

The City University of New York



**Testimony of Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations
and Board Secretary Jay Hershenson
The City University of New York
New York City Council Higher Education Committee
“Examining Reclassifying Medgar Evers College as a Four-Year
Post-Secondary Institution for Capital Budget Purposes”
December 17, 2008**

Good afternoon, Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. I am Jay Hershenson, Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations and Secretary of the Board of Trustees of The City University of New York. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the reclassification of Medgar Evers College as a four-year institution for purposes of the capital budget. Chair Barron, all of us at CUNY are deeply grateful for this committee's longstanding support of CUNY and, in particular, of Medgar Evers College and for your outstanding leadership and support.

With me today are CUNY Vice Chancellor for Facilities Planning, Construction and Management Iris Weinshall and Medgar Evers College President Edison O. Jackson. It is a special privilege for me to make today's introductions because I go back a long way with Medgar Evers College—all the way to the original facilities to the Mosque and, including the Santini Building, a warehouse containing walls you could actually see through. I worked with Assemblyman Albert Vann when he successfully obtained state capital funds to put a down payment on the land underneath Academic I.

As the committee knows, while Medgar Evers College was designated a senior college in 1971, its status was changed to a community college during the 1975/76 New York City fiscal crisis. Medgar Evers College had its senior-college status restored in 1994. However, that occurred only on the operating side, not on the capital side.

On the capital side, funding for the college is currently financed and managed in the same way as community college funding.

In June, CUNY's new 2008-2012 comprehensive academic plan was unanimously approved by our Board of Trustees and will be reviewed by the State Board of Regents in January, before going before the governor. The plan makes clear the position of the University on the subject of Medgar Evers' capital funding. Allow me to read from the plan:

“The State provides 100 percent support for the funding of capital projects at the senior colleges and 50 percent for capital projects at the community colleges and Medgar Evers College, with the City providing the matching 50 percent. The University cannot access State funding for the community colleges and Medgar Evers College without the City match. Since Medgar Evers is a four-year school, CUNY will, as noted earlier, actively work to secure senior-college status and 100 percent State funding of capital projects there, as well.”

Chancellor Matthew Goldstein has long supported a change in Medgar Evers' classification for capital budget purposes, in accordance with its status as a four-year college.

The fact that we are able to discuss this issue with the City Council Higher Education Committee today is a tribute to President Jackson's leadership, who was instrumental in developing support for restoration of senior status. The chances of the college obtaining senior-college status substantially improved after President Jackson came to the college in 1989.

CUNY has worked closely with the Mayor's office, City Council, State Legislators and the Governor for many years to effectuate the move of the Sanitation Garage from across the street of the main building and to obtain state and city matching funds for the academic building. My colleagues will describe the results of this unified approach, which placed the practical needs of the Medgar Evers College students, faculty, staff and community first, resulting in the capital achievements to date, including Academic Building #1.

Since 1989, the college has flourished under the leadership of President Jackson, with a growing enrollment, new academic programs, strong community outreach, and a revitalized campus that is a focal point for central Brooklyn. I would like to introduce first, President Jackson to speak about the capital issue from the College's perspective and then Iris Weinshall, Vice Chancellor for Facilities Planning, Construction and Management, to describe the capital budget situation and, going forward, our specific needs.

Dr Edison Jackson
President

Medgar Evers College/CUNY

Presentation/Testimony

To

New York City Council
Committee on Higher Education

December 17, 2008

Good afternoon Chairman Barron, Members of the Higher Education Committee, As you know, Medgar Evers College is the youngest of the senior colleges of The City University of New York. Despite this, the college has become an innovative and vital force in New York City's academic community. To that end, I am delighted to testify about Medgar Evers College's ongoing efforts to enhancing educational opportunities for our students and serving as an instrument of economic development engine for the greater central Brooklyn community. As you know Chairman Barron, We are more than half way in completing our \$245 million state of the art Science, Health and Technology Building. The construction of this facility has spurred a beehive of activities in new businesses along the Bedford, Franklin and Nostrand Ave axis or corridor. We are indeed a community asset.

It is important to note that none of these would have been possible without the support of the leadership of the Dr. Mathew Goldstein and members of the Chancellery. Of equal importance is the leadership of

Chairman Barron and members of the higher Education committee as well as the city council. Permit me also to recognize the support of the Mayor's office for the provision of matching funds for Medgar Evers college capital programs.

I come before you today to speak about the perennial issue of Medgar Evers College's capital programs funding formula. The 50/50 city/state matching formula has disadvantaged our college. The College has sought to amend the education law as it relates to funding capital projects at Medgar Evers College; and to repeal paragraph (II) of subdivision E of Section 6221 of such law. These changes will eliminate the procedural and funding disparities that place Medgar Evers at a disadvantage to other CUNY senior colleges when seeking capital projects funding.

When The City University of New York was created, its primary funding source was the City. In 1976, New York City experienced a severe financial crisis and as a result, successfully negotiated for the State to absorb the operating and capital costs for **all** CUNY senior

colleges. This transfer was to begin in 1979 and be completed in 1982, as outlined in Education Law Title VII, Article 125- B, Section 6221.

Among other things, this legislation stipulates that the State of New York will pay 100% of the capital costs for all CUNY senior colleges, (including the College of Staten Island and New York City College of Technology, effective July 1, 1982, and 50% of the capital costs for Medgar Evers College, effective July 1, 1982. The legislation requires the City of New York to match 50% of Medgar Evers College's capital projects.

By the Executive Order made in 1994, senior college funding status was restored to Medgar Evers. Although the Executive Order established operating funding parity for Medgar Evers College with that of other senior colleges, it did not correct the disparity for funding Medgar's capital projects. Rather, it continued to apply the 50/50 City/State capital funding formula for matching funds. Consequently, Medgar's access to the financial resources the State had allocated to CUNY senior colleges remained minimized.

Medgar Evers is the only senior college whose capital projects are funded differently. Both the College of Staten Island and the New York City College of Technology have had their operations and capital funding formulas adjusted to that of other senior colleges.

Since Medgar must compete for capital dollars from the considerably smaller pool of funds allocated to the community colleges, rarely are sufficient funds made available to address the major projects for funds were allocated.

In 1994, when Medgar Evers' operating funding was restored to senior college status, we were placed at a competitive disadvantage, since we are held accountable for the same performance standards, outcomes and efficiency measurements as the other senior colleges, despite not having access to extensive capital dollars that are available to other senior colleges. This disparity is magnified further when the College must use operation dollars for projects for which other senior colleges receive capital dollars from the State. An allocation of capital dollars to the community colleges from the state, does not necessarily

assure that the city will match those dollars, which has occurred on several occasions over the past ten years.

Medgar Evers is a growing institution and approaching a critical point in its development. We are striving to become one of the flagship institutions within the University and we are making substantial strides towards that end. Efficient use and maximum access to all available resources are essential to our future growth and success. We seek parity in the competitive process, nothing more, and nothing less.

Thank you .

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

CUNY PANEL :

Date: 12/17/08

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