



*Testimony*  
OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF  
CONGRESS/CUNY

**EXECUTIVE BUDGET:  
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, FY 2019**

**JOINT HEARING OF THE NY STATE SENATE FINANCE  
COMMITTEE AND THE ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS  
COMMITTEE**

**January 23, 2018**

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## TESTIMONY OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY FY19 EXECUTIVE BUDGET FOR CUNY

### ➤ The Legislature's continued support for CUNY

Good afternoon, Senate Chairpersons Young and LaValle, Assembly Chairpersons Weinstein and Glick. I want to start by expressing the thanks of the 30,000 members of the PSC for the consistent advocacy for CUNY by the Assembly and Senate within the bounds of repeated austerity budgets.

The basic Maintenance of Effort provision you fought for and won in 2011 and made permanent in 2017, while not as expansive as the enhanced MOE bill you passed last year, shielded CUNY senior colleges in this difficult budget year. The provision ensured that the Executive Budget provided \$43.5 million for fringe benefit increases at CUNY in FY 2019, an amount that fills a critical need. We also commend you for passing enhanced MOE legislation last year and in 2015. The enhanced MOE would have ensured public funding for all mandatory cost increases – including energy and collective bargaining. Despite your efforts, the stronger Maintenance of Effort provision is not in place, having been vetoed twice.

We also appreciate the Legislature's effort to raise Community College Base Aid and to increase investments in opportunity programs and other important CUNY initiatives. Once again the Executive Budget fails to include the legislative additions to vital CUNY programs. The PSC urges you to restore legislative funding for ASAP, SEEK, College Discovery and other essential programs you have supported.

CUNY's budget request for FY 2019 called for \$158 million in State funding and new tuition revenue to invest in students' success and completion, but most of the request went unmet in the Executive Budget. After years of underfunding, CUNY needs far more.

- The most immediate step the Legislature can take to begin to restore funding for CUNY this year is to cover the \$59 million "TAP gap" caused by the legal requirement that CUNY provide eligible students with a "TAP waiver credit," covering the difference between the rate of tuition and the maximum TAP award.
- Allocating \$16 million to increase the Base Aid rate for CUNY community colleges to \$3,000 per FTE student should be the next priority.
- A further priority should be additional funding to improve student success rates for CUNY's growing student body by increasing the number of full-time faculty positions and counseling staff and increasing support for adjunct instructors.

The damage to CUNY caused by years of underfunding cannot be repaired, unfortunately, within the limits imposed on legislative additions. The 30,000 members of the PSC—people who work at CUNY

because we believe in CUNY students—call on you to work with legislative leaders and the governor to make these significant investments.

New York State has invested strongly in student *access* to higher education through the Excelsior Scholarship and the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), but has failed to invest sufficiently in student *success*. Access is not meaningful without the resources to succeed. As New York invests more in access, it must also increase investment in the personnel and programs needed to educate CUNY's growing student body so the greater access will be meaningful. The State must invest \$300 million in quality education, support for graduation and greater student success.

- **CUNY is a powerful anti-poverty program. It leads the nation in enabling economic mobility of its graduates. But the University is not reaching its full potential as a resource for New York State because of systematic underfunding. CUNY's potential to transform individual lives and lift communities out of poverty is seriously undercut by the State's failure to provide adequate funding.**

Seven CUNY senior colleges are among the ten public four-year colleges nationally with the greatest success in moving low-income students into the middle class; five CUNY community colleges are among the ten public two-year colleges with the greatest success in moving low-income students into the middle class.<sup>1</sup> CUNY enables almost six times more graduates to leave poverty and earn middle-class incomes than all the Ivy League colleges plus Duke, MIT, Stamford, and the University of Chicago—combined.<sup>2</sup>

As representatives of the faculty and staff, we are proud of CUNY's record of enabling economic mobility. The members of the PSC, together with the students themselves, are responsible for CUNY's success. We have the privilege of working with students whose histories and struggles mean that they bring extraordinary intellectual potential to the classroom. Despite working in substandard conditions and—for 14,000 adjuncts and others—for substandard pay, we do the work every day that allows our students to rise. It is our members who work hundreds of unpaid hours, who give up time for our own research and careers to help students in need, who accept uncompetitive pay because we believe in what we do.

But it's not enough. The profound lack of funding for CUNY from New York State makes it impossible for CUNY to be the resource it should be for the state and its people. The statistics about economic mobility refer to CUNY *graduates*. But the truth is that most CUNY students do not graduate within measured timeframes. A major reason is that the University lacks the resources to help them.

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<sup>1</sup> "Colleges With the Highest Student Mobility Rates, 2014", Chronicle of Higher Education, October 15, 2017. Uses data from "Mobility Report Cards: The Role of Colleges in Intergenerational Mobility", Raj Chetty, Stanford University, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Leonhardt, David, "America's Great Working-Class Colleges" *New York Times*, January 18, 2017.

Forty-five percent of senior college students do not graduate within six years, and 82 percent of CUNY community colleges do not graduate with three years. CUNY has announced the goal of doubling the 3-year rate and increasing by 10 points the 6-year rate. We strongly support those goals. Our students want college degrees. But the goals cannot be achieved without substantial new investments, such as the investments in smaller classes, high-contact advisement and wrap-around services that make ASAP—the Accelerated Studies in Associate programs—so successful.

ASAP is successful because it is highly resourced. ASAP is not a perfect fit for every CUNY student, but it reveals the difference increased investment makes. As of Fall 2015, CUNY reported it spent an extra \$3,700 per FTE student in ASAP.<sup>3</sup> The extra funding supports books and MetroCards, but also smaller classes and advisor-to-student ratios ranging from 60:1 to 80:1. For most CUNY students, the student-to-advisor ratios range from 600:1 to 1,500:1.<sup>4</sup> Students in ASAP have a three-year graduation rate of 53%, as compared to 24% for a comparison groups of other community college students at CUNY.<sup>5</sup>

Imagine how powerful a force for individual students' economic mobility and New York's broader economic and cultural future CUNY would be if all CUNY students received ASAP-level investment. Such an investment is not out of reach in this rich state. New York must break the pattern of reducing CUNY funding if it wants all CUNY students to succeed.

➤ **The FY19 Executive Budget adds \$44 million for increased fringe benefit costs—an important addition—but otherwise continues the pattern of underfunding of CUNY.**

The FY19 Executive Budget continues the strategy of decreasing per-student funding for CUNY. The PSC believes strongly that this strategy hurts CUNY students, diminishes the quality of education, contributes to students' difficulty in graduation, and undermines the progressive vision of the state. New York must have the courage, even in a difficult budget year, to change this strategy. We ask for the Legislature's help in making that change.

We commend the Governor for taking a strong position on the importance of college education for the future of New York State. But that position must be reflected in a final enacted budget that invests public funding in CUNY and SUNY.

State funding for CUNY must be measured per-FTE-student and must be adjusted for inflation. By that measure, direct State support for CUNY senior colleges has declined by 18% since the Great Recession

<sup>3</sup> Improving Student Retention and Graduation: CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, PowerPoint, American Council on Education (ACE) Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, March 15, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Doubling Graduation Rates: Three-Year Effects of CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) for Developmental Education Students, Table 3.1, MDRC, February 2015; See also Degrees of Difficulty, Pg. 8, Center for an Urban Future, December 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Significant Increases in Associate Degree Graduation Rates: CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), march 1, 2017.

of 2008. Using the same measure (per-FTE student and adjusted for inflation), direct State support for CUNY senior colleges has declined by almost 4% since Governor Cuomo took office. The disinvestment in CUNY must not continue, especially at a time when New York State seeks to position itself as a leader in access and quality in higher education. Both will be at risk if additions are not made for FY 2019.

The Executive Budget also relies on another increase in CUNY tuition to increase the CUNY operating budget by \$31.3 million. CUNY senior college tuition will rise this year by \$200, to \$6,730. Senior college tuition has risen by \$1,400 or 27% since Governor Cuomo took office. The PSC does not support continued tuition increases as a substitute for steady public funding.

CUNY's requests for State funding to cover building rentals, increased energy costs, and current collective bargaining agreements have been ignored in the Executive Budget. The gap between the cost of these mandatory needs and the allocated funds comes at the expense of students. CUNY will use tuition revenues to cover these costs and be forced to cannibalize existing programs to fund mandatory needs. In addition, funding requested by CUNY to improve students' college success and completion by hiring faculty and academic advisors was also not included in the Executive Budget. The lack of investment in the Executive Budget combined with enrollment growth will exacerbate per-student disinvestment.

- **The most immediate step the Legislature can take to begin to restore funding for CUNY this year is to cover the "TAP gap." Covering this growing gap in funding would allow CUNY to take important steps to address the crisis in full-time faculty positions, counseling staff and support for adjunct instructors.**

The law requires CUNY provide eligible students with a partial tuition waiver, sometimes referred to as a "TAP waiver credit" or "TAP tuition credits," which covers the difference between the tuition (currently \$6,530 at CUNY senior colleges) and a \$5,000 TAP award limit. The goal of the policy is to shield low-income students from tuition hikes, a goal we support. The tuition waiver does protect many—but not all—low-income students from the effects of tuition hikes. But it also deepens CUNY's underfunding by forcing CUNY to absorb the difference between the \$5,000 TAP award limit and tuition. For example, CUNY would absorb the difference between \$6,530 and \$5,000 or \$1,530 for a student receiving the maximum TAP award and no other funding,

This year, CUNY will absorb \$59 million in TAP tuition waivers. The figure represents lost revenue for CUNY, revenue CUNY would have received if the State funded TAP awards for CUNY students at the same rate as the increases in tuition. As a result of the lost revenue, CUNY is further hampered in addressing the urgent educational needs of the students it enrolls. A permanent structural solution to the "TAP gap" must be found so that the state's public universities are not penalized financially for every student they enroll who receives TAP.

We call on the Legislature to work with the Executive to find a structural solution this year to the TAP gap. CUNY cannot continue to absorb the millions of dollars that should be covered by financial aid, shortchanging student success in the process.

➤ **Increase the Base Aid rate for CUNY community colleges by \$253 per FTE to \$3,000.**

After years of support from the Legislature, Base Aid to community colleges has finally exceeded its 2008 level, and we thank you for your advocacy. But Base Aid has been eroded by years of inflation and rising costs; the effects of years of disinvestment continue to accumulate.

CUNY's budget request calls for a \$250 increase in the Base Aid rate. An increase of \$253 would bring the Base Aid rate to a reasonable sum of \$3,000 and would cost approximately \$16 million.

CUNY's community colleges serve a high-needs population that deserves State support. These colleges provide developmental and remedial courses to students with deficient high school preparation, remedial needs or English-language deficits. They also prepare students for meaningful and important careers, with stable incomes, in healthcare, technology and other fields. And they serve as a gateway to four-year degrees and higher degrees for thousands of students who choose community colleges as their first college experience. Their students are more likely to be people of color, low-income, first-generation students, and students raising children. Students at CUNY's community colleges need and will flourish with increased support.

Year-to-year swings in FTE enrollment and inexact enrollment forecasts have led to substantial fluctuation in the level of State support for community colleges. In turn, this has undermined the fiscal stability necessary for effective planning and greater efficiency. The Legislature should work with the Executive, the universities and the unions to mitigate the hardships caused by community college underfunding and fluctuation in base funding.

➤ **Albany must increase State funding for CUNY to support larger enrollment so the University can improve students' rates of success and completion.**

New York State invests considerably in student access to higher education. But increased access is meaningful only if the students who enroll have a chance of succeeding. CUNY's undergraduate enrollment is up by 40% (77,500) since 2000, the equivalent of the total number of students at Hunter and Baruch Colleges combined. It's as if CUNY had added two colleges.

Thanks in part to the promise of the Excelsior Scholarship, CUNY enrolled its largest-ever freshman class in Fall 2017 (38,372 students). Only 4,700 CUNY students received Excelsior Scholarships in Fall 2017, but many more applied because of the vast appeal of the idea of free college tuition. Applications to CUNY for Fall 2018 are up by 11%; enrollment will grow more in FY2019. But the Excelsior

Scholarship does not provide a single dollar to meet the cost of offering a college education to the students it attracts. Excelsior's promise will be hollow without accompanying operational support.

In addition, the Excelsior Scholarship places serious demands on CUNY and on student recipients. Excelsior requires students to complete 30 credits per year and to stay on track to graduate within two years at community colleges, four years at senior colleges. The penalty for not meeting these requirements is irrevocable loss of the scholarship. CUNY faculty have already contacted the union to express their concern that Excelsior students may not be able to take the courses they need in academic majors such as Chemistry and Accounting that require a tight sequence of courses. Inability to take a required introductory course will mean inability to take the next course in the sequence on time.

All CUNY students should be able to take the courses they need. But access to required courses is not always possible in a resource-starved institution. The requirements of the Excelsior Scholarship just sharpen an existing crisis. CUNY must be funded at a level that allows the University to assure progress to graduation.

The State's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is also structured to encourage timely graduation, though under different rules. Undergraduates receive eight semesters – that is four years – of financial aid to complete a baccalaureate degree, must maintain a 2.0 GPA, and must declare a major after four semesters after which only courses that apply to graduation will be covered by TAP aid. The 106,000 CUNY students who receive TAP as well as the students who receive Excelsior Scholarships face added difficulty in progressing toward graduation because of the chronic underfunding of CUNY. It is unfair to structure financial aid programs so that they require timely progress to graduation and then deny the University the resources needed to make such progress possible.

As New York makes a new investment in college access by adding Excelsior to TAP, it must also make a commensurate investment in quality and student success—without it, the State risks betraying the promise of greater access.

- **If CUNY is to reach its full potential, students must have the resources to enable them to succeed and achieve a college degree. The investments they need include more full-time faculty, fair pay for the adjunct faculty who teach the majority of CUNY courses, and more academic advisement and support.**

### **More full-time faculty**

In 1975, CUNY had 11,500 full-time faculty and 250,000 students. Now CUNY has 7,600 full-time faculty and 274,000 students. CUNY's full-time faculty shortage means oversized classes, less individual attention in the classroom and lost opportunities for mentorship. Students are more likely to succeed and stay on pace to graduate when they have strong relationships with faculty/mentors, but CUNY students are less likely to have a mentor because of the shortage.

CUNY's full-time faculty shortage leads to fewer course offerings. CUNY students are struggling to graduate on time—and to remain eligible for Excelsior and TAP—but New York is not providing the investment necessary to ensure they have access to the courses they need. In CUNY's recent Student Experience Survey, 22% of CUNY students said they could not register for a course needed to graduate and 47% said they could not register for a course required for their major.

Only 47% of CUNY's undergraduate instruction is provided by full-time faculty; at College of Staten Island, only 35% of undergraduate instruction is provided by full-time faculty. In its 2012 Master Plan, CUNY articulated a goal of increasing the percentage of course offerings taught by full-time faculty at CUNY to 70 percent. Achieving this important goal requires 4,000 new full-time faculty. The FY2019 CUNY budget request falls far short of what is needed, proposing to hire 150 new full-time faculty. Even this very modest proposal was not funded in the Executive Budget.

### **Fair pay for adjunct faculty**

In Fall 2000, CUNY employed 7,800 adjunct faculty. In Fall 2016, it employed 14,400 adjuncts. Those numbers reveal the secret of how CUNY has coped with the enormous growth in enrollment since 2000 without a growth in per-student funding: adjuncts.

As per-FTE-student funding went down and the demand for courses went up, CUNY tried to solve the problem by staffing its courses with thousands of adjunct faculty—whom it paid at less than half the rate of full-time faculty. That pattern must end. It is unconscionable for a university to rely for more than half of its core work—teaching—on shamefully underpaid workers. And it is unfair to the adjuncts themselves, to their full-time colleagues, and above all to students to expect underpaid, part-time and contingent faculty to be able to provide the continuity, mentoring and access to research opportunities students need in order to succeed in college.

The PSC, which represents CUNY adjuncts and has worked with the CUNY administration over several rounds of collective bargaining to negotiate important improvements for adjuncts, has made a collective bargaining demand this year to increase the per-course pay for adjuncts to \$7,000, up from about half that amount currently. While we are not asking the Legislature to take a role in collective bargaining, we are alerting you to the crisis in adjunct pay. CUNY urgently needs additional funding to pay adjuncts fairly and move current adjuncts—many of whom have PhDs—onto full-time faculty lines.

The idea that an adjunct is a person with a well-paid full-time job elsewhere who teaches one course for the pleasure of teaching is largely a myth. A growing number of CUNY adjuncts rely on their adjunct teaching for their entire income. Because CUNY and hundreds of universities across the country have sharply decreased their hiring of full-time faculty, graduates from top universities with PhDs often have no choice but underpaid adjunct teaching if they want to work in the fields in which they spent six, seven, eight or more years to master in graduate school. Teaching as many courses as a full-time

Lecturer at CUNY, these adjuncts earn about \$25,000 a year. That is a poverty salary in New York City and a disgraceful salary for an educator in a state that views itself as a model of progressive policy.

CUNY adjuncts do an exceptional job despite their unacceptable pay. They work hundreds of unpaid hours, bring extraordinary dedication to their work, and often go well beyond their required work to assist CUNY students. But the evidence is strong that students do best when they have access to small classes and faculty who receive a salary to work full time. CUNY students can judge how much New York values their education by the way the State treats the professors who teach most of their classes. The State's investment in access to higher education is undercut by its failure to invest in the faculty and staff that make access meaningful.

### **Better academic advisement and support services**

The FY2019 CUNY budget request proposes to hire 100 new academic advisors and to make investments in technology and IT staff that would also aid in student advisement. This very modest proposal was not funded in the Executive Budget.

For most CUNY students, the student-to-advisor ratios range from 600:1 to 1,500:1. CUNY students' progress to graduation can be hindered by financial and academic challenges or family and work obligations. First-generation students and students from underserved high schools often struggle to navigate degree requirements and the transition from high school to college. Mental health and career counseling and tutoring are all also under resourced and overburdened at CUNY. Five hundred additional advisors, counselors and support staff are needed to bring caseloads down to a manageable level so more students can have the support they need to stay on pace to graduate.

### **CUNY Needs \$300 Million in New Investment**

- We recognize that this is a difficult budget year, in part because of the specter of devastating federal budget cuts. But New York State cannot allow its promise of increased college access to become hollow. Support for on-time graduation and student success at CUNY must be prioritized.
- NYS is a rich state; it has the money to fund CUNY. It can fund CUNY adequately if legislators and legislative leaders make it a priority, if the Governor makes a commitment to backing up his important statements on higher education and his Excelsior Scholarship by giving CUNY the resources it needs.

### **\$300 Million**

- **\$59 Million Cover Revenue Lost to Tuition Credit Waivers**
  - Restore the lost revenue CUNY would have received if the State funded TAP awards for CUNY students at the same rate as the increases in tuition.

- **\$30 Million Fund Unmet Mandatory Cost Increases**
  - \$2.6 million for building rentals
  - \$4.2 million for energy costs
  - \$4.6 to maintain new buildings
  - \$8.5 million for contractual salary increases
  - \$9.2 million for current collective bargaining agreements
  
- **\$60 Million Fund Future Collective Bargaining Costs**
  - We support CUNY's Budget Request for \$38 million for future collective bargaining agreements. While this figure does not represent the full cost of the contract proposals made by the union, it is essential that State funding for CUNY include the cost of maintaining decent salaries for its employees.
  - No one goes into teaching, or public service of any kind, to get rich. But CUNY will never be competitive for the best talent if it cannot at least keep pace with inflation in employees' salaries. New York State must not put public institutions in the position of choosing between fair salaries for employees and eating into funds meant for other purposes. Such a policy is self-defeating and ultimately harmful to students' education.
  - Funds for future collective bargaining are especially important this year, as the union seeks to work with CUNY management on reaching a fair salary for adjuncts. The solution to the unacceptably low pay for adjuncts must be, in its final form, a budgetary solution, and Albany should start funding that solution now.
  - Collective bargaining funds are crucial this year also because the University and the PSC reached a major agreement in December on increasing the time full-time faculty will have to devote to individual work with students, and that agreement should be fully funded. By reconfiguring the full-time faculty workload, the agreement frees up time for the essential work of student mentoring, guidance and support, as well as other academic work. We expect it to produce important results in terms of student success. It should be fully funded.
  
- **\$80 million Fund 1,000 Additional Full-time Faculty**
  - CUNY is short 4,000 full-time faculty; 1,000 new lines would begin to close the gap.
  - Qualified adjunct faculty could be moved to full-time positions.
  - The racial, ethnic and gender diversity of the CUNY professoriate need to be improved.
  - Graduation rates and the rate of on-time graduation at CUNY need to be improved.
  
- **\$34 Million Fund 500 Additional Academic Advisors and Student Support Staff**
  - With student to adviser ratios at some colleges ranging from 600:1 to 1,500:1, CUNY needs a substantial increase in the number of staff advisors.

- **\$16 Million Increase Base Aid to Community Colleges by \$253 per FTE**
  - Legislative investments have helped restore Base Aid, but it has been eroded by years of inflation and rising costs.
  - \$253 would bring the Base Aid to a reasonable sum of \$3,000 per FTE
  
- **\$20 Million Restore Legislative Investments & Increase Support of Labor Studies**
  - \$4.9 million for SEEK and College Discovery, CUNY's opportunity programs;
  - \$2.5 million for CUNY's celebrated Accelerated Study in Associate Programs initiative;
  - \$900,000 for campus childcare centers
  - \$250,000 for the CUNY Pipeline Program to diversify doctoral education
  - \$50,000 for the Community Legal Resource Network
  - \$200,000 for CUNY in the Heights
  - \$4.6 million for STEP and CSTEP, the Science and Technology Entry Programs
  
- \$2.6 million for the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies.
  - The Executive Budget adds \$1.5 million to support the transition of the Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies to the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies. But this is far less than the \$4.1 million requested by CUNY, which we strongly support. The PSC urges the legislature to continue its ongoing support for labor studies at CUNY by restoring last year's \$1.5 million investment and adding an additional \$1.1 million. \$2.6 million from the Legislature combined with the Executive's \$1.5 million investment will bring State support for the new labor school up to the requested \$4.1 million.

### **Other Initiatives**

#### **Expand and Repair CUNY's Infrastructure**

- Enrollment at CUNY has increased 40% since 2000. During this period, college facilities have not been expanded and improved to adequately accommodate CUNY's enlarged student body.
- Lack of classroom space and modern science and computer labs are a problem for students and faculty, especially in preparing students for a 21<sup>st</sup> century job market.
- The declining physical structure of buildings and delayed maintenance are the most visible evidence of CUNY's long-term underfunding.
- CUNY's request for \$580 million for Critical Maintenance at the Senior Colleges and \$79 million for the State share of Critical Maintenance at the community colleges is not met in the Executive Budget.
- The Executive Budget provides a meager \$284 million and 48.5 million for senior and community colleges, respectively to cover years of neglect of CUNY's physical structure.

**Pass the NYS DREAM Act**

- PSC is a strong supporter of the NYS DREAM Act. We urge the Governor and the Legislature to make this the year it passes. Few things would send a stronger message about New York values.
- For a modest investment, New York State could enable thousands of courageous students, brought to the United States as infants or children, to have a real shot at a college education.
- As college faculty and staff, we see daily their courage, their passion for education, their determination to open doors for the next generation that were closed to them.
- At a time when the federal government is directly threatening immigrants, New York must take a bold stand.

**Improve TAP for Part-time Students**

- 82,000 undergraduate CUNY students attend part-time.
- Many of the part-time students have family and work obligations that do not allow them to attend CUNY full-time.
- Current law requires a student to attend full-time for a year before they can be eligible for TAP awards for part-time study. Almost no part-time CUNY students clear this hurdle.
- Low-income, part-time students should have real access to financial aid via the Tuition Assistance Program.

**PSC Support's CUNY's Request for the City to Increase Support of Senior Colleges**

- New York City's \$32 million investment to support associate programs at CUNY Comprehensive Colleges has remained flat for decades.
- CUNY has asked the City to increase this funding by \$29 million to account for inflation. The PSC supports the request. It is important that City support also be increased to account for inflation.