

Testimony of The Professional Staff Congress/CUNY  
Before the  
CUNY Board of Trustees on the Fiscal Year 2008 CUNY Budget Request  
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Delivered by  
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Good afternoon, Chairperson Schmidt, members of the Board of Trustees, Chancellor Goldstein, Vice Chancellor Malave and colleagues. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the 20,000 CUNY instructional staff represented by the Professional Staff Congress.

An Opportunity to Change Course

The proposed 2007-08 CUNY Budget is presented at a time when both New York City and State are experiencing budget surpluses. It is also a time of political change and possibility. It is the time, we believe, to send a message about the realistic needs of CUNY, and the city and state funding effort that will be required to truly make CUNY into a great university.

This year's CUNY Budget Request is being offered as the incoming Spitzer administration is focused on the important role of higher education in promoting opportunity for New Yorkers and on the disparate treatment of New York City in funding education. A substantial net increase in State funding for CUNY is critical to achieving positive outcomes on both objectives.

The unequal funding of educational institutions in New York State does not stop with the K-12 system. In 2003, CUNY Senior Colleges were only funded at *fifty-five percent* of SUNY state-operated colleges when compared on a full-time-equivalent student basis (FTE). Worse still, this is down from *eighty-one percent* in 1990.

In Fall 2005, CUNY undergraduate students are seventy-two percent non-white and sixty-one percent female. Thirty-seven percent attend part-time, forty-eight percent work more than twenty hours per week, and fifty-nine percent come from households making less than \$30,000 per year. These students work hard and, along with all other New York State residents, they deserve an equal opportunity to attend a well-funded public university. When 72% of CUNY students are people of color, compared to only 19% at SUNY, it is hard to imagine that the CUNY-SUNY funding gap doesn't have something to do with race. Bridging the gap with state and city funds should be a shared priority.

Since 1990, CUNY has experienced a 25% decline in State support and an 18.4% decline in City support, in inflation-adjusted dollars. In 1990, tuition as a percentage of the total budget was 19.9%; it stands at almost double that today. During this same period, enrollment increased 10%, so public funding is being spread over more students—in other words, fewer government dollars per FTE student.

## The 2007-2008 CUNY Budget Request: An Opportunity Missed

This year presents a political opportunity to break the cycle of poverty budgets and provide the needed funding for CUNY. The PSC believes this is the year to call on the city and state to make a bold move to correct the inequitable funding of The City University of New York.

“The 2007-2008 Budget Request As Approved by the Board of Trustees’ Committee on Fiscal Affairs” (November 7, 2006) proposes a very modest increase in state and city operating funds over the FY 2007 base budget. The requested increases of 7.7% in state funds and 6.2% in city funds will do little to reverse the historic public de-funding of CUNY and the inequality associated with past trends. Most of the requested increases are to cover mandatory cost increases. The CUNY budget request only asks for an additional 1.2% in state funding for programmatic changes. This proposed budget request does not begin to repair the real public disinvestment in CUNY.

## The CUNY Compact Sends the Wrong Message

The PSC joins the Chancellor and the Board in taking great pride in the accomplishments of CUNY students and the achievements of CUNY’s faculty and professional staff. What often goes unsaid in the celebratory remarks, however, is that—year after year—students, faculty and staff are doing more with less. Work at CUNY is characterized by inadequate resources: not enough full-time instructional staff—faculty, counselors, or professional staff—to carry out the needed work with students; not enough office space, classroom space, working escalators, lab equipment or supplies to do our work effectively; not enough funds for travel to conferences, to engage in research, or advise students. The overriding experience of those of us who work and go to school at CUNY is that we are making heroic efforts on a daily basis to keep the enterprise of public higher education functioning.

The proposed “Compact” of the CUNY Budget Request sends the false message that CUNY can improve with only a marginal new investment of public dollars. The “Compact” proposes that only 20% of the cost of new programs be funded with public money, that the rest of the funding will come from tuition and enrollment increases, productivity and philanthropy. This approach sends a message to those of us making the heroic efforts year after year that the University is not really serious about much-needed new programs. Furthermore, the “Compact” sends a false message to the public that minor changes at the margin will allow CUNY to deliver a quality education. If necessary programmatic changes must come, in major part, from tuition and enrollment increases, then many current students will be priced out of a CUNY education.

There is no substitute for public funding. The “Compact” proposed by the University Administration is essentially an accommodation to the culture of fiscal scarcity for public institutions and for higher education in particular. It is a proposal to find new sources of revenue and savings, tacitly accepting that state and city funding levels will not significantly improve.

The PSC's position is that—instead of being forced to seek “efficiencies” and alternative revenue sources—CUNY should be adequately funded by government. For fiscal 2008:

- *all new programmatic requests should be funded 100% by the city and state;*
- *community college FTE funding should be increased by \$250/FTE (instead of the proposed \$125/FTE).*

### The Budget Request Should Forthrightly Address the Academic Staffing Crisis at CUNY

The PSC recommends three specific additional programmatic initiatives for fiscal 2008:

- *1) an additional allocation of \$5.4 million for an additional 100 lines plus required support positions over and above the University's request for 200 new full-time positions plus support—for a total request of \$16 million, and*
  - *2) an additional \$9 million for 500 lines to convert long-serving adjuncts to full-time positions*
- for a total of \$25 million—800 new full-time lines.*

During the past several years, hundreds of new full-time faculty have been hired at CUNY, but, because of faculty retirements and increased enrollment, the desired structural change has not occurred. (The number of part-timers has also risen, reaching 8,500 in Fall 2005.) In the last three years, student enrollment at CUNY has increased by the equivalent of two new colleges—added without the additional funding that two colleges need. Therefore, despite the hiring, the University has been losing ground in its goal to achieve 70% of courses taught by full-time faculty.

From Fall 2002 to Fall 2004, the percentage of undergraduate hours of instruction by full-time faculty fell in CUNY's seven senior colleges from 50.4% to 48.5%; in the four comprehensive colleges from 45.6% to 43.4%, and only in the six community colleges was there an increase, from 42.2% to 49.7%. Overall, in Fall 2004, 47.7% of undergraduate instructional hours were taught by full-time faculty.

The PSC has been a strong voice in the campaign for additional full-time faculty lines, while also demanding better support for our part-time colleagues (e.g. pay parity), and we repeat that call this year. The PSC's proposal for 300 new full-time lines and 500 conversion full-time lines for long-serving adjuncts provides the opportunity to accomplish both goals at once. For a reasonable investment by the city and state of approximately \$25 million, CUNY will be able to move more quickly to the seventy percent goal. Three hundred lines open to competitive searches will replenish the faculty with new colleagues bringing the latest in new research and energy.

Among CUNY's 8,500 teaching adjuncts, many have been teaching for years; providing a great service to our students and the University. They excel at their profession and provide a rich and valuable learning environment for our students. Since adjuncts teach half the undergraduate courses at CUNY, the University could not operate without them. They are, however, terribly underpaid and not adequately recognized for their valuable service. They lack the security and dignity of a full-time job, and our students are cheated by not getting their full attention since adjuncts are often torn between competing jobs at different universities. The PSC proposal includes the savings from replacing the cost of current courses taught by adjuncts, illustrating that structural change is affordable.

- ***3) an appropriation to CUNY of \$1.5 million to support an initiative to increase the racial, ethnic and gender diversity of the faculty and professional staff.***

Although CUNY includes some nationally known scholars in underrepresented categories, the potential for instructional staff diversity has not nearly been reached. PSC members know the active support needed to hire significant numbers of people in underrepresented categories. \$1.5 million to support successful hiring of minority faculty would allow faculty to travel to recruit scholars of color, provide for incentives in the form of research support, and support for essential mentoring. As a major university with the most racially diverse student body in the country, CUNY has a special opportunity and responsibility to go beyond mere compliance with affirmative action guidelines. The City University should be a national leader in reversing institutionalized racism and providing a model to the country of the intellectual richness of a faculty as diverse as our student body.

### Conclusion

Education is about the future; it is intrinsically an expression of hope. We, in the PSC, believe this year presents an opportunity to push higher education and CUNY to the forefront of the public agenda. We know that dollar for dollar, no investment goes further than funds for higher education. Every dollar invested by the city and state in CUNY results in 24 extra dollars contributed to the tax base.

Let's work together and set our sights high. Let's work together to make this year the year of public education funding for both K-12 and higher education.