

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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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

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COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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SERGEANT PAYTUVI: This is a microphone check for the Committee on Higher Education; recorded on June 10, 2024, located in Chambers, by Nazly Paytuvi.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon, and welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for the Committee on Higher Education.

If you would like to submit testimony, you may do so by emailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

At this time please place all electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode.

As reminder, no one is to approach the dais at any point during this hearing.

Chair Dinowitz, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ:

(GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING IN)

Good afternoon, I am Council Member Eric Dinowitz, Chair of the Committee on Higher Education. Welcome to our oversight hearing: *Addressing Obstacles Facing CUNY's Transfer Students*

Let me start by reminding us all that April was National Community College Month. At our committee's April hearing, I expressed our appreciation for the hard work of CUNY's seven community colleges, uh, and what they do every day in serving more than 65,000

1 students. That is nearly one-third of CUNY's
2 undergraduates. The community colleges' work will be
3 highlighted in today's hearing as we look at what
4 happens to CUNY 's community college students who
5 plan to and who do actually make the transition to
6 CUNY 's four-year or senior colleges.
7

8 According to a new report by the Center for an
9 Urban Future, entitled *Boosting Transfer Student*
10 *Success at CUNY*, eight out of every nine CUNY
11 community college students start out intending to
12 transfer to a senior college to earn a bachelor's
13 degree -- eight out of nine -- but, only roughly one
14 in nine students actually transfers and earns that
15 degree within six years.

16 So, I will say that again, even though the vast
17 majority of community college students start out
18 saying they intend to transfer to senior colleges,
19 eight out of nine, hardly any of them actually do.
20 Furthermore, fewer than 50 percent of those students
21 who actually do transfer to senior colleges complete
22 their bachelor's degree within three years of
23 enrolling there, and rates of completion are even
24 lower for Black and Hispanic students. Those numbers
25 should be concerning to all of us.

1
2 The Center for an Urban Future report makes it
3 clear that transfer-related obstacles are pervasive
4 in colleges across the country, and are definitely
5 not unique to CUNY. That has been true for many
6 years. With that, we have an opportunity to address
7 the transfer problem here.

8 Center for an Urban Future provides these seven
9 recommendations to do just that, four recommendations
10 for New York City and New York State leaders,
11 followed by three for CUNY itself. Here they are:

12 1. Launching a CUNY Transfer Accelerator
13 initiative, with an investment of up to \$5 million,
14 to implement and scale up already proven effective
15 tools and programs, such as the Transfer Explorer (T-
16 Rex) tool and the ACT program

17 2. Creating a CUNY Flex program to provide
18 wraparound supports to the many transfer students,
19 part-time students, and adult learners who are unable
20 to access existing support programs that require
21 full-time enrollment

22 3. Scaling up CUNY programs that offer wraparound
23 supports for students who successfully transfer into
24 senior colleges—such as Accelerate, Complete, Engage
25 (ACE), College Discovery, and SEEK—and ensuring that

1
2 such programs reach the same number of students in
3 CUNY senior colleges as the ASAP program reaches in
4 CUNY community colleges

5 4. Revising the CUNY funding formula to make a
6 portion of the funds provided contingent on
7 successful student transfers, thus creating an
8 incentive for CUNY to strive for better transfer
9 outcomes

10 5. Launching a Transfer Success team at each
11 college—composed of researchers, faculty,
12 administrators, and peer mentors from the campus—in
13 order to implement transfer policies and practices
14 that have proven successful on a smaller scale on
15 various CUNY campuses

16 6. Setting systemwide and individual campus
17 transfer goals and publishing reports on their
18 achievement, based on more accurate and consistent
19 data across the campuses than are now available and
20 establishing a way to track and analyze the data

21 7. Creating a Transfer Academy to train faculty
22 and administrators to become more knowledgeable about
23 transfer policies and practices so that they can
24 better serve CUNY students

1
2 We're pleased to have testimony today from the
3 Center for an Urban Future, both to discuss the
4 findings in their report and their recommendation.
5 And, of course, we are very interested in getting a
6 fuller picture of CUNY's transfer process from CUNY
7 Administration.

8 I want to acknowledge my colleagues who are here
9 Council Member Brewer, Council Member Marte, and
10 Council Member Bottcher.

11 I'd also like to thank Adam Staropoli, my
12 Legislative & Budget Director; Jenna Klaus, my Chief
13 of Staff, Sahar Moazami, the Committee's Counsel;
14 and Regina Paul the Committee's Policy Analyst.

15 I would like to remind everyone who wishes to
16 testify in person today that you must fill out an
17 appearance card which is located on the desk of the
18 sergeant-at-arms near the entrance of the room.
19 Please fill it out even if you have already
20 registered to testify in advance. To allow as many
21 people as possible to testify, public testimony will
22 be limited to three minutes per person. I am also
23 going to ask my colleagues to limit their questions
24 and comments to five minutes. Please note that
25

1 witnesses who are here will testify before those on
2 Zoom.

3
4 Now in accordance with the Rules of the Council,
5 I will administer the affirmation to the witnesses
6 from CUNY, please raise your right hand. Do you
7 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
8 nothing but the truth before this committee, and to
9 respond honestly to council member questions?

10 (NO MIC) PANEL AFFIRMS

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

12 As a reminder to all witnesses, please state your
13 name prior to your testimony for the record.

14 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Thank you. Good
15 afternoon, Chair Dinowitz and other Members...

16 (CROSS-TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is your microphone on?

18 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: I think it is.
19 I can bring it closer.

20 Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz, and other Members
21 of the New York City Council Committee on Higher
22 Education, staff, and guests. I'm Wendy Hensel,
23 Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost of
24 the City University of New York. I'm joined this
25 afternoon by CUNY's Vice Chancellor for Academic and

1 Faculty Affairs, Dr. Alicia Alvero, Dr. Sangeeta
2 Bishop, current Faculty Transfer Fellow and former
3 Department Chair of Borough of Manhattan Community
4 College, and Colin Chellman, Senior University Dean
5 for Applied Research, Evaluation, and Data Analytics.
6

7 In Academic year 2022-23, nearly 9,000 students
8 transferred from CUNY community college to a CUNY
9 four-year college program. We are here today to share
10 with you the transformational progress CUNY has made
11 over the last several years towards seamless transfer
12 of students between our community, comprehensive, and
13 senior colleges. We will also outline for you the
14 work that remains to be done and our full commitment
15 to its successful completion. CUNY's founding
16 legislation makes clear the university system was
17 created in part to facilitate the seamless transition
18 of our students between associate and bachelor degree
19 programs. We are motivated, not only by this
20 understanding, but also by the moral imperative that
21 the time, resources, and effort our students expend
22 to achieve academic credit and complete their degrees
23 ,anywhere at CUNY, should be recognized fully
24 everywhere across our system. I also note that two of
25 us sitting here today have experienced these issues

1
2 as parents, and we have watched our children struggle
3 through a transfer process in which they have lost
4 credits at CUNY and elsewhere. We understand
5 firsthand the challenges and frustrations faced by
6 transfer students, and we are dedicated to ensuring a
7 seamless experience for all CUNY students.

8 While my testimony today will focus on the
9 strategic transfer initiative we began in 2022, that
10 was by no means the beginning of our work in this
11 space. For example, in 2013 CUNY General Education
12 Pathways Initiative was launched with support from a
13 resolution by the CUNY Board of Trustees to
14 facilitate the transferability of general education
15 credits -- course work that every CUNY student is
16 required to take for degree completion. This work was
17 expanded with philanthropic support to identify more
18 than 1,000 discipline-specific major gateway courses
19 guaranteed to transfer seamlessly within CUNY for
20 credit. At the same time, thanks to the support and
21 collaboration with Ithaca S&R, Lexa Logue, who
22 previously held my position, the staff at Lehman
23 College and key philanthropic partners, we have
24 developed a tool known as CUNY Transfer Explorer,
25 which provides information on how any course at CUNY

1 transfers to any other CUNY College. It also reflects
2 useful trends and outcome data on transfer to bring
3 transparency to the process.
4

5 In addition to these central-led efforts, there
6 have been several extremely effective collaborations
7 at the campus level to affect the seamless transfer
8 of students within specific majors and specific
9 schools. For example, Bronx, Guttman, and Hostos
10 Community Colleges each established blanket
11 articulation agreements with Lehman College that
12 guarantee a minimum of 60 credits would be applied to
13 the bachelor degree in many common disciplines
14 resulting in admission with junior status. In
15 addition, several multi-college academies were
16 created including the CUNY Justice Academy at John
17 Jay, The Baruch Business Academy for business
18 administration majors across four community colleges,
19 the Online Psychology Academy at the School for
20 Professional Studies, and the Urban Academy at the
21 CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies. These
22 academies provide seamless transfer for community
23 colleges and include many wraparound services that
24 facilitate engagement between the community and
25 senior colleges before students matriculate. These

1 programs have been well received and are extremely
2 successful.

3
4 It's also important to note that our Accelerate
5 Complete and Engage or ACE Program -- the
6 baccalaureate version of ASAP -- aims to double
7 timely baccalaureate completion not only for first-
8 time freshmen, but also for transfer students with an
9 associates degree. In FY22, based on outstanding out-
10 comes at John Jay and Lehman, ACE expanded to four
11 additional senior colleges: York City Tech, CSI and
12 Queens. The first transfer cohort at Lehman admitted
13 in fall 2019 realized a two-year graduation rate of
14 61 percent versus 30 percent for a comparison group
15 of students. We re extreme extremely appreciative of
16 the city's \$8.2 million allocation for ACE and \$2
17 million for Medgar Evers' CHAMPSS program in FY24,
18 which allowed us to serve approximately 3,200
19 students. However, this funding has never been
20 baselined, which significantly hampers our ability to
21 implement these programs effectively. As of today,
22 only \$1 million has been allocated in FY25 City
23 Budget for both programs.

24 While these and other efforts have improved
25 transferability, the first comprehensive initiative

1 to address the universal transfer of credits within
2 each major was launched in late 2022 and memorialized
3 in CUNY's 2023 strategic plan. Entitled *One CUNY*,
4 this initiative comprehensively addresses transfer
5 through curricular alignment within each major, the
6 development of transparent policies and efficient
7 technology, and the implementation of best practices
8 for the retention, advisement, and advancement of
9 transfer students. In January 2023, three the CUNY
10 Board of Trustees endorsed this approach by
11 unanimously passing a resolution charging the
12 university with making student transfer within the
13 same major from a community to senior college
14 seamless by December 2024. I am pleased to report
15 that we are on track to accomplish this goal.

17 A key challenge to the full transferability of
18 credits within each major is the lack of coordination
19 and alignment of academic programs across colleges
20 and schools at CUNY. Recognizing the importance of
21 faculty governance and the faculty's primary role in
22 developing curriculum, in December 2022, CUNY's
23 Office of Academic Affairs partnered with the
24 University Faculty Senate to reimagine curricular
25 alignment across the system. By identifying with

1 disciplinary faculty, the universal core competencies
2 within each major that should be achieved within the
3 first two years of the degree path, we will ensure
4 that our community college students retain credits
5 within the main major and secure junior standing when
6 transferring to the same major at a CUNY senior
7 college. We began by tackling our largest transfer
8 majors, which account for about 85 percent of all
9 transfer students, and we will continue this process
10 until all majors are addressed. In addition, all new
11 programs developed in the future will be fully
12 aligned across CUNY before receiving the approval to
13 launch. Our approach is unique, has been embraced by
14 the faculty, and already has been identified as a
15 potential national model for other systems.

17 Nevertheless, aligning core competencies and
18 coursework alone will not solve the transfer problem.
19 We must also tackle the numerous intentional and
20 unintentional ways in which our policies and systems
21 operate to impede transfer. For this purpose, last
22 year we established a new Transfer Committee on
23 Academic Policy to review existing policies and
24 identify new ones that will support transfer students
25 throughout their academic journey. For example, we

1
2 are working on a policy to ensure that the course
3 equivalencies in place at the time a community
4 college student first enrolls in CUNY remain valid
5 until they transfer to a baccalaureate program to
6 avoid unnecessary credits or courses that do not
7 contribute to degree progression. We likewise are
8 thoroughly evaluating the transfer process from the
9 student's perspective beginning with the transfer
10 application and continuing through admission and
11 registration at a four-year college. We are
12 identifying every obstacle and forming cross-
13 functional teams that develop targeted solutions
14 addressing issues ranging from technological
15 enhancements to improvements in the advisement
16 process.

17 We know that to succeed, transfer students must
18 also have wraparound support that they need when they
19 first begin their journey at a four-year institution.
20 This transition period is a critical juncture when
21 students simultaneously begin to take more advanced
22 courses and lose some of the extra support community
23 college provides. CUNY is working on several measures
24 in this space, including a pilot transfer peer mentor
25 program this fall that will embed transfer mentors at

1 two community colleges and one senior college.
2
3 Mentors will work closely with academic advisers
4 across all three institutions to provide transfer
5 students with the information, resources, and most
6 importantly, support and belonging necessary to
7 succeed during the transition.

8 As I mentioned earlier, CUNY Transfer Explorer is
9 a transformative tool that provides students
10 information and transparency. The transferability of
11 CUNY and non-CUNY courses, credits for prior
12 learning, and advanced placement exams is now clear
13 and accessible across the system. Students can
14 identify how their credits will transfer to specific
15 majors at specific colleges before transferring to
16 help them make the best decisions. Notably, this is
17 not just for students, but also serves as an
18 important resource for academic advisers, faculty,
19 and college administrators. Our goal is to have
20 community college students indicate their plan when
21 they enroll so that we can integrate this critical
22 information into our advisement software and enable
23 four-year colleges to provide proactive support from
24 the moment of matriculation. Transfer Explorer also
25 contains publicly available leaderboards indicating

1
2 how long transfer admission actually takes, the
3 percentage of graduates by transfer and non-transfer
4 status, and much, much more. CUNY is committed to
5 further enhancing Transfer Explorer's impact and will
6 continue to add new features and tools to this
7 important tool.

8 One critical challenge we face is our students'
9 limited access to academic and career advisors, which
10 can acutely affect the success and ease of transfer.
11 While our specialized programs like College
12 Discovery, ASAP, ACE, and SEEK maintain low student
13 advisor ratios, the ratios at senior colleges are
14 significantly higher. While we appreciate the one-
15 time funding we have received from the Council to
16 address this challenge, the necessity for additional
17 *baselined* funding for academic and career advisers
18 cannot be overstated. Advancement and advisement
19 technology and analytics can alleviate some of the
20 workload each adviser carries, but the ability to
21 dedicate personalized time to each student remains
22 essential, particularly for transfer students.
23 Improved data means little if there is no adviser on
24 the other end that can act on the information.

1
2 I conclude by noting that our efforts to improve
3 the transfer experience are yielding positive results
4 already. Fall 2024 transfer student enrollment is
5 currently up by 6.9 percent compared to the same
6 period last year. By December 2024, we will have
7 achieved the full transfer of credits within the same
8 major for most of our community college students, a
9 goal established by our board. Importantly, our work
10 doesn't stop there. We will continue to have transfer
11 at the forefront of every conversation and
12 perspective curricular decision, as reflected by its
13 prominence in our 2023-2030 Strategic Plan - CUNY
14 Lifting New York. We know that addressing the
15 transfer challenge requires a comprehensive and
16 holistic approach, and we are confident that we now
17 have the strategies in place across the system to
18 finally reach this goal on behalf of our students.

19 Thank you, and we look forward to your questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

21 I want to make sure our data is aligned. Does
22 CUNY have numbers on how many community college
23 students in each class year, in each college intend
24 to transfer to senior colleges.

1
2 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We don't have data on
3 intention, but that is something -- CUNY Transfer
4 Explorer -- that's the newest feature that was just
5 launched this last spring. So, we are making a full-
6 fledged effort this fall to have every community
7 college at the point of matriculation to enter this
8 information into this tool, and then that information
9 will now be fed into the advisement tool at the four-
10 year schools.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, the way that you have
12 information about a student's intent is through this
13 program?

14 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Correct.

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Correct. The
16 data that you cited is from a study that was done by
17 an outside entity. In terms of our data collection,
18 we have not up until now had a formal way of
19 identifying which of our students intended to
20 transfer. We have that as of spring, and we'll be
21 collecting that going forward.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And the percent of
23 students... transfer students that graduate within
24 three years?

1
2 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Within three years of
3 matriculating in the bachelor's... (CROSS-TALK)

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: From, yes, from a community
5 college to a four-year institution percent of
6 transfer students.

7 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: We know that 62
8 percent in 21-22 of our graduates in an associates
9 transferred to a baccalaureate program within two
10 years. And 72 percent of our AAAS graduates
11 transferred to a baccalaureate within two years in
12 2019. So, 62 percent in 2021, 72 percent in 2019
13 went from the associates into a bachelor's program.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And then how many of those
15 transfer students graduated within three years?

16 DEAN CHELLMAN: So, that is 52 percent of students
17 who transferred from associate to baccalaureate
18 programs got a degree within three years.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is that on par with... I
20 mean, is that about average? Do 50 percent of
21 students who don't transfer graduate within three
22 years?

23 DEAN CHELLMAN: Fifty percent who don't transfer
24 That is slightly higher for students who don't
25 transfer.

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Slightly, it's higher for
2 students who don't transfer? Okay.
3

4 What data collection systems are currently in
5 place to monitor the experience of students who
6 intend to transfer to help ensure their success in
7 obtaining a degree?

8 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: So, you're asking about
9 the data system that we have? So, it's a compilation
10 I think of tools. Transfer Explorer is the main tool
11 that we have, but it doesn't capture the support, the
12 advisement tool is the one that captures the support.
13 And this summer we are integrating the information
14 across both. So, the additional supports aren't
15 something that that we track outside of our
16 advisement tool.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We've had hearings before,
18 and it's... I ,you know, we have these questions
19 about students who come into college and then
20 students who leave college. And it always seems like
21 a really good idea to ask students a couple questions
22 -- Where you come from? Why are you here? Where are
23 you going? -- And then when they leave college to do
24 similar survey questions -- and it, I don't know,
25 feels each time it is acknowledged as a good idea,

1
2 but it seems that anytime there is a survey question,
3 it's through these various systems, and it doesn't
4 apply to every student.

5 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Well, part of
6 what we're trying to do is get out of surveys, which
7 have low response rates, and go into automatic data
8 compilation so that we have that information whether
9 or not a student steps forward to provide it or not.
10 And one of the key challenges that we have, up until
11 now, is often our systems don't talk to each other
12 across institutions. So we recently acquired EAB
13 Navigate for every school within our system. EAB
14 Navigate tracks student data about student success,
15 how they're doing in their classes, and we're working
16 to be able to share that information across. We can
17 easily add, and that's part of our conversation right
18 now, that data that automatically gets identified, so
19 that it isn't the student that has to tell us, but
20 the incoming and current colleges that are constantly
21 in contact to facilitate that transfer from the
22 moment that they enter. But up until now, what you're
23 seeing is a system that did not do that prior to
24 2023. And going forward from 20... I really 2024,
25 uh, we will have that ability. So, that is a new

1
2 thing that has come on board -- but our goal is that
3 it is not reliant on a survey, but instead on an
4 advisor conversation where that information for every
5 single student is inputted into our system and can be
6 shared across institutions.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, I love the automation
8 the systemic way that is being done. But, how is it
9 being done, if I think we all acknowledge there
10 aren't enough advisors, there a isn't enough
11 investment in ACE and ASAP, how is it actually
12 happening without the investment and advisors?

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Well, it
14 certainly isn't done as well as it could be. I mean,
15 that is something that we are looking to develop, a
16 holistic and comprehensive advisement plan. As we
17 indicated, one of the challenges is we see the data
18 and the success from a program like ACE, which goes
19 from a 31 percent two-year transfer graduation to 60
20 percent without additional support. That requires
21 funding that we do not currently have. However, every
22 student has access to advisor and will meet with an
23 adviser as part of our programs. So, the EAB Navigate
24 covers every single student as well... (CROSS-TALK)

25 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: The what Navigator?

1
2 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: EAB Navigate,
3 it's our student success platform that now is
4 universal across our system , and will be online I
5 think as of this summer ultimately.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: How often do students who
7 are not in the ACE Program meet with an adviser?

8 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: We can get back
9 to you on a specific answer to that, but it varies
10 dramatically by school.

11 My concern, which you can probably tell from what
12 I said before, my concern... our concern is to get
13 the student, who doesn't come forward for that
14 advising session, to ensure sure that we capture them
15 in some type of a safety net as it relates both to
16 their intentions and information but also the
17 advisement process.

18 The analytics and data that we are creating
19 through these integrated systems will significantly
20 assist us in proactive outreach, rather than reactive
21 outreach -- when the student indicates they want to
22 talk to us.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, fundamentally it
24 requires a human being to reach out to the student.

1
2 That's the same whether or not there's an automated
3 system, right?

4 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Candidly it
5 does and it doesn't. With things like automated
6 messaging and chatbots, we can identify who's at a
7 particular point in the curriculum to know that it's
8 time to think about transfer. That can all actually
9 be done automatically directly to a student with a
10 text. So, it alleviates the burdens on the individual
11 advisers to then move into the more highly
12 personalized conversations, like about which school
13 is in your best interest, or what is your future
14 plan? So, you actually can automate quite a bit of
15 it, but certainly it is not sufficient at the highest
16 and best levels.

17 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: And I just want to add,
18 even within the ASAP and ACE Program, ASAP developed
19 ASAP-I (sp?), which is parallel to something that's
20 EAB Navigate. So, it's a tool that helps the advisers
21 identify who needs more advisement sessions. So, then
22 the requirement to meet with the high needs group
23 might be three times in a semester, versus a medium
24 group, versus the students that are doing just fine
25 and only need that once. EAB Navigate does that much

1
2 quicker and doesn't require the manual entry. But,
3 to your point, then it categorizes the groups, and so
4 now as an adviser I know who are the ones I need to
5 proactively reach out to that need that additional
6 support. So by decreasing that workload that's
7 currently required to proactively reach out, the
8 students that are not in these special programs
9 currently have advisers with such huge caseloads that
10 they don't have that information. But, now with
11 Navigate every student, every advisor will have that
12 information and enable us to proactively reach out to
13 them -- through text messaging and to get them to
14 come in.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We've been hearing... I
16 think at a hearing last year, we were hearing about
17 some of this being used, student peer navigators for
18 things. So, some of this stuff already exists, and
19 we're still experiencing some of the problems. And,
20 again, how are we doing this when there are still so
21 few advisers? And, just to be clear, the very people
22 who aren't responding to an email, may also not
23 respond to a text message and need that phone call.
24 So, I'm still needing a little clarity on how it's
25 actually getting done with so few advisers.

1
2 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Again, there is
3 no substitute for the personal conversation with an
4 advisor. And however great our data and information
5 is, if there's no one to receive that information and
6 act on it with the student, then it goes into a
7 vacuum. I think we've seen that; however, we have
8 not fully or even come close to fully implementing
9 the capacity and possibility of the new technology
10 that we have now acquired systemwide. So, there is a
11 major push to implement across the system fully. And
12 what it does is it allows the more routine questions
13 to be answered automatically in the moment by
14 chatbots and things. We know probably 80 percent of
15 the questions that will be asked a hundred times by a
16 similar set of students. What we need is more
17 manpower -- and female power -- person power...

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (LAUGHS) Human power...

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Human power,
20 thank you -- to go in for the 20 percent that need to
21 have a human being sit down and really talk about
22 goals, future, and strategies that can't be captured
23 in an automatic type of exchange.

24 We don't have enough people to be able to do
25 that, and that is a priority for us in the future.

1
2 But, it is deeply constrained by the resources, and
3 it's particularly constrained by one-time funding.
4 Because advisers are highly skilled, must be trained,
5 and it's multi-year appointments. So, we can't...
6 it's a lovely thing, and wonderful thing, and we
7 greatly appreciate one-time funding, but it cannot
8 replace the investment in human capital that requires
9 multiple years of funding.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I would just add that this
11 Council, in last year's fiscal budget, I think for
12 the first time, named ACE and ASAP as critical
13 components of your budget. This year we're fighting
14 during our budget negotiations, fighting cuts to
15 those very programs. And, so, in our budget response,
16 we've made very clear that those programs who help
17 student... that help students graduate, and graduate
18 in the timely fashion -- have shown double graduation
19 rates within a timely fashion -- are priorities of
20 this Council.

21 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I also want to add that
22 the manpower needed, we are working on the peer...

23 (CROSS-TALK)

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Human power...
25

1
2 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: mentor support... human
3 power...

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: There you go...

5 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Did I say...

6 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: It was my
7 fault...

8 (LAUGHTER)

9 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: the human power... yeah,
10 you started it. (LAUGHTER)... the human power
11 necessary embedding transfer mentors within academic
12 advisement. And Queens College launched a pilot
13 program, yielded very successful retention rates,
14 and we can get you information on that. So we are
15 expanding a pilot now, to community colleges and
16 another senior college, to help alleviate some of
17 that burden of the academic advisers and work in
18 coordination with them.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: When did they launch that?

20 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: They did it this past
21 academic year.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, so there is or is not
23 data available?

24

25

1
2 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We do have some data, yep
3 on retention, not graduation yet, because they just
4 started (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Do... can you share it?

6 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I will, I didn't bring
7 it with me, but I just thought about it now.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay...

9 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: One of the most
10 effective ways to add that person to person
11 advisement is actually through peers. Our data tells
12 us peer... that students actually respond to in some
13 cases quite a bit better, uh, when they get advice
14 from their peers. So, it's cost effective, and it
15 allows us to both provide work for our students and
16 additional advising for the younger students.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, I know this committee,
18 and I think even chairs before me, have brought up
19 particularly about transfer credits. I keep doing
20 that... particularly about transfer credits. I mean,
21 this has been an issue for as far back as I can
22 remember, and council member after council member
23 have testified at various hearings. They have
24 constituents who go to a community college, and the
25 credits they may transfer as elective credits, and

1
2 this is something you alluded to in your testimony,
3 but it doesn't count towards their major. And that is
4 ,you know, one of the driving factors of students
5 not staying in school. It's what was on average 11
6 credits, it's a semester of credits that students
7 worked hard for, and are not transferring for
8 anything besides elective credit.

9 Can you go over the steps being taken to address
10 that?

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Sure. First,
12 let me say it's totally unacceptable to us that that
13 could happen. And we know that it's happened quite a
14 lot, in large part because of the lack of
15 coordination across academic programs, across the
16 system. So, you have consistent rules by individual
17 colleges, but not with the intention of transfer,
18 even though our AA and AS degrees exist to transfer.
19 That is literally the function that they play. And
20 Alicia has, uh, Dr. Alvero, has headed up the... and
21 also Dr. Bishop... So, I'll let them tell you about
22 the specific steps where we've coordinated between
23 the faculty and the administration to hopefully solve
24 this problem once and for all.

1 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: To EVC Hensel's
2 point, as part of the transfer initiative, what we
3 really uncovered is something that was alluded to by
4 uh the Center for Urban Research. It's educating the
5 faculty. So many of these decisions are
6 unintentional. Faculty, and I was faculty for 20
7 years, you evaluate transfer credit, think, oh, I'll
8 give them elective it counts towards their 120, so
9 what's the difference? But, there is a huge
10 difference and not understanding that. So, I want to
11 allow Dr. Bishop to talk a little bit about what that
12 educational campaign, how have we been able to open
13 up the conversation in order to help us in that. And
14 then you're probably going to have follow-up
15 questions...

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I just want to make
18 sure I'm hearing right, because it's... I want to
19 make the... (CROSS-TALK)

20 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: The 10-second version,
21 which is probably helpful at the front end, is we put
22 together any... the majors that crossed, if you have
23 Accounting, then all of the accounting schools that
24 had the major got together and identified essentially
25 the first half of the major, what are the core

1 competencies that must be mastered by the student?

2 They came to an agreement on that, then went back to
3 their own community colleges and said, what courses
4 do we have that count for those competencies? Once
5 they've decided on that, and we will have done that
6 by the end of 2024 for 85 percent of the majors, they
7 automatically transfer to wherever in the system you
8 take that major.
9

10 DR. BISHOP: Thank you. I think the main issue
11 that that both EVC Hensel and VC Alvaro are talking
12 about is the curricular alignment piece. And that's
13 the piece that probably has been missing to some
14 extent in this whole transfer process. That's what we
15 are trying to address -- make sure that the
16 curriculum for the community colleges aligns with the
17 curriculum for the senior colleges, that whatever
18 courses students take in the major at a community
19 college, can seamlessly transfer to that major in the
20 senior college. If there's a curricular alignment,
21 you no longer have credit wastage. You no longer have
22 courses just going as elective credits, but they're
23 going now as credits in the major, so that when the
24 students transfer to the senior college, they
25

1 transfer with junior status in the major. That's the
2 whole idea... (CROSS-TALK)

3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: The key is that
4 every one of those credits counts toward degree
5 completion... (CROSS-TALK)

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah.

7 DR. BISHOP: Right... (CROSS-TALK)

8 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: As opposed to
9 sitting over here, it's nice that you took it, and
10 it's credit that doesn't really serve any purpose,
11 because you've already exhausted your electives. Now
12 you have 20 additional elective credits. That's
13 unacceptable, and frankly that is some of the
14 disingenuous conversations that you hear when systems
15 say, "all of our credits transfer", oh they transfer,
16 but they don't progress you toward completion of your
17 degree. The program that we've now implemented with
18 the faculty, because the faculty must agree to
19 this... (CROSS-TALK)

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, this is what I need to
21 ask about, because it sounded by what you testified
22 before, that the faculty seem unaware of the
23 graduation requirements or the requirements for the
24 major. And I want to clarify what you said please.
25

1
2 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: So, I'll give one example
3 to first illustrate. If I am at a community college
4 and I'm a department, and the faculty create a major
5 in Accounting with a specialization, but the
6 conversation is not -- well if the purpose of this
7 degree is to prepare students to transfer, and the
8 students then transfer to a school that doesn't offer
9 Accounting in that concentration, but it's the major
10 feeder that's fundamentally the problem. I've created
11 a degree with a specialization, which might be
12 fantastic, but if it is not aligned to that same
13 major at a senior college... So, the curriculum is
14 developed in isolation. Each school creates their own
15 curriculum, and they're not having the conversation
16 about, well if we are preparing a student, where are
17 we preparing a transfer student to go in the
18 development of the curriculum? So, they create these
19 specialized courses that might not have an
20 equivalency at that senior college. Then the faculty
21 at the senior college say, well that's a great
22 course, we don't offer that course; therefore, it
23 must transfer as an elective, because we just don't
24 offer that course. So with the competency approach,
25 what we did is, what must a student learn? I might

1 package it this way, and I might package it this way,
2 but can we agree that combining our first two years
3 of credits and your first two years of credits, the
4 students have the fundamental information that they
5 need. Forget about all the -- this chapter is you
6 know covered in chapter... this chapter is covered in
7 week 14, and I cover something else -- doesn't
8 matter. I might cover it in a different course, so
9 it's about the information and providing students and
10 ensuring that they've learned the same information
11 regardless of how it's packaged at a community
12 college versus a senior college. So that's what's
13 created, that fundamental... and that was not
14 something that we really even realized until we
15 started really looking at why aren't these credits
16 transferring? Why are these things happening? And
17 discovering that it's because this curriculum
18 alignment conversation is not being had. And that's
19 our role at Central, is how we are ensuring that we
20 are really functioning as one system versus
21 curriculum being developed in isolation of transfer.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I want to turn
24 it over to Council Member Brewer for some questions.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you for all your
3 great work.

4 Maybe you sort of answered this, but we all love
5 ASAP, and we love ACE. So, can one go... I know you
6 said there were fewer ACE slots than ASAP slots, so
7 how does that work if you are trying to transfer with
8 that support mechanism?

9 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Great question,
10 but because the funding levels are so different
11 between the two, the numbers are less. So some of the
12 schools with ACE funding are strictly transfer. So,
13 the students, as they transfer... so it's a two-year
14 ACE Program, and then some schools -- there's two
15 schools that are four-year programs -- so from
16 freshman all the way through four years, uh, but that
17 transfer piece, we are currently working and having
18 conversations about. Hopefully I'll be testifying at
19 some point soon about the exciting work that we're
20 doing to strengthen that alignment and that transfer
21 support, so that students don't go from ASAP to
22 nothing. And having that transfer support. But more
23 broadly, we are wanting to replicate that transfer
24 support that currently exists within ACE to the
25 broader student... (CROSS-TALK)

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Because it would seem to
3 me, I don't know this for a fact, that if you had
4 ASAP, and you don't have anything, well you might not
5 get through in a couple of years -- are you tracking
6 that also, or hasn't been long enough to track?

7 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes, we are looking...
8 we have the differences between the schools that have
9 ACE and then those that that do not and that are
10 transfer focused (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And it's a funding issue?
12 Is that what it is... (CROSS-TALK)

13 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Absolutely... (CROSS-
14 TALK)

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: to try to address...

16 VICE CHANCELLOR ATTALLA: Absolutely...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: that concern? Okay.

18 The other question I have is -- and this is just
19 because I love the Center for an Urban Future -- so I
20 know Jonathan Bowles is very focused, as he should
21 be, on workforce development. In other words, that's
22 also part of... so, how does that, if at all, play a
23 role in the transfer student? You can do whatever you
24 want, but is there some... is there more effort
25 perhaps for that topic to come up in the discussion?

1
2 Because I think he's right, CUNY could help more in
3 this area. So, how is workforce development, which is
4 his big thing, part of your transfer program?

5 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Part of it
6 comes into play by understanding what the students
7 goals are. If the student ,you know, one thing we
8 haven't talked about, a place where students lose
9 credits on a fairly routine basis, is they change
10 their major. So, some of the classes that you take
11 don't transfer. So part of what we've been talking
12 about is actually aligning very closely career and
13 academic advisors to be ,you know, either the same
14 person or the addition in multiple places. We know
15 that our retention numbers go up significantly when
16 there is discussion from the first day of
17 matriculation as to what the career outcome is, and
18 then career milestones are linked to the academic
19 career and degree path.

20 So, that's true for transfer students; that's
21 true for every student. And we are having those
22 conversations both separately and in tandem with the
23 conversations about transfer.

24

25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And is that also an issue,
3 again, back to the advisers, of having enough
4 advisers who are up on that topic... (CROSS-TALK)

5 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Absolutely...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Because, that's also his
7 big thing. I'm in the Jonathan Bowles... (CROSS-TALK)

8 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: It's a
9 particularly... (CROSS-TALK)

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: fan club... (CROSS-TALK)

11 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: It's a
12 particularly acute issue, because often we really
13 need outside industry experts to come in and assist
14 with that process. But, it's something that...

15 (CROSS-TALK)

16 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Two more things related
17 to the workforce development, we have traditional
18 degree maps that tell us student which courses to
19 take. We have been talking about having transfer maps
20 with what courses to take at the community college.
21 But, the more important thing is we're embedding
22 career milestones into degree maps. So, it's not just
23 about which courses to take, but what activities do I
24 need to be doing in order to ensure success in
25 getting a job. And the second piece that we've worked

1 on, and the Office of Transformation has worked on
2 this, there is a distinction between an AA an AS and
3 an AAS. An AAS is essentially a tech degree, and that
4 is a terminal degree designed to get you a job. But,
5 what has happened, over the years in development and
6 curriculum development, and without coordination,
7 many students take an AAS degree either because
8 they... and there's a few that take it thinking they
9 want a job and then transfer -- but we have found
10 very large numbers of students getting an AAS and
11 transferring. And AAS has very applied courses, very
12 few Gen Ed courses. So, they by definition will lose
13 transfer credit. So, in these conversations, the
14 schools with an AS have been redesigning the AS to
15 guarantee career outcomes and career success. But
16 this also ensures that the students are advised
17 correctly from the beginning, so they don't
18 mistakenly enroll in a program that is not designed
19 to transfer where they would lose transfer credits.

21 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: They're also
22 embedding apprenticeships with New York CEO Jobs
23 Council and different industries. So, it's a very
24 comprehensive reimagining of the AAS degree. But,

1 distinguishing it very clearly (TIMER CHIMES) from
2 the transferable degrees.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

5 I guess my other question is, are there enough...
6 sometimes you get the complaint that that course, in
7 order to transfer from the community college to the
8 four-year, isn't available because of whatever,
9 budget cuts, et cetera, et cetera. Is that something
10 that is still an issue, or are you able to address
11 that? In other words, I need to get out of my
12 community college, I am going to transfer, but the
13 course that I need to do that is not available
14 because of budget cuts or whatever. And that's a
15 concern. Is that still happening? I don't understand
16 the business community in New York City not saying
17 CUNY needs help. Go ahead?

18 (LAUGHTER)

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: We will say it,
20 we always need addition help and need more

21 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know and they should be
23 doing more... go ahead... (CROSS-TALK)

24 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: And we are
25 trying to address that issue in every way possible

1 including through what we call e-permit, which allows
2 a student to take -- at any of the other campuses --
3 the course that they need at their home campus. So,
4 we are actually, at the same time that we're working
5 on transfer, reimagining what e-permit -- how and
6 when the rules are over that--so, that literally the
7 student, once again, can leverage the system as
8 opposed to just the individual resources of the
9 individual college or school.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And it's the same issue
12 with more professional staff to teach the courses. I
13 assume that's in the same bailiwick as a challenge?

14 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Well, one of
15 the things I've said at a prior hearing, and I'll say
16 here again, we actually have better student faculty
17 ratios now than we did in 2019, in part because of
18 the 600 faculty members that were hired, and the
19 significant decline in enrollment that we
20 simultaneously experienced.

21 So, I would say those issues are more of a
22 mismatch of scheduling and demand, and we are working
23 through those challenges with new technology that
24 should significantly improve our scheduling for the
25 benefit of students.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know this is a crazy
3 question, but is there anything AI and that world can
4 do to help in this crunch... (CROSS-TALK)

5 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: That is what
6 I'm talking about. Absolutely... (CROSS-TALK)

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

8 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Where instead
9 of identifying what you did last semester and
10 basically starting with that as your model, you look
11 at students already in your system, where the demand
12 is, where they are in their degree path, and create
13 the schedule based on student need and demand as
14 opposed to a historical model of scheduling. So, yes,
15 there are... I mean candidly, we're behind in this
16 space, it's something that we're pushing hard on, and
17 I think within... you will see a significant
18 difference within the next six months to a year.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I just conclude with
20 thanking the chair, but I really do think that the
21 city of New York owes CUNY a lot, thank you.

22 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Agreed.

24 I want to go back to my first question about
25 data. I'm reading the CUNY website, I want to make

1
2 sure I heard you that you don't have the data on what
3 students intend to do. But on the CUNY website, I'm
4 just going to read you a paragraph. This is from
5 CUNY.edu, and it's about associates to bachelor
6 degree transfer, and it says, "The 'leaks' in the
7 transfer pipeline between associate's-degree
8 (community) and bachelor's-degree colleges are a
9 critical problem nationally as well as within the
10 CUNY system. Approximately 30 percent of college
11 students in the United States are enrolled in
12 community colleges. Over 80 percent of new freshmen
13 at these colleges (87 percent at CUNY) say that their
14 ultimate goal is to earn a bachelor's degree (which
15 by definition necessitates transfer between
16 colleges). However, six years later, only 17 percent
17 have done so (11 percent at CUNY)."

18 I don't know if I asked the question wrong, or if
19 they... you're using data that you don't have. But if
20 you could talk about that for a second please?

21 DEAN CHELLMAN: All of the above. We received a
22 onetime federal grant to do a study of transfer
23 students. So that was a large scale... it funded a
24 large scale survey of incoming students. And those
25

1
2 are the results you saw. Unfortunately, it was
3 onetime funding.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So you do have data.

5 DEAN CHELLMAN: Well, one year.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I mean, but the...

7 DEAN CHELLMAN: But we don't track...

8 PANEL: (ALL SPEAKING)... (CROSS-TALK)

9 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: So, it was a
10 snapshot as opposed to an...

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right.

12 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: We don't do it
13 on a regular basis. We had special funding to do a
14 one-year survey -- which I actually wasn't aware of,
15 so I'm glad... I appreciate you pointing that out.
16 But, we do not have a practice of tracking where we
17 could go in and give you hard data on this question.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, I would hope that in
19 the future if I ask a question about data, you can
20 put all the caveats you want on it, that we have a
21 one-time survey, uh, but it would very much be
22 appreciated if that... if that data were shared,
23 because it feels hidden. Right? When I'm like
24 looking... trying to look up data here and reading
25 from the website.

1
2 So, there is data that exists, and certainly
3 things have changed in those few years. But I think
4 fundamentally it highlights the problem. And I just
5 really need to articulate that before moving on to
6 the question.

7 Uh, centrally, now it's acknowledged, the
8 problem, let's say, for transfer credits, uh, exists
9 with schools, I guess, aligning curricula or finding
10 things, uh, elements in a course that can align with
11 one of their courses. I'm interested to know how much
12 of that is pressure from Central to ensure that that
13 happens, and how much is left up to each senior
14 college to determine on their own?

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Well, up until
16 now, most of it's been left up to the senior college
17 on their own. And that and that's why you see a
18 patchwork of results. Frankly, you see too many
19 people making decisions individually. So, that's why
20 we determined not just that we need to have more
21 central control, but we need to do that in
22 partnership with the faculty, because they are the
23 experts in the curriculum. And that's why we think
24 that this this approach is unique and will work as
25 opposed to being lip service to fixing the transfer

1
2 problem -- because ideally the way that we will set
3 this up, and then we will code it on the back end to
4 ensure that this happens, once that agreement is in
5 place it is in place. There is no more discretion
6 that comes in at the senior college to say we are not
7 going to accept those credits, because the faculty
8 agreed as a group that they would.

9 The other additional piece, of course, is that
10 that does have to evolve over time, so that will
11 change. But it will be a controlled change, so that
12 whatever rules were in place at the moment that the
13 person transferred are still operative by the time
14 the person graduates. So they're not subject to going
15 back and forth as the faculty meets and may make new
16 decisions on that major... (CROSS-TALK)

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And just what does that
18 pressure or incentive look like ,you know, for a
19 senior college to really dig in and find those
20 transfer courses to apply to the major?

21 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: The incentives
22 to?

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: To the senior colleges, to
24 the professors, to the schools themselves?

1
2 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: I think these
3 are... in the vast majority of cases, these are good
4 faith determinations by faculty that in their opinion
5 it is not an equivalent. Now whether that is a fully
6 informed decision or not, we question from time to
7 time. For example, we often have arguments now over
8 whether the same class isn't transferable because it
9 was taken in a remote setting versus an in-class
10 setting. Those are things that we should decide
11 together administratively and then have consistency.
12 Because students shouldn't be in the position of
13 having to advocate for each of these courses when
14 they make these transfers. We will create this system
15 of rules with the cooperation of the faculty and
16 agreement of the faculty, and then we will administer
17 it to ensure consistency.

18 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I want to add, I don't
19 want to say pressure, but what has definitely...

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You can say pressure...

21 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: helped open up the door
22 of conversation is the students success metrics,
23 sharing the data of what is happening to the students
24 as a result of these decisions has been extremely eye
25 opening for faculty. Seeing what percentage of the

1 students -- and this is one of the features of
2 Transfer Explorer, it has been fantastic -- that
3 shows, how our do students fair once they transfer?
4 And what percentage of the students in my department
5 are transfer students? That information has not been
6 as transparent as it needs to be in order to enable
7 these conversations. And once by and large, as
8 faculty see what is happening and the challenges
9 transfer students are facing, it's a gained
10 (INAUDIBLE) from the faculty.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Did you say the timeline
13 for this is this year, 2024... (CROSS-TALK)

14 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: The end of this
15 calendar year, yes... (CROSS-TALK)

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, by December there will
17 be, I guess, a map of all courses at CUNY that that
18 can or do transfer for credit from associate's to
19 bachelor's?

20 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Well, that's
21 already in Transfer Explorer. But the automatic
22 transferability of course aligned credits will be in
23 place by the end of December for 85 percent of our
24 community college students. Once we hit... go past
25 the 85 percent, we're talking about small majors with

1
2 small numbers of students, so it will take us a
3 little bit longer to complete that last piece. But
4 even those students will benefit tremendously from
5 the additional work and transparency through the
6 technology.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is there a timeline for the
8 that other 15 percent?

9 DR. BISHOP: They're happening as we go. We're
10 doing it along with the 85 percent, which are the six
11 big majors. So the work is continuing on that. At the
12 same time, we also have work continuing on some of
13 the other majors. So, I have somebody who's working
14 on math -- I have another person who's working on
15 biology -- so they are being tackled, and the hope is
16 that some of these other majors will... it will just
17 not stop at 85 percent, but maybe we might have 90 by
18 the time it's the end of December... (CROSS-TALK)

19 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: So they're
20 underway, it's not that they're not all underway.

21 (CROSS-TALK)

22 DR. BISHOP: They're underway, it's all happening
23 at the same time... (CROSS-TALK)

24 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: (INAUDIBLE)
25 with our resources.

1
2 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: And as new majors are
3 created, I think this has to be continuous... (CROSS-
4 TALK)

5 DR. BISHOP: Yes... (CROSS-TALK)

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, so that was my next
7 question, even within a major there are new courses
8 that pop up all the time, or even a curriculum
9 changes slightly. So what is the process for adapting
10 to either new courses or courses that change their
11 syllabus even a little bit?

12 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: That's a great question,
13 and that's exactly what we're doing. We're going to
14 be creating faculty groups that will be looking at
15 requests to make changes. Because curriculum has to
16 evolve and it has to change, but what we don't want
17 it changes at a senior college and doesn't then
18 change when it needs to change at the community
19 college. So, if changes are being recommended at a
20 community college -- senior college, there will be a
21 faculty committee that reviews that to identify,
22 well if this change happens here, then it needs to
23 happen at a community college to see where it... so,
24 to continue that curriculum alignment. So, that will
25 be a process. We have that with General Education, we

1
2 have a committee that anytime there's a proposal for
3 a new Gen Ed course, that reviews these things to
4 ensure that we have that transfer guarantee. And
5 we'll be creating it for every discipline.

6 DIRECTOR CLARKE: I remember you testified at our
7 Seal of Biliteracy hearing, and I was actually
8 shocked that this faculty has to meet for nationally
9 recognized exams like AP courses that they still have
10 to meet. So, there's no automation there for even
11 nationally recognized... and there's no automation
12 currently within your own system that if a syllabus
13 exists... So they have to review every, single one
14 manually.

15 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Yes, but we are
16 going to be... We've been talking about using
17 artificial intelligence to help scan. So if there's a
18 brand new course, let's say, and I want to know which
19 course equivalencies already exist across the system,
20 artificial intelligence can review that syllabus and
21 populate all of that. So, it decreases a manual
22 effort, but there's no replacement for faculty and
23 faculty governance and having to review.

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I agree, no replacement for
25 people or human power.

1 Do you have a contract with an AI company or an
2 organization to actually do that work?

3 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: We have a
4 number, we have a number of them in different spaces.
5 EAB Navigate is the uh AI tech issue in Student
6 Success. We are using Course Doc (sp?), uh, as it
7 relates to scheduling and the issues that Council
8 Member Brewer brought up... (CROSS-TALK)

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I mean for transferring
10 credits, for scan... for doing exactly what you said,
11 is there a contract... (CROSS-TALK)

12 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We actually have faculty
13 member who has developed... (CROSS-TALK)

14 PANEL: (ALL SPEAKING)...

15 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Something on their own
16 and, it's pretty good so I think we might want to...
17 it's a CUNY faculty member and I'll leave it at that.
18 Uh...

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You must be very proud.

20 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Very.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Does it have a clever name
22 like all these other contracts you have?

23 (LAUGHTER)

24 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: No.

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: No? It's just...

2 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Not yet...

3 (CROSS-TALK)

4 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Not yet.

5 (LAUGHTER)

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You have to get a patent or
7 whatever you do for that.

8 So, the goal is to use that CUNY faculty
9 member's... (CROSS-TALK)

10 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Algorithm...

11 DIRECTOR CLARKE: algorithm, AI program...

12 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Embed it within Transfer
13 Explorer to allow for that automated course
14 equivalency.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And it's been tested? It's
16 evaluated?

17 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: It's being tested and
18 evaluated, correct.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Evaluated by whom?

20 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: By a group of developers
21 from Transfer Explorer who have expertise in this
22 area.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And professors?

24 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes.

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

2 I'm interested to know how often you're talking
3 to students and the student experience. Because, we
4 do have a snapshot survey that was onetime federal
5 funding, and we also don't have anything systemic
6 taking in student experience. But, what is in place
7 beyond the automated ,you know, looking at data to
8 understand where a student is academically, what is
9 in place now to understand a student experience?
10

11 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Conversations, very close
12 conversations with the Student Senate. They are
13 integral members of this conversation, and have been
14 involved from the very beginning.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is there any... are there
16 any metrics that you measure to reach conclusions
17 about the needs of students.

18 PANEL: (ALL SPEAKING)

19 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: (INAUDIBLE) student
20 experience...

21 DEAN CHELLMAN: We have an biannual student
22 experience survey. It gives us broadly a sense of how
23 satisfied students are with particular services
24 across CUNY. We don't get into a ton of detail, but
25 yes, we do have a biannual student experience survey.

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Biannual twice a year?

2 DEAN CHELLMAN: Oh sorry, every two years.

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay (INAUDIBLE) (LAUGHTER)
4 semiannual, biannual, we always... nobody knows what
5 those words mean.
6

7 So, you're collecting data, and I think you said
8 before, it is I guess voluntary whether the students
9 complete the survey. But when you face challenges,
10 you are developing all of these systems for transfer,
11 recognizing the transfer credits and transferring
12 from associate's to 4-year is a challenge.

13 Are you updating your survey to reflect what you
14 know to be a challenge to have student-focused data
15 to reflect the needs of the student body and inform
16 your decisions?

17 DEAN CHELLMAN: Oh, absolutely. Every two years
18 we, uh, we send the draft survey to our campus
19 representatives and to EVC Hensel's cabinet in order
20 to update, to make sure we're covering the issues
21 that are on everyone's plate, top of mind.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And that includes the
23 Student Senate?

24 DEAN CHELLMAN: Student Senate? We do not include
25 Student Senate specifically, no.

1
2 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: But we use data from
3 previous years...

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm interested to know more
5 about that decision why not to include the Student
6 Senate?

7 DEAN CHELLMAN: The Student Senate, uh, we tap in
8 particular... So, Alicia...

9 PANEL: (ALL SPEAKING)

10 DEAN CHELLMAN: Speaks to representatives of the
11 Student Senate. We work most efficiently through
12 Alicia to update the survey.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I wonder how your survey
14 questions would be different if they included
15 direct... I believe that you relay the messages very
16 well, but I wonder how your questions would be
17 different if they included direct communication with
18 students. And to just hearken back to something I
19 said just ,you know, a little while ago, we've heard
20 from numerous hearings here and since before I was
21 chair, other council members talk about the problems
22 with transferring credits from their students. They
23 heard directly from their students. I...

24

25

1 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: We... both of
2 us have experienced it as parents, and that
3 experience is different, right?

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (LAUGHS) yes...

5 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: Than as an
6 administrator, and it gives you a different
7 understanding, and frankly an emotion level as
8 relates to lost credits. You're familiar with...

9 (CROSS-TALK)

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Not to mention the impact
11 on your wallet...

12 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: That... believe
13 me, I know it (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: and the students, by the
15 way... (CROSS-TALK)

16 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: We coordinate
17 with USS all of the time. I think your points are
18 well taken. And it's certainly something that we
19 could add them to this conversation. I'm learning
20 things about process sitting here as are you. And we
21 are continually identifying new ways to engage
22 students at a more meaningful level in the changes
23 that we're making. So, I think that's a good
24 suggestion and one that we can look into.
25

1
2 DR. BISHOP: I just want to... May I add one thing
3 to that?

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Of course...

5 DR. BISHOP: Definitely, a student voice is very
6 important, but I think the people who know most about
7 loss of credit, about difficulties that students
8 face, are the department chairs. Because, this is
9 what we... I've been a department chair for nine
10 years; I've been doing this on a daily basis with my
11 students - sending, contacting these senior colleges
12 on their behalf, finding out why their credit didn't
13 transfer, speaking with the students one on one, and
14 finding out, "Well, I wanted to do this major, but I
15 heard my friends say that maybe that major is better,
16 and that's what they are doing, so you know maybe
17 that's what I want to do." My daughter's boyfriend
18 changed his is major from music to psychology,
19 because he spoke to her. So, does this happen all the
20 time? It happens all the time...

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You know, there are some
22 people in this room who've done pretty well for
23 themselves with the music degree... (CROSS-TALK)

24 (LAUGHTER)

1
2 DR. BISHOP: I know, and I think he would have
3 done pretty well, and I think he thinks that, too,
4 because now he's not interested in psychology
5 anymore. (LAUGHTER) But, students do this, so, yes,
6 student voice is very important. But, at the same
7 time, I think that chair voice is really important,
8 just like parent voice is important. You know,
9 they're... as they're saying, they've dealt with this
10 from as parents. I've dealt with it as a parent as
11 well. But, I think that it's important to involve all
12 these different voices in trying to get data. And I'm
13 pretty sure that Alicia, and the contribution that
14 she makes when she talks... from students, is also
15 coming from the Chair's point of view. Because, I
16 know that I've been talking to Alicia for years on
17 this topic and on several other topics that pertain
18 to this.

19 So, we do take it into account, maybe we don't
20 have a student sitting there saying ,you know, oh can
21 you add question x, and can you add question y? Now
22 do students really do that? I don't know. I have
23 ,you know, yeah, student voice is very, very
24 important, but a lot of times students don't know
25 what they are looking for and they need guidance. And

1 that guidance comes from faculty, from department
2 chairs, from administration, from advisors. And I
3 think that's where CUNY needs most assistance, is
4 getting the students the support that they need, so
5 they don't go and take ,you know, change their major
6 to psychology just because their girlfriend told them
7 that that's what she's doing. (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-
8 TALK)

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: They should just double
11 major.

12 (LAUGHTER)

13 DR. BISHOP: Well ,you know, what if he had talked
14 to me about it, that's what I would have told him to
15 do, but he didn't come to me, he changed his major.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: A lot of people have done
17 very well double majoring...

18 DR. BISHOP: Exactly

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: in music and something
20 else.

21 (LAUGHTER)

22 DR. BISHOP: Exactly, that's my point.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I would just I would just
24 share that I often find a disconnect between the
25 student experience and the levels of bureaucracy that

1
2 it takes to get up to things like a survey. And I
3 value that you're recognizing the need to address
4 transfer credits. But, again, it is something that
5 has been here for years... a problem for years. So,
6 to not recognize the voice of the students, doesn't
7 discount the voices of the advisers -- which we
8 recognize don't always talk to the students who have
9 the most need. Right? That's what... (CROSS-TALK)

10 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: And we have
11 spoken extensively, and will continue to do so,
12 because of the value of the student voice. Yes,
13 please know that that is a priority of the Office of
14 Academic Affairs, and we work very closely with the
15 Student Senate with these issues.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'll never forget a couple
17 years ago, when we were talking about students with
18 disabilities on CUNY campuses, and there's a lot
19 that CUNY does for students with disabilities. They
20 testified, it was great, and then afterwards, we had
21 a student testify they didn't even know... they
22 couldn't even find the Office for Students with
23 Disabilities. Right? And this was.... they were able
24 to figure out how to come to a hearing and testify at
25 a New York City Council hearing, but couldn't

1
2 navigate the system at CUNY. Which is always a
3 reminder to me that the things that we see as people
4 who look at data, and are consolidating information
5 from various places, are not always the experiences
6 we directly hear from the students . That was a long
7 way of saying (LAUGHS) talk to more students. So,
8 once that student transfers from a community college
9 to a four-year institution, are they targeted with
10 any specific or special support that is perhaps
11 different than someone entering the four-year
12 institution as a freshman with no credits?

13 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: It varies
14 fairly dramatically, uh, by institution. Part of the
15 challenge that we are now addressing is identifying
16 some things that should be in place at every
17 institution. If you want to talk about some of those
18 supports?

19 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: So, yes, the supports
20 very substantially. And EVC Hensel alluded to, for
21 example, the academies that exist at some of the
22 senior colleges. So, some of them have the wraparound
23 services that begin when the students are at the
24 community college -- so even before that transition
25 support... Uh, Queens College launched a peer mentor

1 transfer support for that transitional period. So,
2 what we are doing is taking a look at all the
3 different things that are being done across the
4 college that already have those support services, and
5 developing a model that should be the standard level
6 of care across all of the schools that include that
7 first... before they even enroll, because sometimes
8 what we're finding is something termed "transfer
9 melt", they apply, they get admitted, and then they
10 never show up. And one thing that's reported by
11 students is that they're bombarded with information.
12 They get so many emails that they get overwhelmed,
13 they don't even know what to do next.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: If they only had a chatbot
16 talking to them (LAUGHTER)...

17 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: That actually
18 is the solution.

19 (LAUGHTER)

20 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: That is one of the
21 solutions... (CROSS-TALK)

22 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: It is. We can
23 tell who has submitted what forms, and so you begin
24 to target communication only to the person who needs
25 to receive the communication. So, it actually

1 significantly reduces that external noise. You sound
2 skeptical, but I assure (LAUGHS) you there's actually
3 data that shows this is a quite effective technique -
4 - to actually direct target the right person at the
5 right time in order to convey the information that's
6 needed. And if they need help, that can't be
7 answered, they're immediately connected with person
8 to be able to help them. Because some of the
9 questions they have, they're very embarrassed to ask
10 a person, and they feel most confident asking the
11 questions to a chatbot or at two o'clock in the
12 morning. So, finding that balance between when they
13 need to be connected to a person, and giving them the
14 opportunity to chat in a way in which they feel
15 comfortable asking those questions that they would
16 want to ask a human, is something that we are
17 working on.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, the Center for an Urban
20 Future Report notes that many students continue to
21 struggle when it comes to ensuring that the credits
22 transfer along with them, especially as applied
23 towards the degree, as we've been discussing.

24

25

1 How is CUNY ensuring this is made more
2 transparent and more efficient, so students don't
3 waste additional time and resources?
4

5 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: It's a multi-prong
6 approach. First the transfer plan, knowing when and
7 what, where a student wants to transfer from day one
8 is critical. Because, from day one, they need to know
9 which courses to be taking, and the moment that we
10 have a delay in knowing when they want to transfer,
11 the courses they take... (CROSS-TALK)

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: By the way, that requires
13 knowing that they want to transfer... (CROSS-TALK)

14 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Correct... (CROSS-TALK)

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: to a four-year
16 institution... (CROSS-TALK)

17 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: which we're capturing now
18 in transfers for...

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay... (CROSS-TALK)

20 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: We are now officially...
21 (CROSS-TALK)

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please continue... (CROSS-
23 TALK)

24 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes. And that's exactly
25 why we need the tracking of that information. So,

1 providing that information, what one of the one
2 things from this transfer initiative I'm most excited
3 about, is then we will have these transfer maps, so a
4 student doesn't have to know from day one, I want to
5 go to Queens College, I want to go to John Jay. Right
6 now, there's so much chance -- if I have to take
7 these courses, if I want to go to John Jay, if I
8 want a major in psychology at Queens College, I have
9 to take these. With this transfer initiative, it
10 doesn't matter, they don't need to know the very
11 beginning, and they if they major in psychology and
12 know they want to transfer, they can go to any 4-year
13 CUNY school with that guarantee that all of their
14 credits are going to transfer within the major. So,
15 essentially we'll have a blanket articulation, a map,
16 and take these courses at community college. Then
17 we're also working at the senior college, what are
18 the remaining courses? We want those transfer maps,
19 so it's transparent to all academic advisers, faculty
20 as well as students. So, we'll have all that
21 information come December 2024.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You'll have the
24 information... (CROSS-TALK)

25 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: The students will...

1
2 PANEL: (ALL SPEAKING)

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Will the public have the
4 information? I think we've been talking about ,you
5 know, what the success rates of the programs are.
6 Are those all going to be public information?

7 PANEL: Yes.

8 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Yes, absolutely.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm looking at the data guy
10 to make sure...

11 DEAN CHELLMAN: If they say yes, I say yes.

12 (LAUGHTER)

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You're the...

14 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: The key to this
15 success is transparency and with the launch of our
16 2023 Strategic Plan, all of our major data points
17 have become public, and we vowed to continue to track
18 them publicly. And these are among those data points.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Are you modeling or have
20 you looked at either externally other higher
21 education institutions to model after? Or are you
22 looking internally at schools like Baruch, which
23 according to the report, has a 67 percent three-year
24 graduation rate for transfer students.

1
2 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Both. I met with the
3 Minnesota State system, Cal State, Maryland, you name
4 it, I met with all of them, and discovered that they
5 all have a transfer problem, and have all said, if
6 you solve it, come to us. And other institutions are
7 knocking on our door asking how we've been able to
8 make (BACKGROUND NOISE) (INAUDIBLE) success already.
9 So, yes, and looking at what's worked within the
10 system as well. So all of the above.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I have two more question,
12 one is a Gale Brewer question.

13 (LAUGHTER)

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You ready? All right, you
15 have a guy making a thing, a chatbot, was he making
16 an AI?

17 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: The faculty member? It
18 was for course equivalencies... (CROSS-TALK)

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Course equivalency? Is he
20 licensing that, and is CUNY getting any credit or
21 residuals for licensing it?

22 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: As you were speaking, I
23 thought, huh, we should do that.

24 (LAUGHTER)

25 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That was...

1 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Intellectual property...

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Intellectual... (LAUGHS)

3 every time someone clicks it, he gets a nickel.

4 (LAUGHTER) It's a lot of clicks, though.

5 But that's a real... I mean, we have actually
6 discussed at this hearing before, whether it's CUNY
7 or other agencies spending the money to develop
8 something, and then some other private entity, uh,
9 benefiting from it. At the very least, that this
10 faculty member could probably license it and get some
11 money.

12 And, then, uh, lastly, you're... you are familiar
13 with the Center for Urban for an Urban Future Report,
14 uh, just so these seven recommendations, or any of
15 the recommendations, uh, just other general thoughts
16 about them or the effectiveness -- or
17 ineffectiveness, of some of these, where you've read
18 them, and you may have said, that's a really good
19 one, we're going to lean into that, or that doesn't
20 make sense logistically, and thank you, but no thank
21 you?

22 EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLOR HENSEL: There are
23 elements of all of the things that we are doing in
24 some of those recommendations. So, first let me thank
25

1
2 the Center for Urban Futures for looking at an issue
3 that we think everybody should be looking at. So, we
4 we're in complete agreement about that. In terms of
5 faculty academies, for example, you heard us say
6 there are misunderstandings with faculty, and we've
7 created like the Faculty Fellow position in
8 educational opportunities. We don't have a full
9 academy, if there are more resources, more people
10 learn, and we can implement it more quickly. I think
11 that that makes sense. In terms of setting funding to
12 actual results, in terms of the time to graduation,
13 it doesn't take into account how many part-time
14 students we have, how many are working full-time, so
15 we think the correct statistics, or how many of our
16 students are completing that transfer within a
17 reasonable period of time... So I know you have more
18 thoughts.

19 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: I think, and I too, am
20 extremely grateful for the Center for Urban Research.
21 Most of what they mentioned, the additional funding
22 for technology, like Transfer Explorer, absolutely --
23 for more advisers -- absolutely. The elements
24 described in each of the different programs that are
25 suggested would be wonderful and welcomed, uh,

1
2 because they would enhance our ability to make
3 progress on these things and continue them. Because
4 the one thing that I want to really stress is that
5 doing this, this is fantastic, we have a great
6 initiative ahead of us, but this has to be forever.
7 We have to change the way in which we approve
8 curriculum. Transfer needs to be at the forefront of
9 every curricular decision. So, that piece, I think,
10 was probably not highlighted enough in that, but
11 obviously you have to be in the weeds to kind of
12 understand that. So, building that infrastructure is
13 something that I think is critical, and that is CUNY
14 Central's role -- how do we ensure that we're not in
15 this mess.

16 I always tell everyone, I approach a problem in
17 two ways -- how do I retroactively clean it up and
18 proactively prevent it from continuing? And that
19 prevention of continuing is something that we are
20 embedding within this process to ensure that five
21 years from now, somebody's not sitting here in the
22 same chair saying, whoops now we have all these new
23 majors, and they don't align. Right? So, how do we
24 prevent that from happening? I don't have any issues
25 with the things that were stated -- other than the

1
2 one piece about tying the budget to... that has to be
3 very tricky, because it has to be the right metrics.
4 It's very difficult -- transfer and loss of transfer
5 credits, it's such a complicated issue. We are
6 solving a lot of it, but there will always be times
7 when a student changes their major too many times.
8 (LAUGHTER) And then they take too many credits, that
9 then upon transfer, end up not aligning with their
10 major. But, the advisement piece and making sure
11 they're on the right track from the beginning I think
12 is critical to address that.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, at a basic level, if
14 a student does work, they should get the credit for
15 that work.

16 VICE CHANCELLOR ALVERO: Absolutely, 100
17 percent... (CROSS-TALK)

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And I'm glad to hear you
19 agree with that, and pleased to hear that there steps
20 being taken. But, it's very clear that there are a
21 lot more steps that need to be taken, a lot more work
22 to do. So, I look forward to checking with you next
23 year to see the impact and effectiveness of all these
24 initiatives you're pushing forward.

25 So, I want to thank you so much for today.

1
2 PANEL: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I now open the hearing for
4 public testimony. I remind members of the public that
5 this is a formal government proceeding and that
6 decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,
7 members of the public show remain silent at all
8 times.

9 The witness table is reserved for people who wish
10 to testify. No video recording or photography is
11 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
12 the public may not present audio or video recordings
13 as testimony, but may submit transcripts of such
14 recordings to the Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in
15 the hearing record.

16 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
17 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms
18 and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will
19 have three minutes to speak on today's hearing topic:
20 *Oversight - Addressing Obstacles Facing CUNY's*
21 *Transfer Students.*

22 If you have a written statement or additional
23 written testimony you wish to submit for the record,
24 please provide a copy of that testimony to the
25 Sergeant at Arms.

1
2 I will now call the first panel, Eli Dvorkin,
3 from Center for an Urban Future.

4 ELI DVORKIN: Good afternoon, I'm Eli Dvorkin,
5 Editorial And Policy Director at the Center for an
6 Urban Future. We're an independent think tank focused
7 on creating a stronger and more inclusive economy in
8 New York. Thank you so much, Chair Dinowitz, and
9 Members of the Committee, for the opportunity.

10 For thousands of New York City public high school
11 graduates each year, the most accessible path to a
12 bachelor's degree, and with it, a major boost to
13 economic mobility, is to enter CUNY as a community
14 college student, and then transfer to a four-year
15 institution. However, most CUNY students who intend
16 to transfer and complete a bachelors simply won't
17 reach the finish line. There are challenges at every
18 point in the transfer process, many who tend to
19 transfer, uh, to springboard from a community college
20 to a four-year institution never transfer at all, a
21 smaller number are accepted but do not enroll, others
22 do transfer but are unable to complete. And there are
23 issues with credits toward a major being lost -- as
24 we heard earlier -- not baked into curriculum design.
25 The transfer application process itself is hugely

1
2 cumbersome, and too few faculty and administrative
3 staff have the knowledge and the tools needed to
4 help.

5 Fortunately, CUNY is already doing a lot to
6 address these challenges as you've just heard from
7 our University colleagues. Our research suggests that
8 CUNY's interventions are working. For instance, the
9 rate of transfer students graduating within three
10 years of transfer increased from 38.7 percent in 2012
11 to almost 50 percent in 2019. But CUNY will struggle
12 to achieve the progress needed without a new level of
13 support from the city of New York. That starts with
14 fully funding CUNY in the 2025 budget. The Mayor's
15 Executive Budget cuts, \$84.9 million in City funds
16 for CUNY, compared to last year's adopted budget. The
17 Council should do everything possible to reverse
18 these cuts.

19 Arguably the most effective option to help boost
20 transfer student success is a simple one *baselined*
21 funding for additional academic and peer advisors at
22 CUNY. Current ratios of students to advisers are
23 unacceptably high and limit the effectiveness of
24 other city and state investments in college access
25 and success.

1
2 We recommend that the City consolidates smart
3 investments in what's already working by launching a
4 new CUNY transfer accelerator initiative, which would
5 invest up to \$5 million annually in operationalizing
6 and scaling up to all 25 colleges the effective tools
7 supports and practices that are delivering results.

8 Given how many transfer students struggle when
9 they enter a senior college setting, the City should
10 commit to growing the small scale, but highly
11 effective, CUNY ACE senior college success program,
12 which is boosting graduation rates by upward of 27
13 percent, but reaches just 3 percent of eligible
14 students today.

15 The City should also consider piloting a new
16 program, call it CUNY Flex, to provide wraparound
17 supports to non-traditional students, including
18 transfer students, older students, and part-time
19 students who may otherwise be ineligible for ASAP or
20 ACE.

21 Helping far more of CUNY's aspiring transfer
22 students to beat the odds and complete a bachelor's
23 degree is among the most effective steps that policy
24 makers can take to boost economic mobility.
25

1
2 With this Council's support CUNY can accelerate
3 and embed what's working systemwide and deliver
4 better results for students at scale. Thank you for
5 the opportunity to testify today.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (NO MIC) (INAUDIBLE)

7 (LAUGHTER)

8 ELI DVORKIN: I think it was right on the dot,
9 huh? Not bad, I could strike the final two words.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: (LAUGHS) Thank you so much,
11 and thank you, of course, for the report. I mean a
12 number of your reports are really critical to our
13 understanding of the successes that CUNY has
14 achieved -- and, of course, the challenges and the
15 hurdles faced by CUNY as a system -- and so many of
16 our students.

17 If you had to pick one single biggest factor or
18 obstacle facing transfer students, what would you
19 identify that obstacle to be?

20 ELI DVORKIN: Yeah, I think it's really the lack
21 of knowledge of how this whole thing works, you know?
22 I mean, only about 5 percent of faculty, when they
23 were tested on this... and administrators, got
24 transfer questions right. Meaning 95 percent either
25 didn't know or got it wrong. So, the level of

1
2 knowledge within the faculty and administrative staff
3 is really lacking today. But, as a result, students
4 just don't know what they don't know. I mean about a
5 quarter of all CUNY students, when they are surveyed,
6 and it only happens once every two years, but they
7 describe advising as really lacking. You know? Now,
8 for many students it's working, but for that... you
9 kind of heard in in the previous testimony that kind
10 of 20 or 25 percent figure -- the students who need
11 more ,you know, that is reflected in that survey
12 data. But the reality is that those students are over
13 represented among those students that don't make that
14 transition. A quarter of all students is a lot.

15 I think the number one issue is that knowledge
16 gap, and we have a few recommendations aligned with
17 that particular challenge.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And it was (INAUDIBLE)
19 again, with the faculty you said?

20 ELI DVORKIN: Right, which is where kind of
21 students are getting their knowledge from. Nobody
22 enrolls in CUNY understanding how transfer is
23 supposed to work. But, they need to get that
24 information from advisers, peer advisers, from
25

1
2 faculty, and from administrators. And, right now
3 there's a big challenge there.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, it was it was
5 actually shocking to me when CUNY testified that. I
6 mean, you heard them testify that educating faculty
7 on sort of the requirements on transfer, that was, I
8 guess, coming from the K-12 world as a teacher there,
9 it was very clear, you need this many credits in each
10 of these subjects to graduate. I think things were a
11 lot more aligned in the DOE than they are with CUNY
12 obviously. But, that was one of the reasons it was so
13 shocking to me

14 So when CUNY testified that part of their work is
15 faculty education, what are your thoughts on that?

16 ELI DVORKIN: Yeah, I think, I mean, first of all,
17 I give CUNY a lot of credit for recognizing the
18 problem. And that survey that was conducted by CUNY
19 faculty themselves revealed just how little faculty
20 really know about transfer at CUNY. What I would say
21 there is, I think it's really important to note that
22 CUNY is taking some steps right now to start to
23 address this, you know, developing a fellowship
24 program for faculty to become more expert in
25 transfer. That's absolutely the right idea, but right

1
2 now we're talking about a handful of those fellows
3 across 25 colleges and nearly 200,000 students.

4 So, what I would say is the approach is, first of
5 all, acknowledging the problem, the approach is I
6 think the right one. We recommend a transfer academy
7 -- I think you did hear that in that previous panel -
8 - support for the idea. I think what was going unsaid
9 there is, there just aren't sufficient resources
10 right now to be able to do what I think is needed at
11 scale, uh, to go from what's the right idea, a small
12 cohort of CUNY faculty fellows to something that is
13 embedded at every single college.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Do you think... how does
15 CUNY fair compared to other universities or college
16 systems when it comes to transfer students?

17 ELI DVORKIN: This is actually an area where I'd
18 say, in a sense there is some good news. The good
19 news is not particularly good for any of us in the
20 United States, which is that this is truly a major
21 problem at public university systems across the
22 country. I mean, I would actually say that ,you know,
23 CUNY fairs no worse than some and better than others.
24 The reality, though, is that CUNY has made this a
25 priority, which not every system has done, just in

1
2 the last couple of years ,you know, building
3 transfer into CUNY's strategic road map going
4 forward. So, I'm actually optimistic about how CUNY
5 is viewing the transfer problem compared to previous
6 years and decades.

7 But, CUNY is certainly not alone nationally in
8 how difficult this problem has been to solve.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Listening to testimony
10 today, thinking about what you know about CUNY's
11 systems, are there other ways to alter them to better
12 address the problem that you identified in your
13 report on transfer students?

14 ELI DVORKIN: I think there's a couple thoughts
15 there. One is, I do think that the big idea of this
16 CUNY Transfer Accelerator, which I'm proposing would
17 be an investment of City dollars in operationalizing
18 what CUNY's already done. You know, it's important to
19 note there that the initial work that really started
20 this process, with the articulation of credit
21 transfer project, it started with grants from
22 philanthropic foundations. Those foundations took
23 kind of the risk of trying to figure out with CUNY's,
24 uh, faculty and administrative expertise, what's the
25 problem here, and how do we solve it? And I think the

1
2 good news is that that project, that program, has
3 been really successful ,you know, where it's been
4 implemented like at Lehman College, we've seen the
5 share of credits that are actually accepted by the
6 receiving institution, at Lehman in that case, from
7 Hostos Community College, increased from about 50
8 percent to over 70 percent.

9 So, there's some things working there. I think
10 the problem is that that was a grant that is expired.
11 And while there's a little bit of additional money to
12 kind of keep it going, I think the part that you
13 weren't hearing from that first panel was there's
14 very few resources in place to even sustain what
15 CUNY's been doing since 2020, let alone to do the
16 full scale of implementation across the entire
17 system. I think everybody up there agrees that it is
18 what's needed. So, that would be my concern right
19 now, is that without the City kind of stepping up and
20 saying, this is a priority for the City of New York,
21 and here are the dollars to specifically allocate
22 toward operationalizing these initiatives, that we're
23 going to continue to see the benefits at the schools
24 that have already benefited from that that pilot

1
2 program, but it'll be challenging to get that
3 implementation to happen across the whole system.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I would propose that
5 perhaps the reason it was so successful was because
6 you named two Bronx colleges (LAUGHTER) and things
7 are great in the Bronx...

8 ELI DVORKIN: Bronx does a lot of things right.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: We do a lot of things
10 right. You know, is doing a lot of one of I think the
11 successful arguments, uhm, financially for a program
12 like ACE and ASAP is that there is the actually the
13 financial benefit from the program. There have been a
14 number of studies which have shown incredible return
15 on investment for every dollar invested in ACE and
16 ASAP.

17 ELI DVORKIN: So true.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And for programs like a
19 Transfer Accelerator, do similar metrics exist?

20 ELI DVORKIN: Great question. Well, first of all I
21 would say not quite at the level of the rigor behind,
22 for instance, ACE and ASAP. I mean ASAP in
23 particular, which has just become this leading
24 national model has been studied extensively. But, I
25 think a lot of the same uh kind of rationales are in

1 place. So, the starting point for our research, and
2 it kind of answers a question from Council Member
3 Brewer, but the median CUNY graduate who earns a
4 bachelor's degree is earning almost \$69,000 a year.
5 By comparison, somebody with just an associate's
6 degree it's \$53,000. With no college degree it's
7 \$38,000.
8

9 So, part of what I would look at in terms of the
10 outcomes is if the program succeeds in significantly
11 boosting the number of transfer students who actually
12 achieve that goal of a four-year degree, the benefits
13 for them in terms of a lifetime of additional
14 earnings are significant ,you know, on the order of
15 about \$1.7 million across a lifetime of work.

16 So, if you try to kind of understand the cost
17 benefit analysis there, I think there's very
18 similarly persuasive data. What's still emerging is
19 really understanding the benefits of all of those
20 specific interventions including the T-Rex Explorer
21 tool and embedding it earlier. And CUNY has obviously
22 stated the intention to follow up on how that's
23 working and be able to build the evidence base there.
24 But, in terms of the case for how important it is for
25 New Yorkers and for New York City's economy to help

1
2 more students who aspire to a bachelor's degree to
3 actually achieve one, the data there I think is very
4 strong.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I mean I think in
6 this committee we often speak about, there's ,you
7 know, the moral justification for saying we should be
8 investing for students to succeed, and then
9 recognizing what financial investments look like --
10 and what good financial investments look like. And,
11 again, this Council... for this Council, CUNY is a
12 huge priority and that's why we are fighting very
13 hard against so many of the cuts that this
14 Administration has proposed. Because we need the
15 advisers, we need ASAP, we need ACE, and we need we
16 need our colleges to run well.

17 You mentioned as one of the top priorities or
18 top hurdles, faculty education, and faculty support,
19 and understanding how the transfer works. Is there
20 another recommendation from your report that you'd
21 like to highlight as one of the things that the City
22 or CUNY should focus on to ensure the success of
23 transfer students.

24 ELI DVORKIN: Thank you, Chair, for the question.
25 I mean, we mentioned a couple of things, I think

1
2 just to underscore them a little bit ,you know, where
3 there is already some strong infrastructure in place
4 like at Baruch College, it's really working. Having a
5 team in place that focuses on transfer success, and
6 it addresses multiple parts of the challenge,
7 including getting departmental buy-in for those
8 credits that are going to transfer that should
9 transfer from a community college, as well as
10 advising, and faculty knowledge ,you know, all those
11 components.

12 So, what we're proposing there, a transfer
13 success team at each college. That would really be
14 replicating what's already working at a school like
15 Baruch and bringing it everywhere. Uh, that would
16 include the kind of transfer affinity group model
17 that started in certain places, that would expand it,
18 that would include ,you know, the peer mentorship
19 program that Dr. Alvero mentioned. So that was one
20 recommendation.

21 I think the second is, the Transfer Academy idea
22 in a larger sense is about creating an infrastructure
23 to train faculty and administrators to become
24 knowledgeable advocates for better transfer pathways.

25

1
2 So, that's something that's, I think, very doable
3 with only a modest kind of additional investment
4 obviously that has to be allocated specifically for
5 that purpose. But, to do that I think CUNY already
6 has the transfer experts inhouse. The problem is that
7 there isn't a program in place that will say, we're
8 going to train department chairs from every single
9 college to do this -- we're going to find a group of
10 transfer champions at each college that are going to
11 receive hands-on training and guidance and support to
12 become those advocates within their own department.

13 So, to do that at the scale of CUNY would require
14 more than what CUNY is doing today. They've started
15 that process, but it can't just be sort of a handful
16 of Fellows, even as impressive as that initiative is,
17 it's got to be something bigger, and for that we're
18 proposing the idea of a Transfer Academy.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And you recommended as sort
20 of a different like a transfer accelerator program as
21 a sort of different program, or do you see this being
22 more embedded as part of a program like ACE or ASAP?

23 ELI DVORKIN: Great question. I see it as being
24 embedded. I think the transfer accelerator idea is
25 really about mobilizing City resources behind a

1
2 handful of key programs that are really working. To
3 say we know that the T-Rex tool is working, but the
4 challenge now, as you heard in that first panel, is
5 to make sure that every student is experiencing the
6 power of that tool from day one. And that means I
7 would say it starts with more advisors. You know the
8 ratios are just unacceptably high, and it's part of
9 the reason why a program like ASAP is as effective as
10 it is.

11 But, I would say going beyond that, what we're
12 proposing there is really an investment in
13 operationalizing and scaling up those key initiatives
14 that are already working, they're just at a super
15 small scale. You know, they started with that pilot
16 funding from philanthropy, CUNY has obviously
17 indicated their desire to keep them going, but I have
18 concerns, you know, with the budget cuts that CUNY is
19 facing right now -- a million different kind of
20 competing priorities. I think it's going to be really
21 difficult to keep that work going, and philanthropic
22 support is not renewing at the level that funded the
23 project initially in 2020. So, there's a challenge
24 there.

1
2 CUNY demonstrated its commitment to doing this,
3 so I have confidence that they're going to... you
4 know, they talk about the goals by December, that
5 we're going to see those realized, but there's more
6 that's going to be needed to make sure, even beyond
7 the kind of you know agreements around articulation
8 of credits, to make sure that all of these
9 initiatives exist equally at every college. And
10 that's where we think the transfer accelerator could
11 be an organizing principle for getting resources
12 where they're needed, where they're actually having
13 an impact, and to make sure that every college that's
14 doing something right shares those learnings with the
15 other colleges, and are held to the account to make
16 sure that they're embedding and institutionalizing
17 these new tools and procedures that are working.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And have has Center for an
19 Urban Future given thought to or have an opinion on
20 the use of AI, uh, chatbots to either help figure out
21 how courses are aligned or to help students interact
22 with advisement?

23 ELI DVORKIN: Yes, absolutely. So, we we've given
24 some thought to this and had some conversations about
25 this. I'm encouraged. I think there's a lot of

1 potential here. CUNY is doing some important work in
2 this space. I think I did hear on the previous panel,
3 though, sort of expression candidly, maybe CUNY feels
4 a little behind. You know? And I think that's
5 important to note. I mean, there is a lot of
6 investment that's going to be needed to be able to
7 actually implement what maybe is an early stage pilot
8 program, an algorithm that a faculty member has
9 developed to be able to actually build it out, so
10 that it's effective across CUNY. That's a huge
11 opportunity, but it's not cheap. You know, it comes
12 with real costs in terms of people, the time that
13 people have to take to invest in these kinds of
14 initiatives, the resources, you know, technological
15 and otherwise.

17 So, I'm incredibly encouraged to hear that CUNY
18 is making progress there. I've seen other examples at
19 CUNY and elsewhere of AI-powered tools that are
20 actually delivering results that are well beyond what
21 kind of previous generations of those same tools,
22 like nudges that you heard about before. You know,
23 you may know this well, Chair, it's like the idea of
24 the effectiveness of those nudge tools in the area of
25 just text messaging, it had a moment, it then kind of

1 faded. And I think the perception from a lot of
2 researchers was it works, but it's a marginal change.
3 New tools, emerging tools that are AI powered, we're
4 talking about orders of magnitude better results.
5 Now, we haven't seen that sustained at scale ,you
6 know, over time, but I'm optimistic, and that's a
7 major opportunity. But, what I heard loud and clearly
8 is that CUNY is going to need additional investment
9 and focused attention to make sure that those
10 innovations are implemented.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to thank you so much
13 for your report, for your time, and for your
14 expertise...

15 ELI DVORKIN: Thank you, Chair...

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: On this really critical
17 matter, thank you.

18 ELI DVORKIN: Thank you so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, now we will be
20 calling our next panel, Ibrahim Xavier Johnson,
21 Onyekachi Okeke. You can have a seat... Jen Gaboury,
22 you must be a doctor writing a prescription, and
23 Sharon Brown.

24 Before testimony please, state your name for the
25 record. We'll go from right to left.

1
2 ONYEKACHI OKEKE: Good morning, sorry good
3 afternoon, my name is Onyekachi Okeke, and I'm
4 representing Young Invincibles, and I'm a senior at
5 Hunter College.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You could begin your
7 testimony.

8 ONYEKACHI OKEKE: Forgive me it's my first time.
9 So, good afternoon everyone, and thank you so much
10 for your time to listen to my testimony today.

11 I'm a senior attending Hunter College studying
12 human biology and sociology, I'm also a proud alumna
13 of Borough of Manhattan Community College. And, as
14 someone who has attended both of two-year and a four-
15 year school, the transferring process between both
16 schools was a difficult and arduous one. After I left
17 BMCC and I entered Hunter, I found that I was
18 significantly struggling in almost every area of my
19 life, uh, academically, financially, mentally and
20 personally.

21 The first semester at Hunter was actually one of
22 my toughest semesters to date. I don't believe I had
23 adequate support regarding advising. I had no one to
24 explain to me how degree work functioned, and
25 consequently I picked random classes to fulfill the

1 full-time requirements so that I could qualify for
2 student loans -- a decision I still regret this day.
3 I picked classes that I should not have been enrolled
4 in due to the pressure of having to enroll in classes
5 right before the beginning of the semester started.
6 I am sure that if I had more support via an
7 orientation or crucial advising, I would have not
8 made those costly mistakes that negatively impacted
9 my me academically that semester. My academic
10 standing was important, because at the time I
11 participated in the Community Scholars Program, and
12 that's a specialized program for high achieving
13 transfer students. Through this program, I received
14 help with choosing my major and having a mentor,
15 which I believed helped me significantly; however,
16 due to my low academic performance during my first
17 semester, I was removed from the program. And I wish
18 that I could have had a second chance to redeem
19 myself and remain in the program. Had I received more
20 professional support from the program, I believe I
21 would have been able to stay and do much better
22 afterwards.
23

24 Additionally, at Hunter I was mandated to take a
25 Sociology 101 course to begin my sociology minor.

1
2 While I already had taken the class previously, I
3 discovered on degree works that my Sociology 101
4 credit had not been fulfilled. I contacted the vice
5 President of Academic Affairs about this issue, and
6 thankfully she was able to obtain my previous
7 transcript and manually update my degree work so that
8 my Sociology 101 requirement would be fulfilled.

9 Unfortunately, I cannot say that others in my shoes
10 had the same outcome while encountering this problem.

11 Another issue I encountered was the difference in
12 resources while transferring from BMCC to Hunter. At
13 BMCC, I struggled daily, and often I endured the day
14 with nothing to eat, no money to purchase anything,
15 and, on top of this. I was unable to secure a job
16 both on campus and off campus.

17 So, I was blessed with the opportunity to learn
18 about Single Stop, which is now known as the Advocacy
19 and Resource Center, through a friend. It had
20 everything I needed and more. So, through the
21 substantial support of Single Stop, I was... (TIMER
22 CHIMES) I obtained...

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You could just finish up
24 your thought, please, thank you.

25 ONYEKACHI OKEKE: Thank you so much...

1
2 I obtained Metro cards and food vouchers to
3 purchase lunch at the cafeteria. Unfortunately, when
4 I transferred to Hunter, I found that Hunter did not
5 have this resource center (BACKGROUND NOISE), and
6 having Single Stop at Hunter would have really helped
7 me with the various issues I mentioned before.

8 So, my story is just one of many of other
9 thousands of other students, of course. So, I'm just
10 asking my city leaders today to hear my story, and to
11 fully invest in additional support across all CUNY
12 campuses. Thank you for listening to my testimony.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I think you
14 really kind of laid out, articulated very well the
15 problems that exist for so many students, which is
16 there are resources that may exist, but you have to
17 figure out how to find them. So, you had to go all
18 the way to the... you said Vice President of Academic
19 Affairs, and really, really fight just to get what
20 you should have had in the first place. And you
21 *happened* to find out about the Single Stop program,
22 because a friend *happened* to tell you. Which is a
23 story we hear all too frequently here at this
24 Committee. In fact, the first hearing I held was
25 about the Single Stop Successor programs, the very

1
2 programs that helped you. And one of the issues we
3 heard then, and we're hearing it now, is students
4 knowing how and when to access it. The hearing I
5 referenced before, about students with disabilities,
6 same story as yours -- students *happened* to tell
7 their friends about the Office for Students With
8 Disabilities.

9 So you are, uh, thank you for articulating a
10 problem that continues to trouble our CUNY system,
11 which is with all the resources they may be able to
12 provide, accessing them remains a challenge for so
13 many of our students. Thank you.

14 Xavier?

15 IBRAHIM XAVIER JOHNSON: Yes, can you hear me?

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I sure can.

17 IBRAHIM XAVIER JOHNSON: My name is Ibrahim Xavier
18 Johnson. I'm a graduate of Lehman College in the
19 Bronx. I transferred to Lehman fresh from the Army.
20 I was an active duty Army prior to enrolling in CUNY.
21 I had an AA degree, I dropped out of several
22 colleges; I had difficulties in life, but after
23 joining the Army, I was determined to finish. The
24 advisers at Lehman College looked at my 143 credits
25 with no bachelor's degree, and they were committed to

1
2 me finishing a bachelor's degree at CUNY. They told
3 me in the beginning, you will finish with us. It was
4 rigorous, it was difficult, but the same discipline
5 that I had in the Army, I experienced the same
6 rigorous academic training at Lehman College. The
7 professors were committed to my success. I went to
8 Lehman during 9/11, that was a critical period, a lot
9 of people were dropping out because of what happened
10 during 9/11. The professors at CUNY met with all of
11 us, and told us the show must go on, you will finish
12 terrorist attack or not, we're going to finish. And
13 we finished. I graduated with 3.7 GPA, honors was in
14 the History Department, and went on to make a whole
15 bunch of money.

16 I'm a CUNY success story, and I want to say this
17 about advisement, the advisers at CUNY were not just
18 the academic advisors, they were the department
19 chairs, they were the professors. They didn't just
20 advise us about academics, they advised us through
21 our life problems. I talked to my professors about
22 marital issues, anything that would stop us from
23 academics, they were there to support us. And it
24 became like an extension of my own family.

1
2 After graduating from CUNY, I go back to Lehman
3 College, I bring my children there, I meet some of my
4 old professors. I think success for transfer students
5 depends on the commitment from the staff, and that
6 commitment is what I experienced at Lehman College.
7 If you can reproduce Lehman college and make it CUNY-
8 wide, I think that's the model.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for sharing your
10 story. It is really, really uplifting to hear the
11 success stories, especially from Lehman College,
12 which is in my council district in the Bronx.

13 (LAUGHTER) And, of course, thank you for your
14 service, your service to our country, thank you.

15 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: Hi, my name is Jen
16 Gaboury. This is my first time testifying in front of
17 the Council in my new role, which is First Vice
18 President for the PSC CUNY.

19 Until eight days ago, I was the Hunter College
20 Chapter Chair, and I have served since 2009, until
21 eight days ago, as a department advisor in my own
22 department, and I also have served as the Senate uh
23 Chair for our College Senate, uh seeing appeals from
24 transfer students for courses -- so students can
25 appeal when a course isn't accepted. That's part of

1 why I came to talk to you here today, from the PSC
2 CUNY because of my long experience doing this.

3 I have used (INAUDIBLE) a navigate, Hunter is an
4 early adopter of that program. I've used it for more
5 than two and a half years, I was trying to figure it
6 out from my email just now, and it a helpful tool.

7 I'm certainly glad to have Navigate, I would
8 certainly welcome more tools from maps and AI bots.
9 But, I'm here from the Union to tell you that this is
10 a *human* power problem. This is a labor problem. We
11 don't have enough faculty, and we don't have enough
12 staff. And that is the beginning and the end of the
13 problem. We need people to give people information to
14 use those tools and to teach them how they work. I
15 like Navigate, because I can text students and say,
16 "Why aren't you in my office?" But, then they have to
17 have an office to come to.

18 I am a little bit disappointed that when you and
19 Council Member Brewer pushed University Provos Hensel
20 on the question of, "Do you have adequate faculty?"
21 she said, "Well, we're doing pretty well with those
22 600 lines."

23 Three-hundred and thirty-three faculty lines were
24 lost between 2018 and 2022. Those aren't the number
25

1 of people faculty that left, that's the number of
2 lines that CUNY didn't keep as lines that they put
3 back into the pot, because so much money has drained
4 out in the Cuomo years. So, that... it is not in fact
5 that we are up 600 lines. We're up about 200 lines
6 from that money that Governor Hochul gave us. We do
7 not have adequate numbers of faculty. I really
8 appreciate
9

10 Mr. Dvorkin's testimony and the question about
11 training faculty. As a department adviser, I remained
12 the department adviser from 2009 until 2024, because
13 I am one of only four full-time faculty members in my
14 department. We are one shy of the required number we
15 are supposed to have by CUNY bylaws. I am the only
16 faculty member willing to be a department adviser,
17 because it is so much work.

18 During COVID, Hunter College took the opportunity
19 to cut the workload credit that department advisers
20 received, at a time when our workload (TIMER CHIMES)
21 was exploding in order to advise students.

22 Community College faculty generally do not
23 receive any workload credit for being advisers in
24 their department. Hunter -- this is the last thing
25 I'll tell you -- when we just filled recent vacancies

1
2 for full-time for full staff advisers at Hunter
3 College, we got down to a ratio of 912 students to
4 one academic adviser after we filled four vacancies.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I have one
6 question about training. We kept hearing from Mr.
7 Dvorkin, we heard from CUNY, about training faculty
8 to understand and engage in uh the transfer process.
9 Is there a requirement, in your agreement with CUNY,
10 is there a requirement for training of this sort?

11 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: No.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And does PSC have a
13 position on requiring certain trainings?

14 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: The PSC would like to see
15 workload credit given to faculty who do labor that is
16 above and beyond the heavy course load that we have.
17 Among the different reasons that faculty and staff
18 leave CUNY, is because of our incredibly high
19 workload, especially compared to our public, not our
20 private peers, our public peers. So, when I tell you
21 that community college faculty are not given any
22 workload credit to be a department adviser -- so
23 they're teaching a heavy load, like more than their
24 peers, and then they are just asked to be advisers.
25 And they don't necessarily... they may receive

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training, but they don't necessarily receive training. And it is entirely a kind of ad hoc process, and I'm really glad to hear that they are really... I mean, I think I'm a good adviser, I'm really glad to hear their advisers at Lehman College... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Which is very clearly, by the way, not in the job description to ,you know, it's one of the incredible things about educators. It's not in the job description to care so deeply and to push so hard, and yet they do. And I think you're such a success story about how deeply our faculty and advisers care for their for their... which is otherwise work, but it's the people they care for, which is just incredible.

VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: I keep Kleenex in my office, and I keep Kleenex in my office that I don't get reimbursed for. But, that's... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You should try generic... (CROSS-TALK)

VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: You know as a teacher...

CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Instead of Kleenex may be try Costco brand... (CROSS-TALK)

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2 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: that we all buy supplies
3 out of our pockets. And I keep Kleenex in my office,
4 because I am a department adviser, and because almost
5 every student who comes into my office -- for lot
6 lots of different kinds of reasons including, just as
7 simple as, I can't get an over tally for a course I
8 need, because the course is so full, because we don't
9 have enough faculty. In fact, that... (CROSS-TALK)

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You don't have to whisper
11 it, by the way. We're full agreement. (LAUGHS)

12 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: I'd like the provost to hear
13 me too... we don't have enough faculty, and we don't
14 have enough advisers. And a student's inability to
15 get that class, but more than that students inability
16 to map exactly what they need, like the testimony
17 that we've heard, is exactly the problem. And I can
18 tell you with someone who has sat granting appeals,
19 that I have to say, "Oh, well close enough," when
20 they're on the cusp of graduation as a kind of act of
21 mercy. And time and time again, when I ask students,
22 "Why did you take this class instead of that class,
23 when you're appealing it?" they say, "Well, I
24 couldn't. I signed up to get an appointment with
25 advisor, but it was three weeks after the term

1 started, and I had no ability to add or drop the
2 class and know which class exactly fit the final
3 three requirements that I needed -- and the map
4 didn't necessarily tell me..." which is a problem.

5
6 By the way, peer-to-peer programs are great for
7 some things, and they're not great for other things.
8 Meanwhile, at my college, we didn't hire about 400
9 work study students this year, and I actually think
10 they should maybe sue CUNY, by the way. Because we
11 don't have enough financial aid staff to process
12 their applications to become work study students and
13 use their financial aid.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I just want to go back to
15 the training. Certain requirements, are there any
16 requirements for faculty to be trained or to receive
17 any sort of ,you know, whether it's transfer, whether
18 it's ,you know, sexual harassment training, is there
19 any requirement? And, in the same vein, is there any
20 requirement for things like professional development
21 hours that either adjunct or tenured professor, or
22 full-time professors, uh, have to engage in.

23 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: So, there are about four
24 trainings that we do. For example, in modules online,
25 for example on Title IX harassment issues, or on

1
2 "don't open junk email that ransoms the entire
3 college's data system", right? Something that has
4 happened (INAUDIBLE) hackers in Chechnya. We have
5 four required... that's happened, right? And then you
6 had to remind college presidents, please don't pay
7 ransoms to people that ransom your data.

8 So, we have four required trainings that we are
9 required to do, and we get persistent emails
10 reminding us as near the deadlines. For people who
11 are advisers and sign up to be advisers, you get a
12 turkey sandwich when you show up at the training.
13 But, I'm not sure that necessarily anything happens
14 to you if you don't go to the training -- that may or
15 may not be offered by your Dean's office. And
16 sometimes I know my Dean's office has not necessarily
17 offered any training. So, whole cycles of advisers
18 don't necessarily depart... like, faculty advisers
19 don't necessarily get any of that training.

20 CHAIRPERSON STEVENS: So, it's I guess, I'm asking
21 there's no agreement between PSC and CUNY that there
22 are... you're saying there are some trainings, Title
23 IX you mentioned, you mentioned phishing emails...

24 (CROSS-TALK)

25 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: Yes, right.

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Do you know the... do you
3 happen to know the other two?

4 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: Workplace Violence...
5 (CROSS-TALK)

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It's not a quiz, don't
7 worry...

8 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: I can email it to you
9 through the... submit the...

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, there's one more...
11 (LAUGHS)

12 Okay, and then anything, else it can be required
13 by... (CROSS-TALK)

14 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: No. Most faculty... In
15 fact, most faculty go out of their way not to have
16 this information, because it is such a burden when
17 you signal that you are... For a lot of faculty, they
18 do not signal that they want to advise students. I
19 say this -- this is horrible to say, I realize--
20 because, they don't want to signal to students that,
21 "I have knowledge that I can give to you on how to
22 use x class for y class." We're supposed to just...
23 outside of our department contacts, we supposed to
24 just send people to academic advising.

1
2 But, also, there are handfuls of people who have
3 spent a lot of time basically acquiring the kind of
4 knowledge that some faculty have, and that some of
5 the professional advisers have. But, those are
6 handfuls of us that have done that. And it's not
7 systematic. And what you would need is workload
8 credit and then an agreement to have that workload
9 credit have that training.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: My last question, is there
11 any requirement or request that faculty upload, or
12 post online, their syllabi curriculum?

13 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: Absolutely. Faculty
14 departments and programs absolutely require faculty
15 to post... (CROSS-TALK)

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

17 VICE PRESIDENT GABOURY: That is part assessment
18 and part of our accreditation.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. I want to thank you
20 for your testimony.

21 Lastly, we have Ms. Sharon Brown.

22 SHARON BROWN: Hello, I'm Sharon Brown, hello
23 committee counsel and Eric Dinowitz, Higher
24 Education. Congratulations on Israel getting back the
25 hostages, the four hostages.

1
2 Okay, this is transfer students, and how to help
3 them. Uh, the CUNY higher education, SUNY and all of
4 that, uh, CUNY... I went to Marymount Manhattan
5 College on a leadership scholarship, and I've been to
6 different colleges, Medgar Evers's, I went to business
7 technical school, uh, technology school, and I did a
8 lot of different things. One thing that I found to be
9 an issue going to different schools, uh, Medgar Evers
10 and Marymount, the two technology schools, and
11 business schools, is that the way they transfer
12 credits doesn't work out properly. So, they don't
13 have a credit-for-credit transfer. So, if you get a
14 100 credits in one school, and then you go to the
15 next school and try to get in there, you can't take
16 all of your credits with you. So, when you're trying
17 to get a degree, you won't be able to carry over all
18 your credits -- it's like you have to start again
19 from scratch.

20 So, I think they need to do something to allow
21 all of your credits that you accumulated from every
22 school to work towards your degree, or that is going
23 to be a problem for people wanting to be transfer
24 students. And they might leave and not go to another
25 school, just leave the CUNY system all together,

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because of the fact that they want to have their credits count. Because, once you go to another school, and you transfer there, they don't take all the credits. So what do you do with those credits? They're just hanging in the balance. I guess you can go back to school and try to fulfill something else, but how can we find a way to make those credits all count? So, they might take 50 credits, and you have a 100 credits, and when you try to get a degree at another school, you have to do 50 more credits, and you have just 50 credits from, let's say Marymount -- I'll have 50 credits there that don't count for anything, and have to take the same classes over and over again at the new school. So, that's something that transfer students are going to face.

I was in a leadership scholarship program for political science major and law. What I found is that they don't really tell you how to go about funding everything in your scholarship situation. You can do a full ride scholarship, you can do partial scholarship. I think they should make it more (TIMER CHIMES) known about the funding -- that there's other grants and things out there. You can have more than one scholarship at the same time... (CROSS-TALK)

1 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

2 SHARON BROWN: Pells and grants...

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You can just finish up your
4 last thought, please I appreciate, it thank you.

5 SHARON BROWN: Okay.

6 I also think that for transfer students, or any
7 student, we need to bring prayer back in school,
8 bibles, Judaism and Christianity. And anti-Semitism
9 needs to get out. And a lot of students that are
10 coming from Liberal Art schools who dealt with the
11 situations that are happening with Palestine and
12 Israel in the schools, they may be leaving schools,
13 and they're going to have to be transfer students and
14 deal with the situation. They need an atmosphere
15 that's conducive to this country. We are Judeo-
16 Christian, and we need Judaism and Christianity in
17 our schools... (CROSS-TALK)

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
19 testimony.

20 I'd like to thank this panel for their testimony
21 today.

22 That concludes our in-person portion of our
23 public testimony. We will now move to remote
24 testimony. If you are testifying remotely, once your
25

1 name is called a member of our staff will unmute you,
2 and you may begin once the Sergeant at Arms sets the
3 clock and cues you.
4

5 Jared Martino, you may begin once you are unmuted
6 and the sergeant cues you.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

8 JARED MARTINO: Hello, everyone thank you for
9 joining us. My name is Jared Martino, and I'm a
10 graduate student in the Higher Education
11 Administration at SUNY Stony Brook University, and
12 the Coordinator of Activities And Engagement at
13 Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology.

14 I want to thank everyone from the New York City
15 Council, especially the Committee On Higher
16 Education, for the opportunity to testify at today's
17 hearing.

18 I'm here to share my thoughts and experiences on
19 the CUNY transfer process on behalf of myself and as
20 a New York Youth Advisory Board member at the Young
21 Invincibles.

22 I began my collegiate journey in 2016 as a SUNY
23 student, and by the end of the fall semester in 2018,
24 I had begun my transfer process into the CUNY system.
25 From the beginning of my collegiate career in the

1
2 SUNY system, I felt comforted and capable due to the
3 wealth of resources available and clear understanding
4 of what my degree progression would look like. While
5 I recognize that the transfer process itself comes
6 with many challenges, there are considerable
7 opportunities for CUNY to improve this process and
8 increase transfer student retention and persistence.

9 Upon my experience at CUNY, I struggled with a
10 lack of outreach to transfer students, and a number
11 of fellow transfer students I met confirm that they
12 shared this experience.

13 Anecdotally, the most successful transfer
14 students I noticed in my time were CUNY associate to
15 CUNY bachelor transfer students who had already
16 networked with current CUNY students and were able to
17 learn more about the upcoming challenges they were
18 going to face from their peers.

19 My own transfer acclimation process was based on
20 applying the new student experience I had recently
21 had at SUNY and challenging the limits of a Google
22 search. Then I faced the largest challenge, the
23 academic credit approval process. The time it took to
24 have my credits evaluated by CUNY City College was
25 significant, and it took weeks before I had concrete

1 knowledge of what I had received credit for.
2
3 Ultimately a majority of my courses I had taken from
4 SUNY were only accepted as elective credits, despite
5 being for the same major and nonsensically covered a
6 diverse range of course levels. Much of my time was
7 spent retaking intro level courses that were
8 identical to content in intro level courses that I
9 took at SUNY, leaving me without the opportunity to
10 apply my knowledge and expand my studies in higher
11 level courses and electives.

12 Since graduating from CUNY, I spent a year
13 supporting first generation college students towards
14 their degree aspirations. I supported many students
15 who elected to transfer into the CUNY system, all
16 facing considerable challenges in a lack of
17 communication, a lack of understanding of the entry
18 process, and a lack of collegiate cultural capital.

19 First generation college students in particular,
20 are at a risk of this pitfall, as the considerable
21 amount of red tape and formal policy required to
22 maintain matriculation at universities can be
23 dizzying.

24 The CUNY transfer process has struggled to bridge
25 the gap between where aspiring college students are

2 and where they need to be to succeed. We often
3 consider the transfer process as a leftover, uh,
4 treating these students as an afterthought, whose
5 educational aspirations motivate them to succeed
6 regardless of any challenge. Yet many transfer
7 students struggle with the same challenges new
8 college students face -- yet are given minimal
9 support and resources to overcome (TIMER CHIMES) said
10 barriers. (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has expired

12 JARED MARTINO: I recommend that the New York City
13 Council and the Committee on Higher Education expand
14 transfer resources on campus and to better and fund
15 (INAUDIBLE) to serve students that enter the CUNY
16 transfer system. I also recommend that CUNY systems
17 model transfer resources more heavily through
18 programs like the HCAP Transfer Pipeline Program at
19 Hunter College, which supports Asian American first
20 semester transfer students with direct peer
21 mentorship and community development events to ease
22 the collegiate transfer process.... (CROSS-TALK)

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you... (CROSS-TALK)

24 JARED MARTINO: These direct peer mentor programs
25 and the community development events are integral in

1 developing lasting impacts on student retention.

2 Thank you

3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for your
4 Testimony.

5 John Verzani has signed up to testify and is not
6 on the Zoom. John Verzani, if you are online or in
7 person, please raise your hand, thank you.

8 If there is anyone present in the room or on Zoom
9 that hasn't had the opportunity to testify, please
10 raise your hand.

11 Seeing no one else, I would like to note that
12 written testimony, which will be reviewed in full by
13 the committee staff, may be submitted to the record
14 up to 72 hours after the close of this hearing by
15 emailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

16 We have concluded public testimony for this
17 hearing. I would like to thank CUNY, Center for an
18 Urban Future, everyone who testified, for sharing
19 your experience is with transferring and transfer
20 credits. Very clearly an area where there's a lot of
21 growth needed, and a lot of work to be done, but also
22 a lot of steps being taken to ensure our transfer
23 students are getting the support they need and the
24 support they deserve.

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COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

This hearing is adjourned, thank you.

(GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING OUT)

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date June 29, 2024