

**Testimony of Janice Cline and Charles Coleman
Cultural Diversity Program, York College
Before the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York**

Concerning the Pathways Initiative

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My name is Charles Coleman. I'm an associate professor at York College. This testimony about the detrimental effect of Pathways is by former coordinators of the Cultural Diversity Program, Janice Cline and myself.

York students come from over 100 countries. York prides itself on our commitment to encouraging students' understanding of and engagement with people of different ethnic backgrounds. On the National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE], York freshmen rated York higher than any other CUNY college, or CUNY peer institution in satisfaction on issues having to do with diversity. We believe a large reason for this success is that every freshman is required to take a three-credit, four-hour Gen Ed course: Understanding Cultural Diversity 101. York students, in a further study, rated Understanding Cultural Diversity 101 highly, as giving them the skills they need to understand and work with people of diverse backgrounds. Most said it should continue as a Gen Ed requirement. But under Pathways, it won't.

At best, it will be one of many Gen Ed courses in the "Flexible Core" from which students can choose. For most freshmen, the unique, first-hand cultural understanding that York has provided our diverse student body will be lost. Prejudices will go unopposed—and likely make for a recurrence of tensions that led to the adoption of the course many years ago.

Pathways will not only end cultural diversity as a required study at York, it will also lessen the value of the Understanding Cultural Diversity course itself for those elect to take it. Pathways require that the course be reduced from a three-credit, four-hour interactive course to a three-hour course without a lab. This loss of 15 hours every semester for face-to-face application of the principles studied in the Understanding Cultural Diversity course will seriously limit its ability to open minds and change attitudes. We need that class time for students to interact, to confront their own ethnocentrism, and to learn first-hand about understanding and working with people with different values. It takes time and a careful approach to eradicate cultural misunderstandings—misunderstandings that can lead to much misery, including campus violence.

We have spent countless hours trying to comply with Pathways despite the fact that we object to this approach to streamlining CUNY at the expense of students. Pathways was not carefully thought through before it was imposed on faculty. We don't want our students subjected to something that undercuts the good education CUNY currently provides.