CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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 TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

          Of the

    COMMITTEE ON HIGHER
        EDUCATION

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                   September 22, 2022
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HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Eric Dinowitz, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

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2   SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a sound check for the

3 Committee on Higher Education. Today's date is

4 September 22, 2022, being recorded by Danny Huang in

5 the chambers... I mean committee room. Sorry.

6   SERGEANT AT ARMS: ... To minimize disruptions,

7 please place all electronic devices to vibrate of

8 silent mode. If you would like to submit testimony,

9 please send via e-mail to testimony@council.nyc.gov.

10 Once again, that is testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank

11 you for your cooperation. Chair Dinowitz, we are

12 ready to begin.

13   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Good morning.

14   [gavel]

15   I am Eric Dinowitz, Chair of the Committee on

16 Higher Education, and welcome to today's oversight

17 hearing on online degree programs, past, present, and

18 future. Before we look at today's topic, I want to

19 make a few comments, first about the Monkeypox

20 outbreak that has become a concern in recent months.

21 After inquiring about the efforts that the City

22 University of New York has been taking to mitigate

23 the effects of the Monkeypox virus on community

24 campuses, I want to share the following update this

25 week from CUNY administration: Printed information

2   and posters about Monkeypox were distributed in July

3   to the campuses via the Health Services and

4   Counseling offices, and to the residence halls.

5   Links to the Center for Disease Control and

6   Prevention and the New York State and New York City

7   Depts of Health were added to the Central Health

8   Services website and to the Health Services websites

9   on various campuses in July, and updated in August.

10   The Chancellor distributed information in August to

11   all students, faculty, and staff, including links to

12   federal, state, and local health offices. Training

13   opportunities were made available to relevant staff

14   members in August. CUNY social media tweeted

15   information in July, August, and September. CUNY

16   students were provided with information about the New

17   York City Health and Mental Hygiene's Monkeypox

18   vaccination efforts via social media, e-mail, and

19   campus posters. However, vaccination is a personal

20   choice for students, which is what they shared. CUNY

21   does not provide vaccinations on campus or in health

22   centers. CUNY does not collect data bout the number

23   of students who have been vaccinated. CUNY states

24   that there is sufficient vaccine supply in New York

25   City for all who are eligible to be vaccinated, and I

2 would just take this moment to encourage anyone who

3 is eligible to get vaccinated. CUNY has advised me

4 that although there is a high level of concern about

5 any transmissible disease at CUNY, concern about

6 Monkeypox has been mitigated significantly as a

7 result of ample vaccine supply, diminished new cases,

8 and weekly averages, and information campaigns by the

9 City, State, and CUNY. I want to applaud CUNY's

10 efforts regarding the Monkeypox outbreak, but also

11 want to encourage continued vigilance and making

12 information and counseling available to students who

13 need it. We know that sexually active college

14 students are at risk for contracting and spreading

15 Monkeypox, and we want to do everything we can to

16 keep it from spreading, and again that includes

17 vaccinations.

18   I also want to give a brief update on the

19 antisemitism, that has been occurring on college

20 campuses. On June 30th, we held a committee hearing

21 about this topic. A quick update: Earlier this

22 month, the Chancellor sent to all the presidents and

23 deans of CUNY campuses a letter. Included in that

24 letter was specific references to antisemitism, and I

25 do want to thank the Chancellor for recognizing

2 antisemitism as its own problem, as a unique form of

3 hate, and naming it, which is not something that is

4 often done, and for directing the colleges to inform

5 students how and when to report antisemitism. This

6 was one of the big issues that came up in the

7 hearing: That students didn't either feel

8 comfortable or didn't know how to report. And so I

9 want to thank the Chancellor for that firs step, but

10 also recognize that there is a lot more to do to

11 create a culture of inclusiveness for students facing

12 harassment on our CUNY campuses. While he has made

13 mention to me of work being done for DEI training, we

14 have organizations that know how to do this work,

15 have been doing this work, and I am going to continue

16 to push the Chancellor to continue to engage with

17 these organizations and require faculty members, and

18 anyone who engages with students to partake in these

19 sorts of trainings which are... appear at this point

20 voluntary. And I am also going to urge the CUNY

21 system to adapt a definition of antisemitism that

22 speaks to the uniqueness of it, rather than the

23 general discrimination term that they use.

24   As I said, we appreciate the steps being taken,

25 but we know that there is much more to do, and I look

2 forward to scheduling another hearing to address this

3 pervasive issue.

4   But we're not here to talk about that today. We

5 are going to turn to today's hearing topic. I think

6 that all of us are going to learn something today

7 about the substantial degree programs over the past

8 two decades, and the innovative work that colleges

9 are doing to severe the population of students who

10 find this way of learning... earning an undergraduate

11 or graduate degree appealing. That population

12 usually includes many working adults who are busy at

13 home, or busy on the job, and find that online study

14 allows them to complete a degree when they otherwise

15 would not be able to do so. And we are fortunate not

16 only to have CUNY today, but have other national

17 experts on online degree programs with us this

18 morning to provide some context for our hearing, and

19 to shine a light on some innovative best practices

20 and online degree programming. We also have

21 representatives from, of course, our own City

22 University of New York, which provides over 60 online

23 degree programs in a broad array of liberal arts and

24 career fields at the Associates, Bachelors, and

25 Masters degree levels through a number of its

2 colleges, as well as through a School of Professional

3 Studies, or SPS. CUNY SPS, which has been offering

4 online bachelor degree programs since 2006 (I think

5 that is like before YouTube was invented?) was ranked

6 #10 out of 361 by US News and World Report in the

7 publication's list of best online bachelor degree

8 programs in 2022. CUNY SPS's vision statement on its

9 website includes the idea that CUNY SPS is dedicated

10 to being the university's premier school for adult

11 learners, as well as being the university's leader in

12 online learning. Those two visions are linked at

13 CUNY within SPS, as they often are at other colleges

14 that are competing for busy adult learners in today's

15 education marketplace.

16   Of course, there are advantages and disadvantages

17 to studying online, and the committee will hear some

18 of those today. We will also discuss concerns that

19 are often raised about online learning, including

20 about faculty preparedness to teach fully online, and

21 the availability...

22   I've been paused. I've been told to tell you

23 it's because of the live stream.

24   SERGEANT AT ARMS: Next time I'll just tell you

25 myself.

2   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Next time, Regina will

3 tell you herself.

4   I've been told 5 minutes. And ironically, from a

5 DJ, I've been told no music. What's up with that?

6   Thank you.

7   I heard the stream is on. I hope that's true.

8 Good to go. All right. Thank you. Thank you. Back to

9 online learning? We're good?

10   All right, thank you. So there are advantages

11 and disadvantages to studying online. And the

12 Committee will hear some of those today. We will

13 also discuss concerns that are often raised about

14 online learning, including about faculty preparedness

15 to teach fully online, and the availability of

16 support services for students who need them.

17 Focusing on CUNY, the Committee will seek an overview

18 of the current status of, and future plans for its

19 online degree programs.

20   And I will just tell you all on a personal note,

21 I am very much looking forward to speaking with CUNY

22 and some of the other professionals in the field

23 because having taught online during the pandemic, and

24 taught students with disabilities, it was a real

25 challenge, not just for me, but for the students to

2 really get that same level of education... that

3 quality education, and not to mention that it was a

4 challenge for the faculty all around. So I'm very

5 much looking forward to hearing about that.

6   I want to acknowledge and thank some people Adam

7 Starpoli, my legislative director, my Chief of Staff

8 Jenna Klaus, Chloe Rivera, the committee's Senior

9 Policy Analyst, who, unfortunately is transitioning

10 off the committee and a couple of weeks, Regina Paul,

11 who, fortunately, is transitioning on the committee's

12 the committee as policy analyst, and Nia Hyatt, the

13 committee's senior finance analyst.

14   I would also like to remind everyone who wishes

15 to testify in person today that you must fill out the

16 witness slip, it looks like this, which is located on

17 the desk of the Sergeant at Arms near the entrance of

18 the room over there. Please fill out the slip even

19 if you have already registered in advance. That

20 way... That you will be testifying in person today.

21 To allow as many people as possible to testify,

22 testimony will be limited to three minutes per

23 person, whether you are testifying in person or on

24 Zoom. I'm also going to ask my colleagues to limit

25 their testimony to five minutes. I'll have to repeat

2 that when they get here. Please note that witnesses

3 who are here in person and will testify before those

4 who are signed into the Zoom webinar... webinar,

5 except with one exception of our one of our national

6 experts who's joining us from Colorado. We used to

7 say via satellite. That was like the... now we say

8 via zoom. I won't. I'd like to call up the first

9 4... 3... 4 witnesses, Judith Cahn, Kimberly

10 Siegenthaler, and Tracy Meade, and Jamie Lerner.

11   Now in accordance with the rules of the council,

12 I will administer the affirmation. That's not my

13 time, is it? Okay, in accordance with the rules of

14 the council, I will minister the affirmation to the

15 witnesses from CUNY. So that's, Ms. Cahn, Dr.

16 Siegenthaler, and Ms. Meade, would you please raise

17 your right hand? You're good. You're good.

18   Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth

19 and nothing but the truth in your testimony before

20 this committee and to respond honestly, to the

21 Councilmembers questions.

22   ALL PANELISTS: Yes.

23   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. And as a

24 reminder to all of our witnesses, please state your

25

2   name prior to your testimony for the record. You may

3   begin with your opening statement.

4   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Has the green light... red

5   light come on? Yep, I'm good.

6   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, red light means go,

7   as it does everywhere in New York.

8   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Good morning, Chairperson Eric

9   Dinowitz, and members of the Committee on Higher

10 Education. Thank you for the opportunity to provide

11 testimony before you regarding online education at

12 the City University of New York. My name is Kim

13 Siegenthaler. And I have the privilege of serving as

14 the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Strategy

15 and Operations for the City University of New York.

16 In that role, my top priority is the development of

17 the online education infrastructure to support all

18 CUNY campuses in their efforts to sustain and expand

19 CUNY's online course and program portfolios. I'm

20 joined today by Dr. Judith Kohn, Director of the

21 Department of Online Education and Support at John

22 Jay College of Criminal Justice, and Ms. Tracy Meade,

23 Senior Associate Dean for Strategy and Innovation at

24 the School of Professional Studies. Each will share

25

2   information about the successful online programs

3   offered by their campuses.

4   When we talk about online education in higher

5   education, we must acknowledge the effect of the

6   pandemic and reshaping the landscape nationally, as

7   well as at CUNY. In short, we've experienced two

8   years of anomalous online course offerings and

9   student enrollments that make comparative analyses of

10 online and in person experiences and outcomes

11 particularly challenging. For example, the US

12 Department of Education extended temporary

13 flexibility to institutions to implement distance

14 learning solutions to continue educating students

15 during COVID. Because of this flexibility, and out

16 of necessity to enable students to continue progress

17 toward a degree, many programs have functioned as

18 online programs, and students have been online

19 learners without preparation or intent to do so.

20   Faculty and students unaccustomed to teaching and

21 learning in an online environment struggled to adapt

22 quickly during a highly stressful and unprecedented

23 crisis. The CUNY SPS course, Online Teaching

24 Essentials, was launched during the COVID shutdown to

25 help campuses pivot quickly to online instruction.

2 The workshop has been offered 11 times since May of

3 2020, and has trained over 3400 CUNY faculty.

4   Due to anomalies associated with the pandemic

5 variations in IPEDS and NYSED online identification

6 and reporting criteria, and individual campus

7 decisions regarding whether to identify and track

8 students in online programs separately from students

9 in on-ground programs, we are unable at this time to

10 provide university wide comparative data for

11 enrollment in, graduation from, or revenue generated

12 from online versus on-campus degree programs. We are

13 putting structures in place that will enable us to do

14 so going forward. 89 online programs from 16

15 campuses are registered with NYSED. Of the campuses

16 with registered online programs, SPS leads the way

17 with 36, and John Jay follows with 11. Kingsborough

18 Community College offers 10 online programs. These

19 three campuses account for 64% of CUNY's registered

20 online programs.

21   I share a snapshot of enrollment trends by

22 modality and level with the caveat that these are

23 semester-specific data and not necessarily indicative

24 of a student's enrollment trend semester over

25 semester. Some of the students would have been

2 enrolled in online degree programs, whereas others

3 would have been in campus programs. In Fall of 2017,

4 less than 1% of associate students enrolled

5 exclusively in online classes, 6% enrolled in a

6 mixture of online and in person classes, and over 93%

7 enrolled in enrolled in-person classes only, 2% of

8 baccalaureate students enrolled exclusively in online

9 classes, 10% enrolled in a mixture of online and in

10 person classes, 88% enrolled in an in person classes

11 only. The notable exception to this trend was SPS,

12 where nearly 93% of students enrolled exclusively in

13 online classes. At the graduate level 5.5% of

14 master's students enrolled exclusively in online

15 classes, no doctoral students did so, 8.5% of

16 master's students enrolled in a mixture of online and

17 in-person classes with a double handful of doctoral

18 students doing the same.

19   In fall of 2020, enrollments at all levels by

20 modality were reversed with 96% of associate and

21 baccalaureate enrollments exclusively online, and 87%

22 of graduate enrollments exclusively online.

23 Preliminary data for fall of 2020 show a trend toward

24 more in person enrollments 63% Overall, but with

25 exclusively online enrollments remaining

2 substantially higher than pre-pandemic: The Graduate

3 Center at 68%, the School of Professional Studies at

4 97%, and the Graduate School of Public Health and

5 Health Policy at 88% have majority fully online

6 enrollments.

7   There were no significant differences in student

8 demographics for fall of 2019 and fall 2021.

9 Overall, women were more likely to enroll exclusively

10 in online courses at the undergraduate level. This

11 is true at both the senior and community sector.

12 Black and Hispanic students were more likely to

13 enroll in exclusively online or some online courses

14 compared to white and Asian students. Older students

15 tended to enroll in exclusively online courses at the

16 graduate level, and to a lesser extent at the senior

17 colleges.

18   All students, regardless of modality, have access

19 to the online mental health resources provided by

20 CUNY. Some campuses provide additional online

21 counseling services via tele-counseling. Online

22 students with disabilities access and secure

23 accommodation through the offices of disability and

24 accessibility by the same online format as on campus

25 students.

2   With respect to issues faced by students and

3   faculty participating in online programs, it is

4   important to note that some were experienced more

5   widely by faculty and students due to the pivot to

6   remote instruction during the pandemic, and may not

7   be specific to faculty and students intentionally

8   participating in online degree programs. Identified

9   issues mirror those experienced nationwide during the

10   pandemic. Faculty identified issues such as lack of

11   access to necessary equipment and technology, lack of

12   timely IT support, lack of access to instructional

13   designers with online expertise, and inadequate

14   preparation to teach effectively in the online

15   environment.

16   Students faced issues such as lack of high speed

17   internet and adequate technology at home, lack of a

18   quiet or private place to do homework, and uneven

19   access to non-instructional support services, such as

20   financial assistance, advisement, registration,

21   Counseling and Career Services, and tutoring.

22   As we emerge from the pandemic, there is an

23   increased focus on the role of online education

24   across CUNY. The university has identified quality

25   online learning as a foundational strategy upon which

2 it can broaden its scale, maximize its impact, and

3 assist adult learners and historically underserved

4 populations of New York City realize their full

5 potential.

6   As I mentioned previously, my role is to develop

7 and implement a CUNY-wide strategy for online

8 education. As a critical initial step, we have

9 commissioned a gap in occupational mapping analysis

10 that will identify where additional online programs

11 are needed to meet the educational needs of New York

12 City. The analysis will examine all levels and

13 disciplines across all CUNY colleges, and will inform

14 strategic development of dozens of new online

15 programs at the certificate, associate,

16 baccalaureate, and graduate levels to enable students

17 to progress smoothly online on their educational

18 journeys. Ensuring that faculty are well prepared

19 and supported to teach effectively in the online

20 environment is a high priority. We have initiated a

21 university-wide assessment of faculty professional

22 development needs specific to online instruction, and

23 will develop resources and learning opportunities to

24 meet those needs. CUNY is committed to ensuring that

25 online students at all campuses have access to

2 wraparound support services. To that end, we are

3 undertaking a CUNY-wide scan to identify and address

4 technology and resource challenges for students and

5 faculty. Several CUNY offices are working on this

6 including enrollment management, computer information

7 systems, student success, student affairs, and

8 academic programs and policy. Achieving the

9 identified goals of rapid online program expansion,

10 high quality online instruction and comprehensive

11 student support services is as with most strategic

12 initiatives dependent on funding. That said, I am

13 confident that CUNY is well-positioned to make

14 substantial strides in expanding its online degree

15 program portfolio. Evidence of this commitment is

16 the work of the individual campuses to increase their

17 online program offerings. One notable example is

18 Lehman College, now in the process of developing 14

19 new online programs.

20   Now you'll hear from my colleague Dr. Judith

21 Cahn, Director of Online Education and Support at

22 John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

23   DR. CAHN: Thank you. Thank you, Committee Chair

24 Dinowitz, and members of the City Council Higher

25 Education Committee for the opportunity to provide

2   testimony about online education. My name is Judith

3   Cahn, and I'm the Director of Online Education and

4   Support at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

5   Online Education has been considered a method for

6   democratizing education, providing access to

7   education for everyone, anywhere, anytime. For those

8   working full time or managing childcare, for our

9   students who lead complex lives, juggling home life,

10 work and health issues, we can offer opportunity that

11 previously had been unavailable to them, and

12 education that mirrors our on campus programs and its

13 quality and rigor.

14   Providing such options supports our very mission

15 at John Jay College to ensure education is just

16 equitable and inclusive. John Jay offers several

17 fully online graduate degree programs, asynchronous

18 online courses that lead to a master's degree through

19 John Jay online. This differs from the online

20 courses offered at the undergraduate level. The John

21 Jay online graduate programs leverage the well-known

22 branding and unique niche of John Jay College in all

23 areas of criminal and social justice. Since its

24 inception in 2014, John Jay online has developed six

25 fully online master's programs. In the past five

2 years, we have attracted over 1500 new students

3 enrolling in our master's programs in criminal

4 justice, international climate justice, human rights,

5 security management, emergency management, and public

6 administration. Total enrollments for the past five

7 years or over 3000 students. 40% of new graduates in

8 fall 2022 are in online programs, and the withdrawal

9 rates remain under 4%. The courses in these programs

10 are taught primarily by faculty who teach on campus.

11 The Graduate Admissions Online Enrollment Advisor and

12 the John Jay Online Student Services Manager advise

13 the applicants and our students with understanding

14 and sensitivity specific to online learning. They

15 ensure our students remain connected with the college

16 through their online studies through various

17 communication methods. Our Blackboard Learning

18 Management Team supports our faculty and students

19 with technical issues. New students in online

20 programs complete an orientation to learn about the

21 system, so the technology is not an obstacle to their

22 educational experience.

23   For the year 2021, over $2 million in revenue was

24 realized from the online graduate programs, which may

25 also be attributed to COVID pandemic issues, and the

2 fact that we offer studies that attract first

3 responders and others who were and continue to be on

4 the frontlines. It is additional revenue for the

5 college that we would not have had if we were only a

6 brick and mortar institution.

7 In addition to our graduate initiatives, we have

8 seen tremendous growth in the number of students who

9 register for online courses on the undergraduate

10 level. Before the COVID pandemic in 2019, 22% of all

11 undergraduate and graduate courses were online. This

12 fall 2022, 35% of our courses are fully online, as we

13 build them continue to build the infrastructure to

14 support rapid growth in these programs and online

15 course offerings. Our focus has been to ensure our

16 efforts are student-centered. The online program

17 development team includes experienced instructional

18 designers and multimedia specialists who collaborate

19 with faculty to bring best practices in online

20 teaching, guided by the online course quality rubric

21 developed at SUNY and adopted by the Online Learning

22 Consortium to ensure students are engaged in their

23 online learning experiences. This includes being

24 sensitive to ADA compliance in the online design, to

25 ensure education is truly accessible. Our Office of

2 Accessibility Services works to support students with

3 disabilities with assistive technology needs. Our

4 Department of Information Technology provides laptops

5 and hotspots for students in need. We've implemented

6 an online excellence project where instructional

7 designers collaborate with academic departments and

8 faculty to develop quality model courses for

9 undergraduate online courses with high enrollments

10 that can be used each semester for multiple sections.

11 The course is designed to incorporate activities and

12 assignments to promote student engagement and to

13 differentiate instruction for all types of learners.

14 The online excellence project will impact over 85

15 courses by the end of this academic year, and this in

16 turn will translate to improving the online learning

17 experience for 1000s of students.

18   In addition to the credit-bearing online courses,

19 the John Jay department of Professional Studies with

20 the Department of online education, developed and

21 have offered noncredit Professional Studies online

22 courses, including investigative psychology, the

23 Department of Corrections Captain's Exam Prep, an ADA

24 advocacy program, Introduction to grant writing, and

25 foundations and Professional Writing. All successes

2 are accomplished through partnerships at the college,

3 and we continue to collaborate CUNY-wide to make

4 online courses work addressing online student needs

5 as well as professional development needs for

6 faculty. We focus on how the student interacts with

7 the content, the instructor, the other students, and

8 the students support teams work to keep students

9 connected with the college. Policies and protocols

10 are addressed on an ongoing basis at the college

11 level and throughout CUNY. Collaborating with

12 university peers through the CUNY committee on

13 academic technology, and other committees. We work

14 through issues of governance, intellectual property

15 compliance, security, and FERPA, new learning

16 technologies quality assurance and assessment. And

17 as we expand our online initiatives, we keep in mind

18 the variables for a successful online course or

19 program. The course must be well-designed online

20 course according to quality standards. Students need

21 to feel a depth to the learning management system and

22 understand expectations for success in the online

23 environment, which we accomplish the orientation

24 workshops and advisors. Students complete

25 orientations to acclimate them to the learning

2 environment and to introduce common online

3 instructional methods.

4   The self-efficacy and confidence of instructors

5 in the online environment are important variables for

6 faculty to facilitate online student learning

7 effectively. We've offered numerous workshops with

8 faculty, and in 2021, we were named winners of the

9 Blackboard Catalyst Award for Training and

10 Professional Development, which honors those who use

11 Blackboard to support and enhance the faculty and

12 staff professional development. Our effective

13 practices and online teaching workshops certified

14 over 340 faculty during 2020, and that's in addition

15 to the many faculty who completed the Online Teaching

16 Essentials Workshop, run by the School of

17 Professional Studies also an award-winning

18 initiative. We support faculty through course design

19 consultations, webinars, instructional video design

20 and production, monthly newsletters replete with

21 resources, an online education website, and the All

22 Things Online podcast.

23   For some, the online teaching environment has

24 been a complete paradigm shift. The instructor is no

25 longer a sage on a stage but more of a guide on the

2 side. And while many acquired new skills during the

3 pandemic, we need to distinguish between Zoom remote

4 teaching, and asynchronous fully online courses and

5 programs. More development opportunities are needed

6 to help faculty make this shift. It's also critical

7 to ensure that students feel a sense of community and

8 connected with the college. Support opportunities

9 are available online through the library, the Writing

10 Center, mental health center and other student

11 services center. Students can request appointments

12 online, email, or virtual front desk, and John Jay

13 recognizes that the online student is an integral

14 member of the community.

15   But we are addressing some administrative

16 challenges about online learning as well, such as

17 defining the term online education at assessing

18 outcomes. The term online education is a large

19 umbrella and includes various forms of technology-

20 enhanced education. During the pandemic, for

21 example, faculty were trying to replicate their on-

22 campus courses online through web conferencing tools

23 such as Zoom to conduct remote classes. Others tried

24 hybrid forms using Blackboard plus synchronous Zoom

25 sessions. Others worked on developing asynchronous

2 courses on Blackboard, which we encouraged in the

3 workshops. And when CUNY introduced a partial return

4 to campus, we were focusing on hybrid models and some

5 CUNY colleges piloted HyFlex.

6   While we plan to examine comparison data between

7 online and on campus to inform our future planning,

8 we hesitate to do so just yet. It is premature to

9 draw conclusions based on pandemic times data with

10 CUNY students who were disproportionately affected in

11 terms of family health, and employment factors, many

12 of whom are frontline workers. However, some pre-

13 pandemic data may enlighten.

14   So examining data from the years 2014 to 2019, it

15 revealed that the demographics of students who take

16 courses online closely resembles our total campus

17 demographics: 63% of our undergraduate students who

18 take online courses are between the ages of 20 and

19 24, the male use of online courses, grew slightly

20 faster than female use. Online course taking has

21 contributed to a larger number of credits taken, not

22 to a different distribution of credits taken. Out of

23 over 3000 students to graduate with a bachelor's in

24 2018, 41% had taken four or more courses online

25 toward their degree. And there were differences in

2 outcomes between online and on campus students, but

3 the gap between in person and online drop, fail,

4 withdraw, and incomplete rates is shrinking at both

5 the graduate and undergraduate level. I've attached

6 charts to provide you with more detail. Recognizing

7 the outcomes discrepancy in 2019, the original

8 mission of the Department of online education to

9 support graduate students expanded to support undergo

10 gradual online education and improve the quality of

11 the undergraduate online courses. Faculty

12 Development programs began just prior to the COVID

13 Campus closure, when we worked to support the campus

14 effort to shift online. It was the impetus to

15 develop the award winning workshop and pursue the

16 online excellence project as described.

17   Also related to the issue of analytics,

18 establishing definitions about various modalities of

19 courses, and the appropriate coding of them within

20 CUNY First, to extract accurate data is in progress.

21 But our ongoing emphasis though, is on offering

22 quality education regardless of the method of

23 delivery. As more students enroll in online courses,

24 we are mindful that we need to maintain and add

25 support systems. I want to clarify, though, that

2 more students enrolling in online courses does not

3 mean that more students are added to the same section

4 of an online course. Rather, we adhere to the

5 enrollment caps for online courses. Therefore,

6 additional course sections would be open and faculty

7 would be added.

8   Looking forward, John Jay College plans to create

9 an undergraduate completion degree in criminal

10 justice so that students in CUNY's Justice Academy,

11 who began their criminal justice degrees at BMCC or

12 Queensboro Community College Online can complete

13 their degrees online at John Jay. It will be our

14 first undergraduate degree completion program.

15   There is little doubt that there has been a

16 seismic shift in the higher education landscape

17 nationwide that began before the pandemic and has now

18 been accelerated by it. But quality education is

19 quality education regardless of the method of

20 delivery, with a greater understanding of the

21 benefits of offering options for accessing education,

22 through various modalities of learning, supporting

23 Online Learning at the college and the university

24 helps us to meet the needs of all New Yorkers by

25 providing them with opportunities to connect to our

2 college and to higher education. Thank you for your

3 continued support.

4   I now turn it over to my colleague Tracy Meade.

5   MS. MEADE: Tracy Meade. Good morning

6 Chairperson Dinowitz and members of the Higher

7 Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity

8 to testify before you on this important and exciting

9 topic of CUNY online programs. My name is Tracy

10 Meade and I am the Senior Associate Dean for Strategy

11 and Innovation at the CUNY School of Professional

12 Studies, CUNY SPS for short. My testimony will focus

13 on CUNY SPS, which in 2003 was established by the

14 Board of Trustees of the City University of New York

15 to meet the educational needs of working adults.

16 This morning I am joined by CUNY SPS student, Jamie

17 Lerner-Brecher, a graduate student in our online

18 master's in disability studies program.

19   In 2006, CUNY SPS offered the first fully online

20 degree program at CUNY. Today we offer 25 fully

21 online degrees, 13 undergraduate, and 12 graduate

22 programs. I'll make a quick note here that the 36

23 cited by Kim is accurate. But there's a way in which

24 we register our nursing programs at the state that

25 increases the count because we have some accelerated

2   programs, but this is the student-facing number that

3   students see on our website.

4   As I noted earlier, CUNY SPS was established to

5   serve working adults. Our online undergraduate

6   degree programs are designed to serve a transfer-only

7   student population. That is our bachelor's degree

8   programs enrolled students with some college credits,

9   but no degree. This is a significantly under-

10   enrolled population in New York City. According to

11   2020 US census data, there were 1,190,000 people over

12   the age of 25 in New York City with some college but

13   no degree. The population was some college but no

14   degree speaks to our school study enrollment growth.

15   In the 2017-18 academic year, we enrolled 1554

16   bachelor's degree students and 596 master's degree

17   students. In 2021-22, we enrolled 2441 bachelor's

18   degree students and 1119 master's degree students,

19   for a 66% increase in enrollment in our online degree

20   programs over this five-year period. Please note

21   that I have provided year-over-year enrollment

22   numbers and other data broken out by degree programs

23   on the final pages of my testimony.

24   As the census numbers show the need for the

25   university to expand its online programming to reach

2 even more working adults with some college and no

3 degree as well as high school grads without a college

4 degree is an enrollment imperative. Our alumni base

5 has grown to an academic year 2016-17, 249 students

6 graduated with bachelor's degrees and 100 with

7 master's degrees. Five years later, 625 students

8 graduated with a bachelor's degree and 309 with

9 master's degrees. Over 3000 online students

10 graduated from CUNY SPS in this five-year period. A

11 snapshot of student demographics and CUNY SPS online

12 undergraduate degree programs follows: 33% are

13 black, 28% White, 22% Hispanic, 16% Asian or Pacific

14 Islander, and 0.3% American Indian or Native Alaskan.

15 2% of our online undergraduate students are 20 and

16 younger, 45% between 21 and 30, 34% between 31 and

17 40, and 19% are over 41 years old. 72% are women.

18 66% are enrolled part time (the highest percentage of

19 part time undergraduate students in the university),

20 75% reside in New York City, 11% in New York State,

21 and, 14% reside outside of New York. The majority of

22 our undergraduates work full or part time or serve in

23 the military.

24   A snapshot of student demographics in our online

25 master's programs follows: 45% are white, 27% black,

2 18% Asian or Pacific Islander, 11% Hispanic, and 0.2%

3 American Indian or Native Alaskan. 40% are between

4 the ages of 21 and 30, 32% between 31 and 40, and 29%

5 are over 41 years old. 68% are women, 95% are

6 enrolled part time, 60% reside in New York City, 16%

7 in New York State, and 24% reside outside New York.

8   I'll now turn to our students, their needs, and

9 the innovations and departures from traditional

10 undergraduate program that characterize CUNY SPS's

11 commitment to access and success for adult online

12 learners. I will focus my time on our undergraduate

13 students.

14   Online access and success, Jump Start: In

15 addition to our traditional admissions application

16 process, we took note of the number of applicants

17 denied admission because they did not meet the

18 school's cumulative GPA requirement of 2.5 or better.

19 Many of our students have been out of college for

20 years their transcripts a relic of a former self, and

21 many dipped in and out of college attending multiple

22 colleges with mixed academic success and no sense of

23 their cumulative GPA. To be responsive to working

24 adults who believe their prior GPA does not reflect

25 their present academic potential, we developed an

2 alternative performance based application called Jump

3 Start instead of focusing on traditional academic

4 requirements and a threshold GPA, our alternative

5 admissions approach allows applicants to create a

6 portfolio to demonstrate the college-level skills and

7 knowledge they have developed in college and

8 importantly for working adults in the workplace. In

9 areas such as leadership research, technical skills,

10 professional writing, and languages.

11   Disability Services: CUNY SPS is committed to

12 providing a safe and equitable environment for all

13 our students, including disabled students. Our

14 electronic case management system allows students a

15 seamless online interface to register with the Office

16 of Student Disability Services, securely upload

17 disability documentation, make appointments to meet

18 with staff, and request accommodation letters. As a

19 fully remote operation, OSDS engages students in

20 determining individual accommodation plans, provide

21 students with assistive software, alternative format

22 textbooks, one-on-one support services, and

23 distributes hundreds of accommodations letters to

24 faculty each semester. Relatedly CUNY SPS has three

25 online degree programs focused on disability studies,

2 the first such programs in the nation: Disability

3 Studies VA, disability studies MA, and Disability

4 Services in higher education, MS. In addition to

5 bringing to our school a heightened awareness of the

6 importance of designing accessible courses, events,

7 and community spaces, these programs have drawn and

8 recruited students, faculty, and staff who themselves

9 have disabilities. As the home of CUNY's disability

10 studies academic programs, disabilities culture, and

11 accessibility are woven into the fabric of CUNY SPS.

12   Counseling services: At CUNY SPS, online

13 students have full access to all of the Office of

14 Counseling Services free and confidential mental

15 health support services via telephone and video

16 telehealth platforms. The licensed clinical

17 psychologists at CUNY SPS offer the direct clinical

18 services that typically form the core of campus-based

19 mental health care: consultation, crisis assessment

20 and intervention, short term psychotherapy, and when

21 needed, customized and supported referrals. The

22 provision of mental health service via telehealth

23 remote barriers, like transportation time and cost

24 that prevent so many students from accessing mental

25 health care.

2   Credit for Prior Learning: CUNY SPS understands

3   that knowledge gained outside the classroom is

4   extremely valuable. As a result, we offer a number

5   of credit for prior learning opportunities that make

6   it possible for students to earn up to 45 college

7   credits from portfolio evaluation, examination, non-

8   collegiate learning, and corporate and military

9   training. CPL is one reason why CUNY SPS received

10 the prestigious Adult Learner Impact Award from the

11 Council for Adult Experiential Learning in 2019.

12 This annual honor recognizes member institutions that

13 have shown an outstanding commitment to the

14 expansion, access, and quality of lifelong learning

15 opportunities and academic programs for adult

16 learners.

17   Information technology: The CUNY SPS Office of

18 Information Technology provides live technical

19 support for students, faculty, and staff. Students

20 can request technical assistance via telephone or

21 email. To meet the needs of students engaged in

22 online degree programs, there are direct links from

23 every course to support services. Courses are built

24 on a standardized design so that students have a

25

2 consistent interface for quick access to services of

3 all kinds, including tech support services.

4   Another critical component of student success at

5 CUNY SPS is access to live, online, 24/7 tutoring.

6 Students engaged in online degree programs at CUNY

7 SPS have access to tutoring services through

8 tutor.com.

9   And now for a couple of recent initiatives: CUNY

10 SPS Black Male Initiative and SEEK an academic year

11 2021 CUNY SPS was awarded its first Black Male

12 Initiative Grant, marking the inclusion of working

13 adults who study part time and online into the CUNY

14 BMI portfolio. Another breakthrough this year is the

15 launch of our online SEEK program. As with the Black

16 Male Initiative, we intend to demonstrate that these

17 important university programs can support the success

18 of online adult learners, as well as the traditional

19 freshmen at CUNY's Baccalaureate colleges that have

20 long been the beneficiaries of these programs.

21   Food Access Initiative: We launched the first

22 fully remote program in CUNY to address food

23 insecurity, the CUNY SPS Food Access Initiative.

24 Since its inception in spring 21, we've granted 1499

25 awards to 691 students. We know from the student's

2 USDA adult food security survey, that these $50

3 microgrants are critical to the well-being of our

4 students.

5   This has been a slice of what we do. And I

6 should mention that for the second year in a row,

7 CUNY SPS has been named in the top 10 of US News and

8 World Report's list of best online bachelor's

9 programs nationwide. CUNY SPS is an innovative and

10 continually evolving school meeting the needs of

11 working adults who want to finish what they started,

12 and come to us for the flexibility offered by online

13 programs. I invite you to visit our school.

14 Councilwoman Brewer did a few years back in her role

15 is Manhattan Borough President. John John. Right

16 on.

17   Thank you to the Higher Education Committee for

18 the opportunity to share with you an overview of the

19 university's commitment to serving adult learners

20 through CUNY SPS is online programs.

21   Now you will hear from CUNY SPS student Jamie

22 Lerner-Brecher.

23   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, and before you

24 begin, I think you give her a shout out the perfect

25

2 time we've been joined by Councilmember, Former

3 President, Gale Brewer. Thank you.

4   MS. LERNER-BRECHER: Hello, I'm Jamie Lerner-

5 Brecher. I'm a master's student. I'm finishing up

6 my degree in the Disability Studies Program. And I

7 served on University Student Council last year as the

8 Co-Chair of the Disability and Mental Health

9 Committee, and the Vice Chair of the Academic Affairs

10 Committee.

11   First of all, thank you so much for allowing me

12 to speak today. It's an honor to be here.

13 Councilmember Brewer, it's lovely to see you again.

14 I'm sure you don't remember me, but I remember your

15 staunch support for the arts and education from my

16 days as a member of the Young People's Chorus of New

17 York City.

18   Like millions of other people in this country,

19 I'm disabled and considered high risk during the

20 ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. With complete confidence,

21 I can say that I'm only in school because of CUNY

22 SPS's online degree program. The classroom is just

23 not a safe place for me right now. My experiences of

24 accessibility, opportunity, and staff that goes above

25 and beyond for their students at SPS might only be

2   the tale of one person, but I know I speak on behalf

3   of the many disabled and non-disabled students I've

4   interacted with in my various student leadership

5   positions, as well as the mere Read of high risk

6   people who have felt excluded from traditional higher

7   education.

8   Throughout the pandemic, I've felt extreme

9   isolation. Increasingly so, as most people have

10   dropped the precautions that keep me safe. Yet CUNY

11   SPS's online MA program has provided me with a

12   lifeline into the world, both socially and

13   academically, and has given me a sense of purpose and

14   community. Because the program is online, I've

15   immersed myself in both student life and academic

16   opportunities that I physically couldn't do as an in-

17   person student. For example, I participated in

18   multiple eight hour meetings on the search committee

19   to help find a new dean of SPS. Due to my

20   disability, I physically cannot sit up or concentrate

21   for eight hours at a time. But on a Zoom meeting,

22   other people didn't know that I was lying in bed with

23   my feet on the wall. Back-to-Back meetings with the

24   CUNY Board of Trustees and the ADA 504 committee, no

25   problem. No inaccessible subway stations to slog

2 through, or running from building to building, I

3 simply clicked a link. I could fully utilize every

4 resource at my disposal, because I had the time,

5 energy, and access, thanks to the online nature the

6 program. Which leads me to my next point: I cannot

7 understate how helpful the close and consistent

8 communication from both Student Services and the

9 Office of Disability Services has been. As a student

10 with a learning disability, I require quite a few

11 academic accommodations. However, many of those

12 needs become obsolete in an online environment that

13 already utilizes universal design. At Columbia

14 University where I got my bachelor's degree, the head

15 of Disability Services once told me that she spent

16 nearly 50% of her job coordinating classrooms and

17 physical exams for students with extra time. Without

18 this task, the Office of Disability Services in an

19 online program can spend significantly more time

20 meeting student's unique and individual needs. At

21 SPS Disability Services manages to respond to

22 requests with the speed I have not witnessed

23 elsewhere, and I've attended four universities. The

24 same is true of student services, because they don't

25 have to constantly track down classrooms to hold

2 events in, something that takes an unbelievable

3 amount of time and money in a city with a shortage of

4 space, they have more time to help students and get

5 to know them personally. When I offhandedly

6 mentioned that I had an idea to provide disability

7 training to staff and faculty, staff from Student

8 Services, Disability Services, and the 504 ADA

9 committee all reached out to me independently to try

10 to help turn that idea into a reality. They had the

11 resources to assign me someone in Student Services to

12 help me write a grant to fund the project, which I

13 ultimately won. This type of individualized services

14 is simply unmatched.

15   Right now, disabled people who have historically

16 been excluded from university education and drop out

17 at an unbelievably high rate -- nearly 71% -- face

18 additional barriers to higher education. Many cannot

19 take public transportation without fear for their

20 health and safety. Now, more than ever, online

21 degree programs have the capacity to create

22 unprecedented access and opportunities for millions

23 of people, disabled and non-disabled alike. CUNY

24 exemplifies accessible, affordable and high level

25

2 online degree programs. And I truly hope the city

3 continues to invest in them. Thank you very much.

4   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, I want to thank

5 you first for you know, sharing that you have a

6 disability. I think you simply being here and saying

7 that out loud is very helpful to a lot of students,

8 you know... you know, as young as kindergarten

9 through adulthood, who very often, you know, don't...

10 and I've seen this in the classroom in high school,

11 where students didn't often want to recognize that

12 they had a need, and I think by you recognizing it

13 and saying out loud, saying who you are, is... is...

14 that alone, I think is helpful. And I thank you for

15 sharing some of the challenges you face as someone

16 with a disability.

17   And so I want to start with disabilities. And

18 I'm very pleased to hear all the services and the way

19 you've engaged with... with CUNY on that. And I

20 heard a lot in the testimony about access. And by

21 the way, we've been joined by Councilmember Feliz. I

22 would add by the way, CUNY Graduate... CUNY... 2 CUNY

23 adjunct professors, so you got a lot of CUNY in the

24 room right now. I keep hearing the word access. And

25 this was one of the challenges... as I said in my

2 opening statement, it was a real challenge to do

3 online learning. It was often hard to... on a

4 computer identify the challenges that students faced.

5 And recognizing that you have great self-advocacy

6 skills. This is obviously something you've been

7 doing for a while and are very successful at winning

8 a grant. There are many students who either may not

9 want to kind of, you know, tell themselves they have

10 disability, they... I've heard phrases like, "Oh,

11 well, I'm over that now that I'm in college," or just

12 maybe don't know how to access Office of Students

13 With Disabilities, and often need the recognition of

14 a professor or a teacher to be engaged in those

15 services. That's something that I recognized at the

16 high school level, and it's something that I know is

17 recognized in the college level, as many presidents

18 have, you know, told me that, when I said, "How do

19 students access disability services?" And what they

20 say is a professor will often notice a student in

21 class doing X, Y, and Z, or not doing X, Y, and Z,

22 and it was the same thing for mental health services,

23 it was the same thing for food access when they would

24 notice a kid coming... And I apologize, 14 years in

25 a classroom, I'm used to calling them kids, I mean,

2 students, because they're mostly adults now. They

3 noticed a student with their head down, or a student

4 kind of fatigued, which would lead them to think that

5 there's hunger or there's mental health need or

6 there's learning disability.

7   So my main question is, first, how online is CUNY

8 prepared to not just offer services, but identify

9 those who need services, especially if they have a

10 disability, but also if they have a mental health

11 need, recognizing that there's not that same personal

12 interaction online.

13   MS. LERNER-BRECHER: I can start. Um, so one of

14 the things that CUNY SPS does an amazing job with is

15 that it's very devoted to universal design. And

16 thinking about universal design is that it's

17 completely... the whole point of it is designed, so

18 there is few needs to get accessible... to get

19 services as possible. So if you don't offer an exam,

20 a timed exam, somebody who has time and a half isn't

21 going to need it.

22   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry, I should have

23 clarified. I'm sorry. Speaking, because... because

24 you heard in testimony, and I think it was in your

25 testimony too, often we think of, you know,

2 disabilities in the physical sense, you need a ramp

3 here. I think that's often how they're perceived,

4 which is also true, but um, I mean in, let's say, a

5 learning disability, something that... So please

6 continue.

7   MS. LERNER-BRECHER: That's exactly... yeah. So

8 it's universal design in higher education. And so

9 when you design things that you assess, you have

10 multiple means of assessment, you have multiple means

11 of learning, you're integrating that into the

12 curriculum already.

13   The other thing is, is that because CUNY SPS has

14 such an amazing Disability Studies Program, it is

15 completely integrated into teachers, into the

16 professors, and they are able to recognize it very

17 well. But the thing is about having a disability or

18 some... as somebody who has a learning disability,

19 you really can design an education to have as few

20 accommodations as possible. I also want to say that

21 there's, as you guys probably know, there's the CUNY

22 Coalition of Students with Disabilities CCSD, and

23 they do a lot of self-advocacy work. And they do a

24 lot of work with students with disabilities, to try

25

2 to get them to use the services, even the ones that

3 don't want to. But a lot of its built in already.

4   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I really love... I think

5 this is the first time in a higher ed hearing, or in

6 any education hearing I've heard anyone use universal

7 design. And I love it. And so it sounds like SPS is

8 really engaged in that building from the bottom up,

9 but recognizing that, you know, we all jumped into

10 online learning, and this this will get to a second

11 question I have, but: How is that being modeled?

12 How is that being used as a model for let's say, the

13 under... more the undergraduate degrees, and the

14 community colleges? And how is it integrated to

15 the... to the training that the staff receives...

16 faculty receives?

17   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Thank you for that question.

18 And this is an area that is part of my scope of work,

19 and our broader and deeper, more intense focus on

20 online education across all CUNY campuses, to

21 institute standards of quality, which includes

22 universal design in all online classes. So are we

23 where we want to be? No. Are we going to get there?

24 Yes. Because we are going to be very intentional

25 about that. And... and part of the work that my

2   colleagues here have talked about what they're doing

3   on their campuses, is the model that we're going to

4   adopt across all the colleges to ensure consistency

5   for all of our students regardless of the level of

6   program or the college at which they're enrolled.

7   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Go ahead.

8   DR. CAHN: If I may add.

9   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please. Please.

10   DR. CAHN: It does... It does speak to a lot of

11   the issues related to faculty development as well.

12   You know, we... we emphasize universal design in our

13   faculty development. We incorporate it. We... I

14   also mentioned in my testimony that we are very

15   mindful of the ways that a student connects online.

16   They don't just connect to content, they connect to

17   the instructor and they connect to each other. And

18   so that's the issue, is the instructor presence and

19   how the instructor is connecting with the student.

20   We're very mindful of that. And we... And we

21   incorporate that piece also within the faculty

22   development, but more is... definitely more is

23   needed, and... and we will continue to do so.

24   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Are you developing --

25   Okay, I'm going to use like, another education term,

2 but -- a rubric? So for the... Because, again, you

3 know, and part of this is... It feels as though, and

4 you can correct me, but a lot of the courses are just

5 extensions of what was created, as... as it was in

6 the testimony, and you said, we flipped over to...

7 you know, all the all those numbers flipped during

8 the advent of the pandemic, and that some of these

9 online courses may just be extensions of that, or

10 maybe they're kept in place, that were online courses

11 that we flipped to in 2020. And we just held on.

12 But is there a rubric that is being used to assess

13 whether that universal design exists and whether

14 those best practices are being met?

15   DR. CAHN: And that's... that's what I did speak

16 about. We have, you know, the Online Excellence

17 Project where the faculty, with instructional

18 designers, are developing the courses, and the

19 instructional designers are guided... we are all

20 guided by the... what's called the Online Course

21 Quality Rubric. There are about 50 variables, and

22 incorporated is universal design. So, yes, we are

23 guided by a rubric. Absolutely.

24   DR. SIEGENTHALER: If I could speak to that, as

25 well. So we have a mix, where we have established

2   online programs such as what... yes, Judy and... and

3   Tracy have talked about... those... the courses

4   within those have been designed using these rubrics,

5   using quality matters standards using... totally

6   committed to a quality online learning experience for

7   students. During COVID, there were -- as we talked

8   about -- many, many, many courses that had to be

9   converted on the fly to what we call remote

10 instruction. Those were not developed broadly with

11 the same set of standards. And so part of our work

12 now is to go back and review those courses and

13 determine which are not up to that quality standard,

14 and beginning revision of those courses to again have

15 consistency across the board.

16   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Is that something that's

17 the responsibility of each individual campus? Or is

18 there sort of a CUNY-wide group or team who's kind of

19 independently looking at these courses?

20   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Yes, and yes.

21   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: All right, two levels of

22 accountability.

23   MS. MEADE: I wanted to add one thing,

24 Chairperson Dinowitz.

25   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please.

2 MS. MEADE: Having grown up with a disabled

3 brother... severely disabled brother, I wanted to

4 make note of what I said before about the disability

5 culture and accessibility. It's... It's a real joy

6 to work at CUNY SPS. I've never been at a higher

7 education institution that centers disability in the

8 way CUNY SPS does. And I think if you ever want to

9 visit, we'd welcome you, and we could, you know,

10 share our experience, both faculty, staff, and

11 students with how that culture has been built.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'd love... only if

13 Councilmember Brewer comes to the tour with me. I

14 think... You live there, right? I think?

15 MS. LERNER-BRECHER: May I add one more thing?

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You may add as many things

17 as you want.

18 MS. LERNER-BRECHER: So this is exactly what my

19 grant project is working on too, that CUNY was very

20 excited to fund, is it's creating, implementing, and

21 assessing the results of disability training for

22 professors. And it's working with Lydia X. Z. Brown,

23 who's one of the leading scholars in this, as well as

24 Professor Sheryl Burgstahler Burke scholar who's

25 probably the leading expert in the US on universal

2 design in higher education. And so this is

3 something, when I brought it up as an idea, CUNY

4 jumped out and gave me a grant for. And so this is

5 something that not only are they doing a really good

6 job of, they're actively trying to improve as well.

7   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, and I just

8 want... You know, and it's and it sounds like SPS is

9 really doing its work, really involved, and very

10 meticulous about it. And I you know, my concern is

11 that it's CUNY-wide.

12   I just have one other question with data, and

13 I... You know, I want to thank you, I think there

14 was a lot of data that we requested that you were

15 able to provide. And now just, and this will be the

16 last thing about disabilities. And I want to give my

17 colleague Councilmember Brewer an opportunity to ask

18 some questions, and then I have a, you know, a bunch

19 more. But do you have data related to the number of

20 students let's say at SPS, online or in person who

21 received or applied for accommodations, versus the

22 four-year versus the two-year... two-year colleges?

23 Am I my purpose in asking that is just to see, you

24 know, what that... If there's a distinction, if

25 students are kind of falling through the cracks when

2 it comes to receiving accommodations and

3 understanding that there's more flexibility in online

4 and there's... you are starting to build universally

5 designed curriculum for... for these online courses?

6 But also the data related to that, especially for

7 community colleges, does it does that data exist?

8   MS. MEADE: Yeah.

9   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay.

10   MS. MEADE: We'd have to follow up on your

11 question to get specific data.

12   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Not at a university-wide

13 level, for the reasons that I identified earlier,

14 where we've not had historically a consistent

15 approach to identifying online programs and online...

16 and students who chose to pursue a credential in a

17 fully online format.

18   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right. But I think you

19 said going... I want to make sure it's yours...

20   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Going... going forward. We

21 will, but we don't have any historical data.

22   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I think you had said in

23 your testimony -- and I don't want to miss misquote

24 anyone, and I'm not going to find the testimony.

25 The... Yeah, the so the gap and occupational mapping

2 analysis. So that's to identify where additional

3 online programs are needed, and meet the educational

4 needs of New York City. So does that... As part of

5 that program, include assessing the sort of impact

6 and effectiveness for students with disabilities? Is

7 that is that kind of part of that?

8   DR. SIEGENTHALER: No. It's really... It looks

9 at market need, and it looks at what the

10 educational... in terms of qualification for

11 employment. It's really looking at those kinds of

12 educational needs, not the specific individual

13 student needs or disability needs, but it's really

14 looking at a... at an identification of where do we

15 need additional academic disciplines represented

16 online?

17   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm going to invite you

18 back next month to talk about... to talk about that

19 at our workforce development hearing, which is next

20 month. October... I'm going to say the 20th. But...

21 But would CUNY consider... You know, I think more

22 data is good, and the data you provided today was

23 great, and very helpful. In the past, there has been

24 other gaps in data. Would CUNY consider assessing

25 the needs of the students with disabilities as part

2 of that, and not just the needs of New York City,

3 which is so vital -- and I love that CUNY is really

4 answering that question, "What does New York City

5 need? -- but assessing the outcomes? And, you know,

6 whether it's through employer survey, whether it's

7 through credit accrual, and of course, including that

8 is students with disabilities, and, you know,

9 graduation rates and their success. Is... Are the

10 students who are engaged in these online programs as

11 successful as students who are in the in-person-only,

12 or in the hybrid models? Is CUNY... Would CUNY

13 consider including those sort of metrics as they

14 develop this... these two programs?

15   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Absolutely. I mean, outcomes

16 are everything. So if you're not getting the desired

17 outcomes from your... your efforts, then you need to

18 change your efforts. So we will be monitoring all of

19 those... those kinds of things. It's going to take a

20 while for us to have useful data, because we're going

21 to be building a number of programs. We're still

22 coming out of COVID. We have numerous courses to

23 redesign. But yes, looking at the... the outcomes...

24 the student learning outcomes, the graduation rates,

25 the persistent rates, the employment rates of

2 students and on ground and online programs is... is

3 central to our efforts.

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, and that's, I think,

5 central to our role here in The Council, too, which

6 is, you know, ensuring that the programs that we're

7 supporting... or we're funding -- and I'm here with

8 the Chair of oversight, which is great -- that they

9 are effective. So I think that's... And I think the

10 state would have the same... you know, the same

11 interest in ensuring that these programs, which sound

12 wonderful, right?, making this this new online

13 learning work ensuring students with disabilities get

14 the services and that they're meeting the needs of

15 New York City, that they're actually effective.

16 I'm going to turn it over to Councilmember brewer

17 for some questioning and then I have another round of

18 questions.

19 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. My

20 day with John Mogulescu at SBS was very special.

21 There were like four students, they were all

22 phenomenal. And of course he's... I guess he's the

23 Godfather of SBS, and the Godfather is ASAP, and you

24 know the godfather of all of us. We're all great,

25 but I don't know, he's my hero.

2   So a couple questions. Just... The... We

3 visited before the pandemic. So it was way before.

4 Did the Department of Education -- and maybe you

5 asked this already -- ever call you for assistance?

6   No? Is that the answer?

7   In other words: Pandemic arrives. They have no

8 idea what to do, and you know exactly what to do.

9 They never called you to say how does your school

10 operate? Maybe we could actually learn something

11 from you?

12   DR. SIEGENTHALER: I don't I don't know that any

13 of us has total knowledge.

14   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but you would have

15 been the persons to call. Yes. Okay.

16   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Well, so... Just...

17   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: I know you're trying to be

18 nice.

19   DR. SIEGENTHALER: I'm in my seventh week at

20 CUNY.

21   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

22   DR. SIEGENTHALER: So there's an immense gap in

23 my historical knowledge. And so... um...

24   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: But even now, as they are

25 setting up apparently, and to their credit, some

2 online capacity for students who don't want to be for

3 whatever reason in person, they... In the last seven

4 weeks, they haven't called y ou. The reason I say

5 this is that DOE should call you, because you have a

6 model that works. So maybe you should reach out to

7 them, since they can't figure out how to call you and

8 say, "We have a model that works," and it's something

9 to think about. Because they really don't know what

10 they're doing. Just FYI.

11   And then I just want to pick up on what the Chair

12 was asking: How does one go about... Because you

13 have a success. There's no question about it. So

14 the question is: I know you're in the process of

15 evaluating it. Can you just describe a little bit

16 more? I know you talked about it. But that's so

17 important, because... Then also, are you doing any

18 kind of intellectual property? In other words,

19 getting paid for your success by other universities

20 around the country? Or even DOE could pay you. That

21 would be an idea. So just... just to talk a little

22 bit more about how you do the evaluation? Because

23 that is the key to all of this, I think. How you're

24 going about evaluation of the amazing success.

25

2 DR. SIEGENTHALER: That is a complicated

3 question.

4 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Well, just a little bit

5 about it. So.

6 DR. SIEGENTHALER: Yeah. I mean, right now, we

7 are really in the process of understanding the

8 baseline of what we have...

9 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Right.

10 DR. SIEGENTHALER: ...because we've not

11 historically done that institution-wide.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Right. I heard you say

13 that to the Chair.

14 DR. SIEGENTHALER: Right. And so as... as part

15 of that work, as we identify what we have, and then

16 we're looking too at assessing what the resources

17 are, and where the success stories are across the

18 campuses. So as you well know, we've got... we've

19 got two of those here, drawing on their expertise and

20 what they've been doing well, to amplify and expand

21 that across the campuses so that we're not

22 replicating, or duplicating, or replacing what's

23 already working well. We're magnifying and

24 amplifying that so that we benefit from the

25 expertise.

2   We're really very, very early in the process of

3 both identification and assessment. But in tools, of

4 those... those metrics that we'll use, we'll be using

5 the OSCQR... OSCQR is the acronym for SUNY and

6 Quality Matters. Some of those that are nationally

7 recognized standards around course design, course

8 delivery, too... You know that... that'll be the

9 starting point for how we look broadly at what's

10 happening, and then creating those additional

11 standards institution-wide, that then we begin to

12 hold the campuses accountable for.

13   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay. So will you be

14 doing this, or an outside evaluator, or another

15 entity at CUNY? Who would actually be doing this? I

16 know it costs money sometimes, so that's why I'm

17 asking... concerned.

18   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Yeah, it costs money. And

19 it'll... it'll... That may depend. We are... You

20 know, that is part of our strategic plan...

21   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

22   DR. SIEGENTHALER: ...and determining the pace at

23 which we can cover all this ground with our internal

24 capacity as... as opposed to outsourcing some of it.

25 It may be a mixture of things.

2   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Alvin Bonilla was the

3 Deputy Borough President who toured with me. He's

4 now number two at the Fund for the City of New York.

5 The Fund for the City of New York. You get what I'm

6 saying?

7   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Yes.

8   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

9   DR. CAHN: I do... I do want to make a

10 distinct... you know, a distinction here, just a

11 clarification. I think Chair Dinowitz, if I may,

12 when you were talking about your frustrations with

13 teaching, you know, with... with assessing the

14 student online: I do want them make a distinction

15 between like a Zoom session, a Zoom demo class versus

16 a fully online course when we're talking about the

17 OSCQR, and rubric, and Quality Matters.

18   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: You're talking about the

19 courses.

20   DR. CAHN: Because they're different designs.

21 And the Zoom class is more of a remote class

22 teaching, versus the intentionally designed

23 asynchronous course, where a student navigates

24 with... with the... with the guidance, of course, of

25

2   the professor, where the student navigates through

3   the course online 24/7 anytime.

4   COUNCILMEMBER BREWERS: I'm not talking about the

5   courses.

6   So the other thing is just technology, which...

7   How have you found it has to be restored? In five

8   years or less? Or how... I mean, I know that you

9   started out with excellent tech, but how does it work

10   for the student? For the family? For the... et

11   cetera? You've got... You know, we've got lots of

12   issues DOE is dealing with? So what are your

13   experiences with the tech? Does it change? Do

14   you... Are you able to keep updated? Does it work

15   for the students? Et cetera. Are there no issues at

16   all maybe?

17   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Do you want to talk about

18   your... how it's working on your campuses? Yep?

19   MS. MEADE: I should say that during the

20   pandemic, we purchased a lot of laptops, and had a

21   laptop loaner program for students to make sure that

22   students who couldn't afford a laptop had access to

23   one. Demand was very high. And we continued to

24   purchase them. We've had significant supply chain

25   problems...

2   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: You've had what problems?

3   MS. MEADE: Supply chain problems...

4   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Supply chain problems.

5 Yeah.

6   MS. MEADE: ... but we were able to provide our

7 students with them. But there were some delays in

8 getting the staff and faculty laptops because of

9 supply chain issues. I know the university is

10 pursuing a new learning management system.

11   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: A new what?

12   MS. MEADE: A learning management system. Kim

13 can... can speak about that, an upgrade from Black

14 Board. But we have a terrific IT director, and I

15 feel as if the campus is always acquiring new tools.

16 I think syncing the tools is that internal challenge

17 that we have to make sure we're not replicating

18 purchases or under-using particular tools that we

19 purchase.

20   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'll do the second round.

21 I just have a not just... I have a bunch of

22 questions. But I have a question around the... some

23 finances, but I'll start with, like, the student end.

24   I've spoken with some students in my district who

25 have struggled with there's... there's a technology

2   fee that students have to pay, $250? Yeah. And is

3   that the same technology fee, whether you're in

4   person, or fully remote? Everyone? Every student

5   pays?

6   MS. MEADE: I think a student pays the tech fee

7   at every campus. Yeah. We can find out if they're

8   going to...

9   MS. LERNER-BRECHER: I think they're planning on

10 lowering the Student Services, because there's a tech

11 fee. I think they're planning on lowering it.

12 That's what I've heard through the grapevine. But I

13 can't say that for sure.

14   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, I love I love rumors.

15 Don't worry. You're not under oath. You can...

16   DR. CAHN: We'll verify that.

17   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right. Because, you know,

18 the cost on the student end, you know, recognizing

19 that high school is different than graduate school or

20 the School for Professional Studies, college in any

21 degree. My students who are at a severe

22 disadvantage, because many of them didn't have, you

23 know, the TI-83 The TI-84 at home, or didn't have the

24 same technology at home that other students may have

25 needed. They literally need this calculator to take

2   the test and... and so can you talk a little more:

3   CUNY provides laptops or technology to every student

4   who needs it? What's... What's the threshold? How

5   does that work?

6   DR. CAHN: Well, at John Jay, if they request it,

7   if they demonstrate a need, they... they get a

8   laptop. In some cases, they actually lent them

9   hotspots because they didn't have access to... to the

10 to the network, to the Wi-Fi.

11   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And that's at a cost to

12 the university? Or is that... Is that some sort of

13 federal grant for that?

14   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Judy, was that COVID specific?

15   DR. CAHN: That was COVID specific during that...

16 but then there are...

17   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can you just make sure to

18 talk into the microphone, because I'm sure online

19 people can't...

20   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Sorry. I was asking her to

21 clarify whether those measures were COVID specific,

22 or they're continuing post-COVID, because in some

23 cases colleges did certain things because everybody

24 needed the technology. And in some cases, those

25 stopped or continued sometimes because of the

2   availability of federal funds. So was asking her

3   what... what the status was.

4   DR. CAHN: So on occasion... when needed...

5   but...

6   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah.

7   DR. CAHN: When needed. I can verify. But I

8   know during COVID: Absolutely. But I do know from

9   our CIO, that.. that he... he said that, when

10 necessary, you know, when... when there's a need,

11 they certainly try to accommodate,

12   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Because those COVID funds

13 have either run out or are running out. And at some

14 point, if you continue the same program and the same,

15 you know, accommodation for students who need this

16 technology to engage in online learning, but struggle

17 with the finances, does CUNY... I mean is CUNY

18 already prepared to continue that program, and to,

19 and like to eat the cost of that? And what's...

20 What's the plan going forward for the next few years?

21   MS. MEADE: First...

22   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I know it's... I mean, I

23 recognize this isn't like a budget meeting. But I

24 think that's important information.

25

2 | MS. MEADE: Yeah, I'm just going to speak about

3 | CUNY SPS. This is... We've always had a laptop

4 | loaner program, and we've always had a hotspot loaner

5 | program. It... we had to scale it during the

6 | pandemic, but in terms of the system level, I'll turn

7 | it over to Kim.

8 | DR. SIEGENTHALER: Yeah. I really can't speak to

9 | that. I don't... I don't know whether that's in the

10 | works or not.

11 | CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay. Well I would... The

12 | committee would love, you know, more information

13 | about that, given that, you know, you are working on

14 | expanding online programming to all the campuses and

15 | the course offerings, which is necessarily going to

16 | mean that more students are going to need the

17 | technology. And again, with COVID funds running out

18 | the money has to come from somewhere, or you're going

19 | to choose not to provide as many students with

20 | technology, which would, you know, be terrible, given

21 | that there's so many needs our students have.

22 | One... A few other financial questions. And

23 | this was interesting to me that for online courses,

24 | out-of-state students pay the in-state tuition price.

25 | Is that correct?

2   DR. CAHN: That is correct. Although it's

3 changing in winter 2023.

4   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, good. That's great.

5 Well, do you know what... what led to that decision

6 in the first place? And, and why is it waiting, you

7 know, almost over a year to change?

8   MS. MEADE: Probably John. You know, John

9 retired. I... My understanding is that the CUNY

10 Board of Trustees considered the issue of out-of-

11 state tuition for out-of-state students, and that...

12 that their decision was to increase tuition again,

13 beginning in winter 2023 for out-of-state students

14 for online learning.

15   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right. Because right now,

16 they don't differentiate, but you're saying in winter

17 2023, they're going to start differentiating between

18 in-state and out-of-state online learners?

19   MS. MEADE: Online programs, yes.

20   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Online... Right. Alright.

21 Okay, I think that's...

22   MS. MEADE: We can get get you follow up on

23 amount and, um...

24   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, just interested in

25 knowing why there was no distinction to begin with

2   and why it's waiting for, you know, again, over a

3   year to make that... make that switch?

4   MS. MEADE: I... I would say that when CUNY SPS

5   is the college that offered the first online program

6   in 2006, that was the agreement put in place. I

7   think it was to reach these students with some credit

8   and no degree, irrespective of where they resided.

9   As we plan to scale online programs and reach beyond

10 New York City and New York state, there was a

11 concern, I think, about you know, taxpayer money

12 supporting out-of-state students, but again, I think

13 there's a resolution of the board that we can... we

14 can send your way, so you have all the details.

15   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, we'd love it

16 because, you know, out-of-state people are great, but

17 in-state people are better. A lot of New York Pride.

18 What can I say?

19   So you just mentioned reaching out to people out

20 of state... reaching out. What does reaching out

21 look like to CUNY?

22   MS. MEADE: I can talk about CUNY SPS.

23   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, I'll phrase it

24 differently. If I if I went, "Hey, Siri, I want to

25 learn online." I'm going to get University of

2 Phoenix, I'm going to get Capella University. I'm

3 going to get DeVry, Maybe even Trump University. I

4 don't know. But I don't think... Oh Siri is...

5 pardon me. But I won't get CUNY. And I tried.

6   DR. CAHN: Well, I would, I would say at John

7 Jay, you know, because our courses... our online

8 programs leverage our unique niche in criminal and

9 social justice, we would attract to those in in these

10 fields to John Jay, I mean, it's... you know,

11 criminal justice and emergency management and

12 international crime and justice. So we have actually

13 attracted students from, you know, nationally and

14 globally. So... So in that case, you know, we do

15 have something unique that we offer.

16   MS. MEADE: I would say...

17   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Do you have a budget...?

18 I'm talking more about, like, a budget for

19 advertising for Google links,

20   DR. CAHN: We are working on communications.

21   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: ... social media, I'm

22 showing my age. I know.

23   DR. CAHN: I mean, they would, you know, whatever

24 social media is used. I mean, they would somehow

25 find it. It's not specific to... you know, it's out

2 there. So the name is known. And John Jay has the

3 reputation that it does.

4   DR. SIEGENTHALER: Speaking more broadly about

5 marketing efforts for online, institution-wide. We

6 are... That is also part of this next phase of

7 things, is to... developing a broader marketing

8 strategy and investment in marketing dollars to use

9 social media, and really digital advertising is the

10 best platform if you're trying to attract online

11 learners to so through LinkedIn, or indeed, or other

12 kinds of platforms. What that looks like on a

13 program-by-program basis, or college-to-college,

14 where you've got niche types of programs, you're not

15 going to see it as broadly as you would, where we're

16 trying to elevate awareness of CUNY and CUNY's online

17 programs.

18   So it's a little bit of a different strategy. We

19 have not traditionally invested a large amount of

20 resources in those marketing efforts. Institutions

21 like University of Phoenix, or Arizona State, or

22 Southern New Hampshire that are going to pop up all

23 the time, invest in the neighborhood of $250 million

24 a year in marketing.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: That sounds like a big

3 number.

4 DR. SIEGENTHALER: Yeah, we're... we're not...

5 we're not going to be in that space.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINWOTIZ: Right. But... though

7 I... you know... Well, I won't get into the cost of

8 online advertising, but I am interested in what the

9 what the budget is, because, you know, I was just

10 speaking with one of the colleges, and people from

11 one of the local community colleges yesterday, and

12 they're telling me about students who are... I'm

13 sorry, it was one of... someone I know about their

14 family, and that they looked online for whatever

15 program and they live in the Bronx. And they went to

16 Westchester Community College. And nothing against

17 Westchester Community College, but that Bronx student

18 should be going to school in New York City. And

19 that's... it's a not uncommon story I've heard where

20 people are looking online and doing a search for just

21 like a general, you know, Associate's degree. And

22 the, and what they get back is, you know,

23 advertisements for Westchester, or they get the

24 Google search for Westchester. So you know, we'd

25 love to know what that marketing looks like. Because

2   time and again, we hear about great programs CUNY

3   does, the incredible work y'all do. And if no one

4   knows about it, or if people only know about it,

5   because they know to look for it like at John Jay.

6   You know, I'm really interested in CUNY, being more

7   broadly known to people as the place to go for online

8   learning, as a place to go for criminal justice,

9   instead of just for those who kind of already know

10   and already have those college counselors who told

11   them about it, or for the students who did, you know,

12   45 hours of research online. I know Councilmember

13   Brewer had more questions. So I'm going to turn it

14   back to her.

15   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.

16   Just... Maybe this got talked about, but this

17   community of Councilmembers, to their credit, is very

18   diverse, and language is an issue. So how do you

19   handle language issues? It should be easier online,

20   but nothing is easy. So how do you how was it

21   different or not in terms of language? Do you use

22   different ways of communicating? How does it work,

23   if at all, for ELLs, or language learners who may

24   speak English but need other support? I don't know.

25   I'm just asking how it works, if at all.

2   MS. MEADE: I know I can tell you at CUNY SPS,

3 our new interim dean Jorge Silva Perez is interested

4 in dual-language courses. So at this point, it's a

5 new initiative. And he's... he's speaking with our

6 academic directors and faculty about it. But until

7 his arrival, we hadn't had any dual-language online

8 courses.

9   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: But now you do?

10   MS. MEADE: We're... We're, it's one of our goals

11 in our strategic plan to develop, especially in the

12 healthcare fields and psychology. His first goal was

13 to develop a medical terminology course in Spanish.

14   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Do you have any idea about

15 how many students would utilize such dual language,

16 or you're still trying to figure that out? And my

17 guess is you'd have a lot.

18   MS. MEADE: I would imagine we'd have a lot, but

19 I'd have to get back to you on that.

20   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay.

21   And then the other question I have is -- just in

22 terms of professors and teaching staff and so on,

23 maybe I should know this -- but are they affiliated

24 with other parts of the CUNY-wide system, or is it

2 just dedicated to your staff? How does that work?

3 Just in terms of the staffing of SPS.

4   MS. MEADE: So, CUNY SPS... the faculty model

5 involves consortial faculty, so faculty from across

6 the university have... have and continue to teach our

7 online courses through a consortium arrangement,

8 although we do have resident faculty at CUNY SPS

9 tenured and adjunct.

10   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Okay, and then maybe you

11 discussed this earlier. But I know, obviously, I

12 know John Jay very well. So the university wide,

13 there are more and more classes that are online. I

14 know there are quite a few, you know, in different

15 places. So again, are you consulted about that? Are

16 they on their own? How does that work in terms of

17 information sharing? I know what you teach at John

18 Jay... I know about John Jay, but go ahead.

19   MS. CAHN: Well, I know that... you know, I've

20 often consulted with various people at SPS, and we're

21 all... we all collaborate through the CUNY Academic

22 Technology Committee, which meets monthly. So... So

23 we do... we do share a lot of information. And we're

24 very fortunate because SPS has really taken the lead

25 in their online teaching essentials workshop. And

2 although we also created a workshop, they really have

3 been primary in helping to... to provide the

4 training... the necessary training for our faculty,

5 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: okay. I think it will be

6 held for all of us who allocate funding to CUNY

7 through that committee to know if there are tech

8 issues. Obviously, capital funding can address some.

9 I try what I can do for John Jay. But I'm just

10 letting you know, that's a resource that you should

11 not forget about. Because with all due respect to

12 having... coming from the tech world, I know that the

13 hardware is as big a problem as sometimes the

14 curriculum. So you should make sure that that group

15 that you just described, is saying very clearly what

16 some of the issues are. It would be helpful for us

17 to know.

18 MS. CAHN: Sure. And I do want to say on behalf

19 of John Jay, that we do very much appreciate your

20 support.

21 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Thank you very

22 much.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you, Councilmember.

24 So I want to thank you again, Dr. Siegenthaler, Dr.

25 Cahn, Ms. Meade, and especially to you Ms. Lerner.

2 You know, it's very inspiring when students come,

3 especially when they share so much of their personal

4 story. Thank you.

5 And, you know, we look forward to continuing the

6 conversation and getting some of the information

7 about the you know, the data that was discussed today

8 what that accountability looks like, and how you're

9 sharing best practices with other institutions inside

10 and outside of CUNY. But thank you again.

11 I'd like to call our next panel. Bobby Bell,

12 Miss Rebecca Watts from Western Governors University,

13 and from the University of Colorado, Boulder, joining

14 us via satellite Robert McDonald. Alright, while we

15 get Robert McDonald online, Mr. Bell, you... you may

16 begin.

17 Yeah. Just make sure you talk right into that

18 microphone.

19 MR. BELL: No, I have hearing aids on, and

20 sometimes these microphones don't, um, do well with

21 the hearing aids. So maybe without the microphone?

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Give us one... Give us one

23 second.

24 We're going turn off the in room audio. We're

25 going to leave the mics on so people online can

2 continue to hear. Turn off the in-room audio so it

3 doesn't interfere with you. Okay? Great.

4   MR. EBEL: I'm Bob Ebel, and I'm _____.

5 (Inaudible). Emerged as a major force for education.

6 _____ reveals _____(1 minute silence) have earned

7 degrees online...

8   I've lost my place, sorry.

9   Allowing them to participate more fully in the

10 nation's productive business, rather than being

11 sidelined to marginal labor, moving from fast-food

12 counters to more rewarding roles in our post-

13 industrial economy. While 40% of online students

14 work full time, double that 80% of online students

15 are full time employees. Colleges with a long and

16 effective history of delivering remote programs

17 understand that student services and student access

18 available to on-campus students should also equally

19 be available to online students. College is not

20 possible unless it is made convenient enough to fit

21 into the limited time and space students have to

22 devote to their studies, especially those who work.

23   What's especially true for students working full-

24 time jobs, for parents working and caring for

25 children, and for others who cannot hop onto their

2 cars and drive simply to the local campus. Student

3 services on campus study centers, career services,

4 health care, clubs, and support for learning and

5 students with disabilities are widely available on

6 most campuses, but few colleges offer the same

7 expansive attention to remote learners as they do

8 online. On campus students... On campus...

9   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Please continue.

10   MR. EBEL: Okay. On campus, students are coddled

11 with high-end services, with 20% of higher-ed

12 budgets, going to student services and related costs

13 at state and city schools and 30% of private...

14 private schools. I have a thought about this as

15 I'm... as I'm giving my testimony.

16   If online budgets were equal to what's available

17 on campus, then on campus students would get as

18 many... as much services as the online campus

19 students do. In contrast, vital student support

20 often as an afterthought online. In a literature

21 search, I found that just a handful of references

22 covered online students services, with none quoting

23 how much institution spend on them, a sure sign that

24 very little attention is paid, and distressingly

25 little is invested. It's as if online students don't

2 need anything but digital classrooms taught by

3 virtual instructions. Most schools act as if remote

4 learners can get away entirely on their lone, like

5 teenagers playing video games.

6   Online must be as essential to the university as

7 on campus. In the minds of senior faculty,

8 presidents and provosts online must be equal to on

9 campus or offices and infrastructure. Resources that

10 are devoted to on-campus education must be devoted

11 equally to remote learning. Faculty and student

12 services and training, quality education, and the

13 same financial backing that is given to on campus

14 must be given equally to students and faculty online.

15   Everything that is delivered on campus must be

16 delivered equally to online students. On-campus

17 lectures and other activities available on campus

18 must be delivered equally to online students. We

19 must provide remote students with exactly the same

20 services, exactly the same resources, exactly the

21 same financial support and training that we give to

22 our on-campus students.

23   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I will now

24 hear from Rebecca Watts, Regional Vice President of

25 Western Governors University.

2   DR. WATTS: Thank you Chair Dinowitz, members of

3   the Committee on Higher Education. My name is

4   Rebecca Watts and I serve as Vice President for

5   Western Governors University, a nonprofit, nonpublic,

6   competency-based online university founded in 1997 by

7   a group of bipartisan governors. They came together

8   to create a new model of learning to remove the

9   barriers of time and space that negatively impacted

10 adult working learners. Just as importantly, our

11 founders were committed to creating relevant learning

12 experiences aligned to the skills and expertise

13 needed for the nation's most in-demand careers:

14 health professions, education, information technology

15 and business, ensuring excellent quality while

16 keeping costs as low as possible. At WGU we are

17 honored to serve 1024 students across the five

18 boroughs who are among the 3034 WGU current students

19 enrolled statewide with representation from every

20 county, and we are extremely proud of our 1638 alum

21 in New York City, who are part of our network of 6016

22 Alumni statewide. WGU currently serves 131,490

23 students across the 50 states, territories, and on

24 military bases around the world... US military bases

25

2 around the world. Our alumni network includes

3 288,045 graduates, a number that grows each month.

4   To meet the goals of the founding of the

5 university, our founders knew they had to develop an

6 innovative model, leveraging online technology, while

7 delivering learning in a unique competency-based

8 model that offers each student the ability to

9 accelerate learning at her or his own individual

10 pace. Essential to the WGU model is the ability for

11 students to access faculty and learning resources

12 virtually in an online experience. As is the case

13 for any college or university providing online

14 learning, there are key elements that must be in

15 place to make the learning experience effective.

16 Online learning must be intentionally and carefully

17 designed to leverage the learning modality for

18 optimal student learning. It will not be effective

19 if it is delivered as a recorded or broadcast version

20 of a traditional classroom lecture. Highly effective

21 practices include providing technical support

22 information at the outset of a course and reinforcing

23 it throughout the learning journey, engaging students

24 in learning environments including interaction with

25 peers through discussions and workgroups, breaking

2 learning into smaller segments to establish a pattern

3 of activity and due dates, establishing expectations

4 for online participation, communication and

5 netiquette, demonstrating to students how their

6 learning will apply in real world settings and

7 providing prompt detailed feedback to reinforce key

8 concepts and skill development.

9   While most agree program requirements at WGU are

10 achieved exclusively in the online environment, there

11 are programs-specific site-based requirements for

12 education, nursing and Health Professions majors.

13 WGU is grateful to its many partners in New York for

14 supporting our students as they move through those

15 required field and clinical experiences.

16   I want to call out some highly innovative work

17 we're doing to help address key talent needs across

18 several sectors. WGU has partnered with the United

19 States Department of Education on a pilot program

20 using federal work study funds to support educator

21 paraprofessionals on the pathway to degree attainment

22 and educator licensure. This pilot holds a special

23 promise for the urgent needs in hard-to-staff

24 schools, and to strengthen the talent pipeline of

25 special educators. To address our community's urgent

2 need for nurses, WGU offers a baccalaureate degree in

3 nursing and master's degree programs to help prepare

4 family nurse practitioners, mental health nurse

5 practitioners, and nurse educators, the latter of

6 which can support faculty staffing needs for nursing

7 education programs at community colleges across the

8 state including CUNY and SUNY institutions.

9   As part of our work to strengthen the talent

10 pipeline in tech fields, WGU partners with Per

11 Scholas, a National Information Technology Training

12 Provider based in the Bronx. Committed to equitable

13 access to education, Per Scholas has a mission to

14 advance economic equity through rigorous training for

15 tech careers, and to connect skilled talent to

16 leading businesses. WGU has an articulation

17 agreement in place with Per Scholas that articulates

18 credit toward a baccalaureate degree to learners

19 completing Per Scholas programs and enrolling at WGU.

20   In another exciting partnership related to tech

21 talent, WGU is honored to have received grant funding

22 from Reboot Representation, a national organization

23 committed to doubling the number of black, Latina,

24 and Native American women holding baccalaureate

25 degrees in tech fields by 2025. Reboot

2   Representation's CEO, Dwana Franklin-Davis, is based

3   in New York City, through Reboot's generous grant

4   funding WGU has launched a new initiative, Building

5   Bridges and Breaking Barriers for Women In Tech. We

6   provide scholarships, mentorships, and holistic

7   support to each student in the program that is

8   participating in the initiative. These examples of

9   partnerships and collaboration focus on the needs of

10   learners and the needs of employers, and underscore

11   the power of online learning delivered with

12   intentionality, purpose, and forethought.

13   I thank you for your time for your commitment,

14   and for your vision for New York City's future. I

15   welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you

16   may have.

17   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Is... Is

18   Robert McDonald online. I heard a rumor he is.

19   MR. MCDONALD: Um, hmm. This won't let me.

20   Alright, there we go.

21   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright, we hear you. And

22   now you're muted again.

23   MR. MCDONALD: We'll try one more time. Can you

24   hear me now?

25   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes, we sure can.

2   MR. MCDONALD: All right. Well, thank you so

3 much. Good morning from Boulder, Colorado. My name

4 is Robert McDonald, and I'm the Senior Vice Provost

5 for Online and Extended Education and Dean of

6 University Libraries here at the University of

7 Colorado, Boulder. First off, I would like to thank

8 Chair Dinowitz and the committee members for inviting

9 me here today to provide a first-hand account of some

10 of the online education innovations that we're

11 delivering from CU Boulder, the flagship campus of

12 the University of Colorado system.

13   Because of our limitations and time today, I will

14 jump right into the main online innovations that I

15 want to describe for you. First, I will describe the

16 difference between a traditional master's program and

17 the performance-based admissions process we use in

18 some of our online education programs. In a

19 traditional master's programs students go through a

20 rigorous application process that usually requires

21 transcripts, TOEFL or GRE exam, an application essay,

22 and letters of reference. Those who are accepted can

23 wait up to three to six months to be notified that

24 they are accepted and up to a year for classes to

25 begin, and fees are paid up front and may not always

2   be recoverable if things do not go well for the

3   student in the program. Such as system favors those

4   with money and time, and discourages those who do not

5   fit into the traditional profile of a master's degree

6   candidate. That includes those who take our online

7   master's programs who are working professionals,

8   caregivers, those who need to jumpstart their careers

9   immediately, and those from financially disadvantaged

10   backgrounds. Our performance based pathways for our

11   master's programs seek to include more students who

12   can qualify for admissions and aim to eliminate the

13   fear of rejection and the typical single annual

14   admissions point for those who need our master's

15   level degree programs.

16   Our current three programs that are delivering

17   performance based admissions are MS in electrical

18   engineering, MS in data science, and our ME in

19   engineering management, all take advantage of this

20   performance based admissions process. In addition to

21   this innovation, these three programs are all built

22   to be certificate stackable programs. This means

23   that each program is built on three to four graduate

24   certificates that when combined equal the master's

25   degree in this discipline.

2   What does this mean for the student? It means

3 that the student can start with performance based

4 admissions gateway courses, usually three courses,

5 starting with a single course and can understand what

6 is needed for success in the program. This way, the

7 student only pays for one or two courses at a time

8 and knows by the end of the third course whether they

9 have been admitted to the master's program.

10 Additionally, at each step of three to four courses,

11 the student earns a graduate certificate in a segment

12 of the course of study. An example of this is our

13 graduate certificate in power electronics that makes

14 up our MS in electrical engineering.

15   The point here is that the student can start a

16 course at any point, determine once they're finished

17 with the course whether they want to try to take the

18 course for credit and then determine what their next

19 steps are in the program based on their performance

20 and achievement. Our performance-based degree

21 programs are all taught by our faculty from the

22 University of Colorado Boulder, but they are highly

23 automated and supported by our course facilitators

24 who are often teaching assistants in those programs.

25 This has enabled us to create all three of these

2 programs at a lower cost to the student at $20,000

3 for the entire degree program. This was accomplished

4 through faculty pushing hard.

5   SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6   CHAIR DINOWITZ: Please continue.

7   MR. MCDONALD: Sorry?

8   CHAIR DINOWITZ: Please continue.

9   MR. MCDONALD: Alright. This was accomplished

10 through faculty pushing hard for innovation in these

11 degree programs as well as a partnership with the

12 scaled MOOC platform Coursera.

13   Since we first launched performance based

14 pathways in 2019, we have learned and continue to

15 learn so much about making graduate degree programs

16 available to a broader range of students. Our

17 performance pathways open opportunities for more

18 people to benefit from our degree offerings, and we

19 offer our courses six times a year in eight weeks

20 terms so that students can begin when their schedules

21 permit. This means that the student can get started

22 at any point within an eight week period, and the

23 degree they receive is the same as any of our

24 master's degrees offered in traditional residential

25 programs. This emphasis on building out the best

2 online master's level credentials is based on our

3 transformative faculty-led initiative called Academic

4 Futures, and in other projects and inputs in which

5 our faculty clearly stated that they wanted to build

6 online degree programs that would expand the reach of

7 our residential campus, and that would emphasize the

8 credentials and areas of excellence that our campus

9 is most known for providing. In my written

10 documentation for this testimony, I will provide the

11 committee a link to our academic futures plan, as

12 well as to a recent article in Inside Higher Ed that

13 describes our advances and progress on our current

14 programs. Our University of Colorado system has

15 recently invested funds for the next five years, it

16 will enable our Boulder campus to create a pipeline

17 of master's level degree programs, many of which will

18 work like the ones I've described today. And that

19 will enrich the lives of a broad range of students

20 who want to study with our world-renowned faculty at

21 CU Boulder in an asynchronous online setting.

22   Thank you for this opportunity to speak with your

23 committee today. And I look forward to answering any

24 questions that you might have concerning our online

25 programs at the University of Colorado. Thank you.

2   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you for your

3 testimony, Mr. Ebel. How are you?

4   MR. EBEL: Good.

5   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Good, good.

6   MR. EBEL: I'm just taking out my hearing aids,

7 because the electronic... uh... dissonance occurs

8 between the microphone and these hearing aids. So if

9 you speak just a little louder, I'm fine.

10   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Absolutely. You can hear

11 me?

12   MR. EBEL: Yes.

13   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, great. So what do

14 you believe constitutes a measure of quality in

15 online learning?

16   MR. EBEL: That's a very good question. I think,

17 for most universities, graduation rates are the key

18 to quality. If a university can claim high

19 graduation rates, then they're doing their job,

20 because students who drop out of their online

21 learning program are not achieving what the

22 university intended, and not achieving what the

23 students intended. So my measure of high quality is

24 a high graduation rate.

25

2   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So I will... I think I

3 said in my opening statement, I'm in a little more

4 skeptical camp, having done the online learning

5 in...?

6   MR. EBEL: Well I...

7   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'll be... Well, I'll ask

8 it this way, because I don't want to be mean to any

9 city agency. But the... the... Beyond graduation

10 rate, how do you measure the quality of the education

11 that's being given in the class? And how do the

12 assessments, which you know, determine whether you

13 pass or don't pass the class? How do those compare

14 to the in-person learning?

15   MR. EBEL: Well, if... if a student passes

16 through their entire higher education experience in

17 four years or six years, however long it takes,

18 they've passed all of the barriers and all of the

19 opportunities for the students, and they've done...

20 and the students have done well enough, that a high

21 percentage graduate, that school has done a marvelous

22 job, it has taken students who would ordinarily not

23 have the experience of going to college because they

24 couldn't... if they're working, they can't go to

25 college, or they... there are obstacles of going to

2 college, if they have children that they take care

3 of, if they have jobs. So graduation is the A-

4 number-one end. Of course, all along the way

5 assessments and other responsible ways of determining

6 how good those programs are, are probably equally as

7 good. But they... for me, the number one triumph for

8 higher education and for the student is that they

9 graduate.

10   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Oh, great. I'll say

11 this... Kind of sort of following up on what

12 Councilmember Brewer was talking about, you know,

13 what the opportunities are for sharing best

14 practices. Because as... as was mentioned in CUNY's

15 testimony, a lot of the good online courses are built

16 from the ground up. But we have education systems

17 that, you know, especially during the pandemic

18 flipped over to a sort of online model, and to put it

19 delicately, were encouraging professors or teachers,

20 to pass students, when perhaps they didn't

21 necessarily meet the thresholds. So, you know,

22 perhaps, Miss Watson you can talk about what... You

23 know, what do assessments look like online? And how

24 do we ensure that those are of the same quality and

25

2 rigor and academic standards that we typically expect

3 in in-person learning

4   DR. WATTS: At WGU, how we assure that is that

5 our programs are designed with employers and industry

6 leaders side by side, whether it's any of any of our

7 four schools or colleges. And so those assessments

8 are designed to meet what the expectation of

9 employers are for the skills, competencies,

10 masteries, and expertise that they want people to

11 have on day one on the job. So it's... we don't...

12 we don't just... we don't look at this work in a

13 silo. We collaborate with the people who hire our

14 graduates. And a big measure of success for us is

15 the satisfaction of our employers that hire our

16 grads. We... we survey them every year, and they

17 report high degrees of satisfaction, and answer the

18 question, "Would you hire another WGU grad?"

19 Consistently, they say yes.

20   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And is that... And that's

21 a systemic survey? Or is that sort of anecdotal

22 information you have?

23   DR. WATTS: It's... It is a systemic survey, and

24 we use a third party to administer that for us.

25

2   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Well, that... That

3 sounds... That's great.

4   No, no, I'm serious. You know, it's... it's...

5 You know, as an educator, we love assessments. And

6 we love... that's, that's part of it. That's part of

7 assessing the quality your program.

8   Is there... So your program is working... Are

9 there -- and Mr. Ebel, you could speak to this -- Is

10 there scholarly literature...? What does scholarly

11 literature say about the results of students taking

12 online courses versus non... versus in-person

13 learning?

14   MR. EBEL: Well, I think the difference between

15 online and in person is... has been faced by online

16 learning from the beginning. There has always been a

17 doubt about online as opposed to on campus, as if on

18 campus is the gold standard. But the goal... but on

19 campus is not the gold standard. On campus has

20 failed many, many students. Many, many students drop

21 out on campus. Many, many students have not achieved

22 what they hope to achieve on campus. So to use on-

23 campus as the gold standard against which online is

24 measured, I think is a false way of looking at them.

25 So each... each modality has its own measure. And

2 each modality should be measured by its own

3 achievements. For example, in Western Governors,

4 their achievement standards are by their... their

5 partner employees. I don't think any other... any

6 other on campus school has that as a guideline. So

7 to measure on campus as opposed to online, is not a

8 very wise approach.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So like sort of like a

10 paradigm shift. It's so... You know, we've been

11 doing school one way for a little while, and suddenly

12 the shift online is certainly tough for a lot of us.

13 So, Mr. McDonald, were you met with a lot of

14 resistance internally at CU Boulder in starting... in

15 starting MSEE or your subsequent online degrees?

16 MR. EBEL: Yes, I think it's a good measure, I

17 think, especially in today's economy, when the

18 employers are concerned about the ability of their

19 students to work effectively in industry. I think it

20 is a good measure.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah. And given that

22 paradigm shift, Mr. McDonald, were you met with

23 resistance internally at CU Boulder when you started

24 your programs? We should just make sure to unmute

25 him as well.

2 MR MCDONALD: You know, this is mainly a

3 residential campus. So there are a lot of faculty

4 here that originally... and I would say more pre-

5 pandemic, we're not that interested in online. But

6 I'll tell you, the programs that I just described for

7 you all came from this faculty and their departments.

8 The curriculum comes from the curriculum committee in

9 those departments. And that's what makes... makes

10 them so strong is the strength of our faculty and

11 what they've come up with for these designed-from-

12 the-ground-up online offerings that do follow a lot

13 of the best practices that we heard from CUNY today

14 in setting up universal design, as well as you know,

15 rubrics for learning, and... and as my esteemed

16 colleague said before, it needs to be judged on its

17 own because it is a different thing for a different

18 type of student who still wants that type of graduate

19 degree. And/or the certificates, because I think

20 graduation is a great metric. That's what I want for

21 all my students. But we have found from those

22 degrees, as well as from our Post-Bac degree in

23 computer science, sometimes people just want a few

24 courses in certain areas, like say power electronics,

25

2 and that's what they're looking for in their career.

3 Right.

4   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And so whether you're

5 talking about credit accrual, or as Mr. Ebel

6 suggested, graduation rates, this short term of eight

7 weeks, that starts six times a year: How has that

8 impacted whether, you know, the success criteria, I

9 guess, one of them being graduation rates or credit

10 accrual, or a certification... How has that model

11 impacted those measures of success?

12   MR. MCDONALD: I don't know that we've... we've

13 had our course... you know, our degrees in place long

14 enough to really assess that from the eight week kind

15 of entry point. But what I do know from...

16 anecdotally, from talking to the students in those,

17 is that that helps them because almost all of them

18 are working somewhere full time or part time doing

19 these programs. And it gives them more flexibility

20 rather than it being a whole semester. So that way,

21 if they need to take an eight-week course, and then

22 for the next eight week cycle drop out a minute,

23 because they got family issues or other things with

24 work, they can't... they're not tied up the whole

25

2 semester, and it breaks the year up into more

3 manageable chunks.

4   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And can... And can you

5 just tell us what you mean by the stackability of

6 your master's degree programs? What are the

7 benefits...? What is it, and what are the benefits

8 of a stackable degree program?

9   MR. MCDONALD: Uh, sure. The benefits there are

10 that each of those masters that I just described are

11 made up of three or four graduate certificates. So

12 as I mentioned before, sometimes students will just

13 come for the graduate certificate. But the benefit

14 is, as they move along through those three or four

15 courses, they're obtaining a graduate certificate

16 that they can take back to showcase to their

17 employer, you know, the progress they're making on...

18 on the degree program, but also show them what

19 they're learning in those certificates in those

20 different tracks. And then as you stack those

21 together into three or four graduate certificates,

22 you end up with the full master's degree. And so

23 that's... it's a good point for the students in that

24 they're always taking some kind of credential with

25 them from the program even if they decide not to

2   finish the full master's degree. And that's a key

3   benefit to the student, I think is having the

4   credential along the way.

5   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Um, Ms. Watts,

6   can you tell us more about, you know, the profile of

7   your students like the average age, for example,

8   these typical college students... college-age

9   students, we think right after high school.

10   DR. WATTS: So I'll give you our mean age, which

11 is 34. And as with any measure of central tendency,

12 we have 18-year-olds, and we have 70-year-olds that

13 are graduating from... attending and graduating from

14 WGU. More than 70% of our students come with some

15 college but no baccalaureate degree. Many come from

16 community colleges and... or have... have gotten into

17 the workforce with their associate degree and want to

18 continue to advance in their careers, but can't walk

19 away from that living wage. So more than 70% work

20 full time, are raising families, are community

21 volunteers. So this is very much... because of the

22 asynchronous nature of our model, it fits into the

23 spaces of their lives, by their tenacity and their

24 commitment, and their hard work.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Can I tell you? Between

3 you and Miss Lerner, like all these phrases, UDL

4 measures of central tendency. I feel like I'm

5 back... This is this is great. I love... I love it.

6 So, you know... So... So you have a range of...

7 of ages and experiences. And... So what... What is

8 the cost of tuition? What are the fees... the fees?

9 DR. WATTS: For our undergraduate programs... Let

10 me talk a little bit about our structure, and it's

11 really very different from UC... CU Boulder. I

12 always say that backwards. It's very different. So

13 we have six-month terms, and students can start at

14 the first of any month. So when they meet the

15 admissions requirements, they have to meet it by the

16 15th of the month, and then they can start on that

17 next month. They start a six-month term. We have a

18 flat rate, no-cap tuition for each six month term.

19 It varies a little bit by program but on average,

20 it's $3,700 per six-month term, as many courses as a

21 student can complete in that six-month period and

22 that includes all fees and learning resources. So no

23 books on top of that. No book cost at all on top of

24 that.

25

2   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Sorry, I got scared when

3 you said no books.

4   DR. WATTS: No, we...

5   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: There's a table... By the

6 way, at your local library there's a table... there

7 should be... that says "banned books table" where you

8 can pick up a free book or borrow a free book. So I

9 just had like a little fear.

10   DR. WATTS: All our learning resources are

11 electronic...

12   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: There you go.

13   DR. WATTS: And there is that... that... the fee

14 for the learning resources is included in that

15 average $3,700. For... for a master's degrees, it's

16 a little bit more. It's like $3,850.

17   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And lastly, in line with

18 some of the questions I was asking if CUNY, how do

19 you ensure that students are engaged... Especially

20 those who have a learning disability or need some

21 sort of accommodation, or... And can you talk if

22 your lessons are universally designed to meet the

23 needs of all learners?

24   DR. WATTS: So it's an individual program at WGU.

25 We have a differentiated faculty model. There is one

2   faculty role, graduate-prepared in the discipline,

3   and their sole job is to be a one-on-one mentor for

4   their student. So they spend individual time, at

5   least once a week in a live session with the student,

6   not teaching them courses, helping them plan their

7   program of study, identifying what struggles they may

8   be having.

9   The second faculty role are the course

10   instructors, and they are the folks who teach the

11   actual courses.

12   And then there's a third faculty role that are

13   the evaluators. So neither the mentor nor the course

14   instructor grades the students' work. We have common

15   rubrics across... and we have common syllabi across

16   the university. So every student in every course is

17   meeting the same standard. But how they get there is

18   differentiated an individualized. Course instructors

19   is on demand, one-on-one tutoring time. And we have

20   right now at WGU 1996 students who are being provided

21   accommodations based on their identified

22   disabilities.

23   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to thank... I want

24   to thank you three for coming. You really do bring a

25   lot of expertise. And, you know, I want to thank you

2 for the work that you've done with CUNY in the past.

3 And of course in line with... with the my statement

4 to CUNY, encourage... If there are online models that

5 are working, especially for students who need

6 accommodations, or have disabilities, encourage the

7 continued conversation with the institutions so you

8 could pick up best practices, so they could pick up

9 best practices and really provide a diversity of

10 learning opportunities for our students, and thank

11 you again for coming.

12   Okay, for the next panel, we have Miss Penny

13 Lewis from PSC CUNY, and Joseph Crowley, DPS Dean

14 online education and Dean Berklee College School of

15 Business.

16   And just to make sure, John Skarali[SP?] is not

17 here? No. Okay. And... And I apologize if the

18 pronunciation is incorrect, but Asalimatsu Dimboola.

19 Okay. You may begin.

20   DR. LEWIS: Okay, thank you so much. So thank

21 you, Chairman Dinowitz, and Councilmember Brewer as

22 well for the opportunity to testify here today. I'm

23 Penny Lewis, the Secretary of the Professional Staff

24 Congress, CUNY, and a faculty member at the School of

25 Labor and Urban Studies, and actually a former

2   faculty... our school used to be affiliated with the

3   School of Professional Studies. Although I was

4   always an in person instructor, at SPS, I have taught

5   hybrid courses and have recently taught a class in a

6   program that offers a fully-online certificate.

7   So we have heard from CUNY and see that CUNY is

8   committed to expanding its online degree programs and

9   presence, and we come to you to express our concerns

10   about the possible directions this is already taking,

11   and our sense of some of the best practices which

12   we've also heard about from other people here today

13   that should be in place as any expansion is

14   considered.

15   My written testimony has a lot more details and

16   I'm just going to speak to some of the more general

17   questions and areas of care concern here.

18   First, we are deeply concerned that CUNY will

19   explore expansion of online education as a cost-

20   savings path. When in fact, as I think we've heard

21   about, when done well, online education demands

22   greater investment in faculty training and support,

23   smaller class sizes, technical support, and student

24   supports.

25

2 Further, we're concerned that any investment in

3 online, not negatively impact our critical in-person

4 education, which we believe is the modality that is

5 best-suited to the vast majority of the students that

6 we serve at CUNY, which is not to take away from the

7 very important services that online education gives

8 to many students, which we've also heard about today.

9 And I'll speak a little more about that important

10 role.

11 In general, we feel we need more transparency and

12 consistent consulting that a hearing like this begins

13 to open up, but within the institution itself,

14 between the CUNY administration, governance, and

15 union leaders, concerning the expansion of online

16 programs, and especially the operations of CUNY

17 online, which is a program that we didn't really hear

18 anything about... I don't think we heard anything

19 about today, but it's been our understanding that the

20 CUNY online initiative is the vehicle through which

21 the Online Education at CUNY is expanding at this

22 moment. And we have a lot of specific questions

23 about CUNY online as I know, just the University

24 Faculty Senate, and in the written testimony we have

25 a number of questions that have been developed about

2 | the CUNY online program. So it would be good for us

3 | to learn more about CUNY online and whether or not

4 | that is the vehicle through which online programs are

5 | really expanding. So thank you.

6 | So I'll just say a few more things: For faculty,

7 | prepping online courses takes longer than in person.

8 | It was good to hear that John Jay keeps its course

9 | caps, but many of our start... our university classes

10 | don't. We have people teaching 25, 35, 40, 100 and

11 | hundreds of people in online classes. The one to 12

12 | ratio is actually the one that we have heard is the

13 | best for teaching online. Chair, as you know,

14 | working with students, there's not a one-size-fits-

15 | all model. And as we've heard from our... our friend

16 | at Boulder, that that online education is not

17 | necessarily for everybody.   That it's good for

18 | certain students.

19 | And so we want to make sure that all of our

20 | students succeed. And we want to make sure that

21 | the... there's enough support... the vetting of

22 | students and the support for faculty and courses, so

23 | that it will not erode academic standards and

24 | decrease student learning and success at teaching.

25 |

2   Finally, I'll just say that we recognize that

3 remote work and... I'm sorry, remote education allows

4 students who needed the opportunity to better manage

5 work life issues. So many CUNY students are juggling

6 jobs, child, eldercare, and remote degrees are

7 attractive. At the PSC, we believe these should not

8 be barriers. As you know, in last year's budget, we

9 advocated for free tuition and expanding access to

10 affordable childcare. In a state-wide new deal for

11 CUNY legislation which has been supported by the

12 Council, we are asking for more full time faculty

13 infrastructure investment and greater access to

14 mental health counselors for students. We hope that

15 you and CUNY will address these key issues that we

16 believe are barriers to attending in-person classes

17 in advance of efforts that minimize in-person... in-

18 person teaching. Thank you.

19   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. You may begin.

20   MR. SKARALI[SP?]: Thank you. Not sure if the

21 mic is on now. Thank you. Good morning... Good

22 afternoon, actually now Chair Dinowitz, and

23 Councilmember Brewer, and any other esteemed New York

24 City Council Committee on Higher Education members

25 who may be online. It's a great honor to be here. I

2 am Joseph Skarali[SP?]. And I would like to thank

3 you for your kind invitation to appear before you

4 today in my capacity as Dean for Online Education at

5 Berklee College. Berklee College has a tradition of

6 excellence in online education that spans 24 years.

7 Berklee college first began offering accredited

8 online degrees in 2003. The college first began

9 offering an accredited online MBA program in 2016.

10 As of the fall 2021 semester, 37% of undergraduates

11 were pursuing their degrees entirely online. These

12 include a cohort of online students participating in

13 our honors program, an interdisciplinary seminar

14 based educational opportunity available to high

15 achieving students. Berklee College Online attracts

16 a diverse student body comprised of working parents,

17 grandparents, young adults managing work and studies,

18 and those actively serving in the military. Berklee

19 College's online classes are fully vetted and

20 designed to meet specific learning objectives. There

21 is a high level of investment in quality online

22 course preparation, resources, and technology.

23 Online classes are as vigorous as on site classes,

24 and in some cases, more so, as they require good time

25 management to be successful.

2   While academics are essential support services

3 are also vital to the student experience and success,

4 especially for at-risk student populations. Berklee

5 College students pursuing a degree online have access

6 to the same support services as students who attend

7 on site, including academic advisement, the library,

8 the Center for Academic Success which helps with

9 skills like time management and public speaking,

10 Career Services, personal counseling, and the Office

11 of Military and Veterans Affairs.

12   Online Campus life experiences include online

13 clubs, virtual volunteerism, wellness, and personal

14 development programs, and workshops focusing on

15 student success.

16   In 2020, the Berklee College of Office of Career

17 Services offered more than 150 free programs and

18 events online, including hybrid and virtual career

19 fairs, internship workshops, and webinars with

20 employers and students, interview and resume

21 preparation sessions, networking events, LinkedIn

22 workshops, and seminars on how to work in a remote

23 environment. The continuity of the supports has

24 enabled students and alums to progress along their

25 own chosen career paths through placement

2 opportunities, and virtual internships, and

3 professional employment.

4   One more remark I'd like to make off of my

5 submitted testimony is that online students with

6 disabilities are able to work with either a

7 professional tutor, a coach, or a personal counselor,

8 each day of the week. Coaches help with academic

9 skills, communications, with professors, tutors, and

10 academic staff.

11   I want to again, thank the Committee on Higher

12 Education for the opportunity to appear today and

13 remain at the committee's disposal for any further

14 assistance that may be required.

15   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. So I

16 have two people here from... who can provide two

17 different perspectives. And I know... CUNY

18 professors, and not CUNY, but I'm interested in

19 hearing your perspectives on costs. And what do I

20 mean by that? One: Does the online learning -- this

21 is for both of you, and I'll explain in a sec -- does

22 the online learning in a sense, save money? So for

23 example, if there's a class at 8 am, you don't have

24 to open the building up as early, you don't have

25 to... I don't know... You know, pay whatever

2 employees to clean the room as often or the... the

3 security. And given, if it's a cost saving measure,

4 is it perhaps a solution to the concern of classes

5 being cancelled, where perhaps if there's five

6 students in a class, a campus decides to cancel... to

7 cancel a section. But if there's five students in an

8 online class, the university may decide not to cancel

9 that section.

10   I'll start with you.

11   MR. SKARALI[SP?]: Okay, thank you. So, it is

12 true that, you know, facilities are expensive. So

13 brick and mortar and like you said, cleaning up

14 everything, you know, maintenance and all that are

15 expensive. I can't give you exact figures on the

16 ratios or whatever. But it's also important to

17 understand that when online is done correctly, there

18 is a tremendous investment in IT infrastructure, in,

19 as I was discussing, student services, you know,

20 specialized training for counselors to be able to

21 provide, and for faculty to be able to provide

22 services directly to students in the online modality,

23 as opposed to the on-site modality. So yes, there is

24 less investment necessary, obviously, in facilities

25 maintenance, and all these other issues, heating,

2 cooling, and whatever costs there are, but there's

3 also on the other side, tremendous investment within

4 technology and training and personnel

5   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And from the side of the

6 professors, because I know there's this... We'll

7 talk about some of the other challenges, but I know

8 course cancellation is a real issue for... for

9 professors, right? It's their livelihood, and

10 students are perhaps missing out if a course does not

11 fill up enough. So is this perhaps a solution? Is

12 that something that administration has spoken to the

13 professor's about?

14   DR. LEWIS: Yeah, I mean, speaking as a professor

15 and also from the union, we have not heard that

16 classes are canceled less frequently for small class

17 size, you know, depending on the modality. So there

18 tend to be cancellations just based on the number of

19 people who are enrolled, and it's... irregardless of

20 whether or not it's online or not. At least that's

21 the CUNY policy that I'm familiar with.

22   As far as the kind of ongoing cost savings, I

23 think one of our concerns, and this is about the

24 potentiality for cheapening of the of the educational

25 process. I mean, I think we have excellent online

2   courses at CUNY. So I do not want to take away from

3   that. But we are concerned that it's a model that

4   invites a kind of mechanization and reproduction,

5   that you could have a course that's developed, it's

6   fully developed, somebody is assigned to it, they

7   have very little capacity to change it, they could be

8   assigned to it at a lower pay, at a lower rate, to

9   teach it, and it therefore, the full professor or the

10   professor who designs a class who constantly remakes,

11   the class, who is involved in updating a class can be

12   written out of the equation, and you can have a labor

13   cost, you know, significantly lowered by having kind

14   of rote coursework. And we don't want CUNY to go

15   down that path. That's just one road that we're

16   concerned about in terms of possible cost savings.

17   And also to the question of brick and mortar, you

18   know, our campuses are... need incredible investment.

19   And we need to make them as fantastic as possible for

20   the students who still succeed or better at in-person

21   classes. It was great that our colleague from John

22   Jay shared the information they have, and we don't

23   seem to have data from CUNY as a whole, but in

24   general, students are, you know, do better in person,

25   from what the little information that we have,

2 although we have many particular students who do

3 excellently online, clearly. And we need that

4 investment in the brick and mortar. And the extent

5 to which we become more and more online, the extent

6 to which investing in brick and mortar and investing

7 in our campuses could possibly fall off.

8   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, you know, I...

9 During CUNY's testimony, I think... Well, it's good

10 to know PSC and is interested in data, as well,

11 because a lot of our university system is, you

12 know... our community colleges, right? And the and

13 the other four-year institutions that aren't...

14 PSP... SPS and... and John Jay, and, you know, I'm

15 looking forward to that to that data. But I guess

16 CUNY... I guess, PSC doesn't have their own data that

17 they collect. But, anecdotally Have you heard

18 from... from yourself or other professors about

19 student outcomes, as it relates to online learning,

20 versus the on campus learning, and on campus degree

21 programs, that actual outcomes?

22   DR. LEWIS: I mean, I can... I can speak to what

23 our colleague from John Jay shared, you know, which

24 shows... and she described it as this is pre-

25 pandemic, and the rates of the drop, withdrawal, fail

2 incomplete rates, are higher for online classes

3 within the John Jay program since 2014 to 2019. She

4 shared that with us. I don't have access to CUNY-

5 wide, and we do have the experience of the pandemic,

6 where we know, and I think it was exceptional, you

7 know, where online classes, you know, were incredibly

8 hard for large numbers of our students and our

9 enrollment is quite low. Or... It's not quite low.

10 I don't want to overstate it, but we have, you know,

11 decreasing enrollment at CUNY, and I can't speak to

12 the cause and effect of that, but I will say

13 anecdotally, that we hear from many students that

14 they are so glad that they can be back in person, the

15 ones who can, and we have students who are so happy

16 they can still be remote, but overall, we have fewer

17 students enrolled. And I think that we need to be

18 investing in all of our educational platforms, but

19 make sure that any investments we have in online

20 doesn't hurt the in-person, and that we make a fully

21 robust online program. So that the students do have

22 success rates in both programs, you know, equally.

23   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, I'm going to... Did

24 you... Did you have something to add?

25

2   MR. SKARALI[SP?]: Just the going back to the

3 question of canceling classes. There's different

4 reasons. Of course, a low enrollment is a big factor

5 in canceling a class. But also as far as our

6 operations go, the biggest factor is, are there

7 graduating students in that class that need that

8 class? Did they need to graduate? And if so then...

9 and we have no other options for those students, then

10 those students that class will not be canceled and

11 we'll run it because those students you know, we want

12 to see them graduate. We would never want to see a

13 student be delayed. So that's, you know, is it more

14 expensive to run a class with only a few students in

15 it. Yes, it is. But to have them cross the

16 graduation stage, that's the most important priority

17 for us. And also, as far as the outcomes of online

18 versus on-site, you know, we offer a mix of

19 modalities. So whether it's on-site, we have campus

20 right here on 43rd Street in New York City, and most

21 of our students take a mix of classes, whether they

22 be on site or online. And then also some take hybrid

23 classes, where they come in for, you know, either

24 part of the class time on site every other week, or

25 whether it's part on site and online each week. And

2   since we're a Career College, we have a lot of

3   specialized accreditors. And those accreditors, most

4   of them are very focused on outcomes assessment. So

5   we have to make sure that our assessments in the on-

6   site and the online are the same, and that the

7   learning objectives are the same, and the same

8   material is covered. So, you know, we do have a

9   focus on that issue. We also have very sophisticated

10 dashboards that analyze grade distribution, grading

11 online, versus on-site, versus hybrid. So we keep

12 track of all of those issues that we also keep track

13 of outcomes assessment.

14   DR. LEWIS: Chair, if I may. Just one quick

15 thing on outcomes: I'm looking for the quote here.

16 But you know, studies have shown at least for

17 community colleges, that students have really good

18 graduation rates when they have more than zero and

19 less than 25% of their courses available to them

20 online, because it gives them that kind of

21 flexibility. But the in-person... the combination,

22 which is you know, the mixed modalities, that CUNY as

23 a whole offers, is really key. And we want to make

24 sure that our degree programs allow for, you know...

25 encourage that kind of mixed modality so that we have

2 online, but that students are also there in person,

3 because the in person really sustains them through to

4 graduation.

5   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Alright. I remain

6 concerned about... or interested in, about, you know,

7 assessments and how we are assessing the quality of

8 these programs and the quality of the education that

9 the students receive in these programs.

10   I'm going to turn it over to my colleague,

11 Councilmember Brewer,

12   COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I

13 want to pick up on the Chairs excellent suggestion on

14 the data. And I know that PSC can't do it by

15 yourself. But I think we should all be urging CUNY

16 to do it. Because when you're talking... I mean, I

17 too taught at Hunter, and, you know, I remember

18 during the pandemic, you know, my Zoom crashed, and

19 then the students had one, it was so embarrassing

20 that they were able to pick up where I could not.

21 But what I'm trying to say is, it was very

22 challenging, not having seen anybody. So I think the

23 mixture of in person and zoom -- if that's what the

24 class is about -- makes sense, and if that works. I

25 mean, we do need much more of an analysis as to

2 whether online works. Does it work as a hybrid, as

3 you're doing at Berklee? Does it work? Professional

4 I think does work. I'm a big supporter of SBS. But

5 it's a unique situation. They know what they're

6 getting into before they start.

7   So my question to you at PSC -- and thank you,

8 PSC for everything -- is what do you think? What

9 kind of data should be collected? What kind of

10 analysis should be done? Where do you... I mean, I

11 have a feeling this is going to continue.

12   Let me give an example: Who knows why there are

13 fewer students at CUNY. But one of them is people

14 getting jobs during the pandemic. I know on Staten

15 Island -- I mean, what do I know about Staten Island

16 -- except Amazon has pulled a whole bunch of people

17 to their warehouse who were at CUNY. I know that for

18 a fact. And why shouldn't, you know, Amazon be

19 paying (they should) for classes at CUNY for

20 students? Maybe hybrid? Maybe online? I mean, just

21 as an example, I know that's been discussed. So some

22 of these companies that are employing young people

23 who could be at CUNY, and should be getting a

24 graduate or undergraduate degree, to me should be

25

2 supporting the university and the student, and then

3 that supports the company.

4   But what I'm trying to say is, how are we

5 going... How do you think we should be collecting the

6 data? And how should we be looking positively on the

7 future of the campuses? Maybe not PSP, because they

8 have a unique situation, but elsewhere, I just think

9 we're going to be doing more online, for better for

10 worse. So I've just would love your thoughts, as

11 somebody who's, you know, on the ground,

12   DR. LEWIS: Thank you for asking. I think that

13 there's a lot of studies... There a lot of studies

14 that have been happening over the past couple of

15 decades, and obviously many more studies that are,

16 you know, underway. And so the more in general that

17 we can learn from what all the institutions -- and

18 we're already hearing from some -- to compare like

19 best practices and outcomes. So... So having readily

20 available that work, and I know a lot of the folks at

21 CUNY are following a lot of that. But... So

22 questions about class size. Questions about faculty

23 to student ratios. You know, questions about the

24 types of classes that, you know, if there are types

25 of classes that are better or worse. I mean, we know

2 that there are certain fields that lend themselves to

3 online more than others. But in holistic ways, I

4 think also questions within CUNY, we could look at

5 about, you know, the grades that students are getting

6 between the two, the extent to which students

7 progress from, you know, lower level to higher level

8 classes in the same subject and how they do in second

9 level classes after introductory classes in their

10 online classes. Right? So the outcomes in terms of

11 their growth, obviously, the DWFI numbers, the drop,

12 withdrawal, fail and incomplete numbers across the

13 system. All of these, I think... And then, of

14 course, the graduation rates, as we're talking about

15 before. I would think that a lot of these numbers

16 would be largely available now, although not within a

17 central database, but that each CUNY School would

18 have access to these.

19   And then also, like the differences between small

20 class sizes and bigger class sizes, because we have

21 comparative data within CUNY, where we have some

22 schools that have 25-person limits, and we have some

23 schools that have 40-person limits, is there a

24 difference in the outcome?

25

2 COUNCILMEMBER BREWER: Thank you so much. I'm

3 hoping that, Mr. Chair, we could send a letter to

4 CUNY at the follow up with that excellent list of

5 "Where's the data", if we're going into more online,

6 which I have a feeling we are, every single one of

7 what you just suggested has to be taken into account.

8 There's nothing... I can't even imagine an online

9 course with 100 people. Nobody's going to learn a

10 thing. And people using their cell phones when they

11 can't see anybody else. Anyway, you get... That

12 will be a really excellent list. Thank you very

13 much.

14 DR. LEWIS: Yeah, and I should say that for the

15 classes that I've heard about that are online at

16 those sizes, like Hunter and I think at Brooklyn,

17 I've heard, you know, there's... there are teaching

18 assistants, and I mean, it's not one person, but I do

19 think that it requires a lot of support.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you to

21 the panel. Thank you, Councilmember Brewer. Before

22 I call up the last panel, is there anyone here or

23 anyone online who is interested in testifying? If

24 you are online and interested in testifying, please

25 use the raise hand function.

2   And for our next... for our last panel, Anthony

3   Picyano and Shawn O'Reilly from Pace University.

4   Both are on Zoom.

5   DR. PICCIANO: Can you hear me?

6   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You may begin.

7   DR. PICCIANO: Thank you. I want to thank your

8   committee for this invitation. I'm sorry, I meant to

9   be there in person, but last week I was tested

10 positive for COVID. And I'm still suffering from flu

11 like symptoms. My voice may crack a bit. So I

12 apologize. I would have preferred to be there in

13 person, but I appreciate the opportunity to do this

14 on Zoom. I know I only have three minutes. So I'm

15 going to be quick. And I'm going to talk in my... my

16 briefest South Bronx accent, where I was born and

17 raised. But I... I'm going to dismiss what was my

18 kind of formal presentation, because I heard a lot of

19 provocative things here this morning. And I think I

20 would like to respond to them.

21 Much of what was discussed had to do with what's

22 going on now, although I recall that your... your the

23 title of this session was "The past, the present and

24 the future." And I think we need to talk a little...

25 I'd like to talk a little bit about the past.

2 Because we don't understand how we got here all aways

3 and there was a lot of discussion of how the pandemic

4 kind of changed everything, not just for higher

5 education, but for the whole world.

6   But I started teaching online in 1996. And I was

7 very fortunate to receive a lot of funding from the

8 Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, not just for me, but for

9 the whole CUNY system. We had several million

10 dollars in grants, and we continued to receive

11 funding until 2013.

12   It was a wonderful time, particularly the first

13 five or six years because anytime we had any kind of

14 success, it was something important. And my faculty

15 colleagues were very dubious about the handful of

16 people who were doing this at the beginning. But

17 within, I would say, five or six years with a lot of

18 training and support, we had thousands of faculty and

19 CUNY faculty, literally taking workshops on how to

20 teach online. I think that was a very important

21 period of development.

22   Other things I've been involved with: I was one

23 of the founders of the Online Learning Consortium.

24 That's an international consortium of 900 colleges

25 that promote quality and online learning. It is

2 now... It is now called the Online Learning

3 Consortium, originally called the Sloan Consortium.

4 I've been involved with a number of faculty

5 development programs throughout the country,

6 including Berklee college and... and Western

7 Governors University over the years.

8   But when I'd like to say and I think the real

9 thrust, and we started getting into it a little bit

10 in the last panel, I think that the... the first

11 couple of panels focused entirely on fully online

12 programs and to some degree, fully online courses.

13   At CUNY fully online programs enroll thousands of

14 students, and I think the... the two models you had,

15 surely SPS and John Jay College are fine models to

16 look at. But we have hundreds of thousands of

17 students at CUNY who are not taking fully online

18 programs, and are not taking fully online courses.

19   SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

20   DR. PICCIANO: And for them... And for them, the

21 real model is the blended, or the hybrid model. And

22 I would say that, particularly, we were evolving to

23 the blended model. And we have accelerated towards

24 that because of the pandemic. And my sense is that

25

2 we have become a blended University, not just CUNY,

3 but many throughout higher education.

4   Every aspect of administration, research, and

5 teaching is now affected by some aspect of

6 technology. And if you want to concentrate on

7 teaching and learning, the blending model is is very,

8 very well developed, it is well understood. And you

9 asked several times -- I think was very astute of you

10 to ask questions about outcomes -- probably the most

11 significant study done on this was done by Barbara

12 Means heavily funded by the United States Department

13 of Education 2013, where she looked at... it was a

14 meta-analysis. She looked at 50 studies and compared

15 outcomes of online versus in person, our conclusion

16 was that there was no significant difference between

17 those two. The only significant difference in effect

18 sizes was for the blended model. And I would dare

19 say that for CUNY, that is the model that should be

20 invested in and developed significantly.

21   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. If you can

22 wrap it up, that would be great. Thank you.

23   DR. PICCIANO: Okay. And I would just say for

24 the future, as you pursue funding or other kinds of,

25

2 of support for CUNY, please do not ignore the blended

3 model. Thank you.

4   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. And

5 Shawn O'Reilly from Pace University.

6   DR. O'RILEY: Thank you.

7   My name is Shawn O'Reilly and good morning

8 Councilmembers and thank you for giving me the

9 opportunity to speak to you today.

10   I am responsible for... My primary role at Pace

11 University is to oversee strategy planning,

12 operations and assessment of online learning across

13 our campuses and locations. As you may know, Pace

14 University is a private, nonprofit comprehensive

15 university with campus locations in Manhattan,

16 Pleasantville, on White Plains. Pace has served

17 citizens of New York City since its founding in 1906,

18 has helped generations of New York City residents

19 achieve their degree... dream of a college degree.

20 Our motto is Opportunitas. It promises that we will

21 be at the forefront of creating opportunity for our

22 students and community.

23   A 2017 study by Opportunity Insights at Harvard

24 University writes "Pace University is the first in

25 the nation amongst four-year private institutions for

2 upward economic mobility, based on students who enter

3 college at the bottom fifth of the income

4 distribution, and ended up at the top fifth." At

5 Pace, we believe that delivering on relevant high

6 quality educational experiences via a variety of

7 modalities and formats fits our opportunity-focused

8 mission. Pace has a significant history with

9 distance education in New York. In its early years

10 Pace offered correspondence courses for students who

11 could not intended person. Pace was a pioneer in

12 online learning in New York, offering one of the

13 first fully online degree programs in the state, and

14 assisting in writing some early regulation of policy

15 for the Department of Education.

16   In recent years Pace has offered... has

17 significantly expanded its online programs,

18 enrollment and support from faculty and students.

19 Pace now enrolls nearly 700 students in fully online

20 degree programs and certificates in over 20

21 individual online programs across University. Five

22 of our online programs are currently ranked in the

23 top 50 nationally by US News and World Report. Our

24 success rate is the percentage of students who

25 started a program that are still enrolled, or

2 graduated from online students, is typically above

3 75%. The average online student at Pace is in their

4 early 30s, has some previous higher education

5 experience, typically is working full time, and

6 likely paying for a full degree programs themselves.

7   Challenges and opportunities for online higher

8 education in New York City: Challenges include

9 flexibility and schedule modality. New York City

10 residents have the same needs for flexible remote

11 learning opportunities as any other part of the

12 country. Just because we live in a dense urban

13 community, that doesn't... that doesn't mean that

14 students don't have the same work-life challenges

15 that other students around the country have:

16 commuting to campus two or three nights a week from

17 one part of the city the other still takes... can

18 still take an hour-plus time each way. So having the

19 opportunities to study on schedules and locations

20 that are most convenient is still very important to

21 these working adults.

22   Financing: Online students are most mostly part

23 time working adults, and mostly study at a part time

24 pace. This limits the kind of amounts of pay that

25 they qualify for. Tap and Pell Grants are

2   significantly less for students that study less than

3   12 credits, typically four courses a semester, and

4   other forms of aid like the GI bill for veterans, so

5   many types of merit aid require full time study to

6   achieve the maximum benefit.

7   The digital divide: Access to internet,

8   hardware, and software...

9   SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10   DR. O'RILEY: ...is still a challenge for many

11   residents. All the latest and tech innovations are

12   meaningless without the ability to access a course

13   remotely. A student's ability to have consistent

14   access to technology, internet is important for many

15   online students, and quality control. Online

16   learning has advanced significantly in the past few

17   years. Emerging technologies, improved online

18   pedagogy and increasingly sophisticated experiences

19   that can replicate or even improve upon traditional

20   classroom experiences. But quality for those

21   experiences can vary greatly between courses,

22   programs, and colleges.

23   Opportunities: Delivering high quality and

24   online education for residents... New York City

25   residents may help them save time and money earning

2 their degree, not spending time on the train or in

3 traffic commuting back and forth in class to complete

4 their work on their schedule can be meaningful.

5 There are significant pandemic effects: Because

6 of the pandemic more and more working adults are

7 seeking online and graduate professional development

8 opportunities. Sometime in the near future, it may

9 be that the vast majority of these programs

10 nationwide will be offered fully online. Traditional

11 age students have gotten more accustomed to online

12 learning through the pandemic. While their first

13 choice for traditional age students may be to study

14 in person, occasionally online courses may help them

15 complete their degree.

16 And finally, digital microcredentials and faculty

17 support for online learning: Pace now offers credit

18 bearing and non-credit microcredential badges for

19 smaller, more tailored professional development

20 experiences. Many of these badge programs are

21 offered online, and the earning credential can share

22 it can be shared and distributed online through

23 social media.

24 Faculty support for online learning: Every week,

25 new technology and development emerges that helps

2 improve online teaching pedagogy, best practices, and

3 uses of emerging technologies. Many of these

4 technologies can be significantly expensive and

5 difficult to implement more funding and support for

6 colleges that want to produce high end digital

7 materials for online programs with ease.

8   In summary, the pandemic has certainly

9 accelerated an already fast evolution for Online

10 Learning in Higher Education, you're seeing

11 significantly more interest in online learning

12 modalities from students, faculty in the general

13 community.

14   Thank you for your opportunity to speak to you

15 today.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. So I just want

17 to get to your last point you made about new emerging

18 technologies. How big of an issue is access to

19 hardware, software, and the internet for the students

20 and who can help solve that problem for New Yorkers?

21 DR. O'RILEY: It's a significant issue. And I

22 think the pandemic really was something that... that

23 for us at pace, I think it really opened our eyes to

24 the challenges that students have accessing digital

25 materials and online resources. Many, many students

2 are trying to do school off their phone. And so we

3 would see students sitting in a living room, on their

4 phone trying to complete their coursework or view the

5 zoom. If they're not in a part of the city, or part

6 of the region that has affordable internet access,

7 they're probably doing it off of cell phone

8 connection, which can be inconsistent, and certainly

9 make the ability to do meetings like this really

10 difficult.

11   So, you know, programs that the city offers for

12 students either go someplace and access, high quality

13 internet connections, or the ability for areas to get

14 access to consistent high quality internet is, I

15 think, really important, not just for higher ed, but

16 for the city in general. But certainly, you know,

17 having students try to take the classes at a

18 Starbucks or in a quiet area of the public library

19 can make it more difficult for students to complete

20 their studies.

21   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. And you said

22 that in the near future, it may be that the vast

23 majority of graduate professional development

24 opportunities nationwide, are going to be online. Is

2 that... Is that the direction in which Pace is

3 headed as well?

4   DR. O'RILEY: Well, certainly we're seeing out of

5 the pandemic a much greater interest in our online

6 programs going in, and I know from my colleagues in

7 the region and around the country that there's been a

8 really spiked interest in studying a lot. Some of

9 the fields in graduate education already are

10 approaching or passing 50% total enrollment in online

11 education. Things like criminal justice that John

12 Jay talked about earlier, educational programs are,

13 if not majority online students then then certainly a

14 significant part of the total graduate school

15 population. And it's because it's working adults who

16 are typically taking those degrees, and I think

17 people through the last couple of years have said, if

18 I have the ability to complete a degree in the

19 modality that makes most sense for me, completed from

20 my own home, there's just a significant convenience

21 factor that's pushing them to online programs versus

22 coming on campus and doing things in person.

23   CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. I want to

24 thank this panel. This was the final panel. And I

25 want to thank you everyone who testified today,

2 including CUNY, and for the information they shared,

3 for the work that everyone here is doing from the

4 professor's to the other universities to CUNY to the

5 students. We look forward to getting more of the

6 data that we requested here and working with

7 Councilmember Brewer to request other data.

8   It's important that as these programs are built,

9 that they are built from the ground up with UDL,

10 Universal Design for Learning, in mind to meet the

11 needs of all learners, and that they are constantly

12 being evaluated and assessed with not just experts in

13 the field, but recognizing that those experts include

14 professors, and students, and the employer. So

15 these, you know, these... these degrees and these

16 certifications are supposed to help.

17   And we also look forward to hearing more about

18 the collaboration within CUNY that they are doing to

19 share best practices with... with the schools and the

20 campuses inside and outside the system.

21   Thank you again for everyone who attended. And

22 for everyone who testified today. The hearing is now

23 adjourned.

24   [GAVEL]

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

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Date _____10/05/2022_____