

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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Tuesday, September 30, 2025

Start: 1:03 P.M.

Recess: 2:06 P.M.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Floor -
Hearing Room 3

B E F O R E: Eric Dinowitz, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Erik D. Bottcher

Gale A. Brewer

Oswald Feliz

Christopher Marte

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
A P P E A R A N C E S

Lauren Andersen,
Vice Chancellor for Career Engagement &
Industry Partnerships at City University of New
York (CUNY)

Amna Malik,
Senior Director for Career Development and
Internships at City University of New York
(CUNY)

Fatima Hernandez,
CUNY Arts, City University of New York (CUNY)

Rachel Lee,
Director of Audience and Youth Engagement at the
New 42

Patrick Quinn,
CUNY MediaMKRS Internship Coordinator of Reel
Works Teen Filmmaking (Reel Works)

Christopher Leon Johnson,
Self

SERGEANT KUSHNER: Testing, testing, this is a microphone check for the Committee on Higher Education, located in Hearing Room 3, recorded on September 30, 2025, by Pat Kushner.

(PAUSE)

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon, and welcome to today's New York City Council hearing on the Committee on Higher Education. At any point during today's hearing, no one may approach the dais.

If you'd like to testify today, please see one of the Sergeant at Arms in the back to fill out a testimony slip.

Please silence all electronic devices.

Chair, you may begin. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. [GAVEL]

Good afternoon, I'm Council member Eric Dinowitz, Chair of the Committee on Higher Education. Welcome to our hearing on today's oversight topic: *Pathways for CUNY Students into the Arts and Cultural Jobs Sector*.

In the past couple of years, our committee has looked at CUNY, at CUNY students being prepared for and entering the workforce, both generally and more specifically in humanities,

medical, and civil service careers. Today, we turn to the arts and culture sector.

In her State of the City address in March 2025, City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams noted, "Our beloved cultural institutions have an outsized role in the strength of our economy, generating \$110 billion for our city. And if we want to remain the world's cultural capital, our city must make the investments so that these institutions and our stories can exist now and in the future." Or, as CUNY Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez says, "New York City is the world's cultural nerve center."

This hearing is about remaining the world's cultural capital and nerve center, which includes investing in our current CUNY students who will fill staff positions at many of our beloved cultural institutions over the next generation, and who will bring their diverse backgrounds to those institutions. It will help those institutions grow and change along with the New York City communities that they serve.

One investment CUNY is making is in the support of fine and performing arts majors, other arts programming, and arts facilities across CUNY

campuses. That investment is necessary and fundamental to the success of CUNY students who are preparing for careers in the arts and cultural fields. And I could speak personally from experience, as someone who has his bachelor's degree in music, of the immense value of this type of education.

Another investment is one that CUNY has been making for almost a decade, in cooperation with the Department of Cultural Affairs. That is the CUNY Cultural Corps. In CreateNYC, the 10-year comprehensive plan that over 188,000 New Yorkers participated in imagining, which was adopted in 2017 and updated as the 2019 Action Plan, one strategy designed to quote, "Cultivate inclusive practices in the cultural sector," was to "expand pathways and advancement in careers in arts and culture for students from underrepresented communities."

Many of our CUNY students are indeed from those underrepresented communities. Making sure they are part of our renowned arts and cultural community should be important to all of us. In fact, just before the adoption of CreateNYC, the staff of DCLA, CUNY, and the Rockefeller Foundation had already put their heads together and created the CUNY Cultural

Corps, a college internship program that is aimed directly at the strategy that would be proposed several years later in DCLA's Action Plan.

Since 2016, student interns have been placed in what is now 88 partner arts and cultural organizations—large and small museums, theaters, foundations, media outlets, advocacy nonprofits, galleries, dance companies, musical groups, botanical gardens, public libraries, and more.

The CUNY Cultural Corps was so important that the number of CUNY students placed in paid internships with cultural organizations became a key indicator for evaluating the success of the implementation of DCLA's plan.

I'm looking forward to hearing about how the CUNY Cultural Corps is doing, how many CUNY students have been placed since it was founded, and how many are learning from those placements right now. I also look forward to hearing about the work of fine and performing arts departments and programs across CUNY campuses. Furthermore, our committee wants to know what the City Council can do to support all of these CUNY efforts as we work to maintain our

place as the world's cultural capital, or as you say, nerve center.

I want to thank Adam Staropoli, my Legislative & Budget Director, who is here; my Chief of Staff, Jenna Klaus; Julia Goldsmith-Pinkham, the Committee's Senior Legislative Counsel, and, of course, Regina Paul, the Committee's Senior Policy Analyst.

I would like to remind everyone who wishes to testify in person today that you must fill out an appearance card, which is located on the brand new desk of this brand new room, with the Sergeant at Arms, near that brand new entrance of this, yes, brand new room. Please fill out a card even if you've already registered to testify in advance. To allow as many people to testify, public testimony will be limited to two minutes per person. Please note that witnesses who are here in person will testify before those on Zoom.

Now, in accordance with the Rules of the Council, I will administer the affirmation to the witnesses.

Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and

nothing but the truth in your testimony before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

(UN-MIC'D): PANEL AFFIRMS

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. And as a reminder to our witnesses, please state your name prior to testimony for the record.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Lauren Andersen, Vice Chancellor for Career Engagement and Industry Partnerships at The City University of New York (CUNY). Can everyone hear that, okay?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (UN-MIC'D) I can't really, but I don't know if they can.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: I can speak loudly, too, if that works.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (UN-MIC'D)
(INAUDIBLE) to the MIC (INAUDIBLE)

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Sure, absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (UN-MIC'D) And they'll turn you up.

VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Great. Good afternoon, Chair Dinowitz, and Members of the Committee on Higher Education, thank you for the

opportunity to provide testimony before you today on Pathways for CUNY students into the Arts and Cultural Sectors.

My name is Lauren Andersen, a proud film major, and I am honored to serve as the Vice Chancellor for Career Engagement & Industry Partnerships at CUNY. In this capacity, I oversee the Office of Careers & Industry Partnerships at Systems Office, which reports directly to the Chancellor in addition to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

This elevated reporting structure is a reflection of the centrality of student career success to the mission and day-to-day operations of The City University of New York. As our Chancellor often says, serving as a springboard for economic and social mobility is "in our DNA" at CUNY. To that end, the role of our office is, first and foremost, to ensure that current students and graduates of CUNY programs have the preparation, connections, and support needed to launch and advance in sustaining careers.

In fact, our strategic plan, CUNY Lifting New York, includes explicit and ambitious goals

related to the levers that we know help students pursue careers of their choosing. This includes undergraduate paid internship participation, which has been shown nationally to correlate with a higher likelihood of job offers at graduation and higher starting salaries—the same is true with CUNY. The university is seeking to triple our paid internship participation rate by 2030.

More than 50% of CUNY's student body hails from homes that earn less than \$30,000 annually. For these students, their families, and their communities, the ability to connect to resilient careers in the best of times, and certainly now amidst the disruption of AI and slower entry-level hiring, can be transformative.

That is why CUNY colleges are making strides to ensure that individuals who come to campus with the hope of pursuing the career of their dreams leave on a path to economic prosperity, thanks to deliberate programs, policies, and partnerships.

And it is not just individuals who reap the benefits of these investments. As Committee members are aware, employers across the five boroughs struggle to find and retain the workers they need to

mount a full recovery, pivot into new fields, and deal with the introduction of AI. Nearly 88% of corporate leaders surveyed by PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) reported higher than usual turnover in their ranks, and the challenges restaurants face in securing workers have been well documented.

CUNY's talent pipelines provide the qualified workers businesses need to stabilize operations and grow. The same is true for our cultural institutions.

New York City's arts and cultural institutions depend not only on curatorial staff, art historians, and artists themselves, but also accountants, facility managers, communications professionals, and technologists, among many other roles, to keep their missions thriving.

CUNY, with over 1,500 undergraduate programs alone, is in a position to be a comprehensive pathway for a diversity of students with a passion for this vital sector.

CUNY is working to ensure that those who want to can identify and connect pathways to careers in the arts. CUNY also runs two specialized

university-wide initiatives to increase exposure in connection with the arts:

CUNY Arts creates opportunities for all students to experience the richness of New York City's arts and cultural institutions. The initiative adopts New York City cultural institutions as an extended campus by providing free access to museums, participation in special and curated cultural events, and connections to paid internship programs, including CUNY Cultural Corps.

CUNY Cultural Corps is a paid internship program with a rich history and multi-year track record of connecting students to paid work opportunities. Through this program, CUNY supports students as they pursue their aspirations for careers at the forefront of NYC culture while bolstering sectors that are vital to New York City's identity.

CUNY Cultural Corps was established in 2016 by CUNY, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and the Rockefeller Foundation in response to a DCLA report outlining the lack of diversity in the city's cultural sector and the need to create, continue, and expand pipelines for underrepresented New Yorkers.

Since then, the program has connected over 1,320 CUNY students to paid work experience during the academic year in arts and cultural organizations throughout the city. Cultural course students earn \$20.00 an hour and can work up to 15 hours a week. Students can filter roles based on availability, such as nine-to-five evenings or weekends.

In FY25, the program connected over 200 students to internship opportunities, a fairly consistent rate compared to previous years. Over 230 institutions overall have participated with Cultural Corps since the program's inception, including established cultural institutions and nonprofit cultural organizations evolved in the visual, literary, and performing arts, as well as public-oriented science and humanities institutions, including zoos, botanical gardens, and historic preservation societies. Selected students work in one of the following focus areas: Communications and Marketing; Education in Public Programs; Development and Fundraising; Curatorial and Exhibitions; and Production Management or Performances and Events.

Host organizations that participate in CUNY Cultural Corps include The Met, The Whitney, Harlem Stage, Museum of the Moving Image, El Museo del Barrio, The Jewish Museum, New York City Ballet, and the Tenement Museum.

The application to be a host site is open and available online to all. All partners must provide evidence of their being able to supervise and provide a meaningful professional development experience for each intern.

Students from any CUNY college are eligible for the program, and over the past three years, interns from 23 campuses have taken part. Student demand for the program is tremendous. Over the last three years, applications went up nearly 300% from 721 to nearly 2,800. In 2024, 2,770 students applied for 204 internship slots. So, roughly 93% were turned away.

Cultural Corps is made possible through the generous support of DCLA, and with previous support from the Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and BNY Mellon Foundation.

At its core, this program aims to create pathways to careers in a critical sector of New York's economy with an emphasis on recruiting participants who reflect the demographics of CUNY and New York City overall in terms of socio-economic, ethnic, and racial diversity.

Outreach to students is conducted through multiple channels and formats, including emails, social media, faculty and staff engagement, information sessions, and on-campus activities. In the last three years, 85% of students have identified as people of color. Last year, 34% of the Cultural Corps cohort identified as Hispanic. This representation closely mirrors CUNY's overall student body and exceeds the representation of the Hispanic community when compared to the City's overall population.

The process of implementing CUNY Cultural Corps has not been without some bumps. The COVID-19 pandemic took a tremendous toll on Cultural Corps. In addition to the pervasive challenges caused by the rapid closure of in-person activity, CUNY's 20% mandatory budget reductions reshaped the fiscal reality surrounding these programs.

The impact of the pandemic was obviously felt by partner institutions as well, who were faced with the difficult decision of canceling or reducing their commitments. During that time, 40 Cultural Corps interns during the 2019-2020 had their internships suspended as cultural institutions were unable to continue hosting the interns in light of stay-at-home directives. And in 2024, again, PEGS to the Department of Cultural Affairs budget resulted in a reduction in the number of internships offered.

However, Cultural Corps continued to innovate and find a way to offer these critical experiences to students. The ability to pivot to online Cultural Corps programming proved a remarkable silver lining for cultural institutions. When COVID-19 forced many of partner organizations to close their doors and lay off employees, talent sourced and supported by Cultural Corps allowed these institutions to continue to serve New York City and its communities, even from their own homes. As a result, students and partners recommended Cultural Corps to peers, as it was one of only a few programs that continued to operate during the pandemic. Since

then, employers have continued to request remote and hybrid roles throughout FY25.

With the start of the school year, another cycle of CUNY Cultural Corps is now underway. Moving forward, we will be laser-focused on ways to continue to improve and evolve these programs. This includes taking steps to further strengthen the transition into careers in these critical fields following the program participation; removing unnecessary barriers to student participation; and improving long-term tracking of alumni outcomes.

We look forward to working with the City and City Council to identify additional opportunities to bolster this pipeline to vital careers in an essential field across the five boroughs in the months and years to come.

I welcome your questions and am joined by Amna Malik, Senior Director for Career Development and Internships, and Fatima Hernandez, who has led CUNY Arts, for questions.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, thank you, fellow artists' film major.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All right. So I don't think we'll have the time to nerd out over movies, but I will say that in the Bronx Delegation, our local members are kind of putting our money where our mouth is when it comes to supporting the arts—and to film, because Bronx Community College has had a wonderful film center for many years, and we just allocated—I'm trying to get the number now—It's over \$1 million—to completely revamp that area of their of their campus so that (BACKGROUND NOISE)... so that their students can really thrive in that environment. We're a lot closer to the ground level, aren't we here?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All right. This is a new room. Thought it was one of your phones.

So I thank you for your testimony. I'm interested to touch on some of the things that you mentioned in your testimony, which we will get to. But just in terms of the majors—people going to college for the arts—what's the total undergraduate and graduate enrollment in fine and performing arts majors across CUNY campuses? And what percentage does that make of CUNY?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: So, in terms of overall enrollments in arts-related programs last year, in 2024, that was around 9,038 students. If you're talking about fine and visual arts specifically, that's more in the neighborhood of 3,170+.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And are there particular colleges that have more robust programs that you see more people enrolled in these programs?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: We can get you a comprehensive profile of the majors offered by each program. Right now, I don't have in front of me the enrollment rates for all campuses across all programs. So I can't necessarily answer that at this time.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: What sorts of investments or cuts need-- have been made or need to be made? I mean, you mentioned the 20% cut, and you mentioned people losing internships during COVID. But have faculty positions in the fine arts and performing arts been cut in recent years? If so, why? And have those cuts, if they were made, been comparable to other cuts? Or have you made investments to try to bolster the arts at CUNY?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Thank you for the question. I do not have the faculty numbers in our arts programs. Apologies for that. We can certainly get them to you afterward.

What I will say is in terms of demand for opportunities in the arts and cultural sectors, and specifically career-related opportunities moving into them, student demand has skyrocketed for the Cultural Corps. And right now, the rate-limiting factor as to whether or not we can offer more opportunities for these students is purely budgetary. It's not a matter of students raising their hands.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, and how do you determine what the demand is?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: We look at it in terms of the number of applications to the program, which, as I mentioned, has gone from 700 to now 2,800 and roughly outpaced the number of positions we have available by one to 10... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's for the internships, correct?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Yeah, that is...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. So that's how you're measuring demand for the major, by applications for the internships?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: No, apologies, for career-connected opportunities to move into the arts sector. That's the demand we see in terms of applications to majors, again, I apologize. I don't have that information. I have to... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, so often, whether it's-- when I ask about education, you know, we ask of our students whether it's papers, homework, exams, we assess them, and we say X amount of your grade is for this assessment.

And for CUNY, I ask the same thing. How are you assessing the demand, or how are we assessing the success or investment in the arts?

And so one of the ways I think we would do that is by saying, how much, not just money, but how many staff have you hired for, uh, whether they're professors or adjuncts, how much staff have you hired in order to bolster these programs? What investments in advertisements or investments in internship programs have been made?

So, are there any indicators besides what you mentioned in your testimony of investments that CUNY has made or cuts they have made for the staff?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Again, I don't have staff or faculty numbers for all of our arts programs across CUNY. I will speak for the programs that are office oversees, which are the ones that are related to getting students into jobs. We have grown our staff who are working on, specifically, Cultural Corps—We've added another staff member, which increases it by 50%. So let us get back to you with the numbers that you're looking for, because I understand that you're looking to measure it based on investment. We just don't have those numbers in front of us.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, yeah, that and that's one of the measures, like financial investment and people investment. So the entire Cultural Corps program is three employees, three people?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: We are able, because of the way that we run programs, to achieve really significant economies of scale in our internship programs, whereas you might need a

dedicated staff member on every single campus if campuses were to run this initiative. Because we run it centrally, we can reach many, many students with fewer staff. The challenge has actually been on the side of student wages and how you are able to expand the pool with an investment in students, and that just has been relatively static throughout the years.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah. So it sounds like in some ways you're doing good work working centrally. I think you know, and I've said for years, I think a number of things can be done centrally. As you mentioned, economy of scale would certainly help, but also, measuring the success of this program, demand is significantly higher than what you're actually able to provide. So in another sense, there isn't the investment that needs to be done.

So what kind of investments would you need—and just repeating, 93% of applicants for the internships were turned away. And I like to remind people, what the Chancellor likes to remind everyone, he wants to be known as the Patron Saint of Paid Internships. I have personal feelings about that. I don't want him to be known by that yet, because I

think you have to pass away before you become a Saint.

ALL: (LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So I don't... we don't wish that upon anyone.

But, with a number of 7% acceptance, when you have significant demand, I don't think those align with the goals of CUNY or the Chancellor or with you of bolstering the arts programs.

So what sorts of investments need to be made in order to bring the acceptance rate higher?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: We could not agree with you more and would welcome more investment.

Our appropriation from DCLA has stayed constant throughout the years. It hasn't gone up in measurement with demand. Right now, we receive about \$650,000 per year to field this program, with a cost for each intern of around \$3,500. We would love to expand this and would love to grow it. We have just had to work with philanthropic partners to be able to sustain the program for years. But that's not really a sustainable process, continuously fundraising year

by year for it in the philanthropic sector. So we'd welcome help and investment.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So the total from DCLA is \$650,000, and what's the total amount for the program, including philanthropic dollars?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Amna, do you have that number?

SENIOR DIRECTOR MALIK: In addition to the Rockefeller Fellows?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Including Rockefeller, yes.

SENIOR DIRECTOR MALIK: (UN-MIC'D) So (INAUDIBLE)...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Hold on, can you-- And just make sure you state your name for the record.

SENIOR DIRECTOR MALIK: Amna Malik, Senior Director for Career Development and Internships.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

SENIOR DIRECTOR MALIK: So, as Lauren, Vice Chancellor Andersen mentioned, we've received \$650,000 from City funds to support the program. And we have an endowment from the Rockefeller Foundation. So that helps us also fund the program, support us

administratively, and with some of the slots that we have to fill, and that's about \$30,000 a year.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's \$30,000 from Rockefeller?

SENIOR DIRECTOR MALIK: Mm-hmm.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Correct. In the past, as I alluded to, we have received additional grants from the Petrie Foundation and others—BNY Mellon. But again, in terms of the long-term investment that we want to make on this, we do think that philanthropic funding year after year is a challenge.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It is a goal of CUNY to continue with this program, right?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: We'd love to, yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: This isn't one of the ones that you want to get rid of.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: No, not at all.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. (LAUGHS)
Okay, good.

And is one of those three positions a Development Director, someone whose job it is to get the funds for this critical program?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: So we do have a member of our team who is responsible for coordinating with the Vice Chancellor for Institutional Development at CUNY. And we do, as I mentioned before, raise money for this program.

In order to ensure, year after year, that we can promise students that there is going to be an opportunity for them and—more importantly—promise our cultural institutions that this is going to be something that they should invest their very limited staff resources in building year after year—it really does benefit from being a more steady investment than philanthropic funding, which year after year expires.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I just want to-- I'm not making the announcement, I am reiterating an announcement—We have five new CIGS, five new Cultural Institution Groups that were announced this morning as part of the City budgets. You have even more institutions to work with.

I will note two of them, because two of them-- I'll mention all of them: The Brick, in Brooklyn; the Louis Armstrong House and Museum in Queens, Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, and

there's a Bronx and Manhattan venue, Noble Maritime Museum in Staten Island, and the Bronx Children's Museum in the Bronx.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Yes, and the Louis Armstrong House is actually at Queens College, so that is one of our...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, perfect!

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, so what better way to integrate with the Louis Armstrong Houses at... Thanks for the tip.

ALL: (LAUGHTER)

UNIDENTIFIED: Actually, she knew that.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: I knew that, yeah.

ALL: (LAUGHTER)

UNIDENTIFIED: I was just bothering her.

ALL: (LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sure she doesn't find it a bother.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Ever. Never.

ALL: (LAUGHTER)

UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you, thank you, Vice Chancellor.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: In the \$650,000 a year that has been granted by DCLA in part of our City's budget, year after year, that money's worth less and less, I guess. But is there a specific amount you're targeting as a system to increase that funding by? And for how many slots, internship slots would that be allocated for?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Well, thank you for the question. One note is that we have had to do more with the same amount of dollars for many years now. And we have introduced several program innovations that have helped us to serve more students, even with less money.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: For example?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: For example, we in an effort to ensure that more students benefit from this opportunity and can actually engage with our institutions that are willing to offer these placements, we have split the program from a year-long program where one student was with a placement for a year to one in which there are now two distinct semester programs—so double the number of students can participate. That has helped a lot in terms of making sure that more students have access to this.

In terms of a target, again, we do know what the demand is in terms of applications, but some of those students are not necessarily qualified. We do screening for our host organizations in partnership with them. So let us get back to you on a target we'd love to ideally meet the need for all students who qualify.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, I would hope that out of (UNINTELLIGIBLE) the testimony, a few thousand, you said 2,800 applied, and 700 received...

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: No. So this past year, 2,800 applied and 200 (INAUDIBLE)...
(CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Two hundred. I would imagine that the other 2,600, you would find some qualified applicants for sure.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, so please get back to us with what those numbers would be—what that financial investment would need to be from the City budget, and then what the benefits would be.

And then, are you tracking also, you know, the students who engage in this program, are you tracking their post-graduate successes, whether

they are getting jobs in the field, in the cultural institutions, or in these organizations, or how it benefits them beyond simply having an internship?

SENIOR DIRECTOR MALIK: So yes, we're very interested and work closely with the employers and the students as well. While not all information is available due to, you know, confidentiality, we do have an alumni LinkedIn page where we have students who finish the program, come back, share their experiences, and share their outcomes. We also have events that take place with employers and at campuses to bring the community together of CUNY students and the industry to promote the success of the program—but just exposure to the opportunities that they have.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But the question is measuring the success of the program, right? I mean, there's anecdotal and then there's quantifiable. And we have the New York State Department of Labor Statistics, right? At this hearing, CUNY has testified regarding other, uh, other fields of work. So I'm wondering if you track that data for the, you know, the cultural sector for the Fine Arts?

1 SENIOR DIRECTOR MALIK: So while we're
2 working on the Department of Labor data,
3 unfortunately, we don't have it with us right now. I
4 can tell you from the responses we received from the
5 students and employers in the last three years, we've
6 had employment conversion, about 53 of our
7 participants have reported back. There's probably
8 more, but it's due to timing and understanding of
9 getting information from them. (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-
10 TALK)
11

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And what are they
13 reporting back?

14 SENIOR DIRECTOR MALIK: That they've been
15 offered other full-time or part-time positions at the
16 placement sites.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, so that...
18 Okay.

19 SENIOR DIRECTOR MALIK: Yeah.

20 VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: One quick note
21 on the labor market data, because in preparation for
22 this hearing, we would have loved to bring more
23 robust data for you—One of the things that we also
24 could frankly use some help on is the wage records
25 that we get from the Department of Labor, which are

1 often two years delayed. And for a program that
2 serves freshman and sophomores who already are going
3 to take two to three years to get to the point where
4 they can be employed full time, that sometimes a
5 five-year lag on understanding what happened at the
6 end of their program if they have not self reported
7 it to us, what would be helpful is if those wage
8 records from the state included more information and
9 maybe were more timely pursued, because they're
10 incredibly valuable. But right now, I think leading
11 into this hearing, we saw that only 27% of the
12 students actually have active records because they
13 just haven't been populated yet.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You're talking
16 about the state records?

17 VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Yes, that's
18 right.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You want the state
20 government to work faster?

21 ALL: (LAUGHTER)

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The chapel is down
23 the hall, where you can all pray for that. I'm just
24 kidding. In this governmental building, there is no
25 chapel.

ALL: (LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: To my knowledge.

I want to ask—you testified about the CUNY Arts, and I just want to look at the website for a second. A number of the goals, I'll go with 3, 2, 1, paid internship opportunities throughout the academic year through programs like CUNY Cultural Corp, which we've discussed, which certainly needs more investment and also more data to show the impact of this program. Goal two is to "Adopt New York City cultural institutions as an extended campus by providing free access to museums, participation in special and curated cultural events". Fine, but I'm interested in goal number one. Goal number one says "Facilitate integration of the arts into all aspects of the university curriculum".

I'm going to repeat that, "Facilitate integration of the arts into all aspects of University curriculum". And on a basic level, what does that look like to CUNY?

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: I am Fatima Hernandez, and I oversee CUNY Arts. I can tell you that this program is beautiful, and it has encouraged

students from all backgrounds and majors to feel welcome in the arts.

So for goal number one, we have worked with a number of organizations, including the Jazz at Lincoln Center, the MoMA, and the Frick, and they have invited us to their location for a special panel discussion. And, also, for example, they have visited some of our campuses for special programming. I can tell you the Jazz Lincoln Center sponsors a group of musicians, and they went to LaGuardia. They have been at LaGuardia a number of times, taking other campuses, and they, you know, do performances and live panel discussions with artists, so students can ask questions to the artists, and enjoy a live performance. And also, the MoMA has partnered with a number of our CUNY libraries to provide materials.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So it sounds like-- Tell me if I'm wrong, it sounds like to me that's for the arts students, that if you're an arts student, having these experiences.

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: Everybody is welcome, all of the students are welcome in this type of...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, because what I am reading from goal number one, what it sounds to me like, it sounds like, yes, in your history, political science, your chemistry, your math, your English, the non-arts subjects, it sounds-- the way it reads, incorporating the arts into the non-arts curriculum is-- is that a correct reading of CUNY Arts?

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: We have faculty members who reach out to us that they want to work closely with, let's say the Whitney, or the Frick, or The Shed, on a special performance, and they want to integrate that into their class for any particular reason. What we will do is bring them together to collaborate.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I think that's wonderful. What I'm asking is, is the goal, I'll try and define the goal—Is the goal to integrate the arts into all curriculum, or is the goal, goal number one of CUNY Arts, to say we're going to have a very robust arts curriculum within the arts that includes trips and includes the other things. It's a university-wide program, or is it in the arts-- solely in the arts curriculum?

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: We are working on that. I cannot tell you that right now that we are on that page, that everybody, every major, every curriculum is going to be taking benefit from this. But if they reach out to us with any particular ask, we make that happen.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I...

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: But that's the purpose, that's the goal. That's the... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, goal number one is to have, in all the majors or in all of the curriculum, some arts component?

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: Some art component...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, that's a goal?

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: That, yes...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, we made it. We got it. (LAUGHS) So, goal number one, I'm glad I did this one last...

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (UNINTELLIGIBLE) goal two and three are easy. So, goal number one is to incorporate the arts into various non-art curricula?

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay! On the record, we agree. Now, how is that being measured, or is it being measured, the success of goal number one?

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: We have different examples, as I mentioned, we have, for example, just had Lincoln Center reach out that they want to (INAUDIBLE) with differing-- our campuses for different performances, so to bring the students closer to... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I just want to pause you...

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: to bring the students closer to the arts. Yes?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's goal number two. Goal number two is "Adopt New York City Cultural Institutions as an extended campus by providing free access to museums, participating in special and curated cultural events." And it sounds like you're doing a wonderful job; you even have Louis Armstrong on the Queens campus.

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: Yes, yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's great. What I am asking is goal number one, goal number one, to

1 incorporate the arts, you know, studying-- you're
2 studying American History, you know, the 20th
3 century, is Jazz being incorporated? Is Aaron Copland
4 being incorporated into that History curriculum?
5 Right? I don't want to do a whole lesson on
6 Pythagoras and math, but I will if I have to. But I
7 promise I won't. Are those types of things being
8 incorporated into the academic curriculum? And it
9 sounds like you said, yes, that's a goal. What I am
10 asking is, is there any audit of the curriculum? Is
11 there professional development? Is there any
12 measurable way that CUNY is determining whether or
13 not they are meeting goal one?

14
15 MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: At the moment, no.
16 But we are working closely with the Academic Affairs
17 Office at CUNY Central to work on that.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

19 MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: You know,
20 (INAUDIBLE) planned that we are reaching the
21 curriculum. It may take some time.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. What does
23 that timeline look like?

24

25

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: I cannot tell you at the moment. We will have to get back to you on that.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: What-- I mean, look, the-- I am just going to-- New York City is the world's cultural nerve center. I think that's a chance, I mean, and that is true, and it's what we say \$110 billion, right? You know, part of who we are as a society is the arts, and it is an economic engine for our city. And you have this goal that's listed on the website, "Facilitating the integration of the arts curriculum into all aspects of University curriculum". And even in your testimony, you had said not all arts jobs are the arts.

I want to read you what you said back to me, but you had said accounts, facility managers, communications professionals, technologists, like all of these--those are just some examples.

And so it just seems to me that you have this really well-founded goal of integrating the arts into the curriculum. It doesn't sound like there's any measurable way to determine whether it's being done. And it doesn't sound like there's been a lot of thought put into goal number one, which I would think

is one of the more important ones. A comprehensive support of the arts. Is there anything that I said that is incorrect? That's actually, we've thought about this, and here's where we are right now.

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: What I can tell you is that we are working with the Office of Academic Affairs for goal number one.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is there any sort of timeline? Have they given you any sort of timeline that says, "By this date, we want to know what your plan is for integrating the arts into more of our college curricula"?

MS. FATIMA HERNANDEZ: Not at the moment.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Not at the moment? This is goal-setting 101, states...

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Can I hop in here for a second?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, yes, please, please.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: So, as you know so well, in terms of curricula, individual faculty members are the ones who design their own curricula. So to reach scale across CUNY takes time and takes

some extreme amounts of collaboration and coordination to do so.

We have made an effort with CUNY Arts to start bridging that gap more by making this connection with the Office of Academic Affairs. Because previously they weren't so closely united. And so now that we're doing that process, we'll be able to have a much more robust planning process for that. And we can get back to you with more information.

But because that is a recent connection point and a recent development, this approach to making sure that every individual faculty member can plug into this has been one where, yes, we would like it to be accelerated, but it takes time.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah. Of course, the (INAUDIBLE) system will record a million students and 25 schools. There are challenges. It just doesn't sound to me like there is-- like any steps are being taken to implement goal one, which I would think would be, I don't know, very basic-- like you put on the website. I think it's a really great goal to integrate the arts into our curriculum, but it just

doesn't sound like any concrete steps are being taken to implement it.

And so that's why I'm asking about the timeline. What sorts of measurement? If the measurement were, you know, by the end of next semester, we'd like to have meetings with the entire History Department at all of our community colleges, like that, I mean, that's a goal, but it doesn't sound like any of that stuff's been done.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Totally understand what you're saying. Thank you for pushing us on this. And we do understand what you are saying about goals. And we are going to have to get back to you on that. This move to OAA ensures that the Office of Academic Affairs, sorry, ensures that we can be more closely united with the faculty engagement and curriculum side of the house. But those conversations are still underway. So, we totally understand what you're asking for, and we're going to have to get back to you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. Yes, I mean, we-- I mean, we have-- I think people are realizing more and more that the importance of the arts-- we talk about who we are as a society, we talk about the

1 economic engine, but we have in our country a real
2 question now about what support for the arts looks
3 like and what it means for us as a country to support
4 the arts with a government takeover of a single
5 person taking over art centers in D.C., of shows
6 being cancelled, because they're critical of
7 government elected officials. Your work right now is
8 more important than ever. This isn't just about money
9 and jobs anymore. This is about whether we are
10 investing in the future of our society. So, this
11 becomes-- your job becomes really critical to the
12 fabric of who we are as a nation. That goal is not,
13 you know, where it needs to be. It is stated as a
14 goal. It sounds like it's there for the website, but
15 really getting thought and energy, and investment
16 behind it is something that we need to invest in
17 critically--both in time, energy, and money.

19 Your relationship with DCLA, I'll go back
20 to this question-- CUNY or as a system, in your view,
21 how do you view the value of majoring in the Fine and
22 Performing Arts compared to the traditionally more
23 stable career fields like business, technology, and
24 healthcare professionals? And how is that value
25

reflected in the investments of whether it's time or money that CUNY makes?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: So when we think about--thank you for the question. When we think about the goals that CUNY has laid out, ensuring that more of our students can connect to careers of their choosing, have job offers at graduation, and are consistently employed a year out. That's not just a goal for business, technology, or science. That's a goal for all of our students. We are not emphasizing some above others or saying we're only going to invest in certain sectors; although, we are investing in cultural and arts sectors, because we recognize their importance to the city of New York. We approach the question of how we can help students connect to jobs with the same investment and the same approach to making sure that our outcomes are successful—if you're a humanities student and if you're a business student.

The value that you're saying of arts majors, we value them and want to see those students succeed and get into the careers that they want in the sector, just as we value the others.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All right. And one of the other questions I ask all the time, I mean, you can almost, uh, CUNY could write the questions for me, it's assessment and accountability, and one of the other ones that comes up is advertisement or outreach recruitment. Is there any proactive way that you are recruiting arts students specifically for arts programming at CUNY?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Happy to talk through how we are encouraging students of many majors to get the exposure they need to target them to get into these initiatives that help increase their pathways to the arts. So we can tell you about the kinds of work that we do to recruit them once they're already at CUNY. If you're asking about recruitment into arts majors, we're going to have to get back to you on that.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I mean, look, we have a pretty big school system, I'd say. Some may call it the largest in the country.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Yes, and we work very closely with New York City Public Schools.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You do, and you have a great relationship and a lot of data sharing, including now.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Mm-hmm.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: IEP data—trying to remind everyone—(LAUGHS) can be shared with the consent of the student or the parent. But we also have arts schools, schools that are built with a theme. I taught at two of them, and so I'm interested to know if there are any efforts to recruit specifically from those schools? Just like if you were a business major, I would think you would want to recruit from the business and finance school, or develop that relationship at least.

Are there any sort of efforts to build those relationships with individual schools to recruit from there?

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: In terms of the relationships that we build with individual schools, the folks on this podium and table don't oversee the individual school-to-school recruitment process. So I hate to say this again, but we are going to have to get back to you on that.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, again, a lot of the same questions I ask of CUNY, like the data and accountability, but you know, I would certainly be interested in any of that data, any of the ways we're supporting this program. I remind you of the funding, the funding requests, you know what that would be to enhance this program so we can have more than a 7% acceptance rate for internships that at least 53% lead to careers for a program that is seeing more and more interest—a program that, for our nation, is really critical more now than ever.

I want to thank the three of you for coming and really beginning this conversation about the arts. Something near and dear to my heart, near and dear to this Council, and important to the city of New York, and to our country. And I look forward to further conversations. I look forward to that data. And I look forward to that accountability and goal setting to make sure that goal number one, which you have listed there, is really integrated into the curriculum so that we can have as well-rounded students as possible. Thank you so much.

VICE CHANCELLOR ANDERSEN: Thank you very much.

(PAUSE)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I am going to call up the first panel, Rachel Lee and Patrick Quinn.

The hearing is now open for public testimony. I remind members of the public that this is a formal government proceeding and that decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times.

The witness table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No video recording or photography is allowed from the witness table.

Further, members of the public may not present audio or video recordings as testimony, but may submit a transcript of such recordings to the Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

If anyone wishes to speak at today's hearing, please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you'll have two minutes to speak on today's hearing topic: *Pathways for CUNY Students Into the Arts and Cultural Jobs Sector*.

If you have a written statement or additional testimony you wish to submit for the

record, please provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant at Arms.

I've called up the first panel. And you may begin. Please state your name for the record.

RACHEL LEE: Thank you, Rachel Lee, Director of Audience and Youth Engagement at the New 42.

New 42's mission is to make extraordinary performing arts a vital part of everyone's life from the earliest years onward. Through our award-winning Youth Corps program, we champion our City as a thriving hub for the next generation of creative professionals.

The New 42's Youth Corps program is both a job and a program. Youth Corps members work front of house and administrative positions within our organization while also receiving paid professional development, life skills training, and academic support.

The program is designed to address the challenges that uniquely prevent students of color, first-generation college students, and students from low-income communities from things like matriculating, seeking financial aid, balancing

internships and home responsibilities, and so much more.

Today, our Youth Corps members, uh, the program remains as one of the city's finest, first, and largest theater employment and skills building programs for young professionals.

This year, we'll serve 60 New York City high school and CUNY college students. Forty of these students are from CUNY schools—thanks to our partnership with CUNY Arts and CUNY Cultural Corps—we're currently hosting an intern from the CUNY Cultural Corps program, and he's amazing.

During the last 30 years, the Youth Corps has nurtured over 1,600 young professionals from across New York City. Our alumni have now gone on to attain lasting full-time careers as arts and business leaders in companies like The Walt Disney Company, Symphony Space, Goldman Sachs, Google, and 16% of our current staff at New 42 are alumni of the program.

We urge City Council to continue its strong support of arts education and workforce development in programs like ours. And if you'd like to see them in action, you're always welcome to come

to one of our theaters, come see a show, and see them do excellent work.

I want to end with a quote from one of our program participants. His name is Joelle (phonetic), and he's a LaGuardia Community College student. He's in his third year of the program. He says, "During my time as a member of the Youth Corps, I've learned the importance of communication and consistency. The team-based work has helped me build more communication skills, and learning how to be consistent shows that you are someone you can rely on, which is a huge everyday life skill." Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

PATRICK QUINN: Patrick Quinn, CUNY MediaMKRS Internship Coordinator and CUNY educator.

Thank you, Chair Dinowitz and Members of the Council Committee on Higher Education, for holding this oversight hearing on Pathways for CUNY Students into the Arts and Cultural Jobs Sector. I am Patrick Quinn, CUNY MediaMKRS Internship Coordinator of Reel Works. I am testifying today to underscore the importance of establishing pathways for CUNY students to enter the arts and media job sectors and

to demonstrate how Reel Works prepares and places CUNY students into jobs across the media industry.

For 25 years, Reel Works mentored, inspired, and empowered underserved NYC youth to share their stories through filmmaking, creating a springboard to successful careers in media and beyond. We provide students with both in-school and after-school programs, which include filmmaking education, one-on-one mentoring with filmmakers, technical training, and, of course, career exploration.

MediaMKRS, the workforce program within Reel Works, was launched by the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment in partnership with CUNY in 2019. This workforce development pipeline is designed to prepare people from NYC's historically underrepresented communities for jobs in New York City's \$82 billion media and entertainment industry. Through industry-recognized credentials, apprenticeships, and paid internships, MediaMKRS graduates are trained, talented, and job-ready. In 2025 alone, 460 students participated in MediaMKRS. To date, 959 internship placements have been made at companies like NBCUniversal, Warner Bros., Discovery,

and Panavision. Additionally, 1,073 MediaMKRS graduates have entered the workforce in the media industry.

With this background and expertise, Reel Works hopes to be a partner with the City Council and the City to expand pathways to the arts sector, ensuring more young people have access to the training, resources, and opportunities needed to build successful careers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I think we'll...

UNIDENTIFIED: (UN-MIC'D) I'm sorry, guys, we're struggling with (INAUDIBLE)

ALL: (LAUGHTER)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You're doing great. We're in a brand new environment. You're doing fantastic.

You said 16, you said 16% of your interns come to work full-time. I think 25% of my staff were interns in my office...

RACHEL LEE: All right!

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: who came to work full-time.

RACHEL LEE: We've got some work to do, then.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You've got some work to do. You have one CUNY Cultural Corps intern. Can you talk a little bit about your interaction with the program, if there's any—if your work is mostly with the interns, can you talk a little more about that?

RACHEL LEE: Our partnership with CUNY Cultural Corps sort of works in both directions. One, we rely heavily on CUNY Cultural Corps as a recruitment partner for our programs. So many of the ushers who are part of New 42 College Corps program find out about the job through CUNY Cultural Corps. And then on the flip side, when they are hosting interns in their program, we applied to be an intern placement partner for them as well. So we're sort of serving them in two different directions.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Great, great, and you would find it to be a successful program?

RACHEL LEE: Yeah, I have really been enjoying it. Our intern from the CUNY Cultural Corps has been wonderful. He's very eager. He, on his

second day, wanted more to do, which I think is a huge testament to his work ethic.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, yeah, we love it. And do you think the City should invest in this CUNY Cultural Corps program?

RACHEL LEE: Absolutely, yeah, I think...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: An easy one.

RACHEL LEE: If they have the capacity to serve more, we would absolutely host more of them within our organization.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And I missed in your testimony, you have CUNY Cultural Corps interns?

PATRICK QUINN: We recruit CUNY students, but that's a distinct program.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Mm-hmm?

PATRICK QUINN: So, we are recruiting with media departments across CUNY. We have liaisons at all of the campuses, but we have specific partners that we are more engaged with. And being a CUNY educator at LaGuardia Community College, and formerly of Hostos in the Bronx, we kind of...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (INAUDIBLE)

PATRICK QUINN: recruit within the classroom...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You abandoned the
Bronx?

PATRICK QUINN: (LAUGHS)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (LAUGHS) You left
us.

PATRICK QUINN: I'd love to come back if
there's a class to teach. But, recruiting, using
those liaisons to help us support who would be
correct for our program, would be a good fit has been
essential.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, and I know
you have great relationships with all of the schools.
Our CUNY schools really do have great programs.

And part of it is making movies?

PATRICK QUINN: Yeah, oh, yeah, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Are these available
for public consumption, the movies, or are they
secret movies in the Disney vault?

PATRICK QUINN: For...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Anyone remember the
Disney vault? Remember that?

PATRICK QUINN: The students within the
program?

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, no, the movies that they produce are those available for the public to watch?

PATRICK QUINN: They're not.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: They're not?

PATRICK QUINN: I don't think so, no.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm interested to know some of the thinking behind that, between not publishing the movies publicly.

PATRICK QUINN: I don't know.

ALL: (LAUGHTER)

PATRICK QUINN: I'd have to check with Disney. But, you know, one of the...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Not Disney, Reel Works.

PATRICK QUINN: Oh, Reel Works, oh, of course, yeah...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I was just kidding about the Disney.

PATRICK QUINN: There's a Reel Works Film Festival; it's happening... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I know you send people to work at Disney. But I was kidding. Okay, for background, like 20 years ago, when they started

doing DVDs, they released them for a limited time and put them back in the Disney vault.

PATRICK QUINN: Yep.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: What this all means is that I'm old and you're not. What I'm asking is, are the Reel Works movies available online for people to see?

PATRICK QUINN: Oh, absolutely, there's a whole process of archiving all of the student films.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah. Wow.

PATRICK QUINN: They're celebrating their 25th anniversary this year, so that's a concerted effort in advance of the 25th anniversary.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And that's great. I would really love to see-- I know you do, like, we've met before, and you've done great work. I really would love to watch some of what you've, uh, the students have produced, rather because our CUNY students are very, very talented.

PATRICK QUINN: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Great. Thank you both so much for your testimony today. Appreciate it.

I want to recognize that we were joined by Council Member Marte and Council Member Feliz on Zoom.

PATRICK QUINN: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That concludes our in-person public testimony. We'll now move to remote testimony. If you are testifying remotely, please listen for your name to be called. Once your name is called, a member of our staff will unmute you. Then you may start your testimony once the Sergeant at Arms sets the clock and cues you to begin.

If there are witnesses signed up to testify remotely, please raise your hand-- Oh, he came just at the right time, he has his slip. You didn't do your homework? Okay, this is a hearing entitled *Pathways for CUNY Students into the Arts and Cultural Jobs Sector*. I'd like to call up now to testify, Christopher Leon Johnson. And you may begin. You have two minutes to testify. You may begin when you're ready.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you so much.

Hey, my name is Christopher Leon Johnson. Thank you, Chair Dinowitz, for this hearing. I just

came from across the street. Two testimonies
(INAUDIBLE) and then the other one, NYCHA, so great.

So let me show myself (INAUDIBLE) these
people, for the children that's in CUNY. I believe
that they need more arts in the schools. I don't know
why the arts are always underrated when it comes to
CUNY. I believe that the City Council needs help work
with the-- I know that Rivera's not here anymore.
This should have been a joint hearing or had a like
emergency chair to co-chair this hearing. It's
something where I believe that the arts are really
needed back into the CUNY system. I think that the
arts really help the kids' minds. It gets them out of
trouble. I mean, these-- I mean, it really expands
the mind. The brain could do a lot. The brain can do
a lot. You started saying like your brain is capable
of doing a lot of things, and you're not using it,
and you're not able to use it, then it does no
service.

So I believe that the commissioner, the
chancellor, should really keep on working with you
guys to make sure that the (INAUDIBLE) is working--
keep on working with you guys and make sure that this
stuff keeps on flowing inside the schools. I think

1 that more art--I know we got a new facility here on
2 the 8th floor. I don't know why the City Council is
3 not allowing, every month, for the kids' and
4 students' art should be featured on this floor,
5 including the fact that the art should be featured in
6 the City Council Chambers. I mean, if I had my way,
7 it should be a bill to where that-- you should
8 introduce a bill to where like anybody-- every month,
9 kids are selected, like artwork, and are selected to--
10 - and more, since you got beautiful rooms here, I
11 think that CUNY should be able to use these rooms and
12 make-- and do like mock like mock city councils and
13 mock judge trials and stuff like that. That's what
14 you should start doing. This is beautiful. These
15 three new rooms are beautiful. Start using them more.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for
18 your... Thank you for your testimony.

19 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You did great off
21 the cuff.

22 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah. (LAUGHS)

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That's fantastic.

24 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah.
25

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And, yeah, we could do with a painting or two in here from a CUNY student. How 'bout it? We can do it.

I want to thank CUNY and all of our witnesses for testifying today about the Arts—Pathways to Careers in the Arts at CUNY.

As we discussed at the hearing, not just having a separate program, although it's a great program, CUNY Cultural Corps is a great program, but integrating the arts into the academics, really making it just as valued as any of the other academic fields, is really critical both to the economy of New York City, the robust arts economy. And asking that question, who are we as a country? We are a country that values the arts, where the arts can be used to express oneself, but also express their political views, and dissent the government. And at a time when our government seeks to censor and silence artists, people who simply speak their minds or sometimes tell a joke they don't like. We really have a responsibility here in New York City to invest in the arts and to invest in what makes our country such a special place. And I think we are really setting measurable goals. By increasing the funding for these

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COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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programs, we can really do a lot for our students, do
a lot for our city, and say a lot about who we are.

With that, I will close out this hearing.
Thank you, everyone. [GAVEL]

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 no interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date October 20, 2025