

CUNY RISING ALLIANCE

CUNY Students' Bill of Rights

Every New Yorker should have access to a free, high-quality public higher education, the surest path to economic opportunity, financial security, and intellectual and personal growth. For a half-million students a year, that path starts at CUNY—The City University of New York.

CUNY students, mostly people of color from low-income families, reside in every borough of the city and come from every corner of the world. They attend CUNY seeking a high-quality, affordable education after graduating from high school or after years of working. CUNY is often the only option for undocumented students. CUNY graduates add significantly to the city's workforce, its culture and civic life, and the economy as business leaders, scientists, teachers, nurses, elected officials, writers, artists and more.

Yet, for all its accomplishments, CUNY, a once free opportunity, is falling far short of its potential because of years of public disinvestment. The decline in public funding per student and increases in tuition are compounded by the rising costs of transportation, food, housing and child care in New York City. Many students are struggling, and these challenges contribute to particularly lower completion rates for low- and middle-income people of color.

CUNY's full-time faculty and staff are overstrained and underpaid, and more than half of CUNY courses are taught by low-wage adjunct faculty hired on a per-course basis. The quality of a CUNY education is threatened because of greater difficulty in retaining full-time faculty and diminished access to instructors in and out of the classroom. This affects the quality of mentorship, retention and success of students. Campus buildings often lack public spaces for students to gather, and too many buildings are deteriorating.

Albany and City Hall must invest in CUNY. Students have a fundamental right to:

Free Public Higher Education

- Public universities should be free for all New Yorkers, through lower costs and increased need-based aid.
- Aid for books, class materials, transportation, food, child care, housing and other costs of attendance should be available to those who need it.

High-Quality Instruction

- Students should receive instruction from expert faculty who are reflective of the cultural composition of the student body.
- Faculty must be fairly compensated and have workloads and class sizes that enable individualized student support.
- Full-time faculty need to teach a majority of courses, and adjuncts should have secure positions and pay parity with their full-time colleagues.

Support to Aid Retention and Completion

- Academic advisers and mental health counselors should have manageable caseloads and sufficient resources.
- Opportunity programs that provide tutoring, guidance and other holistic supports must expand to meet the needs of all who require them.

Safe and Modern Learning Environments in Good Repair

- Critical maintenance projects should be completed quickly to protect everyone's health and safety.
- Maintenance staffing levels should be increased so minor repairs can be made efficiently.
- Facilities should be equipped with state-of-the-art technology that is updated regularly.
- New construction should expand classroom space and course offerings to prevent overcrowding and provide communal spaces for academic, cultural and social activities.

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