

**Testimony of Vice Chancellor Matthew Sapienza
The City University of New York
New York City Council Higher Education Committee Hearing:
"Merit and Need Based Scholarships at CUNY"
June 12, 2014**

Good morning, Chairperson Barron and members of the New York City Council Higher Education Committee. I am Matthew Sapienza, Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance at The City University of New York. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about merit and need-based scholarships at CUNY. I am joined this morning by Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Frank Sanchez, University Dean for Enrollment James Murphy, and the Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at LaGuardia Community College, Dr. Michael A. Baston.

We are acutely aware that rising higher education costs and increasing student debt have been critical concerns, not only here in New York, but on the national level. At City University, we remain focused on providing our students with the highest quality learning experience possible, while maintaining those avenues to access that are the centerpieces to a public higher education institution.

As a result of the combination of high quality and reasonable tuition, CUNY continues to maintain record enrollment levels of 267,000 degree-seeking students. In addition, we are serving 248,000 adult and continuing education students.

As a result of these unprecedented enrollment levels, and in order to meet student demand, there are activities on our colleges year-round. Class sections are available throughout the summer

and during winter intercession. Our colleges offer courses early in the morning, throughout the evening, and on weekends. The University's campuses have truly become the lifeblood of their communities, and a lifeline for thousands of our students.

Financial assistance continues to be a critical linchpin for student persistence. In academic year 2012-2013, the University conferred over 46,000 degrees. Many of those students would not have been able to obtain their diplomas without the scholarship opportunities that were afforded to them at the University.

CUNY still represents the best value in U.S. higher education. CUNY costs a fraction of what students pay at private institutions, and is less also less than at most public universities.

In fact, approximately six out of 10 full-time undergraduates attend tuition-free due to federal Pell Grants and New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) awards that fully cover CUNY's exceptionally low tuition. All told, nearly 175,000 CUNY undergraduate students were awarded nearly \$1 billion in financial aid this past academic year.

At the national level, it's not uncommon for students to leave college with tens of thousands of dollars in loans to repay. With American student debt topping \$1.2 trillion, indebtedness is an urgent national concern and a source of anxiety for students and families. Repayment for federal and private student loans can last decades, with no respite even in bankruptcy.

At CUNY, however, affordable tuition and the availability of financial aid greatly lighten the burden on students—so much so that only 15 percent of undergraduates at our four-year colleges had federal education loans. That’s a strikingly low number compared with most other colleges and universities. It includes some transfer students who arrived with loans but found little need to borrow further for their CUNY education. It comes as no surprise that when our students do take education loans, they owe less on average at graduation than their peers at other institutions, public and private.

Helping to keep the University affordable and enhance the value of a CUNY degree, however, requires an on-going partnership between all of our stakeholders.

One of the key constituents in this partnership is the private sector. CUNY students have some scholarship opportunities, thanks in large part to philanthropic and private support. Numerous scholarships and awards based on merit, need, specialized interests, or other factors are offered throughout our 24 colleges and schools, expanding opportunity and excellence.

The University itself is another component of this partnership. A major part of our commitment has been the Student Financial Assistance Initiative, which over the last three years has provided \$25 million in total benefits to our students in need. Vice Chancellor Sanchez will provide you with more detail about this successful program. Our colleges also provide students with an array of financial aid services, which Vice President Baston will be describing in his testimony.

Another critical partner is the State of New York. The 2011 State Higher Education agreement created a new credit for resident undergraduate students that receive Tuition Assistance Program

awards, at both SUNY and CUNY, for tuition charges over the TAP maximum award. In the current year, CUNY will be providing over \$29 million in TAP credits to students. The University has been advocating for enhancements to the TAP program, which were outlined in a formal report that we submitted to State leaders last fall. We've recommended critical adjustments to award levels and schedules, eligibility regulations, and income calculations.

As part of the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2015, the State has agreed to increase the maximum TAP award to \$5,165 for the next academic year. We look forward to continuing to work with the City Council to ensure that TAP continues to provide need-based aid for our students.

Like the State of New York, the federal government also plays a key role in providing financial assistance to students. The Pell Grant and Federal Work Study are programs that are essential for keeping the federal government's commitment to provide financial support to needy students. The maximum Pell Grant award is increasing by \$85, to \$5,730, for the next academic year. Due to fiscal pressures in Washington, however, there have been several attempts over the last few years to reduce the overall appropriation for Pell Grants, as well as limit the eligibility requirements. We must all remain vigilant in maintaining this crucial federal aid program.

And on both the Federal and State levels, the University has been at the forefront of advocating for the passage of the DREAM Act, which would ensure that deserving undocumented students receive the assistance that is needed to help them pursue their higher education goals.

While it's incumbent on the federal and state government to provide the need-based financial support for deserving students, the City of New York plays a vitally important role in this partnership as well. The City Council, in particular, has always been a strong advocate for merit-based student financial assistance programs. Everyone at the University was very encouraged and appreciative that the Council's formal response to the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2015 City Preliminary Budget included funding for the Academic Achievement Awards at CUNY. Dean Murphy will talk some more about this proposal, which was put forth by our elected student government leaders, and is modeled after the Vallone Scholarships program, another successful City Council investment in public higher education which was defunded several years ago.

Many of our students are not receiving the federal and state benefits that they deserve. In response to this, and to enhance student retention, in 2009 the University partnered with Single Stop USA to support an office at each community college. The program provides a comprehensive set of services, including benefits counseling, free tax preparation, legal assistance and financial counseling. Since 2009, Single Stop has enabled our students to access over \$109 million in services they were not previously receiving. Vice Chancellor Sanchez will go into more detail on this critical endeavor as part of this testimony. We are requesting the Council's assistance in ensuring that the funding needed to maintain program levels at the community colleges, and to expand it for associate degree students at the senior colleges, is provided.

Providing financial aid and merit and need-based scholarships is not only an investment in our students, it also an investment in New York itself. The University continues to be a critical

engine of New York's economy. This is an important measure of CUNY's value. CUNY colleges account for more than a third of the business and finance degrees awarded by New York City institutions, about one-third of the city's public school teachers, and a high percentage of the nurses and health and science technicians employed by local medical facilities. The University produces hundreds of computer scientists, specialists, and engineering professionals each year. What's more, 80 percent of CUNY graduates currently live and work and pay taxes in New York State.

Chairperson Barron and committee members, you have demonstrated many times over your commitment to helping New Yorkers advance themselves through your consistent advocacy for an accessible, high-quality CUNY education. We deeply appreciate your continued support and look forward to working with you to sustain that commitment.

I would now like to ask Vice Chancellor Frank Sanchez to provide his testimony.



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June 12th, 2014,

To: New York City Council, Committee on Higher Education

From: Muhammad Arshad, CUNY University Student Senate Chairperson

Re: Testimony

Good afternoon Chairwoman Barron and other committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Muhummad Arshad, Chairperson of the University Student Senate (USS), which is the student government body for CUNY. USS is composed of all the branches of the University and we are responsible for representing the over 450,000 students of CUNY.

You will be hearing testimony today from a few our student leaders on the importance of the CUNY Academic Achievement Award or AAA Scholarship.

The AAA Scholarship would award a scholarship to all New York City Public High School student who graduates with a grade point average B and above and is entering CUNY as a full-time student. Upon entry, the student must maintain at least a B average to continue to receive the scholarship. This is an opportunity for us to provide an incentive as well reward our students for being successful in high school and for continuing that success in college.

Simone Gordon, a friend and the salutatorian at City College, was among the last recipients of the Vallone Scholarship. She wanted to come to testify today to let everyone know how important his scholarship. She wrote to me and to me:

The peter Vallone Scholarship was a blessing to me as resource. Its assistance allowed me not have to work part-time while completing my studies. Therefore, I was able to fully engage all my attention in my studies, and participate in school activities—having joined the undergraduate student government. As an education senator and then later joining teachers of tomorrow as the vice president...I used this scholarship to buy books supplies, metrocards, and other educational necessities for my courses. The Vallone Scholarship also helped me to pursue other educational opportunities with its financial support, allowing me to apply for scholarships like the Fullbright Scholarship, which I was accepted to teach English in India....The Peter Vallane was a necessity for me as the AAA Scholarship will for future students.

CUNY is full of stories like Simone's. It is in this spirit that we asking for support for the AAA Scholarship.

Respectfully,
Muhammad Arshad



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June 12th, 2014,

To: New York City Council, Higher Education Committee

From: Joseph Awadjie, CUNY University Student Senate

Re: Testimony

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Barron, Speaker Melisa Mark-Viverito and members of the Council.

Thank you for this opportunity to introduce myself and testify, I am Joseph Awadjie, Vice Chair of Fiscal Affairs for the University Student Senate of CUNY and a Graduate Student at Brooklyn College.

I am here in support of renewing and revitalizing the support offered to CUNY students, particularly international and undocumented students through the initiative that began with the establishment of the New York City Council Merit Scholarship, later renamed the Peter Vallone Scholarship in 1998, and is currently being referred to as the CUNY Academic Achievement Award or AAA Scholarship. Established by the City Council, this scholarship in recognition of the need to assist undocumented students to attend college, this Merit Scholarship Award has been a very successful award. Over the years it has helped over 14,000 students to meet the rising costs of their education and their high debt on completing their studies until its demise in 2011.

It is important to remember that to many of our students merit scholars are held in high esteem. This is an opportunity to encourage our students to succeed and then reward them for it. An since eligible students would be aiming to come out of high school in good academic standing and are then being required to maintain good grades throughout college, we are potentially providing an almost decades long incentive for our students to do good in school. And when are students do well, they deserve to be recognized.

This grant has a proven track-record and measurable success in supporting strong academic achievement, while optimizing retention and graduation rates. Award recipients maintain a grade-point average of 3.0 and higher, with significant one-year retention rates: 86.9% in Associate degree programs and 96% in Baccalaureate programs. These are the kind of statistics that make CUNY the strong educational institution our great city needs and deserves.

Respectfully,

Joseph Awadjie
University Student Senate, Vice Chair for Fiscal Affairs



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June 12th, 2014,

To: New York City Council, Committee on Higher Education

From: Cynthia Roldan, CUNY University Student Senate

Re: Testimony

Good morning Honorable Chairwoman Barron and members of the higher education committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Cynthia Roldan and I am the Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs for the University Student Senate.

The New York City Council always had a strong legacy of standing up for CUNY students, even when Albany wouldn't. As tuition went up and up, the City Council established special opportunity programs to keep education within our students' grasp. The Council established leadership programs and merit scholarships to keep our city's brightest minds right here in New York.

But in 2011, no one had our backs. At the height of the Great Recession, students were left to reel in the pain of austerity cuts and everything that came with it. Washington was busy bailing out the banks, Albany was slashing CUNY's funding and shifting the burden on students with "rational" tuition increases, and even the New York City Council eliminated the Peter F. Vallone Sr. Scholarship—the only merit scholarship offered by the city.

Three years later, with a new city administration, we know that austerity is not the answer. We know that the way forward is with more investment in CUNY, not less. We know that our students are an investment that always pays off.

The fact is that CUNY students are some of the poorest in the country with over 40% of students coming from families making less than \$20,000 a year (34.5%/46.8% Senior/Comm. Colleges). When you look at it like that, a \$1,500 increase becomes a big deal.

Going into Fall '14, a student in the lowest income bracket would receive \$5,730 in the form of a Pell Grant, and \$5,165 in the form of a TAP award (that is assuming that she meets all the other arcane TAP criteria); \$10,895 in total.

Senior college tuition for the year is now \$5,730 and going up to \$6,030 this fall. That completely eliminates TAP (which is drained first) and a significant amount of Pell, technology fees, activity fees, and a "CUNY Consolidated Service" fee add up to another \$500 for the year (on average, depending on the school). This leaves the student with approximately \$2,200 per semester.

After that, the student needs to pay for transportation (\$896 for monthly Metrocards during the semesters) and books (which the university estimates at \$1,200 per student per year, on average). This leaves the student with less than \$2,300 for the year.

You might think that's a lot, but think about how far that money needs to stretch... Food can easily burn through all of it (even at \$10 a day). Then you also have to factor in clothing (because you can't show up to an interview without a suit), supplies, phone bills, living expenses in a city where rent keeps rising to new heights, as do phone and internet bills that our students need to access in order to succeed.

Our students cannot afford this, and our city can't afford to fail our students. This scholarship would cover the cost of a monthly Metrocard during the academic semesters or help cover the average cost of textbooks for a semester.

Anyone with a CUNY degree knows that we can take our CUNY degrees and compete with anyone from any college in any field. We know that we are able to do all that without falling nose-deep into debt. Many of you know this from first-hand experience as many of you are CUNY alumni.

Despite increasing financial pressure, CUNY students are doing better than ever before. We're winning more awards, more fellowships, and going on to bigger and better things than ever before. We need to continue our city's investments in the programs that keep CUNY competitive.

But some of the city's brightest minds just don't see CUNY as an option, whether it is because of affordability or immigration status, or because they do not feel CUNY can meet their needs. A New York City Council Scholarship will show these students that a quality education is within their reach, right here in New York City.

We ask that you support the merit based scholarship, Academic Achievement Award (AAA), for high-achieving graduates of New York City high schools, including undocumented students.

The need for more support has been documented. According to the 2013 statistics, over 13,000 students would have been eligible for this scholarship. Of the eligible full-time, first-time freshman students, approximately two-thirds had annual household income of less than \$50,000. Furthermore, one-third had an annual income of less than \$20,000. Data show that the previous city council's merit scholarship has helped students stay in college and graduate.

As I entered Baruch College in Fall of 2010, I was among the last cohort of students to receive the Vallone scholarship, which helped me pay for my books that semester. That scholarship was the only aid I received, for as an undocumented student one cannot receive TAP or Pell. Today I stand here before you not only as the Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs for the University Student Senate, but also as a proud CUNY alumni ready to contribute back to New York City.

The scholarship would exemplify the core of our City's values: The idea that it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, if you come here and work hard, it will pay off. The scholarship would not depend on a student's race, or income, or discipline, or immigration status. It would only ask that students continue to succeed.

Testimony of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Frank D. Sanchez

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

“Merit and Need-based Scholarships at CUNY.

June 12, 2014

Good morning Chairperson Barron and members of the New York City Council Higher Education Committee. I am Frank Sanchez, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the City University of New York (CUNY). Our offices work closely with student service operations across our 24 colleges supporting our 270,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Our office also coordinates several initiatives focusing on financially disadvantaged and high need populations across our colleges.

I appreciate being included in this important conversation about merit and need-based scholarships. An essential aspect of this discussion must include a deliberate focused conversation of CUNY’s poorest and neediest students. On this front, CUNY has made tremendous strides in ensuring these students are not forgotten with full access and financial support to attend college. In fact, the federal and state commitments to our financially neediest students through Pell and TAP funding is vital to full-filling our mission of access; and have seen great success as a result. For example, while 40% of CUNY students have a household income of below \$20,000 we find nearly 60% of our students attend tuition-free due to Pell and TAP

awards. Furthermore, in 2012 the University dedicated \$5 million from the revenue generated by tuition increases to assist students who are at risk of not being able to continue matriculation because of the tuition increase. This Student Financial Assistance Initiative includes assistance with the acquisition of textbooks, an enhancement to the federal work study program, and tuition waivers for those students who are at the greatest financial risk. For the 2013-2014 academic year we doubled the commitment to this initiative, for a total of \$10 million.

Despite this success in providing our financially neediest students access to a quality education, CUNY is not standing idle in addressing the broader financial needs of our students beyond tuition. We know so many CUNY students are challenged with the financial expense of living in New York City including the cost of rent, food, daycare, health needs etc. Knowing this CUNY has responded with significant efforts to address this challenge head-on.

One of the most recognized CUNY initiatives and frankly, one of the most successful programs nationally for reducing student debt and out-of-pocket expenses for our poorest students are the Single Stop Centers across our seven (7) community colleges. Single Stop, a program launched in partnership with the Robin Hood Foundation connects our poorest students at CUNY with available government funds and services. Single Stop provides a comprehensive suite of services, including benefits counseling, free tax preparation, legal assistance and

financial counseling. Counselors use Single Stop's cutting edge technology tool the Benefits Enrollment Network (BEN) to determine which benefits a client is eligible for in as little as 15 minutes, and then guide them through the application process and connect them to other onsite services.

This past year the Single Stop programs in response to the financial needs of our poorest students provided over \$36 million dollars in benefits and tax returns. Over the last five and a half years CUNY has supported over 54,000 students and families with nearly \$128 million in reduced out of pocket expenses. On average, we have connected our students with an additional \$5,300 in direct benefits. The return on investment is exceptional...for every \$1 spent on Single Stop Services we allocate \$31 dollars in benefits. As we institutionalize this program it is our hope to expand these important services to our senior colleges beginning with CCNY and Medgar Evers.

With the Single Stop program and other initiatives tackling the challenges facing our poorest students, CUNY is better positioned to delivering on our promise of an exceptional and affordable education. Need-based federal and state funding in the form of Pell grants and TAP as well as programs such as Single Stop is a strategy that is working for our poorest students with greatest need. However, what is less clear, is how we are supporting our academically high performing students across CUNY. This is a considerable concern as many of these students struggle to make

financial ends meet to stay in enrolled. Merit-based scholarships provide a reasonable strategy to provide much needed financial assistance to high performing students, many of which will have considerable financial need.

Testimony of Dean James Murphy
University Dean for Enrollment Management
The City University of New York
New York City Council Higher Education Committee Hearing:
"Merit and Need Based Scholarships at CUNY"
June 12, 2014

Good morning Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. My name is James Murphy. I am CUNY's University Dean for Enrollment Management. Our offices are responsible for admissions, financial aid, and registration for all 270,000 undergraduate and graduate students at CUNY. We work diligently to make sure that students can access a top-notch education without being overburdened by debt—and we're proud that CUNY remains one of the nation's best-value institutions.

This past year CUNY Colleges awarded over \$1 billion in financial aid to more than 175,000 undergraduate aid recipients. The largest percentage of this aid was need based grants from the Federal Pell program (\$526 million) and State TAP program (\$280 million). CUNY provides over \$75 million dollars in tuition waivers, while our Colleges award an estimated \$60 million in merit scholarships. CUNY undergraduate students also borrowed \$133 million in student loans. However, only \$75 million in loans was used to pay undergraduate tuition charges this past year. This represents approximately 6.4% of undergraduate tuition paid. The balance of the loans was used by the students for personal expenses.

The large amount of grant aid enables 87,000 of our 143,000 (61%) full-time in-state undergraduates to attend CUNY tuition free. The latter figure includes undocumented students who are ineligible to receive any type of financial aid. If the New York State Dream Act is passed we estimate an additional 6,000 students would be able to attend tuition free which would mean 93,000 or 65% of CUNY's full-time in-state undergraduates would have their tuition costs covered in full by financial aid. Many of the students who pay out of pocket or borrow either have exhausted their eligibility for grants or are academically ineligible. CUNY has lobbied the State for an extra year of TAP eligibility without success.

CUNY also enrolls about 65,000 matriculated in-state part-time students with over 12,000 using financial aid grants to attend tuition free. Many part-time students who work to support themselves and their families may be ineligible for financial aid but have their tuition covered in full or in part by their employer. Other part-time students are finishing their degree or could not find the classes needed to attend full-time. These students may have exhausted their eligibility or are saving the eligibility for full-time enrollment. Some others are academically ineligible to attend full-time and are also ineligible for financial aid.

In addition to financial aid the Federal American Opportunity Income Tax Credit (AOTC) is available to a broader range of taxpayers, including many with higher incomes and those who owe no taxes. The full credit allows individuals, whose modified adjusted gross income is \$80,000 or less, or \$160,000 or less

for married couples filing a joint return to receive a tax credit of up to \$2,500 for tuition paid out of pocket or with loans. The availability of the tax credits dramatically increases the number of CUNY students who are able to attend college tuition free. Since we do not have access to students and families' income tax forms it is difficult to estimate the number of additional students who use the AOTC benefit.

It is clear the combination of Federal and State grants, CUNY tuition waivers, and the Federal American Opportunity Income Tax Credit provide a sufficient amount of assistance to address the neediest students. The area where we lack a sufficient amount of assistance is merit based scholarships which is currently less than 6% of our total financial aid awarded. A number of years ago the City Council introduced legislation to create the Vallone Scholarship program, which provided merit aid to graduates of New York City high schools with an average of 80 or above, who attended CUNY and maintained a 3.0 grade point average. Councilmembers successfully lobbied the Mayor to include funding for the program in the City's budget. I believe these scholarships helped ignite an increase in academic performance at our colleges.

Current CUNY students have now endorsed an Academic Achievement Award (AAA) which would almost mirror the former Vallone Scholarship. These scholarship funds will help support many students, including those who receive no other aid, achieve their goal of college graduation. CUNY graduates have traditionally remained in the City, so these students will contribute to the City's workforce. The CUNY administration applauds the students' activities in this area and supports the Academic Achievement Award program proposal. We ask City Council to support and fund the AAA scholarship.

City University of New York

Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management - LaGuardia Community College

Dr. Michael A. Baston

Testimony before the Higher Education Committee of the New York City Council

Thursday, June 12, 2014

Good morning, Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. I am Michael Baston, Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management for LaGuardia Community College. LaGuardia opens the doors of higher education to one of the most diverse and international communities in the world. With students from 158 countries speaking 129 languages, LaGuardia students come from different places, yet their determination to create a stronger future for themselves and their families through higher education is the dream they all share.

Long before their college journey even begins however, many of our students face significant obstacles—financial, academic, personal—that have derailed their goal of earning a degree and pursuing their dreams.

With over 70% of our students earning less than \$25,000 a year, and many undocumented students who do not qualify for financial aid, we have employed a four-part strategy that includes:

- Financial Literacy
- Financial Aid
- Social Safety Net Access and Financing Options
- Scholarships

Financial Literacy and Financial Aid

At open houses for prospective students and their families, and visits to local high schools and community-based organizations, we discuss our tuition, how our enhanced calendar allows full-time students to take more credits at no additional cost, steps to apply for federal and state aid, and scholarships.

We assist them to apply for aid in our financial aid computer lab. In 2013, we had over 12,000 visits providing one-on-one assistance to students as they apply for scholarships and federal and state aid. Federal application increased 5.3% compared to last year (20,032 vs. 19,010); state applications increased 8.5% (17,386 vs. 16,017).

Social Safety Net Access and Financing Options

By helping students to access social “safety-net” dollars such as food stamps and Earned Income Tax Credits, our Single Stop program helps students to overcome financial barriers that force dropouts. Since 2010, Single Stop has connected 7,775 students with resources and services resulting in cash benefits valued at \$7,800,000.

We provide a range of financial literacy workshops, and we have made financial aid the centerpiece of our new knowledge management system. In 2013, we provided free credit reports to 133 students who developed a budget with a financial coach. Over 190 students took advantage of our free legal advice.

We offer no-interest payment plans, giving students up to six months to pay for their tuition. Last year, 8,319 students signed up to pay over \$11 million dollars in tuition.

Due to the growing demand, the payment plan's enrollment fee was reduced from \$30 to \$16.75. Texting to remind students to pay their tuition resulted in a 31% decrease in students being dropped from needed classes in 2012.

We have seen a 15% increase in loan applications this year. We advise students to take out loans as a last resort and have set up alerts so they can more appropriately budget their money. We successfully increased on-campus employment. Our efforts have been rewarded, as our current default rate is 7.5%, below the national average for community colleges.

Scholarships

Our strategy to put more scholarship monies into the hands of our students is very successful. In 2013-2014, our Foundation awarded over \$867,000 to 600 students, an increase of 23% from last year. Unlike most foundations, 86% of the privately raised money is spent on student scholarships the following year.

Outcomes

Our definition of student success is achieving our mission so that graduates become critical thinkers and socially responsible citizens who help shape an evolving society. Graduation and strengthening the economic life of our community defines success. We are positioned to improve our outcomes in the future because we engage our whole community in forward momentum. But our students are our real success story. Students like Layla Quinones.

At 16 Layla dropped out of Aviation High School where she was studying to be an airplane mechanic when she became pregnant. Her parents put her out of the family home and she went to live with the baby's father. Layla enrolled in LaGuardia's GED program. She finished the program with the highest GED score in the state that year. We encouraged her to continue her studies and with the financial support of programs like TAP and Pell and scholarships she excelled, joined Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society at LaGuardia, graduated with a 4.0 is currently majoring at a senior college in math and physics; doing research on osteogenesis imperfecta, or brittle bone disease at the Hospital for Special Surgery. Layla and so many students like her can make it at CUNY and anywhere. All they need is someone to believe in them and the resources to make the dream of a college education a real reality.



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June 12th, 2014,

To: New York City Council, Higher Education Committee

From: Monica Sibri, CUNY University Student Senate

Re: Testimony

Good morning, Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. I am Monica Sibri, a DREAMer with a triple major concentration in Political Science, International Studies, and Sociology from the College of Staten Island.

I would like to start by showing you the financial support the DREAMers and I receive for college (Please, look around) Yes, that's correct, the type of financial assistance we receive is equivalent to a blank piece of paper.

As an active delegate of the University Student Senate, I became aware of the legalities obstructing us from receiving stipends and awarding scholarships to DREAMers. When I sit in the USS scholarship committee meetings, it breaks my heart to know that we cannot give scholarships to DREAMers when it is their money and they are some of the most hardworking, dedicated and deserving students. These scholarships come out of the student activity fees that I and countless others pay from tuition that reaches over \$3,000.00 dollars per semester at our senior colleges, which does not include books, metrocards, and other expenses. For the fear of deportation many of us do not question why we cannot receive any sort of financial support, even while we pay our taxes and tuition.

In 1982, the U.S Supreme Court, in the case of Plyler v. Doe, ruled that non-citizen children of undocumented immigrants were legally entitled to an education from kindergarten through high school. However, what happens to these students after high school? Many qualified students miss out on the opportunity of going to college because legally we cannot receive any type of federal aid, grants, loans, scholarships, work-study payment, and stipends for our college education.

In 2011, I never pictured myself in college yet I worked so hard to pursue my dreams, I worked for under \$5.00 an hr for more than 70hrs a week. During my freshman year I was being charged out-of-state tuition and did not question it because I was terrified of being deported but I am lucky enough to step foot through a CUNY institution because they have provided me with a secure positive environment. Each semester I struggle to save money for tuition and I continue working hard while advocating for DREAMers like me to obtain a postsecondary education and become part of an educated workforce.

We are asking the City Council to end this struggle, and fund the AAA scholarship so that many DREAMers like myself can afford a postsecondary education with a lesser burden. According to Fall 2012 enrollment data, the percentage of First-time Freshmen who were eligible for the AAA scholarship was greater for students with foreign citizenship and those who were undocumented.

I give prominence that based on the same data, of the undocumented Fall 2012 First-time, Full time Freshman who were eligible, 60% were female, and 57% were pursuing Bachelor's degrees. I am one of the 60% undocumented females and one of the 57% pursuing a bachelor degree.

Yet despite our hard work and independence we are seen as a burden to the state. As leeches of the system who try to "get free benefits" Where are these so called benefits? Paying 3 times the tuition, and making less than \$6 an hr is no benefit and although we strive to put our education first, the lack of financial support sometimes means we have to put it as last. This scholarship will without a doubt help many DREAMers like me achieve a postsecondary education and On behalf of them, I strongly urge you to fund the AAA scholarship.

Respectfully,

Monica Sibri



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June 12th, 2014,

To: New York City Council, Higher Education Committee

From: Melissa Carreño, CUNY University Student Senate

Re: Testimony

My name is Melissa Carreño, I am a senior at Lehman College and the Vice President of External Affairs in Student Government, delegate of USS.

When I began my college career at Kingsborough Community College in Fall 2010, I was one of the last recipients of the Vallone Scholarships that was revoked by City Council in 2011. I received the scholarship for one semester and it was very helpful in allowing to secure books for my classes.

I am among the students that receives full financial aid, which covers my tuition and gives me an additional \$700 a semester to cover all the additional expenses I have to make to be a successful student.

I live in District 34 in Brooklyn Bushwick, I attend college full time and work as a peer mentor part time at Lehman in the Bronx. I have to work because it's the only way I can make ends meet for me and my family. I have to cover my travel expenses, my phone bill, and I have to help with bills around the house. (oh, and I can't forget those expensive science books!). My father became disabled in 2007 from a stroke and had open heart surgery two years ago during my Spring Semester. Which means I started working at age 15 and have continued to work throughout my college years (I still am). My mother and I are the only ones working at home --I have no choice. I believe that the AAA scholarship would

have helped me financially during that time and also at this very moment (with books and transportation) have it not been revoked.

Like your colleague, Maria del Carmen Arroyo, who graduated in 1991 from Lehman with a bachelors in Health Services Administration -- I too come from a family with low means but the key difference is that when she was a full time student at Lehman paid 1,225 a year for tuition-- whereas tuition is currently 6,030 at a senior colleges (a difference of 4,805). Not to mention, MTA fare was only \$1.25 in the days she attended Lehman-- 150% lower than they are today.

According to 2012 Fall enrollment data, two thirds of students who were eligible to receive AAA scholarships have annual household income less than \$20,000 like myself. This scholarship will help hard working students who have made sacrifices to attend school -- and do their part to be successful -- just like every single one of you did when you went to college and like I am currently doing.

It is the reason why I am standing here today-- not only to speak for myself but also for those CUNY students and soon-to-be CUNY students who do great in school and who are still struggling financially in college. We need-- not want the AAA scholarship.

City Council we have done our part, now it is time for you to do yours and implement the Academic Achievement Award.

Thank You,

Melissa Carreño



Office of the Chair
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Fax: (646) 664-8863

June 12th, 2014,

To: New York City Council, Higher Education Committee

From: Lida Ramos, CUNY University Student Senate

Re: Testimony

My name is Lida Ramos. I am a recent graduate of Queensborough Community College and I will be continuing my education at Baruch College in the fall.

The Vallone Scholarship was eliminated in 2011.

I began college early 2011. This was a scholarship that could have made such an impact on my college education as an immigrant student.

Being the first person in my family to ever attend college was very exciting. However it did not seem feasible since there was no way I could afford it. The aid that I did receive barely covered 1 textbook.

Luckily, I found the ASAP program. Thanks to programs like these, I was able to start college only a year after graduating high school.

But what about the 15,000 students who benefitted from this scholarship?

I knew a lot of them and I witnessed the struggle they went through when it was eliminated in 2011.

For most of us that are transitioning from Community Colleges to Senior or 4 year Colleges, it is a very tedious process. It is much more competitive in a 4 year college and there are so many other things to consider on a bigger scale such as transportation, food, cost of living. These are all things that have increased within the last years and have made it harder for students to be able to pursue their education.

Implementing the Academic Achievement Award will be a lot of hard work. But the fruits of its labor will be prolific.

Just look at the evidence:

Vallone Scholarship recipients who entered Associate degree programs as first-time freshmen in 2008 had one-year retention rates of 86.9%, compared to 68% of overall CUNY full-time freshmen that entered the same year. Numbers do not lie, and the effect of this scholarship on our students is very clear.

I am here to testify not only on behalf of myself, but on behalf of my younger brother who will be starting college soon; of the many first generation immigrant students who believe they

cannot go to college because of their status; and of every CUNY student who wants to pursue their education but are struggling to find the means to do so.

I urge the Council to take all of this information into consideration and use it to implement the Academic Achievement Award.

Thank you for your time,
Lida Ramos Arce



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June 12th, 2014,

To: New York City Council, Higher Education Committee

From: Dario Peralta, CUNY University Student Senate

Re: Testimony

Good morning, New York City Council Members, members of the Higher Education Committee and students of CUNY. My name is Dario Peralta, current Student Government Association President at Hostos Community College and University Student Senate delegate.

As one of the previous speakers stated, one third of eligible students are born outside of the U.S., and 38% of those born in the U.S. had parents that were born outside the U.S. I myself am part of that one in third of eligible students born outside the U.S., also who had my parents born outside the U.S. I was born in Honduras and was brought to the United States with my parents when I was 10 years old. I've faced many difficulties and challenges as an undocumented person, and even many more to struggle with as an undocumented student.

When I graduated high school, I was not really looking forward to applying to college. I always had the dream to go to college and get a degree, and hopefully to one day become a medical doctor, but I knew I would have to face many hardships in college. As an undocumented student, I used to worry that one day my parents won't make enough money to pay for my tuition. Every semester gets more expensive, and as a science major, it's not only the tuition that I worry about but the text books as well. Every semester I need around \$700 worth of text books and lab manuals.

Undocumented students are choosing to attend community colleges or sometimes not to attend for financial reasons. Community college's tuition is cheaper than 4 year colleges. There is very little and limited help that undocumented students are available for to receive in college. Most of the help is merit awards. ASAP, Pell, Tap, CUNY scholarship, outside scholarships, all of them require the participant to be a citizen.

In my college only about 10% of students graduate within the expected time of graduation. The rest, many undocumented, take longer because they do not make enough money to pay to be in college as a full time student. I have been grateful that so far my parents have been able to be making just enough to allow me to be a full time student, and allow me to give back to the community that has supported me, and to the institution that provides me with an education at a price. Triple AAA will help students like me, who cannot receive any financial help while being an academic achiever and being so involved to the college by helping other students.

Every year, I notice the same students applying to the same scholarships, while at the same time see other struggle to pay the student activity fee, and transportation, both of them which will increase within the next year, CUNY raising tuition price for the Fall semester and the MTA increasing their fares by 2015. It is very difficult being an undocumented student who may sometimes feel with no voice nor representation, especially when there is very little help being offered that they may be eligible for.

**Testimony of the Professional Staff Congress:
Merit and Need-Based Scholarships at CUNY**

Delivered by Dr. Barbara Bowen, President, and Arthurine DeSola, Secretary, PSC

June 12, 2014

Good morning, Chair Barron, members of the Council and friends. On behalf of the 27,000 faculty and staff of CUNY represented by the Professional Staff Congress and the students we serve, we thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify about financial aid at CUNY. Council Member Barron, thank you for holding this hearing, and thank you for acting aggressively to expand access to CUNY and protect the quality of a CUNY education.

You recently delivered a letter to Speaker Mark-Viverito, endorsed so far by 24 other Council members, calling for two new Council-funded initiatives: \$10 million to support 100 new full-time faculty lines at CUNY and \$5 million to create a need-based financial aid fund at CUNY. CUNY is radically understaffed after years of underfunding, and too many of the University's poorest students (and potential students) are ill-served by the current system of State and federal financial aid. Enacting these two initiatives would be a significant step in advancing, together with the Mayor and the entire university community, to make CUNY the centerpiece of the City's attack on economic inequality.

The real solution to the financial aid problem at CUNY is to restore free tuition. From 1847 to 1976, CUNY was free, and for many years students even received an additional stipend to cover the costs of books and transport. This city maintained a commitment to free tuition during the Civil war, two World Wars and the Great Depression. The commitment faltered only when the introduction of Open Admissions was followed by the city's 1976 fiscal crisis, and CUNY took a hit far out of proportion to its share of the City budget.

Now CUNY community colleges cost close to \$4,500 a year, yet 65% of community college students have annual household incomes of less than \$30,000. The best way to maintain the historic, defining commitment to providing access to college for "the children of the whole people"—as CUNY's founding statement announces—would be to restore CUNY to free tuition. In fact, only yesterday *The Chronicle of Higher Education* featured an article on the surge of interest in national proposals to make college free—and it illustrated the article with a photograph of students protesting budget cuts to CUNY that would lead to the end of free tuition.

Ultimately, we would like to work with the Council on that idea; it is less out-of-reach than it may appear. But today we want to concentrate on the financial needs of our students and the critical importance of a need-based scholarship.

Academic Achievement Award (AAA) While Supporting Need-Based Aid

We support the Council's interest in re-establishing a merit-based scholarship, the Academic Achievement Award (AAA), if it is created together with a need-based financial aid initiative. The PSC, as the union representing the faculty, has a bedrock interest in supporting student

achievement. We applaud students who are able to maintain high academic standards and who strive to excel academically. There is nothing like seeing a student take off intellectually when exposed to quantum physics or medieval philosophy or feminist theory. As teachers, we love to see students thrill to learning and we are committed to seeing them do well.

The AAA scholarship would reward full-time CUNY students who maintain a B average with \$400 in scholarship aid per semester or \$800 per year. This is a modest, but much-appreciated amount of aid for the 13,500 students expected to qualify for the scholarship. Many of the qualifying students will come from low- and moderate-income families; \$400 a semester will make a real difference for them. Some will be low-income undocumented students; they won't be barred from receiving the AAA scholarship. There will also be students without financial need who receive the award, students who worked hard to achieve their good grades.

Need-Based Aid Should Be a Priority for the City

But there are serious limitations to a merit-based scholarship, and the City Council has a history of recognizing the importance of supporting students according to their need. Until recently, when funds were cut by the Bloomberg administration, the Council was able to develop and fund a strictly need-based scholarship for undergraduates, without restriction on its use in any part of the University. Now is the political moment to revive that important program. The eyes of the city are focused on the upcoming budget, and Mayor de Blasio has prompted us to see CUNY as a linchpin of his program to reduce economic inequality. Without a need-based scholarship, some of that momentum may be lost.

The proposed AAA scholarship will not help part-time CUNY students, nor will it provide enough aid to undocumented students or working poor independent students so that they can study full-time and progress to graduation. And the large number of students who enter CUNY with remedial needs won't have B grade point averages, even though they would benefit from aid which would help them to work less and study more.

The PSC believes strongly that the Council should set aside \$5 million for need-based financial aid to be distributed by CUNY to those for whom it will make a real difference in their ability to go to school. Financial aid offices at CUNY could target this aid directly to where the most need exists, as they did under the now defunded "Safety Net" financial aid program, initiated by the Council a decade ago.

CUNY Students

Most CUNY students come from poor, low- and moderate-income households. Sixty-five percent of CUNY community college students are from households with an annual income less than \$30,000; 83% are people of color; 40% are immigrants; 15% are parents; and 45% are first generation students.

More than half (54.3%) of all CUNY students receive federal Pell grants and nearly 60% of CUNY students have such low incomes that their tuition is fully covered by Pell and the State's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).

Rising College Costs

Next fall, tuition at CUNY will rise another \$300 per year to \$6,030 for full-time attendance at the CUNY senior colleges and \$4,500 at the community colleges.

CUNY estimates that fees, books, transportation and lunch add \$5,270 bringing the total to \$11,300 for senior college students and to \$9,700 for community college students at CUNY who live at home with their families. This estimate does not cover the cost of housing and other food, which are big expenses for financially independent students who don't live with their parents and students living in residence halls.

Balancing Work and Studies

CUNY students work significant hours while going to school; 20% work more than 20 hours per week while attending full-time. The financial aid rules for TAP and Pell provide little or no support for students carrying fewer than 12 credit hours per semester. This means that many students' work for pay competes with their time for study. There were 105,000 part-time students at CUNY for the Fall 2013 semester. Part-time and full-time students who work have less time for internships, independent research, service-learning projects, clubs and other extra-classroom learning opportunities, which enhance their education and improve their chances of success and completion.

Reducing students' need to work while they're enrolled in classes is one of the ways CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) initiative helps to increase retention and graduation rates. Students in ASAP have their tuition covered (after financial aid is applied) and they receive Metrocards and books free of charge, so they are less likely to have to work (or can work less) while they are in school.

Failures of the State and Federal Financial Aid System

Most CUNY students receive financial aid, but financial aid doesn't guarantee college access for every poor student. And it's a myth that poor students aren't harmed by tuition hikes because of financial aid. Thousands of CUNY students and New Yorkers who aspire to attend CUNY are categorically prevented from receiving TAP and Pell. Others receive inadequate financial awards.

Part-time students who cannot attend college full-time because of family obligations or other responsibilities are seldom eligible for aid.

Undocumented immigrant students who grow up here and graduate from NYC high schools cannot receive State and federal aid. The NY DREAM Act, which would give access to TAP and other forms of State financial aid, is being held up by the State Senate. So about 4,500 low-income undocumented CUNY students are left struggling to afford tuition and thousands more can't attend CUNY.

Working poor adults, who are not dependent on parents or relatives, and have no dependents of their own are very poorly served by our State financial aid system. They have a hard time qualifying for TAP, because the income limit that applies to them is absurdly low: If their Net Taxable Income is above \$10,000 they don't qualify for any aid and they can only receive the maximum TAP award if they earn less than \$3,000 in Net Taxable Income. And even if they are poor enough to qualify for the maximum award, these students receive TAP awards that fall far short of CUNY's tuition. Their maximum possible TAP award is \$3,025; again, tuition next year will be \$4,500 at the community colleges and \$6,030 at the senior colleges.

Conclusion

Low-income CUNY students need this help from the City Council, at least until free tuition at CUNY is restored or the gaps in TAP are repaired by the Legislature. Your support for this initiative has been critical, Council Member Barron. We're grateful for it and for the support of the 24 Council members who cosigned your letter. We urge every member of the Council to join us in the call for a Council-supported need-based financial aid fund and a full-time faculty initiative at CUNY.

CUNY
ADMINISTRATION

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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[]

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VICE CHANCELLOR MATTHEW SAPIENZA

Address: VICE CHANCELLOR FRANK SANCHEZ

I represent: UNIVERSITY DEAN JAMES MURPHY

Address: VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL BASTON

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Name: Dario Peratta

Address: 1525 White Plains rd #2c

I represent: Hostos CUNY USS

Address: _____

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Name: FRANK D - SANCHEZ

Address: 205 E. 42nd

I represent: CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Address: 205 E. 42nd

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: PETER VALLONE

Address: 233 B Way

I represent: Forum Speaker

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Date: June 12, 2014

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Name: Muhammad Arshad

Address: ~~Harlem~~

I represent: University Student Senate

Address: 555 W 57th St

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Name: MONICA SIBEI

Address: 316 - 86st Apt 2R 11220

I represent: College of Staten Island, USS

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: ANTHONY J. S. LA

Address: 188157 71th Street, C

I represent: PROFESSIONAL STAFF COUNCIL

Address: 61 Broadway, N.Y. 10006

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: Joseph Hoedje

Address: 114 St Marys Ave S.I. NY

I represent: USS E-board - Senior College

Address: _____

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Name: Dom. J. Esteviz

Address: 605 W 182 St NY, NY 10033

I represent: Community Colleges

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Date: 6/12/14

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Name: Barbara Bowen

Address: _____

I represent: PSC - President

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

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Name: Cynthia Roldan / Senior College CUNY

Address: _____

I represent: USS

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: Cynthia Roldan

Address: _____

I represent: University Student Senate - USS

Address: _____

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Name: Donovan Berington

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I represent: University Student Senate USS

Address: _____

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
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Date: 6/12/14

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Name: Melissa Carreño

Address: 131 Suydam St BK, NY, 11221

I represent: USS / Lehman

Address: _____

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Name: CHARLES BARRON

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Lida Ramos (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 202-35 47th ave Bayside

I represent: Queensborough, USS, CUNY

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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

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Date: 6/12/14

Name: DR. MICHAEL A. BASTON (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: LAGUARDIA Community College 29-10 Thomson Ave, LIC NY 11101

I represent: City University of New York (CUNY)

Address: 205 East 42nd Street, NY NY

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ISmail Sharif

Address: _____

I represent: NYP: 19

Address: 9 - MURRY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Date: June 12, 2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ANA PAOLA WHITE

Address: 954 Lexington Ave, #511, NY NY 10021

I represent: HUNTER College, NSANYS, NYSA, CUNY DIVEST

Address: 68th & Lexington

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