

6/10 – Testimony to City Council – Committee on Higher Education

My name is Alex Pence. I am a Continuing Education Teacher of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at LaGuardia Community College.

Because my colleagues and I work in Adult Continuing Education (ACE), our programs have traditionally received relatively less funding compared to the degree-granting programs we work alongside. This has resulted in two major consequences.

The first is that, in spite of often having the same amount of credentials and/or experience, we universally receive considerably less pay and little to no benefits. This lack of provisions means that in order to make ends meet, we need to up to six classes (or more) at a time. This amount of work enables us to make ends meet; fewer classes has resulted in many of us unable to afford basic necessities.

The second major consequence is that our programs are more directly dependent on external funding or the tuition of the students in our programs. As a result of the pandemic, students in our classes are largely out of work, and many never received a federal stimulus due to their immigration statuses; thus, the majority have been unable to afford classes. Enrollment is extremely low across continuing education programs, meaning that our programs have been severely downsized or shuttered altogether, as has been happening to programs across the city such as such as the historic ELI program at Queens College.

In addition to the causes in other testimonies you'll hear and have heard today, increased funding from the city would mean that continuing education programs could lower the rate of tuition to offset the financial difficulties of the students in our classes, the immigrants that define and form the lifeblood of our city. This would then have the effect of keeping our programs open, and it would provide employment to teachers who have made it their professional purpose to help members of our communities access the opportunities that equity provides them. Your decision to help these programs and communities continue to survive these difficult times is paramount.

Thank you for your time.

Alex Pence
Continuing Education Teacher
The English Language Center at LaGuardia Community College
City University of New York

My name is Ami and I am a Continuing Education Teacher at The City College of New York. I am writing to call on the City Council Committee on Higher Education to advocate for increased funding to CUNY so that we can continue to provide education to our students without losing our jobs and without increasing tuition for students. In these difficult times, the city must prioritize education, including continuing education programs. Higher education, including continuing education, is a right, not a privilege.

Continuing Education Teachers (CETs) at campuses across CUNY have been informed that CUNY has implemented a university-wide personnel action freeze on all full time and part-time appointments starting July 1st. This personnel action freeze will place entire programs and thousands of jobs and students in jeopardy.

For example, the CETs at the English Language Institute of Queens have all been informed that their program will be dissolved as of July 1st, 2020. The ELI is the oldest English Language school in the CUNY system, and second oldest in the entire nation. It is a historical institution; founded in 1945, it has served Queens for 75 years. Additionally, Queens is the most ethnically diverse urban area on the planet; Queens College is representative of this diverse borough, and it would be shameful and a disservice to the community for Queens College to not have an English language school.

During the transition to online teaching, CETs were given no paid training. We worked 12-hour days to learn the necessary technology and transfer materials and lessons online. At the end of all this hard work to adapt to the conditions created by the pandemic, continuing education teachers have been told that we are losing our jobs.

All CUNY schools offer a number of vital continuing education programs; among them are English language programs. English language education allows immigrants to get better jobs, increase civic participation, and navigate daily life. English language education also increases opportunities for students who want to enter college without a strong proficiency in English; without the appropriate English proficiency, these students will be left behind and will not be able to succeed in their classes. English language education provides English language learners increased academic and economic opportunities.

Additionally, continuing education programs provide education and training for our essential healthcare workers, such as nurses, medical assistants, medical interpreters and EMTs. Without these programs, we would no longer have a strong base of healthcare professionals working hard to save lives in NYC each day.

Compared to the budgets for prosecution and law enforcement, the city university budget is pitifully small at under 1.2 billion dollars. The 2021 Fiscal Year executive budget currently includes over 455 million dollars allocated towards the District Attorneys and Special Narcotics Offices and 6 billion dollars allocated towards the NYPD. If the city council is truly concerned about public safety, you must invest in economic safety nets such as education.

June 10th, 2020

Chair Barron,
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10038

Chair Barron:

My name is Nasim Almontaser. I am a Yemeni American, first generation student, born and raised in Brooklyn NY, activist, College Now alum and a full time student at Brooklyn College studying History and Secondary Education. During these times, I'm really trying to juggle this workload with online learning, simultaneously ensuring I am healthy. As an activist, I believe in "voicing the voiceless." To learn more about the work I do, I am all over social media, please follow me on **Facebook**: NAlmontaser, **Instagram**: Nasim_almontaser, and **Twitter**: NAlmontaser3.

Life has been so hard for everyone including students who are in school such as myself. During this transition, I've had friends who lost family, I lost really close friends myself and my father got sick. He was hospitalized for two weeks. This all happened in the middle of the Spring 2020 semester which was hard as midterms and finals deadlines were approaching. I was really worried if I wasn't going to make it because in that semester I took 6 classes-- 19 credits. Yes, exactly, imagine the workload. Luckily, my father was not diagnosed with COVID and all I had to process was the death of my friends who were really close to me. I remember a friend who I lost from Brooklyn College told me the very last day when Cuomo announced CUNY closure-- for me to remain safe and hope we'd see each other after this pandemic. He gave me tips on how to remain safe. This person was like a big brother because in moments of hardship he was able to read emotions off my face, cheer me up, make me laugh and would give me the best advice on how to move forward. We'd even go out to lunch. Unfortunately, this friend is gone and a week after I found out his father passed away as he was recovering from COVID. I couldn't believe this at first because my friend was really young and did not have any health issues prior. It was a hard moment for me to process which made the conclusion of the semester a hard one as well.

There was something that got me to the finish line. It was the experience I received from Brooklyn College- College Now. College Now taught me how to read, write and articulate myself clearly. It trained me how to get through a college class and be successful. How to communicate with Professors and gave me first hand experience of what a college student's life is like. Additionally, I walked into college with a 3.5+ GPA from the courses I took in the College Now program. This is an outstanding GPA to walk into college with all because of the resources and opportunities the program had to offer. I was ahead of the game.

I have to say that I am completing my Bachelors degree in 2 ½ years with a double major. I don't think anyone in the nation has ever done that before. This was because of all the courses I took at College Now for FREE. As a first generation student, this for sure saved me lots of money. This was an advantage.

CUNY has been overlooked for way too long and it's important to note that there are many disadvantaged students struggling COVID and online classes. When making structural changes in the field of Higher Education, please consider CUNY's mission statement since 1847, "Providing a quality, accessible education, regardless of background or means." This has led me to demand for *four* things.

First, I believe that students should have the chance to file for CR/ No Credit for the summer and fall semester until we know where we are at because of all the stuff in the world that is on our plate which was all out of control. I am taking classes at the moment for the summer and fall semester and professors are still holding us accountable at the same level even online which is unfair because of our individual situations. Therefore, this Credit/ No Credit policy option should still be in place because it's crucially beneficial so students GPA's are not being hurt and can graduate without any issues. This is how we accommodate and provide a quality education for students regardless of background or race.

Secondly, with CUNY budget cuts, I demand that college classes are free just like the way Harvard classes are because many students have lost jobs and this degree can be the opportunity for them to find jobs and get their lives together during this pandemic. For first generation students like myself, this diploma would allow me to make it into the middle class tier and continue the great activism work I am doing-- giving back to my community. Therefore, CUNY classes should be free for us due to the population of students CUNY serves.

Thirdly, College Now should remain funded because as a first generation student, it gave me the opportunity to experience college life, get through my Bachelors degree in 2 ½ years savings lots of money, networking with awesome Professors and faculty on campus who made a long lasting impact on my life and meet students who had similar career interests. On a personal note, this program should remain funded because each CUNY campus has it which gives students the advantage to explore the college and it's resources. For me, my desire was to attend Brooklyn College. The Brooklyn College, College Now program taught me how to navigate the campus which allowed my first day of college to be so much smoother. I was in all my classes on time because I knew the campus from heart. This is a problem many college students have for the first time. Starting it off on the right foot with experience, truly makes a difference. I won the MySelfThird Scholarship from College Now which helped me pay for my textbooks when I enrolled first semester. With all of this assistance and guidance, I was able to

get through the remaining of the semester. College Now should remain funded because it will help the disadvantaged students like myself and many others. Small things make a big difference.

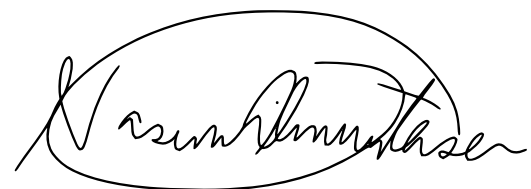
Fourthly, College Now has served half a million students since it went CUNY- wide since 2000. College Now's mission is to serve New York City public high school students through college-credit courses which are aligned with the first-year of study at the City University of New York (CUNY). They also offer pre-college activities designed to increase academic readiness for college. These are all resources disadvantaged and advantaged students take advantage of at the high school level which not only makes a difference when they enroll in college but students like myself notice their grades improve in High School due to the academic rigor college courses offer. Without funding, our students won't have that experience, which would deprive them and the nation from reaching their career goals. Depriving our students from reaching their career goals is one of the last things we can afford right now with the current situation we are living in. Especially in moments like now, we need to better our next generation so they can be the one pushing policies and building on the great work. We can't have it end here.

To conclude, please consider making CUNY classes free, keeping the Credit/ No credit policy options available for students in the Summer and Fall semester until we get back on campus. Additionally, keep funding for College Now programs in CUNY because of it's advantages for disadvantaged students. In the words of Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." If you accommodate for us and for College Now, the next generation will emerge and change the world.

Once again my work revolves around "voicing the voiceless". I want you to all understand that I am here for you and for the core values NYC manifests. To get in touch, you can find me on all social media outlets. **Facebook:** NAlmuntaser, **Instagram:** nasim_almuntaser and **Twitter:** NAlmuntaser3.

Thank you and I have served my time.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nasim Almontaser". The signature is enclosed within a hand-drawn oval border.

Nasim Almontaser
Brooklyn College Student
Brooklyn College- College Now Alum

Activist

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June 10th, 2020

Chair Barron,
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10038

Chair Barron:

My name is Calvin Herman. I am a first generation student living in Flushing, Queens and an alum of College Now as well as Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College. I graduated with a bachelor's degree with honors in biological sciences.

Between 2012 and 2016, I enrolled in Manhattan Hunter Science High School (MHSHS). The summer before my junior year, I saw an opportunity to take a college course at Hunter College as part of the College Now program. An aspect that drew me to College Now was the fact that if I successfully completed the program, I would earn college credits. The thought of getting ahead, while in high school, motivated me to apply to the program. During the summer of 2014, I took PHYS 100 and PHYS 101 at Hunter College: Basic Concepts of Physics, both lecture and laboratory.

The College Now experience was extraordinary. Academically, it was an eye-opening experience because it was the first time I took a physics course. Furthermore, because all my classmates were motivated students, I was consistently challenged to do better through the duration of the program. I was able to network with students from various high schools in New York City. In short, I became a better student.

In regards to the social aspect, partaking in the College Now program was the first time I found a strong academic support system. While I certainly felt supported in high school, the act of enrolling in a college course was daring in and of itself, and one could easily feel out-of-place, and even intimidated, when navigating a new environment. The College Now staff, particularly the coordinator Mr. Erlyn Mendez, has been a positive figure in my academic career, starting in high school all the way through college.

It is important to note that MHSHS is a part of CUNY's Early College Initiative. This means that students—at MHSHS, it was the 12th graders—have the opportunity to take college courses in addition to high school courses that they need in order to graduate. As a result, students have an edge when they start college since they have college credits under their belt. In my case, I came to college with 26 college credits, which allowed me to get started immediately with my major (I knew at that point that I wanted to major in biology) and to explore subjects of my interest. As a

first-generation and low-income student, I am grateful that I was able to experience college early—as part of College Now and Early College Initiative—at no cost.

The college-readiness skills I developed in high school, thanks to College Now, allowed me to achieve more than I could have ever imagined. I was accepted to Hunter College on a full-tuition scholarship as a Macaulay Honors student. I want other students, who may think that college is an exclusive place, to enjoy all that college has to offer. This is why I am urging you to keep College Now's budget intact.

College Now has served half a million students since 2000, and it has been a critical nexus between CUNY and NYC public high schools. College Now is the paragon of CUNY's goal to "providing high quality education to all New Yorkers, ensuring equal access and opportunity regardless of background or means," as well as the City's commitment to ensure that everyone has an equal chance in life.

Thank you very much for your time.

Yours truly,

Calvin Herman

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Testimony of Nicholas Freudenberg

Distinguished Professor Public Health, and Director of Healthy CUNY, on Healthy CUNY 2020 Covid-19 Student Survey, New York City Council Hearing Committee on Higher Education
Hearing, June 10 at 10:00 am

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity testify on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the students of CUNY. My testimony is based on a survey of a representative sample of 2,300 CUNY students completed in mid-April 2020. Professors Heidi Jones and Meredith Manze from our School of Public Health, Patricia Lamberson from Healthy CUNY, a university wide initiative to promote health for academic success, and Tara Twiste at CUNY Office of Institutional Research were my partners in this research. We have also presented these findings to faculty, administrators, student and other groups and our recommendations include their suggestions as well. The survey was generously supported by the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs, but I testify as a faculty researcher, not as a spokesperson for the university. I am also submitting a report that provides additional details on survey methods and findings and our recommendations, which I highlight here.

Our key finding is that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a significant amount of distress for CUNY students. We found that rates of depression, anxiety, and food insecurity have doubled since our last Healthy Healthy CUNY survey in early 2018. For example, in 2018, 18% of CUNY students reported that they feel nervous, anxious or on edge on more than half the days of the last 2 weeks but in April 2020, 40% reported those feeling. In 2018, 15 % reported feeling down, depressed, or helpless while in April of this year 34% reported these feelings. In 2018, 16% of students reported they worried they would run out of food before they could buy more; in April 2020, 50%, more than triple the 2018 rate, reported this level of food insecurity.

These findings were reported in mid-April at an earlier stage of the epidemic but other evidence suggests that despite several new emergency food assistance programs, food insecurity remains alarmingly high in New York City.

Students also reported that the pandemic was disrupting their focus on school. 26% of our students believe that as a result of the pandemic they will graduate later than expected and 29% no longer know when they graduate, showing that more than half our students believe the epidemic has slowed their academic progress.

Covid-19 has made our students much more concerned about their health. On our survey, 68% of students reported that general health was excellent or very good at beginning of semester, but only 10% reported general health was excellent or very good in mid-April, a shocking decline.



Our survey showed that several groups of students experienced higher levels of distress than others. The 14% of CUNY students who are parents or guardians of children under 18 reported difficulty negotiating their roles as parents and supervisors of their children's schooling with their own role as students. Students with disabilities or special needs reported challenges keeping up with online education as did those with limited internet or wifi access.

In general, our survey showed that the proportion of students who reported getting help on basic needs from CUNY was low both before but especially after Covid-19 struck. . Before the epidemic, only 10% of students said they had visited a campus food pantry, after only 1%; 3.4% said they had received a food voucher before , after only .6%; and 2.8% said they had gotten an emergency loan before after only 0.7%.

There was some good news. High proportions of CUNY students, generally about 70%, trusted their faculty, CUNY leaders and CUNY health and mental health professionals to provide them with information they needed to cope with the epidemic.

As a public health professional and long-time researcher on the health of CUNY students, I believe the health and moral responsibility of CUNY, the City Council and the governments of New York City and New York State are to ensure that no CUNY student should fail to graduate because of unmet needs imposed by Covid-19.

To achieve that goal, I recommend:

1. CUNY should strengthen its formal partnerships with community providers to meet student basic needs
2. CUNY should develop coordinated university-wide online and digital basic needs platforms to link students with basic needs assistance and services
3. CUNY should launch coordinated, university wide campaigns to enroll eligible CUNY students in SNAP, Medicaid, and other benefit programs .
4. CUNY should ensure online educational programs are tailored to meet needs of students who are parents, those with disabilities or limited access to Internet or Wi-Fi
5. New York City and State governments should provide CUNY with the resources it needs to meet high levels of student needs during this time of economic and social disruption.

In this moment of crisis, our students need more not less from our faculty, staff, and university. The city, state and federal government could make no better investment in the long term physical, mental and economic health of our city and state than to ensure that every student now enrolled at CUNY gets the support and services they need to achieve their full academic potential and graduate.

For more information: Nick.Freudenberg@sph.cuny.edu

June 10, 2020

Chair Barron,
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10038

Chair Barron:

My name is Leslie Andrade. I am a first generation, rising sophomore attending Macaulay Honors College at Hunter College. I am majoring in Biochemistry with a minor in Classics. I am a College Now alum and a Hunter College Now Ambassador. I am writing this letter to express how valuable and indispensable CUNY College Now is.

College Now holds a special place in my heart because of the huge impact it has had on my life. I, along with thousands of other students were given the opportunity to take college level classes while still in High School at zero cost. This offered us the opportunity to experience what a college campus was like while also taking higher level classes that may not have been offered at our high schools. For example, I attended Beacon High School and while I was offered an excellent education there, we had limited number of AP courses and thus, limited seats. As a result, a hypothetical student would be competing with around 300 other students for a spot in an AP Science course. I applied for AP classes both my junior and senior year but was unfortunately not given a chance. I decided to apply to College Now's summer program and took Chemistry 100 and 101 over the summer of 2018. It was in this class that I discovered my love for chemistry and my appreciation for this program grew. This class, along with others allowed me to enter college with a 4.0 as I received college level credits for these classes thereby providing me with the foundation necessary to succeed in my future college classes.

One of my favorite aspects of CUNY College Now is how accepting and non-discriminatory the program is. Especially in times like these, they serve as a prime example of what several other programs should do. They accept people regardless of their race, ethnicity, social class, gender, etc.

Another aspect that made this program as special as it is, is the College Now staff. The staff at Hunter College became a part of my family. The amount of pride they have in their students is amazing. They have always made me feel like I deserved the best out of life and taught me not to doubt myself. They were always there for me, as they are for all of their students. The coordinator even makes it his goal to know every single person who attends the program. He goes out of his way of making sure that if someone in the program were to come and ask him a

question, he would know exactly who they were. This makes the student feel accepted and more comfortable.

They are a huge part of the reason I decided to attend Hunter College. They introduced me to my home for the next 3 years and for that, I will forever be thankful to them. They encouraged me to apply to Macaulay Honors College and gave me the confidence I needed during college. They made my transition to college much easier as I already knew what was expected of me in college level courses.

I became an ambassador to the program because I aspired to be like them— I wanted to help as many students as I could and raise awareness about this program, especially to students who did not know that such an opportunity exists. I have spoken with many College Now alums who express gratitude to this program as it helped them in immense ways.

College Now should remain funded as it has changed and continues to change lives in ways that no one else can. This program gives opportunities to students who otherwise could not even experience higher level education. They give students who are not as fortunate as others a chance that no one else is willing to give them. By reducing the funding towards College Now, these students are being stripped of this opportunity.

I attended segregated schools during the majority of my childhood, leading up to high school. I was in a system where people, like me, are hardly ever believed in. We were set up to fail and not expected to achieve any type of success.

Especially to other students who are first generation, this program allows for them to experience college courses that their parents could only have dreamed of. Reality is that the majority of these first generation students are children of low and middle class immigrants.

Please do not deny them this experience by reducing the funding towards College Now. Do not tell them no in a world where they hear it often enough. Believe in them. Give them a chance. Especially in times like these, should we not learn to help the less fortunate.

If College Now had not given me a chance, I do not think I would be where I am. I would not be an honors student who is currently receiving a full tuition scholarship to attend college. I am planning to graduate in 3 years and am aspiring to attend a Veterinary School post college. This was all made possible thanks to the chance I was given 3 years ago.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Leslie Andrade
Macaulay Honors College
Hunter College
CUNY Hunter College Now Alum and Ambassador
leslie.andrade82@myhunter.cuny.edu

June 10th, 2020

Chair Barron
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10038

Chair Barron:

Hello, my name is Zayneb Attareb. I am 18 years old, and I am a Yemeni American citizen. Born in East Harlem, New York, and fully raised in the Bronx. As of today, I am a senior in high school, who will be graduating this June. I will be attending Lehman College, this upcoming fall term, as a full time student, under the great works of the ACE Program. I will be entering college in the fall as an "Undecided" major. As I continue to learn bigger and better things while in college, I will decide what I want to pursue. I can take classes my first two years and decide what I want to do, by exploring many different subjects. Social Work or Speech Pathology are two majors I have my mind open to, as I will start soon. However, I will remember to stay very optimistic, when it comes to exploring many different majors to see what I want to pursue in my career.

Being a senior, during this pandemic has been very eye opening. I never realized how much online learning, and doing school the remote way would be until this pandemic occurred. I'm sure none of us had realized it would come to this, within our society. It has been very challenging for many people who have lost their own families and loved ones to this COVID-19 virus. It really amazes me how people who have been through so much, dealing with the losses of their loved ones can still continue to finish off their school semesters and classes with excellent grades. They still remain warriors and fighters, standing up and remaining strong, and it really inspires me. I have known people personally, who have lost their fathers, and grandfathers, to COVID as well, and I wish everyone the best in life who are dealing with these great losses. Luckily, I have not had to experience something like this with someone I truly am close with and whom I truly love. My family, and friends whom I love unconditionally are trying to remain home during this pandemic and wish the best that nothing can occur to our health. However, it can be very challenging to try to finish off the school year and earn excellent grades for people who are dealing with this. I am very grateful that this has not occurred to me, while also having a lighter workload, since it is my senior year in high school. Majority of my classes are electives, which are very easy, as well as a college now class I thoroughly enjoyed.

College Now at Lehman College was the thing that really helped me throughout the last two years of my high school experience. After taking the english regents, at the end of my sophomore year, I found out from my guidance counselors and college advisor that I was able to have the opportunity to take college credit classes afterschool during my junior and senior year. I was thrilled and excited for this because I have heard about this previously. When I saw it with my own eyes, when my sister took college credits during her senior year of high school as well, a few years prior to me. She was a senior in high school, while I was a freshman, she took two college classes as well, to help her get her prerequisites started. When it was my junior year, I signed up for my first college class, which was English Composition 111, introduction to college

english. I was very excited to see what a college-like class setting was really like. I wanted to see how it feels, hands on, how to talk and communicate with a real college professor, and etc. It really gave me a personal experience of what a really college students lifestyle is really like. During my junior and senior year, I had earned about a 3.76 GPA, after taking a few courses with Lehman College's College Now Program. I felt very accomplished with the GPA I had earned because I was walking into college the following semester, with a marvelous GPA I was proud of. I was walking into Lehman the following semester, as a freshman who was ahead of the game from many of the other freshmen. I had basically completed a full semester of prerequisite classes (about 4 classes in completion). This was all thanks to the college now program my guidance counselors and college advisors had introduced me to. This was such an advantage to be, I did not have to stress about paying for any classes that I took in this program, it was all free, and I was one step ahead of lots of freshmen. Yes, I am aware that I do not know what I want to accomplish within my college career yet. However, the great thing about the college now was they helped you sign up for all the classes that you need, no matter what major you will be pursuing your career in, this is what is called "prerequisites". College Now was honestly a life saver for me. It really helped me by showing me what a college class setting and energy really feels like, while it was free. I am very thankful and glad that I got to take classes with this program, it was a great experience for me.

After experiencing, hands on, the works of the College Now Program, I strongly believe that it should remain funded and continue for more generations to experience. Coming from my own experience with it, I would say that this program is very life changing. For students, like me, who want to go to college and make a career for themselves, College Now is a great way to start. It really helped me out by taking courses like Introduction to Psychology, English Composition (part one), Introduction to Statistics, and a Literary Genres arts class. I took four 'prerequisites' classes that I needed for my major, I completed about a full semester of college, before I even began. I feel very set when entering college. The college now program helped me with this. The fact that they created this program, where many high school students can earn college credit classes, and receiving the experience of what a real college class atmosphere feels like is very fascinating to me. My high school experience would have been very different if I was not introduced to this very, life changing experience for many students my age. It is very great for many students who cannot afford college and the finances it comes with it.

When signing up and completing applications for college, I always knew that I wanted to attend Lehman College. I have been hearing about it, years prior, before I became a senior in high school. My mother graduated from Lehman, February 2018. She graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, with a minor of Education. While my sister is currently in her Junior year of college, she will be graduating within the spring semester of the year 2021, with a master degree of English, minoring in Education. Seeing my mom and sister go to college and follow their dreams has really inspired me to do the same. Lehman has always been a great option for me when it comes to going to an institute that is a very great CUNY school. Also, while going to take college now courses I have become familiar with the Lehman College campus, within the last two years. I know where many of the resources are on campus, such as the cafeteria, the libraries, the gymnasiums, the pool, and etc. Each CUNY campus and the representatives of the college now program take their own time to organize these types of programs. They have allowed many high school students to experience what it's like being in that specific college setting. Taking classes at Lehman College has really helped me to decide whether or not I want

to attend here in the fall. By learning my way around the campus, and getting a real feel for the place has really helped me decide that I want to go here and spend the next 4-6 years of my life exploring different majors and deciding on what I want to pursue for the rest of my life.

The college now program really helped me with my way around the campus and helped me experience the energy on the Lehman College campus. This is why I felt it was the right choice for me, when deciding where I wanted to go to college. I feel the College Now program should remain funded because it can help future generations of high school students that want to take college courses, like I did. It truly helps students, like myself, to start ahead of the game and have a true experience of what a college class is really like. Students, like myself who cannot afford paying for college, and paying for each college course we take can really benefit from this program. Removing it, or lowering the funds for College Now can downgrade this great opportunity many students want to take. I know that it will help other students, because it certainly helped me.

In conclusion, I feel that College Now classes, and CUNY classes in general should remain free of charge. The idea that students can go to school everyday knowing that they can do it for free, will help many more students in future generations go to college and pursue what they truly love. We need to ensure that the College Now program should continue to be funded for future students in future generations. This program truly helped me and I'm sure it will help others, in coming. The advantages that it can help students who cannot afford the finances that come with college, such as myself can truly be life changing for many.

To get in touch with me, and if you have any further questions and/or concerns regarding my testimony, I can be reached at my email: zaynebatt0506@gmail.com.
Thank you.

Sincerely,
Zayneb Attareb
Lehman College Student
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Dear Council Member Moya and Assembly Member DenDekker:

My name is Nicole Cando. I am Ecuadorian American, first generation student, born and raised in Queens, NY. I am also a College Now alum and now a first generation graduate from CUNY Queens College. I studied Elementary and Childhood Education and Spanish. I would like to advocate and share my experience with College Now and also share what College Now has done for me.

The experience I received from Queensborough Community College- College Now not only allowed me to familiarize myself with college standards, and the environment but also allowed me to graduate high school with FREE college credits. College Now taught me how to communicate with professors and how to articulate myself clearly. I was to experience college life first hand before I even attended college. I walked into college with college credits and a 3.5+ GPA from the courses I took in the College Now program. I was ahead of everyone else because of all the opportunities and recourses the program had to offer. Coming from an immigrant household with little opportunities this program opened up way more opportunities for me when I attended college, it saved my family lots of money and it gave me, a first generation student, the chance at higher education.

When I say College Now has opened up doors me I mean it, I work for Queensborough Community College- College Now for about 5+ plus years now. This program has not only given me the opportunity to exceed academically but has provided me with a job opportunity. Working for College Now has been the most exciting and rewarding experience. I am able to help and encourage high school students to get a head start with their college classes just like I did. I witness first hand the incredible work College Now does with high school students. You have no idea how many students get excited when they hear FREE college credit. The best thing about College Now is that no matter what race, what economic status, whether students are citizens, residents or immigrants they all have the same equal chance at this program. So many students want the opportunity to get in this program that is why College Now has served half a million students since it went CUNY-wide in 2000.

College Now should without a doubt remain funded! It not only provides high school students with the college experience but it gives students the opportunity to explore the campuses and its resources, it helps students explore the different majors CUNY has to offer and it offers high schools students FREE college credit. On a personal note, the first day I attended Queensborough Community College I was not worried about getting lost or worried about my classes, I knew the campus and because I had already taken college classes I was prepared to conquer my first day of college. Without any funding, NYCDOE high school students won't have the same experiences I had or any pre-college experience before they start college. NYCDOE students deserve better! With today's current situation high school students need College Now more than ever!

Thank you for your time! You can reach me at nicolecando1016@gmail.com

Yours truly,

Nicole Cando

Nicole Cando

Queens College Graduate
Queensborough Community College- College Now Alum

Preliminary Results

Healthy CUNY 2020 Covid-19 Student Survey

Nicholas Freudenberg, Heidi Jones, Meredith Manze, Patricia Lamberson

CUNY School of Public Health

with the support of Tara Twiste at CUNY Office of Institutional Research



June 10, 2020

For more information: Nick.Freudenberg@sph.cuny.edu

Overview of Methods

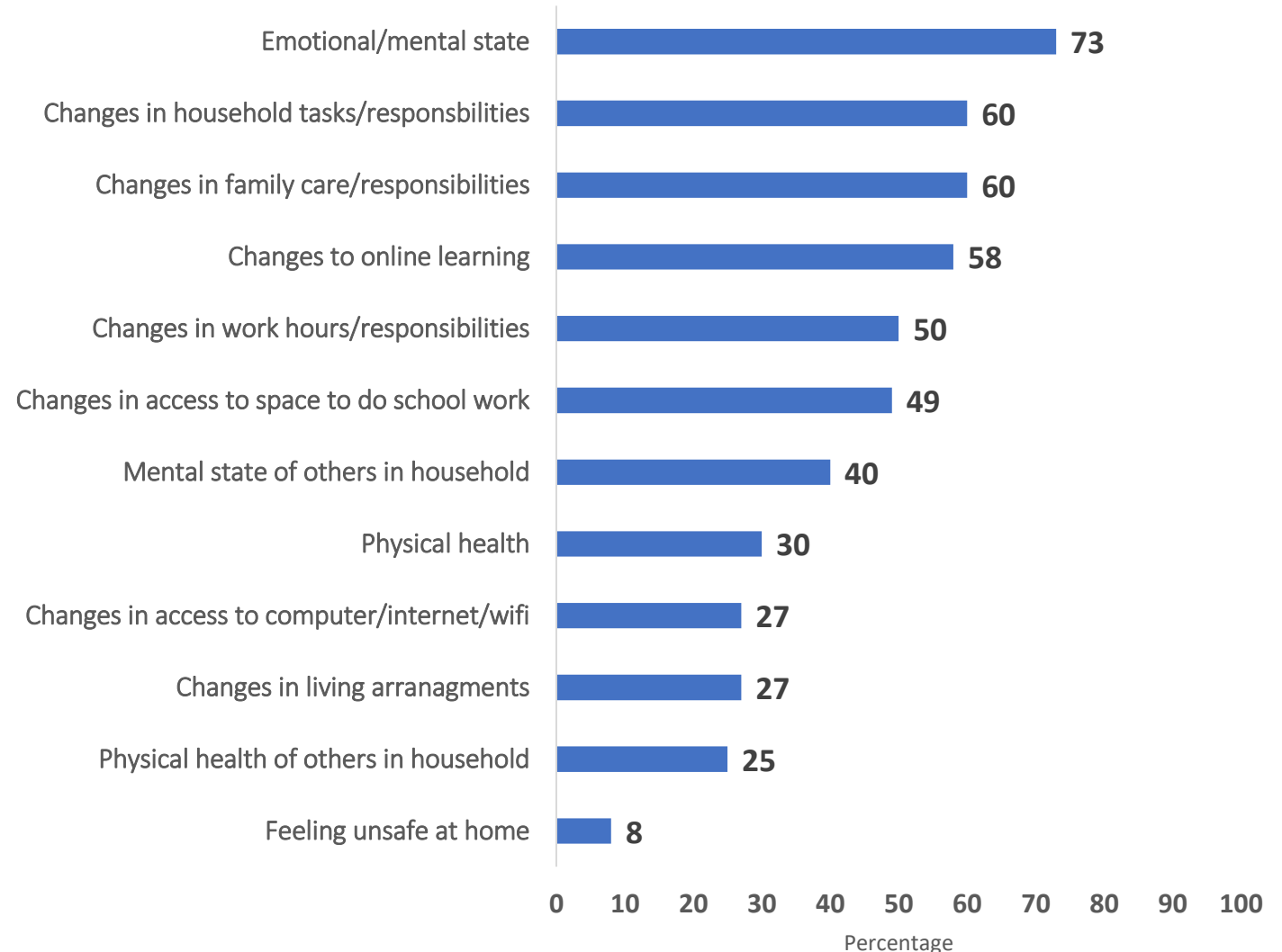
- Office of Institutional Research randomly selected 10,000 students to invite to participate across CUNY's 26 campuses using simple random selection from 274,000 registered students
- The survey was reviewed and approved by the CUNY SPH IRB
- Students completed survey online between April 14 and April 22, 2020
- First 1,000 who answered received \$20 gift card by email
- 2,282 completed 70% or more of the survey for a response rate of 23%
- Final sample weighted to resemble all CUNY students on key demographic indicators
- Select survey questions identical to 2018 Healthy CUNY survey of representative sample of CUNY students for comparison

Effect on Education

Has your ability to do school work increased, decreased or stayed the same due to the coronavirus epidemic?

- **57% decreased**
- 28% stayed the same
- 15% increased

Reasons for Decreased Ability to do School Work



Open-ended Responses

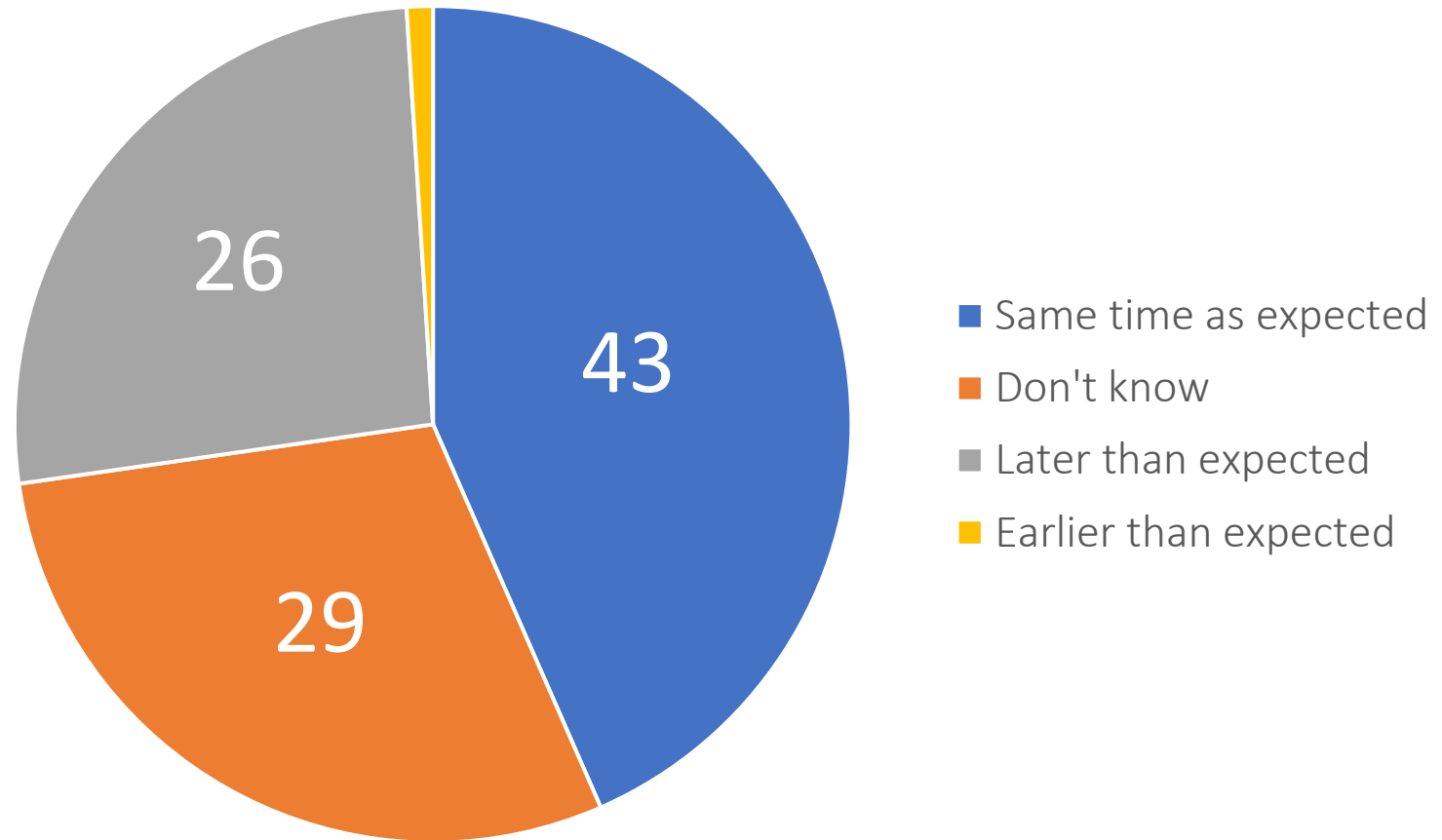
“I don’t feel emotionally well to do my schoolwork or work from home. I’m feeling very overwhelmed and for one of my courses, the professor barely changed the assignments. Yes, she has been flexible with due dates but what good is that if the assignments kinda stayed the same since the pandemic?”

“I have [a] disability so I learn at a slow pace. Online is too quick pace so my work sometimes [is] turn[ed] in late and I feel rushed so I can't really concentrate on my school.”

“I have to work from home with several online meetings. My 6th grader has many online classes and assignments and he is overwhelmed. So I have to spend all my time helping him. So [I] am tired and frustrated.”

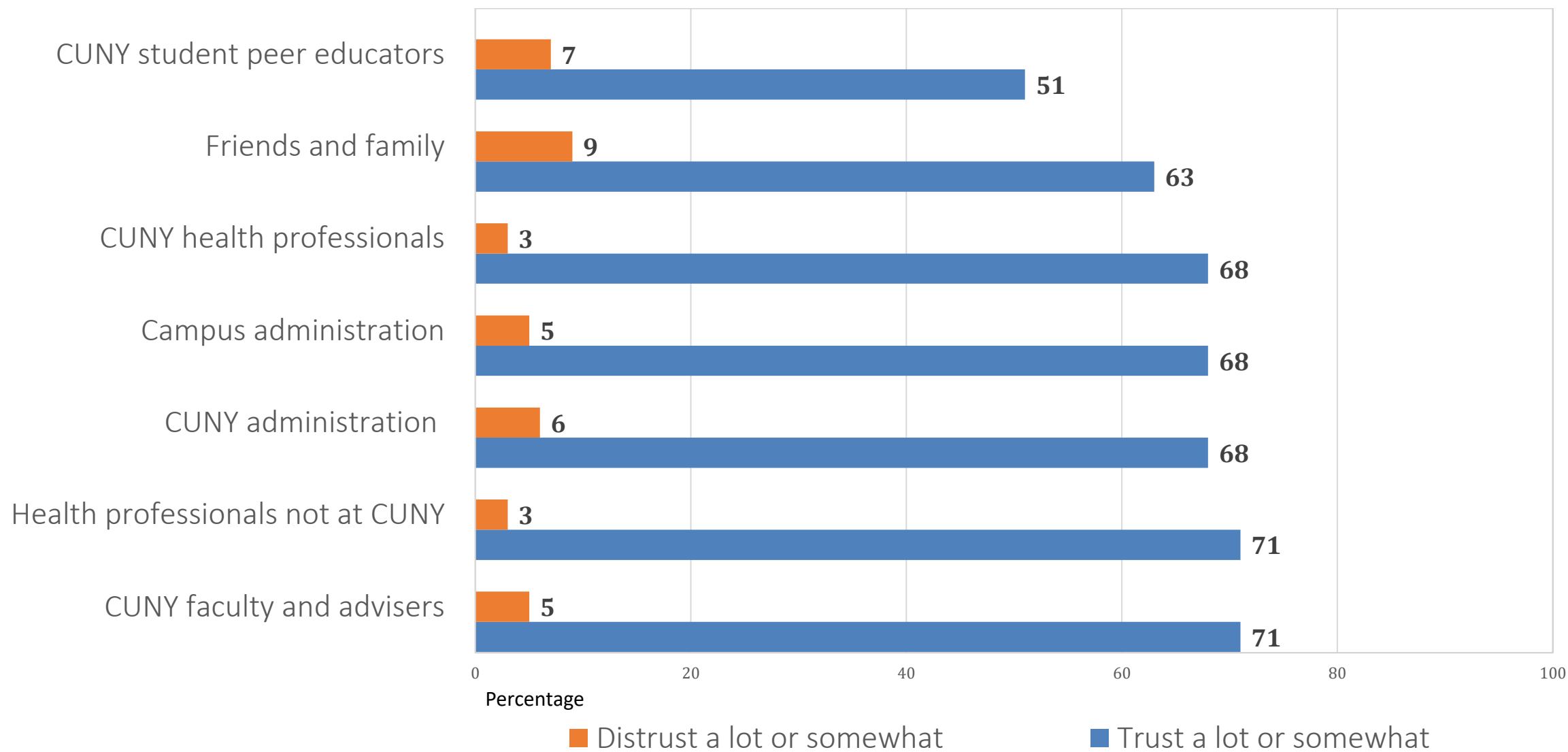
Do you think you will graduate later than expected, earlier than expected or at the same time as expected due to the coronavirus epidemic?

55% either don't know or think they'll graduate later than expected



Percentage

How much do you trust information and referrals related to coronavirus from the following sources of information?

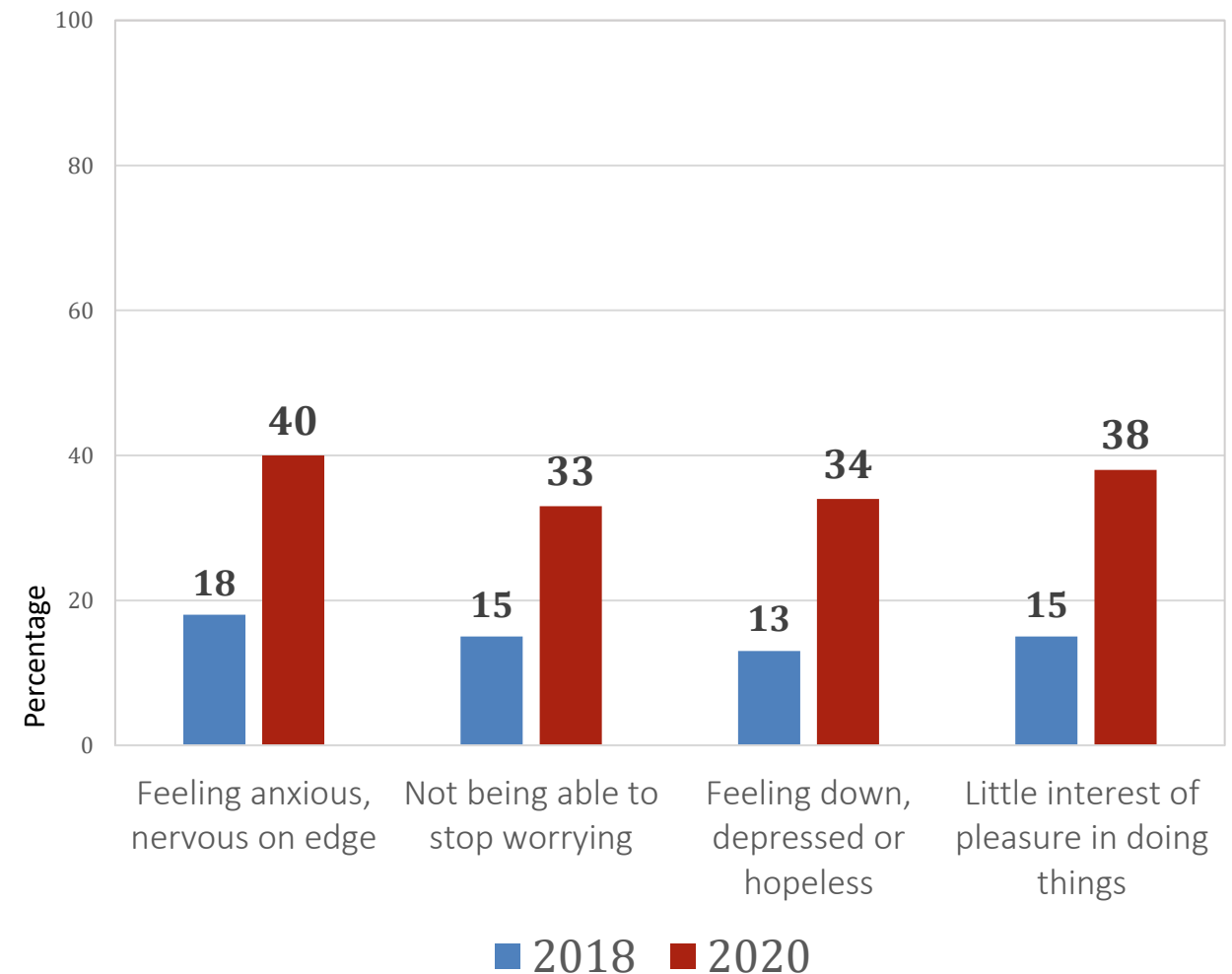


Effect on Mental Health

On more than half of the days in the two weeks prior to the April 2020 survey, more than one third of students reported:

- Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge (40%)
- Little pleasure or interest in doing things (38%)
- Unable to stop worrying (33%)
- Feeling down, depressed, or helpless (34%)

Mental Health Indicators 2018 versus 2020



Need for Mental Health Support

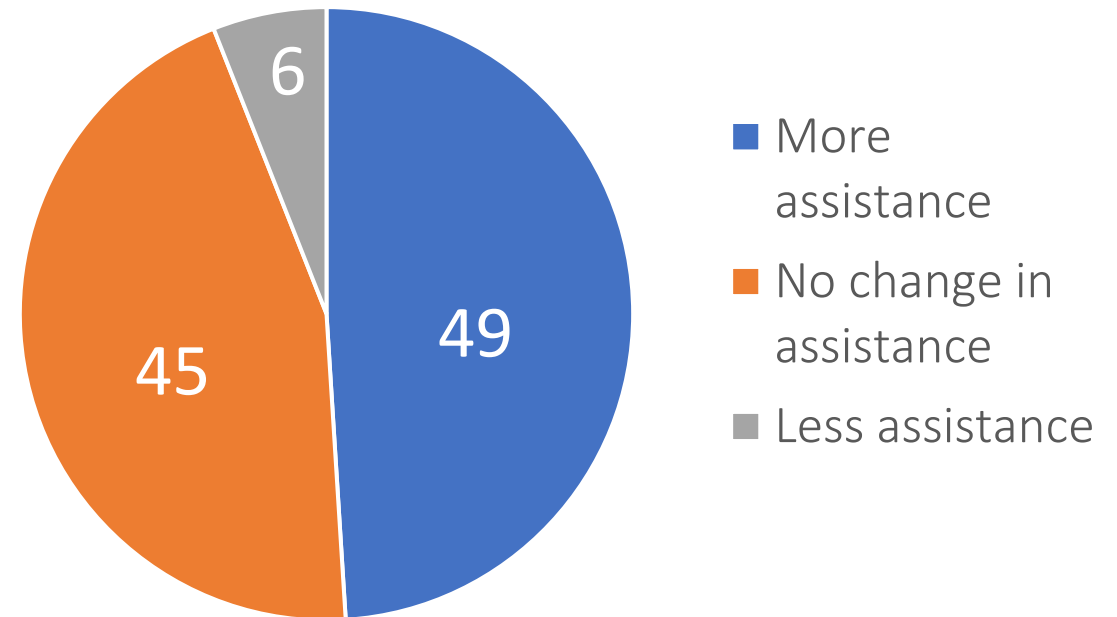
“Being fired from my job gives me plenty of free time but causes many panic attacks”

“The news is overwhelming and depressing”

“I am very stressed and scared for my health, and my family as well. Financially we’ve been struggling and a lot.”

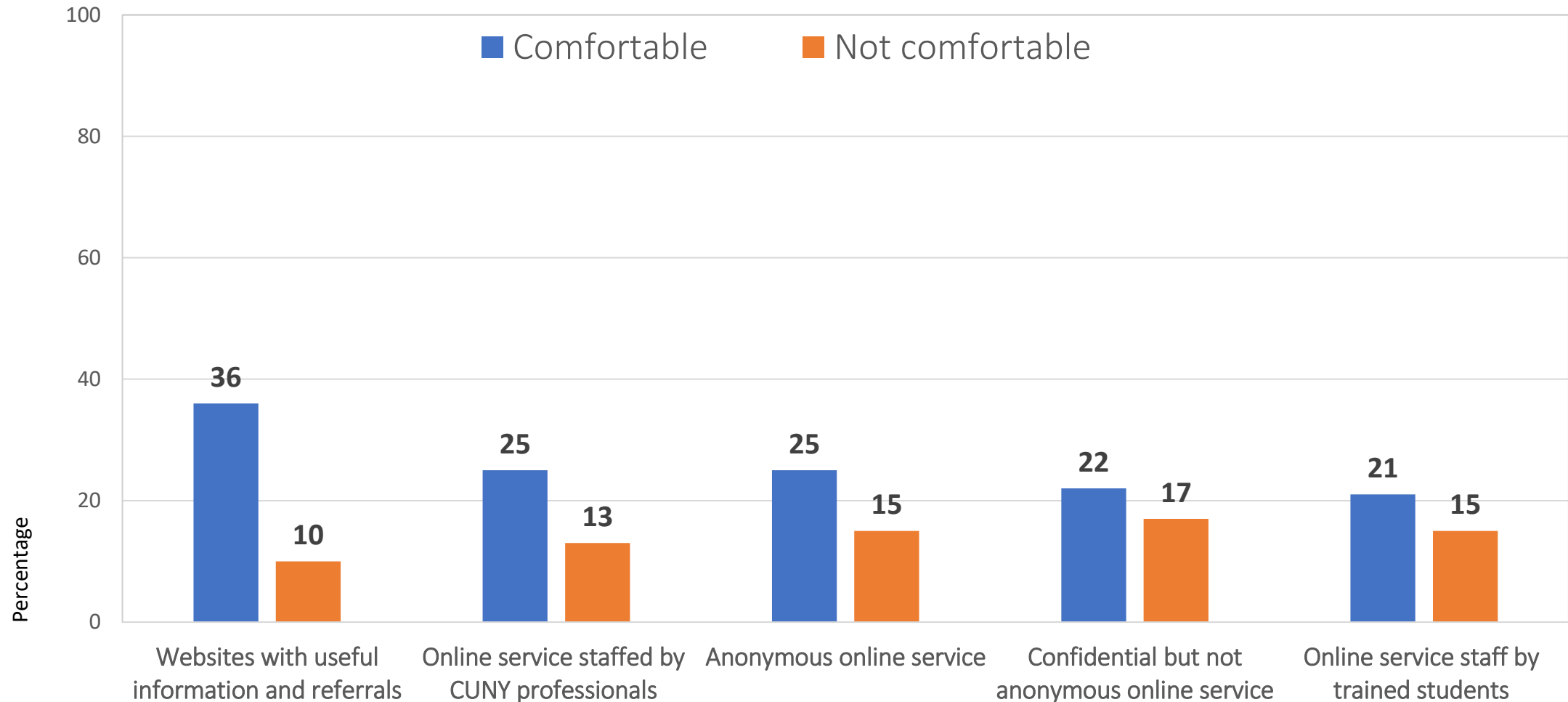
“I have this feeling of impending doom like world war three will start, I’m scared”

Will you need more, less or no change in level of assistance for **stress, anxiety or depression**?



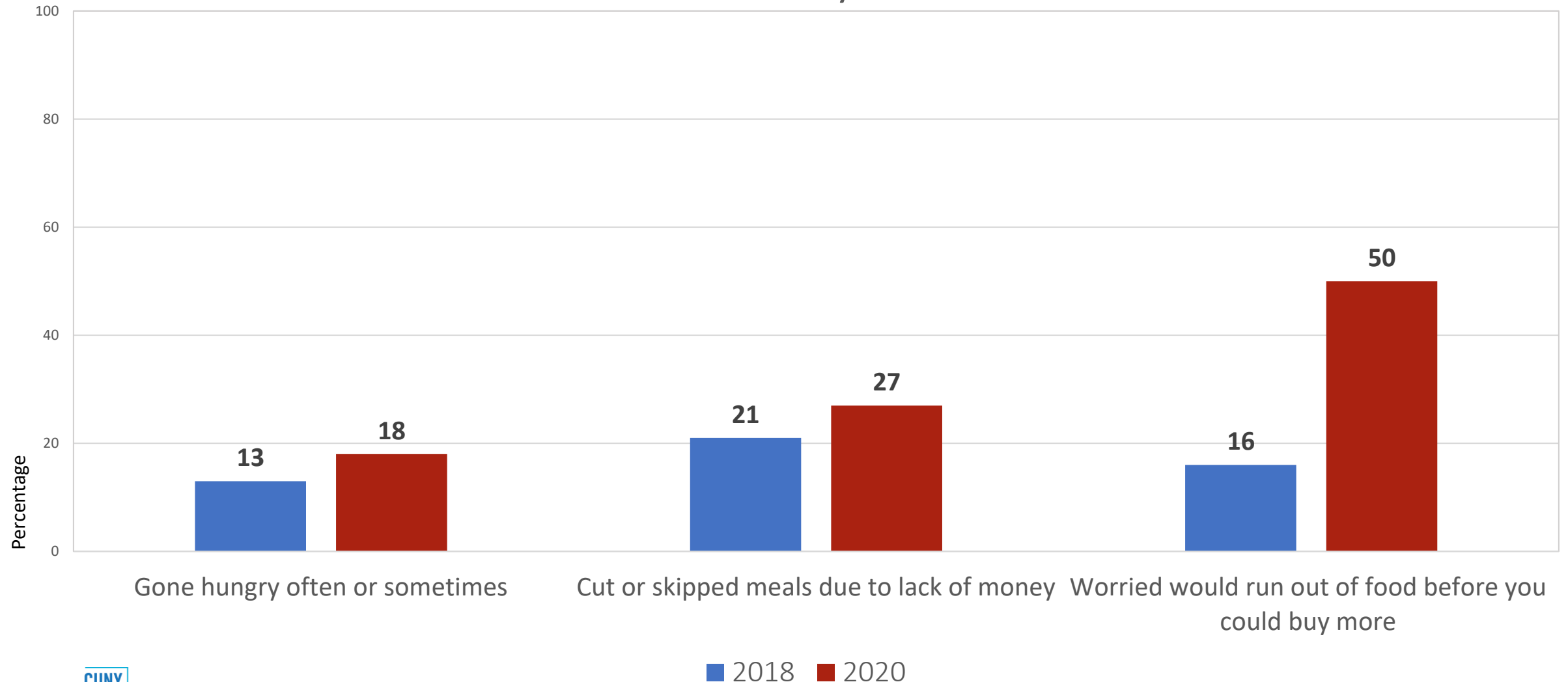
Percentage

During time when travel and group interactions are restricted due to epidemic, how comfortable are you with getting help for stress, anxiety or depression from following sources?



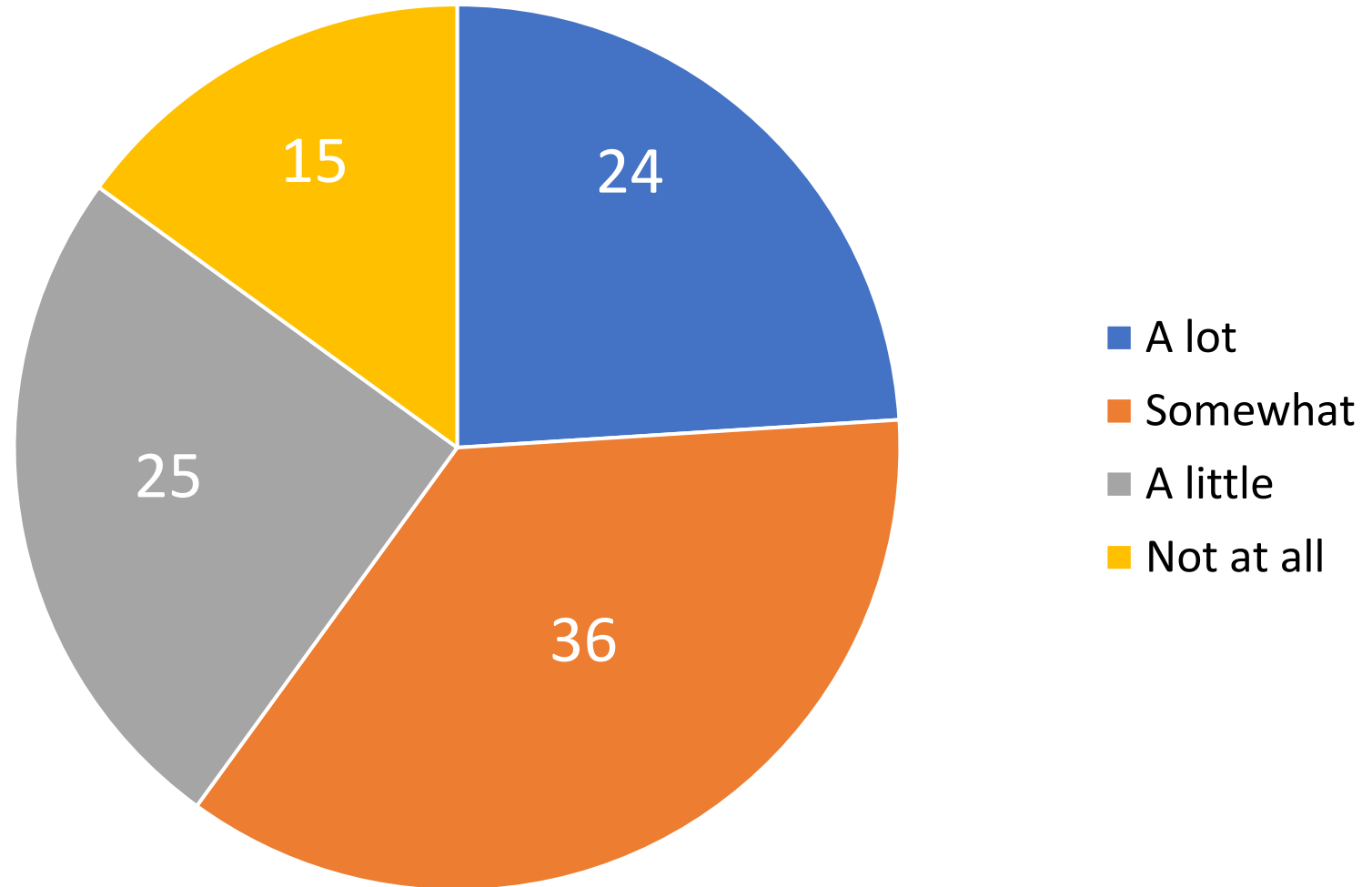
Effect on Food Insecurity

Levels of food insecurity in 2018 and 2020



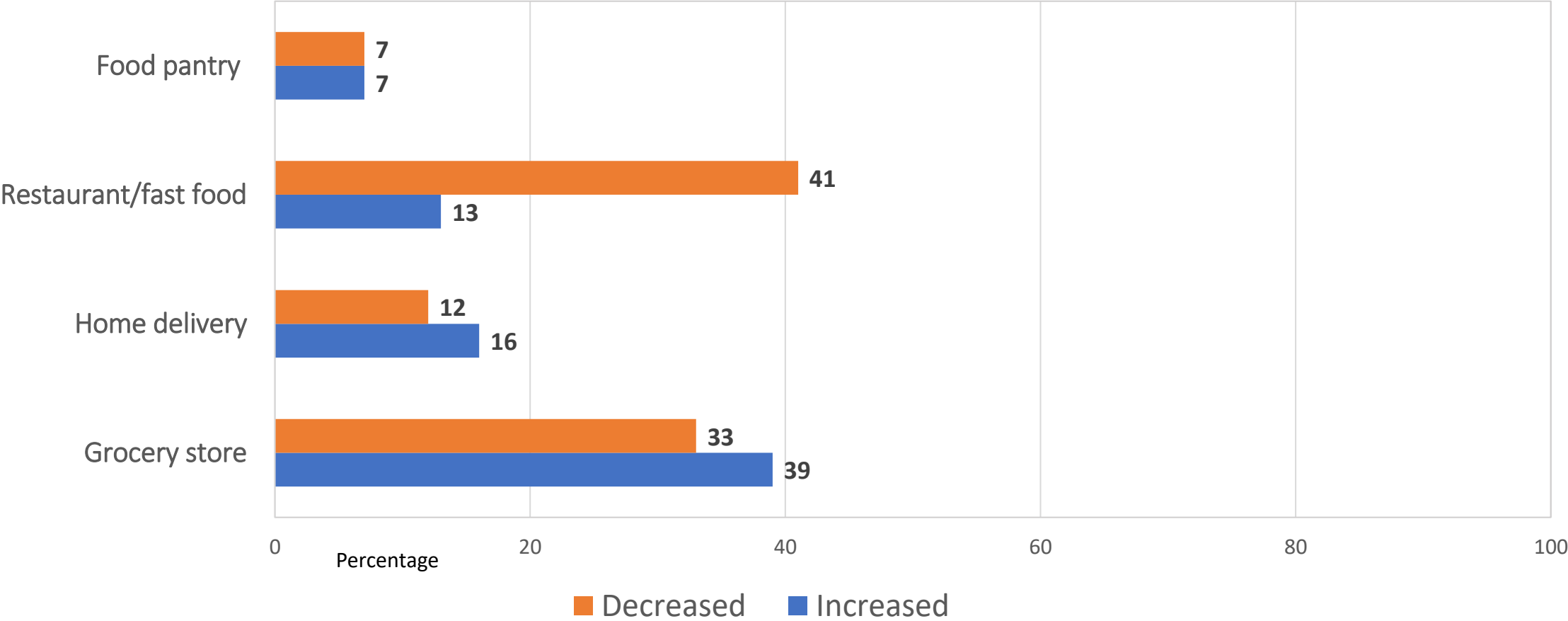
To what extent has the coronavirus reduced your household's ability to get the food you need?

60% report a lot/some impact on their ability to get food



Percentage

Has the quantity of food you get from the following sources increased, decreased or stayed the same due to the epidemic?



“I had to go out and buy food, supermarkets are full , so we went hungry for about two days before I found out about the NYC/Get food.”

Use of CUNY Food Security Services

Services used during the semester prior to epidemic:

- 10% campus food pantry
- 3% campus emergency funds
- 3% campus food vouchers

Since the epidemic, only 6% had used any food pantry, with the majority (67%) of these students using food pantry services off campus, 16% on campus pantries, 10% campus food vouchers and 11% campus emergency funds in the last 2 weeks

Effect on Student Parents

Of the 14% of students responsible for parenting children, 68% reported that the closure of New York City's school affected them as a CUNY student. For these students, caring for and homeschooling children contributed to their decreased ability to do schoolwork.

“My son is home all day and so I cook more often, wash dishes more often, have to help him with his online classes and technical issues. It is mentally draining to have him all day because he has severe ADHD and he needs constant reminders and redirections and it takes more energy for me to be on top of what he has to do, I feel emotionally exhausted by the time I get around to do my work. I do homework after 10pm till 4 am just so I can get peace and quiet; then sleep from around 4am to 9am.”

In the last 2 weeks, how often have your children or any individuals you are financially responsible for gone hungry due to lack of access to food?

8% said sometimes/often, an estimated 21,920 CUNY students report household members had gone hungry in the last 2 weeks



“Worry about keeping food in my kids’ bellies”

Effect on General Health

- 68% of students reported their general health was excellent/very good at beginning of semester, which decreased to 47% at time of survey.
- 29% reported having symptoms that could have been Covid-19 in the last month; of these, 45% consulted doctor.
- 6% reported having ever been tested for Covid-19 at the time of the survey.
 - Of these 28% were positive, 41% negative, 19% were waiting for results, 11% inconclusive.
- 29% reported someone else in the household experiencing symptoms that could have been Covid-19.

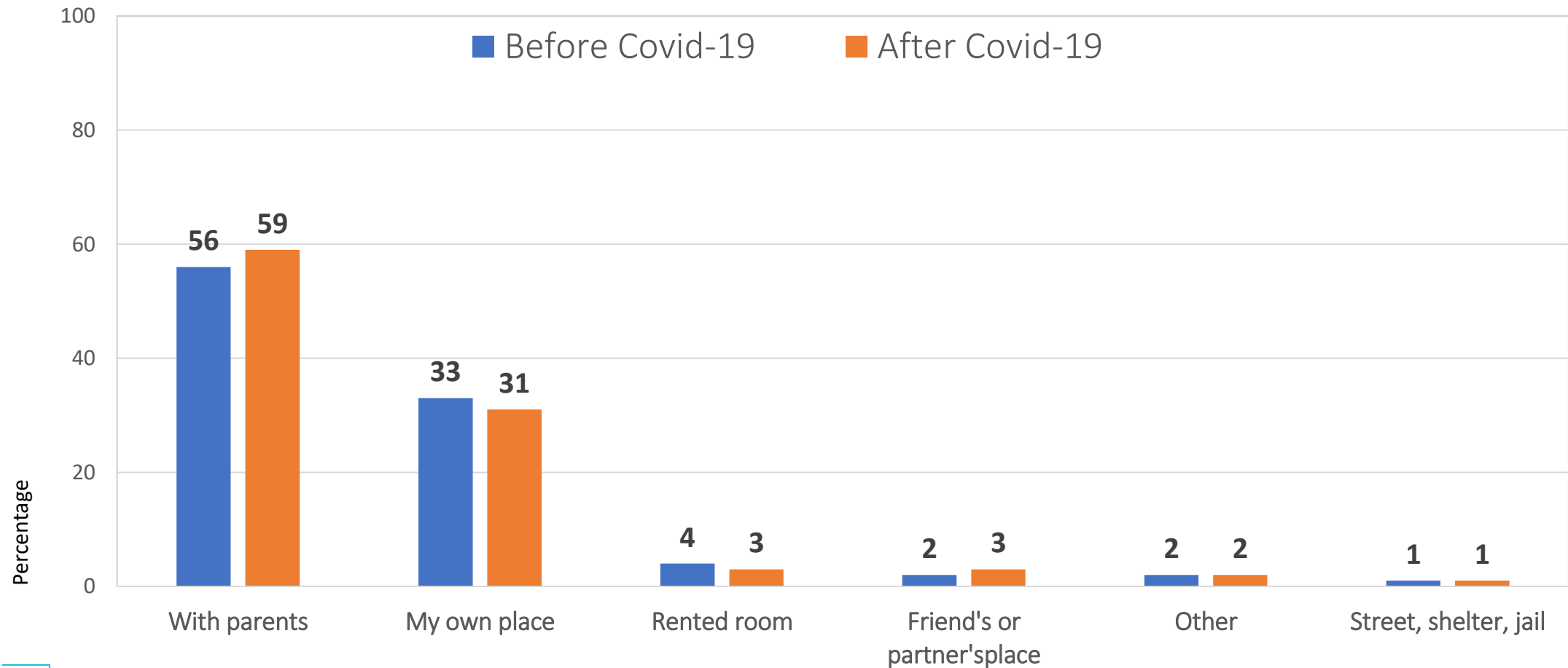
“Some of my family members died due to the coronavirus and sometimes I feel sad and don’t have the energy to do some of my work.”

“I had many responsibilities to do before I got sick but since being sick I have just been in bed not able to move”

Effect on Housing

8% moved due to the epidemic, an estimated 21,920 students;

50% very/somewhat worried about losing current housing as result of Covid-19



No CUNY student should fail to graduate because of unmet needs imposed by COVID-19

Recommendations from Healthy CUNY

1. Strengthen formal partnerships with community providers to meet student basic needs
2. Develop coordinated university-wide online and digital basic needs platforms to link students with basic needs assistance
3. Launch coordinated, university wide campaigns to enroll eligible CUNY students in SNAP, Medicaid and other services
4. Ensure online educational programs are tailored to meet needs of students who are parents and those with disabilities or limited access to Internet or Wi-Fi
5. Provide CUNY with the resources it needs to meet high levels of student needs during this time of economic and social disruption



Dear Governor Cuomo,

We write as proud CUNY professors deeply concerned about the profound New York State budget cuts slated to target CUNY.

Since you became governor in 2011, you have consistently balanced the budget without adequate concern for the educational needs of our students. State aid to CUNY, adjusted for inflation, has declined by nearly 5 percent during your tenure, though the state's gross domestic product has increased. New York's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) no longer covers the full cost of tuition—making the CUNY colleges bridge the difference. The TAP GAP totaled \$151 million this year. Now we are in a crucial moment. In your daily press conferences, you regularly praise the heroes of New York—medical workers, grocery store checkers, mail carriers, delivery workers, gas station attendants, MTA drivers, DOE food service providers—for keeping the city and the state functioning in these very scary days.

Many of these heroes are our students and their parents. Now is the time to honor their service and protect and enhance their education, strengthening New York's economy in the process.

Further cuts to CUNY would be educationally damaging, economically misguided, and cruel. And they do not have to happen. Now is the time to act boldly and raise revenue by taxing the wealthy, like State Senator Stavisky's SHARE Act—and by using CARES ACT provisions through which the Federal Reserve could buy debt from states and municipalities. Acting boldly to fund CUNY is essential to safeguard our students' dreams and the tremendous avenue of social mobility that CUNY has long represented. In a national survey: 9 of the top 20 colleges in the nation providing social mobility to students are CUNY colleges.

During the Great Depression, local, state, and federal policymakers refused to cut and invested instead, building three new CUNY campuses—Queens College, Brooklyn College, and Hunter College in the Bronx—a tremendous educational and economic investment that has served the state well. As President Franklin Roosevelt explained at the 1936 dedication of Brooklyn College: “We not only have to put to work many thousands of good people who needed work; but we are also improving the educational facilities of this great Borough, not just today but for generations to come.” History has not been kind to Roosevelt's predecessor Herbert Hoover, who favored the path of cuts and complacency.

We call on you to make no budget cuts to CUNY this year; to close the TAP gap; to commit funds to protect all current full-time and part-time faculty jobs as well as restore the nearly one thousand full-time faculty lines that have been lost through cuts over the past decade; and to increase CUNY's capital budget to pay for long-needed repairs and green retro-fit our crumbling campuses.

We ask you to change course and commit to funding the public higher education our heroes—and our state—deserve.

Blanche Wiesen Cook, Distinguished Professor of History and Women's Studies, John Jay College and the CUNY Graduate Center

Jeanne Theoharis, Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Brooklyn College

Alexandra Juhasz, Distinguished Professor of Film, Brooklyn College

Sarah Schulman, Distinguished Professor of English, College of Staten Island

Celina Su, Professor of Political Science, Brooklyn College and Marilyn J. Gittell Endowed Chair in Urban Studies, CUNY Graduate Center

Ben Lerner, Distinguished Professor of English, Brooklyn College

Stephen Steinberg, Distinguished Professor of Urban Studies, CUNY Graduate Center

Herman L. Bennett, Professor of History, PhD Program in History, The Graduate Center

Tyehimba Jess, Distinguished Professor of English, College of Staten Island

Dagmar Herzog, Distinguished Professor of History, CUNY Graduate Center

Susan Saegert, Professor of Psychology The Graduate Center CUNY

Cindi Katz, Professor of Geography/Earth and Environmental Sciences, The Graduate Center

Alyson Cole, Professor of Political Science, Queens College & the Graduate Center

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Joseph Entin, Professor of English and American Studies, Brooklyn College

Karen Miller, Professor, Social Science Dept., LaGuardia Community College

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Kandice Chuh, Professor of English, American Studies and Critical Social Psychology, CUNY Graduate Center

Setha Low, Distinguished Professor of Critical Psychology, Anthropology and Earth and Environmental Sciences, Graduate Center

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Alan Vardy, Professor of English, Hunter College
Tanya Agathocleous, Associate Professor of English, Hunter College and the Graduate Center
Lyn Di Iorio, Professor of the Literatures of the Americas and Creative Writing, CCNY and CUNY Graduate Center
Renate Bridenthal, Professor of History, Brooklyn College (retired)
Mark N. McBeth, Associate Professor, English
Ammiel Alcalay, Professor of Classical, Middle Eastern & Asian Languages & Cultures, Queens College
Jean Mills, Associate Professor of English, John Jay College
Alexander Schlutz, Associate Professor of English, John Jay College and CUNY Graduate Center
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Nancy K. Miller, Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature
Samir Chopra, Professor of Philosophy, Brooklyn College
Arnold Franklin, Associate Professor of History, Queens College
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Libby Garland, Associate Professor of History, Kingsborough Community College
Sian Silyn Roberts, Associate Professor, Queens College
Katherine Pence, Associate Professor, History, Baruch College
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Erika Kielsgard, Adjunct Lecturer of English, Brooklyn College

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Roni Natov, Professor of English, Brooklyn College
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Rosalind Petchesky, Distinguished Professor Emerita of Political Science, Hunter
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Gerald Markowitz, Distinguished Professor of History and Interdisciplinary Studies,
John Jay College and Graduate Center
Berni Llanos, Professor of Spanish, Brooklyn College
Patricia Cai, Lecturer
Naomi Braine, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College
Gaston Alonso, Associate Professor of Political Science, Brooklyn College
Ken Estey, Associate Professor, Political Science, Brooklyn College
Deepsikha Chatterjee, Lecturer CCE, Theatre Dept, Hunter College

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Timothy Shortell, Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College
Jessica Mahlbacher, Adjunct Lecturer, Hunter College
Abby Scher, Adjunct Associate Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College
Claire Bishop, Professor of Art History, CUNY Graduate Center
Mobina Hashmi, Coordinator, Women's and Gender Studies Program & Asst. Prof. in
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Rick Lopez, Distinguished Lecturer, Feirstein Graduate School of Cinema, Brooklyn
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Frank Deale, Professor of Law, CUNY Law School
Leon Lazaroff, Adjunct Professor of Communications Arts, Sciences and Disorders --
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Ruth Powers Silverberg, Associate Professor of Education, College of Staten Island
Sunil K Mohanty, Tow Professor and Chairperson, Department of Finance, Brooklyn College
Maddy Fox, Assistant Professor, Sociology and Children & Youth Studies, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Klara Marton, Professor of CASD, Brooklyn College & SLHS, The Graduate Center
Jamila Hammami, Adjunct professor of Community Organizing, Hunter College/
Silberman School of Social Work; Graduate Worker, Graduate Center; Adjunct Project Organizer, Graduate Center
Sasha Maceira, Adjunct Lecturer of English, Hunter College
Alex S. Vitale, Professor, Department of Sociology, Brooklyn College
Harry Persaud, Associate Professor - Health Professions - York College
Sanjay Patel , Adjunct Lecturer, Queensboro Community College
Chia-ju Chang, Professor of Chinese, Brooklyn College
Joan Moretti, Adjunct Lecturer
Robin G. Isserles, Professor of Sociology, Borough of Manhattan Community College
Myra Lotto, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English, York College
Erin Lilli, Adjunct Instructor in Urban Studies, Queens College
Clarence Taylor, Professor Emeritus of History , Baruch College
Varnica Arora, Adjunct, Department of Psychology, City College of New York
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Natalie M. Chin, Associate Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
Merrick Rossein, Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law
Christopher Stone, Associate Professor of Arabic, Hunter College
Daniel Campos, Professor of Philosophy, Brooklyn College
Frimette Kass, Professor of Accountancy, Brooklyn College
Immanuel Ness, Professor of Political Science, Brooklyn College
George Lam, Assistant Professor of Music, York College
Yolanda Medina, Professor Of Teacher Education
Jeremy M. Glick, Associate Professor, English, Hunter College
Mario DiGangi, Professor of English, Lehman College and The Graduate Center
John Whitlow, Associate Professor, CUNY School of Law
David Kritt, Associate Professor of Educational Studies, College of Staten Island
Hollis Glaser, Professor of Communication, BMCC
Mim L Nakarmi, Professor of Physics, Brooklyn College

David Nasaw, Distinguished Professor of History Emeritus, Graduate Center
Gene Fellner, Department of Educational Studies, School of Education, College of
Staten Island

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Romy Golan, Professor, History of Art, the Graduate Center

Feisal G. Mohamed, Professor, PhD Program in English, The Graduate Center

Alycia Sellie, Associate Librarian for Collections and Associate Professor, CUNY
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Duncan Faherty, Associate Professor of English & American Studies, Queens
College

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Scott Sheidlower, York College

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Kingsborough Community College

Melissa Fuster, Assistant Professor, Department of Health and Nutrition Sciences,
Brooklyn College

Angeles Donoso Macaya, Associate Professor of Spanish, BMCC

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Michael Fabricant, Professor of Social Work, Hunter College
Katherine Hejtmanek , Associate Professor, Anthropology and Children and Youth Studies, Brooklyn College
Marek Wlodarczyk, Adjunct Professor, Brooklyn College
Mark Kobrak, Professor of Chemistry, Brooklyn College
Rebecca Mlynarczyk, Professor Emerita of English, Kingsborough CC & the CUNY Graduate Center
Emily Drabinski, Associate Professor, Interim Chief Librarian, Graduate Center
Samantha Cobos, Adjunct Professor of Chemistry, Brooklyn College
Kristina Richardson, Associate Professor of History, Queens College and the CUNY Graduate Center
Christopher Hale, Professor of Special Education, College of Staten Island
Miranda Fedock, Adjunct Lecturer in Ethnomusicology, Music Department, City College of New York
Madeleine Crum, Adjunct Lecturer, English, Brooklyn College
Xia Li, Associate Professor, Brooklyn College
Lynda R. Day, Professor of Africana Studies, Brooklyn College
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Ramsey Scott, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English, Brooklyn College
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Harriet Goodman, Associate Professor of Social Work, Silberman School of Social Work and The Graduate Center
John P. Pittman, Associate Professor, Philosophy, John Jay College, CUNY
Umme Salma Siddiqui, Adjunct Assistant Professor, Chemistry Department, Brooklyn College
Veronica Schanoes, Associate Professor of English, Queens College
John P. Pittman, Associate Professor, Philosophy, John Jay College, CUNY
Nicholas Glastonbury, PhD Candidate, CUNY Graduate Center / Adjunct Instructor, Hunter College
Kosal Path, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Brooklyn College
Jonathan Gray, Associate Professor of English, Graduate Center
De'Shawn Charles Winslow, Adjunct Lecturer, Brooklyn College & Lehman College
Nazia Nayeem, Graduate student, Brooklyn College
Kristin Celello, Associate Professor of History, Queens College

Susan Sullivan, Professor of Leadership and World Languages in Education, The College of Staten Island

Jerome Krase, Emeritus and Murray Koppelman Professor, Sociology, Brooklyn College

Mette Christiansen, Adjunct Lecturer, Political Science, Hunter College

Leda Lee, Adjunct lecturer, Brooklyn College

Sarah Covington, Professor, Queens College, CUNY

Josh Borja, Adjunct Lecturer, Department of English, Brooklyn College and New York City College of Technology

Andrew Blevins, Adjunct Lecturer, English, Brooklyn College

Lauren Bejcek, Doctoral Student, Chemistry Instructor at Brooklyn College

Andrew Sloin, Associate Professor of History, Baruch College

Yanai Sened, Adjunct Lecturer, Brooklyn College

Sonia Murrow, Professor of Education, Brooklyn College

Viju Raghupathi, Associate Professor, Business Management, Koppelman School of Business

Mona Hadler, Professor and Chair of Art, Brooklyn College

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Mark Daniel Golubow, Adjunct professor Brooklyn College

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Phebe Szatmari, Adjunct Lecturer of Communication, Brooklyn College

Shuming Lu, Professor of Communication, Brooklyn College

Linda R Barley, Professor, Chair, Health & Human Performance

Douglas Geers, Professor of Music, Brooklyn College and CUNY Graduate Center

Allie Robbins, CUNY School of Law

Julia Hernandez, Assistant Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law

Frans Albarillo, Reference Librarian, Brooklyn College, Library

Michelle Radtke , English, Brooklyn College

Herbert R. Broderick FSA, Professor - Department of Art - Lehman College

Nicole Haiber, MA Student, The Graduate Center

Michelle King, English Adjunct Professor

Gregory Tewksbury, Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Education, Brooklyn College

Karen Henson, Associate Professor, Musicology, Queens College and The Graduate Center

Chaumtoli Huq, Associate Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law

Jennifer Oates, Associate Professor and Head of the Music Library, Queens College

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Bonnie R. Nelson, Professor Emerita, Library, John Jay College
Jane Brodsky Fitzpatrick, Assistant Professor (retired), CUNY Graduate Center
Ellen Sexton, Associate Professor in the Library, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Susan Vaughn, Professor Emerita, Brooklyn College
Cecelia McCall, Professor Emerita, Baruch College
Caroline Reitz, Associate Professor of English, John Jay and CUNY Graduate Center
Flonia Telegrafi, Adjunct Assistant Professor
Ramona Hernandez, Professor of Sociology & Director, CUNY DSI, City College of New York
Serene Stevens, Adjunct Lecturer, Teacher Education Department, Borough Of Manhattan Community College
Victoria Bond, Lecturer, English Department, John Jay College
Mark Goldberg, Retired Professor, Hunter College, Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences
Jay Gates, Associate Professor of English, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Christen M. Madrazo, Lecturer of English
Hugo Goeury, PhD student in sociology, Graduate Center
Marta Bladek, Associate Professor, Library, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Alexander Long, Associate Professor of English, John Jay College
Maria Kiriakova, Assoc. Librarian for Technical Services, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
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Yasmin Dalisay , Lecturer in English, John Jay College
Kathleen Collins, Professor, Library, John Jay College
Jonathan Levitt, Professor of Biology, City College of New York
Tusia Dabrowska, Adjunct Lecturer, English Department, John Jay College
Sarah Aponte, Associate Professor, Library, CUNY DSI, City College of New York
Aziz Isham, Adjunct Lecturer, Barry R. Feirstein School of Cinema
Junior Tidal, Associate Professor, Library Dept., New York City College of Technology
Erma Nieves, Sr. CLT, Library, Bronx Community College
Nicole Williams, Open Resources Librarian, Bronx Community College
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Daniel Herman, Professor, Silberman School of Social Work, Hunter College

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Anselma Rodríguez, Associate Director, Brooklyn College.,
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June 10, 2020

Thank you Chair Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee for the opportunity to testify on remote learning and the COVID-19 experience. **#DegreesNYC** is a collective impact initiative founded by Goddard Riverside Options Center, Graduate NYC, and Young Invincibles, with a goal of achieving equity in postsecondary access and completion in New York City. The partners' vision is that, by 2025, at least 60 percent of each racial, ethnic, and income group in New York City will have a quality postsecondary credential. This includes enrolling in and graduating from a two- or four-year college, a vocational program, or a public service program, such as City Year. Our Youth Council anchors our work and policy and advocacy agenda with student voice and experience.

Our work is grounded in the values of collective impact, youth leadership, equity and strategic learning as a community. During the time of COVID-19, **#DegreesNYC** and the **#DegreesNYC** Youth Council have been working diligently to ensure that students and families have access to much needed resources and services.

We are surveying stakeholders within our network and collecting data on students' and families' needs, mental health, motivation and young people's academic progress. The following are testimonies from college students—of what the remote learning experience has been for them.

Darleny Suriel, Policy Assistant for #DegreesNYC and a Borough of Manhattan Community College student:

“As a first-generation immigrant student, COVID-19 has exacerbated many of my fears when it comes to educational attainment. I fear that remote learning may affect my ability to graduate on-time next semester and my transfer process to a four-year college. I also fear for the long-term negative effects that remote learning will have on my autistic brother's education and development due to the fact that I am the one home-schooling him even though I am not a trained special needs educator. All of these stressors have negatively impacted my mental health and my ability to be completely focused on my tasks for school and work.”

3rd Year Student, CUNY City College:

“The beginning of remote learning came as a surprise to most of us. A lot of us did not even know that the last day of in-person instruction WOULD be the last. It was a big sudden change for both professors and students. Right after having a third of the semester in person, we had an unexpected one week break in which we were not explained what we should’ve expected for the structure or flow of remote instructions. Professors had deadlines to meet and content to get through, and in the rush to meet them, students such as myself fell behind.

In the case of my statistics class, on the last day of in-person instruction, we were starting a new chapter. On the first day of remote learning, the professor did a 15 minute breakdown of the new format of class and dove right into content. I barely had had time to wrap my head around everything that was going on, and turns out that sitting in front of my laptop for TWO HOURS AND FIVE MINUTES for that one class was more exhausting remotely than I had estimated. Her lectures, I feel, were WAY heavier than they should have been, considering learning was remote. There were barely, if any, activities to keep the minds of the students entertained, and considering the class was so dense and lengthy, they were necessary. Teachers were told to prepare a new syllabus, but they DID NOT have to change any of their existing lectures to adjust to remote learning.

With the death of my grandmother, even more issues rose. I missed two classes in which my falling behind became irreversible. I received tutoring as much as I could, but a tutor is supposed to reinforce what one knows, not teach him from scratch. Though I understand CUNY took a lot of measures thinking of the wellbeing of students, I believe they fell short to provide solutions to deal with this pandemic. [In retrospect, as a CUNY student, I would suggest the following:]

Bullet form:

- Classes with mandatory cumulative department finals should have been exempt, so that professors would have been allowed to teach as much content as they could, but not be pressed to teach the content to its entirety.
- Professors should have been asked to re-construct their lesson plans to have more student engagement, and for appropriate classes, less density per session.
- Instead, content should have been taught not only by remote sessions, but also by having the students watch videos or write papers or do activities that required their own research, and those research would have them counted as quizzes or homework.”

Kyle St. Furcy, 22, Hunter College recent transfer, Junior:

“I’m here to make a statement regarding the distance learning. I would first like to state that I do believe tuition costs should definitely be lowered from this semester and any semester going forward if they continue on with this remote learning method, being that we as students are no longer receiving the full college experience that we signed up for. College is a time to network and socially interact with other students/teachers and engage in the opportunities offered on campus. I personally struggled with this method of learning because I was never a good distance learner, I learn best in a classroom setting with interacting with a professor and the rest of the student body. The experience took a lot out of me, especially being that I had no job and couldn’t pay for the rest of my tuition balance. I think the government and colleges should take this into account by lowering the tuition cost and offering some days were students will be allowed to meet up on campus with professors.”

Kiara Rivas, 22, recent Queens College graduate:

“This was the first semester in which I was a part-time student, so I was barely in Queens College and I had also just moved to Bayside. Going to QC was an inconvenience due to the commute. I also just started a new job so commuting from work to QC was the worst. Hearing that CUNYs were closing was such a huge relief to me. My classes were pretty much standard, so it wasn’t very hard to take the courses online. My main goal was to graduate no matter what. I’m not going to say that it should replace all in person classes because everyone learns differently whether it is online or in person. We usually buy expensive textbooks in the beginning of the year for our classes, however, due to COVID, I was provided with the resources to get my textbooks FOR FREE online. This was also another huge relief because I could not pass my classes without them and I didn’t buy them at first because I didn’t have the money for it. I would say this semester has been the most smooth sailing semester due to financial support, staying at home, no long hours of commute. We’re New Yorkers, so we’re always so worried about what we’re doing next after just finishing a major task. We’re always busy and never focusing on our mental health. Quarantine forced me to take a step back and just self-reflect on myself and on my mental health. I realized so many things just because I finally had THE TIME to focus on me.

I was relieved about everything closing until I realized that it jeopardized my graduation ceremony. Queens College wasn’t really updating the graduates on what was going to happen next. May 28th came and my mental health was all over the place. This was supposed to be the happiest day of my life—I was finally able to show everyone that I, one of few Latinas in the US, has a bachelor’s degree. I was depressed the entire day because I’ve dreamed of what I was going to do on this day, who I was going to spend this day with and everyone I was going to thank on this day. But that didn’t happen. Though I know I graduated, I don’t feel like I did. The ceremony, the changing of the tassel

to the other side is like a rite of passage for any graduate. Queens College didn't do anything besides put our names on a booklet and post it on their website as our 'graduation.' I don't think people realize how unsatisfying that can be. And the worst part of it is that we're not allowed to be mad at it or blame anyone. The spread of the virus was inevitable.

Having these resources such as free textbooks made me realize that CUNY has the resources to make things FREE, just like it once was, but whoever runs it, is so stuck on the money making aspect that colleges bring that they fail to realize what the colleges are actually there for and that is educating our communities. Though I didn't get a ceremony, I think this virus opened our eyes to the amount of resources big corporations hinder students in need from having and how we should really have that conversation."

Stephanie Castro, College of Staten Island:

"Good morning. My name is Stephanie Castro. I was a college student at the College of Staten Island and Spring '20 was my last semester.

Spring '20 was a weird semester for me as a student as well as for my professors. For this semester I did an ePermit to Kingsborough Community College. In this case, CSI turned out to be very unorganized stating that I was "not enrolled in school" when they had already approved my ePermits. I was not able to get all of my financial aid to pay for school. COVID opened a lot of doors as to where CUNY was not prepared to transition to online classes. It took 2 months for professors to understand what to do online. So I lost a month of learning and another month trying to understand what to do.

During quarantine my phone broke, so I had no access to anything. Some professors did not use Blackboard but instead opted to use WhatsApp and emails to teach. They did not use school resources. I couldn't log in to my library because my logins were restarted. I couldn't do the proper research I usually do for my psychology, sociology and anthropology papers. In some instances, some of my professors completely forgot about classes. Exams were based on things that were not taught and that I had to learn on my own. Other professors opened up and said that it was hard to teach online and apologized on every class day.

I am particularly disheartened by CUNY not fully refunding students their money when professors were not using the resources we would've used if we were on campus. CUNY was not prepared for COVID. And neither were we. Students and families were hit hard by this and are still being hard hit. A lot of students suffered during this semester and it is not fair to us. I am not working and I still have to pay for the semester and this is the situation for many other students. How am I able to pay for a semester when I have no money in my pocket? How am supposed to get my Diploma when they say you have to pay tuition first then get your diploma? How is that fair? Please understand our view point. Please step into our shoes and ask yourself could I have done classes online? Put

yourself in a 24 year old student's shoes who is not working. How am I supposed to pay for the full price of the semester? Spring '20 was a difficult and very weird adjustment that I will never forget. Thank you for hearing me out."

Nicole Pozo, 24, Lehman College:

"When I was in BMCC, I completed the FAFSA and I noticed that I wasn't eligible for TAP because of my parents' immigration status. I'm currently at Lehman College and I am 24 years old and still not eligible for TAP and FAFSA doesn't cover my tuition completely so I have to pay out of pocket. I was born in USA, and it is crazy to me that because of my parents' status, here I am not eligible for the grant.

I spoke to the majority of the people in the TAP office and they spoke about the DREAM ACT. I applied almost 10 months ago. And they are still processing my application. I had to work extra hours to cover that tuition.

I got furloughed during COVID and had to borrow the money not only to live, but for school.

I found it hard to concentrate during COVID, and even had an emotional breakdown and had to drop a class but *still* pay for it."

Recommendations from #DegreesNYC and the #DegreesNYC Youth Council:

Our initial survey of students' remote learning experiences indicated the following were needed:

- Tutoring
- Quiet work space
- Wifi/Internet service
- Printer and scanner
- Laptop/ Computers
- Tuition break
- Financial support
- Mental health support
- Remote teaching help for professors

Others mentioned:

- Headphones
- Stipends or Grants
- Research resources
- Equipment

- Software
- More office hours/advisement
- Meaningful and relevant work and assignments (not just busy work)

Thank you.

Judith Lorimer, Director, #DegreesNYC

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LaKisha N. Williams, Assistant Director, #DegreesNYC

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Diane Dhanpat Testimony

I started College Now in the summer of 2016 while I was going into my junior year of high school. Ever since then I have taken many College Now classes at various different CUNY Colleges and received up to 30 credits. These credits helped me when I got to college. I learned many things while taking these classes such as studying habits and how college works in general. I have benefited very much from this program very much and I know that many other students have done so as well. Please do not take away this opportunity and privilege from future students.

Testimony from Professor Kimora from CUNY

“Impact of Coronavirus on City University of New York”

New York City Council

Wednesday, June 10, 2020, 10 am

Professor Kimora

Member, Executive Committee (EC) CUNY University Faculty Senate; Professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Kimora@jjay.cuny.edu

Good morning, Honorable Chair Barron and Members of the Committee on Higher Education of the NYC Council,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you about the issue of how the Coronavirus has impacted CUNY. I am a professor of criminal justice, ethics and leadership at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I have been a dedicated professor at the City University of New York (CUNY) since 2003. I have been a member of the CUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS) since 2011. I was just re-elected this May, 2020, to a third term of the Executive Committee (EC) of the City University of New York (CUNY). I have been asked by the Chair of the University Faculty Senate (UFS), Professor Martin Burke, to speak about this important issue.

There is no question that the Coronavirus has impacted CUNY in ways we never could have expected.

Despite the fact that CUNY Chancellor Felix V. Matos Rodriguez mandated distance learning in March, 2020, to ameliorate the Coronavirus, many students and faculty were not prepared for the transition from in-classroom learning to distance learning in a manner of a few short weeks. However, we all rose to the challenge and we have completed the spring semester at CUNY. Now, over the summer, many professors are engaged in online workshops across CUNY to become even better prepared for the fall semester and beyond. As of June 10, 2020, we still do not know if we will be teaching entirely remotely for the fall, 2020 semester.

We are also waiting to hear about the CUNY budget at the end of June, 2020. We do not know if we will have adequate funding for our colleges during this time.

The Coronavirus has caused undue hardship for many in our CUNY community. I know of many students, faculty and staff who have received the terrible news that their loved ones, peers, or faculty members have died from the virus. Many students have lost jobs during this time due to the impact of the virus. Many CUNY adjunct professors have not been given classes to teach this summer and/or fall since

projections by some CUNY administrators is that enrollment will fall dramatically. (At the time of this writing, some colleges are THRIVING with high enrollments over the summer. Of course, data is not available yet regarding fall enrollments.) Some research has been stalled at CUNY since, for example, we cannot contact our subjects in person. Many in the CUNY community are suffering from isolation and mental distress due to the ramifications of the Coronavirus. We are living in a chaotic, unsure world just as you are at this time.

Despite all this despair, I would hasten to mention that our CUNY community is very resilient and optimistic as we look to the future. CUNY administrators, professors, and student leaders are discussing how to best ensure that students, faculty and staff get the resources they need moving forward to provide the kind of quality education our students have come to expect from the City University of New York.

Let me be clear. We at CUNY realize that this is a very serious virus. In the succinct words of Dr. Michael T. Osterholm, an American infectious disease epidemiologist, Regents Professor, and director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, "...a second wave (of COVID-19) in late summer or early fall that lasts three or four months could make everything we've experienced so far seem mild."

I ask that you stay in touch with me during this trying time. I, along with my colleagues, can provide you with information that you will need to help us ensure that CUNY survives and THRIVES during the Coronavirus pandemic. I know that all of you on the New York City Council firmly believe that CUNY, the largest urban university in the United States, needs to be cherished as it serves a diverse student body and offers high-quality education at an affordable price.

On behalf of the CUNY University Faculty Senate, I thank you for listening to us. May all of you be safe and well during this unsettling time.

City Council Higher Ed Committee Hearing Testimony June 10

My name is **Monika Pacholczyk** and I am **an adjunct lecturer at TELC at La Guardia CC and a CET at Baruch College**. I am writing to call on the City Council Committee on Higher Education to advocate for increased funding to CUNY so that we can continue to provide education to our students without losing our jobs and without increasing tuition for students. In these difficult times, the city must prioritize education, including continuing education programs. Higher education, including continuing education, is a right, not a privilege.

Continuing Education Teachers (CETs) at campuses across CUNY have been informed that CUNY has implemented a university-wide personnel action freeze on all full time and part-time appointments starting July 1st. This personnel action freeze will place entire programs and thousands of jobs and students in jeopardy.

During the transition to online teaching, adjuncts and CETs were given no paid training. We worked 12-hour days to learn the necessary technology and transfer materials and lessons online. At the end of all this hard work to adapt to the conditions created by the pandemic, some of us have been told that we are losing our jobs, and the rest of us are kept in limbo. I could not attend today's meeting in person because I was teaching. I am under immense duress, and I worry about my future, but I continue doing what I have been doing for the past 25 years.

All CUNY schools offer a number of vital continuing education programs; among them are English language programs. English language education allows immigrants to get better jobs, increase civic participation, and navigate daily life. English language education also increases opportunities for students who want to enter college without a strong proficiency in English; without the appropriate English proficiency, these students will be left behind and will not be able to succeed in their classes. English language education provides English language learners increased academic and economic opportunities.

I am an immigrant myself. I came to the US at the age of 20 to escape the communist regime in Poland. I worked my way through college and made many sacrifices along the way, but I achieved my dream of becoming an ESL teacher. I have worked at TELC for more than 20 years and at Baruch for 13 years. I love teaching, and I can relate to my students' problems and challenges because I am one of them. And now, after all these years, my job and livelihood are in jeopardy. And why I ask? Because of the allocation of funds that I have no control of?

Compared to the budgets for prosecution and law enforcement, the city university budget is pitifully small at under 1.2 billion dollars. The 2021 Fiscal Year executive budget currently includes over 455 million dollars allocated towards the District Attorneys and Special Narcotics Offices and 6 billion dollars allocated towards the NYPD. If the city council is truly concerned about public safety, you must invest in economic safety nets such as education.

I am one of thousands of people whose future depends on your decisions. Do the right thing and save our jobs at CUNY!

June 10th, 2020

Chair Barron
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10038

Chair Barron:

My name is Gregory Reyes, a first generation student, attending college obtaining my bachelors in Computer Graphics, and a former college student. College now is gifted with a new network of friends and mentors who cared about us reaching the college level. Due to college now I was able to gain enough college credits to be ahead of the game and allowed to visit my preferred college and my current college Lehman. Also because I had taken classes at Lehman before attending I was familiar with the campus and allowed me to navigate it with ease making it easier to attend class on time as well as be comfortable.

During this pandemic I have lost a few friends and the transition from campus to online has been difficult. I work with my school's multimedia center which focuses on photos, videos and editing for the school. These jobs continue during this time but I am not equipped to help. The laptops I received do not have enough power to support the programs required to edit. Therefore I have not been able to do my job. Classes have become difficult too, I was taking a programming course and again the computers were not equipped to handle the workload and I was unable to complete my workload. These technology difficulties have driven me out of my class and my job. Covid has also restrained me from seeking outside help or going to places like the library to satisfy my technology needs.

However, college now taught me how to participate in college level classes, and how to persevere in the face of challenges. This semester I took 12 credits and can happily say that I received mostly all A's exempting my programming class which I was not able to complete. This is a testament to the hard work that my mentors did to teach me how to overcome adversity.

College now offers the guidance and mentorship that many highschool students and future college students like myself need in order to overcome the lower incomes and lower resources we have and create new opportunities for success. The teachings I had from my mentors put me ahead of my peers not only in credits, but also in grounding my reality to the fact that we are underprivileged and need to work harder to become new leaders and better scholars.

In conclusion, my family and myself have benefited greatly from college now as an underprivileged hispanic from the Bronx. This program allowed me the chance to compete at a high level with my peers and to succeed in college. Due to these efforts I feel confident in my ability to achieve my bachelors and become a first generation student in my family having obtained my bachelor's degree and making them proud. College now has served half a million students since going CUNY wide since 2000. I am grateful to college now and would ask to keep the funding so the program can keep helping more students in need.

Hello,

My Name is Katherine Rakowski, I was born and raised and currently still reside in Queens, NYC. I am also a former NYC public school student and College Now alum. College Now not only gave me the opportunity in high school to earn college credits towards my bachelor's degree, but also gave me the necessary skills to easily excel in the transition from high school to college. I know many of my fellow classmates who also participated in the College Now program are also extremely grateful for the opportunity College Now gave them to be able to earn college credit while still in high school with no economic barriers.

With the global pandemic we are currently experiencing with COVID-19 and consequential economic crisis, I was disturbed to hear that College Now's funding is at risk. With this economic crisis hitting the middle and lower classes harder than anyone else, New York City public school students need, now more than ever, equal and accessible programs for higher education. College Now is an essential program for our society and future of our diverse city. Programs like College Now at the very least should not have their budgets cut, if anything College Now programs should be invested in even more and expanded.

If the city continues to invest more in police enforcement and less in education it will be detrimental to the future of our city.

Respectfully,

Katherine Rakowski

College Now Alum, Lifetime NYC Resident

June 10th, 2020

Chair Barron,
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10038

Chair Barron:

It is impossible to imagine that the devastating events of this past spring have not hit every one of us, every student and faculty members in the City University of New York (CUNY) hard: the complicated migration to online learning, the illnesses and deaths of friends and loved ones, the loss of jobs, income and housing, and then the final blow, the horrifying deaths of black men and women in the hands of brutal police officers and white racists who have no regard for black lives.

Researchers at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy gave students a voice in an April 2020 survey of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their lives. Reading some of these comments will position you uncomfortably close to our lives:

“During the time I believed I had the virus, I was very worried and unable to focus. Now is mostly a concern about how long this will go on and will it affect my ability to take care of my family financially.”

“We also are running short on money to buy food and other ses. As well I’m afraid that I might have to take a semester off to help my parents financially. We also lost a family member which has emotionally and mentexpenally affected me.”

“I lost my job. I was living paycheck to paycheck and as a result paying for the internet [for online classes] was a struggle.”

“It is mentally draining to have [my son home] all day because he has severe ADHD and he needs constant reminders and redirections and it takes more energy for me to be on top of what he has to do. I feel emotionally exhausted by the time I get around to do my work. I do homework after 10pm till 4 am just so I can get peace and quiet; then sleep from around 4am to 9am.”

And all of this was before the brutal murder of George Floyd.

More than a quarter of a million New Yorkers, three quarters of whom are people of color, are working towards higher education goals at one of the 25 CUNY campuses. CUNY colleges have repeatedly been cited as top among institutions of higher education with the greatest success in lifting low-income students into the middle class. And yet, how can we who are students continue onto our dreams, to begin to realize all of our possibilities, if cuts to educational funding and a disregard for our very existence leaves us unsure if we can afford the time or money to continue our studies, leaves us frightened about the possibility of being killed simply for stepping out into the public?

CUNY students and faculty are out there with others marching peacefully, exercising our first amendment right to freedom of speech and assembly. The New York City police force is responding to us with an unmatched and unprovoked brutality. We plead that you listen to our voices and hear what we are saying. We give you no reason to silence or ignore us, for our hopes are the same as yours: to bring New York City and our country and all of those who live here to a place where true justice values human life and its honest pursuits above all.

These are our voices speaking:

Greetings Chair Barron,

I am Nasim Almontaser, a Brooklyn College student, and Educational Advocate for my community. As an essential worker in moments of the crisis, I've been ensuring people in my community have the necessary essentials in remaining safe. I've testified in multiple hearings at City Council ranging from essential workers, public education cuts, and higher education. I am writing to request a hearing for students & faculty on the racial discrimination that has been occurring worldwide. This issue has a direct effect on us and hearing our voices virtually is important as we continue demanding justice for people of color like myself in the world and in the field of education.

As a Muslim American, I have been shunned upon not just out in the public but in educational settings. There have been moments where I felt that I would be attacked because of the color of my skin and ethnic background. Racism has existed for way too long and we really need to address this issue. The first step would be hearing what faculty and students have to say.

Respectfully,
Nasim Almontaser

Brooklyn College Student
Educational Advocate

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Terresa Danzey and I am a resident of Brooklyn, New York's District 34. I have decided to reach out to you in an attempt to address the current state of our Police Department. The NYPD has a long track record of practicing unprofessional, violent, and deadly policing tactics in the City of New York. Many officers have failed to protect and serve this city as they were sworn in to do. They harm the reputations of those officers that serve and protect the community in a professional and dignified manner. They lack accountability for the terror they have caused across these great five boroughs and the time for change is now. The leaders of our city have continued to fail us in regard to this matter. You have promised us change; but you have yet to deliver any progress, though the solution is clear.

I am demanding the City of New York implement legislation that will directly hold police officers accountable for misconduct that leads to serious bodily harm or death. There must be measures in place that protect civilians from savage members of law enforcement. There needs to be a law that will elicit a sense of responsibility amongst the members of the NYPD and their leaders. We can no longer allow the police to go on without being policed themselves. For those who defame their positions as protectors of our communities, ruin the reputations of the officers who uphold their oaths.

I understand that it will take time to construct a law that will hold officers accountable for unprofessional, violent, and deadly policing tactics and I am willing to exercise patience in this fight for change. Nonetheless, I expect you to hear the cries of the citizens of New York and to take action immediately. I am concerned that the chaos and destruction we have witnessed across the city this past week will continue to take place if you hesitate to consider this law. I call upon you as a leader within this city to become an active participant in protecting the lives of civilians against policing tactics that alienate and dehumanize members of our community.

Thank you.
Terresa C. Danzey

Chair Barron,

My name is Franchesca. I write to you from Ocean Hill, in Brooklyn. At this critical time in history, it is impossible to ignore the sheer chaotic state our boroughs and country are in. I write to you as a Black woman, struggling to find hope in these uncertain times. I write to you, wishing to express my sincere plea. I write to you as someone who has endured incidences of police brutality and racial profiling. I am not unscathed by these

events, but I (along with countless others) have endured them, and find our strength in being resilient, unified in our experiences with this oppressive system.

We the People are crying out. We the People are tired of the injustices we have to face because of the color of our skin. Being Black should not be a death sentence, and yet society says otherwise. Officials are elected and installed to address the concerns of community members. We are requesting a hearing, so that our voices can be heard far and wide. We want to defund the New York police department. Money needs to be channeled into restorative programs that strengthen our Black and Brown communities. We need to stop inciting violence, and start inviting change.

Franchesca Campbell

Dear Chair Barron,

Hi. My name is Lina and I am a student of Brooklyn College. I came to America as an immigrant after I was threatened and forced out of my home country, Iraq, by terrorists who wanted to kidnap my family and I. It is clear to see that every single individual has their own story and experience to share and is special in their own way but how can we hear each other's stories when we are being silenced by the racial injustices that drown this country? Chair Barron, I need you to see that this is wrong and you have the power to do something about it and so do we. As a unified group of individuals, we stand today asking you to support us and listen to what we have to say. We need to acknowledge the flaws and unaccountability that has continued to take place for way too long.

My family and I came to this country because we saw acceptance, opportunities and a chance to start fresh in a safe environment. I see these innocent black men and women killed by the hands of the people that vowed to protect us and it is unacceptable. As a non-black individual, I am disgusted and ashamed but I am also angry. We are all angry. You know, I find it insane that we are in 2020 and racism is still such a prevalent issue in our everyday lives. No one deserves to have their lives taken away for jogging or shopping, or just going out for a walk and enjoying nature. People need to be held accountable and this starts with the police. We cannot begin to change anything if we do not accept the fact that the foundation that the Police have been trained in is flawed. There needs to be consequences for their actions. It is their job to protect individuals and some have broken that vow a very long time ago. Please hear us on this topic and stand by our side. Change has to happen. All of this pain and suffering cannot go in vain. Not anymore! Thank you.

Sincerely,
Lina

Chair Barron:

It is time that America admits that it has a race issue. Racism is embedded in American institutions and laws. Enough is enough. We have witnessed injustices time and time again through police brutality. As a tax paying citizen, my dollars feed a criminal justice

system that promotes white privilege and is the new form of slavery. We need a change. We need a system that provides true equality for all. It is the human right of all people to live, and live successfully, without fear and inferiority.

We need better parks, recreation centers, and young as well as young adult programs in poor neighborhoods. We need therapy for those who have lived in poverty and oppressed states. We need essential jobs within poor communities, that will help open finances for those who need work. We need better learning resources and tools for schools found in disadvantaged neighborhoods. We need to put an end to heavy policing, and most certainly police brutality in poverty stricken areas. We need true justice. True justice for people of color, true equality for people of color, and true opportunities for people of color. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed." We want better living and life conditions. There is but one race, and that is the human race. What will you do to help stop the injustices against people of color in America? In your district?

Best Regards,
Sharna Tucker

To whom it may concern,

There is a very apparent race issue in the U.S. systemically and systematically. I can not believe that in 2020 that this is the world we live in. I am a graduate student at Brooklyn College and I am black. I am seeking higher education to better myself yet the budget keeps getting cut and opportunities for students are scarce. NYPD is always hanging around campus and it does not create a comfortable environment for the students at Brooklyn College especially myself. I want to know why security constantly chooses to stop me at the gate when I am coming to campus for my classes while letting everyone else pass? Breaking down the systems and in place and hearing us out in order to rebuild is important in order to truly help people of color in our neighborhoods.

Regards,
Amanda Waldron

Greetings Chair Barron,

My name is Stephen Vitale, I am a 2020 graduate in the physical education department, member of the NYC Men Teach program, and soon to be pursuing a master's education from CUNY, Brooklyn College. I am not part of your district, as I am a resident of Staten Island. Although, I was from your district, as a child, and still have

close family residing in the community. At least thirty years ago there was ongoing drugs and violence affecting my neighborhood, I believe and hope that these conditions have improved. I do have the utmost respect for police, as I know their role is critical and dangerous in order to keep our city safe. My Godfather, named George, is a retired, NY State Trooper and he, like so many of the world, are appalled by the recent killing of George Floyd, as well as countless other black souls killed in similar and shameful manners by acts of police violence and racial profiling. My Uncle George relayed that these police brutalities were never part of his training and has never seen anything even closely related. My heart bleeds for George Floyd and the countless innocent black families affected through these unimaginable and truly avoidable deaths. I can only presume that you are aware of the problems our nation has been facing did not just come overnight, as the US has been built on systemic and institutional racism. Sadly, the inequities and injustices can still be found in all dimensions of today's society.

My fellow peers and I are demanding that the laws involving police brutality be reformed, in order to stop allowing racist officers to kill innocent black folks, the majority of which to be men. We demand that there be accountability for such wrong and dreadful actions, and like so many other professions that have databases, which can expose any officers' records of ever being fired or convicted of such hate crimes, to weed them out of the system. This will help to stop hiring and protecting officers convicted and associated with hate crimes. This should address the lack of transparency found uniquely in our police department, and all across the nation.

There are so many other issues which need to be addressed and reformed, and I am learning and hearing about from many upstanding advocates. I wish I could say that there is equal opportunities and justice for people of all kinds, but unfortunately, we all know that it is untrue. Black, Latino, and new immigrants deserve to have basic human rights to live in peace, this is a natural right given from birth. I fear for the safety of my fellow black and brown brothers and sisters, from both the community and my personal family and friends. To clarify, I am a Caucasian male, and from my experiences in society, I have been expected to express hate for anyone who does not look like me. These distasteful experiences have led me to follow my heart, change careers, and loudly voice my deepest concerns for our future youth and their families. I choose love, as I work hard to not only lift myself up from my own financial burdens, but to also bring everyone else up with me. I refuse to become complacent or take for granted the white privilege, which I did not ask for. I do not desire to leave anyone behind to struggle in poverty.

Today, I walk alongside my neighbors of color, and urgently invite my fellow white folks as well, to all come together. We are living in challenging times and we will only be able to create reform if we work hard, together, as one nation. I am hopeful that we can pave the way for a better tomorrow! Thank you, Chair Barron, for reading our concerns, and please allow our voices to be heard at a public hearing. Will you be able to meet us, your district and city's people, on these demands and provide us the stage to speak out against these tragic injustices?

Be well and stay safe

Stephen Vitale

No, the time for justice, the time for freedom, and the time for equality, is always -- is always -- right now! The Great Debaters, Film 2007

Chair Barron:

My name is Shakima Hightower. I am a resident of the borough of Brooklyn, a Brooklyn College student, and an Educational Advocate for my community. I am emailing you today to formally request that you and your administration implement immediate reforms and policies to combat the continuing crisis of racial profiling and police brutality.

Racial profiling and police brutality are part of a national crisis that is devastating communities across the country. With the ubiquity of smartphones, concerned citizens have captured more and more of the horrific acts of violence that have swept the nation. The recent killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor are only the most recent incidents in a centuries long history of state-sanctioned violence against Black people in America. Indeed, these events trace their roots to the year 1619 when the first Africans were brought to these shores in bondage and sold into slavery to build the wealth of what became the United States. From Slavery to the Post-Reconstruction Era, from the Jim Crow South to Mass Incarceration, the full weight of American government and society has been brought to bear to hold people of color in peonage. The lynching of 14 year-old Emmett Till in 1955 shocked the nation. Today, it is Derek Chauvin's knee bearing down on George Floyd's neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds until he died.

Below is a list of reforms that I am urging you to take action upon immediately:

1. Revise law enforcement policies and training to emphasize de-escalation and alternatives to arrests;
2. Mandate external and independent investigations of police use-of-force incidents resulting in death or injury;
3. Create use-of-force policies that clearly state what information will be released publicly;

4. Establish a Serious Incident Review Board consisting of sworn staff and community members who will review cases involving officer-involved shootings and other serious incidents that have the potential to damage community trust;
5. Partner with the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training to contribute to its National Decertification Index, which collects information about officers who have had their licenses or certifications revoked; and
6. Retain a nationally recognized police department implicit bias trainer who could work with the City's current consultant.

I also expect you to increase the level of trust between the police department and the community. To establish trust, there has to be transparency. I would like to see the NYPD collect and report data on civilian deaths that occurred in custody and as a result of an officer's use of excessive force. The data should be broken down by demographics and should showcase the race, gender, sexuality, and religion of the civilians. Allowing the public access to this information will show us where we, as a community, fall short.

In addition, I would like to request that you take a clear and public stand in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, and put into place programs/funds that will advance this organization within our City. Without these changes, people of color cannot live a safe and secure life in the City of New York. I am strongly inclined to move out of the City and take my needed skills as an essential worker if these changes are not made in a timely manner. Thank you for your time and I look forward to seeing your public response on these pressing issues.

Best Regards,
Shakima Hightower
(Preferred pronouns: She/Her/Hers)
Health Educator, Peer Health Exchange
Peer Mentor, Brooklyn College
Event Coordinator, Women of Color at Brooklyn College

CUNY Faculty, including those representing several important departments at Brooklyn College, have also written in support of the student body and note how damaging these past few months and recent budget decisions have been and will continue to be for education. They sent their letter on May 15, 2020, ten days before George Floyd was murdered, but two days after Breonna Taylor, an unarmed African-American woman

was shot dead in her home. Here is their letter to the Chancellor of CUNY and the Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost:

Dear Chancellor Matos-Rodríguez and EVC and University Provost Cruz:

In this time of crisis, we very much appreciate your leadership and advocacy for CUNY, but we write to you today with great concern over the future of our beloved institution. We are the very communities who helped shape your own education and expertise, your colleagues in ethnic studies and other area studies disciplines, your colegas and hermanx/@s. We not only write to you today over the anticipated fall budget cuts to CUNY, but also with specificity regarding the potential and very real consequences of such cuts that will disproportionately affect ethnic, language, and area as well as interdisciplinary studies in CUNY.

The CUNY ethnic studies, language studies, and interdisciplinary programs represent communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 as well as by racial and religious bias crimes. Additionally, the Departments of Africana Studies and Puerto Rican and Latino Studies represent the greatest concentration of Latinx and Black faculty, both full-time and adjunct. We all, through our interdisciplinary, ethnic studies, and language departments and programs, further represent a curriculum that centers ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious and gender diversity in an otherwise Euro-centric and hetero- and gender-normative academy. We represent diversity that is available to the total student body as general education and electives courses, more so than specifically through a major. Our students are the richer for taking our courses and, in many cases, they are being taught by faculty from underrepresented or silenced groups, particularly faculty of color. These are the groups that will be hardest hit by the larger cuts to CUNY.

At present, many campuses have been given the directive for paring back our schedules dramatically and insisting on a high seat count for all courses, thus negatively affecting our offerings, seat enrollments, and compromising the well-being of full-time tenure-track, tenured, and adjunct faculty. These directives have severe implications for the majority of the students we serve from all backgrounds who are among the most vulnerable due to socioeconomic and structural inequalities, linguistic factors, and immigration status. They undoubtedly serve as a health hazard in this pandemic context, given the mandated increase in class sizes, and should courses remain on-line for the fall, equally are a disservice for student learning and retention given the overwhelming evidence that smaller is better in remote instructional environments.

History has demonstrated that when economic austerity befalls CUNY, administrators take aim to dismantle and consolidate ethnic and language studies departments and interdisciplinary programs, which tend to represent the areas where the most diversity and creativity thrives rather than be imaginative and preserve unique programming. We oppose any such reconfigurations across our campuses. We ask for continued commitment to promote the values and goals of CUNY's mission regarding the undersigned academic units and our sister units throughout CUNY, including Asian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous, Latin American, and Middle Eastern studies.

Chancellor Matos-Rodríguez, we come to you today with two basic requests. We ask you to make an unwavering and public commitment to our beloved CUNY, advocating openly and boldly from the gubernatorial to the federal for every penny. We believe you will do that. We also ask you to make a Declaration of Equity for Diversity; to make an unequivocal statement to college presidents and provosts to avoid mergers and draconian cuts to interdisciplinary, ethnic, and language studies departments and programs. Upon the 50th anniversary of ethnic studies in CUNY, we make this request in the spirit of the civil rights movements that helped give birth to our departments and programs. We understand it would be a historic and daring move on your part. We believe you are up to the challenge.

Your focus on diversity in terms of scholarship and your implementation of diversity hiring initiatives during your career are what distinguishes you from previous CUNY Chancellors. Make this your signature mark of leadership—a Declaration of Equity for Diversity.

We hope you concur and will swiftly respond to our request.

Sincerely,

Brooklyn College, CUNY:

Department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies

Department of Africana Studies

Department of Judaic Studies

Department of Modern Languages and Literatures

Interdisciplinary Programs of American Studies, Caribbean Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, and Studies in Religion

C: Vice Chancellor of Human Resources Management Doriane Gloria

Deputy to University Dean for Recruitment and Diversity Maryann McKenzie

Diversity Programs Manager Shaquiea Sykes

Here is a letter from the Brooklyn College Department of History.

History Reckons with Struggles to Make Black Lives Matter

The public lynching of George Floyd broadcast around the world has torn the veil from the existential threat of Black death that daily stalks our families and communities of African descent in the United States. If history has burdened us with the legacies of racial slavery and white supremacy that play out with murderous sameness on our streets and inside our homes, across our prisons and in our workplaces, within our school districts and on our hospital beds, we can use the power of historical knowledge to bring change. When we understand that structures of oppression developed historically, as a result of conscious choices made by people, not nature, we can turn history into a powerful tool to dismantle systems of injustice. Thus, our former chair John Hope Franklin, a towering figure in the emergence of both the discipline of African American history and the civil rights movement, helped submit legal briefs about the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution during the landmark court case *Brown versus Board of Education*, that ended de jure segregation in public education. The movement he helped shape began in hope but remains mired in unfulfilled promise. Now, as outrage fuels fresh momentum for reckoning with history's heritage across diverse constituencies at home and abroad, let us renew our resolve to tap our classrooms and the archives for intellectual resources and practical strategies to power our activism for equality, our struggles for justice.

Let us listen, and let us act.

(Signed): Gunja SenGupta, Philip Napoli, Jocelyn Wills, Brigid O'Keeffe, Lauren Mancia, Louis Fishman, David Troyansky, Benjamin Carp, Swapna Banerjee, Steven Remy, Clarence Teague Mims, Christopher Ebert, Karen Stern, Bilal Ibrahim.

Here is a letter from one librarian at the New York City College of Technology.

I am writing today to urge you to invest in CUNY. I am a CUNY Alumni and have worked as a Professor and Librarian for my entire professional career (more than 13 years) at CUNY. During the past decade, I have watched as CUNY campuses have tried to make up for city and state budget cuts by increasing enrollment, raising tuition, and cutting the support services that students need. After years of austerity budgets, our campuses are in disrepair and our students are left with overworked and precarious teachers, outdated software and labs, cuts to tutoring services and library hours, and lack of financial aid

support or career counseling. At the New York City College of Technology where I work, we have the worst faculty to student ratio in the state and only one counselor per 4700 students. In our library, which has no bathrooms and frequent power outages, students are often sitting on the floor because we don't have sufficient seating. Our library has mice, mold, water damage, broken windows, and a broken HVAC. In the past 2 years, we've had to reduce our hours, services, and the number of courses we offer. This is just a small snapshot of one department at one CUNY campus but it is a microcosm of the public education system and it sends a message that our city doesn't care about the people of color, immigrants, and low-income populations that CUNY serves.

And in this environment, as we shifted to remote services during the COVID health crisis, we didn't have the technological or organizational infrastructure to support our students the way we would like to. Our students still lack access to the technology (including city-wide wifi!) they need to be successful remote learners. Budget cuts, overcrowding, and the physical deterioration of our facilities make the prospect of reopening our campuses frightening.

I love CUNY and our students. I have devoted countless hours fighting against austerity--through activism, scholarship, and through assessment measures to repeatedly demonstrate that our work matters--hours that I could have spent educating students and supporting my colleagues. Without adequate city and state funding, we are understaffed and we are forced to take on the additional labor that austerity imposes.

I urge you to invest in CUNY, especially now in the wake of social upheaval and a health crisis that has disproportionately affected the CUNY community. I have heard legislators claim that there is a budget deficit that does not allow for increased public spending but that deficit is one that is the product of political decision-making. I urge you to make different political decisions. I urge you to implement a progressive taxation structure that actually serves the communities you represent. I urge you to make billionaires pay their fair share. I urge you to stop giving tax breaks to wealthy developers. I urge you to defund the NYPD and divert funds used to purchase military weapons like tear-gas and automatic rifles. I urge you to fund CUNY beyond the austerity levels that have eroded our public university--a university that our city should be proud of, that touches the lives of millions of New Yorkers.

I will not listen to lawmakers tell us that there is no funding for CUNY when there are armed police on every corner and when we live in a city with billionaires who are undertaxed.

CUNY students overwhelmingly come from New York and after they graduate, continue to live and work in New York. They are, as some have called them, the life-blood of this city. I urge you to invest in them and in doing so, in the future of New York City.

Nora Almeida

And finally, here is a letter of support from a professor at the Queens College School of Education.

David Gerwin
255 West 108th Street Apt 3B
New York, NY 10025
June 9, 2020

Dear NYC Council Committee on Higher Education,

I write in support of the CUNY student effort to save College-Now, and all of CUNY, from devastating budget cuts in the wake of COVID. We know the disease hit New York hard. We also know that during the disease billionaires added \$595 billion dollars to their wealth, a 19% increase. While that is a national figure, quite a number live in New York, or have second and third homes in New York City. A more equitable tax structure, raising revenue from New Yorkers earning over \$5 million (the SHARE act in the NYS Senate comes to mind), or a tax on second and third homes in NYC, could lessen the impact of COVID. At least 70% of CUNY students belong to minority communities, and lower income communities, whose lives have been particularly impacted by the policing that Mayor Giuliani and Mayor Bloomberg supported, an invasion of lower income neighbors with stop and frisk or “broken windows” policing that resulted in countless arrests and criminal records. The murder of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis police, and the violent police response to demonstrations around the nation provide an opportunity to rethink our priorities. As crime has dropped dramatically to low levels unseen in decades, why has Mayor De Blasio increased the number of police and the NYPD budget? Do we really want police in NYC schools? Why not invest in public health, in shelter, and in education as fundamental responses to civic challenges, rather than policing first?!

To directly address CUNY, where I am a faculty member in the Queens College School of Education, I want to point to a real danger. On my campus the Provost has pushed

hard for an expansion of the summer session. My understanding is that summer enrollment is the largest it has ever been at Queens College, generating approximately \$2 million in income. By contrast, the Provost has ordered departments to prepare plans for significant cuts to the fall schedule of classes. Should the budget crisis everyone is expecting materialize, they will go into effect. Why increase course offerings in the summer and cut them in the regular semester? Because in the summer faculty are on annual leave. All summer courses, even those taught by full-time faculty, are effectively taught by adjuncts for adjunct pay. Almost all summer students are paying cash. In the fall many students pay flat-rate tuition, so the college may not make any income on a fifth or sixth course a student takes. This means that the college might spend money paying for adjunct instructors to teach an English composition class required for progress towards graduation, have a fully enrolled class, and not “earn” enough incremental revenue to make a profit on the adjunct hire. Or a full-time faculty member might be teaching a specialized upper level course with necessarily lower enrollment since relatively few students will have the knowledge needed for, as an example, that particular lab course in a science, or research course in the Sociology departments data analysis minor, or a specialized advanced field of mathematics, or a particular area of history. As the college reduces regular semester course offerings and increases summer courses, we will become less a public institution offering education to all New Yorkers, and more of an institution where full tuition will give you a ticket to a lottery – maybe you will get that course you need in the fall or spring, and maybe you will not. Only students who can “pay to play” in the summer will be certain of getting the English composition or required science class to move forward towards graduation. Specialized upper-level coursework will only be sporadically available, and in larger courses, while chances to engage with faculty in specialized areas and research will diminish. This is a significant assault on CUNY’s students. It is also an assault on CUNY’s dedicated ranks of over 12,000 adjunct instructors who now teach more than half of the courses on CUNY campuses. For a number of years anyone teaching two courses at CUNY has been included on NYC health insurance. Thousands of adjuncts will be fired this fall, depriving them of employment and health insurance in the middle of a pandemic, and students of instruction.

I want to close with a word about College Now. I work with middle and high school social studies teachers. I know how important College Now is to connect NYC public school students with CUNY. For many students who come to our campus for courses, it is their first time stepping onto a college campus. For others, who take college courses for college credit in a high school building, they are still obtaining a CUNY ID number and enrolling for college credit. For many students this is the experience that makes attending college manageable, and anyway they are already partially enrolled. It is one

of the best programs we have for making New York's most vulnerable students make it to CUNY, and these credits help them afford college and move towards a timely graduation.

Please preserve CUNY. Please expand CUNY. Queens College opened in the middle of the Great Depression. This moment in time is one to reinvest in CUNY for the sake of every New Yorker.

Sincerely,
David Gerwin

You will recognize in each of these letters that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CUNY, the topic of today's hearing, can only be seen within the context of the greater pandemic in our city, our nation and in the world: the pandemic of racism and white privilege. The death of George Floyd as the climax of three fraught months of suffering have shown us the need for systemic changes in our society. CUNY students are the future. The dedicated faculty recognize and support these students in reaching these goals. The faculty are fighting for support for the very programs that will change public thinking and policy for the better. We students are the ones about to inherit this city and everything it offers us going forward. We, black, brown and white students and supporters want to be a part of the new city that can come of the changes you are empowered to bring about. Hear our voices and address the inequities, the abuses and the deaths that have been brought upon communities of color. Legislate for the changes we demand. Represent us and what we ask. Do your jobs.

Sincerely yours,

C.A., Bronx Community College, CUNY

Alan Aja, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Zoya Ali, alumna, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Nora Almeida, assistant professor, New York City College of Technology, CUNY

Nasim Almontaser, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Kathleen Axen, professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Swapna Banerjee, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Jennifer Ball, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Franchesca Campbell, alumna, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Benjamin Carp, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Elisa Caesar, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Jill Cirasella, associate professor, Graduate Center, CUNY

Terresa Danzey, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
James Davis, professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Emmanuel Desilus, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Heidi Diehl, assistant professor, Brooklyn College CUNY
Christopher Ebert, associate professor, Brooklyn College,
Joseph Entin, professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Beth Evans, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Ian Evans, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Louis Fishman, assistant professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Katherine G. Fry, professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
David Gerwin, professor, Queens College, CUNY
Shakina Hightower, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Michael Handis, associate professor, Graduate Center, CUNY
Mobina Hashmi, assistant professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Bilal Ibrahim, assistant professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Michala John, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Nanette Johnson, assistant professor, New York City College of Technology, CUNY
Mark Lauterbach, assistant professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Lina, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Sharona Levy,
Peter Lipke, professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Susan Longtin, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Lauren Mancina, assistant professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Miranda Martinez, retired associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Clarence Teague Mims, assistant professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Philip Napoli, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Brigid O'Keeffe, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Reynaldo Ortiz Minaya, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Steve Ovadia, Professor, LaGuardia Community College, CUNY
Priya Parma, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Aisha Pena, associate professor, Baruch College, CUNY
Maria Perez y Gonzalez, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Steven Remy, professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Carla Santamaria, assistant professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Ramsey Scott, assistant professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Gunja SenGupta, professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Roxanne Shirazi, assistant professor, Graduate Center, CUNY
Irena Sosa, professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Brian Sowers, assistant professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Kwame Sparkes, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Karen Stern, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Sonali Sugrim, assistant professor, Queens College, CUNY
Andrea Taylor, alumna, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Laura Tesman, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Junior Tidal, New York City College of Technology, CUNY
David Troyansky, professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Sharna Tucker, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Karden P. Ulysse, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Stephen Vitale, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Jessica Wagner Webster, associate professor, Baruch College, CUNY
Amanda Waldron, student, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Sarah Ward, assistant professor, Hunter College, CUNY
Raymond Weston, associate professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY
Jocelyn Wills, professor, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Dear Committee Members –

For ten years, I have helped students at Kingsborough Community College locate proper research sources, assess their academic writing needs, connect them to mental health services and our Urban Farm, encouraged them to make long-lasting relationships with their professors, written recommendation letters, attended graduations, colored with their toddlers and hushed their newborns to sleep as they sat exams, purchased meals out of my pocket – and more.

It would take all week for me to recall the many instances I went outside the parameters of my job description to assist a student on any given day in the last decade.

Last year I earned **\$29,000**; clearly, money is not my motive.

My responsibility as an administrative assistant in the Writing Center is to undergird the learning experiences and processes of Kingsborough students. I do all the good I can, whenever I can, however I can as it is my goal to make a tangible difference in our students' lives.

I want my Black and brown students to know they belong in intellectual spaces. I want our students who aren't too comfortable with English just yet to know their opinions matter and are worth sharing with confidence. I want our older students to know they have all the support needed to feel comfortable despite returning to school some twenty-plus years after high school. I want our students who are also parents to know that being in school doesn't have to be an additional stress. This is why I give every single student I encounter everything I have to offer.

During this spring semester, I was told after a decade of dedication and excellence, I would no longer have a job due to budget cuts and low enrollment. Before I could process the loss of income and health insurance, the first thing that brought tears to my eyes was the question of "What about the students? Who's going to support them now?" I then thought about the Writing Fellows I work with each year, guiding them through the complexities of CUNY and pairing them with students, providing them with experiences that serves as the foundation of their teaching philosophy. The work I do for the Writing Center changes lives. . . it changes CUNY, and for the better.

But, "bleeding" must stop, and "redundancies" must be eliminated. How can student retention at a community college be redundant? Never mind that we have Deans whose responsibilities overlap and no one's considering eliminating their six-figure salaries. We who work diligently to make CUNY truly work for the City, for the "least of these," are the ones who must go. Our \$29,000 - \$56,000 a year is the greatest strain on the University.

The last question I asked myself is the one I'm asking you now:

If we're here for students and we believe that "education is the great equalizer" as Horace Mann once declared, why are we shredding their support systems to shreds?

Why must someone who spent a decade of their life working to enhance student and faculty development be discarded like a filthy rag?

In truth,
Sydoni Ellwood

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER

I am Sylvia Gonzalez, an adjunct Lecturer, at The English Language Center at LaGuardia Community College, CUNY. In this testimony, I would like to give a brief history of what TELC is and what it has meant for the immigrant community and foreign students we serve in one of the most diverse boroughs in the country.

English Language classes were first offered at LaGuardia Community College in the fall of 1971 in the school's first of existence. Dean Ann Marcus brought a small group of ESL teachers to the new college and had Dr. Don Byrd of Queens College come in to do formal observations.

In 1972 Dr. Byrd, who was hired fulltime at LaGuardia and later became its first Full Professor, set up The English Language Center (TELC), which comprised credit and non-credit course for students needing intensive work in college writing; other skills were offered to support writing. At this time there was simply no distinction, salary or otherwise, between teachers hired to teach credit or non-credit courses. Dr. Byrd wanted experienced people with a master's degree in ESL, and he got them. LaGuardia had a great location, poised just outside Manhattan yet in the most ethnically diverse borough of this world city. Students were the very best: immigrants and children of immigrants, eager to realize their American dream and ready to work hard to master English.

With the approval of the College President Joseph Shenker and Dean Marcus, Dr. Byrd assembled a TELC administration of ESL professionals already well-established elsewhere: Gloria Galligane, Larry Anger, Alice Osman, Mary Hines and others. They came to LaGuardia because of a lifetime commitment to this student population and because the college and Dr. Byrd offered a chance to build the biggest and best ESL program in the East, which, at the 1979 NYS TESOL Convention, received an award for excellence usually reserved for individuals.

The credit part of the program, fully realized in 1974 by Gloria Gallingane and Mary Hines, was originally part of the Reading Department but was moved to Continuing Education in 1976. It was felt that fulltime ESL professionals would add weight to Continuing ED and benefit the highly diverse student population as well.

Professor Gallingane succeeded Dr. Byrd as head of The English Language Center in 1979 and remained in that position until her retirement in 1990. At peak, there were four levels of credit "ESL- originally called FESL (Freshman English as a Second Language) - and 12 levels of non-credit ESL in five different programs tailored to accommodate the schedules of busy working people as well as more available foreign students. The program was known as the best program at the best price. The non-credit students pulled out their checks, cash and money orders and lined up all the way to the elevators on registration day. The program was able to maintain a substantial enrolment in the Day Intensive Program throughout the decades prior to the Covid19 crisis. This was due to a simple pattern: adjunct status and benefits attract and hold the best teachers, the quality of teaching and the reasonable tuition attract students. The English Language Center has contributed substantially to the income of LaGuardia Community College.

The all-out effort to improve placement and promotion in the Day Intensive Program has shown that a non-credit program can prepare students for the rigors of academic work beyond ESL. Both teachers and students have responded favorably to higher standards, improved testing and academically targeted curricula. We, adjuncts and CETs are very proud of the English Language Center at LaGuardia Community College.

The Impact of COVID 19 on the Failed Leadership of Medgar Evers College, CUNY

I write to you concerning the leadership and the future of Medgar Evers College (MEC), the only predominantly black institution of higher education in New York State.

MEC, birthed through your tireless efforts, years of struggle, perseverance, and commitment to provide Central Brooklyn with access to excellence in higher education is in danger. Prior to the advent of COVID-19, under the leadership of President Crew and Provost Okereke, the institution has been on an inexorable slide downward.

CUNY's Chancellor Matos Rodriguez has announced that President Rudolph Crew will serve a final year at MEC and will retire at the end of 2021 after the DeKalb County School Board [rejected his appointment as school superintendent](#). In our COVID-19 impacted world this decision puts MEC at risk of being a failed higher education institution. Chancellor Matos Rodriguez's announcement demands the very serious attention of our community.

The coronavirus is killing Blacks and Latinos in NYC at twice the rate at which it is killing White New Yorkers. The death rate per 100,000: for Hispanics is 22; for Blacks 20; and for Whites 10. In Williamsburg, Crown Heights, Flatbush, Kensington and East New York (ENY) the death rates exceed 300 per hundred thousand.

MEC with a satellite campus in ENY and its main campus in Crown Heights ought to play a critical role in supporting the Central Brooklyn community as we re-emerge from the shadow of COVID-19. However, our School of Science Health and Technology has played, thus far, no role in support of the Community's fight against the coronavirus and there is no plan for the same. This lack of planning and meaningful community engagement is indicative of the failed leadership of the Crew-Okereke leadership team.

Given our historical mission, function it is essential that we examine and understand the possibilities for MEC and the critical role its leadership must play in shaping the institution and supporting the community that emerges post-COVID-19.

It is evident that the main impact of the various scenarios will be on student persistence, as our students and our faculty struggle to adapt to online coursework. MEC is an institution with a limited record of creating a compelling online experience. We have relatively few students in fully online environments. We will be seriously hurt if our current students are dissatisfied with our digital offerings and decide to go elsewhere. Many of our students are likely to delay returning until campus life is back to something close to normal. Moreover, MEC emphasizes the value of the on-campus experience and it will be difficult for us to foster this sense of connectedness in a digital setting.

The warning signs are flashing, our current enrollment numbers as of 06/03/2020 reveal a 19% decline in continuing student enrollment when compared to this point in 2019. This reflects an acceleration of a trend that has characterized the President Crew/Provost Okereke administration. In 2007 enrollment was 5522. In 2013 at the final year of the previous administration the enrollment was 6491, an increase of 969 students. In 2014, at the beginning of the Crew administration, enrollment was 6701. In 2019 based on figures released by the

Crew-Okereke administration, enrollment was 5798, a loss of 903 students! At \$6000 per student this represents a \$5,400,000 budget loss.

Our enrollment is trending downwards and given the data of the last seven years and the lack of a clear and credible plan for the next academic year there is a distinct possibility that MEC could emerge from the academic year 20-21 as an institution with 2000 students. The implications for MEC and Central Brooklyn cannot be understated.

Our mission is to connect young people, particularly those from Central Brooklyn, to opportunities through scholarship, teaching, learning and community service. We seek to honor the memory and work of Medgar Wiley Evers. The President Crew/Provost Okereke leadership has demonstrated that it cannot accomplish this task. Their continued presence in these roles in this critical 2020-2021 academic year poses a grave risk to Medgar Evers College. It is time for the Central Brooklyn community to demand that the Chancellor end the benign neglect of MEC and appoint competent and committed leadership now.

June 2021 will be too late.

Terrence Richard Blackman, PhD

Associate Professor of Mathematics

Medgar Evers College, CUNY

June 7, 2020

Dear NY CITY COUNCIL HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE,

Thank you for taking your precious time to read my testimonial. My name is Paul Fraccalvieri and I have been an Adjunct Lecturer at TELC (The English Language Center) at LaGuardia Community College in Long Island City, Queens, the largest ESL program in the northeast for nearly 20 years.

I write to you today to ask for your help and intervention for our ESL program which has served hundreds of thousands of newly arrived immigrants and foreign students visiting our shores since its inception in 1971.

Due to the unprecedented pandemic, our program has faced a drop in enrollment of over 80 percent and many of the long-serving, highly dedicated faculty risk losing not only our livelihoods, but also our health insurance which we so desperately need to treat underlying health issues, and to protect us should we unfortunately become ill during the COVID-19 crisis.

Like many programs at CUNY, our ESL program is an introduction to American life and culture for almost all our enrollees. Some enter our classes with no English at all, and through the nurturing, and skilled pedagogy of our instructors, we have been able to more than adequately prepare numerous students to embark on their quest for the American dream.

I am quite astounded and most humbled when I hear stories from my former students who contact me via email or even come back to campus in person. They recount their American journeys that began at LaGuardia and led them to attain two and four year and graduate degrees-some on scholarship-at universities throughout the U.S.

Additionally, many now hold high-ranking positions in the fields of medicine, law and public service. Our former students all express their deepest and most profound gratitude to the TELC program and state that it was an instrumental springboard to their confidence for their new life in a new country. And YES, for more than a few, their newly adopted home!

I have been sincerely blessed to have been part of a distinguished faculty of diligent, selfless, and empathetic individuals and we would like nothing more than a chance to continue serving in our roles as educators, mentors and advocates for our student population, and above all the opportunity to assist our students in the fulfillment of their goals, dreams and aspirations.

In closing, I reiterate an urgent plea for your assistance. When the pandemic releases its grasp on us at last, this program will be needed more than ever as we deal with the new reality of a forever changed world. I have no doubt that our program will eventually come back and thrive

and flourish as it once did, but this is only possible if our doors remain open. As we have nourished and sustained the lives of so many throughout our nearly 50 years of service, now we are asking for your financial sustenance and support to tide us over to those impending days of fiscal solvency. I believe in TELC, what we do, and the difference we make. I ask that you believe in us as well and find a way to aid us at this critical juncture in our history.

Most respectfully submitted,

Paul Philip Fraccalvieri

245 Bennett Ave. # 4D

New York, NY 10040

Testimony from Saaif Alam ,Alternate USS Delegate

My name is Saaif Alam and I attend John Jay College of Criminal Justice and serve as an Alternate University Student Senate Delegate. I want to testify on behalf of adjunct faculty members who have been laid off. I demand for more funding so CUNY can rehire our adjunct faculty that would provide our students quality education. We must demand Governor Cuomo to not cut funding for higher education despite the protest all over the world. Our students need to become career ready once graduating from our CUNY campuses. This is why we need to retain our adjunct faculty members.



University Student Senate
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Website: www.usscuny.org

**TESTIMONY OF ENRIQUE PEÑA-OROPEZA,
QUEENS COLLEGE SENATOR OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE,
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
REGARDING IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF
NEW YORK**

June 10th, 2020

Good morning Councilmembers, fellow students, and everyone else joining this call,

My name is Enrique Peña-Oropeza, I'm a student at Queens College, studying three majors: Political Science, Urban Studies and Latin American Studies. I'm a USS delegate. I'm a Dreamer. And I always like to point out I am a proud New Yorker just like anyone else in this room.

I came to New York City in January 2016 from Lima, Perú; as my parents and I understood that I had no future staying in my homeland. I was looking for that American Dream, whatever that was, just hoping I could one day repay all the sacrifices my parents made so we could all be together here today, in a small apartment in Queens I now consider my home. Since I was in Peru, my parents taught me the value of education, and being an undocumented brown immigrant as bigotry rose so much in this nation, I found hope for me and my community in education. The Peruvian Poet César Vallejo once said, "to know more is to be more free." I didn't understand that quote until I arrived here. It means that, in a school system where black and brown kids are put through the school-to-prison pipeline, where kids that look like me are put in cages like concentration camps in the border, the only chance for our community to rise is through education. That is why I love CUNY so much and have dedicated so much time advocating so it not only stays the way it is, but improves and is invested in. Yet, this same city that has one of the most segregated school systems in the country, where your zip-code still determines if you deserve a quality primary education, or to be scarred for life going to schools with more cops than counselors, we keep disinvesting in the public college system that those same kids, the ones that made it out of underfunded schools, rely on to get that freedom César Vallejo spoke about. I am here, once again, after I don't know how many times, with the same ask, to invest in CUNY.



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About two months ago, all my family got the coronavirus. My dad and I had already lost our jobs since the pandemic started and neither of us qualify for any city, state or federal aid or unemployment status, and by the beginning of April, we were both hospitalized with pneumonia. I don't know how many of you can relate to this, but I assure you it is not comforting to be asked to sign a document as you get into a hospital authorizing them to try to resuscitate you and your dad if things got worse. But I made it out, after a week, and my dad after a month. On top of worrying about issues with the process to clear my immigration status, and calling my dad and the hospital everyday to check his progress, and having to be strong for my mom, who has a brain tumor that has caused her depression for years, I had the responsibility to inquire anywhere possible, about any support to pay for rent and get basic stuff to eat. But during that time, I got an email from CUNY. Not to talk to me about emergency funds I could apply to, since the Chancellor's fund was way too restrictive and just like every person I know, I didn't qualify for it, or the local emergency funds, since they're mostly funded with Student Activity Fees and the State government has a provision that even though I pay those fees, I can't get any of that money. So it wasn't that either. What was it? The last payment due of my tuition, the one that took the last money I had saved, and the same tuition that the Board of Trustees is yet planning to increase again next year. This is no way to live. If it wasn't for the kind support and guidance of elected officials like Councilmember Helen Rosenthal or Assemblymember Catalina Cruz, I don't know what would've happened to me or my family. We probably would've been evicted as the eviction moratorium extension does not cover people like me and my family. Yet, I have friends that are fighting administration today at Queens College as they're being evicted from the dorms in the middle of a pandemic for not being able to make ends meet. I have friends teaching in many CUNY campuses that are amazing in their classes that either already got a non-reappointment letter or are expecting one soon, because CUNY still considers adjuncts as expendable and plans to leave them with no job security and in most cases, as they won't be teaching, they'll lose their health insurance, also in the middle of a pandemic. Having those professors not reappointed also means I will lose some of the classes I enrolled in for the Fall, and yet another barrier for me and any other student



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that won't graduate on time because we can't find the classes we need to fulfill requirements.

The struggles I mention today are not just caused by the pandemic. It is the consequence of a system that doesn't work, but we have continued to push for, for years, and that leaves behind people like me. Undocumented students cannot talk in these hearings for fear of outing themselves when it's open season on us for the federal government, that usually works with local law enforcement to make our lives miserable, yet we are one of the groups that suffer the most and gets the least help. I speak today because I have the responsibility to do so, because I can no longer stand that when a crisis hits, the first cuts are usually on education, while the NYPD, the same law enforcement that criminalizes my peers and I gets a special treatment and a budget that is bigger than the entire budget of the city of Houston, the fourth biggest city in the country. It is not fair that students like me have to keep coming back year after year with the same ask to get the same grins from our electeds with the promise that they'll try their best to change this, yet every year we get the same result. CUNY, the Harvard of the proletariat, my American Dream, is being gutted in front of our eyes and I ask you to do something about it before it's too late. As the ask to defund the NYPD becomes more popular all around the city, I am here to ask the same thing, and to put some of that money back in the communities they've harmed. Back to the children they once handcuffed because "they looked threatening" and that today fight so their own children don't have the same experiences. It's time to fund CUNY, not the police. Invest in education, not our criminalization.

And to all my black comrades, I stand in solidarity with you. Black lives matter.

Thank you.