what is it?

23 ANGELA ANSELMO: The relationship with  
24 College Now, you're speaking about Baruch...

25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.



1  
2 ANGELA ANSELMO: in general? Well at  
3 Baruch it was a very close relationship, but the  
4 person who ran [background comment] College Now and  
5 that we formed this relationship is no longer there,  
6 [background comment] okay, so that relationship has  
7 changed, but I'll speak to the way it was.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

9 ANGELA ANSELMO: One of the things that  
10 this particular individual did was to form a program  
11 in the summer that was just for black and Latino  
12 males -- it was mainly black males; a Latino would  
13 come in once in a while, but it was mainly for black  
14 males [background comment] and he had relationships  
15 with high schools around the city and in the summer  
16 they would come and they would be given -- they  
17 usually took a course either in black studies or in  
18 sociology or something like that and in the  
19 afternoons the UMLA students and SEEK males would be  
20 mentors [background comment] for these young men. So  
21 we were building a pipeline, and by the way, I feel  
22 that one of the ways of changing things would be to  
23 really take advantage of all the pipelines out there;  
24 there's so many people who are doing good things and  
25 I feel that we're not bringing it together, that we

can do that and we were forming a pipeline; that's no longer the case, I'm not saying that it's impossible. You know I felt a little strange when you asked me before about Baruch because it was the first time in my life that I was kind of on the side of trying to defend Baruch and yet, I have to say that I've been there for many years and it's a good institution, it's a great institution, but there are things that I think we have to work with, you know. So I was a little flustered when you asked me, because anyone who knows me doesn't -- I'm usually the one asking the questions. So yes, I think that's a loss that we have now [background comment], but one of the things that he would do every summer would be to have -- in June, he would have a conference for black and Latino male high school students throughout the city and there would be about 5-600 young men who [background comment] would come and they would be inspired and part of the panel discussions were with our UMLA young men, [background comment] who could tell them yes, you can do this, you belong here, you can do this. So hopefully maybe this will happen again. But since he's not working with us, it hasn't happened.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Is there a College  
Now program at Baruch?

ANGELA ANSELMO: Yes, there is.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

ANGELA ANSELMO: Yes, there is.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Alright. Council  
Member Gibson.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Good afternoon.  
Thank you, Madame Chair and thank you for being here,  
CUNY, I appreciate your presence and your testimony  
and obviously echoing the sentiments of everything  
that has been said about my colleagues, just not by  
me, but I speak to you as a former assembly member,  
along with Council Member Barron, in championing  
higher education and all the opportunity programs,  
making sure that the State of New York fulfills its  
commitment to public education. I'm also a twofer; I  
graduated from SUNY Albany and CUNY Baruch and so I  
recognize the value of these programs and we have  
always been fighting. Inez and I were in Albany when  
we renamed the program after Percy Sutton, because if  
not [background comment] for Percy Sutton and Arthur  
Eve and many of my champions in Albany, many of us  
wouldn't have the degrees we have and so it's really

important as we continue to have these conversations and these hearings that we really try to be creative in expanding opportunities for students across the city to get into these programs, looking at funding opportunities and certainly I encourage you to make your presence known in Albany next year during the budget season, it's very important in terms of having that state support.

Alluding to some of the things that Council Member Williams spoke about in terms of the eligibility and the program itself, so I know there is a level of state funding for College Discovery and SEEK, but every campus, do they get the same amount of funding for the programs and then on a campus level, what support is there? So I speak with familiarity from EOP in Albany where EOP students had access to a library, computer lab, they had mentors, they had counselors; there was a whole sort of resources that were available just for EOP students, so is that the same at our CUNY campuses for College Discovery and SEEK students and also, in terms of the funding for every campus, is that also the same or is it based on a formula?

CHERYL WILLIAMS: Okay. The funding is not the same in the two programs, but what all campuses have is they do have... every student is entitled to have all the services that exist for the college student; in addition to that, on all of our campuses we have additional tutoring, a tutoring center with labs, usually computers, so they have those kinds of services. The biggest difference in the two funding formulas is that the CD budget covers the cost of the salaries of the directors and that means that there is less money for direct student service. In the case of SEEK, the colleges pay the director's salary and so they have a richer funding formula in SEEK, but at the same time, they also have fewer counselors. One of the outgrowths of the 19... and we're going really far back, but in 1995 there was fiscal exigency within the City and the university passed resolutions and one of those resolutions was that we would take money from counseling in SEEK, and this was in SEEK, not in College Discovery; take money from counseling and put it into academic support and that is the reason that the counseling mode in SEEK is higher, at approximately 150:1, whereas in CD that was not done

1 and so the load is lower; it's about 100:1. So I'm  
2 not sure if that answers all of your questions, but  
3 it gives you a sense there are some differences. And  
4 every CUNY campus really has space limitations and so  
5 some of the services that are available -- and they  
6 may vary from campus to campus. For example, one  
7 campus may give priority registration to SEEK  
8 students, but that's not something that's part of a  
9 larger formula. But every campus has academic  
10 support professionals and a budget to cover academic  
11 support so that they will all have a lab and they all  
12 have tutors and computers.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: So is there any  
15 immediate plan that the administration has to address  
16 what we know will be an increased population; many of  
17 our campuses are bursting at the seams; I know Hostos  
18 in the Bronx has not had a new building in almost 30  
19 years and we're now trying to build a new arts and  
20 sciences building. So there is an expected  
21 assumption that in the years to come, you know CUNY  
22 has to face more students of color coming into the  
23 system and many of them should be eligible for  
24 College Discovery and SEEK. So is there a vision  
25 that CUNY has so far to try to address the increase

1 and you know obviously it will be a financial need  
2 and I know CUNY will be coming to the Council and you  
3 know, me being a graduate is something that I always  
4 take with a lot of value because of this institution  
5 I'm where I am and so I have to make sure; it's  
6 important that other young people have the same doors  
7 of opportunity open for them. So do you guys have a  
8 plan to address the increased enrollment?  
9

10 FRANK SANCHEZ: Sure. So very quickly,  
11 give you a sense of the type of enrollment we've seen  
12 say in the last decade-and-a-half. CUNY has grown in  
13 the last 15 years about three times of NYU, just to  
14 give you a sense of the [background comment] type of  
15 growth that we're seeing; the challenge of course is  
16 how do we provide a quality education to now, which  
17 is nearly half-a-million students; this fall we had  
18 record enrollment, 270,000 degree-seeking students;  
19 we're probably gonna serve another 260,000 in adult  
20 continuing education. I can tell you that all of our  
21 presidents across the system are committed to  
22 ensuring the best quality services and support for  
23 their students. Now the challenge is trying to hire,  
24 frankly, enough faculty to ensure that students have  
25 enough courses in core sections [background comment]

1 to be available and so you know it's, well we can  
2 hold off on the hiring of faculty and boost up the  
3 services and support for our students, but then  
4 students don't get into the classroom, or -- and I  
5 don't think it's always an either or, but it's a  
6 balancing act; I think this is, frankly, the  
7 challenges that our presidents going forward are  
8 gonna have, is the balancing of hiring of faculty,  
9 providing enough sections and at the same time  
10 investing in critical programs, in support services  
11 and operations, infrastructure in order to make sure  
12 that students aren't just only admitted to the  
13 institution, but are gonna be able to navigate  
14 through and eventually graduate. It's... [crosstalk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

17 FRANK SANCHEZ: it's... it's not an easy --  
18 there's no easy solution [crosstalk].

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Right. Right.

20 Thank you and thank you, Madame Chair and I guess, I  
21 just wanna make sure that you know I'm committed to  
22 working with you and [background comment] as someone  
23 who's always been a champion of higher education, I  
24 guess the final three words that I will say as we  
25 move forward -- no tuition increases, please. I do



not support tuition increases; I want us to find ways to be creative and find funding so that we do not put this burden, our burden on the backs of students, so I just have to be sure I go on record of that. Thank you very much for being here; thank you, Madame Chair.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Council Member and I guess we can put a moratorium on tuition increases, but you know [laughter] my objective is to roll it back to zero, so we're on that same wavelength.

I wanna thank you for your testimony; it's been very long and I appreciate your patience and your thoroughness and the honesty and the commitment that you have to the students that we're servicing and with CD being such a great success, in terms of retention and graduation, we should look to see how we can make that model throughout all of CUNY so that we can get those kinds of results. I do want to examine also the admission criteria; there was an article a few months back that talked about we needed to change the admission to CUNY, by David Jones of the CSS, so I would refer you to perhaps look at that article as we look at how we can change that. And

1 finally, I would just say we've got to look at how we  
2 can get blacks and Latinos into positions that are  
3 representative of their ability and the rank and the  
4 stature that they deserve and we can't depend on  
5 departments to do that because just as the grand jury  
6 saw that there was no reason to indict, we've got to  
7 not accept that and move forward and find alternative  
8 measures, we can't wait for those who are in these  
9 positions and on their last leg to take their last  
10 breath; we've gotta change the system before that  
11 happens. And finally, I would ask that in the  
12 future, when you give reports to our committee, if  
13 you would also include the two-year data as well as  
14 the four-data, in addition to the data that you would  
15 like to present to us. Thank you very much  
16 [background comment] for your testimony. We know  
17 we've been long, but it's I think been very  
18 informative, very helpful. Thank you.

19 FRANK SANCHEZ: Thank you.

20 [background comments]

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And as they're  
22 leaving we're going to call the next panel -- Jesus  
23 Benitez, John Galan, [background comments] and I hope  
24 I'm not butchering your name; Jassic [sp?] Marquez.  
25

[background comments] If you would come forward and take seats. And additionally, Fatoumata [sp?] Jwala [sp?]. So if those four persons would come forward we appreciate it. [background comments]

If you would raise your right hand, I'm going to swear you in. Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

[collective yes] Thank you. Please state your name and then you may proceed.

CINDY SPORDAN: Hi. My name is Cindy Spordan; I'm actually going to read Jesus' testimony because ironically he had to leave to pick up his son. Okay? So I'll start.

"Good afternoon everyone, my name is Jesus Benitez and I am in my second semester of LaGuardia Community College; my major is philosophy. I am the Ambassador of College Discovery, the CUNY Fatherhood Academy and the Luce Heritage Program and I'm also a Becarios Scholarship recipient for the Jaime Lucero Mexican Studies Institute of CUNY.

At the age of 17 I dropped out of school to support my own family full-time. When my son was

a year-and-a-half old his mother left and I became a single parent. I worked intensively and even had seven part-time jobs at one point. Due to the fact that I lacked a father figure in my own life, I know how important it is for me to be a role model for my son. I am the only person to provide guidance to my son. This responsibility has brought us closer together, showing me how much we need one another and helping me learn some important things about myself. Watching him grow and develop made me realize that I needed to change my life so that I could provide more options for him. Eventually it became clear to me that I needed to go back to school. As I quickly made that commitment to myself and my son, I was soon introduced to the CUNY Fatherhood Academy and decided to see what it was all about. Since I was a single father, I did not believe that I would be able to attend college; my mindset was only to provide my son with what he needed and help him grow in life. In other words, to have the kind of career I dreamed of was not even an option. I slowly began to trust Raheem Brooks and David Speal, the program coordinators, who were the ones to give me the push I needed not only to dream of eventually getting a

Ph.D. in philosophy and a master's in public affairs, but to set me on a path with the tools to make that possible.

Thinking about my progress and CUNY makes realize how crucial it was in inspiring me to continue my education and advance to college. The Academy helped me realize that my dreams were not over because I was a single father; this alone was priceless.

Later I was introduced to the College Discovery Program at LaGuardia and all the wonderful support it provides me. I receive an extra monetary stipend to help pay the expensive books that college has to offer, which helps me save more money towards my son. The private counseling has been a great means to guidance throughout my college semester, because they are always there to help me in any way possible. The staff is another family to me that I can find in school and off campus, always asking how I am and asking about my son as well. Without College Discovery I would not know where to apply for the Luce Program in LaGuardia Community College or other scholarship opportunities. Now I am a Spanish scholar ambassador for the Luce internally, as well

as locally. I hope you get to know us, we have big aspirations; I want to run for Mayor of New York City and for the New York City school chancellor some day and I know that's possible now."

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Next, please.

[background comments] And give us your name.

FATOUMATA JWALA: My name is Fatoumata Jwala.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. And what would you like to share with us? [background comments]

CINDY SPORDAN: Well, we're gonna defer for some time... [crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, we'll come back.

CINDY SPORDAN: Okay.

JOHN GALAN: Is this on? Oh, okay. My name is John Galan; I'm here to speak on [background comments] behalf of the Queensborough College Discovery Program; I'm currently now attending [background comments] Baruch College; just, you know, give you a list of my credentials. I graduated from Queensborough this past spring, in two years, which

1 is a plus... [laughter, background comments] yeah. So  
2 you know, I mean [background comment] just going back  
3 to high school, I graduated by the skin of my teeth,  
4 graduated with a 60 average; college was more of an  
5 aspiration than an expectation for me and my family,  
6 so you know, I ended up applying for the College  
7 Discovery Program on a whim; I saw it as an  
8 opportunity for me to kind of change the trajectory  
9 of my life and you know, I started off taking  
10 remedial math and that was something that I had  
11 struggled with in high school and you know, I  
12 actually did very well and continued to do well  
13 throughout my whole college career; you know I had  
14 amazing support from my counselors -- Cynthia, she's  
15 here -- and I was able to receive a scholarship for  
16 excelling in mathematics, graduated, took Calculus I,  
17 Calculus II and you know, I really enjoyed -- thank  
18 you -- I really enjoyed it. I think one of the  
19 biggest contributors to my success in community  
20 college was the support that I had and you know, I  
21 went in not too confident in my abilities; you know,  
22 I was pursuing a career in investment banking, which  
23 as you may know is predominantly white, Caucasian  
24 career to pursue and you know they typically go to  
25

Ivy League universities to recruit students; you know at the time it seemed like something that was impossible for me, but you know, speaking to my counselors I received the support that I needed to kind of gain the confidence to go out there and get what I wanted.

I graduated from Queensborough Community College and the summer after I graduated I interned at a firm at the Two World Financial Center not too far from here, which is kind of a boutique finance firm and I really enjoyed my experience there, but you know, I continued to wanna give back to the College Discovery Program. I graduated and I'm now attending Baruch College and I'm a part of the SEEK Program and you know, I think one thing that I really enjoyed about being a part of the College Discovery Program is the opportunity to give back; you know, they put you in front of the right people and it gave me the opportunity to gain experience across a variety of fields before I decided, okay, you know finance is what I wanted to do and you know, one thing that I participated in was the Model United.. not the Model U.N.; the Model Senate, which is something that I really enjoyed and you know, I met a



1 lot of people there and it was a great experience and  
2 you know, it couldn't have happened if it wasn't for  
3 the College Discovery Program putting me in front of  
4 the person who was facilitating that event at  
5 Queensborough Community College.  
6

7 You know, just a few talking points --  
8 you know, I graduated from QCC, went to Baruch and  
9 now I will be interning at J.P. Morgan in their  
10 Investment Banking Division; I won a \$10,000  
11 scholarship along with that offer and I did it  
12 without even a GPA from Baruch College; I was  
13 competing against students from Princeton, Warden and  
14 you know, all of the like and you know, I wouldn't  
15 have been as confident as I was going in if it wasn't  
16 for the College Discovery Program's excellent  
17 counseling and their career development. And you  
18 know, I just wanna thank Cynthia, Kat, Sanja [sp?],  
19 Winston and Felix for being kind of the  
20 quintessential in my development. Thank you very  
21 much to you guys for listening to this and thank you  
22 for having me.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.  
24  
25

JASS [sp?] MARQUEZ: Good afternoon everybody; my name is Jass Marquez, so I'll give my statement.

I am currently a student at LaGuardia Community College, majoring in English. I am 19 years old, I was born and raised in the Uptown neighborhood Washington Heights. Coming from a low-income family, my parents could not afford to provide me and my sister with much of the needed materials required for school, like clothes and school supplies, such as a computer, which we really needed for online homework assignments we could constantly be given; Lord knows they tried their best to accommodate us. My parents came to the U.S. about 25 years ago; they worked hard so me and my sister wouldn't go hungry. I saw how my parents struggled because they could not afford an education back home in their countries. I would see how frustrated and unhappy my parents would wake up each morning because they were not happy where they were. They just worked for the sake of working to provide for us; I do not want this me, it isn't where the importance of education are rooted.

Throughout my academic experience I continue to become aware of resources that are needed to be in place for students who come from a similar background to be able to overcome adversity and become successful not only in their studies but in life. Because a college degree is key in life, College Discovery was literally another key in my life that continued to open opportunities for me as a student, but more importantly, as a person. The following tells a bit about myself.

I attended Washington Irving High School, which has a bad reputation for its low graduation rate and level of violence. The bullying I experience in middle school carried over; at the time I was also being affected by the divorce of my parents, my grades were poor and I was not thinking about college anymore, as I did my freshman year of high school; my speech teacher and my counselor spoke to me of the importance of staying in school. After I managed to bring my grades up and I transferred to the New Heights Academy Charter School where everything was more different. My teacher and mentor, Mr. Garland helped me boost my test scores and do well on my classes. My college career

counselor, Miss Bensby [sp?] told me about the SEEK and College Discovery Programs; she told me that I really needed these special programs; then I checked the box and did the rest of what she told me. I am really glad to say that if it wasn't for her I wouldn't even know what the SEEK and College Discovery would be about; most of all, would not have the resources I have today, such as counseling, tutoring and the stipends for books.

As my senior year was coming to an end and most of my friends and classmates parted their separate ways, I decided to go to LaGuardia. As a freshman I had to take math remedials; remedial classes are classes which are not college level yet and students who have not passed a specific requirement of the CUNY assessment test, such as the math requirement, have to take it, so students taking remedials need to review in order to pass. As a student who is not good at math, my tutor, Alex at the College Discovery Resource Center helped me and I was able to pass the math exam. Alex was very patient with me, especially because when it comes to math, I don't get it the first time it is explained. He made mathematics much easier and also fun. Since

I deal with personal issues and panic and pressure with my classes, my counselor Marianne helps me stay on track and listens to me having my personal issues. Thanks to her I developed into a more independent lady; I learned to be more sociable to people and age also helped me to get my first job at campus. Marianne gives me advice and always has time in her schedule for me to listen what I have to say. When moments of crisis, Marianne is there. After I see Marianne I feel much better and I am not alone anymore. Marianne has helped me to achieve my short-term goals and informed me that she will keep helping me to achieve the long-term ones. If I did not have a counselor like Marianne, I don't know who else would listen to me the way she would. Today I am glad to say that Marianne has become a guide and has also become like a second mother. As a shy person, I felt like nobody would help me. The College Discovery staff knows me very well and we all became one same family; they helped me learn leadership skills and believe in me being an efficient leader. College Discovery also helped me financially; with the stipends I received I was able to buy my first small laptop, especially because I knew the

1 importance of having a computer when you're in  
2 college. I was very glad that now I was able to do  
3 my homework more easier. Now every time I know I am  
4 not doing so well, whether it's personally or  
5 economically, Marianne and the other College  
6 Discovery staff will be there to help me.

7 I once wanted to see how is it like not  
8 to be a College Discovery student inside of  
9 LaGuardia, so I stopped going to Marianne and  
10 tutoring for a week-and-a-half; I went tutoring  
11 somewhere else and I went to a different counselor  
12 outside College Discovery; the experience wasn't the  
13 same at all; I got a math tutor that expected me to  
14 do math problems more faster and did not check my  
15 work; she did not have patience with me. The  
16 counselor I tried outside the College Discovery was  
17 good, but did not know me as well as Marianne knows me  
18 and it felt more impersonal.

19 I came back to the College Discovery  
20 office and realized that they are only people I want  
21 to be dealing with [background comments, laughter]  
22 all the time. Sometimes when the conversation of the  
23 importance of the SEEK and College Discovery Programs  
24 comes out I would often realize that the person who  
25

created these special programs would be left out, which is Percy Ellis Sutton. Percy Ellis Sutton realized the importance of people who come from low-income families like me need the resources to achieve in life. Wherever Percy Sutton is, I thank him for giving students like me a second chance; without College Discovery I would probably not be successful in school and there would be nobody that would know I need help. CD taught me that just because a person lives in different circumstances doesn't mean they can't be successful. My sister, who is two years older than me, is also a college student who started before me, but did not know about these special programs and when she struggled, she tells me how she wishes she had a counselor like me who guides me; then I think of how blessed I am to have this program. Sometimes I feel more privileged than those high-income families who can't get access to these programs; most importantly, I know the SEEK and College Discovery Programs be always there holding my hand. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much.

I wanna say we've been joined by Council Member

Laurie Cumbo. We thank you for your testimony and are you prepared now to present for us?

FATOUMATA JWALA: I am.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

FATOUMATA JWALA: Alright. Hi; my name is Fatoumata Jwala and I'm a CD student from LaGuardia Community College. I am a nervous person, but I'm still working on my public speaking.

CD has helped benefit me to become better as a person and as a student; I have counseling advisors that help me academically and emotionally. I get to speak one on one with my counselor, Cindy Spordan, which is her right by my side. I get to speak about my inner problems with my counselor and therefore she helps find solutions for me which can make be become a better person and also enhance [sic] better in my academics.

This program also helps people like me to get out of their comfort zone and be more open to anything, and as well as the resource center that's available to us, I think is more better than what other people get outside in the public, because you get to sit one on one with them and they teach you... [background comments] they get to tutor you one on



one, which can help also with your academics and better a better GPA. And thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much, all of you for your testimony. What are your aspirations; what is it that you're hoping to do when you finish school; what field do you wanna go into?

FATOUMATA JWALA: Fine arts.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Fine arts. Okay, good. My brother's an artist. And did you tell us what your area was...? [crosstalk]

JASS MARQUEZ: No, sorry. I wanna become a lawyer; my hope and dream is to go to law school and hopefully -- I'm trying my best to get there, so I'm majoring right now in English to get better writing skills, because I know in order to go to law school you need very good like writing skills.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yeah. Well I want to encourage all of you; I think that you already know that you just need assistance to be able to move forward; I heard you say you graduated with a 60 and you had to get through this math and you did Calculus I and Calculus II; I said oh gosh, I remember the

struggle that I had with that. But I wanna encourage all of you to continue to go on.

Council Member Cumbo; do you have any questions or comments?

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I don't have any questions; I'm just... I apologize; I've had two hearings prior to this one, but I definitely wanted to come in on this hearing, and just to hear the last two presenters it's so inspiring; I'm also coming from the visual arts world and so certainly relate to your pathway and I actually went on from my arts studies to actually starting a museum in Brooklyn called MoCADA in Downtown Brooklyn and then entering the field of politics and City Council and I'll let you in on a little secret; any time I have to present here at the City Council, whether it's at 250, here, or if at City Hall, I am a nervous wreck, but you did very well and it's so important to always get that opportunity and the experience of doing it over and over and over again and it will certainly become like second nature to you, and as an aspiring artist, it's also always so very important to be able to speak about your work and to communicate with others about the symbolic nature of the work that you're doing.

So I applaud all of you; it's so wonderful for you all to take the initiative to speak on behalf of your perspective institutions in order to garner additional support and resources. So thank you very much for your testimonies.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much.

And as they leave we'll call the next panel to come forward. Jessica Chalka [sic], Cindy Spordan, Adonis Felipe [sic]... [background comment] Felix.

[background comments] If you would raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions? [collective affirmative] Thank you. Please state your name.

JESSICA CHOCA: My name is Jessica Choca [sp?]; I'm from College Discovery at LaGuardia Community College. I wanna say thank you to give me the opportunity to talk. I just want to share a little bit about my experience with College Discovery at LaGuardia.

I came to this country three years ago from South America, Ecuador and I'm really happy to have the opportunity for the College Discovery; they

1 help me -- my advisor, who's next to me, she's always  
2 helping me, advising; not just for college, but also  
3 emotionally; she's always supporting me. She  
4 provides me a lot of, I would say opportunities to  
5 participate in the honor society at PTK and  
6 LaGuardia; I'm a member now and also in the President  
7 Society, who is the group who helps you to improve  
8 your skills in public speaking and they help you to  
9 get an idea to be successful.  
10

11 College Discovery, it is very important  
12 to mention the tutors that they have; my English not  
13 very good, since it's my second language, but..  
14 [interpose]

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Your English is  
16 fine.

17 JESSICA CHOCA: [laughter] Thank you.  
18 So tutors help me to check my papers and also we  
19 practice talking, speaking and they really help me  
20 and I would like just to say that all of us are very  
21 grateful for all the opportunities that they provide  
22 us. That's... that's... thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

24 CINDY SPORDAN: Hello again. My name is  
25 Cindy Spordan and I am a counselor in the College

Discovery Program at LaGuardia Community College. I just wanna say thank you for allowing us to be here and I just want to point out, from a counselor perspective, how important this program is. With the increasing demand and necessity to be successful academically and financially in life as adults, many students, particularly those who are in college in pursuit of higher education face so many challenges and pressures. I think for many of us not an entire month, at most, goes by before we read or see an article or a segment on the news with some type of violence or an act of assault that happens on a college campus and for students to be able to have a licensed or professional counselor where they can talk about any and everything I think is extremely important. This semester I've had about 50 new students who have come in on the third week of the semester; the day before we went to the CUNY BMI, Black Male Initiative conference, one of my students called me and he let me know that this house burned down, but he was still on his way and he asked me to wait for him on the corner and I did. The following week another male student, he let me know that he would be late to class because his mom was arrested

1 when the Feds knocked down his door, but he was still  
2 committed to being successful and being the first one  
3 to graduate from college in his family. With the  
4 political climate, the tension within the communities  
5 about race and politics and policing, not only has it  
6 helped me to become more aware of my environment, but  
7 it has also reinforced the necessity for students to  
8 have a space, a trusted person who can help them  
9 explore their feelings and not let those feelings  
10 negatively impact them as they move through college  
11 or and as they move through society. So instead of  
12 having students who are filled with rage for being  
13 stopped by the police, not even recently, but last  
14 year, because they resembled physically Avonte  
15 Oquendo because he went missing a couple of blocks  
16 from where we work and where we teach and attend  
17 school; students need the support and I think that  
18 perhaps if every student, ideally it would be great  
19 if they had a counselor, someone that they could talk  
20 to, it would be great, but I don't know if that's  
21 feasible, but for the students who already come from  
22 such restrained circumstances, financially and you  
23 know, in regards to their family structure and  
24 academically, the counselors are sometimes the one  
25

1 thing that they know that they have that's theirs and  
2 that's secure, and I just wanted to reinforce the  
3 importance of having emotional and mental health  
4 support for our students, it is very important; I  
5 think it's overlooked and students have to deal with  
6 not only their identity development as a student, but  
7 they have to deal with their identity development as  
8 a person, they have to deal with their identity  
9 development culturally, they have to deal with it in  
10 terms of gender and familial responsibilities; these  
11 are all things that they're dealing with, it's  
12 cyclical and it doesn't just go in a form of an upper  
13 trajectory; it goes back and forth, back and forth  
14 and to have someone who's trained and able to help  
15 them with that so that they can persist is extremely  
16 important and it makes me value my job even more.

17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. The next  
19 panelist.

20 ADONIS FELIX: Hello. Alright. Good  
21 afternoon, my College Discovery and SEEK family. My  
22 name is Adonis Felix and thank you for allowing me to  
23 speak on behalf of LaGuardia Community College, BMI,  
24 College Discovery Scholars and all College Discovery  
25

and SEEK students presently attending college, the alumni of this program and the high school students seeking to join our community.

First and foremost I want to congratulate the program, its founders and our entire community for how College Discovery and SEEK has flourished throughout its 50 years and for the countless lives that they have affected. Past, present and future students, directors, guidance counselors, tutors, administration, and the list goes on, all come together to make up the heart and sole of this prestigious program. I think the real prestige of this program has been its ability to offer hope and to help make dreams come true. To thousands of hopeful students waiting for an acceptance into the program, it is their first or last hope to attend college, because otherwise they would not be able to afford it; to the families and the communities of the students currently in the program, to see how these young men and women as role models, which brings upon positive changes into their lives. The program offers the hope that maybe they too can one day succeed and to me and as ambassador of the campus College Discovery, this program represents all the



1 hopes I had that I could find the support I needed to  
2 help make my life matter.

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4 To many I am a statistic, but I am a  
5 human being with a story. I was raised in the Bronx  
6 by my mother, divorced, making less than \$15,000 a  
7 year; raising three children, so please don't let  
8 this suit fool you. I come from a... [laughter] I come  
9 from a neighborhood where people go to gang meetings,  
10 go to jail and god bless the dead, but they do go  
11 from this world and often too young and usually  
12 without the chance to say goodbye. Of all the places  
13 people in my hood go, college is scarcely seen as a  
14 choice. My environment and upbringing led me to have  
15 an extreme lack of motivation and to not attend high  
16 school frequently or even do one of my classes  
17 whenever I decided to show up. I was never one to  
18 cause trouble, be rude to teachers or students; I was  
19 always well-mannered and always interested in  
20 education and learning, but once I left the school  
21 building I was back home where there seemed to be no  
22 way out, a labyrinth full of hopelessness and  
23 despair. This caused my grades to drop and by  
24 graduation I had an average of just 65, barely  
25 passing; that's how I ended up at LaGuardia Community

College, lack of good grades and an abundance of bad habits. In retrospect, it was a blessing in disguise. When I arrived for my first semester at LaGuardia I met Kyoko Toyama, my previous counselor and current acting director of LaGuardia Community College Discovery Program. She had always shown me tough love, which was visible when she didn't want to, but had no other choice to fail me from my freshman seminar course. [laughter] For everyone here who has ever taken a freshman seminar, you know we mostly just have to show up and participate. Sometimes I didn't show up because of the bad habits I had perfected over the years and other times I just couldn't gather \$5.00 to afford a MetroCard to get me to and from school. For the first two semesters my TAP had arrived later than I would have preferred and it had caused me to fall behind in my courses because I could not afford the books. I was barely able to afford to eat while taking classes and continued to grow hard to concentrate on my studies. I didn't show up for tutoring, I didn't go to my guidance counselor meetings and I didn't use all the money as appropriate as I should have. I accumulated a GPA of 1.2 in my first one-and-a-half semesters.

Heartbroken, I knew I was throwing away an education that many family members of mine wished that they could receive and childhood friends envied; I had to make a change. It's easy to want change, but actually changing is hard to do. I can go to class every day, but can I be an active participant in my education? I couldn't make that change alone; with the help of my mentor, Kurt Mikosili [sp?] and the College Discovery Scholars coordinator and my current counselor, Taneri [sp?] Estevez, helped guide me towards the right direction. In one summer session and this fall 2014 session I boosted my GPA and it now stands at 3.2 and still rising. I got a free monthly MetroCard from College Discovery Scholars, tutoring when I need it and even when I didn't need it, just to further assure my success and went to see my counselor, Miss Taneri Estevez at least once a week. The free MetroCards took away the anxiety I used to feel every morning, how would I get to school. The tutors are some of the most important people to contribute to College Discovery students' success. We have personal relationships with people who are not there just to collect a check, but they are there to ensure that we succeed and will continue

1 to help you until you do; without them the College  
2 Discovery student body would be half of what it is  
3 today. The best thing College Discovery has allowed  
4 me to have, which I am truly thankful for, is my  
5 counselor, Taneri Estevez. To even think that people  
6 would be deprived of an experience as I have had with  
7 her is heartbreaking. College Discovery helps those  
8 who are in need of money and those people like me  
9 come with a story; we need to vent, we need to trust,  
10 we need guidance and we need security; with her  
11 assistance I have learned how to properly maneuver  
12 inside of the school, I have planned my entire future  
13 at LaGuardia and my future plans to attend Baruch  
14 College. With her and my mentor's assistance I have  
15 gained a new sense of self, I have attained the  
16 motivation which I once lacked and I am now on the  
17 right path to fulfill my destiny. Without College  
18 Discovery I would not be here today; I would have  
19 flunked out of college, been at home and unemployed  
20 and would have disappointed my parents, family and  
21 let down the younger generation of my family by not  
22 providing a proper role model, which we lack greatly  
23 in my surroundings. So please do not deprive me, my  
24 peers and my successors of the opportunity of a  
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lifetime, because we all matter; some of us depend on this program for our well-being and it is our only route for success. Because of College Discovery I am not just another statistic; I am a human being with a success story. Thank you.

[waiving hands][laughter]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you all so much for coming and for sharing; it's fine to hear from the administrative point in terms of how the program operates and what it does, but certainly it's the stories that come from panelists such as yourself that bring the program alive and really highlight the significance and give us hope and encouragement that as we go forth to fight to expand the funding for this program that we can see the benefits of all that it does.

Council Member, do you have any questions or comments?

COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I just wanna say I don't know how you were selected to be here to present, but you are the best advocates and spokespersons for this program and you've certainly inspired us, so continue with the great work, you all are so on the right path and you're making me feel

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LaGuardia student; I'm in College Discovery; I'm also a member of College Discovery Scholars. Well let me start out how it starts out.

When I was in high school, I was good in school, but I'd never given the full commitment or the potential that I know that I've gained when I joined in college in LaGuardia because I was undecided what I wanted to do and I had this paper come in the mail saying you wanna join in College Discovery. So I decided why not and when I joined in, it was the happiest decision that I've ever made, because they have provided support for me to gain confidence and to speak out for me, to counselors, to the tutors, to anyone in the faculty if I needed it. And in my first semester in college it went great, but did not show the full potential. And there was a two-month break for me because I wanted to go into Peru to see my grandmother; she's strong-willed, but not for long. And during those days I lost the house with my family and the city gave us in a family shelter, mostly called a Family Center. Since we are on our own section as a family and it wasn't near the bad neighborhood that we were told. During that process I don't know how to handle these sorts of

1 things, 'cause it's time-consuming, it actually is  
2 very far from LaGuardia and we had to take everything  
3 out the house and we never even got the chance to  
4 take everything. We provided with two cars, but we  
5 had to stop every week for gas money and it pretty  
6 much hit me that this is a test of life that I don't  
7 know if I can handle it. And then my second semester  
8 started and professors were kinda... they were at the  
9 highest advance levels, kinda strict, in short words,  
10 and I don't know whether to handle that, so I went to  
11 the Resource Center where the College Discovery is  
12 founded and I met with my previous counselor, Kyoko,  
13 telling her everything that I was going through, and  
14 it made me happy because I have a counselor who  
15 actually gives out the full emotions and everything,  
16 not just help me out academically. And sometimes I  
17 always say that I blame everything, but she actually  
18 gave me the tough love, telling me that so what, it's  
19 their fault or whatever; it's my life and what I need  
20 to do is what I had to do. So I went through it and  
21 I actually got better grades than I expected, but  
22 prefer more and it got me better, completely better;  
23 it made me happy and it actually builds up character  
24 and mature myself. Because of College Discovery I  
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1 managed to become an honor student; I have a  
2 scholarship called American Rising or Rising  
3 American, I think and the family center gave us  
4 housing, still in a bad neighborhood, but I'm happy  
5 to be out of there because it's so long and I had to  
6 walk like six blocks. And that made me happy and I  
7 had to become a spokesperson for my family, for the  
8 news report coming by wanting to know the issues,  
9 because my parents don't speak good English. So it  
10 was no biggie because before any of those things I  
11 was sent to a student leadership academy that I was  
12 nominated from my counselor, Kyoko and those were  
13 the... and it was actually three days and it made me  
14 improve myself in leadership; if it weren't for that,  
15 I probably didn't have the stomach to say to you guys  
16 my story. And... yeah and I finally found what I  
17 wanted to do with my life, to help and support  
18 students that have been through what I have been  
19 through, not just for losing a house, but also being  
20 treated badly because of their race or their income  
21 or whatever they're being judgmental for. And I  
22 thank College Discovery for helping me out.

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24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Great. Thank you.  
25 Thank you. Our next panelist.

1  
2 BRIANNA: Hello, my name is Brianna; I'm  
3 a member of College Discovery at Kingsborough  
4 College, which is in Brooklyn. I would like to thank  
5 all of my College Discovery faculty, especially my  
6 tutors, Mr. Davis, which is here with me; Mr. Pierre  
7 also. I would like to thank Alyssa and Miss Brenda  
8 for being here too.

9 College Discovery taught me that it  
10 doesn't matter where you came from in life; that you  
11 can conquer anything. I started the program last  
12 year of 2013 and over the semesters it was hard, but  
13 I always went to Alyssa and she always said try  
14 harder, you can do it; there's tutoring, we're here  
15 for you; whenever you need me, you could call me, you  
16 could email me and she's always been there to help me  
17 through.

18 High school I was on honor roll, but I  
19 applied to many colleges, Upstate colleges and my  
20 first choices I didn't get accepted to none. Then I  
21 applied to Kingsborough 'cause they had my program,  
22 which I wanna be a sports physical therapist, and  
23 through the College Discovery I got into this honors  
24 program which has helped [sic]; I never knew I could  
25 be a honor student ever, but I was lucky to have

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, thank you, thank you. [laughter] Thank you so much. We appreciate your coming and sharing; you have our support; we hear of your struggles and your challenges and we understand that it's difficult, especially as you're younger than many of us who are here in the room who are working and have gone past those college years, so we know that there are lots of challenges, but we encourage you to push through and come through on the other side, because when you look back you can see what it is that you've accomplished, you can see how you've gone through that and that can sustain you and encourage you to be stronger for whatever else is gonna come in the future. So it'll give you what's called a testimony so that you can look back and say well I've done it once, I can do it again. So we want to encourage you -- colleague is gone -- and we wanna thank you for

2 coming; we wanna thank all of you for being here, for  
3 participating; look out for the next Higher Ed  
4 Committee meeting, which will be sometime in January,  
5 on a topic of great importance, because it affects  
6 you. Thank you so much and this meeting is now  
7 closed.

8 [gavel]

9 [background comments]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 17, 2014