

Teach CUNY History Lesson Plan

Some background on CUNY: Since its founding in 1961, CUNY's target population has generally been those excluded from or unable to afford private universities. The idea was that CUNY should offer a high quality, tuition-free education to the poor, the working classes and immigrants; moreover, that it should be open to all those demanding entrance, regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, etc. Put another way, all high school graduates in New York City were to be assured of the possibility of a higher education, despite possible inadequacies of preparation – what we call “open admissions.”

Some key dates:

1926: The New York State legislature created the Board of Higher Education of the City of New York to better integrate and coordinate the city's institutions of higher learning.

1961: The City University of New York was formally created to integrate these institutions, together with a new graduate school.

1975: In order to deal with the city's fiscal crisis, tuition was imposed for the first time – setting a precedent?

1979: By this date, the Board of Higher Education had become the Board of Trustees of CUNY.

Questions:

What is the purpose of public higher education? Does CUNY fulfill this purpose?

Whose interests does CUNY serve? Whose interests should it serve?

How does increased tuition impact your learning or your life? Why should tuition be free?

Do the salaries and working conditions of the people who work at the university affect students who attend the university?

The Maintenance of Effort Bill (MOE): In 2011, the State enacted five years of tuition hikes at CUNY and SUNY. Lawmakers said the increases would go toward improvements to the education system, such as the hiring of additional faculty and staff and other educational enhancements. Instead, increased tuition revenues were diverted to stopgap measures to address problems presented by crumbling buildings and general operating costs. The current State budget leaves CUNY with \$63 million in unfunded mandatory costs as a consequence.

This past summer, through various lobby efforts, the State legislature passed a bill—the Maintenance of Effort (MOE)—that would guarantee funding for costs at CUNY and SUNY that are deemed mandatory, including such collective bargaining costs as salary and benefit increases. If signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo, the law would begin to apply for fiscal year 2016-2017, which begins in April of next year.

While the MOE bill would guarantee future funding for CUNY, the union is working on a separate proposal that would cover retroactive salary increases.

[DISCUSS THE LACK OF A CONTRACT AND NO SALARY INCREASE
AND HOW IT IMPACTS YOU, YOUR COLLEAGUES, AND STUDENTS.]

The Ask: The governor has yet to take a position regarding the MOE bill. The Professional Staff Congress (PSC – the union that represents faculty and staff at CUNY), United University Professions (UUP – the union representing SUNY employees) and the NY Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG, a student-directed research and advocacy group) plan to send 100,000 postcards to make the governor aware of the need to fund CUNY & SUNY.

[INVITE STUDENTS TO TAKE ACTION TO FUND CUNY
BY SIGNING POSTCARDS TO THE GOVERNOR.]

[Signed postcards should be returned to the PSC chapter officer from whom you received them. Questions? Contact Joyce Moorman, chapter chairperson, at jmoorman@bmcc.cuny.edu.]