

Good Evening.

I am Susan Di Raimo. I teach in the English Department at Lehman College and City College.

I have been teaching at Lehman College since 1995. Every semester my students at Lehman College talk about the economic hardships they face.

On November 20, 2022 I was surprised to read an article in The New York Times about a Lehman College student. The article read:

For Samuel Polanco Jr., graduating from Lehman College in the Bronx was a matter of shouldering a family legacy.

His parents, Samuel Polanco and Ada Gomez Polanco, had met there as students in 1991. But the financial strain of attending the school, which then cost \$725 per semester for in-state students, caused both to withdraw in 1994

Three decades later their four sons are determined to finish what their parents started

“Each of us had this, not a vendetta, but this personal chip on our shoulders to get back to specifically Lehman and finish, for the family,” the younger Samuel Polanco, 25, said'

Mr. Polanco graduated in 2020 with a major in media and communication studies and a minor in nutrition. His older brother graduated in 2019 and now works at a nonprofit, and his younger brothers, both Lehman sophomores, are studying communications and business. Having a bachelor’s degree, Mr. Polanco said, “opens doors.”

Lehman College, part of the City University of New York system, now costs roughly \$3,500 per semester for in-state students, more than four times what it cost when Mr. Polanco’s parents attended.

CUNY needs to be free again. CUNY tuition should not cause students to drop out.

Even with the help of financial aid and scholarships, Mr. Polanco said managing the cost of attendance was a “huge” part of his college experience. He paused, then said it again: “Huge.”

Many of you went to CUNY for Free. Make CUNY Free again. You have the power to do it.

I would also like to talk about the Low Wages Paid to Adjunct Faculty. Right Now The New School Adjuncts are on strike for higher wages.

CUNY Adjuncts must be paid Equal Pay for Equal Work.

Today many Adjunct Faculty are striking for better pay and benefits.

Our Contract ends in February and the new contract must have Equal Pay for Equal Work.

An Adjunct teaching 4 courses each semester earns 40,000 a year compared to Fulltime pay for the same teaching load is 80,000 dollars. There are currently 12,000 Adjuncts that are underpaid. We are the majority of teaching faculty.

This injustice needs to end.