

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Start: 1:05 P. M.

Recess: 3:16 P. M.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: Eric Dinowitz, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Erik D. Bottcher
Gale A. Brewer
Oswald Feliz
Christopher Marte

Other Council Members Attending: Restler

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

A P P E A R A N C E S

Hector Batista—Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer, The City University of New York (CUNY)

Mohamed Attalla—Vice Chancellor of Facilities Planning, Construction and Management, The City University of New York (CUNY)

Sherif Soliman—Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer, The City University of New York (CUNY)

Alyson Bardsley—Professor, College of Staten Island; PSC (Professional Staff Congress), CUNY

Peter Kolozi—Professor, Bronx Community College; PSC (Professional Staff Congress), CUNY

Juan Carlos Vasquez—Student, Bronx Community College, CUNY

Richard Jones—Student, The City College of New York, CUNY

Conor Finley—Student, Queensborough Community College, CUNY

Fabiola Salek Aseff—Professor, York College, CUNY

Jean Grassman—Associate Professor, CUNY Graduate School of Public Health; PSC (Professional Staff Congress), CUNY

John Surico—Center for an Urban Future

Ayesha Schmitt—New York Public Interest Research Group

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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

Erin Lawson—New Yorkers for Higher Education
Funding Justice

Lina-Marie Kirchner—Student, College of Staten
Island, CUNY

Cole Jagdeo—Student, Queensborough Community
College, CUNY

Johanna Von Maach—Student, Hunter College, CUNY

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2 SERGEANT PAYTUVI: This is a microphone check for
3 the Committee on Higher Education, recorded on April
4 17, 2024 located in the Committee Room and recorded
5 by Nazly Petuvi.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon, and welcome
7 today's New York City Council Hearing for the
8 Committee on Higher Education. If you would like to
9 testify, please fill out a witness slip with the
10 Sergeant at Arms at the back of the room.

11 At this time, please place all electronic devices
12 to vibrate or silent mode.

13 You are reminded that at no time is anyone to
14 approach the dais at any point during this hearing.

15 Chair Dinowitz, we are ready to begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING IN)

17 Good afternoon, I'm Council Member Eric Dinowitz,
18 Chair of The Committee on Higher Education and proud
19 CUNY alum. Welcome to our oversight hearing: *How Fit*
20 *Are CUNY Facilities?*

21 Let me start by noting that April is National
22 Community College Month, and by expressing this
23 committee's appreciation for the diligent and
24 demanding work that CUNY's seven community colleges
25

1 do every day in serving more than 65,000 students,
2 that is nearly one-third of CUNY's undergraduates.

3
4 As CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez wrote
5 in his op ed piece in the Bronx Times, "Many of
6 CUNY's community college students are the first in
7 their families to attend college as well as working
8 adults and members of socioeconomically diverse
9 groups that have been traditionally underserved in
10 higher ed."

11 Thank you to the seven community colleges for
12 your work, which is especially important to recognize
13 now as we city council members argue for more
14 generous support of CUNY in our budget negotiations.

15 As the chancellor wrote, "CUNY is an investment
16 in New Yorkers as well as the city's economic well-
17 being." And we agree.

18 Now, for today's hearing on CUNY facilities:
19 Stories of CUNY facilities in disrepair are not hard
20 to find, whether we are reading about them in local
21 newspapers or hearing about them from CUNY students,
22 faculty and staff. But, we know that it is no mean
23 feat to operate 309 campus and central office
24 buildings, containing 29 million square feet of
25 space, classrooms, labs, computer centers, theaters,

1
2 athletic facilities, offices and more. Furthermore,
3 most of these buildings are over 30 years old, though
4 some are over 100 years old, and the average age of a
5 CUNY building is over 50 years old.

6 We also know that maintaining and repairing
7 building costs a lot of money, and we know that
8 nationwide there is a backlog of work that needs to
9 be done to bring college campuses up to the standards
10 that communities set for them. Today we want to
11 understand what CUNY needs to make its facilities as
12 fit as we all want them to be.

13 I want to acknowledge my colleagues on the
14 Committee Higher Education who our present: Council
15 Member Gale Brewer and Council Member Chris Marte. I
16 would also like to thank Adam Staropoli, my
17 Legislative and Budget Director; Jenna Klaus, my
18 Chief of Staff; Sahar Moazami, the Committee's
19 counsel; and Regina Paul, Legislative Policy Analyst.

20 I would like to remind everyone who wishes to
21 testify in person today that you must fill out an
22 appearance card, which is located at the desk of the
23 Sergeant at Arms near the entrance of the room.
24 Please fill one out even if you have already
25 registered to testify in advance. To allow as many

1
2 people as possible to testify, public testimony will
3 be limited to three minutes per person. I'm am going
4 ask my colleagues to limit their questions and
5 comments to five minutes. Please note the witnesses
6 who are here will testify before those on Zoom.

7 In accordance to the Rules of the Council, I will
8 administer the affirmation to the witnesses from
9 CUNY.

10 Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to
11 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
12 truth, before this committee, and to respond honestly
13 to council member questions?

14 PANEL AFFIRMS

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. As a reminder to
16 all of our witnesses, please state your name prior to
17 your testimony for the record. You may begin.

18 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Good
19 afternoon, Chair Dinowitz, before I begin my
20 testimony, I want to recognize one of our trustees,
21 Michael Arvanites, who is here. He is a member of the
22 Facilities Committee of the Board. I always really
23 appreciate volunteer board members who take time out
24 their busy schedule to come and be part of
25

1
2 everything. It goes to show the commitment that they
3 have for CUNY.

4 Esteemed members of the New York City Council
5 Committee of Higher Education, I am Hector Batista,
6 Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer
7 of The City University of New York. I am here today
8 with Mohamed Attalla, Vice Chancellor of Facilities
9 Planning, Construction and Management and Sherif
10 Soliman, Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial
11 Officer. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We
12 appreciate your continued and unwavering support.

13 While the University was founded over 175 years
14 ago, our mission of providing first rate education to
15 all of our students, regardless of means or
16 background, is just as important today as it was
17 then. Our commitment to this mission has made CUNY a
18 true engine for social mobility with our graduates
19 diversifying the city workforce in every sector. So,
20 it's true, our students, faculty, and staff
21 contribute to the City's economics, civic, and
22 cultural life.

23 CUNY is also part of the physical landscape of
24 our city, with 25 campuses spread across the five
25 boroughs, the University has 300 buildings

1 encompassing 29 million square feet, 2,400
2 classrooms, labs, and various facilities supporting
3 our mission. The spaces are vital, not just to our
4 students and faculty, but also to our communities we
5 serve.
6

7 You might remember Chancellor Rodríguez unveiled
8 the University's Strategic Roadmap. We are committed
9 to undertaking projects to maintain and improve the
10 University infrastructure, recapture underutilized
11 spaces, improve technology, and provide the campus
12 expansions to support student success. Upgrading our
13 facilities portfolio is vital to ensure that our
14 graduates are ready for high-demand industries.

15 A significant aspect of our infrastructure
16 reality is the age of our facilities. The average age
17 of CUNY's buildings stand 62 years, with 50 percent
18 of our building and 52 years older, and we have 40
19 buildings that exceed 100 years. Some of the areas
20 most challenged due to the aging infrastructure
21 include boilers, chillers, HVAC equipment, elevators,
22 windows, roofs, and electric electrical
23 infrastructure. This historical depth adds to the
24 complexity of our maintenance and upgrade strategies,
25 emphasizing the need for careful planning and

1 execution in preserving these assets for future
2 generations.

3
4 The upkeep and enhancement of CUNY's extensive
5 facility portfolio entails a sizeable load: 497
6 projects in different Design and Construction phases
7 valued at \$3.5 billion. Adding to our achievements,
8 we have recently wrapped up 44 projects totaling an
9 impressive \$555 million. An example of one these
10 projects was the completion of the Nursing Education,
11 Research, and Practice Center Building at Lehman
12 College. This is an important transformational
13 project, not only for and advancing nursing
14 education, but also for addressing the health
15 inequality in the Bronx. We are thankful for the
16 generous funding and support that made this project a
17 reality. We were also very happy to be there with
18 Chair Dinowitz and his father joining us at Lehman to
19 celebrate this very, very important project.

20 Our seven community colleges play critical roles
21 in advancing CUNY's mission by offering students an
22 empowering education and professional skills they
23 need to succeed. We are committed to providing
24 community college students with modern facilities to
25 support their educational journey. For example, at

1
2 Bronx Community College, we are replacing decades
3 old boilers to ensure that the campus is energy
4 efficient and also has reliable heat and hot water
5 for our faculty, students, and staff. At the Hostos
6 Community College we are deploying a large HVAC
7 project where nine handlers are currently being
8 replaced at 475 Grand Concourse, which will
9 contribute significantly to improving the air
10 quality. Our projects serve as the seed for the
11 creation of a circular construction industry that
12 reuses construction materials providing for a
13 sustainable growth of our Community College Programs.
14 New building management systems at Queensborough
15 Community College will reduce energy consumption,
16 eliminate temperature swings, and provide a
17 consistent learning environment for students.

18 The replacement of critical health and safety
19 systems is a part of our two areas of strategic
20 investment. The first is "asset preservation" which
21 is the investment in critical infrastructure - like
22 the boilers at Bronx Community College - and the
23 other is "program growth" which includes new
24 construction like that contemplated in our most
25

1 recent capital request for the new Applied Health and
2 Sciences Building at Hostos Community College.

3 Here's the reality of our community college
4 infrastructure - 111 buildings, spanning roughly 7.6
5 million square feet, with an estimated replacement
6 value of \$9.2 billion. Common Facilities Management
7 standards advocate for renewal budget is about 2
8 percent replacement of the replacement value. For
9 CUNY community colleges, this translates to \$200
10 million - it's very important to note.

11 Over the past five years, CUNY has received an
12 average of \$64 million for both Senior and Community
13 Colleges, which includes only \$29 million for
14 Community College per year in city capital funds,
15 which is only about 0.3 percent of the estimated
16 replacement value of the facilities. We look forward
17 to working with you and your colleagues along with
18 the Administration to secure additional funding to
19 continue modernizing our buildings.

20 I will now turn it over to Vice Chancellor
21 Attalla to discuss details of our capital planning
22 process, challenges that we are facing, and efforts
23 to improve our process.
24
25

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2 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: Thank you very much, EVC
3 Batista. Good afternoon, Council Member Dinowitz, and
4 members of the Committee.

5 My name is Mohamed Attalla, and I joined CUNY in
6 2021. My mission as the COO's charge has been to
7 improve our capital planning and construction
8 processes, enhance the capacity of the team, and
9 develop a plan for a State of Good Repair.

10 Central to our strategy is the pursuit of system
11 efficiencies and the exploration of the new capital
12 funding opportunities. These efforts aim to deliver
13 superior facility performance and ensure a long term
14 State of Good Repair across all CUNY properties. This
15 includes developing campus-specific procedures for
16 building infrastructure condition assessment,
17 sustainability, and fully realizing the value of our
18 real estate assets.

19 We have undertaken a major an initiative that is
20 essential for the future of our University-
21 developing a Facilities Condition Assessment. This
22 isn't just a routine evaluation; it is a
23 comprehensive review of our assets that is the
24 cornerstone for our strategic planning, guiding us
25 towards informed and impactful decisions.

1
2 The Facilities Condition Assessment spanned
3 across twenty campuses and measured approximately
4 26.9 million square feet. The objective is to
5 determine the current state of repair for all systems
6 and infrastructure and identify any future needs or
7 deferred maintenance backlog.

8 The assessment identified around 27,000 systems
9 that were then grouped into categories such as HVAC,
10 Electrical, and Plumbing, among others. These include
11 exterior doors, elevators, switchgears, chillers,
12 boilers, and other equipment. Each system was rated
13 based on its existing condition and age-based
14 degradation as Good, Fair, Poor, or Critical, and the
15 requirements, if any, for each of the systems were
16 identified.

17 The preliminary assessment or the result of this
18 survey concluded that the University would require
19 \$68 billion to address the deferred maintenance
20 backlog and capital renewal needs over the next seven
21 years. Of that \$5.6 billion would be needed to
22 address 18,000 systems that are identified as being
23 "Vital" for ensuring the safety and integrity of the
24 assets. The top three areas with the highest needs
25 are HAVAC, Electrical, and Plumbing.

1
2 To prioritize capital spending, the University
3 plans to use the data collected through the
4 assessment and implement an approach we are calling
5 the Strategic Method and Responsive Timing, or SMART
6 for short. This approach involves assessing system
7 groups based on their financial needs and dividing
8 them according to their assessed rating - fair, poor,
9 or critical. The University will also consider the
10 recommended life expectancy of those critical items
11 to schedule their replacement action year.

12 The University's strategic roadmap includes a
13 goal of achieving 55 percent of its vital building
14 systems in State of Good Repair by 2030. The SMART
15 approach will help the University prioritize capital
16 spending, with an emphasis in efficiency, safety, and
17 cost effectiveness, all crucial for the smooth and
18 effective operation of facilities.

19 We recognize the importance of being effective
20 stewards of the precious funding that you allocate
21 for University needs, and that is why we have been
22 focused on administrative improvements to raise the
23 bar on performance. But equally important is our
24 budget planning process so we could advance a capital
25

1 budget request that meet the expectations of all
2 stakeholders.
3

4 I would like at this point to share with you the
5 process of crafting our annual Capital Request book.
6 The book captures the aspirations of our 25 campuses
7 over the next five years and is the product of strong
8 collaboration between each campus and our central
9 office. The process starts with a series of engaging
10 meetings where we invite every campus to share the
11 project they envision.

12 Following these discussions, we evaluate each
13 request, assess the scope, and determine the
14 estimated budget needs. The outcome of this exercise
15 is a catalog of individual campus needs - but also
16 system-wide needs as informed by the Facility
17 Condition Assessment and necessary to achieve our
18 goal of 55 percent of our buildings' vital systems in
19 a State of Good Repair condition by 2030.

20 Our capital budget request for FY25 is the
21 largest to date, reflecting a five-year baseline
22 request of \$400 million for Senior Colleges and \$200
23 million for Community Colleges to address deferred
24 maintenance, State of Good Repair needs, meet ongoing
25

1
2 infrastructure needs, and also support some
3 programmatic needs.

4 The five-year request also includes \$170 million
5 per year for Senior Colleges and \$29 million for
6 Community Colleges to support the University's
7 sustainability projects. These initiatives are
8 aligned with our Strategic Energy Management Plan,
9 aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
10 significantly by 2030 and achieve both State and City
11 mandates.

12 Recognizing the critical role of science and
13 technology in contemporary education and research,
14 we are requesting \$50 million a year for Senior
15 Colleges and \$12 million per year for Community
16 Colleges to upgrade our science labs. These
17 renovations will enhance the learning experience,
18 support cutting edge research, and contribute to
19 student success and retention across the disciplines.

20 To further these goals we are also focusing on
21 large capital projects that modernize our facilities
22 and align with CUNY's strategic direction. Projects
23 like the renovations and Baruch College, Brooklyn
24 College, and a request for new facilities at York and
25

1
2 Medgar Evers Colleges underscore our commitment to
3 providing state of the art educational environments.

4 If we focus on community colleges, community
5 colleges are a crucial priority with plans for new
6 and enhanced facilities like the Applied Health and
7 Sciences Building at Hostos Community College.

8 As Executive Vice Chancellor Batista mentioned,
9 the community college portfolio totals 111 buildings
10 and about 7.6 million square feet with an estimated
11 replacement value of about \$9.2 billion, which
12 translates to the need for \$200 million a year to
13 keep these facilities in a state-of-good repair.

14 CUNY's FY25 January capital budget was about \$735
15 million spanning from FY24 to FY28, while the City's
16 five-year capital budget was \$85 billion. This means
17 CUNY is less than one percent of the City's capital
18 portfolio. CUNY has made strides to demonstrate that
19 it can deliver higher registrations over 100 percent
20 of the plan in FY23.

21 It is our hope that we can continue to capitalize
22 on our momentum with additional funding. We
23 understand the fiscal challenges with capital
24 funding, specifically outlined in the call letter
25 memo explaining that cuts were needed due to the

1
2 limit imposed by the York State Constitution on the
3 City's ability to borrow. The limit based on a five-
4 year rolling average of New York City property values
5 which declined sharply during the pandemic.

6 CUNY has been having positive conversations with
7 our colleagues at OMB about our capital program, and
8 we look forward to working with the Administration,
9 you, and your colleagues to allow CUNY to continue
10 with that momentum by securing additional funding to
11 improve our overall campus environment at our
12 community colleges.

13 We wish to speak a little the administrative
14 process to realize the funding. CUNY makes every
15 effort to maximize every capital dollar we receive to
16 ensure efficient and timely project delivery. Once
17 CUNY receives general support, we navigate the
18 detailed administrative processes that require
19 approvals from OMB and the State's Division of
20 Budget. For CUNY projects we detail the project's
21 needs, costs, and tracking details as required for
22 the City's Certificate-to-Proceed process. We take
23 great care to clearly define these details to ensure
24 that the timeline for the CP process is short as
25 possible, preventing a prolonging of the process that

1
2 could result from additional factors like project
3 detail questions and revisions.

4 After obtaining City and OMB approval and
5 receiving the Proceed Directive, contact registration
6 with the City's Comptroller's Office is required.
7 Comptroller's Directive Ten requires projects to be
8 fully funded within the fiscal year before
9 registration. This can delay projects, especially if
10 funding is incremental.

11 The Preliminary Budget's capital cuts,
12 necessitated by the New York State Constitution's
13 borrowing limits, impacted CUNY's capital program. We
14 responded by reducing future lump-sum allocations
15 affecting our ability to fund urgent capital needs.

16 These delays of crucial projects that are
17 essential for our modernization efforts and the well-
18 being of our community (sic). Commitment delays are
19 more than administrative balancing; they represent
20 delays in advancement that can truly make a
21 difference for our students and for the City.

22 CUNY's commitment plan highlights delays in
23 projects waiting for full funding. Despite
24 challenges, CUNY registered over 100 percent in FY23,
25 a testament to potential success when delays are

1
2 minimized. If additional funding materializes, we can
3 maintain high project commitment rates and aim to
4 spend \$200 million annually on community college
5 repairs.

6 Finally, before I conclude I would like to share
7 the progress and plans the University has made,
8 specifically our efforts to enhance our annual
9 spending and the volume of completion of our
10 projects. So this is a major strategic objective of
11 ours to achieve.

12 To achieve these goals, CUNY has been proactive
13 in implementing several key initiatives. Let me walk
14 you through some of these:

15 First, we established a Project Management Office
16 or a PMO. This move was designed to bolster our
17 team's capacity to deliver projects, not just on time
18 but within budget. The PMO is playing a crucial role
19 in improving our department's reporting capabilities,
20 which in turn supports better decision making and
21 project monitoring.

22 We have also taken steps to redefine the roles of
23 our project managers and assistant directors. This
24 was done to heighten accountability and ensure our
25 leaders are more directly involved in the management

1
2 of projects. We are moving towards a model where
3 involvement and oversight are key.

4 We have also introduced a new project management
5 methodology to guide our processes and unify our
6 steps. This provides a clear roadmap for efficient
7 project management.

8 Technology plays a big part in our strategy. We
9 are implementing PMWEB, a project management tool,
10 across our operations. This technology integrates
11 functions like schedule management, cost,
12 procurement, budgeting, and accounting. Furthermore
13 DASNY also utilizes the same technology, and we are
14 working closely with them to insure seamless
15 integration.

16 Standardization is another area we are focusing
17 on particularly in reporting. We have introduced new
18 levels of reporting both micro and macro across
19 project management. This includes our variety of
20 reports that offer greater visibility into our
21 projects.

22 Collaboration with DASNY has been instrumental.
23 Together we are looking at ways to influence project
24 outcomes through various activities. This includes
25 everything from streamlining, project scoping,

1
2 expediting design completion, contract awards, and
3 contractors accountability, and all with objective to
4 increase annual and deal with the funding backlog.

5 As mentioned earlier, significant effort has been
6 made by our Facility Condition Assessment. By
7 engaging a third party consultant, we have gained a
8 comprehensive understanding of the condition of our
9 buildings, which is critical for planning and
10 achieving our State of Good Repair objectives.

11 Maintenance is also key. We are upgrading our
12 maintenance capabilities to ensure all campuses can
13 perform to a standardized level of maintenance. This
14 includes regular preventive maintenance for critical
15 components, like elevators, boilers, and fire alarms.

16 On the procurement front, we have improved our
17 capabilities to procure services more efficiently.
18 This has been done by integrating procurement into
19 our PMWEB application. We have also established over
20 250 Requirements Contracts in all disciplines of
21 Design and Construction in order to facilitate faster
22 procurement of vendors which in turn reduces project
23 times and enhances completion.

24 Lastly, on sustainability front, we have
25 developed Energy Management Plans for our colleges,

1
2 aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve
3 infrastructure conditions, contributing to our State
4 of Good Repair initiatives.

5 As we navigate the complexities of aligning our
6 aspirations with the realities of budget constraints,
7 our narrative evolves. Again, FY25 capital budget
8 request reflects our unwavering commitment to this
9 journey. It is a call to action seeking support, not
10 just for maintenance but for transformation, ensuring
11 our campuses are safe, sustainable, and conducive to
12 the high-quality education that defines CUNY.

13 In closing, it's important to note that the
14 essence of our mission transcends the physical state
15 of our facilities. It is about nurturing an
16 environment where education thrives, where students
17 are empowered to succeed, and where communities are
18 strengthened. With your support, we can realize this
19 vision, ensuring that CUNY not only stands in a
20 state-of-good repair but shines as a pillar of
21 opportunity, social mobility, and educational
22 excellence, thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your
24 testimony. I would like to note that we have been
25 joined by honorary member of the Higher Education

1
2 Committee, Council Member Lincoln Restler, a huge
3 advocate for CUNY.

4 You were speaking in your testimony about the
5 assessment of the facilities. Is that assessment
6 completed yet?

7 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: The assessment, the
8 consulting work and the surveys are completed. We are
9 now in the final steps drawing the inferences of the
10 assessment and drawing the final results (INAUDIBLE)
11 the outcome.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And then will that be
13 public?

14 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: Yes, it could be made
15 public, yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Like on your... (CROSS-
17 TALK)

18 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: You know, I
19 think that, yes, to answer that question, of course,
20 it is going to be a public document that we are going
21 to share with the presidents and the chancellery and
22 use that document as a way to navigate our work that
23 is going forward.

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And do you have preliminary
25 data? I mean, how many facilities there are, how many

1 things need maintenance? Just talking about
2 maintenance right now.

3 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: As we indicated in the
4 testimony, some of the preliminary numbers we have,
5 so we have an overall number of about \$6.8 billion,
6 as I said, over the next seven years... (CROSS-TALK)

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, I meant, out of... I
8 forget how many classrooms you testified, out of this
9 number of classrooms, how many need maintenance for
10 various reasons? Which we will get to in a second. Do
11 you have information like that?

12 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: We are still analyzing
13 this to get the results... (CROSS-TALK)

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, all the... Okay, so out
15 of all of the buildings do you know how many boilers
16 are broken? That's still being collected?

17 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: It is collected, but we
18 are summarizing and tabulating this information. As I
19 mentioned, what we have, we have over 27,000 system -
20 system is a boiler, a chiller, a roof. There is about
21 18,000 of those that are the what we call vital
22 systems. And we are now looking at the top priorities
23 with in these systems in terms of boilers, chillers,
24 roofs, and all of the different components.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, 18,000 out of the
3 27,000 are vital systems. What would constitute as
4 not as vital systems?

5 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: I ,you know, we would
6 say like carpet, paint, like some... We look at the
7 vital systems, at the system that if it fails it will
8 really stop the education and learning and research
9 operation of an institution.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You said carpet?

11 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: Carpet, yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, I want to talk
13 about carpet, which sounds boring, but we get reports
14 of things like mold, things like leaking roofs,
15 classes had to be moved online because of lack of
16 heat. In your testimony you mentioned the word safety
17 a number of times. I'm interested to know how in your
18 report, in your analysis, you are defining safety.

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Let me first
20 start out...

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes?

22 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: I have with me
23 today, uh, Howard Apsan, who is the Executive
24 University Director Environmental across the
25 University. So when we have a report of a particular

1 classroom or situation that ,you know, we quickly
2 work with the local... each college has one... has
3 the same position in each of the colleges, they work
4 with Howard to sort of mitigate whatever those issues
5 are at any given time. Those complaints come to him
6 in multiple ways, but it is something that we take
7 extremely seriously and something that we address.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, and to be clear, I
10 mean, in the City Council's Preliminary Budget
11 response ,you know, we are advocating for more
12 funding for the facilities.

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Mm-hmm?

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I am trying to get an
15 understanding of what that looks like. Because when I
16 hear HVAC as vital, that to me means that will be
17 prioritized with capital funding. But what I also see
18 are articles for instance, "Hunter College is Falling
19 Down," from New York Magazine. The article opens with
20 a discussion of Hunter's campus being overrun by
21 rodents including in the classroom. And I am
22 wondering per your analysis, if you are considering
23 that vital maintenance, even though it may not fit
24 into HVAC, the HVAC category, it may fit into the
25

1
2 carpeting category, or it's not vital per your
3 analysis?

4 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: As Executive Vice
5 Chancellor Batista mentioned, when it affects health
6 and safety, as you mentioned carpet mold, that is for
7 sure would be part of our analysis. We prioritize any
8 aspect, any work that is needed that has an impact on
9 the health and safety of the occupant, that becomes a
10 priority.

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: There are two
12 components here, right? There is the construction
13 component, which Mohamed is alluding to in terms of
14 boilers and whatever, and then there is the health
15 and safety piece of it. When we have situation where
16 we have, for example, an air conditioner that is
17 leaking that creates a problem with the carpet, and
18 that now becomes something that we need to address.
19 That is where Howard or someone like Howard at the
20 college level, it gets flagged and we address health
21 and safety. So, they are two different components,
22 now that becomes a priority, because now we have
23 identified that it is a health and safety issue, so
24 we have to mitigate. So, we have contracts with
25 engineers and so forth to come in and address those

1 things. What Mohamed is alluding to is the repairs of
2 boilers and things along those lines. So, from his
3 world, those are the things that are critical to
4 maintaining operations. Now, in Howard's world, what
5 creates a challenge is when we have a health and
6 safety situation, that is something that is also high
7 priority. So, it is a balancing act that we are
8 dealing with, but both of them are priorities.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But your assessment, does
11 that include... I am trying to understand your
12 assessment, because the report hasn't been released
13 yet. But that includes holes in the wall where rats
14 are crawling through? Does it include mold in the
15 ceiling, or it's only including the hard items,
16 like...

17 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: No, the
18 assessment -sorry to interrupt... (CROSS-TALK)

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please, please...

20 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: The assessment
21 is really focused on the facilities. On... Now what
22 do I mean by that? Boilers, those kinds of systems,
23 right? We are going to have an ability to understand
24 when a boiler... So, the issue that happened in the
25 Bronx, once we... With this new report we will be

1
2 able to know that the lifeline of a particular boiler
3 is going to have six months or something like that,
4 so we could do an intervention before that boiler
5 goes. Then there is the issue of health and safety.
6 Health and safety is done at the campus level with
7 the support of central office. If we have a
8 particular situation that is happening in a classroom
9 or what have you, where there is... has been
10 identified as mold or any of those situations, then
11 we work with the campus to mitigate that issue. But
12 this report is not going to address those issues.
13 This report is all about systems.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Great, so thank you for the
15 clarification. So, we are hearing a lot of... I mean,
16 I have a few articles here, I would rather not read
17 more about rats. But, what is the process now for you
18 being aware of it to it immediately address it? Who
19 in the college - can a student report it? Can a
20 professor report it? Janitor? President? Who are the
21 people who report this, so that before it gets to the
22 news, it gets to your office and it is maintained?

23 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: And in a lot
24 of cases ,you know, sometimes we don't hear about it
25 until it gets to the news. And unfortunately that

1 happens, right? But, if the system is working right
2 and it should ,you know, the way it sort of works is
3 that the local level, a report is made by a student
4 or whoever, that there is a... That is investigated
5 by the local Director of Environmental Protection at
6 the local college. If it is something that becomes a
7 lot... sort of elevated a lot higher that they need
8 some support from the central office, then Howard
9 gets involved. But, on a daily basis Howard is
10 talking to various members at the college community.
11 And on a monthly basis, he meets with all of the
12 directors from Environmental... you know, at the
13 campuses to try to mitigate what is out there and
14 what some of the challenges are. But, sometimes we
15 don't hear about it until...
16

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, that seems to me to be
18 one of the areas of, we will use some educational
19 terms, areas of growth - Because it seems to me, a
20 lot of the complaints that I get in my office, and a
21 lot of the articles I read, are not just about the
22 big ticket items, like the boilers, which we do hear
23 about, but it's the black mold, which you may not...
24 apparently may not hear about, it's the rats, it's
25 the smaller leaks. And so it sounds like there is no

1
2 real process for someone who is in the classroom, who
3 is being affected by that, whose health may be
4 affected, to make sure it gets to you, so you can do
5 the work that... that we all care about.

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: I don't
7 think... I don't agree that there is no process.
8 There is a process at the campus level that somebody
9 could report it and that becomes an issue that then
10 gets kicked up to that particular area or it becomes
11 an issue that then Facilities has to get involved to
12 mitigate. So, there is a process at each of the
13 campuses to address that. And every member of the
14 community has the ability to sort of report that. I
15 think what I am trying to sort of separate, when I
16 was lucky enough to be appointment to this position,
17 this great mission, one of the things that - and I
18 came in front of this body - we talked about
19 Facilities. And we sort of started focusing in on
20 this whole notion of state-of-good repair.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes.

22 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: So, as I
23 mentioned, you know, we have an ancient
24 infrastructure, 50 years plus, you know, buildings,
25 some buildings, 40 buildings are over a 100 years

1
2 old. And we don't get enough funding to be able to
3 address that. We are trying to play catch-up. So, the
4 idea is how we begin to tackle major systems. So, for
5 example, it is a big deal, a boiler, if we let this
6 boiler sort of... If we don't repair the boiler, that
7 boiler then leaks, creates some other problems, it
8 creates the mold problems and all of that. So, our
9 idea here is to begin to tackle this from a
10 systematic way in terms of trying to look at these
11 big systems and begin to repair some of those big
12 systems while still trying to do the day to day
13 maintenance of facilities, which is at the local
14 level.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And to be clear, you said
16 the two percent for CUNY Community College, \$200
17 million would be the ideal number where you could
18 replace the boilers and also mitigate some of the
19 other problems - mold and rats? Yes? Okay.

20 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: That's the
21 industry standard.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. I just want to get
23 back to this other thing about sort of the reporting.
24 Does your office, does Central office keep numbers
25 about how many requests come in for a particular...

1
2 for some maintenance, and we will get to some of the
3 hard stuff later, but the maintenance and how many of
4 those requests actually get... are able to be filled
5 and in what timeline? Is that data that is kept by
6 your office?

7 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Everything
8 that you are saying we do.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You do? Okay.

10 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: We ,you know,
11 we keep track of that and try to... (CROSS-TALK)

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Centrally?

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Centrally,
14 yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thanks for whispering the
16 answer in his ear. (LAUGHTER) That's good. This is
17 called collaboration. So, is that information that is
18 collected and shared? Meaning you have a 100 service
19 requests and you would able to complete 99, let's
20 hope, of them within a week. Is that data that is
21 collected and shared?

22 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: That is a very good
23 question, and this is one of the initiatives that we
24 are also working on as mentioned in the testimony.
25 One of the improvements in the last page of the

1 testimony is one of the upgrades that we are
2 undertaking now, is upgrading our Archibus system.
3 There is a system called Archibus...

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: How do you spell that?

5 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: A r c h i b u s,
6 Archibus. It is a very well-known system... (CROSS-
7 TALK)

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Archibus! Yeah...

9 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: Archibus, yes, it is a
10 system for maintenance and space utilization. So,
11 this is a system where we, the campuses at the local
12 level capture the work orders for implementing those
13 smaller routine maintenance tasks. And there is a
14 variety of implementation for this system. We are
15 upgrading it now so that we can unify utilization of
16 the system, and we will be able to run that level of
17 report that you brought forward as well.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And is it your intention to
19 have public data on that? And honestly I think it's
20 very important to ,you know, I think a news article
21 and there, none of us want that. You, I, none of us
22 in the City want that for our students. I am not sure
23 that it is clear to everyone just how dire your
24 financial situation is and how critical it is that
25

1
2 the City Council, again, in our budget response, that
3 that funding be elevated because of how many service
4 requests you are unable - because of funding - to
5 take care of. And who loses out is our students and
6 our faculty - not just lose out, but are placed, in
7 many cases, in unsafe environments.

8 So, is it your intention to make that data public
9 for (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

10 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: The intention
11 is to really get our campuses to use this technology
12 more efficiently. Right now, it is a new technology
13 that we got I would say in the local community, and
14 you are probably going to hear other members later on
15 testify and tell you how... what a great tool it is.
16 So, Mohamed and his team are really focused on making
17 sure that it is being... as it was rolled out, that
18 it is being used appropriately. That is going to give
19 us a lot of information that then we are going to be
20 able to really do intervention... to do intervention
21 to be able to address those things -as we are trying
22 to triage the resources that we have to try to deal
23 with the most critical situations (INAUDIBLE). But,
24 let me be clear, health and safety is at the top of
25 everything. Right? We want to make sure that people

1
2 are in a safe environment. But the idea here is to
3 try to tackle this in multiple ways as I alluded to
4 earlier - try to address these systems, because if we
5 don't address these systems, then they become bigger
6 and bigger problems, but also at the same time,
7 implementing this new technology to be able to have
8 real data and a way to track, to your earlier point,
9 how many classrooms et cetera, how many problems we
10 have in each of the campuses, and be able to begin to
11 address some of that.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All right, I want to turn
13 it over to Council Member Brewer who has some
14 question and then turn it over to Council Member
15 Restler for questions as well.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.

17 I have John Jay in my district and Macaulay in
18 particular, but I do know a lot of the schools.

19 The issue for me is always the technology as you
20 suggested. That's a big system - so it's systems,
21 obviously, for you to be able to track, it's systems
22 for the students and the faculty to be able to
23 operate, et cetera.

24 My question is, do you keep... is there some
25 notion of what the cost would be to have what you

1
2 actually need? I know with John Jay, I give them...
3 I mean the last 20 years, I've been giving money,
4 it's never enough in terms of the technology,
5 because, every five years, it often outdates itself
6 and you have to start all over. So, on the
7 technology, and in particular, because it's a big
8 issue of course for students and for academics, where
9 do you put in terms of priorities? How do you decide
10 what is the next technology dollar needed et cetera?
11 Just the whole technology picture?

12 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Thank you for
13 that question, Council Member Brewer, good to see
14 you.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

16 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: We actually
17 recently, it is kind of public information, you will
18 see have a Technology Committee of the board where we
19 presented the investment that this administration has
20 done. And it just happened a week ago, Council
21 Member. So, you can see the level of investment from
22 looking at systems to better track our financing and
23 better onboarding our staff, and create benefits. So,
24 those kinds of systems to systems like having
25 multiple points where, uh, if one... If we have one

1
2 part of the internet is down, there is a backup
3 system to be able to address... So, we are doing that
4 across the University. The board has approved
5 hundreds of millions of dollars for us to invest in
6 this. And over the last couple of years, we have done
7 a lot to do that, for example, we have been working
8 with the DOT to try to make sure that wires that are
9 underneath our campuses, which, in a lot of cases,
10 when you had rain or some issues created
11 interruptions on the campus, now we have multiple
12 points, so if that one goes down, we have a way to
13 turn on another process. We're... (CROSS-TALK)

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: (INAUDIBLE)

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: are
16 upgrading... We're upgrading... (CROSS-TALK)

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The redundancy... The
18 redundancy, yeah...

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: We are
20 upgrading our whole internet process to have
21 (INAUDIBLE) connectivity within each of the campuses.
22 So we are doing... But, we have really been focused,
23 as you probably read and saw, we recently had some
24 issues connected to cyber security, we have been
25 really focused on improving our cyber security. We

1
2 created a centralized cyber security hub at CUNY. In
3 any given day, we have 900 million systems that go
4 into CUNY inquires, they go into CUNY through the
5 internet. So, we are as strong as our weakest link.
6 And the idea here is to really try to make CUNY, from
7 the cyber security perspective... so, we spend a lot
8 of time focusing on that.

9 So, upgrading our system is part of our strategic
10 plan. It is goal number four. It is something we have
11 plans for, and we are actually somewhat ahead of
12 schedule on some of those initiatives. So, I would
13 love to know more about where the areas are that you
14 are concerned about, because I am sure that we... It
15 (BACKGROUND NOISE) is part of our plan... (CROSS-
16 TALK)

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And the students pay a fee
18 for their tech, too, in some way, shape, or form. How
19 does that... Do you survey to see if they are pleased
20 with what their fee is going towards? Does it go
21 towards the ,you know, what you are talking about?

22 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Yes, so you
23 should know, the students have... There is a Tech
24 Committee that our CIO sort of works with our
25 students on. And those recourses are allocated based

1 on the conversation that is had with our students.

2 So, they have a tremendous input in how those
3 resources are allocated systemwide and in each of the
4 campuses.
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so, you do you ever
7 survey to see if they're pleased with what the
8 outcome is that you have devised?

9 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: I am not aware
10 of the survey, I am sure there is something, but I
11 know that they are very, very involved... (CROSS-
12 TALK)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: In the past, they have
14 complained a lot. (INAUDIBLE)

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Well, if I
16 could reserve the right to get back to you on that, I
17 will... (CROSS-TALK)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes...

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: I will
20 definitely get back to you. But, I am sure that we
21 have that data.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I won't ask about
23 the hole in the ,you know... Because I would have
24 thought that that could have helped some of these
25 systems if you held onto the hole in the ground, and

1
2 then you could have sold it and made some money. But,
3 I will leave that for another day.

4 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Well, you are
5 consistent, Council Member. But, I will say this, we
6 are... Last time you asked about the capital dollars
7 (TIMER CHIMES), the capital dollars (INAUDIBLE) the
8 EDC budget, and SPARC is moving forward, and we think
9 it is going to be a great project for CUNY.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Council Member
11 Brewer. We have been joined by Council Member Feliz.
12 I will now turn it over to honorary member of the
13 Committee, Council Member Lincoln Restler.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you, Chair
15 Dinowitz. I mostly come here just to remind the
16 Executive Vice Chancellor how great a hire he made as
17 his CFO. It's good to see you always, Sherif.

18 I have some general questions, I would like to
19 ask some questions about City Tech. So, just to make
20 sure I have this right, over the last five years the
21 average City contribution of capital funding to our
22 community colleges has been \$29 million a year?

23 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: Yeah, that is... This is
24 the number, yes.

1 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And have you con...
2
3 You... You testified today that you believe that we
4 need about \$200 million in City capital funding for
5 our community colleges to maintain a proper state of
6 repair a State of Good Repair?

7 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: Correct.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Have you conducted a
9 broader physical needs assessment for the capital
10 needs of the community colleges?

11 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: We performed (INAUDIBLE)
12 last year and assessment of all of CUNY facilities,
13 Community Colleges and Senior Colleges. And we are
14 now in the final steps of gathering the information
15 and making inferences out of it and developing our
16 execution plans.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: So, when will the Fiscal
18 Needs Assessment be done? I apologize.

19 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: (INAUDIBLE) again?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: When will the Fiscal
21 Needs Assessment be done for the community colleges?

22 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: It will be... We are in
23 the process of finalizing the report and issuing it.
24 So, I would say within a month or so.

1 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. We look forward to
2 reviewing it here at the Council.
3

4 And could you just remind me, uh, the Mayor's
5 proposed... Or how many... The Mayor's midyear cuts
6 to the CUNY Capital Plan?

7 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: So, Council
8 Member, there... The past few rounds there have been
9 some pushes. I believe in January as compared to
10 September it was \$133 million.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: \$133 million...

12 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: But...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: in planned...

14 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: Yes... (CROSS-
15 TALK)

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Capital allocations to
17 CUNY... (CROSS-TALK)

18 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: Well
19 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Over the next five years
21 that have been pushed out?

22 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: Part of the
23 commitment plan. And I would just note that the call
24 letter that was released for the Capital Budget
25 planning process did note the borrowing capacity

1 limits by the State Constitution that relate to...

2 (CROSS-TALK)

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: That we (INAUDIBLE)...

4 (CROSS-TALK)

5 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: (INAUDIBLE)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Will be resolved in a
7 matter... (CROSS-TALK)

8 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: Yes we... (CROSS-
9 TALK)

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: of hours?

11 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: We are waiting
12 for the ,you know, to certainly see the bills, and
13 hopefully there is an expansion of that capacity...
14 (CROSS-TALK)...

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: (INAUDIBLE)

16 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: Which I think
17 could create opportunities for all... But, ,you know,
18 I just want to note that we are also working with OMB
19 and collaborating on our capital needs. We have been
20 having very positive conversations. So, I think that
21 there is an understanding of the real needs at CUNY.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You're a far more
23 diplomatic person than I am. But, you know, the City
24 is allocating just \$29 million a year in capital
25

1 funding when you have estimated that you need close
2 to ten times that amount annually to maintain state-
3 of-good repair, and at the same time, the City cut
4 \$133 million from the CUNY Capital Plan over the next
5 five years to push that out to future years at a time
6 when our facilities simply cannot afford greater
7 cuts. I think it's unconscionable. It's a mayor who
8 demonstrates in his budgeting that he doesn't care
9 about CUNY. And that is bad for the future of the
10 City of New York. I hope that you are able to
11 persuade him otherwise, but the record shows
12 something different. And I just want to bring it back
13 home to what I am experiencing on the ground in
14 District 33 where I have the privilege of
15 representing City Tech. I had an opportunity to go on
16 a tour earlier this month with professors at City
17 Tech about the conditions that they're working in.
18 And they showed me classrooms where they pointed out
19 spots where there is black mold. And the thing that I
20 found most disconcerting was these issues have
21 existed for many years. And there is a website about
22 the mold conditions that are known at City Tech. And
23 I totally appreciate that you all have been horribly
24 underfunded, and without recourse it is very
25

1
2 challenging to correct these conditions. But, we are
3 asking our professors and our students to work in
4 these environments each and every day, and it is
5 not.. We should do better.

6 So, the primary question I wanted to ask is
7 (BACKGROUND NOISE) for the mold conditions at City
8 Tech that have been well-known and established,
9 professors issue complaints, sometimes things are
10 addressed, but then there is no communication back to
11 the professors, back to the Professional Staff
12 Congress on what exactly was remediated and what
13 conditions were identified. Is there an expectation
14 (TIMER CHIMES) that the professor, that PSE, that the
15 union should have for communication on how conditions
16 were remediated? And could you elaborate on that?

17 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Thank you for
18 the question, and thank you always for your support.

19 Let me take your question in multiple ways.
20 Number one is, I think that just because you see a
21 stain on the wall doesn't mean there's mold there,
22 right? I mean, what we normally do when these things
23 are brought to our attention, we bring in an expert
24 to sort evaluate that situation. And that one, let's
25 just say that we're... we reserve the right to sort

1
2 of look at it. Right? I think that what, uh, in terms
3 of the communication, your larger question on
4 communication, obviously once something is taken care
5 of, I assume that it is visual and they see it. But,
6 at the same time, I think that I will check to see
7 what kind of communications sort of happened. I do
8 know that there is a safety and environmental
9 committee of the PSC with the administration, and they
10 meet and they go over these issues, where I think
11 those things sort of get resolved and get addressed.
12 And (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You know, I have reached
14 out to the president, and I have asked for a meeting
15 to go through these issues as well and understand how
16 the process could work better, but ,you know, I am
17 not a public health expert. I agree that I am not...
18 What I am seeing, I can't tell you whether it
19 represents a risk to people's health or not. But, I
20 think it is imminently fair that when the
21 Administration investigates, when the City Tech team
22 investigates the condition, to report back to the
23 union, this is what we found, this is what we are
24 doing, or we found this isn't a risk and are acting
25 accordingly.

1 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: And I think
2 that mechanism exists, because there are labor
3 management meetings where environmental issues are
4 discussed with the labor management here at the local
5 level on the campuses. Right? And even at the central
6 level, we meet with the president, but... (CROSS-
7 TALK)
8

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I appreciate that. I
10 don't... I think something is getting lost, because I
11 don't think it is working as well as it should.
12 Because I don't think they would have brought me out
13 to walk me around and show me the conditions and
14 explain to me that they are not getting that feedback
15 loop. So, if we could get your help, and I know that
16 you have a great a team, and Jeff and others are on
17 top of this, but we would welcome some assistance to
18 make sure that that is happening.

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: I will
20 definitely do that, Council Member and get back to
21 you. Could I get back to Council Member Brewer? I
22 actually now pointed to some of the things we have
23 done on the technology side. So, we spent about \$10.1
24 million to secure our operations when it comes to
25 cyber security. We have spent about \$500,000 to

1
2 improve, on the academic side something called the
3 ReadWorks which is a system component that allows for
4 financial aid certification and so forth, that is
5 good for the student experience. We have done some
6 work (INAUDIBLE) CUNYfirst, which is the system that
7 we use systemwide to address both not only students,
8 but also the financial and all the other areas of the
9 University. We put in about \$2.3 million to refresh
10 connected to PCs and computers. We have put another
11 \$800,000 to upgrade different passwords connected to
12 some of our systems in terms of cyber security. We
13 spent another \$2 million on upgrades to the data
14 center where all of our servers are kept. We have
15 done some issues connected to, which is the point I
16 was making, connected to - if something bad happens,
17 to be able to...

18 UNKNOWN: Redundancy...

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Redundancy,
20 right. We have done some other areas connected to
21 resiliency improvements, around \$2.8 million. So, in
22 total almost over \$100 million has been allocated to
23 technology and trying to really address some of the
24 technology needs. This is all something that is part
25 of the chancellor's strategic plan to upgrade. And we

1 have coming up campus modernization of \$36 million.

2 We are going to upgrade all of our phone systems
3 across the University. So, we are sort of tackling
4 the technology piece, so I wanted to get back to you
5 on that. And I am happy to send that to you in
6 writing.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Council Member
9 Restler. It sounds like, what he mentioned about
10 feedback back to the staff, could be addressed with
11 this very well known Archibus system. It sounds like
12 an opportunity to have that feedback and
13 conversation. Did I say that right, Archibus?

14 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: You said it
15 right.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All right, good. We love
17 our acronyms.

18 I would just change one little thing. I agree
19 with Council Member Restler that the cuts are not
20 just unconscionable, the cuts make life for our
21 students unsafe - and life for our professors unsafe.

22 I am going to turn it over to Council Member
23 Bottcher for some questions, thank you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHER: Good afternoon. Are
25 there any efforts to using CUNY's vast real estate

1
2 portfolio to pursue public-private partnerships to
3 generate ongoing income for CUNY?

4 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Thank you for
5 your question, Council Member. Good to see you, as
6 always, thank you for your support.

7 We are, obviously, yes, we are looking at ,you
8 know, where we could do public partnerships. I mean,
9 I the challenge... for me the most important thing
10 first is to make sure that the mission of the
11 University, when it comes to facilities or... so any
12 of those partnerships have to sort of address some
13 of our facility challenges. But we think there is an
14 opportunity to look at and try to monetize some of
15 our facilities. Obviously, uh, it's has to be a very
16 thoughtful kind of process to make sure that it
17 doesn't get caught up other competing interest that
18 really has nothing to do with CUNY's mission. So, at
19 the forefront is really to address the academic needs
20 of the University, and then secondly, if it is a
21 biproduct that get some additional resources, that is
22 great, but, yes, there is... We are working on that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Does that exist
24 currently anywhere in CUNY's portfolio, any income
25 producing entities?

1
2 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Are you asking
3 if we have a department to sort of focus on income
4 producing initiatives? Is that what you're asking?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHER: On any of the CUNY
6 campuses, is there any public-private partnership
7 that generates income for CUNY? Or would this be a
8 new approach?

9 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Yes, this
10 would be something that would be done centrally. All
11 right? Because ultimately through... the facilities
12 are sort of managed... They are managed at the local
13 level, but when it comes to whatever partnership or
14 disposition is done at a central level. We are
15 working with our colleagues at the campus to sort of
16 identify where the opportunities are. And we think
17 that there are probably some opportunities there, we
18 just have to make sure that we approach this in a
19 very thoughtful way that doesn't allow to create any
20 kind of issues connected to how we are dealing with
21 those properties. But, it is something that obviously
22 at a time when we have limited resources we have to
23 look at it very seriously.

24

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: And ostensibly you would
3 bring in the whole campus community at the outset and
4 involve everyone in the process to get buy in...

5 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Well, when it
6 comes to space rentals and auxiliary, yes. Right?
7 When it comes to these kinds of projects we obviously
8 have conversations with the president, the leadership
9 of that particular campus to try to figure out what
10 plans they might have. Right? Because we want to make
11 sure that we are mindful of their particular plans.
12 But, on rentals and all of those things, absolutely.
13 I mean, look, we are also looking at... You know, our
14 provost recently... We have been working very hard on
15 CUNY online work to bring additional revenues. We are
16 looking at how we can look at places where we could
17 do (INAUDIBLE) marketing campaigns and all of those
18 things. I mean, obviously, we have to make sure
19 that... Obviously we are a public entity. We are very
20 thoughtful about that, and there are obviously
21 restrictions.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Council Member
23 Bottcher.

24 In line with that, I think we all recognize the
25 need for more funding and more to be done for both,

1
2 what you called the vital maintenance about our
3 boilers, HVAC, and the day to day maintenance in part
4 due to funding and in part due to reporting and
5 feedback. But, there have also been investments in
6 new facilities. I think you mentioned in your
7 testimony, you did mention the best borough, uh, the
8 best council district...

9 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: I'm smart, I
10 try to ,you know, put the...

11 (LAUGHTER)

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (INAUDIBLE)...

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: You're the
14 chair, I have to ,you know, (INAUDIBLE)

15 (LAUGHTER)

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: A new nursing facility...
17 So, between the struggles with maintenance and brand
18 new facilities, has there been any sort of analysis
19 about how many students and faculty leave due to
20 inability to maintain facilities, or are recruited
21 because of new facilities like the nursing school, or
22 maybe a new sports field, or things of that nature?

23 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: That is a
24 great question. We are going to have to get back to
25 you on that, because I don't think we... I mean,

1 obviously, new facilities like the nursing school,
2 that is only going to help us, right, be able to
3 recruit, because you and I took a tour of that place,
4 it's incredible, right?

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, beautiful.

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: And I think
7 that it is obviously going to help with enrollment.
8 Look, I think the facility challenges always create
9 great problems in terms of making sure that we are
10 keeping those facilities to a point where it doesn't
11 turn off the students, right? We try to work very
12 hard to do that with the limited resources that we
13 have. But, it is a constant struggle. I mean, the one
14 point that I think is important for this council to
15 know, in order for us to be able to do projects in
16 the City and get the State funding, we have to get
17 the City to put in the money first, and then we have
18 to wait almost a year to get the State to give us the
19 money. I mean, unless we have all the funding OMB and
20 the (INAUDIBLE) DOB, does not allow us to move a
21 project forward. So, you... (CROSS-TALK)

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Was that to the... What you
23 said, the Comptroller's Directive 10 in your
24 testimony, was that... Is that related?
25

1
2 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: I'm not sure
3 if it's directly the Comptroller's... Do you know the
4 answer to that?

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Because you had said in
6 your testimony a project to be fully funded before
7 moving forward, but now you're saying it's DOB and
8 OMB?

9 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: Well, just
10 speaking generally, in order for... To receive a
11 Proceed Directive as part of the Certificate to
12 Proceed process here in the City, the project needs
13 to be fully funded. That relates back to government
14 GASB, the Governmental Accounting Standards Board,
15 and certainly Directive 10, with reference to which
16 projects are capitally eligible. So, there is a whole
17 review on scope of a project, whether there's full
18 funding, whether the scope is consistent with its
19 adoption, and all of that needs to be done in order
20 to complete the actual review and proceed directive
21 before you can then move to contract registration.
22 So, that is a process that exists, we look to
23 streamline it as much as possible by having very
24 good, clean, detailed scopes up front - so we
25 minimize the sort of back and forth and the process

1 that could ensure in terms of questions about
2 projects. So, that is certainly a reality. I think
3 EVC Batista was referring to was sort of the match,
4 right? Community College versus ,you know, City
5 contributions versus State contributions and just the
6 budget cycle that could mean, if the State doesn't
7 put up first, because their budget is first, right?
8 Then we may have to wait (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But you never know how late
11 their budget is going to be. It could... You never
12 know.

13 SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR SOLIMAN: Yes, so I think
14 that is really what we were referring to. And ,you
15 know, if I just may add as well in terms of your
16 question about the prominence of facility conditions
17 with respect to enrollment and retention, certainly
18 we are mindful of the fact that is a determinate. And
19 I think ,you know, under the chancellor's leadership,
20 under the leadership of the entire CUNY community, we
21 have a strategic roadmap that has been released, in
22 there there's several, several measurable goals that
23 are matched with metrics. So, you will see in there a
24 lot in the academic side about boosting recruitment,
25 about boosting enrollment, but you will also see a

1 lot about bringing our facilities a State of Good
2 Repair and a goal of bringing it to 55 percent by
3 2030. So, we do have very clear goals. We know that
4 students will ,you know, perspective students will
5 make decisions whether to stay or attend, facilities
6 are a part of it, and we need to focus on it and we
7 are.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: When we have a hearing a
10 few months ago about employees here in New York City,
11 and there was a bill to do an exit survey of City
12 employees, uh, is there a same sort of effort made
13 for students and faculty leaving CUNY to determine
14 whether it was in fact facilities, what type of
15 facilities, that was an impetuous for them to leave?
16 And in that same vein, are there efforts being made
17 to start collecting data on things like a new nursing
18 school's recruiting brand new students who would not
19 have otherwise come here to help inform decisions and
20 inform New York City and State budgets on the
21 critical need for repair and investment in new
22 facilities at CUNY?

23 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: Aside from whether we
24 have the surveys or we do the survey, I believe ,you
25 know - EVC Batista could comment on that, but what I

1 wanted to share with you, Chair Dinowitz, is there is
2 a body of knowledge of research of in North America
3 and in different areas, like outside CUNY, to study
4 and look at the correlation between recruitment and
5 retention of students and researchers and professors
6 and the quality of the facilities. So, there is this
7 body of knowledge there, and there is... It has been
8 documented that there is a very high correlation
9 between the quality of the indoor environment and the
10 quality of the labs and the buildings and the
11 retention of students and researchers. So, we could
12 find that. We don't have it really for CUNY
13 specifically, but it is known in the higher education
14 world that there is such a correlation and
15 relationship.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But, is it known in the
18 budgeting world, in a city and state budgeting world?
19 I think of knowledge that many of us in the education
20 sphere take for granted is not necessarily publicly
21 known or publicly shared for that matter. And of
22 course it does relate to finances. I mean, colleges
23 across the country have seen, after COVID, lower
24 admissions, and that deals directly with the funding
25 of the college and what you have testified at this

1 hearing. So, I think for any of us here, but also
2 OMB, the state, uh, the state budgets, to be
3 critically aware of how those two things are
4 correlated and how it relates directly to the
5 finances of a college.
6

7 So, are there... Besides funding, are there other
8 obstacles that haven't been mentioned today, that are
9 obstacles to ensuring that all CUNY facilities are
10 properly maintained?

11 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: Sorry, can you repeat
12 the question?

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Sure. Are there obstacles
14 besides ones mentioned today, a lot of them dealing
15 with budget, that are obstacles to ensuring that all
16 CUNY facilities are properly maintained?

17 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: Well, the overall
18 environment, as I mentioned in our testimony, that
19 there are certain aspects that we are working on to
20 improve in order to improve our ability to better
21 maintain those facilities. So, there are the pieces
22 around in growing technology and changing our
23 processes. We are also developing (INAUDIBLE) to work
24 with closely with unions developing a new PLA. So,
25

1
2 these are aspects that will impact... I'm sorry, go
3 ahead?

4 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: I mean, look I
5 think that one of the things that, under Mohamed's
6 leadership, that we are doing, is we are holding
7 partners that are partners of CUNY to help us more
8 accountable to make and deliver projects on time and
9 on budget as (INAUDIBLE) they're great colleagues,
10 great agencies. We have a tremendous respect for
11 them. But ,you know, we are holding ourselves more
12 accountable. What Mohamed has really done is really,
13 really gone to the board and asked the board to allow
14 us to bring in most service contracts to be able to
15 be more nimble and be able to address this in a
16 quicker way. I mean, I think ultimately one of our
17 biggest obstacles in all of this is always the
18 procurement process. Sometimes the lengthy process
19 that it takes is going through that process of
20 different approvals, different agencies, that are
21 beyond our control. But, I think that, if we at the
22 front end do a lot where Mohamed has really focused
23 on design to make sure that our design process
24 doesn't... is not as lengthy as it was, that we don't
25 have a lot of sort of change orders. So, we recently,

1 with all the presidents, when we meet with the
2 presidents really instituted this process that we are
3 going to now focus on really getting these design
4 things done a lot more quickly. If we could begin to
5 cut some of the timeline - there are areas we can't
6 control when it goes to other agencies, but we could
7 control our own internal processes. So, the charge to
8 Mohamed from me and the chancellor is, we have to do
9 better in terms of improving our internal processes.
10 And I think that he has done some things, as he laid
11 out, as quickly as he could, in his testimony, to
12 really begin to address, uh, besides the money issue,
13 completing projects on time. And we think technology
14 is our friend. Right? This system, the Archibus
15 system, if we could get our campus to use it better,
16 we get, ,you know, we are not criticizing our campus,
17 just to get it to be used the right way and be able
18 to really generate the reports that we think we need
19 so we begin to address those sort issues... But, I...
20 The one thing that I am going to constantly say,
21 health and safety is at the forefront of everything
22 that we do. But, there are nuances to it in terms of
23 making sure that if we get one of the systems, we fix
24
25

1
2 that system, then it doesn't allow for them to have a
3 health and safety problem. Right... (CROSS-TALK)

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes.

5 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Right? The
6 problem that we have, we haven't fixed those systems.
7 So, now you have a leak that leaks down to the other
8 floor, and now you have.. (CROSS-TALK)

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah... (CROSS-TALK)

10 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: It looks like
11 mold or whatever. So, we have to address these
12 things, and that is what we are trying to do.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, unfortunately, it's
14 both, if there's a leak you have to get rid of the
15 mold and also replace... (CROSS-TALK)

16 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: That's
17 right...

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The system that... By the
19 way, we don't call it criticizing the presidents or
20 the campuses, we call it "feedback". That's sort of
21 ,you know, it's that what we do (LAUGHTER) and the
22 goal being to make sure the facilities are better.

23 We spoke a lot about the maintenance, I am
24 interested to know if some of CUNY's... You already
25 did the best project, which was the nursing school.

1
2 So, now there are other things in the pipeline, I'm
3 sure, just some of the projects that CUNY is making
4 investments in to do some of that recruitment and
5 investment in the colleges and in the students. Are
6 there other projects in the pipeline?

7 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: In terms of large
8 investments, like large capital projects, admission?
9 Yes, so in our priorities we have the academic
10 building at York, which is one of our priorities. At
11 Brooklyn College, the Ingersoll Science Building
12 upgrade, that is another priority... (CROSS-TALK)

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Let me jump
14 in. If I don't say this I get in trouble with my boss
15 - Hostos Community College, the (INAUDIBLE) it was in
16 my testimony so, let the record show that I did
17 advocate for Hostos projects... (CROSS-TALK)

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Which Hostos project?

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: The Allied
20 Health... (CROSS-TALK)

21 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: The Allied Health...
22 (CROSS-TALK)

23 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Sciences
24 Department. That is a project that... It's top of our
25 list. Go ahead?

(LAUGHTER)

VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: And the Baruch 17 Lex building (INAUDIBLE) upgrades - science building.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: The SPARC project (Science Park and Research Campus), which, you know, we have numbers that are... It's a great project that's going to move... School of Public Health & Health Policy is going to move there. The nursing school for Hunter. And a health project for Manhattan Community College. These are all things that we think are going to help us overall with recruitment.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Any, uh, any other sports facilities?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: I think we have a couple of baseball fields that are being renovated. We recently did a lot of work in the College of Staten Island where they did a lacrosse field and a couple of other fields. They are a Division two school, and... (CROSS-TALK)

VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: We (INAUDIBLE) pool at Kingsborough Community College

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: A what?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: Swimming pool.

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, swimming pool.

2 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR BATISTA: We are happy
3 to provide you a list of all of those projects, but
4 we have quite a few that I think are going to be
5 helpful.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, I am very interested
8 to see those too, because it's not just fixing all
9 the problems, it's really making investments. And I
10 say at every hearing ,you know, the money we spend on
11 CUNY, it's not expenditures, they are investments.

12 I want to thank you for your testimony today, and
13 I look forward to following up with you on a number
14 of items discussed today. Hearing more about the
15 Archibus system, the feedback would ideally be... And
16 of course, the final analysis of your report on the
17 facilities. Thank you very much.

18 PANEL: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: A quick reminder to
20 everyone who wishes to testify in person today, that
21 you must fill out an appearance card, which is
22 located on the desk of the Sergeant at Arms at the
23 entrance of the room. And please fill this out even
24 if you have already registered to testify in advance.
25 We will begin public testimony momentarily.

1
2 (PAUSE)

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We are going to call the
4 first panel.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: (INAUDIBLE)

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, for the first
7 panel we have Heather James, Peter Kolozi, and Alyson
8 Bardsley.

9 (PAUSE)

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, the hearing is
11 now open for public testimony. I want to remind
12 members of the public that this is a formal
13 government proceeding, and that decorum shall be
14 observed at all times. As such, members of the
15 public, shall remain silent at all times. The witness
16 table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No
17 video recording or photography is allowed from the
18 witness table. Further, members of the public may not
19 present audio or video recordings as testimony, but
20 may submit transcripts of such recordings to the
21 Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing
22 recording.

23 Once again, if you wish to speak at today's
24 hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the
25 Sergeant at Arms and wait to be recognized. Once

1
2 recognized, you will have three minutes to speak on
3 today's hearing topic: *How Fit Are CUNY Facilities?*

4 If you have a written statement or additional
5 written testimony you wish to submit for the record,
6 please provide a copy of that testimony to the
7 Sergeant at Arms.

8 And with that, we will begin with Ms. James for
9 our first panel. Please make sure you are speaking
10 into the microphone and that it is on, thank you.

11 PROFESSOR HEATHER JAMES: Couldn't I not talk at
12 all the last time I was here. (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-
13 TALK)

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry, one moment...

15 PROFESSOR HEATHER JAMES: I won't need three. I am
16 going to be least interesting...

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: (INAUDIBLE)

18 PROFESSOR HEATHER JAMES: There we go.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All right, Ms. James you
20 may begin.

21 PROFESSOR HEATHER JAMES: Now you can cut me off
22 if necessary. (LAUGHTER)

23 Good morning, I am Heather James, I had actually
24 intended to be our wrap-up person, but you know what,
25 I will start us out instead.

1
2 I'm a professor of a Political Science at the
3 Borough of Manhattan Community College; I'm the
4 legislative representative for the PSC CUNY, proudly
5 fighting on behalf of workers across CUNY.

6 I'm here with many of my colleagues today to
7 thank you for your support both in this hearing and
8 in general. We understand that sticking by us is an
9 uphill fight, and you've been a great partner. Of
10 course, we're always here to urge the City to fully
11 fund CUNY, both operating and capital, and create the
12 investments in our future that you just spoke about.

13 For many years there have been deep cuts to CUNY
14 amounting to large changes in the experience of
15 faculty and students. I think it's a great question,
16 What happens when our buildings are crumbling? How do
17 students and faculty react to that? Do they leave?
18 You know, I am privileged to work at BMCC where our
19 campuses are generally in a better state of repair,
20 but that is not always the case in the outer boroughs
21 and in some neighborhoods. And we really want to
22 stress that all students, faculty, and staff need to
23 have the same experience at CUNY no matter where they
24 work.

1
2 We appreciate you asking so many questions about
3 the prioritization of maintenance, because these are
4 questions that we have as well.

5 We also took a look at CUNY's strategic plan
6 where it said that just 8 percent of our
7 approximately 300 buildings are in good repair, and
8 we were at the Board of Trustees Meeting where CUNY
9 estimated that the value of its deferred maintenance
10 backlog was about \$5 billion - that's a lot - and
11 where CUNY also said that they would attempt to bring
12 55 percent of their buildings into a state-of-good
13 repair by 2030.

14 That sounds ambitious, so we would like to be a
15 partner with you to keep tabs on our maintenance
16 schools, make sure we use strategies to improve, and
17 to make sure there is responsiveness to faculty,
18 staff, and students' maintenance requests. And we
19 also want to emphasize, with the whole 49 seconds
20 left, that to implement any good maintenance
21 strategy, uh, we need to have staff. Okay? We cannot
22 keep our buildings in the state-of-good repair unless
23 there's people to actually do the work. And part of
24 the backlog is just that there's no one there to get
25

1
2 it done. So, we would encourage you to focus on that
3 as well as we sort out our maintenance process.

4 Thank you so much, Chair Dinowitz and to the rest
5 of the committee.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I don't want to
7 mess up your order. You can choose, you can rock,
8 paper, scissor, or you can... Is the microphone on?

9 PROFESSOR ALYSON BARDSLEY: Thank you.

10 I am Alyson Bardsley, I am a professor of English
11 at the College of Staten Island. I am also a resident
12 of that borough. The College of Staten Island is not
13 a community college, I am sure you know we are a
14 comprehensive college; we give associate and
15 bachelor's and also doctoral degrees - all the way
16 through that.

17 The situation that we are facing is similar to
18 the ones that other CUNYs are facing. It seems like
19 you don't need my stories about the library rotunda
20 that leaks in the rain, or about my colleague who has
21 been issued a bucket by Buildings and Ground to put
22 under the leak, because they know they're not going
23 fix it, or the tutors who have come down from the
24 second floor to us to meet with wheelchair users,

1
2 because the elevator is not working that day and they
3 can't come to the Writing Center.

4 You're not surprised find out that I walked past
5 broken rubber safety mats over a concrete staircase
6 every time I report to campus - you know this. CSI is
7 in a particular (INAUDIBLE) state 204 acre campus, we
8 have never been funded adequately to maintain it,
9 because the funding formula is based on the square
10 footage of buildings, and it doesn't take any account
11 into the fact that we have a different kind of
12 campus. So a consequence, finally our administration
13 through some gifts, somehow are fixing the ruts in
14 our pathways, which is good, because then I don't
15 have to watch wheelchair users literally getting
16 stuck in ruts - in one case getting stuck in a rut
17 and having his communication device fall onto the
18 ground next to him. More recently, I didn't witness
19 this one, someone got stuck in a rut, thank goodness
20 we had a substitute lecturer strong enough to help
21 him get unstuck.

22 I want to add the fact that, yes, we need staff.
23 We got a couple of new simulation dummies, I guess
24 they are, in our nursing department - our very
25 important, very successful, very understaffed nursing

1 department - sadly, the students can't use them,
2 because we don't have a full-time supervisor
3 qualified to help them use the simulations. This is
4 added to the fact that our nursing faculty
5 (INAUDIBLE) very successful, our students all have
6 pass rates above everybody else's, including
7 Hunter's, but there's just no staff there. They've
8 lost half their faculty in the last "x" years.

9 So, ongoing problems. You don't need the
10 anecdotes, but the mouse who fell on my friend when
11 she was lecturing about Shakespeare - you know this,
12 and you know, I heard you say that our students
13 deserve better.
14

15 We're the only public institution on Staten
16 Island. My kids don't have anywhere else to go. They
17 come to us and they stay, and I don't want them to
18 feel like this is all they deserve, because you know
19 and I know that they deserve better.

20 Thank you also for your trenchant questions about
21 accountability and transparency around maintenance. I
22 was very thrilled to hear that the implied request to
23 demand that they... that we hear more and that the
24 transparency be respected, you know, as something
25 that you wanted to see from the from the

1 administration, because we don't get it. We don't get
2 it. I request and everything just disappears. I sit
3 Labor Management; we talk about stuff, and it's all
4 fine, fine, fine. Thank you for your attention.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. And please state
7 your name for the record.

8 PROFESSOR PETER KOLOZI: Sure. Good afternoon,
9 distinguished Council Member Dinowitz, my PSE
10 colleagues, CUNY students and members of the public.
11 My name is Peter Kolozi, I teach political science at
12 Bronx Community College. I live across the street
13 from Van Cortlandt Park, and you, sir, are my
14 representative, and I am your constituent.

15 I'm here to... (CROSS-TALK)

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Glad to have you in the
17 district.

18 PROFESSOR PETER KOLOZI: I'm here to urge the
19 Council to make the necessary investments in CUNY
20 infrastructure and in facilities. But, before I
21 discuss CUNY facilities, and specifically those of my
22 home campus, Bronx Community College, where I have
23 worked for 20 years, I want to share a couple quotes
24 with you that capture the theme and perhaps vividly
25 illustrate my point.

1
2 In 2012, Yale professor, Vincent Scully, told The
3 New York Times, referring to the magnificent original
4 Penn Station in comparison to the underground tunnels
5 that replaced it, "Once one entered the city like a
6 God, now one scuddles in like a rat." In a similar
7 vein, New York Times architecture critic, Michael
8 Kimmelman wrote, "To pass through Grand Central
9 Terminal, one of New York's exalted public spaces, is
10 an ennobling experience, a gift. To commute via the
11 bowels of Penn Station," just a few blocks away, "is
12 a humiliation."

13 Perhaps more than any other landmark in New York
14 City, Grand Central exhibits what author Eric
15 Klinenberg called the Palace of the People. It is a
16 public place. It is a place for the people. It is a
17 place when walking through it, you get a certain
18 feeling. It is impressive. It is ennobling. Walking
19 through as a regular New Yorker, you sense respect
20 that you are valued and respected, because the place
21 you inhabit is valued.

22 CUNY's mission and its reason for being, to offer
23 a high-quality education and opportunities for the
24 people of the City of New York, also exhibits these
25 ennobling feelings and values. In a sense each one of

1
2 CUNY's campuses is a palace of the people in the
3 community where the campus is located. Yet, when one
4 actually walks into many CUNY campuses and inhabits
5 the classrooms and science labs, the feelings that
6 are stirred or not ones of pride, appreciation,
7 dignity, but feelings of humiliation and abandonment.
8 According to CUNY's own recent facility condition
9 assessment, only 8 percent of CUNY buildings are in a
10 state-of-good repair. That is 24 out of 300
11 buildings. In baseball terms, 24 out of 300 gets you
12 a batting average of .80. An average like that does
13 not land you in the Hall of Fame or any palace of
14 baseball royalty, it lands you in the Hall of Shame.

15 At my own campus, BCC, while there have been some
16 positive steps recently compared to the catastrophes
17 of a few years ago, facilities at BCC reveal that
18 many years of under investment have led to severe
19 facilities' issues. BCC students, faculty, and staff
20 learn and work at a historic campus that from afar
21 looks wonderful, but upon closer look, a different
22 reality emerges. (TIMER CHIMES) Can I keep going?

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You can finish your last
24 sentence, and then you can submit the rest... (CROSS-
25 TALK)

1 PROFESSOR PETER KOLOZI: Oh, no, I won't get
2
3 through a lot of it. Okay.

4 These conditions don't convey to our students
5 and BCC faculty that they are valued, that they are
6 treated with dignity and respect. But we can do
7 better. BCC can be a palace of the people, but it
8 needs the crucial investment in its facilities to
9 rebuild the crumbling buildings, but also to rebuild
10 and reinvigorate our civic culture, renew the sense
11 that we are part of the community, that we take care
12 of each other, and at the City as a whole benefits
13 from investing in our public institutions... (CROSS-
14 TALK)

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I... I have one
16 question, and you sort of answered it, but after
17 testimony... But based on your experience, what do
18 you see as the obstacles to maintaining facilities on
19 the campus?

20 PROFESSOR ALYSON BARDSLEY: Well, I agree with
21 what Heather said, I mean we don't... We have lost a
22 lot of Buildings and Grounds staff. There are not
23 enough people to clean, literally to clean. And the
24 metal... The paint is worn down to the metal all over
25 my campus. It would take an army of people to even

1
2 identify where the paint needs to go much less apply
3 it. So, you can't separate the staffing problems from
4 the material problems.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

6 Professor Peter Kolozi: Yes, I would agree at BCC
7 as well. You know, we put in work orders for various
8 things to fix the classrooms, labs, and all of those
9 kinds of things. And, again, sometimes there are
10 fixed, but often times it takes a long time. And the
11 reason that we are given is because of understaffing.
12 We just don't have the personnel to do the work, to
13 process the procurement, and so on and so forth. So,
14 sit on Labor Management as well, and these are the
15 issues that we bring up and the answers that we get
16 from our administration. A crucial thing is the
17 staffing shortage.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, thank you so much for
19 your testimony today.

20 I am going to call the next panel: Juan Carlos
21 Vasquez, Richard Jones, and Mr. Finley.

22 (PAUSE)

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Do you have preplanned
24 who's going to go first? Then I will start on my
25 left, and, yes, just please state your name for the

1
2 record before you begin speaking, uh, before you
3 begin your testimony.

4 JUAN CARLOS VASQUEZ: Hello, everyone. Thank you
5 again for being here today and having this hearing.

6 My name is Juan Vasquez, I'm a student at Bronx
7 Community College majoring in political science. I
8 won't bore you with going into detail about what
9 you've already heard and know, be it the mold and
10 vital infrastructure issues like the boiler. That
11 being said, there are issues that weren't touched
12 upon, like the fact that several of our buildings at
13 Bronx Community College aren't wheelchair accessible.
14 On my campus, we haven't had a cafeteria for over
15 three semesters. Our track field is crumbling, and we
16 have a pool has been decommissioned for God knows how
17 long at this point. There's literally windows that
18 are on opaque on an entire building on our campus.

19 I just wanted to touch real quick on what we
20 heard earlier about the potential revenue generated
21 by CUNY. Again, what we are pushing for is funding of
22 CUNY. That being said, I do feel there is compromise.
23 I have pushed on campus that we should consider
24 renting out empty parking lots to the local
25 communities at night, so that we could one, alleviate

1
2 local congestion, two, create that revenue source and
3 three, alleviate as well the fees that students and
4 faculty have to pay for parking on our campus.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

6 RICHARD JONES: Hi, I am Richard Jones, I go to
7 the City College of New York. I am also a student
8 liaison with the CUNY Rising Alliance.

9 When I first saw City College in 2019 I was,
10 frankly, underwhelmed.

11 I chose this school because of the academics. I
12 allowed myself to accept that college was simply
13 class and home. Why spend time on campus when the
14 college abandons upkeep of the public spaces and
15 facilities?

16 The North Academic Center at City College, for
17 example, is an asbestos ridden monstrosity.

18 When I began college, the upper plaza and bridge
19 connecting to Marshak, across the street, was closed.
20 The plaza is open now, with no work done do it, but
21 the bridge connecting the two buildings is still
22 closed, it took 5 years to start working on it. It
23 was probably closed before I even began.

24 Elevators, escalators, and even the plumbing
25 barely work, with buckets, trashcans, and ceiling

1 tiles; moving, vanishing, and perpetually dripping.

2 The outdated elevators and escalators are perpetually
3 being repaired. I should not hear stories of
4 professors being hurt because all the accessible
5 options to get upstairs are out of service.
6

7 My own experiences alone makes me consider
8 keeping count if the train or having to walk up seven
9 flights of stairs have made me more late for class.

10 Your funds primarily benefit Community Colleges,
11 and I'm here as an advocate for these Community
12 Colleges, too. They face the same issues as the four
13 year schools like broken heating and bad ventilation
14 perpetuated by chronic disinvestment from the City.

15 CUNY graduates provide so much benefit to the
16 City and so many of them stay to show their
17 commitment to New York, in spite of the innumerable
18 options in and outside New York City.

19 As the Mayor continues to push for disinvestment,
20 this makes CUNY a less attractive choice to
21 prospective students.

22 In the face of CUNY's severe infrastructural
23 issues, and pleas from faculty, students, and alumni,
24 will you uphold the promise of CUNY and provide
25 quality places of learning and working for New

1
2 Yorkers? Or will you continue to disinvest and risk
3 the educational pillar of modern New York City
4 crumbling, literally and figuratively?

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

6 CONOR FINLEY: Good afternoon, my name is Conor
7 Finley. I'm a student of Queensborough Community
8 College. I did not expect be speaking today, so
9 forgive me if these seems a little rush or
10 disjointed.

11 I'm a member of the Queensborough Community
12 College YDSA (Young Democratic Socialists of
13 America), and I'm appearing to represent them, but
14 I'm also appearing here as a student.

15 For those in the audience, QTC is over half of
16 our student body is non-white, roughly half of our
17 body beyond is typical college age, and 60 percent of
18 our student body are below the poverty line.

19 I'm here to testify mostly as a student. Our
20 staff and our students, they're trying to best they
21 can, but if (INAUDIBLE) and funding cuts continue to
22 be pushed through, trying won't be enough. Our
23 buildings are all over 50 years old, many of our
24 elevators date from the same era, most of them are
25 objectively at the end of their working life, and the

1 remainder are just as unreliable. This has
2 consequences. Repeatedly, disabled students have gone
3 up the classes on the upper floors of our buildings,
4 and then have been trapped up there when the
5 elevators ceased functioning. And these are the ones
6 that the public can access without a key.
7

8 The remainder of the learning situation is not
9 welcoming or conducive to learning. Our classrooms
10 are water damaged. The ceiling paddles are often
11 broken or removed out right. None of the clocks...
12 I'm sorry I will not speak objectively - most of the
13 clocks do not work.

14 The air conditioning and the heat have repeatedly
15 stopped working. I can personally attest to how hard
16 working in the 90 degree classroom in July is. Two
17 entrances to our building have been closed since at
18 COVID, and there is no sign of them being opened. In
19 addition, this leaves several parking lots
20 inaccessible, which creates dangerous traffic
21 situations from people double parking in order to get
22 in.

23 Our staff have also been affected by these
24 issues. It's not just the material. Our CLTs (College
25 Laboratory Technicians) have been gutted and moved

1
2 away from the departments which they were previously
3 assigned to. Our staff have been working without a
4 contract for just over a year.

5 Not cutting funding is patching a leak in the
6 boat, but patching the leak in the boat is so much
7 better for us and for students than needing a life
8 preserver.

9 From the students QCC, and for students of QCC,
10 and for the students of every community college in
11 this city, I implore the City to listen, thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

13 Two questions, and they are very simple.

14 Do you know where to go to report issues with of
15 maintenance?

16 JUAN CARLOS VASQUEZ: So, if I am not mistaken,
17 you can do a work order, so that's... (CROSS-TALK)

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You... Do you students...
19 (CROSS-TALK)

20 JUAN CARLOS VASQUEZ: Well, no students can't, it
21 would have to be (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, who do you go to?

23 JUAN CARLOS VASQUEZ: Well, we would just... I
24 would a maintenance worker, someone I see, and I
25 would report it to them, or a lot of times, I would

1
2 just go to Public Safety in the hopes that they would
3 make the report.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

5 Do you know where you go if there is a
6 maintenance issue?

7 RICHARD JONES: Absolutely not. I usually just
8 complaint to my professors, and we just agree that
9 it's an issue, and then that's just the way the world
10 is.

11 CONOR FINLEY: I do not believe the information on
12 reporting them is publicly accessible to students
13 now. But, the thing is, many of these have been
14 reported repeatedly...

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry, to whom?

16 CONOR FINLEY: To the staff, to the grounds staff.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

18 And my only other question, we'll start with you
19 Mr. Finley, because we started with... If you knew a
20 high school junior or senior, would you recommend
21 them to go to your CUNY campus for school? They want
22 to college, should they go to your college?

23 CONOR FINLEY: I mean, the thing is that, I am not
24 going to say that the staff hasn't been trying their
25 best with that they have been given. So, I mean, if

1
2 they needed a community college, I wouldn't
3 necessarily say no. But, with the caveat that a lot
4 of this is falling apart. And a lot of it is going to
5 need repairs.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

7 RICHARD JONES: I mean, I would say... When I
8 first started, probably not, because I had such a
9 love/hate relationship with the school. Because all I
10 could see at the beginning was just everything that
11 was broken. And as time has gone by, I have kind of
12 like warmed up more to the side of, like, the
13 academics and embracing the fact that I did go to the
14 school for the academics. Other than Sheperd Hall and
15 some of the older buildings, they call it the Poor
16 Man's Harvard, I don't really recommend the school
17 for its facilities.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Mm-hmm

19 RICHARD JONES: I mean, the Architecture Building
20 is cool, but it is ironic that there is a big leak in
21 the roof currently that they have to fix.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is that one of those 100-
23 year-old buildings perhaps?

24 RICHARD JONES: It was the former library.

25 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. Juan?

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JUAN CARLOS VASQUEZ: It is a bit of a bitter pill, like this question, because as a native New Yorker, as a Bronxite, I am proud. I am proud to be a Bronxite. And I say that with my chest held up high, and a smile on my face. And, honestly, at BCC, even with all of the problems, I am happy. I am probably the happiest that I have ever been, because there are so many people, like Professor Kolozi, and people I work with at CRA, whether it is Ava or Richard, whoever, that are here and uplifting us and fighting. And that motivates me. So, yeah, I would definitely recommend it, because it is a hidden gem.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you all so much for your testimony today.

PANEL: Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I am going to call the next panel: Jean Grassman and Fabiola Salek Aseff.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You may begin, and please state your name for the record.

PROFESSOR FABIOLA SALEK ASEFF: (NO MIC)

(INAUDIBLE)...

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you please make sure
3 the microphone is on?

4 PROFESSOR FABIOLA SALEK ASEFF: Okay. So, I... My
5 name is Fabiola Salek Aseff. And, can I... you said
6 you cannot share? Can you share images? Can I add it
7 to my testimony when I submit it writing like photos?
8 Okay, cool.

9 Good afternoon, thank you for your support and
10 setting up this hearing. I'm a Professor and Chair.
11 World Languages, Literatures, and Humanities, as well
12 as the Vice Chair of PC CUNY York Chapter.

13 York is one of the nine colleges of concern
14 identified by CUNY - with a deficit of \$11.5 million
15 that our college is not able to absorb given the
16 chronic underfunding. And since the budget allocation
17 formula for York, as a New York college, heavily
18 relies on tuition, the revenue (INAUDIBLE) drop in
19 enrollment will impact us more than other schools.

20 These budget cuts have plunged the college into
21 a spiral of despair, where even our future existence
22 seems to be in question.

23 Since our establishment in 1967, our campus has
24 served as an engine of mobility for our diverse
25 student body with many first generation students...

1
2 and it was established Jamaica Queens, at the behest
3 of the Jamaica community. However, historical
4 underfunding has led to pressing issues impacting
5 York's campus and students' experience, jeopardizing,
6 education quality and jeopardizing health and safety.

7 With my fellow colleagues and the CUNY Watch
8 Dogs, which she is part of, we have been conducting
9 periodic walkthroughs, assessing water damage in the
10 roof, possible mold with reluctance to conduct any
11 testing by the administration - rodents and
12 infestation in the library and other common areas.
13 Unfortunately, we have been met with a lack of
14 transparency at every turn.

15 Some of the infrastructure concerns: Since fall
16 of 2019, our campus has lacked a cafeteria, depriving
17 students of a vital resource for sustenance and
18 community engagement. The closest dining options are
19 about 10 minutes away. The closest opening date we
20 were told this semester is fall 2025.

21 Elevators and (INAUDIBLE) stairs are in constant
22 state of disrepair - as we heard that's common at
23 many CUNY campuses. Persistent flooding due to roof
24 damage with leaks, notably in the library, has
25 resulted in water stains and missing ceiling tiles,

1 raising concerns about mold growth and structural
2 integrity. After a rainy day, we can see buckets
3 strategically placed in different areas.
4

5 Many areas have been cordoned off due to the
6 leaks, and tiles have fallen near students, faculty,
7 and staff, thus the several areas are now limits.

8 Additional areas, including the Biology
9 Department lab, and Financial Aid Office have also
10 suffered flooding due to busted water pipes.

11 In my own department, one of the Language Lab
12 floods on a yearly basis, damaging computers and
13 equipment. (TIMER CHIMES) This is exacerbated...

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. So that you
15 know, you can submit testimony on line up to 72 hours
16 after the close of the hearing.

17 PROFESSOR FABIOLA SALEK ASEFF: Okay, cool, thank
18 you.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. You may begin.

20 PROFESSOR JEAN GRASSMAN: (NO MIC) (INAUDIBLE) Oh,
21 there we go.

22 I would like to thank you for holding this
23 hearing. My name is Jean Grassman and I'm an
24 Associate Professor at the CUNY Graduate School of
25 Public Health Policy.

1
2 I'm going to speak to the desperate need for
3 funding to improve our building's physical
4 infrastructure so that the nearly 42,000
5 instructional and classified CUNY employees, of which
6 30,000 are PSC members, along with over 225,000
7 students, have safer and healthier conditions to work
8 in. I'm well qualified to do this, I teach Industrial
9 Hygiene and I've been the Health and Safety
10 Coordinator at the PSC for 15 years.

11 We have heard that CUNY has over 300 buildings
12 and their average is 50 years, so systems are
13 outdated.

14 So, what I'd really like to talk about is an
15 infrastructure, an example of a process that happens
16 at CUNY. And I'm going back to Bronx Community
17 College. As we know it's, uh, BCC is a Black and
18 Hispanic serving school, the majority of students
19 receive financial aid, and 40 percent have annual
20 household incomes of less than \$15,000.

21 In 2019, the heating pipes and Colstan Hall froze
22 and flooded dozens of offices and classroom, and
23 there were concerns about mold, and they had to
24 relocate for six weeks. So, you might say, well in
25 2019, it was a long time ago. Well last year, heat

1
2 went out in several buildings, including Meister Hall
3 leaving students, staff, and faculty were shivering
4 for weeks in the cold.

5 It was only after the situation was covered in a
6 national story published in Inside Higher Education
7 that a mobile boiler brought in to provide heat.

8 You might say, that was an isolated incident but,
9 early last year, a steam pipe broke in a classroom in
10 Colstan Hall soaking a couple of rooms. Let me repeat
11 that, this is a steam pipe breaking in a classroom.
12 Luckily, no one was present, and there were no
13 injuries, but it's a pattern. It is a pattern of
14 failure that is dangerous.

15 When we were re-occupancy walkthroughs at BCC,
16 one of our members was horrified by the decayed
17 condition of the classrooms. I will include a photo
18 with my testimony. It was so bad that the instructor
19 was in tears and pleaded for a better space saying,
20 "Please do something about this for the dignity of my
21 students."

22 BCC is not the only campus with problems - I
23 could tell you about the extremely hot studio
24 temperatures or the black goo dripping from the
25 ceiling at Brooklyn College, the water leaks and

1
2 associated black mold at BMCC, Medgar Evers, City
3 College, City Tech and so on, but I only have three
4 minutes.

5 I urge you support the funding needed, as we at
6 the PSC will, to correct these conditions. And it
7 comes with a lot of levels of benefits. It not only
8 makes (TIMER CHIMES) a healthier and safer workplace
9 for our members, but it permits us to better do the
10 work that we love at CUNY.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. And if you had
12 more, same thing, you can submit written testimony.

13 Just very quickly, a student comes up to you,
14 they say I really want to be a professor; I am
15 thinking about working at CUNY. I am interested to
16 know what you would tell them - based on the
17 facilities, if that would impact your decision to
18 guide them to work at CUNY or another institution?

19 PROFESSOR JEAN GRASSMAN: Oh, I would tell them to
20 do it. (LAUGHTER) I mean, I love... I mean, I think
21 all of us, that is what we share. I have been on
22 every campus in dozens of buildings, and I know... I
23 have seen horrors, but it is really the students and
24 what CUNY does for New York, and what CUNY can
25 convey. So, that is... For me, it's a no-brainer. Do

1
2 it! But know that you are going to have to struggle
3 with certain things. And the physical conditions are
4 significant. And I know that faculty have left
5 because of conditions. So, that's...

6 Professor Fabiola Salek Aseff: I think that is
7 especially true for people that needs labs. You know
8 lab space? And they need to conduct experiments. It
9 is very tough. I mean, we have people that ,you know,
10 basically, for coming up for tenure and promotions,
11 they need a running lab. And it takes years sometimes
12 for the labs to be set up, and by that time we are
13 setting them up for failure. That being said, I think
14 the faculty is outstanding. I think there is a lot of
15 lack of transparency with the administrations. And we
16 basically have a two-tier system where the
17 administrations come and go. For example, basically,
18 the faculty is there for the long term, but the
19 administration, if they feel this is not working,
20 they just find a new job and leave. So, that is a
21 consistent problem. And I think there is basically no
22 sharing, you heard this before, right? There is...
23 They know this, but I don't know why they try to,
24 instead of putting up a solution, they try to hide
25 it. Basically some college presidents are not...

1
2 clearly not reporting, or if they are reporting,
3 there is not solution they put forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
5 testimony today.

6 I am going to be calling the next panel.

7 PANEL: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

9 Ayesha Schmitt, Erin Lawson, and John Surico.

10 You may begin your testimony, and as a reminder,
11 please state your name for the record.

12 JOHN SURICO: Who should go first?

13 Good afternoon, I'm John Surico, the Senior
14 Fellow for Climate and Opportunity at the Center for
15 an Urban Future, an independent think tank focused on
16 creating a stronger and more inclusive economy in New
17 York. Thank you to Chair Dinowitz and this committee
18 for the opportunity to testify.

19 The Center for an Urban Future has published
20 extensive research on opportunities for policymakers
21 to strengthen CUNY as the City's most important
22 economic mobility engine—from launching CUNY
23 Reconnect to expanding the vital CUNY ACE program.
24 But policymakers have another massive opportunity
25 ahead: to help that engine go green.

1
2 Building a greener CUNY won't just help the City
3 meet its crucial emissions reduction goals. It will
4 also modernize an institution, like we heard today,
5 that helps more New Yorkers achieve economic mobility
6 than any other, but, sadly, is also home to an
7 alarming number of buildings that are failing its
8 mostly low-income students.

9 CUNY's nearly 300 buildings cover 29 million
10 ground square feet. The majority are over 50 years
11 old, reliant on gas- and oil-fired boilers and window
12 A/Cs. They are equipped with their original single-
13 pane glass windows, insufficient insulation, and
14 fixtures consuming far more resources than modern
15 alternatives. Only about 8 percent are in a state of
16 good repair.

17 Even so, CUNY has made progress. After a pandemic
18 lull, the system's carbon emissions intensity
19 continued to drop in 2022 and 2023. But the system
20 now faces a 24 percent cut to capital funding with
21 this budget request, which was already woefully
22 insufficient to meet basic needs, let alone help
23 slash the system's carbon footprint. CUNY has
24 developed a smart five-year plan to meet its climate
25 goals, but lacks the resources to see it through.

1 Meeting the city and state's commendable targets
2 for carbon emission reduction will be all but
3 impossible without a major new focus on helping
4 decarbonize CUNY.
5

6 Now is the time to act. New state and federal
7 legislation has catalyzed billions of dollars in new
8 funding and financing for building retrofits. New
9 York should leverage this moment to make a
10 generational investment in CUNY's net-zero future.

11 Fortunately, this effort has a secret weapon:
12 CUNY itself. The CUNY Building Performance Lab serves
13 as a hands-on research center for New York's
14 decarbonization efforts. City College has cutting-
15 edge renewable energy and building electrification
16 research centers. Students can earn degrees and
17 certifications in everything from clean energy HVAC
18 to solar power to sustainability in the urban
19 environment.

20 CUNY has the talent to realize this vision, with
21 a sustained capital investment.

22 The next steps are clear. First, this Council
23 should lead a major new initiative to green CUNY and
24 identify it as a key target for federal and state
25 decarbonization funds. Second, City Hall and Albany

1
2 should work together to boost CUNY capital investment
3 in this and future budgets, with a focus on
4 decarbonization and state of good repair needs.

5 Third, city and state leaders should work with CUNY
6 officials to harness its immense pool of talent to
7 build a more sustainable future.

8 By tapping into this unprecedented alignment, the
9 nation's most effective public university can become
10 its greenest, too. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. You may begin.

12 AYESHA SCHMITT: Hi, good afternoon my name is
13 Ayesha Schmitt, and I am the Higher Education
14 Coordinator for the New York Public Interest Research
15 Group, NYPIRG. Thank you for the opportunity to
16 testify today.

17 Safe, modern, efficient, and accessible building
18 and infrastructure at CUNY should be a given. It
19 should be top priority for City Council and our state
20 government to properly fund CUNY's capital budget to
21 provide a learning environment that encourages
22 enrollment and supports a student's path to
23 graduation.

24

25

1
2 At bare minimum, CUNY facilities need to provide
3 safe access to students classes and other campus
4 facilities.

5 Unfortunately, as a former CUNY student, and now
6 someone who works at a CUNY campus, I have seen the
7 deterioration of our college campuses over the past
8 nine years - from broken elevators, to malfunctioning
9 heating during the winter, to falling ceiling tiles,
10 to pest problems, the situation is serious at our
11 campuses - students who have buildings either too hot
12 to have class and focus while it is overheating, or
13 buildings with no heat at all that lead to classes
14 being moved to remote learning, like in Bronx
15 Community College last winter.

16 Former Hunter College student, Inez Schmidt,
17 shared how her classes had to dismiss early in fall
18 of 2022, because of how unbearable the heat had
19 gotten. These are not safe learning conditions for
20 our students.

21 Building accessibility is a problem at a number
22 of campuses. For one example, Hunter College Students
23 like Ariana Silva and Emily Klapper have shared that
24 they experience elevator delays consistently in
25

1 buildings with nearly 20 floors, sometimes adding an
2 additional 15 minutes, making them late for class.

3 We have heard from Staten Island students that
4 ceiling tiles have been missing or have fallen during
5 classes. More examples can be found searching social
6 media tags such as #CrumblingCUNY or looking at the
7 NYPIRG story bank on our website.

8 With a huge backlog of deferred maintenance in
9 the billions of dollars, city and state have not
10 properly funded CUNY's facilities.

11 To conclude, infrastructure issues at CUNY, and
12 specifically at community colleges in comprehensive
13 schools, should be a top focus before the situation
14 continues to get worse.

15 I am implore the Committee to fight for full
16 capital funding for CUNY. Thank you for your time.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

18 ERIN LAWSON: Good afternoon my name is Erin
19 Lawson, and I have recently been hired as the Student
20 Organizing Campaign Director New Yorkers for Higher
21 Education Funding Justice an organizing campaign that
22 engages students in conversations about higher
23 education funding inequality and the value of public
24 institutions - as well as to advocate for the passage
25

1 of the New York State Repair Act: Repair or repeal
2 egregious property accumulation and invest it right
3 is legislation that demands that NYU and Columbia pay
4 their fair share back to New York City. NYU and
5 Columbia are the largest private landowners in New
6 York City, and yet for decades they have received
7 real property tax exemptions, which causes New York
8 to lose out on more than \$300 million each year.
9

10 How many CUNY faculty members and course
11 offerings could be saved with over \$300 million? How
12 many CUNY students could graduate on time instead of
13 being held back with over \$300 million? How many
14 crumbling CUNY buildings and dilapidated classrooms
15 and broken elevators could be repaired with over \$300
16 million? How many hungry students could be fed with
17 over \$300 million? How many of CUNY's unhoused
18 students could be housed with over \$300 million?

19 As CUNY students go hungry, as their classrooms
20 fall apart, as a professors and professional staff
21 are laid off, and the services they deserve and the
22 classrooms they need to graduate are cut, NYU and
23 Columbia gobble up their surrounding communities,
24 destroying neighborhoods, and kicking people out of
25 their homes in an egregious display of wealth and

1
2 property accumulation - as they refuse to pay back
3 their fair share to the City of New York.

4 Eighty-two percent of CUNY students went to New
5 York City public high school and 85 percent of CUNY
6 students stay in New York City after they graduate.

7 (TIMER CHIMES) Over half of CUNY graduates go on to
8 work in healthcare, social assistance, education, and
9 public administration providing many of New York's
10 teachers, nurses, social workers and other essential
11 workers.

12 The positive impact of CUNY on New York City
13 cannot be clearer. An investment into CUNY is an
14 investment into our city.

15 The demand from Repair is very simple: for NYU
16 and Columbia to pay their fair share. If NYU and
17 Columbia were any other corporation, everyone would
18 be outraged of this plain display of tax evasion. But
19 NYU and Columbia hide behind the guise of education
20 while refusing to give back to the public education
21 system that runs this city.

22 The Council included support for Repair in its
23 2024 state budget priorities, and we thank you for
24 acknowledging the importance of a well-funded and
25 well-repaired CUNY.

1 The students of New York across CUNY campuses
2
3 NYC, and Columbia alike all already gathering,
4 organizing and agitating around Repair. We would like
5 to say to all the legislators - and NYU in Columbia -
6 what we are demanding is so simple: If you're going
7 to develop in *our* city so aggressively; if you're
8 going to accumulate wealth and property in such an
9 egregious manner; (TIMER CHIMES) if you're going to
10 benefit from everything New York City has to offer,
11 you should pay your fair share of taxes, and,
12 furthermore, these taxes should go right back into
13 the pockets of the institution of public higher
14 education to benefit the students who make this city
15 run.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you...

17 ERIN LAWSON: Thank you...

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: so much. Thank you very
19 much. I would like to thank this panel for their
20 testimony, and we have one more panel on Zoom.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We have a change here.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. So, this
23 concludes our in person portion of our public
24 testimony.

1
2 We will now move to remote testimony. If you are
3 test...

4 (PAUSE)

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, in the meantime,
6 while she is filling out a form, we will move to Zoom
7 testimony. If you are testifying remotely, once your
8 name is called a member of our staff will unmute you,
9 and you begin once the Sergeant at Arms sets the
10 clock and cues you. There are currently two Zoom
11 registrants, uh, and we are going to begin with Lina-
12 Marie Kirchner.

13 LINA-MARIE KIRCHNER: Good afternoon, my name is
14 Lina-Marie Kirchner, and I am a student at the
15 College of Staten Island of The City University of
16 New York, and I'm a volunteer member of the New York
17 Public Interest Research Group at CSI and testifying
18 as a student.

19 I would like to thank you for the opportunity to
20 testify on this very important testimony for higher
21 education in New York City today.

22 I'm an international student from Germany, and I
23 arrived to New York three months ago. I just begin my
24 undergrad program with a major psychology.

1
2 The experiences that I already had in the short
3 time regarding the financial issues of the CUNY and
4 SUNY schools are very alarming to me.

5 The College of Staten Island is an amazing
6 institution for higher education with the biggest
7 campus in New York City. It is beautiful, the student
8 is big, and I love to be a part of it. It makes me
9 sad to hear and to see how students struggle with
10 having multiple jobs, having issues with the
11 transportation to come to college, and the personal
12 issues they have to deal with and feel left alone
13 with. Many students have to face poverty and do not
14 even have enough money to buy menstrual products, or
15 they have to go without meals to be able to pay their
16 bills.

17 I cannot say how many emails I received during
18 the last months that informed me about elevator
19 failures, construction sites, where even pipes burst
20 that made people move their offices. Some doors of
21 the stalls in the restrooms fail to close properly;
22 some water taps do not run, and the facilities are
23 old and tend to have areas in need of renovation.

24 The last issue I would like to name is the lack
25 of student support and safety. During the last three

1
2 months, I was a witness to discrimination like
3 racism, gender discrimination, sexual harassment and
4 the pain that it leads to. I know about situations
5 when bathrooms, which are supposed to be private and
6 intimate areas, were used to make inappropriate
7 videos of the women who were then made to feel
8 vulnerable and unsafe - and also discrimination
9 against transgender students.

10 With more money we could improve the safety on
11 campus and create a safe environment to study, work,
12 and live. To create a safe environment on campus, an
13 appropriate environment to study and work, and to
14 avoid burnouts of young students, even before they
15 start to work in their profession, we need CUNY and
16 SUNY to be funded completely by the government.

17 I love this city. I really love to go to the
18 College of Staten Island, and I know that most of the
19 students would agree with me. This is only one of
20 many amazing colleges of CUNY and SUNY

21 I hope we will get the support that we need to
22 make this experience possible for everyone,
23 regardless of their income, and to support the
24 current student body regarding the named issues.

1
2 Please help us. Thank you for your time and for
3 listening to me.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

5 I will now call our remote panelist, and I
6 apologize in advance for the mispronunciation, Cole
7 Jagdeo.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 COLE JAGDEO: Hello, good morning, City Council,
10 Chair Dinowitz, and members.

11 My name is Cole Jagdeo, and I'm a student at
12 Queens Community College. I live in (BACKGROUND
13 NOISE) (INAUDIBLE) New York with my parents and
14 brother. We are all your speak to you about the state
15 of CUNY infrastructure and whether or not it is fit.
16 It is not.

17 On my campus, students have a clear view of many
18 ongoing infrastructure projects. I feel that these
19 investments are shortsighted. A lot of the projects
20 are much needed, but community colleges lack a long-
21 term investment strategy, specifically into strategic
22 initiatives.

23 While senior professional and graduate colleges
24 see increase of around \$5 billion over the next five
25

1 years, the community colleges have less than half of
2 that - around \$1 billion.

3
4 The total amounts are jarring, but if we account
5 for the number of senior professional and graduate
6 colleges, it seems to make sense.

7 What doesn't make sense is the requested capital
8 budget of community colleges for the years 2025 to
9 2027. Community colleges are requesting zero - best
10 case scenario, less than \$1,000 for strategic
11 investments specifically.

12 I hope to urge this panel to find a way to ease
13 the pressures community colleges face, specifically
14 physical infrastructure, which I'm glad you guys are
15 so passionate about.

16 I believe that prioritizing finishing physical
17 infrastructure quickly and effectively, will use the
18 pressures and allow the faculty at our institutions
19 to request and strategize for better investments
20 long-term.

21 An example of how the City's short term solution
22 approaches have harmed community college students,
23 would be internet access. Queens Community College
24 has had a long history of inconsistent internet
25 availability. Recently, we've had two outages - one

1
2 of them reportedly solved, and we got an email saying
3 it was solved. But, the next day we come into
4 classes, and professors are unable to access their
5 lessons, students are unable to access research
6 sites, my peers and I are unable to fact check
7 sources, answer interdisciplinary questions, and
8 depth-full conversations without access to reliable
9 internet.

10 By prioritizing the infrastructure of CUNY
11 colleges, that are the least with the modern, with
12 the lowest reliability, I believe that we would be
13 able to push CUNY into the direction of what was
14 meant to be - a lasting institution that grants
15 social mobility to those with the least resources.
16 Thank you for your time.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Cole.

18 Is Matthew Arend (sp?) online?

19 Okay, thank you. We will now go back to in person
20 testimony with Johanna Von Maach.

21 JOHANNA VON MAACH: Thank you so much for hosting
22 this today. My name is Johanna, and I'm a student at
23 Hunter College; I'm also former Brooklyn College
24 alumni.

1
2 And I will say that during my time at CUNY, I
3 have seen so many problems related to infrastructure-
4 most of it just within this last year at Hunter:
5 Broken elevators; broken escalators; run down
6 classrooms; broken facilities; libraries; cafeterias,
7 all facing these same conditions, making it harder
8 for students to study or even eat healthy; signs
9 displaying asbestos warnings; mold on the floors;
10 problems of rats, bedbugs roaches - I mean, you read
11 the article, you know what it's like.

12 Anytime it rains, I don't think the article
13 mentioned this, I see how Hunter College puts out
14 these buckets and these fluorescent swimming pools to
15 try and catch the water. And these are just
16 conditions that are not just at Hunter but other CUNY
17 campuses as well.

18 I'm just here more so to kind of convey the
19 frustration I have, especially more so when I saw
20 Admin here earlier today.

21 I'm always hearing ,you know, these discussions
22 related to funding and repairing and infrastructure,
23 but I'm not seeing it happen and neither are a lot of
24 the students, faculty, and staff -some of whom are
25

1 here, some of whom are online - most who weren't able
2 to make it.

3
4 I'm hearing so much about CUNY funding being put
5 into the construction of buildings like the SPARC or
6 the nursing center that they mentioned here earlier
7 today, but conveniently CUNY Admin failed to mention
8 that it's being built after the Brookdale Dorms are
9 being torn down - one of the only affordable options
10 for CUNY students to dorm in.

11 I am always hearing stuff about money being
12 invested in AI programs, and all these other things,
13 but where is the funding that's fixing the very real
14 and current problems that CUNY students are currently
15 facing - that is impacting their ability to learn to
16 teach?

17 Only 8 percent of our buildings are in a state of
18 good repair, and it is a shame that New York has even
19 allowed it to get this bad. Our city needs to invest
20 in CUNY, not necessarily because it generates a
21 profit or because it's a good business decision. That
22 isn't how we should be proceeding a University.

23 CUNY needs to be invested in, so New Yorkers can
24 have access to a fully funded institution that can
25 help enrich the city and transform the lives of

1
2 millions. And I just don't know how we're going to do
3 that if we're dealing with leaky ceilings and tiles.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
5 testimony.

6 Is there anyone else in the room who plans to
7 testify? Is there anyone else online?

8 I want to thank everyone for coming today, and
9 for everyone who testified - the advocates, the
10 students, the professors, and CUNY Administration
11 for... Now my time is running out. (LAUGHTER) (TIMER
12 CHIMES) It happens even to me.

13 I want to thank everyone for testifying today. It
14 is very clear that there are a lot of investments
15 that need to be made both in the physical structures
16 of our buildings, but also in the communication and
17 the transparency of the repairs that really need to
18 go on, and that there are a lot of investments being
19 made in new buildings, but it is clearly not enough.
20 And as we move forward, I look forward to ensuring
21 that those investments are made with the staff, with
22 the funding, and working with CUNY to ensure that
23 CUNY remains a worldclass institution that serves as
24 the greatest engine of social and economic mobility
25 in New York and in the country.

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COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

The meeting is adjourned.

(GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING OUT)

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date May 15, 2024