

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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B E F O R E: INEZ D. BARRON
Chairperson

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

Ali Hatto (sic) Hasan, Vice Chairperson of
Evening and Part-Time Affairs at CUNY
University Student Senate

Timothy Hunter Chairperson, University
Student Senate, CUNY

Melanie Kravelis, Senior Manager of Policy
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Ms. Andrea Bowen

Andrea Vasquez, First Vice President of
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Yasmin Edwards, Associate Professor, Bronx
Community College, and CUNY Alum

Sakia Fletcher, President of Student
Government, Medgar Evers College

Dr. Zulema Blair, Professor, Medgar Evers College

Terrance Blackman, Associate Professor of Mathematics, Medgar Evers College

Nick Freudenberg, Professor of Public Health, City University of New York, CUNY

Sydoni Ellwood, Adjunct, Kingsborough College

Alex Pence, Continuing Education Teacher of English for speakers of other languages at La Guardia Community College

Michelle Markman

Nathan Schrader, Adjunct Lecturer, La Guardia Community College and Hunter College

Janette Bastiste, Bronx Community College

Monica Courtney, Adjunct Lecturer, English Language Center, La Guardia Community College

Sylvia Gonzalez, Lecturer at English Language Center, La Guardia Community College.

Lena Hayes. Former Employee of La Guardia Community College Adult and Continuing Ed Workforce Education Center

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning everyone
3 and welcome to today's New York Remote New York City
4 Council hearing of the Committee on Higher Education.
5 At tis time would all panelists please turn on their
6 video. Again, at this time would all panelists turn
7 on their video. To minimize interruption, please
8 place electronic devises to vibrate or silent. If
9 you wish to submit testimony, you may do so at
10 testimony@counccil.nyc.gov. (bell) Again, that's
11 testimony@counccil.nyc.gov. Thank you for your
12 cooperation. We are ready to begin. (pause)

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good morning and
14 welcome to today's oversight hearing on the impact of
15 Coronavirus COVID-19 on the City University of New
16 York. I am Council Member Inez Barron, Chair of the
17 Committee on Higher Education, and a proud CUNY alum.
18 First, I want to acknowledge that this is the first
19 higher education hearing since the COVID-19 Pandemic
20 turned many of our lives upside down, took may lives.
21 (bell) There the racial inequities that have always
22 existed in New York City and indeed throughout this
23 nation. The latest available data on COVID-19
24 related death rates in each of the city's zip codes
25 show that while the majority of deaths have been

2 older residents, race and income have proven to be
3 the largest factors determining who lives and who
4 dies. Though the city may have identi—though the city
5 may have identified our Coronavirus epidemic,
6 neighborhoods with majority black and Latino New
7 Yorkers as well as low-income residents suffered the
8 highest death rates while some wealthier areas
9 predominantly white, suffered almost no deaths. This
10 is person, and it has devastated my Brooklyn district,
11 which includes the zip code with the highest death
12 rate in the city. So, withstanding the data that the
13 elderly and those who are Black and Latino were at
14 the highest risk for contracting and dying from this
15 virus. The Governor did not see fit to make adequate
16 provisions to protect those communities and send the
17 resources there, and that is the state there. Today,
18 17 days after George Floyd, a 46 year-old unarmed
19 black man was publicly choked to death by a
20 Minneapolis police officer in a way that immediately
21 brought to mind the 2014 murder of Eric Garner, a 43—
22 year-old unarmed black man by an NYPD Officer. The
23 continued discriminatory treatment of black and brown
24 people by the police caught on tape has doubly laid
25 there the inequities that again have always existed in

2 New York City, and lest we forget, police officer
3 Daniel Pantaleo was only fired from the NPD and
4 stripped of his pension benefits less than a year
5 ago, five years after Mr. Garner uttered his dying
6 words: I can't read, and there are many countless
7 others here in New York City unarmed who have died at
8 the hands of the NYPD, and I'm going to call their
9 names and these are just some of them. Anthony Biez,
10 Mohammed Bah, Sean Darrow, John Collado, Deborah
11 Danna, Ahmed Diallo, Malcolm Ferguson, Landi Evans,
12 Clifford Glover, ten-year-old Clifford Glover, Eric
13 Garner, Ramaley Graham, Nichols Hayward, Jr. also a
14 child, a minor, Devon Small and Saheed Vassell,
15 unarmed people shot and killed by NYPD ,and I must
16 include Ratonza Bavel, shot in the back by Officer
17 Shell who was able to rise through the ranks and
18 become Chief. Daily demonstrations have since broken
19 out across the city and the country, driven by these
20 events and the deaths of numerous other black people
21 of color and indigenous people (bell) and elevating a
22 national discussion on police use of force and other
23 law enforcement tactics that disproportionately
24 impact non-white people, people of color, Black,
25 Latino. However, these peaceful protests has once

2 again showcased the lawlessness of those who have
3 sworn to serve and protect us, and it only because of
4 the protests that I believe we've been able to get
5 the results that we are now beginning to see
6 percolate, and that's because of people in the street
7 protesting. Once again, we must stand up and remind
8 leadership that black lives matter, and this does not
9 stop at adding a hashtag to our social media account.
10 We must demand real investment in black and brown
11 communities. New York is one of the most culturally
12 diverse cities in the country, and along with many of
13 its great institutions such as CUNY (bell) New York
14 City is the greatest city in the world not in spite
15 of its diversity but because of it. (bell) CUNY has
16 established with explicit legislation and tense that
17 identify the university being of "vital importance as
18 vehicle for the upward mobility of the disadvantaged
19 in the city of New York. Now, the largest urban
20 public university in the country, CUNY serves more
21 than 247,000 degree seeking, and 276,000 adults and
22 continuing education students at 25 campuses across
23 the five boroughs, and certainly CUNY's undergraduate
24 student population more than-more, um, more or less
25 reflects the diversity of the city through its

2 faculty and some of its leadership, but not enough.

3 History shows that in times of economic downturns and

4 in periods of high unemployment there tends to be an

5 increase in the enrollment at particularly community

6 colleges. However, we have all learned or we've all

7 heard about the cuts that are planned to courses, to

8 faculty and to programs including CUNY ASAP, which

9 has won prestigious innovations and American

10 government awards from Harvard's John F. Kennedy

11 School of Government this past April, and as a

12 relatively affordable path into the middle-class for

13 low-income students, it is crucial that CUNY

14 critically consider how it will re-open and continue

15 to be an economic engine for the city. In addition to

16 ensuring the health and safety of the CUNY community

17 as they return to campus it is imperative that the

18 university explicitly commits to serving the under-

19 served especially black and brown New Yorkers through

20 degree completion. It is also critical that the city

21 put the appropriate funding into CUNY to maintain its

22 programs. As a Black member of the New York City

23 Council, Chair of the Committee on Higher Education,

24 and a member of the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus, I

25 am committed to fighting educational inequities, and

2 ensuring that CUNY better serves its Black, Latino
3 people of color students and indeed one \$1 billion in
4 the NYPD budget can be better spent, and I would
5 encourage us not to scrap over the pennies and have
6 them pit one organization or agency or program
7 against another or to be able to understand that we
8 can adequately fund our (pause) I would like to thank
9 Joy Simmons my Chief of Staff, Ndigo Washington, my
10 CUNY Liaison and Director of Legislation, Chloe
11 Rivera the Committee's Senior Policy Analyst, Paul
12 Sinegal, Counsel to the committee, and Monica Posen,
13 the Committee's new Finance Analyst. And now, I will
14 ask that the Counsel take over and call the first
15 panel.

16 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you, Chair Barron.
17 Before calling the first panel, I'm going to review
18 some rules. My name is Paul Sinegal. I'm Counsel to
19 the Committee on Higher Education of the New York
20 City Council. I'll be moderating today's hearing and
21 calling panelists to testify. Before we begin, I
22 want to remind everyone that you will be on mute
23 until I call on you to testify. After you are called
24 on, you will be unmuted by the host. Please listen
25 for your name. I will periodically announce who the

2 next panelist will be. Council Members' questions
3 will be limited to five minutes, and Council Members
4 please note that this includes both your question and
5 the witness' answer. Please also note that we will
6 allow a second round of questions at today's hearing.
7 These will be limited to two minutes. Again,
8 including both your question and the witness' answer.
9 For public testimony, I will call individuals in
10 panels of three or four. Council Members who have
11 questions for a particular panelist should use the
12 Raise Hand function in Zoom. You will be called on
13 after everyone on that panel has completed their
14 testimony. For public panelists, once I call your
15 name a member of our staff will unmute you, and the
16 sergeant-at-arms will give you the go-ahead to begin
17 speaking after setting the timer. All public
18 testimony will be limited to three minutes. After I
19 call your name there will be a brief moment for the
20 sergeant-at-arms to announce that you may begin
21 before starting your testimony. I will now call the
22 first panel to testify. The first panel in order of
23 speaking will be Timothy Hunter, President,
24 University Student Senate; Ali Hatto Hasan, Vice
25 Chair of Evening and Part-Time Student Affairs at

2 University Student Senate, and Melanie-Kruvelis
3 Senior Manger of Policy and Advocacy at Young
4 Invincibles. Your time begins now. Timothy, you may
5 begin.

6 TIMOTHY HUNTER: It's definitely all the
7 rates that (inaudible)

8 PAUL SINEGAL: We appear to be having
9 some technical difficulties right now. If we're able
10 to resolve those, we'll circle back to you, Timothy.
11 In the meantime, we'll move onto Ali Hatto Hasan.

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time starts now.

13 ALI HATTO HASAN: (bell) Good morning. My
14 name is Ali Hatto Hasan. (sp?) I am the Vice
15 Chairperson of Evening and Part-Time Affairs at CUNY
16 University Student Senate an academic center at
17 Queens College, City University of New York. Thank
18 you for holding this hearing. The City University of
19 New York, a true gem for the city known to be the
20 greatest urban university in the world is lacking
21 proper funding to maintain and offer access to offer
22 quality education to students. The University Student
23 Senate founded on the principle of advocacy for all
24 students in achieving a fully funded CUNY have
25 continuously called on elected officials to increase

2 funding to higher education for the students
3 especially for those who live in a poverty—who live
4 in poverty in the most expensive city in the world
5 can afford an education—higher education. This is an
6 unprecedented time. the city has just emerged from a
7 global pandemic. New York State has seen
8 unemployment rise to almost two million within the
9 last three months leaving the question not only are
10 we facing the possibility of increased tuition when
11 our students have lost their jobs and are facing food
12 insecurity and homelessness, but our students and
13 their families are seeking jobs in an economy that we
14 haven't seen since the Great Depression. How do we
15 expect student to afford this tuition hike? This is
16 a student from BMCC: I'm a student from BMCC and I'm
17 employed there through work study. Yet, I'm not
18 receiving payments because schools are closed. Many
19 people like me are out of work, and I'm spending the
20 little money I have on staying alive. I do not have
21 the money to think about tuition let alone a raise on
22 it. Community colleges, the most affordable—the more
23 affordable route compared to a senior college here in
24 New York offers one of the highest rates in the
25 nation. As of 2016, 60% of students, CUNY students

2 came from homes with under-with incomes under
3 \$30,000. Part-time and evening students a lot of the
4 times consists of students who work full-time who are
5 single mothers and fathers, students who want to
6 prioritize their education but receive little to no
7 Pell Grants, and need to work to afford tuition. The
8 students face one of the greatest threats. This
9 pandemic has left many of them jobless. How do we
10 expect them to finish their education? According to
11 CUNY's data on total enrollment based on fall 2019,
12 shows that BMCC had over 25,000+ students. 7,700 of
13 them are part time. La Guardia Community College out
14 of its total 18,505 students, 8,563 of them are part-
15 time students. In every CUNY college part-time
16 students make up almost one-third or half of the
17 total students. Then how can we even think about
18 raising the tuition at this moment when these
19 students are losing their jobs, are homeless or
20 facing homelessness. (sic) Many students haven't
21 finished paying off this past semester's tuition, and
22 have to set it for next semester while also worrying-
23 save for next semester while also worrying about it
24 increasing. It is time that the Council invest and
25 prioritize in our education, and I urge the Council

2 to allocate \$16 million for a tuition freeze at CUNY
3 Community Colleges for the fiscal year 2021. Thank
4 you.

5 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. we will now
6 circle back to Timothy Hunter.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: So, his time starts
8 now.

9 TIMOTHY HUNTER: (distorted audio) Thank
10 you. Thank you so much. Firstly, after (inaudible)
11 We've been working very closely with her this past
12 week but it has been a very stressful time. I'm
13 always there for our students all across the
14 university. Again, I'll just to introduce myself. My
15 name is Timothy Hunter, Chairperson of the
16 University. My name is Timothy Hunter Chairperson of
17 the University Student Senate and first, I just want
18 to circle back to the CUNY mission statement. You
19 know founded in 1972, you know, well we-we have the
20 mission of preserving the accessibility of-- we have
21 the mission of preserving the accessibility of
22 affordability of excellence of higher education
23 within CUNY and it is our job to consider to be those
24 advocates for that. You know, amidst the COVID-19
25 pandemic when we've seen so many students experience

2 a plethora of hardships from, you know, the
3 increasing of a solution that could potentially
4 happen at the end of this year to losing jobs and
5 income and to many of our students being frontline
6 workers and as Ali or my colleague has highlighted,
7 it's super important that the Council considers not
8 increasing tuition this year and allocating the
9 proper money that's needed. \$60 million is not a huge
10 ask for a city that has one of the largest budgets, a
11 budget that is larger than some of the states ,and
12 where the pressure is coming from a lot of the people
13 to make sure that we're, you know, cutting, you know,
14 funding to the New York Police Department, and make
15 sure that we're investing in education. We have
16 collected even like-as COVID had kind of started,
17 1,600 testimonies from students all across our
18 university and some alumni kind of calling on the
19 Board of Trustees to make sure that they freeze
20 tuition this year. Many of these students have paid
21 out of pocket their whole entire life or many of they
22 are international students, and they don't know how
23 they're going to make ends meet because they have
24 been like laid off of their jobs or their parents
25 aren't work or they had to head back home to make

2 sure that their family was okay and that their family
3 wasn't sick. I don't think that it's right for these
4 students to have to pay extra money for their tuition
5 and have to pay that. You know, the Council should
6 definitely kind (distorted audio) their--their--

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Unfortunately, it
8 seems like we've lost Mr. Hunter. If we're able to
9 resolve, um, the technical difficulties, we'll circle
10 back to you and let you finish your statement. In the
11 meantime, we will move onto Ms. Melanie Kruevelis,
12 Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy, Young
13 Invincibles.

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time starts now.

15 MELANIE KRUEVELIS: Okay. Thank you very
16 much Paul. Good morning everyone. My name is
17 Melanie Kruevelis. I'm senior manager of Policy and
18 Advocacy at Young Invincibles. I want to thank the
19 Council and the Committee on Higher Education for the
20 opportunity to testify today. CUNY faced serious
21 challenges in the COVID-19 Pandemic to colder New
22 York. You know, transitioning from a system of 25
23 physical campuses to distance planning and virtual
24 support services was daunting and in conversations
25 with CUNY students many recognized the challenges

2 that their campuses faced during this transition. As
3 one city college told us—as one city college student
4 told us this spring: Although grateful that the
5 universities throughout New York are doing what they
6 can to prevent the spread of COVID, I also realized
7 that there's an added layer of uncertainty and stress
8 that I actively have to deal with. How will I attend
9 online classes when my Internet connection isn't
10 always stable? We do recognize that CUNY responded
11 to these issues publishing campus level points of
12 contact on CUNY's central websites to connect
13 students with laptops and tablets. Still, even as
14 CUNY adapted to this digital environment, we know
15 that many students as it is mastered with that, and
16 it is adequate internet access. This includes
17 students who are most vulnerable to the pandemic
18 including the 14% of CUNY students experiencing
19 homelessness. We spoke with a Lehman College student
20 living in one of the city's homeless shelters who was
21 prohibited from using her laptop in the shelter or
22 accessing its wifi. We heard from students living in
23 crowded housing conditions, which impacted their
24 ability to access Internet and focus. Recent surveys
25 fielded by Healthy CUNY also showed further

2 challenges with distance planning. The caretaking
3 responsibility of CUNY student parents to unaddressed
4 issues for students with different learning
5 abilities. In short, these issues that emerged as
6 CUNY went online, go beyond some plans ensuring
7 laptops and Internet access. The are intersectional
8 issues that underscore which students are able to
9 access higher ed and those who are left behind to
10 figure it out for themselves. Now as more New Yorkers
11 emerge in this pandemic on the brink of eviction and
12 homelessness with rising food insecurity, and serious
13 mental health challenges, CUNY must step up its
14 communication and collaboration services on and off
15 campus that can help students address these issues.
16 We hosted a round table of CUNY students earlier this
17 spring asking how COVID impacted their semester. When
18 asked about the communication they received from
19 their campuses, they said they heard a lot about the
20 transition to online learning and blackboard, but few
21 had received information about food pantries, single
22 stop services or accessing emergency aid. It's time
23 to step up coordination and communication of these
24 services. We need to see digital CUNY wider platforms
25 that connect students to basic needs assistance. We

2 need CUNY wide campaigns aimed at enrolling eligible
3 students in SNAP, Medicaid, and other services and we
4 also need CUNY to keep an eye on the rising housing
5 insecurity that students face. Students are
6 frustrated by the lack of support they receive when
7 it comes to securing affordable housing. CUNY must
8 strengthen its communication and collaboration of the
9 city's housing system including shelters, housing
10 providers and those big partners who are in the role
11 of making sure students have safe, stable places to
12 sleep at night. And when our systems fail and leave
13 students without housing, we cannot turn our back on
14 these students. We must do everything we can to make
15 sure they're safe and housed. In other states like
16 California, Maine, Louisiana, colleges created on-
17 campus liaisons for students experiencing
18 homelessness who can manage these relationships with
19 housing systems and ensure that the issue of the
20 Lehman college student base do not happen. As we
21 move forward--

22 PAUL SINEGAL: That's all. (sic)

23 MELANIE KRUEVELIS: Thank you.

24 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you, Ms. Kruevelis.

25 Um, Timothy, are you able to finish your testimony?

2 (pause) If not, I'd like to remind you that you may
3 submit your written testimony online. I believe you
4 already have submitted something, but in the
5 meantime, we will turn it back to Chair Barron for
6 any questions for this panel.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Mr.
8 Sinegal. I do have questions for the panel. First
9 of all, thank you for coming and we wanted to make
10 sure that we gave you the opportunity to present your
11 testimony first because we wanted you to set the
12 platform for what we want to have CUNY respond to.
13 So, my question will be directed to Mr. Ali Hatto
14 here but not made too badly, and I wanted to ask you
15 what does USSC in terms of the need for mental health
16 services as students return to CUNY as well as
17 supporting them with their food needs. What is USSC
18 in those two areas in particular?

19 ALI HATTO: Thank you, Chair Barron. So,
20 regarding like the health and wellness, the issue is
21 and in most of our CUNY campuses we don't have enough
22 counselors, but the ratio between our counselors and
23 our students is such a huge gap that it takes forever
24 for students to even see a counselor. They are
25 about—I think there's—for each—for each counselor I

2 think there's about 1,000 or 2,000 students that they
3 see. So, the thing is that even before this pandemic
4 we already have—we already had this—this gap of more.
5 We already had this tap of students not being able to
6 see counselors, not—waiting months for appointments.
7 CUNY needs to have more counselors. CUNY needs to
8 have—needs to invest more into mental health and
9 wellness in our campuses, and they need to reduce it—
10 they need to reduce it. The gap between students
11 and counselors would be closed. So that way students
12 can see counselors properly in a proper manner of
13 time and not have to wait months. So, we would have—
14 we would—CUNY would need more counselors for
15 students.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And in terms of food
17 insecurity, which is a polite word of say hunger,
18 what do you think will be some of the face...challenges
19 facing us moving forward? What--was it asked? How--
20 how do you think the CUNY system provided meals and
21 food and what do you think we need to be aware of for
22 challenges moving forward?

23 ALI HATTO: Thank you. So, for food
24 insecurity, we need—CUNY has like even the City
25 Council and CUNY has tried—have done something to

2 assist student with food insecurity, but the thing is
3 a lot of our students still face food insecurity even
4 though we have, we might have—at some campuses we
5 might have these food pantries but it's still not
6 enough for these students because these students
7 have—a lot of these students are—don't have—don't
8 have jobs. A lot of these students come from under-
9 income families—low-income families. They could—the
10 could do—the could be—there could be a better job
11 done across the board because students that—and
12 especially during this time when students have lost
13 their jobs because of pandemic, this pandemic, we're
14 going to see more students who are going to be in
15 need of food assistance and food assistance through
16 our campuses, and there are going to be more students
17 who are going to be food insecure. So, you would
18 need to seek more...more assistance and a better job
19 done across the board with CUNY.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, and if
21 the—if the technician could help put on Melanie
22 Kurvelis, I have a quest or two for her as well.
23 Melanie, as Young Invincibles has come and spoken to
24 me about the what they see are some of the issues,
25 what do you see are some of the challenges in terms

2 of the academic disruption for students because of
3 this Coronavirus?

4 MELANIE KRUVELIS: Thank you for that
5 question. Yeah, um, you know, I think—as I think in
6 response to that question I feel like it is so inter-
7 related to even just the last question you asked in
8 terms of food insecurity and mental health, and yes
9 what I mentioned with the transition to online
10 learning. I think often we think of these challenges
11 as separate from one another, but I think as we, you
12 know, speak with students and then again as Dr.
13 Kutrenburg has found in his survey work you see how
14 all of these challenges—challenges are inter-related
15 and can truly impact students' ability to persist
16 from semester to semester. Um, I think that, you
17 know, you know while we applaud some of the decisions
18 around, you know, making pass bill decisions and
19 things like that that CUNY has made, I think that
20 there are serious challenges for students who are
21 trying to persist from semester to semester, and
22 again, I do see it very much related to all of those
23 challenges that students are facing. You know, I
24 think we're concerned about what happens to students
25 who might, you know, not be able to fully participate

2 in school whether it's because they are now
3 caretaking while at home and--and at school or whether
4 it's because, you know, they are dealing with mental
5 health issues that they don't have enough resources
6 for, and will that impact their ability to maintain
7 financial aid, you know, in upcoming semesters? Do we
8 have clarity on whether or not they'll be able to
9 maintain TAP if their academic performance doesn't
10 meet--

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

12 MELANIE KRUVELIS: --that satisfactory
13 academic progress, and that's something that we have
14 been talking with colleagues about on the state side,
15 and we'll continue to have those conversations. Just
16 one quick thing I wanted to note on your question on
17 mental health and food services. One thing that we
18 recently held a town hall led by some CUNY students
19 on mental health in collaboration with USS, and one
20 thing that came clear to me from that is I think
21 there are opportunities as we use the telehealth
22 services, but I also really want to speak to fact
23 that even if telehealth services are available,
24 they're not always accessible or safe for all
25 students and so when I say that I think about

2 students who, you know, from different language
3 backgrounds who may not be served by these services
4 or students who, you know, LGBTQ students who might
5 not feel safe talking with a counselor over the phone
6 knowing that someone in their family is right next
7 door in the other room and can hear what they're
8 talking about. And so, I think you know thinking
9 creatively and multi-modably can be really helpful as
10 we make sure that all students are able to access
11 these services. So, whether it's texting therapy or
12 other things that we can do, we really need to make
13 sure that students who are, you know, again most
14 vulnerable in this in this pandemic are really
15 centered in decision making processes.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And you speak about
17 telehealth. Has that been an opportunity presently or
18 how have we found it working during this interim
19 period and how are students getting informed of
20 whatever it is that the services the CUNY system is
21 offering to them? How are they getting informed?
22 Have you found that to be efficient and what is the
23 opportunity that we see to make improvement?

24 MELANIE KRUVELIS: Absolutely. So, thank
25 you for that question. I think in general one of the

2 things that we have heard from the students that we
3 work with is just again as I mentioned in my
4 testimony just not enough communication from CUNY
5 about sort of these non-academic pieces of their
6 lives, and, you know, again when I mentioned that
7 round table that we held with students, we did—we
8 heard from them, that, you know, whether it's mental
9 health like tele-health services or information about
10 food pantries, they really had to like track down a
11 lot of different sources in order to get that
12 information, and so I—I really encourage CUNY to, you
13 know, centralize some of that information as much as
14 possible, and communicate that information to
15 students often and frequently, and whether or not
16 that means that, you know, including the same
17 information and like weekly emails like that's okay.
18 Like students need that information and students are
19 going to have different needs throughout the time and
20 so whether, you know, one week maybe that mental
21 health services wasn't something that was on their
22 mind, but maybe something happens where the next week
23 it is and are we continuing to communicate that to
24 students and, you know, again, yeah to your point on
25 telehealth, I think again centering those—those needs

2 of students, again I think it's a big opportunity
3 especially as we try to figure out what fall 2020 is
4 going to look like, but again, I think there's
5 opportunities for CUNY to connect with community-
6 based providers who have already had a long history
7 of serving under-served communities in mental health
8 and connecting them with mental health counselors
9 that actually look like them and like understand
10 their concerns. I think that's a really big
11 opportunity, and I'm happy to connect the Council
12 within the groups that we have met with.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And in terms of the
14 issue of communication, has CUNY been the source of
15 just sending out blasts through emails of what it is
16 that's happening or does the information have to be
17 initiated by the student to go and to log in and to
18 check the website. So, does CUNY either centrally or
19 through the campuses send out blasts and emails and
20 let students know or is it originated from the
21 student?

22 MELANIE KRUVELIS: Right. Great question
23 and I'd be curious to hear what some of the other
24 current students on this panel think about that
25 question, but from everything that I've heard, I mean

2 I think—I think it's a—it's a variety. I think there
3 are instances where CUNY Central is sort of sending
4 out that larger information. I think we saw that
5 with some of the, um, emergency grant information,
6 but it is largely a very decentralized by campus
7 communication, and that's what's we've really heard
8 from students, and again, it can really vary widely
9 depending on what campus that you're at and—and what
10 services are available. And so, again, I think as I
11 mentioned in my testimony and, you know, others may
12 bring up, I think there are some real opportunities
13 to centralize some of that information to CUNY so
14 students really know where to access it, and then to
15 have some of these concerted, you know, outreach
16 campaigns to make sure that students are, you know,
17 whether it's Medicaid or SNAP or, you know, accessing
18 some of the city's mental health services, we need to
19 make sure that those, um, that's really centered in a
20 lot of the advertising and marketing materials that
21 come out in the next semester. So, just some of my
22 thoughts there.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much,
24 and if Timothy Hunter has been able to get back on, I
25 don't know if he has, but if he has, I'd like to

2 afford him and opportunity to once again try to share
3 his testimony. So, if there's an opportunity to reach
4 out to him in the next (squawking mic) 30 seconds to
5 my tech team we can find out if he is logged back in.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: I'll be one minute. I
7 believe he is no longer logged in.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. thank you.

9 LEGAL COUNSEL: We're going to ask the
10 next panel. Just wanted to give you an opportunity
11 to-

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

13 LEGAL COUNSEL: --let your colleagues to..

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. I want to
15 recognize that we've been joined by members-Council
16 Member Maisel and Council Member Ulrich who are both
17 members of this committee. Thank you.

18 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Barron.

19 I will next call the following members of the
20 Administration to testify: Jose Louie Cruz, Senior
21 Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Matthew
22 Sapienza, Chief Financial Officer. I will first read
23 the oath, and after, I will call upon each of you
24 individually to respond. Do you affirm to tell the
25 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth

2 before this committee, and to respond honestly to
3 Council Members questions?

4 LEGAL COUNSEL: Vice Chancellor Cruz?

5 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: I do.

6 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you. Mr. Sapienza.

7 MR. SAPIENZA: I do.

8 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you both. Vice
9 Chancellor Cruz, you may begin your testimony when
10 ready.

11 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Thank you. Good
12 afternoon or good morning I should say. Chairperson
13 Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee
14 thank you for the opportunity to testify before you
15 on the impact of COVID-19 has had on the City
16 University of New York. My name is Jose Luis Cruz,
17 and I have the privilege of serving as the Executive
18 Vice Chancellor and University Provost of the City
19 University of New York. As we look to the days
20 ahead, we must be guided by the understanding that to
21 fully meet the needs of our students and communities,
22 to truly be engaged in the recovery of New York City
23 and New York State, we must invest in our students
24 and also in the institutions that serve them because
25 it is crucial that accessing affordability be paired

2 with the rigor and value that our students, city and
3 state require or deserve. Institutions in New York
4 State must work hand-in-hand because there is no one
5 single agency or institution that predominately and
6 disproportionately shoulders the responsibility of
7 increasing educational attainment as a means to
8 knowing gaps in opportunity. There is no one single
9 agency or institution that predominantly and
10 disproportionately paves the way for a more just and
11 equitable society. So, we must work better together
12 to go for the challenges brought about by the
13 pandemic and to be better positioned to adjust to the
14 future disruptions through our ways of life. That is
15 why we greatly value the support of that you Chair
16 Barron and this committee have historically provided
17 to the City University of New York City or by
18 influencing direct investments for admission and by
19 holding us accountable to achieving our highest
20 principles. Food, health information has secured the
21 MLS through accessing arguably increase at a time
22 when the challenges—challenges the university faces
23 intending to them how, of course, for it. It should
24 not be news to anyone who knows how structural
25 oppression and systemic racism the varying issues

2 that CUNY was legislated to combat, work against the
3 students we server. The reality is that is that
4 recent internal policy suggested nearly 40% of our
5 students have lost their jobs. As of May 15, 2020,
6 18% have reported going hungry at least once in the
7 two weeks previous, and 55% have faced housing
8 insecurity since March 2019. It's unfortunate
9 increases over the appalling conditions we were
10 already facing in the pre-pandemic era. During the
11 pandemic. During the pandemic, we have reacted
12 swiftly and forcefully to turn things around. We have
13 had the courage to know how to work our days from the
14 suffering, but continue to work fantastically measure
15 it and address it head-on. My colleague Masa Pienza
16 will describe in detail the distribution of over \$100
17 million of fair sack emergency funding to eligible
18 students picking up aggressive allocation formula
19 that considers to actual need and whether or not they
20 have dependents to care for coupled with the nimble
21 distribution process. Furthermore, he will also
22 report on the Chancellor's Emergency Relief Fund,
23 which has distributed much needed grants to CUNY
24 students who are coping with the city's economic
25 fallout of the extraordinary public health emergency

2 we are all facing. Finally, we're also happy to
3 report that we distributed the full \$1 million of the
4 Food Insecurity Pilot Program sponsored by City
5 Council Speaker Corey Johnson. Our southern
6 community colleges participated in the program that
7 provided 441 students \$400 for food expense in both
8 the fall 2019 and spring 2020 semesters. Another
9 1,054 students received \$400 in April 2020 as we
10 modified the program to respond to the needs of our
11 students caused by the COVID 19 Pandemic. We also
12 provided our seven community colleges an additional
13 funding for food pantry purchases, and we look
14 forward to additional partnerships regarding on these
15 important efforts. I am also pleased to present an
16 update about our enrollment projections and
17 graduation projections, which I know have been on the
18 mind of the Chairperson. Regarding enrollment, the
19 recent amount is a 16% increase in our projected
20 summer enrollments. Even as to date these courses
21 are scheduled to be delivered online. While our fall
22 2020 projections need to be taken with caution, we
23 currently see much better numbers than are being
24 reported by other institutions of higher education
25 across the country. As of this writing we're

2 projecting an overall reduction of approximately 4.4%
3 for the fall with the caveat that not all of our
4 colleges have started enrolling for the fall 2002
5 semester, and we have yet to make an announcement as
6 to the balance of in-person versus online classes and
7 services that we expect next fall. In terms of
8 graduation projections, I am so please to state that
9 we expect an estimated 55,000 CUNY graduates to
10 complete their degree requirements within a year. As
11 we celebrate their accomplishments of many of those
12 online, we continue to turn our attention on the many
13 ways we can best support them as they enter into what
14 is perhaps one of the most difficult job markets in
15 decades. For these and so may other reasons, my
16 outlook today is one actually of great optimism about
17 what lies ahead. My optimism is motivated by a clear
18 understanding that our request to make things bigger.
19 Better and bolder is now more important than ever.
20 Now is the time to double down and accelerate the
21 advancement of our mission. We must take heed of the
22 lessons before us, the lessons of the inequities of
23 which COVID-19 had wreaked its havoc upon the under-
24 served communities we seek to better serve, and the
25 systemic oppression that took the life of George

2 Floyd, Beema Qatar, and too many others. It is that
3 the stakes were too high and the time to fully
4 deliver on our mission is becoming uncomfortably
5 tight. As such, we need to be—to bet big, and we
6 need to bet big on CUNY to drive its mission forward.
7 I very much look forward to working with the
8 committee, the students and the other panelists on
9 making this a reality. Thank you, Madam Chair.

10 LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you for your
11 testimony, Vice Chancellor Cruz. Vice Chancellor
12 Sapienza, you may begin your testimony when ready.

13 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Thank you.
14 Good morning, Chairperson Barron and members of the
15 Higher Education Committee. I am Matthew Sapienza,
16 CUNY's Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial
17 Officer. I very much appreciate the opportunity to
18 speak with you about the impact of COVID-19 on the
19 City University of New York. I will focus my
20 testimony on the financial impact on our campuses and
21 on our students. With New York City being at the
22 epicenter of the Coronavirus outbreak in the United
23 States, CUNY's campuses were among the first in the
24 nation to be changed by COVID-19. Early in the
25 spring 2020 semester our students and staff began to

2 be individually impacted by the virus. Several
3 campuses invested resources to deep clean and
4 disinfect potentially affected facilities. Once the
5 decision was made that the remains of the semester
6 would be conducted in a remote modality, the
7 university's oncologists quickly pivoted to outgoing
8 funds that would ensure that our students would have
9 as much as a seamless transition as possible to
10 distance learning. In addition to the time investment
11 by CUNY's dedicated faculty to moving their silby
12 (sic) learning materials and exams to electronic
13 modes. Our campuses also incurred expenses to
14 purchase the technological equipment needed by
15 students and faculty and staff to move to a remote
16 environment. CUNY Board of Trustees also approved a
17 waiver of a portion of student activities fees for
18 the remainder of the spring 2020 semester and
19 authorized refunds in place to those students who had
20 to be displaced from their dormitory residences.
21 Since the majority of CUNY's students come from
22 backgrounds of limited financial needs, it became
23 immediately obvious that many of our students would
24 not be able to successfully complete the spring
25 semester without having a dedicated device for which

2 they can used for their academic work. The University
3 therefore utilized \$15 million from its capital
4 budget to purchase over 33,000 devices comprised of
5 both laptops and I-Pads. We are very appreciative of
6 our funding partners of both the state and city
7 levels who assisted in ensuring that these purchases
8 could be made as quickly as possible. The device-
9 (coughs) excuse me. The devices were delivered to
10 students both with pick-up at their local campuses as
11 well as shipment to their homes. Although the
12 instruction activities moved to a virtual
13 environment, our campuses have remained open, and we
14 are extremely thankful to our essential workers
15 namely those who are employed in public safety and
16 those who maintain our facilities. Our colleges have
17 invested plenty of resources to purchase personal
18 protective equipment such as masks and gloves and
19 other supplies like hand sanitizer and disinfecting
20 wipes to ensure the safety of these campus workers.
21 The university has also completed bulk purchases of
22 these items to deliver to campuses in need, and to
23 begin to create a stockpile that will be available
24 once our campuses are back to a more traditional
25 learning mode. While the issuance of laptops and

2 iPads were extremely helpful, we realized that he
3 financial impacts of the Coronavirus deeply affected
4 a vast majority of our students and their families.
5 Nearly half of CUNY is 275,000 students work while in
6 school, and many found their jobs and incomes
7 eliminated, drastically reduced or otherwise
8 imperiled. In addition, many students unfortunately
9 had to deal with themselves or family members
10 contracting the virus. To help with this financial
11 and emotional hardship, Chancellor Felix Matos
12 Rodriguez announced the creation of the Chancellor's
13 Emergency Relief Fund. The Fund provides one-time
14 \$500 grants to file on CUNY students. In April,
15 students received grants based on the highest
16 financial need, proximity to graduation and being a
17 student parent. The May distribution focused
18 primarily on undocumented students and others who are
19 not eligible for Federal Cares Act funds. To date,
20 4,000 students have received grants totaling \$2
21 million. The fund has been supported by Carrol &
22 Milton Petrie Foundation, the James and Judith K.
23 Diamond Foundation, the Robin Hood Foundation, and
24 the Jeffrey and Shar Aronson Family Foundation as
25 well as several other corporate philanthropic and

2 individual donors. We are very grateful to our
3 philanthropic partners, and proud of our ability to
4 get these funds into the hands of our students so
5 quickly. CUNY students have also benefitted from the
6 Federal Cares Act. This federal stimulus legislation
7 know as the Coronavirus Aid Relieve and Economic
8 Security Act provides emergency grants from the U.S.
9 Department of Education to eligible students to help
10 cover education related expenses caused by the COVID-
11 19 Pandemic. The Cares Act directs recipients to use
12 these funds they receive for unexpected expenses,
13 unmet financial need or expenses related to the
14 disruption of campus operations resulting from the
15 Coronavirus. These include expenses for food,
16 housing, course materials, technology, healthcare or
17 childcare. In order to be eligible, students must
18 meet basic eligibility for Federal Title 4 Financial
19 Aid. These eligibility criteria include having a
20 demonstrated financial need certified by the family
21 income information provided on the student's Free
22 application for federal student financial-student aid
23 the FSA, being a U.S. citizen or a national,
24 permanent resident or eligible non-citizen and being
25 enrolled in a degree or certificate program and

2 making satisfactory academic progress. CUNY's total
3 allocation from the program is \$180 million. About
4 190,000 under graduate to graduate students are
5 potentially eligible to receive grants. We are very
6 pleased to report this morning that about \$107
7 million of total allocation has already been
8 disbursed to students. The average award is over \$600
9 with some students receiving well over \$900. Our
10 allocation formula as Executive Vice Chancellor Cruz
11 mentioned earlier considers students' financial need
12 and whether or not they have dependents to care for.
13 The second half of the Cares Act funding which also
14 totals \$118 million, is the institutional aid that
15 will be allocated to the campuses to help cover any
16 cost associated with significant changes to the
17 delivery of instruction due to the Coronavirus.
18 These funds can be used to expand remote learning
19 programs, build IT capacity to support such programs
20 and train faculty and staff to operate effectively in
21 the remote learning environment. In addition, these
22 funds can be used to provide more financial grants to
23 students. CUNY's campuses have also received \$14
24 million from the Minority Serving Institution
25 Component of the Cares Act. We have developed a plan

2 for the use of the total \$132 million that is
3 available, and hope to have approval to allocate
4 these funds to the campuses as quickly as possible.
5 While we are grateful for this allocation, we are
6 also preparing for an extremely challenging fiscal
7 environment in the upcoming academic year. While we
8 are pleased that our summer session enrollment
9 numbers are very strong, it is still unknown what the
10 impact of the Coronavirus will have on the on our
11 students and the summer enrollment to the fall 2020
12 semester. Our funding partners at the state and city
13 are also facing severe funding shortfalls for Fiscal
14 Year 21, which will have a direct negative impact on
15 CUNY's operating budget. The city's Executive Plan
16 included \$31.6 million in reductions for CUNY as well
17 as—as well as proposed cuts to the award-winning ASAP
18 Program, and the state has projected a \$13.3 billion
19 deficit in Fiscal Year 2021. The University is taking
20 steps to meet this challenge, one of which was to
21 implement a freeze on all personnel actions including
22 hires, and discretionary salary increases. For state
23 and city regulations, the University placed all
24 active campus construction projects with the
25 exception of those that are COVID-19 related or clear

2 health and safety issues. We also directed congress
3 to refrain from any new one-time expenditures, with
4 the exception of those that are related to COVID-19
5 or distance learning instruction and mandated that
6 they not be entering into any new long-term
7 contractual obligations. We are planning on
8 presenting a budget plan for Fiscal Year 2021 to the
9 Board of Trustees shortly and that plan will take all
10 of the above into consideration as we craft a budget
11 that will-sets our core values as much as possible.
12 Chairperson Barron, all of us at the University very
13 much appreciate your leadership and this committee's
14 strong and continuing advocacy for our students.
15 Thank you.

16 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you for your
17 testimony. We'll now turn the floor over to
18 Councilwoman Barron for questions.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much to
20 the panel for their testimony, and for bringing us up
21 to date on what it is that CUNY is doing. I do have
22 lots and lots and lots of questions, but before I
23 start my questions I do want to acknowledge that also
24 we are joined by Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo and as
25 others join I will announce them as well. So, we

2 heard the testimony and we understand that from your
3 testimony you're projection is that there will be an
4 increase in the student population for the summer
5 semester, and you are not yet firm with the number of
6 students that we can expect to be enrolled in the
7 fall, but at this point it may be a reduction of 4%.
8 My question is as we understand that students as
9 you've indicated will have lost jobs or have suffered
10 a reduction in their employment hours, how is it that
11 CUNY can continue to stand and say that they support
12 a tuition increase and new fees added to that tuition
13 increase? How do we justify that? How do we justify
14 going along with eliminating ASAP, which is an award
15 winning program, which is nationally acclaimed, which
16 is replicated in many places across the States. How
17 do we do that in terms of increasing that financial
18 burden on students who lost their jobs, who may have,
19 in fact, been self-been impacted personally by the
20 virus, who are in a state of holder, which they like
21 to put the nice tidy label of food insecurity. How
22 can we continue to justify that? How can we not say
23 that we will hold—you know, my position is to go back
24 to free tuition. My position is that education should
25 not end at the 12th grade just as it used to end at

1 8th grade, but based on the signs and conditions of
2 society, they moved it to 12th. I think that
3 compulsory education needs to be extended to at least
4 two years post secondary education paid for by the
5 city and state. So, how can we not add this
6 additional financial burden in the era of COVID on
7 students who are already saddled and burdened with
8 these expenses that we have?
9

10 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Thank you,
11 Chair Barron, and just really quick before I get to
12 tuition, I just want to mention ASAP and I appreciate
13 you bringing that up. It's a \$20 million proposed
14 reduction in the Mayor's Executive plan. We are
15 working with the Administration to try to find
16 alternatives to that because we know ASAP is such a
17 successful program, and we want to try to avoid
18 having any reductions to the level of \$20 million.
19 It's an asset. So, I appreciate your raising that
20 and for...and for recognizing that program. On
21 tuition, that will be part. It's under consideration
22 as part of our overall budget planning. As I
23 mentioned in my testimony and it was part of our
24 budget request for Fiscal Year 21 a \$200 increase for
25 senior proms and community colleges, and it's going

2 to be under the consideration of depending on the
3 impact of what our overall budget condition is, and
4 that includes what our public funding is, what our
5 enrollment levels look like, the impact on campus
6 operations of some of the other revenues that they
7 generate from their auxiliaries operations and their
8 fund raising. So, all those things will get-be taken
9 into consideration. We very much take tuition
10 increases very seriously. We are very grateful that,
11 you know in New York we do have the TAP Program. We
12 had Excelsior Scholarships, federal Pell grants are
13 very helpful for our students. Two-thirds of our
14 undergraduate student attend tuition free because of
15 those financial aid programs that are in place and
16 again we're very grateful that we're able to able to
17 distribute over \$107 million or \$118 million CARES
18 allocation very quick. We can get them to answer our
19 students. So, tuition is something that's under
20 consideration and will be analyzed and the
21 recommendation we made to our Board of Trustees based
22 on our overall budget condition once more information
23 is known about that.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: The \$107 million you
25 say has already been distribute? Can you...

2 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: It was. (sic)

3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: give a brief summary
4 of how that money—where that money went?

5 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: We can provide
6 that. Yes, we can provide that. one of the things
7 that, um, that, um, really works to our advantage on
8 this is the financial aid payment process at CUNY
9 was centralized several years ago, and so when
10 students get financial aid, it's—it's done through
11 the CUNY Central Office in coordination with the
12 campuses obviously, but by having that centralized
13 mechanism in place that really benefitted us in terms
14 of generating the checks and the direct deposits to
15 students quickly. But Chair Barron, so I'm going to
16 give you information on—and give you data on where
17 the money has gone so far, and give you plenty—and
18 give you more specifics about the remaining \$11
19 million and the whole \$118 million by campus, and—and
20 whatever level of additional detail you would like.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, prior to the
22 COVID-19 and the CARES Act, CUNY had an emergency aid
23 funding available to students, and the students have
24 received such emergency aid funds from CUNY in
25 previous semesters. Are they are still able to apply

2 for an receive emergency funds now, and what are the
3 categories that are considered emergency aid by CUNY?

4 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Yeah, the
5 Chancellor's Emergency Fund is available and—and
6 again we're very pleased that fourth, we've been able
7 to give out \$2 million to 4,000 students. We're
8 really pleased about that, and we're very grateful to
9 our philanthropic partners for seeding that program
10 and for all the people. So, there's a lot of people
11 at this hearing today that have made contributions as
12 well. So, we are really grateful for that, and
13 that's a really important source of funding because
14 the CARES Act is, as grateful as we are to receive
15 it, um, and we're again grateful to our—our leaders
16 in Congress and the Senate that helped pass that, it
17 is limited. I think that's something that everyone
18 should be aware of. It is limited to students who are
19 eligible for Title 4 and who are, um, who are
20 residents of the United States, and so have a bunch
21 of DACA Students or undocumented students who are not
22 eligible for that, and in addition there could be
23 some students and likely are many who just barely
24 miss out on Title 4 eligibility, but their families
25 may have lost their jobs or they may have lost their

2 jobs as a result of the Coronavirus, and they did
3 have financial limitations as a result, and so, um,
4 they're really targeting those emergency funds to
5 those students who have those needs and who won't be
6 eligible to receive funding through the CARES Act.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, of the \$118
8 million that is designated institutional expenses
9 including lost revenues and payroll for employees,
10 what is the breakdown of the distribution of that
11 money by CUNY institutions? By each institution and
12 how did you determine what each institution—is it
13 proportional to enrollment? How—what is the formula
14 that you use and can you give me the breakdown for
15 each campus?

16 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Yeah, now
17 that's—that's a—that's a terrific question, and it
18 was actually determined by the federal government.
19 The Federal government had a formula that actually
20 benefitted CUNY because it was based on Pell
21 eligibility and so every single institution in the
22 United States received a discrete allocation of those
23 funds and it was based on 75% Pell eligible students
24 and 25% non-Pell eligible students, and so because we
25 have such a large proportion of Pell eligible

2 students, CUNY's total allocation of \$118 million was
3 proportionally higher than most other institutions
4 and we do have a break-out by campus. The...the--the
5 Federal formula had a specific amount for every
6 single campus, and we're happy to provide you and the
7 committee members with those amounts.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And can that money--
9 how much of that money will be dedicated for adjunct
10 facts? (bell) Because you understand that that is a
11 category of employees who are very--well, they've
12 gotten an increase, but not, in fact, what they
13 really reflects the work that they do, but since
14 campuses use that is there a formula that the central
15 administration is saying should be used or is it up
16 to the each campus now to decide how they will apply
17 the funds that they have received a proportion or a
18 percentage for payroll?

19 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Well, there
20 are very specific uses that the funds can be used for
21 that were outlined by the U.S. Department of
22 Education. It was for--to expand remote learning
23 programs, to build IT capacity to support such
24 programs, to train faculty and staff to offset costs
25 of the Coronavirus and to extend support for

2 students' financial needs. So, in addition to the
3 grants that the students have, some of the
4 institutional money can be used to-for additional
5 student needs. so-

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: But just in terms of
7 employees' salary, what-what can we expect might be
8 covered through that?

9 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: The only
10 component that could be covered that's employees'
11 salaries are the-for costs that are incurred for
12 additional training or professional development for-
13 for going towards distance education. It-it and
14 that's something that, you know we've been pointing
15 out to our campuses and to-and to folks externally to
16 the university is that it does have specific uses
17 related to the Coronavirus. It cannot be used just
18 for gap closing activities or to cover a budget
19 shortfall. It-there are specific uses that are
20 outlined by the U.S. Department of Education. (bell)

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, CUNY's website
22 indicates that the federal government determined the
23 total allocation for each constituent at CUNY
24 College, (bell) as a result, the base amount of a
25 student's grant will vary depending on which college

2 they attend. So, if there are students with similar
3 kinds of needs at different institutions, how can we
4 understand the variation and the amount that they
5 will get?

6 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Yeah, the—and
7 I'm going to ask my colleague Chancellor Cruz some
8 more about that because he and his team did an
9 outstanding job in creating a progressive formula to
10 allocate those funds to the students, and so the
11 federal Department of Ed as I mentioned earlier came
12 up with the formula 75% Pell, 75% non-Pell..

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right

14 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: ...to give an
15 amount to each campus. You know, CUNY then would
16 determine the allocation formula to fir within that
17 amount of money for each campus as to how much each
18 student would receive. So, I'm gong to ask Ahmed the
19 question. So, please describe that a little further.

20 AHMED: Sure, thank you madam Chair.
21 Thank you, Chairwoman. So, basically what we went
22 about was trying to develop an equitable allocation
23 model for each one of our campuses, and so the model
24 is the same for all of our campuses. The model
25 basically ensures that all of our Title 4 eligible

2 students who are eligible to receive funds from the
3 CARE side, yet a base amount. For everyone that is
4 eligible will get a base amount, and then on top of
5 that base amount we devised an allocation formula
6 that would consider providing students additional
7 funding based on their level of need a determined by
8 their financial applications, or financial aid
9 applications, and so, a student whose expected family
10 contribution to their studies was between zero and
11 25% say, would get a 25% increase over their base
12 amount...

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

14 AHMED: ...all the way up depending on how
15 much they expected family contribution was, and then
16 on top of that if they also have dependents, they
17 would get an extra 25%. So, on any given campus you
18 will have students that are receiving either from the
19 base amount all the way up to 150% of that base
20 amount, and then in order to implement that within
21 the guidance that we were provided by the federal
22 government, the base amount has to be adjusted by
23 campus based on how much money they actually receive.
24 So, I'm going to ask him the question so please
25 describe that a little further.

2 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Sure. Thank you,
3 Madam Chair. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. So,
4 basically what we went about was trying to develop an
5 equitable allocation model for each one of our
6 campuses, and so the model is the same for all of our
7 campuses. The model basically ensures that all of
8 our Title 4 eligible students who are said are
9 eligible to receive funds from the CARE side get a
10 base amount. For everyone that is eligible will get a
11 base amount, and then on top of that base amount we
12 devised an allocation formula that will consider
13 providing students additional funding based on their
14 level of need as determined by their financial
15 applications, or Financial Aid Applications, and so,
16 um, a student whose expected family contribution to
17 their studies was between zero and 25% say would get
18 a 25% increase over their base amount...

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

20 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: ...all the way up
21 depending on how much the expected family
22 contribution was, and then on top of that if they
23 also had dependents, they would get an extra 25%.
24 So, on any given campus you will have students that
25 are receiving either from the base amount all the way

2 up to 150% of that base amount and then in order to
3 be able to implement that within the guidance that we
4 were provided by the federal government the base
5 amount has to be adjusted by campus base on how much
6 money they actually receive. So, the formula is the
7 same for everyone. The amounts vary, but they vary
8 because of the way they were allocated by the federal
9 government.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Just
11 general questions, and I'll come back to the finances
12 a little later. Prior to COVID-19, did CUNY have a
13 general emergency preparedness plan or a plan in
14 place, and if not, why not? Do we not think that far
15 in a year for the great CUNY institution, and I mean
16 that that very sincerely. Did we have a body of
17 people who were thinking in a thank-a thinking
18 environment about well what if this were to happen?
19 Did anyone ever share with CUNY, you know, well there
20 might be a pandemic? Did we have that kind of broad
21 view?

22 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Chair Barron, we do
23 have a systemwide emergency plan for emergencies
24 whether it's a weather emergency or-or, you know, an
25 emergency that we're dealing with now. So, there is

2 a formal written plan and not only does that
3 University have a plan at the university level, but
4 each campus has emergency plans. We also have a CUNY
5 Risk Management and Business Continuity Council made
6 up again from folks at the central office and the
7 colleges that meet every single month to prepare for
8 such emergencies, and, you know, the other thing I'll
9 mention is we work very closely with our partners in
10 city government in the Office of Emergency
11 Management. We do have a desk at the EOC the
12 Emergency Operation Center, state level as well, the
13 State Emergency Management Office, SEMO, and we have
14 worked closely with the FEMA in the past and have
15 already begun taking with FEMA about, um, about this
16 emergency as well. So, so yes, we do have plans, and
17 at the university level, and each of our colleges
18 have plans as well.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, individual
20 campuses have separate emergency preparedness plans?

21 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Are they subject to
23 what it is from the central plan? How are they
24 coordinated? Do individual campuses have a

2 coordination with other nearby campuses or things of
3 that nature which they would rely on another?

4 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Yes, and, you
5 know, that's one of the, you know, and someone of us
6 now have been here at CUNY for a while, and its have
7 been here through this pandemic, was there for
8 Hurricane Sandy. One of the things that...so, you know,
9 one of the many things that's so great about our
10 institution is the way the campuses work together to
11 help each other out, and some campuses are more
12 severely affected by it than others. But, yes, the
13 plans are coordinated, and the plans may have to be
14 different for different types of campuses, Manhattan
15 vertical campuses are going to have a different type
16 of emergency plan than maybe Queens College or the
17 College of Staten Island, which is a more, you know,
18 traditional type of campus with—with, you know, lots
19 of acreage to cover. So, yes, the plans do differ,
20 but they are coordinated all together. (sic)

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And with—who withing
22 the CUNY chain of command has duties under this plan?
23 Who are the people that are the primary points of
24 contact or decision makers and we would like to get a

2 copy of the plan if you could share that with us with
3 the committee.

4 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Sure, we'll-we'll
5 get that to you, and it's the risk managers at each
6 of our campuses. We have a Director of Environmental
7 Health and Safety at the university level who
8 coordinates this. He reports to the Chief Operating
9 Officer, but yes, pleased to-to gather those plans
10 and make sure that the committee sees them.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And do the plans
12 call for any type of practice drills on a regular
13 basis or a scheduled basis?

14 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Chair Barron, I
15 believe that they do, but I am-I am not 100% certain,
16 and I don't want to give you incorrect information.
17 So, we'll go back and check. I believe that the
18 answer is yes, but I'm not 100% sure. So, we'll go
19 back and check and-and make sure we get you the
20 correct response on that one.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay and how often
22 does each plan updated?

23 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: That I'm not
24 certain about either, but we'll...we'll...we'll find out
25 and get you that answer.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And I would be
3 interested to know if the plans provide for our
4 service contingencies like access to academic, the
5 housing? Because we're now here in the throes of
6 what we are experiencing, and we just want to make
7 sure that all of those kinds of areas are—are
8 covered.

9 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Understood.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. The
11 Chancellor's Emergency Relief Grant Program, which
12 was created and includes benefits to undocumented
13 students, DACA students, and some international
14 students who are ineligible for the Emergency CARES
15 Act was funded through philanthropic donors, and we
16 thank them for that, and you say that there are 2,000
17 students in April and another 2,000 that we see funds
18 from this program in May.

19 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Correct, 4,000
20 students so far and Chair Barron, I'm sure that the
21 breakout was—was 2,000 per month, but in total yes it
22 was 4,000 students that have received grants so far,
23 and the total that we've given out is to date is
24 about \$2 million.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: \$2 million. Okay, and
3 are there plans to continue or have further
4 disbursements from this emergency aid?

5 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Absolutely. We're
6 hoping that more funds come in, and you know the
7 website is available for folks to go to if they want
8 to donate. Obviously, the—the large chips that we've
9 gotten from the philanthropic partners that you
10 mentioned have been great to seed the—the Emergency
11 Fund, but, um, any contribution that folks can make
12 is greatly appreciated, and like I said, I know
13 there's probably folks on that are attending this
14 hearing that have made contributions. So, yeah, as—as
15 additional funds come in, they intend just to
16 continue to give the money out as quickly as
17 possible.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Have students
19 expressed any type of concerns about sharing their
20 private information in this category of undocumented
21 students and documented? Have they expressed any
22 kind of reservation or concerns about sharing that
23 information (bell) of their status?

24 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Not that I'm aware
25 of. I mean obviously that is a, you know a sensitive

2 issue and—and, you know CUNY protects the privacy of
3 all of our students especially back up the students,
4 you know, incredibly well, but I am not aware of any
5 concerns that have been raised regarding that.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And the student
7 panel that was prior to the panel talking, they
8 talked about academic interruption to their—to their
9 progress at CUNY. Do we have any way of tracking the
10 academic outcomes of students who are the recipients
11 of this aid, and do we know whether or not there's a
12 way to find out why students have had these and they
13 just—is it something, a particular category or cause
14 for that to have perhaps breakaway year or a gap
15 year? Do we have anyway of tracking that that kind of
16 success? (bell)

17 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Chairwoman we are in
18 the process of analyzing the data for this past
19 semester that just completed. The final day for
20 grade submissions was May 28th and I'm happy to say
21 that when we're looking at and it's a preliminary
22 analysis that we have to have so far where we're
23 looking at the percentage of our students that we're
24 not able to progress in specific courses. We are
25 seeing that those percentages are on par with

2 previous years. We believe that one of the reasons
3 for this is not only the great work that our faculty
4 did to try to engage our students through this time,
5 but also some policy decisions that we made around
6 postponing the dates through which—by which students
7 could withdraw from a course and also the creation
8 of a flexible credit or credit rating policy that
9 will allow our students to convert their graded to
10 credit/no credit 20 days after having a chance to
11 look at what they received in a particular course and
12 talking to their advisors. So, so far academic
13 momentum with the data we do have seems to be on par
14 with previous years, but we need to do a bit more
15 digging and see how the credit/no credit policy plays
16 out before we can give you more primal information.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That's going to be
18 very interesting to see if students opt for that, if
19 they feel that perhaps it might have some stigma or
20 negative impact as they move forward and perhaps
21 apply to other schools, although we know it's being
22 experienced around the nation. So, we would like to
23 know what you're doing to help students persist and
24 stay on track to degree completion, but history shows
25 that in the times of economic downturns, and periods

2 of high unemployment there tends to be an increase or
3 enrollment at community colleges. So, what is CUNY
4 doing or planning to do to support students [bell]
5 entering community colleges during this time of the
6 pandemic and uncertainty? What is CUNY doing for this
7 incoming or present population at community colleges
8 in particular?

9 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Well, we're in the
10 process right now of redoubling or doubling down on
11 our recruitment and advising efforts through the
12 remote modalities that we have available to us at
13 this point in time to ensure that our students,
14 continuing students that are aspiring to transfer
15 from community college to senior colleges have all
16 the information they have in order to do that and we
17 also are happy to say that just from a freshman
18 perspective, right, that with our new entering
19 students we're seeing a slight uptick with respect to
20 last year at most of our community colleges from the
21 DOE. So, we're—we're doing the best we can to ensure
22 that, um, that expansion of opportunity that we're
23 known for continues even against these most dramatic
24 backdrops.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I have lots more
3 questions, but I am going to take a pause here, and I
4 am going to ask Council if they would give an
5 opportunity for other members who might have
6 questions to pose their questions at this time, and
7 then I'll come back.

8 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Thank you, Chair
9 Barron. This is Malcolm Butehorn. I am co-counsel
10 with Paul Sinegal for today's Higher Education
11 hearing. If any council members present have any
12 questions for the CUNY Administration, please use the
13 Zoom Raise Hand function now and we will call you in
14 the order that you raise your hand. (pause) Okay,
15 Chair Barron, at this time it appears your colleagues
16 do not have any questions so I turn it back to you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, thank you.
18 Thank you for stepping up Malcolm. I'm glad you're
19 here. We always have to have a back-up plan, and
20 you're doing great. Thank you. So, back to the
21 panel then. Can you give me specific examples of how
22 CUNY is supporting students who applied for emergency
23 aid, but perhaps did not receive it, and how they
24 might be connected to other services and supports,
25 (bell) that can address some of their basic needs

2 such as food, stop-food pantries, single-stop, other
3 campus and community based supports. Can you share
4 with us what you're doing to make sure that students
5 don't fall through the gap?

6 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Well, in addition to
7 the examples that my colleague Matthew Pienza has
8 provided of things that we're doing at the system
9 level, we have to remember that our campus assistance
10 is built on the long tradition of providing support
11 to our students in these areas, and they have to do
12 so even through the pandemic. They all have or most
13 have been able to secure funding for emergency
14 grants. They have been able to create one-stop
15 solutions for students that they may be in need of a
16 brokering relationship with the city for services
17 that they're entitled to, and that would, um, have
18 certain continue, and so, a lot of what we have done
19 at the central level to ensure that students may in
20 the past not have known about these opportunities
21 because maybe they may not have needed them if the
22 creation of a very comprehensive portal a COVID-19
23 portal on our cuny.edu website, which not only
24 provides high level overview of all of these
25 opportunities, but allows us to drill down to the

2 specific campus, and see what they can expect from
3 the campus and just the food pantries, emergency aid
4 counseling and so forth. So, while there is some
5 variation, campus to campus, most of the services
6 that the chairwoman has mentioned are available and
7 information is provided through that portal, and if I
8 may because you had made a question earlier and I...and
9 I failed to state the obvious around the community
10 colleges.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

12 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: As we work hard to
13 ensure that we can expand access as much as we can in
14 that area, the ASAP question that you had raised is
15 crucial because as you know, that's not only
16 something that has great outcomes at the end, but
17 it's also--

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

19 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: --a very attractive
20 recruiting tool.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That's right, but
22 talking about food [bell] insecurity, when CUNY's
23 physical campuses closed in March, it was at first
24 indicated that the on-campus food programs would
25 remain open, but as the pandemic persisted, pantries

2 began to close, and others have more restrictive
3 access including limited hours or required to have an
4 appointment. How often did CUNY communicate the
5 availability of food campus pantries to students?
6 Who is responsible for that information? How is it
7 done, and can a student from a school without a
8 pantry access pantry at another campus?

9 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Thank you for that
10 question. So, we have updated information. We try to
11 make it a real time as possible on the Coronavirus
12 Student Continuity Website I mentioned a minute ago.
13 So, a student could go into the food pantry section
14 and see campus by campus what the hours of operations
15 are, and if appointments are needed and whatnot.
16 There's variation as you would expect across our-our
17 food pantries in the system. Some of them have
18 explicitly indicated and we're working through a
19 committee to have a more uniformed policy statement
20 on this one that there-that any student CUNY student
21 will be welcome to use the services, and others do so
22 when confronted with a student from another school.
23 So, we're clearly working to try to create a more
24 uniformed statement on...on how the services are
25 delivered, what the times are, like the appointment

2 structures. So, we have a committee on that, but for
3 now, any student that's interested can simply go to
4 the COVID-19 web page and—and get some information on
5 their own food pantry.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, the May 2020
7 Education New York—Education Trust New York found
8 that 56% of New York State's (bell) low-income
9 college students skipped meals because they couldn't
10 afford them or couldn't access food. So, how is CUNY
11 making sure that that the existing food pantries will
12 be stocked and staffed by 4/2020 and are additional
13 funds needed to ensure that these pantries stay open
14 in the fall and if so, what—how much is needed for
15 the food [bell], for the storage, for the cleaning
16 for the disinfecting?

17 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: So, food insecurity
18 as—as Madam Chair knows was an important issue for
19 CUNY before COVID-19.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

21 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: It's certainly true I
22 will to be going forward. So, to the question of
23 additional funding, yes. it can only help. To the
24 extend of what we have been doing, we have finished a
25 third year, been working to ensure that the services

2 continue, and that we use the funding that has been
3 made available to us either through the CARES Act or
4 through the Chancellor's initiative on creating an
5 emergency fund, that those funds are quickly
6 dispersed to our most vulnerable students. This is
7 really one of those wicked problems that—that
8 institutions such as CUNY have to deal with, and
9 we're ready to continue to work on that front, but I
10 just want to make sure that—that we're making the
11 that point that we acknowledge it, that we embrace
12 and need to do more, and that we're looking for
13 partnership and investments to make sure that we do
14 the best we can for our students.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: In that regard, what
16 is the amounts—what are the—what's the dollar amount
17 attached to the food pantries instrument? How can
18 we—what's that dollar amount?

19 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: I would—I would have
20 to come back to the committee with that number. The
21 way that the food pantries have evolved in each one
22 of our campuses have been different.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-hm.

24 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: In my prior life about
25 nine months ago, I used to be the President of Lehman

2 College and I remember very well how our food pantry
3 at Lehman came to be, and it came to be through a
4 student led effort, and from racing, and—and then
5 eventually was—benefitted from investments like for
6 example those that the New York City Council and
7 others have made. So, we would need to come back to
8 you with a more direct answer as to how each one of
9 them are funded, and what their needs are?

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And are there any
11 kind of basic standards of goals that would include
12 the assurance that there's fresh, healthy foods,
13 fruits and some vegetables that might be included in
14 these pantries so it's not a high percentage of
15 processed or canned foods?

16 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Yeah, that's part of
17 what I know many of our colleges are doing on their
18 own as they're looking at their own pantries and part
19 of what have asked is a system level committee I
20 mentioned earlier that's trying to look at a more
21 uniform approach to food pantries it's looking into.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, in the May
23 2020 Report prepared by Healthy CUNY the CUNY Urban
24 Food Policy Institute and the Hope Center they
25 recommended creating a director of Food Security role

2 at CUNY Central to coordinate and monitor food
3 efforts across CUNY. The same report also recommends
4 creating a "university wide task force for promoting
5 food security charged with developing, implementing,
6 and monitoring a plan to significantly reduce food
7 insecurity at CUNY within three years. What's your
8 response to this report? Are you considering a
9 director, and what is—what about the university wide
10 task force that this report recommends?

11 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Well, the committee I
12 mentioned a minute ago with—it's the beginnings, if
13 you will, of what a taskforce could look like, and so
14 I would expect it to function in that—in that way.
15 Again, even before pre-COVID-19, the university has
16 always viewed development of it's budget request as
17 an articulation of values, and the Chairwoman may
18 remember that one of the three buckets of—of funding
19 that the university was advocating for was precisely
20 on student health and wellness with food insecurity
21 being one of the important factors there. So, the
22 short answer is yes, we are in the process of putting
23 together what the pulling into the taskforce based on
24 what the trusted conditions should look like. In
25 terms of a designated or dedicated person to look at

2 that issue, we do have a small team within Student
3 Affairs that dedicates significant time and effort to
4 these issues, and so that's the thing that we would
5 be wanting to think a little bit more about moving
6 forward.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, I heard you say--
8 I think I remember you saying that you're trying to
9 make sure that students not be restricted to their
10 home campus for assistance. Where are we? Is that
11 already in place or what is the timeline for that
12 happening? Particularly now that single-stop campus
13 offices are closed and they're instead offering
14 virtual services. So, where are we along that goal of
15 making sure that any CUNY student can go to any CUNY
16 facility and get service?

17 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Right, so--so the
18 committee, I mentioned if working with the individual
19 campuses to see what impediments, if any, there would
20 be to just making that a blanket assertion.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Do we--

22 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Um, we have several--we
23 have several that are already doing it.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Do we have a target
25 date to make sure that that's fully implemented--

2 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --that students will
4 be (inaudible)?

5 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Yes, so we—we have—we
6 have a very aggressive date of finishing this work by
7 the end of this month by June so that we can start
8 the fiscal year with—with a better communication
9 strategy on this front.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

11 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: I just wanted to make
12 sure that—and if somebody on this panel or elsewhere
13 hears differently that you please let us know if
14 anybody that could have been turned away from one of
15 our pantries. It's one of the things that we
16 explicitly say that it's open for everybody. In other
17 words, send people away and I'm not aware that that
18 has happened.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. What is CUNY's
20 long-term plan regarding Single Stop?

21 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: So, we—we are
22 interested in ensuring that the Single Stop Services
23 continue to strengthen throughout our—our campuses
24 and—and that's part of a group that we have working
25 on pre-COVID-19 understanding that our Single Stop

2 Agreement would end with the Fiscal Year. The
3 services will not change overnight, and, um, what we
4 do hope is to strengthen them. The only thing that's
5 changing is branding of-of the services at this
6 point?

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Would CUNY support
8 the call to supply hot food to students who are SNAP
9 recipients? Would CUNY support that-that-that move
10 to include hot food..

11 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: In-in---

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: for SNAP, for SNAP
13 recipients?

14 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Do you mean you stop
15 benefits for health foods?

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

17 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

19 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: For somebody that was
20 hungry for many of my years, yes

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and what's the
22 cafeteria services at CUNY? There may be a plan
23 I've heard for one vendor for all of CUNY. Is that
24 still the approach and what do we benefit that? How
25 would that operate, and if CUNY had to have remote

2 learning continuing in the fall, how would that
3 impact it? So, what's the timeline for it?

4 MALCOLM BUTEHORN: So, I will turn—I will
5 turn it over to my Colleague Matthew Sapienza.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

7 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Thank you.

8 Yeah, thanks Chair Barron. Appreciate you raising
9 this issue and it's very timely because last night we
10 had a Board fiscal committee meeting in which the
11 committee approved a, um, contracts with the
12 university wide vendor to provide food service and
13 just to give a very quick background, historically at
14 CUNY each of the colleges entered into their own
15 contracts to have food services at that campus, and
16 so the services that were provided were very—just
17 spread amongst the campus. Some it was done very
18 well. Some not so well, but pricing was very
19 different at different campuses, and so the decision
20 was made to go ahead and to, um, do a public
21 procurement and enter into a contract with one vendor
22 and so we—we did seek approval last night from the
23 Board Fiscal Committee on that full board but they
24 are next meeting on June 29th. The vendor that we
25 selected is a firm called Culinart, a very big

2 national firm who has a lot of higher rate clients
3 here in New York State and-and elsewhere throughout
4 the country and one of the things that we're so
5 excited about is as part of this agreement, Culinart
6 is going to invest \$16 million in capital upgrades
7 and on cafeterias. So, some of our cafeterias that
8 were constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, and still
9 look that way unfortunately, are going to get a
10 refresh, and that's going to make a much more
11 pleasant situation for our students to congregate and
12 to eat and to have a place that they can go to on
13 campus, and then one of the other things and you—you
14 have, you know, talked about it a lot of that time at
15 this hearing, which we appreciate, which is food
16 insecurity. As part of this agreement Culinart, um
17 has agreed and the contract is not finalized yet,
18 because we're waiting for board approval, but
19 Culinart has agreed that they will contribute \$2
20 million to food insecurity as part of this contract,
21 and so what that will look like essentially is we
22 will take funding each year and from the vendor, and
23 we will use those funds to add to—students will have
24 a swipe card that they can use in the cafeteria, and,
25 you know, we'll work with our counselors to determine

2 what students will be eligible and how much students
3 will receive. Um, but we're really excited about it,
4 too, and that is something that our Chancellor and
5 Chief Operating Office are very focused on as part of
6 this agreement would be having a component that would
7 be dedicated to food insecurity. So, we're—we're
8 really excited about is and it was a really
9 collaborative effort and I want to thank our
10 students, too, who gave us some tremendous feedback
11 as we went through this process.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, as you're
13 talking about this vendor making a commitment to do
14 upgrades of the cafeteria, we know that CUNY's
15 infrastructure has long been in the state of decay
16 and disrepair, and so now that facilities are likely
17 to have been underutilized or the pandemic, are there
18 any concerns about making them safe and getting them
19 ready for code by the time students return to
20 campuses, and in that regard to what extent has CUNY
21 engaged in disinfecting classrooms and labs and
22 common areas, and since there were not used
23 facilities has there been an offset in the costs that
24 can ensure that the safety of those cleaning these
25 facilities will be included or considered?

2 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Yeah. No, those
3 are very good—those are very good questions. You
4 know, in terms of the costs, it's interesting in the
5 current fiscal year that we're in Fiscal 20, which is
6 ending in three weeks, our campuses did incur
7 additional expenses and very early on in March as
8 students or faculty were contracting the virus,
9 campuses were shutting down, and/or shutting
10 facilities that those folks might have visited and we
11 were doing deep cleaning and—and sanitizing and
12 bringing in outside firms to do that. Once we went to
13 remote learning, though, those costs, you know, kind
14 of stopped for the most part, and as you mentioned
15 Chair Barron, we've had savings because we have been
16 a remote modality. Some of the—our purchasing budget
17 has certainly been reduced. We've had energy—savings
18 in energy costs. We've had savings in travel costs
19 and so those savings have in the current year kind of
20 offset the additional expenses that we have—didn't
21 for the current year, which has been helpful. But
22 going forward yes we do have a Coronavirus Taskforce
23 that is—is working on those issues and analyzing what
24 the needs are in terms of the facilities when we do
25 reopen what social distancing might look like, what

2 kind of equipment might be needed, whether it's
3 Plexiglass or offices that students visit a lot. What
4 kind of person protective equipment we need? As I
5 mentioned in my testimony, we are through our
6 Procurement Office trying to purchase as many PPEs as
7 possible so that we have a stockpile when we do
8 reopen for more traditional learning. So, we are
9 working on all those things very much, you know, part
10 of what we talk about everyday and the Coronavirus
11 Taskforce is working with our campuses because campus
12 is again vertical campuses versus, you know, campuses
13 in-in, you know, in more traditional modes are going
14 to have different needs.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: As we talk about
16 this crisis and the impact and the expectation that
17 we're going to have an increase in the wave of
18 homelessness. How is CUNY making plans or positions
19 or trying to analyze what they can do to assist those
20 students who may face eviction and may, in fact, not?
21 Because we're talking about people not being evicted
22 now during these three or four months, but at the end
23 of that time unless the state and the feds step up,
24 and forgive that—that—those past due amounts, they're
25 going to be saddled with say-so—with say-so to pay

2 four months rent, and then perhaps evictions will
3 begin to—to be prominent. So, is CUNY considering
4 that? Is CUNY thinking about perhaps finding other
5 locations that they might also use to house students
6 who become homeless? What is CUNY doing in that
7 regard and are you continuing your program for those
8 students in foster care? What's the impact on that
9 because that's another population of students with
10 housing needs?

11 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Yeah, the
12 Foster Care Program those students are continuing to
13 be housed. All of our students who were in dorm
14 residence that, you know, left after the Coronavirus
15 we did work with our campuses to determine what
16 students, um, didn't have a place to go to
17 essentially, and so, um, we moved all of those
18 students into one dorm, which is at Queens College.
19 It's a dorm that's called the Summit, and I believe
20 we have about 250 students there currently because we
21 know that there were some students who were living in
22 our facilities that did not have a place to go to or
23 if they did, they couldn't get there because of the
24 travel restrictions and so, we are housing about 250
25 students at Queens College currently.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So are there any
3 plans to look to be able to expand the total number
4 of students that are—that use CUNY housing,
5 understanding that there may be students who were
6 going to be evicted, they and their families were
7 going to be evicted and what possibly can we do to
8 provide housing?

9 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Yeah, those are
10 things that our Coronavirus Task Force are looking
11 at. You know the CARES ACT the institutional funds of
12 the CARES ACT does provide the ability to give
13 emergency grants—additional emergency grants to
14 students and one of the uses of that is for housing.
15 So, that's a possibility that can be used to help
16 students, and so we are looking at those things. It's
17 challenging because of most of our dorm facilities
18 are set for multi-student—you know, many—few students
19 in one room as most dorm facilities are throughout
20 the country at colleges and universities. Right now,
21 at Queens because we only—we only have 250 students
22 and I believe that facility can accommodate I think
23 550 or 600 students. We are able to keep one to a
24 room. Um, but going forward that's something
25 especially in the short term that we have to also

2 consider as well is how do we keep the students safe
3 that are going to be in our residences. So, again,
4 that's something that our Coronavirus Taskforce is-is
5 analyzing and...

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: What?

7 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: and trying to,
8 um, trying to come up with solutions for it.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: How many students
10 did CUNY have that were in inside dorms before this..?

11 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Well, we had,
12 yeah, we had I believe there's about 3,300 students a
13 little over 3,000, 3,300 students that were in dorm
14 facilities prior to, um, prior to the virus.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Just a few
16 more questions. We talked about the mental health
17 needs. They're always prominent and prevalent and
18 important for us student population as well as the
19 general population, but this crisis is going to wreak
20 havoc with those who perhaps were quite balanced, and
21 didn't have any kind of emotional imbalances, but now
22 as a result of what they're experiencing, are in need
23 of services of a mental health capacity a mental
24 health professional. What can CUNY do particularly
25 for its students to address that need? Do you

2 understand it was a limited number. The ratio was
3 inappropriate for counselors to students and there
4 are going to be, I believe, more students now with
5 that need. So, what is CUNY---what are CUNY's plans
6 to provide that service?

7 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Right. So even
8 Pre-COVID-19 we had articulated very detailed plans
9 on how to get to a much better place, health, mental
10 health. It's just for our students and I know Nick
11 Furgenburg (sp?) may be speaking later in a different
12 panel and he will be able to speak a little more
13 about concrete recommendations for what the
14 University can do. As of this moment, what we're
15 focusing on in on is a few things. One is how do we
16 make sure that in a fall semester for example where
17 we may still expect some online instruction and some
18 remote support services to be happening. How do we
19 make sure that our faculty and staff are prepared to
20 help us to navigate their mental health issues and so
21 we have—we're developing, we're currently developing
22 training upscaling training webinars and certificate
23 programs for our faculty and staff that are
24 interested in serving us...

25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Are-are...?

2 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Facilitators
3 if you will.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Are you planning to
5 increase or hire personnel that are trained in that
6 regard to provide those services or are you expecting
7 the existing staff to become trained and add to
8 whatever their responsibilities are to now provide
9 these services?

10 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Right. Well,
11 we're—we're trying. One of the first steps is to try
12 to make sure that all of our faculty and staff are
13 aware of mental health issues, and they can manage
14 them in an appropriate way in a classroom setting or
15 a support service interaction, and that are trained
16 to direct our students in the proper way to the
17 services that may be available to them. So, that's
18 one-one bucket. Pre-COVID-19 we're also in
19 conversations with the Mayor's Office about how to
20 better connect our students to the services that the
21 city already provides so that they may have access
22 to, and so that's a conversation that we hope to be
23 able to retake in the next few weeks as it was
24 abruptly, um, as you would expect Council in mid-
25 March as we all had to move in different directions.

2 So, that will be another piece of it, and then the
3 third piece of it, of course, is to try to continue
4 to figure our ways to get the right levels of
5 investments so that we can push forward with the—with
6 the plans that we had set out in our budget request,
7 which were our best thinking at the time, and like
8 what we could do to reduce those counselor to student
9 ratios or student to counselor ratios. I'm sorry and—
10 and really figure out how we can accelerate progress
11 on that front. We feel that we may have a chance to
12 do that for the CARES Act funding.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: uh-hm.

14 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: There may be a
15 one-time injection, but it may be what we need to
16 just, you know, get some traction on this issue and
17 so that's how we're thinking about it right now in
18 the central office. They have several teams
19 advancing that work.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Have you thought
21 about perhaps also embedding mental health counselors
22 in the childcare centers when the campus is open and
23 provide that service because I would imagine that's
24 an added stressor for the student parents that are
25 using our services?

2 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: You know, you
3 make a great point. We have not thought about that
4 one specifically, but we do have—we have thought
5 about how do we make sure that our counselors are—can
6 meet the students where they're at, right? We've
7 also heard for example from our own childcare
8 providers that usually the they are the first ones
9 to--

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-hm.

11 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: ...to write them
12 a file, a mental health issue and so how do we train
13 them to come at them with the rest of our
14 infrastructure so that the students can get the
15 services they need?

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And is your training
17 looking and examining to make sure that there is
18 culturally relevant staffing and programs and
19 sensitivities so that we are reaching out to all of
20 our population?

21 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Yes. That's
22 the CUNY way.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, yes that's
24 right. A few more questions and then we're almost
25 done, and as far as the other panel, is there other

2 Council Members that have raised their hand up are
3 able to join us as well. So, in terms of our needs,
4 we're talking about the ratio of students to
5 healthcare providers, mental healthcare providers. We
6 need to look at the ratio of students to faculty,
7 students to instructional staff. What are CUNY's
8 plans to maintain the required adjunct faculty that
9 will be able to provide the instruction and the
10 interaction that's needed to make a wholesome
11 educational program? We can have remote learning and
12 we can have 500,000 students with wardens, but that's
13 not achieving what we really want to have in terms of
14 student instructors to the faculty interaction,
15 student to student interaction. What are we doing to
16 make sure that we maintain the educational goal of
17 interacting with students, challenging students,
18 having a dialogue that an instructor, particularly
19 we're talking about the adjuncts because I'm hearing
20 that they are getting lay-off letters or that there's
21 a timetable by the end of this month by which they
22 will be getting notices. So, what are we doing to
23 protect them? What are we doing to maintain them?
24 What are we doing to make sure that students get that
25 benefit?

2 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: That's a really
3 good question and I'll talk on the academic side and
4 perhaps Matt would want to talk on the financial
5 side. You know, I think I think we're doing a lot of
6 scenario planning. To your point Chairwoman, our
7 mission at the University of New York is to serve as
8 a vehicle of upward mobility for the historically
9 underserved students of this city, and that is a
10 mission that I would say that we meet very well. In
11 fact, I've been at many institutions across the
12 country and—and I have seldom if ever seen an
13 institution that—that tracks as closely to meeting
14 its mission as we do routinely being ranked top in
15 the country as the top engine of opportunity for
16 social mobility of our students. And so, that's
17 something when you're faced with dramatic stress and
18 disruption that you need to embrace your mission, and
19 so as we look at what lies ahead, and we do our
20 scenario planning, we're trying to make sure that we
21 organize our work and our resources in a way that
22 will allow our students to get the courses that they
23 need when they need them with the faculty and the
24 learning conditions that will allow them to succeed,
25 and that will allow them not only to advance in their

2 degrees and graduate, but get a family sustaining
3 wage, and go onto graduate school and do great
4 things. So, that happens, yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: But isn't in fact--

6 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: --and (inaudible).

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: But isn't in fact
8 CUNY cutting back on its course offerings?

9 VICE CHANCELLOR CRUZ: Well, the
10 situation is here and that's where the financial
11 piece comes in, right. So, how do we do scenario
12 planning to meet those goals, and what are the
13 constraints around that? What are constraints that
14 guide your decision making and what you can do and
15 there's a lot of uncertainty as you well know as to
16 not only what CUNY's budget will be, but the city's
17 budget will be, and the state's budget will be and so
18 as we do the scenario planning, we're looking at ways
19 that we can, if you will, have our cake and eat it,
20 too and one of the reasons why no letters or very few
21 letters of non-reappointment for actions have gone
22 out is because the university has decided in
23 conversations with the PSC that we want to push out
24 that date as far as possible so we have as much good
25 information about the budgets before we need to make

2 those hard decisions, and so that's how we're
3 approaching it, and—and hopefully, we're doing it I
4 think in a responsible way as we can given the—the
5 times we're living and I don't know Matt if you want
6 to say a few more words.

7 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Yeah. No, no,
8 thank you and, um, what I'll add to that is again
9 we're very grateful to our union partners at the
10 Professional Staff Congress for agreeing to push that
11 back, that contractual date for notifying adjuncts to
12 give us more time and more time and more sense, too,
13 hopefully on our budget situation, and I also want to
14 express gratitude to our union partners for the
15 contract that we settled back in the fall. To Chair
16 Barron's point on one of the on one of the really
17 terrific components of that agreement was a paid
18 office hour for every three credits taught by
19 adjuncts. Well, again, time on tasks with students
20 and also to compensate the adjuncts for that work
21 that they're doing. So, again, we were pleased about
22 that. But as—as Jose Luis said, the Challenge here
23 is what is our budget condition going to be for next
24 year? What is our public funding going to be?
25 What's our enrollment levels going to look like?

2 What are the other nine tax levy revenues that we
3 generate? Are they going to be diminished because of
4 the Coronavirus or because of a different modality
5 that we might be in for the fall. As Executive Vice
6 Chancellor Cruz said we're doing a ton of scenario
7 planning right now at the university level and with
8 our campuses so that, um, no matter what situation we
9 find ourselves in with our budget situation that
10 we're ready and we're prepared and so those analyses
11 are taking place and have been for the last several
12 weeks.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And—and finally
14 through all of this that we're talking about, you
15 know my longstanding concern is the lack of black and
16 brown faculty, professors, vice presidents and
17 presidents in the CUNY system, and my concern again
18 is what are we going to do? I know we had a plan, but
19 the plan was not generating the results that we were
20 seeking. So, how are we going to make sure that this
21 horrible pandemic that we're facing does not just
22 throw this total plan out of kilter, and push it to
23 another back burner and we continue to perpetuate the
24 inequity that exists throughout the system and which
25 is being revealed by this pandemic to those who

2 perhaps have on blinders or sunglasses our just that
3 one over there. How are we going to make sure that
4 we don't undermine that—that pledge that plan to move
5 forward and make sure that as we go forward black and
6 brown faculty, administrators and management and
7 leadership reflect what it is that our population is
8 in CUNY.

9 VICE CHANCELLOR SAPIENZA: Yeah, I...I know
10 that that this is a—an, um, a very important topic
11 that you have really raised to the forefront Chair
12 Barron. I know we have had hearings on this, and as
13 you mentioned we do have a plan and I think the
14 answer to your question is how do we ensure that it's
15 going to come from the leadership, and I know our
16 Chancellor is incredibly devoted to this issue. I
17 know our Board of Trustees are as well. Our
18 Chancellor has made some presidential appointments
19 already. I think that that reflect that and we have a
20 lot of presidential vacancies currently. I think we
21 have seven searches or something like that going on.
22 So, I think that our Chancellor is incredibly focused
23 on this as is his entire team. Going all the way
24 down to the college presidents in terms of that. You
25 said faculty appointments, and so, um I think we're

2 very confident that we're going to make some really
3 good progress on this front going forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That concludes my
5 questions. Thank you and if there a subsequent
6 questions, we will have them sent to you and look
7 forward to your response as we always do have that
8 done, and I'll turn it back the host, the technician
9 and if there are questions from Council Members they
10 will be presented to you as well. Thank you.

11 PAUL SINEGAL: At this time Chair Barron,
12 your colleagues don't have any questions. Did you
13 have any closing remarks before we move to the first
14 public panel?

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Just want to once
16 again thank the committee for their work in preparing
17 this, and to the panel that you for the work that you
18 do. You know, CUNY is very dear to my heart because
19 I'm a CUNY Alum having graduated from Hunter College
20 January 1967, Bachelor's in physiology, minor in
21 psychology, and my parents both worked, but did not
22 have that extra cash to have to pay for what would
23 have been tuition had I not been able to go to CUNY
24 tuition free. So, it's very dear to my heart. It's a—
25 it's a gateway to opening up so many avenues or

2 opportunities for improvement and we want to make
3 sure we continue to have as broad a path into CUNY as
4 possible. We don't want to narrow the gate by
5 increasing tuition and adding on fees and making it
6 more restrictive for people who want to find ways to
7 get ahead, and once again, in my opinion compulsory
8 education is should be available for at least two
9 years beyond post-secondary, beyond secondary school
10 to provide that opportunity, but thank you so much
11 for you panel. Look forward to working with you, and
12 engaging you further.

13 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you, Chair Barron.
14 Now that we have concluded the Administration's
15 testimony, we will now turn to public testimony.
16 Once more, I'd like to remind everyone that
17 individuals will be called up in panels of three or
18 four. Council Members who have questions for a
19 particular panelist should use the Raise Hand
20 function in Zoom. You will be called on after
21 everyone on that panel has completed their testimony.
22 For panelists, once your name is called, a member of
23 our staff will unmute you, and the Sergeant-at-Arms
24 will give you the go-ahead to begin after setting a
25 timer. All testimony will be limited to three

2 minutes. Please wait for the sergeant to announce
3 that you may begin before starting your testimony.
4 The first panel in order of speaking will be Naseem
5 Ontazer, Calvin Herman and Gregory Reyes, and I
6 apologize if I mispronounced any names. Naseem.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time begins now.

8 NASEEM ONTAZER: Do you hear me?

9 PAUL SINEGAL: Yes, hello.

10 NASEEM ONTAZER: Hello.

11 PAUL SINEGAL: Yes, go ahead.

12 NASEEM ONTAZER: Chairman Barren, my name
13 is Naseem Ontazer. I'm a Yemeni-American first-
14 generation student born and raised in Brooklyn, New
15 York. As to this college now I'm an alum and a full-
16 time student in Brooklyn College studying history and
17 secondary education. During these times I am really
18 trying to juggle this workload with online learning
19 simultaneously and sharing on Healthy. Life has been
20 so hard for everyone including my parents who are in-
21 who including my-life has been so hard for everyone
22 including students who are in schools such as myself.
23 During this transition, I had friends who lost
24 family. I lost a really close friend myself and my
25 father got sick. He was hospitalized for two weeks.

2 Thankfully he was not diagnosed with COVID. It was a
3 hard moment for me to pass this, which made the
4 conclusion of this a hard one. There was something
5 that got me the finish line. It was the experience I
6 received from Brooklyn College, College Now. College
7 Now taught me how to read and write and articulate
8 myself clearly, how to communicate with professors
9 and gave me first-hand experience of what a college
10 student's life is like. I walked into college with a
11 3.5 GPA from the courses I took at the college and
12 our program. I was ahead of the game. I have to say
13 that I am completing my bachelor's in two and a half
14 years with a double major. I don't think anyone in
15 the nation has ever done that before. This was
16 because of all the resources and courses I took at
17 college now for free. CUNY has been overlooked for
18 way too long, and it's important to note that there
19 are many disadvantages students struggling COVID in
20 online classes. When making structural changes in
21 the field of higher education please consider CUNY's
22 mission statement since 1847: Providing a quality
23 accessible education was always the background for
24 me. This has led me to demand just three things.
25 First, I believe that students should have the chance

2 to file their credit/no credit for the summer and
3 fall until we know where we are at because of all the
4 stuff in the world that is on our plate, which was
5 all—all out of our control. I am taking classes at
6 the moment for the summer and professors are still
7 holding us accountable to the same level even online,
8 which is unfair because of our division situation.

9 Second with CUNY's budget cuts, I didn't know my
10 college classes are free, just like the way Harvard
11 classes online are because many students have lost
12 jobs and this degree can be an opportunity for them
13 to find jobs and give them—and give their lives—and
14 get their lives together during this pandemic.

15 Thirdly, programs like New York City Men Teach and
16 College Now, should remain and CUNY as well should
17 remain funded because as a first-generation student
18 it gave me and opportunity to experience college
19 life, network with other classes and faculty on
20 staff. With all this assistance and guidance, I was
21 able to get through the remaining of the semester.

22 Small things make a difference. Depriving our
23 students from reaching their career goals is one of
24 the last things we can afford right now with the
25 current situation we are living in. Especially in

2 moments like now, we need to better our next
3 generation so they can be the ones publishing and
4 pushing policies and building on the great work. We
5 can't have it at here. To conclude, I am working on
6 gathering CUNY students' voices one brother who
7 expressed similar issues and voiced

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time is up.

9 NASEEM ONTAZER: Okay. How can I get to
10 you? Please consider making CUNY classes free
11 keeping the credit/no credit policy options available
12 for students in the summer and full semester until we
13 get back on the campus. Additionally, keeping
14 something colleges in our programs at CUNY because of
15 disadvantages, the disadvantaged students. In the
16 words of Nelson Mandell: Education is the most
17 powerful weapon, which you can use to change the
18 world. If you accommodate for us and for College Now,
19 the next generation will merge and change the world.
20 To learn more about my work you can find me on social
21 media, and thank you. I yield my time.

22 PAUL SINEGAL: Next, we will hear from
23 Calvin.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time begins now.

2 CALVIN HERMAN: Good morning, Chair

3 Barron and Committee on Higher Education. My name is
4 Calvin Herman. I'm a first-generation student and an
5 alum of College Now as well as a biology graduate of
6 Hunter College. I'm here to bring attention to the
7 College Now Program specifically, which allows New
8 York City public high school students to take the
9 college course in the CUNY campus. In high school I
10 took part the College Now Program and took the
11 course, a college course at Hunter College. An aspect
12 at CUNY through College Now was the fact that I
13 successfully completed the program. I was earning
14 college credits. The thought of getting ahead while
15 in high school motivated me to apply to the program.
16 The College Now experience was extraordinary.
17 Because of my classmates who were motivated students
18 I was consistently challenged to do better through
19 the duration of the program. I was able to network
20 with students through various high schools in New
21 York City. In short, I became a better student. In
22 regards to the special aspects, by taking the College
23 Now Program was the first time I found a strong
24 academic support system. The College Now staff
25 particularly-particularly the coordinator Mr. Irwin

2 Mendez has been a positive figure in my academic
3 career starting in high school all the way to
4 college. I am grateful that I was able to experience
5 college early as part of College Now at no cost. The
6 college resident skills that I developed in high
7 school thanks to College Now allowed me to keep more
8 than connective academic (inaudible) I was accepted
9 to Hunter College on a full tuition scholarship as
10 I'm a full honor student. I want other students to
11 maintain their college as an exclusive place to enjoy
12 all that college has to offer. This is why I'm
13 urging you to keep College Now by just being passed.
14 College Now has half a million students since 2000,
15 and it has been a critical nexus between CUNY and New
16 York City public high school. College Now is the
17 paradigm of CUNY's goal to providing high quality
18 education for all New Yorkers ensuring equal access
19 to opportunity regardless of background or need as
20 well as CUNY's commitment to ensure that everyone has
21 an equal chance in life. In the midst of the COVID-19
22 Pandemic, it is ever important to preserve—preserve
23 and expand on being for students of CUNY and younger
24 students who depend on CUNY. Thank you very much for
25 your time.

2 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you and next we will
3 hear from Gregory.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time begins now.
5 (pause) Gregory Reyes, are you on?

6 GREGORY REYES: Thank you so much from
7 unmuting me to do it.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Yes, go ahead.

9 GREGORY REYES: Thank you so much for
10 your time everyone (static). I'm Gregory Reyes in
11 response to the (inaudible) At this moment I have
12 struggled both with COVID as a student and also as
13 working part-time. I have been affected because I
14 have not been able to comply with the necessary
15 technological needs. I have not been provided with an
16 advocate, a person with tablets or the computers
17 provided. There are not enough to complete my work. I
18 am visual designer and work with video as well as
19 photos to be able to edit such things meaning like
20 highly capable computers, which at the moment are not
21 available. I think this is a very high percent for
22 somebody as me, and anybody working in the field of
23 digital designers because we need these technologies
24 to actually work at all. I have also showed it to our
25 classes because it is. A lot of my classes also need

2 this type of technology. I'm taking recording class,
3 and I was unable to complete my classes because of
4 this. We've been really with a back lay. Besides
5 that, I was also influenced by College Now to become
6 better and actually go through this adverse city and
7 come out on top. I was able to get all A's besides
8 the (inaudible) class that I was taking, and I was
9 still able to try to contribute to my job in any way
10 that I could even with the laptops provided. I'm a
11 Hispanic person who came from the Dominican Republic
12 not too long ago, and the opportunity that that has
13 now gave me to be able to go to college as a first-
14 generation student was a really amazing one that I
15 really cannot take back. They were able to allow me
16 to network with millions of students across high
17 schools and colleges. I was able to be accept to
18 Lehman College. I'm a student right now at Lehman
19 College attaining a bachelor's in digital-digital
20 computer information systems with graphical-graphic
21 arts. I am trying to get my bachelor's and hopefully
22 make my family proud, and make everybody around me
23 proud. I want to be able to say I graduated and the
24 fact that the way you can do it no matter what the
25 circumstances are, even if you are under-privileged

2 anything that you will have, the necessary
3 requirements. College Now allowed me to actually
4 have abilities to compete with people at this high
5 level of college and that's taken myself in front of
6 others. Without College Now, I really don't think I
7 would be in college, and I really would appreciate it
8 if we could keep the funds, but besides that, I think
9 it has helped millions of people since they actually
10 started since 2000. I believe they helped people CUNY
11 wide. Around half a million students have been held
12 back in and continue to be held back in high schools.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Alright.

14 GREGORY REYES: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I want to thank the
16 panel for coming and sharing your testimony with us.
17 We appreciate hearing always from those who are most
18 directly involved in the CUNY system and that would
19 be the students. I want to commend you for the great
20 academic achievements that you've gotten 3.5. That's
21 fantastic. We encourage you and to, um, Gregory
22 Reyes I'm trying to get a better understanding. So,
23 you were able to get digital device from CUNY, but
24 you weren't able to have the other types of
25 technology that you needed for the program that you

2 were in? Is that what you were saying? (pause)

3 Gregory Reyes. (pause) Well, if he's hearing us

4 perhaps he can send us a note or send us a text and

5 then we'll be able to get that answer. Thank you to

6 the panel, and I now--

7 GREGORY REYES: Thank you. Sorry..

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh.

9 GREGORY REYES: --to interrupt. Yes, yes.,
10 exactly the grants.

11 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, so you weren't
12 able to access the higher--a level of equipment that
13 you needed for your program. Did that impact your
14 continuing in the course for that semester?

15 GREGORY REYES: Yes, I-I am actually
16 benefiting from the credit on credit policy that is
17 taking place at the moment.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

19 GREGORY REYES: It's really helpful.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Then because you
21 weren't able to access that they modified what the
22 requirements were? Is that what you're saying?

23 GREGORY REYES: Yes. the computers were
24 not at a high enough level to actually do any of the
25 coding necessary for the course.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh.

3 GREGORY REYES: So, I spoke with the
4 teacher, and I told him how I would be opting for the
5 credit/no credit.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, great. Thank
7 you so much. So, I want to thank the panel for their
8 testimony, and you can call up the next panel please.

9 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you, Chair Barron.
10 Before I call the next panel, I'd like to remind you
11 that all testimony will be limited to three minutes.
12 Please wait for the sergeant to announce that you may
13 begin before starting your testimony. The next panel
14 will be Bob Razan (sic), followed by Andrea Vasquez
15 followed by Yasmin Edwards followed by Katherine
16 Makowsky. Ms. Bowen, you may begin your testimony
17 after the Sergeant-at-Arms gives you the go-ahead.

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time begins now.

19 BARGARA BOWEN: Okay, thank you very much.
20 Thank you, Chairperson Barron. It's very nice to see
21 you and see you well and thank you for holding this.
22 I—we will have written testimony, but really my
23 message today is that the reimaging of New York City
24 that so many of us urgently are calling for and
25 people in the streets are calling for need to start

2 with ending CUNY's institutional poverty. CUNY has
3 been institutionally poor for too long and, in fact,
4 if we were in this political moment and with so many
5 of us calling for non-police solutions to the deep
6 problems in our society, we—if we didn't have the
7 City University of New York people would be crying
8 out to invent one and, in fact, we have this
9 incredible resource and yet it is in a constant state
10 of poverty. So, my testimony today, Andrea is going
11 to speak about one particular part, but I'm going to
12 focus on funding and some subjects that have come up
13 already. At this moment, it's distressing to hear any
14 discussion of cuts for CUNY and its potential
15 layoffs. I know we heard earlier about scenarios for
16 layoffs, but in fact some adjuncts have received
17 notices of non-reappointment for the fall, some
18 continuing education teachers have also, certain
19 programs have been cut, and the chairs of different
20 departments are being told to plan for 25 or 35% cuts
21 in courses. That will be devastating, and the
22 union's position is that now in this moment when CUNY
23 is more important than ever, the university and the
24 Council should be taking the position that there can
25 be no cuts to CUNY. If there is going to be

2 redirection of funding for New York City and we hope
3 there will be, some of that funding must go to CUNY.
4 In a moment where New Yorkers especially those who
5 have borne the biggest cost of the pandemic will be
6 turning for new education and new skills to the City
7 University in ways that they may have never have
8 needed it before. That's exactly the moment for new
9 investment not for cuts and layoffs, and so we call
10 on you to help our CUNY administration to stand up
11 and take the position of defending cuts, defending
12 CUNY against cuts not normalizing them, and I see
13 also we should talk about if we had more time the
14 CARES Act money. Very important to know, and that the
15 CARES Act also includes a provision for keeping
16 employees on payroll. Employees should be kept on
17 payroll if they receive CARES Act money. We call on
18 the Council to make sure that those employees that
19 all employees at CUNY are kept on the payroll and we
20 support the students in their demand for no more
21 tuition increases, and none of the so-called Wellness
22 Fee. I believe I'm out of time, but we thank you, and
23 we call on the Council to join us and take the stance
24 that CUNY must be defended and have re-

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

2 MS. BOWEN: Thank you.

3 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The next panelist may
4 begin. Andrea Vasquez.

5 ANDREA VASQUEZ: Thank you. Hi, my name
6 is Andrea Vasquez.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time begins now.

8 ANDREA VASQUEZ: Hi, I'm Andrea Vasquez,
9 First Vice President of the Professional Staff
10 Congress. Thank you, Chairperson Barron and members
11 of the Committee for holding this hearing. As you
12 know, in addition to representing the full-time and
13 part-time faculty at CUNY the PST also represents
14 approximately 7,000 professional staff a most
15 racially diverse sector of our membership.
16 Professional Staff is predominately people of color.
17 Most are women. They and hundreds of CUNY librarians
18 had a very different and frightening experience when
19 teaching remote and (inaudible) CUNY gave very little
20 guidance to colleges and so presidents made
21 individual decisions about who would be considered an
22 essential worker. The PSC campaigned for many long
23 weeks as colleges continue to call in professional
24 staff and librarians traveling in our trans-public
25 transportation. Now that we are discussing a return

2 to work and the different phases of that return,
3 these thousands of employees are fearful of the
4 decisions CUNY will make and fearful for their lives
5 and the health of their families, their communities
6 and the students they serve. We have lost far too
7 many already. Our members feel like CUNY must do a
8 better job protecting CUNY community in the months to
9 come requiring staff to return prematurely or with
10 inadequate protections will be yet another example of
11 how the effects of the COVID-19 crises fall more
12 harshly on New Yorkers of color. The union has made
13 ten impact bargaining demands related to health and
14 safety and the eventual reopening of CUNY facilities.
15 The terms and conditions of the return to work must
16 be the subject of collective bargaining. Oversight on
17 the issues of returning to campus cannot wait until
18 phase 4 or the end of the summer. Right now, there
19 are many students in the sciences who in order to
20 graduate and move into jobs must do their clinical
21 work and research in labs on campus. Everyone wants
22 our students to graduate and launch their careers,
23 but it simply cannot be done at the expense of the
24 college lab technician or faculty advisor. So, I end
25 by emphasizing two things: As a university, we must

2 consider every member of the community—CUNY community
3 and the CUNY workforce equally. We cannot allow
4 anyone to enter our colleges unless we can provide
5 them with the proper assurances and protections, and
6 second, even after and agreed upon time to return to
7 normal work is determined, if an employee feels that
8 it would be too dangerous for them to return to work
9 either because of their own health risks or that of
10 an elderly or compromised family member, they should
11 be allowed to continue to work from home until a
12 later date. It is the just thing to do, it is the
13 responsible thing to do, it is the moral thing to do
14 and it will help us stay CUNY strong. Thank you.

15 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you for your
16 testimony. The next panelist is Justine Edwards.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time begins now.

18 JUSTINE EDWARDS: (pause)

19 PAUL SINEGAL: You appear to be having
20 some technical difficulties. We will skip you and go
21 to Katherine Makowski next.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time begins now.

23 (pause)

24 KATHERINE MAKOWSKY: Hello, my name is
25 Katherine Makowsky and I was born and raised and

2 currently reside in Queens, New York City. I'm also a
3 former New York City public school student in College
4 Now alum. College Now not only gave me the
5 opportunity in high school to earn college credits
6 towards my bachelor degree, but also gave me the
7 necessary skills to easily excel and then transition
8 from high school to college, and now many of my
9 fellow classmates who have also participated in the
10 College Now Program are also extremely grateful for
11 the opportunity College Now gave them to be able to
12 earn college credit while still in high school with
13 no economic barriers. With the global pandemic we are
14 currently experiencing with COVID-19 and
15 consequential-consequential economic crisis, I was
16 disturbed to hear that College Now's funding is at
17 risk. With this economic crisis hitting the middle
18 and lower-classes or even anyone else, New York City
19 public school students need now more than ever equal
20 and accessible programs for higher education.
21 College Now is an essential program for our society
22 and for the future of our diverse city. Programs
23 like College Now at the very least should not have
24 their budgets cut, but if anything, College Now
25 programs should be invested in even more and

2 expanded. The continuing—if the city continues to
3 invest more in police enforcement and less in
4 education, it will be detrimental to the future of
5 our city. Respectfully Katy Wakowski, and I yield my
6 time.

7 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. At this time,
8 we'll circle back to Yasmin Edwards.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time begins now.

10 YASMIN EDWARDS: Hello. Can you hear me?
11 Yes? Okay. So, my name is Yasmin Edwards, and I am
12 associate professor at Bronx Community College, and a
13 CUNY Alum. As I observe the choices being made by the
14 CUNY leadership in what they describe as balancing
15 the college budget, I wonder where is the shared
16 sacrifice? In a period of record unemployment, a
17 global health crisis, and social upheaval not seen in
18 50 years, at Bronx Community College the
19 Administration chose to cut 60% of college assistance
20 and other adjuncts are being targeted for non-
21 reappointment. Now this follows the classic corporate
22 code to target the most vulnerable of the pool
23 elimination. Bronx Community College is a public
24 college. It's not a corporation, but the leadership
25 has chosen to operate like the corporate leaders on

2 Wall Street whose redone graft in my humble opinion
3 has—is destroying out country. CUNY’s choice to
4 emulate a corporate style above everything (sic)
5 reveals the same results. While COVID-19 is
6 decimating the lives of—of the poor and the people of
7 color on our campus, out Administration’s actions
8 reveal a lack of compassion and abdication of
9 responsibility for the lives of the lowest paid and
10 most vulnerable members of the Bronx Community
11 College community. They have chosen to make a group
12 of workers that are 80% black and LatinX jobless.
13 They have chosen to make a group of workers that are
14 60% woman (sic) and jobless, and the harshest blow is
15 that they have chosen to make a group of workers who
16 have in their ranks many Bronx Community College
17 graduates jobless. We have taught, we have nurtured
18 these students, and now we’re preparing to abandon
19 them to a cruel fate. Now, amazingly, the highly
20 paid CUNY leadership has managed to avoid making many
21 of the—any of the sacrifices that they have imposed
22 on the rest of the CUNY community in this time of
23 crisis. So, again, I ask: Where is the shared
24 sacrifice?

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I want to thank the
3 panel for their presentation, and I just have a few
4 questions. The first questions will go to Barbara
5 Bowen and in-in her testimony she talked about the
6 fact that we've got defend CUNY not defund CUNY, and
7 she talked about any cuts that are being proposed,
8 and can you speak Barbara, a little bity about using
9 CARES money to keep employees because that's what I
10 asked the Administration and they sort of for the
11 CUNY Administration, they sort of went around that,
12 but if you have any specifics or particulars, I'd
13 like to hear you share that.

14 BARBARA BOWEN: Yes, I'd be happy to.
15 Thank you. The CARES Act Provision 18006 is a titled
16 continuum, continued payment to employees, and it
17 states that any educational-higher education
18 institution that receives funds under the Education
19 Stabilization Fund, which is this part of the CARES
20 Act shall to the greatest extent practicable continue
21 to pay its employees an contractors during the period
22 of any disruptions or closures related to
23 Coronavirus. There are restrictions on the use of
24 funds as Vice Chancellor Sapienza said, but the
25 Section 18004 that describes the uses of funds says

2 the funds received can cover any costs associated
3 with significant changes to the delivery of
4 instruction due to the Coronavirus, and then it goes
5 on exempting some payments for religious activities
6 and so on. There are, the CARES Act money is
7 targeted and is specific money, but is also includes
8 a provision that's right there in the act that
9 demands, it's not a—it's not an expression of a wish,
10 it's a requirement that higher education institutions
11 and others that receive the Education Stabilization
12 fund, the CARES Act money, some of which CUNY has
13 already received as we heard earlier that they shall
14 to the greatest extent practicable continue to pay
15 its employees. So, we—we call on the Council to ask
16 whether CUNY is, in fact doing that. They're keeping
17 people on due to the disruptions and also using the
18 funds to—associated with any significant changes to
19 delivering instruction. Those are not incompatible.
20 Adjuncts are crucial for the instruction throughout
21 the university and—and it's a point I think I think
22 Jasmin was pointing to in a way that because CUNY has
23 the majority of its courses taught by adjuncts,
24 12,000 adjuncts, in a sense a plan that calls for
25 termination of adjuncts or a non-reappointment of

2 adjuncts, in as sense takes advantage of the already
3 unjust structure of employment at CUNY and uses that,
4 um, vulnerability and precarity of those workers to
5 signal that hundreds of them or thousands may lose
6 their jobs. So, John Jay College put out a notice
7 that 437 adjuncts would be scheduled to be laid off.
8 Brooklyn called for 25% reduction in courses, Staten
9 Island for 35% reduction. So, there's a need for more
10 investment. The CARES Act is a one-time non-
11 recurring investment, but it could help in this
12 crisis, and also there's a need for the city finally
13 to address the fact that the city's contribution to
14 four-year colleges has not increased even with the
15 rate of inflation for 20 years. If New York City is
16 serious about the communities of color who have been
17 devastated by systemic racism and by COVID, then New
18 York needs to put money into CUNY. That's all there
19 is to it.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you and to
21 Yasmin Edwards, if you could—at this time I just
22 wanted to ask her in terms of what you're seeing at
23 your institution, have there already been staff who
24 have received notices that they will not be
25 returning?

2 YASMIN EDWARDS: Yes, Councilwoman
3 Barron, yeah. We've recently been told that, and
4 this was very depressing to the department, Chairs,
5 because we were told that over-actually between 60 to
6 70% of college assistance would be let go. Why is
7 this significant? We're moving our courses online.
8 Many college assistants were in support of students,
9 and one of those roles is as tutors. We're increasing
10 the class sizes. If you increase the class size, you
11 should then also increase the number of tutors who
12 are able to support the students. So, once again,
13 our CUNY leadership with benefit of the doubt that
14 they think it can work the way it's set up, but if
15 you work in the classroom with the students, you know
16 the way things have been designed will not work with
17 all the students.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right and that was
19 the point that I was raising to the Administration
20 that you can't just think that because we're now
21 using more online instruction that you won't have an
22 increased need for assistants, and for personnel that
23 can support that program. I think that concludes my
24 questions. I'm glad that you came, and we are
25 struggling and we're fighting, and we're continuing

2 to raise our voices to say that CUNY has got to be
3 the institution that we look to, to help get us
4 through this pandemic and get back into what's going
5 to be on the other side. So, I thank you for your
6 presentation, and Mr. Counsel, Mr. Senigal, is there
7 other panels?

8 PAUL SINEGAL: Yes. I will now announce
9 the next panel. Sakia Fletcher, Zulema Blair, and
10 Terrance Blackman in that order. Sakia Fletcher, when
11 the—during your testimony when the sergeant tells you
12 it's okay to begin.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time begins now.

14 SAKIA FLETCHER: Hello, good afternoon.
15 Thank you for having me, Council Member-Councilwoman
16 Barron. I just want to get right into it. My name is
17 Sakia Fletcher. I am with the SG, the current SG
18 President of Medgar Evers College. I want a couple—I
19 want to talk about a couple of things today and that
20 is the impact of COVID 19 on the Medgar Evers College
21 students. I want to also talk about sound leadership
22 at that institution, institutionalized racism and also
23 the funding of CUNY. So, due to COVID-19, Medgar
24 Evers College students experienced loss of wages,
25 lack of access to technology, food insecurities, home

2 schooling children difficulties, homelessness, loss
3 of health—health insurance, hospitalizations and
4 deaths disproportionately in comparison to other CUNY
5 campuses. I want to read you some of the student
6 testimony that I received. Students actually emailed
7 me, and I received phone calls from students during
8 this time. So, one student said: I am incredibly
9 stressed. I have no choice but to stay home because
10 I—I'm highly risked and even more so with asthma and
11 normally I—normally I love being at home, but I've
12 been home for maybe two weeks and it's driving me
13 crazy and making my depression worse. School was also
14 stressing me out so much. I'll read one more and this
15 particular student is an international student. So,
16 she doesn't receive financial aid and she—So, she
17 reads: One student stated that COVID 19 Pandemic was
18 really affect, really affecting her emotionally as
19 she witnessed so many people losing her life from—
20 from this deadly virus. She became the depressed and
21 anxious, and her—and as her small island of Grenada
22 was also highly infected by the Coronavirus. I
23 sometimes have a difficult time completing my school
24 assignments as I can't—I can't help but worry about
25 my family at home in Grenada. Our students was

2 disproportionately affected by the virus because most
3 of them are predominately black, and also in the
4 Brooklyn communities. So, they're in the height of
5 this COVID-19 Pandemic. My dad was college president
6 and he then publicly sought employment with the DCAL
7 of Georgia School District announcing his departure
8 at a crucial and vulnerable time for Medgar Evers
9 College students where students need a strong leader--
10 a strong and dedicated leadership, he was not there.
11 This also left students in a state of vulnerability.
12 At that time the Medgar Evers College Student
13 Government had to step up and take the place. We
14 actually came up with a way to give \$50,000 to
15 students. We solidified in April to give \$50,000 to
16 students because the college was not going to have--
17 did not have a plan for our students. Also, I want to
18 talk about lastly is just the CUNY in terms of--

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time is done. (sic)

20 SAKIA FLETCHER: Lastly. So, CUNY gives--
21 CUNY gives the discretion to each campus of how to
22 implement the response of emergencies to each campus.
23 However, at Medgar Evers College due to this
24 discretion it was extreme delay in resources and in
25 implementing the resources because we did not have

2 that strong leadership during this crucial time.
3 Also, just in terms of equitable—equitable resources
4 given to Medgar Evers College, Medgar Evers College
5 for years has received inequitable resources across
6 CUNY. In terms of dorms we are the only senior
7 college that does not have dorm (inaudible) but we
8 are the highest population of homelessness. We also
9 released—we receive the least in funding when it
10 comes to capital and projects, and also when it comes
11 time to our disabled students. I am a disabled
12 student in a transition from online. From in-class to
13 on-line we had no additional help. We had no
14 resources and it was extremely difficult. We are
15 asking that the City Council support aiding—support
16 aiding a free CUNY and also take the money to be
17 reallocated from the NYPD's budget. We are also
18 asking for a tuition freeze. We are also asking for
19 the immediate resignation of President Doctor Koo. We
20 are also asking that that the no credit action be
21 extended until the summer. Thank you.

22 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you for your
23 testimony. The next to testify will be Zulema Blair
24 followed by Terrence Blackman.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time begins now.

2 ZULEMA BLAIR: Okay, good afternoon
3 Council Member Barron, Majority Leader Cumbo, and
4 other members of the panel, CUNY Chancellery. My name
5 is Dr. Zulema Blair. I'm a professor at Medgar Evers
6 College of CUNY Department of Public Administration
7 located in the School of Business. I am also the
8 Vice Chair of the College Council, the Governor's
9 body for Medgar Evers College. Hence, I am a member
10 also of the Faculty and its leaders in CUNY, and so I
11 receive an abundance of information pertaining to
12 guidance given to the administrations of CUNY
13 colleges. During COVID-19 the SGL, thanks to the
14 Governor's leaders received daily and the
15 subsequently weekly guidance for the Chancellery on
16 how to proceed with the remainder of the academic
17 semester. However, these guidance memos received
18 very little input from faculty. Yes, this is a
19 violation of share governance. However, this is not
20 the sole reason for which I raise this issue. I raise
21 the issue of faculty input because—input because
22 faculty has direct contact with students. In some
23 cases, experience the same difficulties as students
24 with respect to resources, that is adjuncts and have
25 intimate knowledge about the culture of the

2 population that they serve as well as the
3 organizational culture that guides the functions and
4 processes of a college. Further, as information
5 became readily available to the individual Care
6 Assist. My Care Assist (sic) in particular did not
7 seek a broad input from the faculty, Medgar Evers
8 College. They were given in the format of as updates
9 as opposed to guidance. The students, however, who
10 educated themselves on the use of their student
11 technology speed, activity speed and other reserved
12 resources created a process for which students could
13 receive emergency funds. Go on four is an important...
14 it is important that the chancellery the Board of
15 Trustees and all elected officials take into
16 consideration that this is not enough. It's
17 considered tuition and that is not enough that is not
18 enough to consider tuition where college education is
19 concerned. CUNY may be a community university.
20 However, students still must have a place to live,
21 food to eat, health insurance, textbooks, a computer
22 and Wifi. This is what room and board is all about.
23 CUNY cannot take for granted that our students have
24 all the basic necessities. CUNY should also
25 reorganize the basic necessities for college student

2 include, which include a laptop and Wifi. He Board I
3 quote/unquote "room and board" includes a Stewart
4 Power (sic) student on board into college. For
5 onboarding to be equitable across all CUNY campuses,
6 CUNY must review the demographics of their student
7 population with respect to neighborhoods, zip codes
8 and the like. It is only then that they will be able
9 to devise a universal plan that appears to be
10 equitable. As a tenured school professor who was once
11 an adjunct, it is important that we take into
12 consideration that some adjuncts given their salary
13 are worse off economically than some of students, not
14 to minimize the hardship that students suffer. For
15 most this is their only form of income. Thus, it is
16 important that enough technological resources and
17 professional development are available to assist with
18 the process of achievement at best.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

20 ZULEMA BLAIR: Throughout this COVID-19
21 pandemic, adjuncts were severely disadvantaged.
22 However, their resources were not considered.
23 Instead, they received a poor (sic) evaluation all
24 being in formal. This in turn would have serious
25 implications for whether they were able to continue

2 teaching at their respective campuses. CUNY must
3 understand their infrastructure so that faculty,
4 staff and students will be able to survive any
5 emergency, disaster or pandemic with minimal damage.
6 Some suggestion for improvement may include
7 consultation or at the very least internal
8 stakeholders, implement some more guidance around STS
9 and their students have the right to get materials
10 needed for onboarding and being productive college
11 students. STS should be used to improve the
12 experience of teaching and learning as opposed to
13 paying for salaries, infrastructure needs that
14 college could have already paid for. Faculty have
15 given greater resources to adjuncts to make up the
16 majority of our teaching staff are given a greater
17 voice as to what we're asking for and then a plan of
18 implementation of our academic infrastructure.
19 Finally, we hope that CUNY would appoint an interim
20 at Medgar Evers College who has the competency and
21 the academic leadership and existential and political
22 skills to deal with both. It's not just political on
23 one end and then the next person be academic on the
24 other end. They must be integrated academic times or

2 community-oriented times politically inclined, times
3 civic engagement. Thank you.

4 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. The next
5 panelist will Terrence Blackman

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time begins now.

7 TERRENCE BLACKMAN: Good afternoon
8 Chairperson Barron and members of the City Council on
9 the Higher Education Committee. It is with great
10 humility that I speak to you this morning on the
11 intersection of COVID-19 and the City University of
12 New York. I am Terrance Blackman, Associate
13 Professor of Mathematics 25 years of service at the
14 city-at Medgar Evers College, a founding faculty
15 member or our Mathematics Program, the first black
16 chair of our Mathematics Department and the first
17 black male to serve as Dean of the School of Science.
18 Medgar Evers College is a predominantly black, is the
19 only predominate black institution of higher
20 education in New York State. Chancellor Matos
21 Rodriguez has announced that President Rudolph Crew
22 will serve a final year at Medgar Evers College and
23 retire at the end of 2021 after the DeKalb School--
24 kind of School Board has rejected his appointment as
25 school superintendent. In our COVID impacted world

2 this decision puts Medgar Evers College at the risk
3 of being appealed higher education institution.

4 Chancellor Matos's announcement demands the very
5 serious attention of this committee. The Coronavirus
6 is killing Blacks and Latinos in New York City at
7 twice the rate of which it's killing white New
8 Yorkers. For clarity, the death rate for 100,000 for
9 Blacks it's 20, for Whites it's 10. In Williamsburg,
10 Crown Heights, Kinsington and East New York, the
11 death rate exceeds 300 per 100,000. In East New York,
12 the death rate is 600, 60 times as much per 100,000.
13 It is the highest in New York City. Medgar Evers
14 College has a satellite campus in East New York and
15 its main campus is in Crown Heights. It ought to play
16 a critical role in supporting the Central Brooklyn
17 community as we re-emerge from the shadow of COVID-
18 19. However, our School of Science, Health and
19 Technology has thus far played no meaningful role in
20 support of our communities' fight against the
21 Coronavirus, and there is no plan to per se. This
22 lack of planning, the lack of meaningful engagement
23 with the community is indicative of the failed
24 leadership of the two operations leadership teams.
25 (sic) Given our historical mission and function, it

2 is essential that we examine and understand the
3 possibilities for Medgar Evers and the critical role
4 that its leadership must play in shaping the
5 institution and supporting the community that emerges
6 post COVID. As evident as has been said in the panel
7 that the main impact of the various scenarios will be
8 on the persistence so our students. Our students and
9 their faculty had struggled with that online course
10 work. Medgar Evers College is an institution with a
11 limited record of creating compelling—a compelling
12 online experience. We have very few students in a
13 fully online environment. We will be seriously hurt
14 if our current students are dissatisfied with their
15 digital office -

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

17 TERRENCE BLACKMAN: --the science and go
18 elsewhere. The warning signs are flashing. As of 06-
19 03-2020 there is an 18% decline in continued student
20 enrollment when compared to where we were in 2019. We
21 have lost over course of the Koo Administration a
22 total of 903 students. That amounts to \$600--\$6,000
23 per student to a budget loss of \$5,400,000. Our
24 enrollment is trending down and there is a lack of a
25 clear and critical plan for this new academic

2 community. Our mission to connect young people
3 particularly those from Central Brooklyn to
4 opportunities in Solsville teaching, learning,
5 community service. Our mission to honor the memory
6 and the work of Medgar Wiley—Medgar Wiley efforts
7 cannot be accomplished under a coupe of directed
8 leadership team. This continued presence at this
9 moment of the pandemic poses a grave risk for the
10 college. It is time for this committee to seriously
11 demand that the end of benign of Medgar Evers
12 College, and a point: If competent and committed
13 leadership now, June 2021 will be too late. Thank
14 you.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. is that
16 the-completion of that panel? Thank you, well and
17 thank the panel for your presentation, and I just
18 want to say that in terms of the leadership of any
19 institution, that process is, in fact, determined by
20 the Chancellor and his Search Committee. It has been
21 an issue that I have addressed for many years in
22 talking about how the community needs to have not
23 just input, but the decision-making power in how
24 Chancellor-how presidents of universities are
25 selected. It has increased over the last five years

2 to have less and less community involvement even in
3 knowing who the candidates are, and in making that
4 final appointment and that final selection. So, it's
5 an issue about which I'm very much concerned to make
6 sure that we have, in fact, leadership that reflects,
7 respects and inspires the population and the students
8 and involves the leadership of faculty, which I'm
9 hearing is not very, um, reflected in the—in the
10 Administration there. So, I'm very much concerned
11 about that. I have expressed part of that concern,
12 and I will be talking again with the Chancellor about
13 the situation there. Also, concerned because it is an
14 issue that has been brought by (bell) the, um, the—
15 Myrlie (sic) Edwards as well and certainly we know
16 we want to respect his family, and make sure that we
17 are doing as much as we can to edify the university
18 name for one of our great, great civil rights
19 activists and he gave his life for what he believed
20 in. So, I do want to thank you for your testimony,
21 and it's an issue that I will pursue further. Counsel
22 can call the next panel.

23 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you, Chair Barron.
24 The next panel will be a panel of five speaking in
25 this order: Nicholas Freudenberg, Dupaw Membly (sic)

2 Sadani Ellwood, Alec Pence and Michelle Markman. Mr.
3 Freudenberg, you may begin when the Sergeant-at-Arms
4 cues you.

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time begins now.

6 NICK FREUDENBERG: Hi, I'm Nick
7 Freudenberg. I'm a distinguished professor of Public
8 Health at the City University of New York and a
9 graduate of Hunter College. Thank you for having me
10 here today. We completed a survey of 2,300 CUNY
11 students in April 2020 supported by the Office of
12 Academic Affairs and that's what I'd like to talk
13 about today, and a more detailed report will also be
14 made available. A key finding is that the COVID 19
15 Pandemic has caused a significant amount of distress
16 for CUNY students. We found that the rate of
17 depression, anxiety and food insecurity have doubled
18 since our last Healthy CUNY Survey in early 2018. In
19 2018, 16% of CUNY students reported that they worried
20 that they would run out of food before they could buy
21 more. In April 2020, 50% more than triple the 2018
22 rate reported this level of food insecurity.
23 Students also reported that the pandemic was
24 disrupting their focus on school. 26% of our students
25 believed that as a result of the pandemic they will

2 graduate later than expected and 29% no longer know
3 when they will graduate showing that more than half
4 our students believe the epidemic has slowed their
5 academic progress. I believe that CUNY, the City
6 Council and the governments of New York City and New
7 York State have a health and a moral responsibility
8 to ensure that no CUNY student should fail to
9 graduate because of unmet needs imposed by the COVID
10 19 Pandemic, and to achieve that goal I recommend
11 first that CUNY should strengthen its formal
12 partnerships with community providers to meet student
13 basic needs, to make it easier to get services in the
14 communities they live. Second, CUNY should develop a
15 coordinated university wide online and digital basic
16 need platform to link students with basic needs
17 assistance and services. Particularly that that be
18 centralized. Three, CUNY should launch coordinated,
19 university wide campaigns to enroll CUNY students who
20 are eligible in SNAP, Medicaid and other public
21 benefit programs. Our data show that many more
22 students are eligible who now enroll. Four, CUNY
23 should ensure online educational programs are
24 tailored to meet the needs of students with special
25 needs such as parents, those with disabilities or

2 with limited access to Wifi or Internet, and finally
3 New York City and State governments should provide
4 CUNY with the resources it needs to meet high levels
5 of student needs during this time of economic and
6 social disruption. CUNY is an essential institution
7 for New York City, and supporting it now in this
8 crisis is the best investment that the city can make.
9 Thank you.

10 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. We will next
11 hear from Drew Pogmoon. (sic)

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time begins now.

13 JAVON POGMOON: Hello. Okay, so hello
14 everyone My name is Drew Pogmoon (sp?) and I'm a
15 student at CUNY Queens College, and I'm currently the
16 president of the college's Committee for Disabled
17 Students. I'm here today to talk about the
18 importance of funding CUNY especially in the wake of
19 COVID-19 and share the experiences with some students
20 I know. As has been pointed out before COVID is not
21 equal opportunity. It has impacted disadvantaged
22 communities disproportionately, the black and brown
23 folks, poor folks and you know compromised folks and
24 people with disabilities and people exist at the
25 intersection of these identities, and people who have

2 already pointed out that people running—that had been
3 running and, you know to the essential workers are
4 primarily minorities and/or economically
5 disadvantaged, and I believe all of us recognize the
6 basic impact of systemic racism. Unfortunately,
7 people with disabilities instead of talking ableism
8 are often left out of these conversations. Roughly—
9 for example in conversations about police brutality,
10 roughly a third to a half of people who are actually
11 judicially killed police are people with
12 disabilities. Sandra Bland, Eric Garner, Freddie
13 Gray, Tanisha Anderson, Deborah Danner, Ezell Ford,
14 Alfred Orlando, Keith Lamont, and many more all line
15 the intersection of race and disability. In the
16 context of higher education, students with
17 disabilities are under-represented and face
18 additional challenges. As unemployment skyrockets,
19 students in general face uncertain futures, but
20 students with disabilities who are often especially
21 dependent on their families are unworthy. These
22 students face inequities from our health system as
23 well. With the transition to online courses and
24 quarantine lockdown, students with disabilities have
25 faced again further challenges. Student with ADHD

2 have told me about how because many of them are
3 living in cramped dormitories—apartments, pardon,
4 they've had a harder time with school work they've
5 had a hard time focusing. One of the services that
6 students rely on is in Office of Special Services, a
7 room where they can take tests without distractions,
8 and they just—they aren't getting that and they don't
9 have the privilege or the opportunity to be—to have
10 their own separate room some of these times.

11 Autistic students that I know have struggled greatly
12 with the transition online courses and the breakdown
13 of their routines, and you know compromised students
14 have been terrified for their health and other
15 students who rely on healthcare aids have been
16 increasingly worried about bringing the—of about
17 people bringing the disease in, and about whether or
18 not they will be able to get at assistance. (coughs)
19 There have also been students who (coughs) pardon—
20 (coughs) Sorry. I also had COVID-19 and my lungs are
21 still scarred, but I'm not the only one. There's lots
22 of people who I know, peers of mine who whether their
23 family members are struggling with new found
24 disability use, new kind of limitations on what they
25 can do, and they found that many other things have

2 been touched upon already like the counseling system
3 are under-equipped to deal with—to deal with them.
4 Our often Special Services have over the past few
5 years have made cuts to hours, and when we talk about
6 student retention keeping students in, people—
7 students with disabilities are sexually vulnerable,
8 and I fear the as this—as we continue to

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

10 JAVON POGMOON: Thank you. Just the last
11 note, and now where we're beginning go read the
12 conversations about equity for the marginalized and
13 justice broken and used, the continued under-funding
14 in the city must be recognized as part or a systemic
15 problem. Especially related to COVID CUNY is in dire
16 need of further funding. If anyone can use more
17 resources more funding, less disinvestments it would
18 be the students that CUNY serves. Thank you.

19 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. We will next
20 hear from Sydoni Ellwood.

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time begins now.

22 SYDONI ELWOOD: (pause) Yes, so good
23 afternoon everyone. For ten years I have helped
24 students at Kingsborough Community College locate
25 proper research resources, assess their academic

2 writing needs, connect them to mental health services
3 and our urban farm, encourage them to make long-
4 lasting relationships with their professors' written
5 recommendation letters, attended graduations, colored
6 with their—colored with their toddlers and housed the
7 ones as they sleep. Essentially as they had exams,
8 purchased meals out of my pocket and so much more. It
9 could take me a week to recall the many instances I
10 went outside the parameters of my job description to
11 assist a student on any given day in last decade.
12 Last year, I earned \$29,000. Clearly money is not my
13 motive. My responsibility as adjunct COT in the
14 Writing Center is to undergird the learning
15 experiences and processes of Kingsborough students.
16 I do all the good I can whenever I can, however I can
17 as it is my goal to make a tangible difference in our
18 students' lives. During this spring semester
19 (overlapping audio) I was told for a decade—after a
20 decade of dedication and excellence I would no longer
21 have a job due to budget cuts and low enrollment. I
22 received a reappointment letter with an allocation of
23 zero hours. Before I could process the loss of income
24 and health insurance, the first thing that brought
25 tears to my eyes was the question of what about the

2 student? Who is going to support them now? I then
3 thought about the writing fellows I worked with each
4 year guiding them through the complexities of CUNY
5 and pairing them with students, providing them with
6 experiences that serves as the foundation of their
7 teaching philosophy. The work I do for the Writing
8 Center changes lives. It changes CUNY and our broader
9 community for the better, but bleeding must stop and
10 redundancies must be eliminated. How can student at
11 a community college be redundant? Never mind that we
12 have these responsibilities overlap and no one is
13 considering eliminating their six-figure salary. We
14 will work diligently to make CUNY truly work for the
15 city for the least of these are the ones who must go.
16 Our \$29,000 to \$56,000 a year is the greatest drain
17 on the university? I don't think so. If we're here
18 for students and if we believe the education is a
19 great equalizer, why are we ripping their support
20 system to shreds? Why must anyone whose spent a
21 decade of their life working to enhance student and
22 faculty development be discarded like a filthy rag?
23 (pause)

24 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. We will next
25 hear from Alec Pence.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time begins now.

3 ALEX PENCE: Alight, good afternoon. My
4 name is Alex Pence. I'm a continuing education
5 teacher of English for speakers of other languages at
6 La Guardia Community College. I intend to speak
7 officially to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on
8 adult continuing education programs. Because my
9 colleagues and I work in continuing education of
10 programs that traditionally receive relatively less
11 funding compared to the degree vetting programs that
12 we work along side. This has resulted in two major
13 consequences. The first is that in spite of often
14 having—having the same amount of credentials and/or
15 experience, the university receives considerably less
16 pass and little to no benefits. This lack of
17 provisions needed in order to make ends meet we need
18 to teach up to six classes or more at a time. This
19 amount of work enables us to make ends meet. So,
20 fewer classes has resulted in many of our being—many
21 of us being unable to afford basic necessities. The
22 second major consequence is that our programs are
23 more directly depending on the tuition of the
24 students in our programs. As a result of the
25 pandemic, students in our classes are largely out or

2 work or working fewer hours, and many didn't receive
3 a federal stimulus due to their immigration statuses.
4 Thus, the majority have been unable to afford the
5 classes or make the transition to remote learning due
6 to the lack of technological access. Enrollment is
7 extremely low across continuing education programs
8 and across sounds like every program meaning that our
9 programs have been severely downsized or shuttered
10 altogether as has been happening during the COVID-19
11 Pandemic to programs across the city such as the
12 historic ELI Program at Queens College. The largely
13 low-income and immigrant students in continuing
14 education programs are continuously been under—have
15 historically been underserved due to a gross lack of
16 funding of funding distribution, which in itself is
17 unjust. However, this low-funding has gone towards
18 pushing their instructors who have made it their
19 professional purpose to help members of our
20 communities access the opportunities that serve city
21 economic and racial equity, essentially provided—
22 provides them into financially desperate and
23 precarious situations. The majority of my colleagues
24 are uninsured and juggling two or more jobs many of
25 which have all but vanished in the last few months.

2 In addition to the deserving causes and other
3 testimonies you'll hear and have heard today, such as
4 the gutting of CUNY ASAP. Increased funding from the
5 city would mean that continuing education programs
6 would be able to lower the rate of tuition in the
7 continuing ed programs to offset the financial
8 difficulties of the students in our classes who would
9 be immigrants that define and form the life blood of
10 our city. This would then have the effect of keeping
11 our programs open and it would provide employment to
12 teachers like myself. The decision to help these
13 programs and communities continue to survive these
14 difficult times is paramount. Thank you for your
15 time.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

17 PAUL SINEGAL: We will next hear from
18 Michelle Markman.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time begins now.

20 MICHELLE MARKMAN: Hi, everyone. Cheerio.
21 I'd like to talk about the College Now Program, which
22 as you may—which as you may know is a program where
23 high school students can take college classes.
24 Having been a student in the program and now as a
25 mentor, I have witnessed how much of an impact the

2 program has had on so many students' lives such as
3 economically disadvantaged students and first
4 generation of college students. The program shows
5 the students who participate that they can be
6 successful in a college setting and provides them
7 their first few credits of college free. This is a
8 primer motivator to get students started on pursuing
9 higher education. I would now like to highlight
10 several aspects about the College Now Program that
11 show just how important the program is to me and so
12 many other students. The first story that comes to
13 mind is when I need extra help in math while in high
14 school. The College Now Office helped me find the
15 class that perfectly matched my skillset. The class
16 provided me with the extra practice that I needed,
17 and I was able to catch up. Eventually, after taking
18 more math classes through their program, I was able
19 to take three semesters of calculus. In addition,
20 the College Now program also provides an enrichment
21 over the summer. They give students the opportunity
22 to be exposed to science classes, and science
23 research in addition to social science and humanity
24 programs that include group trips and an
25 environmental program. In particular, the summer

2 program gave me the opportunity as a high school
3 student to spend the summer assisting in a biology
4 lab that was conducting cancer research.
5 Furthermore, when I became a College Now mentor, I
6 quickly realized that there were some students that
7 who did not speak English well, and who also
8 struggled significantly with the material. I saw the
9 dedication of the professors, and College Now staff
10 as they did everything in their power to work with
11 these students. Thus, the College Now program has
12 had a great impact on my life, and many others around
13 me. I am now a student at the MacCaulay Honors
14 College, and I believe that the College Now program
15 was a major factor in my educational path. I hope
16 that this program remains intact for a long time to
17 help students realize the benefits of college and to
18 give them the confidence that they can actually—that
19 they can actually succeed in college classes. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: (squawking mic) Does
22 that conclude this panel? If so, please call the
23 next panel forward)

24 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you, Chair Barron.
25 The next panel will in the order of speaking Nathan

2 Schrader, Janette Bartiste, Monica Courtney, and
3 Sylvia Gonzalez. Mr. Schrader, you may begin after
4 the sergeant ques you.

5 PAUL SINEGAL: You may begin now.

6 NATHAN SCHRADER: Thank you, Council and
7 Chair. Thank you everybody, and I appreciate your
8 attention. I'm not going to take up too much time
9 and I think that a lot of what I have to say is—has
10 already been said by a number of members of the
11 panel. I'm an adjunct lecturer (bell rings) at La
12 Guardia Community College and Hunter College, and
13 like a lot of my part-time working colleagues we are
14 some of the hardest hit by the COVID Pandemic and the
15 economic healthcare and job security effects caused
16 by it. We lack the—many of us lack the technology,
17 healthcare coverage, and job security if we get sick
18 with the disease and following the announcement of
19 the movement to remote learning, which was, by the
20 way, announced on Twitter, we are kind of the face of
21 the university to our students. Funding part-time
22 workers is crucial to the future of public education
23 to CUNY and to our students because as has been said
24 before by the—by panelists, adjuncts make up the bulk
25 of the workforce at CUNY and, the proposed cuts of up

2 to one-third of classes in the face of increased
3 enrollment is only going to hurt us part-time
4 workers. Let's see. I like many of my colleagues
5 have received a non-reappointment letter, which was
6 sent at—which was said to be an accident on the part
7 of Human Resources, but on increases out feeling of
8 insecurity in our jobs. Also, I believe that the
9 move to remote learning was not handled very well on
10 the part of the school administration, and left a lot
11 of us part-time workers increasingly with more work
12 to try to cater to our students' needs, many of whom
13 needed additional support including students with
14 disabilities and students who needed other support
15 such as second language students, and I think that
16 has proved to be pedagogically unsound in terms of
17 teaching writing at least in my experience, and to
18 kind of put a cap on it, city and state funding is
19 necessary to save part-time jobs at CUNY, which
20 again, represent a majority of the face-to-face
21 interactions that students have with the college, and
22 as the Chair observed earlier in the meeting, we
23 wanted a pay increase, and we didn't receive what we
24 wanted, and now, I just want CUNY to kind of hold up
25 their end of the bargain by persevering part-time

2 jobs, and ensuring security for the next semester and
3 into the future for the sake of part-time workers as
4 well as for our students who depend on us. Thank you
5 very much.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. The next
7 panelist will be Janette Batiste.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time may begin
9 now.

10 JANETTE BATISTE: Good afternoon, Chair
11 and panel and committee. I am Janette Bastiste
12 working in Bornx Community College in the Biological
13 Science and Medical Technology Program, the Division
14 of Microbiology including our nurses. I am the tech
15 that sets up all organisms for our students including
16 set for (inaudible) media of solutions, et cetera. I
17 am the Vice Chair Chancellor of the COT Campus in
18 CUNY and our goal is to support education. COT
19 supports educational research, physics, the life of
20 science, graphic, performing arts, computer science,
21 electronic media and name a few. I'll only name a
22 few, but they-through cross-campus and diverse jobs
23 in different departments we are the workforce behind
24 CUNY science and technology. About 500 of us are
25 under-paid and just the OTs who are at significant

2 risks of jobless on the potential city and state
3 budget. COT at CUNY was affected with the
4 Coronavirus. I'm sorry about that. Much like everyone
5 else moved our teaching online. We are necessary
6 educators as part of the faculty and many features
7 with blackboards, utilize APN, management software
8 license necessary (inaudible) We took the
9 responsibility to ensure staff and students and
10 faculty to access these materials and troubling
11 issues and help the IT in the (inaudible) COTs are
12 different departments where CUNY informs essential
13 parts of the CUNY system and science lab. Without a
14 full-time in A and C department field to CUNY will be
15 unable to deliver quality education to students,
16 strength removing what (inaudible) is labeled. Would
17 they manage the schools to the workforce to rely
18 their help and the students will be served. I'm
19 urging you to help and protect the jobs of all
20 student workers including part-time COTs. When
21 student return to BCC after Corona Pandemic what will
22 they return to if they force—the workforce has been
23 hurt and the services are poor? We should take steps
24 to secure our workers so they can deliver the results
25 that keeps students coming back to BCC and across our

2 campus. Without reliable workers who will ensure the
3 classes have materials they need or the machines to
4 work with? Who will keep the classes running and
5 deliver the teaching environmental educators and
6 students? We should recognize these people, our COT
7 and support them during these uncertain times. We
8 are concerned about how we will get back to campus.
9 We need to know that it's—our administrators will
10 provide PPE especially in '95 for our COT. They will
11 be maintained a safe working environment for students
12 and faculty COT as that. We want to know what steps
13 will be taken to ensure members' safety and we want
14 to determine those steps. How will they—will arrange
15 and maintain social distance in our land. Well, it's
16 usually are (inaudible) How do we continue to ensure
17 enforcement of hygiene and safety environmental. We
18 can work together assessing problems, creating
19 solutions that will—can quickly agree, and working
20 steps to change and implement across campuses. I
21 thank you very much. I will urge my members for the
22 Higher Education Committee to speak up of the health
23 and safety of CUNY workers and continuing CUNY's most
24 precious workers.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. The next
3 panelist will be

4 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. The next
5 panelist will be Monica Courtney.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

7 MONICA COURTNEY: Good afternoon,
8 Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher
9 Education Committee. My name is Monica Courtney and
10 I've been an adjunct lecturer in the English Language
11 Center of La Guardia Community College in Queens for
12 the past 41 years. If you had to learn English as an
13 adult or have experienced the debilitating process of
14 adapting to life in a different country, not as a
15 tourist, not in a resort, but as a hard-working adult
16 living in a place like Queens, working in one of the
17 service industries, saving money to study English and
18 eventually get a college degree, you may understand
19 who my students are. This is the face of the typical
20 ESL student that I've been fortunate enough to teach.
21 English Language Center at La Guardia was founded in
22 1971 and has grown to become the largest ELS program
23 on the East Coast, and the second largest ESL program
24 in the United States with over 80 countries
25 represented by our students, and our students are as

2 diverse as Queens. As instructors, we witness
3 transformation due to their learning language on a
4 regular basis. New York has weighed the confidence
5 and reticence to critical thinking into to notions
6 about the world and others to openness, compassion
7 and reflection. It's pure joy. Instructors in
8 English Language Center are highly experienced all
9 with advanced degrees and are as passionate about
10 teaching as I am. On behalf of our students and the
11 approximately 60 instructors in the English Language
12 Center all of whom are adjuncts or continuing ed
13 teachers. I'm asking for your help and your
14 intervention. The current pandemic has dealt a gut-
15 wrenching blow to our ESL students. Many have no
16 families in the United States and even more have been
17 unemployed since New York City shut down 13 weeks
18 ago. The English Language Center at La Guardia is a
19 self-funded tuition-based program. In better times
20 it's been described as a cash cow for the college.
21 Now enrolment has dropped to 20% of what it usually
22 is, and as one of my students said, Monica, if it's a
23 choice between buying food and paying tuition, I've
24 got to pay for food. Of the almost \$13 million in
25 federal stimulus funds allotted to La Guardia

2 Community College, the English Language Center will
3 receive nothing ostensibly because of its designation
4 as a continuing education program. This is a
5 travesty. How can a community college supposedly
6 dedicated to serving the hard-working students who
7 aspire to do more shut its doors in the face of the
8 desire for growth and opportunity? TELC has survived
9 innumerable political and economic crises, and while
10 I'm hoping that history will repeat itself, this time
11 it needs help. Students who can't attend classes
12 flounder. We will lose our jobs, our health
13 insurance and the knowledge of contributing to a
14 greater good. Please help get funding for TELC.
15 We're a much better world when we support each
16 other's strengths.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Alright.

18 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. The next
19 panelist will be Sylvia Gonzalez.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

21 SYLVIA GONZALEZ: Good afternoon
22 everyone. I am Sylvia Gonzalez and a lecturer at the
23 English Language Center at La Guardia Community
24 College. I've been teaching there for the past 25
25 years. In this testimony I would like to give you a

2 brief history of what TELC is, and what it has meant
3 for the immigrant community and for our students we
4 serve in one of the most diverse boroughs of the
5 country—in the country. English languages classes
6 were first opened at La Guardia Community College in
7 the fall of 1971 in the school's first year of
8 existence. Deann Marcus brought a small group of ELS
9 teachers to the new college and had Dr. Don Byard of
10 Queens College come to do formal observations. In
11 1972, Dr. Byard who was hired full-time at La Guardia
12 and later became its first school professor, set up
13 the English Language Center which comprised credit
14 and non-credit courses for students needing intensive
15 work in college writing. Other skills were offered
16 to support writing. At this time there was simply no
17 distinction salary or otherwise between teachers
18 hired to teach credit and non-credit courses. Dr.
19 Byard wanted experienced people with a masters degree
20 in ELS and he got them. La Guardia had a great
21 location, poised jut outside of Manhattan yet in the
22 most ethnically diverse borough of this world city.
23 Students were the very best, immigrants and children
24 of immigrants eager to realize the American Dream and
25 ready to work hard to master English. With the

2 approval of the college president Joseph Shanker and
3 Dean Marcus, Dr. Byard assembled TELC—a TELC
4 administration of ESL professionals already well
5 established elsewhere. Laura Darling, Larry Anger,
6 Alice Osman, Mary Hines and others. They came to La
7 Guardia because of a life-time commitment to this
8 student population, and because the college and Dr.
9 Byard offered a chance to build the biggest and best
10 ESL program in the east, which at the 1979 New York
11 Teacher Convention we seized an award for excellence
12 usually reserved for individuals. The credit part of
13 the program fully realized in 1974 by Gloria Darling
14 and Mary Hines was originally part of the Reading
15 Department that was moved to Continuing Education and
16 in 1976. It was felt that full-time ESL
17 professionals would add weight to Continuing Ed, and
18 benefit the highly diverse student population as
19 well. Professor Darlington succeeded Dr. Byard as
20 head of the English Language Center in 1979 and
21 remained in that position until her retirement in
22 1990. At peak there were four levels of credit, ESL,
23 originally called FESL, Freshman English as a Second
24 Language, and 12 levels of non-credit ESL in five
25 different programs tailored to accommodate the

2 schedules of busy working people as well as more
3 available for the students. The program was known as
4 the best program at the best price. The non-credit
5 students pulled out their checks, cash and money
6 orders and lined up all that way to elevators on
7 registration day. The program was able to maintain,
8 has been able to maintain a substantial enrollment in
9 the very intensive program throughout the days prior
10 to this COVID-19. This was due simply--this was due to
11 a simple pattern: Adjuncts, the status and--

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is up

13 SYLVIA GONZALEZ: practice for the best
14 teachers, the quality of teaching and the reasonable
15 tuition attract students the English Language Center
16 has contributed substantially to the income of La
17 Guardia Community College. Thank you.

18 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. Before I
19 announce the next panel, are there any council
20 Members questions? If so, please use the Zoom Raise
21 Hand function.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I want to thank this
23 panel for their presentation, and I understand and
24 appreciate and support all the work that adjuncts do
25 and certainly they have the oil that keeps things

2 running and make sure that everything is prepared and
3 has, in fact, many of the—much of the direct contact
4 with students. So, we appreciate you. We are trying
5 to support you, and move forward to make sure that we
6 use this opportunity to, in fact, force CUNY, the
7 city and the state to look at where they need to put
8 their resources, put their money and bring a better
9 alignment as the reflection of what it is that
10 adjuncts do. We certainly support you and encourage
11 you and pray that you continue to be involved with
12 students. We know you're not doing it for the money
13 because the money is not reflective of the time that
14 you put in, but we do thank you so much for coming
15 and sharing your testimony, and the Counsel can call
16 the—you're welcome. The Counsel can call the next
17 panel please.

18 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. Before I call
19 the next and last panel, if we inadvertently missed
20 anyone that would like to testify, please use the
21 Zoom Raise Hand function, and we will call on you
22 after the next panel in the order in which your hand
23 is raised. Thank you. The next panel will be
24 Lakisha Williams Followed by Lena Hayes. Ms.
25 Williams, you may begin when the sergeant cues you.

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin now.

3 LAKISHA WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. We
4 submitted our testimony electronically, and it is a,
5 um, combination of a bunch of our students'
6 testimonies from Degrees NYC, which is a collective
7 impact initiative here in New York City, but it
8 definitely reflects everything that has been said
9 regarding the remote learning experience that our
10 students and some of the faculty, the staff has
11 experienced, and then we also have a list of
12 recommendations that we have attached to the bottom,
13 but students as we said in our submitted test-
14 testimony, students are calling for more mental
15 health support, more basic needs support, tuition
16 breaks, remote teaching help from-for professors and
17 for staff. Also, better equipment, and also
18 meaningful work and assignments, and not just busy
19 work, but also they would like to office hours from
20 their professors, and they would also like to make
21 sure that the-the university is listening to what
22 they are saying. A lot of our students have had COVID
23 experiences directly. They've had family members
24 pass, and they've also had the experience of having
25 to take care of siblings who are also experiencing

2 remote learning from-at-at the elementary or the K-12
3 level. So, the stress levels are very high. Also,
4 the remote learning experiences have not been the
5 best, and they would just like for the university to
6 pay attention to what they are saying, and not just
7 give lip service in public. Thank you. I yield my
8 time.

9 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you. The next
10 panelist will be Lina Hayes followed by Enrique Pena
11 (inaudible)

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

13 LENA HAYES: Thank you. Good morning
14 Chairperson Barron and members of the committee. My
15 name is Lena Hayes. I'm a former employee of La
16 Guardia Community College Adult and Continuing Ed in
17 the Workforce Education Center, which administered
18 the Summer Youth Employment Program for 3,500 youth
19 annually. The Workforce Education Center employed 16
20 full-time staff, and one part-time staff person. 15
21 of us were terminated due can't fund this critical
22 program. The staff at LaGuardia Community College
23 were diligently working from home to research online
24 platforms to transfer our project-based learning
25 curriculum for younger youth to virtual learning as

2 well as brainstorming and creating online
3 opportunities for all you. We had staff that are
4 trauma-informed and aims to better additional
5 mindfulness and restorative exercises to help the
6 students deal with the new reality of a COVID-19
7 world. Within 24 hours that was all gone. It seemed
8 like our efforts and work were not shown any respect
9 or valued. In the meantime, the Mayor encouraged
10 businesses not to lay off employees. We were first
11 to go April 8th because he did not honor our
12 contract. I have personally kept afloat by engaging
13 with Teens Take Charge, and staying connected to
14 former co-workers and continuing my advocacy—advocacy
15 for co-workers and youth. Many of the SY students
16 have gone on to do great things. Some to do ordinary
17 things in extraordinary ways. The loss of SYEP
18 specifically at La Guardia denies thousands of youth
19 the opportunity to have their work experience
20 connected to college. For some, this helps to
21 demystify the college experience by engaging and,
22 therefore, enrolling in the La Guardia. One of my
23 personal youth was a young man that relocated to New
24 York from Florida, but ended up living in a shelter.
25 He came to us as a vulnerable youth successfully

1 worked retail and worked at La Guardia—and enrolled
2 at La Guardia. Excuse me. He sat out one semester due
3 to finances, but came back came back to our SYEP
4 staff and we assisted him in negotiating a payment
5 plan so he could re-enroll. There was a young woman
6 from a Jamaican immigrant family. She enrolled in a
7 DYCD funded program, applied and enrolled at La
8 Guardia Community College, participated in SYEP
9 several years while she attended school there. She
10 went on to transfer to Emily College on a full
11 scholarship and now works for Google, and finally,
12 the value of SYEP at La Guardia is ultimately shown
13 by a young man that is currently an EMT. He worked
14 through SYEP from age 14 to 21. He was referred and
15 accepted at La Guardia's EMT program and graduated
16 last August. Working in SYEP put him in a position
17 to possibly save lives. COVID-19 has stolen enough
18 from our city. Please don't let it steal this
19 summer's employment and learning opportunities from
20 the youth. Support the reinstatement of SYEP funding
21 this summer so that we can ensure the continued
22 employment opportunities and support for New York
23 City youth and families at La Guardia. For many this
24 is the first work experience and a chance to assist
25

2 their families financially. Now more than ever these
3 opportunities are needed to keep youth engaged,
4 prevent isolation, loneliness or the trauma and
5 possible unwanted interactions with law enforcement.
6 If the Department of Education can turn on a dime and
7 create online education, surely we can demand the
8 department use the CUNY development to support
9 provider agencies like La Guardia Community College
10 to do the same with projects based on the online
11 employment training and vetted with mental health.
12 Thank you.

13 PAUL SINEGAL: Thank you and the last
14 panelist for today will be Enrique Pena Orapaza.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

16 ENRIQUE PENA ORAPAZA: Alright. I just
17 want to start by saying Chairwoman Barron I heard you
18 had COVID. So, seeing you today makes me really
19 happy. Good morning—good afternoon everyone. My name
20 is Enrique Pena Orapaza. I'm a student at Queens
21 College, a triple major in political science, Urban
22 Studies and American Studies. I'm a USS delegate. I'm
23 a dreamer and I always like to point out that I am a
24 proud New Yorker just like anyone else to this call.
25 I am an immigrant from Peru since I was a kid and my

2 parents taught me the value of education. That's why
3 I love CUNY so much, and have dedicated so much time
4 advocating so that it not only stays the way that it
5 is, but improves and its invested in this same city
6 that has one of the most segregated school systems in
7 the country. We keep disinvesting in the public
8 college system that kids that look like me rely on to
9 get an opportunity. I am here once again after I
10 don't know how many times with the same ask to invest
11 in CUNY. About two months ago, all my family got the
12 Coronavirus. My dad and I had already lost our jobs
13 since the pandemic started and neither of us
14 qualified for any city, state or federal aid or
15 unemployment status, and by the beginning of April,
16 we were both hospitalized with pneumonia. I don't
17 know how many of you can relate to this, but I can
18 assure you it is not comforting to be asked to sign
19 a document as you get into a hospital authorizing
20 them to try to resuscitate you and your dad if things
21 get worse, but I made it out after a week and my dad
22 after a month. On top of worrying about issues with
23 the process to clear my immigration status and
24 calling my dad in the hospital every day to check his
25 progress, and having to be strong for my mom who has

2 brain tumor and it has caused her depression for
3 years. I have the responsibility to inquire anywhere
4 possible about any support for rent and get basic
5 stuff to eat, but during that time, I got an email
6 from CUNY not to talk to me about emergency funds
7 that I could apply to since the Chancellor's Fund was
8 way too restrictive and just like every person I
9 know, I didn't qualify for it or the local emergency
10 funds since they're mostly funded with student
11 activity fees and the State government has a
12 provision that even though I pay those fees, I can't
13 get any of that money. So, it wasn't that either.
14 What was it? The last payment due of my tuition, the
15 one that took the last money I had saved and the same
16 tuition that the Board of Trustees is planning to
17 increase again next year, but I'm not sure how I'm
18 going to be able to attend. This is no way to live. I
19 have friends that are fighting the administration to
20 the Queens College. They're being evicted from the
21 dorms during the middle of the pandemic for not being
22 able to make ends meet. I have friends teaching in
23 many CUNY campuses that are amazing, and in their
24 process, but either already got an appointed letter
25 or are expecting one soon since CUNY still considers

2 adjuncts expendable, and plans to leave them with no
3 job security in most cases as they won't be teaching
4 they lose their health insurance, also in the middle
5 of a pandemic. Adjuncts are the heart of CUNY and
6 should be protected. Having those professors not be
7 appointed also means that I will lose some of my
8 classes when I enroll in the fall. Yet, another
9 barrier for me and any other student that won't
10 graduate on time as we--

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time.

12 ENRIQUE PENA ORAPAZA: --if they end the
13 classes. They need to be requirements. I have—I am
14 here today because I have the responsibility to do
15 so. I can no longer stand when the crisis hits, the
16 first cuts on education while the NYPD does the same
17 law enforcement that criminalizes my peers and I get
18 this special treatment and a budget that is bigger
19 than the entire budget of the City of Houston, the
20 fourth biggest city in the country. To me, my
21 American Dream is being gutted every in front of our
22 eyes and I ask you to do something about it before
23 it's too late. It's time to fund CUNY not the police.
24 Invest in education and not in criminalization, and

2 to my adjunct comrades I stand in solidarity with you
3 and Black Lives Matter. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I want to thank this
5 panel for their presentation, and yes, we're fighting
6 for restoration of some of the programs. You
7 mentioned SYEP. That's a part of what we're fighting
8 for as well, and again, I want to say we don't want
9 to pit one program against the other. What we're
10 saying is that there are other areas that we--where we
11 can look to find how we can make cuts that don't have
12 direct impact on the programs that our students need,
13 and as has been said, this COVID virus is not gone.
14 It's not over. I've done some reading about previous
15 (bell) pandemics and traditionally there's a
16 resurgence a re-emergence when the fall comes. I
17 think that all of the issues that you have raised are
18 pertinent and need to be a part of--of the
19 consideration of making a responsive plan to what it
20 is. I don't think we can think that okay, it's going
21 to go away and we're going to start. I'm going to
22 pick up where we left off. That's not going to be
23 the case I don't think. So, we've got to make sure
24 that all of the issues that we've raised have an
25 opportunity to be discussed, to be fleshed out, to be

2 considered and to be reflective in a comprehensive
3 plan moving forward to make sure that we continue to
4 offer the programs and services and the instruction
5 in a responsible way, and with the faculty and staff
6 that we need to make sure that students are
7 recognized and that students get all of the support
8 that they need moving forward beyond just what the
9 academics is, and I think particularly the mental
10 health issues that have been touched on briefly here
11 are critical because this going to be far-reaching
12 beyond wherever the end of the pandemic is. It is
13 going to be far reaching and have a long-longstanding
14 impact. So, I want to thank all of you for your
15 testimony here today, and if the Council does not
16 have anything further in terms of Council Members or
17 other panels, if there is nothing further, then we
18 will consider this hearing adjourned. Thank you so
19 much. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 26, 2020