

**Fiscal Year 2021 Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**Testimony of The City University of New York**

**New York City Council Finance and Higher Education Committees**

**Fiscal Year 2021 Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**March 3, 2020**

Good morning Chairperson Barron, and committee members, I am Allen Lew and I am the new Senior Vice Chancellor of Facilities Planning, Construction and Management at CUNY. It is a pleasure to be here today and I am happy to have this opportunity to discuss with you our capital budget. I am glad to be back at CUNY, where I attended architecture school at City College, and in New York City where I grew up.

The City Council has been an outstanding partner to CUNY, and especially to our community colleges, by providing support for critical maintenance work and major new buildings. In recent years, your support has been instrumental in helping CUNY to complete the purchase of the former Jewish Center across from Queensborough Community College which will be used for the expanded ASAP program; also to complete North Hall's new quad at Bronx Community College; a major expansion of libraries at Medgar Evers and LaGuardia Community College;

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creation of a new dining facility at Queensborough Community College; and renovation of the 500 Grand Concourse Building 4<sup>th</sup> floor at Hostos Community College. All these projects added or upgraded space and have enriched those campuses with modern, well-designed facilities that inspire students. Several of these projects have additional phases that are active which you have also supported.

Also with your assistance, we have been able to start design on the new Allied Health and Sciences Building for Hostos Community College. This major facility will provide modern classrooms and science labs for the college's allied health programs, which provide essential workforce development. In addition, it will house a dental clinic that will provide students with practical experience and furnish the community with expanded services.

In recent years, the Council has provided over \$270 million to CUNY and funded hundreds of projects, in particular at the community colleges where the need is greatest. Because of your generous support of critical maintenance funding, CUNY has been able to address some of the most challenging infrastructure issues

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at these campuses. In particular your allocation of lump-sum funds that allow CUNY to add to projects that are in process has helped CUNY move several important critical maintenance projects along. Last year the council provided CUNY \$10 million which CUNY has requested the state match that would then make it \$20 million. As you know from previous discussions, achieving a state of good repair within the system is CUNY's priority. Without the city funding we cannot access any state funds. By some accounts, since FY 2012 the state has provided \$3.1 billion in funding for CUNY capital projects (both senior colleges and community colleges) and it proposes another \$685 million in CUNY capital appropriations for FY 2021.

One of the largest ongoing critical maintenance projects is the replacement of façade of LaGuardia Community College's Center 3 Building. This enormous building with 882,678 square feet is 100 years old and its façade had to be replaced to preserve the building. I am happy to report that we expect to complete construction of this \$125 million project by the end of this year. I hope you will all take pride in realization of what will be a community treasure.

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Other critical maintenance projects that have benefited from Council funding are: the ongoing campus-wide utility upgrades at Bronx Community College roughly totaling \$161 million. Currently, we have completed phase 4 and are starting phase 5 and there is still another phase which will start design next year; and the phased renovation of Hostos Community College's 500 Grand Concourse Building continues; we are currently bidding the gut renovation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor and basement; and the cooling tower replacement at Borough of Manhattan Community College. And roof replacements and fire alarm and bathroom upgrades across the University on many campuses.

We are pleased to report all this activity but must emphasize that critical maintenance continues to be a major capital priority at our community college campuses and we are still in need of your support for the long-term effort. We have over 7 million square feet of community college facilities, three-quarters of which is over 40 years old. The most serious need is still infrastructure systems that support facility operations. Continuing deterioration of these systems could lead to costly emergency repairs and, in some cases, major system failures. \$750 million is needed to keep the backlog of deferred maintenance from growing, so

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you will continue to see requests for critical maintenance funding from our colleges. This year approximately \$200 million in identified projects need funding to cover critical facility items such as fire alarms, roofs, boilers, heating ventilation, air conditioning, facades and windows.

We are also pleased to inform you we are starting construction on our expansion of space in Inwood for the CUNY in the Heights program associated with Borough of Manhattan Community College. The expansion will allow us to continue to increase vital higher education services to the community, including substantially increasing credit-bearing classes at the Center, providing many career ladders to educational attainment and careers. We anticipate work will be complete for the fall semester.

We continue to seek additional city and state funding for the Hostos Allied Health and Sciences Building that I mentioned. And, we very much need funding for another important initiative, which is \$50 million for a new, permanent facility for Guttman Community College. We are investigating different options for their expansion.

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I think it is worth reminding you that for every dollar of city funding we receive for community colleges, the state matches it doubling our buying power.

The work on our facilities continues and is integral to realizing those important goals. CUNY is a community treasure. Thank you for your support, and for all you do for CUNY and New Yorkers.



**TESTIMONY  
OF THE  
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP  
BEFORE THE  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
ON THE  
PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021  
MARCH 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020  
New York, New York**

Good afternoon. My name is Santana Alvarado and I am the Chairperson of the New York Public Interest Research Group's (NYPIRG) student Board of Directors and a CUNY Hunter College student. NYPIRG is the State's largest non-partisan student advocacy organization. Our Board of Directors consists of college and university students elected from campuses with NYPIRG chapters across the state. Through NYPIRG, City University of New York (CUNY) students are educated on and empowered to impact policy decisions on issues that affect us, as well as the community at large, including decisions about funding for public higher education. We appreciate this opportunity to share our suggestions in response to the Mayor's preliminary budget proposal.

**INVESTMENT IN DEGREE COMPLETION AND COLLEGE SUCCESS ARE A  
NECESSITY FOR A THRIVING ECONOMY AND DEMOCRACY**

In an economically divided and high-cost city, college degree completion is vital. Investing in public higher education is a win for individual New Yorkers and a win for the city's economy as a whole, even amid a climate of budget-tightening. The average bachelor's degree holder contributes \$278,000 more to local economies than the average high school graduate through direct spending over the course of their lifetime; and an associate degree holder contributes \$81,000 more than a high school graduate.<sup>1</sup>

There is also an increasing need for a college degree in today's economy. In New York City, twenty of the twenty five fastest-growing occupations that pay over \$50,000 annually require a college degree.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rothwell, Jonathan. "What colleges do for local economies: A direct measure based on consumption." *Brookings*, July 28, 2016, [www.brookings.edu/research/what-colleges-do-for-local-economies-a-direct-measure-based-on-consumption/](http://www.brookings.edu/research/what-colleges-do-for-local-economies-a-direct-measure-based-on-consumption/).

<sup>2</sup> Center for an Urban Future (CUF) analysis of New York State Department of Labor Long-Term Occupational Employment Projections, 2014-2024.

## **FREEZE PUBLIC COLLEGE TUITION AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

Community colleges are a local and potentially affordable path to a higher degree or a better job for many New Yorkers, including those who need to be close to their homes, families, and jobs. Moreover, community colleges provide crucial job training and re-training for under-employed and unemployed workers in a rapidly shifting economic environment. New York community college tuition costs are among the highest in the nation<sup>3</sup> – creating a barrier where access must be paramount. Tuition rates at community colleges have been frozen for the past four fiscal years, however without adequate support from the city or state, CUNY community colleges will be raising tuition \$200 next year.

This will be an unfair burden placed on some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers, particularly those who do not qualify for financial aid, such as those who cannot commit to a full-time course load. Currently, nearly 40% of CUNY's community college students attend part time.<sup>4</sup> We have heard from many students who are parents, have jobs, and other responsibilities which do not allow them to take on a full-time course load.

We urge the City Council to ensure that students and families are protected from the burden of a tuition increase at CUNY community colleges. CUNY's budget request includes a \$250 per Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) increase at community colleges from the city and state. *We urge this funding request be met, and we urge that the City cover the additional \$16 million needed to ensure tuition remains frozen.*

## **COMBAT FOOD INSECURITY ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES**

The state-mandated creation of food pantries on all CUNY and SUNY campuses has been an important response to reports by groups including NYPIRG on student food insecurity. Studies consistently find that about half of students go hungry in a given month. A recent study by the Hope Center at Temple University, which included CUNY students, also cited that students who are veterans, former foster children, were convicted of a crime, identify as LGBTQ, or are African American have a higher risk of insecurity about their basic needs. Student food insecurity undermines the educational success of untold thousands of students by impacting decisions to forego textbook purchases, missing or dropping classes.<sup>5</sup> Students that are hungry and homeless must get the services they need.

NYPIRG appreciates the attention brought to food insecurity by CUNY and the City – including the Food Insecurity Pilot Program launched this academic year. We support the scaling of cafeteria voucher programs to more students and more campuses. We look forward to continuing to work

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<sup>3</sup> The College Board, see: <https://trends.collegeboard.org/college-pricing/figures-tables/2018-19-district-tuition-and-fees-public-two-year-institutions-state-and-five-year>.

<sup>4</sup> CUNY Enrollment Headcount 2018, <https://www.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/trustees/meetings-of-the-board/2020-2021-Operating-Budget-Request-and-Four-Year-Financial-Plan.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> NYPIRG, Hunger on Campus, The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students, October 2016, [http://www.nypirgstudents.org/reports/Hunger\\_on\\_Campus\\_NYPIRG.pdf](http://www.nypirgstudents.org/reports/Hunger_on_Campus_NYPIRG.pdf), accessed November 30, 2016.



together in service to campus food pantries and by supporting policies which combat hunger on campus.

*We urge the City Council to provide sustained funding that reduce and eliminate college student food and housing insecurity more permanently.*

### **SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS, BUT DO NOT FURTHER SADDLE STUDENTS WITH THE COST**

Stress, anxiety, and depression are major problems on college campuses. Yet, CUNY currently lacks the resources to mobilize adequate university-based responses. NYPIRG applauds strategies to address mental and physical well-being outlined in CUNY's budget request. The goal to reduce wait times for mental health counseling appointments and the outreach campaign to destigmatize seeking treatment for issues students face are particularly important. City support to realize these goals and others will be imperative.

*NYPIRG urges the City Council to provide funding to hire new on-campus counselors and provide training to current and new staff and volunteers. Critically, these costs must be added to CUNY operating budget allocations from the City and State and must not burden students with additional fees.*

### **ADDRESS COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH COLLEGE WHICH CAN BE BARRIERS TO COLLEGE COMPLETION**

Textbooks, food, rent, child care and other costs can price students out of an education before they even fill out their FAFSA. Currently, over half of CUNY's 2- and 4-year students work over 20 hours per week. In a recent report put out by the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, of students that work, 79 percent reported that they work to pay for living expenses and over a third of those who work believe that having a job negatively impacts their academic performance.<sup>6</sup>

Many students are eligible for public benefits that could help them make it through college and finish their degree. The "Single Stop" program at CUNY provides an essential service in helping connect students to the millions of dollars in public benefits that they are eligible for including; housing, SNAP benefits, health insurance, tax preparation and financial counseling.<sup>7</sup> "Single Stop" has received national recognition for its tremendous success.<sup>8</sup>

*We support the expansion of Single Stop offices at all CUNY campuses.*

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<sup>6</sup> City University of New York, "2016 Student Experience Survey A survey of CUNY undergraduate students," [http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/institutional/surveys/2016\\_SES\\_Highlights\\_Updated\\_10112016.pdf](http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/institutional/surveys/2016_SES_Highlights_Updated_10112016.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> The City University of New York, BMCC, Single Stop, <http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/singlestop/>.

<sup>8</sup> The City University of New York, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, March 7, 2011, <http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/sa/specialprograms/SingleStopCCI/SingleStopInnovationAward.pdf>.

***NYPIRG urges the City Council to watchdog proposed cuts to CUNY child care funding in Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget for New York State, and guard against any possible program cuts.***

## **SUPPORT OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM EXPANSIONS**

Opportunity programs are important pathways that help at-risk students successfully complete college. Their demonstrated successes should result in program expansions. In general, students in opportunity programs are individuals who have come from low-income communities and often rank low on traditional measures of collegiate admissions standards, such as SAT scores, high school GPA, and class standing. Opportunity programs have a steady track record of success in increasing retention and graduation rates. Students who are enrolled in CUNY's ASAP (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs) opportunity program graduate at more than double the rate of non-ASAP students.<sup>9</sup>

ASAP, and other opportunity programs including Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK), and College Discovery offer many benefits to students and to our city and they should be expanded. CUNY has also proposed a Math Start/ASAP pilot program expansion to intensively address math proficiency among 1,200 students over the next four years, and to expand its ACE program – the 4-year adaptation of the successful CUNY ASAP – to 5,000 students over the next four years.

Per CUNY's budget request, "the goal of ACE is to double four-year bachelor's graduation rates by providing structured advisement, academic and financial support to students. On-time graduation has a direct impact on the cost of a degree — for students and taxpayers — and the economic benefits of the degree (income to students, tax revenues for the State)."

***NYPIRG urges the City Council to protect and increase funding to opportunity programs including the two pilot program expansions listed above.***

*In conclusion*, higher education is an investment with guaranteed rewards both for society and the individual. Programs and initiatives that have proven to work must be expanded. Any investment in higher education will undoubtedly have a net positive impact on the city. We appreciate your continued support.

Thank you.

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<sup>9</sup> City University of New York, "Significant Increases in Associate Degree Graduation Rates: CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)," March 1, 2017, [http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2017/03/ASAP\\_Program\\_Overview\\_Web.pdf](http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2017/03/ASAP_Program_Overview_Web.pdf).

**Testimony of Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer Matthew Sapienza  
The City University of New York  
New York City Council Higher Education Committee Hearing:  
Fiscal Year 2021 Preliminary Budget  
March 3, 2020**

Good morning, Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. I am Matthew Sapienza, CUNY's senior vice chancellor and chief financial officer. I am very pleased to be joined by this morning by Allen Lew, senior vice chancellor for facilities planning, construction and management. Senior Vice Chancellor Lew was appointed in December 2019 after a successful career in Washington D.C. as the City Administrator, and in addition to being an alumnus of City College, is the first Asian-American Vice Chancellor in CUNY's history. Allen and I are also joined by several of our colleagues from the University who will assist in responding to questions and concerns from the Committee.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2021 Preliminary Budget and its effect on The City University of New York. Chairperson Barron, and members of the committee, we very much appreciate your strong and continuing advocacy for our students.

At a time of growing inequality, CUNY has become a national leader in promoting upward social and economic mobility. In 2019, six CUNY colleges placed in the top 25 nationally on CollegeNET's 2019 Social Mobility Index, with Baruch College ranking Number One for a fifth straight year. CUNY also dominated both the Forbes and Wall Street Journal's "Best-Value" college rankings.

We are proud of our affordable value: two out of three CUNY undergraduate students do not pay for tuition and fees out of pocket, and three out of four of our graduates leave debt free. CUNY's tuition remains of high value, and continues to be much lower than other university systems throughout the country. Likewise, CUNY's average cost of fees of \$475 are substantially lower than those of other public university systems of comparable size throughout the country.

Our history, and reputation, of delivering high-quality, affordable education and promoting social mobility help explain why freshman enrollment rose 3 percent this past fall, countering the national trend. It was part of a 17 percent increase since 2010, a decade in which freshman enrollment for universities nationwide remained largely flat.

We are also proud of our recent historic agreement with our faculty union, the Professional Staff Congress, which provided well-earned increases for our full-time and adjunct faculty. Chair Barron, we very much appreciated the opportunity to discuss this topic at your recent Hearing on January 30<sup>th</sup>. As I testified at that Hearing, the University is grateful that the Fiscal Year 2021 City Preliminary Budget included funding to fully cover the costs of this collective bargaining agreement.

In our Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Request, we have a renewed drive to expand our sources of revenue for CUNY. This approach is aligned with our belief that CUNY, the State and the City share an obligation to the future for all New Yorkers. To that end, we are proposing partnerships with the State and the City, along with the private sector and philanthropic community to tackle the daunting economic, environmental, and social challenges ahead.

Now let me speak to the City's Preliminary Budget. We are pleased that the City's financial plan provides assistance for our community colleges with funding for mandatory costs related to fringe benefits, building rentals, and contractual salary increases. The Preliminary Budget also includes a \$6 million Efficiencies target in Fiscal Year 2021, for which we will work with our community colleges to develop strategic savings initiatives.

We are grateful to the City Council, particularly the Higher Education Committee, for securing resources in the current year's budget for the Vallone Merit Scholarships. We will ask for your advocacy again, as funding for this critical student support program was not included in the FY21 Preliminary Budget. This initiative provides financial aid to students who graduated with an 80 average from New York City high schools and who maintained a B average at the University. These merit-based awards are available to deserving students at both the senior colleges and community colleges and are a significant contribution to our

efforts to speed time to degree. They demonstrate to our students, in a tangible way, that their city makes it possible to pursue an excellent postsecondary education right here at home. We look forward to working with you in ensuring that these financial aid awards are protected.

We also need your help in restoring \$2 million that was provided for remediation in the current fiscal year. CUNY has developed a plan to better tailor remedial instruction to the needs of its students and to accelerate their degree progress. The University is also appreciative of the City Council's current year allocation of \$1 million for a Food Insecurity initiative. We have allocated those funds to our community colleges and the results have been encouraging. As of December 31, 2019, 42% of eligible students accepted our offer to participate in the Food Program. We anticipate that the enrolled students will receive a total of \$800 for the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters. It is critical that this allocation is restored in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget. Our success with this initial cohort leads us to believe that an increased allocation can have a profound impact on a much greater number of students. We are also seeking restorations for our community college child care centers and adult literacy programs in the FY21 City budget.

Additional needs to support CUNY's ongoing efforts to increase completion rates are highlighted in our FY2021 budget request. We are seeking City investment in several significant endeavors, one of which is increased support for associate degree programs at our comprehensive colleges. The amount provided for these programs has remained constant at \$32.3 million since 1995. Simply applying the Higher Education Price Index over that time period would result in an additional \$34.2 million in annual, recurring support.

The first category of strategic investments in our Budget Request focuses upon proven approaches that expand access, enhance learning, and accelerate success towards degree completion. We propose to expand the Accelerate, Complete and Engage (ACE) program and support other academic momentum initiatives. We are also seeking to expand and

support the growth of a diverse body of full-time faculty through the addition of 500 new full-time faculty lines over the next four years.

Second, we need to embrace the future of work and improve our students' quality of life in a rapidly changing, globally competitive economy. Our third area of investment recognizes that the physical and mental health and well-being of our students are integral components of student success. The fourth and final area of investment included in our Budget Request covers strengthening the University's infrastructure through increased allocations to campus maintenance and information technology.

I would also like to take a moment to address the Federal Budget. The recent budget proposal released by the White House would eliminate the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG) program and would reduce the Federal Work Study program by half. Tens of thousands of CUNY students rely on SEOG and Work Study for financial aid as well as valuable work experience. We are grateful that the House and Senate has rejected previous calls for reductions in these critical financial aid programs, and ask for their assistance again for the upcoming budget cycle.

Chairperson Barron and members of the committee, please be assured that the University community deeply appreciates your continued commitment to a high-quality CUNY education, which is the vehicle that so many New Yorkers rely on for the path of upward mobility. I would now like to ask Senior Vice Chancellor Lew to talk about CUNY's capital program.

**TESTIMONY OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY  
ON THE MAYOR'S PRELIMINARY FY2021 BUDGET  
BEFORE THE NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

*March 3, 2020*

Chairwoman Barron, members of the Council and friends: Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak about city funding for CUNY on behalf of the 30,000 faculty and staff represented by Professional Staff Congress, Local 2334, AFT, AFL-CIO. I am Deborah Bell, PSC's Executive Director. President Bowen is unable to be here today because she is in Albany, with PSC members, to press state legislators to provide enhanced funding for CUNY's senior and community colleges.

Our union is grateful to the Council for your ongoing advocacy on behalf of the students at CUNY and all the faculty and staff. PSC members also acknowledge that the Council and the Mayor have consistently increased funding levels for CUNY community colleges—68% (not adjusted for enrollments or the price index) over the past 5 years. I particularly want to acknowledge that the Preliminary Executive Budget for FY2021 and the city's financial plan include funding for community college instructional staff salary and fringe benefit increases negotiated in the 2017-2023 PSC-CUNY collective bargaining agreement.

The PSC contract is a necessary step in ensuring students' access to resources and success, because, as we often say, "our members' working conditions are our students' learning conditions." Working with the city and the state, the union and CUNY succeeded in negotiating a significant improvement in adjunct faculty pay, permitting part-time faculty to spend more time with their students.

Nevertheless, New York City must continue to increase investment in CUNY. PSC proposes that you add \$81M to the Mayor's proposed budget for CUNY, most for expanded full-time staffing at the senior as well as community colleges, and the rest to freeze tuition at community colleges, restore funds for program cuts and cover predictable increases in mandatory costs, in addition to restoring \$23M for Council-funded programs.

Seventy-five to eighty percent of NYC high school graduates go to CUNY, both senior colleges and community colleges. This committee is well aware of the challenges many of these students face, as well as being aware of the value to them and to our city of their achieving college degrees.

PSC supports the FY2021 operating and capital budget requests that CUNY has brought to you today. Students' health and wellness are critical to their success, but they should not have to pay for it through increased fees. Furthermore, CUNY's request does not go far enough in calling for the full-time staffing resources CUNY students need to succeed.

- PSC proposes an additional \$30M for community colleges for a new cohort of scholars and counselors, 280 F/T “One City Fellow” community college positions:
  - 150 new F/T faculty positions, with an emphasis on diversity hiring and moving experienced part-time faculty to full-time positions
  - 140 new academic advisors, career advisors, and mental health counselors—eliminating the need to charge students a “wellness fee”!
- PSC supports CUNY’s request for \$34M in city funds for the senior colleges<sup>i</sup> and, more concretely, proposes that the funds also be used for a new cohort of counselors and scholars, 225 F/T “One City Fellow” senior college positions:
  - 175 new F/T faculty positions, with an emphasis on diversity hiring and moving experienced part-time faculty to full-time positions,
  - 150 new academic advisors, career counselors, and mental health counselors--eliminating the need to charge students a “wellness fee”!

While CUNY has proposed funding additional budget funds for F/T faculty and staff, PSC sees an imperative to hire more of them sooner than CUNY proposes. Funding 325 new fulltime professors and lecturers at CUNY colleges through our “One City Fellows” proposal would be an opportunity to diversify the faculty, and create more conversion lines to hire experienced and talented adjunct faculty. We share the desire with the Council that students should have teachers, mentors, and advisors who reflect them and their communities.

By funding over 600 new F/T faculty, advisors and counselors, this \$64 M commitment can knit together the CUNY system more effectively, providing needed learning and well-being supports to students at all the colleges and helping to align and streamline movement to 4-year degrees, whether a NYC high school student goes directly from high school to a senior college or attends community college first. By offering increased resources to students, the ASAP program has made a significant difference to many CUNY community college students. Now is the time to provide expanded resources more broadly throughout the CUNY system in order to increase student retention and graduation rates. Such an investment is also consistent with the national higher education agenda expressed by most democratic presidential candidates.

PSC also supports:

- an additional \$4M to restore program cuts to important programs at CUNY—food insecurity, child care centers, remediation and adult literacy
- \$1.2M for increased energy costs and critical maintenance on community college campuses
- \$11.5M to continue the community college tuition freeze

In addition to the new \$81M we propose, PSC supports \$23M in restored funding for Council-funded programs



Many of you are on CUNY campuses regularly. You know how necessary increased capital funds are to bring campuses to a “state-of-good-repair” and to upgrade systems, technology and infrastructure. PSC urges you to support CUNY’s 5-Year Capital Plan (\$0.7B/\$222 thousand this year) and to support their request for \$97M in Reso-A funding for smaller-scale projects.

On behalf of PSC’s 30,000 members, I urge this committee and the full city council to help lead the effort to end the years of inadequate public investment in CUNY by charting a somewhat different course than in the past and helping to fund the whole university so it can continue to fulfill its mission. Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> For at least 2 decades, the city has contributed \$32.8M to CUNY senior colleges. It is past time to increase this amount by the higher education cost index to help ensure an effective Pre-K to BA pipeline.

**March 3rd, 2020**

**Testimony of: Silvia Perez**

**Campus: John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

**New York City Council Higher Education Public Hearing**

Greetings members of the City Council Higher Education Committee my name is Silvia Pérez and I am currently a senior at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I am here today to advocate on behalf of the 15,000 students enrolled at John Jay. My college experience, like many other students you'll hear from today, hasn't been the smoothest. I have been to 3 three colleges within the past 9 years. After I graduated High School, I attended a private institution for only one semester. It was cut short due to financial reasons. It took me 5 years to pay off the debt that was accumulated at this college and remember, I was only there for 1 semester.

It took me about 1 year to look for a job to be able to pay what I owe. My family would pull me out of bed to job search. I didn't want to, I felt like it wasn't worth it. I was at my lowest at that time. After finally gaining access to my transcript, I was able to attend Queensborough Community College. QCC was my home away from home, it began to open so many doors for me and I began to find my passion and drive again. It is important to invest in community colleges because this where students like myself get their start at CUNY and are exposed to many opportunities that have helped me get to where I am today. Now, John Jay has been my home for the past 2 years. Although it is my last semester here, it has been hard. I love what I have done so far: being a full-time student, having 2 part-time jobs, being a student leader, has been a wonderful experience and I would do it all over in a heartbeat. However, it has been hard because I have a hold on my account. As a CUNY student whose gone through many hardships support services would have made my college experience a lot much easier expanding on financial counseling for students, federal, state and local screening benefits screening and more; would make the experience better for students. For example, if single stop like support services were expanded to all CUNY campuses a lot of the burden students face would be relieved.

I feel like history is repeating itself. On top of all of this, there's a cap and gown that I have to purchase. My friends would like me to go on the Senior cruise, my family and I would like to get the class ring. Oh, let's not forget the senior portraits; if there's no picture it didn't happen, right? I feel like I deserve graduating and walking across the stage at the Barclays Center, I have worked so hard! I have so much to be happy for, I am graduating after 9 years of hard work, I've shed many tears, there have been many times that I've wanted to throw in the towel and just not attend any more. Not only would this make my parents very disappointed but, I would also be doing a disservice to myself for putting years' worth of hard work to just give up. I do not want to be another person who has given up because I can no longer pay. I am speaking up today because I am going to use my voice and help speak up for myself and many other students that are going through something similar. With all of this being said, I want other students to see that you are not alone, that by speaking up we can make a difference.



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**TESTIMONY OF  
TIMOTHY HUNTER, UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE CHAIRPERSON  
BEFORE THE  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON THE  
MAYOR'S PRELIMINARY BUDGET FY 2021  
March 3, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is Timothy Hunter. I am the Chairperson of the CUNY University Student Senate (USS) and the student Trustee on the City University's Board of Trustees. Founded in 1972 with the mission of preserving the accessibility, affordability, and excellence of higher education within the CUNY, the organization is charged with protecting the rights of the student body and promoting the general welfare of its student constituents and the University. The USS delegates are responsible for the representative governance of the 500,000 students of the 25 CUNY campuses.

The mission of The City University of New York (CUNY) is rooted in the bedrock of academic opportunity and equal access to higher education for all. CUNY provides the most effective vehicle for the upward mobility of disadvantaged New Yorkers. It is then the goal of the University Student Senate (USS) to ensure public higher education affordability and accessibility to as many New Yorkers, particularly to the majority of students who come from underserved communities of color. Due to staggering disinvestment from the state, CUNY is already saddled with restraints in the city council budget. However, it is within reach to advocate for vital programs and services that would benefit the most vulnerable student constituencies.

**THE COSTS OF EARNING A DEGREE HAS INCREASED DRAMATICALLY OVER THE  
PAST DECADE**

As of 2016, 60 percent of CUNY students come from homes with household incomes under \$30,000, and 42 percent come from homes with household incomes under \$20,000.<sup>1</sup> A study done by *Young Invincibles* states that 18% of community-college students and 14% of four year students in New York State are experiencing homelessness. Yet, between 2006 and 2016, the national average annual tuition at community colleges has increased by \$850 per student.<sup>2</sup>

CUNY community colleges are not immune to this upward trend. While tuition at community colleges has remained frozen in the last four years, this year, CUNY proposed to bring back the bad practice of raising tuition at community colleges. This is problematic for various reasons, including but not limited to the idea that NYC already has one of the highest community college tuition rates in the nation. The national average for tuition at community colleges is \$4,816, however, at CUNY, tuition is \$5,194.<sup>3</sup> This increase of \$200 at community colleges will negatively affect students, especially those paying out of

<sup>1</sup> 2016 CUNY Student Experience Survey

<sup>2</sup> CUNY Report, see: <https://www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov/static/assets/CUNY%20Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Community College Review, see: <https://www.communitycollegereview.com/avg-tuition-stats/national-data>



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pocket. Saphirah McNeil is a Business Management Major at Borough of Manhattan Community College. Here is her statement regarding CUNY tuition:

*"I believe that I will only be graduating on time once I have enough money to pay my tuition. The Financial Aid office and the ASAP program both determined that I'm not qualified to receive aid or enter their program. So, I work part time to provide for myself. Before attending BMCC, I attended the Holyoke Community College in Massachusetts. Back then it wasn't a struggle to receive aid. Aid to pay your tuition was fully funded through fafsa and it seemed like they helped provide many opportunities that helped students avoid student debt. I have never been in debt before, not until coming to New York that is. It's honestly a struggle to be a New York student that wants a certificate in what they are passionate about. I believe that there would be a more stress-free campus that wouldn't deter students or people looking to become graduates with a fully funded CUNY."*<sup>4</sup>

While freezing tuition will not address the precipitous decline in state support, it will certainly help cash-strapped CUNY students living within NYC. **We urge the Council to allocate \$16 million for a tuition freeze at CUNY community colleges for FY 2021.**

#### **"SINGLE STOP": ONE STOP SHOP FOR ALL**

After the shocking results from CUNY's 2010 survey on food insecurity, Single Stop was created to assist students in enrolling in SNAP and provide them with "free comprehensive social, legal and financial services at several CUNY colleges". The service is vital for connecting families to the resources they need but is only limited to eight schools, seven of which are community colleges. This is a problem when there's still a significant amount of students attending senior colleges who are considered low-income yet they are without access to Single Stop which can help increase their chances of academic success.

Taylor McMahon skipped breakfast and lunch most days when she first enrolled as a Nursing student at Hostos Community College in the Borough of Bronx. Her mother had recently been laid off, and McMahon said she had no financial support. "It was hard to study when I wasn't eating," she said at an event. McMahon said Single Stop advisers helped her successfully apply for food stamps, find affordable housing and do her taxes, which in turn led to money from tax benefits that she used to buy books and a nursing uniform. Without that extra help, McMahon said she would probably not have been able to make it to graduation, and certainly not with the 3.9 grade point average she carried to the finish line. She is the first in her family to earn a college degree.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> NYPIRG Higher Education Storybank, see: <https://www.nypirgstudents.org/storybank/page/2/>

<sup>5</sup> Single Stop Before Graduation, see:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/06/11/nonprofit-group-single-stop-helps-low-income-students-avoid-financial-barriers>



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Targeted investment from the City Council could help CUNY to achieve its goals in this area by improving and expanding existing Single-Stop-like services at all CUNY colleges. The services would improve by:

- Providing training and outreach to students and faculty to promote awareness and fight stigma
- Offering special programs, services, or initiatives for particular student groups, including women, LGBTQI students, veterans, DREAMers, and students with disabilities
- Tax preparation services for students
- Food pantry supplies and nutrition education for students
- Menstrual hygiene products for students
- Housing options, especially for students with housing insecurity

As mentioned earlier, Single Stop currently has counselors ready to interview students and provide them with information about which federal, state or local benefits they are eligible to receive and guide them through the process of applying for benefits. Over a six-year period, CUNY Single Stop sites have served more than 77,000 students and accessed benefits, legal services, financial counseling and tax refunds valued at \$183 million. The cost of operating a Single Stop site is \$220,000. Thirty-seven percent of all CUNY senior college students are from families with incomes of \$20,000 or less. This means that more than 54,000 senior college students are prime candidates to be served through Single Stop. **We urge the Council to allocate \$2.4 million to expand Single Stop to all CUNY senior colleges.**

#### **FOOD INSECURITY AT CUNY**

On another note, food insecurity is a continuous threat to a significant amount of CUNY students. A CUNY-wide survey conducted earlier this year by researchers at CUNY's Urban Food Policy Institute (UFPI) concluded "over twenty percent of CUNY undergraduates- nearly 50,000 of them- were food insecure in 2018."<sup>6</sup> While the University has committed to creating and maintaining food pantries on all campuses, CUNY needs funding to continue their efforts to run the city council funded Food Insecurity Pilot Program that allows students to receive food at their campus cafeteria throughout the year. By funding this pilot program, food will be more accessible to students who need it most which will, in turn, help mitigate the effects of food insecurity such as low GPAs, consistent absences, or dropping out. **We urge the Council to fund the Food Insecurity program at \$1 million in order for CUNY to continue supporting starving students.**

#### **EXPAND CITIZENSHIP NOW TO THE COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND**

While New York City is considered a sanctuary city, according to NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, deportations of undocumented immigrants have soared, particularly among immigrants who have no

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<sup>6</sup> 20 Percent of CUNY Students Are Food Insecure. Can New Initiatives Help? See: <https://www.ediblemanhattan.com/foodshed-2/university-student-hunger/>



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criminal record.<sup>7</sup> Citizenship Now! serves as one of the most reliable services for students and community members alike to attain information on the ever-changing immigration policies that affect them and their families. The city council funded initiative provides free, high quality, and confidential immigration law services to help students, non-students, and their families on their path to U.S. citizenship.

With the councils increase of \$500,000 to the service last year, Citizenship Now was able to create a rapid response team that can provide additional services to Council sites with the longest wait times. With the additional money, they are also providing educational forums directly to communities to inform them on changes to immigration laws and how the changes will impact the undocumented immigrant population. Lastly, Citizenship Now was able to add twelve additional legal service days at existing and new city council offices.

However, additional support is needed for CUNY students in Staten Island. Students in Staten Island have cited the need to expand the service to CSI. While other campuses have various Citizenship Now offices near them or directly on their campus, CSI students only have one option, since Staten Island is the only borough with just one Citizenship Now office. The average commute time to the service hosted at CM Deborah Rose's office from CSI is thirty minutes (without traffic) in order for students to receive help, which expands their wait time even longer. Students from Staten Island agree that if there was an office on their campus, students would be able to receive more immediate help. CSI has approximately 360 international students and there are undocumented students who attend the school as well.<sup>8</sup> **We request the Council to provide funding to expand the CUNY Citizenship Now office to CSI.**

### **MENSTRUAL EQUITY AT CUNY COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

There are many things everyday people and lawmakers overlook, and an example of that is menstrual equity. Menstrual Equity is a framework which is intended to acknowledge the far-reaching societal importance of and need for public policy to address the safety, affordability, and availability of menstrual products for everyone who needs them.

In 2016, the New York City Council voted unanimously for a series of measures to provide menstrual hygiene products free of charge in public schools, prisons and homeless shelters. The decision came after the success of a pilot program launched in 2015 at the High School for Arts and Business. The school reported a 2.4 percent increase in attendance after accessible menstrual products were available to students. National leaders such as Michelle Obama have raised awareness around the lack of access to feminine hygiene products in public educational facilities, and labeled it an issue of educational equity. Studies around the world have reported the inability to access menstrual products can have a negative

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<sup>7</sup> Comptroller Stringer Investigation Reveals Huge Increases in ICE Enforcement in NYC, Leaving Families in Fear, see: <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-investigation-reveals-huge-increases-in-ice-enforcement-in-nyc-leaving-families-in-fear/>

<sup>8</sup> CUNY CSI International Student Report, see: <https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/cuny-college-of-staten-island/student-life/international/>



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impact on students' attendance and productivity. On many campuses toilet paper (of course) and also condoms are free and readily available to access for all students even after the close of business hours. The University Student Senate agrees that the same should be said for menstrual products which should be fully funded by the city budgets since they are essential to everyday health and sanitation.

Where there has been a lack of resources for the students in the City University of New York, similar to what happens with emergency funds, and food insecurities, students are forced to use their own funds to plug the holes that the State and City government leave in the universities. However, without the continuous investment from our City electeds, most of our resources are left to deteriorate over time. Dispensers go unfilled for months, and opportunities to combat serious equity crises on our campuses are seemingly forgotten.

Women's Center and Student Health Services currently provide free menstrual products at their offices on various CUNY campuses. This is good for students that attend school during the day, however on larger campuses is an inconvenience for students who are unaware of the location of these centers, or if they are far away from class spaces. This also disproportionately impacts our night time students because these offices tend to close their doors at around 5pm. It is important that we identify a means of distributing feminine hygiene products, that doesn't rely on an office being open, and that can be placed in a bathroom where students can all have access to the products. **We request the Council to fund a menstrual products pilot at CUNY community colleges that can provide tampons and pads in bathrooms or outside Single Stop offices.**

#### **EXPAND THE ACCELERATED STUDY IN ASSOCIATE PROGRAMS (ASAP)**

By providing resources to students that would allow them to attend college full-time (free tuition, free monthly metro-card, free textbook vouchers, etc.), ASAP successfully continues to double graduation rates at community colleges (versus non-ASAP students). Due to the programs clear benefits, and its track record of curbing the stressful demand on students to balance work and studies, ASAP currently serves as a national model for equitable higher education affordability.

We are asking for the Mayor and Council to fund the continued expansion of ASAP over a four-year timeline to double its current size to a total enrollment of 50,000 associate-seeking students by FY2024. **We urge the Council to fund ASAP by \$20 million for this fiscal year.**

#### **RESTORATION OF CHILDCARE SERVICES**

A major benefit of CUNY is its mission to be accessible and affordable to all, regardless of income or background. Seventeen percent of CUNY's degree-seeking students at community colleges and 11 percent of students at senior colleges are parents.<sup>9</sup> While approximately 1,500 student-parents currently

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<sup>9</sup> City Council Response to State Budget:

[https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2019/04/Fiscal-2020-Preliminary-Budget-Response\\_FINAL.pdf](https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2019/04/Fiscal-2020-Preliminary-Budget-Response_FINAL.pdf)



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receive child care services at CUNY, others have trouble accessing the same services due to long waitlists at various centers.

The Mayor's Preliminary Budget zero'd out the \$600,000 increase that was given in 2018, leaving CUNY child care centers budget back to \$500,000, the same amount it had been since the 90's. **We request that child care funding is baselined moving forward and urge the Council to restore funding to CUNY child care centers.**



# YOUNG INVINCIBLES

**New York City Council Committee on Higher Education  
Preliminary Budget Hearing  
Submitted by Melanie Krugelis, Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy  
Tuesday, March 3, 2020**

Good afternoon. My name is Melanie Krugelis, and I am the Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy at Young Invincibles. Young Invincibles is a policy and advocacy non-profit dedicated to elevating young adults in the political process and expanding economic opportunities for our generation. We work with young adults to ensure that our voices are at the table when it comes to higher education, health care, workforce development, and civic engagement. I want to thank the New York City Council and the Committee on Higher Education for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing.

Today's preliminary budget hearing for the Committee on Higher Education comes at a critical moment for New York's college students. Today, nine out of every ten jobs created in the United States go to those with a college degree.<sup>1</sup> In New York City, workers with a bachelor's degree earn, on average, \$550 more per week than those with a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup> While there are multiple pathways to a living-wage career, a college degree remains one of the best bets a person can make to attain long-term economic stability. Here in New York City, researchers point out that the CUNY system in particular is one of the nation's most important resources for propelling generations of low-income students into the middle class.<sup>3</sup> That is critical, given the makeup and experiences of CUNY's student body: today, about half of CUNY's students come from households making less than \$20,000 a year.<sup>4</sup> CUNY students are also experiencing homelessness and hunger at alarming rates: a 2019 survey of 22,000 CUNY undergraduates found that about half of CUNY students surveyed struggle with food insecurity, while nearly 15 percent experienced homelessness in a given year.<sup>5</sup> We also know that CUNY students are often

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<sup>1</sup> Goldstein, Steve. (2019). Nine out of 10 new jobs are going to those with a college degree. Retrieved from: <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/nine-out-of-10-new-jobs-are-going-to-those-with-a-college-degree-2018-06-04>

<sup>2</sup> New York State Department of Labor. Labor Statistics for the New York City Region. Retrieved from: [https://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/why\\_go\\_to\\_school.shtm](https://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/why_go_to_school.shtm)

<sup>3</sup> Chetty, R. et al. (2017). Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility. Retrieved from: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w23618>

<sup>4</sup> CUNY. (2018). CUNY Again Dominates Chronicle's Public College Social Mobility Rankings. Retrieved from: <https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2018/08/20/cuny-again-dominates-chronicles-public-college-social-mobility-rankings/>

<sup>5</sup> Goldrick-Rab, S., V. Coca, C. Baker-Smith, E. Looker. (2019). City University of New York #RealCollege Survey. Retrieved from: [https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/HOPE\\_realcollege\\_CUNY\\_report\\_final\\_webversion.pdf](https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/HOPE_realcollege_CUNY_report_final_webversion.pdf)

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balancing their lives as a college student with their responsibilities outside of college, including working part- or full-time, and caretaking responsibilities. In short, for many CUNY students, college is just one of many responsibilities and costs they face.

Today, as we consider the city's commitment to its public higher education system, we must recognize the reality for New York's college students. While CUNY's tuition prices are lower than many other public university systems (though increasing now both at CUNY's senior and community colleges), CUNY students are also living in one of the most expensive regions in the country. Affording tuition is just one piece of the puzzle when students must also cover costs like rent, food, transportation, healthcare, and childcare. Thus, any enacted budget for Fiscal Year 2021 must recognize the reality for CUNY's students. As such, we urge the Council and the Mayor to build on recent investments made towards addressing basic needs among CUNY's students, including a recent pilot aimed at addressing food insecurity on campus, and recent investments in CUNY's campus childcare, reversing a decades of flat investment in on-campus childcare. We also support investment in programs like CUNY ASAP, and will work with students to urge our state electeds to address the serious implications of the TAP Gap, and its impact on student success.

As the Council and the Mayor work towards an enacted budget, we also believe it is critical to hear from students themselves, and the challenges and opportunities they identify in their campuses. Today I am joined by Samer Hassan, our Policy and Advocacy fellow at Young Invincibles, and a senior at Columbia College. I am also joined by three CUNY students and Young Advocates, Marcia Collier of City College, Lisa Nishimura of John Jay, and Duwayne Wright of Borough of Manhattan Community College. I urge the Committee on Higher Education to consider the concerns and solutions they bring to the table. Thank you for your time.

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**New York City Council Committee on Higher Education  
Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**Submitted by Lisa Nishimura, Senior at John Jay College of Criminal Justice  
Tuesday, March 3, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is Lisa Nishimura. I am a senior at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, graduating this May with my Bachelor's of Arts in Criminology. Thank you Councilwoman Barron and the Committee on Higher Education for the opportunity to share my story and present challenges that I faced during my time at John Jay, in hopes of improving CUNY policies to allow more students like myself the opportunity to afford college.

I am here today to ask you to take steps to provide funding opportunities for students like me, who cannot receive either federal or state financial aid due to their inability to provide certain documentation, something which is outside of their control. I would also like to see the eligibility requirements for programs like ASAP and ACE to be made available to more students in the future, and would like the eligibility criteria to be expanded to allow for sophomores to enter into the program. These investments will help ensure that more students like me have access to financial aid and other programs that help make college affordable.

Throughout my entire five years at John Jay, I was unable to receive any state or federal aid, having solely to rely on scholarships and work to pay tuition. While I received a \$1,000 scholarship from my honors program every semester, this scholarship was not enough to cover even half of my tuition. As a result, every semester, I was met with a Bursar Hold, preventing me from registering for my classes until I paid off the remaining balance, which was usually \$3,000. To some, \$3,000 may be a small amount. However, coming from a low-income family, with a single mother, this amount could have been used to help pay for our rent, bills, and food.

To obtain aid, I have tried numerous avenues, all with dead ends. I tried applying for the Excelsior scholarship, but because it required FAFSA completion and documentation, such as proof of income, which was out of my parent's control, I was not able to apply. I even tried filing to be an independent student, because if I was granted this status, I would be eligible for both state and federal aid. Ultimately, I was denied independent status. The bit of hope I had to not relive the

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same financial nightmare I had experienced, came crashing down. On top of it all, the financial aid office was not helpful in terms of finding any alternative way for me to get funding. They simply said there was nothing that could have been done and that was the end of it.

Program requirements also continued to prevent me from participating in other programs that would have helped alleviate my financial burden. Even programs that would have helped alleviate some of my financial burdens such as the ACE program that provides funding for textbooks and free MetroCards, I could not be a part of due to certain requirements. As an honors student, I was not eligible, and the following year when the policy was changed to admit honors students, I was no longer eligible because I was a sophomore and not an entering freshman.

Despite the socioeconomic barriers I continue to face, being able to graduate is a huge feat, and one that I take pride in. However, I know that this is not the reality for many other students who are in my situation. I once again ask the NYC Council to invest in programs that support students who are in situations similar to mine, and help them realize their college dreams. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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**Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**Submitted by Marcia Collier, Senior at City College**

**Tuesday, March 3, 2020**

Good afternoon. My name is Marcia Collier, and I am a senior at City College studying Medicine and Psychology. Thank you to Councilwoman Inez Barron and the Committee on Higher Education for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing.

I am here today to ask the City Council to urge Albany to action and close the TAP GAP. I also want to ask for your support in expanding the CUNY ASAP and ACE programs across New York City.

It has come to my attention that the maximum TAP award in recent years does not cover full tuition at CUNY and SUNY. This is known as the TAP Gap. 42% of City College students receive TAP and use it as a primary method to pay their tuition. That's almost 7,000 students at City College alone! According to the Professional Staff Congress Union, the TAP Gap creates a \$139 million total shortfall across the state, leaving CUNY to cover \$74 million of that gap.<sup>6</sup> This shortfall leaves a burden not only on CUNY, but on students and families that cannot afford to make up the difference. Consequences include staff shortages, limited course availability, increased workloads on remaining staff, and less advisors and overall resources for students.

Prior to 2011, low-income SUNY and CUNY students would have their tuition costs covered in full by TAP, with colleges receiving adequate TAP payments to help cover operating costs for hiring new staff, funding libraries and investing in student support services. In my time at City College, I have seen my fellow classmates leave college because it was no longer affordable. Furthermore, as students struggle to pay for CUNY, schools may put a hold on a student's account if they owe any outstanding payments, leaving students unable to register for classes or receive a transcript. As a result, many are forced to leave college unless they find thousands of dollars to pay the balance. As a low-income student, it is crucial TAP covers the full tuition amount so I may access the resources and be able to afford to stay in school and access my classes. While the State

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<sup>6</sup> Close the TAP Gap. PSC CUNY. <https://www.psc-cuny.org/issues/close-tap-gap>. Published March 8, 2019

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plays the biggest role in closing the TAP Gap, I urge the New York City Council to work with their colleagues in Albany close the TAP Gap and end its impact on CUNY and SUNY students.

I also urge the City to invest in programs like CUNY ASAP and ACE. For ten years, CUNY ASAP has helped thousands of students transfer from two-year college to four-year college, and earn their degree.<sup>7</sup> But for students at four-year colleges like myself, however, the lack of CUNY ASAP means we struggle to afford the \$127 MetroCard monthly for school usage. On top of increasing student fees, the increasing TAP Gap, plus food and housing costs, paying for transportation in New York City makes it difficult to keep a budget for a low-income student manageable and realistic.

ASAP graduates overwhelmingly credit the program's financial incentives and comprehensive advising to why they graduated. The City and State as a whole also benefit from investing in ASAP. A cost-benefit analysis of CUNY ASAP found a remarkable return on the investment for students under the ASAP program. It was found that there's a benefit/cost ratio of about 3.5 on average.<sup>8</sup> The institutional cost per graduate (taxpayer) were subtracted from benefits per additional degree (taxpayer) to develop this ratio over a few years of those on the program.

The ASAP program has been piloted at two four-year CUNY colleges in the form of ACE, the Accelerate, Complete, and Engage program, or ACE. One of those two colleges, John Jay College of Criminal Justice has implemented the program now for five years and has already seen positive outcomes. The result would be even more impactful if all four-year colleges including City College had this program. Increasing New York State's investment in TAP program and expanding the CUNY ASAP and ACE programs with support of the City and State will ensure higher graduation rates, lower use of welfare benefits, and increased tax contribution from educated individuals in a higher tax bracket.

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<sup>7</sup> Linderman D, Kolenovic Z. (2009) Early Outcomes Report for City University of New York (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). Retrieved from:

[http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2014/06/asap\\_final\\_report\\_2009.pdf](http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2014/06/asap_final_report_2009.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Levin, H, Garcia E. (2013). Benefit-Cost Analysis of Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) of the City University of New York (CUNY). Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University. Retrieved from: [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/opportunity/pdf/Levin\\_ASAP\\_Benefit\\_Cost\\_Report\\_FINAL\\_05212013.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/opportunity/pdf/Levin_ASAP_Benefit_Cost_Report_FINAL_05212013.pdf)

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Finally, as the City and State work together to fund the CUNY system, I am proposing a plan that New York may be interested in piloting. A ten cent increase on the toll of NYC bridges and tunnels will generate about \$51 million a year. Over the course of about one and a half years the CUNY TAP GAP would be fully closed. This small investment would improve our college system and provide more tax generating graduates which would bring in a lasting return. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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New York City Council Committee on Higher Education

Preliminary Budget Hearing

Submitted by Duwayne Wright, Senior at Borough of Manhattan Community College

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Duwayne Wright, and I am a senior at Borough of Manhattan Community College. I will be attending Baruch College in the fall, pursuing a degree in business. Thank you to the Councilwoman Barron and the Committee on Higher Education for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing.

I am here today to ask the City Council to increase investments in CUNY, both for programs and services that better support students through to college completion, but also to help cover the cost of tuition for students. Over nearly the past decade, CUNY has increased tuition significantly, and as a result has become increasingly unaffordable to many. Even with scholarships like the Excelsior Scholarship, eligibility rules are so restrictive that many people are not eligible.

College was created as a means to a better quality of life. However, given the rising cost of college, that is not always the case. In 1636, traditional higher education within the United States began in Boston. Other states soon caught on and then the rest of the world. However, with the boom, there emerged a lack of room for certain ethnic groups due to the cost of college.

In the last four decades, the price of college has increased exponentially and caused the student loan crisis. Today, over one million people attend college with a staggering 70% of them in debt. This financial epidemic cripples students nationwide. As a result, it is hurting our economy and the financial future of students as they cannot afford to put a down payment on a home and build other avenue of wealth, as they are burdened with debt.

College is expensive enough with tuition. However, costs such as housing, food, and transportation, make college even less of a reality. In fact, 42% of CUNY students had household incomes less than \$20,000 annually. In addition, in a city like New York, it is immensely expensive to be a student. In fact, a report by the Hope Center at Temple University recently revealed that 14% of CUNY students experience homelessness and over half have experienced housing insecurity.

It is clear that CUNY is not adequately supporting students. Why aren't more programs like ASAP,



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which have been shown to double graduation rates being expanded? Why aren't more academic, financial, and other support services being adequately funded across each CUNY institution? These are the questions that I ask today, in hopes that you provide more students with the resources that they need to be successful and graduate from college. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

# YOUNG INVINCIBLES

**New York City Council Committee on Higher Education  
Preliminary Budget Hearing  
Submitted by Samer Hassan, Senior at Columbia University  
Tuesday, March 3, 2020**

Good morning. My name is Samer Hassan, and I am a senior at Columbia University's School of General Studies, studying Political Science. I am also the Northeast Policy and Advocacy Fellow with Young Invincibles. I want to thank the New York City Council and the Committee on Higher Education for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing.

I am here today to ask the City Council to provide the housing, transportation, and food programs that support all college and university students in New York City. I am also here to ask you to hold more private institutions, like Columbia University, accountable for ensuring the basic needs of students are met, and that all eligible non-tuition grants be given directly to students. We have a duty to ensure all of our students have a level playing field in order to attain a quality education.

Columbia University is known for its large endowment and its Ivy League status, but I am here to tell you that the reality between its beautiful facade and the students within it are very different. I transferred from a community college and was instantly aware of the inequities at school. As I listen to the struggles of my fellow college peers around New York City, I can't help but notice the dynamics between community college students and four-year colleges and universities and how they mirror each other.

There is a connection between the public and private institutions and that is their inability to tackle real world problems, such as basic needs, that so many New York City students face. Student homelessness and housing insecurity are rampant in not only the city, but across the nation. In fact, even at Columbia, there are students sleeping in 24 hour libraries and only eating food from school events. In today's society, it is normal for students to have to choose between food or a textbook. There is an inherent problem here, one that I don't believe many colleges are taken into account. We need affordable housing, free transportation, and food. In a city where average rent is \$2,800 dollars, and average wage is \$49,000,<sup>9</sup> we need to ask ourselves what

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<sup>9</sup> NYC Census Data

# YOUNG INVINCIBLES

that means to someone that is juggling rent along with tuition, and all the other costs that come along with being a student in New York City. The reality is that many of New York's students can't afford to have the luxury to just be students.

The average student has many additional costs to cover than just tuition, and this is not limited to Columbia students, but to every college student across the city that I have encountered. I am able to attend Columbia due to a prestigious scholarship for first generation, low-income students. It pays my tuition, and only my tuition. While the scholarship itself is purported to be an amazing opportunity for its recipients, the reality is that students (myself included) are coming from nothing and require more aid than the school is willing to help with. For example, our financial aid office told us to apply for the Pell Grant as it would help us cover the cost of housing. Unfortunately, after I received the grant, Columbia took the aid and applied it to the scholarship I already had, essentially turning my scholarship into a last dollar program. State and federal financial student aid should go to the students who desperately need the money, not the institutions who have the connections to establish other avenues of financial backing.

Our school tells first generation low-income students like me to focus on our studies and we'll eventually begin climbing the ladder of social capital and economic opportunity. But, we respond by saying that we can't even achieve these ladders in the first place because we're too busy working multiple jobs to pay expenses and commuting from place to place navigating the bureaucracy of our institutions. What we want and desperately need is a level playing field. We are smart, talented, and civically engaged members of society, but you will never know that because we're too busy just trying to survive.

## FOR THE RECORD

Good afternoon, everyone. I want to thank you for listening to my testimony. In particular, I am grateful to Council Member Inez Barron and Council Member Helen Rosenthal for their continuing support after hearing my testimonies at the sexual harassment and trans and gender-nonconforming New Yorkers oversight hearings in May and November 2019.

My name is Red Washburn. I use they/them pronouns. I am a trans, gender non-conforming, and non-binary Associate Professor of English and the Director of Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) at Kingsborough Community College. The Concentration, the first of its kind in CUNY, celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year together with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Stonewall. I want to clarify I am not representing Kingsborough, but rather testifying about my experiences with harassment and retaliation based on my gender identity as an employee there and by extension, the harm being done to women and TGGNC students, many of whom are working class students of color, by the defunding of the Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) Program I direct.

Six months after I came out as trans at work by requesting a name and pronoun change and sharing that I was getting top surgery, Kingsborough's administration announced that it was defunding WGS. I suspected that I would face transphobia, so I waited until after I got tenure to come out on campus. It turned out that my suspicions were correct. Kingsborough's administration has discriminated against me during my transition. Public Safety ordered me to come in for an investigation when I was on annual leave and on post-surgical bed rest. After two years, the administration has not updated my name in its entire system, including in my employee file, my CUNY Portal, and my permanent employee tenure certificate, among many others. Even my email shows my deadname in its "new" configuration. It has not updated my gender to include how I identify, because it claims they cannot do it in their system. It switched my teaching schedule one day before the fall 2018 semester, and last semester gave me an all-online schedule. This semester I am teaching only one day and online, because the administration cancelled my WGS class again a few days before this semester. It repurposed the WGS office the first week of fall classes, changed the locks the week after my revision surgery, just before the spring semester last year, and put WGS archives and my belongings in storage. Then it put me in a temporary storage office the size of a closet next to a "high voltage – danger – keep out" closet that made me break out in hives. I currently do not have a suitable office. It recently blocked me from making any curricular decisions as a director by moving my interdisciplinary field into a traditional department with a chair who is neither knowledgeable of nor supportive of WGS. It only made some name changes in its directory and course offerings after I published my Op Ed in *The Daily News* mid-June 2019. Shortly thereafter, it organized a PR cover-up campaign that denied transphobic behavior towards me over email to the entire college community and sent a letter to the editor of *The Daily News*. In addition, it started to include TGGNC students on its website and social media without their consent, one of whom was not out to her family. It also posted Pride flags and shared platitudes about Trans Day of Remembrance on its faculty and staff listserv since then. Its COACHE job satisfaction survey, recently administered, does not include trans employees, and when I said it was not inclusive, they said they were still using it because it was CUNY-wide. Harassment based on gender identity or disability,

and retaliation for complaints of discrimination runs contrary to New York law and CUNY regulations, and these actions ignored my surgeon's and therapist's directives. This sustained harassment caused me, my students, and the WGS Program much harm. It created the need to take sick leave, get a second revision surgery, a third surgery this past winter, and WGS lost its funding, staff, and office – not to mention many students were subjected to spurious investigations by Public Safety and the Office of Student Conduct, resulting in them leaving and/or getting kicked out of the College for defending me and the WGS Program.

As a result of my op-ed, the Center for LGBTQ Studies (CLAGS) wrote a petition in my defense. In addition, CLAGS, along with the Center for the Study of Women in Society (CSWS), organized the Trans CUNY Town Hall on October 30, 2019 at the Graduate Center. It was the first ever town hall about trans issues in CUNY, and it was standing room only with Council member Helen Rosenthal and Ndigo Washington as speakers. I, along with Dr. Paisley Currah, Endowed Chair of Women's and Gender Studies at Brooklyn College, facilitated this discussion. As a result of the town hall, 4 TGGNC tenured faculty members, including me and Dr. Currah, testified with approximately 20 students at the Committee for Women and Gender Equity oversight hearing for Gender Equity in NYC: Access, Resources, and Support for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming New Yorkers on November 27, 2019. CUNY students and faculty were approximately half of the people testifying – and that was with just a week's notice and before Thanksgiving. TGGNC faculty and shared their lived experiences with studying across various CUNY campuses – John Jay, BMCC, CUNY Journalism, the Grad Center, Queens College, Brooklyn College, Silberman Hunter College, Kingsborough, Queensborough, City College, and the College of Staten Island --and the similar struggles they are facing under the aforementioned and unacceptable conditions, which demand serious change. I was shocked and dismayed that so many students had experienced institutional transphobia across the spectrum of racial and ethnic difference.

I made several recommendations to the Committee on Women and Gender Equity that day. I strongly encouraged the council members to create access and opportunities for WGS and LGBTQ students, faculty, staff as well as WGS and LGBTQ programs and departments to be supported and funded. I requested it hold CUNY schools accountable for the harm being done to women as well as TGGNC faculty and students by not abiding my NYC laws. These accountability areas include not having all gender bathrooms, ids, emails, paystubs, CUNY online services, such as Blackboard, CUNY First, the CUNY Portal, and other institutional records like faculty files, evaluations, and tenure certificates, that do not have people's names and genders on them. I recommended that all faculty and staff have a mandatory statement about names and pronouns on their syllabi, include in their email and letter signatures, and pronoun buttons are provided on all campuses. More importantly, my strongest recommendation I offered was that funding for WGS and LGBTQ Studies Programs, Departments, and Centers be restored and bulked up on all campuses in the forms of reassigned time, office space, administrative support, scholarships, internships, and curriculum work. Academic and advocacy programs, departments, and centers should work together to bridge gaps between knowledge and experience, both in and outside of the classroom. It is a form of

institutional violence to cut resources for at risk women, TGGNC, and LGBTQ students, most of whom are working class students of color. It signals that their personal and intellectual lives and studies do not matter.

I recently drafted the Gender and Sexuality (WGS-LGBTQ) Incubator, submitted last month for discretionary funding across CUNY. I worked with CLAGS and CSWS to submit a budget for the City to fund WGS and LGBTQ Studies as access to learning about their lives as well as harm reduction to women and TGGNC faculty, students, and staff who are experiencing ongoing discrimination on their campuses. This incubator will allow faculty, staff, and community leaders to collaborate to promote WGS and LGBTQ education across CUNY and NYC as a specific academic and community-focused project in diversity during a time when LGBTQ faculty, staff, and students need resources to address rampant incidents of transphobia, homophobia, and misogyny as well as other interlocking forms of inequality on our campuses, post-Stonewall. This cross-campus and community collaboration will be conducted by prominent faculty, staff, and community leaders in the nonprofit and art worlds all working together on a pipeline to build intellectual, creative, and social justice communities focused on gender and sexuality in CUNY and NYC. It will contribute to advancing collegiality, pedagogy, scholarship, and community service. It will provide access for faculty, students, and community leaders to learn about LGBTQ issues from the levels of AA/BA/MA with degree transferability and a cohesive community as well as in social justice work in the greater NYC area. It will explore the possibility of creating a PhD in WGS and LGBTQ Studies as well as internships and work opportunities in the future, as well. In addition, it will allow faculty, staff, students, and community leaders to share their work publically in CUNY as well as partner with professionals in community-based, civic, advocacy, and service-learning work focused on WGS and LGBTQ diversity and democracy in NYC. Lastly, it will celebrate 100 years of suffrage, 50 years of Stonewall in NYC, 50 years of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in the US, 50 Years of the Feminist Press, and 30 years of Center of LGBTQ Studies in CUNY and NYC. Now is the time to invest in this work.

We respectfully requested \$1,000,000. CLAGS and CSWS will divide up this budget for the aforementioned purposes and use the Gender and Sexuality (WGS-LGBTQ) Incubator to service approximately 18 CUNY campuses with an interdisciplinary council of faculty-endowed chairs. It will promote civic engagement opportunities for faculty, staff, and students with approximately 50 NYC nonprofit organizations in order to bridge theory and practice outside of academia. We want to put our time and energy into creating prestigious and rigorous WGS and LGBTQ Studies programs and departments in CUNY, to bridge intellectual, creative, and social justice communities in NYC, to have a consortium to discuss intersectional and interdisciplinary work that promotes critical consciousness and challenges systematic violence on our campuses and in the world, and build our networks with community organizations to give students, faculty, staff, and community leaders more opportunities to apply their learning about social justice for women and LGBTQ people in the greater NYC area. Without time and resources, this task is arduous, albeit impossible. By creating the Gender and Sexuality Incubator, we can devote consistent attention and work to what we want to do, what we love to do, and

what our colleagues, students, and citizens of NYC need and deserve at this crucial moment.

Thank you for hearing my testimony. I am honored to be a part of it. I hope you will consider WGS and LGBTQ Studies funding as an important educational matter for CUNY's faculty, students, and staff. Thank you, again.

Red Washburn, PhD, is Associate Professor of English and Director of Women's and Gender Studies at Kingsborough Community College (CUNY).

Red Washburn can be reached at 718-916-8171.

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I represent: CVNY

Address: NYC

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Name: Samer Hassan

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Name: Lisa Nishimura

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Name: Marcia Collier

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Address: 25 Broadway, NY, NY

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Name: Timothy Hunter

Address: 632 E 96th Street

I represent: University Student Senate

Address: 555 W 57th Street

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Name: Emilia Deaudin

Address: 47-25 48th Street, BC

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Matthew Sapienza

Address: Sr. Vice Chancellor for Facilities, Construction & Planning

I represent: CUNY

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

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Name: Allen Lew

Address: Sr. Vice Chancellor for Facilities, Construction & Planning

I represent: CUNY

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

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Name: JERONAH BELL

Address: 215 E 70th St 10021

I represent: PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS

Address: 61 BROADWAY NY, NY 10006

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