

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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September 6, 2023
Start: 1:05 p.m.
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HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Eric Dinowitz
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Charles Barron
Gale A. Brewer
Oswald Feliz
Inna Vernikov

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

Anne Lopes
Interim Senior University Dean for Graduate and
Undergraduate Programming at CUNY

Karin Beck
Associate Dean of School of Arts and Humanities
at Lehman College CUNY

Dionne Miller
Associate Dean and Program Director of the
Liberal Arts at LaGuardia Community College

Tamara Tweel
Teagle Foundation

Kelly Kreitz
Pace University

Luke Waltzer
CUNY Graduate Center

Remy Salas
Queens College Graduate Center

Barbara Bowen
PSC CUNY

Sarah Chinn
Hunter College

Alan Aja
Brooklyn College CUNY

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

Hugo Fernandez
LaGuardia Community College Professor

Anne Kornhauser
Chair of History Department at CUNY

Dean Ringel
John Jay College

Edward Paulino
John Jay College

Linique Pedaway [sp?]
John Jay Graduate

Gail Lewis
Queensborough Community College

Rosette Ruth Reisman Aguillar [sp?]
Audiology Department CUNY

John Verzani
Chair of CUNY University Faculty Senate

Addie Malinowski [sp?]

Laura Washington
New York Historical Society

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COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon and welcome to the New York City Council hearing of the Committee on Higher Education. At this time, can everyone please silence your cell phones? If you wish to testify, please go up to the Sergeant's desk to fill out a testimony slip. Written testimony can be emailed to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that is testimony@council.nyc.gov. At this time going forward, no one is to approach the dais. Thank you for your cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Good afternoon. I am Council Member Eric Dinowitz, Chair of the Committee on Higher Education and proud CUNY alum. Welcome to our oversight hearing on Humanities as a viable academic path for CUNY students. Having graduated from the Bronx High School of Science, one might think it odd that I am championing the hearing today. Credit for that goes to the undergraduate professors at Binghamton where I majored in Political Science and Music. Now, Political Science is really one of the Social Sciences, not one of the humanities, but many believe that it has the same foundational elements as humanities courses.

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2 According to the National Humanities Center, those
3 elements include thinking creatively and critically,
4 as well as asking and investigating questions on a
5 wide range of topics that affect how the human
6 experience is understood and appreciated across
7 cultures and communities past and present. And then
8 there's music. One of the fine and performing arts
9 which are squarely in the Center's definition of
10 humanities along with history, philosophy, religion,
11 modern languages, and literature, including English,
12 ancient languages and literatures, media studies, and
13 cultural studies including black studies, women's
14 studies, and fields sometimes referred to as Area
15 Studies, such as East Asian Studies. Columnist and
16 Editor Nicholas Goldberg wrote in the Los Angeles
17 Times, "The humanities and social sciences helps
18 students and the adults they become maneuver through
19 the complications and contradictions of the world,
20 and that learning languages, studying other
21 countries, remembering history broaden perspectives
22 and help us transcend global differences." So what
23 could be more important than that? Well, as it turns
24 out, perhaps, a lot of things. The number of
25 students-- well, it's kind of a-- I guess a dark

1 joke. Because the number of students enrolled in the
2 humanities is in free-fall according to scholars and
3 researchers in the field. In the past decade,
4 undergraduate enrollments in English and in History
5 were down by one-third, and enrollment in humanities
6 overall was down by 17 percent. The number of
7 graduating humanities majors has fallen eight years
8 in a row by 2020, when only four percent of graduates
9 majored in a humanities disciplines of English,
10 History, Philosophy, and Foreign Languages, and
11 Literature. According to data collected by the
12 Modern Language Association, 651 collegiate programs
13 in languages other than English were closed between
14 2013 and 2016, and that trend has unfortunately
15 continued as foreign language programs continue to
16 take a short-sided hit. How else are we going to get
17 our students ready to relate to and work with the
18 rest of the world? And in case you're worried that
19 humanities graduates can't get jobs when they
20 graduate or end up with very low salaries, neither
21 turns out to be true, thankfully. Today's hearing
22 topic came as a result of my staff's reading an
23 article entitled, The Humanities Aren't Hurting
24 Everywhere, by Karin Beck, Associate Dean of the
25

1 School of Arts and Humanities at Lehman College in
2 the Bronx, in Council District 11. So, Doctor Beck,
3 thanks for the push. We're looking forward to hearing
4 about work being done at Lehman and also at La
5 Guardia Community College. We are pleased to welcome
6 as expert witnesses, Tamara Tweel, Program Director
7 for Civic Initiatives at the Teagle Foundation, a
8 long-time supporter of humanities and of CUNY, and
9 Doctor Kelley Kreitz, an Associate Professor of
10 English and Director of the Babel Lab [sic], a
11 digital humanities center at Pace University. I want
12 to acknowledge my colleague Council Member Oswald
13 Feliz who is present today. I would also like to
14 thank Adam Starapoli [sp?], my Legislative Directors,
15 Jenna Klaus [sp?], my Chief of Staffs, Christina
16 Yellamaty [sp?], the Committee's Counsel, Regina Paul
17 [sp?], the Committee's Policy Analyst, Nia Hyatt
18 [sp?], Committee's Senior Finance Analyst, and on her
19 last day of her internship in my office, Yuretzi
20 Kanatae [sp?], who is here with us in the Chamber
21 today. I would like to remind everyone who wishes to
22 testify in person that you must fill out a witness
23 slip which is located on the desk of the Sergeant of
24 Arms near the entrance of this room. Please fill out
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1
2 your slip even if you've already registered to
3 testify in advance. To allow as many people as
4 possible to testify, testimony will be limited to
5 three minutes per person, and I'm going to ask my
6 colleagues to limit their questions and comments to
7 five minutes. Please note that witnesses who are here
8 in person will testify before those who are on Zoom.
9 And we all looked over, we can't-- now in accordance
10 with the rules of the Council, I will administer the
11 affirmation to the witnesses from CUNY. Please raise
12 your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
13 the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your
14 testimony before this committee and to respond
15 honestly to Council Member questions? Thank you. As
16 a reminder to all witnesses, please say your name
17 prior to your testimony for the record.

18 ANNE LOPES: So, good afternoon
19 Chairperson Dinowitz and members of the City Council
20 Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the
21 opportunity to speak to you today about the current
22 scope of humanities education at the University. So,
23 I am Anne Lopes, Interim Senior University Dean for
24 Graduate and Undergraduate Programming. I'm joined
25 today by my colleagues Karin Beck, Associate Dean of

1 the School of Arts and Humanities at Lehman College,
2 and Dionne Miller, Associate Dean and Program
3 Director for Liberal Arts at LaGuardia Community
4 College. Associate Dean Karin Beck's recent article
5 raises capacious questions about humanities
6 education. Debates on the role of the humanities in
7 higher education spans the institution's history and
8 is intensified with democratization, the need for an
9 engaged citizenry and the cost of education, labor
10 market needs, and the rise of STEM. Through
11 humanities courses students learn to think
12 critically, understand themselves, appreciate
13 multiple perspectives, diverse cultures and people,
14 apply problem-solving skills, communicate
15 effectively, develop ethical reasoning, historical
16 thinking, spur innovation and creativity among other
17 learning goals. The Humanities have been a
18 wellspring of learning for political leaders and
19 activists from FDR to Huey Newton to Sonia Sotomayor
20 and for business leaders from-- and luminaries from
21 Steve Jobs, Arundhati Bhattacharya. CUNY's trained
22 public leaders have cut some of their won
23 intellectual and leadership teeth chewing on the idea
24 of the humanities. The scope of humanities education
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1 at CUNY. At CUNY, the humanities disciplines include
2 English classics, creative writing history, Judaic
3 studies, modern languages, literature, linguistics,
4 philosophy, religion, rhetoric [sic], and relating
5 cross-disciplinary areas such as liberal studies and
6 translation. CUNY offers 22 Associates, 94
7 Bachelors, 44 Masters, and eight Doctoral Degrees in
8 Humanities. Enrolled in these programs as of 2022
9 are over 17,745 students. Between nine and 10
10 percent of Bachelor students graduate with humanities
11 degrees. That's been consistent over the last five
12 years. These figures do not reveal the broad reach
13 of humanities training. Undergraduates can select a
14 humanities double-major, minor, or concentration.
15 All undergraduates take general education courses,
16 between 30 and 42 credits' worth which include a full
17 array of humanities offerings. In addition, the
18 humanities are present in interdisciplinary knowledge
19 areas from areas of study focused on locale, race and
20 ethnicity, to disability studies, food studies,
21 gender studies, gerontological studies, health
22 studies, health sciences administration, over 45 new
23 areas that integrate the humanities are represents.
24 Added to this, many programs in the arts have blurred
25

1 the boundaries between arts practice and pure
2 humanities content. The expansive reach of the
3 humanities and their dispersion at CUNY have been in
4 part propelled by the increasing diversity of our
5 faculty who study disciplines that reflected their
6 experiences of themselves and the world and have
7 brought that learning to our students and to
8 curricula development. The students experience
9 outside the classroom also includes exposure to and
10 practice in humanities knowledge and skill areas.
11 Student clubs such as Debating Societies, cultural
12 and multi-faith clubs, language clubs, clubs for new
13 divergent [sic] individuals, altruism clubs are all
14 informed by interest in the humanities. In addition
15 to clubs, many initiative in the humanities enrich
16 our students' collegiate experience. Over 35 centers
17 and institutes in the humanities at the university
18 provide rich programming and a broad range of
19 humanities topics from medical humanities to racial
20 justice, climate justice, and global ethics. All
21 these educational experience help prepare students
22 for their careers, for lifelong learning, and for the
23 world they will inherit. Through this training our
24 students learn to thrive in a world of constant flux.
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1 Humanities education prepares our students for a
2 plethora of careers from advertising to public
3 servants, as well as for professional graduate
4 education. There is no better training for passing
5 the LSAT and succeeding in Law School than the study
6 of philosophy. Even in STEM-related professions,
7 Google's famous project Oxygen Study found the seven
8 top characteristics of success at Google are all soft
9 skills, the ability to coach, to communicate
10 effectively to listen carefully, to have insights
11 into others, including those who have ideas and
12 values that differ from one's own, the ability to
13 feel and express empathy, be an adept critical
14 thinker and problem-solver, and be able to make
15 connections across complex ideas and work on a team.
16 In the Google study, STEM training come in last. The
17 scope of the humanities at CUNY is a broad one. At
18 CUNY we're committed to providing our students with a
19 first-rate education regardless of means or
20 backgrounds. The humanities help us achieve that
21 goal and prepare students for the uncertainties of
22 the future. That concludes my testimony. Thank you
23 for your time. To further describe the reach of the
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1 humanities on our campuses, I turn now to my
2 colleague Associate Dean Karin Beck.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That was very
5 invigorating. That's very exciting. Thank you.
6 Yes, Doctor Beck?

7 KARIN BECK: Hi, my name is Karin Beck.
8 I'm the Associate Dean of the School of Arts and
9 Humanities at Lehman College. Thank you Committee
10 Chair Dinowitz and members of the City Committee on
11 Higher Education for the opportunity to provide
12 testimony about the humanities at Lehman. We need
13 creative thinkers now more than ever. A discourse
14 that limits workforce needs and career opportunities
15 to the tech and health industries in fact neglect
16 workforce needs, as well as the importance of the
17 creative industries and the cultural sector for the
18 thriving of our city. Studying in the humanities is
19 not a privilege for the wealthy. It is a right and a
20 necessity for everyone who chooses to do so, and with
21 the right support is a great stepping stone for a
22 successful career. In the arts and humanities at
23 Lehman College, we see ourselves as an engine of
24 upward creativity. We strive to empower students to
25 go beyond the limits of their imaginations. Let me

1 give you just some short examples how Lehman
2 graduates enhance the culture of our city. A recent
3 graduate of our journalism program is now the Bronx
4 Reporter for the new journal The City. A music
5 graduate working for the Afro-Latin Jazz Alliance. A
6 recent graduate of the English Department is now
7 working for the Doe [sic] Foundation. A graduate of
8 Latin-American Studies won the Miranda Family
9 Fellowship for PHD in History at the Graduate Center,
10 and a graduate of philosophy and political science
11 went on to the CUNY School of Law and is now a City
12 Council Member and serves on this committee, but has
13 left the room. It's Council Member Feliz.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: He had great
16 attendance in school, though. That's what matters.

17 KARIN BECK: In September '22, CUNY
18 launched incorporation with the City, the CUNY
19 Inclusive Economy Initiative with a focus on the
20 tech, health, and green economy sectors. A liberal
21 arts pilot is financed out of private funding. Two
22 schools are receiving funding for the humanities and
23 the arts, Lehman College and Baruch. Let me add here
24 form the footnote that the CIE is funded by \$30
25 million dollars and the money for the liberal arts is

1 half a million dollar per year. Despite its success
2 it is-- the program is thriving, despite its success
3 it is however, not part of the continued funding of
4 the CIE as the tech and health programs are.

5 Furthermore, since many of the potential employers
6 for our students are small cultural or community
7 organizations, they cannot afford to pay the
8 students. An advantage of programs that pay

9 students a stipend is that it gives them the same
10 chance in the workforce as students from richer
11 institutions who can afford to accept unpaid work.

12 Beyond internships, we're incorporating experiential
13 learning in our curriculum as much as possible. A
14 class in Latino Popular Culture, for example, using
15 the new possibilities of online learning combined

16 with learning off-campus at museums and cultural
17 events. This does not only expose students to the
18 cultural institutions of the city, but also to the

19 career opportunities in the arts and cultural
20 entrepreneurship. The English Department has

21 recently updated their curriculum and centered it on
22 under-represented voices. These are also central in
23 our atlas [sic] anchored in the liberal arts program
24 funded by the Teagle Foundation. It offers general
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1 education classes that focus on the reading and
2 discussion of transformative texts, challenging and
3 transforming the students' thinking. We are
4 committed to a transformational curriculum through a
5 deep study of texts that give students a sense of
6 belonging to a community of scholars and thinkers and
7 strengthens students' intellectual development and
8 impact their future careers. Arts and Humanities
9 reach all students at the college. Nursing students,
10 for example, take classes in Africana studies to
11 better understand the communities that they will be
12 interacting with. In these humanities classes,
13 students of all majors find their voices. New York
14 City needs to hear them. Upward mobility needs to be
15 grounded in upward creativity to become inclusive and
16 truly transformative.

18 DIONNE MILLER: My name is Dionne Miller
19 and I am Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and also
20 the Liberal Arts Program Director at LaGuardia
21 Community College. Thank you, Committee Chair
22 Dinowitz and members of the City Council Higher
23 Education Committee for the opportunity to provide
24 testimony about humanities education at CUNY. As a
25 two-year college in the CUNY system, LaGuardia's

1 mission is in part, and I quote, "to educate and
2 graduate one of the most diverse student populations
3 in the country to become critical thinkers and
4 socially responsible citizens." Part of how we
5 achieve this is by providing them with a robust
6 humanities department and curriculum. In 2022,
7 LaGuardia served over 23,000 students in pre-college
8 associate degree and continuing education programs.
9 Consistent with the demographics of Queens, 52
10 percent of LaGuardia students are born outside of
11 United States. They come from 130 countries and
12 speak 54 heritage languages. More than half, 54
13 percent, are first-generation college students.
14 Virtually all LaGuardia students are ethnic
15 minorities, 88 percent. Forty-eight percent are
16 Hispanic, almost double the threshold of 25 percent
17 required by the US Department of Education for
18 designation as a Hispanic-serving institution. To
19 this vibrant diverse student body we offer an equally
20 diverse and vibrant humanities curriculum as part of
21 our general education offerings, but also as majors.
22 These includes courses and programs in English,
23 Creative Writing, Philosophy, and Spanish/English
24 Translation. We offer an interdisciplinary Social
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1 Science and Humanities Liberal Arts Degree, one of
2 the largest enrolled in the college. Within the
3 liberal arts degree students are able to add
4 concentrations in Ethnic Studies, Japanese, Latin
5 American Studies, and TESOLL, Teaching English to
6 Speakers of Other Languages and Linguistics.

7 Starting this academic year, we are proud to be one
8 of the first two-year colleges in the nation to offer
9 a concentration in health humanities, developed with
10 the supports of a grant from the National Endowment
11 for the Humanities. LaGuardia also offers courses in
12 a wide range of modern languages including American
13 Sign Language, Bengali, Arabic, Chinese, Korean,
14 Uzbek, and Haitian Creole to name a few. Students in
15 our humanities majors are successful as measured by
16 graduation on transfer rates. The three-year
17 graduation rate for first-time full-time students in
18 the 2019 cohort of the English and Creative Writing
19 Program is 66.7 percent, although my data people made
20 me emphasize that it was a small cohort, and the
21 three-year transfer rate is 81.3 percent for English
22 and, 75 percent for Creative Writing majors. While
23 the social plans [sic] on humanities graduation rates
24 are more in line with the college average at 27.8
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1 percent, these students over three years transfer at
2 a rate of 63.8 percent. Moreover, the majority of
3 the English and Creative Writings majors, 80.2
4 percent, transfer into similar programs at their
5 four-year colleges such as English, English
6 Literature, Creative Writing, Journalism, and Film
7 Studies. Our Liberal Arts majors, as would be
8 expected, transfer into a wide range of programs from
9 Psychology to Finance, English Literature, and Public
10 Administration. LaGuardia's success has not been
11 accidental, but is a result of focused strategies to
12 support our students. We have implemented at-scale a
13 credit-bearing first-year seminar experience that
14 integrates discipline-based curriculum taught by
15 disciplinary faculty with an introduction to college
16 advising and core curricula innovation. In an Inside
17 Higher-Ed article earlier this year titled "Re-
18 writing the English Curriculum," by John Orlanzo
19 [sp?], the author notes that for English majors at
20 LaGuardia, the program has been intentional in
21 emphasizing the versatility of an English Degree.
22 Orlanzo writes, "In multiple courses, starting in the
23 first-year seminar, students learn about different
24 fields and professions in which they could use an
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1 English degree, such as event planning, book
2 publishing, and public relations. As a result, a
3 high percentage of English majors transfer to a
4 Bachelor's program within one to three years of
5 graduating." For Liberal Arts students, major-
6 specific advising reinforces the students that they
7 are gaining vital skills for academic and
8 professional success such as writing and research,
9 critical thinking, teamwork, while retaining maximum
10 flexibility upon transfer. Another recent New York
11 Times guest essay, "Let's Stop Pretending College
12 Degrees Don't Matter," by Ben Wildavsky, reinforces
13 the point that the broad education and targeted
14 skills humanities and liberal arts graduates obtain
15 have significant long-term benefits no matter what
16 majors and careers these students ultimately pursue.
17 Lastly, LaGuardia also has a focus on experiential
18 and core curricula learning. Students in our English
19 and Creative Writing programs, for example, can take
20 semester-long credit-bearing internship courses that
21 provide the opportunity to work closely with faculty
22 and peers in developing the college's literary
23 magazine, The Lit, or the college newspaper, The
24 Bridge, work with an external media organization, or
25

1 work on a faculty member scholarly research projects.
2 Students can also participate in civic and community
3 engaged projects. At LaGuardia, despite our
4 successes, we know our work is not done. We continue
5 to innovate and scale up high-impact practices, to
6 support all our students. We thank the City Council
7 for the support it continues to provide in fulfilling
8 our mission. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much
11 for your testimony. We've been joined by Council
12 Member Vernikov. Thank you for joining us. I have a
13 sort of a broad question, and we'll get into some
14 more details, but Doctor Beck, you said one of the
15 important things general education classes that focus
16 on reading, discussion of transformative texts,
17 challenging and transforming the students' thinking.
18 And that was a very interesting phrase you used,
19 especially now as we're dealing with a lot of
20 difficult topics here in New York City, and across
21 the country with curriculum changes, and people in
22 positions like mine being able to challenge our own
23 thinking and speak to one another and challenge other
24 people's thinking in a way that's appropriate and
25 respectful. Do you see any relationship between some

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2 of the political climate that we're in right now and
3 the humanities curriculum and the decline in the
4 humanities in our colleges?

5 KARIN BECK: Thank you for the question,
6 Chair Dinowitz. Could you make it any broader?

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I-- well, I mean,
8 I'm interested in your thoughts here, a real expert
9 on this issue, and kind of get more broadly kind of
10 the importance of humanities, not just-- because
11 we'll get into jobs and graduation rates. But where
12 we are as a city and a country I think speaks to the
13 fundamental purpose of studying the humanities. So I
14 wanted to hear a little more of your thoughts on that
15 before I got into some of the other questions.

16 KARIN BECK: I see your large-- a huge
17 danger right now in the discourse that undervalues
18 the humanities. I want to be very careful in my
19 phrasing here. We have, I think-- when we have
20 discussion at the college about the backlash against
21 Critical Race Theory, I do see in this backlash
22 actually an indicator how afraid people are of books,
23 how afraid leaders are of critical thinking, and of
24 hist-- and of an approach to history that takes out
25 the truth. And I do believe that this actually a

1 sign of how import-- that we're obviously doing
2 something right in the humanities if we are upsetting
3 people in this way. So this kind of challenging has
4 to continue. At the same time, there's you know, a
5 lot of business decisions or other big decision--
6 other decisions or political decisions tend to be
7 made in what is called a data-enforced-- data-
8 informed way. And very often, data is then read in a
9 very simplistic way, which I think can be another
10 indicator for a lack of a humanities education
11 besides a business education. That's why Professor
12 Lopes could point out that it's Google [sic], it is
13 the humanities education that helps more than the
14 STEM education. So I do think that yes, the lack of
15 a humanities education and a tendency towards the
16 simplification of it has really-- is connected to
17 this tendency that you have described, and that's--
18 we are trying to at the same time challenge our
19 students and their thinking and bring them in contact
20 with their own traditions so our Atlas program
21 focuses on under-represented voices and focuses on
22 the traditions that are often the ones our students
23 come from. So we try to help them to find their
24 roots so they have-- can have a strong standing from
25

1
2 where to challenge themselves and to challenge the
3 world.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, I-- you know,
5 one-- it's interesting to talk about challenging
6 one's own perspective. You know, one of the issues
7 that Council Member Vernikov and I have worked on is
8 the issue of anti-Semitism at CUNY, and the reports
9 we get among others are students feeling like they
10 are not able to express themselves as Jews or as
11 Zionists, because they are shouted out in class, or
12 they are told by their professors that they-- that
13 that is a wrong perspective to have, which sounds to
14 me like quite the opposite of what a good humanities
15 education would support. so, certainly something
16 that all around needs to be enhanced all over CUNY
17 for a variety of reasons, and certainly it is-- as
18 you mentioned data, I would love to hear from either
19 of our witnesses as well-- and we know that the data,
20 the use of data and of course going into automation
21 and AI sort of reinforces existing biases. Are the
22 decision-makers made an algorithm and the data will
23 just reinforce that. And so is there -- are there
24 steps being done at CUNY to recognize this, I guess,
25 dangerous path going down when we talk about the

1
2 engineering's going up, Computer Science, any steps
3 to require more humanities-- more humanities courses
4 for the STEM degrees to delve into some of the issues
5 that Doctor Beck was raising?

6 ANNE LOPES: I'm unaware of the
7 requirement issue at CUNY. Certainly this is being
8 raised as an issue, particularly with AI which is--
9 raises some bias issue that you so described in other
10 issues where the humanities can certainly temper or I
11 guess address and confront some of the issues that AI
12 brings forward and one very important initiative
13 coming out of Academic Affairs CUNY-wide-- so it's
14 central administration and then CUNY-wide-- will be
15 to address these AI issues, that this is a critical
16 and important part of the future, and it's also one
17 that we have to A, embrace, and B, learn how to use
18 effectively so that it is mind-expanding as opposed
19 to mind-limiting, right, when it comes to our
20 creativity and ability to deal with each other and
21 the diversity of ideas and accept the diversity of
22 ideas.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, I just want to
24 make sure I heard right, so I'll ask a little
25 clarifying. Is CUNY-- is part of the discussion as

1
2 AI is part of this discussion, is part of that
3 discussion requiring more-- require-- again,
4 requiring more humanities classes and ethics, classic
5 things like that, for students in these tech fields?

6 ANNE LOPES: So, there is some
7 discussion. So the requirement is, you know, is not
8 there yet, right? So, but there is discussion about
9 what is the place of AI in general education, for
10 instance? And what is the place of dealing with
11 these issues around AI in general education, so
12 raising this issue in terms of education that all
13 students at CUNY will be exposed to? It's not that
14 far down the road yet, right? It's going to be--

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: [interposing] Well,
16 it's here, so.

17 ANNA LOPES: [inaudible] yeah, exactly.
18 But it--

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: [interposing] But--

20 ANNA LOPES: You know how fast colleges
21 change, right?

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I would just
23 hope you would rephrase a little bit. You know, the
24 real question I think as part of this hearing should
25 be not where is the place of AI. It's where is the

1 place of humanities? Where does humanities belong?
2
3 And the answer seems to be everywhere.

4 ANNA LOPES: Everywhere.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Whether we're
6 talking about automation, talking about political
7 discourse and history, or we're talking about as was
8 mentioned Google, STEM. Right there in the tech
9 field is the soft skills. It seems everywhere you
10 look, if CUNY students are going to be as successful
11 as possible as members of our society or in the STEM
12 fields or any fields, they would seem to me that the
13 question asked should be how do we incorporate
14 humanities and require it without quotation marks
15 into every curriculum.

16 ANNE LOPES: So, it is in general
17 education throughout general education. It is in all
18 of these interdisciplinary areas. The sciences re
19 also STEM fields informed by the humanities, and
20 there are many courses that are humanities-informed
21 in STEM fields. And you know, right from ethical
22 decision-making that's almost part of every
23 discipline, part of the humanities dealing with those
24 ethical questions, to all kinds of critical thinking
25 skills that are infused. So that kind of humanities

1 knowledge, the history of a discipline comes from the
2 humanities when we think about histories and how
3 ideas change. All of that is certainly part of the
4 curriculum, and will-- I believe, I don't know, but I
5 believe in terms of CUNY and the discussion that are
6 happening on the campuses will continue to increase
7 as we see these changes occur in our society.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right. And we
10 don't have to think back that far to remember the
11 early days of the pandemic and even when the vaccines
12 first came out were really outside of the actual
13 science where so much of the skills required us as a
14 society to work together and to communicate with one
15 another and even the scientists on the teams
16 developing the vaccines didn't do it in a vacuum.
17 They did it as teams working, you know, working
18 collaboratively, challenging each other's thoughts.
19 We've been joined by the one and only Council Member--
20 - fine, just regular Council Member Gale Brewer. I
21 have a question about data, because it was mentioned
22 before that the data, as judged by the graduation
23 rate and the transfer rate, of humanities are
24 successful. Are there any other data that are
25 collected, for example, job placement and salaries

1
2 from graduates of the humanities at LaGuardia or CUNY
3 as a whole?

4 DIONNE MILLER: I can speak for LaGuardia
5 in that it's-- we actually don't have that data.
6 It's actually very difficult to track students when
7 they-- because of course, as a two-year degree
8 students are transferring to complete a four-year
9 degree and then enter the workforce. So it's been
10 very difficult to get that information. You know, we
11 send out student surveys and the-- our team has some
12 limited amount of data, but it's hard to distinguish
13 humanities graduates in that data pool.

14 ANNE LOPES: I'm unaware of that data,
15 but I'll check.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right. I would
17 imagine CUNY central would track data. I see the
18 head nod.

19 ANNE LOPES: Yeah, well graduate-- I
20 don't know what the-- if we track it that way for all
21 campuses, but I will check.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right. I think the
23 data overall from the country is that humanities is
24 on a par with-- or almost on a par with other majors.

25 ANNE LOPES: It is nationally.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Nationally, right,
3 and I would-- I think it was-- it would be of great
4 interest to this committee, and of course, to our
5 city to show the viability of English-- it's always
6 the butt of every joke, but English as a viable
7 degree for a career trend, and we were focusing a lot
8 on STEM which is great, but it often seems that the
9 expense of humanities fields. And I see you're both
10 nodding your head. So,--

11 ANNE LOPES: So, you're looking for
12 income data, yeah, parity?

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Income data and
14 job placement data.

15 ANNE LOPES: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But at Lehman
17 College, you've been bucking the trend. You've been
18 successful in increasing or maintaining your
19 humanities majors, and I'm-- is that due in part to
20 the half a million dollars that you were speaking
21 about earlier?

22 KARIN BECK: So, first, I have to
23 clarify. We are bucking the trend. It is not going
24 down. So the absolute number of majors is now going
25 down, but not as a percentage of students graduating.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry-- I'm--
3 say that again.

4 KARIN BECK: Okay, we have been bucking
5 the trend in that the number that we-- we are not at
6 14 percent or the 17 percent reduction in students
7 graduating, but over from 2010 to 2020 the number of
8 graduates in the humanities at Lehman College has
9 actually increased.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And what do you
11 attribute that-- I mean, so compared to the rest of
12 the country, though, it-- right? Because I mean,
13 that's what it's comparison. It's more successful in
14 attracting and retaining students in the humanities,
15 and what can you attribute that to?

16 KARIN BECK: So, we can't attribute that
17 to the half million dollars in the CIE funds, because
18 that only started in January of 2023. So I don't
19 think we can attribute a tendency of the last 10
20 years to that. I think what is very impressive was
21 for example that at Lehman College the number of
22 English majors did go up which I attribute to very
23 strong English classes in the general education
24 program and to a strong first-year experience program
25 that we have had at Lehman for over 20 years where

1 students are being exposed to different majors.
2 Also, through good cooperation with the nursing
3 department where we have a lot of students that enter
4 our college dreaming of being a nurse, which is the--
5 it's the perfect first-generation position for upward
6 mobility, but so many students cannot do that. So we
7 have always cooperated with very well to move
8 students early into other possible majors for them.
9 Also, we are working very closely together in arts
10 and humanities. All our majors are offering combined
11 sections as we call it. I'm saying cross-listed
12 courses now, because that's what people better
13 understand, but that's really not what it is. So, a
14 class might be offered by Africana Studies, Latino
15 Studies, and the English Department together, one
16 professor teaching all three fields. That's-- the
17 students can get exposed to all these different
18 majors. We have also worked very career active
19 clubs. We have several journals and newspapers at
20 the college, and we have worked very closely with the
21 students, and we're working closely with career
22 education. We're trying to be very practical, but we
23 know that this is still an area where we can gain.
24 What we are seeing is that a lot of students are
25

1 interested in taking creative writing classes as
2 general education classes. That is one thing we have
3 noticed and we are now increasing and building out
4 the creative writing part of the English major, and I
5 believe this is part of the story that students want
6 to be-- that especially minority students want to be
7 able to tell their story.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I would note that
10 one of my staff members majored in Creative Writing,
11 and now she's working in the City Council which I
12 think speaks to, you know, how impactful these
13 degrees can be and your ability to adapt to any
14 situation. Doctor Miller, are there-- is your first-
15 year experience for the students similar to what was
16 described about Lehman College where they're-- where
17 the students have a strong first-year experience and
18 that's why you have a successful humanities program?

19 DIONNE MILLER: I would say yes, we have
20 a really impactful first-year experience where
21 students are in seminars that are discipline based.
22 So students in the English major are with other
23 English majors taught by English faculty who are able
24 to get up close with what majoring in this discipline
25 looks like and we're able to- you know, or as I

1 mentioned in my remarks, we have first generation
2 students and a lot of our students come to LaGuardia
3 and it's nursing or computers or engineering, things
4 that people recognize quite easily as paths towards
5 the middle class. So we are very careful about
6 making sure that students understand that there are
7 other ways to be successful and we understand the
8 need to get a credential that leads to a good job,
9 but that there are other fields that you can attain
10 this. And so these first-year experience classes are
11 very good about grounding students in the discipline
12 from day one. We also have lots of innovative
13 programming like our collaborative online
14 international learning where that's built into our
15 student's regular General Ed classes or some of their
16 program courses where they're learning to collaborate
17 with students in other countries online activities.
18 We have community-based programs where we have
19 partnered, for instance, with the Malala Foundation,
20 and they're thinking about issues of women's
21 education, girls education, and students in our new
22 media classes are creating videos, and students in
23 education are creating lesson plans, and so they're
24 beginning to see how their work connects across
25

1 fields, across the globe. And to give them just a
2 very different perspective about what they could be
3 doing that career-wise and major-wise that they could
4 find impactful. So I think the combination of the
5 first-year experience programs like our collaborative
6 online international learning or-- it's called the
7 LaGuardia Humanitarian Initiative where they're doing
8 community-based worked. All of these areas reinforce
9 the students that there are lots of pathways in the
10 humanities.
11

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You mentioned a
13 few items that this committee has taken up, in fact,
14 including credentialing programs, and one of the
15 things we just-- that I've spoken about a lot is
16 that, you know, when I taught high school it seemed
17 to me that there were a lot of students who had to
18 wait until they graduated high school to find that
19 they were really good at something else really
20 talented and there should be other pathways besides
21 the standard high school curriculum-- vocational
22 training, those that certification in other areas.
23 But some of the feedback that I've got gotten from
24 some professors I've spoken to at CUNY, they told me
25 it's almost the opposite problem, that there's been a

1 lot of pressure for students to have the pathway
2 right into the STEM area, the engineering, that
3 advisors are pushing them towards one specific field,
4 and students don't have the opportunity to explore
5 the humanities and other-- and explore for themselves
6 the areas they'd like to study. Have any of you
7 experienced that either on your campuses or heard
8 your friends talk about it?

10 ANNE LOPES: I think, well, one thing
11 that's happened is that there's-- there are Meta
12 [sic] majors. So students look at and enroll in
13 programs with advisors and a combination of
14 experiences when they start out as first-year
15 students, and certainly in the senior college level.
16 You know, they have more credits to play with, right?
17 So, they can explore a group of majors and have an
18 opportunity really to do that. At the Associate's
19 level they have a more limited number of credits,
20 right, to work with than they do at the senior
21 college level. So there's great exploration that is
22 also a part of the undergraduate program and built
23 into the undergraduate program through 42 credits of
24 General Education as well, and you're not married to
25 your major. Many students change their major

1 multiple times, right? Because they learn about
2 these other disciplines, and that's what General
3 Education is about, right? The ability to expose you
4 to these other disciplines including all-- you know,
5 the plethora of the humanities, right?
6

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right. But I
8 mean, I just-- it sounds like you said yes in the
9 four-year colleges it's a little easier, there's more
10 flexibility to explore different things. But on the
11 associate's level, they really do come in with a
12 pathway, and they are guided to specific things
13 despite the fact that perhaps college may be a place
14 where some students do need to figure out what they
15 want to do or explore a different discipline.

16 ANNE LOPES: Well, they do have very
17 broad degrees, too, at the associate level. So there
18 is a liberal studies kind of degree, right, a Liberal
19 Arts degree, and I believe that something like 40
20 percent of students and-- Dionne might know this
21 better than I do.

22 DIONNE MILLER: Part of my life's work.
23 You know, I should probably confess that I am a STEM
24 major myself, right? My P.H.D. is actually in
25 Chemistry, but unfortunately our students have to

1 declare a major as they come in the door, and this is
2 one of the greatest challenges that we have that for
3 financial aid purposes, and 90+ percent of our
4 students need financial aid, they have to declare a
5 major and that immediately limits the possibilities
6 for exploring. For the Liberal Arts program,
7 unfortunately the messaging has been from high school
8 well, Liberal Arts is the place that you go when you
9 don't know what you want to do, and then as soon as
10 you figure it out, then you transfer into that other
11 thing. So I've spent the last few years--

12
13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: [interposing] And
14 that's why you transferred to STEM?

15 DIONNE MILLER: Unfortunate-- well, long
16 story.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm just kidding.

18 DIONNE MILLER: But you know, at
19 LaGuardia we've now been really intentional about
20 telling students in our Liberal Arts program that
21 this is a valid, vibrant disciplinary area in and of
22 itself, and offers you the maximum flexibility to
23 transfer into other career paths when you go to your
24 four-year college. So we tell students, for
25 instance, that if you add a concentration in Health

1 Humanities, that's a great pathway still into nursing
2 or some other health science career. It doesn't mean
3 that you have to pursue a degree in Health Humanities
4 when you transfer. So we've been trying to change
5 that messaging that the Liberal Arts is just a holding
6 tank in terms of majors. But it is an issue that we
7 now-- we're doing implementation-- greater
8 implementation of what we call guided pathways where
9 students will be in similar disciplinary fields again
10 where they can now explore a little broadly in at
11 least that first semester, but having to declare a
12 major is a challenge that we have.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is that--

15 DIONNE MILLER: [interposing] At the two-
16 year level.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is it a Pathways
18 program?

19 DIONNE MILLER: No.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's different,
21 okay.

22 DIONNE MILLER: No, different.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Guided path.
24
25

1
2 DIONNE MILLER: Different, different,
3 something that we work with with our friends from
4 Columbia University.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: One of you's [sic]
6 got to rename it, because it's just too confusing.

7 DIONNE MILLER: I know. There are too
8 many pathways running around, yeah.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's the only
10 thing we want less of for our students, it's
11 pathways, right? Doctor Beck?

12 KARIN BECK: And if I may say, the one
13 thing we really should not want for our students is
14 pipelines. There's-- you know, the pipeline to
15 success, the pipeline to STEM, the pipeline from the
16 students to-- from the high school to pipeline.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, they
18 rebranded it pathways, so it's fine.

19 KARIN BECK: Yes, they rebranded
20 pipelines to pathways. I would like to say that at
21 Lehman College we have-- we are one of the very few
22 community colleges that do not require students to
23 declare a major when they enter. We actually don't
24 allow them to declare a major until their sophomore
25 year, which might be another reason why we have more

1 humanities majors. And my third point-- the third
2 point I would like to make on the record here, that
3 one of the reasons why students have so few
4 possibilities to explore the very, very rigid TAP
5 [sic] financial aid requirements of New York State.

6
7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Some support from
8 the audience there. So, you ascribe some of hot
9 success to the fact that they can't declare a major,
10 and you ascribe some of the shortcomings that they
11 have to, and that's-- and you mention TAP. When you
12 say financial aid, do you mean federal, state, what
13 do you mean by when you say financial aid? Is that
14 all financial aid programs?

15 DIONNE MILLER: I don't want to venture
16 into areas I'm not an expert about, but it's between
17 the federal and state financial aid that I am told
18 that students must declare a major as soon as they
19 register.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It's-- okay. I'd
21 like to recognize Council Member Brewer.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I just have one
23 question. First of all, it's a great topic. I guess
24 is it a selling point-- I teach at Hunter, one class,
25 so I have some sense of how great your students are.

1
2 But is it a selling point that to be able to write
3 and 2023 English, Spanish, whatever language is an
4 asset like none other? I mean, actually this year I
5 had students and they were phenomenal writers, and
6 they're from all over the world, and in many cases
7 English is not their first language, excellent
8 writers. Other years, oh my God, you are a terrible
9 writer. So, my question is, is this a selling point?
10 It may not be, but I can say from many years of
11 experience, the writers are my angels, in general.
12 So is that help you with humanities or does it really
13 do much?

14 ANNE LOPES: From the employer point of
15 view, yeah, it helps quite a bit, because employers
16 are very clear that they are looking for people who
17 are literate, who can write and speak properly, and
18 they need people who can communicate effectively. So
19 it's a definite selling point, particularly for
20 career success.

21 DIONNE MILLER: We emphasize especially
22 for our Liberal Arts majors who are usually maligned,
23 and sometimes by parents, understandably. You know,
24 what are you going to do with that degree. Is that
25 we spend a lot of time emphasizing that the skills

1
2 that they gain from humanities and other liberal arts
3 or social science courses give these valuable skills
4 that are valuable as they continue their academic
5 careers. The teamwork, the communication, the
6 critical thinking, the writing, and it's also valued
7 by employers, and we spend a lot of time showing the
8 research and the articles where employers are saying
9 this over and over again. I worked these past two
10 years on apprenticeship programs with tech, in the
11 tech field, for two of our programs, and part of what
12 we provided for students were the so-called soft
13 skills training, additional soft skill or
14 professional skills training for these tech students
15 as they're entering the workplace. So I think we
16 emphasize the value whether you're a STEM major or a
17 straight Humanities major, that these skills are
18 transferable across all disciplines and careers.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: As I said, I do--
20 I do all sorts of things to make Council Member
21 Brewer very angry at me. I'm going to do one right
22 now, and I'm going-- I'm going to wish her a
23 wonderful, wonderful happy birthday.

24 [applause]

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.
3 Continue with the hearing, please.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You're welcome.
5 She made fun of my tie a couple months ago. So I'm
6 getting back. Does CUNY have any plans for-- given
7 how important humanities are and how successful-- we
8 have successful models, does CUNY have plans to
9 expand its humanities courses and programs? Are
10 there additional resources needed to do that? Are
11 there any obstacles preventing CUNY from expanding
12 its humanity courses?

13 ANNE LOPES: I don't think there are
14 those kinds of obstacles. So one thing that my
15 remarks talked about was the dispersion of the
16 humanities into interdisciplinary fields. That's
17 where the real growth is right now. The humanities
18 are really everywhere and informing so many
19 disciplines, and the increase of these
20 interdisciplinary knowledge areas that have
21 humanities from disability studies to Africana
22 studies, it's critical that those areas continue to
23 grow because that's where the new and emerging
24 knowledge is, right? And they include real, full
25 humanities content in those areas, as they do other

1
2 interdisciplinary content, right, from the social
3 sciences or STEM or wherever else.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I mean it's
5 interesting that you mentioned disability studies,
6 that was-- when I went to Hunter my Masters was in
7 teaching students with disabilities, and I think my
8 experience was a little different that in some of my
9 courses it was very much here's the disability,
10 here's the classification, here's how you identify
11 it, and not enough of the literature about what it
12 means to be a person living with a disability, what
13 it means to be a parent with a child with a
14 disability, and I just think even in my own schooling
15 how valuable that would have been to my being a
16 teacher and my working with my students with
17 disabilities and their families.

18 KARIN BECK: You should have gone to
19 Lehman College. We have a disability studies minor
20 under the leadership of one of the nation's leading
21 disability scholars and philosopher Julie Maybe [sp?]
22 and she works very closely, though not close enough.
23 I think we really have to work on that with the
24 School of Education to work to-- but that-- more
25 theoretical underpinning of what is disability, how

1
2 does the society create the whole concept of
3 disability. That is very strong at Lehman. We have
4 a minor in it.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'll go back for
6 my continuing education courses.

7 KARIN BECK: Absolutely, we would in
8 continuing education, and I also would like to
9 reinforce what Dean Lopes has said before. Lopes has
10 said before the Bressi [sic] Initiative, for example,
11 that she has mentioned in her testimony was one point
12 where the funding of social science and the
13 humanities has been increased over the last couple of
14 years. But if you ask about obstacles, then I think
15 the example that I sued about the CIE, that is the
16 funding for internships mainly in the tech and health
17 industries, but not so much in the humanities. These
18 are the kind of obstacles we walk into because the
19 humanities are over and over an afterthought.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: What does the
21 Chancellor want to be known as? He says it every
22 time I hear him. He says the Patron Saint of Paid
23 Internships.

24 ANNE LOPES: Paid internships, right. So
25 they would--

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That should
3 include humanities is what you're saying.

4 KARIN BECK: That should include
5 humanities and that should include ways of finding to
6 pay for these internships because paid internships in
7 this sense can only be offered by very rich
8 institutions, but if we would actually work together
9 and give students a stipend for paid internships,
10 both community organizations and cultural
11 institutions would profit as well as the students.

12 DIONNE MILLER: I would add that sort of
13 pushing back against the trend and even despite the
14 funding challenges, LaGuardia has introduced many
15 sort of interdisciplinary type courses that students
16 all across the college take. So we have women,
17 gender, and sexuality studies. We have ethnic
18 studies. As I just mentioned, we just launched a
19 health humanities concentration and there's a course
20 that's coming in literature and medicine, for
21 instance, for people to talk to students to delve
22 into how people process illness through creative
23 expression. So we've developed so many new courses
24 like that that are available again as part of our Gen
25 Ed and as part of concentrations, but I'm sure the

1 humanities faculty will tell you that there's so much
2 more they would want to do, but there is just no
3 funding. We have a great theater program. I know
4 that technically not humanities, but we have a great
5 theater program that puts on amazing productions.
6 The students go to the Kennedy Festival, but there's
7 always a struggle for the college to find funding to
8 support these kinds of programs. Where internships
9 are concerned, our foundation has raised money that's
10 used to fund student internships. So where we work
11 with like some of our small businesses in Queens, so
12 that if they can't, the businesses themselves can't
13 afford to fund the students, LaGuardia can pay the
14 students so that they're able to take advantage of
15 these internships, because over 70 percent of our
16 students work and need to work to support themselves.
17 So, there are times when we have these opportunities
18 and they can't even take them because they need to
19 pay the rent and internships won't do that, but
20 that's one way we support students in being able to
21 have that sort of experience that's going to maybe
22 be life-changing.

24 ANNE LOPES: I just want to add one thing
25 to that which is a real need as well, there's so much

1
2 money for research in the sciences for faculty and
3 for faculty to work with students on their research
4 as role models for their students so the students
5 actually do the research with the faculty, tons of
6 money, and federal money. But in the humanities
7 there's almost nothing for undergraduate research in
8 the humanities. That could make a huge difference
9 for students in introducing them to the humanities
10 enrich careers for themselves in humanities so that
11 they become the professors, too, in the future.
12 That's important.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to thank
14 the three of you for your testimony today and for
15 answering the Committee's questions, and of course
16 for the work you do every day for the students here
17 in New York City. Thank you. For our next panel I'd
18 like to call Tamara Tweel and Kelly Kreitz.

19 TAMARA TWEEL: Hello?

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, you may
21 begin, and you please state your name before your
22 testimony for the record.

23 TAMARA TWEEL: Hello. My name is Tamara
24 Tweel, and I want to thank the Committee for turning
25 their attention to this important issue and to our

1
2 partners at CUNY for their exceptional leadership in
3 the field of humanities education. I am here on
4 behalf of the Teagle Foundation, and institution
5 dedicated to supporting and strengthening humanities
6 education which we believe is fundamental to
7 meaningful work, effective citizenship and a
8 fulfilling life. We all know that the humanities are
9 on a steep and dangerous decline. In the last 10
10 years alone, study of English and History has dropped
11 by a third, but what is often missed in the media
12 discussion, and what I want to share with you today
13 is why a humanistic education is so urgent for New
14 York City students. It is urgent for them as
15 individuals, as community members, and as residents
16 of our great city. The humanities not only prepare
17 students for jobs, they also prepare them for their
18 whole lives. In a shifting employment landscape, we
19 know the essential skills of a humanistic classroom.
20 We've discussed this. Public speaking, writing,
21 reasoning, open-minded thinking, are more important
22 forever, but subjects like English and History also
23 prepare students for full and complex lives. They
24 invite individuals at a tender age of transition to
25 confront and discuss their most pressing questions on

1 the nature of love, on the challenges of loss, and on
2 the very real tensions of leaving home. In an age
3 where loneliness and mental health issues are
4 national crises, humanities classes are some of the
5 only spaces only college campuses where students of
6 all different backgrounds practice being in community
7 with one another. They do this through the
8 discipline of reading shared texts, discussing them,
9 and listening to one another. It has also been shown
10 for this reason, and we talked about this with
11 freshman year experiences, to help with college
12 persistence in freshman year and beyond. Finally,
13 the humanities are a fundamental part of an education
14 for civic responsibility. It is in the humanities
15 that students are taught how to empathize with lives
16 different than their own, how to see one issues form
17 multiple perspectives, how to engage in civil
18 discourse and honest debate, and how to understand
19 that the gap between our nation's aspirations and our
20 political reality is serious and requires their
21 commitment. No matter how many innovations we create
22 in the scientific sphere, we will always need to
23 learn how to organize ourselves into functioning
24 social communities. This is the job of this urgent
25

1 form of knowledge, and it cannot and must not be
2 treated like a luxury only to be had of private
3 institutions. At the Foundation we believe that
4 every institution of higher learning has a task of
5 taking stock why our democracy exists, who it serves,
6 and what it must do to educate the next generation of
7 students. Over the last 10 years, CUNY has been
8 doing just that. we are incredibly proud of our
9 partnership with a number of schools at CUNY
10 including the City College of New York, Lehman
11 College, Hostos Community College, and LaGuardia
12 Community College to name a few. In fact, we
13 regularly name these places and the humanities
14 programs they're running as models for institutions
15 across the country. Lehman College is currently a
16 shining example in a national program called
17 Cornerstone Learning for the Living where students
18 participate in small seminars and discuss shared
19 texts. The New York City Leaders Fellowship which
20 emerged at City College gives students who are
21 invested in becoming public servants courses that in
22 addition to teaching them how to run a city budget,
23 helps them understand the history of the city itself,
24 the changing ideas of freedom, and the incredible
25

1 value of self-governance. The Foundation sees these
2 grants as a modest investment in a vital and
3 transformative form of education, the kind that
4 reminds us all what education is for and why CUNY is
5 so deeply important. It prepares the next generation
6 to invest in themselves and in our great city. Thank
7 you.

8
9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. And
10 make sure your microphone's on. The red light should
11 be on.

12 KELLY KREITZ: There we go.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You did it. You
14 didn't need a STEM degree for that either.

15 KELLY KREITZ: Hi everyone. My name is
16 Kelly Kreitz. I am an Associate Professor of English
17 at Pace University right across the street. I'm also
18 the director of our Experiential Learning Initiative
19 in the Provost Office at Pace. And I'll start with
20 just a little bit of context. Our university is a
21 private, mid-sized, regional, comprehensive teaching
22 university. Our Arts and Sciences is our largest
23 school. We have about 6,000 undergraduates on our
24 New York City campus across all of our schools, about
25 3,300 of those undergraduates are in our Dyson [sic]

1 College of Arts and Sciences. Our student body is
2 about 40 percent black indigenous people of color.
3 Ninety-five percent of our students are on financial
4 aid, 25 percent of our students roughly are first-
5 gen college students. Our admissions rate is 83
6 percent. A little bit about our faculty, our Arts
7 and Sciences faculty we have 250 fulltime faculty,
8 about 520 part-time, and in my Department in English
9 we have 10 tenured faculty or contract faculty and
10 about 70 to 80 adjuncts during any given semester.
11 And our strength as an institution is experiential
12 learning which combines academic exploration which
13 we've been talking about quite a lot here. We have
14 career preparation, and it includes classroom-based
15 and also independent undergraduate research and civic
16 engagement as two of our strengths. So the
17 significance of the humanities, we've always seen
18 that humanities is an essential component of our
19 liberal arts core at Pace, and earlier the humanities
20 participated in Paces' focus on preparing what we
21 called at the time Thinking Professionals back when
22 Pace started as a business school in 1906. And we're
23 now in the process of re-centering the humanities as
24 we positioned the university for the rapidly-changing
25

1 field of higher education. Some of our focus comes
2 from recent momentum, and here I'll name some
3 statistics that defy national trends. Since Fall
4 2021 each year since then we've seen our largest ever
5 enrolment in humanities majors for incoming first-
6 years. This is especially true in English
7 Communications Studies and Film and Screen Studies.
8 In this past Spring 2023, our English major received
9 national attention for its growth, about 50 percent
10 over the last two years to about 150 majors, again in
11 defiance of national trends, which we credit to its
12 place-based experiential approach. And also related
13 to that, some of the same sorts of initiatives that
14 we heard talked about here today. So we really in
15 the English Department have focused on under-
16 represented voices and empowering students to put
17 past injustices in conversation with ongoing
18 struggles from racial and social justice. So we
19 understand the value of the humanities from various
20 perspectives, not just growth of majors. We
21 understand it as part of our mission as an
22 educational institution that puts the liberal arts
23 core at the center. We believe that humanities have
24 a vital role to play in giving everyone a place in
25

1 the world as makers of democracy, and this is
2 especially through a focus on empowering students to
3 explore and participate in the production of
4 knowledge about their own heritage, their experiences
5 of racism, sexism, and economic inequality, and to
6 blaze new pathways for the future. Humanities majors
7 lead to desirable career paths. Our English majors,
8 for example, go onto gainful employment in
9 publishing, the arts, media, business, education,
10 law, and the nonprofit sector. They also prepare
11 students in our professional schools with
12 interdisciplinary skillsets that make them
13 competitive and we hear this a lot from our career
14 services, that our STEM majors, for example, are more
15 competitive when they can show really solid
16 humanistic background in their majors. We also
17 believe, and we heard this earlier, that the
18 humanities are key to innovation. We know that our
19 future is multi-disciplinary and we need strong
20 departments for that innovation. So just really
21 quickly to conclude, some of the challenges that we
22 confront have to do with metrics. When we look at
23 growth alone it's really hard to demonstrate the
24 value of our programs, but when we start to look at
25

1 things like who's contributing to the first-year
2 experience, who's contributing to retention, who's
3 contributing to multidisciplinary innovation? We get
4 a very different picture of the value of the
5 humanities, and I think that question of metrics is a
6 really important one for us to be having both
7 internally with our institutions, and also with the
8 consulting firms with the foundations that help us
9 set priorities and demonstrate success. I'll just
10 say quickly about investment in the humanities, part
11 of this needs to come from communicating through our
12 budget, through our messaging and institutions that
13 we value the humanities, and students interest I
14 think does follow where they see value being
15 demonstrated or interest being demonstrated in the
16 university. So we envision a future at Pace and with
17 the humanities are central within institutions of
18 higher learning and widely available within the daily
19 lives of individuals and the shared experiences of
20 communities. So the humanities are essential to
21 making universities into sites of preparing students
22 to become makers of the world in which they want to
23 live. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I'm
3 looking at your pie charts. Can't read the pie
4 chart, but I can see it. Because I do want to talk
5 about metrics. It was one of the questions that I
6 sked a previous panel. They had metrics on transfer
7 rate graduation data, but what are some of the other
8 metrics? And this is for both of you, but I want to
9 start with you Ms. Kreitz, about what changes to the
10 whole system, I think-- what are necessary for
11 measuring the value of humanities? And you have four
12 survey questions. Are there other metrics that you
13 think should be involved in measuring the value of
14 humanities degree?

15 KELLY KREITZ: Yeah, absolutely. And
16 I'll just say, just you know, these survey questions
17 are from our career services that just demonstrate
18 what employers are looking for, and we already heard
19 a lot about this from the previous panel with the
20 soft skills-- I don't know if those are the network--
21 those may be some of the metrics, but I think the
22 thing that we really struggle with, and I think this
23 is a real challenge for administrative leaders and
24 faculty leaders. You know, as leader you need to
25 show that you're being responsible about your

1 decision-making, and we do have an expectation that
2 decisions are going to be data-driven. But what do
3 you do when your data doesn't give the full picture,
4 right? Part of what you do, is you can bring your
5 humanities skills from your humanities degrees to
6 articulate that there is a problem. But you know, I-
7 - so, prior to coming to Pace I spent some time
8 working in nonprofit consulting, working with
9 organizations, direct service nonprofit
10 organizations, and it really strikes me that in the
11 direct service area of nonprofits there are ways of
12 talking about social impact. They're not perfect,
13 but there is a conversation that exists about how do
14 you look at your mission and determine that you're
15 making progress towards your mission. It's been
16 really difficult to find that in higher education,
17 because we've gone through a strategic planning
18 process over the last couple of years, as I've had
19 conversations within and outside of Pace about how
20 this might work. It seems that we really focus on
21 growth and revenue, and it's very difficult to come
22 up with other metrics that allow us to say it also
23 matters that our students are saying reporting that they
24 have fulfilling careers. It also matters that our
25

1 students are going on to contributing to their
2 communities. I think, you know, in the short term,
3 the way that we can measure the value of the
4 humanities has to do with more programmatic things.
5 Like, are there departments that are contributing
6 first-year experiences? You know, how are
7 departments contributing to delivering the humanities
8 in these other ways that we're saying exist beyond
9 majors? But in the long-term I think that there's a
10 conversation that maybe doesn't need to just happen
11 within universities, but starts here, but also
12 involves funders, involves the consultants who advise
13 universities on the decisions they make. What does
14 social impact look like in the educational sector?
15 How can we start talking about that and measuring it?
16 Because ultimately, that's what we need in order to
17 make these very different decisions I think that can
18 center the humanities.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, and Ms.
21 Tweel, it's a little different for you. You're an
22 organization that's giving money, and I always
23 imagine if you're giving money there are some
24 metrics. What do you look for to determine the
25 success, or that you're getting I guess to put it

1
2 this way, the best bang for your buck, that your
3 investment is a wise investment?

4 TAMARA TWEEL: It's a great question.

5 And I-- I can press a button. It's a--

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: [interposing] You
7 don't need a STEM degree for that.

8 TAMARA TWEEL: Yes. And no, it's a
9 wonderful question. I would say a few things, but
10 this is very specific to our particular foundation.
11 One is I think we're humble about what metrics can
12 actually tell us. And we are invested in the long-
13 term growth of students. So a lot of metrics, even
14 like basic teacher evaluations-- I know my best
15 teachers, I didn't know how good they were 'til 10
16 years after I left their classroom. And sometimes
17 you do an evaluation six months later, and I don't
18 know what it-- so I just want to say, first we're
19 very humble about it. We're very interested in
20 longitudinal studies and we're interested in framing
21 questions that get to our mission, not just questions
22 that are good metrics to prove to others, and that
23 is-- and I just want to say I understand what a
24 unique gift that is as a foundation, and it's not
25 something that CUNY can do. but I will say for

1 civics work, a lot of our metrics are-- our
2 humanities and civics, they are designed to see if
3 there's intellectual and even like ethical growth
4 inside of the classroom. So we'll do longitudinal
5 studies on did someone make an argument that actually
6 expanded your mind? If so, what was it? Do you
7 still remember it? We'll play with those kinds of
8 questions. We'll ask where do you volunteer? What
9 do you see as your essential community? Is it your
10 school, your city, your neighborhood? Did the class
11 or the series of class alter your perspective on
12 democracy? How has your experience of America
13 changed after taking a cornerstone course at Lehman?
14 Like those are kinds of questions that we're
15 interested in as a foundation?

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You're reminding
18 me, we just go through last month or a couple months
19 ago, Community Board applications.

20 TAMARA TWEEL: Right.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And you know, so
22 often we're looking for those exact questions. Do
23 you participate in the community? What is driving
24 you to better the community? Why do you want to
25 participate on a Community Board? And so many of the

1 things you spoke about, you know, ring true about the
2 work I do about volunteering, people volunteering in
3 the community and making their community better which
4 is so important. As was mentioned, hard to measure.
5 Hard to put on a spreadsheet.

7 TAMARA TWEEL: But I think-- I'll just
8 say this, I think that what we've learned are there
9 are excellent forms of questions that work with
10 quantitative data, and we still want those. We want
11 to make sure that persistence is increasing. We're
12 really invested in these freshman year experiences.
13 They have a huge impact. We know if you have a
14 cohort in a teacher, you're much more likely to not
15 feel invisible and invest in your own education, but
16 then we're also interested in new forms of just, you
17 know, qualitative data. Like, we are humanists, we
18 believe in stories. And so collecting a lot of these
19 stories can be very persuasive.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, the way you're
21 both speaking, this vision and opportunity for the
22 humanities, it requires a major shift in current
23 thinking, even for many of us. You know, we do deal
24 with a lot of quantitative data. We do a lot of
25 metrics that are very specific to the economy,

1
2 especially now that we just two months ago did our
3 budget. But it does require major shift in current
4 thinking about the humanities within institutions of
5 higher learning and beyond. And so what steps-- what
6 are the important steps to benefit students? What
7 are the most important steps to benefit students and
8 to turn the tide?

9 KELLY KREITZ: This is a question I think
10 about a lot, and you know, I think of different
11 levels of how this work can happen. And at an
12 institutional level, one thing is making sure those
13 things that work are continuing to get funded. So, I
14 know that one thing that came up earlier in the panel
15 earlier is, you know, funding internships for
16 community and cultural organizations. We have a
17 Community Impact Internship Fund that started during
18 the pandemic that we've increased funding for,
19 fundraising for every year because it is successful,
20 and it is something that both gets students out into
21 community and cultural organizations for paid
22 internships that those organizations themselves
23 wouldn't otherwise be able to pay for, and then also
24 of course helps those organizations by brining labor
25 in. So finding those kinds of examples and funding

1
2 them. I think there's a lot about story telling both
3 within and outside the university. So, another thing
4 that can happen a lot that I see internally is that
5 people are scared. Humanities faculty are scared.
6 They feel threatened. Sometimes they feel threatened
7 within conversations with their colleagues about the
8 future of the university. And resetting the tone,
9 which of course also ultimately has to be backed by
10 directing funds from the budget, but communicating
11 that we understand the value, right, as leaders of
12 our institutions, communicating that we are going to
13 start to move forward with initiatives that support
14 what works, tells stories about works, and then also
15 invest in innovation. I think that's where it needs
16 to start. And then I think it's also looking for the
17 right partnerships to be able to move some of these
18 bigger things like the question of metrics. So,
19 knowing the metrics, for example, the Teagle
20 Foundation that you mentioned, that are both
21 qualitative and quantitative that start looking
22 towards how are students' mindsets changing, how are
23 students learning and growing with the world. I
24 think that could be huge. I think being able to work
25 together to change the tools we have for having

1
2 conversations and making decisions and telling
3 stories is part of it as well.

4 TAMARA TWEEL: I wish the CUNY panel was
5 still up here, because I think they would have really
6 better answers than I do, but I will say, I think
7 we're at an incredible moment in American education
8 with things like AI. I see like a deep desire to
9 figure out what does it mean to be human and what is
10 the purpose of education in this world of new forms
11 of intelligence. Is it a mo-- I think there's just a
12 world of excitement there, and I also think there's a
13 world of excitement on what does it mean to be a
14 resident of the city, a citizen of the city? How do
15 we think about our democracy right at this moment? I
16 think the best place for this kind of urgent
17 reconsidering of humanistic education is General
18 Education. Right now, it can seem like an
19 afterthought. It can seem like not the most
20 important place on campus. I think really reinvesting
21 and building coherency and high content and
22 intellectual urgency into General Education is an
23 answer.

24

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to thank
3 you both so much for your testimony and for
4 answering-- did you have a questions?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Just very
6 quickly. It's my same experience when I teach
7 sometimes high school students on a panel and their
8 parents won't let them, as you said earlier,
9 participate in anything that looks like the
10 humanities. So, I guess my questions is, is there
11 some also-- these are obviously for first-generation
12 in many cases. Is there some part of what you're
13 doing that also works with parents to explain the
14 opportunities that the humanities offer? Because
15 students want to do it, but the parents dissuade
16 them.

17 KELLY KREITZ: Yeah, it's a great
18 question. This does come up with some of my
19 students, especially as I said, we're about 25
20 percent first-generation college students. Again, I
21 think it's that very slow work of changing the
22 narratives. So if I have a student who comes to me
23 and says, you know, my parents really don't want me
24 to be an English major, which has happened, we start
25 with the data. We start with well let's share with

1
2 them what Career Services says about what employers
3 want. You know, that's on an individual basis, but
4 then the question becomes what can we do as
5 institutions to start to put out there the stories
6 about these successes, right? And I think-- I guess
7 on a daily basis I try to think about making progress
8 on both of those levels.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you to the
10 panel. Thank you, Council Member Brewer. I
11 appreciate your testimony and answering the questions
12 today. I will now call the next panel. From PSC
13 CUNY Luke Waltzer and Remy Salas, and Barbara Bowen.
14 Okay, Luke, you may begin when ready. Please say
15 your name for the record.

16 LUKE WALTZER: thank you. Luke Waltzer.
17 Good afternoon. Thank you to the City Council for
18 holding this important hearing and to PSC CUNY for
19 organizing this panel. I'm the Director of the
20 Teaching and Learning Center at the CUNY Graduate
21 Center where I also earned a PHD in History, and I've
22 been there since 1999 in one capacity or another.
23 One of my responsibilities is to co-direct the CUNY
24 Humanities Alliance which is a Mellon Foundation-
25 funded project that supports doctoral students in the

1 humanities in a variety of educational roles at four
2 community colleges. Students at the Graduate Center
3 have an outsized impact on the experience of CUNY
4 undergraduates. Our students teach more than 5,000
5 courses to a 150,000 undergraduates every year, one-
6 third of those are in the humanities. In addition to
7 their teaching, our students work in fellowships and
8 libraries and in academic support centers throughout
9 the CUNY system. We've heard about some of those
10 projects like COIL [sic] at LaGuardia which graduate
11 center students have supported. Many graduate center
12 student alums become fulltime CUNY faculty,
13 administrators and staff like myself. So my job is
14 to support these students in their teaching and other
15 work across CUNY and to help them think about the
16 kind of careers from which their experience has
17 prepared them. We're not simply training graduate
18 students to do narrow research, we're also helping
19 them think about the impact that their work may have
20 and the range of skills necessary to maximize that
21 impact. Our students are studying the most pressing
22 issues of the moment and building community around
23 that work that extends beyond CUNY's walls deep into
24 the City. These days, disciplinary training must be
25

1 broad and porous, and our students are exposed to a
2 range of methodologies within and beyond their fields
3 from which they assemble their toolkits. These
4 transferable skills and commitments are required to
5 thrive in the modern economy and are passed through
6 graduate students to the thousands of undergraduates
7 that they teach every year. I believe the study of
8 the humanities enriches our communities and our
9 personal lives. At the same time, it's not idea
10 that's in opposition to the notion of workforce
11 development, as we've heard so eloquently today.
12 Employers want graduates who are well-rounded and who
13 can communicate with various audiences effectively.
14 The humanities are necessary to comprehend and
15 communicate the ethical dimensions of the drivers of
16 economic development in the 21st century, including
17 machine learning, artificial intelligence,
18 healthcare, and clean energy. It's not news that
19 trends in public higher education are hostile to the
20 humanities and to the notion of liberal education
21 more broadly, while wealthier private institutions
22 deepen their investments in these areas. West
23 Virginia University has redirected resources away
24 from the humanities and towards technical and
25

1 vocational programs. Institutions like BYU Idaho and
2 Ensign [sic] College have approved 90-credit BA's in
3 Business Management and Applied Health by eliminating
4 general education requirements in the humanities.
5
6 At CUNY and in New York, we have a choice. Do we
7 want to follow these concerning trends that narrow
8 degree into a vocational pursuit, or do we want to
9 double-down on our mission of access by seriously
10 considering just what we're giving the children of
11 the whole people access to? We must welcome them
12 into institutions that are pathways to the worlds of
13 knowledge that simply can't be accessed,
14 comprehended, or extended without a deep or enduring
15 institutional commitment to the humanities. Thank
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Mr.
18 Waltzer. Ms. Bowen?

19 BARBARA BOWEN: Thank you very much.
20 Good afternoon. Nice to be back here and to be with
21 you. I'm Barbara Bowen. I'm now a Professor of
22 English at Queens College in the Graduate Center, and
23 I'm the former President of the PSC. The current PSC
24 President James Davis and the other officers regret
25 that they can't be here. There was a collective

1 bargaining session that conflicted with today's
2 hearing. I hear two questions in the title of today's
3 hearing. First, whether studying the humanities in an
4 economy that worships technology and substitutes gig
5 work for secure employment can lead to a meaningful
6 job. There's abundant proof that the answer to that
7 question is yes. CUNY officials have supplied
8 statistics and proof, and today, survey after survey
9 of employers show that the qualities they value are
10 the qualities nurtured by the humanities. The second
11 question I hear in today's title, however, goes
12 something like this. Humanities may be acceptable
13 for students in elite institutions, but isn't a major
14 in Philosophy or English an unaffordable luxury for a
15 student at CUNY? The answer is no. If the measure
16 of a viable academic path is whether it leads to a
17 job, you need only look at recent graduates of my own
18 department and see what they're doing. They are
19 thriving as oncology nurses, attorneys, teachers,
20 visual artists, journalists, video game writers,
21 novelists, and more. But to stop with that answer is
22 to risk accepting the premise that working-class
23 students, students of color and the poor can aspire
24 only to an instrumentalized education, an education
25

1
2 whose value is measured entirely by its ability to
3 lead to a job. the students who rushed up to me
4 after class this week with a theory on the meaning of
5 the Greek names in Shakespeare or to tell me how
6 their whole experience of watching movies has changed
7 because of our class on historicizing. These
8 students are not approaching their education as a
9 ticket to a job. They are thrilled by the
10 possibilities of life opened up by the humanities
11 just as I was as a student. Life is so big, Tony
12 Morrison said, when she spoke at Queens College. The
13 humanities as the subjects most explicitly-dedicating
14 to exploring life's potential are not just viable for
15 CUNY students, they are vital. In a culture that
16 aggressive seeks to strip many of our students of
17 their humanity, humanistic study is a powerful act of
18 self-preservation. James Baldwin talked about the
19 moment he first read a novel by Richard Wright. For
20 the first time in his life he said opening the number
21 one page, he said about the moment-- he read that he
22 felt affirmed in his existence. CUNY students affirm
23 their individual and collective potential every time
24 they grapple with a demanding novel or master or
25 philosophical argument. We are in the midst of a

1 revolution in the humanities. As the arts history,
2 literature, and philosophy are being remade by
3 thinkers who demand a world safe for future humans
4 and free of oppression. CUNY students with their
5 deep experience of struggle and the knowledge it
6 engenders are exactly the humanists we need. I'm
7 grateful to the Committee on Higher Education for
8 giving us the chance to refute those who would narrow
9 and instrumentalize the CUNY curriculum. CUNY
10 students urgently, deeply, radically need the
11 humanities, and the humanities need them. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Ms.
13 Bowen. Mr. Salas?

14 REMY SALAS: Thank you so much. Hello
15 everyone. My name is Remy Salas. I am a professor at
16 the Department of Ethnic and Race Studies in CUNY
17 Borough of Manhattan Community College, better known
18 as BMCC. I am honored to address this committee
19 hearing where I shall emphasize the profound
20 significance of CUNY's academic offerings, and their
21 role in propelling individuals, including myself, out
22 of poverty towards a better, brighter, and more
23 promising future. In my capacity as an educator in
24 my field-- in the field of humanities, I have a
25

1
2 profound appreciation for the pivotal role these
3 programs play in shaping our students' journey from
4 the classroom to the professional world. The
5 humanities foster critical thinking, analytical
6 skills, a profound sense of creativity, they empower
7 students to explore the shared thread that binds
8 humanity together while also highlighting the nuances
9 that sets us apart. Moreover, the humanities offer a
10 wealth of practical applications that enhance one's
11 professional skills-- skillsets, I'm sorry. Drawing
12 from my professional experience as a former city hall
13 staffer, former City Council staffer, former city
14 agency staffer serving in various policy roles, I can
15 attest to the fact that humanities education that
16 I've gotten has played a pivotal role in my early
17 career trajectory. My proficiency in writing honed
18 through humanities course works greatly contributed
19 to my professional advancement, and as a dedicated
20 professor, I have had the privilege of witnessing
21 numerous students discover their own strength and
22 successfully applying them in academia as well as in
23 the professional arena. A significant number of my
24 former students have ventured into the sector of tech
25 as well as finance where their global perspective and

1 effective communication skills has set them apart.
2 Our academic curriculum must cater to these
3 aspirations, and the humanities are uniquely
4 positioned to do so. The humanities departments
5 contributes to the holistic and well-rounded
6 education that equips students with a multi-faceted
7 world view and versatile skills. I extend my sincere
8 gratitude to the Committee of Higher Education for
9 holding us this invaluable opportunity to counteract
10 any attempts to narrow the scope of the CUNY
11 curriculum. The humanities are not only viable, but
12 absolutely indispensable for CUNY students who in
13 turn are essential champions of the humanities.
14 Together, we shall continue to uphold the profound
15 importance of a diverse and a comprehensive education
16 that empowers individuals to flourish both
17 intellectually and professionally. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. So, I
19 gather you all feel the importance of humanities in
20 some ways it's under attack. And I'll ask a similar
21 question I asked some of the other panels, which is
22 what are some of the steps you believe need to be
23 taken in order to reinvest in the humanities and
24 support the humanities?
25

1
2 BARBARA BOWEN: I'll just say happy
3 birthday to the Council Member as she was leaving.
4 Happy birthday.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: She-- you can't
6 see on the camera, whatever camera, but she was very
7 pleased that you did that. She said thank you very
8 much and she's very appreciative.

9 BARBARA BOWEN: Great. Well, she's my
10 council person.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, good. You
12 have a great one.

13 BARBARA BOWEN: I took that liberty-- and
14 great council person. I think what needs to be done
15 is more investment in CUNY overall. I mean, I think
16 you framed the question rightly by saying what needs
17 to be done to invest in humanities. In an
18 institution where we are always under an austerity
19 regime, where we always are scrambling, where we
20 don't have enough, where there are not enough books
21 in the libraries, where my students have to sometimes
22 have to drag a desk from another room in order to be
23 in the classroom because it's too full, where we
24 don't have proper heating or air cooling in our
25 rooms, where we don't have enough faculty to teach.

1
2 All of that undermines everything we do across all
3 subjects, but I think the humanities in some ways
4 suffer more because they're not seen as needing a
5 heavy infrastructure investment. So I think that in
6 some ways the general austerity in CUNY is visited
7 very heavily on humanities.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Are you
9 describing the situation at CUNY or are you
10 describing that story of students pulling their desks
11 into your classroom as exclusive to the humanities
12 where other majors don't face those same sorts of
13 challenges?

14 BARBARA BOWEN: No, I'm not saying it's
15 exclusive to the humanities, but what I'm saying is
16 that in the context of overall scarcity which CUNY
17 has lived under for far too long, every discipline
18 suffers, and I know those STEM subjects suffer in
19 other ways. I know for instance that in some colleges
20 there aren't enough lab stations for students and
21 they have to look oversee-- you know, overlook
22 somebody doing the experiment and that's their
23 version of doing the experiment, so it's not unique
24 to humanities, but I do feel, and I'd love to hear my
25 colleagues on this, that it's felt especially in the

1 humanities because it's often seen that that kind of
2 investment isn't needed, and therefore, it's the last
3 to get investment. We are the last to get
4 investment. And I'll just say one more thing, that
5 they continuing disinvestment which I see as, you
6 know, a decades' long problem but very acute right
7 now, the continuing disinvestment in CUNY has played
8 out in a lack of support for the part-time faculty
9 who remain underpaid and for too few fulltime
10 faculty. And in an area so faculty-intensive as the
11 humanities where there's often so much of a bond made
12 between the professor and the student, we feel that
13 intensely. So those are a couple of the areas where
14 I think that investment overall in CUNY would do a
15 tremendous amount to enhance what we can do in the
16 humanities.

18 LUKE WALTZER: If I could just add a
19 couple of examples of how investment, deeper
20 investment in CUNY and in the humanities would help.
21 one is keeping our class sizes small so that we can
22 have the kinds of intimate discussions and build
23 close community with our students in humanities
24 courses that can really stay with them and transform
25 their lives and remind them what CUNY is a pathway

1 to, which is the world. And the second impact is
2 contingency of our faculty. Sixty to 70 percent of
3 our courses are taught by part-time faculty members.
4 We have too few fulltime faculty who come to CUNY and
5 stay. We have many talented faculty who come and
6 then leave, because of the challenges of this
7 institution they may have opportunities elsewhere,
8 and that makes very difficult to find is
9 longitudinal, the longitudinal data that can be
10 effective to make arguments for additional funding
11 down the road. I feel like we're constantly in
12 moments of reorientation for the process for new
13 faculty who are coming in. So the funding-- the
14 funding challenges are real and persistent and they
15 have very negative impact on the teaching and
16 learning that happens in our classroom.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to thank
19 this panel for your testimony and for answering
20 committee's questions. I will call the next panel.
21 Thank you. I'm going to apologize to two people, one
22 on pronunciation, and two I'm not sure I can read the
23 last name. Mr. Hugo Fernandez? Alan Aja, okay. And
24 Sarah Chinn. Thank you. I had a student who spelled
25 your-- Mr. Aha, I had a student who spelled her first

1 name the same as your last name, but her name was
2 Aja. So I didn't want to mispronounce it. Okay,
3 thank you. Okay, Mr. Chinn, you can begin. Again
4 before you speak, you can make sure you state your
5 name for the record.

7 SARAH CHINN: Okay, my name is Sarah
8 Chinn and I'm a Professor in and former Chairperson
9 of the English Department at Hunter College. My
10 esteemed colleagues have been or will be talking
11 about the various kinds of crucial work that the
12 humanities do for our students, prepare them for a
13 career that will almost inevitably require the skills
14 that humanities equip them with, give them access to
15 the almost limitless array of arts and media venues
16 and job opportunities the city provides, build their
17 capacities for qualities that hard to quantify such
18 as empathy, problem-solving, analysis, and self-
19 expression. These are all central arguments for the
20 importance of the humanities and I share their
21 enthusiasm and advocacy. I'd like to take a slightly
22 different tack in my own comments, however. I want to
23 talk about class, equity, and joy. College is
24 probably the last, maybe even the only place in which
25 our students get to choose to do what inspires them.

1
2 Throughout their school years K to 12 they've been
3 subjected to standardized tests, citywide curricula,
4 the influence of peers, and of course the pressure to
5 get into a college that they can afford and that
6 meets their needs. Once they leave college and
7 embark on a career, their lives will be determined by
8 the dictates of the marketplace. The decisions they
9 make will be shaped and set by managers, bosses,
10 clients, and alike, not to mention their needs to pay
11 rent, support a family, and let's hope thrive whether
12 in New York or elsewhere. College is a brief respite
13 in which students could, and I would argue should
14 have the space to expand and to stretch themselves,
15 to challenge their assumptions, to enter into other
16 ways of thinking and seeing. Equally importantly as
17 Professor Bowen mentioned, why should our students be
18 denied access to those intellectual goods that their
19 more privileged counterparts take for granted. After
20 attending New York City public schools my own
21 children chose Liberal Arts colleges because they
22 recognize that being immersed in literature, history,
23 languages, art, and art history and alike was
24 essential to a meaningful education. How much more
25 crucial is access to the humanities for our students,

1
2 the children not of college professors, but of
3 working people, immigrants, documented and
4 undocumented, families of color who too often are
5 told both explicitly and implicitly that they should
6 limit themselves intellectually, focus on
7 practicalities, and not for a moment feel like they
8 are entitled to the same education as those kids at
9 NYU or Columbia. To my mind, offering a rich, full,
10 multilayered humanities curriculum to CUNY students
11 is ultimately a question of equity. Elite
12 institutions are not debating the value of the
13 humanities. They take for granted that their
14 students need, deserve, and want a broad and deep
15 education. The students we all teach are no
16 different. They are hungry for more, more knowledge,
17 more context, more novels and poems and essays, and
18 plays by writers they would never have encountered
19 otherwise, more joy. In the classes I teach, I see
20 not just their work, but their pleasure in
21 intellectual engagement with new narratives and new
22 ideas. How can we imagine denying them that gift?

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Mr.
24 Aja? Make sure the microphone's on. Thank you.

25

1
2 ALAN AJA: Thank you so much. Thank you,
3 colleagues. Saludos [sic]. My name is Alan Aja and
4 I'm Professor and Chair of the historic Department of
5 Puerto Rican and Latino or Latin-x Studies at
6 Brooklyn College CUNY. I also Co-direct with
7 Professor Theo Harris, Professor to the Mellon
8 Transfer Student Research Program in the Humanities.
9 My department was created during the student-led
10 protest waves in context of ethnic revival during the
11 late 60s and early 70s. The program I co-direct was
12 more recently, but they both respectably were born
13 out of the dire curricula needs to serve marginalized
14 and underserved communities like CUNY, and they
15 operate within the same struggle that brings us here
16 today. So thank you for this hearing. I could bring
17 this testimony by highlighting some of the concerning
18 research by the Academy of Arts and Sciences of the
19 federal to state and local disinvestment in the
20 humanities. All the while-- I'll just cut to the
21 chase-- STEM seems to be thriving. I could also
22 reference the moral conundrum situated in labor
23 market evidence, part of my expertise, that as we
24 push college students, primarily working class, into
25 STEM fields and create infrastructures out of them

1 across higher education, that the supply of those
2 jobs in those fields doesn't match the supposed
3 demand into that creditentially [sic]. Those numbers
4 speak for themselves. I could also reference some of
5 what my colleagues have witnessed-- experienced at
6 CUNYs. Some of this deference means the departments
7 and programs in humanities, social sciences-- you
8 mentioned area studies, ethnic studies, thank you for
9 that-- consistently have to fight from partition to
10 protest to grants, right, for equitable resource
11 level treatment. As some of us say at CUNY,
12 [speaking Spanish], every day is a struggle. But
13 I'm going to ask the council and ourselves here to
14 think to do exactly what the humanities teach us to
15 do on a daily basis. This thinking which I heard
16 before in here-- terrific-- requires us to subvert a
17 racist narrative that CUNY students are unworthy,
18 especially as you underscored, of a full education
19 that centers, not sidelines the arts and humanities,
20 the area studies, and the social sciences. I'm going
21 to ask ourselves as well why elite colleges across
22 the country dare not even go there, even as they
23 dominate in STEM, because they understand that these
24 disciplines teach us how to think, to analyze, to
25

1 lead, to create. I'm going to ask us to think what
2 we think CUNY students-- why we think CUNY students
3 deserve less, and if Harvard or Columbia or Yale, NYU
4 are the only ones who deserve small classes or
5 liberal arts education at-large. I'm going to ask
6 you also to center our CUNY grads when we think about
7 how we create policy-- Lisa, who's now at Columbia
8 getting her PHD; Derek, who writes at the New York
9 Times; Raul and Anaponie [sp?] who teach ESL in the
10 public school system where my department helps
11 create-- helps do; Vanessa who went onto the new
12 school and now works at Aspida [sp?] and an adjunct
13 lecturer at CUNY; and Dominick who is now at UMASS,
14 and Jamilla [sp?] who works at the ACLU. I'm going
15 to ask you to center them in your thinking and our
16 policy. And inclusive college education needs not to
17 come at the cost of but center the humanities to
18 social sciences, the arts, and God forbid, the ethnic
19 and area studies. Areas of studies which you all
20 know are under attack across the country through
21 direct and indirect policy erasure. Lastly, CUNY
22 students are not only our city's workers, but they
23 are our citizens, our thinkers, our readers, and
24 writers, and deserve to have the creative and
25

1
2 critical capacity and urge. CUNY is the thinking
3 class. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Mr.
5 Fernandez [sp?]?

6 HUGO FERNANDEZ: My name is Hugo
7 Fernandez. I'm a Professor of Fine Art Photography at
8 LaGuardia Community College. The humanities saved my
9 life. Like many of our students, I grew up with
10 socioeconomic struggles, the son of a single parent,
11 but I was never denied the humanities. My mother was
12 an immigrant and knew nothing about this country, so
13 she bought me an encyclopedia so I could look things
14 up. She always found a good school on the edge of a
15 lousy neighborhood. I grew up in New York, Boston,
16 south Florida, and somehow I found myself in gifted
17 programs until high school when peer pressure and
18 recreational drug use ended my career in mathematics.
19 I used art as a way to transition into higher
20 education. Even though I had no interest in the
21 commercial arts practice, I found other things to
22 study like journalism and broadcasting, and
23 eventually photography to hold my interest. I took my
24 own gap year of sorts after my Associates and saw the
25 American west, and then went back and got my

1 Bachelor's adding creative writing, poetry, British
2 literature, the history of art to my toolbox, and
3 eventually received a BFA in Fine Art Photography
4 along with a minor in British Literature and Art
5 History. I studied abroad, participating in
6 archeological dig in South America and became
7 involved in political aspects of the arts communities
8 in the United States. But eventually I got my
9 Master's in Fine Art Photography at the Yale School
10 of Art. From there I went to LaGuardia Community
11 College where I have taught for 30 years, beginning
12 in the photography program and branching out into Art
13 Appreciation. I once had the notion that I had no
14 business teaching poor kids how to be artists, that
15 they couldn't take care of themselves. Finally,
16 [inaudible] told me even poor kids have a right to be
17 artists. I spend most of my days trying to instill
18 the notion that not only is art part of everyday
19 life, but we all have a stake in determining which is
20 valuable and needs support. So you see, if we are
21 ever to make it out of our humble beginnings and to
22 get to the place that we want to be, the humanities
23 are going to take us there. The leaders of this
24 country tend to be English majors and Liberal Arts
25

1 students. They can communicate. They can think
2 critically, because they have the repository of all
3 human aspiration within their grasp and use it to
4 develop new ways of doing and thinking. We're long
5 past the industrial revolution, smack dab in the
6 information age, and while I have no interest in
7 talking someone out of a career with a blue collar or
8 in a laboratory, I can tell you now those studies
9 will only take them so far, and if they want to
10 achieve their greatest self, they're going to have to
11 sit in some approximation of my Intro to Art course.
12 The average CUNY student graduates and finds
13 themselves in a job bringing in 20,000 dollars a year
14 less than somebody with the same degree from another
15 institution. Why? Well, to be a supervisor, you
16 have to be able to think critically and communicate.
17 If you don't have those skills which you learned in
18 the humanities, you will always work for somebody
19 else and make less. 20,000 dollars a year over the
20 course of the average person's working lifespan is a
21 million dollars. Are you going to deny that of
22 students in public education, higher ed in New York
23 City? Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I've
3 asked the question of each panel, so I want to hear
4 if you have any additional answers, and if not,
5 that's okay. But I heard about investments, research
6 opportunities, internships, issues with financial
7 aid, data. Besides those categories, are there any
8 other steps that you believe should be taken in order
9 to uplift the humanities at CUNY?

10 SARAH CHINN: I think that there's very
11 poor PR for the humanities, certainly nationally, but
12 also in CUNY. I mean, I think these amazing programs
13 that the Teagle Foundation have sponsored have
14 fantastic, but CUNY should be trumpeting them
15 constantly, and yet I know about them only because of
16 my own personal interest. I think-- I mean,
17 certainly at Hunter, the humanities get very little
18 love. So even though many of our faculty win
19 national prizes, edit national journals, that's not--
20 that does not get the same kind of announcement, you
21 know, sort of on these big screens as let's say
22 someone who wins a grant, a government grant. So I
23 think to a certain extent given how much noise is out
24 there in the world, the humanities definitely fall
25

1
2 under the radar and they have to be promoted in an
3 active way by our administrators.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm-- I don't know
5 If you can tell I'm smiling, because I think this was
6 the first hearing since I became Chair of this
7 committee that I didn't ask the question about how
8 CUNY is promoting themselves, because what you said
9 is absolutely true, not just in the humanities, but
10 in a lot of areas CUNY's doing incredible work and
11 you know, you search on Google and they're never the
12 first advertisement you see. They're never on the
13 Facebook ads, and they say, well, we have a couple of
14 ads on the train, and that's kind of about it. So I
15 couldn't agree with you more that the PR at CUNY is
16 severely, severely lacking.

17 HUGO FERNANDEZ: [inaudible] working on
18 that.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: They need some
20 great artists to do the proofs for them.

21 ALAN AJA: Look, I would add to that. I'm
22 grateful for the fact that I co-direct the program
23 that is funded by the Mellon Foundation, but that
24 money's going to run out, and while I'm thankful--
25 we're thankful for that, that should be engrained

1 into the budget, the operational budget of every
2 single college, and the program actually emulates
3 what is largely needed at-large. You ask the
4 question what could-- what could you do, what could
5 City Council do? I think we need a new deal for
6 CUNY. Look, there's a narrative that needs-- it's
7 often unspoken, but it's true. Under the guise of
8 fiscal austerity, when CUNY became more diverse in
9 the 1970s, all of a sudden they said there's a fiscal
10 crisis and students were charged tuition, right? So
11 that was not by accident. That was by design. So
12 what needs to happen is that there's a bill. I
13 believe Senator Gianaris is one of the co-sponsors of
14 it. And so if there could be upward pressure to the
15 state level, we would eliminate a huge bureaucratic
16 apparatus regarding-- if we had a new deal which
17 calls for tuition-free CUNY again, that would
18 eliminate all these barriers that you heard today
19 with regards to financial aid. It'll actually save
20 costs and put money into students' pockets. It's a
21 win/win. So that's, you know-- you ask me-- and the
22 other thing, it's part of my-- call it the expertise,
23 I'm going to throw it in there. We need a citywide
24 job guarantee. We've been calling for that at the
25

1 federal level, but you could actually do that whereas
2 if a person doesn't get a job in the labor market at-
3 large, that the government responds. In fact, that
4 began with FDR, and there were talks about it in this
5 room in the 1940s. So, we can talk after about that,
6 but those are some of the policy level ideas that I
7 would have.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Always down for a
10 good history lesson, although I would note that this
11 committee last year did pass a Resolution supporting
12 the new deal for CUNY at the state level. So we are
13 certainly supportive of the new deal for CUNY, not
14 just-- it's not just me saying it. This is something
15 that came out of this committee and was voted on by
16 the council. So we certainly support the new deal for
17 CUNY.

18 HUGO FERNANDEZ: As a teacher, I'm going
19 to give you some homework. You might benefit from
20 reading the writings of Ken Robinson, the late Ken
21 Robinson, and Malcolm Gladwell's "Why I Hate the Ivy
22 League." Those are two good things that can kind of
23 get you into the headset, because some believe that
24 we need a revolution in higher education, and that
25 the dominance of the left brain kind of thinking

1 disciplines has gone on too long. There's a lack of
2 creativity or the ability to think creatively on the
3 part of our students, and that's what, you know, the
4 humanities can give them. but we really just need to
5 get-- give them the freedom like, you know, kids who
6 come from money get, which is to find your-- find
7 their way, find their-- you know, find their path by
8 offering them the option of studying whatever they
9 want, you know, follow their nose. I mean, I was
10 afforded that because, you know, I was a momma's boy
11 and I lived at home. I had to pay for school, but I
12 didn't have to pay for, you know, the roof over my
13 head or meals, and that was the greatest gift my
14 mother ever gave me, those 13 years for a six-year
15 degree. And you know, that is-- we're-- you know,
16 this notion that you have to know what you're going
17 to do and the fact that, you know, English and
18 mathematics and science are mandated, but the
19 humanities is an elective, that kind of thinking has
20 to go away. We need to put-- there needs to be kind
21 of an even playing field in higher education and in
22 the public sector, in public education. So we really
23 need a revolution, and it would be great to have the
24 support of the legislature to do that.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much
3 for your testimony today. I will now call the next
4 panel: Anne Kornhauser, Edward Paulino, Dean Ringel.
5 Okay, Ms. Kornhauser, when you're ready you may
6 begin, and please state your name for the record.

7 ANNE KORNHAUSER: Thank you. My name is
8 Anne Kornhauser. I'm Chair of the History Department
9 at City College CUNY. I should add that these
10 comments, however, reflect my own views. I'm not
11 here in an official capacity. So I felt it necessary
12 to take the time to make sure that the title of this
13 hearing remains a statement and not a question. The
14 humanities are a viable academic path for CUNY
15 students, and indeed for all students, and they will
16 always be so as long as humanities departments exist
17 and that existential question is real, and that goes
18 back to funding and resources, and I can answer more
19 specific questions about that later if you'd like.
20 But since we're short on time I'll just make a few
21 quick points. The first is, college is not only in
22 my view about preparing students for a job. It is
23 about preparing students for a full and rewarding
24 life. This holds doubly true for CUNY students who
25 likely have not had the opportunities of some of the

1
2 other college students in the United States. The
3 word viable in the title of this hearing connotes
4 practicality and ultimately employability. I
5 understand that we need to keep the connection
6 between higher education and job prospects in mind,
7 but let's keep quality of life and life skills in
8 mind, as well. Let's not deny our students the
9 opportunity for a rich and rewarding life beyond
10 their job. I had a student, for example, who thanked
11 me not only for my academic guidance, but for
12 providing a role model for women in leadership
13 positions and intellectuals. Where she came from,
14 the country she came from she explained, this was not
15 so common, and she'd been taught to keep her
16 expectations low, not just about the job she could
17 have, but even what life she could have. Secondly, I
18 would say the CUNY students want to study the
19 humanities. Speaking from my own discipline of
20 history, throughout CUNY we have not seen the
21 dramatic decline in majors typical of many other
22 colleges and universities in recent years. I think
23 one reason has to be that CUNY students are broad-
24 minded and interested in making the world a better
25 place in a variety of ways. I believe this is one--

1 this is true of other humanities disciplines such as
2 literature and philosophy as well. Third, I'd like
3 to say that CUNY should lead by thinking creatively
4 about how to do more with less and that the City
5 Council and other legislative bodies should fund us
6 as much as they can, but help us in-- you know, to be
7 imaginative and creative in using the resources we do
8 have. Let's not go down the path of eliminating
9 smaller majors, for example. Let's find a way to
10 continue to provide opportunities for our uniquely
11 diverse student body that they cannot get elsewhere.
12 Finally, I will address jobs, because everybody wants
13 to know that these days. One of the things that our
14 department has done successfully at least in recent
15 years is reproduce ourselves, reproduce the
16 humanities, which I haven't heard come up so much
17 today. So for example, we have three recent
18 graduates, the last 10 years because it takes a while
19 to get a PHD, in our History Department who now are
20 teaching at CUNY colleges including in our
21 Department. They went off to Yale, Princeton, and
22 Brown and came back and got jobs at City College,
23 John Jay, and Queens. I'm very proud of that fact.
24 Thank you for your time today.
25

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

DEAN RINGEL: My name is Dean Ringel and it's an honor and a pleasure to be here today. although I've spent more than a decade to teaching as adjunct assistant professor at John Jay College with Mr. Paulino next to me, I spent more than four decades before that in the business and legal world, and it's my experience in that world that I want to emphasize in affirming the value of humanities as a viable academic path for CUNY students. Now, I speak of course in a personal capacity, but based on my experience in the private sector, as well as my more recent experience teaching at CUNY, the humanities are not only a viable academic path for CUNY students, study of the humanities also provides a clear and direct path to career success. Such studies also foster the kind of thoughtful civic virtue our city and country so need. You referred to that earlier, Mr. Chairman. I think that's an important aspect that needs to be emphasized in the value of the community of the humanities, not just in helping people have a viable career path, but also in functioning well as citizens in our country. Now, I've been an adjunct assistant professor in the

1 History Department at John Jay since 2012, but for
2 more than 40 years before that I was a litigator and
3 for most of those years a partner at a major New York
4 law firm where I specialized in representing the
5 press in constitutional issues. I had the great good
6 fortune to represent among other entities, the New
7 York Times, NBC News, Time Magazine, and Inside
8 Edition. I hired, trained, and mentored young law
9 students and lawyers. I observed that law students
10 and lawyers who had been exposed the humanities,
11 history, literature, music, philosophy were best able
12 to think through the issues with which we dealt to
13 offer novel solutions to difficult problems, and able
14 to express themselves orally and in writing with a
15 confidence and a skill that students who had focused
16 on job readiness courses simply couldn't do. Now,
17 many of our students were the products as I am of our
18 New York City public schools or other systems, come
19 to college thinking it is about memorizing a bunch of
20 information, regurgitating that information on an
21 exam, and ultimately gaining a diploma to satisfy a
22 perspective employer's checklist. Now, there is
23 value in that, but it grossly undervalues what a
24 college education can and should provide. Students
25

1 seek a college degree at last in part in pursuit of
2 white collar jobs. They should recognize that
3 success in such jobs requires the ability to solve
4 problems, to think abstractly, and sometimes outside
5 of the box, to read difficult materials with
6 understanding, to write clearly. Humanities prepares
7 students to do this by requiring them to grapple with
8 the great issues, the thinkers and artists of our
9 world have grappled with over the centuries. The
10 highest compliment that I've ever received in my
11 teaching career was paid me by a student after a
12 humanities injustice course I taught. "This is the
13 first time a class made me think," he said. That is
14 indeed what courses in the humanities do, and those
15 courses provide valuable training in what it takes to
16 succeed in careers and in life, and in functioning as
17 a citizen of our city, our state, and our country.
18 We should not deprive CUNY students of that in a
19 narrow focus on providing job readiness courses.
20 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Mr.
23 Paulino?

24 EDWARD PAULINO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman
25 and the committee for the opportunity to offer my

1 testimony. Hello my name is Edward Paulino. And
2 this feels surreal to me, because I grew up a stone's
3 throw away in the Alfred E. Smith public housing
4 projects. I'm the son of immigrant parents from the
5 Dominican Republic, and I'm also a historian in the
6 Global History Department at John Jay College, and
7 Associate Professor, a proudly Hispanic serving
8 institution. In the last two decades I have taught
9 several thousand amazing CUNY students, from first-
10 year transfer students to seniors. I have taught
11 courses from globalization and inequality to
12 historiography, but over the years it is my signature
13 course, the History of Genocide, that has had the
14 most profound intellectual and emotional effect on my
15 students. Students learn that as my friend and
16 scholar Adam Jones writes as humans, "genocide is to
17 study our historical inheritance, and it brings you
18 into contact with some of the most interesting and
19 exciting debates in the social sciences and
20 humanities." Courses like these reveal that the
21 humanities are more relevant and through the reading
22 and analysis of text is transformative in the lives
23 of students. Listen to what one of my recent
24 students emailed me: "I'm writing to express how much
25

1 I loved learning from your course this past spring. I
2 spent the majority of my life in Nigeria, so I never
3 got the opportunity to fully learn the dark histories
4 of the different countries we studied in this class.
5 However, through your course I was able to learn more
6 about the world, world history, and even discover
7 things about my country that I didn't know before.
8 The final essay assignment led me to have a deep and
9 meaningful conversation with my grandmother. Through
10 our talk I discovered so much new information that
11 made me admire her strength and bravery more than I
12 already do. I left your class different from the
13 person I was when I started and it made me realize
14 how much I loved history." As human beings, we don't
15 love or communicate daily in equations, $e=mc^2$,
16 $f(x)$ equals $0/0$, Lopeow's [sic] rule. We love in
17 words, touch, feel and breath. Despite DNA cloning
18 and Mars Rover missions, the humanities remains a
19 viable academic path to fulfilling careers for CUNY
20 students, from teaching, law school, archives, and
21 NGOs, being trained in the humanities will remain an
22 important tool more than ever in the 21st century.
23 For example, I am currently working on creating a
24 pipeline for John Jay College students to enter the
25

1
2 US Foreign Service. At a time when the State
3 Department has acknowledged the lack of racial and
4 ethnic diversity in the US diplomatic corps,
5 humanities trained John Jay and CUNY students are in
6 the best position to use their training history in
7 the past I knowing what worked, what didn't, what the
8 foundations and thinking and creations of our
9 societies and ways of being are, to create new
10 narratives and contribute to American society as
11 self-aware, knowledgeable, complex, interesting, and
12 empathetic citizens, not robots. STEM is important,
13 don't get me wrong. My engineer friend reminded me
14 if the bridge falls, what then? But what good is a
15 bridge if there is nothing, no people, no culture, no
16 art, no music to connect. As Jane Jacobs [sic] could
17 have said to Robert Moses, you know, a highway does
18 not make a city. I want to leave with you this. In
19 the 1997 film Contact, Jodi Foster plays a search for
20 extraterrestrial intelligence as a scientist. As she
21 comes out of a worm hole in deep space, she is
22 confronted by overwhelming beautifully, multicolored,
23 celestial lights, stars, planets, and galaxies, and
24 in response to the question what do you see, she
25 says, "You should have sent a poet." Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I would like to
3 thank this panel for their testimony. Our next panel
4 will be on Zoom. Panel number five is Linique
5 Pedaway [sp?], Gail Lewis, Rosette Ruth Reisman
6 Aguillar [sp?], and John Verzani.

7 LINIQUE PEDAWAY: Hi. I'm Linique
8 Pedaway and I recently graduated from John Jay
9 College in June 2023 with a degree-- an English
10 Major. So I feel very attached to the humanities. I
11 took a Humanities in Action course when I was in the
12 fall, and I found it was very helpful because it
13 taught me a lot of critical thinking skills that-- on
14 top of my English major I was enhancing, and it
15 allowed me to find the problem that I knew was there,
16 but wasn't really widely known and isn't as
17 researched about. My particular research project
18 for that class was the struggles that black teenage
19 girls face when it comes to high school. They have a
20 lot of failure rates which I found is very different
21 narratively compared to the way people kind of like
22 to discuss black teenagers, and teenage girls and how
23 they're succeeding or doing super well. There's
24 always [inaudible] to the stereotypes that are
25 associated with them, and I found that while there's

1 not much of a solution because there's so many
2 problems that kind of led to their failure rates, the
3 class taught me to focus on history, on how law and
4 legal justice systems kind of attack and [inaudible]
5 sorry-- don't help with the problem as well as just
6 general psychology. Some stereotypes and tropes are
7 very associated with by teenagers and black women
8 generally that lead to their failure rate. And I
9 think if I didn't take that class, I would have
10 probably been a little stuck in thinking about what I
11 could do with my major, and I'm really glad that I
12 took it, and really glad for the humanities because
13 it allowed me to explore so many different avenues,
14 and I could bridge them all together. They're not
15 separate. I know this idea that law and history don't
16 have to be together, but they absolutely do. So many
17 of what-- so much of what we learn is just completely
18 interconnected. And I'm just-- I'm pro-humanities,
19 all for it. Everyone should learn it. And thank
20 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. And
23 congratulations on graduating. Gail Lewis?

24 GAIL LEWIS: Hi good afternoon everyone.

25 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Good afternoon.

1
2 GAIL LEWIS: I'm Gail Lewis for the
3 record, and good afternoon to the Committee on Higher
4 Education. The study of the humanities has
5 traditionally been an academic endeavor reserved for
6 the affluent, but as you know, not here at CUNY. In
7 our reality, CUNY makes the study of humanities a
8 viable inclusive path for students. I'm a lecturer
9 here at Queensborough Community College CUNY in the
10 Department of Communication, Theater, and Media
11 Production, and I'm also a proud CUNY grad. Go
12 Baruch Bearcats. Our students population here at
13 QCC, as it is CUNY-wide, spans age, culture, and of
14 course background, and when it comes to the study of
15 the humanities here at Queensborough Community
16 College, we hold accreditation by the National
17 Association of Schools of Theater, which is NAST,
18 accreditation from the National Association of
19 Schools of Art and Design, and we are accredited by
20 the National Association of Schools of Dance. So
21 lots of accreditation in the humanities right here at
22 QCC. I've read the articles about the decline of the
23 number of students seeking a major in the humanities.
24 Robert Townsend, Co-Director of the American Academy
25 of Arts and Sciences Humanities Indicators Project

1 states that humanities as we stated before studies
2 enrollments have declined by 17 percent in the past
3 10 years, but in my class their reality is a little
4 bit different. I see students who are excited by the
5 possibilities that the humanities present. Students
6 are challenged in communication and in media
7 production. They express their own reality through
8 their productions. They tell their own stories.
9 They immerse themselves in our accredited theater
10 program, production after production. They build
11 sets. They come daily and nightly to get it done.
12 Students in our communication classes, public
13 speaking, interpersonal communication, intercultural
14 communication, communication in a professional
15 setting, they're excited about the possibilities of a
16 major or a minor in communication. Our theater-- we
17 also in my department, Communication Theater and
18 Media Production, we host a soft skills workshop
19 every semester and it is standing room only of
20 students across the disciplines. The demand for the
21 humanities here on our campus is huge. Instead of
22 redistributing funding away from the humanities,
23 let's double-down. Let's help ensure our humanities
24 grads get well-paying jobs. Let's invest in more
25

1
2 public/private internship programs to funnel our
3 students--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time is
5 expired. Thank you.

6 GAIL LEWIS: and our grads back into New
7 York City's best and brightest cultural, musical, and
8 theater programs. Let's promote the humanities. And
9 lastly, I guess to paraphrase a humanities thinker,
10 Justin Timberlake, let's bring sexy back to the study
11 of humanities across CUNY. Thanks again for letting
12 me speak today.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you very
14 much. Thank you. Our next speaker-- anytime someone
15 quotes Justin Timberlake as a humanities person is--
16 put a smile on my face. Next speaker is Rosette Ruth
17 Reisman Aguillar [sp?].

18 ROSETTE RUTH REISMAN AGUILLAR: Yes, hi,
19 good afternoon everybody.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Hi.

21 ROSETTE RUTH REISMAN AGUILLAR: Thank
22 you. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak
23 on the platform. I'm going to speak more from the
24 heart and a little less scripted. I think I serve
25 myself as proof to the value of the Humanities

1 Department here at CUNY. I myself, and obviously I
2 am an alumni. I graduated from CUNY with three
3 different degrees in various areas, an undergraduate
4 degree in Communication Arts, Sciences and Disorders,
5 a Doctoral Degree in Audiology, as well as my MBA at
6 Baruch, and I think-- and now I'm actually here as a
7 fulltime Doctoral lecturer in the CUNY Department for
8 Audiology and not only are we probably the smallest
9 major within the Humanities Department, but I think--
10 I'm so surprised that this is even up for debate in
11 terms of the value that humanities brings to society,
12 to the community at-large how much the human
13 connection is so important in day-to-day life. What
14 we do as Audiologists, which are ultimately
15 clinicians that diagnose and rehabilitate hearing and
16 balance disorders, is so essential to all
17 communities, all cultures, all throughout the age
18 range from newborn to our seniors department. I'm
19 actually going to be presenting for New York City on
20 the falls prevention and how hearing, balance,
21 audiology and of course the humanities and the human
22 connection is so important in preventing falls in our
23 senior population which really causes a lot of risks
24 in their overall health. so to me, I think, part of
25

1
2 the issue is some of-- everyone-- some of the things
3 that have been discussed is the lack of PR and
4 awareness of what the humanities can bring to our
5 community and what the opportunities are after
6 graduation for the students which is why I kind of
7 came back to teaching after having gone throughout
8 the country to different universities and observing
9 their audiology departments and what they have serve-
10 - or what they have to offer to their students and
11 really seeing some of the, I guess, weaknesses of the
12 CUNY system in terms of what we-- and the disservices
13 that we're doing to our students by cutting back
14 funding and not offering them the opportunity to
15 really excel like in those universities that do have
16 the funding and support in their environment, because
17 I think our platform as New York City providers
18 ultimately a lot of our students go on to support the
19 New York City community and patients within New York
20 City, it's really--

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time has
22 expired. Thank you.

23 ROSETTE RUTH REISMAN AGUILLAR: It's
24 really ultimately--

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: [interposing] You
3 can finish your last thought.

4 ROSETTE RUTH REISMAN AGUILLAR: Yep, so
5 that's really the-- ultimately, I would think that,
6 you know, we should as we said double-down on the
7 investment in terms of what we can offer to CUNY
8 students, because we are ultimately the ones serving
9 the community at-large.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much
11 for your testimony. And last on this panel is John
12 Verzani.

13 JOHN VERZANI: Hi. Thank you for having
14 me. I'm John Verzani, Professor of Mathematics at
15 the College of Staten Island and current Chair of
16 CUNY's University Faculty Senate. For the past 55
17 years, the University Faculty Senate has represented
18 CUNY's faculty in front of the board and central
19 administration on academic matters. Today's topic is
20 timely and calls on many nationally important
21 stories. For example, the question of the state of
22 the humanities for the elite colleges was looked at
23 in last spring's proactively titled New Yorker piece,
24 The End of the English Major. While that story was a
25 nuanced piece looking at shifting enrollments in

1 students' preferences, many national stories have
2 apparent political motivation, the most noteworthy
3 examples being the hostile takeover of the
4 humanities-friendly new college in Florida by a
5 Governor following the playbook drawn up by fellows
6 at the Manhattan Institute. In the passing SB17 in
7 Texas radically restricting efforts to cultivate
8 diversity, equity and inclusion at its public
9 institutions of higher ed, part of national efforts
10 driven by the Heritage Foundation and the American
11 Enterprise Institute and the Woodson [sic] Center has
12 recently detailed in a chronicle of higher education
13 article, and these have had effect. For example, in
14 West Virginia where there's significant budget
15 issues, the university announced a significant cost-
16 saving targeting humanities students and faculty. I
17 believe that these ideas of the humanities weren't
18 powerful, they wouldn't be under assault by well-
19 funded national organized groups. And we see this
20 locally. The New York Post gleefully runs articles
21 at CUNY's expense, even when CUNY is at-best
22 tangentially involved. The only current reason being
23 weakened reputation in the greatest engine of social
24 mobility in the region. These efforts are working if
25

1 not solely with half the electorate. Yesterday's New
2 York Times article titled "Americans are Losing Faith
3 in the Value of College," highlighted how the
4 Republican view that college is a negative
5 [inaudible] 37 to 58 percent between years of 2015
6 and 2017. Now, are the humanities viable at CUNY,
7 which is the question of the day? Looking at
8 declared major data for BA students at CUNY, there
9 has been a decline in humanities-related majors since
10 between 2018 and 2022. English is down 56 percent
11 from what it was, History 85 percent, Philosophy 72
12 percent, and Spanish 87 percent. Does this signal
13 and end? Well, the declines to some extent follow
14 losses in enrollment which are off 80 percent as of--
15 from 2018. However, such enrollment losses seem to
16 have been stemmed. Many were driven by the pandemic,
17 and we've have strong rebounds this fall, especially
18 for community colleges and our comprehensive
19 colleges. Perhaps instead these shifts reflect the
20 [inaudible] of efforts by the City Council and the
21 Mayor's Office to open up computer science gateways
22 which are up 36 percent over that five-year span.
23 More likely the declines are the result of natural
24 diversification and specialization and a not a
25

1 testament to the value and viability of the
2 humanities. While English numbers of fallen,
3 percentage amount is nearly identical to criminal
4 justice--
5

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time
7 expired. Thank you.

8 JOHN VERZANI: both with three times the
9 declared students. I'll stop there, but I could go
10 on.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much
12 for your testimony today. And our last panel, Addie
13 Malinowski [sp?]. I'll read the three names, Addie
14 Malinowski, Laura Washington, Mora Ima Krite [sp?],
15 and we'll start with Addie Malinowski.

16 ADDIE MALINOWSKI: Hi, can you hear me?

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, we can.

18 ADDIE MALINOWSKI: I'm just going to keep
19 this really short, because I actually have to be in
20 class in a minute. I am a student at the CUNY
21 Graduate Center in English, and I also teach first-
22 year writing which is a general education requirement
23 in college writing to freshman students at Brooklyn
24 College. I'm also a product of public education and
25 public universities from the great state of Michigan,

1 and I have a Master's in Creative Writing. I'm a poet
2 also. So to educate the whole people of the City of
3 New York, that's the slogan of CUNY. CUNY students
4 especially those who are poor, black and brown, New
5 Yorkers-- and this is just echoing what a lot of my
6 colleagues have said today-- deserve the right and
7 the freedom to explore the humanities in their
8 education and not just be put on a pipeline to become
9 workers in a mediocre economy. For example, students
10 should have the funding to study somebody like Audrey
11 Lord [sp?], the great black feminist poet and
12 essayist who studied and taught at Hunter College.
13 They should be able to be afforded this right to
14 study the humanities and get a good job after
15 graduating, which would mean addressing larger
16 economic problems we face, making good on the promise
17 of economic justice, which would mean instituting
18 something like a citywide jobs guarantee. We don't
19 want to deny students at the nation's largest public
20 urban university, the great City University of New
21 York, the kind of liberal arts education their
22 predominantly white and wealthy peers that the City's
23 private universities receive. New Yorkers of all
24 stripes have to write -- have the right to learn
25

1 about their own unique histories and should not be
2 the target of politicized attacks on the humanities.
3 I believe we should fund CUNY again like it was
4 funded for all New Yorkers during the period of open
5 admissions between the years 1970 and 1976 when
6 tuition was imposed, and we should make good on the
7 promise to educate the whole people of the City of
8 New York. Thank you.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much
11 Addie. Laura Washington?

12 LAURA WASHINGTON: Good afternoon
13 Chairman Dinowitz and members of the Committee on
14 Higher Education, my name is Laura Washington. I'm
15 the Chief Communications Officer and Vice President
16 for Strategic Partnerships here at New York
17 Historical Society, and I'm honored to testify today
18 about the humanities as an academic and career path
19 for CUNY students. I didn't say pipeline. At the
20 New York Historical Society, the humanities is at the
21 heart of everything we do. For decades, our museum
22 and library have been at the forefront of presenting
23 exhibitions that re-examine US History and include
24 the perspective of historically under-represented
25 groups, but we do more than exhibitions. We're also

1
2 creating pathways for students interested in the
3 humanities, which is to say students who are
4 interested in investigating the forces that shape the
5 world that we live in. One way we do this is through
6 our ground-breaking Master of Arts in Museum Studies
7 Program which the New York Historical Society created
8 in 2019 in partnership with CUNY's School of
9 Professional Studies. This coming November will mark
10 the fourth anniversary of the MA in Museum Studies
11 Program, and this program, it serves a dual purpose.
12 First, it equips students with the knowledge, skills,
13 and preparation necessary for a career in
14 professional museum practice, and second it addresses
15 the need for a diverse museum workforce that reflects
16 an increasingly diverse museum going public. We also
17 have the Presidential Teaching Scholars Summer
18 Institute where our students enrich the museum
19 interpretation in scholarly voices, and we also
20 offer-- or each students is required to work on a
21 capstone project which gives them practical
22 experience and networking opportunities. Our
23 graduates have gone on to work at institutions like
24 the American Museum of Natural History across the
25 street the Intrepid Sea, Air, and Space Museum, MOMA,

1 and the New York Historical Society. So they are
2 getting great work and they're putting those
3 humanities-inspired degrees to work. In conclusion,
4 the humanities are vital for fostering critical
5 thinking as you've heard over and over again today,
6 as well as cultural awareness, and our joint program
7 with CUNY actively helps diversify the cultural
8 workforce. So by supporting programs like ours, the
9 city invests in the next generation of cultural
10 leaders and ensures that the humanities continue to
11 enrich and transform lives. So thank you so much for
12 your time today.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much,
15 Ms. Washington. And last on this panel is Mora E.
16 McWright [sp?]? Okay, is there anyone else on Zoom
17 who has not been recognized but would like to
18 testify? Please use the raise hand function. I
19 would like to thank everyone who testified today,
20 everyone who is watching the hearing and came to the
21 hearing to participate in this critically important
22 hearing about humanities at our colleges. This
23 hearing is adjourned.

24 [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 September 18, 2023