

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION

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February 27, 2024
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HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Eric Dinowitz,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Higher Education

Rita Joseph,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Education

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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Gale A. Brewer
Oswald Feliz
James Gennaro
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Shahana Hanif
Kamillah Hanks
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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good afternoon. This is a
4 microphone check for the Committee on Education
5 jointly with Higher Education located in the
6 Committee Room, recording done by Pedro Lugo.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet please. Good evening
8 and welcome to the New York City Hybrid Hearing on
9 the Committee on Education joint with the Committee
10 on Higher Ed. At this time, please silence all
11 electronic devices. Please, at no time do not
12 approach the dais. If you have any questions, please
13 kindly raise your hand and one of us the Sergeant at
14 Arms will kindly assist you.

15 Thank you for your kind cooperation. Chairs, we
16 are ready to begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: [GAVEL] Good afternoon.
18 I'm Council Member Eric Dinowitz, Chair of the
19 Committee on Higher Education. Welcome to our joint
20 hearing with the Committee on Education Chaired by
21 Council Member Rita Joseph.

22 Today's Oversight Hearing is on Streamlined
23 College Acceptance of New York City Public High
24 School Graduates. We're going to be discussing a
25 program that CUNY started last year and that has
great potential both to serve our high school

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3 students better and to grow the enrollment at our
4 CUNY institutions.

5 Let me offer some background. At least ten
6 states and their public college systems have opened
7 their doors to high school students in their states
8 in a variety of ways. From the State of Idaho which
9 adopted the nation's first direct admissions program
10 in 2015 by admitting all high school graduates to its
11 public higher education institutions to the very
12 popular flagship university of Texas at Austin, which
13 in this academic year automatically admitted the top
14 six percent of graduating high school classes in
15 Texas to the new law signed last week by Wisconsin
16 Governor Tony Evers legislating that the well
17 respected flagship university of Wisconsin at Madison
18 must accept all Wisconsin high school students who
19 finish in the top five percent of their graduating
20 classes. And of the other university of Wisconsin
21 system colleges must admit students who finish in the
22 top ten percent.

23 We are looking forward to conversing with a
24 special guest at today's hearing. Phong Yang, the
25 Associate Vice President for Strategic Enrollment
Management at California State University Fresno.

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3 Vice President Yang's Directed Mission Program
4 remarkably starts with ninth graders. In our last
5 legislative session, our committees examine some
6 outstanding programs that can work only when CUNY and
7 the DOE cooperate and collaborate.

8 First, we looked at CUNY's array of college
9 preparation initiatives for middle and high school
10 students and how they improved the status quo for
11 everyone involved. Then, we looked at the New York
12 State seal of biliteracy, which recognizes and
13 appropriately rewards high school students skills in
14 world languages and how those students can also be
15 rewarded when they bring those skills to CUNY.

16 I would add that since that hearing, we passed
17 two resolutions related to the seal biliteracy and we
18 are of course hopeful that the DOE and CUNY will
19 continue collaborating for the seal of biliteracy
20 tool and award students credits for this seal that
21 they've earned.

22 Today, we will examine one more joint effort
23 between CUNY and the DOE. Getting our high school
24 students transitioned onto our CUNY community college
25 campuses as they are getting ready to graduate and
26 doing that as efficiently and effectively as

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3 possible. We are looking forward to hearing from our
4 witnesses today the details of the current program
5 and the plans for the future of that program. We are
6 also interested in their response to Governor
7 Hochul's proposal and our State of the State Address
8 to expand SUNY's current program of accepting
9 students at SUNY colleges. The governors proposed
10 expansion would admit New York State students in a
11 top ten percent of their graduating classes,
12 automatically to four years SUNY campuses.

13 Now, I want to acknowledge my colleagues who have
14 joined who are present Council Members Louis,
15 Narcisse, Hanks, Krishnan, Marte, Gutiérrez, and
16 Hanif. I would also like to thank Adam Staropoli, my
17 Director of Legislation, my Chief of Staff Jenna
18 Klaus, Sahar Moazami the Committees Counsel, Regina
19 Paul the Committees Policy Analyst and Carolina Gil
20 the Committees Principal Financial Analyst.

21 I would now like to invite Chair Joseph to give
22 her opening statement.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Dinowitz and
24 thank you for inviting the Committee on Education to
25 join Higher Education for this very important hearing
topic. I'm Rita Joseph, Chair of the Education

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3 Committee. Thank you to everyone who's planning to
4 testify today. I'm very much looking forward to
5 hearing your testimony. Chair Dinowitz covered a lot
6 in his opening remarks so I will be brief.

7 A college education prepares students both
8 intellectually and socially for a thriving career in
9 adult life. Nearly 60 percent of New York City
10 public school graduates attend college choosing CUNY
11 and nearly 80 percent of first-time freshman at CUNY
12 are New York City public school graduates. So, close
13 collaboration between New York City public schools
14 and CUNY is essential to continued success of our
15 students and our city.

16 As a forever educator I was thrilled when CUNY
17 announced its automatic acceptance program because
18 I've seen first hand the obstacles students encounter
19 in pursuit of their education. An automatic
20 acceptance program that encourages students to
21 continue the academic journey beyond high school has
22 been long overdue for our students and I look forward
23 to exploring how New York City public schools and
24 CUNY can enhance their collaboration to ensure smooth
25 transition from high school to college.

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3 I am particularly interested in learning more
4 about the implementation of this years automatic
5 response program and how it was communicated to New
6 York City public school students, especially our most
7 vulnerable student population. I'm also interested
8 in learning about the future of CUNY's automatic
9 acceptance program and how it can expand to
10 incorporate best practices from jurisdictions Council
11 Member Dinowitz mentioned earlier. Thank you to the
12 Committee staff as well as my own staff, Chief of
13 Staff Juvanie Piquant, Deputy Chief of Staff Joel
14 Desouve, Chantel SeFlore(SP?) Legislative Fellow.
15 Thank you for the work they put in today's hearing.

16 I also would like to acknowledge; okay you've
17 acknowledged everyone. Now, I'll pass it on to - now
18 I'll turn it over to Chair Dinowitz to administer the
19 oath.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Chair Joseph. I
21 do also want to acknowledge we've been joined
22 remotely by Council Members Schulman and Gennaro.
23 I'd like to remind everyone who wishes to testify in
24 person that you must fill out a witness slip, which
25 is located at the desk of the Sergeant at Arms near
the entrance of the room. Please fill out the slip

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2 even if you have already registered in advance that
3 you will be testifying in person today.

4 To allow as many people as possible to testify,
5 testimony will be limited to three minutes per
6 person. Whether you are testifying in person or on
7 Zoom. I'm also going to ask my colleagues to limit
8 their questions and comments to five minutes. Please
9 note that witnesses who are here in person will
10 testify before those who are signed into the Zoom
11 webinar.

12 Now, before turning to our witnesses from CUNY
13 and the DOE, I would like to invite our guests, Vice
14 President Yang to offer his remarks. He is with us
15 on Zoom all the way from Fresno. Welcome Vice
16 President Yang.

17 PHONG YANG: Good afternoon colleagues, Council
18 Members, Chairs, it's a pleasure to join you on this
19 very important meeting. My name is Phong Yang, I
20 serve as the Associate Vice President for strategic
21 enrollment at Fresno State. We're one of the 23 CSU
22 campuses in the State of California and back in the
23 fall 2023, we started a program called Bulldog Bound.
24 Bulldog Bound is in a direct admission, guaranteed
25 admissions from high schools directly to Fresno State

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3 and part of the program, these are the key features I
4 just wanted to highlight. It is a program that
5 requires a commitment from the university, Fresno
6 State. The school districts, the students and the
7 parents. So, these are the four components and we
8 start the program enrolling students as early as the
9 11th grade all the way through the 12th grade and
10 these students can sign up in any grade level and
11 they are following specific curriculum depending on
12 their grade level.

13 What the program does is it provides a clear and
14 tangible pathway to Fresno State. It does guarantee
15 admission to Fresno State but that is for lack of
16 better word, the icing on the cake. Behind the
17 program is really the activities and the programming
18 and the building of the sense of belonging for these
19 students.

20 As early as 11th grade, we look at their, you know
21 whether they are on track for Fresno State and we
22 offer them a preadmission package at that time and
23 then in the fall semester of their senior year, then
24 they'll pride at Fresno State as a student and they
25 get automatically admitted.

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3 Then as they sign up as early as the 9th grade,
4 these students get into a data base. We give them a
5 Fresno State ID, the same ID that they will be
6 utilizing when they apply to Fresno State. They will
7 get an ID card which provides them access to our own
8 library. It also provides them discounts to our
9 sporting events as well.

10 And then along with the program, the students
11 participate in many colleges and success preparation
12 activities at their campus and also on our campus.
13 Part of the program is that they build, they have a
14 campus experience at Fresno State. Along with that
15 with activities for the students, we also provide
16 parent engagement. Meaning our students are first
17 generation, so over 65 percent of our student will
18 attend Fresno for generations so they will understand
19 the need for the parents to for their parents to be
20 for them as well. While informing the students about
21 the things that we are teaching their students.

22 And then starting next year, we also are looking
23 at dual enrollment, which will allow these students
24 to take courses at Fresno State. Along with the
25 program, the students who participate can also
participate – can also be eligible for our new

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3 Bulldog Scholarship as well. And what it allows us
4 to do, what the program really allows us to do is
5 really create a channel for collaboration between our
6 Fresno State, different entities at Fresno State not
7 just enrollment at departments but there is
8 departments at Fresno State, academic to technology
9 services, to enrollment management but also it opens
10 the door for our off-campus community stakeholders
11 like the school districts to the high school
12 counselors all the way down to the students and the
13 parents. So that in a nutshell is the highlight of
14 you know the key features of the Bulldog Bound
15 program.

16 Currently, we have 34 high school districts, 34
17 school districts that have a sign at MOU at Fresno
18 State that equates to a total of 81 high school
19 students, 81 high schools and as since August of
20 2023, we have 5,000 students sign up and out of those
21 5,000, 47 percent are seniors and we have 18 percent
22 juniors, 19 percent sophomores, 14 percent freshman
23 who have signed up for the program.

24 The impact of the programs, we can see right away
25 that some permeating pack is that some school
districts, we used to link in terms of school for

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3 Fresno State as low as 9th or 10th. They are now
4 number two in the number of students registered for
5 Bulldog Bound. So, those are more of our rural area
6 schools, so that really definitely provides access to
7 the students. Also, you know our, we have over 1,700
8 students who have applied through Bulldog Bound and
9 we have an admission rate of 98 percent right now for
10 these students.

11 So, those are preliminary reports in terms of
12 like just a return on the investment being made with
13 the program. We also are seeing a shift in the
14 demographics of participants as well. Fresno State
15 has a 60 percent of enrollment, Fresno State are
16 Hispanic but participants who have applied in the
17 Bulldog Program, for example, Hispanic, the Hispanic
18 population, it makes up 74 percent of our applicants
19 in Bulldog Bound. So, definitely a shift as well in
20 the demographics and access in those school
21 districts.

22 So, I will pause there. I think that I will open
23 it up to questions if the Community Members have any
24 questions at this time.

25 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, just a few and then
if anyone else has questions, certainly go. I do

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3 want to acknowledge we've been joined by Council
4 Members Feliz and Sanchez. I'm anxious to know some
5 of the factors that led you to create this program in
6 the first place and how this program and why you
7 started in 9th grade. Why are you giving the ID's,
8 the discounts. All of these decisions you're making
9 and how they differ from some of the other models
10 that exist throughout the country.

11 PHONG YANG: Great question and I should have
12 shared that in the beginning but Fresno States is
13 located right in the center of California. We are
14 within 120-mile radius. The only public accessible
15 university. And so most of the students that we
16 serve in the four counties, which is Fresno, Kings,
17 Madera, and Tulare counties, these students are first
18 generation. They are also all sorts of social,
19 economic background and many of them cannot leave the
20 area. As a matter of fact, among the 23 campuses in
21 the State of California, us as one of the 23 PSU, we
22 line number two in terms of first-time freshman who
23 only apply to one of the CSU campuses.

24 So, almost percent of our first-time freshman
25 applicants only apply to one CSU and that's us. In
terms of transfer applicants, we rank number one in

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3 the 23 campuses with almost 45 percent of transfer
4 students applying uniquely to adjust Fresno State.
5 So, as you can see from this data, is that most of
6 the students in our region cannot leave or don't want
7 to leave the region. 80 percent of the students who
8 enroll in Fresno State are from these four counties
9 and 87 percent of all enrollees of Fresno State are
10 within the central valley which is enabling some
11 counties to these four counties. So, that's why we
12 need to create a tangible pathway for these students
13 because Fresno State is not for many of our students,
14 for most of our students, Fresno State is the only
15 four-year public option for them to achieve a
16 bachelor's degree in a central body.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: For a lot of our students
18 here in the city, CUNY is the option for them. And
19 you already have some data associated with your
20 program. You know colleges across the country,
21 including CUNY right here in New York City are seeing
22 and steep decline in enrollment. So far, do you have
23 any solid data that indicates how this program,
24 Bulldog Bound is impacted enrollment challenges you
25 were previously facing?

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3 PHONG YANG: As of right now, as of Fall 2024, we
4 were seeing an uptake in first time freshman for
5 Fresno State. So, as I mentioned earlier, we have
6 almost 1,800 applicants in the Bulldog Bound program.
7 We are up in application for Fall 2024 by almost, for
8 first time freshman, almost 7 percent.

9 So, it's a little early for us to you know
10 conclude that Bulldog Bound generated the differences
11 but all I can see is from right now is just from the
12 preliminary data is that most of the school districts
13 who have joined Bulldog Bound has seen an uptick in
14 the number of applicants from those high schools to
15 Fresno State.

16 So, we'll take a little we'll run these numbers
17 again in the summer to get a better idea but as of
18 right now, our first-time freshman classes would be
19 very strong compared to last year.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And lastly, the biggest
21 lesson you've learned from implementing this program
22 so far?

23 PHONG YANG: The biggest lesson learned is that
24 we have to make sure that everybody is awarded the
25 program and that they're onboard with the program.
That's why we have an MOU with the school districts.

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3 None of this could happen without the support and
4 leadership from the school districts. And so, we
5 partner to get them onboard. We have kick off events
6 at these school districts and you know they draw
7 students and parents. The leaderships that they
8 learn. The board members are there. The
9 superintendents are there. The principals are there.
10 The counselors are there and it really creates that
11 sense of change that college culture among the
12 parents and the students just to show them that you
13 know Fresno State being leaders in that. That is one
14 of the most, the biggest takeaway from the program.

15 Many students already rule themselves out of
16 going to college and when we go in there, we say that
17 "you know what? You can go to college because we're
18 going to put you in Bulldog Bound. We believe in
19 you. We'll make sure that you stay on track and your
20 counselors are keep you on track. You and your
21 superintendents are going to make sure that you stay
22 on track." And that goes a long way.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And then, thank you so
24 much. I mean it sounds like a lot of collaboration
25 is involved in this and I assume that means data

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3 sharing, robust sharing of data between Fresno and
4 all the high schools you're involved with.

5 PHONG YANG: That is accurate. Part of our MOU
6 is data sharing, so we value that component. In
7 California, we have the California College Guidance
8 Initiative, which all school districts can be a part
9 of at no cost to them and they can upload all their
10 student data, transcripts and as a partner, we're
11 going to see with access to the student information,
12 so we don't have to ask for counselors to print
13 transcripts and so forth. We could just actually
14 have access to do student information.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much for
16 coming in today virtually to testify and I look
17 forward to hearing more about the impact of your
18 program. Thank you.

19 PHONG YANG: You're welcome. Have a great day.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Now, in accordance with
22 the rules of the Council, I will administer the
23 affirmation to witnesses from CUNY and the DOE.

24 Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to
25 tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the

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3 truth in your testimony before this Committee and to
4 respond honestly to Council Members questions?

5 PANEL: I do.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWTIZ: Thank you and as a
7 reminder to all of our witnesses, please state your
8 name prior to your testimony for the record. And we
9 can begin with Ms. Sarmiento.

10 REINE SARMIENTO: Can you hear me now? You can
11 hear me now. Reine Sarmiento, Vice Chancellor for
12 Enrollment Management, City University of New York.
13 Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz, Chair Joseph, and
14 esteemed members of the Higher Education Committee
15 and the Committee on Education. My name is Reine
16 Sarmiento and I am the Vice Chancellor for Enrollment
17 Management. I'm here to discuss recent initiatives
18 to increase access and opportunity for our New York
19 City Public School Graduates in higher education.
20 The welcome letter and our apply for free campaign in
21 the month of October and to offer commentary
22 regarding Governor Hochul's top ten percent proposal.

23 First, in the fall, CUNY Chancellor Felix Matos
24 Rodrigues and New York City Public Schools Chancellor
25 David Banks cosigned a personalized welcome letter to
all New York City public school seniors who are on

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3 the path to graduate in 2024. The letter offered
4 student admissions to the community colleges. They
5 provided additional information about the 19
6 undergraduate college options and a QR code that led
7 to the CUNY application. The power of these letters
8 was that they were personalized and tailored to each
9 students high school academic profile and
10 accomplishments to date. Equipping them with the
11 valuable information to navigate their post-secondary
12 planning process was very important.

13 All students graduating from high school were
14 offered admissions to one of seven community
15 colleges, while students with higher GPAs were
16 allowed and encouraged to apply to a CUNY four-year
17 institution. Approximately 65,000 high school
18 seniors received this letter distributed in the first
19 week of October and to kick off CUNY Month in October
20 and coincide with the college application season.

21 CUNY Month celebrates the Universities vital role
22 as a community anchor for the city and CUNY month
23 showcased the universities breadth of academic,
24 athletic, career offerings through more than 100 in
25 persona and virtual events through that month.

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3 Second, in partnership with HESC College
4 Application Month, CUNY augmented its October
5 outreach with an Apply for Free Campaign that waived
6 the \$65 application fee. This applied to all New
7 York City public school students for the entire month
8 of October and then also extended to all New York
9 State residents for the last two weeks in October.
10 The initial outcomes for these fall initiatives saw
11 New York City's students shine and nothing was short
12 of extraordinary. We are encouraged by the results
13 of these fall activities demonstrating a clear
14 example of what's possible when we work together to
15 address systemic barriers limiting access to higher
16 education.

17 During the month of October, CUNY received over
18 40,000 applications representing a 386 percent
19 increase compared to the previous October. The
20 increase of the New York City public schools
21 applications was 369 percent and from non-New York
22 City public high school students, the university
23 experienced overall a 494 percent increase in
24 applicants in the month of October compared to the
25 same time last year.

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3 More than 34,000 New York City public seniors
4 received an automatic fee waiver when submitting a
5 CUNY application that month by simplifying the
6 paperwork and facilitating communication. We've
7 removed unnecessary hurdles for graduating seniors
8 and reaffirmed to students that higher education is
9 attainable and that CUNY's doors is always open.

10 As part of the CUNY welcome letter and CUNY month
11 initiatives, the University launched an extensive
12 advertising enrollment campaign, "A Degree for Every
13 Dream," across the entire tri-state area with print
14 ads and digital ads all over the city. The campaigns
15 featured more than 60 current students and alumni to
16 highlight the University's unrivaled affordability
17 and the vast range of academic programs. Coming out
18 of this fiscal year, we will roll out a CUNY
19 simplified application and a counselor corner that
20 will provide student information about the CUNY
21 application to our counselors at their fingertips.

22 Our strategies to reduce barriers for all
23 students who plan for access to post-secondary
24 education and it continues past the fall application
25 season into the spring, supporting college

1 transitions through our college career and bridge
2 program.
3

4 The CUNY NYCPS partnership ensures that all
5 55,000 New York City public school graduates have a
6 near peer mentor to support them as they graduate
7 high schools. Students receives weekly tailored
8 messages, personalized based on their post-secondary
9 plan, the CUNY application and financial assistance.
10 The bridge program increases college enrollment for
11 populations historically under represented in higher
12 education. 82 percent of college intending
13 graduation served by the bridge program successfully
14 enroll.

15 Thirdly, lastly, the Governor's Top Ten Proposal
16 is another promising students avenue for talented
17 students, expanding CUNY and students automatic
18 admissions pathways and will provide guaranteed
19 admissions to high level high school graduates,
20 further bolstering the access to a quality affordable
21 education.

22 While specifics need careful consideration, this
23 proposal does deserve thorough exploration. However,
24 these admissions represent only one piece to the
25 puzzle of providing a public, a first-rate public

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3 education for all regardless of their means or
4 backgrounds. To truly expand for access in all and
5 align CUNYs strategic roadmap to uplift New York, we
6 must build on our existing endeavors and support
7 pipelines to higher education. This necessitates
8 utilizing resources that have been part, in large
9 part, through the vision and commitment of the New
10 York City Council. As CUNY continues to address
11 affordability head on, to strengthen pre-college and
12 advising mentorships, to expand college ready
13 programs and to reinvest in CUNY Reconnect, the New
14 York City public school funded program, created to
15 address the challenges of adult learners and
16 enrolling and completing college credentials.

17 With its inception in 2022, we've enrolled 14,000
18 students, surpassing its initial goal of 10,000 and
19 thanks to the City Council, the programs renewal of
20 its second year aims to strengthen the completion
21 rates of these students. By working together and
22 with your continued support, we can ensure that every
23 New York City public school graduate can pursue its
24 educational dreams. Streamlining application
25 process, affordability initiatives and targeted

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3 supports are key ingredients for making this vision a
4 reality. Thank you for your time and consideration.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'd also like to
6 acknowledge Council Member Stevens.

7 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Ms. Harris.

8 KRISTIN HARRIS: Kristin Harris, New York City
9 Public Schools, Executive Director at College and
10 Career Planning.

11 Good afternoon Chair Dinowitz, Chair Joseph, and
12 members of the New York City Council Higher Education
13 and Education Committees. My name is Kristin Harris,
14 I am the Executive Director for College and Career
15 Planning in the Office of Student Pathways at New
16 York City Public Schools.

17 On behalf of Chancellor Banks, thank you for the
18 opportunity to testify today on our efforts to
19 streamline New York City public school students
20 application process to CUNY. I am joined by my
21 colleagues Melanie Mac, Senior Executive Director for
22 the Office of Student Pathways and Jon Quintanilla,
23 Executive Director of Pathways Data. We are pleased
24 to be here today to discuss our deep sense of urgency
25 and commitment to strengthening our students college

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3 and career pathways and our partnership with CUNY
4 supports that effort.

5 I am deeply engaged; I have been deeply engaged
6 in this field for over 20 years and I have witnessed
7 first hand the challenges that students face in
8 navigating the complex terrain of higher education
9 and the vital role that a comprehensive approach
10 ensuring high quality college and career advising
11 plays in supporting them through this journey.

12 Before I go further, I want to thank both Chair
13 Joseph and Chair Dinowitz for their commitment to the
14 expansion of programs through removing barriers and
15 increasing access to higher education for New York
16 City youth. We welcome the chance to talk with you
17 today about our programs, strategies and continued
18 partnership with the City Council. Chancellor Banks
19 has set a bold North Star goal for New York City
20 public schools to ensure each graduates on a pathway
21 to a rewarding career, long term economic security,
22 equipped to be a positive force for change.

23 In setting this bold goal, Chancellor Banks has
24 not shied away from the hard truths about our
25 graduates college and career readiness and New York
City public schools is deeply committed to improving

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3 upon our rates of 58 percent of seniors graduating
4 college ready, 59 percent of graduates transitioning
5 to a post second pathway and 34 percent of graduates
6 earning an associate degree or higher within six
7 years. We would like to share the actions we have
8 taken over the past year to strengthen college and
9 career pathways and to achieve better outcomes.

10 The Office of Student Pathways, formalized in
11 early 2022 under the leadership of Jade Grieve, Chief
12 of Student Pathways, works with schools, districts,
13 higher education, and employer partners to achieve
14 better outcomes. We do this by enacting four key
15 strategies to increase student K-12 postsecondary
16 success, with a focus on long term economic security.
17 First, strengthening college per advising. Second,
18 expanding high quality college and career pathways
19 and aligned internships and apprenticeships. Three,
20 enhancing 21st Century skills like financial
21 literacy, digital fluency. And finally, extending
22 early college credit and credential opportunities to
23 provide more young people with a head start on their
24 future after school.

25 Under the leadership and vision of Chancellor
Banks and Matos Rodriguez there is now deeper

1 alignment across institutional values and missions
2 and even stronger commitment to our shared student
3 body with 41 percent of our students transitioning to
4 CUNY after graduation. New York City public schools
5 priority for college and career advising and
6 awareness dovetails with CUNY's efforts to build
7 seamless access and transition points while
8 increasing the readiness of incoming students.
9

10 Today, out of the 64,000 students that graduate
11 annually from New York City public schools roughly 25
12 percent of our students leave without a documented
13 post-secondary plan. And about 35 percent say they
14 wish they had more and better support in navigating
15 their college and career options based on an annual
16 senior survey that we conduct.

17 College and career advising is an essential level
18 to achieving successful post-secondary outcomes for
19 students. Currently, too few students have the
20 information and advising support required to explore
21 and understand how to navigate college and career
22 pathway options and develop a robust, high quality
23 personalized plan to pursue their desire after high
24 school.
25

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3 In order for us to achieve our goal of every
4 student graduating with a strong plan and a head
5 start on their path, we must ensure that every
6 student has access to high quality college and career
7 advisement by a knowledgeable adult that supports the
8 development of a strong personalized plan that
9 activates their passion and their purpose.

10 In over two years, since Chancellor Banks took
11 office, we have taken significant strides toward
12 addressing the gaps mentioned above. By launching
13 and expanding academic policy that set a standard for
14 individual advising support across a students high
15 school experience, increased higher education
16 partnerships, to increase our access to dual credit
17 courses and options with a focus on courses aligned
18 to high demand degree pathways.

19 We convened a Pathways Advising Coalition, which
20 is a broad-based group of organizational stakeholders
21 across the New York City college career and landscape
22 now in its second year. Coalition goals include
23 defining agreed definition of a high-quality standard
24 for advising and aligned best practice for
25 implementation. Standard metrics for success and
essential training required for these individuals.

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3 We provide a FAFSA Guide, translated in all of our
4 official DOE languages and we distribute it to all
5 our graduating seniors, both in English and in their
6 own language. Access to a streamlined menu of high-
7 quality digital platforms, such as Xello or an over
8 grade to provide comprehensive data management of
9 students, college and career exploration activities
10 and post-secondary planning. These platforms expand
11 the impact and reach of advising programs in our
12 schools and currently we have 250 high schools that
13 are currently onboard in accessing these tools.

14 And finally, CUNY and SUNY welcome letter
15 initiatives in support of New York State College
16 Application Month Initiatives in October. Both
17 letters featured affirming messages about students'
18 ability to pursue higher education, confirmed that
19 they had a place at CUNY and SUNY and encouraged them
20 to submit an application for free during the month of
21 October.

22 Our students face technical and systematic
23 barriers through accessing college ready coursework,
24 completing a college, completing the college post-
25 secondary application process, seeking financial aid
and determining affordability. Ultimately making an

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3 informed decision anchored in a sense of
4 belongingness at their future college home.

5 The Welcome Letter Initiatives get to the heart
6 of some of these technical and systematic barriers.
7 The CUNY Welcome Letter Initiative aims to further
8 eliminate barriers in higher education and make
9 applying to college more accessible to New York City
10 public school students, building off our well
11 established jointly funded fee waiver program,
12 Chancellors Banks and Matos Rodriguez partnered to
13 send assigned personalized welcome letter to over
14 60,000 graduates across our district.

15 We saw a significant spike in submitted CUNY
16 applications during this month. Over 36,000
17 applications were submitted approximately three times
18 the highest volume that we've seen historically. We
19 also ran a parallel welcome letter campaign with
20 SUNY. The scope and scale were similar with the
21 exception of the two-week window that SUNY opened at
22 the end of October for the applications to be free
23 for any student. In addition to the welcome letter
24 program with CUNY, New York City public schools and
25 CUNY really collaborated across all phases of the
planning scope drafting the language of the letter,

1 the mode of delivery, and our communication strategy.

2 We began this process in the spring of 2023 for our
3 fall launch in the subsequent school year. New York
4 City's public schools provided translations for all
5 the letters which lived on the CUNY landing page.
6

7 New York City public schools also trained and
8 offered office hours for our school staff prior to
9 the launch and during the month to support successful
10 implementation. New York City public schools also
11 successfully advocated for students to use their OSIS
12 number in place of the traditional CUNY generated fee
13 waiver code during the weeks of the initiative,
14 further streamlining the removal of the cost barrier
15 to our students. We also collaborate in response to
16 FAFSA delays which is aligned to the application
17 process to minimize the impact to students. And CUNY
18 Has officially extended their deadline to June 1st.

19 The Office of Student Pathways invests
20 approximately \$16 million this year in schools
21 directly through the college and career advising
22 School Allocation Memo or SAM, in order to increase
23 staff capacity for delivery of quality college and
24 career advising support across a student's high
25 school experience. Schools use these funds to

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3 supplement existing efforts to provide students with
4 personalized college career advising.

5 Further, we believe all students should have
6 access to ongoing personalized college and career
7 advising to facilitate their progress through key
8 awareness and planning experiences; to offer the
9 relational support needed to explore and own a range
10 of future possibilities and to develop a strong
11 personalized plan to pursue their desire after high
12 school.

13 To that end, we have curated a robust college and
14 career advising training catalogue with over 75
15 unique sessions, totaling just under 95 hours of PD.
16 Workshop facilitators include a wide range of content
17 experts from the field and at the end of school year
18 2023, over 5,000 total staff received training. Out
19 of 531 high school's we saw 514 or 97 percent have
20 had at least one staff member trained.

21 New York City public schools and CUNY has
22 established a range of important equity-centered
23 initiatives to strengthen advising and early college
24 awareness opportunities for historically marginalized
25 and underrepresented students. Those include as
mentioned earlier, our admissions fee waiver program,

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3 all financially eligible graduating students applied
4 to CUNY receive an application fee waiver. Over
5 50,000 application waivers are distributed annually
6 across all high schools. Waiver allocations are
7 determined by enrollment of free and reduced-price
8 lunch eligible students with CUNY and New York City
9 public schools sharing the cost of \$65 per waiver.

10 In response to the requirements outlined in Local
11 Law 18, New York City public schools has worked
12 closely with MOPD to comply with the law while
13 considering the implications of FERPA and limited
14 availability of resources. To date the Special
15 Education Office has taken multiple steps to comply
16 including the addition of parent letters to every
17 transition age IEP explaining the process of
18 obtaining accommodations in college. Web updates
19 have also been made by both MOPD and New York City
20 public schools to provide additional guidance and
21 support to students and families and the expansion of
22 the community engagement manager existing TCAC staff
23 position expanding that job description to act as a
24 student advocate who supports students and families
25 directly with the college process.

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3 The short-term plan for the electronic data
4 sharing system compliance is expected to be in place
5 by this summer and infrastructure development
6 considerations are ongoing to respond to a long-term
7 solution.

8 Looking across the efforts of both New York City
9 public schools and CUNY, we have laid a strong
10 foundation of programs that enable many students to
11 get an invaluable start to their post-secondary path.
12 Through strong college and career advising, early
13 college exposure, and removal of barriers when
14 applying to college, we have learned together with
15 our CUNY colleagues about readiness, transition, and
16 persistence in college and are clear that there is
17 still more work to do. The road ahead with CUNY and
18 our other higher education partners is to explore how
19 we might push further to streamline admissions
20 through a simplified application and the use of a
21 student OSIS number in place of meeting a CUNY
22 application fee waiver code.

23 We look forward to continuing to elevate the
24 quality of the college and career pathways and
25 programs. We are developing collaboratively with
CUNY in pursuit of our central mission of ensuring

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3 all students long term college success and economic
4 security. We anticipate this work will include
5 strengthening our data infrastructure while
6 broadening opportunities and programming specific to
7 the needs of multilingual and immigrant students. As
8 we continue to evaluate our current partnership and
9 ways to grow to meet student needs, we want to build
10 on the strong alignment partnership and collaborative
11 leadership of our Chancellors. We thank you for your
12 strong support and interest and look forward to your
13 questions.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you.

15 KRISTIN HARRIS: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I wanted to know we've
17 been joined by Council Member Bottcher.

18 So, I just want to go through like a little bit
19 of the just a few questions and I'll turn it over to
20 Chair Joseph. We'll go back and forth. I know some
21 other Council Members have questions.

22 I think both in the – in both testimonies it was
23 talking about a personalized letter. Can we talk a
24 little more about what you mean by personalized,
25 customized and tailored to each students high school
academic profile and accomplishments to date?

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3 MELANIE MAC: Melanie Mac, New York City Public
4 Schools. Thank you Chair for your question. This
5 was a version one of this welcome letter to our
6 students citywide, so I think that our CUNY partners
7 and New York City Public Schools are clear that
8 there's a long trajectory here and in terms of how
9 far we can go with personalization. I think that
10 there were few things that were really important this
11 first go around. We were looking at CPA. We were
12 looking at we, as New York City Public Schools were
13 looking at student data points to look at
14 admissibility into different CUNY institutions. We
15 looked at where there were a few components to a
16 students high school experience, whether it was a CTE
17 program or a career connected learning program and
18 where there might be programs to uplift in the larger
19 frame of you're going to college in service of your
20 longer-term career or your longer-term passion and
21 purpose and what is it that's you know prompting you
22 to consider post-secondary education?

23 So those are a few of the things that we were
24 looking at in terms of personalizing for this first
25 go around and I would say that we have a lot of
aspirations about how we would continue to iterate on

1 that. And just uplifting that language access was a
2 big part of that too and making sure that broadly
3 available in our most widely spoken languages. I'll
4 pass it to my CUNY colleagues to add on.
5

6 REINE SARMIENTO: I believe we supplied you with
7 copies of that.

8 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, yes.

9 REINE SARMIENTO: So, you see them right? So,
10 they're very bright and they're very colorful. It
11 has their name -

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It was a lot of my blue
13 ink but it was fine.

14 REINE SARMIENTO: You had to get the full affect
15 Chair Dinowitz. Not only did we do that but we also
16 sent notifications to the families. They were very
17 important decision makers in this process, so they
18 got the email. They got the personalized letter
19 where they could actually open it and we had the
20 opportunity of having both Chancellors in a room
21 where students got to open their personalized letter,
22 many of which never thought that college was possible
23 and to be able to receive that and to know that it's
24 as simple as a QR code has really kind of opened up
25 what we feel pathways that wouldn't be there and get

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3 them to act earlier, which is a key initiative
4 instead of them waiting until the last minute to
5 apply.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And I mean it sounds like
7 a very nice moment and I want to clarify, we were
8 sent two letters. Are those the same two letters,
9 one or the other that a student would have received?

10 REINE SARMIENTO: So, let me clarify that based
11 on their academic profile and their achievements to
12 date, each student got one of those two letters. So,
13 one was accepting them to one of the seven community
14 colleges and the other one was accepting them to all
15 of the comprehensive and four-year institutions. So,
16 depending on where they were academically at the
17 moment, they received one of those, two of those
18 letters.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, so I mean, this is
20 a great I think idea and really important and I can't
21 over state that the importance of that moment a kid
22 must have opened this and felt great, but the
23 implementation of this sounds a little different than
24 your description of it. The way you describe it
25 sounds more like the way it should be. Looking at a
students profile, looking at their academic history,

1
2 their interests. Maybe where they live, what they
3 want to do, their academic plan but what actually,
4 how it was implemented sounds like and correct me if
5 I'm wrong, if their GPA is 70 or above, they receive
6 one letter. And if their GPA is 69 or below, they
7 receive a different letter.

8 REINE SARMIENTO: Along with our colleagues at
9 the New York City Public Schools, this is uh, but
10 this was our first iteration and to be able to launch
11 this, mail it and to be able to activate this for
12 this fall, that was our first iteration. I think
13 that absolutely, based on students interests, we
14 could absolutely tailor the letter.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Just to be clear, I mean
16 that's -

17 REINE SARMIENTO: That's the way it should be.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I mean, that's also what
19 was testified. You know it sounds like the idea is
20 not matching up with the implementation of it, right?
21 Is that accurate?

22 MELANIE MAC: So, I can add that in terms of
23 process, it's good for me to clarify that there is I
24 think a trajectory for our hopes here in terms of
25 what the version one was and then where we will go

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3 forward with this, so we've looked at the states that
4 you mentioned up front, you know the 20 odd states
5 that have implemented similar programs,
6 collaboratively with CUNY, we've looked at versions
7 of their letters. We've looked at the agreements
8 with their between their school systems and their
9 higher education and we've looked at text messaging.
10 We tested out a lot of this language with our
11 students to see what would resonate and feel real and
12 affirming and also substantive enough given we knew
13 there were limitations to how much personalization
14 could go in a first letter.

15 The letter that you have in front of you is
16 pretty comparable to or the two versions of the
17 letter you have are pretty comparable to what you see
18 in these other states that have. And so, longer
19 term, where we would go with this is we would start
20 to implement some of the differentiation that I was
21 describing right. Where if you are attending a
22 future IDNC program, a career and technical education
23 program, you can see some of the degree pathways, the
24 career pathways, and what options you have.
25

3 What you see in the example there is you actually
4 see a couple specific examples there. I don't have
5 it in front of me unfortunately.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm happy to give you a
7 copy.

8 MELANIE MAC: That's okay, we have it here on the
9 computer but there are a couple specific examples of
10 degree pathways right? And we did some intentional
11 messaging knowing that these letters will not match
12 every students passion purpose and you know pro-
13 secondary pursuit that they are aiming for. However,
14 we can start to narrate the importance of a degree
15 connected to a career pathway and I think there's a
16 long road we can travel.

17 So, for future iterations, getting to a deeper
18 level of personalization but what you're describing
19 and what Vice Chancellor Sarmiento described was
20 right in terms of our V1 that we implemented this
21 year.

22 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, it sounds very V1,
23 you say Version 1?

24 MELANIE MAC: Version 1.

25 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It sounds very Version 1
and the important program with this great idea of

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3 tailoring things and I don't know if DOE has tons of
4 data that could be very easily used. So, they get
5 this letter, which in the future will be tailored.
6 Not really so tailored now. In the future it's going
7 to be tailored and then it's automatic acceptance
8 into the two-year colleges?

8 REINE SARMIENTO: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay at all of them?

10 REINE SARMIENTO: At any one they choose to apply
11 to; they have seven choices.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So, if I'm a student with
13 a 69 or below GPA, I get admission for fall 2024 to
14 one of seven two-year colleagues?

15 REINE SASRMIENTO: Correct.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Only the two-year colleges
17 here on the letter, right?

18 REINE SARMIENTO: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yes.

20 REINE SARMIENTO: So, they successfully complete
21 high school. They can be automatically admitted to
22 any of the seven community colleges.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And it's the same for if I
24 have a 70 or above and is it not the same for 70 or
25 above?

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3 REINE SARMIENTO: So, the 70 above and for some
4 of our programs, there are limited seating for
5 freshman but what we do do in those cases is for
6 students who didn't get their first choice, we route
7 them to their second choice and work with them so
8 that they do have the opportunity to pursue a
9 bachelor's degree at a CUNY college.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Sorry, let me do it again.
11 69 or below, they have guaranteed admission to a
12 community college but 70 or above they don't have
13 guaranteed admission to it?

14 REINE SARMIENTO: Their guaranteed admission to a
15 senior college.

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: A senior college?

17 REINE SARMIENTO: Yes. The two letters, let me
18 back up. The community college is a guaranteed
19 acceptance upon completion of a high school diploma.
20 The second one, same applies and they will have an
21 opportunity to apply to any one of those colleges and
22 will have a seat at a CUNY college. I want to
23 preface this by saying that there are some colleges
24 whose freshman applicants far exceed what they're
25 capable of holding on their campus.

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3 So, that's why the language is you could apply to
4 one of the senior colleges and that there is a home
5 for every student at CUNY.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: But they have guaranteed
7 admission to the four-year colleges?

8 REINE SARMIENTO: They do.

9 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Okay, I'm reading it and
10 I, college is a very stressful time. I was very
11 fortunate in high school to have great college
12 counselors and it was still stressful. And then I
13 get, imagine I get this letter, very excited to open
14 that with the Chancellor and then I read, your hard
15 work means that a four-year college may be a strong
16 fit for you and we encourage you to apply to a
17 bachelor's program. Additionally, CUNY is thrilled
18 to offer you admission to Fall 2024 to one of the
19 seven two-year colleges listed on the next page.
20 Just submit an application and I'm reading this 70 or
21 above. It just, I'm confused because it sounds like
22 what you're telling me about guaranteed admission is
23 great and it just sounds like it doesn't match the
24 letter that students around the city received. Am I
25 reading wrong?

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3 REINE SARMIENTO: So, there's a couple of intents
4 in that, intentions with the letter, right? One of
5 them is to be able to know that they can attend a
6 CUNY college, right? It would irresponsible for us
7 to be able to say they could be accepted at Baruch
8 with an average of 70. And so, that's not what it
9 says in the language right. So what we want to be
10 able to say is, you have a home at a CUNY
11 institution, whether it be an undergrad college of,
12 in which they can qualify for or upon successful
13 completion of a high school diploma, they could be
14 accepted to the community colleges.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Sorry, so they do or don't
16 get automatic acceptance to a four-year institution?

17 REINE SARMIENTO: They do because when they
18 apply, if they don't get into their first choice,
19 because we're not in a position of over extending the
20 campuses with their freshman applicants.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Sure.

22 REINE SARMIENTO: There are other institutions.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I'm not asking about
24 a specific four year. I have a number listed here on
25 the letter. I'm just trying to figure out what it
must be like for a kid, who you know if you're

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3 telling me today, you can get into a four year. We
4 can't guarantee which one but you have a place at a
5 four-year college and the letter doesn't say that.
6 It says you should apply and there's a place for you
7 at a two year college and I'm trying to figure out
8 what you know, this should be clearest thing of all.
9 We should be able to get all our information from
10 this letter and I'm confused about even asking
11 someone really in charge of this stuff.

12 REINE SARMIENTO: Well, I think it's important
13 feedback that you're giving but it also underscores
14 all the supports that the NYCPS and K16 are doing in
15 support of that, right? So, it starts the
16 conversation and we're jointly holding a lot of
17 events to be able to help students with their
18 application and their financial aid. Many students
19 will never receive a letter like this at all, and so
20 to be able to have them, know that it's a possibility
21 at CUNY and that they could apply early will allow us
22 to be able to outline some of the programs that they
23 could have to graduate and go on to the workforce.

24 MELANIE MAC: We appreciate the feedback for
25 sure. You know I think we present all of this
humbly. We think that the success that we saw in

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3 October was huge and it's very heartening and we also
4 know that when it comes to the very stressful
5 decision making that comes with like, what am I doing
6 after high school, that there is art and science and
7 there is large scale messaging and then there is very
8 uhm, very personalized you know decision making that
9 have financial decision making, career you know
10 decisions that you know the kind of supports that
11 students will be looking for in the campus they
12 ultimately attend. And so, I think that there is a
13 balance in how we share very affirming messages. We
14 take all of the feedback on what Version 2 will look
15 like but we're excited with the initial you know
16 boost that we saw in student and in family interests,
17 which we largely attribute to the letters.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I want to turn it over to
19 Chair Joseph for questioning.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you Chair Dinowitz.
21 In speaking, I wanted to know what programs are in
22 place to help students navigate the college
23 application and acceptance process across New York
24 City Public Schools?

25 MELANIE MAC: Thank you Chair Joseph. We'll
start by saying that this is all three people here

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3 from New York City Public Schools have worked
4 directly with students for many years. And so, this
5 comes from sort of life's work in terms of what we
6 need to do at scale across the city and what we need
7 to do in a way that respects very diverse learners
8 across our schools.

9 And so, as Kristen shared in her testimony, there
10 have been policy advancements in recent years. So,
11 since COVID, we have implemented citywide policy
12 around students receiving one to one advising,
13 graduating with a plan and that is data that we
14 monitor across the city. That we share with District
15 Superintendents. That we share with schools and that
16 we hold as a really important progress point. We're
17 allocating the college and career advising SAM to
18 schools. Now, schools select from a variety of ways
19 to provide college and career advising to their
20 schools. In some cases, they're you know hiring CBOs
21 who are going to fill that niche. In some cases they
22 are funding a counselor or an advisor. In some cases
23 there is a team at the school who is supporting
24 strong advising. We release guidance that is
25 specific to different populations of students. What
are culturally responsive and linguistically

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1 responsive approaches to advising for our
2 multilingual learners, for our newly arrived
3 students? What our approach is for our students with
4 disabilities in the transition process. And so,
5 across policy, funding I think stronger progress
6 monitoring and data monitoring across the system uhm
7 and providing the training that Kristen outlined,
8 where 97 percent of our high schools have somebody
9 who has been trained. This year, as an example, what
10 that looks like is a person or multiple people at a
11 high school participating in our college and career
12 advising credential and that's up to 20 hours of
13 training topics. That's a really diverse offering
14 because we know our counselors, advisors, college and
15 career staff in high schools are serving very diverse
16 learners and so we've tailored the professional
17 learning credential to improve the supports and what
18 does financial advising for example, look like for an
19 undocumented student compared to what financial
20 advising might look like for a student who has you
21 know completed a CTE sequences and has a set of
22 credits that they're carrying on into you know
23 college and they've already you know kind of starting
24 with a head start on early college credits and so,
25

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3 and so, I defer Kris or if there is others that you
4 would add.

5 KRISTEN HARRIS: I think the only thing I would
6 add is specific to this initiative, we provided a
7 menu of options for our counselors to engage with us
8 directly. We provided info sessions. We had PD
9 specific to how to support their students to identify
10 CUNY campus appropriate for them and we also have an
11 in box where we are constantly fielding messages and
12 meeting and communicating directly to our CUNY
13 partners if there is technical issues with just
14 submitting the application. If there are questions
15 about the platform, the application platform or if
16 they need help with just determining. I have a
17 student that is interested in x, how do I identify a
18 campus that's appropriate? They work with our team
19 for that kind of coaching and professional
20 development support and kind of customer service
21 throughout the whole initiative. Even now, we have
22 office hours every Monday where folks know that they
23 can come in and get their questions answered.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Parents who English is not
25 their first language, where the child is the only
English speaking in the household, how do you

1 navigate that space with the parents? Because I've
2 said this to New York City public schools every
3 single day, every chance I get. Parents have to be
4 part of this educational journey. It cannot be
5 solely dependent on the child. For example, in my
6 household, I would have been the one to read that
7 college application, fill it out with my parents,
8 because my grandparents sit and read or write
9 English. So, how do we close that gap? And how do
10 we make sure that our English Language Learners or
11 our families sometimes first-generation Americans but
12 you still have parents that do not speak, read or
13 write English. How do we address that?

15 MELANIE MAC: Thank you Chair Joseph. It's
16 really important; I'm a former ESL Teacher and so,
17 understanding the lift of meaning making that this
18 can put on a young person to have to translate things
19 when we're talking about college and career. Like
20 very, very uhm, life changing, trajectory changing
21 information that's already pretty overwhelming and
22 translating of the family. We don't take that for
23 granted. Some of our colleagues across NYCPS have
24 created these post-secondary glossaries that I think
25 are in nine languages as a starting point and it's

1 something that we're happy to share if you haven't
2 already seen them. I think that the post-secondary
3 glossaries are an important way of breaking down a
4 lot of the terminology that can be a barrier. A lot
5 the processes. A lot of the jargon in higher
6 education and education for families and I would say
7 that the trainings that we've been I think doing for
8 the past four years around culturally responsive and
9 linguistically responsive advising and particularly
10 reaching out to some of our schools that have the
11 largest population of multilingual learners and
12 families, has been really important to recognize that
13 there are culturally responsive practices that need
14 to be at the center of the college and career
15 advising approach and that there needs to be language
16 access at the center of unpacking and navigating a
17 really complex process.

19 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How do you address parents
20 that don't read and write their Native language? We
21 also have that where parents don't read or write so
22 we have something we call bio illiterate, where the
23 parents don't read and write neither language, even
24 though they speak it. So, how do you address those
25 parents? If I didn't have Sylvia Brown in my corner

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3 when I was applying for college, I wouldn't have
4 probably didn't want to go to college but I had
5 somebody and what's the student ratio with the
6 advisors that you have?

7 MELANIE MAC: Can I clarify Chair Joseph? You
8 asked for the ratio of uh -

9 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You said you trained
10 staffers to support the students. What's the student
11 ratio?

12 MELANIE MAC: Can you give us just one moment to
13 look that up? So, in what we publicly report out in
14 the annual guidance counselor bill, the citywide
15 ratio of all schools is 1 counselor to 272 students
16 and that's K-12. If we're looking at schools with
17 high school grades 6-12, 9-12, 9-14 etc., the ratio
18 is 1 to 190. And that's for school counselors. What
19 that does not count is the CBOs, the teachers, the
20 other staff who are often trained to provide that.
21 That ratio is one that we'd have to follow up on
22 given we do rely on the self-reported data from
23 schools in terms of how they have used the resources
24 for example from our college and career advising SAM
25 to appropriately staff. You know in some cases, a
high school may staff with a CBO that has staff

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3 members who speak the primary languages and that's a
4 really important value to add and that they are
5 electing to have that CBO do some of those services
6 in lieu of a DOE staffer. And so, that number of
7 kind of when we look at the ecosystem and the
8 different types of staff who support college and
9 career planning, that we would have to follow up on
10 in terms of what is the true ratio when you take into
11 the account the different CBO partners.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. In terms of
13 FAFSA, what type of support do New York City public
14 schools and CUNY, is there a point where New York
15 City Public School pass it on to CUNY to continue the
16 process? And if so, walk me through it.

17 MELANIE MAC: I'm going to pass to Kristen to
18 speak to what FAFSA support looks like in general but
19 also what it has looked like this year with the
20 redesigned application.

21 KRISTEN HARRIS: So, in general again, we have a
22 comprehensive set of professional development
23 specific to the financial aid process because it is,
24 there are multiple phases of that in the best years,
25 when we didn't have a streamlined application. This
year, we know there are significant delays because of

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3 the late availability of the simplified FAFSA and now
4 there are technical glitches with different student
5 income background. So, we are working really
6 diligently again, that's why we have every Monday
7 morning, we are meeting regularly with our schools
8 and our counselors to help them navigate that
9 process. We have really close relationships with our
10 CBO partners that deliver comprehensive professional
11 development ongoing because this is an ongoing
12 process and every phase of the financial aid process
13 requires some skill building and some refresh. And
14 so, we do that across the school year. So, it's the
15 101 in the beginning of the school year all the way
16 through how they submit, verifying all of the
17 technical difficulties that might happen with a
18 particular populations and financial background. So,
19 we lay it on the PD and we lay it on the experts in
20 the field that are doing this work. We partner with
21 HES, the Higher Education Services Corporation, so
22 we're staying really close with what's happening at
23 the state to provide information. They text students
24 at the state level. We also have a texting campaign
25 where we're texting students directly to give them
updated information and also be able to help students

1 when they're doing this at their schools. We also
2 attend, if a school reaches out, we attend their
3 FAFSA nights and support those evening programs when
4 they are bringing families in to support that work.
5 And we're leaning on the full ecosystem of folks that
6 are supporting specifically now with all of the
7 challenges with the new FAFSA. So, New York City
8 public library, all of our partners across the field
9 and CBOs and other offices. So, that's how we're
10 attacking it and trying to work in collaboration with
11 our CUNY partners to ensure students have the
12 resource information and the experts. So,
13 collaborating with their admissions and their
14 financial aid officers to deliver completion events.

16 REINE SARMIENTO: And for CUNY, the FAFSA delay
17 has caused major concerns about all of the things
18 that we just talked about to boost the application
19 rate. Our concern is that if students don't know or
20 get their award letter on time, they won't go
21 anywhere. And so, our admissions staff has been
22 trained on the FAFSA and the TAP. We've launched and
23 hired work study students to be deployed throughout
24 the city to offer financial aid assistance,
25 regardless of their CUNY students, because we find

1
2 that this is an imperative that needs to be addressed
3 on the city level.

4 The campuses have virtual events, in person
5 events and that also – we also have over 200 bridge
6 coaches working with the New York City public school
7 systems to be able to help and they're trained on
8 FAFSA's. We're currently looking at a particular
9 program to provide more scaled services through the
10 summer. It will be a very long summer and we have
11 been approached by some donors to be able to assist
12 in our effort so I hope to be able to have something
13 shortly to share.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you and what does
15 community engagement look like in terms of once to
16 make sure parents and families and even outside
17 entities know about the acceptance of CUNY? This new
18 streamline program?

19 MELANIE MAC: Thank you for the question Chair.
20 The Pathways Advising Coalition that Kristen started
21 to name, it has a number of partners, some of which
22 might be recognizable to the Council. Goddard
23 Riverside Options, Make the Road New York, I Mentor,
24 College Bound Initiative, the list kind of goes on in
25 terms of folks who are very steeped in our

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3 communities and also very steeped in this work of
4 college and career success. And so, across the ways
5 that we of course communicate directly with school
6 leaders and their identified teams, we of course
7 communicate with districts and their family, support
8 liaison's citywide. So that anything, whether it
9 comes to you know fee waivers, welcome letters,
10 changes to FAFSA, there is a steady drip of
11 communication but I think that through the Pathways
12 Advising Coalition and our communication with our
13 community partners, we lean really heavily on how do
14 we make sure that messages get shared through their
15 platforms, whether they're social media, whether it's
16 their list serves, whether it's their you know
17 presence in different community spaces. We are also
18 doing some planning on how we look at communities
19 print materials need to be available at the entrance
20 to subways. Where do print materials need to be
21 available in shelters to access advising resources
22 and to access updates that are really important for
23 the decisions graders are making? So, those are some
24 of the examples of the ways that we aim to ensure
25 that the message really is you know resonating with

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3 the help of some of our community partners who occupy
4 different places and spaces that we do.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Yeah because normally New
6 York City Public Schools are very robust when they
7 first start a program and then it drops off. I hope
8 we keep the same robust engagement for years to come.
9 What was New York City Public Schools involvement in
10 creating the CUNY Streamlined Acceptance Program?
11 How involved were you guys?

12 MELANIE MAC: Thank you. Kristen's going to walk
13 through the planning process and then can pass to our
14 CUNY partners.

15 KRISTEN HARRIS: Yeah okay. Thank you for the
16 question. So, like I said, we started very early on
17 and we collaborated at every stage, uplifting the
18 things that we know to be true about our students.
19 What we know is going to resonate in the messaging.
20 So, we collaborated with our CUNY partners from start
21 to finish and it hasn't finished yet. So, we're
22 still collaborating.

23 Definitely gave advice and suggestions for what
24 needed to be a part of the landing page and ensured
25 that there were translated letters on the landing
page to ensure that we were able to make it as

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3 accessible as possible and wanted to share. We
4 shared the data of like completion, just so we know
5 the progress we were making. And so at every stage
6 we were synced. We were tuned in to what was happen
7 in our progress and we made pivots. If schools
8 didn't have the information they needed, we made sure
9 that they were able to get that. We also just had a
10 kind of cascade of communication just on New York
11 City Public School side, making sure that from every
12 level our different central offices knew about this
13 program because many central offices support schools
14 directly. So, we wanted to make sure it was all one
15 voice. Everybody knew the same thing and everybody
16 was communicating the same goals and supports and
17 resources that we had available. Again, we're making
18 sure that our community partners understood what was
19 going on because not only are they in our schools,
20 our students are going to after school programs,
21 where they are also being supported through the
22 financial aid and college application process. So,
23 we wanted to make sure that information was
24 everywhere and our community partners were working in
25 lock step with us to ensure that students not only
knew about it but acted on this initiative.

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3 And again, we sent email letters or messages to
4 all of our families through our messenger system that
5 our DIT department created. So, those emails went
6 directly to families in their language. We also
7 texted students multiple times to let them know this
8 was going on. So, making sure that we were canvassing
9 not just disseminating the information but also
10 making sure that they knew where to get the help and
11 the resources for the technical like execution of the
12 application.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What if I don't have email?
14 How else can I get that information?

15 KRISTEN HARRIS: So, we made sure that our
16 schools had all of that, so if they didn't get a
17 letter; the letters got mailed to their house and
18 schools got a copy of the letter. And so, if they
19 had - they disseminated those letters in school as
20 well as those letters got to them at their home, at
21 the address we had on file. So, we wanted to make
22 sure both they received it at their school and at
23 their home.

24 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: What feedbacks are you
25 getting from students who have been accepted into the
program? What are the feedbacks? What

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3 recommendations are they giving? Are they giving any
4 feedback?

5 KRISTEN HARRIS: Well, the application process is
6 still going on and acceptance letters are still
7 rolling out. Initially, our initial feedback has
8 been very positive just because it was like they see
9 me. I can apply. They felt very affirmed. And so
10 anecdotally we have really strong evidence that this
11 was something that was very positive. Our schools
12 and our school counselors and the folks that are
13 supporting students with application completion,
14 while it was intent because it was all happening in
15 the month of October, they had a wrap around kind of
16 support to make it happen. And they definitely saw a
17 difference in the kind of motivation of a student to
18 complete the progress and we saw that in our numbers,
19 right? We saw that in the like a significant boost
20 of applications submitted. We are still going to
21 collect data. We have to wait until the end of this
22 process and the application acceptance process and as
23 students make decisions and then when we are serving
24 through our senior survey, we'll get that data and
25 so, we'll be able to have more formalized but right
now, it's anecdotal and it's been positive and the

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3 places where folks have said, okay, this would be
4 better next time, we're taking all that in to
5 consideration.

6 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Are you providing that space
7 for them to give you feedback and surveys?

8 KRISTEN HARRIS: Yes, so we are happy to share
9 that once all of those formal processes have been
10 concluded.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, alright. How about
12 for parents? We talked about parents. Is there
13 workshops for them to come in and learn about the
14 FAFSA process, the whole process? Are you allowing
15 parents to come in in person? I don't have Zoom.
16 How do you make it easier for me to have access to
17 this information?

18 MELANIE MAC: Uhm, from our - thank you for the
19 question. From our perspective in the Office of
20 Student Pathways, we equip schools in districts with
21 the resources so that they know that the FAFSA
22 information they have in front of them as they are
23 creating community events, whether that's you know a
24 pizza and FAFSA night, as some schools do or like an
25 evening where they're providing this sort of support
directly to the communities. We want to ensure that

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3 they don't have the 2022 information. That they have
4 the 2024 information. So, our role is ensuring that
5 we are interpreting what's coming from federal shifts
6 to FAFSA, any state shifts to TAP and that we are
7 being the most credible messengers we can to schools
8 so that they can in turn key because school staff
9 have very big jobs and so, our role is to we aim to
10 make sure that the information is as up to date and
11 as digestible as possible.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I will now pass it on. I
13 will come back again and I'll pass it on to my
14 colleague Council Member Gutiérrez. The floor is
15 yours.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Chairs
17 Joseph and Dinowitz and thank you all for your
18 testimony. I think it's so encouraging to hear the
19 you know over 300 percent of students that applied.
20 I think that's incredible. I think that's congrats.
21 Certainly a lot to improve I think on the
22 communication of the letter, but I think it's
23 wonderful.

24 I have a couple of questions. One is about the
25 letter. One is, were school advisors notified of the
program and then were staff and principals given a

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3 heads up when letters were going to go out to their
4 students?

5 MELANIE MAC: Thank you. This was an important
6 part of the planning between NYCPS and CUNY. So, the
7 planning first, with Superintendents, we ensure
8 Superintendents were aware of this initiative and
9 that it was coming and the potential impact for the
10 districts. So, we cascaded from superintendents to
11 school leaders to school counselors to specific
12 resource guides to the info sessions that Kristen was
13 describing that you know continue on a weekly basis
14 and so, ensuring that message sort of from our
15 district leaders to our practitioners. That was the
16 intention.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: That's great. So,
18 then you - when students were - they were
19 anticipating? Great. Are you all, I was also
20 encouraged by the testimony from the representative
21 from Fresno and I read in the Committee report about
22 how you know it's really the first of its kind that
23 is creating pathways for high school freshman. I'm
24 curious if that is a similar model that we are
25 looking at here. Primarily because from what I
understand, the letters were sent to students that

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3 were already on path to graduate, which is great but
4 I'm often concerned about the folks that are not and
5 I'm wondering if the incentive of college being a
6 prospect four years from now serves as an incentive
7 to be on track to graduate on time. So, is that all
8 something that you are looking at?

9 MELANIE MAC: I can start. That's a wonderful
10 question. It's one that we think about often because
11 out of our office, we start with the kindergarten 529
12 savings plan. Like, from the Office of Student
13 Pathways, there is a lot of intentionality behind
14 these particular initiatives. This CUNY Welcome
15 Letter initiative was also happening at the same time
16 as the SUNY welcome letter, so the intentionality is
17 of course at a critical moment like 12th grade. We
18 need to ensure the right message you know reaches the
19 student with affirmation at the right time.

20 We already have a lot of large-scale messaging
21 about the 529 plan and are thinking about like as we
22 continue to develop NYCPS communication, how are we
23 thinking about all the key transitions and moments
24 when a family can make a decision transitioning into
25 middle school and transitioning into high school?
Transitioning into high school and understanding the

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3 Future Ready or Career Connected Learning programs
4 and what type of early college opportunities they'll
5 have through that program. So, it is you know this
6 testimony is about the welcome letter specifically
7 but want to acknowledge and affirm that everything
8 that you're naming in terms of like a longer
9 trajectory and like what's the right message that
10 should reach a student and family member at the right
11 time for the decisions they make about the future is
12 very much a part of the communications planning we're
13 doing as an office and look forward to continuing
14 with CUNY and SUNY and our other higher ed partners.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Great and I think just
15 to uplift what Chair Joseph had mentioned about
16 language access and just familiarizing families and
17 parents and caregivers with the process. I did my
18 own FAFSA. You know there were a lot of errors and I
19 think but I still made it but I think the mechanics
20 of ensuring that families and caregivers from you
21 know their 9th grade students understand the
22 application process, that understand that there
23 potentially is a seat for them and this is how you
24 apply for financial aid. This is what TAP is. I
25 think the more frequently that we do it, the more

1 viable the prospect of college becomes to students.
2 Uhm, and again, maybe that serves as an incentive to
3 get more students across that finish line. Can you –
4 oh no, I have two questions. Can you share what data
5 you have at CUNY from New York City Public School
6 students that enroll in CUNY, how many of them finish
7 their programs? And I know it's nuance because they
8 transfer and there's two years and four years
9 institutions but if you can share what percentage of
10 New York City public graduates that enroll in CUNY
11 ultimately complete their program and if there are
12 any other plans for data collection for this year?
13 Are you also looking at data of which students that
14 got offered letters, ultimately either apply or get
15 accepted into SUNY. I'm very curious. We're both
16 SUNY graduates and we're here for it. We're here for
17 CUNY as well but very encouraged by some of the
18 conversations that are happening between CUNY and
19 SUNY, particular the MCC and student Albany this
20 year.

21 So, just wondering if that's the data that you
22 all will look to collect and if there are any other
23 conversations about CUNY to SUNY? That's it, thank
24 you guys.
25

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3 MELANIE MAC: We can start and then pass to CUNY
4 in terms of New York City Public Schools
5 collaboration with SUNY, the Parallel Welcome Letter
6 Initiative. We would love to share more data on the
7 impact of that as we go through this application
8 cycle. And we're really interested to see that more
9 of our students understand their options at SUNY and
10 the opportunity programs, the career pathways,
11 there's a lot of really aligned work between
12 Chancellor Banks and Chancellor King, and so we
13 invite the opportunity to share more on what that
14 looks like. We're also working in closer partnership
15 between our Future Ready NYC Schools and SUNY
16 campuses that offer a degree in career pathways that
17 are very aligned and looking to the types of
18 opportunities that will provide students you know
19 starting as earlier 9th grade with exploration
20 opportunities at SUNY all the way up to 11th and 12th
21 grade college course work.

22 REINE SARMIENTO: Provided that 80 percent of our
23 incoming freshman are NYCPS, we could get the data
24 for you. I would say the majority of our graduates
25 are from the public school system but when we report
it out, it's an aggregate. So I note that and we'll

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3 get back to the Committee with that data. But I did
4 want to address your one question about students that
5 are not just in high school but in the earlier years
6 and have Dean Soonachan talk about some of the
7 programs that start even as early as elementary
8 school.

9 DEAN SOONACHAN: Oh, sure I can touch briefly on
10 that. The work that was highlighted at Fresno really
11 emphasized the importance of building that sense of
12 belonging early on for students and that sense of
13 what's possible for them. Which is just as important
14 as sort of understanding the nuts and bolts of an
15 application or a financial application?

16 And that's work that we've been deeply invested
17 in for a long time. Our CUNY Explorers program
18 engages 8th graders and coming on to campus. All of
19 our dual enrollment programs which serve over 20,000
20 public school students annually, provide students
21 with that college ID and that access to the library
22 and the campus facilities because we know that
23 experience of becoming a college student is really
24 core to the impact of these programs. We have a
25 network of 20 early college high schools that deeply
are MR cycle students starting in 9th grade, in that

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3 sense of, "I'm a college student, while I'm starting
4 my high school career."

5 So, that's work that we are doing and have been
6 over a long time across many, many programs serving
7 tens of thousands of students. I think Melanie spoke
8 to many of the ways that we hope to continue to
9 deepen that and think about the way that we can
10 expand that access. But I think I just wanted to
11 emphasize that there are many students already – they
12 engaged starting in middle school in addition to the
13 work that was mentioned.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I was going to
15 touch on that because I wanted to ask the question on
16 your early college program. What does that students
17 acceptance letter look like? Because it's going to
18 look different. They are already coming in with
19 college credits. What does that look like and
20 already having that experience and being on campus
21 interacting with college professors and all that.
22 What does their acceptance letter look like?

23 ANDREA SOONACHAN: Well, so for this year, the
24 welcome letter looked like the two versions that
25 you've got, right? And so, it would be dependent on
their GPA, what they were invited to apply to. There

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3 are some portion of those early college students
4 annually who have up to an associate degree and would
5 be entering with that transfer status. That comes
6 later in the application process once they decide
7 where they're applying to. We can definitely follow
8 up with you on the statistics on the numbers of
9 students that are applying with that transfer status
10 annually.

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right because that's also
12 important data to capture as well because you're
13 starting early on in high school to give them that
14 experience and expose them to higher education. And
15 when they come to you, they're kind of prepared. So
16 I would like to see what the transfer students
17 because then they become a transfer student. What
18 does that look like? So, that's another set of data
19 that you can also use to uplift the students. I like
20 that. I like that. Chair Dinowitz.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Chair Joseph.
22 Speaking of other types of schools, District 75
23 schools and Charter schools, did they also receive
24 this letter? Students in District 75 schools and
25 students in Charter schools.

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3 MELANIE MAC: Thank you for the question while we
4 made sure we were giving you the correct answer. So,
5 the students in District 75 who are operating under a
6 standard assessment receive the letter. We have some
7 students who have alternate assessment who are not
8 receiving that letter based on their IEPs, their
9 learning, their transition plans. Uhm, we did not
10 disseminate the letter through Charters but Districts
11 1 to 32 and standard assessment students in District
12 75 all received one of the versions of the letter.

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And so, I just any student
14 with an IEP diploma for example, would not have
15 received the letter?

16 MELANIE MAC: So, the students cutoffs were based
17 on GPA. And so, in our D75, in District 1 to 32
18 schools, students who potentially are receiving IEP
19 diploma, may have received the letter if they were
20 meeting the GPA criteria. And the reason for that is
21 partly the timing. This was going out in the fall
22 when a student is still completing their final year
23 of high school and there are students as we're well
24 aware as educators that might still – there might
25 still be a choice point whether they are graduating

1 with Regents diploma or if they are going to graduate
2 with a different credential.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right, I mean that's sort
5 of the differentiation I'm trying to get. It's
6 Regents diploma?

7 MELANIE MAC: So, this was based on GPA because
8 it's early enough in the school year. Uhm, in
9 thinking about where this letter is as a starting
10 point and the national models that we looked at, a
11 lot of the advice and the research we did pointed at
12 looking at GPA as our initial most inclusive, most
13 affirming message we can share and being thoughtful
14 about not closing doors unintentionally when a
15 students academic progress is still underway. They
16 are still in high school. They still have a year
17 ahead of them.

18 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Right and so just getting
19 into because I think making sure students have
20 access. They know they have access. They have that
21 sense of belonging, is a really good value that I'm
22 so pleased to hear you share and that are starting
23 with these letters. It's very important for so many
24 of our students. You have other programs like CUNY
25 unlimited, which are specifically tailored for

1 students with intellectual disabilities. Is there
2 any movement to get them personalized letters to
3 really see all of the different programs that CUNY
4 has, not just for students who have 70 or above, 69
5 or below, but recognizing the different diplomas that
6 a student may leave high school with the different
7 credentials they may leave high school with.

9 MELANIE MAC: It is our strong aspiration that
10 these letters and knowing that these letters are one
11 part of a comprehensive system of support that
12 Kristen named, get as personalized as we can as we go
13 through iterative cycles. Getting to a place that
14 you're speaking about where we can be really pointed
15 about the resources for a student with intellectual
16 disabilities and how they continue their post-
17 secondary options, would be where we would like to go
18 in terms of that level of true personalization and
19 access. I think that right now, the letter is one
20 tier of communication. It's a message that's signed
21 by both Chancellor's which other school systems and
22 other states had chosen a different approach or had
23 sent a message from the state or a message from the
24 university Chancellor. We were very intentional
25 about how do we send the most inclusive message? And

1 so, in thinking about that, there's much farther down
2 the road that we're looking for to traveling both, to
3 our Council Member his previous point about before
4 12th grade, what do messaging and communications look
5 like and how do we continue to tailor?
6

7 And right now, the letter is a companion to the
8 set of advising resources and advising into different
9 programs at CUNY, SUNY and higher education that we
10 offer to schools.

11 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, I think one of the
12 great things you do in the letter is name ASAP, ACE,
13 College Discovery, Seek. These programs that I know
14 often operate in silos and there are significantly
15 more programs than I think you can target specific
16 populations with and I think that's an important path
17 to go down. It's not just naming the programs which
18 you do and I think it's important but when you're
19 tailoring this to really outline what programs are
20 available based on demographics. Based on academics,
21 based on IEP status, you know Look [INAUDIBLE
22 01:34:22] of 2023 if I might add that in here. But
23 one concern that I have is on the DOE side, we keep
24 hearing about cuts, rounds of cuts to every agency
25 including the Department of Education. And if I'm

1
2 not mistaking the Mayor implemented cuts to the
3 Department of Education which included after-school
4 hours, per session hours, which wouldn't necessarily
5 include counselors and college advisors. And how
6 have those cuts impacted our schools ability to
7 provide guidance to our students through the college
8 process, through the application process and
9 everything else our wonderful college counselors do?

10 MELANIE MAC: The resourcing for schools to do
11 the work is of the utmost importance. We can speak
12 to the work with the Office of Student Pathways and
13 the discretionary funding that we offer to schools
14 specifically for college and career advising was not
15 impacted by the PEG, nor were the suite of programs,
16 the comprehensive college and career planning
17 programs that Kristen described in testimony were not
18 impacted by the PEG.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I imagine, so your
20 specific allocation of funds but there are principals
21 who choose to provide procession hours to their
22 college advisors to stay after school outside of your
23 allocated funding. Is that fair to say?

24 MELANIE MAC: That would be fair to say.
25

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3 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Uhm, so you have no sense
4 yet by feedback from teachers and principals, other
5 faculty members how the cuts have impacted?
6 Especially the wonderful thing that this letter
7 helped do which was increase applications. We have
8 more students applying but seemingly less, fewer
9 resources to help students guide them through this
10 process.

11 MELANIE MAC: I can't from this moment describe
12 the range of issues that schools are maybe
13 experiencing with after school and procession being
14 curbed. We do have very, very active engagement with
15 college and career staff and leaders across all of
16 our high schools and they will communicate with us
17 their concerns and challenges. We have been very
18 much in the throes of unpacking FAFSA and unpacking
19 some of what is challenging about this particular
20 college admission cycle for students and families
21 across the city.

22 We will definitely be attentive to the ways that
23 holistic budget cuts may be impacting this work for
24 sure and would be happy to follow up.

25 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I have found that if it's
not in a spreadsheet when it comes to the DOE, the

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3 information doesn't exist. So I just want to confirm
4 that when it was asked about recommendations from
5 students, faculty, you take a senior survey every
6 year and you take a teacher survey, a faculty survey
7 every year and the questions about the welcome letter
8 and the college process specific to these new
9 initiatives, will those be questions asked of the
10 seniors graduating high school?

11 MELANIE MAC: We incorporate topical programmatic
12 initiatives every year in our senior survey. There's
13 some questions we ask every year for years because we
14 want to see how we're doing over time with [INAUDIBLE
15 01:37:54]—

16 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Of course.

17 MELANIE MAC: And we of course and we'll have
18 particular FAFSA questions because we had to redesign
19 FAFSA this year. We will have particular questions
20 about the SUNY and the CUNY welcome letter and so,
21 that survey is administered towards the end of the
22 school year intentionally when students have made
23 their decisions or are making their decisions and
24 then we review that data very closely over the summer
25 to inform areas where we may need to pivot, do
differently, make adjustments to program and supports

3 for schools. And we look at the same reflections and
4 self-assessments from schools.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And so, I mean the survey
6 rightfully so is similar year after year but there
7 will be questions added or they have already been
8 added to the survey for the end of the year regarding
9 things like the welcome letter and all of the new
10 initiatives to do outreach to students. They will be
11 added to that survey, so you have not just anecdotal
12 data from the students but empirical data?

13 MELANIE MAC: Our seniors will be asked about
14 CUNY and SUNY welcome letters in particular.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And what feedback do you
16 receive quantifiable data? What quantifiable data do
17 you receive from faculty, including college
18 counselors and teachers?

19 MELANIE MAC: We work with schools on
20 comprehensive career connected pathways they're
21 implementing their college and career advising.
22 Their partnerships with employers. Their partnership
23 with higher education. So, when we ask schools, high
24 schools for feedback and when we ask them to survey
25 and self-assess and share data, they are doing this
in a comprehensive frame around the student pathways

1
2 that incorporate students building real relevant
3 skills. Building a strong career plan for the
4 future. Having a head start through early college
5 credits and credentials. Having strong advisement
6 through their post-secondary decision. And so, that
7 is the context for the surveys and the planning that
8 we do with school staff. And it will get into the
9 particulars of how schools are staffing, supporting,
10 training and planning with the resources that they
11 have.

12 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I get concerned every time
13 I hear you know things like conversations and
14 anecdotal data because there are so many layers
15 between a school counselor or a college counselor and
16 a deputy chancellor but right now, there are no plans
17 to incorporate questions regarding the CUNY New York
18 City Public Schools alignment, no additional
19 questions you plan on adding to the annual survey
20 that's given to faculty each year?

21 MELANIE MAC: We will be adding it to our Office
22 of Student Pathway Surveys, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Office, okay. So, you
24 will have quantifiable data that you can then look at
25

1
2 to improve this? Because that's I think what we all
3 want.

4 MELANIE MAC: Absolutely. Absolutely, what I
5 described to you was the quantifiable planning and
6 self-assessment work we do held against schools,
7 student outcomes data and they are the specific data
8 points that we regularly share and some that is very
9 like qualitative, the schools are the best position
10 to know and share. And so, the CUNY and SUNY welcome
11 letter feedback will be coming to us from school and
12 district leaders from students and we look forward to
13 taking all of that feedback into the next cycle.

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: And any reaction to SUNY,
15 the top ten percent of the schools – the top numbers
16 of students being admitted to the CUNY four years?
17 What I say CUNY? SUNY four years, my apologies.
18 It's just one letter difference, it's very confusing.
19 So, the reaction to the top ten percent of students
20 being admitted to the SUNY four years?

21 MELANIE MAC: Thank you Chair. We are excited
22 that Governor Hochul was sharing the initial outline
23 of what this could look like across CUNY and SUNY and
24 we'll pass to CUNY colleagues in a moment. I think
25 that what we're doing with the welcome letter

1 initiative as well as our Future Ready NYC and our
2 other comprehensive programs is looking at
3 systemically we're working on disrupting some very
4 significant numbers of students, well above and
5 beyond our top ten percent of students. And so, we
6 are incredibly excited to talk more about what that
7 could look like and receive more guidance and we have
8 preemptively started to have discussions with CUNY
9 and SUNY and also look at the data regarding our top
10 ten percent of students and what we need to know and
11 understand about their post-secondary trajectories.
12 There's a lot of opportunity that we're excited about
13 with this program and we're also going to in parallel
14 continue the work that we presented today in terms of
15 more and more inclusive messaging about post-
16 secondary opportunity for students who have
17 historically been underserved.

18
19 REINE SARMIENTO: On the SUNY – on the CUNY side,
20 see, I'm doing it now.

21 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry. I ruined it
22 for everyone.

23 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I was going to ask on the
24 CUNY side, no worries.

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3 REINE SARMIENTO: Okay, on the CUNY side, I just
4 want to be able to say that in canvassing our
5 colleges, all of them are very enthusiastic about
6 this initiative of the top ten percent. In addition,
7 we have it in contact with SUNY regarding the
8 logistics of this because in the way that other
9 states have done this, the systems have been set up
10 to clearly identify that top ten percent. So, we're
11 working with our SUNY partners in identifying how to
12 be able to do this across those big five areas and
13 working together to ensure that we get to them and
14 that they have the letter and that they're qualified
15 for it.

16 It's just, the other states have a system where
17 they could clearly identify them and we want to be
18 able to make sure that we're sending it to the right
19 students.

20 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'm sorry, let me, I don't
21 know how to ask this. How do you not know who the
22 top ten percent in each school is?

23 MELANIE MAC: I think that what we're referencing
24 is that we don't offer - we don't have universal
25 ranking across New York City Public High Schools and
Jon can add and correct me if I misspeak. And so,

1
2 there would be just a set of work to do to ensure
3 that the criteria was fair and clear for all of our
4 school leaders and that we were thinking about the
5 equitable implementation of the plan. I would say
6 though, we are looking forward to getting more
7 guidance from the state and being able to work with
8 what we're hearing from Governor Hochul's team to
9 move forward with a strong plan.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: I'd be very surprised to
11 hear that the DOE would not be able to get the top
12 ten percent of any piece of information, given that
13 when we were teachers in public schools, we got data
14 like that all the time within our schools. I'd be
15 very surprised to hear that that, that there were
16 challenges associated with getting that data but
17 maybe I'm missing something.

18 MELANIE MAC: And we didn't describe it as a
19 challenge. I think that we're sharing in the weeds
20 response that as this move forward in implementation,
21 we'd want to make sure that we have a very clear and
22 fair interpretation of the top ten percent, given the
23 way greeting policies and rank looks different in
24 high schools. But in terms of the data challenge, I

3 think is not the challenge but fair and equitable
4 implementation is what we're aimed at.

5 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: So at this point, you're
6 just waiting for more guidance from the governors
7 office?

8 MELANIE MAC: We're doing initial, a data review.
9 We are looking exemplars from other states that have
10 done this work as Vice Chancellor Sarmiento
11 referenced. We're doing some of the preliminary
12 planning with SUNY and CUNY and we're excited because
13 we're not starting from scratch. These are -- this is
14 a plan that can fit within a pretty robust
15 infrastructure of CUNY NYCPS partnership and not
16 something that we're starting from scratch in terms
17 of the ways in which we've collaboratively planned
18 access and success and initiatives.

19 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Chair Joseph.

20 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We want to make sure we're
21 equitable. CUNY, how is budget cut impacting some of
22 the services that you provide, especially particular
23 to this program?

24 REINE SARMIENTO: Particular to the application?

25 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: The system as a whole.
You're going to get students. If you're getting

1 cuts, professors are being cut. Programs are being
2 cut. How has the cuts impacted CUNY?

3
4 REINE SARMIENTO: Uhm, how much time do you have?
5 No, just kidding. Uhm, I think that for CUNY in
6 general and this particular program is very important
7 to us. We have used our strategic funds allocated to
8 us to be able to ensure that the colleges not only
9 have the resources they need to identify it but also
10 the proper infrastructure in looking at and having
11 this self-sustaining. I know from my offices, we are
12 looking at artificial intelligence to be able to
13 streamline some of procedures and processes so that
14 our recruiters, our financial aid advisors have the
15 time to spend with their students. This FAFSA
16 process, while touted as simplified, that first year
17 will be very difficult. And so, we've devoted
18 resources out directly to the colleges to be able to
19 help that. And also looking at infrastructure to be
20 able to help them from the future on.

21 It will be challenging but everyone that I've
22 spoken to in leadership at the campuses are really
23 devoted to making sure that we provide as much as we
24 can for the students because we're moving out of and
25 we have moved out of the pandemic. And we're even

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3 seeing increasing in our enrollment for this spring
4 with the largest freshman class I've seen since I've
5 been in CUNY and so we want to be able to exercise
6 that momentum and make sure that the students are
7 getting the services they need.

8 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How many of your CUNY
9 campuses are ADA accessible?

10 REINE SARMIENTO: ADA accessible?

11 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Hmm, hmm.

12 REINE SARMIENTO: Yeah, I don't -

13 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You'll get back to me?

14 REINE SARMIENTO: Yes. Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Please do because it's
16 important because we do have our students with
17 mobility issues. We want to make sure that they are
18 also serviced as well. So, uhm, SUNY is not here to
19 answer but I would have the same question for SUNY.
20 We want to make sure our just as much as we fight for
21 public schools to be accessible, we want to make sure
22 our higher education institutions are also accessible
23 to our New York City students. So, that's important.

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: It would be great if there
25 were legislation. That would make it easy for CUNY
to know exactly how many students with disabilities

1
2 were coming into their campus. If only. It does
3 exist and it was supposed to be implemented last
4 July, so July of 2023.

5 Speaking of AI, a great opportunity to use that
6 to actually personalize the letters and how do you
7 feel about – do you feel like there's more
8 competition with SUNY now with the governor's
9 announcement of the top ten percent of the students
10 with GPA's that CUNY is now in more competition with
11 SUNY? You might be losing students to other parts of
12 the state or to the four campuses in the city.

13 REINE SARMIENTO: While I believe that the City
14 University of New York has an exceptional opportunity
15 for the students in New York City, we want our
16 students to pursue higher education, whether that be
17 CUNY or SUNY, which is why we're partnering with them
18 to make sure that everybody has a place in higher
19 education. And so, do I see them as competition?
20 No, I consider them a critical ally to making sure
21 that all students have a post-secondary education
22 experience.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Yeah, like at Binghamton.
24 That's where I went. I'll give it back to Chair
25 Joseph.

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3 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Uhm, so I passed a
4 Resolution earlier this year asking for educators to
5 be trained on AI. Is that happening in CUNY? Are
6 professors being trained because every time we think
7 we know one AI, there's another one that comes out,
8 so counteracts the first one.

9 REINE SARMIENTO: Constantly changing.

10 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Constantly, so I keep saying
11 you think Chat GBT then you have "bot" that can
12 detect, that can give you a paper that you cannot
13 detect AI in it and it's growing. So, how are we
14 addressing that? Because the students are moving
15 faster than you guys are. They are already ahead of
16 it and you think two, what is it turning? That
17 paper, there's a paper you submit. There is already
18 an AI that they can use so you not detect that that
19 paper was created through AI. So, they're moving
20 fast. How fast are you keeping up?

21 REINE SARMIENTO: So, uhm, we are part of an
22 investment of \$75 billion for artificial intelligence
23 in which our faculty are participating in. And we
24 know the kids are ahead of us right? But what we
25 need to be able to do is train the faculty to be able
to have them use it responsibly and for us to be able

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3 to detect it. On the student staff side, we need to
4 get better about the paper processing and the
5 bureaucratic measures we put these students through
6 and artificial intelligence could help us do that.
7 So, I'm looking at it from my perspective as an
8 opportunity to alleviate some of the burden on our
9 staff of the manual process that are happening, so
10 that we could have a better experience for our
11 students. And we look forward to the collaboration
12 of the entire state on the artificial intelligence as
13 it pertains to education.

14 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely, I've asked for
15 guardrails to be put around so students can use it
16 responsibly. It can be used responsibly, right? We
17 can also create ways where I know New York City
18 Public School is using a mirror for dyslexia and also
19 for reading but we can also use it and I know through
20 that; you can create the pipeline because we also
21 have biases in all of these software so our students
22 have to be at the table to help create these
23 software's as well. So uhm, I think this is a great
24 moment because I had a student from CUNY that I did a
25 roundtable during caucus and he was like Chair, I
went into the classroom and the kids were running

1 circles around this teacher because they didn't know
2 because now, when I talk to people I'm like, "so what
3 are you using?" "Oh Grammarly." I said, "no, but
4 they have Right Tune." They already created two more
5 ahead of Grammarly. If you're using Mid Journey,
6 they already have Leonardo, so you're behind already.
7 As they move, they move twice or three times the
8 amount of AI, Artificial Intelligence software that's
9 being out there to use.
10

11 So, even for note taking, sticky note app is
12 great for note taking. Our students struggle with
13 that but with guardrails and safety around that, so
14 New York City public schools, I know you're currently
15 using three in 350 schools I believe. You're using a
16 mirror for reading and dyslexia and how are you guys
17 keeping up with the AI phenomenon?

18 MELANIE MAC: That's right. I think I was on the
19 hot seat in the fall talking to you all and to
20 Council Member Gutiérrez about this. This is
21 incredibly important. This is a defining moment in
22 teaching and learning and so, there's a couple
23 connections with CUNY. We actually, we have the
24 first State Certified Data Science program at
25 Bushwick Leaders High School in partnership with

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3 LaGuardia Community College. They are developing the
4 Data Science pathway, so when we think about our
5 young people learning about machine learning and
6 really being, gaining the skills, developing a
7 portfolio that demonstrates an understanding of AI
8 and its applications before they even leave high
9 school. We are looking to cultivate more of these
10 tech pathway programs through Future IDNYC, so there
11 is the aspect of this that is thinking about
12 preparing students for the workforce in which they
13 need to have both AI literacy but we also need our
14 students to be able to fundamentally be prepared to
15 become an AI engineer right and understanding that
16 software engineering is something that is quickly
17 being kind of outpaced by an AI engineer.

18 For our staff, there is a fundamental AI literacy
19 you know opportunity where we, I believe we shared
20 the citywide training that we've continued to, we've
21 continued to cultivate the AI policy lab that's
22 working with stakeholders across the city from
23 students and families to all of our closest partners
24 to understand what strong responsible AI policy
25 should look like that will ultimately be open sourced
and something that we can share as a national

1
2 exemplar and that's work that is happening in real
3 time this semester.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. I'm waiting for
5 New York City Public Schools to create the digital
6 literacy plan. There was one in place, I think you
7 guys scratched it but it's time especially with what
8 happened with the remote learning and also during
9 COVID. There was a lot of lessons learned and this
10 is an opportunity again and I'll keep saying that.
11 New York City public schools have an opportunity to
12 really reinvent the digital literacy plan for New
13 York City. So, this is two decades of experience and
14 I'm also an undercover techy, so this is a lot of
15 uhm, so I want to see the work and investment go into
16 those areas because even scientists are using AI just
17 to track data, data collection and how we use it in
18 the future.

19 Talk about Reconnect. You mentioned Reconnect
20 earlier. Where do you do your recruitment? Is it
21 just for students who left the system and came back
22 or are you in partnership with District 79 as well to
23 do your recruitments?

24 REINE SARMIENTO: In year one, it was to be able
25 to look at students who started at CUNY and didn't

3 finish. In year two, it was everyone. So, whether
4 or not they attended a CUNY institution or not, uhm,
5 we have geo mapping data that identifies students who
6 want to pursue or complete their education. So,
7 we're focusing on that and also working with
8 nonprofits to be able to provide a service to their
9 employees as well.

10 And would love to be back to be able to talk
11 about CUNY Reconnect and some of the other
12 initiatives to enhance retention because it's not
13 enough to just recruit them but our obligation at
14 CUNY is for them to be able to graduate and find
15 jobs.

16 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely and whatever the
17 barriers are. I know metro card has been a big
18 thing. Are you guys promoting fair fares on campus
19 for students to apply for fair fare? The Council
20 funds this program where low-income students can
21 apply and their metro cards are half price. So, you
22 should be promoting those things on campus. That's a
23 barrier. Transportation is a huge barrier and when I
24 meet with students and college, especially in
25 college, that's a barrier. If we can remove that,

3 that should be also a game changer in terms of how we
4 retain our students.

5 REINE SARMIENTO: Yeah, it's very much
6 appreciated in our ASAP and ACE programs. The
7 incentive they look forward to is their metro card
8 and so, we know the value of that in transportation
9 for our students, absolutely.

10 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you Chair Joseph.
11 I'd like to thank the New York City public schools
12 panel and CUNY panel for testifying today on this
13 very, very important topic.

14 PANEL: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: To those of you waiting to
16 testify, uhm I want to remind you, this is a hearing
17 titled Streamlined College Acceptance of New York
18 City Public High School Graduates and please be
19 advised that no one is allowed to record themselves
20 during the hearing. A recording of the hearing can
21 be accessed through the City Council's website.

22 And a reminder, if you would like to testify in
23 person, you can see the Sergeant at Arms by the back
24 of the room and fill out a witness slip. For our
25 first panel, I'd like to call up Sharon Hardy,
Michael Shields and Christopher Leon Johnson.

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3 It's Sharon Hardy, Michael Shields, and
4 Christopher Leon Johnson here?

5 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Again, this is
7 a hearing on Streamlined College Acceptance of New
8 York City Public High School Graduates and I would
9 like to remind anyone testifying today that they
10 cannot record themselves. A recording can be
11 accessed through the City Council website.

12 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Uh, by the way, it's
13 not live. I mean, just to let you know, it's not
14 live on the website. Alright, so this is about
15 Streamlined Applications.

16 So, I was a student of CUNY from 2009 to 2011. I
17 was at Kingsborough Community College. So shout out
18 to everybody that was at CUNY. It's a beautiful
19 institution to be at. It's free. I was, since I'm
20 poor, it was free but usually it's cheaper than like
21 SUNY and like NYU. But I'll say this right now is
22 CUNY needs to be more transparent of like what's the
23 requirements, what's the grade requirements to get
24 inside the senior colleges like Baruch and City Tech
25 and like Hunter College? While if you have a bad
score, they put you in the lower tech colleges like

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3 Kingsborough and Queensborough Community College.

4 What needs to happen more is CUNY needs to kill and
5 eliminate the filing fees for everybody. You should
6 be able to file for free. That's more of a cash
7 grab. It does by you paying, I think it's \$90 bucks
8 now. Ask Community Council, \$90, \$100, \$70, \$65 is
9 nothing but it's a rip off.

10 And the thing about CUNY more is they need - the
11 books need to be more affordable. Why does a book
12 cost \$100? It's ridiculous. So, to be 100 percent
13 about this stuff, when it comes to high school kids,
14 it should be more fair for them to you know apply
15 fairly without paying a fee and they should be more
16 educated by people in CUNY of what's the grades you
17 need to actually get into those colleges.

18 Then one more thing is they need to stop this
19 picking people because of their racial class or their
20 economic class. It should be more of a fair system.
21 If you have a high score, get in. If you don't have
22 a high score, you shouldn't get in but all this like
23 affirmative action type stuff, it should be happening
24 at CUNY.

25 So, a few more things. Do you know about the
access building, yeah, it should be more accessible.

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3 Like certainly these colleges they need to have rants
4 everywhere and railings and such or so. That's all I
5 got to say. Thank you. Thank you Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you so much. Is
7 there anyone else interested in testifying or who is
8 signed up to testify in person? Okay, thank you and
9 we have on Zoom Lorraine Cohen followed by Paulette
10 Healey.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

12 LORRAINE COHEN: Okay, hello?

13 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Hi.

14 LORRAINE COHEN: Hi. Okay, thank you for giving
15 me this opportunity. Uhm, my name is Lorraine Cohen,
16 I am a retired professor of sociology in the social
17 science department at LaGuardia Community College. I
18 taught there from 1993 to 2022. As such, I spent
19 approximately 29 years of my career at CUNY. I also
20 got my PHD at CUNY and my BA at SUNY.

21 Among the many leadership roles that I played at
22 the college, I was a Department Chair and Chair of
23 the LaGuardia Chapter by Union, the Professional
24 Staff Congress. During my time at LaGuardia, I
25 witnessed a dramatic decline in investment on public

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3 higher ed. Mayor Adams recent budget cuts to
4 community colleges are just one example.

5 The Governor has decided to bring more students
6 to CUNY is a commendable plan but we must be able to
7 serve the students who do return. While the
8 Governors plan focuses on automatic admissions for
9 high performing students, the reality is that most
10 students who are admitted to CUNY need some form of
11 remediation, as they are not fully prepared to do
12 college level work. With insufficient funding from
13 the city and state, we cannot hope to keep these
14 students from dropping out.

15 We know that money matters. ASAP students do
16 well. They have free tuition, a laptop, money for
17 transportation and more educational advisement. This
18 type of support is needed for students to accel. My
19 testimony focuses on the way the universities
20 administrations development and implementation of an
21 algorithm or index, as it is called, raises issues
22 regarding its efficacy, placing students once
23 admitted. I also argue that the concentration of
24 power in the central CUNY administration has had
25 adverse consequences. Remediation in ESL have always
been hot button issues. The policy of CUNY central

1
2 has been to marginalize the faculty that teach these
3 course and the students who require them.

4 About eight years ago, the college replaced the
5 ACT test with an algorithm to the purposes of
6 placement of students in community and senior
7 colleges. The algorithm was based on multiple
8 measures in contrast to the ACT test. The change
9 from using the ACT to an algorithm otherwise known as
10 the index, began as a top-down measure. The VIN VP
11 at CUNY at its team designed and implemented these
12 changes. Faculty and department shares in the areas
13 of developmental education and ESL were only given a
14 cursory opportunity to comment or discuss their
15 concerns. They had no saying on the time of its
16 rollout, it's scope or the methodology. There was no
17 pilot program that would establish its superiorities
18 and assessment in placement school.

19 Within a short time, the index was used for all
20 applicants to CUNY. It was used for placement in
21 senior community college as well as placement in
22 developmental forces -

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: You can finish your
25 thought.

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3 LORRAINE COHEN: Oh dear, okay well, my thought
4 was to demonstrate how the inflexibility of the
5 central administration has hobbled students because
6 they have been placed in wrong remedial courses. And
7 ESL and my final sentence is that uhm, some students
8 who need ESL language skill building are not
9 identified by the algorithm. ESL is not treated as a
10 legitimate program and is minimized at many campuses,
11 when in fact, our students need language support.

12 And in closing, the majority of the students that
13 come to CUNY are not in the high achieving bracket.
14 They are mainly, the majority are students who need
15 developmental education. This is something that
16 should be recognized and supported strongly and not
17 marginalized and I hope that the Chancellor really
18 will talk to faculty who are experts in this area.
19 To consult with them and to visit them and get
20 feedback so that whatever the problems are with the
21 implementation of this algorithm, they can be
22 identified and resolved. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Thank you. Thank you so
24 much and I know we also have your written testimony.
25 Thank you for joining us today.

Uhm, next, we'll hear from Paulette Healey.

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

4 PAULETTE HEALEY: Hi, thank you so much for
5 allowing me this opportunity to testify. My name is
6 Paulette Healey and I am a District 75 parent as well
7 as being a disability advocate and community
8 organizer. I thank Chair Joseph for asking the
9 question about accessibility. I was pretty confident
10 that there would not be any information shared today
11 by the DOE or in terms of how many buildings are
12 accessible. But when we're talking about the
13 admissions process, the structure of the building
14 itself is a huge challenge for our disability
15 community. You know they've made strides in terms of
16 providing disability supports with you know, within
17 the campus itself. But we don't as a public school
18 system, teach our children to advocate for themselves
19 when they're in higher learning scenarios.

20 So, they don't know what to ask for. They don't
21 know to ask for a combination. They don't know
22 whether they need continued speech supports or you
23 know executive functioning supports or uhm,
24 counseling at this point. And in a report that was
25 released recently, it shows that 90 percent of high
school graduates that are identified as college

1 ready, and our students with disabilities, less than
2 35 percent of them actually graduate within a four-
3 year program compared to the 14 percent of their
4 general education counterparts.
5

6 So, it's almost double the number of students
7 with disabilities that end up dropping out of college
8 in their first or second year. And this is also
9 including a third of students diagnosed with
10 depression, whether they were diagnosed prior to
11 going into higher learning or whether they're
12 diagnosed while they are in college. So, this is
13 just uhm, another lens that we ask those who are
14 tasked to look at how admissions is administered. To
15 look at our children with disabilities as desirable
16 candidates and provide not only you know easier
17 access for admissions but provide desirable
18 programming that students with disabilities can
19 actually see themselves going into. We are at an
20 all-time high in terms of staffing shortages for
21 related service providers. Why do we not have more
22 programs that allow you know students to become
23 speech pathologists, occupational therapists, school
24 psychologists, social workers? These are areas that
25 are in high demand time and time again and we've

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3 already talked at nauseum about the need for
4 bilingual related service providers. So, considering
5 that you know the percentage of students that
6 actually go into our CUNY and SUNY systems are
7 identified as either from immigrant families or
8 multilanguage learners. Why not you know take that
9 incentivize them into going into areas of staffing
10 shortages.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time is expired.

12 PAULETTE HEALEY: Uhm, I just have one more
13 thought, can I get one more minute?

14 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Sure thing, go ahead.

15 PAULETTE HEALEY: Thank you. I appreciate it.
16 Uhm, and I appreciate the speaker that you started
17 with from the University of Fresno but in New York
18 City, we have P-Tech programs that actually allow
19 students to get early college credits starting in the
20 9th grade and extends you know the accessibility for
21 our students from 9-12 to 9-14.

22 So, having more P-Tech programs with the
23 appropriate transitional supports to guide these
24 students as they're thinking about how independently
25 they can learn, is a proven program that is not
funded the way AP for All is funded. And

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3 unfortunately, with AP for All, those courses and
4 credits don't translate even into our CUNY schools.
5 So, when we're talking about what programs to extend
6 and what programs to invest in, the P-Tech program is
7 an evidence-based program that works and provides
8 long term supports for children who are going into
9 post-secondary readiness and there's you know, I
10 would like to highlight the Urban Assembly Schools
11 that actually do this incredibly well. And I know
12 Chair Joseph knows that I am very big on school
13 visits, so Chair Dinowitz, if you want to come by and
14 check out what Urban Assembly School for Emergency
15 Medicine is doing with their P-Tech funding, I would
16 love to schedule a visit for you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DINOWITZ: Happy to. Happy to go.
18 Thank you so much for your testimony. Is there
19 anyone else on Zoom who would like to testify? Thank
20 you and I want to give a special thank you to Chloe
21 Rivera who is on Zoom, managing lots of things.

22 I'd like to thank CUNY and New York City Public
23 Schools for testifying today and everyone who
24 testified today. You know our students in our public
25 schools deserve the best and sometimes that just

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2 means CUNY and the DOE talking to one another and
3 providing opportunities for them.

4 It's also very clear from the testimony today
5 that there is a long way to go in making sure this
6 great idea becomes a robust program that truly
7 supports our students in their goal in getting into
8 and graduating from college. I want to close this
9 hearing out. Thank you all very much. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date March 12, 2024