

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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March 20, 2026

Start: 12:34 p.m.

Recess: 3:58 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING
ROOM 3

B E F O R E: Rita C. Joseph, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joann Ariola
Eric Dinowitz
Harvey D. Epstein
Farah N. Louis
Virginia Maloney

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Phil Wong
Gale A. Brewer
Linda Lee

A P P E A R A N C E S

Alicia Alvero, Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost for City University of New York

Hector Batista, Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer for City University of New York

Ken Godiner, Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer for City University of New York

Meetu Dhar, Managing Attorney of City Council Services for Citizenship Now at City University of New York

James Davis, President of Professional Staff Congress

Akkeem Polack, Chairperson of the CUNY University Student Senate

Damir Shavkatov, Vice Chair for Senior College Affairs

Julian Vera, Vice Chair for Students with Disabilities for the CUNY University Student Senate

Josiah Ramesar, Vice Chair for Graduate Affairs in the CUNY University Student Senate

Fatima Zahara-Kamil, Vice Chair for International Studies in the CUNY University Student Senate

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

Rhota Wilson, Vice Chair of Legislative Affairs
for the CUNY University Student Senate

Lo Anderson, Community Organizer with Students
for Students and Student Engagement Coordinator
for CUNY Cares

Jana Bergere, Program Coordinator for the New
York Public Interest Research Group

Kilsys Payamps-Roure, Executive Director of
Braven New York

Matthew Ahrens, CUNY student

Sakeena Trice, Senior Staff Attorney in the
Disability Justice Program at the New York
Lawyers for the Public Interest

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Hello. This is mic check. This is a hearing for Higher Education. This is Sergeant Roman Petrov. It's check mic recording.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. Welcome to today's New York City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing for the Committee on Higher Education.

Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices.

There are no food and beverages allowed in this Hearing Room.

If you wish to testify, please fill out an appearance card with one of the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Moving forward, no one is to approach the dais.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [GAVEL] Good afternoon, everyone. I am Council Member Rita Joseph, Chair of the New York City Committee on Higher Education. Welcome to today's hearing on the City's Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Budget Hearing for the City University of New York.

Before we begin, I want to acknowledge the Council Members present, Council Member Louis, Council Member Epstein.

CUNY consists of 26 colleges throughout all five boroughs and is an essential form of economic mobility for New Yorkers. In 2024, over 46,000 CUNY graduates entered the workforce or began a more advanced degree program. CUNY alumni generate approximately 70 billion in annual earnings, and every tax dollar that is invested in CUNY yields a return of at least 15 dollars for New York State. CUNY's Fiscal 2027 preliminary budget totaled 1.5 billion, which includes 1.11 billion in personal service to support 6,024 budgeted positions, including 4,289 pedagogical positions and 1,735 non-pedagogical positions. CUNY budgets also include 436 million in other-than-personal services spending. In this preliminary budget, OPTS' budget has decreased by nearly 61 million compared to last year's adopted budget due to one-time funding for several programs, including CUNY ReConnect, ASAP, and ACE not being accounted for in the budget. CUNY's proposal Fiscal 2027 budget comprises mostly of 75.7

percent of City funding and 19.6 percent of State funding. The restoration and expansion of funding are crucial to providing adequate service, academic support, and financial resources for students to succeed in their education.

Many students struggle with housing instability, food insecurity, child care issues, and the high cost of transportation. Again, we must invest in programs that clear pathways to increase graduation rates.

At today's hearing, I look forward to hearing how current CUNY programs deliver for our students, as well as discussing potential resources needed to continue to break barriers to education, regardless of students' physical mobility, financial condition, or immigration status. We will also examine programs that aim to inspire New York City public school students to consider higher education after graduation. Furthermore, we are interested in hearing about CUNY's Fiscal 2027 budget ask at the State and City levels. There is no doubt that many CUNY buildings are in desperate need of maintenance and repair for issues such as, but not limited to,

2
3 leaking roofs, non-working elevators. We will examine
4 how University prioritized capital projects funding
5 to ensure that it provides equity repairs and
6 maintenance across all colleges. We must also find
7 disparities that exist in programs and between
8 campuses and work to address them.

9 CUNY has the power to bring positive
10 change to New Yorkers' lives. We must continue to
11 fund equitable programs to better serve existing
12 students and attract the prospective ones.

13 Before we begin, I would like to thank
14 Finance Staff Allie Stofer, Florentine Kabore, and
15 Aisha Wright for their work on this hearing, as well
16 as Committee Staff Julia Goldsmith-Pinkham and Regina
17 Paul for their support. Finally, I would like to also
18 thank my Staff, Juvanie Piquant, my Chief-of-Staff.

19 And now I'll turn it over to Counsel to
20 administer the oath to the Members of the
21 Administration.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your
right hand. I'll address you each at a time.

Do you swear to tell the truth before
these Committee Members to the best of your ability?

2 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: I do.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you swear?

4 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I do.

5 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I do.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

7 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Thank
8 you. Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and Members of the
9 City Council Higher Education Committee. Thank you
10 for the opportunity to be here today. My name is
11 Alicia Alvero, and I serve as the Executive Vice
12 Chancellor and University Provost for CUNY. I am
13 joined today by CUNY's Executive Vice Chancellor and
14 Chief Operating Officer, Hector Batista, and Senior
15 Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer, Ken
16 Godiner.

17 Before I begin, I want to welcome those
18 of you who are new to this Committee. We look forward
19 to partnering with you to address the challenges of
20 higher education and to support our students.

21 The power of CUNY as an engine of
economic mobility is widely known and is something I
identify with as a first-generation college student.
When I first came to CUNY Queens College as an

assistant professor in 2003, I was relieved to learn the college offered affordable childcare for faculty and student parents. This center allowed me to pursue my career knowing that my daughter, then three and a half, was close by and in good hands. Without this support, I would not be sitting here today. And without our partners in government, we would not continue our critical work. The City Council's support is essential to helping the university expand access for students and increase its role as an engine of upward mobility and economic development. Your investments in our programs have fueled three straight years of enrollment gains at CUNY and propelled our colleges to the top of national rankings year after year.

Our work is not finished. To meet workforce demands and to strengthen outcomes for our students, we are expanding our programs and facilities to ensure our students have the best chance of success. Creating a pipeline of qualified workers to the City's workforce remains an urgent priority at CUNY. We created innovative programs and partnerships to further align the University to

workforce needs and ultimately to get our students jobs.

In my role as a Chief Academic Officer, I oversee many of these key initiatives that partner with the City and the Council, like CUNY Beyond, which was launched in October. CUNY Beyond is a system-wide initiative that bakes career readiness into every aspect of an undergraduate's college experience. The initiative aims to triple the number of students in paid internships and increase employer recruitment from CUNY by 20 percent, ensuring a smooth transition from the classroom to the workforce. Through career-connected learning, academic and career advising, paid internships and apprenticeships, and employer engagement, we will enable students to launch fulfilling careers after they graduate. We started in July with four campuses, and we are looking to the Council for support in expanding to two more community colleges and 70,000 students in the next phase. Successful implementation of all our undergraduate campuses is projected to drive an estimated 3.3 billion dollars in future wage

growth and provide a 700 million return on public investment through earnings and economic mobility.

CUNY has worked hard to strengthen its partnerships with NYCPS, knowing that the key to unlocking in-demand careers for students is to equip them with the post-secondary credentials and connections to employees before they graduate high school. Programs like CollegeNow and Future Ready NYC ensure our students see themselves as college students with professional career paths and a head start on life after college. CollegeNow nearly serves 16,000 high school seniors from the class of 2025, while Future Ready NYC has shown steady growth, with enrollment rising from an estimated 7,500 students in Fiscal Year 2025 to a projected 10,000 students in Fiscal Year 2026. CUNY also plays a critical role in addressing the statewide teacher shortage. I'm proud to say that CUNY prepares more than one-third of all New York City public school teachers and more than 40 percent of teachers of color in New York State. This stems from innovative programs like the NYC Teaching Fellows, which placed 526 recent college graduates into New York City classrooms and master's degree

programs across the university in 2025, more than tripling the numbers enrolled in the program at CUNY the previous year.

CUNY is also working to expand its already robust early childhood education program to help advance Governor Hochul and Mayor Mamdani's shared goal of delivering free childcare for two-year-olds across New York City. With 17 campus-based childcare centers, 13 early childhood degree programs, and work of the New York Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, CUNY is uniquely positioned to support the student parents while also recruiting, training, credentialing, and retaining the educators needed to make the Governor and Mayor's efforts successful.

Through bilingual credit-bearing programs, we are ensuring these opportunities reach as many students and families as possible. The same goes for CUNY's landmark accessibility management system, CUNY Accommodate, which has streamlined requests for disability services and helped connect more students than ever to a broader network of resources. Since launching last January, enrollment

of students requesting services has shot up by approximately 25 percent, reaching a record-breaking 13,800 students, and the academic year is not yet complete. CUNY Accommodate also continues to be an important lever for the incoming NYCPS graduates who want to connect with their respective campus disability offices early. We have revamped our communications process and are committed to having a more seamless data-sharing infrastructure in place by June of this year to benefit the high school class of 2026, and we are on track to meet our goal.

In fall 2022, with support from the New York City Council, we launched CUNY ReConnect to address a pressing workforce need and another underserved group, reengaging hundreds of thousands of working-age adults who earned college credits but stopped short of completing a degree. Thanks to nearly 7.6 million in direct financial support to date, CUNY ReConnect has graduated almost 6,000 associate degree students and over 7,000 bachelor's degree students, strengthening not only individual families, but New York City's economy as a whole.

CUNY's groundbreaking ASAP program of financial, educational, and career advisement services for associate degree students continues to more than double three-year completion rates at the university when compared to non-ASAP students. The program, which also provides personalized advisement, tuition and fee gap awards, textbook assistance, and OMNY Cards, has supported nearly 70 institutions across nine states to replicate CUNY's innovative model of student success and access.

ACE, a related program that supports bachelor's degree completion, achieved a four-year graduation rate 12.4 percent higher than qualifying students who did not participate. However, uncertainty surrounds the program because it is not yet baselined.

Another new initiative to help support students, CUNY Cares, started in fall 2023 to help Bronx students find the campus and essential services they need for health care, mental health, food, and housing. By helping students meet these needs, CUNY Cares hopes to improve academic success and overall well-being of students who need it most. So far,

preliminary results are encouraging. By fall 2025, more than 1,000 additional Bronx students were enrolled in SNAP compared to 2022, with an average monthly SNAP benefit of 233 dollars. These students collectively brought an estimated 2.96 million dollars into their household budgets in that year alone.

Lastly, I want to highlight achievements among CUNY researchers and how they've impacted New York City by improving public health, climate resilience, and workforce readiness. From the NYC Urban Heat Portal at Hunter College, to FloodNet's real-time flood monitoring, to informing the City's COVID and MPOX response, CUNY researchers continue to help the city address emergencies while supporting workforce development through programs that train students for climate, public health, and technology careers.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to thank the City Council for your unwavering commitment to CUNY and its students, faculty, and staff. Our success is intertwined in the City's economic,

social, and cultural vitality. We look forward to continuing to partner with you.

Now, I'd like to turn it over to CUNY COO and EVC Hector Batista to further address the importance of our collaboration with the City to reach our shared goals of equity and access for all New Yorkers. Thank you.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Thank you, Alicia, and thank you, Speaker Menin, Chair Joseph, Members of the Higher Education Committee, and all Members of the City Council for your steadfast support of CUNY.

We deeply appreciate your commitment to our students, faculty, and staff, and for always recognizing the value CUNY provides to our city and state. Before I turn to the FY27 preliminary budget, let me first offer an update on CUNY's financial position. We testified here last year with a clear picture of the financial challenges facing CUNY. Our plan for stabilizing our financial position, tackling CUNY's structural deficit, has been and continues to be a top priority. Structural deficit is largely driven by steep enrollment decline and unfunded

mandatory costs that the University has had to absorb over several years. Through a detailed review of campus financial plans, sound decision-making, and close collaboration with our campus community, we have made considerable progress, but there is more to do.

The progress we've made on the expense side of the ledger has involved hard but necessary decisions at the campus level. We developed a framework for assessing college financing that is more targeted than across the board savings plans that we had to compel to undertake during the pandemic. This targeted approach examined key indicators such as the presence of a cash deficit, the size of the college structural deficit as a percent of its budget, and the amount of the campus reserve. Originally, nine colleges were deemed to be of high financial concern. We worked very hard with working with them on a hiring restriction and deficit reduction target to reduce their expenses. Through a disciplined approach, close partnership, and support of these campuses, we have brought that number down to six colleges, and one is getting closer to coming

off that list. We continue to work closely with colleges still on the list to improve their financial condition while focused on a balanced approach to reduce expenses and opportunities to generate revenues.

University-wide, we have realized significant reduction in structural deficit. Among the factors leading to declines are expense reductions across the University, addition of State aid, and an enrollment uptick. The combination of these factors has led to a nearly 68 percent reduction on overall structural deficit from 234 million dollars in FY22 to an estimated 76 million dollars projected at the end of FY26, according to the mid-year estimate. This year, enrollment growth was over 3.5 percent for a two-year increase of 5.5 on almost 13,000 students. This translated into additional revenues that for every 1 percent increase in enrollment generates approximately 14.3 million dollars. We enter this budget cycle with a goal to sustaining our momentum, but we recognize the uncertainty that exists, including actions at the federal level that can have a direct impact on CUNY

or have an indirect impact because increased pressure on the State and City budget. That is why we continue to advance our efficiency strategy by implementing system-wide shared service initiatives, including centralizing IT, procuring contracts to benefit our economy at scale, moving our facility to a shared service model to more effectively deploy maintenance and repairs, and allow the consolidated service contract to negotiate better pricing and better services. We are also streamlining tuition fee collection, planning these initiatives, including upfront investment required to build operational infrastructure as well as underway. We're beginning to see some initial savings, and we're hopeful that further implementation initiatives will achieve meaningful efficiencies in FY27.

Now turning to the preliminary budget, its impact on our operating budget. We thank the Administration for fully funding the labor contract and the rise in health care insurance costs. Our priority going forward is to ensure the continued funding for our increased costs, especially collective bargaining fringe benefit on the expense

side of the house. In this budget cycle, our top priority is funding vital capital projects for our community college.

We thank you for a strong advocacy for CUNY programs. We look forward to working closely with you and your Colleagues to ensure funding for many of these important programs in the adopted budget. I want to highlight a few areas that we look forward to you.

Partnership and support for additional funding. Early childhood workforce development to strengthen our early child education pipeline, which is so important as the City expands its 3K and 2K. Baseline funding for ReConnect, which has proven to be a very successful program. Additional funding to support students with disability. Funding for free OMNY Card pilot, which is a priority for our student senate. And some of our other programs are ASAP, ACE, Food and Security, Child Care, just to name a few.

Lastly, let me turn it over to facilities. As you know, CUNY has set an ambition goal to bring our facilities to a state of good repair from 50 percent to 55 percent. A vital system

of state of good repair by 2030. We're proud of what we have accomplished so far. Approximately 33 percent of our vital system now in a state of good repair, which is up from 27 percent from last year, and our baseline was 23 percent when we started. Our strategy for meeting these goals include assessing the health of our different building components, enable us to better prioritize our capital program. By using data metrics, we can more efficiently expand our capital dollars and improve our facilities for our students, faculty, and staff. Our priorities are also shaped by close collaboration with our campus community and through engagement with elected officials who seek to allocate discretionary funding for CUNY projects. While we can target what needs to be addressed, our priority in order, we cannot make progress without continued funding. We need dollars estimated at 200 million dollars on the capital side for community college to bring them to a state of good repair. We look forward to securing funding from the City of 100 million dollars and to be matched by the State.

CUNY FY27 preliminary budget includes 1.5 billion dollars in a 10-year plan. As previous cycle,

CUNY realigns its capital funding, projected schedule to better match the years the project is in the works. With regular communication with OMB about the status of our capital commitment, we thank the Administration for recognizing the timing of the capital projects that are already in the plan and for better matching the plan to when the projects are commencing.

In conclusion, I would once like to express my gratitude to the City Council for supporting CUNY's priorities, and this plan is critical that CUNY capital request is funded, including the money we need to reach our state of good repair, as well as specific projects for the campus. We look forward to working with you to deliver much-needed resource for this invaluable institution. We thank you for the opportunity to testify and look forward to answering your questions.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'd like to recognize Council Member Dinowitz, Council Member Ariola on Zoom, and Council Member Maloney.

CUNY's Fiscal 2027 budget in the preliminary plan does not restore critical one-time

funding for CUNY ReConnect, ACE, and ASAP. Can you provide an updated number of students currently enrolled in the CUNY ReConnect, ASAP, and ACE by campus?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: For CUNY ASAP, we are at 20,343 students enrolled in fall 2025. Do you want the breakdown of every single college here? 2,200. Bronx, we have 2,248. BMCC, 5,545. City Tech, 1,212. Hostos, 1,240. Kingsborough, 2,289. LaGuardia, 2,780. Medgar Evers, 594. Queensborough, 2,646. Staten Island, 1,793.

For ACE, City College is 150. City Tech, 392. John Jay is 1,024. Lehman, 597. Medgar Evers, 44. Queens, 249. Staten Island, 373. And York is 387 for a total of 3,216 ACE fall enrollment.

For CUNY ReConnect, we have a total of 23,032 students. And by campus, starting with the senior colleges, Baruch, we have 814. Brooklyn, 232. City College, 255. At the Graduate School, we have 8. At Hunter, 856. John Jay, 402. Labor and Urban Studies is 124. We have 1 at the Law School. Lehman is 591. Medgar Evers, 334. At the Medical School, we have 2. At New York City Tech, we have 358. The

School of Professional Studies, 1,121. Public Health, 64. At Queens College, 2,664. College of Staten Island, 827. And at York, 1,369 for a total of 10,022.

And at the community colleges, at BMCC, we have 5,125. At Bronx, we have 1,558. At Guttman, 73. Hostos, 2,037. Kingsborough, 1,117. LaGuardia, 554. At Queensborough, 2,546. For a total at the community colleges of 13,010.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. And the schools with the lower numbers, there's outreach or there's...

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes, there's outreach. And when we communicate with students, we ask them where they went to school. Some want to switch schools. We evaluate their credits to determine... a lot of times, these students have accumulated a lot of credits because they switched their major too many times, and sometimes it makes more sense to finish at a different school that has a major where those credits align and they're more closely aligned to graduation.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And it's easy to
transfer within the system?

4 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
5 Correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Like CUNY to CUNY.

7 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
Exactly.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.
9 How much are you requesting for each of
10 these programs in Fiscal 2027?

11 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: So, for
ReConnect, 7.8, and for ASAP, 6.4, and ACE is 10.1.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Impactful programs
13 like ReConnect and ACE have no funding currently
14 baseline. How does this impact CUNY's ability to
continue to plan for programming?

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I will
16 take that one. The challenge with the uncertainty is
17 recruiting for the following year. With ASAP, we know
18 how much is baselined now, and we thank you very much
19 for that support, so we're able to aim for the 20,000
20 student enrollment each year. But the uncertainty is
the remaining 4,000 to 5,000, and so that is always

the challenge, because if we wait until we find out when we have that money, we're at the last minute trying to recruit students, and students very much love these programs. And so, it's just that balance of what we can anticipate with baseline funding and the time for preparation of those services.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Got it. Thank you.

The budget for CUNY ReConnect in the Fiscal 2026 adopted was 7.8 million, which is an increase from 1.9 million from the funding allocated in 2025. How has this additional 1.9 million further expand the program? And how can you explain how the funding is being used?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I will tell you the most beneficial impact was the grant aid that we were able to provide to the students. So many students that had balances of 1,000 or less, that was the impetus for re-registering and coming back to school and eliminated that small obstacle is what allowed them to enroll back in school. And that was the most strategic way in which we were able to use the funding. Another thing that it enabled is the recruiters with ReConnect, that they provide really

great touch points and care, and they ensure that they help them every step of the way. Some of these students, because they've been out of school so long, felt the process very overwhelming, and being able to provide that level of support to them was invaluable because they develop a very trusting relationship with these advisors and help them through the entire registration process to get them re-enrolled.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you.

The CUNY ReEntry Higher Education Program supports incarcerated individuals in re-entering higher education. What is the Fiscal 2026 budget and the projected 2027 budget for this program?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: We'll have to get back to you. I'm sorry I don't have that specific initiative.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We would love to see what the numbers look like, how many folks you've impacted, and do you also find job placements once the student sits finished in your program as these are incarcerated individuals who are re-entering our society?

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I can
4 get you that information. The majority of that work
5 happens at John Jay College, and so we're happy to
6 provide that information for you.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

8 And the CUNY Fatherhood Academy provides
9 support to unemployed and underemployed dads with
10 their educational goals and getting new and better
11 jobs. The program is currently offered at LaGuardia
12 Community College, Hostos Community College,
13 Kingsborough Community College. How many students are
14 enrolled by college?

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Getting
16 to the page. So, we have 141 students currently
17 enrolled in the Fatherhood Academy, and I do not... oh,
18 yes, I do. Thank you. For Hostos, in Fiscal Year '25,
19 we had 41 new students for a total of 414, and so the
20 number I listed before is the number of new students.
21 Kingsborough was 28, a total of 324. For LaGuardia,
90 for a total of 851. And, yeah, so then the total
in the program is 1,589.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What is the budget
for this program for Fiscal 2026 and FY27?

2
3 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: The
4 budget's 1 million dollars. We've expended all of
5 that already. We're looking to get the million
6 dollars baseline and any increase that we could get.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And there's been
8 discussion about expanding the Fatherhood Academy to
9 other campuses?

10 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: With
11 additional funding, we would gladly expand it.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How do you recruit
13 fathers for this program? How is the outreach done,
14 and how do you retain them, and what's the next step
15 once they graduate from you? Do you continue to
16 support it, provide support?

17 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.
18 Some of the students that we recruit, so we actively
19 partner with New York City Public School because the
20 ones that dropped out of high school, we have the
21 program to get them their GED and support them that
way. We also have a very robust marketing campaign.
Word of mouth has actually proven to be a very
powerful tool as well. And so whether they are in the
pre-enrollment GED process, we have a seamless

2 pipeline to enroll them then into the associate
3 degree and then the bachelor's degree.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you prep them and
5 allow them to enter your CUNY system?

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
7 Absolutely.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's great.

9 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: That is
the goal.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: New York City Men
11 Teach, which is part of the Young Men's Initiative in
12 partnership between the Office of the Mayor and New
13 York City Public Schools and CUNY to increase the
14 number of men of color in the teaching field. How
15 many men are being served by the program currently
16 and how many have been served since the beginning of
the program?

17 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I do
18 not have the total since the beginning of the
19 program, but this year we have 249 new students. Six
20 hundred each year are recruited into the program, and
21 we meet that target every year, and it's across 16
colleges.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you help New York
City Public Schools with placement?

4 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
5 Absolutely.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what's some of
the criteria? Is it high need where there is no Black
7 male presence in those schools?

8 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We work
9 with New York City Public School, and they establish
10 the criteria that's necessary, so I'm unfamiliar with
the criteria. But since that's one of the goals of
11 the program, I suspect that that's exactly what is
12 done is making that connection and placing them in
13 places of high demand.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What is the current
Fiscal 2026 and projected 2027 budget for this
15 program?

16 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: This is
17 for BMI, right?

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: New York City Men
Teach.

19 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Oh, Men
20 Teach.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And in the area of
4 shortage of teachers, is there a plan to also expand
5 this program to also recruit more teachers through
6 this program?

7 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: With
8 increased funding, absolutely. I can tell you what
9 the operating budget was last year, 3.05 million
10 dollars.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And, of course, more
12 money would give you more students.

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
14 Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I see the line.

16 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: More money.

18 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: The
19 target, we are limited to 600 new each year based off
20 of the budget.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Got it. Got it.

Yeah, so it kind of circled into the
question I was leading up to, how does this program
help to reduce teacher shortage issues in specific
targeted areas?

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:

4 Absolutely. It's been instrumental for that. We have
5 not had an issue with recruiting and meeting that
6 demand based on the budget.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What other programs
8 can you have to encourage people of color into
9 workforce, and what are the budgets for those
10 programs?

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: So, the
12 other programs that we have are open to all, and
13 because of the diverse nature of our population, we
14 meet the workforce demands. They're open to all of
15 our students. And, as you know, our enrollment
16 population is extremely diverse. So, I will tell you
17 in the teacher education specifically, we have a lot
18 of amazing programs in teacher education because of
19 the strong partnership with NYCPS. The teaching
20 fellows is just one of them, which we account for 55
21 percent now of the New York City fellows put in the
placement. We also work closely and are recruiting
the paraprofessionals that are currently in the NYCPS
to provide them with a launching pad to advance their
credentials for the goal of becoming a teacher. We

are offering a workshop webinar series. There's over 1,000 people already interested in the teacher education program. These partnerships are paying off. This year was the first year we saw over 400 students increase enrollment specifically for education programs, and we worked very closely with NYCPS for the placement and the training throughout that as well.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Music to my ears that we're trying to fill in the gap for teacher shortage.

What does that look like, especially with the needs for early childhood? I know that's going to be a need across the city. Can you tell us how many teachers you're looking to train in that space, from all levels, from entry level, because people think teachers are teachers. We started at entry level, especially in CBOs. There's different levels. Can you tell us what does that look like?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:

Absolutely. That's one of the things I'm most excited to talk about because as you alluded, it starts with child care, early childhood, which is a different credential than the classroom teacher. There is a

very high demand and will be even more so. We are anticipating over 3,800 people may be necessary for the two-year-old program from the Governor and the Mayor. Most of those will require CDA, and that CDA credential, we partnered with the School of Professional Studies at CUNY. We offer it online and hybrid. Last year, we actually created it bilingual to increase because we know that a lot of the home services and center-based services are provided in Spanish. In one semester alone, we have 161 students in that program.

I can tell you about a few other things. Yes, we anticipate about 3,800 home-based child care providers may need that credential, and so we have a pipeline. One of the things in creating that pipeline that we were very intentional about because it's 12 credits, we ensured every single credit counts towards an associate or bachelor's degree if someone chooses to then pursue their education, and it aligns with those degrees very seamlessly.

And I want to say that one out of every 20 undergraduate degrees awarded by CUNY was in the education field, and almost one-third of all of our

2 master's degrees and 45 percent of all of our
3 advanced certificates are in education every single
4 year.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

6 One issue impacting CUNY students we hear
7 a lot is housing insecurity. Without secure housing,
8 it's difficult for one to focus on their education.
9 What program does CUNY has to offer students
10 regarding housing insecurity and what are the budgets
for those programs?

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: So, the
12 most impactful program that we have is CUNY CARES,
13 and that model has been extremely impactful where we
14 hold the students' hands through the process of
15 applying and identifying their needs to enroll them
16 and find placement for them, and that is the program
17 that we have seen the most success in because we know
18 the process for not just identifying their needs but
19 fulfilling their needs, whether it's food insecurity,
housing insecurity, and making that connection in
order to enroll and provide that access.

20 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I just
21 want to add that recently we negotiated a couple of

2 dorm deals in the private sector, and one of the
3 components of that negotiation was to try to create
4 an affordable component to that, and we actually have
5 two dorms right now that the price point for our
6 students is going to be really way below market, so
7 it's a model that we're trying to duplicate as much
8 as we can and working with the private sector since
they want to do business with CUNY.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Strategic
10 partnerships are so important in this city.

11 So, do you have a budget for the CUNY
12 CARES?

13 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: I
14 believe it's a million dollars.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How much?

16 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: One
17 million.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One million? We're
19 going to stay on the same theme. This is what we need
20 for it to work.

21 How many CUNY students are formally or
currently unhoused? Do you keep track of this number
of cases where students request assistance?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: So, we capture that information currently in our biannual survey of students, the Student Experience Survey, and in that survey 5 percent of the total university population has indicated that they have experienced housing insecurity within the last year. And so based off of that estimate, it would be about 7,871 students within one year have reported housing insecurity.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's when the numbers are a little too high.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes, and we have that percentage of numbers available by campus if you'd like.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you.

And the same goes with food insecurity. We know that's something our students face as well, so students struggling with food insecurity, which can add an additional barrier to students being able to attend class or feeling well enough to attend classes. Many CUNY campuses offer food pantry or Fresh Food program. How much was spent on the CUNY food pantries and by college in Fiscal 2026?

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I don't
4 know if you have that number.

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: In the
6 food security code, the budget is in '26, about
7 875,000 dollars. We've expended about 20 percent of
8 that so far. You know, obviously data's a little on
9 the lag, so it's probably from February.

10 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: And I
11 want to add that all of the colleges also seek grants
12 and receive funding from grants and philanthropic
13 partners. As a result of that, the amount of food
14 available at the food pantries varies substantially
15 because the money that we receive is insufficient to
16 meet the demands of the students. I do have some
17 numbers to kind of share the impact of that. In
18 Fiscal Year '25, we gave out 33,736 bags of foods
19 that were distributed. And the campuses recorded in
20 Fiscal Year '25, 177,564 visits to our food pantries.
21 So, we know that there's a very high demand, and one
of our goals is to be able to meet that increasing
demand.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How is the amount of
the funding per campus determined? How do you

determine which campuses get what amount of money for the food pantry?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Well, we use the Student Experience Survey and the results that indicate where we capture the housing and food insecurity, and then we have a conversation with each campus. Some have very strong philanthropic partners. And so, we know what the amount of money based off of the student survey results, what percentage of the students are likely to need support. And we engage in a conversation with them because some colleges do not have such strong additional support. Some have successfully obtained grants for this as well. And so, while they may have a high need, may need less Fiscally from us, which allows us then to meet the undersourced campuses.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I did a visit to a college. And one of the things that were discussed is the food pantry visit was timed during the year that the food pantries are open. School breaks leave many students once again without food access. During the school break, how can we fix that? That's one of the things I know I see across. For example, I have a

pantry in one of my high schools in my District. And one of the things we do with the young people is they get to take food over the weekend because we don't see them and we don't know what they eat. So, is that something that CUNY is being considered during the break? Students can take what they need to go home?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: There are some schools that because they receive additional funding are able to offer those extended hours. But it really comes back to the fiscal resources available to offer the extended hours.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how much additional funding would we need to expand food pantries to serve food during school breaks as well? That's another question.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yep. I would get you that number.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're going to get me some numbers? Okay.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Would love to.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Aside from food
4 pantries, what option do CUNY provide to students
5 facing food insecurities?

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Aside
7 from the Fresh Food program and the food pantries,
8 that's the extent that we provide. Some of the
9 campuses may have other programs that are
10 philanthropically supported, but centrally those are
11 the two that we manage system-wide.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm going to pass
13 over to Council Member Lee, Chair of Finance.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Thank you, Chair. And
15 I love the green. We're continuing on with the theme
16 this week.

17 Okay. Quick question before I get into
18 the other budget questions. Just based off of your
19 testimony, should I call you Mr. Batista or COO
20 Bautista? I don't know what to say, but...

21 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Hector.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hector. Okay. Just
23 based off your testimony, sorry. I just wanted to see
24 if you could help me understand, because I know that
25 you're saying that the deficit is really due to a lot

of the steep enrollment declines, unfunded mandatory costs that we don't like. And just wondering, because it says on the next page... sorry, I was just reading through this, that actually it's gone from the big gap that was closed, which is actually great, it seems like, a combination of the factors has led to a reduction of nearly 68 percent in the overall university structural debt from 234 million to approximately 76 million at the end of 2026. So, just wanted to know what you've done to close that gap, and has the steady decline in student enrollments, is that still factoring into the fact that it's difficult to get over the gap?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: So, Ken and I will handle this, but I'll, you know, whatever I don't cover, I'll start off.

I think our structural deficit really began really right after the pandemic, where we had a steep decline both for the community colleges and the four-year schools. And during that time, we really implemented a very tough hiring freeze across the university to sort of try to stabilize that. Since then, we've uncovered that at least nine of our

schools have a structural deficit. So, we began to really not use that stringent method, but really to try to create a mechanism to really work with them to increase revenues, right, and you could do that through some of the accelerates, but also through, you know, we've been very fortunate the last couple of years, as I stated in my testimony, we've increased enrollment by about 5.5 percent over two years, 3.5 percent this year. And I think that that has helped cutting costs and really making sure that... and working with those colleges very, very closely to really properly and actually, we have a really strong partnership with the Provost's Office, where we're really going in and really having a whole approach about how class sizes and how we sort of configure them to make sure that we're using all the resources the right way. I don't know if you want to add any.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Just, you know, what Hector said, that the enrollment has ticked back up. We are marching up that hill, you know, obviously not the speed that things came down during the pandemic. So that has definitely helped, even though that's uneven. And, you know, as you

2 mentioned, we've been, you know, we implemented
3 CourseDog, which gives us a lot of data on class
4 enrollment. So, we're trying to match your course
5 offerings to a student demand rather than having
6 under-enrolled classes and over-enrolled classes.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And then the 3.5
8 increase, as you mentioned, and the 5.5 to almost
9 13,000 students, is that pre-pandemic levels? And how
much would it take to get back there?

10 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: No.
11 We're not back to the pre-pandemic levels.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Do you know
13 what that gap is? If not, you can let me know.

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER:
15 Approximately 30,000.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And then also
17 going back to the nine schools you were talking
18 about, because I see here that it went from nine to
19 six, which is great. So, which were the nine schools
20 and which are the six now that still have that gap?

21 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: So, you
correct me if I'm wrong. So, Queens College, York.

2
3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Sorry. These are the
4 six or the nine?

5 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: These
6 are the nine.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Perfect.

8 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Do you
9 want to go through the nine or you want...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah. Nine and then
11 which ones, I guess.

12 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Okay.
13 So, we have Queens College, York, Medgar Evers,
14 College of Staten Island, City Tech, Kingsborough. Am
15 I missing? Where am I missing? Which are the other
16 ones?

17 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: John
18 Jay.

19 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: John
20 Jay. BMCC?

21 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Yeah.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: BMCC.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: BMCC? Okay.

2
3 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I think
4 let's say we're missing one. We'll get you the list.
5 We didn't have it in front of us.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And then I was
7 interested to know how is it that you were able to
8 get them off the list of the, you know, the schools
9 with the highest financial concerns. Can you give
10 examples of what you did to decrease, I mean, to get
11 them to a better place financially?

12 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: So, you
13 know, it starts with those schools having upticks in
14 enrollment. We've also worked with them to decrease
15 costs, looking at where efficiencies can be found,
16 whether that's in, you know, matching course
17 offerings to students or looking at central office
18 efficiency. And then we've also worked with them to
19 try to maximize other sources of revenue in addition
20 to fundraising, right, which obviously always, but
21 also, you know, utilizing their assets to get
22 additional revenue.

23 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: And
24 we've also done, as I stated in my testimony, some
25 shared services.

2
3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes.

4 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: We
5 centralized some of the IT functions. We have created
6 CUNY Buy, which is a centralized procurement process
7 that has generated a 40 to 50 percent discount in
8 some of the commodities that we purchase. And now
9 we're in the process of fully implementing a shared
10 service of facility management to really try to lean
11 into being a system and be more nimble and be able to
12 address some of our challenges connected to deferred
13 maintenance.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah. I was going to
15 say, I've seen how... I know that there's, you know,
16 differences of opinions on AI and tech and the usage
17 of it, but this is where I feel like maybe
18 operationally administratively, we can sort of
19 utilize it to centralize, streamline, be more
20 efficient in that way. And then also maybe train the
21 students to do that one day too and build a program.
Sorry. That's just my line of thinking.

Okay. And then just going really quickly
into headcount and vacancies. So, as of January,
2026, there were 47 pedagogical positions and 269

vacancies for non-pedagogical positions. So, what's the current total number of vacancies per campus and what positions are they? I know that's a lot in and of itself.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Why don't I come back right now and give you the nine schools since we now have it, and I'll get to your question.

So, the nine were Brooklyn, John Jay, New York tech, Queens, College of Staten Island, York, SPS, BMCC, and King's college. So, after that, Brooklyn, John Jay, SPS and BMCC came off, but Medgar Evers was added.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh, okay.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: That's always that. I always remember this, this, this, this odd phenomenon that this one.

Now in terms of vacancies, we don't track vacancies in the way that the City tracks vacancies. We were down about 975 or almost 1,000 heads from the PEG and the decrease in enrollment, right. When we've got the restoration of the PEG, we were able to add about 45 of the heads back.

2
3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. Sorry. I'm just
4 writing this down. Okay. And do you do it per campus
5 or track it per campus at all? And how do these
6 vacancies impact one campus versus another. And are
they impacting provision of services.

7 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: On the
8 community college side, we saw decreases at all the
9 colleges with the exception of Guttman between 2021
10 and 2025. If you want the exact numbers, I can give
11 those to you. And then we saw those numbers come
12 down. The impact, you know, most of this we have
done, you know, everything we can to mitigate the
impact on students.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: And
15 don't forget part of the reduction is driven by a
16 decrease in enrollment so we had less demand too.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And then, what
18 are the challenges that you're facing trying to fill
the vacancies?

19 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Well, I
20 think that the issue is, you know, having enough
21 revenue to support a larger headcount. Again, you

know, we don't have vacancies that are held. We don't have that sort of reporting system that the City has. We decreased, you know, at the colleges. And, you know, part of that is that we wouldn't go back and, you know, if the money came back exactly to the levels we were at, we probably wouldn't rehire in exactly those same positions, right? The priorities and the needs change over what's now a considerable period of time from 2001. But we look at directing the colleges to provide the services that the students need and utilizing the staff they need to do it.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And just moving on to the Chief Savings Officers, were you given the same directive with the 1.5 percent in '26 and the 2.5 and '27?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And who is the Chief Savings Officer?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: That'll be me.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Oh, okay. Great. Awesome. More duties.

2
3 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Just
4 what I was looking for.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, exactly. How
6 much of a percentage of your time have has been
7 dedicated? I know the reports are due today, but
8 yeah.

9 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Well,
10 you know, we spent some time on this. I'm not able to
11 tell you a percentage.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And how will
13 CUNY ensure that efforts to identify recurring
14 savings or operational efficiencies do not negatively
15 impact, which I think you sort of touched upon. But
16 especially for CUNY Reconnect, ACE, ASAP. And do you
17 anticipate any consolidation or restructuring of
18 programs as part of the Chief Savings Officer's
19 review?

20 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: We're
21 going to make sure to protect student programming.
The programs you mentioned have discrete programming
lines, so that wouldn't be part of the mix. But we're
going to look for efficiencies where, you know, we
are expanding and launching shared services

2 initiatives, which we think will provide
3 efficiencies, and we're hoping to be able to take
4 care of any needs with that.

5 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Just to
6 give you an example, we have I think 178 contracts
7 across the university for construction-related
8 companies, so like elevators, so that's being reduced
9 to about 70. So, you could imagine the... and we're
10 going to be able to service more efficiently and be
11 able to lean in to... to provide better service for our
12 campuses. So those are the kinds of things that we
13 believe we could do as a system to be able to save
14 money.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And is the reduction
16 to 70 because the projects are now complete or
17 you're?

18 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: No, no,
19 no. A lot of colleges have, so Baruch will have an
20 elevator contract.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Hunter
will have a different elevator contract.

2
3 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: You're consolidating
4 those.

5 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: So,
6 consolidating and trying to maximize that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Perfect. And actually
8 that was my last question around capital budget.
9 Because I think the preliminary budget includes 44.5
10 million in Fiscal '26 for a site acquisition at East
11 73rd street, which includes 31.1 million that was
12 pushed forward from the outyears of the plan. Why was
13 the funding pushed forward and what is the
14 anticipated completion date?

15 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Is this
16 SPARC you're talking about. I don't know, East 73rd
17 street.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The hole in the
19 ground.

20 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: The hole
21 in the ground.

22 So, the project right now is we have
23 completely decanted from the facilities and the EDC
24 has a construction management company that is, you
25 know, working on the sort of the cost of phase one,

which is our phase. Part of that sort of SPARC project is this MOU that tied in 73rd street, which is so-called the hole in the ground that's going to go back to the City with the understanding that we get a new facility for a School of Nursing for Hunter, the School of Public Health, and some additional labs. We're in communication with the Administration to truly try to get some additional labs in this project that were taken out by the previous Administration. We believe should have been left in there, but the project is on schedule, moving along, and we moved the nursing school to a temporary facility and our goal is in three years to move them back.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Okay. And is Memorial Sloan Kettering, are they the ones that are partnering with you on this or is it, you said Hunter School of Nursing?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: No. It's Sloan Kettering. It's connected to the hole in the ground?

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yes.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Yes.

When they build a new building, part of the deal was that part of that property will go to CUNY.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Right. And at that time, it would cost about a billion dollars to build the nursing school there. And over many years, the Administration at Hunter tried to get that building built. When we came into office, we kind of looked at things and tried to figure out a way because we... where our nursing school was located was in dire need of repairs and there's no way that we had the resources to repair it. So, at that time we were presented with an idea connected to Brookdale and we thought it was great. And for the first time, we have both the City and the State committing for a four-year school. The City funds the two-year schools, the State funds the four-year school, put in resources of almost a billion dollars to fund what I believe is an exciting project for the University.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah. But those capital projects can take a while. So glad to hear that it's on schedule, even though there's a big hole in the ground still.

And just lastly for CUNY Beyond, which I know is like a big initiative that you guys are talking about, how is it that you're assuring that every single student will have a career connected learning experience?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Happy to take that.

So, what is so unique about CUNY Beyond and excites me probably most is, you know, currently 25 percent of students report ever going to a career services office, but 100 percent of students go to class. And so, we are working with our faculty on A) how do they explain... they are the experts... how do they explain that the information they're learning in this class is connected to a real skill they need in the future? How does that comparative literature course teach you the critical thinking skills that you need in any job that you pursue? There is a high correlation between students making the understanding and feeling the value of that course towards their career and increased retention. And that will ensure that every single student in every class has a career-connected learning opportunity.

And we also have academic degree maps. Every program has an academic degree map that tells you which courses you need to take along the way. Now we're embedding career milestones into that same academic degree map so that students aren't only thinking about what do I need to do in semester one when I'm taking perhaps my gen ed courses? What are those career-connected activities that I should be thinking about? Is it working on my CV? Is it going to this office? And we're integrating academic and career advisement. So, it's not you have to go to separate places to figure all of this out. And that is one of the key components of CUNY Beyond to assure that every single student throughout their academic experience exposes this.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Great. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

Just want to do a real quick followup on why is it that you don't track job titles in the CUNY system? Because that's a lot of complaint we get from students. They'll sign up for classes and folks are not there to teach the classes or any other

headcount. So, it'd be great to hear what's the rationale behind that.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Well, that's a different issue. Assigning folks to teach classes is done through our CourseDog software. What we don't do is we don't have, let's say a college headcount the way that the City has agency headcounts that are approved. We don't have a headcount budget that we process. And the colleges address how they provide the services in a semi-autonomous way. And remember, they have a lot of flexibility, which they achieve by using part-time faculty. But if you want more information on this, we're happy to continue the discussion.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah. We would love to because that's one of the things we hear about even with OMB and the headcount report.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: And the Provost might be able to answer some of the other questions.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yeah. I do want to point out that it is a very strategic approach in looking at enrollment. But one thing that

we do monitor is student-faculty ratio, and it went down from a high of 27 to 1 that we're now at 24 to 1 because we want that to be low. And the percentage ratio of full-time and part-time faculty over the last four years has remained very consistent. So, 39 percent full-time, 61 percent part-time over the last five years. And one of the challenges is as the number of students and majors shifts, the number of faculty demand for certain lines increases and may decrease in other areas. But to our CFO's point earlier, stability in revenue for permanent positions requires some stability in enrollment because you need that long-term. We also recognize the high impact and value of full-time faculty on retention and increased retention. But we also want to make sure the student services aren't cut. So, we're very strategic. We don't want to be cyclically responding to positions. And so, we're very strategic about where the needs are based off of the student needs.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You just mentioned ratios are now 24 to 1. But in the FY23, they were 21 to 1. What happened there?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:

Correct. That was the one year that it went down. It went from 27 to 22 and then to 24. And that's overall. And it varies substantially from college to college. Some are lower and some are higher. And, yeah, class size may be an impact as well. But I will say the program I'm most excited about in connecting what was talked about earlier is we now have this very advanced AI tool that has predictive analytics called CourseDog, and it's the first time ever we have a system that connects directly to student degree maps. And so, what does that do? It knows how many students are in this Psych 101 course that are psychology majors that are now going to need the second course, and it predicts and tells you based off of historical enrollment what days and times do students need these courses so that we can get out of having to cancel a class for under-enrollment or not having sufficient seats for those high-demand courses. And we're very excited about that strategic way of identifying where are the highest needs for any personnel.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And does that AI app
4 also help you map out how long a student will stay in
5 your school, how many classes they need, when they'll
graduate?

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
7 Absolutely.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I hope it says
9 they'll also be employable after they leave the CUNY
system as well.

10 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
11 Absolutely. With CUNY beyond, I have no doubt.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

13 I'd like to pass it over to Council
Member Louis.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you, Chair,
15 and good afternoon to you all.

16 I have three questions. All right. The
17 Preliminary Plan shows that CUNY's budget is 1.55
18 billion in FY27, with the majority of funding coming
19 from the City and State sources, but with significant
20 reliance on other categorical external funding
21 streams for programs and research. Given the
prevalence of potential federal funding cuts, do you

have a breakdown of which specific schools receive the most of federally funded grants and research projects? And is there a bigger hit to undergrad or grad programs with that?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I don't have an answer to the federal fund per college.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: We have to get that back to you.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We have to get it back to you.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Okay.

At last year's preliminary budget hearing, CUNY expressed a need for additional funding to support the Office of Disability Services. The Council then urged the Administration to allocate and baseline an additional 2.1 million to allow CUNY to expand the headcount at the Disability Services Office by 21. There was no additional funding allocated to CUNY for that purpose. And I wanted to know, does CUNY still have a need for additional support for Disability Services Office? And how is CUNY improving access to accommodations and support

services for students with disabilities across all campuses?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yeah. I'm happy to take that question, and then our CFO can take the budget.

The answer is absolutely, we need more funding. One of the things that we launched in spring 2025, as I said in my testimony, was CUNY Accommodate. This is a very sophisticated tool that we're very excited about. Students, faculty alike were very happy. Where students could, at a click of a button, request the accommodations that they need, and it's all automatically seamlessly done. Our goal was to get from the point of a student requesting an accommodation to receiving it to two weeks, and we hit that target. And, as a result of it being so easy versus perhaps a student having to go to an office and feeling uncomfortable and being told to go from one place to another, go to a professor, we've seen a 25 percent increase in the number of students who now have requested accommodations because we've made it so seamless and we've made it so that it's an easy process to facilitate. And we anticipate that this

need and the number of students will increase, and this is 25 percent, we're still not done with the academic year, because of a very strong partnership with New York City Public Schools and Local Law 18, that really we're having a lot of wonderful conversations. It's wonderful that we've gotten it down to two weeks, but it's too late if a student requests it when they start the semester. How do we get the students and get that information so we could proactively reach out to students who may need services? And we know in the public schools, they have an IEP, which is initiated by a parent. When you're 18, it is up to the student to determine whether or not they want services. So, how do we work with knowing the students that may need those services and getting that information into our hands so that we can proactively reach out to them at the point at which they're admitted to the school? And so, we're revising our data sharing agreement with NYCPS by June so that we can get information, and the information, the students, and this is why the partnership with NYCPS is so strong, is that those students have to opt in. They have to raise their

hand and say, so anyone who has an IEP, I would like CUNY to reach out to me because I may need services. And by having that information in a data sharing agreement, the moment they are admitted to CUNY, that allows us to connect with them automatically so that we can get those services in that two-week window but well in advance of them starting classes. So, just by having an easy, seamless tool, it's increased by 25 percent. Now when we have direct access to the information of the students coming from the public schools, we know that that's going to increase, which is why it's one of our priorities. And we're requesting additional fundings because we know it will increase.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: We're seeking just over 2.5 million dollars of additional funding, about 2 million for Accommodate. So, you know, we need that to be able to cope with what we expect to be increase in demand under the new sort of self-identified IEP rules, and we need your support, obviously, to secure that funding.

2
3 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Thank you. Thank
4 you, Madam Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member
6 Maloney.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you so
8 much, Chair Joseph. Appreciate the time, and thank
9 you all for being here.

10 I wanted to dig into questions about
11 workforce development as the Chair of Economic
12 Development, a topic I care a lot about. CUNY Beyond
13 launched in October, and as you said in the
14 testimony, is looking to expand, and I wanted to get
15 more information around which sectors of the economy
16 you see growing and how you're thinking about where
17 to focus workforce development and training.

18 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Well,
19 we are thinking of increasing workforce and
20 development based on the demands of the city. We have
21 close partners with the CEO Jobs Council and that
strong partnership. And we have data to indicate
where are those in-demand jobs. And we proactively
partner with those industries. But CUNY Beyond, it's
about connecting the student to the career that they

want based on demand. But the key, I will say, is helping students navigate which career do they want. Because the longer it takes a student to figure that out, the harder it is academically to piece together the program. And so it starts from the impetus when they first enroll in school. It's that career exploration and identifying how do you explore strategically, academically, to identify what are the careers that you want, and embedding the career-connected learning into every single course and the experiences between internships and apprenticeships, which we know if a student... nationwide, if they experience a paid internship experience, they're two times more likely to end up in a job connected to their choice. At CUNY, it's three times more likely. And so that preliminary data shows us that this is where we need to concentrate. It also helps students navigate, is this the right career path for me. So, embedding this as early as possible throughout every experience and connecting them to those high-demand fields.

COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Very impressive.

With the economy so rapidly changing, in particular AI, I'm curious how you're thinking about AI proficiency and literacy and career connectivity.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:

Absolutely. So, within AI, the first thing I'll highlight is that we are hiring thanks to a very large philanthropic gift to the Graduate Center, AI faculty experts throughout all of our schools, and so that is underway. We've partnered recently with Google and procured a platform that will enable the researchers to have the tools that they want. But it also has access to a breadth of learning tools so that faculty can create, whether it's an AI tutor for their courses, connecting it to information about which courses should I be taking, which ones are open, all at their fingertips, and AI literacy is at the foundation of all of that. The faculty organically have come together. They've created a group called Don't AI Alone. And the demand is there. We put out an RFP recently, request for proposal from faculty, awarding them some funding to say, do you want to explore connecting AI into your curriculum. We also have a pilot program to do the same thing

within Gen Ed courses to ensure that students are exposed to how to use it responsibly, ethically, but also training our faculty on how can they use it to help increase learning outcomes in those courses that may have high failure rates. And so it is throughout everything that we're doing. We want to ensure all students graduate with some level of AI literacy and exposure and that our faculty and our staff feel well prepared to use this within safe, ethical ways, right, because it's challenging. It's changing every single day, but we are working hard to support it throughout every aspect of the curriculum.

COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: You're on the case.

You mentioned 3X. So, it's after you go through a paid internship program, 3X more likely to?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Three times more likely to end up in a career than if you don't experience a paid internship.

COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Do you have any other data on number of placements and internships and ultimately job placements from this program?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: So, I do have before the program was launched about 6,800 undergraduates reporting having a paid internship, and that has already increased to 7,700 numbers, so over 14,567. Our goal is 30 percent of all of our students having a paid internship or apprenticeship experience.

COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: In my last eight seconds, I wanted to ask about early childhood education, which is a top priority, and if there are investments in training and retaining educators for that particular sector.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes. We work very closely with our partners at NYCPS on a lot of initiatives to promote teacher education and ensure that we're meeting the high demands. We have a partnership where paraprofessionals currently working in NYCPS can receive credentialing and a seamless pipeline into CUNY to build upon whatever college credit they already have in order to meet that teacher shortage. We also have our New York City teaching fellows, which tripled to over 536. I already said the number, but I'm sorry if I got it

2 wrong. So that's 55 percent of all New York City
3 teaching fellows that are embedded in classrooms as
4 they are working towards their teacher education
5 certification as well.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MALONEY: Thank you very
7 much, and thank you, Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

9 Next person, Council Member Dinowitz.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you,
11 Chair. Good afternoon.

12 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Good
13 afternoon.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: It's good to see
15 you all. I really loved hearing about that Local Law
16 18. It's a good one.

17 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I
18 wonder why.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I wonder why.
20 For those who are unacquainted, it's my bill. I'm
21 really pleased about the progress that's being made
about that digital transference of data.

2
3 I want to clarify just one thing that you
4 said about opting in and opting out. To be clear, the
5 goal was to make sure...

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: You're
7 right. You're right. The partners at NYCPS did say it
8 was going to be opt-out, not opt-in. You are correct.
9 I forgot they said that. You are right.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: We were having a
11 lot of issues with the opt-in and the training, and
12 so just having an opt-out means a lot more students
13 are going to be able to get that phone call right
14 from CUNY, get that email.

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
16 Absolutely.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I'm really very
18 pleased with the progress that's being made there.

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We're
20 working on that language to ensure it's clear what it
21 is that they're, yes, opting out of.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Perfect. And I
23 think you're going to see a lot more students
24 graduating, graduating on time, exactly what you
25 said, getting those accommodations early on instead

of waiting a semester or two semesters, which is what we were seeing before.

I want to ask about two elements of Constructive Dialogue and everyone getting along at CUNY. The first is the Constructive Dialogue Initiative. Can you talk briefly about that and the measurable impact that it has or has not had on the student interactions at CUNY?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes. Our partnership with Constructive Dialogue is really about true cultural shift throughout the system. We know that there are skills necessary in order to facilitate difficult conversations. And when we're really promoting critical thinking and thought, it is natural to sometimes feel a little uncomfortable, but it's about skill building. How do you navigate and what are the skills necessary to navigate those difficult conversations? And we have two various curriculums. Perspectives is the one that I'll say is open to all CUNY students, all CUNY faculty. And it is a few hours long where it's skill building and just exploring and understanding basic skills on having these conversations. The students that have

already gone through it, 92 percent already said that they're applying those skills to the way in which they communicate with others. The faculty, 88 percent reported that they feel much more comfortable in order to navigate some of those complicated skills. We have a leadership programming where all the college leaderships at the highest level have undergone that programming. And we're embedding experts into every single college so that every college will have a resource of experienced facilitators, students, staff, faculty. And that is the most intensive level of training. I will say anecdotally, recently there was a college that reached out proactively and the support from CDI is a proactive approach where they reached out and they said, we're going to have an event and we want to make sure we have the skills necessary because potentially it could be very complicated. And we partnered with CDI, the students and staff facilitators went through the training and they reported back it was a wonderful event, and they said, we found ourselves literally thinking about the training and using the skill sets because some of the

2 conversations were complicated and it was wonderful.
3 So, we are going to measure this.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: The measurable
5 impact is student survey, student feedback data.

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: And
7 faculty as well as and staff.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, there is
9 that element of proactive stuff, making sure people
10 have the skills. There is also the reality that
11 things happen, people need to report things. And as
12 you know, the reporting portal for active bias has
13 gone through two iterations now. First started in
14 2022 and then after the Lippman Commission report and
15 the hearing of this Committee, put an RFP for the
16 second portal. I want to confirm the second portal is
17 online?

18 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: One of the
20 things that was testified to by the Chancellor on
21 November 25th of 2024, I guess, when we had the
hearing was that the reporting, the data would be
public, that he committed to reporting out to the
public, how many reports there have been and some of

the results. And I'm happy to read it to you, but you'll have the ability to share. He says, yes. So 100 percent will be on the website. He goes, yep. That was the transcript. So, I have had trouble finding it on the website. Can you talk more about whether or not this data is yet public? If it is not yet public, why it is not public yet? And can you make it public as was committed to over a year ago?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes. I can answer that.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: October is when we will be making the report public. One of the challenges is when anyone files a complaint in the portal, to make it public immediately, we owe it to ourselves to offer accurate data. Sometimes a student reports that they're unhappy with a grade, and they're using the portal to report something that isn't actually what the portal is for. It is to file any instance where someone feels that there's been a violation of policy. And so, the numbers that are first entered are not 100 percent accurate. The CDOs and the campuses work to review every single

complaint to ensure. And so, once that validation period goes through, by October we will have gone through that validation process, and we can have conversations about the frequency with which we make the data public, understanding that there will be a lapse in time between initial reporting and instances and the public data.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Your Chancellor thinks that quarterly reports seems "extremely reasonable." So, quarterly reports understanding... he said it, not me, but that's what we're looking for. Because again, a lot of the, again on the other end, not the constructive from the bottom up, but from the top down, knowing that things are being handled is a real source of frustration and anxiety for students who feel like nothing's being done. And this is one of the methods that I think is going to help CUNY and a lot of the students. And so, if we can look forward to the commitment, can we look forward to what the Chancellor committed to quarterly reports on the acts of bias?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yes. Okay.

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yeah.

4 And one thing I want to add with the portal is that
5 it allows for that communication because it's a valid
6 concern. You report something and there's
7 nothingness. With this portal, it allows for that
8 communication verification that it's been submitted.
9 Every step of the way, someone who reported something
10 will be kept in the loop so that they know that
11 action is being taken. And so that is something the
12 portal that does allow us to do.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And that
14 includes after they submit the report, right? Like
15 here's --

16 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
17 Correct.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: -- where it is.
19 Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

21 I'd like to recognize Council Member Wong
and Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
much.

And I do want to thank John Jay, because on Monday night, March 23rd, we're having our town hall meeting there, and I appreciate their support.

Have you lost a lot of international students and with funding, has that been something that's on your radar or, which is curious because they do bring in some funding.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes, they do. And I have those numbers right here. So, international students, we actually have had an increase since 2024. However, we do anticipate now that there will be more of a challenge because of certain countries, the visas being much more difficult to obtain, and so we are preparing ourselves for that. But fortunately for this year, we saw an increase in the total number of international students. Yes. Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And then I know that you and the SUNY Chancellor worked to get the high schools, not just so great work that Council Member Dinowitz said, but just generally more high school students applying. Maybe you did this earlier. I tried to listen on my way down from another

2 meeting, but did you have a big increase because of
3 the efforts? We had a press conference. We did a lot
4 of work to get high school students to apply. Did
5 that work or it did work on SUNY?

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I have
7 the enrollment numbers, but I'm not quite sure the
8 percentage from public schools versus all total
enrollment.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: He was very
10 excited about that with you on that.

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes. We
12 did see the number of applications because of a free
application period substantially increased.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But you don't know
14 how that translated into actual students.

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I would
16 need to get the numbers for you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right. That'd
18 be helpful.

19 Food policy. That was always an issue. Is
20 that still something that, I mean, insecurity, and so
21 is that something that you're allocating funding
toward? I know you have in the past.

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes,
4 absolutely.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: How much or?

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes. I
7 can revisit those numbers. Sorry about that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's okay.

9 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Okay.
10 So, we receive from the City is 880,000-dollar
11 allocation, but each of the colleges, right, some of
12 them receive grants for funds and there's a lot of
13 philanthropic partners that also provide. So, I don't
14 have the breakdown of what each college receives. We
15 only have the information that we centrally allocate
16 to the campuses, which is the 880,000 dollars. And
17 so, as a result of some campuses having more access
18 to resources, they have more food available, extended
19 hours than others. So, there is a level of inequity
20 for food access across the colleges because we are
21 limited in what we can do with the amount that we
receive centrally, but we work with the colleges and
philanthropic partners.

2
3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Do you think that
4 you're meeting the need or you obviously need more
5 money? That's what you're saying.

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
7 Absolutely.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I would say it's a
9 big issue.

10 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: It
11 absolutely is.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right. So, are
13 you giving us some idea how much more you would need?
14 Is that something that's on your list?

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We'll
16 hand that over to our CFO.

17 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: We can
18 get back to you with a specific ask on that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Thank you.

20 All right. Then of course, Guttman, my
21 usual question. So, they need space. We have the
north building. There's a question here that says
Center for Urban Futures. They're always saying, you
know, CUNY has space. We should build low-income

2 housing and then CUNY below. So, what's with the
3 north building? My annual question.

4 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I know.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The building is
6 still there.

7 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I love
8 the annual exchange.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: The building is
10 still there. Guttman still needs space and we need
11 affordable housing.

12 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Got it.
13 So, when it comes to Guttman, we are obviously in the
14 process of trying to identify space for them. We're
15 working with the current landlord to give us some
16 time to really figure out what is next for Guttman in
17 terms of space. Right now, we feel confident that
18 we're going to be able to secure the space that they
19 need to continue to run that school. With regards to...

20 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But they still
21 need to move at some point and get more space because
you're renting in other locations so that they can
have more classes.

2
3 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I'm not
4 sure that we're in agreement on that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They're in
6 agreement on that.

7 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I'm not
8 sure that we're in agreement with that. I think that
9 right now we believe that they have the space that
10 they need in order to be able to do the work that
11 they're doing there.

12 With regards to North Hall, we are
13 obviously trying to figure out what's going to happen
14 with that particular site. That is one of the reasons
15 why we're extending the lease for Guttman. As you
16 know, there's an ongoing suit that we can't really
17 comment on. Your other question was?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It was Guttman and
19 North Hall, so it's the same story. Guttman, you
20 think, is fine, and the North Hall sits there empty.

21 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: When it
comes to the organization that printed that report,
they never consulted with us, so we really have
really no comment on that particular report.

2
3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm going to
4 follow up on North Hall.

5 Finally, I had thought that at one point
6 we were trying to have all CUNY students graduate
7 with some kind of, I don't know what you call it, a
8 tech certificate of some kind. When you graduate with
9 knowledge and AI and that wonderful program, do you
10 graduate with any certificates or just in your course
11 selection? Something specific sometimes helps people
12 get jobs. That's what I'm asking.

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We are
14 having conversations about exactly that and talking
15 to the faculty. We're currently piloting our faculty
16 in courses with multiple sections, so very large
17 courses within general education, embedding AI use
18 and technology into those courses, so that skill set.
19 We're undergoing some conversations. What does that
20 look like if we expand this? This is something that
21 is, what is a designation? We're having those
conversations about is it a separate credential? Is
it a particular designation per course? We're in the
early stages of having those conversations.

2
3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Credentials
4 matter, so that would be something that you would
5 consider doing that.

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.
7 And we partnered with Google, so all students
8 actually have access to their Google AI essentials,
9 and they earn a certificate for that, and that's open
10 to all students.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council
14 Member Brewer.

15 AI also will be embedded in your teacher
16 preparation program as students are running circles
17 around teachers because they don't know?

18 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: That is
19 absolutely part of the conversation as well, and you
20 will appreciate that I was attending. I have an
21 eighth grader. We were attending high schools, and
one of the questions I ask is how AI, thinking
exactly that we need to prepare our teachers for AI,
and so that is absolutely part of the conversation
for educators across all levels, the teacher

2 preparation as well as within higher education as
3 well.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. Because
5 I'm also thinking on the intervention side, AI can be
6 such a great tool for teachers with our English
7 language learners along with our students with
8 special needs.

9 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
10 Exactly.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that.
12 Council Member Wong, I know you have a
13 question, right? How are you?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you.
15 Thank you, Chair.

16 I really have two questions. One
17 regarding the adjunct faculties of CUNY, and then two
18 back to the IEP systems. If I have any time left, I
19 want to ask about the Browns Community College.

20 First question is I met quite a few of my
21 constituents that are actually adjunct faculties of
CUNY, and they teach in the evenings, and I'm sure
for a lot of college students that work in the
daytime, attending classes at night is like their

only option. So, adjunct faculties can be very important to the system, but they told me that they don't have a very good experience with CUNY, like demanding hours to pay. So, I sense that the... well, here's my question. What is the attrition rate for these adjunct faculties, and is it something you'll consider in, like, improving their working conditions or pay hours and so forth? Can you talk about that?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Well, I mean, I don't know what... I would love to know more about what you're referring to in regards to working conditions. I mean, they are... you know, we're bound by a contract, and that contract sets the pattern and what increase faculty gets. And ultimately, every faculty member will get those increase over the period of time. So that's the first thing.

Second, as the Provost alluded, we manage the University with a good amount of adjuncts. Those adjuncts are provided... they apply for the kind of courses they want to be involved in, and they work with the colleges to get into those particular classes. I would love to know more what conditions that you're referring to, because they get treated

like every other faculty, whether they're full-time or part-time or every other employee. So, I'm not really sure what you're referring to.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: After the hearing, we can get in touch and talk about specifics. Thank you.

My next question is students with IEPs. Back to that topic. We have a lot of districts, 75 schools in the city, and there are quite a few in my District. So, where kids graduate with IEPs, many of them end up in CUNY schools. Unfortunately, I was next door. I wasn't able to hear your whole testimony. But is it a matter of course that CUNY have access, or the students must sign papers for CUNY to access their IEPs?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Thanks to Local Law 18 that we referenced earlier, which now requires that there's a partnership between NYCPS and CUNY, we have been working with them on how do we access that information. An IEP is initiated by a parent, and the services that a student receives in NYCPS does not mimic those that are offered at higher education institutions. Some may be overlap, but

some, like being assigned a paraprofessional, is not something that we do in higher education. And the students, once they turn 18, they themselves must initiate the request, because there are some students who don't want to seek the services. So, what we've done is twofold. One, we first launched a system called CUNY Accommodate, which makes it very easy for students to click a button, upload, receive, whatever information is necessary to request services, and within two weeks of receiving that request for accommodations, we're able to grant that accommodation. But we've now been in conversations with NYCPS on, it's wonderful that a student can request this, but if they request it, once they start classes, it's not very useful. So, how do we know from the moment they get admitted to CUNY? And that's where the data sharing agreement that we're working on, we're revising it by June, where students in NYCPS, the seniors who are graduating and applied to CUNY, they will receive messaging that asks them the fact that you have an IEP will be shared with CUNY in order to proactively reach out to you to see if you want accommodations or do you want to opt out? It's

the student's decision whether or not they want that information shared, and then the data sharing agreement, we will receive all the information from every student who's been admitted to CUNY from NYCPS that would like accommodations. And then we could proactively reach out to them at the point at which they're registering for courses so that the accommodations will be in place before the first day of class.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah. I can be really specific, like students that need speech therapy.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
Absolutely.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: And they expected that in high school, but once they're in college, they don't even know where to go.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: From what I know, there may be CUNY sites in which they don't offer speech therapy. So, that can be very frustrating for that transition. It can be very stressful.

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:

4 Absolutely. The first point is making it easy for
5 them to even find out how they can gain any access.
6 And that's what CUNY Accommodate allows.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Okay. Thank you.

8 Do I have time for another question?

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: I visited the Browns
11 Community College. This came into my mind because I
12 saw the mug over here. The Gould Memorial Library is
13 a gem, but when I visited there, it's not exactly in
14 very good condition. So, is this being well kept? Is
15 it being renovated? Can you talk about it?

16 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I have
17 to get back to you on that library, but I could find
18 it and talk to you offline if you like, because I
19 have it here and be able to give you some
20 information.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you. Thank
you, Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

I have a quick question. I know we offer
New York City Public School high school students

pre-admissions application. They get accepted into the CUNY system. Is there any part of that application that does ask if you are a student in New York City Public Schools, do you currently have an IEP? Is that question being asked?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: It's not being asked. We've had a lot of conversations about that, and the concern is the student perspective of fearing that that might influence and impact a decision on being admitted, and so asking at it at that point in time, best practice shows that that's not the right time to be asking for the fear that that might influence and impact, regardless of what we say on the application that it will not impact the decision, best practices show that that's not the right time to ask.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Only because New York City Public Schools is the handoff to you, similar to early intervention. So, it just follows the students into every single, and then there's a handoff to New York City Public Schools. I was just thinking.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: No, me too. I thought the same thing when I first started, I

2
3 thought, why not? And then I realized that makes a
4 lot of sense.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Our great Council
6 Member Brewer has a followup.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'll be quick.

8 So, just in terms of the nursing school,
9 the nursing school from Hunter is supposed to go over
10 to, you asked it already? No. The nursing school was
11 supposed to go from Hunter to this, whenever this
12 campus 2.5 acres is built. I guess right now they're
13 on 68th Street and some of that is at the Grad
14 Center. Is that space going to exist for the nursing
15 school at the new site, Brookdale? And is it going to
16 be large enough, etc.?

17 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Yeah.
18 So, the nursing school is not at either one of those
19 places. We found out CUNY acquired a new facility at
20 40 Rector Street. So, they actually have... we took
21 over and assisted a facility that had a school there
so we didn't have to do a lot of renovation. So
actually, the space is actually beautiful, the new
space that we were able to build for them. When all
those uses, when Brookdale is completed, not only is

the nursing school going to be able to go there, physical therapy is going to be able to go there and some of the other uses that we move. And then we've allowed Hunter to have some additional space for future programs. So, that's the way that space was built. And then the space at the Graduate Center was built with the purpose of either having the Graduate Center use it or Hunter continuing to use it. So, we think that the plan really is going to allow us to have even additional space for the university.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: All right. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council Member Brewer.

Next question, CUNY partners with New York City Public Schools on College Now, which is a free program transition, dual enrollment program. How does the program operate? How many students are enrolled in College Now in 2025 to 2026? Has the numbers of enrollees increasing or decreasing in recent years? What is the trend?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I could answer that. So, for College Now, we have nearly

2
3 31,000 students are enrolled in College Now. We have
4 been expanding between College Now and New York
5 Future Ready. We have been on an increasing trend
6 every single year and we work in partnership with
7 NYCPS to set that goal, and it's always an increasing
8 goal and expanding and we've continued to expand
9 that.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One of my favorite
11 programs.

12 What is the budget for the program for
13 Fiscal 2026 and 2027?

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: The
15 current budget is 17.9 million. Our expectation is
16 that we would continue at that level.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, continue at that
18 level.

19 According to the CUNY website, 592 high
20 schools participated in 2024 to 2025. How do high
21 schools opt in to participate and what is the
process?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I would
have to get back to you. That is the partnership with

2
3 NYCPS, and I don't know the process itself that takes
4 place.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Like how do they
6 choose?

7 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: And how
8 do they choose?

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: He'll be here on
10 Monday, I'll ask him.

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Have there been any
13 high school want to participate but unable due to
14 capacity or limited resources?

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Not
16 that I am aware of, and I will confirm that for you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

18 New York City partners with Early
19 College, which also support high schools that are
20 committed to Early College program, college
21 readiness, outcome for traditionally underrepresented
students in higher education. Early College allows
high school students to earn an associate degree or
up to two years of college credit at no cost. The
program is available for students grades six to 14.

2 Can you explain the different options available to
3 students based on their grade?

4 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I do
5 not know that level of detail. I was prepared to tell
6 you enrollment and how many were P-TECH schools.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You could tell me...
8 well, I'm going to come to P-TECH schools because
9 that's another one of my favorite, but I just wish
10 more people knew about Early College programs and
College Now and P-TECH.

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
12 Absolutely.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You would save so
14 much money as well leaving high school with a high
school associate degree debt-free.

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: In
16 Academic Year '25, there were over 3,800 students
17 enrolled in Early College and 13,686 were P-TECH, so
receiving college credit.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And so one program
19 under College Now is NYC P-TECH school, which offer a
20 carefully integrated STEM curriculum over the course
21 of six years. I know you also have a nursing track.

2 You have a phlebotomy track. You have an EMT track.
3 Tell us about that.

4 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I don't
5 have the details about all of the programs. I have
6 the list of the schools, but not a description of all
7 of the academic programs.

8 But to your earlier point, they are
9 fantastic opportunities. I had the privilege of
10 visiting one of the schools and could not believe the
11 labs and the simulators available, what the high
12 school students are doing absolutely are
13 college-level ready, and I'm happy that we've
14 partnered with them so that they can receive the
15 credit that they deserve.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And can you talk to
17 us about the programs involved, each school
18 partnering with potential employee partners? Because
19 I know they also partner, for example, with ECAM, who
20 I'm a huge fan. They partner with Northwell.

21 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.
And so, I don't know the details of all of our
partners, but I know that that's a core part of the
success of these programs, is to be able to prepare

2 those students directly into jobs and assist with
3 that job placement.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, what's the budget
5 for P-TECH in 2026 and 2027?

6 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: I do not
7 have it broken out. P-TECH, the Early College
8 Initiative in total is 3.2 million, and I believe
9 that we're also still holding that at the same level
next year.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And P-TECH you don't
11 have? You'll get that number?

12 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: It's not
broken out, but we'll definitely get that number.

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yeah.
14 It's not broken out from that overall number.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. That would be
great.

16 And do you know how many students are
17 currently enrolled in P-TECH?

18 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.
19 1,386.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there a plan to
expand?

2 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Always.

3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And how much would
4 that cost us?

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: How much
6 would we be expanding?

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. CUNY Prep
8 offers a full-time program for students age 16 to 19,
9 which they take core classes, math, science, writing,
10 social studies, working to earn their high school
11 equivalency diploma. What is the budget for CUNY Prep
12 in the Fiscal 2026 and 2027?

13 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: CUNY
14 Prep, the budget is 2.4 million.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you know where
16 they're located in the city?

17 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: I do
18 not.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can you tell me the
20 college campuses you have them on?

21 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: But the
Provost might know that.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I don't
know the colleges. I know that there's 215 students

2 currently enrolled in the program this year. And I
3 can get back to you with a list of the schools.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah. That would be
5 great.

6 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER:
7 Apparently White Plains Road in the Bronx.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Huh?

9 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER:
10 Apparently, it's in the Bronx on White Plains Road.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's it?

12 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: That's
13 it.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do we plan to expand
15 anywhere?

16 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: I do not
17 know that we have plans.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And that's going to
19 need money, right? I know.

20 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: There
21 you go.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The favorite subject.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: You
asked the CFO.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And then 2026, how
4 many students did you support with the budget in
5 2026?

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: 215.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. It should be
8 expanded. Looks like a good program. It reminds me of
9 another program they have in New York City Public
10 Schools.

11 What aspect of CUNY Prep encourage
12 students to who have dropped out of school to return?

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I'm
14 sorry. I didn't get that.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What aspect, what
16 encouragement does it provide when students drop out?
17 You know, life happens and they drop out of school.
18 What do you do to bring them back? What supports do
19 you provide?

20 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yeah.
21 We provide a lot of hands-on comfort and support and
assurance because oftentimes it just feels like this
overwhelming thing. And we know the process is
complicated from filling out forms and applications,
and we assist students throughout every step of the

way and really connect them to all of the resources that we have available from childcare and food insecurity. I mean, we try and connect them, and then through CUNY cares. We listen, what are their supports? And we have so many programs, making sure we connect them versus telling them it's up to you on your own. Making sure that we provide that academic support as well as that mental health support and assurance as well.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is there any financial support as well?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I would have to get back to you on that.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you.

How do you advertise that program? How do people know about CUNY Prep?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Well, we have a marketing available for that and in partnership with local community-based organizations as well and always with our partnership with NYCPS.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Does CUNY offer any pathways for students enrolled in CUNY Prep to enter CUNY college once they're done?

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:

4 Absolutely. We connect that throughout the process to
5 assure them that there's a seamless level of support.
6 And the handoff is seamless because we want to make
7 sure we're providing you support every step of the
8 way, and so that it feels seamless. And once a
9 student gains that momentum, we don't want them to
lose that and there's always a path throughout CUNY
for them.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

11 Headcounts. I'm going to go back to
12 headcount real quick. One area of concern that we
13 have heard about is the number of adjunct professors
14 at CUNY. How many adjuncts versus tenured professors
do you currently employ?

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yeah. I
mean, I have the ratio, but.

16 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Yeah.
17 You want the numbers, right?

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes, sir.

19 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: The
20 full-time faculty, about 7,150. And the part-time
21 faculty, 11,250.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How do we compare
4 them by campuses.

5 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: I can
6 see if I have campus data. I can give you the
7 full-time by campus. I don't think I have the... Oh,
8 no, I do have both.

9 Okay. So, do you want the full-time or
10 the adjuncts?

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Give us the tenured
12 and then you can give us the adjuncts. Thank you.

13 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Okay.
14 So, the full-time you want every one of the colleges.
15 I mean, it's fine. I can read the long list.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You could send it
17 over to us.

18 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Perfect.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You can send it over
20 to us, but we just wanted to know what was the
21 comparison. What's the difference vary per campus.
What's the difference.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Yeah. I
don't have a table, so we'll have to...

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You'll get that to
4 us.

5 Do certain fields tend to have more
6 adjunct professors than others.

7 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: What
8 was the question?

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do certain fields
10 have adjuncts more than tenured professors?

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: It
12 depends campus to campus and based off of department,
13 and so it varies substantially. So, the answer is
14 yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What's the most
16 popular field that has more adjuncts.

17 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
18 Anything I say would be a guest based off of the
19 largest major so I'd rather get you accurate
20 information.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What's the number one
major at CUNY.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: It's
always neck and neck between psychology and computer
science.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is that where most of
our adjuncts live or you don't know?

4 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I don't
5 know. I'd have to get you that.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.
7 What is the payment rate for adjunct
professors versus tenured professors?

8 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: I mean,
9 it varies a lot by years of service. There's a whole
10 table. I mean, we can always send you the appropriate
11 pages from the PSC agreement. But there are assistant
12 professors and associate professors and full
13 professors, instructors, lecturers, and then
14 adjuncts. So, there's a lot of different salaries.
They're all on a grid. So, we can supply that to you.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What's the entry
16 level? For example, New York City Public Schools, if
17 you're becoming a teacher with a bachelor's, plain
18 55,000. What's the entry level for? There's not an
entry level?

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: It
20 depends on their credentials. So, if they have a PhD,
21

that would be a doctoral rate. But the rates are listed on the PSC.

And one thing that I want to highlight is how much they get paid depends on the course. So, if it's a three-credit, three-contact-hour course, so it's based off of the contact hours. So, if it's a course like a lab course that might be six contact hours, then it would be counting. And there's a limit to how many contact hours an adjunct can work. So, there's no set entry level. It depends on the course, on their credentials.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: But one thing is we're very proud of this latest contract that we did with the PSC. Since this Chancellor came on board, we doubled what adjuncts get paid in terms of so we're very proud. We were very close with the union and the Chancellor. This was one of the areas that he was really focused on. But we'll get you those numbers. But it has been a tremendous increase in terms of.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The Committee would love to see these numbers. Thank you.

We talked about this earlier, but I just want to academic advisors are very important to student success. The Committee heard at last year's preliminary budget hearing about CUNY's needs for advisors. How many academic advisors does CUNY currently employ?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We currently have 611.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do students continue with the same advisor over the entire college career?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: That depends on the college. Some have that structure. Others do not. Some, it's the first two years, and then the last two years at the four-year schools might be with a faculty member. The structure varies from college to college.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What outreach do advisors do to students? How do they reach out to them?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Well, we have a system called Navigate 360, and it allows for texting, it allows for emails, that proactive

outreach, and those are the most common ways in which the advisors would be in touch with students.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: For advisors not advising programs such as CUNY ReConnect or ASAP, which have dedicated advisors, how many students in the average advisors oversee?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: The University advisor ratio is 1 to 281 overall across the entire system, and that varies a little bit between the four-year schools and the two-year schools. And the industry standard is 1 to 300. And so the senior colleges, it's higher. So, we're not at industry standards, but at the community colleges, we are. Because at the senior college, average is 1 to 378, and the community colleges is 1 to 217, and the industry standard is 1 to 300.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's a lot. Sometimes a student never gets to see an advisor.

How does lower advisor-student ratio impact student success?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Well, if ASAP and ACE and our SEEK programs are any indication, that connection with the advisor is

absolutely critical, and providing... I also say what's critical is providing the support for advisors, ensuring that they have easy access to information so that they can support those students. And that is something that we've worked on with, Navigate now has reports that will show if a student is registered for a class, it falls out of financial aid, proactively reaching out to the student. So, it's about the critical information that the advisors are able to connect to those students so those connections are really critical. And in ASAP and ACE, it's a requirement that the student come to an advisor. Whereas in the general population, some colleges do require that for registration, but others do not, and we know that the students that come to an advisor and seek that advice, it's a much stronger likelihood of retention.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah. Okay.

In the CUNY Fiscal 2027 budget, requests include 15.2 million in City funding for academic and career advisement, and 3.7 million of that being to hire diverse academic career advisors. If allocated,

how would this funding impact the number of advisors that could be hired?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: It would significantly impact the number that we can hire, and really is the key to success. We know that providing that level of support and in CUNY Beyond, as I mentioned earlier, that connection between, it's not just academic advisement or career advisement. It really needs to be both, because it's not just about student progression to a degree. It's also about student progression to a degree to a career. And hence, our ask.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

A funding of 710,000 dollars is CUNY contract budget in Fiscal 2027 is dedicated to daycare service for children.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Is there a question?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Oh, 710,000 dollars is CUNY contract budget in Fiscal 2027 is dedicated for daycare services for children. No daycare?

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes. We
4 have the daycare centers. Yeah. I'm not quite sure
5 about the budget.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, you're not sure
7 of the budget? What's the budget?

8 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Do you
9 want to know what the budget is or you want to know
10 (INAUDIBLE)

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah. We want to
12 confirm, and we want to know the budget, and we want
13 to know how many slots are funded with that money.

14 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: Yeah.
15 We'll get back to you on that. I mean, I think we
16 could give you the slots. Correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Give me the
18 slots. You'll get back to me on the budgeting. How
19 many slots? Is there a wait list?

20 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.
21 So, we have a license capacity for 1,389. That varies
between infant, toddler, preschool, and school age. I
will tell you the cost per child. So, it's 2,000
dollars for an infant and toddler seat based off of
the budget and the personnel necessary. Preschool is

1,500 dollars. In school age, it's 1,000. And we have a total of 17 centers that serve from three months to 12 years of age, and they're open approximately 7:30 to 6 p.m., some as late as 9:30 p.m. And so, the funding and additional funding would allow for, we do have in some child care centers, there is a wait list, but it's dependent on the slot. So, if they want more infants and there's too much of a demand for infant, we might have a slot for a 12-year-old. But it's the infant ones that cost more, or it might be the extended hours that are necessary. And so that is really where the additional funding could be supportive because it depends on the age of the child, and we do have a much higher need for infant and toddler seats than preschool. And once there's the 3K and the 4K, that alleviates some of that but then increases the demand for the three-month-old.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Sometimes it's seat types that are in demand.

Do you do an assessment on the seat types, and then how quickly do you change that around if you have to?

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Well,
4 we do assess all the time, and it's not as easy to A)
5 get the increased funding necessary and finding the
6 staff with the credentials for the youngest age.

7 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: The
8 total budget for the University for child care is 6.7
9 million. About 2.4 is at the community colleges.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You already talked
11 about the seats, and you talked about the resources,
12 and sometimes it's the contract. Some folks don't
13 realize you cannot change the contract. If you're
14 contracted for two-year-olds, you can't change the
15 contract because there are certain requirements.

16 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
17 Correct.

18 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I get it.
19 One of CUNY's budget requests for 2027 is
20 200 million in additional funding annually split
21 between the City and the State for the state of good
repair. How is that amount determined?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: About
two years ago, Vice Chancellor for Facility
Management did what we call a facility assessment,

and that really determined for us what... and it was really well prompted by a couple of years ago, we had an issue with one of our schools where the boiler went out, and we really weren't aware, and it just created some tremendous challenges. So, the Chancellor charged us with sort of figuring that out. We now know every system, and we have about 27,640 systems throughout CUNY, 300-plus buildings, 30 million square feet, but we know we can now do an intervention on buildings where we know that, for argument's sake, Baruch Building Number two, Boiler Number five is going to go out next year. We're able to now allocate resources to that. So, that's one way of allocating resources. Obviously, there's also conversations that take place with the college President. When the Chancellor came on board, he also charged us with... there were a lot of projects that have been in the books for a very long time. He hired a lot of new Presidents. It's just turned over, and we wanted to make sure that the projects that we had in the books were the priorities of those new Presidents, so we went through an exercise of really looking at those projects and really reducing that

booklet to be able to be more targeted. But then, really, the most important thing is we really -- and the University's strategic plan -- we really focus on the state of good repair. We did a two-year analysis and determined that 23 percent of our facilities were in a state of good repair. So, we really are proud to say that, over a couple of years, we're now up to 33 percent. So, we're using those resources on a very targeted basis. The challenge for us has always been that, on the State side, we've done very, very well. On the City side, we haven't done well. I am encouraged by the new Administration and some of the conversations we've had, but, frankly, we have projects that are in the books, and then we get a call, and those projects get pushed out to an outer year so that creates a real challenge. So, this is why this urgency of us getting capital dollars for our community college... we're starting to see the deterioration. I think the Council Member, in his earlier question, was connected to that. It's one of our community colleges. So, our community college is really struggling, but we have a real... and the other thing that I'm really very proud of is that the other

1
2
3 thing, when we took over, our completion rates were
4 very low. I'm happy to report we took our completion
5 rates from around 29 percent to, what, 60-something
6 percent. For the first time, we booked over
7 538-million-dollars' worth of projects over our
8 10-year capital plan. So, that shows that we're doing
9 a lot more. We're also doing a lot of projects
10 internally. We relied a lot on DASNY, so I wanted to
11 change that narrative and give them some more
12 complicated projects, but we're doing a lot more
13 projects in-house, which is really creating the
14 ability for us to complete projects in time and on
15 schedule, which is really very important. But we need
16 the funding, and that's why it's so critical.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We get that. That's
15 the theme today.

16 When you looked at your book and you did
17 an assessment, what was the oldest project you found
18 in the book?

18 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Oh,
19 going back to probably... I remember probably in one
20 particular case, it was three Presidents ago, right,
21 a project that, you know, so we cleaned all that up,

right? And frankly, some of those projects were never going to get funded, but they just were there for... so the Chancellor wanted to make sure that we really had a plan that reflected his Presidents' priorities, and so we really focused on doing that.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How do you collect information and track the need for maintenance and repair by campuses? If yes, please share how you track them and how you make them... how you prioritize which projects get done first.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: So, next year, you'll be able to ask me that question. I'll be able to give you even more information. Right now, we're going through an exercise of taking all our facilities and really creating a shared services where all the trades will be put into four hubs, sort of system-wide, and those hubs are going to be sort of targeted to... one hub is going to be in Queens, one that's going to service Brooklyn and Staten Island, another one that's going to service the Bronx and one school in Manhattan, and the other one's going to serve in Manhattan. And I think what really is good about this is that we have over 700-plus trades, and

we never leaned into being a system. So, colleges will have regular maintenance that they had to do, and then they had an emergency, but they only had limited personnel, and so now they had to move this personnel from the regular maintenance to deal with the emergency. The beauty of this new system is we're going to be able to do that maintenance, but also have an emergency crew if we have an emergency, to be able to address that. And we're actually hiring more people to try to make sure that, as a system, we're able to target that, and we're going to have - we have something called Omnibus, which is a... Occubus (phonetic), which is a system that's going to allow us to, to your point, at the campus, they're going to be able to put in what repairs they want, we're going to be able to track it, they're going to get a service, they're going to know when the van is going out to service them, and they're going to know when it's going to be repaired. So, I'll be able to provide you a lot of that data, because it's a new system that we're bringing on board, and we're launching this probably over the next month, month and a half, system-wide.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Because we hear from students and faculty that, in certain campuses, when it rains outside, it rains inside as well so we want to make sure that you're prioritizing the spaces.

We want to make sure that the maintenance repairs are highly prioritized based on urgent need and safety of our students, as we know that some colleges are overdue for capital project funding. If CUNY were allocated the funding, how would you prioritize which campus or projects to start in the first year?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I mean, right now, we have about 672 active projects, system-wide. I'm happy to report across all campuses they have as low as nine or eight projects in each of those campuses, totaling 4 or 5 million, to as much as 21 projects, totaling over 359 million dollars. By the way, Council Member, that's at the Bronx Community College. We have 21 active projects totaling 359 million dollars, and one of the projects is the one you referred to, so I was able to find that information. So, we try to sort of distribute the funding across all the systems, but we really are

targeting areas where we think that if we don't have an intervention at that moment in time, we're going to have a problem a little later with no heat or whatever those issues are, so we're trying to be very strategic how those resources are allocated.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can you also share with us, if you have it now, if not, email it to us, the current list of college campuses that are in dire need for capital funding?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Why don't I get you that? Because I think that we should talk about what that sort of definition is and how we arrive at it, so I'll send you some information on that.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what is the timeline when you start a project from beginning to end?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Well, like I said earlier, I'm happy to report that we brought down... it used to take us over three, three years and a half to complete a project. We're now down to two years completing a project. The challenge is for us and the community college is that we have a

project that's in the books and the community college, we have to get the City funding first and then we have to wait until another year for the State to do their part because they don't align. We get the matching from the State. We're not allowed to book a project until we have full funding, so sometimes that lags, right, and it's creating that challenge. And really this has happened over multiple administrations, and so now we really are targeting and working with this Administration to really help us be more targeted. And as I mentioned in my testimony, we're in constant communication with OMB to make sure that they know what our priorities are so we're not getting projects that are being pushed out to outer years because that's really creating the problem and it's creating the challenges that you alluded earlier. We don't fix that leak, that pipe. Now you have another problem, but part of it is connected to funding.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the Chief of OMB came from CUNY, so just saying, just putting it on the record.

The CUNY five-year capital plan booklet includes capital project requests for each CUNY's college. In the booklet, five of the seven community colleges mentioned need for a new roof due to leaks, Bronx Community College, Hostos Community College, Kingsborough Community College, LaGuardia Community College, and Queensborough Community College. How much funding is currently allocated to roof replacement and when is the timeline to complete the roof replacements?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I have to get you that information. I could tell you how much resources are allocated to those community colleges, how many projects they have active. I could give you that right now. And I believe that... I know for a fact that in a couple of these numbers that I'm giving you, there are roof replacements in there, but I don't know which ones.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You'll be able to pull out the roof replacement because that's urgent for the students and the faculty that I hear from.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: 100 percent.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That soon they'll
4 have to walk with umbrellas on the campus inside. We
5 don't want that.

6 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Sure. We
7 definitely don't want that.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We don't want that.
9 So, you'll get that back to us, right?

10 So, has CUNY ever canceled class due to
11 leaking roof causing unsafe conditions?

12 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: We've
13 never canceled classes. We might have to, in a
14 particular situation, I can't recall. Well, maybe
15 there was one situation where we had to move the
16 class, but I don't think we've ever canceled class
17 because of leaking roof. And I actually... I don't...
18 some of our colleges need roof replacement, but I
19 will tell you that from a maintenance perspective,
20 it's not that walking around there with an umbrella,
21 that's actually not factual.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: If we don't invest in
23 the replacement...

24 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Oh, 100
25 percent.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm talking about long-term, they will be walking around. And I visited some of the campus colleges. I'm one of those Chairs that's out in the field. I don't like secondhand information. I like first, I'm the primary source. I want to go out and see myself, and I do go out into the field to see the colleges. As I was the Chair, I visited hundreds of schools. That's the type of Chair you have. I'm hands-on. I'm going to look at it and I'm going to bring the real information to you. So I went to college. I went to Hunter College, and I was sitting in the auditorium, all this chip paint, plaster. The chairs were as old as I think, I don't know, older than I. So, a lot of investments have to be made if we continue to... I don't think everything public should look bad, right? Sometimes people think everything public there's no investments. We have to invest if we really believe that CUNY is the economic engine of the city. CUNY is actually the heartbeat of the city if we do it right. So, I think the capital side, I've complained about visiting stuff and seeing even accessibility for our students with disabilities who may want to stay in communities, but they can't,

they have to travel far because you're not accessible for them to stay in communities. So, those are real conversations that I look forward to having with you and seeing how we can, of course, we know everything comes with money. We know. My Finance Chair is right here.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Thank you, Council Member. We look forward to working with you on that. I mean, I think that just very clearly, I think that it's extremely important that our community colleges catch up. We've done very well under this Governor. I've got a lot of resource when it comes to the capital side, record investments, but on the City side, we're getting 30, 40 million dollars. And sometimes we get 60 million dollars and then we're told move 40 million dollars to the outer years. That's just not a formula. And so that's why you have the challenges that we're having. One of the things that our Vice Chancellor for Facility Management was able to do, he looked at all our projects that were completed and needed TCOs. And we're now repurposing so money was left over, repurposing money to try to use some of that money to

address some of those. But that doesn't get us what we need to get, right? We're doing our part, but we really need your support and funding to be able to address that. And I'm happy to go with you to visit any campus and walk you through some of the things we're doing.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And when we talked about the accessibility, the Fiscal 2026 to 2030 capital commitment plan was 16.8 million for accessibility projects, which is 8.3 million less than what was funded in the Fiscal 2026 adopted budget. In the CUNY's five-year booklet Multiple Community College Campuses outlined the need for accessibility upgrades due to broken elevators, inaccessible part of the campus.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Yeah. When we take on any new project, the accessibility component, that it might not be and what you're receiving, that is at the forefront of everything we do. So, a project might not be an accessibility project, but it'll be a renovation of some classrooms or what have you and, within that, we also address any accessibility problems.

I think the other thing that is important under the Shared Service Initiative that we're doing, as I mentioned to you, we had 160, 170 or so contracts that were elevator companies and, you know, if you're a small school that doesn't have one or two elevators, that elevator company is not going to pay attention to you because there's just too many. But if we have a couple of hundred elevators, maybe a couple of thousand elevators, then now they're paying more attention because it's a larger contract and we're now able to lean in and put the kind of pressure. So, we're doing those kinds of things to assure that we're getting the kind of maintenance and support. But I think part of the challenge was that these individual contracts, there wasn't the ability for us to put kind of the weight of the university on those companies to be able to address those repairs.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Have you spoken to OMB about funding need for accessibility infrastructure in the CUNY campuses?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: We're in communication with OMB. As you alluded, we have someone who is very familiar with our challenges, and

I'm leaning into that. He used to sit on this side with me so I'm going to be talking to him. And, look, we're hearing all the right things, you know, and so we're going to, with your help and the help of the Chair of Finance, we hope that we could get some additional resources. But yes, we're having those conversations.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what's the timeline for accessibility in the school buildings? I know for New York City Public School is 2030. What's CUNY's timeline for accessibility for students?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I'm not really sure that we have a timeline like that, but I have to get back to you because I'm not familiar with a date.

I know that accessibility in our students with disability is extremely important to the Chancellor.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And your staff, right? I'm sure you have staff that are also with disability. So, for your students and staff as well

--

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: Yeah.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: -- who wants to
4 navigate your school building.

5 Has the Commission on Civil and Human
6 Rights reached out to CUNY regarding the needs to
7 install ramps and accessibilities in order to remain
8 compliant with ADA laws?

9 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I
10 believe that right now we're in compliance with ADA
11 laws. I mean, some of it is because some of our
12 buildings are over 100 years old, and so they're
13 grandfathered in. Some of it, that creates some
14 challenges for us to be able to create accessibility
15 because the way these buildings were built. But as I
16 stated, every capital dollar that has a renovation,
17 one of the lenses and one of the things we put in the
18 budget is to make sure that if we're going to fix a
19 particular classroom or auditorium, that we're also
20 looking at the accessibility to try to address that.
21 But it is complicated because some of our buildings,
I say about 55 percent of our buildings are over 100
years old.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Give me one second.

On the State side, foster students at CUNY are eligible for the Foster Youth Success Initiative, which is New York's State-funded program designed to support current and former foster youth and orphans as they pursue their first associate or bachelor's degree. What is the State budget for the program in Fiscal 2026? And what is the proposed budget for 2027?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: I think that maybe we rolled up in some other numbers. Let me get that for you and (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Around foster youth? Okay.

So, Council Member Wong, go ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yeah. A constituent actually just texted me this, okay? Late February, a couple weeks ago, on the third floor sky bridge of Hunter College, the whole pipe was ruptured and then the whole hallway is flooded, low in classrooms. Can you talk about what happened or what's being done to fix that?

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: I don't know the particulars of that. I mean, I assume that

the... no, I understand, Council Member. I don't know the particulars. I'll have to get back to you. The colleges have their own facility department, and I believe that they are probably addressing that. I don't have that in my.. in some of the things, but I'll get back to you and give you the information.

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're done, Council Member?

COUNCIL MEMBER WONG: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you.

In the Fiscal 2027 executive budget, Governor Kathy Hochul announced 500,000 dollars between CUNY and SUNY to introduce ReConnect for foster scholars program. Of the 500,000, how much is being allocated to CUNY?

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: I don't have that with me. Let me get that to you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: All right. I'm going to tell you a little secret.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: You know?

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm going to tell you a little secret. I was a foster mom, and I adopted my boys, and so the foster kids around this city are so important to me. So, if you look around the trajectory of our foster youth, that's been a passion that I carry with me. So next time you come before me, please be prepared to answer the questions on foster youth and initiatives.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: We will. I just want to get back to you. The foster youth budget that we get in the State budget is 3.6 million.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I would like to add how many students we do support as a result of that. So, in Academic Year '24-'25 was 489 students. When it was first launched in 2016, it was only 65 students. And it has grown as a result of that. And for spring 2026, that number is 572 students enrolled across 19 undergraduate campuses. And I have enrollment by campuses, if you would like.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you can send that over per campuses and how you support them.

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:

4 Absolutely.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That population is
6 very unique and they face a lot of struggles.

7 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And anybody who
9 follows my work knows that that's a population I'm
10 very passionate about.

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: And the
12 program does offer a very comprehensive support
13 system for exactly that reason. It's more high
14 touchpoint, which is necessary. A sense of belonging
15 is a priority within the program and it creates a
16 community so they don't feel alone and are supported
17 all the way through. It's a beautiful program.

18 CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: The only
19 thing I was going to add is our Chancellor was, when
20 he was running Queens College, he had a foster care
21 program that was, and we had a partnership with ACS
with our dorms. So, he's very, very sort of committed
to that project. And now that we know, we'll be
prepared.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah. And it's important even to connect you with... NYPC under my leadership in 2022, opened the first foster care office in the city. It's the only one in the country and has nine staff dedicated to it to support youth in New York City Public Schools, and we eliminated the trash bag by passing the bill, the Luggage of Love so, no kid entering or exiting this foster care system will ever, ever carry a black trash bag again. So, that was important work to us and meaningful work to this Council and to the foster youth that comes here and tell us their stories. So, we want to make sure we continue to carry their stories.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: And I am proud to say in CUNY, some of our student leaders in the Student Senate have gone through the system and talk about how CUNY gave them this chance to excel and to be on the Student Senate as an elected student representing their college is a sense of pride, and I'm proud of that. I'm proud of how CUNY can change a trajectory of one's life regardless of means.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So, thank you. Thank
4 you for that.

5 CUNY Black Male Initiative provides
6 additional layers for academic and social support for
7 students from populations that are severely
8 underrepresented in higher education, particularly
9 African American, Afro-Caribbean, Latino, Hispanic
10 males. What is the Fiscal 2026 and 2027 budget for
11 the Black Male Initiative?

12 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: It's 3.5
13 million dollars.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many students are
15 you currently being served through this program?

16 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: 7,566.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Is the program
18 available on all campuses?

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: It is
20 available. I will count the number. It's not all the
21 campuses. 10 of our campuses.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And is the program
fully funded?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: If we
wanted to increase, we would need additional funding.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Of course.

4 And if we were to increase the funding,
5 how many more campuses can we touch?

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I can
7 get you the exact figure, but we would ideally like
8 it in as many as possible.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And the success
10 rates, what are you seeing in the program?

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We
12 support them. So, 25 percent, because we have two
13 components of it. One is the goal of, it's
14 pre-matriculation program to get them the GED, and 25
15 percent of all participants successfully complete the
16 pre-college program and obtain the GED. In the
17 2024-'25 cohort, 13 percent of them graduated from
18 the community college four-year school, or even a
19 graduate and professional degree.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And is there any
21 support for job placement as well?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO:
Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One of the CUNY's
budget requests is 1.1 million from the City and 8.5

2 from the State for a Student Well-Being Initiative.
3 The funding would provide more direct mental health
4 services for students as demand continues to outpace
5 availability. What specific resource would this
6 funding be used for?

7 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I am
8 unfamiliar with the title of what you mentioned. What
9 was the name of the initiative?

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Student Well-Being
11 Initiative.

12 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: To
13 expand the number of mental health counselors at the
14 campuses. And the goal of that is to decrease the
15 ratio.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What is the ratio
17 now?

18 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: The
19 ratio right now is 1,997 to one mental health
20 counselor.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: They will never see
one.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: And
we'd need 40 additional counselors are needed to meet

the Association of University College Counseling Center recommendation of 1,500 to one. And the ratio 95 to one to over 4,000.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what about a student who needs to see a mental health person urgently?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We have connections with organizations. So, we have access 24/7 helplines for students, but they're not the mental health counselors at the actual campus, but we have support available 24/7 through partnerships with other organizations.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That's been the biggest request from the students we meet with is mental health support.

All right. On February 26th, a Columbia student was detained by ICE after agents misrepresented themselves as looking for missing person. What information has CUNY communicated to students, faculty, and staff to protect themselves against ICE?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Our students, we have immigration liaisons at all of our

campuses and we have at Central as well and communicate with the students. We reach out to our students and immediately provide levels of support, connections to mental health counselors. We also have CUNY Citizenship Now, which is a fabulous program and provide support. But it's about the social and mental well-being of the student as well as the legal resources available to students because in that time of concern, the faculty immediately were very concerned about their students and they provided assurances to their students that they would be there to support them. And so, we communicate with them through the faculty who are extremely supportive through the liaisons, which a lot of these students feel very connected to. And we make sure that any of their needs, we connect them to the right resources.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Has CUNY provided guidance to students, faculty, and staff on what steps to take if they were detained? Is there any guidance if they were detained? Can they call you?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yeah. Citizenship Now.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Got to make sure.

2
3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.
4 Absolutely.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Has CUNY has any
6 students, faculty detained by ICE in 2025 and 2026?
7 If so, how many and what steps have CUNY taken to
8 assist them?

9 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I'm not
10 aware of any of our... we don't have that information.
11 Yeah, we don't. We're not aware of that.

12 But the one thing that we have done is,
13 you know, we send out very communication from our
14 General Counsel, really laying out how ICE is to
15 navigate our space in terms of, you know, having an
16 active warrant in order to be able to access our
17 space. In the Columbia University incident, that was
18 a dorm that was outside of Columbia. Even though we
19 have open campuses, it's a little bit harder for them
20 to really enter our facilities. And so after the
21 incident happened, our Secretary of Public Safety
gathered all the chiefs and sent out information and
reinforced our guidelines to ensure that we're more
mindful of that. I mean, I think in that particular
case, you know, they were, I mean, that public safety

officer was totally overwhelmed, and so one of the things that we did is we informed across the system that when you have those situations, you know, you have the ability to communicate and get other support to come to that area so that something like that doesn't happen.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The question I asked about being detained is sometimes staffers or students go in for check-ins and they're kept similar to our student, Dylan, who was finally released yesterday after 10 months. He was our first student that ICE took into custody. He was finally released after 10 months. So sometimes it's just at the check-in.

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I would be remiss if I didn't mention that under the leadership and advocacy of the Chancellor, the Petrie Foundation and Robin Hood actually stepped in. So, aside from CUNY Citizenship Now, we launched CUNY Immigration Assistance Project and it provides direct rapid response legal support for students, and this is information that's communicated to our entire CUNY community, so faculty, students, and staff alike, so

2 that they have that resource available and they can
3 contact in any instance in which they face any
4 challenges.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you for
6 that.

7 CUNY also runs Citizenship Now program,
8 which offers immigration legal services, help
9 assessing eligibility for legal benefits. The Council
10 has allocated 4.6 million to the program in Fiscal
11 2026. How many people did CUNY Citizenship Now serve
12 in 2025?

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We have
14 someone from Citizenship Now here.

15 UNIDENTIFIED ADMINISTRATION MEMBER: Hi,
16 Council Member.

17 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: we've
18 helped over 241,000 New Yorkers on their path towards
19 Citizenship Now.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Has the program been
21 able to serve all people that have contacted you?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: If they
are not able to provide support, they have referrals
and connections to other legal support.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And I'm sure the
4 funding level is good, right?

5 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We
6 could do more with more.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm sure.

8 What outreach is done to ensure people
9 are aware of the service? Does CUNY partner with any
10 community-based organizations or other agencies to
11 ensure people are aware? How can the Council be a
12 resource to help further advise the program?

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: The
14 Council can serve as a resource in helping us get the
15 news out. We communicate this very broadly, not just
16 to the liaison, but to all of the faculty and staff
17 and make them aware. Websites, we push it out.
18 There's social media to help ensure that everybody
19 knows that the resources are available. They also are
20 in their district offices with the CDOs as well.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Do you want to sit?
We've have to swear you in. Excellent.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Can you say your name
for the record, please?

MEETU DHAR: Sure. Meetu Dhar.

2
3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great. Do you affirm
4 to tell the truth before this Committee?

5 MEETU DHAR: I do. Yes.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

7 MEETU DHAR: Council Member, it's nice to
8 see you.

9 So, I'm from CUNY Citizenship Now. I'm
10 the Managing Attorney for the City Council. And I can
11 tell you that this is a question that you asked
12 earlier about the number of people who were detained
13 by ICE, and there was at least 12 members of the CUNY
14 community who's been detained and/or deported. So, we
15 have seven students, five parents of CUNY students,
16 and one employee spouse.

17 To tell you a little bit about the
18 programs that we have, we have the CIAP program,
19 which is funded through the Petrie Foundation, and
20 that's actually for individuals who are detained and
21 they don't know what to do. They can call that line.
It's 24 hours. We also have the citizenship program
that I manage, and that's located in 37 different
Council Member offices, either in your District
offices, at CBOs, or in community-based organizations

throughout New York City. And so those are two of the ways that we offer services. And we also offer services, and this is something that we are actually just starting, is through the supplemental asylum program. And so, for those individuals who applied for asylum but those, when they applied, they applied maybe in a rush, and so those applications are not fully completed or there are some issues with them, and so we are actually going to help those individuals with those types of cases.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER BATISTA: And Councilwoman, I want to clarify something. Of those 12 that were detained, none of them were detained.. they were not in CUNY properties. They were outside of CUNY.

And while we're waiting, Council Member, the Hunter, it was a pipe that froze. The pipe was fixed, so there's no issue there.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And you're asking funding for ASLAN program?

MEETU DHAR: Yes. That's the third program that I just mentioned. That was for the assistance to the asylum seekers that applied previously, and their

2 applications were incomplete. We are also asking for
3 funding for the City Council program.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What's the amount?

5 MEETU DHAR: The City Council program is
6 4.6.

7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: For this one? For
8 ASLAN, I have it written down on that piece of paper.
9 It's kind of an odd number. It's 845,951 dollars.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. And she came
11 down with the dollars down.

12 MEETU DHAR: I needed the paper for that
13 one.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I love it.

15 If a location doesn't have an appointment
16 available, what is done to refer them to a different
17 location?

18 MEETU DHAR: We usually have appointments
19 within two weeks, and so that doesn't happen often.
20 But if it's outside of our scope of services, then we
21 will refer it to a different organization. We have a
system for that.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How much more calls
are you now getting prior?

2
3 MEETU DHAR: This Fiscal Year to date,
4 we've received 30,000 calls through our contact
5 center.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wow. And what's the
7 turnaround time to reach potential?

8 MEETU DHAR: We tell everyone that we'll
9 give them a call back within 48 hours.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 48 hours.

11 MEETU DHAR: Yeah.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And depending on the
13 case, it's case-by-case on how long you get back, or
14 it's the same 48 hours?

15 MEETU DHAR: 48 hours, yeah. If they reach
16 out to us, there's different ways to reach out to us.
17 They can call us. We have on our website a link where
18 individuals can actually fill out a form for a call
19 within 48 hours. It's a very simple form, too.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

21 MEETU DHAR: And that's what Council
Members utilize as well.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right.

According to the Citizenship Now website,
the location at Hostos location is permanently

closed, and therefore it's not a full-time service location in the Bronx. What caused the Hostos office to close?

EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: So, that is outside of the City Council program, so I would have to...

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: All right. We'll have to talk.

What impact has it had on CUNY's ability to meet the demands?

MEETU DHAR: So, what we've pivoted to is offering services in other Council Member Districts and other... so, we are open in 10 different CUNY campuses, and so we are still continuing to expand in different areas within CUNY.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: On how many campuses are you on now? And if you were to expand, what would that look like?

MEETU DHAR: Ten campuses. And continuing to offer further services. For example, I go to Lehman College once a month. We could maybe do it two, three times a month. So just increasing our presence on campus.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay.

4 CUNY offers part-time services for the
5 program at Lehman. Is there interest in making the
6 location full-time?

7 MEETU DHAR: There's always interest.
8 Yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: She's going to write
10 that. There's always interest.

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: The
12 more students that we can reach, the better.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: All right. I think
14 this is it.

15 MEETU DHAR: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you
17 so much. And we'll be emailing the follow-ups.

18 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Thank
19 you so much.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much for
21 being here.

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER GODINER: I just
wanted to get back to you on the... you had asked me
about the New York Men Teach, and I still had it
under YMI, the old name. So, that's 3.1 million.

2
3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: 3.1 million. I like
4 the fact that you do your homework.

5 Thank you.

6 I now open the hearing for public
7 testimony. I remind members of the public that this
8 is a formal government proceeding, that decorum shall
9 be observed at all times. As such, members of the
10 public shall remain silent at all times.

11 The witness table is reserved for people
12 who wish to testify. No video recording or
13 photography is allowed from the witness table.
14 Further, members of the public may not present audio
15 or video recordings as testimony, but may submit
16 transcripts of such recordings to the
17 Sergeant-at-Arms in inclusion in the hearing record.

18 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,
19 you will fill out an appearance card with the
20 Sergeant-at-Arms if you have not done so already and
21 wait to be recognized.

When recognized, you will have two
minutes to speak on today's hearing topic, CUNY's
budget. If you have additional written statement you

wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to Sergeant-at-Arms.

First person, James Davis, Akkeem Polack, Damir Shavkatov -- if I mispronounce your last name, forgive me -- and Julian Vera.

All right. You may begin.

JAMES DAVIS: Good afternoon, Chairwoman Joseph and Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We're honored to be here for the first Higher Ed budget hearing of the term and to testify before the new Chair. I'm James Davis, President of Professional Staff Congress, the union representing 30,000 faculty and professional staff at CUNY.

This is a critical time for public higher education and this is a critical committee. This Council fended off nearly 100 million dollars in cuts during the Adams Administration. Without the Council, CUNY's community college budget would have been decimated. Yet challenges remain. The Mayor's preliminary budget increases CUNY's overall budget by nearly 25 million, but it keeps staffing levels flat. Enrollment growth at the scale we are seeing requires

pedagogical investments to ensure that students have the faculty and staff to guide them to timely graduation. So, we believe our budget requests will help achieve this by:

Number one: Having 70 percent of classes taught by full-time faculty, a hiring goal of over 2,800 new full-time community college faculty will help achieve a ratio of 65 full-time faculty for every 1,000 students.

Number two: Staffing up popular programs like ACE and ASAP that need dedicated wraparound services like culturally competent advisors and mental health counselors.

Three: Providing free OMNY Cards to students. The vast majority of CUNY students take public transit to campus along with juggling daily obligations.

Number four: Funding to keep federally funded research alive and the jobs that come with it.

And finally, since my time is short, I do want to underscore the previous discussion about capital funding for CUNY, because as was stated, facilities need a lot of work. Thank you for the

2
3 opportunity to speak today. Look forward to your
4 questions.

5 AKKEEM POLACK: Good to go?

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yes.

7 AKKEEM POLACK: Good afternoon, Chair
8 Joseph and Members of the Committee. My name is
9 Akkeem Polack. I'm the Chairperson of the CUNY
10 University Student Senate and a CUNY trustee where I
11 represent more than 240,000 students across 26
12 campuses.

13 CUNY has long been New York's ladder of
14 opportunity. For generations, it has opened doors for
15 working class families, immigrants, and
16 first-generation college students to build stable
17 lives and contribute to the economic future of this
18 city. Today, that ladder remains, but the climb has
19 become harder. For most CUNY students, tuition is not
20 the primary barrier. Through Pell and TAP, many are
21 able to attend tuition free, yet more than half of
CUNY undergraduates live below the poverty line. What
stands between them and a degree are the everyday
costs of getting to campus, getting to internships,
and getting to opportunity. Transportation is one of

the most significant of those barriers. That is why the University Student Senate strongly urges the council to support the CUNY's 700,000-dollar request to launch the OMNY Transit Pilot for students. This is a modest investment within the scale of the City's budget, but its impact would be transformative. Transportation support increases persistence, improves graduation rates, and expands access to internships and career pathways that students would otherwise be unable to reach. If a student cannot afford the train or bus, they cannot access the education the City has already invested in. If they cannot reach an internship, they cannot build the experience employers expect. An OMNY Card may appear small in the context of public policy, but for a student it determines whether opportunity is within reach or just beyond it. We must also strengthen support for students with disabilities. These students deserve the resources, staffing, and services necessary to fully access their education and campus life. At the same time, we must continue investing in the physical infrastructure of CUNY campuses. Many facilities require modernization and

repair, so students can learn in environments that reflect the value of their education. Thank you so much.

DAMIR SHAVKATOV: Good afternoon, and thank you to the Committee on Higher Education for this opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Damir Shavkatov, and I'm a proud Brooklyn College student and the Vice Chair for Senior College Affairs, representing over 160,000 students across CUNY's 11 senior colleges.

Independent data confirms what CUNY students have long understood. A CUNY degree is one of the strongest values in American higher education. Forbes recently ranked Brooklyn College the number one in the nation for return on student investment, placing it ahead of many elite private institutions that charged several times over our tuition. In the same analysis, eight CUNY senior colleges were recognized among the 25 highest payoff institutions with seven in the top 10, more than any other university system. For New York residents, annual tuition at these colleges is under 10,000 dollars before financial aid. Graduates are often able to

recoup their educational costs within a year and move into strong long-term earnings with relatively low student debt. This is what effective public investment looks like. But those outcomes depend on whether students can remain enrolled long enough to reach them.

I want to share one example that reflects what many students I represent are experiencing. Maria is a full-time CUNY student who also works part-time while helping to support her family. Her commute is more than an hour each way, and she relies entirely on the subway to get to her class, work, and campus resources. When her work hours were reduced, she began structuring her education around what she could afford on her OMNY Card. On the days when she had only one class, she chose not to attend. Instead, she came to campus only on days when she had multiple classes scheduled so that each trip felt financially justified. What seems like a practical adjustment had real consequences. She missed the same course repeatedly, fell behind, and put her semester at risk. Not because she lacked commitment, but because she was trying to manage the cost of getting to

class. This is why CUNY University Student Senate is requesting 700,000 dollars from the City to fund a free OMNY Card pilot program for CUNY students. This is a targeted practical investment that ensures the cost of transportation is not the reason a student must choose between attending class or staying home. It directly supports retention and improves graduation outcomes and advances City goals around equity. CUNY's senior colleges have already demonstrated that modest public investment can translate into strong earnings with low graduate debt. With free OMNY Card pilot program continued support for students' basic needs, we can ensure that those outcomes are within reach for students like Maria and across all of our campuses.

JULIAN VERA: Thank you guys for giving me the opportunity to testify alongside my colleagues. My name is Julian Vera, and I am the current Vice Chair for Students with Disabilities for the CUNY University Student Senate, proudly representing students from across CUNY campuses and a proud product from the City College of New York. I'm also a proud student with an invisible disability, being on

the spectrum and being a product of special education.

CUNY is an incredibly diverse institution that opens doors to thousands of opportunities, especially when it comes to how many students with disabilities come here to study and thrive in this environment with more than 9,000 students with disabilities studying here. Through my effort within the CUNY University Student Senate, I frequently hear barriers from students from different CUNY schools, especially with barriers to transportation. I also experienced barriers to transportation myself where I have to pay a lot of money out of pocket, especially with the cost increase recently two months ago with my balance for my academics, with my balance for community service as well. While the reduced fare addresses some of the issues, I believe that it does not go far enough to address barriers that students experience across CUNY as it is still money that they end up having to pay out of pocket, while money can be used for things such as food, supplies, and other things, which is why on behalf of my colleagues that are here to testify today, I'm also proud to support

the CUNY University Student Senate legislative priorities for this year. I first want to bring up the initiative to launch the free OMNY Card pilot program for CUNY students requesting 700,000 dollars. As I did bring up, students experience financial barriers traveling when it comes to attending classes and other activities in their institutions. This pilot program would ensure that students can participate and access their education and their opportunities without concern of financial barriers getting in the way.

I also want to bring up initiative to increase disability funding. This funding has not increased in years since 1997. While it has received support for programs such as CUNY Leads and Unlimited, it hasn't been invested for more and more resources such as assistive technology and increased funding for services and specialists. I want to thank you for giving me and my colleagues the opportunity to testify on behalf of not only the CUNY University Student Senate, but the City University of New York on behalf. Thank you, and I also yield back.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

2
3 James, I have a question for you. What
4 field do you see have more adjunct professors? I
5 asked, nobody can answer.

6 JAMES DAVIS: Thank you for re-asking. I'm
7 glad to be close enough to the ground to be able to
8 provide a response to that. It doesn't break down
9 cleanly along disciplinary lines. Where you see the
10 breakdown is between general education offerings and
11 everything else at the school. So, where you see
12 first-year courses, general education, service
13 courses like introduction, math, English, etc., tend
14 to have higher concentrations of adjunct faculty.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for that.

16 CUNY mentioned pay is based on contract.
17 Do you feel the contract is fair and provides
18 sufficient pay?

19 JAMES DAVIS: No, not yet. It does not.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Work in progress?

21 JAMES DAVIS: Work in progress. As
22 Executive Vice Chancellor said, we were able to reach
23 agreement in the last round. That made significant
24 improvement. Our goal is to have pay parity, equal
25 pay for equal work, for the teaching work that our

faculty do irrespective of their job title. So, we're getting there, but we're not quite there yet.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. And that's along the line I talked about affordability in the workforce, right? We have to be able to afford the city that we live in.

I have a question for you. How much, you said they have not invested in disability technology in the school. How much would that cost for the investment?

JULIAN VERA: In regards for the investment, alongside with the package for the legislative priorities, around 700,000 dollars. I had the opportunity to speak to members of the CUNY team for disabilities and had a meeting with them, and they told me that since 1997, while there has been investment in things such as some assistive technology and also specialists, it hasn't increased since 1997. And I was speaking in regards to a request to further increase disability funding across all CUNY campuses on behalf of the New York City Council.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Go ahead.

2
3 AKKEEM POLACK: Yeah. And just to add to
4 that, currently CUNY is looking at around 7.8 million
5 in total to include assistive technology, more
6 staffing to help our students with disabilities. So,
7 that's what Julian was referring to as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. So, it's 7.8
9 million --

10 AKKEEM POLACK: 7.8, yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: -- to invest in
12 disabilities, assistive devices.

13 AKKEEM POLACK: Assistive technology.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Wonderful.
15 Thank you.

16 Thank you all.

17 Josiah Ramesar, Fatima Kamil, Rhota
18 Wilson -- am I saying that wrong, I couldn't read the
19 -- Wilson, last name. Okay. Tell me your first name
20 again. Tell me your first name.

21 RHOTA WILSON: Rhota.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. And Lo
Anderson.

You may begin.

JOSIAH RAMESAR: Okay. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chair Joseph. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Josiah Ramesar, and I'm the current Vice Chair for Graduate Affairs in the CUNY University Student Senate, and I'm proud to represent the over 30,000 graduate students across CUNY, and I'm also a third-year law student at the CUNY School of Law as well.

As a graduate student, I want to speak specifically of supporting free OMNY Cards for CUNY students. I am a proud product of New York City Public Schools. I grew up in Queens, still live there, and I had access to a MetroCard growing up, which is now an OMNY Card. When I began my studies at CUNY in 2019 at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, that free MetroCard was no longer available, now OMNY Cards, and since then, transportation costs have only increased as well. Us graduate students were already facing and managing higher tuition costs, limited access to financial aid, especially with more cuts, and the demand of work and other family responsibilities. Many of us graduate students rely primarily on loans, and transportation becomes

yet another expense that adds to that burden that graduate students face. Students should not have to get in more debt just to simply get to class. And one thing I definitely don't want either is students being stopped by police and having to face a 100-dollar fine for fare evasion as well, which I know some students have had to go through that, unfortunately. I am asking the Council to support funding 700,000 dollars for the free OMNY Card pilot program from the University Student Senate, because this investment would reduce financial strain and improve attendance, retention, and student success across CUNY. Many of us in this room rely on public transportation and understand its importance. For students, access to transit directly affects access to education. Thank you so much for your time and consideration today.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead.

FATIMA ZAHARA-KAMIL: Good afternoon,
Chair.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Turn your mic on.
Yep.

FATIMA ZAHARA-KAMIL: Good afternoon,
Chair and Members of the Higher Education Committee.
My name is Fatima Zahara-Kamil, and I serve as the
Vice Chair for International Studies, a first in the
CUNY University Student Senate, representing students
across the five boroughs. I'm also a student at
Kingsborough Community College. Today is also Eid
al-Fitr for many Muslim students, including myself.
It is a day centered on community, gratitude, and
opportunity. I am honored to be here on this day,
speaking on behalf of students across CUNY.

CUNY is the most diverse public
university system in the United States. Our students
include first-generation college students, immigrant,
international students, and working students, each
navigating different challenges in pursuit of their
education. Through my work with the University
Student Senate, I regularly hear from students across
campuses about the barriers they face. I also
experience many of these challenges myself. As an
international student, balancing academics,
leadership, and community across the city requires
constant financial and personal trade-offs. For many

students, this is not the exception. It is the norm. Today, I am here to support the CUNY students' legislative priority for 2026. First, free OMNY Cards for CUNY students. Transportation remains a significant burden. Many students travel across boroughs to attend classes, internships, research opportunities, and leadership commitments. We are requesting 700,000 dollars in the City budget to fund a free OMNY Card pilot. This will reduce a daily financial strain and ensure that students can consistently access both their education and the opportunities that support their long-term success.

Second, continue investment in campus and technology infrastructure. Students should be able to learn in environments with reliable Wi-Fi, functional facilities, and updated classroom technology that reflect the standards of a modern university.

Finally, equitable access through modern assistive technology must remain a priority so that students with disabilities can fully participate in academic and campus life. These investments are especially important for international immigrants and undocumented students who often face additional

financial and structural barriers while pursuing higher education.

CUNY's diversity is one of New York City's greatest strengths. Supporting its students means strengthening the community and workforce that sustain this city. CUNY students are not asking for more than what is necessary. We are asking for the conditions that allow us to learn, to contribute, and to complete what we started. Thank you for your time and continued support.

RHOTA WILSON: Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Rhota Wilson, and I serve as the Vice Chair of Legislative Affairs for the CUNY University Student Senate, representing more than 240,000 students across 26 campuses. I'm also a student at the College of Staten Island, majoring in communications with a concentration in digital media and design.

As an immigrant student, CUNY has been a place of both affordability and community. It has provided me and many others access to a quality education that might have not otherwise been possible. For more than 170 years, CUNY has built a

reputation as a pathway to upward mobility, offering students the resources and opportunities to improve their economic futures. CUNY students are not defined by the classroom alone. Many are parents building stability for their families. Many are working part-time or full-time, often balancing more than one job. And even with these responsibilities, students continue to show up for their education and for their communities. I'm asking you to support the 700,000 free OMNY Card pilot program.

To support students, we must invest in opportunities that prepare them for the future. Expanding access to internships, mentorships, and fellowships is essential. Strengthening partnerships with City employers and integrating work experience into the academic programs will better position students to succeed after graduation.

At the same time, we must address the barriers that make it difficult for students to fully participate in these opportunities. Transportation is one of the most immediate challenges. Many students rely on public transit and travel long distances, sometimes up to two hours to attend class, work, or

internships. As fares continue to rise, these costs have become an increasingly heavy burden. This is why we are urging for the support of the University Student Senate's legislative priority for free OMNY Cards for CUNY students. Access to transportation is access to education. When students cannot afford the cost of getting to campus, they cannot afford to attend class. When they can't afford to travel, they are shut out of internships, research opportunities, and civic engagement. Students are forced into difficult choices between attending class, going to work, or meeting basic needs. These are not choices they should have to make. CUNY has long been the engine of social mobility for New York's working class and immigrant communities. Investing in CUNY is an investment in the future of this city. We urge you to support free OMNY Cards for CUNY students and continue funding policies that remove barriers to higher education. The return on investment is clear. When students can access their education consistently, they graduate and contribute to the economy and strengthen our communities. Thank you for your time, and I look forward to working together to

build a stronger future for CUNY students and for New York City. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Go ahead.

LO ANDERSON: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and Members of the Committee. My name is Lo Anderson, and I'm a Community Organizer with Students for Students, a club based out of Lehman College, and the Student Engagement Coordinator for CUNY Cares. I'm here to speak to budget and to highlight that housing stability and economic support are essential to student retention at CUNY.

According to the CUNY Cares 2025 student survey, 51.5 percent of students experienced housing insecurity in the past year and 5.9 percent experienced homelessness. In the Bronx, nearly 60 percent of students reported housing problems and over 9 percent experienced homelessness during the academic year. These are students trying to stay enrolled while navigating housing challenges. Supporting them is critical to student success. Through CUNY Cares, we are implementing measurable interventions that help students remain enrolled. We have supported students who transitioned into

shelter, helped single parents retain their rental subsidies, and secured over 159,000 dollars in emergency assistance through the Human Resources Administration. CUNY Cares hired CUNY's first Housing Specialist and is also working with the Housing Advisory Committee to advance eviction prevention, rapid rehousing, and new housing development strategies. These efforts align directly with the City's broader housing goals. At the same time, we are leveraging career and technical education policy, along with technology and AI, to close enrollment and persistent gaps by connecting students to benefits earlier. I am also conducting a legal analysis on the chronic underutilization of the Career and Technical Education Act with the goal of expanding access to SNAP, benefits for over 70,000 students in two-year programs, and unmatriculated students in pre-college courses. Investing in these systems is evidence-based strategy that directly supports retention. Expansion of CUNY Cares, along with alignment with University Student Senate priorities, such as free MetroCards for CUNY students, ensures that basic needs support is available to those who need it most. My ask is

simple, continue to prioritize programs that stabilize students, expand access to basic needs support, and scale interventions that keep students enrolled. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

Jana Bergere -- am I saying that right -- Kilsys -- am I saying that right -- Matthew.

You may begin. Thank you.

JANA BERGERE: Good afternoon. My name is Jana Bergere, and I am Program Coordinator for the New York Public Interest Research Group, NYPIRG. We are a statewide, non-partisan organization founded by students to engage their peers in civic life. NYPIRG urges the New York City Council to adopt a budget that strengthens CUNY and supports student success and to continue advocating for a stronger final State budget.

First, the City should expand proven opportunity programs like ASAP and ACE. These programs boost retention and graduation rates by covering tuition gaps, providing advising and mentoring, and helping with the costs like textbooks and transportation. They work, and they deserve

expansion. We also urge funding for CUNY ReConnect at 11.7 million dollars. This program has already helped bring 47,000 New Yorkers back to college to complete their degrees, and it should be expanded to reach even more students.

Second, the Council must address transportation affordability. While K-12 students receive free OMNY Cards, college students are left to shoulder rising transit costs. We urge full funding of the Student Commuter Grant Pilot Program at 700,000 dollars from the City.

Third, CUNY's infrastructure is in urgent need of investment. With an average building age of 50 years and only 25 percent of facilities in good condition, students are learning in deteriorating environments. The City must allocate capital funding to ensure safe and functional campuses.

Finally, we urge full funding for Council-supported initiatives like Campus Child Care Centers, Citizenship Now, and CUNY CARES, which provide critical support for student parents, immigrant students, and those facing basic needs insecurity.

At the State level, we ask that the Council advocate for increased operating capital funding, expansion of financial aid, and passage of the New Deal for CUNY. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify and for your support.

KILSYS PAYAMPS-ROURE: Good afternoon, Chair Joseph and Members of the Committee on Higher Education. My name is Kilsys Payamps-Roure, and I am the Executive Director of Braven New York. As the proud daughter of Dominican immigrants and a lifelong New Yorker, I know firsthand that higher education can change the trajectory of a family, but only if it leads to real economic opportunity. That's why Braven exists.

Braven is a non-profit organization that partners with colleges and universities to ensure low-income and first-generation students don't just earn degrees, but secure strong first jobs or admission to graduate school. Since launching in New York City in 2020 with Lehman College and expanding to City College in 2023, we have served more than 2,900 students. We will expand this fall to the University of Mount St. Vincent, reaching nearly

1,500 students over five years. Our results show what's possible. Nationally, 84 percent of Braven graduates are employed or in graduate school, and 92 percent graduate on time. But this progress is happening in a more difficult job market. Entry-level jobs in New York declined by 37 percent between 2022 and 2024. For today's students, a college degree alone is no longer enough. Students need structured pathways into the workforce. That's why I encourage the Council to increase funding for proven CUNY programs like CUNY ReConnect, CUNY ACE, and the Public Service Training Corps, and to invest in non-profit partners like Braven. Braven is a career-accelerating experience, starting with the credit-bearing course, where students build skills, confidence, and networks. Our support continues with coaching, mentorship, and employer connections so students don't just graduate, they launch. This turns a college degree into real economic opportunity. I ask you to invest in programs connecting higher education to the workforce so every New Yorker has pathway to the American dream. Thank you, Chair Joseph and Members of the Committee on Higher

Education, for your leadership and support of CUNY students.

MATTHEW AHRENS: Good afternoon. So, my name is Matthew, and I currently attend City Tech, and the biggest reason why I'm here today is to talk about the need for more campus infrastructure, especially considering what's happening at my campus. And I want to specifically call out campus admin about how my campus is basically falling apart, and students are not aware about what's happening, and I've tried to confront admin about this, and they've basically turned a blind eye, or they've tried to sweep it under the rug. And I know it's happening at my campus, and I know it's happening all over. I know there's been famous, like, there's other colleges where they have the nicknames of Broke Lynn College. I don't want to even say my campus' nickname because I feel that's not a really, not a safe place for me to say it. But also, it's just the idea that we need to be holding campus admin accountable for their actions. And especially with Luis Rodriguez, from my own campus, about how he has turned his own eye on

2 the mold in the library, the asbestos everywhere, and
3 having me have false reports. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

5 Okay. That concludes the in-person
6 portion of our public testimony.

7 We will now move to remote testimony. If
8 you're testifying remotely, please listen for your
9 name to be called. Once your name is called, a Member
10 of our Staff will unmute you. You may then start your
11 testimony once the Sergeant-at-Arms sets the clock
12 and cues you to begin.

13 Sakeena Trice, you may begin once you're
14 unmuted and the Sergeant cues you.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Starting time.

16 SAKEENA TRICE: Good afternoon.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

18 SAKEENA TRICE: Good afternoon. Thank you
19 for the opportunity to present testimony today. My
20 name is Sakeena Trice, and I am a Senior Staff
21 Attorney at the New York Lawyers for the Public
Interest in our Disability Justice Program, and I'm
here to speak about accessibility in higher
education, particularly at CUNY.

CUNY was created to be a pathway to opportunity for all New Yorkers, but for students with disabilities, that promise remains out of reach. Over the past two years, our office has seen a consistent pattern. Students with disabilities are being denied reasonable accommodations, facing hostility when they advocate for themselves, and encountering disability services offices that are understaffed and under-resourced. These are not isolated incidents. They reflect systemic failures across campuses. Even when accommodations are approved, professors are refusing to implement them. Students report being questioned, dismissed, and in some cases harassed.

At the same time, students seeking accommodations face another barrier, which is the high cost of documentation. Neuropsychological evaluations can cost thousands of dollars, effectively locking low-income students out of the process entirely. These barriers exist within a broader context. While CUNY's budget is over 1.5 billion, critical accessibility needs remain unmet. Disability services offices lacks sufficient staffing

and training, and campus facilities still require significant investment to meet ADA compliance and basic accessibility standards. There must be a change. We urge you to allocate and fully fund disability services offices, ensuring adequate staffing and training. Fund free or low-cost disability evaluations so students can access accommodations without financial hardship. And for students who receive the same accommodations in secondary school that they are requesting from a post-secondary institution, the post-secondary institution must rely on the disability diagnosis and documentation set forth in their individualized education program, as Assembly Bill A3494 proposes to do. We must assess whether (TIMER CHIME) post-secondary institutions address this...

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you for your testimony. Time has expired.

SAKEENA TRICE: Thank you. I appreciate it. Can you repeat the last part of that bill that you just talked about?

SAKEENA TRICE: Yes. The Assembly bill number is Bill A3494.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And would this tie in also with Local Law 18 with students with disabilities that are entering higher education?

SAKEENA TRICE: Yes. It's pretty much similar. And it would allow the post-secondary institution to rely on, you know, the diagnosis that says forth in the IEP and the 504 plans.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you. If you heard the hearing earlier, we talked about that in depth.

SAKEENA TRICE: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're welcome. Thank you.

If there's anyone else present in the room that has not testified but wishes to testify, please do so, raise your hand.

All right. If there are any witnesses signed up to testify remotely but are not present at Zoom, the following witnesses also signed up to testify remotely. If you are online or here in person, please raise your hand.

No raise hand, right? All right.

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So adjourned. Thank you for our first
hearing together. Thank you, guys.[GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 25, 2026