

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
JOINTLY WITH CULTURAL AFFAIRS,  
LIBRARIES, AND INTERNATIONAL  
INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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October 6, 2021  
Start: 1:06 p.m.  
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HELD AT: Remote Hearing, Virtual Room 1

B E F O R E: Inez D. Barron  
Chairperson, Higher Education  
  
Jimmy Van Bramer  
Chairperson, Cultural Affairs,  
Libraries, and International  
Intergroup Relations

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Inez D. Barron  
Laurie A. Cumbo  
Alan N. Maisel  
Ydanis Rodriguez  
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James F. Gennaro  
Mark Gjonaj  
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Lauren Anderson  
CUNY

Chelsea Palot

Sheelah Feinberg  
Deputy Commissioner  
DCLA

Pernita Ragavan  
General Counsel  
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Elyse Buxbaum

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Recording to the PC  
underway.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Cloud recording is up.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Backup is rolling.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, and  
Sergeant Lugo, if you may begin with your opening  
statement.

SERGEANT AT ARMS LUGO: Good afternoon,  
everyone. Welcome to today's remote New York City  
Council hearing of the Committees on Higher Education  
jointly with Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and  
International Intergroup Relations. At this time  
would all panelists please turn on your videos. To  
minimize disruption, please place electronic devices  
to vibrate or silent. If you wish to submit  
testimony you may do so at [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).  
Again, that's [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Thank you  
for your cooperation. Chairs, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good afternoon and  
thank you for joining us with this joint hearing of  
the Committee on Higher Education along with the  
Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and

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3 Intergroup, International Intergroup Relations. The  
4 topic for today is CUNY Cultural Corps and Service  
5 Corps. I'm Council Member Inez Barron, chair of the  
6 committee and a proud CUNY alum. Thank you everyone  
7 for joining us here today. Academic internships have  
8 become integral to securing full-time employment and  
9 after graduation. A student resume with internship  
10 experience signals to employers that the individual  
11 is ready to enter the workforce. These opportunities  
12 can also act as a foot in the door to one's first  
13 job. Research has shown that participating in an  
14 internship has positive impacts on one's wages,  
15 increases the likelihood of getting a job interview,  
16 facilitates student transition to professional  
17 workplace, and even enhances outcomes, including  
18 academic achievement and career self-confidence.  
19 However, for many low-income students, many of whom  
20 are first generation and/or students of color,  
21 internships are not always a viable employment option  
22 as they are often unpaid. In fact, a 2021 national  
23 survey of college internships studied found that  
24 nearly 50% of internships are unpaid. Consequently,  
25 unpaid internships can act as a gate-keeping  
mechanism, keeping low-income, first generation,

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3 and/or students of color from participating in  
4 potentially life-changing experiences and even in  
5 particular industries. CUNY students, who are  
6 largely black and Latinx, low income, and/or first  
7 generation, deserve the same opportunities to gain  
8 meaningful work experience and jump start their  
9 professional careers. Moreover, according to the  
10 2018 Student Experience Survey, SES, which is the  
11 latest publicly available data and does not account  
12 for the impact of the pandemic, many CUNY students  
13 are under significant financial strain. 13% of CUNY  
14 students are financially supporting children. 9%  
15 reported being usually or always worried about having  
16 enough food in the past 12 months. 25% reported  
17 being usually or always worried about having enough,  
18 ah, money to pay housing costs, and 5% reported not  
19 currently having a regular and adequate place to  
20 sleep. According to the 2016 SES, 42% of CUNY  
21 students reported a household income of \$19,999 or  
22 less. Opportunities for paid career opportunities  
23 provide critical financial, academic, and  
24 professional benefits for CUNY students who have too  
25 often been made to have to do with less. Students  
enrolled at CUNY to achieve upward mobility,

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3 including solid employment with good wages and  
4 benefits, and other financial struggles, and/or  
5 obligations that should not mean they cannot accept  
6 an internship because it is unpaid. Given that this  
7 year's graduating class will have to compete in many  
8 cases with 2020 graduates who are still seeking their  
9 first full-time job as well as some who have lost  
10 their jobs due to the pandemic, it is essential for  
11 CUNY as the city's economic engine to ensure their  
12 students are not at a disadvantage in the job market  
13 upon graduation. This is a major reason why we chose  
14 to hold this hearing on the CUNY Service Corps and  
15 Cultural Corps. The CUNY Service Corps provides  
16 students with the opportunity to work on projects  
17 that include the city's short- and long-term civic,  
18 economic, and environmental sustainability while  
19 gaining real work experience and getting paid.

20 Projects include providing administrative support to  
21 hospital vice presidents, helping senior citizens to  
22 use technology effectively, designing promotional  
23 flyers to attract youth to a job training program,  
24 teaching children about animals in a zoo, promoting  
25 financial literacy among adults, and researching  
energy efficiency. Similarly, CUNY partnered with

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3 DCLA in the fall of 2016 to launch the CUNY Cultural  
4 Corps, modeled after the Service Corps, which creates  
5 comparable opportunities for CUNY students to work in  
6 the city's cultural sector. And one of the main  
7 intent of the Cultural Corps is to diversify cultural  
8 leadership in the city. I'm looking forward to  
9 learning more about these programs, their successes,  
10 and how they fared during the pandemic. Now,  
11 preparing for this hearing, I would like to thank Mr.  
12 Omawally Clay, my chief of staff, Ms. M. Indigo  
13 Washington, my director of legislation and CUNY  
14 liaison, Amy Briggs, the counsel, the committee's  
15 Counsel, Chloe Rivera, the committee's senior policy  
16 analyst, Michelle Peregrin, the city's financial  
17 analyst, and Frank Perez, the committee's community  
18 engagement representative. Additionally, I might, I  
19 want to thank the sergeants at arm who are working  
20 very hard behind the scenes to make this hearing  
21 possible. And at this time I will turn it over to my  
22 cochair, Council Member James Van Bramer.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, Chair  
24 Barron, and good afternoon everyone, and welcome  
25 again to this joint oversight hearing with the  
Committee on Higher Education, ah, and our committee,



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3 the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and  
4 International Intergroup Relations regarding the CUNY  
5 Cultural Corps and Service Corps. Ah, my name is  
6 Jimmy Van Bramer and I'm proud to be the chair of  
7 this committee. Ah, and I want to thank my colleague,  
8 Chair Barron, for being, ah, such an incredible  
9 leader when it comes to CUNY and higher ed in our  
10 city. Um, I want to start off by just, you know,  
11 recognizing and acknowledging Commissioner Tom  
12 Finkelpearl, our former Department of Cultural  
13 Affairs commissioner who was very instrumental in  
14 creating, ah, the CUNY Cultural Corps and I know it's  
15 something he's, ah, very proud of, ah, to this day.  
16 The Cultural Corps comes out of, ah, the cultural  
17 plan, a bill that Council Member Steve Levin and I,  
18 um, passed with the support of our colleagues and it  
19 led to an exhaustive, ah, review process and  
20 ultimately led to the funding streams that were  
21 created that, ah, allow for us to fund the CUNY  
22 Cultural Corps, ah, which, ah, could be a very, very  
23 important, ah, piece of our ecosystem when it comes  
24 to culture and the arts. So we're here today to get  
25 an updated overview of the very important program  
that I just spoke of. In today's job market college

1 graduates need more than just a degree to be  
2 competitive. They need the experience that for many  
3 only an academic internship can provide. We also  
4 know the arts and everyone knows I believe the arts  
5 are the most impactful way to effect social change,  
6 explore, ah, racial or ethnic representations, and  
7 reflect a community's history and identity while  
8 providing an opportunity to engage diverse audiences  
9 and transformational learning. We know that  
10 encouraging and supporting the arts and culture, ah,  
11 community is important because of its ability to  
12 amplify our diverse voices, which in turn enables  
13 creativity and problem-solving in all areas. Ah, we  
14 also know that exposure to arts and culture helps  
15 both individuals in organizations produce better  
16 outcomes and results in their lives. Ah, while  
17 cultural diverse black, indigenous, people of color,  
18 LGBTQ communities in New York City represent and  
19 provide important voices in the city's arts and  
20 cultural sector. Ah, we know that there continue,  
21 ah, to be numerous disparities and barriers to equity  
22 and equality. A recent DCLA study found that in New  
23 York City staff at cultural institutions are on  
24 average 38% people of color and 62% white  
25

1 nonhispanic. In contrast, US census data shows that  
2 67% of New York City's population identifies as BIPOC  
3 and 33% white nonhispanic. The data also reveals a  
4 disproportionate representation by pay grade and  
5 positions, where positions such as curator were  
6 primarily held by individuals identifying as white,  
7 while jobs within cultural institutions with the  
8 fewest white workers, um, ah, were primarily in  
9 maintenance and security. Advocates, ah, and many  
10 others assert, ah, that COVID-19 pandemic has made  
11 gender, racial, and economic disparities, ah, even  
12 worse and research shows that BIPOC and immigrants  
13 serving arts organizations in their city have been  
14 the hardest hit by the pandemic. Today, more than  
15 ever before, the CUNY Cultural Corps provides much-  
16 needed opportunities for a diverse cross section of  
17 students to experience work in all areas of the  
18 city's cultural sector at museums, concert halls,  
19 zoos, and botanical gardens. At present the  
20 internship connects students with paid positions in  
21 over 80 nonprofit cultural institutions across all  
22 artistic disciplines. An internship provides real-  
23 world experience and an exciting chance to be a part  
24 of the inner workings of a cultural organization. In  
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3 this case CUNY Cultural Corps provides students with  
4 what can be a transformational experience and an  
5 opportunity to gain entry into a world where they may  
6 not have otherwise been afforded. Of course, as  
7 Chair Barron mentioned, ah, the key here is these are  
8 paid internships, ah, because many of these students  
9 are working and going to school and, ah, in some  
10 cases, ah, ah, raising and a family, and it's very,  
11 very important. I also think that, ah, today we're  
12 gonna hear from, ah, the Department of Cultural  
13 Affairs. Ah, and I know that Commissioner Casals is,  
14 ah, unable to be with us today, um, but I see that,  
15 ah, ah, yes, Deputy Commissioner Feinberg is with us,  
16 ah, and testifying, and we are certainly, ah, in  
17 appreciation of the commitment to CUNY Cultural  
18 Corps, which, again, stems from, ah, Commissioner  
19 Finkelpearl and I know, ah, ah, also is [inaudible]  
20 Commissioner Casals. Ah, but I want to hear from  
21 advocates and, most importantly, the students, ah,  
22 themselves and the, the proof of concept here will  
23 ultimately be if we're actually establishing the  
24 pipelines to leadership that, ah, is intended from  
25 the beginning here. Um, we, we understand the  
disparities that exist. We must address them with

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3 urgency and the CUNY Cultural Corps is about  
4 establishing and creating that pipeline, ah, which  
5 will only be successfully if these interns become  
6 paid staff members and then are included in a  
7 leadership track so that they are the future, ah,  
8 curators, artistic directors, executive directors,  
9 presidents, and CEOs of our amazing cultural, ah,  
10 organizations and institutions. So look forward to  
11 asking all those questions, learning more about it.  
12 Ah, but before I turn to our committee counsel to  
13 read the oath I want to thank, ah, not only Chair  
14 Barron and her amazing team, but my staff, ah,  
15 legislative director Jack Madovitz, chief of staff  
16 Matt Wallace, our committee staff, ah, Brenda  
17 McKinney, who we are only sending lots of love, ah,  
18 and support to, ah, right now, Christie Dwyer, our  
19 legislative policy analyst, Alia Ali, our principle,  
20 ah, financial analyst, and now I will turn it over to  
21 our hearing moderator, Amy Briggs.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Pardon. Thank you,  
22 Chairs Van Bramer and Chair Barron. Um, I would like  
23 to take a moment to acknowledge Council Member  
24 Maisel, who is also in attendance today. My name is  
25 Amy Briggs and I serve as counsel to the Committee on

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3 Higher Education at the New York City Council. I  
4 will be moderating today's hearing and calling  
5 panelists to testify. Before we begin, please  
6 remember that everyone will be on mute until I call  
7 on you to testify. After you are called on you'll be  
8 unmuted by a member of our staff. Note that there  
9 will be a few-second delay before you are unmuted and  
10 we can hear you. For public testimony, we will call  
11 up individuals in panels. Please listen for your  
12 name. I will periodically announce the next few  
13 panelists. Once I call your name a member of our  
14 staff will unmute you. The Sergeant at Arms will set  
15 a clock and give you the go ahead to being your  
16 testimony. All public testimony will be limited to  
17 three minutes. After I call your name please wait  
18 for the Sergeant at Arms to announce. So for today's  
19 hearing the first panel will include representatives  
20 from CUNY and the Department of Cultural Affairs,  
21 followed by council member questions and then public  
22 testimony. For CUNY we will have Lauren Anderson,  
23 university dean of industry and talent partnership,  
24 and Chelsea Palot, who is an alumni of Hunter College  
25 and a Cultural Corps participant. For DCLA we will  
have Sheelah Feinberg, deputy commissioner, and

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3 general counsel in the DCLA, Pernita Ragavan. I will  
4 now administer the oath to the administration. When  
5 you hear your name, please respond once a member of  
6 our staff unmutes you. Please raise your hands for  
7 the administration of the oath. Do you affirm to  
8 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the  
9 truth before these committees and to respond honestly  
10 to council member questions? Dean Anderson?

11 DEAN ANDERSON: I do.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Chelsea  
13 Palot?

14 CHELSEA PALOT: I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Sheelah  
16 Feinberg?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FEINBERG: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And Pernita Ragavan.

19 PERNITA RAGAVAN: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much.

21 Um, Dean Anderson, you may now begin your testimony.

22 DEAN ANDERSON: Wonderful. Thank you.

23 Um, good afternoon Chairs Barron and Van Bramer, and  
24 members and the staff on the Committees on Higher  
25 Education and Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and  
International Intergroup Relations. Thank you for

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3 the opportunity to provide testimony before you today  
4 on two programs at the City University of New York,  
5 CUNY Service Corps and CUNY Cultural Corps. My name  
6 is Lauren Anderson and I am honored to serve as the  
7 university dean of industry and talent partnerships  
8 at CUNY, a position that I assumed two months ago in  
9 July of this year. In this capacity I oversee the  
10 office of continuing education and workforce  
11 partnerships, or CEWP, which was recently elevated to  
12 report directly to the chancellor in addition to the  
13 executive vice chancellor. This updated reporting  
14 structure is a reflection of the centrality of career  
15 success to the mission and day-to-day operations of  
16 the City University of New York. As our chancellor  
17 often says, serving is a springboard for economic and  
18 social mobility. It's in our DNA at CUNY. To that  
19 end our role at CEWP is first and foremost to ensure  
20 that current students and graduates of CUNY programs  
21 have the preparation, connections, and support needed  
22 to launch and advance in sustaining careers. And of  
23 course, as these committees know well, sustaining  
24 careers have become all the more critical in light of  
25 COVID-19, which disproportionately impacted many of  
the communities CUNY serves. 42%, as the chairperson



3 said, of CUNY's student body hails from homes that  
4 earn less than \$20,000 annually, and for these  
5 students, their families, their communities, the  
6 ability to connect to resilient careers is in the  
7 best of times critical, and certainly now in the  
8 aftermath of the pandemic can be transformative.

9 That is why CUNY colleges are making strides to  
10 ensure that individuals who come to our campuses with  
11 the hope of pursuing the career of their dreams leave  
12 on a path to economic prosperity, thanks to  
13 deliberate policies, programs, and partnerships. And  
14 it's not just individuals who reap the benefits of  
15 these investments. As committee members are aware,  
16 employers across the five boroughs are struggling to  
17 find the talent and retain the workers they need to  
18 mount a full recovery. Nearly 88% of corporate  
19 leaders surveyed by PWC reported higher than usual  
20 turnover in their ranks and the challenges  
21 restaurants face in securing workers has been well  
22 covered. CUNY's talent pipelines provide the  
23 qualified workers businesses need to stabilize  
24 operations and grow. The same can be said of our  
25 cultural institutions and nonprofit organizations.  
CUNY Service Corps and CUNY Cultural Corps are two

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3 programs with a rich history and multi-year track

4 record of connecting students to paid work

5 opportunities. Through these problems CUNY supports

6 students as they pursue their aspirations in civic

7 and cultural careers while bolstering sectors that

8 are vital to New York City's identity. I am so glad

9 to be joined today by Chelsea Palot, who is an alumni

10 of CUNY Cultural Corps and a current government and

11 legislative affairs assistant at El Museo del Barrio,

12 who will offer a firsthand perspective on students'

13 experience in the program. Before diving into

14 details of how these programs are performing and how

15 they fared during the pandemic, I just want to offer

16 a few words of context, some of which have been

17 mentioned already. Service Corps was founded in 2013

18 on the heels of Hurricane Sandy and provides a

19 pipeline of diverse, qualified talent for the city's

20 community-based organizations, nonprofit

21 institutions, and government agencies. In eight

22 years it has provided thousands of CUNY students with

23 paid work experiences on projects that improve short-

24 and long-term civic, economic, and environmental

25 sustainability of New York City. The program has two

main goals and aims to achieve them. For students to

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3 make a meaningful difference through internships in  
4 New York City's nonprofits and community-based  
5 organizations while gaining valuable real-world  
6 experience, a wage, and, where appropriate, academic  
7 credit. For residents, communities, and project  
8 partners, to realize concrete benefits as a result of  
9 CUNY Service Corps projects. It does so through  
10 internship, student internship placements that are  
11 approximately 10 to 12 hours per week, over fall and  
12 spring semesters, for a total of 24 weeks, at a pay  
13 rate of between \$15 and \$17 an hour. Interns have  
14 the opportunity to work on initiatives, many of  
15 which, um, Chair Barron mentioned examples of, um,  
16 that include community and public health, green  
17 infrastructure and resiliency, education of both  
18 children and adults, and economic development.

19 Service Corps projects prepare students for success  
20 throughout their college experience and transition  
21 into careers by making meaningful links between  
22 internship placements and college course work,  
23 fostering structured reflection amongst participants  
24 to help students recognize and articulate  
25 transferrable skills in the workplace, and offering  
students valuable work experience and exposure to

1 careers. Students in the program also benefit from  
2 one-on-one advisement through their campus-based  
3 managers, pre-service training, ongoing monthly  
4 trainings, special program events, and peer-to-peer  
5 support from other Corps members. Examples of  
6 organizations that have partnered with Service Corps  
7 include the 9/11 Memorial Museum, Brooklyn Navy Yard,  
8 Federal Reserve Bank of New York, New York-  
9 Presbyterian Hospital, Queens Botanical Garden, and,  
10 as was mentioned, um, Wildlife Conservation Society,  
11 city zoos across the city. The online application to  
12 be a host organization is open to nonprofit and  
13 government agencies. Applications are evaluated to  
14 confirm that organizations will provide a meaningful  
15 experience for students that builds professional  
16 skills and isn't limited to basic administrative  
17 roles. Service Corps then works with host sites to  
18 provide ongoing support and assistance to help  
19 student development. Most host organizations in the  
20 current program are returning partners and have come  
21 back to work with CUNY year after year. Since 2013,  
22 eight campuses have participated in Service Corps,  
23 though today the program is open to five - two  
24 community colleges, [inaudible] and Laguardia, two  
25

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3 senior colleges, John Jay in Queens, and one  
4 comprehensive college, City Tech. Modeled after  
5 Service Corps, CUNY Cultural Corps was established in  
6 2016, as has been mentioned, by CUNY, the NYC  
7 Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Rockefeller  
8 Foundation in response to the report that has been,  
9 um, noted previously. Since then the program has  
10 connected over 800 CUNY students to part-time  
11 professional learning experiences during the academic  
12 year in arts and cultural organizations through the  
13 city. Cultural Corps students earn \$15 an hour and  
14 work up to 12 hours per week. Most organizations  
15 that participate in the CUNY Cultural Corps include  
16 the Met, Harlem Stage, Museum of the Moving Image, El  
17 Museo del Barrio, the Jewish Museum, New York City  
18 Ballet, and Tenement Museum. Similar to Service  
19 Corps, the application to be a host site is open and  
20 available online. All partners must provide  
21 students, must provide evidence of their being able  
22 to supervise and provide a meaningful professional  
23 development experience for each intern. Unlike  
24 Service Corps, students from any college are able and  
25 eligible to participate in the program. Over the  
past three years interns from 23 campuses have taken

1 part. Cultural Corps is made possible through not  
2 only the generous support of DCLA, but also the  
3 Rockefeller Foundation, and as of two years ago the  
4 NY Mellon Foundation. At their core, both of these  
5 programs aim to create pathways to careers in  
6 critical sectors with an emphasis on recruiting  
7 participants who reflect the demographics of CUNY and  
8 New York City overall in terms of socioeconomic,  
9 ethnic, and racial diversity. Outreach to students  
10 is conducted through multiple channels and formats,  
11 including email, social media, faculty and staff  
12 engagement, information sessions, and prior to the  
13 pandemic many on-campus activities. In the last  
14 three years 22% of Cultural Corps participants have  
15 been, has identified as black or African American,  
16 22% white, 26% Asian-Pacific Islander, 1% American  
17 Indian, and 4% multiracial. 33 identify as Hispanic  
18 or Latinx. The remaining participants who do not add  
19 up in these numbers, um, selected other or chose not  
20 to respond. This representation more or less mirrors  
21 CUNY's overall student body and exceeds the  
22 representation of Latinx and Asian communities when  
23 compared to the city's overall population.  
24 Similarly, in the most recent year of available data,  
25

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3 Service Corps, um, had 29% of participants  
4 identifying as black or African American, 9  
5 identified as white, 25 identified as Asian, and 34  
6 identified as Latinx. Service Corps participants are  
7 over 40% first generation college students, over 40%  
8 non-native English speakers, and over 50% from low-  
9 income households, near on par and exceeding a bit  
10 the overall CUNY student body demographics. COVID-19  
11 pandemic took a tremendous toll on CUNY Service Corps  
12 and Cultural Corps. In addition to the pervasive  
13 challenges caused by rapid closure of in-person  
14 activity, CUNY's 20% mandatory budget reduction  
15 shaped the fiscal reality that surrounded these  
16 programs. The impact of the pandemic was obviously  
17 felt by partner organizations as well, who were faced  
18 with the difficult decision of canceling or reducing  
19 their commitments. Forty of the 105 Cultural Corps  
20 interns during the 2019-2020 session had their  
21 internships suspended as Cultural Corps institutions  
22 were unable to continue hosting the interns in light  
23 of stay-at-home directives. In 2020 90% of the  
24 Cultural Corps internships were offered remotely with  
25 roughly 20 students continuing in-person placements.  
However, the ability to pivot online, to online

3 Cultural Corps programming, proved a remarkable  
4 silver lining for cultural institutions themselves.

5 When COVID-19 forced many partner organizations to  
6 close their doors, and in many cases lay off

7 employees, talent sources supported by Cultural Corps  
8 allowed these institutions to continue to serve New  
9 Yorkers and its communities even from their own

10 homes. As a result, students and partners

11 recommended the Cultural Corps to peers as it was one  
12 of the only programs that continued to operate during

13 the pandemic remotely. In large part, due to this  
14 increased demand, Cultural Corps will be expanding

15 this coming year. The new remote environment also  
16 allowed program staff the flexibility to offer more

17 professional development programming as students

18 could join from their respective locations across the  
19 five boroughs. In 2021-22, this current academic

20 year, Cultural Corps will continue to take advantage  
21 of these remote offerings and will be offering a

22 hybrid system to meet [inaudible] needs. 68, or

23 about a third of Cultural Corps interns this year,

24 are entirely remote and the remainder will be in-

25 person or hybrid. Similarly, Service Corps was able

to commit 100% of its 2019-2020 internships through a



3 remote setting, allowing students to continue to  
4 offer critical capacities to nonprofit partners.

5 2021, faced with significant budget constraints, the  
6 program took an innovative leap and transitioned the

7 CUNY Service Corps model to one primarily supported  
8 by Federal Work-Study funding with additional

9 philanthropic support. Building on CUNY's recent

10 expansion of work study under federal experimental

11 site authority, Service Corps realigned its target

12 population to serve students eligible for this form

13 of financial aid. At the same time, the program

14 scaled back its reach to about 250 students a year.

15 This transition will allow Service Corps to take

16 advantage of a long-term sustainable funding stream

17 and has the added benefit of reaching students with

18 explicit financial need through additional channels,

19 for example, financial aid offices. This transition

20 hasn't been without bumps. The limitation of

21 eligibility criteria to work study-eligible students

22 has significantly shrunk the applicant pool. In

23 partnership with office of financial aid, the CEWP

24 team is continuing to explore reasons why eligible

25 students may not be aware or take full advantage of

the available work study packages. With the start of

1 the school year, another cycle of both CUNY Cultural  
2 Corps and Service Corps are now underway. The  
3 changes made to these programs during the COVID  
4 pandemic will allow us to continue to move forward on  
5 a more sustainable path. As we do so, we'll be laser  
6 focused on ways to continue and improve, to improve  
7 and evolve these programs. This includes taking  
8 steps to further strengthen the transition to careers  
9 in this critical fields following program  
10 participation, removing unnecessary barriers to  
11 student participation, looking for additional  
12 opportunities to extend internships into the summer,  
13 which they do not currently operate under except for  
14 this past year, and improving long-term tracking of  
15 alumni outcomes. To that point I just made, in the  
16 summer of 2021 CUNY, both CUNY Cultural Corps and  
17 Service Corps partnered with the CUNY Recovery Corps,  
18 which a summer internship program that was run under  
19 the Summer Youth Employment Program, with support  
20 from the Center for Youth Employment and DYCD, nearly  
21 140 CUNY Corps participants were able to extend their  
22 academic year internship for an additional six weeks  
23 into the summer. This provide, this proved to be a  
24 meaningful opportunity for Cultural Corps interns and  
25

3 one that we hope to continue to explore in the  
4 future. We look forward to working with the City  
5 Council and city to identify additional opportunities  
6 to bolster these pipelines to vital careers across  
7 the five boroughs in the months and years to come.  
8 Thank you for this opportunity to provide an update  
9 on where we are. As a public institution we're  
10 accessible to the cities of New York, citizens of New  
11 York, to you, their leaders, and to CUNY students,  
12 who turn to us for a first-rate education that will  
13 propel them towards economic prosperity. We  
14 appreciate the chance to appear before you today.  
15 And now if it's possible I'd like to take a moment to  
16 hand over the floor to Chelsea Palot, a CUNY Cultural  
17 Corps alumni, who will share her experience. And  
18 after that I look forward to answering any questions  
19 you may have.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
20 testimony. Chelsea Palot, you may begin your  
21 testimony.

22 CHELSEA PALOT: Hello, my name is Chelsea  
23 Palot. I am a recent graduate of Hunter College,  
24 where I received my bachelor's degree in sociology.  
25 I'm also an alum of the CUNY Cultural Corps program,

1 where I had the opportunity to intern at El Museo del  
2 Barrio. CUNY Cultural Corps has changed my life and  
3 the trajectory of my career. I returned to Hunter  
4 College to pursue my sociology degree with no clear  
5 path for my future. I had already obtained a degree  
6 in music and I had a passion for community affairs,  
7 yet I couldn't figure out how to combine the two.  
8 Prior to CUNY Cultural Corps I had never heard of the  
9 arts and culture sector. I didn't know that it was  
10 the perfect amalgamation of my two interests and a  
11 viable career option for me. From the very beginning  
12 of my internship in the government and community  
13 affairs department at El Museo, my supervisor, Ana  
14 Chilamo, clearly communicated with me that she wanted  
15 to craft my intern experience to my interests and the  
16 areas in which I wanted to learn. Soon I was  
17 drafting letters to local government officials,  
18 communicating with community members, and crafting  
19 synopses to be shared across departments at El Museo.  
20 One of the projects I'm most grateful to have worked  
21 on was El Museo's annual Three Kings Day celebration.  
22 Seeing the entire planning process through to the  
23 final day of the festivities and the overwhelmingly  
24 positive and even emotional community response to the  
25

1 celebration was one of the most rewarding experiences  
2 of my internship. Being a part of this project made  
3 me realize that the immense social impact, the  
4 immense social impact that working in arts and  
5 culture can have, and further solidified my decision  
6 to pursue a profession in this field. At the end of  
7 my five months as a CUNY Cultural Corps intern, El  
8 Museo del Barrio hired me as the government and  
9 community affairs assistant. As a Puerto Rican and  
10 New York City native, it has been a dream come true  
11 to work at El Museo del Barrio, a cultural  
12 institution founded by Puerto Rican artists  
13 specifically to uplift and create space for the  
14 Latinx community of New York City. Additionally, as  
15 a disabled person, having the opportunity to work  
16 remotely made this internship program more accessible  
17 than it would have ever been in person. CUNY  
18 Cultural Corps transitioning to a fully remote  
19 program allowed for me to confidently apply and  
20 participate, knowing that a lack of accessibility and  
21 disability accommodations would not be a hindrance to  
22 my ability to excel. I began my internship unsure of  
23 what to expect, but incredibly excited, hopeful, and  
24 eager to learn, and I ended the program with quite  
25

3 literally the best possible outcome. In closing, I'm  
4 eternally grateful to have had such a transformative  
5 opportunity. Without CUNY Cultural Corps I would not  
6 be successfully pursuing my career in the field of  
7 arts and culture today. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
9 testimony, Chelsea. Sheelah Feinberg, you may now  
10 begin your testimony.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FEINBERG: Thank you.  
12 Um, good afternoon, Chair Barron and Chair Van  
13 Bramer, members of the committees. I am Department  
14 of Cultural Affairs Deputy Commissioner Sheelah  
15 Feinberg and I'm here to testify in regards to  
16 today's topic, the CUNY Cultural Corps and Service  
17 Corps, and I'm joined today by our DCLA general  
18 counsel, Pernita Ragavan. And I just want to start  
19 off by saying like I have a whole thing prepared.  
20 I'm gonna read it. But I just want to take a moment  
21 and just say how great it was to hear from our  
22 colleagues at CUNY. I am really, I'm, I'm moved and  
23 I hope that others are as well. I was really  
24 impressed with that. So, anyway, that said, I will  
25 continue now. Ah, New York City's cultural community  
is a tremendous source of civic pride and social

3 strength, of economic value, of jobs, inspiration,  
4 and uplift. It's what defines us to the world in  
5 many ways. That's why it's so important that our  
6 cultural community reflects the dynamic, diverse  
7 residents it serves and why under the de Blasio  
8 administration the Department of Cultural Affairs has  
9 pushed diversity, equity, and inclusion to the top of  
10 the agenda in our cultural sector. In 2016 we  
11 released results of a landmark demography survey of  
12 New York City's cultural workforce. The results,  
13 while not entirely surprising, were startling. In a  
14 city where 66% of residents identify as people of  
15 color just 33% of the workforce did the same. The  
16 survey was an urgent call to action for our many  
17 partners in the cultural sector. As a first step, we  
18 immediately committed to funding a pipeline for more  
19 diverse candidates into positions in the cultural  
20 sector. When it comes to accessing a diverse pool of  
21 talent in New York City, New York City, the CUNY  
22 student body is an unparalleled resource. So working  
23 with our incredible partners at CUNY, we helped  
24 launch the Cultural Corps the same year we published  
25 the survey results in 2016. Since the start of the  
program in 2016 more than 850 students have

1 participated in the program. In the 2019-2020  
2 academic year more than 200 Corps members, working at  
3 87 host sites, provided over 46,000 work hours. In a  
4 survey conducted of Cultural Corps alumni, half of  
5 them responded to report having another internship or  
6 job with a significant number those jobs in the  
7 cultural sector. Note that not all Corps are seniors  
8 when they take part in the program and may still be  
9 enrolled in school once their Cultural Corps tenure  
10 is finished. After launching, with interns facing  
11 the 33 institutions at city-owned property in the  
12 cultural institutions group, now more than 85  
13 organizations in every borough, size, and discipline  
14 host Cultural Corps members. Students working in  
15 larger institutions are exposed to have some of the  
16 largest cultural organizations in the world put on  
17 major performances and exhibitions. Students in  
18 smaller groups become crucial members of the team and  
19 are immersed in their operations. Beyond the direct  
20 value of this program to the students and host  
21 organizations it was important to help shift  
22 expectations and payment for introductory work, too.  
23 For too long unpaid internships have been the norm in  
24 many industries. This practice often bars lower-



3 income people who can't afford to work for free from  
4 important entry-level experience. By paying students  
5 \$15 an hour CUNY Cultural Corps demonstrates that  
6 training is work and work at all levels deserves fair  
7 compensation. We also want the students to  
8 understand that working in culture can provide a  
9 good, meaningful job in a variety of disciplines,  
10 from programming and curation to finance and  
11 communications and even intergovernmental affairs.  
12 In addition to CUNY's leadership and partnership, a  
13 number of partners from private philanthropy,  
14 including Rockefeller Foundation and Mellon  
15 Foundation, has stepped up to invest in and expand  
16 the program's offerings. This demonstrates  
17 recognition of the urgency and value of CUNY Cultural  
18 Corps mission and we thank these partners for helping  
19 sustain and grow the program. There are legitimate  
20 concerns that the layoffs and furloughs caused by the  
21 pandemic have set the sector back in terms of staff  
22 diversity. We believe it's more urgent than ever to  
23 foreground this work, particularly in light of  
24 COVID's disproportionate impact on communities of  
25 color. We were thrilled [inaudible] that CUNY and  
the cultural host sites found a way to keep the Corps

1 up and running throughout the pandemic. In the past  
2 academic year 95% of Corps members completed their  
3 internships, helping to ensure that this pipeline and  
4 the partnerships and connections it fosters remains  
5 strong. Qualitative surveys continue to find  
6 enormous levels of support from the program or the  
7 program from students. One recent participant,  
8 participant, reported after their internship this  
9 program has given me an opportunity to break into the  
10 art world that I otherwise would not have. It's  
11 given me immense perspective in what I want to do  
12 with my life, but more importantly through my  
13 relationships with my supervisors it has shown me the  
14 type of professional I want to be as well. The  
15 cultural groups who host CUNY Cultural Corps members  
16 also find their organizations transformed by the  
17 talent, energy, and perspectives they bring to their  
18 roles. In another community survey a recent host  
19 organization reported that during COVID the fact that  
20 our organization did not just survive, but that we  
21 thrived and met unprecedented challenges with  
22 innovative solutions is in large part thanks to our  
23 CUNY Cultural Corps team. We believe that this  
24 program is helping to create the next generation of  
25

1 talent and leadership for our city's cultural  
2 organizations. We are grateful to CUNY, our cultural  
3 partners, and funding partners for their ongoing  
4 support of the program, and we give a huge shout-out  
5 to all the CUNY Cultural Corps members present, past,  
6 and future whose energy and talent and intelligence  
7 are the lifeblood of the program. Thank you for the  
8 opportunity to testify. I'm happy to field any  
9 questions you may have.  
10

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
12 testimony, Deputy Commissioner Feinberg. Ah, before  
13 we go onto the next witness I would like to  
14 acknowledge Majority Leader Cumbo and Council Member  
15 Gjonaj for joining us today, and General Counsel  
16 Pernita Ragavan you may now begin your testimony.

17 PERNITA RAGAVAN: I don't have extra  
18 testimony yet, thank you [laughs]. Deputy  
19 Commissioner Feinberg did our testimony. Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Then we  
21 will now turn to questions. Um, and before I turn it  
22 over Chairs Barron and Van Bramer I would like remind  
23 council members to use the raise hand function in  
24 Zoom to indicate they have a question for this panel.  
25

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3 Chair Barron, you may now begin with your questions.

4 Pardon, Chair, you're muted.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes. Thank you very  
6 much. Ah, I want to thank the panelists for coming  
7 and for sharing their experiences and, ah, sharing  
8 the information, Dean Anderson, welcome. New to the  
9 CUNY family, but we're glad to have you. You've been  
10 such an important function. Ah, we've gotten lots of  
11 questions and I wanted to find out in terms of the  
12 CUNY Service Corps what's the total number? Do we  
13 have that total number of students who've been a part  
14 of that Corps since its inception.

15 DEAN ANDERSON: It is over 5,000. We can  
16 get you the total number afterward.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, it's over 5,000.

18 DEAN ANDERSON: Um-hmm.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK, and what is the  
20 average size of a cohort?

21 DEAN ANDERSON: Um, it has changed over  
22 the course of the history of the program. Um, it  
23 used to be, ah, someplace between 600 and 800  
24 students. Now it is closer to 300, and that is a  
25 reflection of the fact that for many years CUNY

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3 operated the Service Corps. Sorry, did you ask about  
4 Service Corps or Cultural Corps?

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: The Service Corps.

6 DEAN ANDERSON: Service Corps, right. So  
7 for many years we operated Service Corps out of our  
8 operational budget without any allocation from the  
9 city or state for this purpose. And in 2018 that  
10 became very hard to sustain and so we had to reduce  
11 the size of the program, um, in 2018 to five colleges  
12 down from eight. And since we have switched over to  
13 Federal Work-Study we are excited to see if that  
14 could be a long-term sustainable stream, um, because  
15 there's a chance we might be able to grow that again,  
16 but we're really looking to see how that happens this  
17 year since that changed just happened in the last  
18 academic year.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So the reason that  
20 it went from five campuses down to eight was simply  
21 based on the finances?

22 DEAN ANDERSON: That's right.  
23 Additionally, when went down from eight to five  
24 schools there was a reevaluation of schools based on  
25 criteria that had to do with enrollment and  
retention, um, and program completion rates and so

3 when we selected the new schools several schools were  
4 not selected because they did not meet the same  
5 standards of the criteria.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So were all of the  
7 schools required to have, um, pre-service, did they  
8 all have the same requirements and they didn't meet  
9 them adequately? I know you talked about pre-service  
10 you talked about one to two advisement, you talked  
11 about peer, ah, arrangements. Were those in place  
12 throughout the time of the, of the Service Corps or  
13 did you institute them at some point after you saw  
14 that there was some need?

15 DEAN ANDERSON: So the program has always  
16 been about more than just placement, about supporting  
17 students throughout the process. The exact  
18 interventions have evolved over time, um, and I don't  
19 know exactly which year they were introduced, but it  
20 has been an evolution.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK. Um, so what is  
22 the requirement of the partner organization? I heard  
23 you say that it's online, ah, the application to  
24 become a host. So what are those requirements?

25 DEAN ANDERSON: Absolutely. So our  
partner organizations, we deliberately keep it open

3 so that, um, partner organizations who would like to  
4 benefit from the service, who see the need in these  
5 talent pipelines have the ability to apply, so we  
6 don't limit application. But when we are evaluating  
7 applications what we look for is that the host  
8 organizations are committed to providing projects  
9 that are gonna actually contribute to student  
10 professional development. Um, that they have a on  
11 campus or on-site supervisor who is able to help, um,  
12 oversee and offer assistance to students. And those  
13 are really the two things that we look for, whether  
14 it's Service Corps or it's Cultural Corps in our host  
15 institutions. We also tend to prioritize for Service  
16 Corps or host institutions that could take five  
17 students or more.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That can take five  
19 students, oh, so, OK, you try to have a group of  
20 students placed. That was a question I wanted to  
21 ask. Do you have groups of students at each or is  
22 there, are there instances where one student is at  
23 host by themselves without any other students there,  
24 or is that something you try to avoid?

25 DEAN ANDERSON: We do, ah, prioritize  
having multiple students at one location. It adds

3 [inaudible] support and confidence. Um, there may be  
4 instances where we do only have one student, though.  
5 Happy to get back to you on the scale of that.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And then are  
7 students encouraged to apply to future cohorts if  
8 they are not accepted into the program at the time  
9 that they first, ah, want to enter?

10 DEAN ANDERSON: If they meet all of the  
11 eligibility requirements for the program, um, and  
12 aren't, ah, deemed ineligible, then yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And, and in your  
14 testimony you spoke about, ah, having an arrangement  
15 now based with the work study from the federal  
16 government. Can you speak a little bit more about  
17 that?

18 DEAN ANDERSON: Absolutely. So Federal  
19 Work-Study is a financial aid, a formula-based  
20 financial aid, um, program that the Department of  
21 Education oversees at the federal level, and it is  
22 offered to students oftentimes as part of a full  
23 financial aid package so it is not available to every  
24 student that qualifies for financial aid. Um, it is  
25 available to some that meet specific requirements and  
then CUNY additionally put some, ah, requirements



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3 around which students that qualify for financial aid  
4 also quality for Federal Work-Study.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And so, ah, talking  
6 about the financials, between cohorts one and four,  
7 ah, the Jewish Foundation for Education for Women  
8 Service Corps provided an extended full-time summer  
9 placement, ah, for students who completed the Service  
10 Corps. Can you describe the nature of this  
11 partnership and how many students benefitted from the  
12 program?

13 DEAN ANDERSON: You know, I don't believe  
14 that I have the specific information...

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK.

16 DEAN ANDERSON: ... on that partnership  
17 but, again, happy to get it for you afterward.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK, ah, very good.  
19 As I'm trying to negotiate and get back to my other  
20 screen, I just need a second for you to be a little  
21 patient.

22 DEAN ANDERSON: Sure.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I think what I'll do  
24 is I'll defer to my cochair while I try to find my  
25 other screen of questions, and Amy if when he's

3 finished you would allow me to come back I'd  
4 appreciate it.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No problem. Chair  
6 Van Bramer?

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very  
8 much. Um, ah, thank you, Chair Barron, and thank you  
9 to, ah, everyone who has spoken so far. Um, so I am  
10 of course interested in, in the long-term success of  
11 the Cultural Corps and I think that it's great that  
12 we've had over 850, ah, individuals, 87 institutions,  
13 ah, participating, but I don't know who can answer  
14 this best but whoever wants to chime in. So, ah, and  
15 Chelsea's story is a powerful and, and, and great  
16 success story but how do we, um, continue, ah, this  
17 program over the long term to make sure that there's  
18 accountability, that we're measuring success, not  
19 just in terms of how many young people, ah, become  
20 interns with the CUNY program, which is great, but  
21 how many like Chelsea are offered positions and then  
22 ultimately not just offered positions but that there  
23 is a path to leadership, ah, for Chelsea and others,  
24 right, that we're actually doing what the program was  
25 intended to at its very, very beginnings when I was  
there with Commissioner Finkelppearl and that is to,

3 um, use this as a way to, ah, deal with the  
4 disparities that exist at the top echelons of  
5 leadership of cultural institutions?

6 DEAN ANDERSON: I'm happy to, to take a  
7 first stab and then Deputy Commissioner, if you'd  
8 like to hop in please feel free.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

10 DEAN ANDERSON: Um, this is a terrific  
11 question, and as I had mentioned in, ah, the  
12 testimony provided, ah, we have several priorities  
13 moving forward, one of which is to strengthen those  
14 connections to postgraduate career outcomes, another  
15 of which is to measure them more holistically. Um,  
16 prior to the pandemic we had done some informal  
17 surveys of student outcomes that had led to some of  
18 the data points that you have heard about, um, and  
19 have continued to do that informally through 2020.  
20 Um, we would like to systematize that and when I came  
21 on board two months ago we started the conversations  
22 about how do we get a more holistic and consistent  
23 measurement of the impact of these programs, both of  
24 them actually. Um, we have not to date set up that  
25 process yet, but that is absolutely a priority for  
us. Additionally, um, it is really critical that we

3 continue to, to look for, target, and recruit, ah,  
4 organizations that are committed to bringing on  
5 talent, not just hosting talent, who see talent as  
6 not just an intern for a short period of time but  
7 someone they actually want to join their workforce  
8 and we are excited to do even more based on the  
9 successes we've had with El Museo del Barrio and  
10 other partners, um, to be able to understand better  
11 how that transition has worked, where there have been  
12 challenges, where there are advantages, and use that  
13 as we bring industry partners, employer partners  
14 onboard to be able to do that work.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Ah, Deputy  
16 Commissioner, did you want to add from the  
17 [inaudible]?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FEINBERG: I think, I  
19 think Lauren covered it really well. I mean, I guess  
20 the only thing I would add is that we have to  
21 continue to do the interviews and the evaluations and  
22 make sure that everyone's getting a good, positive  
23 experience that we're talking about right now, but  
24 that sustains throughout time so that helps. Again,  
25 ah, word of mouth is such a big thing, right,  
whenever you're on the job market and whenever you're

1 an intern you're trying to think about where you go  
2 next and word of mouth is really a big piece of that,  
3 too. So I think just working again with our partners  
4 at CUNY to help with the evaluation piece as well.

5  
6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, Deputy  
7 Commissioner, what is the, the communication with  
8 the, the cultural organizations or institutions  
9 themselves about how we measure the, the long-term  
10 success of the program? Ah, CUNY, ah, you know,  
11 certainly is, is wed to the success long term of the  
12 program and I understand how they're, ah, attempting  
13 to, you know, manage the, ah, program and, and gauge  
14 its success, but DCLA has, of course, a unique  
15 relationship with all of our cultural organizations  
16 and institutions and, and, and how are, you know,  
17 managing it, how are you measuring it, how are you  
18 communicating with the, the cultural institutions and  
19 organizations themselves about the expectation that  
20 this is going to be more than internship program and  
21 it really is a pipeline to leadership?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FEINBERG: That was a  
23 great question. Thank you for it. Um, I want to get  
24 back to you on the specific answers on, on your  
25 question. I would say at a broad brush stroke, you

3 know, we have made that institutional commitment and  
4 we share that with our cultural partner, partners in  
5 the sector so they are well aware of our commitment  
6 behind it, both our funding commitment and also to  
7 the extent that we partner with CUNY to help with the  
8 process, that commitment as well. I think a lot of  
9 it, you know, as we were saying earlier on, um, this  
10 is just one thing that we're doing in our overall  
11 exhaustive work on DEI. I think the message has come  
12 out loud and clear to the sector that this  
13 administration and this agency is committed to DEI  
14 work, ah, and cultural center at all levels, whether  
15 it's an intern, senior board appointment, and even  
16 the president and CEO of our arts organizations. So  
17 that is, that has come through loud and clear. And  
18 also our partners [inaudible] since we started the  
19 program, and I can give you the actual numbers of  
20 that, ah, after this.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Ah, yes, thank  
22 you. Ah, I know, um, that it's, it's growing and,  
23 and that's a very, very good thing. Um, we've also  
24 got to, ah, protect the funding for this, ah, program  
25 which, ah, ah, obviously has been terrifically  
invested for, um, several years now. Um, so, you

3 know, as, as someone who, ah, ah, ah, was not lucky  
4 enough to be an intern when I was college, but who,  
5 ah, who, ah, had, had less than no money when I was  
6 in college, um, and worked and, um, struggled to, ah,  
7 literally pay the tuition, um, you know, I'm  
8 wondering what we do for, for folks who do run into  
9 issues and, and, you know, are there, are there ways  
10 that, that we help young people, ah, in the program  
11 who, who might actually run into financial  
12 difficulty, um, and, you know, the worst thing, of  
13 course, is to, ah, realize, ah, back in the day we  
14 would, we would wait outside for hours at the  
15 bursar's office and, and try and get, um, loans and  
16 relief when it came time to paying the tuition, at  
17 least folks in my, ah, position, um, and, and the  
18 worst thing would be for folks to be denied an  
19 internship here in this program because somehow, you  
20 know, they, they were in arrears or they, they, um,  
21 weren't able to, to make it financially. I don't  
22 know if I'm making myself clear. But like how, how  
23 do, how do we help folks stay in the program, stay in  
24 CUNY, who are really the most marginal, really  
25 struggling, right, financially?

3 DEAN ANDERSON: Yeah, absolutely. So,  
4 first of all these are well paid programs. Um, we  
5 have had partners in the past that wanted to offer  
6 academic credit and we say no because, only academic  
7 credit, no payment, because that is an essential  
8 piece of being able to take advantage of these  
9 opportunities is not having to make a tradeoff  
10 between taking a job that pays your rent and taking a  
11 job that can increase your, um, career path and  
12 professional development. So, one, all of the  
13 opportunities are paid, as you know. Um, two, CUNY  
14 more broadly, especially recently over the last  
15 couple of years, has launched a number of efforts  
16 from the emergency fund for students during the  
17 pandemic to the recent CUNY Comeback program that  
18 helps, um, [inaudible] debt that students might have  
19 or fees that they might owe. Additionally, this next  
20 round of CUNY Comeback targets students who have paid  
21 their, um, bill in full but have additional economic,  
22 ah, challenges, so they are eligible for this most  
23 recent round and we are happy to provide you with  
24 more information on those programs. We within  
25 Service Corps and Cultural Corps make sure that we're  
making the link to those programs with students who



3 experience financial hardship rather than offering  
4 something specific through our own programs.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right. That's,  
6 that's exactly what I was talking about, because, as  
7 you know, there are, ah, students who are working  
8 and/or have paid internships who still can't make the  
9 tuition, right, um, and it's very, very difficult,  
10 ah, to make that along with their families. Um, so,  
11 ah, so thank you for that. I do want to acknowledge  
12 Council Member James Gennaro is with us, ah, in the  
13 hearing. Ah, thank you to Council, ah, Member  
14 Gennaro. And Department of Cultural Affairs, um,  
15 Deputy Commissioner the, the, the data that we have  
16 so far, right, to have this program in existence for,  
17 um, five years or so, um, and, and I realize that  
18 there's a wide range, ah, seniors, sophomores, ah,  
19 juniors, and freshmen, ah, participating but what  
20 data do we have so far on the number of folks who've  
21 actually been like Chelsea, ah, wonderful success  
22 stories, ah, who have been offered full-time  
23 permanent positions in cultural organizations?

24 DEAN ANDERSON: Um, if, if you're trying  
25 to unmute, OK. I'm, I'm happy to just speak to that  
briefly. So, um, the deputy commissioner referenced

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3 a survey that we have done most recently that, um,  
4 surveyed the current Corps, current Cultural Corps  
5 members to understand how many, alumni, to understand  
6 how many were employed. Um, of that 50% were  
7 employed. Um, we are meeting to do more thorough  
8 survey and analysis of our student outcomes to be  
9 able to tell you exactly how many continued on in an  
10 organization, um, or how many are now in a different  
11 position within the cultural sector, um, to be able  
12 to get that to you with more specificity. On the  
13 Service Corps side, which I know is not what you're  
14 asking about, we generally see that up to 25% of the  
15 students stay on at their institutions, um, that have  
16 hosted them and many in [inaudible] capacities.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Um, thank you.

17 Dean Anderson, so when you say 50% of CUNY Cultural  
18 Corps, ah, graduates, if you will, um, are employed  
19 is that 50% have found employment in the cultural  
20 sector or just 50% have found permanent employment?

21 DEAN ANDERSON: That is 50% have found  
22 employment and I do want to make just a little note  
23 about permanent employment. Many of the students who  
24 participate in these programs, as the deputy  
25 commissioner mentioned, are still students. They

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3 are, um, still enrolled, still going to work. So,  
4 um, there is additional analysis to be done to even  
5 understand who would qualify, however many semesters  
6 out for a full-time position.

7 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Totally fair. I  
8 guess, and, and I'll, ah, throw it back to Chair  
9 Barron, of course. Um, but my last point is, is, I  
10 guess what I'm trying to get is and, and I realize  
11 you, you may not have all this data, but we do need  
12 to start having the data to, ah, to convince, ah,  
13 folks that it's working and deserves to be not only  
14 continually funded but that maybe having a funding  
15 increase from the program expanded, so the question  
16 is, ah, is how many have found, ah, work, ah, full-  
17 time employment in the cultural sector of that 50%,  
18 ah, total, which is false actually as I take it.  
19 What is, what is our success rate and, and, and, you  
20 know what I'm getting at, right, like, and I, I, I  
21 believe in the cultural sector, I believe in our, ah,  
22 all of our cultural organizations and I know, um,  
23 Lisa is going to be testifying, ah, for [inaudible]  
24 but everyone wants and believes in, in, um, in the  
25 DEI mission, but, um, but we also have to have  
metrics associated with this and accountability. So,

3 um, is there a way to drill down into, ah, what  
4 percentage have found full-time employment at  
5 cultural institutions and organizations, which, of  
6 course, is the very heart and soul of the Cultural  
7 Corps?

8 DEAN ANDERSON: Yeah, so I completely  
9 understand what you're what asking for. Um, at this  
10 moment, and again apologies, Deputy Commissioner, for  
11 speaking over you. Um, we do not have precisely what  
12 you're looking for but can follow up. Deputy  
13 Commissioner, anything you wish to add?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FEINBERG: Yeah, I  
15 was just gonna say we can, ah, we'll follow up with  
16 you and your office to get you the, ah, the exact  
17 data that you're requesting. And I, and I understand  
18 why you're asking for it. It makes a lot of sense  
19 and myself I tend to overlook the data as well, so I  
20 think it's really good to help, again, bolster the  
21 argument for why this is a great program and why it  
22 needs to continue for years to come.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Ah, Chair  
24 Barron.

25 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes, thank you. Ah,  
am I unmuted?

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You are.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK, good. Ah, thank  
5 you so much for your, for your testimony. And I have  
6 a question for Miss Palot. I don't know if I'm  
7 pronouncing your name properly.

8 CHELSEA PALOT: Yes, you are.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much.  
10 Ah, your testimony was very inspiring and I could  
11 hear the enthusiasm and sort of like the epiphany  
12 that this is what I want to do, I found it. Did, did  
13 you find this as a graduate student? Is that when  
14 you came to find out about the Service Corps?

15 CHELSEA PALOT: No, I'm actually, I was,  
16 um, I returned to Hunter to get a second bachelor's  
17 design because I had gotten a music degree a few  
18 years earlier and for about three, four years I, I  
19 didn't know what my career path was going to be, just  
20 'cause I didn't know that there were more options in  
21 the arts, other than performance-based careers or  
22 education-based careers. I didn't know if there was,  
23 um, more than that. And, and that led me to just  
24 kind of wanting to return back to school, so I  
25 returned back to school in the beginning of 2020 and  
throughout my time, um, in school that's when I

3 discovered, ah, the Cultural Corps. Ah, in the  
4 middle of the pandemic was when I discovered it  
5 through a Hunter newsletter, um, and that...

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, you found out  
7 about it in a, I was trying to find out...

8 CHELSEA PALOT: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: ...how it is that you  
10 found out about it. Because I'm always...

11 CHELSEA PALOT: Yes, it, it through a  
12 Hunter newsletter.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I'm, I'm always, ah,  
14 excited to know that there's an outreach that's  
15 effective and really letting the students know about  
16 the [inaudible], not that we can provide placements  
17 for all of the students, it might be interesting to  
18 do, but really to be able to at least, ah, make them  
19 informed, have them be informed that this is an  
20 opportunity that they can, that they can pursue. Ah,  
21 so other than the newsletter had you seen other kinds  
22 of advertisements or did you get it in your, in your  
23 email from Hunter or from CUNY? Was there an alert,  
24 or how, pay attention to this, did you have any of  
25 that or was it just through that newsletter article?

3 CHELSEA PALOT: Um, well I, I definitely  
4 was seeking opportunities. Ah, I, um, I already knew  
5 that I, I was going, trying to graduate, ah, within a  
6 year, year and a half or so. Um, so I was looking  
7 for my next step. I just didn't know exactly what  
8 that was going to be, so I was, I was, I, casting a  
9 wide net pretty much and, um, ah, I signed up for a  
10 few different, ah, opportunities through, ah,  
11 Hunter's Office of the Arts. I believe that was, ah,  
12 one of the avenues that I discovered that I could,  
13 that they would send, ah, frequent, ah, updates on,  
14 internship opportunities.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh.

16 CHELSEA PALOT: There's job  
17 opportunities.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK.

19 CHELSEA PALOT: Um, I signed up for the  
20 general CUNY, ah, emails, I think the internship  
21 office, um, just, I know they also have like a, like  
22 a job board, an internship board, so that you can  
23 see, um, the frequent updates on, on what  
24 opportunities were out there. And those were kind of  
25 the avenues that, that I found, Cultural Corps.

3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK, thank you. And  
4 then a general question, ah, um, for Dean Anderson.  
5 Ah, the list of criteria cites a grade point of 2.5.  
6 Are there exceptions that are made, or must a student  
7 really have a hard 2.5, and is there an opportunity,  
8 let's say we have a student who had college credits  
9 that they earned while they were in high school. You  
10 know, we had the early college program. So if  
11 there's a student who has college credits that  
12 they're bringing in as a freshman would they have an  
13 opportunity to apply, ah, to participate, or do you  
14 generally wait to make sure that it's been a student  
15 who's already been in the college campus setting and  
16 then can move on to that?

17 DEAN ANDERSON: Sure. Um, 2.5, ah, is  
18 generally the rule. Occasionally we have had  
19 exceptions, if a faculty member vouches for the  
20 student, but that is generally what we aim at. In  
21 terms of credits and standing, in general we prefer  
22 that students have at least a year's worth of  
23 experience with credits on campus. Um, again, there  
24 have been some exceptions made, but those are, are  
25 the ideal criteria.



3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And, and the, ah,  
4 Chair, Chair Van Bramer talked about the goals of, of  
5 the program and talking about cultural diversity and  
6 making sure that, ah, there's a path that leads to  
7 positions that are higher up and leadership, curators  
8 at museums and such, so the list of criteria says  
9 that they have to start their placements at their  
10 sites and they must participate in professional  
11 development training program. Can you talk a little  
12 bit about how that professional development training  
13 program helps to define exactly what we're talking  
14 about when we say cultural diversity?

15 DEAN ANDERSON: That is a great question  
16 and I'm gonna have to get back to you on the  
17 curriculum of the professional development offerings  
18 that we, um, run. We do, as I mentioned before, have  
19 workshops that are led, that are focused on  
20 professional development. We have career mentions  
21 that help with professional development. But I'm  
22 gonna have to get back to you on the curriculum as to  
23 how it specifically addresses that issue.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Great. Ah, I'll be  
25 very interested in knowing how that, ah, works and  
how it's presented and who are the people and what

3 are the preparations and what are their  
4 qualifications for doing that professional  
5 development. Are we particularly in CUNY? Are there  
6 other outreaches and other agencies and other people  
7 that do that? Ah, moving on, there are many times  
8 that students work more than one job and we know that  
9 students, part of the requirement, I think, is that  
10 the student must be enrolled for at least 12 credits.  
11 Is that a part of your requirement, I think I saw  
12 that, to be able to be eligible? I think I saw that  
13 in the briefing material.

14 DEAN ANDERSON: Yes, they would be  
15 registered for 12 credits.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK. But we know  
17 that students really have a lot of responsibilities  
18 and many of them are parents and have to make  
19 provisions, and this particular, this particular  
20 opportunity to have an internship is great, it's in  
21 their field, it's giving them that experience. But  
22 there may also be the challenge that the student may  
23 face of having another part-time job. So are there  
24 provisions made that will allow them to be flexible  
25 in the hours that they would work, or is the whole

1 cohort that you talk about expected to work the same  
2 hours and the same, ah, schedule?  
3

4 DEAN ANDERSON: Students commit to  
5 working between 10 and 12 hours a week, and in the  
6 Service Corps they make a year-long commitment. Um,  
7 but the schedules are dependent on host sites, so on  
8 a host site by host site basis those kinds of  
9 accommodations might be allowed.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And what is the  
11 percentage of students that successfully complete the  
12 program, who are able to do the whole year, do the 10  
13 to 12 hours? We know there are lots of other, ah,  
14 contingencies that come in, things that impact the  
15 student's commitment, but what's the percentage of  
16 students that actually are able to complete the  
17 program?

18 DEAN ANDERSON: That is a great question.  
19 Again, I'm sorry, I'm gonna have to get back to you  
20 on that.

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK. And what kind  
22 of additional support is there for students to be  
23 able to get, ah, counseling, or to be able to say,  
24 listen, I'm, I'm at a critical point here and I need  
25 to try to make, ah, four hours this week and add the

3 additional hours. Is that, that capability available  
4 and is there a support system for them to be able to  
5 do that?

6 DEAN ANDERSON: So we, we, the way we  
7 approach, ah, connections of internships to  
8 placements is definitely not just a put a student in  
9 a placement and hope that all goes well. Um, our  
10 team and our staff and campus staff offer support to  
11 students to ensure that they are able to navigate on  
12 a day-to-day basis. In terms of negotiation and  
13 flexibility, obviously that is a conversation that  
14 happens with the host site in addition to staff, so a  
15 student is not negotiating directly with staff on  
16 those. Um, but we do have staff available who work  
17 with students directly to be able to address any  
18 issues like that that come up.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Great.

20 DEAN ANDERSON: [inaudible].

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes, go ahead.

22 DEAN ANDERSON: I'm so sorry to  
23 interrupt. Just to, ah, go back to your earlier  
24 question, we have about, um, 80% to 90% completion of  
25 those Service Corps opportunities.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, great. That's,  
4 that's good.

5 DEAN ANDERSON: Um-hmm.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Um, and then, ah, my  
7 colleague asked questions about longevity and  
8 tracking and finding out, ah, how students are moving  
9 forward and what actually, ah, are some of the  
10 achievements that they make. So do we disaggregate  
11 this data by more than just race and ethnicity? Do  
12 we do districts or borough or ZIP codes or age or  
13 areas of study?

14 DEAN ANDERSON: We do many of those  
15 things. We do, um, borough. We do age. We do, um,  
16 income level, um, and gender are, are the fields that  
17 I think you, ah, in addition to what you mentioned.  
18 So, yes, we do disaggregate by that.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And is there an exit  
20 survey for students to be able to, ah, share what  
21 their experiences have been or to make suggestions  
22 about ways to improve what has been their experience  
23 as an intern?

24 DEAN ANDERSON: Yes, we do survey of  
25 students in the program and after the program.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK, great. I'd love  
4 to be able to see what some of those comments are and  
5 how they help to shape changes, ah, for the program  
6 moving forward. Um, and finally what, what are the  
7 financials? What are we looking at? What are we,  
8 what's the expectation, what's the need, how can we  
9 look at our budget and see how we can help more mo  
10 into this type of program, which is very successful.  
11 I did hear you talk about the Federal Work-Study and  
12 trying to, ah, negotiate that moving forward. But  
13 with a great, how many students apply but are not  
14 selected because there's just not enough room?

15 DEAN ANDERSON: Um, so that has varied by  
16 year. This year when it comes to Federal Work-Study  
17 we actually have a little bit of the opposite  
18 program, which is the limitation to Federal Work-  
19 Study...

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

21 DEAN ANDERSON: ...changed our eligibility  
22 pool pretty considerably. So, um, right now  
23 recruitment is open. It is ongoing. We are, have  
24 many open slots, are not running into the challenge  
25 of qualifying students who, who, um, meet the  
requirements being able to get matched.

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3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And, and you spoke  
4 about the pandemic and the need to, ah, some of your,  
5 ah, partners, I think you said there were only 40 out  
6 of 105 that were able to, ah, maintain the internship  
7 program in 2019?

8 DEAN ANDERSON: Um, so 40 of the 105 had  
9 their internships suspended, meaning that the  
10 cultural institutions that they were at, um, were not  
11 able to, um, continue to host them. However, 34 of  
12 those 40 whose internships were cut, we actually  
13 wound up being able to reallocate towards work on  
14 Cultural Corps itself, um, professional development  
15 staffing operates. So all of those students, the 34,  
16 actually did wind up having a paid experience.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And how, how, what  
18 has been the return rate have the, of the 105, what's  
19 the number for this year?

20 DEAN ANDERSON: Um, the number for this  
21 year is still in flux. We have 215 right now, but we  
22 are still, um, interviewing a few additional ones to  
23 see if that number will grow.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Great, OK. And what  
25 are the other expenses that, ah, CUNY or DCLA are  
incurring regarding this program?

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3 DEAN ANDERSON: Um, from CUNY's  
4 perspective we are continuing to support Service  
5 Corps through our operating budget in part, um, to  
6 the tune of about \$300,000, and that is again not an  
7 allocation from the state, not an allocation from the  
8 city, just dollars we are finding, because we believe  
9 this has benefit to students.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Um-hmm.

11 DEAN ANDERSON: Um, so that is still a  
12 requirement. Um, we've had many very helpful,  
13 successful, um, foundation partners who have seen the  
14 benefit of this program and this year have stepped up  
15 to the tune of about \$600,000 to be to support  
16 Service Corps. Um, but we are hoping this year to  
17 double down on figuring out why more students are not  
18 taking advantage of their Federal Work-Study parking  
19 because if we can figure out those challenges then  
20 the pool of potential funding is actually much larger  
21 than, um, the students we have right now, and so  
22 we're hoping that will be a way for growth in this  
23 program.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FEINBERG: Ah, just  
25 to add for DCLA our funding has increased between  
fiscal year 17 and fiscal year 22. We've increased



3 our own finding for this program. I also wanted to  
4 get back. I think there was a question earlier on  
5 about the completion rate for Cultural Corps, and I  
6 just wanted to chime in and say that we have a  
7 95.12%, which are the [inaudible] but we're 95.12%,  
8 ah, completion rate with CUNY Cultural Corps for the  
9 last academic cycle, you know, 2021.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: OK, great. Um,  
11 thank you very much. Amy, I concluded the questions  
12 that I wanted to have.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.  
14 Um, to the other council members who are present, if  
15 you would like to ask a question and you have not  
16 yet, please use the raise hand function in Zoom, ah,  
17 and please remember to keep questions and answers to  
18 give minutes. Um, I will take a moment to let anyone  
19 raise their hand, and seeing no other raised hands,  
20 Chairs Barron and Van Bramer, if you'd like to ask  
21 additional questions to the administration the floor  
22 is use for those.

23 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: My questions have  
24 been answered, and if there are any other burning  
25 questions that come up I will ask that the, the, ah,  
council would send them to you.

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3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Same for  
4 you, Chair Van Bramer?

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. So we  
7 have now concluded the administration's testimony and  
8 we will now turn to public testimony. First, I'd  
9 like to remind everyone that I will call up  
10 individuals in panels. Once your name is called, a  
11 member of our staff will unmute you and you may begin  
12 your testimony once the Sergeant at Arms sets the  
13 clock and gives you the cue. All testimony will be  
14 limited to three minutes. Remember that there is a  
15 few-second delay when you are unmuted before we can  
16 hear you, and please wait for the Sergeant at Arms to  
17 announce that you may begin before starting your  
18 testimony. The first panel of public testimony in  
19 order of speaking will be Alejandra Martinez from  
20 Young Invincibles, Lisa Nishimura from Young  
21 Invincibles, Mojubaolu Olufunke Okome from CUNY  
22 Universe Faculty and Senate, and Elyse Buxbaum from  
23 the Museum of Jewish Heritage. I will now call on  
24 Alejandra Martinez to testify.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

3 ALEJANDRA MARTINEZ: Thank you, good  
4 afternoon. My name is Alejandra Martinez and I'm a  
5 recent graduate from John Jay College, where I double  
6 majored in sociology and criminal justice. I'm also  
7 a newly hired outreach specialist for Young  
8 Invincibles. I want to thank the New York City  
9 Council, the Committee on Higher Education, the  
10 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and  
11 International Intergroup Relations for the  
12 opportunity to testify at today's hearing. Today I'm  
13 here to testify on behalf of CUNY Service Corps and  
14 speak upon its importance in CUNY colleges. As a  
15 newly transferred student from BMCC I was looking for  
16 an opportunity to grow professionally while also  
17 staying on track with my upcoming graduation date.  
18 As a CUNY student I was constantly surrounded by  
19 young, ambitious students who wanted to succeed in  
20 the real world, and to no surprise internships and  
21 fellowships were seen as a valuable tool to get  
22 there. I made sure that throughout my college career  
23 I kept my grades up, while also doing internships and  
24 building real-life connections. In my senior year at  
25 John Jay I was made aware of CUNY Service Corps and  
their message of creating a healthier, more

1 resilient, and better educated city. As a woman of  
2 color I felt connected by CUNY Service Corps' mission  
3 of representing both opportunity and need through the  
4 means of service. After being notified of my  
5 acceptance, CUNY Service Corps aligned me with an  
6 organization that met my views and whose values I  
7 felt gravitated towards. This organization was Young  
8 Invincibles, whose mission is to amplify the voices  
9 of young adults in the political progress, process.  
10 As a sociology major I felt in place with an  
11 organization who values the voices of my generation,  
12 especially when it comes to social aspects that  
13 affect our futures, such as education, health care,  
14 and workforces. I spent a semester getting to work  
15 on data projects, outreach engagement projects, and  
16 writing formal reports of my findings. Towards the  
17 end of my service I can attest that CUNY Service  
18 Corps has rewarded me by allowing to make a  
19 meaningful difference through service while gaining  
20 valuable real-world work experience, earning a wage,  
21 and receiving college credit. As a CUNY Service  
22 Corps alumni and recent graduate, I can happily say  
23 that I have been employed by my organization that I  
24 had the opportunity to serve with. I urge the  
25

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3 educational committee today to continue to invest and  
4 support CUNY Service Corps and other programs alike  
5 that allow CUNY students to network, gain  
6 professionalism, gain workplace experience, and, most  
7 importantly, serve their city. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
9 testimony. I will now call on Lisa Nishimura to  
10 testify.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 LISA NISHIMURA: Good afternoon. My name  
13 is Lisa Nishimura and I am the engagement coordinator  
14 at Young Invincibles. Young Invincibles is a policy  
15 and advocacy nonprofit dedicated to elevating young  
16 adults in the political process and expanding  
17 economic opportunities for our generation. I first  
18 want to thank the New York City Council, Committees  
19 on Higher Education and Cultural Affairs, Libraries,  
20 and International Intergroup Relations for the  
21 opportunity to testify at today's hearing. Today's  
22 hearing is held at a critical time for not only New  
23 York's college students, but also for partner  
24 organizations, such as Young Invincibles. Programs  
25 like CUNY Service Corps and Cultural Corps have been  
a vital part in allowing nonprofit organizations such

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3 as YI to continue to support the communities and  
4 populations we serve through [inaudible] means. With  
5 Young Invincibles the CUNY Service Corps has helped  
6 us to increase capacity at no cost to our  
7 organization, to carry out crucial projects such as  
8 developing a basic needs website. Our interns have  
9 been matched, who have matched with us have created  
10 materials that raise awareness about food and mental  
11 health resources both on off the CUNY campuses.

12 We've also been able to train interns in policy and  
13 advocacy with our Young Advocates program, a 14-week  
14 program where college students can learn tools,  
15 skills, and knowledge of policy and advocacy, on  
16 higher educational issues here in New York City and  
17 New York State. In addition to the program some  
18 interns organized Advocacy Day, where young adult  
19 college students can advocate for pressing higher  
20 educational issues to elected officials and  
21 legislators who represent the communities. More  
22 importantly, CUNY Service Corps provided us with the  
23 opportunity to elevate young adult voices on the  
24 issues that have directly affected them and they  
25 deeply care about. Our interns have also written  
block posts on higher educational issues, created

3 social media content to further amplify the issues  
4 that impact them and other college students alike,  
5 and ultimately contributed their own vision and  
6 [inaudible] projects to ensure college students have  
7 the resources and supports they need. Along with  
8 being able to provide the lens of young adults gain  
9 more capacity for the projects we work on, CUNY  
10 Service Corps and Cultural Corps also allow students  
11 to learn new skills and knowledge such as advocacy  
12 and higher educational issues, allowing them to grow  
13 professionally and personally through building social  
14 capital, and ultimately be paid for their own  
15 contributions and their growth. As a CUNY cultural  
16 alumnum myself I can personally attest to how this  
17 program has led me to my current position. Although  
18 I was on intern with Young Invincibles through my  
19 time at CUNY Cultural Corps the organization I was  
20 matched with at the time had not only further  
21 developed my personal and personal skills to be more  
22 employable, but I built the social capital I needed  
23 to open the door for more opportunities. Months  
24 later, after I ended my internship with CUNY Cultural  
25 Corps my former supervisor had given me the  
application to the first New York Young Advocates

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3 program. Now I can say that I was a part of the  
4 inaugural [inaudible] of the New York Young Advocates  
5 program in spring 2020, which led me to being an  
6 organizing fellow in spring 2021 and now an  
7 engagement coordinator at Young Invincibles. Without  
8 having been given the opportunity to be with CUNY  
9 Cultural Corps I will not be here today. Therefore,  
10 I urge the Committees on Higher Education and  
11 Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International  
12 Intergroup Relations to continue investing in  
13 programs like CUNY Service Corps...

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 LISA NISHIMURA: ...and Cultural Corps so  
16 that partnering organizations such as Young  
17 Invincibles can provide the opportunities for other  
18 students like myself and other former interns like  
19 Alejandra to gain skills, knowledge, and supports  
20 they need to be well equipped for professional and  
21 personal endeavors they want to pursue. Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
23 testimony, Lisa. I would like to take a moment to  
24 recognize Council Member Darma Diaz, who has joined  
25 our hearing today. And Mojubaolu Olufunke Okome you  
may now begin your testimony.



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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

4 MOJUBAOLU OLUFUNKE OKOME: Good

5 afternoon. Um, my name is Mojubaolu Olufunke Okome

6 and I'm a professional of political science at

7 [inaudible] College. I am representing the

8 University Faculty Senate. I'm a member of its

9 executive, um, committee. It's a pleasure to be here

10 with you and to hear about all these great programs

11 that CUNY has. I think they should be funded. I

12 actually think the, um, there's a need to do needs

13 assessment to see how many of our students need these

14 programs but are not accessing them. Not just

15 because, um, you know, ah, we have this pandemic

16 that's affecting us, but because they either don't

17 have enough information or they do not have enough

18 support to scale through the application process. I

19 think, you know, with these programs, as, as with

20 many others, CUNY's function [inaudible] ways and I

21 want to applaud the, um, people who are running the

22 programs. But, you know, I am, obviously, a black

23 woman [laughs]. I have two sons who passed through,

24 um, universities different from CUNY, where they are

25 serious minorities. And I do think that if we are to

really, um, make equity a reality in spite of all

3 these success stories we've heard there is a lot of  
4 work to do. Um, and some of that work involves  
5 counseling. As much as we are punching above our  
6 weight I think we could do better in terms of  
7 providing the kind of support that makes sure that  
8 people don't only see the information, they're able  
9 to, ah, scale through the hurdle of going through the  
10 application process. I'm saying this because, you  
11 know, um, if we have persistent, um, challenges in  
12 terms of seeing the equity in the numbers that we, or  
13 percentages that we want, then that says that there's  
14 more than we can do as an institution. So my, ah,  
15 and, and I'm, I'm saying its also because I've taught  
16 at Brooklyn College for over 20 years now. And  
17 before that I taught at Fordham University, and I  
18 attended Columbia University for my Ph.D. So for my  
19 children and myself, you know, I have a whole lot of  
20 experience with higher education in the US. We need  
21 to, um, to give more support. I urge the City  
22 Council to increase the budget. I urge the, the  
23 budgets within CUNY that are doing this work to do a  
24 better kind of needs assessment. I'm not saying  
25 they're not doing their work. They're doing an

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3 excellent job. So that we really serve our students  
4 and then we have the outcome...

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 MOJUBAOLU OLUFUNKE OKOME: ...that  
7 reflects the effort that has been put into these, um,  
8 these initiatives. Thank you very much.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
10 testimony. I will now call on Elyse Buxbaum to  
11 testify.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 ELYSE BUXBAUM: Thank you, Chairs Barron  
14 and Van Bramer for hosting today's hearing on the  
15 CUNY Cultural Corps and Service Corps. My name is  
16 Elyse Buxbaum and I'm honored to testify today as a  
17 former CUNY employee and now as executive vice  
18 president of the Museum of Jewish Heritage, a living  
19 memorial to the Holocaust. The museum is committed  
20 to the crucial mission of educating diverse visitors  
21 about Jewish life before, during, and after the  
22 Holocaust and that the lessons of what hate can do.  
23 We are dedicated to education and remembrance. The  
24 museum became a partner organization of the CUNY  
25 Cultural Corps program in 2018. Since then more than  
dozen students have interned with us, growing their

1 skill set in departments across the museum. For  
2 example, last year in the midst of the pandemic we  
3 hosted four CUNY interns with our collections,  
4 education, and development teams. Following all  
5 safety protocols, they worked both remotely and in  
6 the office to give a more hands-on experience and now  
7 I'm excited to share that Denise, a first-generation  
8 New York State student with a Mexican background from  
9 the Bronx just started with my team yesterday.  
10 Cultural Corps students receive real work experience  
11 on projects that help advance the museum's mission.  
12 In addition, they participate in our education  
13 programming, including engaging with a Holocaust  
14 survivor to hear personal stories of trauma, hope,  
15 and resiliency. Last year Allister, a finance  
16 student, helped research possible education program  
17 funders, a number of which are now museum supporters.  
18 And Lauren, a film major, she worked with our  
19 collections department to migrate recorded historical  
20 testimony so that generations to come can access  
21 survivor stories. After the CUNY program she applied  
22 for a general internship and stayed with the museum  
23 for the summer. The museum is committed to helping  
24 former CUNY Cultural Corps members stay connected to  
25

3 the institution and each other. We always encourage  
4 the students to apply for additional internships with  
5 us and positions once they've graduated. We also  
6 open doors to other institutions across New York City  
7 and provide professional references. We deeply  
8 believe that helping students realize different  
9 career paths and nonprofit experience is critical to  
10 diversifying the city workforce. Further, their very  
11 life experiences enhancing the museum's ongoing  
12 diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts by ensuring  
13 a wide range of perspectives are represented in our  
14 museum. At a time when culturals are really  
15 suffering we are truly grateful for the opportunity  
16 to host these interns and bring future focus and  
17 positive perspectives into our space. Reciprocally,  
18 the CUNY students lost a year during the pandemic and  
19 they need this work experience. We deeply appreciate  
20 the hard work of the Cultural Corps team, who ensured  
21 safe procedures to continue the partnership. They  
22 definitely pivoted to host a virtual matching fair,  
23 which made the recruiting process much easier. CUNY  
24 Cultural Corps allows New York City institutions such  
25 as ours to host committed people who are ready to  
serve organizations that pledge to give back to the

3 their communities. The Museum of Jewish Heritage  
4 looks forward to continuing this relationship in the  
5 current academic year for years to come. Thank you  
6 all to the council. I urge your continued support of  
7 the CUNY Cultural Corps and Service Corps programs.  
8 Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
10 testimony. Before I turn to Chairs Barron and Van  
11 Bramer, I'd like to remind council members to use the  
12 raise hand function in Zoom to indicate that you have  
13 a question for the panel. Chair Barron?

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Ah, I just to thank  
15 this panel. It's always informative to hear from  
16 those who have been directly involved either as  
17 interns or as hosts, and we get that ability to see  
18 what's happening, to find out if there is some gaps  
19 or some things that need to be done. But what I'm  
20 hearing is it's working well and more money would be  
21 helpful, and I, I agree, I, I appreciate the comment  
22 about support, which is the question that I had posed  
23 to the previous panel, how can we make sure that as  
24 our students engage in, ah, challenging times and  
25 situations that they can get some support to help  
them get through. But I want to thank the panel for

3 their comments, for their participation, and for  
4 being here today. Thank you. Council Member Van  
5 Bramer?

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, ah,  
7 Chair Barron, and I agree. Ah, often we, we create  
8 programs, we fund programs, and, and then the most  
9 rewarding part of that is to actually see them, ah,  
10 manifested and to see the good that comes, and when  
11 you hear from, ah, young people like, ah, Lisa  
12 Nishimura, you have a sense that we actually  
13 accomplished some good here, um, and there are good  
14 things occurring, ah, and Elyse, um, ah, telling the  
15 story of, ah, I think it was 12 interns, um,  
16 [inaudible] has, um, worked with and, ah, I think it  
17 was a young woman who just started yesterday, ah, and  
18 it sounds like your department, um, is, is a great  
19 success story. I guess I would just ask, um, you,  
20 Elyse, and I realize that every museum and  
21 institution is different. They're different size,  
22 they're different experiences, but you may or may not  
23 have heard the, the line of questioning that I was  
24 asking, ah, before about the, the, the long-term  
25 success of the program, right, which is to truly a  
pipeline to, to leadership. Um, and, and how do we,

1  
2 how do we make that happen, right? We know we've got  
3 an internship program I think that is successfully,  
4 clearly. It could obviously be more successful to  
5 have more funding, as you know how these things work.  
6 Um, and then it seems like we're, we've got some  
7 success, although the data, ah, we still need more  
8 data on how many folks, ah, young people are being  
9 hired in full-time positions in our cultural  
10 organizations. But you're obviously part of that  
11 success, ah, and so is, ah, Lisa and, and others.  
12 Ah, and then I think the third of piece of this  
13 gauging how successful a program is and ultimately  
14 is, is the pipeline into leadership, right? It is,  
15 it is making sure these young folks, interns, new  
16 hires, then are, are, um, provided that support in  
17 every way. So, I mean, how, how, how do you think  
18 that should work or how will it work at your museum  
19 and how could the Department of Cultural Affairs and  
20 CUNY help make that a reality, which I know we all  
21 want, right, is to see all of these young people, ah,  
22 being the curators and the, ah, CEOs and presidents  
23 in 10, 20 years.

24 ELYSE BUXBAUM: Um, thank you very much,  
25 Chair Van Bramer. Um, I will say it is an absolute



3 privilege hosting, ah, these CUNY Cultural Corps  
4 students. They're incredible, and each one comes  
5 with, ah, a different set of skills and a different  
6 set of interests, and I think, um, while I can't  
7 speak specifically because our students have all, are  
8 all still in programs or while they've graduated and  
9 moved on to, um, graduate school, um, and are not yet  
10 fully in the workforce, um, I'll tell you that I  
11 personally sit down with each one and, and learn  
12 about what they want to do and what skills they want  
13 to grow, um, and we focus whatever training we do  
14 specifically on that. Um, Andreas just started  
15 today. Ah, he is a history major with a biology  
16 background and he wants to learn how to write grants  
17 because as all of us know in the nonprofit world you  
18 have to know how to be able to write grants in order  
19 for your institution to survive. And so we're giving  
20 him projects start to completion, do the research,  
21 learn how to grow this, and I think that if we, ah,  
22 as professionals, make a, a concerted effort to think  
23 about what we are giving them, I think we'll have  
24 that pipeline. If, if people are just filing papers  
25 and shredding it's not the experience that anyone

3 wants, not the institution and certainly not the CUNY  
4 students, so I think it's up to us.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you, ah,  
6 Elyse, and, um, ah, I'm sure you are an incredible  
7 mentor, ah, for, ah, these young folks and, you know,  
8 I think that that is one of the ways in which we'll  
9 be successful here and creating that pipeline is  
10 actually tailoring the experience to the, the, the  
11 talents, the experience, and the, ah, the needs of  
12 the young people. Ah, I also see that Council Member  
13 Eric Ulrich has joined us, so I want to, ah,  
14 recognize, um, his attendance and participation in  
15 the hearing. Um, but, yeah, no, I, I appreciate that  
16 perspective, um, Elyse, and, ah, appreciate all that  
17 you do, obviously, for the young people and for the  
18 city.

19 ELYSE BUXBAUM: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chairs Van  
21 Bramer and Barron. If you have no other questions I  
22 will give the other attending council members a  
23 moment to raise their hand using, do we have a hand  
24 raised? I thought I saw one. Pardon. Pardon, I am  
25 seeing a hand raised but I am not quite sure who is  
doing this. Oh, I see here.

3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: It's one of the  
4 panelists.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: It's one of our  
6 panelists. Pardon. Would you like a moment?

7 MOJUBAOLU OLUFUNKE OKOME: Yes, please.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Pardon, you're muted  
10 again.

11 MOJUBAOLU OLUFUNKE OKOME: What I'd like  
12 to add to all the, um, great inputs that we have had  
13 is that it's easy for people sometimes to get lost in  
14 a big system like ours, and so, you know, I think  
15 that we should take seriously the fact that there are  
16 often structural barriers to entry into any  
17 opportunity. And for me I don't think that our  
18 students of color are actually benefitting to the  
19 extent that they can from the opportunity, from the  
20 various opportunities that are at CUNY. That's why  
21 I'm saying that we need more, ah, support. We need  
22 more mentoring. We need to make, you know, if you,  
23 if you are in a place where you don't feel entirely  
24 that it is your space you need more. And, you know,  
25 I don't think that, ah, that just having the program  
and the information, some people can land on their

3 feet, take advantage, other people need more support.

4 And I would like to urge all the programs to figure

5 out ways of finding, um, the students that are shy,

6 that are less certain, that, you know, ah, maybe

7 start the application but don't finish, you know, and

8 walk with them to integrate them into these programs,

9 'cause that's what is needed, from my perspective,

10 and I've watched for 20 years what we're doing, and

11 I'm impressed but I think we could do more.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

13 MOJUBAOLU OLUFUNKE OKOME: Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your

15 testimony. Thank you, Chairs, ah, Van Bramer and

16 Barron. I believe we have now heard from everyone

17 that has signed up to testify and we appreciate your

18 time and presence. If we inadvertently missed anyone

19 that would like to testify, please use the raise hand

20 function in Zoom and I will call on you in the order

21 of hands raised. All right, seeing no one else, I

22 would like to note that written testimony, which will

23 be reviewed in full by committee staff, may be

24 submitted to the record up to 72 hours after the

25 close of this hearing by emailing to

testimony@council.nyc.gov. Chair Barron, we have

3 concluded public testimony for this hearing, if you  
4 would like to close us out.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Ah,  
6 before I close I want to offer Chair Van Bramer any  
7 closing remarks that he would want to make.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Ah, I just want  
9 to say thank you to all of the teams who had a hand  
10 in making today's hearing possible. Thank you, ah,  
11 especially to all those who, who waited, ah, around  
12 to give public testimony and, ah, thank you, ah,  
13 Chair Barron, for your partnership and look forward  
14 in whatever capacities we should be in to making sure  
15 that this program continues, ah, to be a success for  
16 young people. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much  
18 for your partnership and for helping to, ah, bring  
19 this hearing to a great presentation, very  
20 information, and, ah, a bright spot in this time of,  
21 um, gloom and wondering what's going to happen, a  
22 bright spot to be able to give us some inspiration.  
23 Thank you to all the panelists and thank you once  
24 again to all the sergeants at arms, and to all of the  
25 staff that work with that, and with that this

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3 meeting, ah, this meeting, this hearing is adjourned.

4 Thank you. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date October 30, 2021