

CUNY BOT Hearing October 16, 2023

My name is Kevin Adams. I am a Higher Education Officer at Medgar Evers College and a delegate in the Professional Staff Congress.

Since the return to campus in August 2021, I, like many of my colleagues and the students we serve, have been disappointed in the working conditions we have been plagued with enduring at Medgar Evers College. Upon our immediate return, the College failed to meet the promised health and safety protocols prescribed by the University and campus-leadership. On August 31, 2021, I joined over two dozen faculty and staff members who rallied outside Medgar Evers College to call out what we saw as unsanitary conditions at the school.

Hurricanes Henri and Ida havocked the campus library – compounding what was already a lowly situation. Their impact forced a six-month closure of the library and water damage to other parts of the campus’s footprint. Two years later, the individuals who access the library have dealt with constant mold and mildew issues. In addition to the environmental slights, those who have raised these concerns have been gaslit and stigmatized against when questioning the superficial remediations. Two weeks ago, we formally raised concerns about these persistent issues to the administration, only to be met with a retort about the College’s inability to act appropriately.

Buildings, classrooms, and libraries — education infrastructure — are crucial elements to learning environments. High-quality infrastructure supports student learning outcomes, improves instruction, and reduces dropout rates.

Per cuny.edu, Dr. Mohamed Attalla, Vice Chancellor of Facilities Planning, states, “design for capital renewal projects will include new criteria to improve the indoor quality for our buildings and the latest health information to insure the health and safety of the CUNY community.”

- I ask all of you today, where are the renewal and assurances for the faculty, staff, and students at Medgar Evers College?

Per CUNY Space Usage Statistics for Fall 2021, out of the senior colleges — excluding the professional schools, Medgar Evers College ranked last in Net Assignable Square Foot Distribution. Conversely, Medgar Evers College serves some of the most needy and vulnerable students in our university system.

Coupled with mold and moisture-ridden spaces, bed bug and rodent issues, and a capital footprint in desperate need of an upgrade, this further disadvantages the students that Medgar faculty and staff serve.

From its inception, the lack of a proper investment in Medgar Evers College has been well-documented. Let's change that paradigm. CUNY cannot truly live up to its mission without addressing these issues in earnest. Medgar Evers College cannot thrive when decisions about education infrastructure investments chronically have been made under uncoordinated and decentralized models, driven by ad hoc needs and limited funding availability, rather than a strategic approach that addresses both the short-term and long-term needs.

Let's commit to our young leaders at Medgar Evers College to ensure that they have every opportunity to flourish.

Thank you very much.