

Professional Staff Congress/CUNY Testimony On the New York City Council Fiscal Year 2008  
Preliminary Budget for the City University of New York  
City Council Higher Education Committee  
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Delivered by

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Good afternoon, Chairperson Barron and members of the City Council Higher Education Committee.

You have always been strong advocates for New Yorkers' right to access to quality public higher education. In the past few years, you have been vigilant in seeing to it that CUNY's budget has made gains and recovered some of the ground lost in prior years.

In this, the year of education funding, we need the City Council to once again demonstrate that it has a vision of a strong and vibrant City University of New York; a vision of public higher education that will provide a quality education, one that will maintain access for all New Yorkers, a vision that recognizes CUNY is a critical economic resource for the city, and one that provides the programmatic support for students once they are in attendance. Since this vision is yet to be fully realized, the time is now to invest in CUNY.

While we are grateful for your past support and thank you for your continuing willingness to provide the resources to educate the "children of the whole people," our collective work is not done.

- § In real dollars, City funding for CUNY is still 17% lower than it was in 1990 while CUNY student enrollment is at a 30 year high.
- § More than half of our courses in the community colleges are still taught by highly exploited adjuncts, who have little time to meet with students.
- § Progress on diversity hiring of faculty has been too slow, in large measure because of our non-competitive salaries. This leaves CUNY with a faculty that is 35% Black, Latino, Hispanic, Asian and Native American and a student population that is 72% students of color.
- § In 1975, there were 5000 more full-time faculty than there are today.

As a result of these factors, too many of our students do not get the counseling and mentoring services they need to stay in school and succeed.

Despite this continuing need, the Mayor's preliminary Operating Budget for CUNY does not permit the University to move forward. The Mayor's budget does not fully cover operating costs and financial aid needs. Uncorrected, CUNY and its students will suffer and we will move backwards rather than continue to repair the years of underfunding.

The PSC urges the City Council to restore needed dollars to the Mayor's budget and to continue its historic commitment to invest in the economic, cultural, and intellectual well-being of New Yorkers by approving a net increase in funding for CUNY.

**Restore Programmatic Funding:** The Mayor's Preliminary Operating Budget cuts vital programs like

the Black Male Initiative, the Citizen and Immigration Project, and Science, Math and Nursing Scholarships. The historic programs initiated by the City Council - the Vallone Scholars and Safety Net Financial Assistance - are cut. Additional dollars provided through City Council member items have also been cut. Taken together, these programmatic reductions total **\$27.4 million**. The PSC requests that the City Council restore these necessary programmatic initiatives.

**Fund All Mandatory Costs:** The Mayor's Preliminary Budget also failed to fund **\$25.1 million** in operating aid for energy and fringe benefits. The PSC supports CUNY's request for funding of these items.

**Fully Fund With Public Dollars CUNY's Tuition Increase Request:** CUNY's original funding request for the community colleges included revenue from tuition increases. The PSC opposes these tuition increases and we are pleased that Governor Spitzer has rejected tuition increases as a funding mechanism in his Fiscal Year 2008 budget request. Without the tuition increases for the Community Colleges, however, there is a gap in fully funding CUNY's request. Therefore, the PSC requests that the City Council fully fund CUNY's budget request by providing an additional **\$6.4 million**.

The Mayor's Preliminary Budget proposes \$17 million in funding for some new initiatives and budget items. The PSC supports these initiatives, but these increases should not come at the expense of existing and planned programs.

**Taken together, fully funding CUNY's operating budget request will require \$58.9 million above the Mayor's Preliminary Budget Request.**

**The PSC Proposes The City Council Scholars and Diversity Program:** The PSC requests a programmatic investment that would provide funds for 200 additional faculty and professional staff for the community colleges with an emphasis on diversity hiring, mentoring students, and hiring needed faculty counselors. This new initiative would cost **\$12 million**.

**Fully Fund CUNY's Capital Request:** Finally, the PSC supports CUNY's Capital Budget request which will require \$39 million more than proposed in the Mayor's Preliminary Budget. These additional funds will provide matching dollars to the State's share for Fiterman Hall at BMCC and construction at Medgar Evers.

Now that there is a renewed effort to fund K-12 education and provide New York City children with resources needed to get a quality education, it is important to recognize that a 21st Century education system means K-post grad. We know that a high school diploma is not enough to advance one into the middle class. Higher education is a necessity for personal advancement and investment in public higher education is a necessity for societal advancement. The City Council has stood by CUNY in leaner times and we believe the time is now to make the investments that will continue CUNY's journey on the road to becoming a first class university able to serve all the people of New York City.