

Kurt M. Sealy

New York City College of Technology

Black Male Initiative Program.

Honorable Trustees, Distinguished administrators, honored guests. My name is Kurt Sealy and I thank you for the distinction of speaking to you today about the Black Male Initiative Program. Global technological advancement and the pivotal nature of the sciences have made programs such as the Black Male Initiative crucial. As part of a larger CUNY wide thrust, the New York City Tech, BMI was created to focus on the disciplines related to Science Technology Engineering and Math, often represented by the acronym STEM. This was deemed necessary since related research has time and again indicated that minorities have been traditionally underrepresented in these fields. Even the President of the United States has time and again commented on the urgency with which the country needs to refocus its attention on cultivating a new generation of scientists if America is to regain and maintain its position of eminence in these fields. To this end, I shall expound upon the contribution of the NYCCT Black Male Initiative Program to the accomplishment of this goal.

The program at City Tech has been in existence for just about 3 years and at its inception had a skeletal membership of 7. Academic advising and counseling,

Mentorship from faculty and peers, tutoring, paid summer research and internships, exposure to industry, career exploration and capstone experiences, are some of the many services that were being offered. Since my initial contact, I have gained invaluable exposure, beyond even what I expected, to mainly the Physical Sciences. Hands on learning and an intimate knowledge of the scientific world have been hallmarks of my learning experience in the program. My experiences are by no means unique. I assure you that many of my peers if asked would have the same testimony. As a result, some have even decided that the Sciences are a field in which they would like to pursue a career. This is tremendous, especially if you take into consideration that the group to which I refer has traditionally shied away from focusing on Science as a path they would like to take. While I am no researcher, as an observer I can tell you that for many minority men and women scientific study is like a dream which someone else is more likely qualified to capture. One of the main reasons for this is the seemingly strange inability of many to get pass the main gate keepers to entering the field, math and writing.

Math and Writing form the basis of technology. For many, even the thought of studies in these areas summon a fear that is immediate and academically paralyzing. In my opinion, the BMI has been very successful in helping to

neutralize and alleviate that fear for its members, offering much needed tutoring and encouragement. The results have been amazing. Generally, those who have participated in the tutoring sessions have been able to realize a vast improvement in their overall GPAs. More importantly, is the manifestation of confidence in the face of the challenge that math and writing poses, that now they can actually do it, now they actually get it. What I have witnessed is the transposition of this confidence into almost every other area of study. I believe this has a lot to do with the boldness which emanates from the conquering of ones fears, and the sense of safety cultivated belonging to a community of academically ambitious individuals affords; standing together, supporting each other and pushing one another toward the ultimate goal-success.

There are many other benefits which I can touch on today (incentives, field trips, networking) but I think the best way to really help you appreciate the full extent of what I am trying to say is by sharing with u the story of a young man named Michael. A computer engineering major and a friend, he came to the BMI with a GPA of 1.3, low confidence and unsure. After flunking out one semester and barely making it through another, Michael participated in many of the BMI programs and events. This past semester Michael, called me irate because in his five classes he had two B+, all the others were A's. Michael's story capsulate the

success that is the aim of the NYCCT BMI; Michael's current GPA of 3.2 attests to the impact that the BMI is having on its members. The reputation of the program as a community of student scholars is further solidified by the fact that the current membership is just over two hundred members. In a nutshell this is the NYCCT BMI.

Talking Points: CUNY Master Plan
Vice Chancellor Garrie Moore, March 16, 2009

- SEEK and College Discovery programs are central to the City University of New York's mission of providing access to higher education for the poor of New York City and State and serve as one of the many strategies that we use to reduce gaps in student success.
- As most of you know, SEEK and CD are the two CUNY higher education opportunity programs. They bear the distinction of being the first state funded opportunity programs in the nation. Admission is based on two criteria—a family income below the poverty level **and** high school academic performance that does not meet the standard admission criteria of the enrolling college.
- For nearly a half century, SEEK and CD have provided students a small financial supplement and developed innovative academic and counseling initiatives that enable them to compete with their better prepared non-program peers. At no time in our nation is there a greater need to ensure that we are educating all our residents.
- The investment of less than \$2,000 per student has netted results that extend far beyond the Program. Many of the current “best practices” in higher education—pre-freshman summer programs, learning communities, freshman seminars—began in SEEK/CD.
- All programs offer academic support throughout the students' tenure. Each program has a computer lab and “laptops for loan”, supplemental instruction and master tutors assigned to SEEK classes. Theme based workshops like study skills, time management, and graduate school selection are regular offerings.
- Over the last decade, narrowing the gap between our opportunity program students and their peers has become an obsession, one that has led us to create a SEEK/CD Leadership Academy, expand study abroad funding, and strengthen SEEK/CD honors programs for high achievers.
- The result of the rich programming in SEEK and CD is that students succeed. For example, in SEEK approximately 80% of incoming freshmen finish their first semester in good academic standing. Performance only improves with time, with the number rising to 85% after the first year. College Discovery students continue to have higher graduation and retention rates than non-program students.
- SEEK enrollment is 8,772; CD enrollment is 2,501. Given the current economic downturn and increase in applications, we anticipate that the opportunity program pool will increase as well.
 - Alumni: doctors, judges, lawyers, research scientists, corporate heads, journalists, college professors, social workers, artists, NYS Assembly members and NYC Council members.

From: Professor Joseph Wilson, Co-Director, Brooklyn College ERIS
Empowering/Recruiting/Investing/Supporting: Black Male Initiative

RE: Public testimony: City Council, Committee on Higher Education

Date: April 28, 2009

Dear Committee members,

It is an honor to represent Brooklyn College BMI/ERIS program

Our program plays a vital role in the lives of some of the most vulnerable students at Brooklyn College.

We recruit students working with local high schools.
ERIS provides mentors in all subjects.
ERIS provides a drop-in study center with a compute lab.
ERIS builds a sense of support, community and positive reinforcement.

Last year over 1500 drop-ins spent time in the ERIS Center.

ERIS has increased black-make retention at Brooklyn College. Over 70% of our ERIS scholars return to school.

As a result of our work, the retention rate for African American men has risen to match the general student retention rate.

We assist needy and deserving students with social problems; we provide counseling and assist when students run into a crisis.

ERIS is a pipeline program sending students into the School of Education to become teachers. We also send students to graduate school and this addresses the issue of underrepresentation of Black graduate students.

Chris Browne is an example of one of our award winning success stories. He exemplifies those students who have benefitted greatly from ERIS.

We would not exist with out city council funding.

Please save BMI and ERIS

We are critically important to the success of New York City's future and the future of Black men in CUNY.

**Testimony of the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY
On the Success and Challenges of Opportunity Programs at CUNY
to the Higher Education Committee of the NYC Council**

**Delivered by
Arthurine DeSola,
PSC Secretary
April 28, 2009**

Good afternoon Chairperson Barron and distinguished members of the Council's Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the chance to testify on behalf of the 22,000 PSC members about the importance of the CUNY's Opportunity Programs to the several thousand students who benefit from these state-supported programs.

SEEK and College Discovery programs serve some of CUNY's neediest students. These programs are—by design—only available to entering college freshman who are academically disadvantaged and come from families with incomes below the poverty level which is \$26,420 for a family of three for example.

The SEEK and College Discovery are among the biggest success stories of CUNY. With greater resources to provide enhanced counseling services, academic support and supplemental financial aid including modest stipends to students, these programs have a long track record for moving very low-income students from a marginalized position to the high levels of academic attainment.

But the number of positions in SEEK and College Discovery has declined as state funding has withered. In 1990, funding was sufficient to offer places to 4,321 freshmen; by 2008, the number had fallen 40% to only 3,180 freshmen. Declines are worst at the community college level where the need is likely to be greatest. CUNY community colleges enrolled only 906 students in College Discovery last year.

Both these programs are funded by the state – and while these programs were not cut this year, they have been reduced in others years. More important, State investment in CUNY overall has declined over the last 20 years. As documented the Fiscal Policy Institute documented last January, enrollments at CUNY community college enrollments rose 29.2% since 1990—and we expect another 10-12% increase next fall—but state funding per FTE student adjusted for inflation declined 25.6%. We are grateful to Governor Paterson and the Legislature and the Obama administration for restoring a proposed 10% cut to state Community College Base Aid from the federal stimulus package, but the need remains great.

Fully 38% of all CUNY undergraduates come from families with income less \$20,000 which would make them eligible for SEEK and College Discovery based on their income. This is approximately 13,000 incoming freshmen ~~enrolled~~ who began last autumn. While we ^{do not} know how many of these students would ~~not~~ be considered academically disadvantaged to the degree required for entry to SEEK or CD, this

number gives us a rough measure of how many CUNY students there are who come from families with very low incomes and who would benefit from greater access to the supports provided by the SEEK and College Discovery programs – beginning with access to much higher levels of academic, personal and career counseling.

To state it plainly: we believe that all low and modest-income students at CUNY (that is the majority) should have ~~the~~ much greater access to educational support services, especially counseling services.

As you are aware, we have campaigned vigorously for additional mental health and other counseling services for all CUNY students. In fact, I was here representing the PSC last spring, asking the City Council to provide an additional \$6.3 million for faculty counselors, especially licensed mental health counselors, at CUNY community colleges and to fund a one-on-one faculty mentoring program.

As we have noted previously, the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) defines *minimum* standards for college counseling programs to include, for example, the requirement that the counseling directors have a doctorate in an appropriate psychological counseling field. The IACS standards require colleges provide at least one licensed psychological counselor to every 1,000 to 1,500 students.

CUNY colleges compare dismally to the IACS standard. Even using the minimum IACS standard of 1 licensed counselor to 1,500 students, our community colleges¹ have on average of just one licensed mental health counselor for every 2,239 students not counting licensed counselors assigned to students in College Discovery. Staffing levels are even worse at the senior, comprehensive and graduate and professional schools. Here the ratio is closer to one licensed mental health counselor for every 5,000 students on average. Though CUNY has been able to mitigate this problem by expanding the number of doctoral fellowships in clinical psychology and social work and assigning these graduate students to work with campus counseling services, much, *much* more is needed.

Frankly CUNY's ratios would be unacceptable on any college campus, but they are especially unacceptable at CUNY. If any students in the country should be provided with adequate counseling faculty, they are CUNY students. Statistically among the lowest-income college students in the nation, CUNY students face pressures unknown at many academic institutions. They hold down jobs, they support families, they contend every day with racism and poverty; they translate and mediate for parents, siblings and community. Close to a third do not have health insurance which severely limits their ability to get psychiatric care outside of school.

¹ These figures do not include either the staff or students in the College Discovery and SEEK programs.

We in the Professional Staff Congress know our students are remarkably resilient. It is a tribute to their commitment to a college education that they co-exist at CUNY largely in harmony and stability. Imagine how much more these students could achieve, however, if they had the necessary support. A fully staffed psychological counseling service is important for students' success and for maintaining the safety of the campus community.

We will continue to appeal to the Governor and State Legislature to expand SEEK and College Discovery, but we also call on the City Council to invest more resources in CUNY students who are New York City's future workforce.

This year, we strongly urge you to restore cuts to the community college budgets proposed in Mayor Bloomberg's Preliminary Executive Budget. We urge you to restore \$11.5 million for Vallone Scholarships to FY 2008 levels, to restore \$3.8 million for vital programs including the Black Male Empowerment Initiative and other programs, and provide \$160 in capital funding to match state-authorized capital investments. We call on the City Council to also invest new funds for critically needed services including expanding counseling services and hiring additional full-time faculty.

Finally, we reiterate our appeal that New York City invest in CUNY students with *public* dollars, and not with unfair tuition increases that make CUNY students pay for New York City's budget deficit.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be heard.



CUNY is the PATH to New York's Future

April 2009

Dear City Council Members:

CUNY's enrollments are higher now than at any other time in the university's history. However, CUNY now has 5,000 *fewer* full-time faculty than it had in 1975, the last time enrollments were almost as high.

Over the last several years, thanks to additional City funding, CUNY has begun to rebuild the university's community college workforce. It has hired additional full-time faculty, started to expand student services including sorely needed academic, career and mental health counseling, and begun to rebuild campus facilities such as libraries, laboratories and learning centers.

City Council support is essential for Vallone Scholarships, Safety Net Program, and university programs including, for example, the Black Male Empowerment Initiative. All these programs have made a difference for thousands of CUNY students, many of them in the first generation in their families to attend college.

Continuing these investments in CUNY is the path out of the current economic crisis and into a better future for NYC. But budget cuts proposed in the FY 2010 Preliminary Budget—at a time when enrollments are expected to grow 10% or more—will quickly undo the progress of recent years and hamper our economic recovery. CUNY students already face bigger classes, course cancellations and close-outs, reduced library hours, too few books and computers to go around, and overused and deteriorating facilities.

New York City should invest in CUNY students with public dollars, and not with unfair tuition increases that make CUNY students pay for New York City's budget deficit.

Your leadership is needed now more than ever. During the Great Depression, New York expanded public higher education: that's when Brooklyn, Lehman and Queens Colleges were built. New York City needs that kind of courageous leadership today.

Restore cuts proposed in the Mayor's Preliminary FY 2010 Budget

Operating aid for CUNY Community Colleges \$43.6 million
(This includes restoring \$4.5 million for the Council-initiated Safety Net Program at its level for FY 2008)

Add back funds for innovative programs, scholarships and other university-wide programs:

- | | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------------|
| • Vallone Scholarships (restore to FY 2008 level) | \$11.2 million | |
| • Black Male Empowerment Initiative | 2.5 million | |
| • CUNY centers and institutes | .9 million | |
| • Vocational Education for Disconnected Youth | .5 million | |
| • Creative Arts Team | .4 million | <u>\$15.5 million</u> |

Fully fund CUNY's investment program so it can accommodate more students

To keep up with growing enrollments, CUNY needs funds to hire additional full-time faculty, counselors and other needed professional staff; to expand student services, workforce development offerings; and to maintain facilities that are in use seven days a week.

\$ 25 million

Fund CUNY's Capital Request (needed to match state funds)

\$160 million

Public higher education is the best way to reinvigorate our city's economy. Invest in CUNY, Invest in New York.

2008 JJC RHB JUNIOR COHORT

LAW SCHOOL APPLICATION STATISTICS

❖ APPLICANTS:

- 11 law school applicants submitted an average of 26 applications each.
- 5 of the 11 students are recycled from past cohorts.
- Average LSAT 145

❖ APPLICATIONS:

- 180 Application Fee Waivers; 2 LSAC Fee Waivers
- 286 Applications for 126 Law Schools

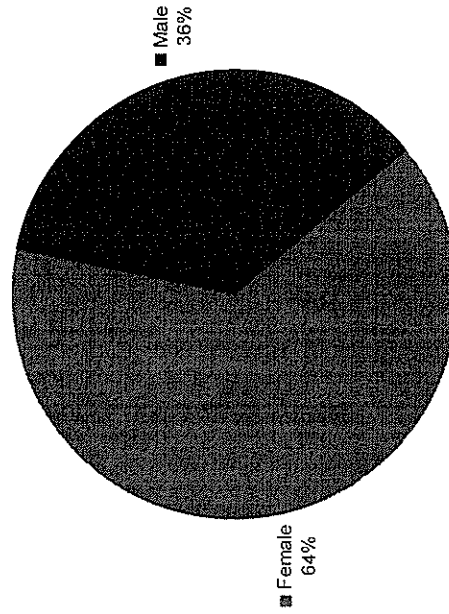
❖ RESULTS AND SUCCESSES:

- 58 Acceptances—35 with scholarships
- \$587,708 total in scholarships
- 10 students have received acceptances or conditional acceptances—all are still awaiting decisions (for personal reasons, 1 of the 11 students applied to only 1 school and has not received a decision).
- 11 Conditional Acceptances
- 30 Waitlisted

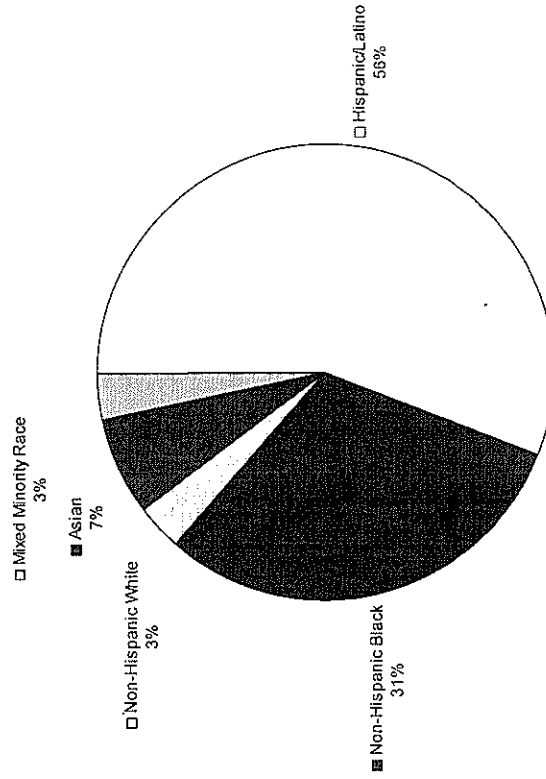
Distribution by Gender & Race/Ethnicity 2005-2009 Cohort



Student Distribution by Gender



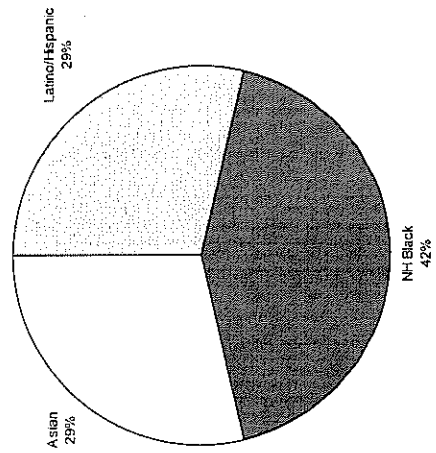
Student Distribution by Race/Ethnicity



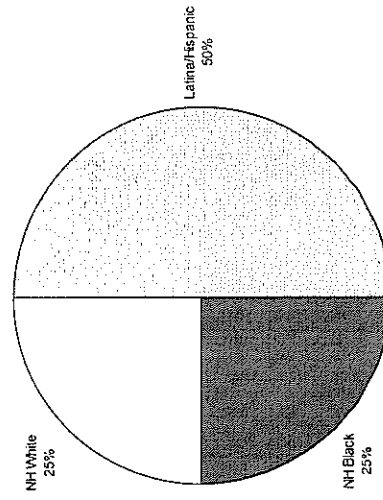
Race & Ethnicity Distribution by Gender for 2009 Sophomore Cohort



2009 Male Sophomore Cohort
Race & Gender Distribution



2009 Female Sophomore Cohort
Race & Gender Distribution

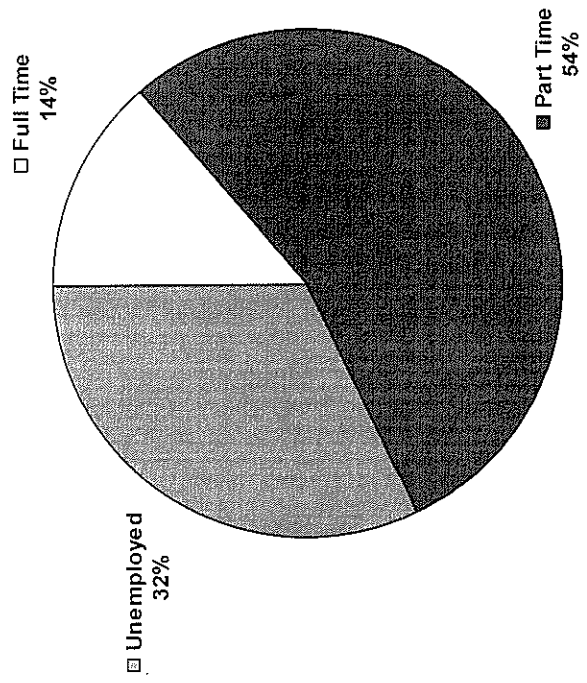


Distribution by Employment Status

2005 – 2009 cohort



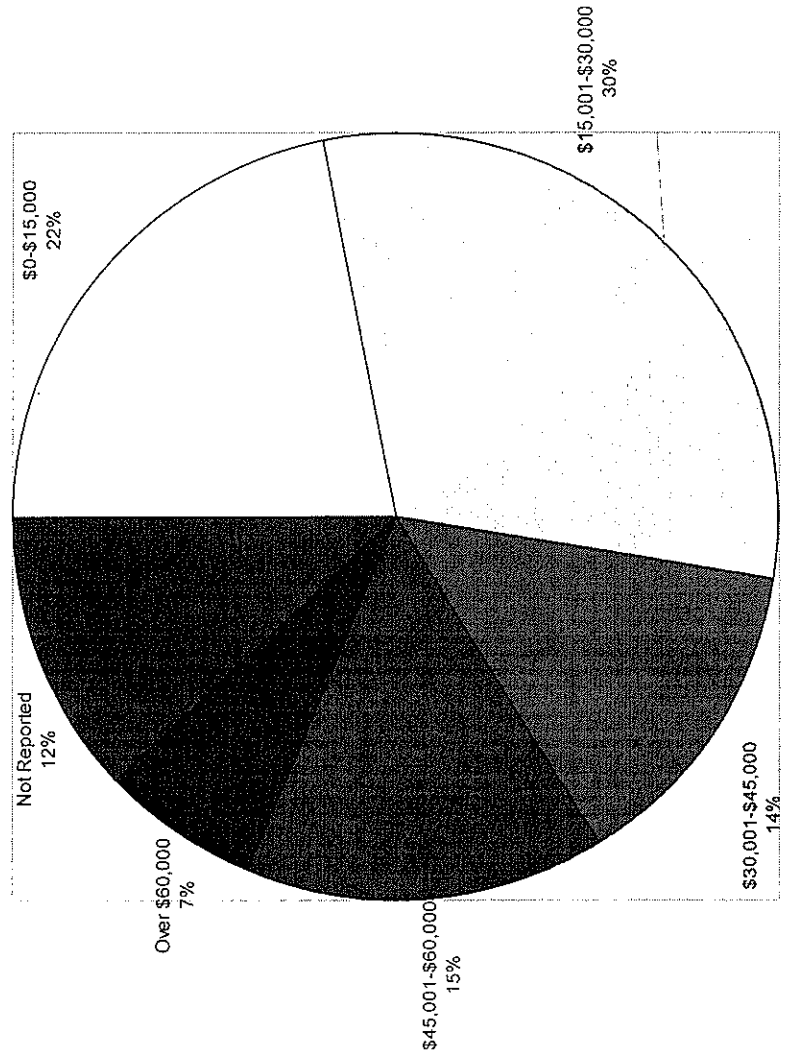
Student Distribution by Employment Status



Distribution by Annual Household Income 2005 – 2009 cohort

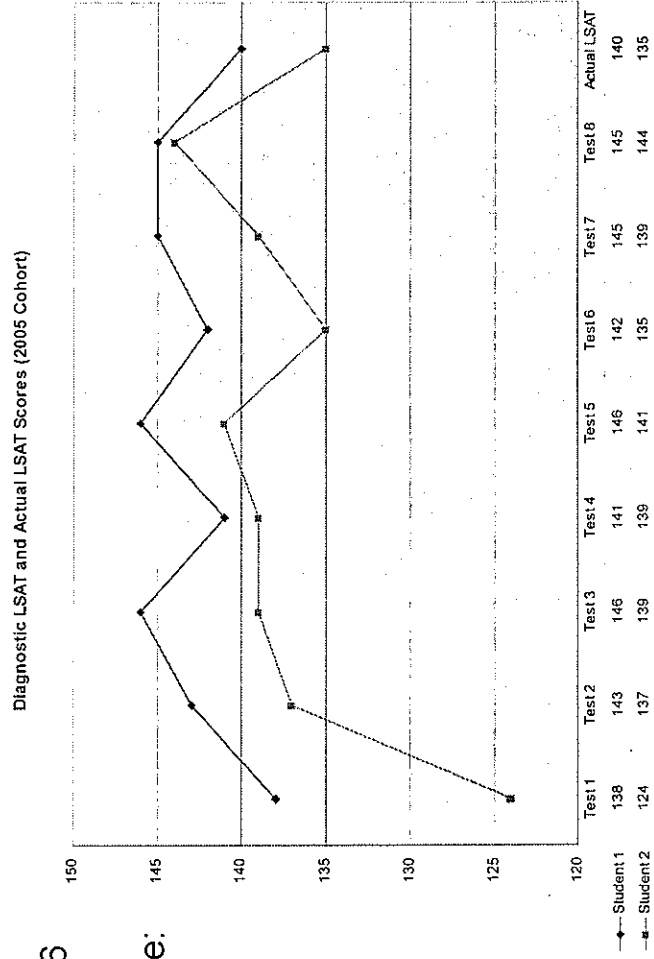


Annual Household Income Distribution



LSAT Participants and Success 2005 Cohort

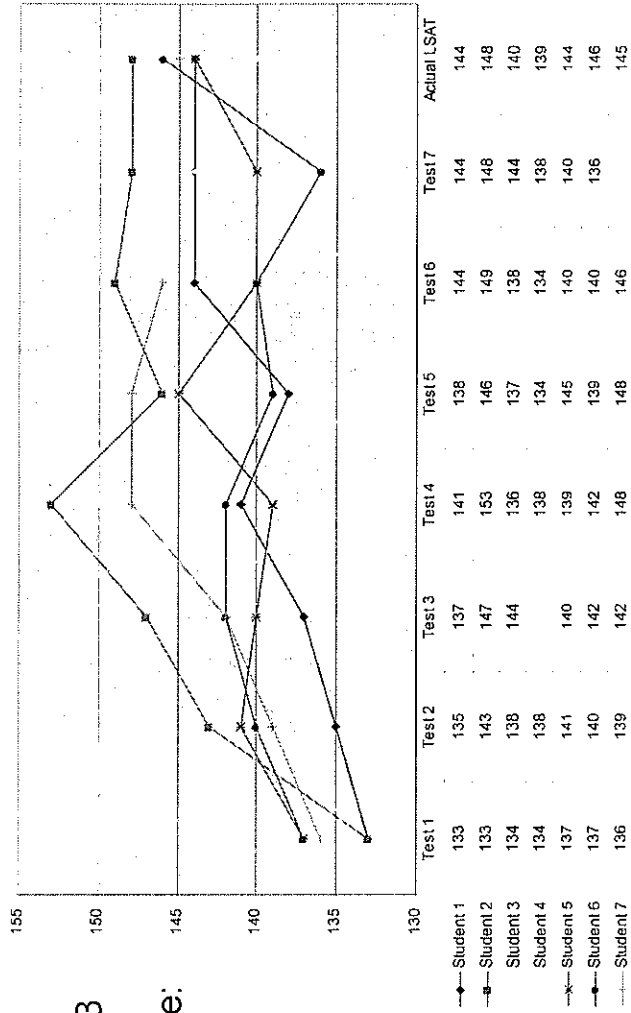
- Highest LSAT diagnostic change – 20
- Average starting LSAT diagnostic score – 131
- Highest LSAT diagnostic score – 146
- JJC RHB 2005 Cohort from Test 1 Diagnostic to their Actual LSAT score:
 - Student 1 – 138 → 140 (+2)
 - Student 2 – 128 → 135 (+7)



LSAT Participants and Success 2006 Cohort

- Highest LSAT diagnostic change – 20
- Average Starting LSAT diagnostic score – 135
- Highest LSAT diagnostic score – 153
- JJC RHB 2006 Cohort from Test 1 Diagnostic to their Actual LSAT score:
 - Student 1 – 133 → 144 (+11)
 - Student 2 – 133 → 148 (+15)
 - Student 3 – 134 → 140 (+6)
 - Student 4 – 134 → 139 (+5)
 - Student 5 – 137 → 144 (+7)
 - Student 6 – 137 → 146 (+9)
 - Student 7 – 136 → 145 (+9)

Diagnostic LSAT and Actual LSAT Scores (2006 Cohort)

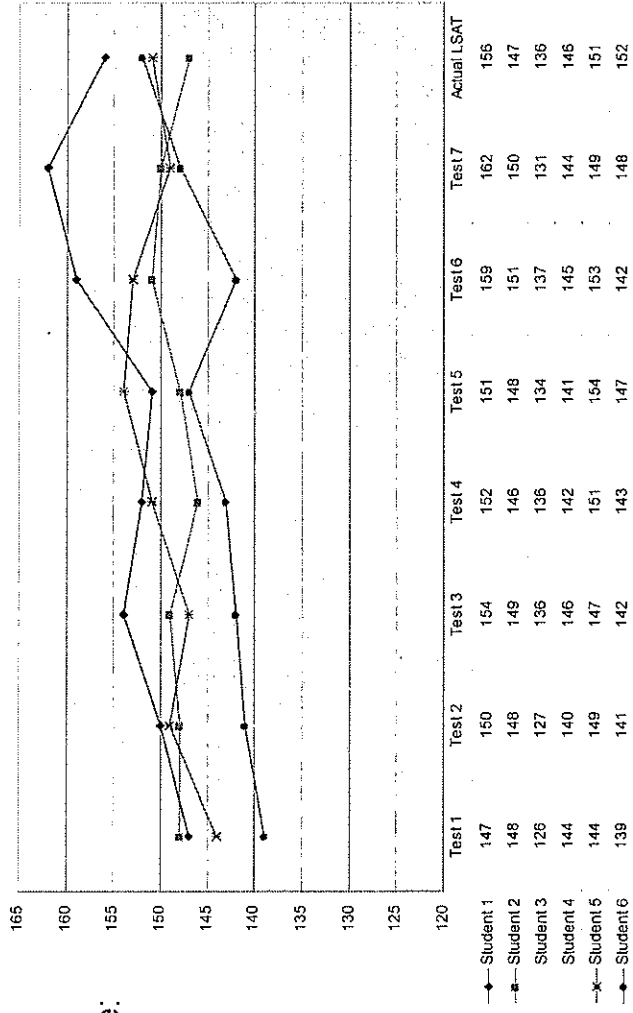


*Student 4 did not take diagnostic Test 3; Student 7 did not take diagnostic Test 7

LSAT Participants and Success 2007 Cohort

- Highest LSAT diagnostic change – 15
- Average Starting LSAT diagnostic score – 141
- Highest LSAT diagnostic score – 162
- JJC RHB 2007 Cohort from Test 1 Diagnostic to their Actual LSAT score:
 - Student 1 – 147 → 156 (+ 9)
 - Student 2 – 148 → 147 (- 1)
 - Student 3 – 126 → 136 (+ 10)
 - Student 4 – 144 → 146 (+ 2)
 - Student 5 – 144 → 151 (+7)
 - Student 6 – 139 → 152 (+ 13)

Diagnostic LSAT and Actual LSAT Scores (2007 Cohort)



April 28, 2009

I've used all parts of the MALES (BMI) Program at Queensborough Community College.

The most successful aspect for me was the peer mentoring:

When I meet with the peer mentor, he always asked how I am doing in classes and if I need help with anything. Even though he is not in my major he still tries to help in any way he can. He became like an older brother, someone I could look up to.

I have been a member of MALES for four semesters. I was invited to become part of the leadership of MALES, this demonstrated confidence in my abilities and it showed me that I could do something more and my opinion counted.

Through the MALES Program, I started an internship in the Spring 2009 semester at the CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP). I work with computers and I also teach CLIP students how to use them.

My major is Electric Technology. The paid internship funded by the MALES Initiative has allowed me to apply what I know. It is also preparing me for my future classes. I am really beginning to understand computer problems. The person overseeing the internship confirms or corrects what I think is the solution to the computer problem. This has built up my confidence.

The internship has also improved my communication skills. This has happened because I am taking English 101 at the same time. I have learned to break down the problem and explain it simpler so that the person I am working with can understand. The process has even helped me in my English essays.

The MALES Program makes me want to try harder in my college classes. My grades have improved dramatically. In English I am carrying B, ET704, A, and Web Design, B.

I recommend that the New York City Council continue to fund the MALES Initiative at Queensborough Community College.

Mr. Tremaine Gooden
MALES Initiative (BMI)
Queensborough Community College/CUNY
(718) 926-4304

Donaldson Conserve

SEEK student

Tuesday April 28, 2009

FOR THE RECORD

Testimony for Committee on Higher Education of the New York City Council

Approximately, ten years ago I migrated from Haiti to the United States. With no idea of what the new country had to offer. In Haiti I lived in Cite Soleil, one of the most impoverished places in Haiti and was not fortunate to learn much about the United States or even a word of English before leaving Haiti. Thus, I was challenged by my language barrier in high school and was failing most of my classes. I lived with a single mother who worked three jobs in order to support me and her family in Haiti. She also had a language barrier and was not able to assist me academically.

Eventually, I overcame my first real obstacle when I started to read books with the aid of a French and English dictionary. Fortunately, I graduated from high school with the bare minimum average which allowed me to be accepted at Queens College through the SEEK Program in 2004. As an aspiring physician, I had no clue of what the requirements were for medical school. All of that changed when I told my SEEK counselor that I wanted to become a doctor. She immediately referred me to the pre-professional advisor. The advice and support that I had received allowed me to take advantage of several academic opportunities which has led to my acceptance to a Ph.D program in Biobehavioral Health at Penn State University for the Fall 2009 semester. My story is only possible because of the sacrifices that were made by the people who have come before me; such as the creation of the SEEK Program and other opportunity programs.

On February, 6th 1990 as a law student at Harvard President Barack Obama said, "The fact that I've been elected the new president of the Harvard Law Review shows a lot of progress. "But it's important that stories like mine aren't used to say that everything is O.K. for blacks. You have to remember that for every one of me, there are hundreds or thousands of Black students **with at least equal talent who don't get a chance,**" alluding to poverty or growing up in a drug environment.

I feel my story is similar to President Obama because I have been fortunate to have benefited from the opportunity that the SEEK Program provided me. I know that there are a lot of students who have the talents and determination to attend college but do not have a chance to prove themselves. The SEEK program and other opportunity programs are essential in providing these students with an opportunity for success.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience and success.

Legal education as a Vehicle for Systemic Criminal Justice Reform

According to the 2000 Census, 24.9% of the populations in the United States are non-white.¹ Regrettably, within the legal profession this number is drastically lower. The ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession reports that only 9.7% of all lawyers represent racial or ethnic minorities.² Minorities comprise approximately 10% of all lawyers and judges in the US.³ Minority demographics on the legal profession prove that in comparison to their representation in the general population, minority groups are severely underrepresented within the legal profession. Specifically as it pertains to lawyers and judges, Blacks and African Americans comprise 12.9% of the general US population and only 4.2% of all lawyers and judges.⁴ Latinos represent 12.5% of the general US population and only 3.7% of all lawyers and judges.⁵ Asian Americans represent 4.2% of the general US population and 2.29% of all lawyers and judges and the numbers are most dismal for Native Americans who represent 1.5% of the general population and only 0.2% of all lawyers and judges in the US.⁶ In actual numbers based on the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession report, in 2007, Caucasians comprised 106,530 members of the ABA while Blacks/African Americans comprised 3,698, Asian Americans, 3,397, Latinas/os 2,044 and Native Americans 541.⁷ Moreover, Caucasians remain to be overrepresented practitioners in the three most

¹ Census Bureau, U.S. Census 2000 Redistricting (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Tables PL1 and PL2.

² ELIZABETH CHAMBLISS, MILES TO GO 2000: PROGRESS OF MINORITIES IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION 3, 2 (2000).

³ Census Bureau, U.S. Census 2000 Special Tabulation.

⁴ Goal IX Report: 2007-2008 - The Status of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the American Bar Association, American Bar Association: Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession, at 6, available at http://www.abanet.org/minorities/ftp/Goal9_2008.pdf.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ ABA Report, *supra* note 4, at 7.

influential and affluent professions: medicine composing a majority of 68.5%, dentistry composing a majority of 62.5% and of course, law composing 47.7% of all lawyers and judges.⁸

✓ This underrepresentation of African Americans and Latinas/os in the legal profession is of grave concern, in comparison to a multitude of social issues indirectly and directly affected by the criminal justice system. These include, but are not limited to, immigration detention, access to a proper education, and the national over incarceration rates of Latinas/os and African Americans in comparison to their general population in the U.S. There is an enormous need for Latinas/o, African American, and other minority communities to have diverse attorneys represent them. It is important that we as a nation provide opportunities for a cross section of all populations to participate in a “democratic and representative” government in these United States.

It is a crucial time for emphasis to be placed on Latinas/os in education and severity of the multifaceted obstacles we face. Latinas/os are the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in public education. Nonetheless, by many indicators our school systems are failing them.⁹ For example, “[m]ore than 80 percent of New York’s Hispanic eighth graders read below grade level, and only 33 percent of Hispanic students graduate from high school in [New York].”¹⁰ Latina/o enrollment in the nation’s law schools is falling by significant margins.¹¹ Without a quality education, Latinas/os students are unprepared, unable to compete and will continue to be denied access to colleges and graduate schools, employment and other such areas effectively

⁸ CHAMBLISS, *supra* note 2, at 2.

⁹ National Academies' National Research Council, *Multiple Origins, Uncertain Destinies: Hispanics and the American Future* (Marta Tienda & Faith Mitchell eds., 2006).

¹⁰ Press Release, LULAC, During Hispanic Heritage Month, Civil Rights Coalition Calls For High School Education Reform (October 1, 2008), (*available at* <http://www.lulac.org/advocacy/press/2008/edreform.html>).

¹¹ Lawrence Velvel, *Few Hispanics in Law School*, SCRIPPSNEWS, Mar. 9, 2007, *available at* <http://www.scrippsnews.net/node/20002>.

limiting their opportunities.¹² For example, one study shows that “dropouts from the New York high school class of 2007 will forego \$23.4 billion in earnings over the course of their working lives.”¹³ The percentage of African American and Latina/o students enrolled in law school has been on a decline nationwide for the past ten years and for those students that have met previously assigned standards, the law school admissions standards continue to rise.¹⁴

Historically, a lack of access and inequity in education has served to impede such opportunities for people of color and underprivileged people in the US. The lesson has been that underrepresented groups in the legal profession cannot successfully attain access until we tackle the obstacles that impede such progress.¹⁵ While issues such as poor public education, increase in stop and frisks, and the extension of immigration policing are faced by underrepresented groups in the U.S., the ever growing increase of standards with regards to the LSAT scores and law school admission standards makes access for people of color more difficult to achieve every year.¹⁶ Law schools’ admissions claim standards are not being met by applicants of color. However, despite efforts by people of color to meet such assessments, these standards continue to rise every year keeping the performance distance a constant.¹⁷ Diane S. Abraham authored the Pre-Conference Report submitted to all invitees of the November 3-5, 2005 American Bar

¹² Press Release, LULAC, During Hispanic Heritage Month, Civil Rights Coalition Calls For High School Education Reform (October 1, 2008), (*available at* <http://www.lulac.org/advocacy/press/2008/edreform.html>).

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Peter Lattman, Study Shows Grim Outlook for Minority Law-School Enrollment (January 17, 2008), *available at* <http://blogs.wsj.com/law/2008/01/17/study-shows-grim-outlook-for-minority-law-school-enrollment/>; LSAC, Minority Enrollment Statistics-Total Minority Enrollment Chart (2007-2008), *available at* <http://www.lsac.org/pdfs/2007-2008/TotalMinorityEnrollment.pdf>.

¹⁵ *See for example*, Elizabeth Rindskopf Parker & Sarah E. Redfield, *Law Schools Cannot be Effective in Isolation*, 2005 B.Y.U. EDUC. & L.J. 1, 2 (2005).

¹⁶ *See generally*, Phoebe A. Haddon & Deborah W. Post, *Misuse And Abuse Of The LSAT: Making The Case For Alternative Evaluative Efforts And A Redefinition Of Merit*, 80 ST. JOHN’S L. REV. 41 (2005); William C. Kidder, The Rise of the Testocracy: An Essay on the LSAT, Conventional Wisdom, and the Dismantling of Diversity, 9 Tex. J. Women & L. 167, 216 n.216 (2000).

¹⁷ *For example see*, Chris Chambers Goodman, *Post-Grutter: What Does Diversity Mean in Legal Education and Beyond?*, 35 PEPLR 663, 683 (2008).

Association conference entitled "Embracing the Opportunities for Increasing Diversity in the Legal Profession - Collaborating to Expand the Pipeline (Let's Get Real)."¹⁸ It was hosted by the ABA Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity in the Profession and the Law School Admission Council. This conference was brought together for the first time stakeholders key to increasing and sustaining minorities in the legal profession. According to Abraham, "the test-score gap between students of color and white students begins as early as the fourth grade and continues through the undergraduate and graduate levels."¹⁹ Minority students are less likely to attend college after high school than their white counterparts. These statistics depict the ability for students of color to compete in law school. Application, enrollment and graduation rates for students of color are disproportionately lower in comparison to their white counterparts. The report notes the following devastating facts about students of color and the law school process:

In the fall of 2005, white students constituted more than 65% of all applications to ABA-accredited law schools, compared to 10.4% of African-Americans, 8.3% of Asians, and 8.2% of all Hispanic groups. ... Unfortunately, 2005 brought a 20% drop in that number to only 3,107 - the smallest class of African-American 1Ls since 1990-91; indeed, in 2005, fewer than 400 Native-Americans enrolled in law school. Moreover, in the past decade, law school enrollment for students of color has remained around 19-21% of all law school applicants, but most minority groups experienced slippage in total law school enrollment during the past decade. ... For that same period, African-American enrollment fell 6.7%, Mexican Americans dropped 3.4%, and **Puerto Ricans plunged 24%**.²⁰

To further compound the situation students of color generally have lower bar passage rates than whites. A 2005 report noted that African-Americans represent 12.1% of the U.S. population and only 6.8% of the law degrees conferred and Latinos/as represent 12.5% of the U.S. population

¹⁸ Carl G. Cooper, *Increasing Pipeline Opportunities in the Legal Profession for Minorities*, March 2007, <http://www.metrocorpocounsel.com/current.php?artType=view&artMonth=April&artYear=2009&EntryNo=6350>.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

and only 6.9% of the law degrees awarded.²¹ These figures illustrate the severity of the problem in legal education and the obstacles that impede the diversification of the legal profession.

Diverse lawyers are a missing link in our communities. In order to create access to the law, we must have a critical mass of lawyers to represent us in all areas of the judiciary and the criminal justice systems. Our community, as discussed in this report, has historically and continues to be subject to enormous injustices purported by the criminal justice system. The continued cumulative effect seen in these reports has persistently constricted and will ultimately siphon off access to justice to our communities unless an intervention to help plug the legal education pipeline is achieved.

Additionally, law schools are also meeting diversity reports by admitting diverse international students from other countries into LLM programs rather than diverse candidates from the US.²² The vast majority of these international students are among the elite of their countries, can afford to study, and have the necessary resources to achieve such levels of education in their countries and abroad.²³ The obtainment of access and equity for underrepresented groups in legal education shapes our ability to have diverse attorneys represent our communities. In examining the future of education and educational equity in communities of color in the U.S., strategies and approaches must be contemplated that allow or at least aide in the diversification of the legal profession to address and remedy issues of lack of legal access and representation in our communities.

²¹ *Id.*

²² John Carmona, Post-Doctoral Associate, Yale Law School, Presentation at the ALAS Education across the Americas Sixth Annual Conference (Mar. 14-15, 2008).

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Chart from: Latino Educational Enrollment and Attainment Levels in New York City

Figure 7. Percentage of Degree Completion for Those Who Reported College Attendance between 25 to 34 Years of Age by Ethnicity

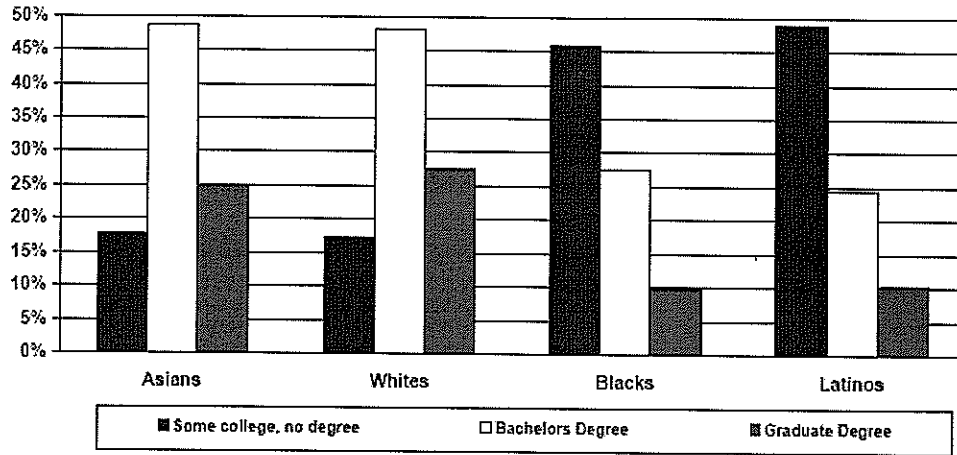
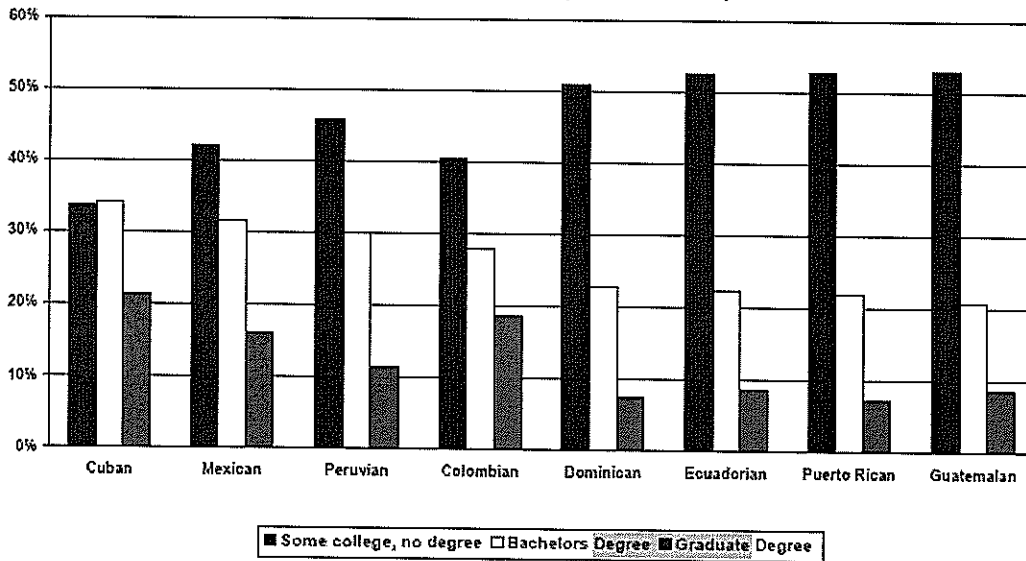


Chart from: Latino Educational Enrollment and Attainment Levels in New York City

Figure 8. Percentage of Degree Completion for Those Who Reported College Attendance between 25 to 34 Years of Age, by Latino Nationality



*These data were derived by totaling the population reporting college experience and using this as a division base for each attainment level; this was repeated for each ethnic group.

**Testimony of Dr. Reginald Blake at the Oversight Hearing of the
Committee on Higher Education of the New York City Council**

Speaker: Dr. Reginald Blake

Date: April 28, 2009

To the Committee on Higher Education of the New York City Council: to the honorable Chairperson Charles Barron and to the distinguished committee members Tony Avella, Gale A. Brewer, Miguel Martinez, Darlene Mealy, Larry B. Seabrook, and Erik Ulrich, I say a pleasant good afternoon. My name is Dr. Reginald Blake, and I am a Professor of Physics at the New York City College of Technology (City Tech), and I have been privileged to serve as the project director of City Tech's Black Male Initiative program from its very inception some three years ago.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify of the growth, the success, and the value of City Tech's BMI program. As you well know the genesis of the CUNY BMI program can be traced to the heart and the mind of Dr. Edison O. Jackson, President of Medgar Evers College. After perusing the dismal academic landscape at CUNY, particularly for young Black men, Dr. Jackson had an epiphany, a grand vision of transformation to increase, to encourage, and to support the inclusion and the academic success of under-represented groups in higher education, particularly for black males.

As the only Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) designated BMI program within CUNY, City Tech's BMI program has been true to the spirit and to the intent of Dr. Jackson's vision. We started as a fledgling program three years ago, but today our BMI program is a NSF/NASA, nationally recognized model for STEM education. Three years ago, our BMI program begun with twelve students; today the program is brimming with over three hundred students. We have turned "gatekeeper" STEM courses into "gateway" courses. One of the hallmarks of our program is the unique research mentoring paradigm that we have developed. Through research we have provided mentoring to our students in satellite and ground based remote sensing, cell biology, organic chemistry, computing, and hypermedia & telecommunications. Our BMI students have been able to conduct research in Mexico, this Summer one student is going to do climate change research in the Arctic, another student will be interning at the famed Johns Hopkins University, another student has been accepted to a summer internship at Rutgers University, and yet another student will be presenting a paper she co-authored at a conference in Hawaii by the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education. One of our most recent graduates was accepted to the Masters degree program in computer science at City College. He started his Masters degree program this Spring 2009 semester, and he is simultaneously conducting satellite remote sensing research in data compression and data encryption. A BMI student who transferred this Spring 2009 to City College to study Biomedical Engineering has just received a full five year scholarship to complete his Bachelors degree.

It is abundantly clear that City Tech's BMI program has helped to transform the STEM culture at City Tech at all levels - from the senior administration down to our students. We have instituted a program that is centered on Student Success and is predicated upon a myriad of student support services that includes mentoring, advising, counseling, peer-led workshops, tutoring, paid research internships, etc.... Our STEM students now feel empowered and confident. One of our BMI students in Electrical Engineering Technology will be this year's graduating class' salutatorian, and he is already accepted to City College to study Electrical Engineering and to conduct satellite remote sensing research. The phobia of Science, Technology, Engineering and Technology is dissipating. Student research activities are at an all time high at City Tech, and the college is indeed experiencing a renaissance; our BMI program shares the credit for this rebirth. Qualitative assessments and preliminary quantitative analyses all indicate that the STEM outlook at City Tech has dramatically been enhanced, and STEM retention rates and graduation rates are expected to show marked improvements

It is, therefore, imperative that this committee continues to provide funding for the work that CUNY BMI is doing. At City Tech we have been very vigilant in seeking external funding so that our BMI program becomes sustainable and institutionalized. By May 1, 2009 (this coming Friday) our BMI Task Force at City Tech will have submitted four proposals to NSF, to WalMart and to the US Department of Education. We are serious about the BMI issues; however, until we are able to secure external funding, the funding that the City Council provides to the CUNY BMI program is indeed vital.

An investment in the CUNY BMI program is an investment in the future of this City, this nation, and this world, I implore and I beseech this august committee, I appeal to you, please do not lay the budget axe to the BMI tree. Please do not turn the clock back. Please do not muddle Dr. Jackson's vision. We have come too far, we have accomplished too much, and we have too much more ground to cover. I close by reminding you that

- A seed, until it is released, is only a promise of a tree.
- The death of a seed is the burial of a forest. Please do not kill this forest.
-

Yesterday as he addressed the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine, President Obama said that, "Science is more essential for our prosperity, our security, our health, our environment, and our quality of life than it has ever been. And if there was ever a day that reminded us of our shared stake in Science and Research, it's today." The president went on to say, "I'm going to participate in a public awareness and outreach campaign to encourage students to consider careers in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering - because our future depends on it."

I urge this committee to join CUNY BMI and President Obama in accepting the challenges of the 21st century by making available the funds necessary to continue Dr. Jackson's vision. Thank you.

Why funding Opportunity Programs is essential to CUNY education.

As a high-school graduate coming from Haiti, I had some difficulties dealing with English, American history and American government. As I took the ACT exam, it was clear that my point of weakness was English. I only passed the Math portion. Thus, what I thought was a curse in taking remedial classes and being a SEEK student was actually a blessing.

Because of failing the English portion of the ACT test, I unknowingly contributed to my success. By failing the ACT text, I was introduced to the SEEK program. As a SEEK student I had the opportunity to really understand how American colleges work and the level of attention that I have to address in my studies. I was assigned to a SEEK counselor who helped me in times of need, and guided me in achieving my goal to become an attorney. First and foremost, the SEEK counselors are well-connected with the outside world and offer a supporting hand beyond anyone's expectation. However, another important and helpful sector in the SEEK department is the SEEK tutoring Lab.

I was privileged to have a helping hand with all the assignments in which I had trouble. The best thing about the lab is that the tutors are specialized in different fields, which makes the lab truly unique. SEEK tutors are very accessible in terms of working hours and the time they allot to their tutees. I realized how blessed I was to have those tutors when I realized that not all college students in my classes had the same opportunity. I heard some non-SEEK students complaining about the English lab because of the limited spots and the time allocated to them. Some non-SEEK students even asked me: "How do I enroll to become SEEK?" or "you are so lucky that you are a SEEK student."

Also, because of the tutors' various background, I always had someone in the tutoring lab to help me. For instance, the lab has attorneys who helped me prep for the LSAT and helped me with my personal statement. This is among the help that the lab had offered me. Because of SEEK, I became top of all my classes, making me a *summa cum laude* college graduate. Because of the SEEK Department, I was much more prepared for law school. For instance, a SEEK counselor referred me to an attorney who also helped me with my personal statement. Because of such referral, I was properly guided to make the right decision in choosing a law school and received many acceptance letters. In addition, that same attorney told me how to survive law school. Thus, the SEEK department was *the tool* that I needed to navigate the American system.

Because I excelled in my classes, the SEEK lab offered me a tutoring position. With such position, I could give back to the program in a small way. My appreciation for the program deepened. As a tutor, I see the progress of my tutees who attended tutoring sessions. The most fulfilling thing is when my tutees receive a good grade because of my guidance, and they come by the lab to show their appreciation. Such act always made me reminisce the time I was in their position. I even had a tutee who came up to me to thank me and wanted me to attend her graduation because her only impediment in graduating was passing Math.

I speak on behalf of all SEEK students that this program is essential for all CUNY colleges because of its particular attention to college students who need the extra help in succeeding in college. I am a prime example of the SEEK Department's accomplishments. Because of SEEK, I am now an attorney. I am proud to say "I was a SEEK student."

Marcos Pichardo

My name is Marcos Pichardo and I am in my second year as a student at The New York City College of Technology. Before arriving here it was difficult for me to map out what my plans were after high school and those for my future career. I simply knew, however, that I needed a plan. It was clear to me that the unguided student that I heavily portrayed was not going to cut it in the real world. I did, however, know what it felt like to be supported by a few teachers, and I felt that it was necessary for me to be in an environment in which encouragement and belief in a student were its main priorities.

As a member of the SEEK program, it is important for me to speak out and encourage its message: The Search for Education Elevation through Knowledge. To me this means taking diffident students, putting them in study halls and tutoring halls with exceptionally good tutors and mentors and showing them how find solutions to their problems.

The SEEK program has provided me, as well as other students, with many services which we would not otherwise be able to obtain due to cost or simply its unavailability. I have attended many math, science, and English sessions in which I had one-on-one instruction with tutors who put one-hundred percent effort in showing me how to find solutions to my work. Every question was backed by a solution; every mistake solved creatively in a way in which made the work look easy. The computer lab in the SEEK office is also critical to the program; thus, I believe the SEEK program deserves continuation of funding so that students who have no other sources of getting information outside of their schools stay can connected to the internet to be able to carry out the homework assignments and research projects. I am also thankful to have a counselor in the SEEK program, Kisha Swaby, who I can come to for support and encouragement, as well as helping me to get organized in terms of class scheduling and graduation requirements.

Altogether, the SEEK program brings a sense of security to all students who are involved with it. By continuing to fund the program you would not have only made a impact on the lives of many students, but also you would have contributed to society. This is true because you are equipping students with the ability to attain the knowledge that makes society function in a way that is productive as well as responsible. Today I am a student who looks to a promising future: one that includes many goals to be achieved, and promises to be kept. Just as the SEEK program has given to me, so I will give back by continuing its message. One thing I have learned from the program is to never give up on what seems distant and help students less fortunate than myself who show ambition and a hunger for knowledge: your typical SEEK student.

William Huang
New York City College of Technology

I was never really into school. There were many times when I wasn't doing too well or wanted to leave but SEEK really seem to care. The SEEK staff makes me realize how important education is. My Academic counselor makes me realize how much education truly influences my future career. I want to get into business administration or psychology. SEEK and City Tech helped me decide that these are a good possibility.

I have been in SEEK for a year and a half. I have used services, such as tutoring for Math, Philosophy, and English. I had an Academic Coach from SEEK who helped me with test taking, memorizing important information, good note taking, studying tips and time management. I also use the SEEK computers for researching.

All these services have helped me maintain myself in good standings and further my education process. My counselor helped me make important decisions about my future. There have been many times when I felt like giving up. I've never really been a school person, but Keisha, my counselor seems to really care about my future and wants me to try. She also makes school a little more fun and interesting. SEEK helped me stay in school.

Seek is one of the successful programs offered by CUNY, that has help to mold individuals like myself. Seek is not only a program that helps students financially it is a program that offers trust, communication and respect to there students, because with out respect you have nothing. One way they have helped me was by introducing me to my counselor Ms. Keyshia Swabby. She has helped me grow and shown me a completely diverse perspective about college. Thanks to her, I am a proud undergraduate on the road of reaching a higher education. Restraining programs like SEEK to me means students missing a great opportunity to meet great people like Ms. Keyshia that is willing to go that extra mile and help students like myself graduate.



**TESTIMONY OF THE
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP
REGARDING THE IMPACTS OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2010 NEW YORK CITY
PRELIMINARY BUDGET ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

***LISA LAMANNA, COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND
FERDINAND ALMODOVAR, BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE***

Lisa LaManna, College of Staten Island

Good afternoon. My name is Lisa LaManna, and I am a junior Biology major at the College of Staten Island (CSI). I hope to one day be a doctor of osteopathic medicine. I am an active member of the NYPIRG chapter at CSI, and I'm a long distance runner on the track team.

I'm here to ask you to reject the mayor's proposal to eliminate the Vallone Scholarship, which helps keep CUNY affordable for more than 12,000 students. Ferdinand Almodovar, another NYPIRG student signed up to testify today, will urge you to protect funding for CUNY's community colleges when it is his turn to speak.

NYPIRG — the New York Public Interest Research Group — is New York State's largest non-partisan research and advocacy organization, with a Board of Directors comprised of college and university students elected from campuses with NYPIRG chapters across the state, including nine CUNY schools. NYPIRG teaches organizing, research and communications skills, and provides students with opportunities to learn while working on issues including the environment, consumers' rights, and voter registration and mobilization. We are also deeply concerned about access to affordable, quality higher education, so I thank you for the opportunity to make a few comments here today.

I was accepted to three SUNY schools but chose to attend the College of Staten Island. I made that choice partly for financial reasons, but also because I wanted to stay close to home. Now that I've spent two years at CSI, I am very happy with the choice I made.

I receive some need-based financial aid (the minimum TAP award with a small enhancement because my sister attends CSI also) as well as merit-based aid including the Vallone Scholarship. This aid pays for most of my tuition, but I struggle to pay out of pocket for books, transportation,

food and other expenses. Those expenses add up quick. Textbooks, for example, cost me about \$500 a semester this year. I've tried borrowing friend's books to save money, and my sister—she tried to not buy books at all this semester.

The recently approved tuition hike of up to \$600 at the CUNY senior colleges has me worried. I'm working part time already as a Teaching Scholar at the Michael J Petrides School, and the extra hours I'll have to work to pay the additional tuition will make it harder for me to maintain the grades I need to keep my scholarships.

Eliminating the \$500 per year Vallone Scholarships would make the tuition hike much worse for me. In fact, combined with the tuition hike, the Vallone cut would increase my out of pocket expenses by \$1,100—much more than I can afford. Right now, students and families have less money to spend, their savings are being depleted and their jobs are less secure. CUNY shouldn't be increasing tuition and the City should not cut financial aid.

If both the tuition hike and the Vallone Scholarship cut are enacted, I will have a very tough time paying for school. In fact, it seems very likely that I would have to cut back to a part-time course load and find another job so that I can make ends meet. Without full-time status, I will lose my health insurance, my spot on the track team, my Teaching Scholars position, and possibly more of my financial aid.

I work really hard to keep my grades up. I love learning, and I am proud of what I achieve at CSI. My Vallone Scholarship is a reward for that hard work. It's the best kind of reward because it helps me to pay for school.

The proposal to eliminate the Vallone Scholarship makes me feel underappreciated. It makes me feel that the City doesn't value my hard work and the contribution I make to CUNY, and that hurts. Student like me are vital for CUNY and the City. We raise the level of scholarship at our campuses, increase the prestige of the university system and, when we graduate, we contribute substantially to the City's economy and tax base. We deserve and demand your support.

Please don't let the mayor's cut to Vallone Scholarships stand. The program has already been cut too much. Vallone Scholars received \$625 for the fall 2007 semester. Then, our awards went down to \$465 for spring 2008. Before this year, our awards were cut again to \$250 per semester. Instead of cutting the award further, the City should restore funding for the program back to its 2008 level of \$11.2 million.

Ferdinand Almodovar, BMCC

Hello. My name is Ferdinand Almodovar. I am a student at Borough of Manhattan Community College, studying Human Services. When I finish my studies at BMCC, I plan to attend a four-year college, probably Brooklyn or City College. Ultimately, I hope to be a guidance counselor. In addition to my studies, I am also actively involved in the BMCC NYPIRG chapter, and I write for the school newspaper.

I decided to attend a CUNY community college because it made financial sense for me, and because I thought it would help me ease back into being a student. I'm 24 years old, and have

been away from school for a while. Since high school, I've worked a variety of odd-jobs ranging from security guard to food service worker, but none of them has presented me the kind of satisfaction or career opportunities that I was hoping for. I'm thankful that CUNY has offered me an affordable path to self improvement and success. I'm here today to urge you to help keep that path open by protecting city funding for community colleges.

The mayor's proposal to reduce city funding for community colleges by \$30.2 million is a bad idea. In this economy, the City needs CUNY to be stronger than ever. Enrollment at CUNY is way up. At my school, it has risen 13% since last year. These students are turning to CUNY for job skills to compete in this awful job market, and because they can't afford more expensive four-year schools. Unfortunately, instead of investing in community colleges in their hour of need, the mayor has proposed cuts that could lead to a painful tuition hike and undermine the quality of a CUNY education.

When the mayor has offered up similar cuts in recent years the City Council has honored their Maintenance of Effort agreement with CUNY and restored the cuts. I urge you to do so again this year.

As you know, the state legislature recently restored the governor's proposed 10% (\$18 million) cut to community colleges. That restoration has given students like me some hope that CUNY will be able to avoid a tuition hike, or at least reduce the size of a hike below the \$400 recently approved by the CUNY Trustees. If the City Council steps up as well and restores the mayor's entire proposed cut, then much of the need for the community college tuition hike will be gone.

With your help, this tuition hike can still be avoided. In this economy—this era of greater than 8% unemployment, when students are flocking to CUNY in record numbers, family incomes are on shaky ground and CUNY financial aid applications are up 33%—community college should remain affordable and accessible.

Working, poor adult students with no dependents of their own would be particularly burdened by a \$400 community college tuition hike because they get shortchanged by the state's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) for "independent students." In fact, if the proposed tuition hike is fully implemented, even the poorest independent students at community colleges won't receive enough TAP to cover their full tuition. Under law, they can only receive up to \$3,025 in TAP. At 24, with no dependents of my own, I fall into this category, and would see my out-of-pocket expenses increase if tuition goes up the full \$400.

I have a younger sister, Hope, who would also be hurt by the tuition hike. She is also a student at BMCC. The first person in my family to go right from high school to college, Hope was unable to receive any financial aid because of a complicated custody situation. Instead of getting the help that she obviously needed, she was forced to pay out of pocket and work full time while she went to school. Now she has a big outstanding balance and can't register for classes until she pays it off. Financial aid can fail even the neediest students and, when it does, tuition hikes make the situation worse.

Testimony to City Council Higher Education Committee

April 28, 2009

Anthony Heyward
Student
Borough of Manhattan Community College

Anthony Heyward

Borough of Manhattan Community College

April 28, 2009

Subject: The Black Male Initiative

Good afternoon. I am Anthony Heyward and I am a proud student of the Borough of Manhattan Community College who will graduate in June 2009. Thereafter I plan to transfer to City College to complete my Baccalaureate and teacher certification. In May of 2004, the Board of Trustees of The City University of New York approved its Master Plan 2004-2008. This document included for the first time in the University's history a "Chancellor's Initiative on the Black Male in Education." This Black Male Initiative has consistently implemented programs throughout various campuses of the City University, with the goal of reversing the trends of low retention in higher education among minority males. At the Borough of Manhattan Community College, the Black Male Initiative takes the form of The Urban Male Leadership Academy. Today I would like to talk about the aspects of the Academy from which I have benefited. They are The Each-One Reach One peer mentoring program, and the Teachers as Leaders Project.

The Each- One Reach One Peer Mentoring program is designed to give students on academic probation, the mentoring and tutoring to improve their grades by pairing them up with high achieving student scholars. Students receive peer guidance and training in areas of proper study techniques, test taking, and instructions on utilizing campus resources essential for academic success and college retention. I have been a mentor for three semesters at BMCC. I have personally seen how the mentoring program has helped to create an environment of solidarity and community connectedness among its participants. Many of the students, who were previously mentees in past semesters, have improved their grades enough to become mentors themselves. I am fortunate to have been a mentor and I know firsthand the positive difference the program has made for mentees and mentors.

In an effort to address the disproportionate lack of male teachers of color in New York City, CUNY BMI has created the Teachers as Leaders Project to assist current City University students that are aspiring educators. The Teachers as Leaders Project offers CUNY students: tuition scholarships; workshops for The New York State Teacher Certification Examination; clinical education experiences and mentorship from current and former New York City teachers. The Teachers as Leaders Project has been especially helpful to me because while I am focused on my goal of becoming a New York City teacher, I am a husband and a new father. The assistance from the program, both financial and advisory, is helping me balance an extensive academic schedule, a fulltime job and a six week old baby. Although I am sure I would be able

to achieve my goal eventually, The Teachers as Leaders Project is helping me to achieve my aspirations faster.

I have benefited tremendously from the Urban Male Leadership Academy, BMCC's initiative sponsored by Cuny BMI. I would like to thank Director Elliott Dawes and all involved for establishing this very successful program as well as the City Council for giving me the opportunity to speak.

FOR THE RECORD

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF BLACK MALE INITIATIVE FUNDING BY PAUL WASSERMAN, DIRECTOR, LEHMAN COLLEGE ADULT LEARNING CENTER

My name is Paul Wasserman. I'm the Director of the Lehman College Adult Learning Center, a program offering GED, Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, based at Lehman College. My program serves about 700 students a year, almost all from low income and immigrant communities in the Bronx. We are part of a larger network of adult education programs at CUNY campuses throughout the City, coordinated by CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs.

Our baseline funding comes from a combination of Federal, New York State and New York City grants, but our work has been greatly enhanced by support through CUNY's Black Male Initiative, which we have received for the past three years. This support has enabled us to provide a structured mix of academic tutoring, mentoring and college counseling to GED students with college potential. BMI funding has provided similar support to our colleagues at Brooklyn College, and has enabled the broader network of CUNY GED/College Preparation programs to develop a rich and informed structure of college counseling for GED graduates.

Our GED classes are filled with a mix of New York-born adults and young adults who did not finish high school, all of them committed to resuming their educations, and immigrants from many countries for whom getting a GED diploma is a first step in building new lives in this country. Each year, between 60 and 70 students in my program earn GED diplomas, and hundreds more earn diplomas at the other CUNY GED programs. During the past three years, the CUNY GED system has developed a unique sequence of classes and support structures designed to not only help GED students prepare for the GED exam, but also to prepare for the college experience. This includes GED/College Preparation classes that combine thoughtful preparation for the GED exam with work designed to help students develop skills and habits they will need for success in college. After attaining a GED diploma, our graduates now have available a network of Transition to College classes throughout the City which help them prepare for the CUNY reading, writing and math assessment tests while also engaging them in college-level academic work and offering them structured, thoughtful college counseling.

Black Male Initiative funding has been crucial in developing the counseling component of our Transition to College classes, and has enabled us to offer enriched college counseling to all CUNY GED students. BMI has allowed us to develop a network of college counselors in our programs, coordinated by Central Office staff developers. Counselors meet regularly to share information, explore the complex options available to students in the CUNY college system, and discuss strategies for counseling individual students. It supports college information sessions at individual GED programs as well as larger multi-campus college fairs for CUNY GED students.

Our students come to us with great hope and determination. Entering our GED classes is an important, often intimidating step for them. For some, the GED is a key to better

FOR THE RECORD

Good afternoon. My name is Lee Jay Favors. I am here representing the Brooklyn College Adult Literacy Program, one of three CUNY-based literacy programs, the others being Lehman and Hostos, that has had the benefit of participating in the CUNY Black Male Initiative.

Customarily, a literacy program's mission has been to prepare its adult students to pass the GED test, which would then open up a world of employment possibilities for that adult and improve the life of his or her family. Recently, however, this has been changing in two fundamental respects. The students are getting younger, closer to typical high school age, and the job opportunities afforded a GED diploma holder, like those of a high school graduate, no longer guarantee the ability to support a family.

Today, our literacy programs have to offer more than just counseling and tutoring in support of the standard classroom activities. With funding from CUNY BMI, we have been able to respond to these additional needs with several programs. Our one on one mentoring program has allowed us to give more personal attention to that young student about to fall through the cracks once again. Our computer application internship classes have broadened our students' scope of career possibilities and led many of them to another of our BMI funded programs, Bridge to College. In this program students are exposed to the process of applying to college and taught the skills necessary to succeed at the university level. In addition to these new programs, BMI funding has vastly improved our job counseling and outreach.

Yes, through BMI funding, we have greatly enhanced our program offerings. However, it's the change in our students brought about by these new programs that is the real success story. Communication between our students has improved immensely. They are more supportive of each other, recognizing that no one can do it alone. This in turn has increased attendance and cut down on tardiness. And this camaraderie doesn't end with graduation from the program. Many former students return to share their experiences and to offer support and encouragement to the GED and Bridge to College classes.

To say that BMI has affected our program would be an understatement. Because of this funding, Brooklyn College Adult Literacy is a better program. BMI has allowed us to respond to the expanded needs of today's literacy student. The continued funding of CUNY BMI projects would ensure our ability to offer our students the full support they deserve and need for success. Thank you.

April 28, 2009

FOR THE RECORD

Hi my name is Doris Almonte, I am currently attending Queensborough Community College and I am a College Discovery student.

College discovery has helped me in so many ways and I am very appreciative of it. After I finished High school, I was very discouraged about continuing my education due to financial difficulties that I was facing at the time. But when I found out about all the benefits of the CD program, I was excited to know that I had been accepted into the program.

This program has helped me by supplying me with financial and academic help. The College discovery program has assisted me with free books and an intro to college class to prepare me for my first semester in Queensborough Community College.

It has also supported me through the assistance of my advisors Kat and Antonio. When I was not sure if I wanted to continue to study nursing, my advisors helped a lot. They made me realize that I should do what I enjoy, which is teaching.

Another benefit that I receive is the tutoring sessions. The tutoring sessions have been very helpful by allowing me to better understand what I learn in class as well as to achieve better grades in all my exams.

This program has not only helped me but it also has help hundreds of students to stay motivated as well as to stay in school by providing to them all the services that have been provided to me. Please don't cut the funding to the CD program because it won't allow incoming students to benefit from all the services that I received.

Doris Almonte
College Discovery
Queensborough Community College/CUNY

FOR THE RECORD

Wilber Trivino

04/28/09

Dear New York City Council

I, Wilber Trivino, was given the opportunity to be part of the Ronald H. Brown Summer Law School Prep Program in the Summer of 2008. The RHB program is extraordinarily helpful for prospective law students because it provides insights into the law school community, wonderful hands-on legal exposure to various areas of the legal profession, and a thorough understanding of the legal system. This has provided me with a fundamental understanding of the law school process by providing me access to actual law school courses. Through my judicial externship I gained a first hand knowledge on how judges deliberate and decide specific cases that come before them in the courts. Lastly, I learned how the legal system handles domestic violence through my internship in the Domestic Violence Bureau in Queens County, where I worked alongside Assistant District Attorney assisting victims of domestic violence on a day-to-day basis. The Ronald H. Brown Program has provided me with a direct path towards achieving my goal of becoming an attorney. I recognize the advantage I have over most individuals as a result and am very grateful for the opportunity you have provided to me via your funding of the Program. Simultaneously, the RHB program has made me a better student by providing me with the resources to excel in my classes to the best of my ability and further my goal of attaining admittance into law school. Please do not discontinue providing access to the disadvantaged and help diversify the legal profession by continued funding of the Ronald H. Brown Program at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

John Molina

The College Initiative: Continuing Student

April 28, 2009

There is no doubt in my mind that when I take an inventory of my life, post-incarceration, the single most important event that has allowed me to successfully transition into a contributing member of society has been my affiliation with the College Initiative. I have a vivid memory of sitting in a room at John Jay College during an orientation and listening to the success stories of the students who came before me. I was most moved though, by the statistics with respect to the adverse correlation of higher education and recidivism rates. A review of the numbers has revealed that the more education a person has the lower the chances are that he or she will return to prison. I was completely floored by the numbers and it was at that point that I made a commitment to myself to earn a college degree because the one thing I knew for sure was that I never wanted to go to prison again.

Coming home from prison after serving 8 ½ years can be a daunting experience. Though I was a professional before I went to prison, I was very scared about my prospects for employment due to my felony record. I also had a myriad of financial problems that included IRS problems, back child support, defaulted student loans and housing issues. I was essentially homeless and living in a ¾ transitional house sharing a room with 3 other men with no cooking facilities. I was overwhelmed but determined to make a better life for myself and so I made a follow-up appointment to see one of the educational counselors at the College initiative. As it turns out, I was not able to start school as soon as I would have liked because of my defaulted student loans but I was able to obtain the information I needed to rehabilitate the loans from the college initiative. In addition, my counselor reviewed my resume and made suggestions. While her main focus was the educational piece, I was also heartened by other information that was available to me there and it proved to be invaluable to me.

Several months later, I returned to the College Initiative after I had consolidated and rehabilitated my loan. Circumnavigating the bureaucracy of the HESC was facilitated by the information I was given at the College initiative. It was extremely late to register for school, the middle of December but the counselor assisted me by scheduling a placement test, obtaining the transcripts from my previous schools and filling out the financial aid forms. Remember, I had been incarcerated for almost a decade and having someone to walk me through these steps was essential, in my opinion, because I had no idea where to begin these processes. After failing the algebra portion of the entrance exam, I thought that I could not attend college that semester but yet again, the counselor at the College Initiative was able to place me in an intensive accelerated

college prep math program that lasted two weeks. After taking the college prep class, I passed the algebra portion of the math with such a high score that I need not take a math class in college.

Subsequently, I was registered at Herbert H. Lehman College on the last day of registration. I have continued to attend college full time and have been on the Dean's list every semester since. I am proud to report that I have a GPA of 3.85 and I will be a senior when I matriculate for college this fall. I am happy to report today that I am gainfully employed full time, have paid the IRS and my back child support. Reclaiming my life began with that orientation at John Jay, make no mistake. It was there that I was able to visualize what my life could be like if I earned a degree. I will have that degree in Health Services Administration by this time next year.

I have been a staunch advocate for the College Initiative. I have volunteered to do outreaches and I have been into several state prisons to talk about how higher education can change your life. I believe in redemption as does our country. It is that spirit of forgiveness and second chances that makes this country great. Once a person serves his or her time, they should have the opportunity to change their lives. Having a felony record should not become a life sentence. So, I am here today to ask that the city continue to fund this worthy program through the Black Male Initiative or any other funding mechanism. In my opinion, the city gets a tremendous return for their dollar by investing in this program because it is investing in the future of people. It creates tax revenue and people who contribute to their communities. Study after study has shown that investing in the building of prisons and jails does not work and is indeed a tremendous expenditure for the city and state. Investing in educating people just makes more economic sense in the long run. I for one do not know how I would have fared without the help of the people at the College Initiative and I believe that those that come after deserve the opportunity afforded to me. I agreed to speak to here today to ensure that this happens. Please take a good look at me and my accomplishments. I am an example, an outcome of this investment. Am I not worthy? Please continue this Initiative.

The College Initiative

Good afternoon,

My name is Cheryl Wilkins, Ass, Director of the College Initiative, (CI) a reentry program that assists men/women who have had some involvement with the criminal justice system. We are a BMI funded project and our population reflects the prison population, mainly man of color.

Our program affects change in a major way. I would like to say we are contributing to building the economy. With a college degree our students do not need Medicaid, they are able to get jobs that carry health plans; with a college degree our students are not getting section 8 or affordable housing vouchers, unfortunately they are paying market rate rent. We are producing productive citizens who are giving back to their community in a positive way.

Most of our students go into the social work field for many reasons; but the main reason is because they want to mentor, counsel, and work with young people who are headed down the path that will land them in jail.

BMI is the catalyst that assists with mentoring, counseling and guiding young people in a positive direction. BMI also utilizes or students who average age 35 to get through to these tough to reach kids.

Without the support of BMI, CI could not have sustained these tough times.

Good Afternoon Council Members,
My name is Fitz King and I am a senior attending John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Let me start off by saying that I am humbled before your presence. You see, migrating to the United States as a child, I never imagined I would be addressing members of the New York City Council. Yet, I am here requesting your continued support in funding the City University of New York's-Black Male Initiative. Before you stands living proof of how your funding can change a person's life, and I want to express my gratitude and briefly explain how it has impacted my life.

A little over a year ago I came across a college advertisement for the Ronald H. Brown Summer Law Program affiliated with John Jay College's Department of Latin American and Latina/o Studies. From that day forward, I have been bound for the legal field. My interest in the law began in Iraq, where I realized my passions lay within the public sector. When I returned to the States, I knew that I needed a plan of attack to prepare for law school. However, I had **no idea** where to begin. Through the Summer Prep program, I was able to take law classes at St. John's University School of Law and gain practical experience as a legal intern at the Kings County District Attorneys office and a judicial intern for Judge Matthew Sciarrino at the Richmond County Courthouse-where I still serve as an intern. Little did I know, acceptance into the program would entail memorable experiences and unleash a vast support system through its focused administration. However, the summer law program would not be a success without **CUNY-BMI's** funding, which is now in your hands.

I stand here today as one of **many** thankful beneficiaries of the NYC Council's Opportunity Programs-specifically **CUNY-BMI**. Through your auspices, countless NYC youth's are able to advance their educations despite a lack of personal finances. BMI provides a way for marginalized individuals to gain valuable information necessary to attain a higher level of education through workshops and distinguished speaker series

I do not come from a wealthy family. I work full-time and am finishing an 18-credit semester towards my Bachelor of Arts degree. I truly believe I would not be on my way to Law School if it were not for the Education Committee's funding and the help of BMI and John Jay's Ronald H. Brown Program Director, Dr. Jodie Roue, and her staff. Each link in a chain is instrumental. Our chain needs to maintain its diversification goal and without this funding, who knows how this goal will be affected.

As I stated earlier, I am living proof of the benefits your generous funding provides. Without your support, CUNY BMI can not successfully assist CUNY colleges. BMI's designed plan to improve the enrollment and/or graduation rates of students from underrepresented groups, particularly black males, will suffer greatly. Therefore, I implore you, ladies and gentlemen of the Chamber, to continue your support of CUNY-BMI through adequate funding. I fear the consequences would hurt the progress we **are** making.

Thank you for your time.