

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,  
16th Fl.

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

FERNANDO CABRERA  
JAMES VACCA  
JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS  
LAURIE A. CUMBO  
VANESSA L. GIBSON  
YDANIS A. RODRIGUEZ

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

1  
2 [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good morning. Good  
4 morning.

5 [background comments]

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I want to welcome  
7 everyone to today's hearing on merit and need based  
8 scholarships at the City University of New York. I  
9 am Inez Barron Chair of the Committee on Higher  
10 Education. Witnesses invited to testify on today's  
11 topic include representatives from CUNY, student  
12 leaders from all 24 CUNY campuses, former Council  
13 Speaker Peter Vallone Senior, former Higher  
14 Education Committee Chair Charles Barron, and other  
15 interested parties. Before we begin I want to  
16 stress for everyone here that I came to the council  
17 committed to fighting for the restoration of free  
18 tuition for all graduates of New York City public  
19 Schools who had a B or average or better. This idea  
20 seems to have gone out of fashion but it is an idea  
21 that made it possible for the best and the  
22 brightest children of immigrants, working class,  
23 and lower middle class to attend CUNY and make it a  
24 world class institution. I've said before I myself  
25 was fortunate enough to have attended Hunter

1  
2 College because it was tuition free. And I believe  
3 it is the responsibility of successive generations  
4 to make it available for the generations that come  
5 after us. I also believe it is central to the  
6 mission of the university. Though nearly 60 percent  
7 of CUNY students have their tuition covered by need  
8 based PELL grants and state TAP assistance these  
9 days there appears to be very little relief for the  
10 members of the lower middle class who do not  
11 qualify for such assistance and who lack the  
12 savings to pay for tuition out of pocket. Even  
13 though CUNY tuition is significantly lower than  
14 tuition at private institutions over 40,000 CUNY  
15 students rely on over 275 million dollars in  
16 federal student loans for an average loan amount  
17 per year of over 6,600 dollars or in excess of  
18 26,000 dollars over four years. That's roughly 87  
19 percent of the average amount borrowed by graduates  
20 of private four year institutions. While some  
21 people may believe that student loan debt isn't  
22 harmful or that 26,000 dollars in debt accrued at a  
23 public institution is substantially better in the  
24 long run than 29,000 dollars accrued while  
25 attending a private university I do not. 26,000

1  
2 dollars of debt that can never be discharged to  
3 bankruptcy borrowed by someone who may never have  
4 worked, who has no assets, and who might have to  
5 borrow even more money to obtain a graduate degree  
6 in order to get a job in his or her desired field  
7 to earn stagnant wages that don't keep pace with  
8 inflation is an enormous burden. An editorial in  
9 yesterday's New York Times noted; according to  
10 federal statistics about seven million of the  
11 nation's 40 million student loan borrowers are in  
12 default. The people in this large and growing  
13 pariah class have difficulty getting jobs or credit  
14 or renting apartments. But borrowers who even  
15 narrowly earn enough to make loan payments are not  
16 much better off. They have to put off car purchases  
17 and bunk with their parents because they can't  
18 afford rents and they can't even begin to think  
19 about saving for retirement. The imposition of that  
20 burden on students is antithetical to why City  
21 University of New York was created. The first CUNY  
22 school founded in 1847 was called the free academy  
23 and provided a free college education for all. CUNY  
24 continued to offer free tuition to students at  
25 senior colleges as recently as 1976. The financial

1  
2 crisis of the 1970s forced the university to agree  
3 to charge tuition. The fact that the city stopped  
4 subsidizing the tuition of public school graduates  
5 during the financial crisis of the 70s seems to  
6 have created a false sense among some people that a  
7 city that provides free college education is a city  
8 that isn't financially responsible even though the  
9 same people acknowledge that the benefits of a  
10 college educated populous is indisputable. We know  
11 college graduates earn twice as much as non-college  
12 graduates. We know that society benefits from the  
13 increased tax revenues these higher earners  
14 provide. And the fact that they typically don't  
15 have to rely on public assistance. We also know  
16 that a college educated citizen has been shown to  
17 be more health conscious, more engaged in community  
18 affairs, and to have a lower rate of incarceration  
19 than noncollege prepared, the noncollege educated  
20 populations. Given what we know about the benefits  
21 of a college degree and the dangers of student debt  
22 it seems fiscally irresponsible for the city not to  
23 provide free tuition. So part of why we're having  
24 this hearing is to change the conversation about  
25 tuition and debt. In the late 1990s former City

1 Council Speaker Peter Vallone Senior took the steps  
2 towards restoring free tuition by establishing a  
3 hugely successful scholarship that covered 50  
4 percent of the tuition of students graduating from  
5 New York City public schools with a B average or  
6 better. Over time that scholarship was diminished  
7 until it was eliminated in fiscal year 2011. Last  
8 year during his campaign for mayor then Public  
9 Advocate de Blasio said quote the Peter F. Vallone  
10 Scholarship, Academic Scholarship Program offered  
11 thousands of young people across New York a  
12 tremendous opportunity for a great education.  
13 Empowering the sons and daughters of immigrant  
14 families with the skills and knowledge to succeed  
15 isn't just the right thing to do. It's critical to  
16 New York City's future. The fact that these  
17 resources were cut is simply wrong. We must do  
18 right by New York City's young people and restore  
19 this funding. Unquote. We have an opportunity to  
20 begin that process now. As we meet here today the  
21 City Council is considering possible initiatives to  
22 include in fiscal year 2015 budget. One of those  
23 initiatives submitted by a Council Member Paul  
24 Vallone would allocate five million dollars to a  
25

1  
2 new merit scholarship at CUNY modeled on the one  
3 established by Speaker Vallone. Due to increases in  
4 tuition over the years the initiative will only  
5 cover 10 to 20 percent of the tuition for  
6 qualifying students unless we can obtain more  
7 funding from the mayor. However it would be the  
8 first step on the path to restoring free tuition at  
9 city university of New York, a path I'm committed  
10 to pursuing through this budget and every budget  
11 while I'm here and a path on which I invite my  
12 colleagues, students, faculty and administrations,  
13 and all New Yorkers to join me. I want to  
14 acknowledge my colleague who has joined us; Council  
15 Member Paul Vallone. And I also want to thank my  
16 Committee Council Jeff Capana [sp?], my Policy  
17 Analyst Tonya Cyrus, as well as my Legislative  
18 Director Indigo Washington [sp?] for the help in  
19 organizing this hearing. I will now recognize  
20 Council Member Vallone who will make a statement.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLON: Good morning and  
22 thank you Madam Chair. A few eloquent words and  
23 looking radiant again today in orange. It is an  
24 honor to stay here today and, and bring the words  
25 of those that were brought before me by the man



1  
2 that's here today. So as a council member, as a  
3 father of children in our school system, and as a  
4 son of the man who started this I wanted to speak.  
5 And I thank my fellow Council Members for allowing  
6 me the ability to come today and also listen to why  
7 this was such a wonderful wonderful program for  
8 over a decade. As Council Member Barron stated this  
9 is the week that all of the council members  
10 submitted initiatives. And I was overwhelmed by the  
11 support when we brought this idea back for the  
12 Vallone Scholarship or for the New York City  
13 Council Academic Scholarship that the Council  
14 Members all came and said its time has come to  
15 bring it back. And with the leadership of Council  
16 Member Barron and our Chair we are very close. So  
17 today's hearing is instrumental into continuing  
18 that rallying cry and, and making us heard. And I  
19 have to tell you I've received thousands of emails  
20 and phone calls and these ones I'm happy about.  
21 Sometimes they're a little bit much. To, this is  
22 one that you can send as many times from all of the  
23 students of the city who either receive the  
24 scholarship or is hoping to get the scholarship or  
25 realized an impact it had on someone in their

1 family that enabled them to do something with the  
2 additional funding. This, this award over the last  
3 13 years varied from two million per year to almost  
4 13 million in its heyday. This ask is about five  
5 million. Of course as Council Member Barron said we  
6 would love to put full tuition and hopefully one  
7 day that will come but realistically this is a  
8 wonderful first step to getting to that goal, to  
9 realizing the tens of thousands of students and  
10 every aspect of the city will be impacted by this.  
11 And there's not many initiatives that that would  
12 happen. So as I summarize my first six months here  
13 in council I said this is a council that is united  
14 to fight for the groups that need to be fought for.  
15 If anything can say about this new council that has  
16 got together it has taken on many new fights. And  
17 this group is one that clearly is our children, our  
18 future, our students. And there is so many  
19 different organizations that wrote wonderful things  
20 in this, one that came to me today and I, I thought  
21 it was a good summary was from NYPIRG and it said  
22 the perfect storm of budget cuts, rising costs,  
23 inadequate financial aid, and the surge in  
24 enrollment have heightened the demand for greater  
25

1  
2 New York City investment in programs that work such  
3 as the Peter F. Vallone Academic Scholarship which  
4 helps to make college more accessible and  
5 affordable and a realistic dream. In addition  
6 undocumented youth are currently ineligible for any  
7 federal state and financial aid that would  
8 encourage access to college. The Vallone  
9 scholarship was one of the few and only programs  
10 that were available to undocumented New Yorkers who  
11 wanted to attend CUNY. In effect it was New York  
12 City's own dream act. And so as the state failed us  
13 we can save us. And we can do what needs to be done  
14 and not have to be dependent on Albany or those in  
15 congress and say as the greatest city in the world  
16 we can bring this back. So thank you very much for  
17 allowing me to have my comments today Madam Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you Council  
19 Member Vallone. I want to acknowledge we've been  
20 joined by Council Member Vanessa Gibson. And at  
21 this time we're going to call the first panel. And  
22 since we have so many people who have joined us to  
23 testify we're going to put people on the clock  
24 because we do have a time to be out. And at my  
25 first hearing we were so engaged and so much to say

1  
2 that many people didn't get an opportunity to say  
3 anything. So we want to make sure that everyone has  
4 an opportunity to present. So I'm going to call the  
5 first panel and that will be Council, former  
6 Council Member Charles Barron and former Speaker  
7 Peter Vallone. I'm going to ask if they would come  
8 and if they would be sworn in at this time. Thank  
9 you. Thank you. If you'd both raise your right hand  
10 I'd appreciate it. Do you swear or affirm to tell  
11 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the  
12 truth in the testimony you provide today and to  
13 answer all questions posed by the Committee  
14 honestly? Thank you, you may begin.

15 PETER VALLONE: Been a long time since I  
16 used it I'm sorry... Thank you Madam Chair and thank  
17 you council members for witnessing. And I'm pleased  
18 to be a guest with Charles Barron who was a former  
19 chair of Higher Education Committee. I'm just going  
20 to leave out most of my prepared statement which I  
21 gave to you. I just want to read the part that I  
22 think it's important in the record to give the  
23 historical background of, of the scholarship and of  
24 the council itself. We have to put this back in  
25 historic act of the councilman... When I was first

1  
2 elected in 1974 I introduced a resolution to  
3 abolish the then ruling body of the city called the  
4 Board of Estimate as violating the separation of  
5 powers and the principals of one man one vote. The  
6 councilors was powerless to move even one penny of  
7 the budget without the permission of the Board of  
8 Estimate of which the Mayor was Chairman. 17... later  
9 in 1999 the Supreme Court of the United States in a  
10 case called Morris against the Board of Estimate  
11 while I was the then Vice Chairman finally agreed,  
12 declared it unconstitutional, and set the stage for  
13 the Council to be a truly independent branch of  
14 government separate but equal to the office of  
15 mayor. Despite my recommendation to the Charter  
16 Commission and major legislative power held back  
17 from the council was the ability to increase the  
18 budget set by the mayor. This set the stage for the  
19 negotiations that must take place between the mayor  
20 and the council every year with the help of the  
21 Independent Budget Office IBO to verify increased  
22 revenues. If the office of the Mayor refuses to  
23 negotiate for any reason the Council then does have  
24 the power to change the budget from within as  
25 indeed we did in 1967 when a then mayor walked out

1  
2 of budget negation, negotiations. For the very  
3 first time the council adopted its own budget,  
4 remove million set aside by the mayor to move  
5 Yankee Stadium from the Bronx to Manhattan and move  
6 that money to build a new high school in every  
7 borough and as well as starting this momentous  
8 scholarship program. The mayor sued and we settled.  
9 Yankee Stadium stayed in the Bronx. The schools  
10 were built and the scholarship was established.  
11 Very important to understand that this is a council  
12 initiative not a mayor initiative. It wasn't until  
13 my last year of service at the very last session of  
14 the term limited council in 2001 that the then  
15 Chairman of Higher Education Helen Marshall  
16 introduced a resolution changing the name of the  
17 scholarship which was properly called New York City  
18 Council Academic Scholarship to my name which I  
19 objected to. However they, over my objection they  
20 unanimously passed it. And while I was and am  
21 deeply honored I said then and repeat now it is not  
22 the name but the students that are a need that we  
23 want to help who are most important. I emphasize  
24 council initiatives because the scholarship is only  
25 one of the many such landmark programs initiated by

1  
2 the newly independent council such as Safe City  
3 Safe Streets, Campaign Finance, Indoor Clean Act,  
4 it goes on and on. Of course we seek the  
5 cooperation of the mayor but not just as another  
6 agency of the mayor but as a truly equal partner.  
7 That's why we were elected in the first place to  
8 represent the people and simply to do the right  
9 thing. Approximately 15 thousand students took  
10 advantage of this scholarship every year. 11  
11 million dollar set aside in 1998 with the tuition  
12 then at 3,200 dollars amounted to about half of  
13 this tuition. What a wonderful... But today with  
14 tuition at 6,030 dollars would amount to as you  
15 said Madam Chair to less than half. But it's still  
16 a significant initiative and a good incentive for  
17 every kid in high school to know I can stay in High  
18 School. There are people that care about me. I can  
19 go to a great one of 17 colleges. I don't have to  
20 be number one in class and I don't have to be the  
21 poorest kid in class. I could be part of what's  
22 called the vanishing middle class. Thousands upon  
23 thousands upon thousands of kids who have no place  
24 else to go because they don't fit in the means  
25 category. That's what makes this scholarship so

1  
2 special because it's open to everyone; poor,  
3 middle, and everyone else. And I think that's a  
4 tremendous, tremendous incentive. What better  
5 incentive to keep a kid in high school to know that  
6 someone cares and I could go to a great school. One  
7 of the greatest in the country, equal to many of  
8 our so called Ivy schools. That's why it's so  
9 important that this council on its own do whatever  
10 it thinks is necessary to make every kid in this  
11 city know that we care and that you are entitled to  
12 an education. If my way it would be free for  
13 everyone. Thank you very much Madam Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you Mr.  
15 Speaker.

16 [applause]

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So what we ask here  
18 in the council chambers is, well in the council  
19 hearings is that we do the applause through the  
20 hand sign. It's okay but I have to say that because  
21 I might applaud again myself after the next  
22 speaker...

23 [laughter]

24

25



CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And the next speaker that we're going to hear from is Council Member, former Council Member Charles Barron.

CHARLES BARRON: Thank you very much Madam Chair and I must say that you... all due honesty express that I have to express that you just look royally elegant.

[laughter]

CHARLES BARRON: And it's only matched by your articulate eloquence and... are you married?

[laughter]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Happily.

CHARLES BARRON: Happily. That's my wife for the record. So that, for the record that's my wife. You know I never thought I'd be on the same page of a Vallone as much as I battled his son all the years I was in the council...

COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Not this one.

CHARLES BARRON: Not that one. The other son. But I'm honored to be here today to talk about the scholarships. As chair of the Higher Ed. for eight years and I remember when I first came in the scholarships were at 4.3 million and there was about 1,500 dollars for each student. And even as

1  
2 the amount of money went up sometimes the  
3 allocation per student went down. So we was trying  
4 to keep or match the amount of money with the  
5 amount of students that were in need. Now there's  
6 always a debate between merit and needs based  
7 scholarships. I don't think we need to have that  
8 kind of debate. We need both. This is one of the  
9 richest cities in the world and there is enough  
10 money for merit scholarships and an increase and  
11 needs based scholarship. Not just with TAP but with  
12 other kinds of sources where students could truly  
13 benefit. We did get the scholarship up to a high of  
14 12.3 million in 2008. And I might add at the risk  
15 of sounding whatever after I was removed from chair  
16 unjustifiably the scholarship went down. Now I  
17 don't believe in coincidence, it went down, and  
18 down to the point where they zeroed it out and we  
19 didn't have anything. So I came here today to say  
20 that we need to keep the doors of CUNY open. And  
21 just for those who don't understand who actually  
22 gets these scholarships about 50, over 55 percent  
23 are to black and Latino students, another 20 some  
24 odd percent would be to Asian students, about 70  
25 percent of them go to students of color. And I know

1 people don't like to deal with race but race  
2 matters in everything we do. It permeates racism,  
3 every institution in American and in this city. So  
4 we want to keep those doors open for those students  
5 that in greatest need and so if you have a, a  
6 student that has a C average because I think needs  
7 based and doesn't have that B average. There's a  
8 lot of students that have a C average and may not  
9 make enough or make too much money, their families  
10 to get TAP. So they're stuck with a C average,  
11 can't get the Vallone Scholarship, can't get TAP  
12 and they're stuck. So we got to keep looking at  
13 needs based and expand the concept of needs. And  
14 then often times we're always talking about middle  
15 class, middle class, middle class like that's the  
16 only class in the world. There's others who are in  
17 working poor neighborhood and they are in classes  
18 that don't reach. You know when you make 50, 60, 70  
19 thousand dollars a year if you think you're middle  
20 class you got another thought coming. You're just  
21 as broke as a lot of people. Because 50, 60  
22 thousand dollars after they take out tax and you  
23 have to pay all the stuff that you have to pay it's  
24 not a lot of money. So we're looking at most CUNY  
25

1 students whose families are at 30 thousand and  
2 below then we're looking at a very very tight time.  
3 So I want to recommend highly, highly to the city  
4 council it is time for the council members to  
5 assert the power that you have. The speaker has one  
6 vote for the budget and the mayor has no votes for  
7 the budget. The budget is passed by the city  
8 council members. This is a 74 billion dollar  
9 budget. It is a disgrace that we're talking about  
10 five million dollars. We should at least be talking  
11 about anywhere from 15 to 20 million dollars for  
12 these scholarships. That is not a lot of money in a  
13 74 billion dollar budget. That's not a lot of money  
14 in a city that helps the Steinbrenner build Yankee  
15 Stadium, helps Ratner [sp?] build Parksley [sp?]  
16 Stadium, and then you don't want to help build the  
17 mind and the future of our students. It is a  
18 disgrace if we don't get the kind of money that we  
19 deserve out of your taxpaying dollars. Five million  
20 is much too low. This should at least go into 15  
21 and 20 million dollars and you should not vote for  
22 a budget that doesn't fully restore this  
23 scholarship for our students. Thank you very much  
24 Madam Chair.  
25

[scattered applause]

CHARLES BARRON: If you all clap they can't throw all of you out. Clap, go ahead.

[laughter]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you both for your presentation. I'm especially pleased that you're both referencing the time and the responsibility of the council, that you've laid out the history which I had forgotten was the onset of the council being able to in fact look at the budget and say no this doesn't appear right and we want to change that. That's critical. And it's always been my position that the people elect us to the positions to represent them, not to rub a stamp, or to be silent on those positions that are not in their best interest and that we've got to continue to do that. So I want to commend you and thank you both for bringing that to attention and making that a highlight here because we only hear our four members of the council. But it's our responsibility and our authority to say what it is that we want to see in the budget. And we are the ones that vote on the budget. So we can make sure that it's a reflection of what's in the best

1  
2 interest of those citizens and the residents that  
3 are here in the city. I'm going to call on my  
4 colleagues for question... I want to acknowledge  
5 we've been joined by Council Member Rodriguez and  
6 I'm going to limit my questions and move to my  
7 colleagues. I'm going to start with Council Member  
8 Gibson. And we're going to be on the clock three  
9 minutes for both questions and answers.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Absolutely. I  
11 got you. Thank you so much Madam Chairwoman and  
12 good morning to each and every one of you. And  
13 thank you so much former Council Member and former  
14 Speaker. I don't have a question but simply just a  
15 statement. As a newly elected council member  
16 someone who served as an Assembly Member I know all  
17 too well the contributions that public institutions  
18 that higher education make. I'm a twofer. I went to  
19 SUNY and CUNY so I know the value. And certainly as  
20 someone who looks at our young people in an  
21 uplifting way I look at them as success stories and  
22 not statistics I applaud the work that you have  
23 done to make a difference in the lives of so many  
24 students. I was one of the champions in Albany to  
25 try to get the dream act passed in New York State

1  
2 because I recognized that in my district, and I  
3 represent the Bronx, I represent Yankee Stadium too  
4 Council Member.

5 [laughter]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: But that's okay.  
7 But I recognize that so many undocumented students  
8 don't have access to financial aid and that's why  
9 we tried to get the Dream Act passed because we  
10 recognize that this is not about you know barrios.  
11 This is not about limitations but about opening  
12 doors of opportunity and that's what the dream act  
13 would do. So as my colleague Council Member Vallone  
14 has said this is our opportunity to make a reality  
15 and satisfy the dreams of so many students that  
16 want to go to college and be the leaders that we  
17 know they can be. So I am so delighted at all the  
18 work that you have done over the years in being  
19 leaders and soldiers in this effort. And certainly  
20 I know that my colleagues and I will continue to be  
21 strong advocates in restoring this to the fullest  
22 capacity that we can because at the end of the day  
23 if we can look students in the face and say that  
24 we've done this for you and your brothers and  
25 sisters then we have made a difference and opened

1  
2 those doors, that we'll continue to open doors of  
3 opportunity. So I applaud your work, thank you for  
4 all that you have done and I certainly will look to  
5 be a strong advocate and make sure that we get this  
6 money in the budget because as you said it's the  
7 right thing to do. So thank you so much and thank  
8 you Madam Chairwoman.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Your welcome. Thank  
10 you. We're going to move onto Council Member  
11 Vallone.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: I think it's  
13 family day... [crosstalk]

14 [laughter]

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Alright...  
16 [crosstalk]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: This is good.  
18 I, I just have a simple question. Is, is family  
19 dinner Sunday still at 3:00? Because that is,  
20 that's, are we have pasta again on Sunday? And, and  
21 thank you both and Council Member Barron. Both of  
22 your reputations have helped this council to forge  
23 the relationships that we have today. And I think  
24 that that's paramount to get to this point, that  
25 the battles that were fought in, in, in the decades



1  
2 past and the council members before us led us to  
3 have the unity that we have today as a, as a group,  
4 as a council body to take on whoever's on the other  
5 side. Because when you're united you can do  
6 anything. And so I thank both of you for that. And  
7 I, I just had one quick question for either. This,  
8 this scholarship in its inception was always merit  
9 based correct? And over the years the students that  
10 received the scholarship was a B average. Right,  
11 and all they had to maintain that average going  
12 forward. And coming out of high school they had to  
13 have a certain GPA to apply and they had to  
14 maintain the B average. So we set the challenge.  
15 The students no matter where they came from, no  
16 matter what the economic background that was the  
17 platform. And it'll always remain that way correct?

18 PETER VALLONE: It was meant as an  
19 incentive. It's meant for every kid that gets into  
20 high school to try and be as good as he or she can  
21 be and work themselves up to a B average. I just  
22 want to point out that affects every council member  
23 but also affects every citizen of the city. Very  
24 recently I had the, a heart scare ad I was taken to  
25 Mount Sinai Hospital. The young doctor came over to

1  
2 me and says I know you don't know me but I said I  
3 know you, you were a council member, and there's a  
4 scholarship. He says I would not have been able to  
5 go to college if I didn't have that half tuition  
6 back in 1986 or 87. He said, and he was the head of  
7 the cardiology unit in Mount Sinai Hospital at that  
8 particular unit. So needless to say if that ever  
9 happens to you you'll be very happy to see somebody  
10 that likes you for any reason once so ever. And I  
11 was so delighted because I didn't know him, he  
12 didn't know me, but he remembered the scholarship,  
13 and that helped him go to school. And it's, doesn't  
14 make any difference of race, doesn't make any  
15 different religion, doesn't make any... just be a  
16 human being who tries his or her best.

17 CHARLES BARRON: You know I know we  
18 putting a lot of emphasis on merit but race does  
19 matter. And most of, those of us who are black,  
20 Latino, or make up the larger so called lower class  
21 or poor class of people. So race does matter and  
22 while we speak of merit and I don't want us to  
23 forget needs based. Needs based should always be  
24 part of the discussion. And I think you have a AAA  
25 academic achievement scholarship that that should

1  
2 be considered, a raise in TAP award should be  
3 considered, the PELL money, should get more of  
4 that. So we shouldn't have separate discussions  
5 even if you're talking merit we should always be  
6 talking needs based. Because that is critical...

7 [static] [laughter]

8 CHARLES BARRON: ...is critical for us. He  
9 must think he's still Speaker. Did you forget who I  
10 am? No you can't do that to me. Oh my... see that's  
11 what about white men John. That's what I was trying  
12 to tell you. So they just think that they could  
13 just do, that this is their world they could just  
14 do what they wanted... sitting there talking and he's  
15 going to take the mic. Oh my God. Anyway...

16 PETER VALLONE: You're out of order.

17 [laughter]

18 CHARLES BARRON: So on the real side  
19 though I think we need to keep the idea of getting  
20 greater public financial support to CUNY for  
21 everything. Because the state and the city is  
22 giving less and less each year which means we're  
23 going to have to come, they raise tuition and have  
24 to go to the private sector. We have to keep this  
25 as a public institution and make this city and

1  
2 state, prioritize it. So let's not get in battle  
3 over merit and need because you need it and merit  
4 always good incentive scholarship.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Then maybe what  
6 we could do is to... while we fight to establish this  
7 we create an additional scholarship needs base  
8 either part of this or an additional funding  
9 allocation that we can make for students have a  
10 needs based need that we can have different  
11 attitudes for all of our students to attain that. I  
12 think, so it's not a competition between...

13 CHARLES BARRON: Right.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: ...one or the  
15 other. I think it's just an ability to create all  
16 of these different steps for anyway, for anyone  
17 trying to get to CUNY. So you have these different  
18 challenges and if the student meets the challenge  
19 wonderful but then there's a financial challenge of  
20 reality for it. And I think that's important that  
21 we can establish both of... [crosstalk]

22 CHARLES BARRON: See and that would be  
23 excellent. See that would be excellent and you're  
24 not asking for a lot of money...

25 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: No.

1  
2 CHARLES BARRON: So if we had a 20  
3 million dollar package or a 25 million dollar  
4 package that included merit and needs based money  
5 that would be excellent.

6 PETER VALLONE: Just want to remind..

7 CHARLES BARRON: And further more...

8 [laughter]

9 PETER VALLONE: Just want to remind  
10 Council Member, former, former colleague I agree  
11 with everything you say. However we're talking  
12 about a whole thousands upon thousands upon  
13 thousands of young people who don't qualify for  
14 financial assistance. And they are not covered by  
15 anyone; not PELL, not anyone. That's why this  
16 scholarship was enacted and that's why it's so  
17 important.

18 CHARLES BARRON: And you're talking  
19 about thousands and thousands of students where  
20 they don't have enough needs based money in there  
21 to cover all the needs of the thousands and  
22 thousands of students that have needs that is not  
23 enough money covering the amount of tuition that  
24 they need because they don't have enough money.  
25 That's alright Madam Chair.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. I'm  
3 going to call on Council Member Rodriguez. Council  
4 Member we're on the clock three minutes because  
5 it's already 10:40 and we have about five more  
6 panels to go. So we're on the clock. Three minutes  
7 for your questions and the answers.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: A comment. I  
9 would like to know thanks everyone that and has  
10 been working so hard to provide scholarship to our  
11 student. And I believe I know as Tony Morrison  
12 [sp?] said I take a whole... see... CUNY has been our  
13 entry door for most of us. And, and I think that it  
14 took from the administration to the union PSE to  
15 the advocate to the former speaker to the former  
16 chairman and councilmember and alls, all of us here  
17 to understand that you know education is a way to  
18 build a strong middleclass in our city. And I think  
19 that it is so unfortunately that, that politics  
20 play a role on getting... scholarship that was very  
21 important. That the former speaker and the  
22 administration they did, he looked up they didn't  
23 see how much that hurts our student when they get  
24 rid of all the Vallone's scholarship. So for me  
25 like CUNY's doing a great job. You know we ca go

1  
2 back and forth. I know that there's conversation  
3 will continue. There's going to be moment where we  
4 will agree and disagree but at the end of the day  
5 we had great teacher, we had great, great  
6 professor. We got great stuff. I know that  
7 administration was also committed to continue  
8 expanding the scholarship that have been provided  
9 at CUNY. And that's our responsibility. You know  
10 those student and their family, they are not  
11 begging for money. This the taxpayer money and it  
12 is our responsibility to be sure that we are there  
13 for those student that they have the need those the  
14 student that they don't qualify for financial aid  
15 and I think that we are you know in a best day, in  
16 our history, when it comes to have a letter from  
17 the mayor to the speaker progressive. You know who  
18 progressive mean about putting the dollars what is  
19 needed. And I think that with the, and the  
20 investment that Speaker Melissa Mark Viverito is  
21 committed and the commitment with the mayor too. So  
22 I, addition of funding to CUNY we are moving in the  
23 right direction. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: thank you Mr.  
25 Council Member. I thank the panel for coming and

1  
2 thank you for your testimony. We appreciate the  
3 work that you did when you were both in the city  
4 council. Going to call the second panel.

5 [background comments] [laughter]

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Second panel as  
7 you're called please come forward. Donovan  
8 Borrington [sp?], Joseph... would you help me  
9 pronounce your last name? Yes. Cynthia Rodon [sp?],  
10 Mohamad Assar [sp?], and Joseph help me with your  
11 last name... are they here? Okay. Owagie [phonetic]  
12 thank you. Okay, please take your seats. I'm going  
13 to swear you in and we're going to put you on a  
14 three minute clock because we want to make sure we  
15 get everyone in. Can we get another chair? There  
16 are four people on this panel. We need one more  
17 chair please. Thank you. If you'd raise your right  
18 hand. Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the  
19 whole truth, and nothing but the truth in the  
20 testimony you are to provide today and to answer  
21 all questions posed by the, by the committee  
22 honestly? Thank you. Please give your name and your  
23 testimony. We are on a three minute clock.

24 MOHAMAD ASSAR: Good morning New York  
25 City Council Member Honorable Chair and Council



1  
2 Members and distinguished... for... My name is Mohamad  
3 Assar. I'm the Chairperson of University Student  
4 Senate of the City University of New York  
5 representing more than 450 thousand students. And  
6 first I'd like to start by saying thank you for  
7 giving me the opportunity to represent all of our  
8 students who come from all over the city, all over  
9 the world too. Represent almost every nation in our  
10 City University of New York. And I want to thank  
11 former speaker and former council member and chair  
12 of Higher Education Committee and the chair, chair  
13 Barron for, for your remarks. I have my testimony  
14 ready but I could not have said it better than what  
15 you have said. All the statistics are there. That  
16 scholarship had worked and our students need it.  
17 What I would start by is I had the opportunity to  
18 attend multiple graduations this, this year as a  
19 trustee. And what I saw was in every graduation we  
20 would pose a question; you know how many are the  
21 first in their family to graduate, how many worked  
22 jobs while they were in school, how many have kids  
23 and numerous hand just, people just raise hands.  
24 And that just shows us what CUNY adds value. I  
25 worked on my associates at LaGuardia, my, my

1  
2 Bachelor's at City College, my Master's at City  
3 College and I love CUNY and the value that we add  
4 into city, city's life at City University of New  
5 York. I think there is no match to that. And I  
6 would like to share the story just to affirm what  
7 former speaker said before. That our colleges  
8 compete with Ivy League. I would say they are  
9 better than Ivy Leagues because the difference that  
10 we make in people's lives and the lives of their  
11 family is just greater than what they do yeah... to  
12 the, to the lives of their students. And I will  
13 share the story of Simone Golden [sp?], Simone  
14 Golden. She's a friend. She also graduated with me  
15 from City College of New York. She was part of... and  
16 she also received a Vallone Scholarship and she was  
17 a salutatorian. And this is her story. Peter  
18 Vallone scholarship was a blessing to, to me as a  
19 resource. Its assistance allowed me not to have  
20 the, to work part time while completing my studies  
21 therefore I was able to fully engage in all my  
22 attention in my studies and participate in school  
23 activities. Having joined undergraduate student  
24 government as an education senator and then later  
25 joined teachers tomorrow as a vice president. I

1  
2 used the scholarship to buy books, supplies, metro  
3 cards, and other educational necessities for my  
4 course. The Vallone Scholarship also helped me to  
5 pursue other educational opportunities with this  
6 financial support allowing me to apply to a  
7 scholarship like as Full Bright which I, I was  
8 accepted to teach English in India. The Peter  
9 Vallone Scholarship was a necessity for me as a  
10 triple A scholarship will be for the future  
11 students. And this is a student who, who served in  
12 student government with me. She was a salutation of  
13 City, of City College of New York. She's a Full  
14 Bright Scholar. As you can see in all the subways  
15 we have all these CUNY stars, students who receive  
16 all these NSF scholarships. In the Eastern side we  
17 receive the most scholarships like that and amount  
18 of value that this college will add during our  
19 student's life there's just no match to it. And I  
20 urge city, city council to support triple A. Thank  
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next  
23 presenter.

24 CYNTHIA RODON: Good morning honorable  
25 Chairwoman Barron and members of the Higher

1  
2 Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity  
3 to testify here today. My name is Cynthia Rodon and  
4 I'm the Vice Chair for legislative affairs for the  
5 University Student Senate. The New York City  
6 Council has always had a strong legacy for standing  
7 up for CUNY students even when Albany wouldn't. As  
8 tuition went up, up, and up the city council  
9 established special opportunity programs to keep  
10 education within our students' grasp. They  
11 establish leadership programs and merit  
12 scholarships such as triple A to keep our city's  
13 brightest minds right here in New York. But in 2011  
14 no one had our backs. At the height of the great  
15 recession students were left to deal in the pain  
16 of... cuts and everything that came with it.  
17 Washington was too busy bailing out the banks.  
18 Albany was slashing CUNY's funding and shifting the  
19 burden on students with rational tuition increases  
20 and even New York City Council eliminated the Peter  
21 F. Vallone senior scholarship, the only merit  
22 scholarship offered by the city. Three years later  
23 with a new administration we know that assuredly is  
24 not the answer. Going into Fall 2014 a student in  
25 the lowest income bracket will receive 5,730 in the

1  
2 form of PELL grant and 5,165 in the form of TAP  
3 award. A total of 10,895. As we know student cost  
4 tuition is going up. And with that that'll leave a  
5 student with approximately 2,200 per semester for  
6 the year. After that a student still needs to pay  
7 for transportation for monthly metro cards, and  
8 books which leaves a student with less than 2,300  
9 dollars per the year. You might think that's a lot  
10 but when you think about how much that money needs  
11 to stretch. I mean food can easily burn through all  
12 of it even at 10 dollars a day. Then you also have  
13 to factor in clothing because you can't show up to  
14 an interview without a suite, supplies, phone  
15 bills, and living expenses in a city where rent  
16 keeps rising to new heights as do phone and  
17 internet bills that students need to access in  
18 order to succeed. Students cannot afford this and  
19 our city cannot afford to fail our students. This  
20 scholarship would cover the cost of monthly  
21 metrocards during the academic school years or even  
22 help our, cover the average cost of text books for  
23 a semester. Anyone with a CUNY degree knows how  
24 important it is to have, to have a higher  
25 education. Many of you know this having had that

1  
2 experience. As I entered Baruch College in Fall of  
3 2010 I was one of the last... to receive the Vallone  
4 Scholarship with help me pay for my books. Today I  
5 stand here before you not as a member of USS but as  
6 a proud CUNY alumni. And as I enter the workforce  
7 this summer I plan to give back to the city. And  
8 I'm not going anywhere. So I ask you to pass this  
9 scholarship because it would help our, our  
10 students. And it doesn't depend on a student's  
11 race, or income, or discipline, or immigration  
12 status. It would ask... students continue to succeed.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next  
14 panelist.

15 Good morning. Good morning Chairwoman  
16 Barron and members of the council. Thanks for this  
17 opportunity to introduce myself and, and testify.  
18 I'm just variety vice... of the University of Student  
19 Senate of CUNY and a graduate student at Brooklyn  
20 College. I'm here in support of renew and a  
21 revitalizing the support offered to CUNY students,  
22 particularly international students and  
23 undocumented students throughout the initiative  
24 that begun with... establishment of the New York City  
25 Council Merit Scholarship later renamed Peter

1 Vallone Scholarship in 1998. And it's currently  
2 being referred to as a CUNY Academic Achievement  
3 Award or we call triple A scholarship. Established  
4 by the city council this scholarship in recognition  
5 to the need to assist undocumented students to  
6 attend college. This merit scholarship award has  
7 been a very successful award. Over the years it has  
8 helped over 14,000 students to meet the rising cost  
9 of education and, and their high depth of  
10 completing their students, their studies...  
11 dismissing 2011. It is important to remember that  
12 many of our students merit scholars, scholars are  
13 held in high esteem. This an opportunity to  
14 encourage our students to succeed and then reward  
15 them for it. And since eligible student would be  
16 aiming to come out of high school in a good  
17 academic standing and are then being required to  
18 maintain a good grade, grades throughout the  
19 college we are potentially providing an, almost  
20 decade long incentive to our students to do a, to  
21 do good in school. And one, and once students are  
22 doing well they should, they deserve to be  
23 recognize. This grant has proven, has a proven  
24 track record in measurable success and supporting  
25

1 strong academic achievement while optimizing  
2 retention and graduation rates. Award recipients  
3 maintain a grade point average of 3.0 and higher  
4 with significant one year retention rates, 86.9  
5 percent in associate degree programs, 96 percent in  
6 baccalaureate programs. And this goes to show these  
7 are the kinds of statistics that makes CUNY the  
8 strong educational institution our great city needs  
9 and deserves. Therefore I'd like to ask if they,  
10 Higher Education Committee can please go ahead and  
11 approve this scholarship because it, it would mean  
12 to us, our students. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next  
15 panelist.

16 DONOVAN BORRINGTON: Greetings Madam  
17 Chairwoman Barron and committee members and my CUNY  
18 family and citizens of the greatest city in the  
19 world. I am Donovan Borrington, a student at Baruch  
20 College. And I am also the co-chair of the  
21 University Student Senate Scholarship Committee.  
22 And I want to thank you for this opportunity today.  
23 It's wonderful that you get to hear from a student  
24 so you can see how valuable a scholarship like this  
25 would be. The, by use of the student activity feed



1 the University Student Center established  
2 scholarship for students from every student that  
3 pays the activity fee. A portion of that would go  
4 towards the scholarship that would help at-risk  
5 students. Because we felt that these students  
6 needed it at the time. Although the University  
7 Student Senate understands that the student  
8 activity fee it's for student activities when  
9 student leaders are called upon by their fellow  
10 peers we took to action and this was the result  
11 that we came with. However, due to lack of funding  
12 these scholarships aren't able to assist all  
13 students that demonstrate need. Also students that  
14 are undocumented can't receive scholarships funded  
15 by CUNY. It's important that acknowledge that they  
16 are students who just so happen to lack certain  
17 documentation. But they are admitted into CUNY.  
18 They are enrolled in courses within CUNY. They pay  
19 tuition at CUNY. Does that make them CUNY students?  
20 Please forgive me for my lack of understanding but  
21 a student that lacks documentation but pays tuition  
22 cannot receive a scholarship that they are  
23 contributing to. Switching gears. We are currently  
24 in the process of reviewing hundreds of  
25

1  
2 scholarships. And there's no doubt that students  
3 are in need. Even at the community colleges where  
4 tuition is no less than 45 hundred dollars a year.  
5 Take LaGuardia Community College for an example.  
6 According to the institutional profile of 2013 38.4  
7 percent of all students living with their parents  
8 had a combined family household income of less than  
9 15 thousand dollars. The average financial need for  
10 these students is 10,886 dollars. And the average  
11 financial aid awarded was 4,893 dollars. However  
12 this leaves the student with an average gap of  
13 5,993 thousand, 90, 90, 993 dollars. So the  
14 question is where are students getting these funds  
15 from. This is examples like this of why we are here  
16 today. We ask the city council that they create  
17 this scholarship to help these students. The  
18 academic achievement, the achievement academic  
19 award to put in a city budget for fiscal year 15.  
20 We request that it's not only put into the budget  
21 but it's at a level that allows our students to  
22 reach their full potential ad go on and be the  
23 bright shining stars. The university's, we hope  
24 that the city council takes the same action that  
25 University Student Senate took several years ago

1  
2 and create scholarship and financial support so  
3 that the students can go back and give to their  
4 community, strengthen the city, and do what's best  
5 by our state. Thank you. [crosstalk]

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Do you  
7 have copies of your prepared testimony? Did you  
8 give them to the...

9 DONOVAN BORRINGTON: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, we don't have  
11 it here, the last one, we only have three. Thank  
12 you. We're going to have some brief quick questions  
13 and then I'll call on my colleagues. I want to  
14 acknowledge that we've been joined by Council  
15 Member Vacca and Council Member Cumbo. Thank you.  
16 You mentioned the academic achievement award. Can  
17 you give us a brief description of what that is?

18 MOHAMED ASSAR: So academic achievement  
19 award it has the same criteria as, we've been  
20 mentioning before Peter F. Vallone scholarship is  
21 the same B average. If student receives B or better  
22 average graduates from New York City High School  
23 and goes into CUNY they receive academic  
24 achievement award and they, if they maintain the B  
25

1  
2 average they receive that, the scholarship until  
3 they graduate so...

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And what would be  
5 the amount of that academic achievement award?  
6 Could you put a dollar amount on that?

7 MOHAMED ASSAR: We had 10.8 and 10.9  
8 million but that is, I would just echo your comment  
9 before. Building toward, this would be a great step  
10 building towards what the, what your goal is of  
11 free tuition. We start with the, this, with  
12 academic achievement award and build it every year  
13 and University Student Senate would love to be  
14 participate in that and help promote that to build  
15 it to level where it will be free for students who  
16 graduate from our high schools going to CUNY.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Have you estimated  
18 what that would be per student, that 10.8 or nine  
19 million.

20 MOHAMED ASSAR: Approximately 400.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: 400, okay.

22 MOHAMED ASSAR: Then again like Council  
23 Member Vallone said you know limited funding if  
24 there is more funding we can definitely do more  
25

1  
2 calculations to, to accommodate, to increase that  
3 400 to 500, 600, 800... would love that.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. And was this  
5 a initiative that the students themselves came up  
6 with, the academic achievement award or who was  
7 evolved in deciding what you would ask for and the  
8 mounts. Who were is involved in that..

9 MOHAMAD ASSAR: So I, if you remember  
10 we, we talked at a black and Puerto Rican caucus.  
11 Before that part of university student senate we  
12 were discussing it, and we would just... discuss it  
13 with you and former Council Member Barron about a  
14 safety net, that kind of scholarship. And then we  
15 did some research within University Student Senate  
16 of what is achievable goal and because of our one  
17 year limited amount of time. And then we had a  
18 meeting with the administration. We presented the  
19 idea and we, we met with the different student  
20 groups, my executive board along with the  
21 administration to, to... and also we are building  
22 stronger and stronger relationship with University  
23 Faculty Senate. So we slowly worked towards this  
24 stronger plan of having academic achievement award.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. So you only see this as a beginning, initial...

MOHAMAD ASSAR: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...step, growing...

MOHAMAD ASSAR: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...and getting even...

[crosstalk]

MOHAMAD ASSAR: And University Student Senate is dedicated as this, as the first step in definitely helping to improve this scholarship every year...

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Mm-hmm.

MOHAMAD ASSAR: And definitely working with you for the coming years. I'm graduating but I'll, but I'll still be enrolled as an alumni.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. If you didn't have any restrictions on you and if you were, if it were a limitless pot what would, what would you ask for in terms of what the tuition is and...

MOHAMAD ASSAR: That would be... that's giving more than tuition. If, cover the tuition we know, the textbook costs are, are rising. It, if we look at the comparative how much textbook cost if

1  
2 it has risen as opposed to any other cost you can  
3 talk about groceries or any other has skyrocketed.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

5 MOHAMAD ASSAR: Our students are paying  
6 a lot more for the same books, different pictures.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. That's,  
8 that's very true.

9 MOHAMAD ASSAR: Cover the books. Metro  
10 card cost is rising. When I started I, I came from  
11 Pakistan in 2007. I didn't pay 104 dollars. I, now  
12 I'm paying a lot more for metrocard, for books  
13 [crosstalk]

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay I'm going to  
15 move on. I'm going to ask my council member, my  
16 colleague Council Member Vacca if he has some  
17 questions.

18 MOHAMAD ASSAR: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER VACCA: Thank you Chair  
20 Barron. I have Chair Barron and I have former Chair  
21 Barron so... [crosstalk] both were chairs. I thank  
22 you for having this meeting and I do want to say to  
23 you that this is very timely. And I thank you  
24 because we are discussing the budget now as a  
25 council. We have a deadline. But I want you to know

1  
2 personally, very much so, that I'm going to fight  
3 for restoration of the Vallone Scholarship. It's an  
4 easy decision to make. I feel it was eliminated  
5 inappropriately when it was eliminated. I'm using  
6 the word inappropriate. And there was a rational  
7 for eliminating it that I never understood because  
8 the rational was not there. So based on that... and  
9 also you mention about citizenship and all. I'm an  
10 adjunct to Queens College. I've been there for  
11 years, years. And I never, no professor ever says  
12 to any student are you documented or not. We're  
13 there to, we're, this university is here as the,  
14 the gateway to this city. And it always has been.  
15 So that's not even an issue. And I'm glad you  
16 raised it but it, it's not an issue and should not  
17 be an issue with this council. So I'm very honored  
18 that, that you come here and testify. You know many  
19 of the students in, in CUNY not only go to school  
20 with CUNY. And sometimes when we think of city  
21 university we think of 18, 19, and 20 year olds.  
22 But many of our students today in CUNY are adults.  
23 They work two jobs. They have families at home.  
24 They take care of elderly parents. These are many  
25 of my students and they struggle and they work



1  
2 hard. And if they do well, and if they have  
3 financial issues there should be a way that we  
4 could assist, and we should assist. So I don't have  
5 a question I just want you to know that the Vallone  
6 Scholarship is important to me. The delegations are  
7 meeting from the boroughs, the budget negotiation  
8 team that I'm on, the leadership team I'm on, my  
9 colleagues, all of us feel strongly that we just  
10 can't say education's important and then, and then  
11 not put money behind our words. And we have an  
12 opportunity this year from a financial point of  
13 view to, to do something significant here. And you  
14 do have my support so I thank you for coming.

15 MOHAMED ASSAR: Thank you Council  
16 Member.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Now we'll hear  
18 questions or comments from Council Member Cumbo.  
19 We're on a three minute clock. Thank you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you Chair  
21 Barron and thank you to all my colleagues. I just  
22 want to echo the sentiments. Yesterday we had a  
23 lengthy discussion at the stated meeting.  
24 Councilman Vacca brought up a lot of the challenges  
25 that we're having as it relates to crime in our

1 communities. And I'm leaving actually to go to a, a  
2 press conference in rally to keep our NYCHA public  
3 housing, community centers, and senior centers  
4 open. But what it is particularly in communities of  
5 color as it pertains to the budget it seems that  
6 particularly communities of color are always  
7 fighting to restore, always fighting to maintain,  
8 always fighting just to, just to keep going. And I,  
9 I'm very supportive of this because this is an  
10 opportunity for us to move in a, in the right  
11 direction to transition out of many of the  
12 challenges that we're facing. And so I'm certainly  
13 in support of this with my colleagues because I  
14 believe very strongly that we have to move from a  
15 place of, of emergencies, always having to put a  
16 Band-Aid on something, and really creating a  
17 pipeline and an opportunity for us to make sure  
18 that particularly those young people that have  
19 identified themselves and have worked hard that we  
20 need to give them all of the tools and resources  
21 that they could possibly have to sore and to become  
22 incredible contributors to our society. So I thank  
23 you all for your brilliant testimony. It was a, a  
24  
25

1  
2 true testament to what our CUNY system is producing  
3 all throughout the city of New York. So thank you.

4 [pause] [laughter]

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: It's always the  
6 ones that are closes to you... you... defy the rules  
7 there. Okay, we want to thank you for your  
8 testimony. And as has been said you are a great  
9 example of what it is to go to CUNY and come out  
10 and represent us so well. So we thank you for your  
11 testimony and you'll be hearing from us. And those  
12 of you who've graduated and moved on we hope that  
13 you stay in touch and we wish you the best in your  
14 careers. Thank you. We will now call our next  
15 panel. Okay. There're four? I only have three  
16 slips. Okay. We're going to have Vice Chancellor  
17 Matthew Sapienza, and Vice Chancellor Frank  
18 Sanchez, and Vice President Michael Baston,  
19 University Dean James Murphey. Invite them to come.  
20 This is CUNY administration. And we wanted to have  
21 the panels that preceded them in that order so that  
22 we could have the foundation historically. And  
23 we've been joined by Council Member Jumaane  
24 Williams. But we wanted to lay out a historical  
25 background in terms of the Council Members who had

1  
2 been here. And then we wanted to hear from the  
3 students because it directly affects them. So we  
4 appreciate your understanding. We know you have  
5 busy schedules and we appreciate your adjusting  
6 your schedules to stay. Thank you. If you would  
7 raise your right hands; do you swear or affirm to  
8 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but  
9 the truth in the testimony you are to provide today  
10 and to answer all questions posed by the committee  
11 honestly?

12 MATTHEW SAPIENZA: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

14 MATTHEW SAPIENZA: Good morning

15 Chairperson Barron and members of the New York City  
16 Council Higher Education Committee. I am Mathew  
17 Sapienza, Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance at  
18 CUNY. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with  
19 you today about merit and need based scholarships  
20 at the university. I am joined this morning by Vice  
21 Chancellor for Student Affairs Frank Sanchez,  
22 University Dean for Enrollment James Murphey, and  
23 the Vice President of Student Affairs and  
24 Enrollment Management at LaGuardia Community  
25 College Doctor Michael Baston. We are acutely aware

1 that rising higher education costs and increasing  
2 student debt have been critical concerns not only  
3 here in New York but on the national level. At city  
4 university we remain focused on providing our  
5 students with the highest quality learning  
6 experience possible. While maintaining those  
7 avenues to access that are the center pieces to a  
8 public higher education institution. Financial  
9 assistance continues to be a critical lynch pin for  
10 student persistence. In academic year 2012-2013 the  
11 university conferred over 46 thousand degrees. Many  
12 of those students would not have been able to  
13 obtain their diplomas without the scholarship  
14 opportunities that were afforded to them at the  
15 university. CUNY still represents the best value in  
16 US Higher Education. CUNY costs a fraction of what  
17 students pay at private institutions and is also  
18 less than at most public universities. In fact  
19 approximately six out of 10 full time  
20 undergraduates attend tuition free due to federal  
21 PELL grants and New York state TAP awards. ...tolled  
22 nearly 175 thousand CUNY undergraduate students  
23 were awarded nearly one billion dollars in, in  
24 financial aid this past academic year. At the  
25

1 national level it's not uncommon for students to  
2 leave college with tens of thousands of dollars in  
3 loans to repay. The American student debt topping  
4 1.2 trillion dollars indebtedness is an urgent  
5 national concern and a source of anxiety for  
6 students and families. Repayment for federal and  
7 private student loans can last decades with no  
8 respite even in bankruptcy. At CUNY however  
9 affordable tuition and the available financial aid  
10 greatly lightened the burden on students so much so  
11 that only 15 percent of undergraduates at our four  
12 year colleges had federal education loans. That's a  
13 strikingly low number compared with most of the  
14 colleges and universities. Helping to keep the  
15 university affordable and enhance the value of a  
16 CUNY degree however requires an ongoing  
17 partnerships between all of our stakeholders. One  
18 of the key constituents in this partnership is the  
19 private sector. CUNY students have some scholarship  
20 opportunities thank in large part of philanthropic  
21 and private support. The university itself is  
22 another component of this partnership. A major part  
23 of our commitment has been a student financial  
24 assistance initiative which over the last three  
25

1 years has provided 25 million dollars in total  
2 benefits to our students in need. Another critical  
3 partner is the state of New York. The 2011 state  
4 higher education agreement created a new credit for  
5 resident undergraduate students that received TAP  
6 awards for tuition charges over the TAP maximum  
7 award. In the current year CUNY will be providing  
8 over 29 million dollars in TAP credits to students.  
9 The university has been advocating for enhancements  
10 to the TAP program which were outlined in a formal  
11 report that we submitted to state leaders last  
12 fall. Like the state of New York the federal  
13 government also plays a key role in providing  
14 financial assistance to students. The PELL grant  
15 and federal work study are programs that are  
16 essential for keeping the federal government's  
17 commitment to provide financial support to the  
18 needy students. The maximum PELL grant awards  
19 increasing by 85 dollars to 5,730 for next fiscal  
20 year. Due to fiscal pressures in Washington however  
21 there have been several attempts over the last few  
22 years to reduce the overall appropriation for PELL  
23 grants as well as limit the eligibility  
24 requirement. We must all remain vigilant in  
25

1  
2 maintaining this crucial federal aid program. And  
3 on both the federal and state levels the university  
4 has been at the forefront advocating for the  
5 passage of the dream act which would ensure that  
6 deserving undocumented students received the  
7 assistance that is needed to help them pursue their  
8 higher education goals. While succumbent [phonetic]  
9 on the fater [phonetic] and stederal [phonetic],  
10 while succumbent on the federal and state  
11 government to provide the need based financial  
12 support for deserving students the city of New York  
13 has a vitally important role in this partnership as  
14 well. The city council in particular has always  
15 been a strong advocate for merit based student  
16 financial assistance program. Everyone at the  
17 university was very encouraged and appreciative  
18 that the council's formal response to the mayor's  
19 fiscal year 2015 preliminary budget included  
20 funding for the academic achievement awards. Dean  
21 murphy will talk some more about this proposal.  
22 Providing financial aid and merit, I'm sorry  
23 financial aid and merit and need based scholarships  
24 is not only an investment in our students and is an  
25 investment in New York itself. The university



1  
2 continues to be a critical engine of New York's  
3 economy. This is an important measure of CUNY's  
4 value. Chairperson Barron and committee members you  
5 have demonstrated many times over your commitment  
6 to helping New Yorkers advance themselves through  
7 your consistent advocacy for an accessible high  
8 quality CUNY education. We deeply appreciate your  
9 continued support and look forward to working with  
10 you to sustain that commitment. I'd now like to ask  
11 Vice Chancellor Sanchez to provide his testimony.

12 VICE CHANCELLOR SACHEZ: Well good  
13 morning Madam Chair Barron and members of New York  
14 City Council of Higher Education Committee. I am  
15 Frank Sanchez. I am the Vice Chancellor for Student  
16 Affairs at the City University of New York. Our  
17 offices work closely with student service  
18 operations across 24 colleges supporting now over  
19 half a million students undergraduate, graduate,  
20 and adult with continuing education. Our office  
21 also coordinates several initiatives focusing on  
22 financially disadvantage and high need populations  
23 across our colleges. I appreciate being included in  
24 this important conversation about merit and based  
25 aid scholarships. An essential aspect of this

1 discussion must include a deliberate and focused  
2 conversation of CUNY's working poor, and neediest  
3 students. On this front CUNY had made tremendous  
4 strides in ensuring these students are not  
5 forgotten with full access and financial support to  
6 attend college. In fact the federal and state  
7 commitments to our financially neediest students  
8 through PELL and TAP funding is vital to fulfilling  
9 our mission of access. And I've seen great success  
10 as a result. For example while 40 percent of CUNY  
11 students have a household income below 20 thousand  
12 dollars we find 60 percent of our students attend  
13 tuition free due to PELL and TAP awards.

14 Furthermore in 2012 the university dedicated five  
15 million dollars from the revenue generated by  
16 tuition increases to assist students who are at  
17 risk of not being able to continue matriculation  
18 because of tuition increases. This student  
19 financial assistance initiative includes assistance  
20 with the acquisition of text books, enhancement to  
21 the federal work-study program and tuition waivers  
22 for those students who are greatest, at greatest  
23 financial risk. And this year in 2013-2014 we  
24 doubled that commitment to total 10 million  
25

1  
2 dollars. Despite this success in providing our  
3 financially neediest students access to a quality  
4 education CUNY is not standing idle in addressing  
5 the broader financially diverse students beyond  
6 tuition. We know so many, so many of our students  
7 are challenged with financial expense of living in  
8 New York City including of course the cost of rent,  
9 food, transportation, daycare, health needs, the  
10 list goes on. Knowing this CUNY has responded with  
11 significant efforts to address this challenge head  
12 on. One of the most recognized CUNY initiatives and  
13 frankly one of the most successful programs  
14 nationally for reducing student debt and out of  
15 pocket expenses for the poor students are the  
16 Single Stop centers across our seven community  
17 colleges. Single Stop, a program launched in  
18 partnership with the Robin Hood foundation connects  
19 our poorest students at CUNY with available  
20 government funds and services. Single Stop provides  
21 a comprehensive suite of services including  
22 benefits and financial counseling for tax  
23 preparation and legal assistance. Counselors use  
24 Single Stop's cutting edge technology tool, the  
25 benefits enrollment network are or BEN, to

1  
2 determine which benefits a student is eligible for  
3 in as little as 15 minutes. And then it guides  
4 through an application process while connecting  
5 them to other onsite services. This past year the  
6 Single Stop program in response to the financial  
7 need of our poorest students provided over 36  
8 million dollars in benefits and tax returns. Over  
9 the last five years, five and a half years CUNY has  
10 supported over 54 thousand students and families  
11 with nearly 128 million dollars in reduced out of  
12 pocket expenses. On average we have connected our  
13 students with an additional 53 hundred dollars in  
14 direct benefits. The return on investment is  
15 exceptional. For every one dollar we put into the  
16 Single Stop services we allocate 31 dollars in  
17 benefits to our students. As we institutionalize  
18 this program it is our hope to expand these  
19 important services to our senior colleges beginning  
20 in CCNY in Medgar Evers With the Single Stop  
21 Program and other initiatives tackling the  
22 challenges facing our poorer students CUNY is  
23 better positioned in delivering on our promise of  
24 an exceptional and affordable education. Need based  
25 federal and state funding in the form of PELL and

1  
2 TAP as well as programs such as Single Stop is a  
3 strategy that is working for our poorer students  
4 with greatest needs. However, what is less clear is  
5 how we're supporting our academically high  
6 performing and middle income students across CUNY.  
7 This is a considerable concern as many of these  
8 students struggle to make financial ends meet and  
9 to stay enrolled. Merit based scholarships provide  
10 a reasonable strategy to provide much needed  
11 financial assistance in high performing, poor high  
12 performing students many of which will have  
13 considerable financial need. I'm now going to turn  
14 over to Dean Jim Murphey

15 DEAN MURPHEY: Good morning Chairperson  
16 Barron and members of the Higher Education  
17 Committee. First of all I got to apologize. I got a  
18 little bit of a cold so I'm talking a little  
19 nasally. But anyway my name is James Murphey, I am  
20 CUNY's university, university Dean for Enrollment  
21 Management. Our office is responsible for  
22 admissions, financial aid, and registration for all  
23 270 thousand undergraduate and graduate students  
24 ate CUNY. We work diligently to make sure that  
25 students can access a top notch education without

1  
2 being over burdened by debt and we're proud that  
3 CUNY remains one of the nation's best value  
4 institutions. This past year CUNY college has  
5 awarded over one billion in financial aids and more  
6 than 175 thousand undergraduate aid recipients. The  
7 large percentage of the aid was need based grants  
8 from the federal program 526 million, the state TAP  
9 program 280 million. CUNY provides over 75 million  
10 dollars in tuition waivers while our colleges award  
11 an estimated 16 million dollars in merit  
12 scholarships. CUNY, CUNY undergraduate students  
13 also borrowed 133 million in student loans however  
14 only 75 million in students loans were used to pay  
15 tuition, undergraduate tuition charges this year.  
16 This represents 6.4 percent of the undergraduate  
17 tuition pay. The balance of these loans was used by  
18 students for personal expenses which includes books  
19 and transportations and contrary to popular belief  
20 does not include buying the latest iPhone. The, the  
21 large amount of grant enables, the large amount of  
22 grant aid enables 87 thousand of our 143 thousand,  
23 61 percent of full time in state undergraduates to  
24 attend CUNY tuition, tuition free. The latter  
25 figure includes undocumented students who were

1  
2 ineligible to receive any type of financial aid. If  
3 the New York state Dream app, Act is passed we  
4 estimate an additional 6,000 students would be able  
5 to attend tuition free which would mean 93 thousand  
6 or 65 percent of the CUNY full time in state  
7 undergraduates would have their tuition covered,  
8 tuition course covered by financial aid and the  
9 Dream Act is actually being discussed this week up  
10 in Albany. Again many of the students who pay out  
11 of pocket or borrow... exhausted their financial aid  
12 eligibility for grants or academically ineligible.  
13 CUNY has lobbied the state for an extra year of TAP  
14 eligibility without success. CUNY also enrolls 65  
15 thousand matriculated in state part time students  
16 with over 12,000 using financial aid to attend  
17 tuition free. Many part time students who work to  
18 support themselves and their families may be  
19 ineligible for financial aid but have their tuition  
20 covered in full or part by the employer. Other part  
21 time students are finishing their degree, degree  
22 could not find classes needed to attend full time.  
23 These students may have exhausted their eligibility  
24 or saving the eligibility for full time enrollment.  
25 Some others are academically ineligible to attend

1 full time and are also ineligible for financial  
2 aid. In addition to financial aid the federal  
3 American opportunity income tax credit is available  
4 to a broader range of taxpayers including many with  
5 higher incomes who, and those who owe no taxes. The  
6 full credit allows individuals whose modified  
7 adjust... is 80 thousand or less or 160 thousand or  
8 less for married couples filing a joint return to  
9 receive a TAP credit up to, a tax credit up to 25  
10 hundred dollars for tuition paid out of pocket or  
11 with loans. The availability of the crack, the tax  
12 credits dramatically increases the number of CUNY  
13 students who are able to attend college free. Since  
14 we do not have access to students and their  
15 family's... it's difficult to estimate the number of  
16 students who use the AO, AOTC benefit. To close  
17 current CUNY students, current CUNY... endorse the  
18 academic achievement award which is almost  
19 mirroring the Vallone Scholarship. These  
20 scholarship sums will support many students  
21 including those who receive no, no other way to  
22 achieve their goal of college graduation. CUNY  
23 graduates have traditionally remained in a city so  
24 these students will contribute to the city's  
25



1  
2 workforce. The CUNY administration applauds the  
3 student activities... supports the academic  
4 achievement program proposal. We ask the council,  
5 the city council support in fund the AA  
6 scholarship. Thank you. Michael.

7 MICHAEL BASTON: Good morning

8 Chairperson Barron and members of the higher  
9 education Committee. I'm Michael Baston, Vice  
10 President of Student Affairs and enrollment  
11 management for LaGuardia Community College. Two of  
12 the students that testified earlier are LaGuardia  
13 graduates. LaGuardia opens the doors of higher  
14 education to one of the most diverse and  
15 international communities in the world. With  
16 students from 158 countries speaking 129 languages  
17 LaGuardia students come from different places. Yet  
18 their determination to create a stronger future for  
19 themselves and their families through higher  
20 education is the dream they all share. Long before  
21 their college journey even begins however many of  
22 our students face significant obstacles; financial,  
23 academic, personal that have derailed their goal of  
24 earning a degree and pursuing their dreams. With  
25 over 70 percent of our students earning less than

1  
2 25 thousand dollars a year and many undocumented  
3 students who will not qualify for financial aid  
4 we've employed a four part strategy that includes  
5 financial literacy, financial aid, social safety  
6 net access, and financing options, and  
7 scholarships. At open houses for perspective  
8 students and their families and visits to local  
9 high schools and community based organizations we  
10 discuss our tuition, how our enhanced calendar  
11 allows full time students to take more credits at  
12 no additional costs and steps to apply for federal,  
13 state, and aid, and scholarships. We assist them to  
14 apply for our financial aid. In our computer lab we  
15 had more than 12,000 one on one visits to help  
16 students. We had federal applications up by 20,000  
17 students, state applications at more than 17,000  
18 applications. We've helped with our Single Stop  
19 program as Vice Chancellor Sanchez talked about to  
20 connect more than 7,775 students with 7.8 million  
21 dollars in resources since 2010. We provide a wide  
22 range of financial literacy, workshops, and all of  
23 these kinds of programs to support students. And  
24 more than 8,000 students last year signed up for  
25 our no interest loans to pay for going to school.

1  
2 And we tried to make a college affordable with  
3 loans as a last resort as we helped them to plan  
4 for what we need to help them succeed. But the  
5 truth of the matter is we have scholarships at  
6 LaGuardia, we've raised our foundation more than  
7 867 thousand dollars that we've given to more than  
8 600 students. So 86 percent of privately raised  
9 money is spent on student scholarships. But the  
10 truth of the matter is it's not enough. For our  
11 definition of success is to make sure that each and  
12 every student that comes to LaGuardia has the  
13 opportunity to be successful and be able to afford  
14 the education. Students like Lila Kinyona [sp?]. At  
15 16 she dropped out of Aviation High School where  
16 she was studying to be an airplane mechanic when  
17 she became pregnant. Her parents put her out of the  
18 family home and she went to live with the baby's  
19 father. Lila enrolled in our GED program, finished  
20 the program with the highest GED score that year.  
21 We encouraged her to continue her studies at  
22 LaGuardia and she did just that with financial  
23 support from programs like PELL and TAPs and  
24 scholarships. She joined Phi Theta Kappa and  
25 graduated with a 4.0 GPA, is currently majoring in

1  
2 a senior college in math and physics during  
3 research on Osteogenesis Imperfecta or brittle bone  
4 disease at the Hospital for Special service,  
5 Surgery. Lila and so many students like her can  
6 make it at CUNY and elsewhere. All they need is  
7 someone to believe in them and the resources to  
8 make the dream of a college education a reality.  
9 Please support the academic achievement award for  
10 CUNY students.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Thank  
12 you for your testimony and I'm going to call on my  
13 colleague for questions.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you  
15 Madam Chair. You look exceptional in that... you look  
16 fantastic. And of course I want to acknowledge  
17 former speaker Peter Vallone. And I want to  
18 acknowledge ...Cabdolla [sp?] and NYPIRG are in the  
19 back because they helped hone my troublemaking  
20 skills when I was in Brooklyn College so...

21 [laughter]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I thank you  
23 for the testimony. Obviously this is an important  
24 issue and I'm, unfortunately have to leave but I  
25 had a question. And of course I always preface it

1  
2 by saying obviously CUNY should be free. The  
3 education that our young people are receiving  
4 should be free. There's definitely a community  
5 benefit. I've said it before and I'll say it again.  
6 The... expansion happened during the Great Depression  
7 because we believed we had to invest in education.  
8 And it changed in the 70s, I don't think it changed  
9 coincidentally as a complexion of the students  
10 started changing. So that troubles me quite a bit.  
11 And I believe that the same opportunity that was  
12 given to those who had a little bit less melanin in  
13 their skin should be given to those who have a  
14 little bit more melanin in their skin as well. With  
15 that said I did have one question. I know there's a  
16 lot of demographic break downs. But I wanted to  
17 know do we have demographic breakdowns in terms of  
18 average? Would we be able to say the  
19 demographically breaking down who have 70 point  
20 grade point average, who has 85 grade point average  
21 of anything like that?

22 DEAN MURPHEY: We have those statistics,  
23 we don't have them today. But we could certainly  
24 get them to you if... and we will.

25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yes I would  
3 very much like that. Thank you Madam Chair and  
4 thank you for having this hearing.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you Council  
6 Member Williams. I have a couple of questions. You  
7 talk about the Single Stop program to connect  
8 students to services that they might be entitled  
9 to. How aggressive is that program? Does it require  
10 the students to come and find it online or are you  
11 making an outreach to them?

12 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: So...

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: How are you  
14 reaching out?

15 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: That's a great  
16 question. So all the staff at the community  
17 colleges do extensive outreach to students through  
18 our Single Stop centers, through our advising  
19 offices, our counselling offices. We, we build it  
20 in. In fact at LaGuardia for example they have  
21 built it into their financial aid office so it's  
22 just part... [crosstalk] of the process.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

24 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: It's part of  
25 the administrative process so that students are

1  
2 automatically connected to those services. And  
3 that's really the goal of all the single stop  
4 centers is to integrate it into the campus in a way  
5 where the student just as a matter of attending  
6 that school are going to be exposed to those  
7 services.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. And you talk  
9 about the private donations that you receive. Are  
10 those private donations housed in each of the  
11 institutions that receives them? And what do you do  
12 for money that comes to CUNY? What do you do for  
13 those institutions that don't have that...

14 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: Sure. So...

15 [crosstalk]

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...economic power.

17 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: ...so, so over  
18 the last, over the last five years the Robin Hood  
19 foundation has supported Single Stop completely in  
20 the funding of it. This, this year however they're  
21 beginning to phase out that funding.. [crosstalk]

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Well I'm not just  
23 talking about Single Stop. I'm talking about...  
24 [crosstalk] whatever contributions that CUNY may  
25 receive; fundraising that's done by the presidents.

1  
2 I understand that's a major or new evaluation tool  
3 for college presidents as well.

4 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: That's correct  
5 and I'm glad you brought that up Chair Barron. That  
6 is an evaluation tool for the presidents. And our  
7 presidents have been doing a much better job at  
8 fundraising. And as you pointed out the  
9 overwhelming majority of dollars from fundraising  
10 are directed towards student scholarships. And to  
11 answer your question yes the majority of  
12 fundraising is done by the colleges and remains at  
13 the colleges for scholarship opportunities at those  
14 campuses.

15 VICE PRESIDENT BASTON: I would just add  
16 from LaGuardia's perspective that as I mentioned in  
17 our testimony 867 thousand dollars was raised for  
18 600 students, 86 percent of the privately raised  
19 money is spent on student scholarships the  
20 following year. So those monies go right into the  
21 direct hands of students.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay and in, in  
23 terms of the academic achievement award I've heard  
24 that that money is for, targeted for books and  
25





1  
2 we're talking about. Are there certain criteria as  
3 which students eligible.

4 DEAN MURPHEY: We would, we envision it  
5 or the, actually the, the students envision it and...  
6 have the same criteria as the old, as the old  
7 Vallone Scholarship which would be graduate of New  
8 York City high schools; public, private, parochial  
9 with an 80 average, attend a CUNY institution and  
10 maintain a B average when they, when they enroll in  
11 the institution and attend full time.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And that would not  
13 be a restriction for those based on immigration  
14 status? It would...

15 DEAN MURPHEY: No there wouldn't...

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...connection to  
17 that?

18 DEAN MURPHEY: There would be no  
19 restriction. If the city council tells us we can  
20 give them to the undocumented students we have  
21 absolutely no problem giving to undocumented  
22 students.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I have  
24 another question. Yes, that one. Okay, I have  
25 another, a few questions if I can gather them. What

1  
2 has, what, we know the new Chancellor... he's here  
3 now?

4 DEAN MURPHEY: Yes he's still here, yes...

5 [crosstalk]

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I certainly  
7 would love to have a chance to sit and talk to him  
8 and to bring my perspective and the city council's  
9 perspective on what we hope to see going forward  
10 and just to be able to dialogue with him. You had  
11 given us information and you have a table to Triple  
12 A scholarship eligibility for full time first time,  
13 first time freshman by income bracket. So I don't  
14 know if you have it there. It lists the income, the  
15 triple A eligibility by number of students and by  
16 percent, and the total cohort. So for the group of  
17 people who are at 50 thousand dollars on, up to  
18 unknown income, in other words unrestricted would  
19 they be eligible? How would they... there, there are  
20 a number of people who are not eligible actually.  
21 You have a number that totals about 6,000...

22 DEAN MURPHEY: I would assume the, the  
23 students who are ineligible, or the first time  
24 freshman who are ineligible either didn't graduate  
25 from the New York City high schools, or did not

1  
2 have the average, an 80 or average or above when  
3 they graduated from the high schools. Unfortunately  
4 I do not have that document in front of me. I'm not  
5 even sure if I saw it but, but...

6 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: Thanks. Chair  
7 Barron the one, the one thing I want to point out  
8 about the academic achievement award proposal is  
9 that it's, it's merit based. And so depending on  
10 the income levels...

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So you're just  
12 projecting how many students would be entitled to  
13 receive so that all students...

14 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: Based on their  
15 academic profile... [crosstalk]

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Based on academics.

17 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: Right. So in  
18 the example you gave a student is at 50 thousand  
19 dollars going back to what Dean Murphey said before  
20 that student would be eligible for some TAP award,  
21 potentially some PELL award you know... PELL is not  
22 just based on income. They have to look at Assets  
23 of, of the family as well. But all of those  
24 financial awards would be the first call on the  
25

1  
2 tuition and then the academic achievement awards  
3 would be an enhancement to that.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, alright. A  
5 part of my concern is that CUNY talks about 58  
6 percent of the full time undergraduates attend  
7 tuition free based on the scholarships and grants  
8 that they get and that they can also apply for the  
9 tax credit, the American opportunity tax credit  
10 award. What about those students, I'm always  
11 concerned about those students who don't. You know  
12 we're talking about a large percentage of students  
13 who graduate with debt, college debt that we know  
14 does not go away.

15 DEAN MURPHEY: Yeah CUNY has, has  
16 probably, well it certainly has one of the lowest  
17 percentage of graduates that have, with debt in the  
18 country. The past couple of weeks I've had some  
19 issues with numbers that were reported about  
20 student loan debt in CUNY. A newspaper in Queens  
21 came out about a week and a half ago and said that  
22 80 percent of the Queens college students were  
23 graduating with 20,000 dollars in debt and that was  
24 nowhere near true. And we still don't know where  
25 they got those numbers from. Another college

1  
2 reported that 46 percent of their students were  
3 graduating with 20,000 dollars in debt. And I  
4 actually traced the source of that, of those  
5 numbers and it turned out the person who reported  
6 those numbers took the amount of debt incurred by  
7 undergraduate and graduate students in a given  
8 year, projected it over four years, and then put it  
9 under the, put that number onto the undergraduate  
10 student body which inflated the number  
11 tremendously. It was actually close to 20 percent  
12 and that... I'm sorry 20 percent of the students  
13 graduated with a debt of about 18,000 dollars and  
14 that included debt that was incurred at private  
15 institutions before they transferred to that school  
16 so... When we, when we talk about debt we need to be,  
17 be more specific in... you know the numbers is just  
18 all over the place. One thing that really bothered  
19 me, it turned out the national debt project was  
20 getting numbers from Peterson's Guide [sp?] which  
21 they took as official numbers on debt incurred at  
22 the colleges and it was just nowhere near accurate.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I'm, I'm still very  
24 much concerned. And we know that there are  
25 students... These numbers I think we're talking about

1  
2 are students within the four year topic, the four  
3 year timeline. But we know that there are students  
4 that take longer than four years.

5 DEAN MURPHEY: I, I'm talking about all  
6 undergraduate students. I, it's the, they project  
7 over a four year timeline but we're looking at  
8 students as they finish you know the six, seven,  
9 eight years, whatever took them to, whatever it  
10 took to finish degree. The... it's... a debt incurred  
11 as, as undergraduates.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: so those students  
13 who, that are no longer eligible because they're in  
14 their fifth, or six...

15 DEAN MURPHEY: They'd still be...

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...seventh year.

17 DEAN MURPHEY: They'd still be eligible  
18 for loans. Right now, they won't...

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

20 DEAN MURPHEY: ...be in a few years but  
21 right now the law still allows them to be eligible.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, so that's the  
23 part that, that's very troubling because the loans  
24 mount up and they don't go away, they don't go  
25 away.

1  
2 DEAN MURPHEY: The, the truth of the  
3 matter is though... last year, this, this year that's  
4 just passed CUNY undergraduates took 133 million  
5 dollars in loans and only 6.4 percent of that, I'm  
6 sorry 75 million was actually used for tuition and  
7 fees, tuition not fees I'm sorry, was used for  
8 tuition. The rest went for fees, books, supplies,  
9 transportation, and other... It represented 6.4  
10 percent of the undergraduate tuition paid.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and in my  
12 notes that I have here according to your, your  
13 website for 2010-11 4,000, 41,844 students did rely  
14 on 276 million dollars in federal loans.

15 DEAN MURPHEY: That included grad  
16 students.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That includes  
18 graduates okay.

19 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: And Chair  
20 Barron one thing I, I want to point out about the,  
21 the data is that many of our students and, and I  
22 don't know how many in the 41 thousand fall into  
23 this category, many of our students come to CUNY as  
24 transfer students... [crosstalk]

25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Transfer students.



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2 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: ...with loans

3 from other institutions. So that's one thing I just

4 want to point out about that data.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. And 40

6 percent...

7 [pause]

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay so in your

9 order that you gave me PELL is last...

10 UNIDENTIFIED: No PELL is third.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: PELL...

12 UNIDENTIFIED: ...third...

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: PELL was third. And

14 what comes after PELL?

15 UNIDENTIFIED: All, all other...

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: All other, right.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: All other grants A...

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay so...

19 UNIDENTIFIED: ...and then loans are the,

20 are the final thing that are applied to tuition.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay but it's

22 troubling that we still have as low as the tuition

23 is in comparison to others. It is a burden. And I

24 wonder, I haven't heard from the administration

25 whether in fact they embrace the concept of going

1  
2 back to tuition free education. I've heard about  
3 your programs, your you know... Oh lots of people  
4 like that. I haven't heard whether or not you  
5 embrace that position. And I understand some people  
6 deal with the hard facts and... But I, I don't put  
7 limits or boxes in certain situations. So I would  
8 just like to know... and that's one of the reasons  
9 why I'd love to talk to the new Chancellor. Because  
10 if the mindset is that it, it can't happen or won't  
11 happen or it's never going to happen that's what  
12 you get. You know you get what you look for. So I'd  
13 like to know what is the administration's position  
14 on that?

15 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: Sure. Well  
16 first of all we look forward to you having the  
17 opportunity to meet with the new Chancellor and  
18 hopefully...

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

20 VICE CHANCELLOR SANCHEZ: ...we'll be able  
21 to do that soon. In terms of tuition you know they,  
22 the, the process that's in place now... And, and you  
23 brought up a, a great... round about... that 60 percent  
24 of our students attend tuition free now thanks to  
25 PELL and TAP. And, and I think something that we

1 all have to focus on together are student  
2 advocates, the university itself, our, our partners  
3 here at the city council have to help strengthen  
4 those programs, PELL and TAP for those need based  
5 awards so that more students can become eligible  
6 and that it extends for a greater number of  
7 semesters that they currently do so that students  
8 don't drop out... of being eligible for financial  
9 aid. In terms of free tuition there are many  
10 students that come from, have family incomes that  
11 can certainly afford, easily afford the CUNY  
12 tuition. And so one thing to consider is that  
13 making it free tuition would make it free for those  
14 folks as well. And I think folks that have the  
15 ability to pay should pay. Folks that don't have  
16 the ability to pay are protected by PELL and TAP  
17 but that 40 percent that is not tuition free, those  
18 are the folks that we have to focus on to see which  
19 ones still struggle and have any ability to pay and  
20 making sure that we internally through finding  
21 efficiencies within our own operating budget like  
22 we do with the student financial aid assistance  
23 initiative... 10 million dollars, doing more  
24 fundraising the way our campuses are doing, having  
25

1  
2 terrific merit based scholarships like the academic  
3 achievement awards. I think having that partnership  
4 for all these different components will help cover  
5 those students that are, that are still in need.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Well I, I think  
7 that it's a, society isn't, an entitlement for  
8 those in the society be, to be able to have free  
9 tuition. Now I see education as going from pre-K  
10 through 20. You know we talk about all the way  
11 through graduate school and beyond. I think that  
12 those persons who can afford it are still entitled  
13 just as we educate all of our residents for public  
14 school education I'm sure there are people who are,  
15 who have their children in public school who can  
16 afford private school but choose to put their  
17 children in public school for the benefits that  
18 they get there although there are many challenges  
19 with the public school system. And I, I think it's  
20 an entitlement that we have. And I think it's the  
21 basis for the foundation of CUNY, the free academy.  
22 So I, I'll love to have further conversations with  
23 all of you. Because I only heard one person answer  
24 as to whether or not we can get back to free  
25 tuition. But I thank you for your testimony. I do

1  
2 have other questions but we are on the clock and  
3 there are other panels that I want to... [crosstalk]  
4 respect their time... [crosstalk] Thank you so much.  
5 I put... off too right, okay. Thank you. The next  
6 panel will be students. And the names that I have  
7 are Monica Seabrie [sp?], Anna Palo White [sp?] and  
8 Melissa Corenyo [sp?]. If they're here, if they  
9 would please come forward. If you'd raise your  
10 right hand I'd like to swear you in. And we're on  
11 the clock after this. Do you swear or affirm to  
12 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but  
13 the truth in the testimony you provide today ad to  
14 answer all questions posed by the committee  
15 honestly?

16 [crosstalk]

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Please  
18 give your name. Yes we're on the clock, three  
19 minute clock.

20 MONICA SEABRIE: Good morning  
21 Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher  
22 Education Committee. I am Monica Seabrie, a dreamer  
23 with a triple major concentration in political  
24 science, international studies, and sociology from  
25 the College of Staten Island. I would like to start

1  
2 by showing you the financial support the dreamers  
3 and I receive for college. Please take a look  
4 around. That's, yes, that's correct. The type of  
5 financial assistant we receive is equivalent to a  
6 blank piece of paper. As an active delegate of the  
7 university student senate I became aware of the  
8 legalities obstructing us from receiving a stipends  
9 and awarding the scholarships to dreamers. What I  
10 seen in the... Scholarship Committee, all those  
11 meetings it breaks my heart to know that we cannot  
12 give the scholarships to dreamers when it is their  
13 money. And they are some of the most hardworking,  
14 dedicated, and deserving students. This is  
15 scholarship come out of the student activity fees  
16 that I and countless others pay for tuition that  
17 reaches over 3,000 dollars per semester, our senior  
18 colleges which does not include books, metro cards,  
19 and other expenses. For the fear of deportation  
20 many of us don't have question why we cannot  
21 receive any sort of financial support, even while  
22 we pay taxes and tuition. In 1982 the US Supreme  
23 Court in the case of Player vs. Doe rules that  
24 known citizen children of undocumented immigrants  
25 were legally entitled to an education from

1  
2 kindergarten through high school. However what  
3 happens to those students after high school. Many  
4 qualified students miss out on the opportunity of  
5 going to college because legally we cannot receive  
6 any type of federal aid, grants, loans,  
7 scholarships, work study payment, and a stipends  
8 for our college education. In 2011 I never pictured  
9 myself going to college yet I worked so hard to  
10 pursue my dreams. I worked for under five dollars  
11 an hour for 70 hours a week. During my freshman  
12 year I was being charged out of state tuition and I  
13 did not question it because I was, I was terrified  
14 of being deported. But I'm lucky enough to step  
15 foot through a CUNY institution because they have  
16 provided me with a secure positive environment.  
17 Each semester I struggle to save money for tuition.  
18 And I continue working hard while advocating  
19 dreamers like me to obtain a post-secondary  
20 education and become part of an educated work  
21 force. We ask our city council to end this struggle  
22 and fund the triple A scholarship so that many  
23 dreamers like myself can afford postsecondary  
24 education with a lessened burden. According to Fall  
25 2012 enrollment data the percentage of first time

1  
2 freshmans who were eligible for triple A  
3 scholarship were greater for students with foreign  
4 citizenship and thus were undocumented. I give  
5 prominence that based on the same data of the  
6 undocumented Fall 2012 first time full time  
7 freshman who were eligible 60 percent were female  
8 and 50 percent were pursuing bachelor's degrees. I  
9 am one of those 60 undocumented females and one of  
10 the 50 percent pursuing a bachelor degree. Yes  
11 that's... work an independent... dependency we're seen  
12 as a burden to the state, as leeches of the system  
13 who try to get free benefits. Where are these so  
14 called benefits? Paying three times tuition, making  
15 less than six dollars an hour, it's not a benefit,  
16 and although we strive to put our education first  
17 the lack of financial support sometimes means we  
18 have to put it as last. This scholarship will  
19 without a doubt help many dreamers like my, myself  
20 achieve a postsecondary education. And on behalf of  
21 them I strongly urge you to fund the triple A  
22 scholarship. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next  
24 panelist.

25



ANNA PALO WHITE: Hello honorable

Chairwoman Barron and all of our CUNY community and those supporters of our CUNY, CUNY community. My name is Anna Palo White and I am going to, I am the nursing student association of New York state's president this year. So I'm speaking on behalf of Hunter Bellevue School of Nursing and also Hunter College. Having been a student representative.

Today I'm here in support of the academic achievement award because when, when you graduated in 1967 as a physiology major the tuition was zero chairwoman. And as for a Hunter nursing student in my senior college the tuition is currently 6,480 dollars for in state tuition. When I graduate I will be lucky enough to graduate with 36 thousand dollars in federal loan debt for a four year degree. This is my tenth year in pursuing a nursing degree. I began as a biochemistry degree and also a chemistry degree and I was unable to complete it because my parents weren't able to help me during the recession. It's because I am lucky enough to qualify for loans and FAFSA because when I first began school I qualified for New York State, New York City poverty level. I entered Hunter College

1  
2 with a 4.0 in transfer and I averaged a 3.75 across  
3 the schools that I had attended previously. And so  
4 now having work, have to work through school full,  
5 full time in addition to trying to continue  
6 achieving a 4.0 in order to get even into the  
7 nursing school which is one of the most competitive  
8 in the city I am asking you reinstate what they  
9 were requesting between 10 and 14 million to the  
10 scholarship that was taken away for political  
11 reasons. And the reason we ask for that amount is  
12 because that was what was previously budgeted for  
13 students like some of my fellow USS representatives  
14 who had previously been on it and had it taken  
15 away. So even that 400 dollars really makes a  
16 difference. Because for me in the last year because  
17 I was a biochemistry major in order to apply for  
18 FAFSA it was the only thing I qualified for with  
19 all my chemistry classes. I was not allowed to be a  
20 nursing student until I was in the nursing school.  
21 So my TAP was taken away for a semester which means  
22 that the books that cost me between 200 to 500  
23 dollars for all of my science classes I was only  
24 able to afford because Hunter College gave me a  
25 private scholarship of 600 dollars a semester.

1  
2 Those kind of expenses we don't really take into  
3 consideration. In addition to the transportation  
4 needs of students. So the couple of things I wanted  
5 to say about the academic achievement award is that  
6 our scholarships come out of an endowment and  
7 that's, if it's irresponsibly managed and we can  
8 expect up to a 40 percent loss on at least eight  
9 million dollars invested in fossil fuel that would  
10 require the council to supplement within the next  
11 year by at least 3.2 million dollars to continue  
12 serving the current populations of students.  
13 Vallone scholarship recipients who, who entered as  
14 baccalaureate degree programs as first time  
15 freshman had earned a degree, 59 percent had earned  
16 a degree within four years whereas Hunter College  
17 four years is only 19 percent.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

19 ANNA PALO WHITE: Thank you.

20 MELISSA CORENYO: Hello everyone.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Hi.

22 MELISSA CORENYO: My name is Melissa  
23 Corenyo. I am a senior at Lehman College and the  
24 Vice President of External Affairs in Student  
25 Government and a delegate from the USS. When I

1  
2 began my college career at Kingsborough Community  
3 College in the fall of 2010 I was one of the last  
4 recipients of the Vallone Scholarship that was  
5 revoked by city council in 2011. I received the  
6 scholarship for one semester. And it was very  
7 helpful in allowing me to secure books for my  
8 classes. I am in a, I am among the students that  
9 receive full financial aid which covers my tuition.  
10 But the 700 dollars I receive a semester does not  
11 cover all my expenses I have to make in order to be  
12 a successful student. I live in District 34 in  
13 Brooklyn, Bushwick. I attend college full time and  
14 work as a peer mentor part time at Lehman in the  
15 Bronx. I have to work because it's the only way I  
16 can make ends meet for my family and I. I have to  
17 cover my travel, 112 dollars a month for metrocard.  
18 That's the only way I can get to school. My  
19 expenses which are, which are my phone bill and  
20 also helping my parents pay the bill around the  
21 house. And we can't forget about those, those  
22 really expensive science books especially if you  
23 are a science major. My father became disabled in  
24 2007 from a stroke and open heart surgery two years  
25 ago during my spring semester which means that I

1  
2 had to start working at age 15 and have continued  
3 to work throughout my college years. My mother and  
4 I are the only ones working at home. I have no  
5 choice. I believe that if the AAA scholarship, or  
6 the Peter Vallone Scholarship as it was called  
7 before was available at that time it would have  
8 helped me financially and as well as this moment.  
9 Like your colleague Maria del Carmen Arroyo who  
10 graduated in 1991 from Lehman with a bachelor's in  
11 health services administration I too come from a  
12 family with low means. But the key difference is  
13 that she was a full time student at Lehman and paid  
14 only 1,225 a year for tuition whereas tuition is  
15 currently 6,030 dollars at senior colleges, a  
16 difference of 4,805 dollars. And not to mention MTA  
17 fare was only 125 in the days she attended Lehman,  
18 150 percent lower than it is today. According to  
19 two, 2012 fall enrollment data two thirds of  
20 students who were eligible to receive the AAA  
21 scholarship have annual income less than 20,000  
22 like myself. This scholarship will help hardworking  
23 students who have made sacrifices to attend school  
24 and to do their part to be successful just like  
25 every single one of you did when you went to

1  
2 college and like I am currently doing. It is the  
3 reason why I'm here today, not only to speak for  
4 myself but for, but for also for those CUNY  
5 students and soon to be CUNY students who do great  
6 in school and who are still struggling financially  
7 in college we need this scholarship. City council  
8 we have done our part today and now it's time for  
9 you to do yours and implement the academic  
10 achievement award. Thank you very much.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Thank  
12 you. I'm really very pleased at how many student,  
13 CUNY students are here today to participate. When  
14 we decided on this topic we thought we would have  
15 good attendance but this is really very impressive.  
16 And it, it lets everyone know how concerned you are  
17 about the burdens that you're facing in terms of  
18 trying to get through school. And we thank you for  
19 your testimony highlighting the other pieces of an  
20 education, not just tuition but all of the other  
21 factors are intend, not just the tuition and fees  
22 but th3e living expenses, transportation, books,  
23 500 dollars for a book...

24 ANNA PALO WHITE: Some of the books are  
25 just 200 dollars but when you add up...

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Just 200?

ANNA PALO WHITE: ...add up all the books that you need to get you have anywhere between three to five a semester so...

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That's, that's... truly burdensome. And as it says, as someone had said previously they just change the pictures. And, and we did have the previous year there was a, a panel on text books. So we will have a further examination of that going forward.

ANNA PALO WHITE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...looking at that cost. But we thank you for your testimony. And if you have a written copy we'd appreciate it. If you can get it to us.

ANNA PALO WHITE: I can get that to you actually, didn't bring one today sorry.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good, thank you we'd appreciate it. Thank you so much. And we're going to move onto our next panel which is...

[pause]

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay we're now going to hear from the community colleges. Leda Ramos [sp?] [crosstalk] Dario Poralta [sp?], Dario

1  
2 Poralta, Domingo Estevez [sp?], and Ismael Sharif  
3 [sp?]. Okay, so we're going to start. Hello, hello.  
4 Oh, is it... Oh, I didn't realize that there was an  
5 overflow room that's filled... wonderful. Glad that  
6 that's happening, glad that it's happening. Okay.  
7 If you'd all raise your right hand. Oh there's a,  
8 there's a four person okay. Thank you. Do you swear  
9 or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and  
10 nothing but the truth in your testimony you provide  
11 today and to answer all the questions posed by the  
12 committee truthfully?

13 [crosstalk]

14 LEDA RAMOS: Good Evening. My name is  
15 Leda Ramos. I'm a recent graduate of Queens Borough  
16 Community College and I will be continuing my  
17 education at Baroo [sp?] College in the fall. I'm  
18 also a delegate for University Student Senate and  
19 the former Executive Vice President of Student  
20 Government for Queens Borough Community College.  
21 The Vallone Scholarship was eliminated in 2011. I  
22 began college in early 2011. This was a scholarship  
23 that could have made a really big impact on my  
24 college education as an immigrant student. Being  
25 the first person in my family to ever attend



1 college was very exciting. However it did not seem  
2 feasible since there was no way that I could afford  
3 it. The aid that I did receive barely covered one  
4 textbook per semester. Luckily I found a great  
5 program called the ASAT program. And thanks to this  
6 type of program I was able to start college only a  
7 year right after graduating high school. What about  
8 the 15 thousand students who benefit, who benefited  
9 from this scholarship before? I actually knew a lot  
10 of them, personal friends of mine and I, I  
11 witnessed the struggle they went through when it  
12 was eliminated in 2011. For most of us that are  
13 transitioning from community colleges to senior,  
14 four year colleges, many of you know it's a very  
15 tedious process. It is much more competitive in a  
16 four year college and there are so many other  
17 things to consider on a bigger scale such as  
18 transportation, food, cost of living, these are all  
19 things that have increased within the last years  
20 and have made it harder for students to be able to  
21 pursue their education. Implementing the academic  
22 achievement award will be a lot of hard work. But  
23 the fruits of its labor will be prolific. Just look  
24 at the evidence. The Vallone Scholarship recipients  
25

1  
2 who entered associate degree programs as first time  
3 freshman in 2008 had a one year retention rates of  
4 86.9 percent compared to the 68 percent of overall  
5 CUNY full time freshman that enter that same year.  
6 Numbers do not lie and the effect of this  
7 scholarship on our students was very clear. I am  
8 here to testify not only on behalf of myself but on  
9 behalf of my younger brother who will be starting  
10 college soon. Of the many first generation  
11 immigrant students who believe they cannot go to  
12 college because of their status and of every CUNY  
13 student who wants to pursue their education but are  
14 struggling to find the means to do so. I urge the  
15 council to take all of this information and use it  
16 to implement the academic achievement award. Thank  
17 you for your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next  
19 panelist.

20 DARIO PORALTA: Good afternoon. My name  
21 is Doria Poralta. I am the current president of the  
22 student government association... And Chair I must  
23 say that you look radiant with those colors. Those  
24 are the, the colors from my college, orange and  
25 blue...

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

DARIO PORALTA: So I take a lot of pride in that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And part of my reason for wearing my African attire is to keep the plight of a 300 Nigerian girls in the forefront so that we don't forget. Thank you.

DARIO PORALTA: Respect. As one of the previous speakers stated one third of eligible students are born outside of the US and 38 percent of those born in the US had parents that were born outside of the US. I, myself am, part of those eligible students that were born outside of the US who also had my parents born outside of the US. I am Hispanic. I am from... and my parents brought me to the United States when I was 10 years old. I 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 was, I always had the dream to go to college and get a degree and hopefully one day become a doctor but I knew that I would have to face many hardships in college. As an undocumented

1 student I used to worry that one day my parents  
2 won't make enough money to pay for my tuition.  
3 Every semester gets more expensive and as a science  
4 major it's not only the tuition that I worry about  
5 but the text books as well. Every semester I need  
6 around 700 dollars' worth of text books and lab  
7 manuals. Undocumented students are choosing to  
8 attend community college or sometimes to attend for  
9 financial reasons they don't attend college at all.  
10 Community college's tuition is cheaper than four  
11 year colleges. There is very little and limited  
12 help that undocumented students are available for  
13 to receive in college. Most of the help, actually  
14 it's just merit awards which is pretty small; as a  
15 [sp?], PELL, TAP, CUNY scholarships, ALTA [sp?]  
16 scholarships, all of them require the participant  
17 to be citizen. In my college only about 10 percent  
18 of students graduate within the expectant time of  
19 graduation. The rest many of the... take longer  
20 because they did not make enough money to pay to be  
21 in college as a full time student. I have been  
22 grateful that so far my parents have been able to  
23 make just enough to allow me to be a full time  
24 student and allow me to give back to the community  
25

1  
2 that has supported me and to the institution that  
3 provides with an education at a price. Triple A  
4 will help students like me who cannot receive any  
5 financial aid while being an academic achiever and  
6 being so involved in the college by helping other  
7 students. Every year I notice the same students  
8 applying to the same scholarships while at the same  
9 time see other struggles to pay for the student  
10 activity fee and transportation, both of them which  
11 will increase with the next year. CUNY raising  
12 tuition price for the fall semester and the MTA  
13 increasing their fares by 2015. It is very  
14 difficult for, it is very difficult being  
15 undocumented student who may sometimes feel with no  
16 voice, no representation especially when there is  
17 very little help being offered that they may be  
18 eligible for. So I urge you to please support this.  
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next.

21 ISMAEL SHARIF: Hello. Good morning. My  
22 name is... [crosstalk]

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Hello.

24 ISMAEL SHARIF: Sharif. Hunter College,  
25 member of the NYPIRG Board of Directors New York

1 Public Interest Research Group. We're here, we  
2 appreciate the opportunity to provide NYPIRG's  
3 perspective on the merit base, need base  
4 scholarships that you're talking about today.  
5 NYPIRG is New York state's largest student directed  
6 nonpartisan research and advocacy organization.  
7 Through NYPIRG CUNY students are empowered to  
8 impact policy decisions on issues that affect us  
9 including decisions about funding for public higher  
10 education and financial aid which is what we're  
11 here for today. We're going to hop on many of the  
12 same things that people have already spoken about  
13 previous to me getting here and we're fully in  
14 support of the council proposal as outlined in the  
15 city council's response to the mayor's 2015  
16 preliminary budget to invest 10.9 million to create  
17 the academic achievement award. This long overdue  
18 merit based program will provide some of New York's  
19 achievement... city's best and brightest students  
20 help in offsetting the rising cost of associated  
21 with attending college. Undocumented youth are  
22 currently ineligible for any federal state  
23 financial aid and that would encourage access to  
24 college and successful, success thereafter. Triple  
25

1  
2 A would be one of the few programs that would be  
3 available to undocumented New Yorkers who went on to  
4 attend CUNY schools. The Vallone scholarship which  
5 was New York City's only merit based higher  
6 education scholarship award at the time was then  
7 the only avenue for qualifying New York's, New York  
8 City Public High, High School undocumented students  
9 to receive any financial aid to help in attending  
10 CUNY schools. Even though CUNY was faced with  
11 rising costs the Vallone Scholarship was defunded  
12 in 2011. This was a huge blow to the 14 thousand  
13 students who lost their scholarships, threatened  
14 access, threatening access to higher education from  
15 some of the, to the city's higher best and  
16 brightest. CUNY students responded with a clear  
17 voice. 14 thousand students signed a petition to  
18 demand restoration. We were overjoyed when the  
19 council responded to those students with the  
20 academic achievement award. Let's talk about need  
21 based financial aid also. The safety net  
22 scholarships for CUNY students was defunded in  
23 2009. The program was designed to aid college  
24 students during times of significant financial  
25 need. Today our students face economic hardship

1  
2 that may be difficult to overcome on their own. The  
3 council can do more to help CUNY's most vulnerable  
4 students. While many CUNY students received the  
5 federal PELL grant and state tuition assistance  
6 program award to help them pay for college not all  
7 students will, who need aid have access to these  
8 programs. Thousands of low income students such as  
9 undocumented and part time students either do, do  
10 not qualify for TAP CUNY needs a, CUY needs a  
11 council funded financial aid program to help  
12 students with their education costs and fill the  
13 gaps left by TAP. We urge the council to invest  
14 five million into a need based financial aid  
15 program. In closing NYPIRG appreciates your efforts  
16 to help ensure affordable, accessible, and a high  
17 quality at public, higher education for CUNY  
18 students. We look forward to working with you to  
19 ensure that all need, needy college students are  
20 provided with assistance that they need. Thank you  
21 for providing, providing us with the opportunity to  
22 share our thoughts. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay and next  
24 presenter.



1  
2 DOMINGO ESTEVEZ: Well I'm going to keep  
3 it short because a lot of my sentiment has been  
4 shared with my brothers and sisters here when they  
5 came to the, to the stage. Good morning Chairperson  
6 Barron and everyone here today, hope all is well.  
7 My name is Domingo Estevez. I'm the Vice Chair of  
8 Community Colleges and I'm also the President of  
9 the Student Government in the... Community College,  
10 also graduated this semester, finally done with  
11 community colleges, going on to city college.  
12 Triple A is something USS came together to help  
13 students who excel academically. Personally going  
14 to community colleges and understanding the need  
15 for extra resources as a student who attends a  
16 commuter school is a must. I personally would not  
17 benefit from triple A because I did not graduate  
18 from high school. I got my GED. Yet a lot of my  
19 peers who did and work day and night work, work  
20 hard during the day and go to school at night would  
21 need that, that extra assistance and, to help them  
22 in their journey to, to pursue a college education.  
23 It's not to... how could I say this. It's not, it's  
24 not going to help everybody but being a student you  
25 understand that everybody, it takes time to help

1  
2 everybody. That's something I learned in student  
3 government. It's not something that happens  
4 overnight. But the people we could help is just  
5 another story that could be added to, to, to the  
6 book saying well now it's time for us to help  
7 somebody else you know. So I, I, I, I see it as an  
8 opportunity to help those, those incoming freshmen  
9 who are not able to, to, to get the same benefits  
10 we did while we were in college but it would help  
11 out approximately 41 percent of incoming freshmen  
12 which is equal to about 13,486 full time students.  
13 And that is something that is better than saying  
14 we're not helping anybody. An institution where  
15 more than 200 thousand matriculated in an  
16 institution that it has more than 200 thousand  
17 matriculated student. As a student I feel for my  
18 peers and I am deeply saddened when a small  
19 striving intellectual has a, has to drop out of  
20 school to work because he or she does not have the  
21 help or the luxury of dedicating his or her self to  
22 be a full time student as other students do or are  
23 able to live in an 18 thousand dollar home off the  
24 back of poor students. All I want to say is triple  
25 A might not help everyone in need but it does help

1  
2 students and that's a start. And when we, and we  
3 can begin the convo now of creating a safety net  
4 for all students in New York and set an example  
5 countrywide that it doesn't, that New York doesn't  
6 only invest in the students but it also listens to  
7 them. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much  
9 for your testimony. And I'm glad that you raised  
10 that point, that you would not have been eligible  
11 because you didn't graduate from a New York City  
12 High School. And I hadn't been aware of that, that  
13 those who attained a GED are not eligible. So did  
14 you attend high school at all during the time that...

15 DOMINGO ESTEVEZ: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...in a New York City  
17 school?

18 DOMINGO ESTEVEZ: Yeah I did attend high  
19 school but...

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: In New York City?

21 DOMINGO ESTEVEZ: Yeah. But I wasn't  
22 focused at the time so I, I ended up dropping out  
23 at 16.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So that might be  
25 something for us to look at as well as we're

1  
2 forming this policy that those who at one point  
3 were enrolled in a New York City high school and  
4 subsequently obtained a GED which is even harder to  
5 do now than it was in the past year that they might  
6 also be considered. Because there are lots of  
7 reasons that students drop out of high school.

8 DOMINGO ESTEVEZ: But I also wouldn't  
9 have had the, the grade requirement either. My GPA  
10 was like under a 60 I think it was.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So at the time that  
12 you left it was not...

13 DOMINGO ESTEVEZ: Yeah, yeah...

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Okay. But  
15 it's, I still think it's a consideration for those  
16 who might have dropped out for other reasons, you  
17 know personal family reasons and who had the GPA  
18 that would be required...

19 DOMINGO ESTEVEZ: Yeah.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...and then  
21 subsequently attained a GED. So that's something  
22 that I'm going to look at to see how we could  
23 include that and not eliminate those persons who  
24 said well I've left the formal, formalized system  
25 but I understand education's important and I want

1  
2 to get that degree so I think that, I think that's  
3 something you should look at.

4 DOMINGO ESTEVEZ: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I'm glad you raised  
6 it. And you had mentioned the fact that the safety  
7 net was defunded?

8 ISMAEL SHARIF: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And, and, and CUNY  
10 in their presentation talks about the programs that  
11 they have now. So do you feel that they're not  
12 adequate or...

13 ISMAEL SHARIF: Well for one the triple  
14 A scholarship as it stands we're definitely going  
15 to need that in order to move forward. As for the,  
16 what CUNY has to offer for us, they have made  
17 several strides in allowing students to remain in  
18 college so forth and so on but there's a huge  
19 funding gap that's necessary to be filled in for us  
20 to essentially remain in college. Even with what  
21 they have offered it's still some money left that's  
22 going to still have to be funded in. Like the, the  
23 amounts I'm not sure, I don't have them off hand  
24 but they weren't full tuition for students that  
25

1 particularly needed it at the time that they were  
2 going through immense financial difficulties.

3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So you're not  
4 saying that they don't exist but that...

5 ISMAEL SHARIF: They're, they're,  
6 they're...

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...they're...

8 ISMAEL SHARIF: ...inadequate.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...they're  
10 inadequate.

11 ISMAEL SHARIF: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, alright.

13 Great. Well I thank you all. I wish you all the  
14 best as you continue in your college career and  
15 nothing but success even though it may be a little  
16 longer we're going to help you hopefully by a least  
17 diminishing some of the costs as you work towards  
18 those degrees. Thank you. And our last panel and  
19 we're going to finish just about on time. Panel  
20 number six are representatives from PSC. We're  
21 going to have Barbara Bowen who's the president of  
22 PSC and we're going to have Artonio [phonetic], no.  
23 Arthurian, Arthurian Dasola [sp?]. If you would  
24 raise whatever hand is convenient for you to raise.  
25

1  
2 Do you swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole  
3 truth, and nothing but the truth in the testimony  
4 you provide today and to answer all questions posed  
5 by the committee honestly? Thank you.

6 BARBARA BOWEN: Good afternoon.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good afternoon.

8 BARBARA BOWEN: the chairman,  
9 chairperson Barron. Good afternoon to the council,  
10 the committee, and especially good afternoon to  
11 students. It's really nice to be in a room full of  
12 students. I haven't been teaching for a while and  
13 it's making me thing oh, let's just turn this into  
14 a classroom. I mean this, this is a great moment so  
15 forgive me if I start bursting out and teaching.  
16 It's a, a real pleasure to be here, to be here with  
17 my colleague the Secretary of the Union Arthurian  
18 Dasola. And I speak on behalf of the 27 thousand  
19 faculty and staff of CUNY represented by the  
20 professional staff congress the union. And we also  
21 stand for the students we have the opportunity and  
22 the honor of serving. We thank you Chairperson  
23 Barron you recently delivered a letter to the  
24 speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito endorsed by 24 other  
25 council members calling for two new council

1 initiatives, 10 million dollars to support 100 new  
2 full time positions at CUNY and five million  
3 dollars to start the work on creating a needs based  
4 financial aid fund for CUNY. CUNY is radically  
5 understaffed and radically underfunded and too many  
6 of the university's students and potential students  
7 are ill-served by the current system of state and  
8 financial aid enacting the two initiatives that you  
9 raised and I don't want to forget the, the 10  
10 million dollars we proposed and, and you have so  
11 strongly advanced for 100 new positions. I know the  
12 budget negotiations are going on now. So we call on  
13 you to stand firm for those and also to stand up  
14 for a needs based scholarship. The real solution to  
15 the financial aid problem at CUNY is to restore  
16 free tuition. From 1847 to 1976 CUNY was free. And  
17 for many years students even received an additional  
18 stipend to cover the cost of books and  
19 transportation. The city maintained a commitment to  
20 free tuition during the civil war, two world wars,  
21 and the great depression. The commitment faltered  
22 only when the introduction of open admissions was  
23 followed by the city's 1975 fiscal crisis and CUNY  
24 in 1976 took a hit far out of proportion to its  
25



1 share of the budget. I think it's right to conclude  
2 that there were race and class politics involved in  
3 that cut. Now community colleges at CUNY cost 4,500  
4 a year yet 65 percent of community college students  
5 have annual household incomes less than 30 thousand  
6 dollars. The best way to maintain the historic  
7 defining commitment to providing access to college  
8 for the children of the whole people as CUNY's  
9 founding statement announces would be to restore  
10 CUNY to free tuition. In fact only yesterday the  
11 chronicle of higher education featured as its first  
12 article the surge of national interest in proposals  
13 to make college free. And it illustrated the  
14 article with a photograph of CUNY students  
15 protesting when the tuition was going to go up.  
16 There's an announcement I believe today by a new  
17 coalition on a plan for national free college and  
18 they, college history that they studied in  
19 developing their plan was CUNY. I'd like to just  
20 take another second since I'm speaking on behalf of  
21 the whole union and Arthurian I'm going to take  
22 that time if you don't mind. Ultimately we'd like  
23 to work with the council on the idea of free  
24 tuition and it's less out of reach than it may  
25

1  
2 appear once you bundle all the other financial aid  
3 that's going there. But today we're going to  
4 concentrate on the financial needs of our students  
5 and the critical importance of needs based  
6 scholarships. We support the Council's interest in  
7 reestablishing a merit based scholarship, the  
8 academic achievement award if it is created  
9 together with a needs based financial aid  
10 initiative. The PSC is the union representing the  
11 faculty has a bedrock interest in supporting  
12 student achievement. We applaud students like those  
13 who've spoken today, such courageous students as  
14 the dreamers who are able to maintain high academic  
15 standards and who strive to excel academically.  
16 There is nothing like seeing a student take off  
17 intellectually when exposed to quantum psychics or  
18 medieval philosophy, or feminist theory. As  
19 teachers we love to see students thrilled to  
20 learning and we are committed to seeing them do  
21 well. The triple A scholarship would reward full  
22 time students at CUNY who maintain a B average with  
23 400 dollars in scholarship aid per semester or 800  
24 a year. This is a modest but much appreciated  
25 amount of aid for the 13,500 students who are

1  
2 expected to qualify. Many of this qualifying  
3 students will come from low and moderate income  
4 families. 400 a semester will make a real  
5 difference for them. Some will be low income and  
6 undocumented students. They won't be barred from  
7 receiving this scholarship unless other provisions  
8 are put in. There will also be students without  
9 financial need who receive the award, students who  
10 worked hard to achieve their goals. But there are  
11 serious limitations to a merit based scholarship.  
12 And the city council has a history of recognizing  
13 the importance of supporting students according to  
14 their need. And we heard that first thing this  
15 morning by former Council Member Barron. Until  
16 recently when funds were cut for the council's  
17 initiatives the council was able to develop and  
18 fund a strictly need based scholarship for  
19 undergraduates. Without restriction on its use in  
20 any part of the university, without restriction on  
21 where one graduated from... too... respond to your  
22 previous question. Now is the political moment to  
23 revive that important program. The eyes of the city  
24 are focused on the upcoming budget and Mayor de  
25 Blasio has prompted us to see CUNY as a lynch pin

1 of the program to reduce economic inequality.  
2 Without a needs based scholarship some of the  
3 momentum for that change may be lost. The proposed  
4 triple A scholarship will not help part time CUNY  
5 students nor will it provide enough aid to  
6 undocumented students or working poor independent  
7 students to that they can study full time and  
8 progress to graduation. And the large number of  
9 students who enter CUNY with remedial needs may not  
10 necessarily have B grade point averages even though  
11 they would benefit from the aid and would help them  
12 to work outside less and study more. The PSE  
13 believes strongly that the council should set aside  
14 at least five million dollars, a very modest amount  
15 in terms of the entire city budget 74 billion... 5  
16 million for need based financial aid to be  
17 distributed by CUNY to those for whom it will make  
18 a real difference in their ability to go to school.  
19 Financial aid offices at CUNY could target this aid  
20 directly to where the most need exists as they did  
21 under the now defunded safety net financial aid  
22 program initiated by the council a decade ago. Our  
23 written testimony contains more information about  
24 the specific needs of the students. But I want to  
25

1  
2 close by thanking the council for their advocacy,  
3 thanking Chairperson Barron and urging us this year  
4 to combine the ideas of merit in a scholarship  
5 which is a very powerful idea. As a faculty member  
6 how could I be opposed to that. I, but I think we  
7 need to combine that with the idea of needs based.  
8 There are so many students who for very legitimate  
9 reasons will slip out of that B average or may be  
10 able to access more money than the 400 or 800 in  
11 the very important triple A scholarship. So we urge  
12 you to return to that very strong impulse which  
13 combined need and merit and then work together with  
14 us to wipe it all, all the need for it away and  
15 replace that with free tuition. Thank you very  
16 much.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next  
18 panelist.

19 BARBARA BOWEN: We shared the, the  
20 testimony. So Ms. Dasola is also available to  
21 answer questions..

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

23 BARBARA BOWEN: ...and would be very good  
24 resource as a long time councilor for students at  
25 CUNY before she gave her services to the union.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, thank you.

We've been joined by Council Member Cabrera and he does have a question or two that he would like to ask.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Alright thank you so much Madam Chair. Thank you for bringing this important topic into our committee. And also I want to thank the CUNY faculty. Often I, I encourage young people, I'm a pastor also of a church so you know I deal a lot with young people. I always tell them to go to CUNY and part of the big reason is because of the faculty for, you know we have a five star faculty that, with many many recognitions in accolade. For a second I thought I was in church. I saw everybody going like this you know.

[laughter]

COUCNIL MEMBER CABRERA: But what I, you know I get that indeed it's a form of clapping here and, and it really... on what you're saying. I do want to address one question. Because you know I, I sat down in this committee now for four years and it was a pleasure to be and always to be in this committee. Always asked to be in this committee.

1  
2 But my question to you is for, in order to have  
3 free tuition for all the students we don't want to  
4 tap into the faculty salary because we want to draw  
5 the best faculty, CUNY is already strapped right so  
6 would you say that this really is incumbent upon  
7 the state to, to come through and to give us the  
8 funding that we need? Because CUNY cannot do the  
9 job they're supposed to do. Faculty, obviously  
10 we're not going to draw the best faculty if we  
11 don't have the funding. But I mean, at the end of  
12 the day would you say that it comes down to the  
13 state really being serious about putting out the  
14 funding that we need in order to make this a  
15 reality?

16 BARBARA BOWEN: Okay. Thank you for the  
17 question. To restore free tuition at CUNY I think  
18 we'd need to sit down and make a plan that involves  
19 the state, the city, and even the federal level  
20 because there are PELL grants now going into CUNY  
21 and look at the total of aid that comes in now and  
22 how, what sources there might be in the public  
23 sector to replace the balance because there's  
24 already aid coming in. And the plan would be, not  
25 at all to reduce the overall funding for CUNY. That

1  
2 is not, that is not our call when we say we think  
3 that the horizon... and it may not be such a far  
4 horizon... could be to think about free tuition. But  
5 it, absolutely we support your view that any  
6 proposal for free tuition should not be about  
7 diminishing the overall funding of CUNY. And yes  
8 absolutely the state funding for CUNY has dropped  
9 by 30 percent in the, since 1990 and the city  
10 funding for CUNY has also dropped. I can give you  
11 our list, our static, static, I'm sorry our booklet  
12 here that lays out for you the changes in the  
13 tuition proportion of CUNY's total funding vis-à-  
14 vis the state and the city. And you'll see a  
15 dramatic drop in that funding. So yes our call  
16 would be for the state to step up and stop  
17 defunding CUNY but start increasing the funding for  
18 CUNY, also the city to take a major step in  
19 increasing funding. The mayor has taken a major  
20 step this year by adding nearly 20 million dollars  
21 in funding for stem fields at CUNY. He has made the  
22 proposal to bring that all the way up to 150  
23 million dollars extra. That's a very powerful  
24 proposal and we strongly support that. But I think  
25 the real solution is to restore the public funding



1 which has been systematically drained from CUNY.  
2  
3 And not to weigh the funding for, or to cut funding  
4 for faculty to provide additional funding for  
5 students. That will, that's a way to diminish and  
6 hurt the institution so that would never be our  
7 proposal.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I agree. And,  
9 and what's the real gap then? What would it take  
10 in, in terms from the analysis that you...  
11 [crosstalk] as a union, what's the real number?

12 BARBARA BOWEN: I, I don't, we don't  
13 have enough information at this point to know  
14 exactly what that number would be. But I would love  
15 to work with the council on that. And I see one of  
16 CUNY's representatives here, and we had earlier  
17 ones today. I think it's worth at least knowing  
18 what that gap is before we think about whether we  
19 could have a vision of returning to free tuition.  
20 It might be a moment that we can think about that  
21 since that's on the horizon nationally. And we'd  
22 love to work with the council to develop what the  
23 actual numbers are. We've heard different ones  
24 through the years, I know you have Council Member  
25 Barron, and I know CUNY's heard different ones

1  
2 through the years. I'd like to really do the  
3 numbers and find out what that number would be that  
4 would replace the current tuition without  
5 diminishing the funds for the university.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: And in closing  
7 let me just say that what I, what I, in my line of  
8 question I don't want, I don't want faculty, I  
9 don't want the responsibility to fall on faculty. I  
10 some ways the same with CUNY it really, to be  
11 honest with you, it falls on us elected officials.  
12 Because at the end of the day if we are going to  
13 be, have an effective system we have to, and of  
14 course we want to... of, of this funding but at the  
15 end of the day we cannot ask, just like an army to  
16 do their job if we don't give them the funding to  
17 do what they're supposed to do. The same thing, if  
18 we are going to march forward we have to give the  
19 resources that they need in, in order to effective.  
20 Madam Chair thank you so much. As always it's a  
21 pleasure to be here with you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you Council  
23 Member. We want to thank the... You have another  
24 comment?

1  
2 ARTHURIAN DASOLA: Yeah, just want to  
3 make a comment with regard to the issue of that  
4 gap. We've heard this, we've heard this morning the  
5 impact of that gap. I really believe that we should  
6 have a free CUNY.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Mm-hmm.

8 ARTHURIAN DASOLA: I missed it by one  
9 year.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh...

11 ARTHURIAN DASOLA: I missed it by one  
12 year. But the gap impacts on our students, it  
13 impacts in terms of graduation rates. Because our  
14 students are not flunking out, they are stopping  
15 out.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Mm-hmm.

17 ARTHURIAN DASOLA: It extends their time  
18 at the university. It also impacts as a counselor  
19 where, with over 35 years of experience I have seen  
20 students over the years because of that gap  
21 determine their choice of major. And that's  
22 significant. That is tremendously significant. I've  
23 seen students who would have been excellent science  
24 majors, excellent students in fields of allied  
25 health. Once they do their research they say Ms.

1  
2 Dasola I can't afford this, I have to choose a  
3 different major. And that's disappointing. There's  
4 a whole host of students. We mentioned it this  
5 morning with regard to part time students. Part  
6 time students do not get the same type of aid if  
7 any aid at all. Those students their graduation  
8 rates are taking them five, six, seven years. We  
9 also, we didn't speak about students exist in a  
10 context. A context in terms of family.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Mm-hmm.

12 ARTHURIAN DASOLA: CUNY is now saying  
13 you know it's, it's, it's not that expensive to  
14 come to CUNY. It is expensive. It's expensive for,  
15 to come to CUNY if you can't afford it. And that  
16 gap includes books, tuition, transportation, lunch..  
17 There is, in the brochure that President Bowen  
18 talked about, we have a chart that talks about food  
19 insecurity. Being on a campus to see students... when  
20 we have, when students are participating in let's  
21 say clubs and if that club is going to have let's  
22 say food the amount of students, the word goes out.  
23 The word goes out. So, many, many of our students I  
24 wouldn't say...

25 [laughter]

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Everybody's hands  
3 are up on that one.

4 ARTHURIAN DASOLA: Many of our students,  
5 they work very very hard. They're strong students,  
6 but over the years I have seen students stop out  
7 more than I would like to see. I was a nursing  
8 advisor. As a nursing advisor it's a very  
9 challenging major. We have a significant number of,  
10 of number of students who stepped up to the plate  
11 and in their second and third year they had to stop  
12 out. They had to stop out because of economic  
13 reasons. So I would just say that I would like to  
14 see going forward that we do have this conversation  
15 of having a free CUNY. I think it's essential  
16 because it impacts on the city, because going  
17 forward we are having, we're now having, I'm seeing  
18 a drain of human capital. Students who would make  
19 the grade and would make a significant contribution  
20 to this city are being denied that opportunity. So  
21 going forward I hope we will have that  
22 conversation. I would like to see a free CUNY and I  
23 think it can, I believe it can happen. Thank you.

24 BARBARA BOWEN: And if I could just say  
25 Madam Chair while we do the work on thinking about

1  
2 a free CUNY we must do a needs based scholarship in  
3 addition to the achievement based scholarship.  
4 They're just, as Arthurian said there are just too  
5 many students who are not captured by an  
6 achievement based scholarship. We must reward  
7 achievement and I love the idea that students came  
8 out with that, thought themselves to reward  
9 achievement. But as you know there are ways that  
10 many many deserving students could fall short of  
11 the achievement marker or even for one semester so  
12 I urge you to make it a priority now to include  
13 needs based fellowship or scholarship money along  
14 with the achievement base money. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Okay, we want  
16 to thank you for your testimony. And as we conclude  
17 this hearing I want to thank all of you. You can  
18 give yourself a big round of applause for your  
19 participation. You've done a great job, great job.

20 [applause]

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And I just have to  
22 say that unfortunately the state passed the  
23 legislation which allowed the trustees to impose  
24 the increase of 300 dollars every year and they  
25 tried to, you know we have to be careful with

1 words. They called it the rational tuition policy.  
2 There's nothing rational about requiring an  
3 additional 300 dollars every year. It's predictable  
4 but it's not rational to say that you have to. It  
5 doesn't take into account economic impacts that may  
6 come during that time. So it's not rational. The  
7 second thing I would say to all of you who are here  
8 is that you have power, students have power. When  
9 you come together in an organized fashion with a  
10 specific target... And I remind everyone that when  
11 the high school students said no, we're not going  
12 to allow the state to take away our metro cards to  
13 get to school they organized, they protested, and  
14 within two months state legislators were called  
15 back to Albany and told listen, fix that, change  
16 that, take it out. You have that power, you have  
17 that ability when you come together as an organized  
18 body and plan what it is and make your demands  
19 clear and focused. So I would encourage you to do  
20 that. I will be there with you as you wage those  
21 battles. And the other thing I would say is be  
22 careful. Because they've gotten through with their  
23 so called rational tuition policy and they're still  
24 lurking the differential tuition that they want to  
25

1  
2 impose so that the schools that have the medical  
3 programs and what they call the more higher,  
4 higher, because of the labs and things that are  
5 required at a greater fee they won't to impose a  
6 differential tuition at that school, at those  
7 schools. It's still lurking. Don't let it sneak up  
8 on us and we're unprepared for it. Because things  
9 don't really die in Albany. They go into a little  
10 state of hiatus but then they come back. So I  
11 encourage you and want to ask all of you to study  
12 hard, do the best you can. I know that you've got  
13 lots of obstacles but it's worth it. You're  
14 bettering yourselves, you're improving your own  
15 conditions, and you're making a greater  
16 contribution to society. So I want to thank you for  
17 coming, urge you to stay in touch. And we look  
18 forward to the battle because the battle is a  
19 strenuous one but we can be victorious as we stay  
20 together. Thank you.

21 [applause]

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: We're adjourned.

23 [gavel]

24

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date         June 19, 2014