



**Testimony of Dr. Lucinda R. Zoe  
University Dean for Undergraduate Studies  
City University of New York**

**Update on the Pathways General Education Initiative**

**New York City Council  
Committee on Higher Education  
October 26, 2016**

**City University of New York  
Office of Academic Affairs**

Good morning Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. I am Lucinda Zoe, University Dean for Undergraduate Studies for the City University of New York. I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the Pathways Initiative established by the City University of New York in fall of 2013. With me today to present testimony are several CUNY colleagues. Allow me to introduce President Marcia Keizs from York College, Provost Paul Arcario from LaGuardia Community College and City College student Bryan Wigfall, who started his CUNY career at Bronx Community College and transferred to City College.

## **BACKGROUND**

I will start by providing a little background on the initiative, then follow with an update on the implementation and evaluation process. With more than 245,000 undergraduate students enrolled in our 7 community colleges and 12 senior colleges, CUNY experiences significant flows of students transferring between its colleges. In fact, student transfer is a critical aspect of educational opportunity at CUNY: Approximately two-thirds of new students enter CUNY baccalaureate programs as transfer students.

While the most common transfer paths are from the community colleges to the senior colleges, many other students transfer from one senior college to another, or within the community college or the senior college sectors. Reasons for transfer are many and varied, including changes in circumstance such as a new job, a relocation to a different borough, or a change in academic focus. In all cases, students are striving to achieve their goals and deserve a seamless and effective transfer system that supports their aspirations.

New York State Education Law supports this notion. Section 6201 specifies that CUNY is one university and must have clear transfer paths and curricular alignment across its colleges. CUNY has long recognized the importance of student transfer, and has adopted policies intended to ensure transfer students make efficient progress toward degree completion.

The Pathways Initiative was established through the June 27, 2011 Board of Trustees Resolution. The purpose is, "to enhance transfer students' progress toward degree completion," while maintaining CUNY's commitment "to the highest academic standards," "to the faculty's special responsibility for courses and curriculum," and "to providing colleges with the flexibility to maintain their distinctive identities and traditions."

Prior to Pathways, there was no common curricular structure across CUNY colleges. As a result, students who transferred often found that course credits at one college did not match course requirements at another; therefore, those credits were not applied to degree requirements. Pathways guarantees that credits will transfer across the system. A 30-credit Common Core has been established, clarifying the general education requirements that students must meet at any CUNY college, and ensuring that general education credits transfer to other CUNY colleges.

Students also benefit from greater clarity about which courses they should take for entry into their majors, no matter at which college the major is offered. Finally, students are assured that electives they take at any college will transfer, with full credit, to any other college. Together, these policies are increasing students' efficiency in progressing towards their degrees.

Since the Fall 2013 implementation of Pathways, we have observed positive outcomes and trends. It is too early to draw conclusions regarding Pathways' effectiveness on graduation rates and time to degree completion, because a full cohort of CUNY students has not yet progressed through the system since the new requirements were put in place in 2013. However, available data provide an initial view of the impact that Pathways is already having in various areas. Here are some examples.

- From Fall 2012 to Fall 2015, the percentage of students who transfer to CUNY baccalaureate programs *with* associate degrees increased by 31 percent.
- The total number of credits that transfer students have earned and received credit for has also increased. Prior to Pathways, the average credit accumulation within a year after transfer was 62; by Fall 2014, it had increased to 65. Meanwhile, the average GPAs of these students remained steady at 2.8. We found that one-year student retention rates have also remained steady, at approximately 64 percent for associate degree students and 86 percent for Baccalaureate degree students.
- Most notably, the courses that students take before they transfer are now much more likely to count toward their degree. Before Pathways, 33 percent of all transfer students had at least one course that did not contribute toward their degree at transfer. By Fall 2015, that percentage had dropped to 13.

All in all, these data make it clear that Pathways is improving the transfer process. I will introduce some more data later.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

Let me step back and briefly describe the planning and implementation processes of the Pathways Initiative. I need to emphasize here that the Initiative would not have been possible without the tireless, collaborative efforts between the colleges, especially their faculty, and the central administration. Over the 2-year period following the 2011 Board of Trustee Resolution, faculty across CUNY set to work establishing the broad curricular parameters for the Pathways Initiative. A Task Force, consisting predominantly of faculty, developed the contours of the 30-credit Common Core for all of CUNY's undergraduate colleges, with eight areas including

English composition, math and quantitative reasoning, life and physical sciences, and five additional thematic areas namely Creative Expression, Individual and Society, World Cultures and Global Issues, Scientific World and US Experience in its Diversity.

Individual colleges within CUNY decided which courses belonged in each area, depending on their academic priorities. All courses have been developed by faculty members at the colleges.

The Common Core Course Review Committee, or the CCCRC, consisting entirely of faculty from across CUNY, is tasked with the review and approval of Common Core courses. This committee ensures that all Common Core courses meet the learning outcomes set forth by the original Task Force. To date, the CCCRC has reviewed over 2,000 courses submitted by the colleges, and has approved approximately 88 percent of the courses submitted.

In addition, we wanted to address transfer of major courses. Faculty members from the senior colleges and the community colleges in the biggest transfer majors worked together to select three to five courses students could take with confidence that they would be counted toward the major at transfer. The big transfer majors included such fields as English, psychology, business, nursing, political science, and biology. More than 680 courses have been identified as Pathways major transfer courses across the University.

Due to the diligent work of hundreds of faculty and administrators, Pathways was fully implemented in Fall 2013. A full complement of general education coursework, as well as coursework in popular majors, has been available to students and guaranteed to transfer for credit toward degree requirements. CUNY's registration system, as well as its degree audit system DegreeWorks, have been updated with the new curricular requirements, and college websites outline the new policies.

With each entering class starting Fall 2013, all new students, including new transfer students, are required to follow Pathways curricular requirements. Approximately 81 percent of all degree-seeking students were following Pathways in Fall 2015, including 75 percent of those enrolled in baccalaureate programs and 88 percent of those enrolled in associate programs. We expect an even larger percentage of students to be enrolled in Pathways in subsequent semesters.

## **EVALUATION**

CUNY recognized that careful evaluation of the Pathways Initiative would be needed to ensure the goals were met. The Board Resolution specified that Pathways be evaluated each year for the first three years, and every three years thereafter.

The first year review of Pathways was overseen by Interim Chancellor William P. Kelly, and was completed in February 2014. The review committee included representatives from the University Faculty Senate, and other faculty members from the natural sciences, English, and the humanities. As a result of the first year review, three changes were made, related to contact hours, waivers for degree programs with special circumstances, and selection processes for faculty representatives to the CCCRC.

In preparation for the second year review, CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs, OAA, took several steps. First, OAA contacted the Pathways Liaison at each campus to discuss the status of implementation, and found that Pathways was running smoothly with no major issues reported. Second, a suggestion form was made available on the Pathways website beginning in February 2015 to solicit input, providing a mechanism to gather a wide range of perspectives and concerns. Additionally, in Spring 2015 OAA hired an independent consultant to conduct student focus groups on the Pathways Initiative at four community colleges and two senior colleges, to assess students' understanding and opinions of the Pathways Initiative.

The focus groups revealed—and we know that this is part of a larger challenge—that in general, transfer and graduation requirements were not well understood by CUNY undergraduates. This pointed to the need for better communication and more proactive guidance procedures on most campuses. We have begun to address this in several ways: we have created and introduced more straightforward, student-inspired and directed multi-media informational clips on understanding the CUNY curriculum, general education and the transfer process. These short instructional clips can be accessed remotely by any digital device, by all CUNY students. We have also invested in advisement resources to support a better understanding of STEM education and degree requirements, adding 60 new advisors and investing over \$7million in community colleges advisement resources in 2015 and 2016, funded by the Mayor's STEM initiative. Additionally, students are being introduced to DegreeWorks and trained to use it as the go-to tool for tracking and understanding their graduation requirements and progress toward degree completion.

After completion of the second full year of Pathways implementation, the second review committee was charged by Chancellor James B. Milliken in May 2015. The committee included representatives from the University Faculty Senate and a variety of colleges and academic disciplines. Comments submitted through the online feedback form, as well as the summary report from the student focus groups, were shared with the committee. The committee presented the Central Office of CUNY with a number of questions and requested data on student transfer, course-taking patterns, and performance.

Data showed that the Pathways Initiative may have influenced students' decisions related to transfer; the number of transfers into CUNY baccalaureate programs has been on the rise,

mostly due to the increase in the number of transfer students with associate degree. As I mentioned earlier, between Fall 2012 and Fall 2015, there was a 31 percent increase in the number of students transferring to a CUNY baccalaureate program who had earned an associate degree prior to transfer.

There was a concern by some that course-taking in some disciplines would decline at CUNY due to Pathways. Yet the committee concluded that course-taking patterns by discipline have remained fairly consistent since Pathways was implemented, probably owing to the flexibility of the Common Core curriculum. Course-taking for first-time freshman, in fact, increased from fall 2012 to fall 2015 in a few disciplines. Foreign language course-taking increased from 18 percent to 19 percent, the natural sciences saw an increase from 28 percent to 35 percent, and math course-taking jumped from 79 percent to 86 percent.

Questions were also raised by the committee about how Pathways might influence student performance. As I introduced earlier, after the Pathways implementation, data showed a consistent mean GPA after one year for transfer students, and a higher mean accumulated credits after one year for transfer students.

As mentioned earlier, Pathways has reduced instances among transfer students where their course credits are not being counted by their receiving college. Among all CUNY students who transferred in Fall 2012, 33 percent had at least one transfer course that did not apply to any degree requirements. By Fall 2015, this decreased considerably to 12 percent. In some cases, the impact has been dramatic, with one senior college going from 64 percent of students with at least one non-contributory transfer course in 2012 to 4 percent in 2015.

CUNY took deliberate steps to ensure that students were informed of their rights and the Pathways guarantees. As part of Pathways implementation we developed a Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities and a process to appeal the denial or restriction of transfer credit at both the college and university levels.

These analyses suggest that Pathways is enabling students to make more efficient progress toward degree completion. The Pathways program guarantees students that each and every course they take in CUNY will transfer for credit to any other CUNY college; that any general education course taken at a CUNY college will transfer for general education credit to any other CUNY colleges; and that Pathways major gateway courses will transfer for Major credit from one institution to another. That is the Pathways Promise.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, with the Pathways Initiative, the University has clarified the path to degree completion and put measures in place to ensure that transferring does not set students back.

We believe that the best interests of students are being served. A very difficult set of problems that students once had to face themselves has now been addressed by CUNY. This will help students make progress, without suffering the discouragement and setbacks experienced when courses are not accepted for credit toward general education or major requirements. Pathways provides a Common Core structure that is highly flexible and maintains the individual college's freedom to develop innovative courses and programs that are consistent with the needs and goals of its specific student population.

CUNY as an institution has stepped up to help students deal with a problem that has bedeviled their earlier peers for decades. We understand further adjustments will be necessary, and will continue to address concerns raised by review committees as specified in the Board Resolution. The third year review is underway and ongoing evaluation and modifications will continue to be made. We welcome substantive feedback and suggestions for improving opportunities for CUNY students. This, truly, is a work in progress, and we at CUNY are committed to better serving our students and empowering their academic success.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I will now turn this over to President Keizs from York College to present a college perspective on the Pathways design and implementation process on the ground.

**Testimony Prepared for Hearing Conducted by the Committee on Higher Education  
of the City Council**

**October 26, 2016**

Good afternoon, honorable Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. My name is Paul Arcario, and I serve as the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at LaGuardia Community College of The City University of New York. I am pleased to join my CUNY colleagues today to provide testimony on the Pathways initiative. On behalf of LaGuardia, I would like to express our deep appreciation of your continued support for all the CUNY colleges and the thousands of students we educate. LaGuardia's mission is to educate and graduate one of the most diverse student populations in the country – coming from over 150 countries – to become critical thinkers and socially responsible citizens who will help shape our rapidly evolving society. With fifty percent of our students transferring to four-year colleges within a year after graduation – about 90% of them to CUNY colleges – facilitating transfer, particularly within the CUNY system itself, is indeed a critical goal for the college.

As stated by my colleague, Lucinda Zoe, University Dean for Undergraduate Studies, we will gain a much more complete picture of the impact of Pathways - rate of completion, time to completion, credits needed to complete – once students who have participated in Pathways entirely have had an opportunity to finish the associate degree, transfer, and then complete the baccalaureate. In the shorter term, however, we can see that data on non-contributory courses for students transferring to LaGuardia from other CUNY colleges is in line with the overall trend just reported Dean Zoe. In Fall 2012, 29.6% of CUNY transfers to LaGuardia had at least one non-counted transfer course; in Fall 2015, this number fell to 21.9%, which is encouraging.

On an anecdotal level, I have reports from our advisors and office of transfer services that due to streamlined and consistent advisement regarding Pathways, student stress and anxiety appear to be reduced regarding transfer of credits, at least in terms of the general education part of the degree. Students are now assured that their general education courses will transfer - and students



are indeed appreciative of this increased level of certainty. In fact, LaGuardia has significantly improved its advising processes for students regarding transfer and Pathways, academic success, and career development. I personally worked with advisors to create an instructional video guiding students through the transition to Pathways, while the faculty developed recommended two-year sequences of study in every major incorporating the Pathways curricular changes, and all have been posted on a redesigned advising website. An “Advising Team” approach has been implemented here at the college - consisting of advising staff, faculty, and peer advisors working collaboratively – to help ensure that students are served more effectively. This has resulted in our seeing, for the first time in several years, an increased level of satisfaction with advisement here at LaGuardia: the number students being “somewhat/very satisfied” increased from 68% in 2012 to 83% in 2016, as measured by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement that we administer to students every other year.

We have also found that Pathways has streamlined the process of developing articulation agreements with four-year colleges: since general education and key major courses articulate through Pathways, we now only need articulate the program core component of the degree. Thus we need only negotiate with the department housing the major, rather than with all the involved general education departments as well. This fact enabled us just this past year to articulate our redesigned education programs with Queens and Brooklyn Colleges, ensuring a seamless transition for students. Yet another benefit to students is that Pathways created “room” in the degree for courses that were formerly not listed as requirements, but “embedded” as prerequisites. While LaGuardia actually did not have many such prerequisites, through curricular review we are eliminating any we did have, simply by moving them to become instead part of the Pathways Flexible Core.

I would like to conclude by foregrounding what I believe is an important - perhaps even unforeseen by some - benefit for our students. For many of us, college provided a journey of exploration and discovery. Yet for community college students – often first-generation college students – such a journey of opening new vistas is often denied. Limitations on credits in the degree and financial aid strictures often mean that the curriculum can be highly constrained, but we are finding that the flexibility built into Pathways has opened up students to possibilities that

otherwise they might not have ever considered, simply because such courses could not fit into the degree. For instance, here at LaGuardia courses in astronomy have taken off, and students are enrolling in courses in disciplines as diverse as philosophy, neuroscience, oceanography, nutrition, and linguistics as part of the choices now available to them in the Pathways core. I cannot help but think that these expanded possibilities serve to enrich the educational experience for our community college students.



**Bryan Wigfall, City College of New York (CUNY)**  
**Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education**  
**October 26, 2016**

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Good Afternoon Chair Barron, Honorable Council Members and CUNY colleagues. My name is Bryan Wigfall and I'm proud to be a student leader at the City College of New York. I major in Political Science; minor in Legal Studies and I'm honored to report that I was recently accepted to the student ambassador program for the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs. City College is my second stop on the "CUNY Express." I began my CUNY career at Bronx Community College and transferred to City earlier this academic year.

Throughout my CUNY career, I've been actively involved in student leadership and although I've attended two CUNY colleges, rarely has my leadership been limited to narrowly focused issues on my campus. Indeed, I've supported organizations like the University Student Senate and the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities precisely because they fight for the rights and opportunities for ALL 270,000 degree-seeking students, across all of our campuses. They advocate for a singular, outstanding experience for every CUNY student, wherever they go to school within a single, unified, truly integrated, truly connected University system. This vision of a truly interconnected CUNY is now possible because of CUNY Pathways.

For me, a truly interconnected CUNY hinges on two important principles that are lifted up by Pathways. First, our University can be considered truly integrated if, and only if, we value the education and experiences of our community college students equally with those of our senior college students. I've been fortunate to be able to take courses both at Bronx Community College and City College and I'm pleased to say that my courses at Bronx Community are every bit as rigorous, demanding, and challenging as those I've taken at City College. Through the acceptance of core credits from one CUNY institution at another, Pathways helps to ensure that my Bronx Community and City College general education coursework is valued equally. This is not only validating to community college students, but also to senior college students – two-thirds of which are transfer students – AND to our outstanding community college faculty, who are every bit as dedicated and accomplished as CUNY's world-class senior college faculty.

Secondly, as a more practical matter, CUNY can only be experienced as a truly interconnected University if our courses transfer seamlessly when we seek to move from one CUNY school to another. In the past, the general education curricula of CUNY's colleges simply did not align well at

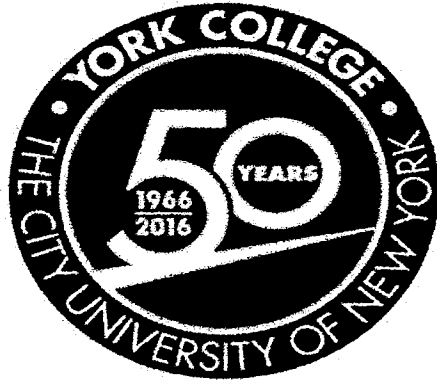
all. Colleges accepted students' transfer general education credits inconsistently. For some students, some Gen Ed courses transferred only as electives, which did not always help us, because elective credits do not necessarily advance us toward degrees. This cost CUNY students their most scarce resources – TIME and MONEY. And these are the very resources that Pathways has helped students to save! Students are now assured of the transfer of general education credits from one CUNY college to another, making it easier for us to plan our academic futures and prevent us from unnecessarily taking more credits than we need to graduate.

Aside from saving students time and money, it has also empowered us through the freedom of academic exploration. Because I am now ABSOLUTELY CLEAR about the required general education courses that I'll need to graduate, I am able to fearlessly explore elective courses that interest me – simply BECAUSE they interest me, without concern that they will somehow slow my path to graduation. Elective credits are now a matter of student choice, rather than an arbitrary "trash bin" designation given to transfer credits that somehow didn't fit the receiving college's definition of the Common Core.

Finally, I'd like to close my comments on the transformative impact of Pathways by highlighting the impact that it has had on one of CUNY's most vulnerable student groups, that is, its population of more than 9,000 students with disabilities. More than ten percent of these students rely on tuition sponsorship from State agencies, like ACCES-VR and the Commission for the Blind, in order to fund their CUNY educations. Students with disabilities know, by heart, the THREE absolute rules of tuition support by these State agencies. Number 1: You must remain in good academic standing. Number 2: You must attend school full-time. And Number 3: These agencies will only pay for a course ONE TIME, and ONE TIME, ONLY! If you're sponsored by these agencies, and you fail a course and are forced to repeat, the cost of repeating is on you. Prior to Pathways, transfer students with disabilities, sponsored by these State agencies, frequently found themselves in a transfer student "Catch-22." They would take and pass a course at a CUNY college in good faith, believing they had satisfied a Gen Ed requirement, only to learn that their receiving college wouldn't accept the course as satisfying a Common Core element. Yet, when they sought to take the "replacement course" at the school to which they transferred, ACCES-VR wouldn't fund the tuition for the course because, to everyone else in the world outside of CUNY, the course looked like a repeat course which, given the "IRON Clad Rule" of ACCES tuition support, wasn't fundable. As a result, students with disabilities would invariably be delayed or get stuck in their effort to earn degrees. Now, thanks to Pathways, State-sponsored students with disabilities have been able to avoid this "course-repeat trap;" they have matriculated towards degrees and, thanks to the CUNY LEADS program, are employed at a rate of 70 percent following graduation.

I'm especially proud to be able to share the progress that our University has made through Pathways because the movement to create a system of seamless transfer of general education courses from one CUNY school to another was very much a student-led movement. Student organizations like USS, CCSD and other University-wide student coalitions fought hard to implement Pathways at CUNY. By working actively with students, faculty, and administration to refine Pathways to maximize its ability to save students time and money as they progress towards degrees, I feel as though I'm participating in a great legacy of CUNY student empowerment.

Thank you!



**Testimony of Marcia V. Keizs  
President, York College/CUNY  
New York City Council Committee on Higher Education  
“Oversight – CUNY Pathways Update”  
Wednesday, October 26, 2016**

Good morning Chair Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee of the City Council. First let me add my thanks to all of you for the work you do and as well for your ongoing support of CUNY, not only the Community Colleges, but the baccalaureate granting colleges like mine, York College in Queens.

As you know, I am Marcia Keizs, President of York College of the City University of New York, where over 8,540 students are currently enrolled pursuing baccalaureate degrees in over fifty-two major areas of study, as well as, the BS/MS Degree in Occupational Therapy, the Master's Degree in Pharmaceutical Science and the Master's degree in Physician Assistant. Some of you have been to the campus lately and so you are well aware that the year 2016- 2017 marks the 50th Anniversary of York College which started out in temporary housing on the Queensborough Community college campus, and after a few nomadic years, found a home in Jamaica, Queens with the stalwart help of many community leaders, including the City Councilman Archie Spigner, which is still alive and well and who participated in the Executive Leadership Breakfast Panel on our campus on September 16<sup>th</sup> in which he highlighted his and other community leaders' role in establishing a firm foundation for York College as a Baccalaureate granting institution in the heart of Southeast Queens. We continue to strive to fulfill our founder's mission and vision.

I am pleased to join my colleagues from CUNY Central, Dr. Lucinda Zoe, University Dean for Undergraduate Studies; and Provost Paul Arcario of LaGuardia Community College; and CCNY student Bryan Wigfall to provide testimony on the Role of the CUNY Pathways Initiative on our students. My testimony will focus on York's experience with the CUNY Pathways General Education Initiative which was implemented at York in the fall 2013 term for all incoming students both first time attendees and transfer students. Its implementation was the

culmination of several years of planning and detailed work by faculty cooperating with CUNY administrators and personnel. It is a fact that today's students seek affordability and currency in their higher education goals, thus resulting in movement from college to college. For example, here at York College over 80% of our first-time, full-time freshmen who do not return are enrolled in other CUNY colleges. Based on lists of freshmen (fall 2011, 2012 and 2013) who left in good standing submitted to the National Student Clearinghouse, it was determined that in fall 2011, 73.1% of non-returners at York were enrolled in another CUNY school; in fall 2012, it was 82.5%; and in fall 2013, it was 83.7%. The bottom line here is that students will leave one CUNY college and enroll in another CUNY college to pursue or finish their degree, thus making it critical that the transfer process and the counting of courses and credits need to be seamless.

**Percent of York College First-time Full-time students who go to other CUNY colleges (e.g. 73.1% who did not return from F2011 had a CUNY College as their next College)**

<b>Cohort</b>	<b>Baruch Hunter Queens</b>	<b>Brooklyn City Lehman</b>	<b>John Jay Medgar Evers</b>	<b>Community Colleges</b>	<b>Total CUNY</b>
Fall 2011	24.9%	11.0%	2.4%	13.8%	73.1%
Fall 2012	36.9%	17.2%	4.6%	8.6%	82.5%
Fall 2013	30.8%	17.3%	3.8%	8.7%	83.7%

**Source: National Student Clearinghouse**

The main goal of the Pathways Initiative is to reduce the negative impact of student transfers and to provide CUNY students with a pathway to intentional transition from the community colleges to the baccalaureate colleges with the goal of completing their baccalaureate degree. A secondary goal is to reduce the negative impact on student's finances when they transfer from one institution to another and are obligated to pay additional tuition or use additional financial aid for courses or credits that may not be deemed appropriate to fulfill the individual college's credit requirements. A final value to the Pathways to General Education

model introduced by CUNY, is that it represents a best practice in higher education that shifts the focus to student outcomes vs. continuing to embrace the content only driven approach to learning assuring that students are prepared with essential competencies in the liberal arts such as critical thinking, critical reading, scientific literacy and numeracy and writing.

### **Design of Pathways General Education**

The overarching design of the Pathways General Education model was created by a task force that included representation from all the CUNY campuses and of the needed constituencies (administrators, faculty, staff). Additionally, faculty participated on working committees for each area of the general education requirements and on individual discipline committees. More than 200 full-time CUNY faculty participated. The whole effort was coordinated by a CUNY-wide Pathways Liaison Committee facilitating information dissemination and campus implementation as needed. This initiative resulted in reduced and streamlined general education requirements across the university. The general education credits were reduced to about one third of the credits needed for graduation (42 out of 120). Prior to this, York College had 54 credits in our General Education model.

### **The York Pathways Journey**

The Pathways journey at York proved to be a collaborative and collegial one though as you can well imagine providing lots of opportunity for debate, disagreement, discussion. And it came at the right time, since after almost twenty years, the college was already in the process of reviewing its general education requirements. That exercise prepared York faculty and students to engage vigorously in the initiative. York College was represented on all CUNY pathways working committees (at least 10 faculty), many times becoming leading voices and chairing them. York department chairs, as charged by the Dean of Arts and Sciences, formed an ad hoc



committee that became a crucial body overseeing the Pathways course design and submission to the CUNY-wide pathways course review committee, ensuring the academic leadership participation and approval. The proposal that became York's Pathways requirement was unanimously approved by all department chairs at the college – a rare occurrence in academe. The in-depth engagement of the department chairs and the faculty also highlighted additional opportunities for programs to reassess their major and minor course requirements, again with an eye toward student learning outcomes.

The final York College Pathways proposal was presented, discussed and approved by the York College Curriculum Committee and the York College Senate on October 23, 2012, that included faculty, students and administrators, before submission to the CUNY Board of Trustees by a 37-0-1 Vote with ten (10) students voting yes for approval. The reduction of credits in the general education requirements presented opportunities for the individual departments to enrich their degree programs with additional courses enhancing their quality and competitiveness.

These bold steps removed academic restrictions based on courses and all the related obstacles for transfer students. Transfer students are now granted credit by the receiving institution for general education if they fulfilled the requirements in their home college. The transferring of credits became transparent and the student advisement more efficient.

### **Implementation of Pathways**

A number of forces occurring at the same time as the Pathways implementation came together to facilitate and enhance the introduction of Pathways: The implementation of CUNYfirst that serves to manage all student records that relates to financial aid, bursar and advisement and second, the overhaul of the York College advisement process that centralized advisement in an advisement center with ancillary support for advisement residing in the

academic departments. The advisement innovations and the implementations of Pathways introduced a new reality for students and faculty at York. In fall 2013, fall 2014, and fall 2015 York College saw continued growth in the percentage of students transferring into the college and despite these increases the process for credit allocation and advisement was faster, more efficient with fewer complaints and financial aid discrepancies. This process will be even more efficient as the Pathways (seamless transfer) takes hold.

<b>Fall Enrollment</b>		<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Freshmen (including SEEK)	994	994	1,030	971	
Transfers		760	844	936	853

**Source: York College Admissions Office**

### **And What, So Far, Have Been The Short-Term Impacts?**

1. Student course-taking patterns have changed because with the reduction of general education requirements from 54 to 42 credits, students now have the ability to enhance course taking in the major;
2. Secondly, students now have more room in their studies to add a minor (15 credits or more) to complement their chosen fields making them more competitive in applying for graduate school and for employment;
3. Another set of impacts is related to our work with the community colleges. With clarity regarding general education courses and with a finite number of credits available to students at the community colleges, articulation agreements between associate degree community colleges and baccalaureate degree colleges like York, make for a seamless transfer of completing students at the associates degree into matriculating at the baccalaureate level;
4. Transferring students know up front what courses they will need to take after the associate's degree to complete the bachelor's degree. Since 2013, York has updated or

entered into new articulations agreements in all of the STEM areas, and an agreement was recently established in music, public health, community health, etc.

### **Closure**

As York College undergoes our self-study assessment required for Middle States accreditation, we will be reviewing the direct outcomes on graduation and retention rates that will have resulted from the CUNY Pathways program. Preliminary CUNY data indicates that Pathways has helped to reduce the loss of credits. As for the impact on curriculum, we have seen a real resurgence in certain areas of the humanities. For example, the department of foreign languages now renamed world languages. Building on the reality of the importance of languages and literature, the department revamped its curriculum, revitalized its courses to meet the student learning goals of Pathways, and introduced new courses including at York, a mandatory requirement for the studying of a foreign language.

In terms of clarity and integrity regarding the granting of course credits, it is clear that Pathways has provided a contract to the students of CUNY that their general education courses and credits taken at any institution will be given the full value towards the completion of their degree at any other CUNY institution. That is an important step in the right direction for our York students indeed for all CUNY students and their families. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Kevin Sailor, PhD  
Chair, Department of Psychology  
Lehman College on behalf of  
Professional Staff Congress/CUNY  
NYC Council Higher Education Committee  
October 26, 2016

Thank you Chairwoman Inez Barron and members of the New York City Council Higher Education Committee for calling an oversight hearing on CUNY's Pathways program. My name is Kevin Sailor and I am chair of the Psychology Department at Lehman College.

As part of today's review of Pathways, I would like to present some key findings from a study of CUNY students who graduated shortly before the Pathways' policies were implemented. This study used both transcript data for a large cohort of students and data on how these courses are evaluated by different campuses from the TIPPS (Transfer Information & Program Planning System) database of course titles. In contrast to analyses that were presented by the University to initiate Pathways, this study directly analyzed credits that were lost when students transferred from a community college to a senior college. The key findings highlight some of the mistaken assumptions that underlie Pathways about the kinds of difficulties that occur during the articulation process.

**First, the establishment of a common general education curriculum was an overly broad solution to a transfer problem in a relative handful of courses.** The architects of Pathways argued that articulation agreements were too narrowly focused to fully articulate the huge number of course offerings across CUNY. Analyses of student transcripts indicate that there are very large discrepancies in how often different courses are taken and transferred across CUNY. An examination of the transcripts of nearly 11,000 students who took a class at community college, revealed that they had taken nearly 6,000 unique course titles. However, just 100-120 of them accounted for 42% of all the credits earned by this group at a community college. Similarly, 58 course titles at CUNY accounted for 50% of the credits earned in classes that TIPPS designated as not transferrable. These patterns indicate that the effectiveness of transfer is largely driven by specific high enrollment courses.

**Second, the reduction of the number of general education credits required by many of the senior colleges was not necessary to facilitate timely graduation.** Analyses of transcript data suggest that the size of the general education curriculum at senior colleges had minimal impact on the overall number of credits earned and the number of credits not accepted during the transfer process. Students who earned a bachelor's degree at schools with a larger general education curriculum earned less than one credit more than students at schools with a smaller curriculum. Moreover, students who transferred into schools with a larger curriculum actually lost .67 fewer credits during the transfer process than students who transferred into schools with a smaller curriculum.

**Third, the mandate that popular majors had to establish common "gateway" courses across the University was ill-conceived.** This mandate was based on the belief that transfer students were having to take more credits within their major discipline than students who started at a senior college because senior colleges were not giving major credits for courses in the same

discipline taken at a community college. Analyses of credits taken within a student's major discipline indicated that transfer students and students who started at a senior college earn approximately the same number of these credits. Moreover, the number of credits taken within the discipline at a community college did not reliably predict the total number of credits recognized at graduation by the senior college. These results suggest that excess credits cannot be attributed to a failure to count credits earned at a community college toward a student's major.

**Fourth, senior college residency requirements, which were not considered as part of the Pathways restructuring, are significant contributors to lost credits.** Transfer students who earned more credits than the maximum number accepted by the senior college to which they transferred lost on average 12.0 credits compared to just 2.1 credits for students who transferred without exceeding a school's residency requirements. Analyses suggest that for each credit earned in excess of the residency requirements, a .75 credit loss can be attributed to exceeding the cap.

**Fifth, the argument that the CUNY associate's degree policy was outmoded because community college students are choosing to forego coursework at the community colleges to begin a bachelor's degree program at a senior college was at odds with the credit earning patterns observed for transfer students.** As a whole, community college students typically accumulate more than the 60 credits required for an associate's degree. Students who transferred with a degree earned 67.24 credits and student who transferred without a degree earned 59.02 credits on average at a community college. More than half of all students who transferred without a degree did so having earned more than 60 credits. The failure to earn an associate's degree can have significant implications for the future of a student who transfers but fails to earn a bachelor's degree. Pathways does not address this issue.

In conclusion, it is not possible to evaluate Pathways for its effectiveness in supporting student transfers, because Pathways was based on assumptions about the causes of excess credits that are not supported by the data. If there has been any reduction in excess credits or improvement in graduation rates, it cannot be attributed to Pathways. Pathways was a solution to a misdiagnosed problem, and its implementation continues to compromise the quality of education at CUNY.

Thank you

Good afternoon, City Council Members of Higher Education committee, and members of the City of the University. My name is John Aderounmu, I am a proud graduate of the Borough of Manhattan Community College with an associate degree in computer science in 2015. I transferred to Hunter College in 2016 where all my 69 credits were accepted and most my major classes were taken as electives. In a system that claims to be a university, it is important that my major classes that already required me to take prerequisites in my previous college are not just downgraded to electives forcing me to take only a lot of my major classes at my senior college over a spread of semesters as those classes require their own prerequisites. Furthermore, the additions of an extra classes needed in each college curriculum makes it difficult for students to branch outside there majors and take classes across the board.

I am presently a CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies student with concentrations in computer science and mathematics with my home college as Hunter College.

Ensuring I graduate equipped for a doctoral process at any university, I would prefer taking classes required to advance my scope of understanding and make contributions to the field. After consulting with the Executive Officer of the Computer Science department at the City University of New York's Graduate Center. I acknowledged that as a student at Hunter College, a more profound understanding of mathematical concepts is essential beyond the offered for an undergraduate computer science degree. It is limited in creating the transition from an undergraduate degree to a doctoral level. The solution would be taking classes outside the major, subsequently going over the required credits for graduation and an extra semester to have a shot at any university's doctoral process. The CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies eliminates the need for this and permits the flexibility in determining what would aid the actualization of my dream. It encourages students to take classes across CUNY campus while maintaining the rigor of a bachelor degree as well as taking masters classes for good standing students. To graduate with a degree, a mix of intermediate and advanced level classes must be taken in both concentrations or single concentration

Creating my own major gives me the freedom to study my interests on my terms, opening endless possibilities for breaking barriers and individual improvements beyond a classroom. It affords the prospect of conversing with students in other parts of the university at various levels of their education and learning what it is to be in their field of study. The baccalaureate program, I believe, is the future of post-secondary education, as it shows the value of one's decision to take charge of education, it immediately rewards one's thirst for knowledge. With all the benefits of these program you would assume that a lot of students where in or knew about the CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies. The program only has about 500 students of the 500 thousand students in CUNY less than 0.001 of the population. The main problem this program faces is a lack of funding and even with the continued talk of tuition increase the program it works of a limited budget for growing interested students. Just to make it clear, the pathways curriculum improved the program. The importance of the pathways process cannot be overstated in serving a city that houses millions of people with various backgrounds in

education. It would greatly benefit the city if funding for the program were improved by the city.

And I just want answer some of the issues raised by the committee.

For the Chair's Council Member Inez Barron question on what pops up for a student to know if they had completed pathways? the reply from the University dean for undergraduate students was degree works while my answer is nothing alerts you unless you are just a very inquisitive student. It took me until my 4<sup>th</sup> semester at BMCC to know I has a degree-works account. It is good resource but greatly underutilized as the students don't just know about it. The 250% increase since pathways is extremely misleading because every student should be using it. I challenge the administration to give a general survey and come back and report it to the city council.

For remediation question, I must commend the job being done by the University to tackle this issue by the improvement of the CUNY Start and CUNY Summer Start and ASAP. In my time in student government this was a big issue and now it has been greatly alleviated by the attention paid by the University

On the standard of BMCC as a community college it was amazing. The professors were great and usually full time professor unlike Hunter College that relies a lot on adjuncts.

On the topic of transfers students: there is very little support for transfer students to Hunter college, I wish there more students that could talk about their colleges here today but I sure it is the same.

In response to the PSC President view on pathways-

I partially agree that students have received a watered-down version of a bachelor's degree with the pathways but the motive behind I believe are different as I mentioned earlier students that come into to city University have a huge difference in educational background for various reasons. One solution is CUNY Baccalaureate for Unique and Interdisciplinary Studies; another would be to receive more funding from both state and city to better help students with no previous experience of the American university educational system not to delay an entire generation of New Yorkers from getting the best possible bachelors education and giving each student the benefits of the rising tuition we are forced to pay. To get rid of pathways you have to come up with a way to address the issues pathways addressed.

I do have friends that graduate before pathway and after pathways from BMCC to Columbia. The ones that transferred even without graduating with the associates in computer science got all their credits transferred why the ones that came after pathways lost a lot of common core credits. This might be a testament to the drop-in quality of the degree.

In response to the gentleman from Brooklyn College

I personally believe the idea of imposing a language at the college level is a last-ditch effort for students to speak a second language. This should be done at an earlier age when the students are in elementary schools similarly to what is done in the rest of the world. A two years of language

forceful learning does not make a good speaker of the language if it wasn't something a student was passionate about. Just student who in a couple of years can remember some verbs. Immersion in an area where the language is spoken helps a lot more.



**City Council Higher Ed Committee Hearing Oct 26, 2016**  
Testimony of James Davis, Professor of English, Brooklyn College

Thank you Chairperson Barron and Councilmembers for the opportunity to address the committee. Resistance to Pathways was widespread among faculty members, and I want to share with you the story of why and how Brooklyn College's faculty resisted its implementation.

**Pathways was a solution in search of a problem.** Did the university need to do more for transfer students? Yes, no one disputed that, but the real questions were: What is the scale of that problem? And what are the best remedies? Anyone who placed educational quality as a priority was troubled by the Pathways initiative; it was clearly an expedient way to streamline student transfer. Its chief virtue was that it was cost-effective, but it is actually very costly, because it comes at the expense of the quality of education.

**As professors we work closely with students.** We do not have the view from 30 thousand feet up, the perspective administrators have, but we have expertise in pedagogy and curriculum. We know what students need to succeed in our fields of study. And we understand that in many cases, a general education course is the only exposure a student is likely to get to a certain field of study. The Pathways curriculum flew directly in the face of what many of us knew was best for students.

**Decisions were made that were divorced from their academic merit.** Consider the limit placed on the number of credits to the student. If a college had determined, for example, that the best way to teach first-year students how to read and write was a 4-credit intensive composition course, that was ruled out of compliance with the new mandate. If a college had determined that the best way to introduce students to the sciences was to award more than 3 credits for a course that combined lectures and hands-on laboratory experience, that was ruled out of compliance. If a college had determined that an overall total of 45 general education credits should be required, that was ruled out of compliance with the mandated maximum of 42 credits.

**A short-sighted vision of a well-rounded education characterized this initiative.** For example: Should students be required to demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language, a language other than English? That is a debatable question, but the answer across CUNY has been a resounding Yes. We're a university that not only exists in a multicultural city but one that claims in all of its glossy publicity to prepare students for global citizenship, for an increasingly globalized economy, for engagement in a global community. What could be more provincial, more antithetical to that spirit of preparation for a life beyond one's neighborhood or one's city, than to remove foreign language instruction from the general education program? But that's exactly what Pathways did. Granted, colleges were allowed on an individual basis to include foreign language in the College Option 12-credit layer. But having to place it there – rather than building it into the core of general education – means bumping other things out of the College Option. Moves like this made it difficult to take seriously the claims the University made about the rigor and forward-thinking quality Pathways represented in preparing CUNY students for 21<sup>st</sup> century citizenship and employment.

**So at Brooklyn College, we refused to cooperate.** The Faculty Council, our elected governance body, is charged with overseeing matters of curriculum and degree requirements. Faculty Council passed two resolutions, one in 2014 and one in 2015, overwhelmingly opposed to approving courses for Pathways. This was a reflection of broader faculty sentiment at Brooklyn College. At an April 2014 meeting of all full-time faculty, a resolution opposing Pathways passed with 298 ayes, 9 nays, and 18 abstentions. On what issue could 300 Brooklyn College professors ever agree? But on this there was near total unanimity; we called on the Brooklyn College and CUNY administrations “to abide by the decisions of local faculty in designing a new general education program at Brooklyn College.” That sparked a two-year, faculty-driven process of revising the general education program. The committees involved were aware of the Pathways policies but did not treat them as a foregone conclusion. In the end, our revised general education program was approved by Faculty Council by an overwhelming majority, but our Provost refused to send it forward to CUNY Academic Affairs, in violation of our governance plan. He felt that as it was not fully Pathways compliant, it did not warrant the central office’s review. In the end, after a full year of negotiations and further revisions, our gen ed program was finally submitted to and approved by the CUNY administration.

**Faculty members faced intense pressure to go along.** Department chairs felt that if they didn’t capitulate, they’d be passed over for resources from the college administration. Individual professors were offered stipends to write curriculum for Pathways compliant courses. The administration pitted departments against each other, noting that those who refused to participate would lose the FTE’s that come with offering general education courses (and resources follow FTE’s). And the administration pitted professors against students, emphasizing that failure to cooperate would gum up the works and jeopardize the educational progress of the very students we claimed to care about.

**Overall,** the imposition of Pathways created a toxic environment at Brooklyn College, soured the working relationship between professors and administrators, many of whom knew they were carrying out ill-conceived marching orders, and reminded us of the precariousness of our students’ educational experience, when it could be subject in this way to an efficiency model that diluted what CUNY students are entitled to receive.

THE COUNCIL CONY Panel  
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Name: Paul Arcario, Provost for Academic Affairs

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Name: Kevin Sailor

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Name: Carlton Bowen

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Address: 61 Broadway

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Name: John Aderounmu

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: CUNY Students

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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Name: ~~James Davis~~ James Davis

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I represent: PSC/CUNY

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