

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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June 23, 2021

Start: 10:16 a.m.

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HELD AT: Remote Hearing (Virtual Room 2)

B E F O R E: Inez Barron
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Laurie Cumbo
Alan Maisel
Ydanis Rodriguez
Eric Ulrich
Helen Rosenthal

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

Hector Batista, Executive Vice Chancellor
and Chief Operating Officer
CUNY

Dr. Daniel Lemons, Interim University
Provost
CUNY

Dr. Denise Maybank, Interim Vice
Chancellor for Student Affairs and
Enrollment Management
CUNY

Juwanie Piquant, Chairwoman
CUNY University Student Senate

Mojubaolu Okome, Professor of Political
Science
Brooklyn College

Diana Cruz
Hispanic Federation

Jean Grassman
School of Public Health

Dr. Diane Price Banks, Chair
Health and Safety Committee

Roxanne Shirazi, PSA Delegate and Library
Faculty
Graduate Center

Andrea Vasquez, PSC First Vice President
Graduate Center

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sergeants, please start your recordings.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: PC started.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Recording to the cloud all set. Sergeant Biondo, please begin with your opening statement.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sure. Good morning and welcome to today's remote New York City Council hearing for the Committee on Higher Education. Once again, at this time, would all panelists please turn on their video for verification purposes? And to minimize disruptions, please place all electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode. If you would like to submit testimony, please send via email to testimony@Council.NYC.gov. Again, that is testimony@Council.NYC.gov. Thank you for your cooperation. Chair Barron, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good morning. Thank you for joining the Committee on Higher Education for this very important remote hearing on returning to CUNY's campuses in the wake of Covid 19. I am Council member Inez Barron, the Chair of the Committee and Higher Education and a proud CUNY alum and thank you to everyone who is here to testify

today. After nearly a year and a half of working and learning remotely, CUNY, like the rest of the city, is gradually returning to in person activity. While New Yorkers have shown the strength and resilience the pandemic also exposed systemic failures and widened existing racial and socioeconomic inequities. More than 33,000 of our neighbors lost their lives and many more loved ones lost-- and many more lost their loved ones in their livelihoods. Now it is our responsibility to address the city's failures, to institute best practices, and to build a future that owners OR losses, the city where we can all thrive. It is for this reason that I was so disappointed that Hunter College high school's decision to maintain its discriminatory admissions process over the objections of students and faculty, many of whom presented strong evidence-based testimony at the committee's February 23 hearing and elected officials, including myself. While other elite high schools across the country used the pandemic as an opportunity to eliminate their entrance exams and to adopt more equitable admission standards, Hunter College high school opted to maintain the status quo. At today's hearing, we will review CUNY's plans to largely

resume in person operations in the fall after a year-- more than a year of distance learning. This includes an overview of CUNY's plans for compliance with federal, state, and city guidance, University guidance issued to the schools, and each CUNY colleges plan for safe reopening. The committee is particularly interested in how the University plans to meet the logistical, academic, and administrative challenges of reopening, as well as any changes in student services and resources. Lastly, the committee will seek clarity around the financial impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, including reductions in staff and the allocation of federal relief funds. It is imperative that CUNY's return to campus is not just about returning to business as usual. The University must be responsive to the heightened needs of its community as well as committed closing the gaps exacerbated by the pandemic. Finally, this weekend, I was pleased to join my staff and the community in person for an annual Juneteenth event that we hold and this was our 20th celebration of Juneteenth. As many of you may know or have found out, Juneteenth commemorates what has been said is the date that soldiers of the union finally made

their way to Galveston Texas to announce that the enslaved Africans were so-called free. Here, again, we have a distortion of what actually happened. How can someone who has no jurisdiction over territory or geographical area make edicts and pronouncements that affect that area? It would be like Canada telling the United States but it could do with some of its authorities and the inhabitants thereof. That was not an announcement that had any weight, even though it took the two years to get there. In the other thing is we want to acknowledge that it was black soldiers that was part of that whole movement of resistance that helped to free those that had been enslaved. The date, again, is June 19th, 1865 when that happened and CUNY recently joined [inaudible 00:05:46] and the federal government and recognizing Juneteenth as a holiday. However, it has come to my for thousands of CUNY employees, many of our black, Juneteenth will be an unpaid holiday. While a paid holiday for all employees doesn't bring us closer to the reparations of the unpaid debt owed to descendants of enslaved people, I do take issue with the fact that a holiday commemorating justice unduly delayed following a summer of historic protests

against police brutality that disproportionately affects black people and systemic racism would be observed at the financial expense of many of the universities black employees. I hope and expect that this will be rectified in the near future. Now, in preparing for this hearing, I would like to thank Mr. Omowale Clay, my Chief of Staff, M Indigo Washington, my director of legislation, Amy Briggs, the committee's counsel, Chloe Rivera, the committee's senior policy analyst, Michelle Peregrine, the committee's financial analyst, and Frank Perez, the committee's community engagement representative. Additionally, I would like to thank all of that Council staff, including the sergeant-at-arms who are working very hard behind-the-scenes to make this. Possible. I would like to acknowledge that we have been joined by several Council members. Council member Maisel and Council member Rodriguez who are members of the committee are present. Others will be acknowledged as they join. And now, I will turn it over to committee counsel Amy Briggs who will review the procedural items relating to today's hearings and call the first panel.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Barron. My name is Amy Briggs. I am committee counsel for the Committee on Higher Education. I will be moderating today's hearing and calling panelists to testify. Before we begin, please remember that everyone will be on mute until I call on you to testify. After you are called on, you will be on muted by a member of our staff. Note that there will be a few seconds delay before you are on muted and we can hear you. For public testimony, I will call on individuals in panels. Please listen for your name and I will periodically announce the next few panelists. Once I call your name, a member of our staff will unmute you, the sergeant-at-arms will set a clock and give you the go-ahead to begin your testimony. All public testimony will be limited to three minutes. After I call your name, the please wait, again, for the sergeant-at-arms to announce that you may begin. For today's hearing, the first panel will include representatives from CUNY followed by Council member questions and then public testimony. For CUNY, we will have Hector Batista, who is the executive vice chancellor and chief operating officer, Dr. Daniel Lemons, interim

1 COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION 10
2 University Provost, and Dr. Denise Maybank, interim
3 Vice Chancellor for student affairs and enrollment
4 management. I will now administer the oath to the
5 administration. When you hear your name, please
6 respond once a member of our staff unmute you. Do
7 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
8 nothing but the truth before this committee and to
9 respond honestly to Council member questions?
10 Executive vice chancellor and chief operating officer
11 Batista?
12 HECTOR BATISTA: I do.
13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.
14 University Provost, Dr. Lemons?
15 DR. DANIEL LEMONS: I do.
16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And
17 Vice Chancellor Dr. Maybank?
18 DR. DENISE MAYBANK: I do.
19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Dr.
20 Maybank. So, we will begin testimony with executive
21 vice chancellor and chief operating officer Batista.
22 You may begin your testimony now.
23 HECTOR BATISTA: Okay. Can you hear me?
24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes. We can.
25

HECTOR BATISTA: Okay. Good morning, Chairperson Barron and other members of the city Council higher education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the CUNY full 2020 would return to more in person activities. I am Hector Batista. I am the executive Vice Chancellor and chief operating officer of City University of New York. With the end of the spring semester and academic year, we are proud of the CUNY community for rising to the challenge in the middle of the global pandemic. Delivering on the University's mission to provide quality accessible education to our diverse student body. But while our mission remains the same, many ways in which we approach our work of academic and operations will be very different from now on, as we look at the past. From the onset of the pandemic, CUNY developed a base approach to its reopening strategy. This allowed us to be nimble and unresponsive to the rapidly changing guidance of public health conditions. Since the fall of 2020, all of our campus has been phase 1 of CUNY's stage reopening. We represent occupancy levels up to 25 percent. CUNY operator and largely virtual modality to maintain levels on campus in the interest of

public health and as that conditions then demanded.

In preparation for the fall 2020 semester, we directed our campus to develop reopening plans and collaborations with stakeholders for our review and approval. We provided them with the CUNY guidelines for safe campus reopening, along with a checklist and the state requirements to inform their plans. The guidance informed campus [inaudible 00:12:12] to discretion of the steps it would require for a safe, mostly remote fall 2020 reopening. The Chancellor then received of these plans to ensure the compliance and consistency and would require public health safety measures. Once we approved the plans, we served it in an advisory capacity to any implementation issues that the campuses encounter. Additionally, we completed and today we continue to complete on-site inspections at CUNY campuses to make sure that they adhere to the Covid 19 safety policy procedures. Now, as the cities and state head into full reopening, we are preparing for more in person fall semester [inaudible 00:12:55] occupancy level on campus and at the central office location. In January, our Chancellor, Felix Matos Rodriguez, announced his vision for more in person fall 2021

semester. Several months later, as the public health conditions improved and more New Yorkers got vaccinated, we made a very careful decision to mark the week of August 2 as the date for staff to return to their workplace. We announce to this decision in May to get back with the staff and the time to plan and transition back to on site work and to determine the logistic goal details surrounding the return. To prepare for re-occupancy and consistent with the University's safety first approach that we have been employing all along, we, again, have guidance that governs the fall reopening for the entire CUNY system, including 25 campuses in the central office location. The guidelines involving the current CDC for higher education and office space work, as well as best practice recommendation for our regulatory sources. Because CUNY college is a different size and location and types of campus, the number of students, faculty, and staff, individual campuses used CUNY guidance to customize elements of their reopening plans. To ensure safe resumption of a continuation of campus operations and in person instruction and work, while the state has significantly relaxed Covid protocols and we, of

course, will support city and reopening efforts, CUNY is committed to continue we increased in person activities at a gradual and strategic manner. That will ensure the continued health and safety of our communities. Each campus plan will continue to be accessible to stakeholders online, campus, and CUNY best website to foster meaningful community participation and reopening efforts, the campus has been advised that the stakeholder groups such as labor unions must again be engaged. In each campus, we will work with labor unions to conduct safe walk-throughs of our facility is and will make sure that they see all the areas in fact, in the spirit of transparency and partnership, two weeks ago, I convened a meeting with representatives were invited to ask questions and express concerns about reopening. The meeting covered a wide range of topics such as on-site occupancy level, flexible work schedule guidelines, ventilation, HVAC work, health screening, and Covid testing. From a facility perspective, we have also been working diligently to prepare for a higher rate of occupancy across the University. Ventilation was and continues to be a key component of our efforts. We have engaged in

independent third parties to conduct review of ventilation in CUNY buildings. Our goal in working with the consultants to ensure that CUNY buildings meet the CDC building ventilation guidelines and recommendations. To meet these goals, our approach includes data collection from campus about the facility use, ventilation of data through interviews - verification of data through interviews. Excuse me. On site visit and inspected buildings and performance and taking an approach needed to remediate actions such as upgrades or repairs the facility is that are essential to the start of the fall semester. Another core principle of reopening efforts has been supporting and encouraging our CUNY community to get vaccinated. CUNY has been at the forefront of the state and city vaccination efforts. With five CUNY campuses serving as vaccination sites, these five sites vaccinated nearly a million New Yorkers to continue doing our part. Each of our campus plans with fall, also include communication strategies for increased vaccination among students, faculty and staff. As we get closer to fall reopening, we are carefully consulting our key stakeholders regarding vaccination and testing

protocols for our campus and offices. In this area and all facets of reopening put us safely [inaudible 00:17:13] in our approach. We expect everyone at CUNY campuses or working in CUNY offices will be vaccinated subject to mandatory testing protocols. More details regarding this protocol will be offered by my colleague, Daniel Lemons, the interim executive vice chair and University Provost. Our reopening efforts for the upcoming academic year will be greatly assisted by federal stimulus funding allocated to our campus. On June 7, the Board of Trustees fiscal committee approved fiscal year 2022 budget proposal including federal stimulus funding from coronavirus responsibility supplement approach, American Rescue Plan Act. Our budget will now be considered by the full board and the meeting on June 28. For our community [inaudible 00:18:04] about \$244 million of federal student funding of what this Institute needs. For the outcome of fiscal year, our plans utilize these resources in the following needs: \$47.5 million for student support and retention, \$5.7 million for reopening costs, \$105.8 million to cover project revenue lost, \$1.9 million for mental health service for students, 3 million for online program

development, and 1.7 million for faculty and professional development. For the remaining 77 million, colleges will be asked to include stimulus spending plans as part of their multi-year plans and submission for the use of over the next two fiscal years. There are two items in our federal stimulus spending plan that I would like to know. First, set aside from the reopening costs will help ensure the safe return to our campus as our colleges will be able to utilize these dollars for quality testing, Covid 19 testing and cleaning protocols for the purpose of PPE and facility enhancements. The second component of our stimulus funding plan I would like to note committee is the allocation for lost revenues. As those funds are currently being targeted to-- reductions, revenue losses resulting [inaudible 00:19:33] that the city Council will adopt in the fiscal 22 budget would provide some relief for CUNY targeted reduction stimulus dollars to redirect and reinvest in our students. I want to close my testimony today by emphasizing that our primary objective is to ensure that our system, while reopening continues to be prioritized for the health and safety of all students, faculty, and staff. We

are very thankful for the entire higher education committee, especially Chair Barron. The City University of New York and our students through this very challenging year. I hope you join me today in looking at the year behind us with much pride for a collective resiliency in the year ahead with much anticipation and help that our students in our staff and our faculty and everyone connected to the University will return safely. I would now like to turn on over to interim executive vice chancellor and University Provost Dan Lemons.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. University Provost Dr. Lemons, you may begin your testimony.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Good morning, Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on important issues of CUNY's transformation into a post pandemic University. My name is Daniel Lemons and I have the privilege of serving as interim executive vice chancellor and University Provost of the city University of New York. What we hope are the waning days of the Covid 19 pandemic which has reshaped New York in the nation

and the world, we, as a society find ourselves in a place where, once again, we can be proactive and not really reactive to the forces around us. Indeed, CUNY has emerged from the pandemic as a modern University that is well positioned to not only to whether the challenges ahead, but prepared to explore and take advantage of the novel opportunities in front of us. In many ways, the pandemic was not a deterrent to CUNY's mission, as nationally renowned as it is as an institution of higher education. Instead, Covid 19 crisis proved itself in accelerant to the University's mission to create a holistic, equitable, digitized University fit for the 21st century and the demands of students in the New York community. I was asked by the committee to address how higher education has been changed through the effects of the pandemic. As a university system comprised of 25 schools and nearly 600,000 students, many of whom come from the populations that were and still are the most affected by the pandemic economically and personally, CUNY learned valuable lessons throughout the crisis that will continue to inform the University's transformation into an effective and post pandemic University that can serve

as a national model. First and foremost among these lessons is that student expectation post pandemic has changed regarding course delivery options and overall flexibility and learning modalities. Simply put, our students are now much more tech savvy and accustomed to a digital learning environment. In the past, and emphasis on digital learning had the trappings of an environment that was atomized and emotionally disengaged, however, due to the significant advancements in technology and a comprehensive shift in culture, digital learning has not only become more accessible for students, but it has become far more favorable for them. In fact, CUNY's most recent internal data revealed that the vast majority of our current student population now prefers digital learning environment to traditional in person learning. At Lehman College where I am still interim president until the end of this month, almost 25 percent of our classes were taught in hybrid and online format before the pandemic. That percentage will likely be higher post pandemic. The staggering shift in learning and environment preferences one that absolutely can't be ignored by a post pandemic University and must inform the University's response

and retooling their courses and services for post pandemic world. Or, in this era of recovery, a responsive University will be a competitive University. It must also be noted that, although CUNY students have been overwhelmingly perseverance and resilient during the pandemic, they have experienced a significant loss of learning, as Most students at all levels nationwide. And so it is imperative that CUNY be double it's already expansive digital learning efforts in order to provide students with the tools to regain their academic momentum in the coming semesters. The disruption of the pandemic and the rapid shift to remote learning also changed the faculty of the University. Although, as I mentioned, some colleges such as Lehman have already many hybrid and online sections, now all instructors are experienced in the use of digital resources and even if they are teaching in person classes, those resources are key to improving the quality of the education we offer and increasing its accessibility to a wider range of students. This in mind, I am happy to stand here today before the committee and presents several examples of how CUNY has adapted its courses and services while adhering to its historic

charge, scope, and mission. Were very confident the initiatives I summarized here today will paint a picture of a compassionate and a forward thinking university that ensures safety, health, equity, specially academic momentum. In April 2020, CUNY made a quick pit it to digital learning, eventually converting an estimated 95 percent of its 1400 academic courses to fully online. This massive systemwide conversion effort is a testament to CUNY's nimbleness as an institution that values academic momentum and its responsiveness in the face of a historic crisis. Aside from the University's swift conversion to digital learning, CUNY remained committed to retaining a sense of community among its more than 600,000 students, ensuring that their learning experience, although geographically distanced from each other, would not feel disjointed or atomized. So, CUNY insured that students, faculty, and staff experiences were enhanced by the work of Cisco Inc. to establish access for over 300,000 users and subsequently by working to acquire an enterprise wide license of zoo videoconferencing solutions. That now includes its new life transcription service to aid CUNY users who require

assisted technology. During Covid 19 crisis, CUNY rose to the challenge as a 21st-century institution of higher education that understands that for its diverse student body, academic momentum means more than providing courses. It also entails affording students the resources they require to focus on their studies. As you know, the vast majority of CUNY students, from African-American, Latino, and immigrant communities, the very same communities that bore the brunt of the pandemic in New York City. The pandemic exacerbated long-standing and inequities endured by these communities and CUNY students in particular. For instance, many CUNY students work either full or part time in the service sector which experienced an industrywide layoff in the spring of 2020. Such immediate and unexpected loss of income was devastating for our students, many of whom are supporting a family while earning their degree. In a survey last year revealed that over 40 percent had lost their jobs during the pandemic. In response, CUNY worked assiduously to secure area and equitably distribute close to \$118 million to 198,000 of our students through emergency relief funds through the coronavirus aid, relief, and economic security

package, CARES. It was just distributed another \$118 million through CRISA, the federal act, and in the coming fall term, will distribute additional federal funds to the majority of CUNY students. In addition, the University raised more than \$10 million distributed in emergency grants to over 12,000 students through the Chancellor's emergency relief fund. That is in addition to groundbreaking fundraising by individual campuses and support of food pantries, emergency loans, and scholarships. Part of CUNY's holistic mission to serve our students, many of whom are raising children while pursuing a degree, all 17 of the University's campus childcare centers will be open in the fall of 2021 and all will be capable of serving 100 percent of their licensed capacity. Children of CUNY's student parents will be enrolled regardless of whether their parents are opting for in person, hybrid, or remote classes. Work is also underway to address any challenges with regards to physical space, centers occupied, including ventilation, cleaning, and minor repairs. Meanwhile, CUNY childcare programs are recruiting and enrolling children now for the fall semester. Some programs will begin offering their

services this summer. In an effort to streamline communication, the central office of Early Childhood Initiatives has established a phone line and email address for student parents to be used to further them as they seek child care for their children. The University Dean for Early Childhood Initiatives and her team meet with the center directors monthly and individually when necessary to support the reopening process. The programs that may need to hire new staff following the pandemic, the office of Early Childhood Initiatives offers an employee network to enable center directors to find staff who meet the New York City licensing requirements. In addition to supporting centers through their site recoveries, they became eligible to apply, and participate in Quality Stars New York. We are quality reading and improvement system which provides on-site consultation and coaching, professional development, and a wide variety for sources, including equipment and materials. Additional work continues to add [inaudible 00:30:44] classrooms to at least three centers in the coming year with a target date of January 2022 for opening those new classrooms. The pandemic also exacerbated the digital divide that

existed among our student population. The conversion of courses to digital learning meant that, in order to maintain academic momentum, students would need the technology to connect with their classes and so, as a further example of its role as a responsive university, CUNY and its campuses launched an enormous effort to equip students, many of whom live in Internet deserts and do not have laptop computers have their own. We quickly acquired and equitably distributed more than 33,000 laptops and tablets to students as well as 4000 mobile broadband hotspots. That all to support their learning needs as part of the University's pivot to digital learning. These devices are still available for student use and are under the responsibility and management of the colleges to determine their availability and to distribute the devices directly. These devices are intended to be a loner devices and are expected to be returned to the colleges when the student use ends. Along with the distribution of aid and technology and systemwide conversion and digital learning, CUNY understood that a 21st-century university, pandemic or not, must provide streamlined administrative classes that enhance the student faculty and staff

experience. A key example of this is Lehman College's successful effort to convert 20 vital administrative processes that had been performed manually to fully automated and online. First among these were the automation of declaration of major forms. Lehman, like many colleges, requires students to declare a major before they have earned 60 credits.

Historically, this process would be performed through a physical paper form, and then the registrar which could take a lengthy amount of time to complete.

However, Lehman's automated process allows for the forms to be completed and signed electronically, and thereby significantly cutting the time that the process takes and enhancing student satisfaction.

Second example of Lehman's work on this front is its conversion of credit transfer evaluation process to fully online. Currently while over 60 percent of Lehman's students are students who have transferred from other colleges, including CUNY and non-CUNY community colleges. A smooth and seamless transfer of their previously earned credits is integral to maintaining their academic momentum and their ability to retain financial aid. Again, this process has been performed manually with students, the admissions

office, and faculty exchange and signing of physical forms. This time-consuming process, along with CUNY social distancing measures included in person meetings and Lehman's conversion to an online process was not only necessary, but it was also overdue. And so the process is now fully digitized and ensures both transparency and expediency were transfer credit evaluation software now completed in days, not weeks. And I would know that this new tool is being used by other CUNY colleges following Lehman's example. The digitization of these key processes that Lehman have proven successful and they are continuing and being expanded. The Covid 19 pandemic also reinforced CUNY's mission as an institution of higher education that is dedicated to innovative approaches to our student career pathways. In short, CUNY has been and will continue to be a university that focuses on career building, education, and one that affords our students a pathway to a meaningful, life-sustaining work and greater agency over their lives. The key example of CUNY's work on this front during the pandemic is that it shifted focus to improve career pathways to be at the new CUNY up schooling initiative. Through the initiative, thousands of

students enroll in free courses to gain marketable skills sought after and in the new post Covid 19 economy. In the last nine months, more than 74,000 visitors accessed the initiative. In addition to CUNY's focus on digitized courses and services for its students, the University has redoubled its efforts to train its tens of thousands of faculty and digital learning environments. Even before the pandemic, CUNY was proactive on this front. Pre-pandemic, CUNY founded its innovative teaching Academy, a hub for professional development that we believe will become a national model. As part of this effort, roughly 450 faculty participated in one of the Association of College and University educators, ACUE, micro credential programs. Another 300 faculties are participating in ACUE's full 25 week course. CUNY also developed and launched its award-winning School of Professional Studies online teaching essentials workshop. As of spring 2021, the program has been completed by 2000 faculty have, since doing so, have taught more than 11,000 classes with a combined enrollment of more than 268,000 students. Furthermore, as part of the innovative teaching Academy, a unique partnership with Western

Governors University, has led to the development of faculty training programs that nearly 250 faculty successfully completed. Additionally, more than 250 faculty completed the workshop of open pedagogy and mindset and another 200 faculty participated in a workshop on learning mindsets. Finally, along with dean Ayman El-Mohandes, CUNY's graduate school of Public Health and Policy, I have had the privilege of cochairing a task force to make recommendations regarding CUNY's official vaccination policy. This task force included voices from CUNY faculty, students, and administration, as well as leaders from the public health sphere. I must be clear that, until CUNY's Board of Trustees approves the vaccination policy, I am unable to provide you with a finalized policy. However, I can reiterate some things regarding the policy that we know for certain. Gov. Cuomo has mandated that CUNY and the State University of New York, SUNY students, be vaccinated. The mandate is contingent upon FDA approval of at least one of the vaccines now being given emergency authorization. Pfizer applied in May for full licensure. At CUNY and SUNY, the mandates will be activated only way and that contingency occurs and

only after their respective boards approve a specific policy about how the mandate would be carried out.

Regardless of the activation of the vaccination mandate by that FDA approval, there will be a mandatory testing on every CUNY campus starting in the fall. All in vaccinated students, faculty, and staff will be required to participate in testing according to a protocol that will be announced by CUNY in the coming weeks. Individuals may opt out of the testing if they share information that shows they are vaccinated. In any case, we are strongly urging that everyone be vaccinated as soon as possible as it is still the safest course to preventing the spread of Covid 19. Once CUNY's Board of Trustees approves the proposed vaccination policy and the University deploys a swift and streamlined communication effort around it, university representatives will be able to speak much more specifically and on the record about the policy. I firmly believe that CUNY's advancement on digitized learning, services, faculty training, and it's reachable commitment to career pathways signal a university that is very well positioned to take on the challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities that the post pandemic world will

offer. We are taking action to ensure that our faculty, staff, and students are vaccinated or test negative if they are on our CUNY campuses or in any CUNY office. We will always be a universe that values in person instruction, advising, and services, but in order to provide students with the flexibility that they need to access courses of study and earned degrees in the midst of a busy, complicated lives, the growing digital learning environment is essential. I am confident that CUNY, as the nation's largest and most reliable engine of economic mobility will continue to serve as a national model for what a 21st-century institution of higher learning could and should be. For this and so many other reasons, I stand here today optimistic about what lies ahead.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. Vice chancellor Dr. Maybank, you may begin.

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: Good morning. I thank you, Chairperson Inez Barron for this opportunity to present to you and the members of that Higher Education Committee regarding what it is that we will be doing as we returned to CUNY campuses in the wake of Covid 19 experience. My name is Denise

Maybank and I am honored to serve as the interim Vice Chancellor for student affairs and enrollment management at the City University of New York. I had the privilege of coming for you on prior occasions and I returned to focus on what we are planning to do to support the success of the amazing CUNY students as we returned for greater in person experiences and continue to assure that CUNY students thrive through this next phase of transition. As we prepared to return for in person instruction and engagement in the fall, there are many strategies, programs, and initiatives, and activities being implemented to assure students thrive. To this end, we want students to select CUNY as their destination for advancing their [inaudible 00:41:33]. We have implemented promising programs and practices and we plan to keep students engaged. In support of enrollment, I first highlight to financial aid related initiatives. Students who file the FAFSA may qualify for an adjustment in their federal financial aid. That are impacting their ability to pay for college, they may submit a professional judgment appeal to the financial aid office. Over 14,000 students were notified of this option on June 9 and

immediately, nearly 300 students responded.

Secondly, the benefits of the American Rescue Plan Act include financial resources that will go directly to eligible students enrolled in CUNY during the 2021 to 22 academic year. Messaging drawing attention to be opportunity may help those otherwise concerned about the cost to have attendance to make a quality decision to enroll now. In spring 2021, more than half of CUNY degree seeking enrolled students received a grant on average between \$600 to \$1,000 from the previous round of stimulus funds. So, more to come. Being attentive to the decline in the enrollment of black and Latin X men, the programs of CUNY use Black Male Initiative, BMI are designed to provide additional layers of academic and social support from students from populations that are severely underrepresented in higher education, particularly African, African-American, black, Caribbean, Latino, and Hispanic males with initiatives such as high-interest dialogues, collaboration with community-based organizations, and culturally competent peer to peer mentoring. BMI is highly effective in attracting students of color and engaging them for ultimate academic success. With

the recent expansion of Mentors Matters funding, BMI will be able to increase its peer to peer mentoring program. The university admissions office is partnering with ASAP to improve enrollment and retention of disconnected youth in New York through the cutie welcome back campaign. This campaign focuses on the reclamation of two particular student populations for fall 2021. Those who had participated in ASAP previously and are not currently enrolled and those who were admitted for fall 20 and spring 21, but who did not actually enroll in any college. As part of this campaign, students are invited to connect with a dedicated counselor to arrest see the support for their reenrollment. During the pandemic, we formed new ways of responding to student means that matter and it made a difference and that need to continue. Mental health counseling continues to offer online mental health services to be a tele-therapy to students both on and off campus and we are planning to transition to in person counseling this fall. I want to assure you that the \$5 million investment in mental health services from the CARES Act funds has made a difference for students. The crisis text line has had 500

conversations completed since its launch in February.

The main issues identified have been the academics and school, anxiety and stress, and depression.

There has been an 87 percent satisfaction rate with

this service. The 10 minute mind, which offers

relaxation and meditation options, has over 27,000

registered users. Most use the product 3 to 7 times

weekly. And Talk Space, the teletherapy option for

our out-of-state and international students currently

have 4734 registered users. Health services units

are preparing for a return to the in person or hybrid

services. Clinical and wellness services will become

available and online health events will be provided

throughout the academic year to provide virtual

resources and expand wellness education beyond the

traditional in person experience. Health services

will also continue to manage immunization

requirement, both existing and new. Virtual service

counters are an invention from the pandemic. From

the Office of Financial Aid and the Bursar, these

virtual service counters were established as in

person was curtailed. The model of meeting student's

needs through virtual advising and problem solving

has proven to be a model to keep. Student have

responded to the more relaxed interactions facilitated through the space and advisors have expressed feeling more productive. We want to keep students engaged. That is something we are determined to do. Students are being kept informed about returned in person expectations and protocol through campus websites and outreach efforts employing emails, text messages, and, in some instances, phone calls. Services and activities for students associated with returning include childcare. As you heard, we have 17 childcare centers in a capacity to accommodate 1800 students. Students in the residence halls are provided with a copy of Covid protocols and guidelines for living in the holes. The residents hold directors work closely with the students to ensure that these protocols and procedures are followed. For this next initiative, I will begin by saying thank you. Thank you to the Council for supporting the partnership between the summer youth employment program and CUNY to launch the CUNY recovery core. This initiative will provide paid work opportunities for 5000 CUNY students this summer. They will join in the efforts of meeting the challenges faced by various entities during the Covid

19 pandemic. This initiative has attracted the interest of 6400 students who submitted applications and are being considered for placement. A particular note, so 100 of the participating student interns will be dedicated to the CUNY welcome core, a special program utilizing the power of your leadership and aimed at directly addressing the needs of students transitioning to CUNY this summer. With that, I want to talk just a moment about the orientation program which has continued throughout the pandemic and into the new modalities of learning we will experience in the fall. The campuses remain committed to offering exciting programs to welcome new students and prepare them for their collegiate experience. Since transitioning to an online platform, some campuses have reported increased participation in orientation. For example, at Bronx Community College, 28 percent of students completed orientation in the fall of 2019 wall 51 percent of students completed orientation in the fall 2020. Additionally, Bronx Community College has collected data that demonstrates students who complete the online orientation program gained significantly higher GPAs by the midterm and by the end of the semester compared to their peers who did

not complete the program. Campuses have also added content to their orientation programming to enhance students preparation for college and for joining the diverse CUNY community. Some campuses have included a racial and social justice come on it in response to all we are experiencing. For example, Jon Jay College has included a session in which the values, diversity, and an identity of the college are discussed. Many campuses recognize that virtual and remote learning can be an isolating experience in that students can become disengaged during the gap between acceptance, registration, and formal orientation. At Gutman Community College, incoming students have the opportunity to join live weekly sessions throughout the summer to engage with the campus community and the College of Staten Island incoming students are assigned a peer mentor with whom they can connect with throughout the summer until they begin coursework in the fall. In Kingsborough Community College, a monthly FAQ session is held to answer questions and address concerns from the incoming class. CUNY's college discovery and seek opportunity programs will provide four to five virtual developmental summary experience for incoming

first year students. The program will provide participants with exposure to campus resources and preparation for a successful transition to college. Among the mechanisms for meeting the essential needs of our students-- and that is something that is often referred to as basic needs, but there's nothing basic about them, they are essential. We are using our campus resource centers and those centers provide students with in person financial and legal counseling, public health benefit screening, healthcare enrollment, and free tax preparation. The resource center is also taking up responsibility for providing emergency funds and holding my responsibility for the food pantries, housing referrals, services targeting student parents, clothing assistance, case management referrals, and outreach services. In response to CUNY's fall reopening, some of our resource centers have added other initiatives to enhance supports to students. The Access Resource Center program at Kingsborough is increasing the value of their supermarket gift cards and the Gutman Connect Center will implement a Fresh Direct program where they can send groceries directly to students' homes. Associated with food insecurity

is the fact that policy changes have dramatically increased the number of students eligible to apply for SNAP benefits. To facilitate applications, CUNY has provided easily downloadable enrollment verification forms. More than 200,000 presumptively eligible students were notified of the changes through email and the CUNY SNAP website has been updated to include this new information. CUNY is working with Swipe Out Hunger's CUNY food navigators and HRA to provide support to the thousands of CUNY students who may be eligible for SNAP as the legislative changes. Over 17,000 CUNY enrollment verification forms have been downloaded to date. Housing instability still remains a concern and the resource centers are available to support students facing those circumstances. In terms of student inclusion initiatives, the CUNY Office of Disability programs has focused on training and development that helps build the readiness of colleges to accommodate and support students with disabilities in the remote learning environment. Out LGBTQI+ Hub and Advocacy Academy were launched this spring enhancing services to and engagement of members of the LGBTQI+ community at CUNY. The Central Office of Veteran's Affairs

established a tutor coordination project designed to connect student veterans with existing college tutorial resources available during remote learning. The pandemic has been labeled as unprecedented and certainly has, but we want to assure you that we have and will continue to devise unprecedented responses in support of the extraordinary students who make CUNY a part of their destiny. Thank you, Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee for your interest and attention to the return to CUNY campuses in the wake of Covid 19. I trust we have provided information responsive to your inquiry and useful in your deliberations. We stand committed to shoring CUNY is the place of thriving for our students. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Dr. Maybank, for your testimony. Before I turn to Chair Barron for questions, I would like to remind Council members to use the raise hand function in Zoom to indicate that you have a question for this panel. I will now turn it to the Chair to be in her questions.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you for the panel. Take you to the panel for coming and presenting your testimony and good to see you all

again. We have been before this body before and we are glad to see you. I do want to acknowledge that we were also joined by Council members Rosenthal and Cumbo and I am sure that will be able to offer them an opportunity to present their questions. I have a lot of questions and I'm going to move quickly. When will CUNY campuses reopen? I think I heard you say in August. Staff was notified that they were to return. So, what is the actual date of return?

HECTOR BATISTA: Well, for one--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Will there be one common date or will each campus determine their own opening date?

HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah. So, for the central office, the date is August 2nd. The week of August 2nd. Systemwide, we are, you know, asking the system to be ready by August 2. Each campus-- I think the official date-- I will let our Provost jump in here, but each campus has-- our official date is August 24th, but some campuses start a little later than that, but that is when faculty is due back. Dan, did I miss anything?

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: No. Yes. Even though it is the central office that has August 2 as

our reopening, the campuses also are really working towards that date, too, in terms of reopening offices and because throughout August is really a ramp up to the fall term and by the middle of August, there will be a lot of activity on campus. In fact, we will be there. Our offices will be open and students also will be visiting campus in preparation to the fall term.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: What is the start date for courses to begin?

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: August 25th.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. And each campus have the same outline or the same requirements or the protocols in the order in which these needed to be identified as having been met in any document?

HECTOR BATISTA: There are systemwide guidelines.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

HECTOR BATISTA: Each campus, because we have word local campus or horizontal campus, each campus will be different depending on how the campus prepares to ensure that we meet the guidelines connect to social distancing and those requirements. We, as I stated in my testimony, we have always-- we

have been approved already to be a-- the campus has been approve already to be at 25 percent.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

HECTOR BATISTA: We are starting from a 25 percent baseline and so some campus or-- I am just going to make this up. This is not a fact, right? Hunter could be at 35 percent. Lehman, which is a much different campus, right, could be at 40 percent, right? Each campus will be different, but each campus will have a set of guidelines that they have to adhere to to ensure that they are meeting the requirements set forth by the state, the CDC, the city, the best practices.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Is there a deadline date by which each of those guidelines must be met?

HECTOR BATISTA: So, that deadline for the campuses to submit plans was June 15th.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

HECTOR BATISTA: my office is now in the process of reviewing those plans and going back and forth with campuses on areas where we feel there are deficiencies. The challenging part of all of this is that every single day it changes, right? So, when we set the set of guidelines to put forth to the

campuses, then we will operate on one set of guidelines. In the governor and CDC came out with new guidelines, so now we have to relationship and so I'm in the process of sending the campuses some new guidelines, some new requirements so they can make the proper adjustments. So, at the end of the day, once I signed off on it, then I sit down with the Chancellor and he reviews each individual campus to make sure that they meet the mandates that we are requiring.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I understand that it has to be submitted to the Board of Trustees, as well, and that is happening at the end of the month. Will there be a public report, perhaps by the end of August, detailing how CUNY's opening goals were achieved in the areas for improvement?

HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah. Let me just go ahead. The plans are not submitting to the Board of Trustees. The guidelines were-- we discussed the guidelines with the Board of Trustees, but the plans are not submitted to the Board of Trustees.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, what is it that has to be submitted to the Board of Trustees at the meeting, I think, next--

HECTOR BATISTA: The budget. The budget.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: the budget, but not the plans for reopening in terms of the policies--

HECTOR BATISTA: Well, they're going to be some policies like, you know, vaccination and some of these other policies that the board has to approve, of course, but, you know, the specifics of the guidelines and plans, no.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. And what services and facilities will CUNY prioritize during the first stage of reopening in the fall?

HECTOR BATISTA: I'm not sure of the following you. I think that-- let me see fancier question. Let me try. Give it a shot. So, I think what we are-- If it campus is going to be at 25 percent occupancy, right, they have to bring back all the services that they need to support a 25 percent occupancy, whether it is pantries, libraries. Whatever services they need and that is factored in with the 25 percent. Did that answer your question, Council member?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes. Right. So, it will match what it is with the percentages of return required to have happening.

HECTOR BATISTA: That's right.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: The governor said that all students must be vaccinated in SUNY and CUNY. Has there been any similar statement regarding faculty? Staff at CUNY? Any--

HECTOR BATISTA: We are highly encouraging [inaudible 01:02:17] because he's chairing the task force that the Chancellor has put forth with the head of public health. We are encouraging our staff and faculty to get vaccinated. If they are not vaccinated, they will be tested before going and being allowed to return--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [inaudible 01:02:42] CUNY has received federal funds to upgrade its ventilation systems and we know that that is a critical component to fighting this disease that we are in. So, what are the plans to allocate those funds? I know that, in previous hearings that we have had, there were often times complaints about the poor ventilation, about mold and [inaudible 01:03:09]. So, how do you target or how are you targeting those schools that have the greatest need? And I did hear you mentioned about the HVAC systems, but what particularly are we trying to ensure are the

standards that we met to protect all of those persons at CUNY?

HECTOR BATISTA: So, Council member, like always, you are always a very challenging with your questions. There's a lot of questions there, so I am going to try to, hopefully-- that if I don't answer them, please tell me. So, let me take a couple of-- take them out a couple at a time. So, the way the Chancellor-- ventilation is obviously at the forefront of everyone's mind and concern, right? So, what we decided to do was bring in 1/3 party to really look at our buildings. 300+ buildings, right? Then we met with all the colleges and said, of the buildings in your particular campus, which are the ones that are essential for you to be able to open, right? So they gave us a list.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

HECTOR BATISTA: And of those buildings that are essential, which ones have new systems? Which ones do you have concerns about, right? So, we broke those up into different tiers, right? Then, we then put them through this company that we brought on board. We put them through that CDC guidelines in terms of ventilation to make sure that they met those

sort of guidelines and then we then took the case buildings and then went out and did field visit to invest the ventilation and to shore that, number one, as per the Chancellor's mandate, we have put in new filters, right? Now, I know that is a lot of talk about HEPA filters. Well, in some cases, some facilities, if you put in a HEPA filter, it actually works against it because it doesn't allow for more clean air to come in. Not every system requires a HEPA 13 filter because it creates a-- we went and made sure that, number one, that the filters were put in. Number two, to make sure that that building was operating like it was designed to operate and where not operating, that was put into another area to be evaluated and if we could not repair that, then we would good to your number two. So, the three tiers that were created was essential buildings, buildings that would be nice if they had and buildings they really don't need. So, then we went into the next tier of buildings to sort of say to that particular campus, well, I don't think in time where going to be able to get that facility ready, so you are going to have to use this facility in order to accommodate your classroom. So, that is kind of the work that is

going on there. At the end of all of this, each campus will have a report that will tell them how each of their buildings that are operated that are going to be using and that will be a report that will be shared with the unions as they are doing their walk-throughs to make sure that, you know, they are employees and faculty and staff are feeling comfortable with the kind of work that they want done. Let me be clear. The Chancellor has made it very clear to me and to our team that this is at the highest priority. So, not only did we hire one consultant, we brought an additional consultant to do work, fieldwork, to make sure that we [inaudible 01:06:51]. Hopefully, I answered your question, Council member.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes, you did. And in terms of establishing those tears, what role did other stakeholders have in identifying those locations that needed to be addressed or inspected?

HECTOR BATISTA: Well, I--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: The president and are there other stakeholders and the students themselves would know that there might be particular areas?

HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah. So, when it comes to the buildings, I won't take the buildings in isolation. I think that the way that the Chancellor has instructed his presidents to do is to engage the community and who is in that community? The unions, the students, the stakeholders. And their opening plans. Within their opening plans are buildings and all the different components that are part of their opening plans. So, there's been committees that have been formed that have been engaged in those discussions. So, it is to cover the whole plan not just building specific plan. We had been that, obviously, we don't know where right now what buildings each college is going to use until those plans get reviewed. Once those plans get reviewed and approved, then stakeholders, the union, particularly, will be able to know that at-- I'm going to use Dan's college. At Lehman, building A, B, D, E were approved to be open. Those are the buildings. And, as you noticed, C was not included, so C is not opened. It's not a building that is going to be used. So, those are the four buildings that we are going to put staff in and you should go there and do your inspections for compliance.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: A question about
3 the percentages that each of the schools will
4 establish in terms of the students that will be
5 involved in on campus learning. Can you tell us how
6 the percentages will impact the residential or
7 housing needs of students?

8 HECTOR BATISTA: Are you talking about
9 dorms?

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

11 HECTOR BATISTA: Okay. So, when it comes
12 to dorms, the as our Provost stated earlier, we are
13 hoping that we are going to have a vaccination plan
14 that once the FDA approves the vaccination and all
15 the dorm students will be asked to be vaccinated,
16 right? And in order for them to occupy that
17 particular location. When it comes to dorms and so
18 forth. So, the reality is that our goal is,
19 hopefully, to be able to have fully vaccinated
20 students occupying and using the dorms to its
21 capacity.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Are there shared
23 rooms in the dorms or are the rooms in dorms
24 individual or does it vary? Are there suites where
25 there are three students sharing an apartment type?

HECTOR BATISTA: They vary. There are quads, there are singles, there are doubles, depending on every particular campus. Now, you know, dorms for us is not a big number. I think we have total systemwide 1700 or so. Ditties can correct me if I'm wrong on that, but I think, I mean, we don't have a lot of dorm students. You know, we are a commuter school, but it is mostly that are dorms are located in Queens College, CSI, city College, and that we have some Hunter, [inaudible 01:10:37]. We have some least at Jon Jay, we have some least areas. But, for the most part, we are not a big dorm school.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. But, for those were not locals or whose home situation don't allow for them to live at home and they are in dorms, that is the critical issue and I'm wondering what would be the percentage that you think might be impacted? If you have a double and you decided, well, it is a room that is supposed to be a double, but worldly going to allow one student, have you made any projections as to the reduction in student numbers that would be able to utilize the housing that CUNY does offer?

2 HECTOR BATISTA: I'm not sure what
3 students you're referring to. I mean, I think that
4 we have a program with ACS, right? If you are
5 referring to those students, you know, obviously, we
6 will make whatever accommodations we need to make to
7 ensure that students are--

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You said 1700
9 students or there about that use the dorm facilities
10 at CUNY? What is your projection as to what that
11 number will be now if we have to reduce the use of--

12 HECTOR BATISTA: I would have to get back
13 to you. I can't, you know, really can't answer that
14 right now.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I do want to
16 acknowledge that we have been joined by Council
17 member Ulrich. I don't know if he left. He did have
18 a question, but we have been joined by Council member
19 Ulrich and if he returns, I will defer to have him
20 ask his question.

21 DANIELS LEMONS: Chair Barron, one thing
22 I could maybe add to that consideration, and it has
23 been said before that we know the ground keep
24 shifting under our feet--

25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: True.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: If we do end up with a mandatory vaccination policy, that is very likely to impact what will be possible in the dorms as well as in other situations on campus.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, what are we going to do or what mechanism has been put in place to allow for notice to be given to the campus responsible for making sure that things are correct? If I am a student and I see a condition that I think is inadequate or suspicious or hazardous, what mechanism is in place for me to immediately report that and get a response?

HECTOR BATISTA: Well, each campus has their own website, their own email where students or anyone can report any challenges connected or any--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: For example, in this age of Covid, if I go to the bathroom and I noticed, oh, my gosh. There's no soap? It's really important issue now that were talking about thorough hand washing. How do I report that, whatever the system is that is in place for that? And how quickly does it get responded to?

HECTOR BATISTA: You know, as our plan has been laid out, you know, they should be

responsive very quickly. I mean, each campus has their own mechanism of how things get reported. Happy to share that with you. I can't address each campus and how they handle it, but I know every campus has their own sort of system in order to be addressed. I will say this that a couple of things are connected to inspections. Number one, we have not only--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I'm not just talking about inspections because I understand--

HECTOR BATISTA: No. No. But it is connected your question, right?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

HECTOR BATISTA: We have a separate director for environmental safety centrally. Each campus has their own. The idea that art director managing safety has been working with the local campus to really put together a protocol in terms of looking at facilities and making sure that things are included in the bathrooms. That the bathrooms are being looked at. We also have implemented more cleaning. So, instead of, you know, by itself every time three times a day, the multiple times a day going in cleaning by itself, those would allow for if

we have no soap before the soap dispensers to be filled and things along those lines. So, we put in different mechanisms in place and I am happy to send that to you in writing.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. How will CUNY engage students? Were you still speaking? Were you finished?

HECTOR BATISTA: No. Finished.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: How would CUNY engage with students to interact with Covid safety plan updates? As you said, it is constantly changing, so how are we going to engage students? Is there anything similar to the hashtag VaxUp CUNY campaign and how will students be made aware of the liaison or the point person at any particular school?

HECTOR BATISTA: You know, we have done a really, I believe, marketing communication and [inaudible 01:15:58] systemwide has really done an amazing job of making sure that not only are our campuses and our students-- I would tell you that we reach close to 3 million users this past several months connected to, you know, communication connected to Covid 19. Each campus has been asked to have, you know, communications connected to that. I

will let either the Provost Lemons or vice chancellor Maybank, you know, at more to it, but I think we are very proud of the work that has been done by our communication department in conjunction with our colleges and getting the information out for our students. But if any of you want to add anything to that, then I--

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Chair, I would be happy to add, Hector. I can answer partly and put on my Lehman College President hat--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: having been really close to the ground on that. But, you know, first just from the central point, central communication has been really extensive and I think it is really touched all the media. We know that, you know, we can send emails for things on websites but students--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: tend to access other ways, right? They tend to use Instagram. They use Facebook. They use other methods to get information and we have worked really hard to be on social media and have a really active presence and now I know, for instance, at Lehman College, lots and

lots of live briefings and that was for faculty, staff, and students. But I also did Instagram live briefings very regularly for students because I knew that was where they were very likely to tune in and get information and I think that is pretty true of the other campuses, too. There has been a lot of outreach that way because things have changed so quickly and there is never enough information. But as soon as we have it, we tried to get it out to students and let them know.

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: And may I add that senior vice chancellor and Glenda Grace convenes the Covid liaisons on a regular basis and it is a very robust group and they share information amongst themselves. They come up with ways of communicating and that list of people is available, but maybe we can, you know, certainly push that information out on social media, as well, so that people know exactly who the person is for their campus. But they are pretty much no. They are pretty active. They are pretty engaging, and they are paying attention regularly you know what is going on and making certain that we are responding appropriately.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much. Comparing CUNY's course offerings to the fall of 2019, pre-pandemic, what percentage will be offered this fall in 2021 and how many will be offered in person? Will there be an increase in the number of digital or hybrid learning, as well? And was there a particular academic area where you saw there was a significant decrease in the course offerings?

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: First of all, in terms of the fall 21 course offerings, we very much are in a transition back to be an in person University.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: And also been a commuter school, it makes us kind of stand apart from a lot of big university systems we might compare our students to. We've heard that lots of universities are going fully in person. We are in between there. We are going to have about 50 percent in person hybrid courses and about 50 percent all online courses. That percentage is pretty settled now. It has been evolving over the last month as we have had settled the schedule, but that is going to be pretty

close to where we are going to land. We tried to pay attention a lot to what it is that students are asking for and what they want and what's very interesting is that actually a majority of students are still preferring distance learning to being in person and there are a variety of reasons were that. And, again, I think that goes to our being a commuter school and other issues, you know, that students face. I saw we-- what we are trying to do is make our course offerings, help us through that transition because we know next spring, you know, any changes that are really in the wrong direction with the pandemic, by next spring, we expect to be fully back in person except for those programs, you know, that we very intentionally want to be offered hybrid or online. The transition is what we are in and that is where we are right now. We are at 50 percent. So, in terms of the courses, you know, compared from-- what I can do is I can compare fall 21 to fall 2019 and this overall across all the campuses, there are 20 percent of courses that were offered fall of 19 that will not be offered fall 21 and I have to-- there is a caveat there because when you talk about courses not offered, it doesn't mean that we will

have necessarily 20 percent overall fewer course because there are elective courses that we offered one term and then another term they won't be offered and then another course will be offered in place in a major. Overall, that's the difference. And in terms of the areas where there are the largest reductions in those courses offered in that comparison, as they cultural and gender studies, foreign languages, literatures, and linguistics, visual and performing arts, [inaudible 01:22:09] professions and related clinical sciences and business managing, and those are the top areas with that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Where there has been a decrease.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Where there has been a decrease. Right.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Interesting. Ethnic studies, I heard you say, has been a decrease.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You would wonder, in this light of talking about social justice, that that would be an increase. Well, that's interesting.

2 DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Well, if you think
3 about what drives that, I mean, first we offer course
4 in response to demand.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

6 DR. DANIEL LEMONS: So, you know, if we
7 are offering a course and there's a big demand, then
8 we might open another section of that course, right?
9 Whatever it is. So there's a lot of expansion and
10 contraction in the offerings in response to
11 enrollment. And so what I would say, my guess is,
12 and I don't know this because, you know, this would
13 require a lot of, you know, surveying and finding out
14 from specific students. My guess is that the reason
15 that we saw reductions in programs is that student
16 demand really changed a lot through the pandemic and
17 so I fully expect that will rebound by the spring
18 when the pressure of the pandemic on students--
19 particularly economic pressure-- will hopefully be
20 much less.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. In
22 terms of student degree tracks, either associate or
23 baccalaureate, as the reduction in cost options
24 impaired students progress over the past year and a
25 half and how has the University prepared to reorient

and/or offer additional course options to accelerate any setbacks or assist students in getting back on track?

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: So, surveys prior to Covid showed that a sizable minority of students couldn't access all the courses that they felt they needed to graduate. That was a study that was pre-Covid. That is what students were telling us. A sizable minority of students said that. And so, what we have been doing in response to that, because that, obviously, was a significant concern for us. We want students to be able to, if they need to complete a major, we want to make sure that they have the courses available to do that. They're not sitting there for term or a year waiting for some course that is required. So, we been doing a number of things. Some of these things have been underway for quite some time, but there are a number of things that we have been doing-- and this is pre-Covid, again, mostly-- to try to make sure that we are able to offer students the courses they need because we, obviously, we want students to finish in a timely way. So, one of them is a curricula benefit management system that has already been very

effective at helping us to manage the curriculum. It allows for real-time integration across our CUNY information systems. That something very important. Another one is University student schedule builder. That is been fully implemented at all the CUNY colleges now. It enables students to plan and register for courses that meet their degree requirements, schedules, and also their personal constraints. So, it is a very important tool to help students actually develop their scheduled term by term in a way that is going to work for them. We have also had an academic momentum campaign that is now in about its third year, actually going into its fourth year. It is a comprehensive set of strategies that we are using to try to accelerate students towards their degrees. In another very important tool, and it is one we been using for some time, but it has started out being fairly limited in its use and what we are doing is we are expanding it so that the entire curriculum is covered. It's called Degree Maps. And so, that allows the student to go on to this Degree Map program and it will lay out exactly for them here is the series of courses that you need to complete because that is not always easy to keep

track of and, you know, there can be requirements that you might miss, but this program, what departments do is they map out their degree. Here is what you need to do. And that is a very accurate accounting for students. So, these are things that we're doing to try to make sure that students are getting the courses and that they now, right? The know what the courses are that they need to finish.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. That is so important because this past month, my son graduated from Medgar with his associates and liberal arts and his bachelors in public administration and it takes quite a bit of managing to make sure that you have got the right courses in the right places at the right time. So, that is very, very important.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Congratulations.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Thank you.

HECTOR BATISTA: Congratulations.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. You worked hard.

HECTOR BATISTA: I'm sure he did.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I want to move to the financial and student fees. How much have

community colleges collected over the 2021 academic year in student fees and have you pressed pause on collecting any of these student fees over the past year? And what do you do with those fees that are collected when the services can't or aren't rendered to students such as the fee that they had for child care that was required that wasn't offered in have you ever refunded those fees to students?

HECTOR BATISTA: So, on the fees, we collected about \$21.5 million, but for the spring semester, we refunded students 50 percent of some of the fees connected to the spring semester. We also suspended the activity fees because, you know, there was not a lot as activity going on in the campus since. So, as you know, systemwide, nationwide, CUNY has one of the lowest in the country in terms of our fees, so we continue to, you know, feel proud of that and continues to make sure that, you know, we are very mindful of those fees going forward.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, is it still a suspension or a designated amount? Do we have a finite number that we can say to students? Well, normally, it would be X dollars, but this time it's X divided by two.

HECTOR BATISTA: We are happy to provide that to you, but in this spring we gave back about 50 percent of the fees for student activities for the spring 2020 as a result of the pandemic because we eliminated a lot of activities on campus.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. How's the--

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: Chairperson Barron, may I offer something?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: I do want you to realize that a lot had been going on even in the midst of that. So, with university students had provided hundred \$10,000 in Covid emergency grants so that that information, I think, is a really important, as well and the student government associations have been really active in making certain that there is programming available to students, as well. So, I just want you to be aware that effort still is there in spite of what else may be going on around fees. The students are serious about making certain that everyone has attention given to their needs and to their interests, as well.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And we are so proud of the work that they do and their involvement in their voice. Thank you.

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: They are amazing.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes. How have the federal stimulus funds received by this institution been designated to backfill tuition or revenue losses and how do you plan to use remaining funds received to provide greater services and will any of that money be used to address faculty or staff layoffs?

HECTOR BATISTA: Well, as you know, we are-- our budgets does not been approved by the board.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

HECTOR BATISTA: Until we have approval from the board, we really cannot, you know, really say how those funds are going to get used because the board--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Well, are you asking the board to consider using those funds to address the faculty and staff needs?

HECTOR BATISTA: We are asking the board to approve some of those funds to help us with some

of the loss in revenue and enrollment connected to the pandemic.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, do you have a plan for a dollar amount or a budgeting plan for how you would like the Board of Trustees to designate the use of the remaining funds?

HECTOR BATISTA: Our focus is to make sure that our campus continues to be able to run the Best. As you know, we've taken kind of a big hit on our three year schools.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

HECTOR BATISTA: And we are hoping, as I stated in my revenue with the city Council and your committee advocating for us to get some of those resources back and, if we get some of those resources back, then we will be able to use some of those resources to reinvest in the University which we believe is the best use of those funds. How those dollars get allocated depends on how each individual college budget situation is. The challenges they have that are connected to the budget situation. You know, in this fiscal year and in the next fiscal year.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. So, the Board of Trustees at their June 7th meeting approved CUNY's proposal to send down the federal stimulus funds. Can you give us more information about that proposal?

HECTOR BATISTA: Yes. So, some of that proposal-- \$47 million is going to go to student support and retention. \$5.7 million is going to go for a reopening clause. 105 million is going to go to recovering project revenue losses. 1.9 million for mental health. 3 million for online programs and development. 1.7 million for faculty and professional development. And then the remaining 77 million we are waiting for plans from the campuses in terms of how those funds will be--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, you are waiting for plans from the campus. And who are the personnel that will be involved in making those decisions for how their campus-- Who is the president relying on to help us? Maybe, Dr. Blevins, you can tell us who you are relying on to help you at your school.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: So, the primary group would be the president's cabinet where you have the vice president for admin and finance, but also in

there you have representatives of student affairs, academic affairs, and all the different parts of the campus that need to be taken care of. Facilities has been a huge one and just making sure the facilities are upgraded and, you know, things that we have talked about before.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: For instance, at Lehman, you know, we really did all the bathrooms are touchless. So, those types of things were done and managed through admin and finance and facilities. But that is the primary group that would bet that. You know, that is based on a larger campus plan. You know, Hector mentioned that earlier and that group really had all the campus constituencies represented.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. So, to be clear, how much federal funding are the senior colleges receiving in stimulus aid?

HECTOR BATISTA: About \$563 million.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. And--

HECTOR BATISTA: In the two-year schools is 242.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Say that again.

HECTOR BATISTA: \$242 million.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: For?

HECTOR BATISTA: The two-year schools.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Two-year schools.

Okay. Thank you. And if you could, the information that you gave us, we could get that probably in your testimony now. The proposal for the spend down.

Thank you so much. And there was something in your testimony, Mr. Batista, where you talked about--

Where did I write it? The program that helps staff members to improve their skills in online teaching academics? Teaching Academy, I think you called it?

HECTOR BATISTA: I think that was in Dan's.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: That was in my comments. Right.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Dr. Lemons, you talked about the teaching Academy. I am interested in that. You talked about how professors and instructors are using that. You know, I've been told that there was a resistance or lack of interest in using the digital and now we have the pandemic, so we were forced into that. So, open sourced materials, will there be an impact, then, on reducing the cost of using textbooks or are instructors really

going to come together and collaborating use those kinds of online resources? Will that have an impact on saving our students those exorbitant costs for textbooks?

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Well, I love that question because, to me, this is the opportunity that we have right now. You're right.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: You know, if we tried to force everybody to do what happened--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: We would never succeed, right?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: We would've never succeeded, but what we had was a situation where everybody just had to.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Had to.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: You know, I think that even though there might be resistance initially, I think a lot of instructors found out that these are some great tools available to them and they can really help student learning by using these tools, you know, and I feel that we have this window of

opportunity right now that we are in where, okay.

All the students are used to it in all the instructors have been using these tools. Well, we don't want to drop them. We want to keep using--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: and developing them and that is why through this professional training, and so important because in a lot of ways, we have just scratched the surface and what we can do and we can do a lot better. And you probably heard and we all heard that there is a very mixed student experience around being remote, right? Some of it was great. Some of it was not so great. And that is all around learning to do it better and what we have got to do is build on that. And I feel like, you know, on the academic side, this is a huge opportunity because these resources can really help students. That is not to say that in person isn't important. In person is very important and even those digital things help in person, but they certainly help students when they are not on campus and when they need to access resources. And, you know, the open education resources and developing that, I feel like this is an opportunity to really

expand that and, if we do, that will really bring down costs for students. That out of class, you know, the beyond tuition costs that they are paying.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. Right. In terms of now again making sure that we maximize the digital learning platforms and keep the instructors using it, are there any kind of carrot that are being given to them? You know, because it is easy to fall back. You know, we get on our diets in the first six months we are grade and then, you know, we lapse and go back. So, are there carrots that are being offered to entice them to maintain and improve and expand what they have learned and how to use those resources?

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Yes. Great. The plan is really to expand the training in the opportunities for faculty to build their skills and, you're right. There have to be incentives. And so, at the very minimum, what we are doing with those is we are offering faculty some compensation for their time to do that. And that is important to do that. So, yes. We have to build that dynamic again, but we really want to see that happen and continue. And I think that if you just add up the numbers that I

mentioned and what we have done so far, it is well over 3000 faculty members have been involved in some form of it. Well, that is a high percentage, but we want to keep moving that up.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. And just a few more questions before we see if there are other Council members. You talked about childcare and I believe you mentioned it would benefit 1600 students across the campuses--

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Right.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: with accommodations. In terms of returning an opening and distance requirements as you say, again, there being relaxed. We understand that. What is the opportunity here for us to expand financing for these childcare centers and other opportunities for children to be cared for while their parents are at school?

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: That's a great question and, I mean, one of the reasons and a number of important reasons why we want to get these childcare centers fully open for the fall is not only, of course, primarily so that we can help our students, but also we have state and federal funding

that comes to these centers and we didn't want to see that interrupted because that is very, very important in helping those centers to run and really provide a lot of subsidy for their operation. So, that is one of the ways that those centers are able to operate in an affordable way for students. In terms of expanding, I suppose that one of the challenges that we face is there is just physical space. And, again, I can talk more directly. At Lehman, we have a fairly new childcare center. You might've seen it when you were--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes. I did.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: on campus. Yeah. I think you-- So, you know, that is a very nice new facility, but, of course, it's got a finite amount of space.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right. I'm going to cut right there because while my Council members has been very patient and bill on the line. So, I'm going to do for him to ask Amy to expand it now to my colleagues. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. I will now call on Council members with questions in the order that they have raise their hands using the

hand function in Zoom I would also like to remind everyone that questions are reserved for Council members and we will begin now with Council member Rosenthal.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so much. And, Chair Barron, I appreciate you giving me a chance to ask questions. Have a meeting starting at noon, but in these will be quick. And, frankly, Chair Barron, you were exactly in the line of questioning that I have, so I'm not sure I'm adding too much, but thank you so much for this opportunity and thank you for the awesome hearing that you are holding. Just will quickly, I guess, you know, when so much money is involved, right? You're getting hundreds of millions of dollars from the federal government. It's hard to keep track of it and it really genuinely is and, you know, when you want to know that it is getting to the students, it is hard to figure that out of whether or not it actually-- you know, if you have hundreds of millions of dollars, do hundreds of millions of dollars get to students the one percent for overhead, so I guess, rather than say I have X hundreds of million and with

that we can serve this many students, can we start with do you know what the real demand is? How many people at CUNY now would not be able to come back unless the federal money is there for them for them to come back? Right? Are we talking tens of thousands of students? And then, once you have sort of that number, how much money do you have available and do you meet 100 percent of demand? And if the answer is we meet 80 percent of demand, that is fine, whatever it is, but do you even have a sense of that?

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: I can start to answer that if you want, Hector.

HECTOR BATISTA: Sure.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: So, one of the things-- and I think I mentioned this in my opening comments is that we did a survey last year to try to understand how students were being impacted by Covid. We found 40 percent of them had lost their jobs. So, there is one starting point on, you know, who needs aid. Well, you know, we know at least those 40 percent of students do. We also know that a lot of those jobs have still not come back. So, there is a high percentage that need it. We also know how many students have received direct aid from what came

through from the federal stimulus packages and first for the CARES Act it was 118 million that went directly to students--

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Again, if you could try to talk apples to apples. So, 40 percent of students lost their jobs. How many people is that and then X hundreds of millions went to students. How many is that? I know it's hard, but if you could do apples to apples because, otherwise, it just sort of goes in one ear and out the other. I don't understand what you are saying really.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: I guess 40 percent -- I'm doing the math quickly here in my head, but I think that is around 120 to 130,000 students of the students that are in degree granting programs. Of course, we have many students that are--

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: 130 students have lost their jobs making it harder for them.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: We don't know when possible, but harder. Then you've got it in total how much to give in direct aid? 100 million--

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: So far, it's been 118 million from--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: total?

3 DR. DANIEL LEMONS: I was 118 million
4 from the CARES Act and another 118 million which
5 recently was distributed--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So, 240
7 million. How many people does that serve? Is it
8 130,000 students?

9 HECTOR BATISTA: It was about-- I mean,
10 I think of the \$230 million that we have given out,
11 we-- probably it's about 150,000 students.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: 150. Okay.
13 And--

14 HECTOR BATISTA: And by the way, Council,
15 we are-- in our website, we are mandated to report
16 out how the stimulus dollars are. So, you know,
17 it's--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I mean, so is
19 OMB mandated--

20 HECTOR BATISTA: [inaudible 01:47:38]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: to tell the
22 federal government how they are spending the money.
23 That is the mandate of federal money. You are
24 required to show how you spend it. It is always the
25 devil is always in the details in terms of do you

2 show it in a way that the public can understand or do
3 you show it in a technical works for federal OMB sort
4 of way? You know what I mean?

5 HECTOR BATISTA: You know, we show it the
6 way the federal government wants us to.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: That's right.
8 That's right. That's concerning.

9 HECTOR BATISTA: I don't know about that.
10 We're meeting the mandate that is required by the
11 federal government.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I would say
13 you--

14 HECTOR BATISTA: We can disagree on that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Who was going
16 to be involved in oversight of the federal funds
17 given that local campuses are coming up with their
18 own plans? Who is doing oversight on that?

19 HECTOR BATISTA: Well, ultimately, it's
20 the Chancellor and the CEO. It is presented to the
21 Board of Trustees for approval and how the funds get
22 distributed in our chief financial officer puts
23 together the reports.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: And--
25

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: So, one thing, Councilwoman, you know, the funds don't come as a great. Their reimbursement based and so there is detailed reporting that is done quarterly from every campus in which every expenditure has to fit in with an approved federal category so that the accounting is very, very detailed and accurate coming from every campus and submitted to the central administration.

HECTOR BATISTA: Yeah. So, we can't redeploy dollars that are earmarked for particular areas. The just the way it is.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it all sounds rosy. When I hear from students that they can attend and really what you just said that the 150,000 sounds rosy compared to 130,000. You know, but I don't know. When I hear from students that they had to drop out, they were covered, right? They didn't make it as part of the 150. So, I don't know the details intimately. I just need you to know that there are students that can't come back and students who can't get housing. Students who are still trying to take care of their families and students who, you know, have too much on

their plate and that I hope CUNY is doing all it can to go out of your way for these students. You know?

HECTOR BATISTA: Well, I can assure you, Councilwoman, that the Chancellor is doing that. I mean, I put together the--

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yeah. I mean, if you could--

HECTOR BATISTA: [inaudible 01:50:47]

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: show that in a way that is meaningful, I would--

HECTOR BATISTA: I understand.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: believe you, but there are too many students who are tweeting at me, who are emailing me, who are calling me saying that they are not getting it. So, that divide is why it and I guess what I would do-- if you really are so confident about this, I would ask you to stay on when the student Senate representative on the Board of Trustees. When she speaks, if you are actually able to answer her questions and to respond to her with a straight face when she tells you about the other students and not just give some sort of blanket, you know, ambiguous statement, that would show something. But it is certainly not-- what I'm

hearing from students as the demand is overwhelming and I'm not saying it's easy and I'm not saying it's a slam dunk. You know, you all are doing God's work, but this is part of the job is meeting all of these students needs and meeting the moment. Thank you very much for giving me that time, Chair Barron.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You're welcome, Council member Rosenthal. In the follow-up just briefly, in your presentation-- I think, Dr. Maybank, you spoke about BMI and you spoke about ASAP and I thought I heard you refer to a welcome back program which I thought I heard you say reclaims students. So, is that the way that we can find out quantitatively how students were able to be supported in their need for finances? And we have often said that it would be helpful to have some kind of survey tool which captures at the end of the semester whether a student intends to return or if there are issues or if a student does not return, what is the cause? What are the reason that that students are returning and if we have that kind of database, I think that ASAP program that you mentioned, welcome back could be specifically targeted to that population and which said in their survey that these

were the issues that they were facing that might interfere in their continuing education.

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: Chairperson Barron, I do believe that that is doable, certainly, and we can provide that information to you if we are able to collect it this time around, but certainly going forward can create a plan to do that. But what I wanted to point out for Councilperson Rosenthal also is that the money that is been distributed, the 118 from the CARES and the 118 from CARISA goes directly to the students. And so, I had given the range of awards of \$600 up to \$1000 and it may been a little more for some, but there is a formula that we is to look at the circumstance for the students. The money goes directly to them. The circumstances of the pandemic have resulted in families-- and those include student families-- having to make really hard decisions. So, they are getting the money, but then the choice has to be made about how it is spent and there is nothing that causes that money to automatically go to paying the outstanding bills that are associated with their education. It may have to go to medication and to housing into those other things, as well. So, that is a part of what we're

facing and I realize that it is serious and dire.

So, we can check in with those that we are looking to reclaim in this effort and find out what The them from re-enrolling. Them from coming back and now is afforded them the opportunity to do so because our hope is making certain that people know that there is another round of stimulus money coming that might encourage enrollment. So, yes.

HECTOR BATISTA: And, Councilwoman, I just want to respond back to your comment. Trustee Juvanie not only meets with me and meets with the Chancellor and meets with members of the cabinet, including our chief financial officer. We have discussions connected to it and we do look at it. We're here because of the mission of this organization. The mission of CUNY and we take that extremely seriously. So, the notion that we would not, you know, look at someone with a straight face is not a notion that-- you know, going to let that out there because I think that are Chancellor not only rented to your school, but ran a four-year school and is extremely committed to the mission of the University and we are all sharing in that vision and sometimes resources are limited and the way the

resources come to us, they come in the way that doesn't allow us the flexibility that we like. And the Chancellor, because of that, went out and did a lot of fundraising to make sure that, you know, we get resources for students that are not covered under the stimulus grants. Obviously, dollars don't stretch as far as we would like and there will be students that will be left out, and that is unfortunate and it's something we are constantly working on, but the notion that we don't take this, you know, extremely seriously is not a notion that we want to leave out there. We are committed. The reason we do this is because we are committed to the mission of the system and it is a great mission and our students are at the forefront of all of it.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I guess, Chairperson Barron, if I may, just for another minute?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Sure. Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you. Dr. Maybank, I really appreciate the way you connected the dots. It helps one understand the realities. So, I appreciate that. Do you think that-- do you think that, given your point about all

the different things that CUNY students are juggling, do you think that they know also about how to get like the-- you know, there is federal relief money coming through for rent, for example. Like do they know about-- are they helping-- you know, it's horrible that they are the conduit, but they are. Do you know that they have access to that, as well?

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: Well, the resource centers that I mentioned in my testimony are designed to be available to students to lay that out for them. A lot of things happened in that peer to peer relationship where someone says, well, I was able to do such and such and they share that information. So, I think it is critical for us to push as much information on his many platforms, there is many mechanisms as possible so that they can share information amongst themselves then we are on point from the student affairs perspective to make certain we are connecting them to that things that are important. So like SNAP eligibility and is pushing that information out to make certain students knew that you may now be eligible. Forget what was going on. He may now be eligible. Additionally, we have to be able to say that there are resource centers,

you may need to go and see someone at legal aid.

Let's get you connected to them. When we had the resources for rent forgiveness through May, making sure that they knew about all of that. So, yeah. I think there are ways that we do it. Can we do more? Always. Always. Because, as I said, we have amazing students who are living amazing lives and we need the making amazing contributions, so we have to do everything we can do an sure that.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Oh, the feedback I'm getting is that you meet with the students on a regular basis and that they really, really appreciate you very, very much. I mean, and then--

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: Thank you for that.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Do you feel or-- I mean, I just think-- Chair Barron, get back to you. I don't mean to be yammering on, but I think the most powerful thing we just heard or I just heard in the last 10 minutes or so is just this notion that people are getting, you know, grants of \$600-\$1000 and that is surely not enough to cover the shortfall in these people's lives and I'm glad to

know that there are resource centers that can help people get access to other funding. That is very powerful. Chair Barron, do you have a clear sense-- I shouldn't be asking you this. I will ask you afterwards, but I just hope that we really-- I think we should have more transparency about how the money is being spent, what it is being spent for, and what the demand is. I think that demand is a lot higher than I was aware and we have to figure out a way to articulate it so that we can advocate for the CUNY students the best we can. But, thank you, Chair Barron. I always appreciate you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You're very welcome, and thank you for your pointed questions, as well. I will turn it now back to the host.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair. Chair Barron, if you don't have any further questions, we are going to move on to the public portion of the--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I do have more questions. Just one or two. First of all, when we-- Well, the first one is not a question. It is a comment. When we returned to free tuition, many of these problems will be removed, dressed, and not is

pressing for a large student population. You know, that has been my rallying cry and it was the rallying cry of the representative here before me. Return to free tuition. That is the reason that I was able to get through college and just have to, at that time, worry about books which were a nominal cost, transportation, food, and the \$0.15 token with the Y in the middle. So, we want to get back to that. Yes. That was something way back when. But the last question that I have is what are you doing to address the mental health needs of staff and faculty at schools on our campuses?

HECTOR BATISTA: Well, HR department has, in conjunction with the company that we have been working with is we will be offering to our faculty and staff services connected to be able to deal with the challenges that we all are facing, right? We all have faced challenges connected to the pandemic. I think our Chancellor-- and I'll defer that today and in Denise, but our Chancellor has made it a really important point to get colleges to really focus on mental health and it has been a priority of his and has allocated resources to make sure that students have services connected to mental health. I

am happy to share with you and send you the information that we are doing with faculty and staff. More than happy to send you that information.

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: I had referenced the tools that we were able to purchase with the \$5 million allocation from the CARES Act fund. So, the crisis

it is open to anyone from CUNY. So, it is not just student related. So, among those 500 conversations that I have referenced, that there could have been faculty and staff in the next of that.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, okay.

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: People using the 10 minute mind tool is another way that they could, again, you know, it is relaxation. It's mindfulness. It is all of those things and anyone can use that, as well. So, the investment is focused on students, but available to others and those particular tools.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I'm glad you clarified that. That is good to know.

DR. DENISE MAYBANK: It is not students only. Yes. It's open. It's open.

DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Chair Barron, I could add a little bit more in terms of just faculty. We did launch through trainings, mental health trainings on Blackboard. You know, that is our learning management system that faculty and students use, but we launched new modules on that. And it was focused on faculty and staff because I think, you know, we are acutely aware of what students have been through, but we all here very directly from faculty and staff about the stress, you know, over the last 16 months have been.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. New prompted another question for me. As we talk about using Blackboard, what is the status now of CUNY's program that allows for auditing of classes for, I believe, senior population at no cost? Is that still in policy? How is that message shared? And what has been the participation? Do we have a tool to measure what that is been? And particularly now when people are having all these other kinds of mental pressure. They may just want to take something just to elevate themselves mentally, spiritually, and not necessarily following a skills development.

2 DR. DANIEL LEMONS: Right. Right.

3 It's a really good question and I would have to get
4 back to you to really tell you--

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

6 DR. DANIEL LEMONS: You know, those
7 statistics you are interested in. I would be really
8 interested in knowing myself what those are because I
9 don't know. But I can get back to you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Great. Thank you
11 so much. I appreciate you coming and I wish you all
12 good health. Great opening in the fall semester and
13 continue to serve the population that we are required
14 to surf and that expect our best efforts. And I will
15 turn it back to our host, Ms. Briggs.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair
17 Barron. We have concluded the administration
18 testimony and we will now turn to public testimony.
19 First, I would like to remind everyone that I will
20 call up individuals in panels. Once your name is
21 called, a number of our staff will unmute you and you
22 may begin your testimony once the sergeant-at-arms
23 sets the clock and gives you the Que. All testimony
24 will be limited to three minutes. Remember that
25 there is a few second delay before you are on muted

and we can hear you. The first panel of public testimony in order of speaking will be Juvanie Piquant, Chair of the University Student Senate, Mojubaolu Okome, University Faculty Senate, and Diana Cruz of the Hispanic Federation. I will now call on Juvanie Piquant to begin her testimony.

JUVANIE PIQUANT: Greetings, members of the Public Higher Ed Committee. My name is Juvanie Piquant. I am the Chairwoman of CUNY University Student Senate and member of the CUNY Board of Trustees. I would like to extend my thank you to Council member Inez Barron for being a fierce advocate and strong advocate for CUNY and holding this oversight hearing regarding returning back to campus. As we have known, this past year has been strenuous on our students and it does seem like we are approaching the light at the end of the tunnel and returning back to campus, but that doesn't mean that all of our issues are fixed already. We do know that there are many discrepancies and issues and conversations that are occurring. The first thing I would like to talk about is a little bit of the vaccinations in CUNY's efforts to promote vaccination to our students. We have heard from the

administration that vaccinations will be required for students who will be taking in person classes.

Exemptions are going to be eligible, if granted, to the people, as well, and also testing will be

happening. But I think my concern as a student and

sharing that-- and I have stress to this to the

administration and they have been very receptive in

regards to ensuring, despite a student vaccinated or

not, if a student does have a negative Covid tests,

they can still be granted the resources they need to

succeed. When we talk about basic needs, as our Vice

Chancellor, Denise Maybank loves to speak about,

technology, food pantries, Senior mental health

counselor on campus. Those are basic and vital needs

that it most of the time been stripped away from our

students are not easily accessed. I must say I

applaud CUNY for the effort to continuing the food

pantries throughout the pandemic that we have seen

where students were able to come on campus to collect

bagged groceries and partnering up with community

organizations to ensure that we are consistently

helping our students. But that also helped with our

student government and our student leaders across

CUNY who would come out and volunteer every other

week to make that happen. And I think it speaks to the true testament of what we are as an institution. Getting back to the basics of what we need as essential resources. One of the most pivotal issues that we are going to see when we entered the fall and one of my top concerns and student concerns are mental health. The mental health of our staff, the mental health of our students, especially for black students in our students of color. This is something that must have an intentional approach when we approach into the fall and it cannot operate as business per usual. I do believe our institution, we cannot operate as if it is a blanket fix. We must have intentional efforts to help fix intentional issues and I do think it is the administration's duty to say how they are going to tackle that, but also incorporating the voices that are closest to the issue to be part of the solution driven conversations that we are going to be having. I stress our faculty of color, are black faculty, our students of color, are black students and also our staff, as well--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time.

JUVANIE PIQUANT: who are part of those communities. I do think it is very important for us

not to just stray away and know that we do have resources and federal stimulus funds going into what is happening. I do think Council member Inez Barron has stressed the importance of transparency and us understanding where these funds are going, but also including people who are going to be recipients of these services that CUNY is thinking about implementing our part of the conversation. I do stress our administration to have a more transparent approach, but more digestible way of delivering this information to the CUNY community although more consistent and regular basis. I do see that there is going to be a lot of shifts in the fall, but I do stress our administration to continue to be more transparent, but also ensuring that the information is digestible. Lastly, we do know that we have proposed cuts to CUNY and I cannot in my testimony without speaking about these proposed cuts to CUNY you may know we have some of our Counsel members on that call on this call here today and it is extremely important that this money that is proposed to be cut is not. We have a group of students that are going to be coming back into the fall. We have post-Covid recovery and it is important to stress that the

pandemic is still here and part of New York City's lifeline is CUNY. You know, I can even remember how many times I have testified in front of the Council advocating, you know, for funding for CUNY but also ensuring that we can one day go back to the free tuition college that doesn't just give us free education, but a sound education. And I think the history of CUNY and what we were asked to meet the moment. Socially, we have an upheaval and uprising of social justice issues and this is the perfect moment for CUNY to invest in the studies that matter. To invest in the students that matter and invest in the programs that matter because it is extremely important in every student that walks into any campus and halls of any CUNY institution shall and must feel that they are celebrated. With that being said, that concludes my testimony and I look forward to working with our administration, but also our students and continue advocating and elevating the concerns of our students. Thank you, Chair Barron.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You're welcome.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony, Ms. Piquant. I will now call on Mojubaolu Okome to testify.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

MOJUBAOLU OKOME: Good afternoon to the Committee on Higher education. I also would like to pray your indulgence because I have an international conference that starts at one and I am chairing the panel discussion. So, if I leave, it is not because I do not respect the process, but because those plans were made since last year. So, thank you very much for holding this hearing. I want to start with a quote from Union PSC CUNY. Healthy and safe working environment is a right and not a privilege. I am Mojubaolu, Olufunke Okome and I am a professor of political science at Brooklyn College and a representative of the University Faculty Senate of CUNY. I was newly assigned to this committee and it is a pleasure to have participated thus far. I see the Covid 19 pandemic just like many other human beings as unprecedented in the magnitude, the impact, and the long term yet to be fully known ramifications. This pandemic has challenged us in manifold ways, including the devastating number of infections and fatalities suffered in New York City which quickly became an epicenter of the pandemic. As a matter of fact, currently, our union has 15

members of our faculty and staff listed as having lost their lives during this pandemic and, from the CUNY side, I saw a list of four students names, but I'm sure there are more. I, myself, taught students who were sick and who lost family during this pandemic, so this has been a pandemic that shook us all in many ways. I have submitted my written remarks because they are quite lengthy and I wouldn't be able to cover everything, but one of the things that is important to us as faculty is safety as a top priority. We have to make sure that when we return to campus in a safe way that is logical, that we do so in as safe as possible a manner while still providing remote options for people who are not able to join in that move because they have health concerns and they have disabilities that don't allow them to join. So, we are also, you know--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

MOJUBAOLU OKOME: interested-- Oh. My time is expired, so let me quickly go to the bullet points in terms of what we would like to see.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes. I just want to say that you can continue your remarks. You have

been patient in waiting and you do have another event, so you can continue. Thank you.

MOJUBAOLU OKOME: Okay. Thank you very much. So, the priority areas for us are the health, security, and safety of all members of the CUNY community in a way that proactively and transparently plans and responds to the Covid 19 challenges that we face. Job security for adjunct faculty and staff is also very important. Some of our colleagues have been laid off and this was at a time when everybody's lives were really in turmoil. We believe that it is not equitable to do so and some of the funds that are being received from the federal government, we think, should be allocated to re-incorporating these members of our community back into their jobs. We also would like to have full-time compensation for CUNY support staff. One of the things I would like to know, actually, is what plans are being made for custodial staff? Because I know there were cats before the pandemic. So, what are we doing to ensure that we have enough custodial staff to keep up with the intensive cleaning that is required under Covid conditions? We also need assistance for our indigent students. We need our students to have help to pay

their fees, help to access education in whatever modalities are required, for healthcare assistance to them inclusive of mental health care. We need for us to be able to give them academic support that would enhance their chances of succeeding, exiling, and graduating. We also need to maintain levels of cleanliness and ventilation that will meet CDC health standards and other health standards that are best practices. We need funding and support for our ethnic studies departments and programs. A lot of them are underfunded and they are struggling. We also need to hire and retain more BIPOC faculty and staff. This is black, indigenous, and ethnic communities. You know, the funds from the federal government, we think, should be used for these purposes and other things I mentioned in my report that I couldn't get to you. An investment in CUNY is an investment and not only knowledge creation that educates our students and the community at large. It is a solid contribution separate. Our students to successfully engage and compete in a rapidly changing world. CUNY is involved in building human capital and has been noted to be a powerful engine of socioeconomic mobility in our city, state, and

country and in the world, I would say. Now, more than ever, it should be adequately funded and it should be given the material conditions that it needs to succeed in its mission, , and its mission, and admitting its core values. How we organize our return to our various campuses is an important part of building back better. We have to commit to intersectional equity, to socially conscious planning, and antiracist education in all aspects of the strategies and policies that we embrace in this process. And I would like to draw attention also to a lot of the work that PSA CUNY has done to make suggestions and recommendations on things that we need in order to foster equity and embrace antiracist education. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. I will now call on Diana Cruz to testify.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

DIANA CRUZ: Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you, Committee Chair Barron and all other committee members for allowing me to present this testimony on behalf of the Hispanic Federation. The greatest number of undergraduate Latino students across New York State attend CUNY colleges. As the

largest urban public university, offering many opportunities such as affordable quality education, there is no doubt as to why many Latino students enroll in CUNY institutions. Moreover, while the college enrollment has been on the decline for years across the US, the Latin X students have been enrolling in exponential rates. However, the coronavirus pandemic is forcing many of them to decide between staying in school and working to help their families survive the economic fallout. We are concerned about the many students that won't return this fall and, in CUNY's case, enrollment dropped more than five percent of the fall of 2020 and although the city is in full reopening mode, students and families continue to navigate uncertainty and lack of access to basic needs. Many students had to put their education on the back burner as they worry about their jobs, housing, and families. The recovery of New York depends on our students future and we must allocate the necessary supports to reopen strongly and fairly. Thus, the Hispanic Federation urges the Council to advocate for the restoration of 77 million for CUNY, ensure that the funding cuts for the ASAP program are rectified, stop the tuition

increases, and ensure that federal funding is allocated equitably. A full funding budget is critical for CUNY to reopen campuses effectively and in the best interest of students. The funding can offer food services, mental health supports, tutoring to reengage with academics, faculty support, faculty retention, and much, much more. This is not the time to do you invest in our students education and we request that the Council prioritize this funding that will provide better and better opportunities for college students that are the key to a brighter New York City. CUNY students are among the population that experience and continue to face challenges during the pandemic. According to server data, 80 percent of students have lost their household income, 50 percent reported losing access to food, and, overall, many have shown high anxiety and depression signs. An equitable and just reopening of the city must prioritize the immediate and long-term needs of our students. This includes the hiring of mental health experts that can assess and provide social and emotional supports that continue to invest in college success programs that focus on transition from high school to college and from community colleges to

four-year institutions. Increase financial aid resources and address the tuition costs across CUNY. While also addressing the basic needs, as mentioned before in terms of food access. And, finally, I definitely want to address the need for faculty to be hired and retained in our institutions. I thank you for your time and we emphasize how critical it is to focus on these priorities for the benefit of many students and communities as we envision a stronger New York City. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. I will now turn to Chair Barron for questions for this panel.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much to the panel for your testimony. I don't have any questions, but I do want to encourage you and to let you know that I support your comments. I support your efforts and I look forward to continuing to work with you to achieve those things that we know are in the best interest of the CUNY community, wherever they are located. And I want to commend Juvanie Piquant for her tribute, her on her. She was recognized at the 20th annual Juneteenth program as an outstanding person and we want to acknowledge that

as well as was Timothy Hunter who received acknowledgment and Professor Arthur Lwin from Baroque College. So, they were part of a group of people who were honored and we want to acknowledge that and commend them. Thank you. Back to our moderator.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.

I will now call on the next panel and this panel in order of speaking will be James Davis, president of PSC, Jean Grassman, cochair of the health and safety-- of Health and Safety Watchdogs, Dr. Diane P. Banks, member of PSC, Roxanne Shirazi, member of PSC, and Andrea Vasquez, first vice president of PSC. I will now call on James Davis to testify.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

JAMES DAVIS: Thank you, Chair Barron and Committee members. It's good to be with you. I am James Davis. I am the president of the Professional Staff Congress and, as you know, we represent CUNY's 30,000 faculty and professional staff. I am joined by Andrea Vasquez, PSC First Vice President, Professor Jean Grassman from our School of Public Health, Professor Diane Banks from Bronx Community College, and Professor Roxanne Shirazi from the Graduate Center. We appreciate the opportunity to

discuss some of the challenges that are facing our members. Chair Barron, we start by thanking you and your colleagues on the Committee for your steadfast support for CUNY. Even as the Mayor has proposed sharper budget cuts in any in recent memory, you've pushed for restorations and for additional funding. You have consistently highlighted CUNY is an economic engine and advocated that CUNY will only overcome years of racist austerity through recurring investment that is going to help put the city on a path to recovery. So, thank you. My colleagues and I would like to highlight some of the key challenges facing our workforce and we seek your support. So, to be safe, our transition back to in person work needs to be gradual and needs to be handled with transparency. We love our students and our mission, that is what gets us going every morning, but we love our families, too, and so our health is paramount. Transparency from our administration will not only build confidence among faculty and staff in the safety of the workplace, it will make safety possible. We will be able to ask informed questions and request remediation of facilities that require it. We will not send our members into unsafe

offices, labs, or classrooms. We have taken steps to minimize risk to our members. We developed clear safety standards so members can follow the science. We negotiated a remote work agreement with CUNY so that staff who can perform their jobs effectively off-site may continue to do so. We negotiated a pre-occupancy walk-through protocol so that PSC representatives can accompany engineers, administrators, checking ventilation and other key indicators. Our Health and Safety Committee has trained nearly 150 members to conduct to those walk-throughs with management, and we undertook a campaign to free federal stimulus funds from bureaucracy at the state and university levels so that repairs and upgrades could be completed before we return in large numbers. Nevertheless, we are concerned because many facilities have suffered from years of neglect and deferred maintenance. CUNY's record, in this regard, has been an even, sometimes dismal or even dangerous. Many of us want to return to campus, but we need vigilance from the administration, not here and there, but on each campus and in every facility.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

JAMES DAVIS: May I please have 30 seconds to complete my remarks?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You may. Certainly.

JAMES DAVIS: Thank you. CUNY's target to return staff to in person work is August 2. We do not know when each college is reopening plan will be approved and although the process months not be rushed, delays to the approvals could also require delays to reopening in order to accommodate walk-throughs with union members present. CUNY must provide our members with accurate data and timely responses to questions and concerns. Your support in the oversight process is deeply appreciated and we thank you for your continued efforts on our behalf.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. I will now call on Jean Grassman to testify.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

JEAN GRASSMAN: Okay. Thank you. Thank you to the Committee on Higher Education and specifically thank you to Chair Barron for hearing us today. I would like to call out three principles that should guide CUNY in a healthy and safe return

of the entire University community. The first is CUNY should employ multiple strategies aimed at minimizing the spread of Covid. The pandemic is not over as much as we would like that to be the case and it is because continued precautions are necessary because the campus community will be a mixed population in terms of vaccination status and this is due to individual choice, religious reasons, and health. New variants of the coronavirus continue to emerge and spread. Just yesterday, a spike in hospitalizations in Missouri was attributed to the Delta variant. Lastly, we do not know how long vaccinations will be effective. Those of us lucky enough to have been vaccinated early in the spring find ourselves susceptible once again in October, the middle of the fall semester. The second point and principle about CUNY reopening is that it needs to be based on the science. Authoritative sources have disseminated compelling evidence that Covid 19 is spread through aerosols which can disperse through distances and accumulate over time. College campuses are uniquely vulnerable because of the time spent in crowded classrooms where speakers can release large quantities of droplets and aerosols. Examples of

situations where the science is not being considered include CUNY has asked campus as to develop plans for three foot distancing without a corresponding plan as to whether the ventilation will be sufficient. This spring, CUNY distributed memo where they referred to [inaudible 02:31:02] 62.1 as the authoritative standard for indoor ventilation. In fact, Ashray's [sp?] Own epidemiologic task force urged abandonment of the use of 62.1 as it is intended for energy conservation and not adequate for reducing airborne virus. We understand that CUNY has hired a consultant to do a ventilation audit. In order to be useful, that audit needs to verify adequate ventilation in all occupied spaces. We suspect that the ventilation audit is being done at the building level rather than the immediate environment used by our members and students, so we look forward to those reports and we are wondering when they may be available. Finally, we call on CUNY to develop a stance of pandemic readiness. In 2011, the World Health Organization said the world is ill prepared to respond to a severe influenza pandemic or to any similarly global sustained and threatening public health emergency.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

JEAN GRASSMAN: Could have 30 seconds,
please?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes. Certainly.
You may. Thank you.

JEAN GRASSMAN: Thank you. They add
that pandemic preparedness is not a plan. It is a
continuous process that adapts to evolving knowledge.
CUNY will say that they already have an emergency
response plan, but this is different. They need to
develop preventative strategies. As an institution
of higher education, CUNY should apply the lessons
learned from the past year to protect those who work
and learn here at the nation's largest public
university. And I thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your
testimony. I will now call on Dr. Diane P. Banks to
testify.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

DR. DIANE BANKS: Peace and blessings,
everyone. My name is Dr. Diane Price Banks. I come
to you as a conduit of PSC members at BCC who have
communicated with me in my capacity as Chair for the
Health and Safety Committee regarding health and

safety concerns on campus. Let me start by providing an example of problems pre-pandemic and during the pandemic that have created deep health and safety concerns on campus specific to ventilation in Covid 19. In 2018, Havemeyer Annex was shut down prior to the pandemic after the union highlighted poor ventilation and poor air quality which led to employees being sick. It was well documented by members of the administration that the air quality was poor in that building, yet it took union involvement to get the building shut down. Costner [sp?] Hall was shut down due to poor heating of the pipes which caused 68 pipes to burst and flood the building in January 2020. In addition, this building is also operating with the UniVent system which brings in fresh air that is mixed with existing air. If working properly, then the exterior is filtered, heated, and cooled, but is not the ventilation system recommended by Asray for classroom capacities and bus can be a mixing ground for Covid 19 transmission. Faculty who have worked a full year on the re-occupancy committee were asked to volunteer during their 2021 contractual leave which commenced from June 1 to August 23, 2021, yet all other non-faculty

members of this committee continue to be compensated.

BCC administration claims that the total of \$2000

needed to pay faculty for services rendered during

the summer was not available, despite CARES Act

funding being set aside for this very reason. This

has caused a lack of representation of faculty on the

reoccupancy committee as it relates to instructional

stakeholders returning to work. Currently, due to

the 60 percent in person mandate by the Chancellor,

PSC members at BCC are being asked to return to work

in buildings that do not have HVAC systems in place

and asked to work with students in these very

buildings. Poor ventilation is a breeding ground for

the transmission of Covid and any viral particles in

the air can linger for days and be a source of

infection. An alleged incident at BCC involved an

employee who was positive for Covid coming to campus

in the absence of sick leave time, infected others,

and resulted in South Hall building being closed for

cleaning and disinfection. This building does not

have any HVAC system, but has been occupied by

employees during the pandemic. These safety

concerns, amongst others that my colleagues have

cited or will cite and those that--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

DR. DIANA BANKS: Can I have 30 seconds, please?

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes. Of course.

DR. DIANA BANKS: Thank you so much. That continued to pose a serious health and safety risk for students, faculty, and staff. Therefore, we collectively recommend the following: funding provided to aid capital projects to install an update HVAC systems and poorly ventilated buildings and buildings that do not meet the Asray standards by August 2nd, 2021 are not open until they do meet these standards. Add Mr. Batista stated, CUNY has commenced an intensive survey of ventilation on campus is, therefore, we ask that these reports be made public to all CUNY employees, especially those who occupy these spaces prior to reoccupancy and, lastly, as the Chancellor mandated, all campuses to push for a 60 percent in person return for the fall, and as Dr. Lemon stated, CUNY will commence a testing initiative and we look forward to seeing this manifested into fruition at each campus. We ask that students, faculty, and staff are not asked to return

until this testing initiative is fully in place.

Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. I will now call on Roxanne Shirazi to testify.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

ROXANNE SHIRAZI: Hi. Thank you. My name is Roxanne Shirazi and I am a PSA delegate and member of the library faculty at the CUNY graduate Center. Thank you for having me. Librarians understand the devastating impact that Covid 19 has had on research and teaching and we know that reopening the libraries is an important step towards academic and intellectual normalcy, yet we also know that, before the pandemic, many of CUNY's campus libraries were in disrepair. We CUNY classes moved online in March 2020, the libraries were initially kept open and librarians reported having to bring their own hand soap to work so that they could practice proper hygiene as frontline workers. CUNY libraries are high traffic spaces where students congregate, often in groups, for several hours at a time and library staff work in close contact with that Met service desks. CUNY library workers often have decades of

experience working in these crumbling facilities.

There is little faith left in general statements about a building being safe. We have learned to ask for proof. We want details about how our spaces have been prepared for a mix of vaccinated and unvaccinated people to keep our communities safe. We believe that our students deserve the same precautionary measures that are already in place at other New York City libraries and we want to ensure that all CUNY students have equitable resource access regardless of their campus affiliation. Some materials are simply not available as e-books and students often prefer to use print. We must not lose sight of the urgent need to provide safe access to our libraries print collections. But at my own campus at the Graduate Center, librarians have been working for six months to restart on-site services, but CUNY will not provide the information we need to do it safely. We have asked for details about the ventilation that are told that that data is not available because the library is closed. How are we supposed to prepare operations and spaces before we know that those spaces can be used safely? At every turn, the Graduate Center has told us to wait. To

wait for policy from CUNY Central, to wait for new guidance, to wait because they just don't have the information to move forward. Yet, after months of not any basic information, the Graduate Center suddenly moved to open a student study space in the library and gave the librarians just five working days' notice. When PSC Helping Safety was finally allowed to conduct a walk-through, we were not given access to any of the shared offices used by library staff in CUNY's representative stated that they were not bound to any HVAC best practice recommendations. We actually had to argue that Covid 19 is a recognized hazard and that reducing indoor concentrations of the virus is achieved through improved ventilation. We should not have to fight over these simple facts. CUNY repeatedly assures workers that spaces have been checked and are safe, but they will block access to any of the details or proof that improvements have been made. When there should be community engagement and transparency--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

ROXANNE SHIRAZI: CUNY has opted for secrecy installing. It does not have to be this way. We are not here to catch CUNY failing. We want

CUNY's reopening to succeed and to be done with care for our community so that we can reopen stronger together. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. I will now call on Andrea Vasquez.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

ANDREA VASQUEZ: Thank you. I am Andrea Vasquez, PNC First Vice President and a professional staff member at the Graduate Center. Thank you, Chairperson Barron and members of this committee for holding this hearing and for all of your work on behalf of CUNY students and on behalf of our union members throughout this difficult year. It is hard to adequately reply to so many points that we heard from the CUNY administration, so the PAC would very much appreciate further conversations with Chair Barron and Council members, especially those whose districts encompass CUNY colleges. The main points I would like to pick up on all are about transparency and timetable. CUNY's calling back about 7000 staff members on August 2, mostly two days a week to full time face-to-face. Thousands more will show up when the semester starts. This is the moment that CUNY is obliged to ensure a safe return for us all and it is

an opportunity to better serve our students. It is the time to ensure that our facilities are clean and safe, showing respect and gratitude for all its students and employees have done to keep this institution alive. So, we say to CUNY: tell us what your plans are. Executive vice chancellor said he gave guidelines to each campus. He is going back-and-forth with colleges to make sure the buildings meet necessary standards. Why have we not seen any of CUNY's guidelines if they want this to work? Why have we not seen what the companies they have hired have discovered and determined? Why has CUNY not told us when college reopening plans will be approved? When they will inform us which buildings will be used? Why are they scheduling walk-throughs now if they want their plan to work? The Executive Vice Chancellor told us that he has the information on how we will keep our colleges clean. In many instances, this will be for the first time. Great. Why hasn't he given that plan to the stakeholders? The people who will inhabit those spaces? So, we ask: how is withholding all of this information helpful and efficient if they intend to open at 50 to 60 percent capacity on August 1st? Or August 2nd.

How is withholding that information respectful to the employees who have worked to their hearts out all year long and held up the University for our students? Mental health issues were raised earlier today. First, I would like to thank Chairperson Barron for asking about the mental health of our members. Help with relaxation and mindfulness, as we heard, our wonderful, but those things do not help when our contractual workload is ignored. When there is fear of job loss or retaliation, and when professional development opportunities are few and far between. In the mental health for our students, during the peak of the pandemic, CUNY gave inadequate funds to colleges and told them they needed to rush and spend it by July that the funding would end. That was a disaster. Now, executive Vice Chancellor Batista has said they have allotted \$1.9 million to provide mental health services for our students. As CUNY and this committee may recall, the current ratio of mental health counselors to students at CUNY is 2700 to 1, not the 1000 to one that is nationally recommended. \$1.9 million would allow for only 15 full-time positions, not the 125 full-time--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

ANDREA VASQUEZ: Thank you. That are needed as laid out in the new deal for CUNY state legislation. Today, we have heard from students, a member of the faculty Senate, PSC members, and the Hispanic Federation. We share a vision and we now need Q need to walk the walk to make sure that that vision is a reality. Be transparent. You have the funds and the power to make CUNY better. Free the funds that Congress fought so hard for to make our spaces safe and to make the hires of full-time faculty and staff to be able to meet the needs of all of our glorious students. Thank you very much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your testimony. I will now turn to Chair Barron for any questions or comments.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you very much. I want to thank this panel for your testimony and for your presentations and I do believe that this may be the first times that we have had testimony from James Davis at least as president of PSC. So, we want to welcome you and look forward to a continuing relationship. Very much concerned about the ability for PSC to be at the table as discussion is going forth about what the conditions are. I am

also very much concerned about not just saying that you have met the specifications on paper, particularly as it relates to ventilation, but what are the other factors that need to be considered? And I believe it was-- Oh, my goodness. Was it may be Ms. Diane Banks who talked about there are different measures, not just in the immediate area, but in a larger base. So, if you could just briefly talk about that for about one minute? Because I do have another meeting. But I think you made a comparison as to meeting the qualifications and the immediacy of the space as compared to another environment. Is that right?

DR. DIANE BANKS: I think that was Jean Grassman--

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

DR. DIANE BANKS: But we did point out that it was a six ACH units that has to be in each space to make sure that there is adequate ventilation in an area.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. Okay. Great. So, those are the kinds of things that it's helpful for me to get information on because you can say, oh, yes. This unit is great. It's working, but

you may need more. That may not be sufficient for the space that you are in. Got it. So, I look forward to continuing to advocate on your behalf and make demands not just on the Covid situation, but certainly on the budget on your behalf, as well. Thank you, again, for your testimony.

JAMES DAVIS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Ms. Briggs?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Barron. We have now heard from everyone who has signed up to testify. We appreciate your time and your presence. If we inadvertently have missed anyone that would like to testify, please use the raise hand function in Zoom and I will call on you in the order your hands were raised. All right. Seeing no one else, I would like to note that written testimony, which will be reviewed in fall by committee staff may be submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the close of this hearing by emailing it to testimony@Council.NYC.gov. That is testimony@Council.NYC.gov. Chair Barron, we have concluded public testimony for this hearing. Chair, I'm sorry. You're muted.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. I muted myself. Thank you very much. I want to thank all of the panelists who participated in today's hearing. I want to thank everyone who watched virtually and for your interest and what it is that we need to do to make sure that as we go forward and get to the various stages of ending this pandemic, that we don't relapse, that we don't miss signals and importunate stops and checks that we need to take along the way that we continue to make CUNY a great institution. I want to thank you all. I am rushing because I am late for-- this is the zoom world. So, one ends and another begins almost simultaneously. So, I want to thank everyone for their participation and thank you very much, Ms. Briggs. Oh, I have my shakere. This meeting is adjourned.

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 July 30, 2021