



**TESTIMONY OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF  
CONGRESS/CUNY**

**THE IMPACT OF THE 2006-07 STATE BUDGET ON  
NEW YORK'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS**

New York State Assembly Standing Committee on  
Higher Education  
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*Submitted by Dr. Barbara Bowen, President,  
PSC/CUNY*

Good afternoon, Chairman and Majority Leader Canestrari, distinguished members of the Assembly Committee on Higher Education, fellow faculty, staff and students. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the 20,000 CUNY faculty and professional staff represented by the Professional Staff Congress. I am delighted to be joined by my colleagues from UUP and NYSUT, and by the PSC's new legislative representative, Dr. Steve London. Later this afternoon you will hear from several other members of the CUNY faculty and staff.

Before turning to the issue of CUNY, let me add my congratulations to Assemblyman Canestrari on his election as Majority Leader. It is a pleasure for us to see your leadership recognized by your colleagues.

Last year the Legislature showed real leadership in rejecting the Governor's proposed budget cuts for public higher education and overriding his attempt to veto higher education funding. You also restored the proposed cut of \$189.8 million in TAP support and—perhaps most significant—provided the additional funds without resorting to another tuition increase. Rejecting CUNY's proposal to increase tuition by \$130, the Legislature responded to the position taken by the PSC, student groups and voters that increasing tuition is not the way to make up the public funding deficit.

Your path-breaking actions last year suggest a direction for the years ahead. The answer to the impoverishment of CUNY is not ever-increasing tuition; it is restoration of public funds.

**Incremental Increases Don't Work**

What is the impact of the 2006-07 budget on CUNY? The PSC joins the CUNY Chancellor in celebrating the University's accomplishments in the current year—after all, it is our members, the CUNY faculty and staff, who have made those accomplishments possible. But we have done so in spite of, not because of, the level of support we are provided.

The lesson of the current fiscal year budget is that incremental increases don't work. Twenty years of underfunding cannot be remedied by modest increases in the operating budget. The PSC recognizes the political courage it took last year to resist a tuition increase and provide additional CUNY funding, and we thank you. But the CUNY funding deficit has been twenty years in the making. It stands to reason that it cannot be overcome with incremental changes. That's why the PSC differs with Chancellor Goldstein's "CUNY Compact," the proposal for restoring CUNY through a mixture of modest increases in public funds, significant increases in tuition revenue, and relatively small sums raised by philanthropy and cost-savings. We join CUNY in requesting funding for mandatory increases and additional operating support. But funding at this level is not enough. The "CUNY Compact" offers the misleading suggestion that the University can be restored to greatness without major public investment. The "Compact" depends on the State and City for mandatory increases and limits programmatic increases at CUNY largely to what can be funded by increased tuition and enrollment. That is not a sound basis for restoring a university, especially one that has been stripped bare by years of planned neglect. And it is certainly not a sound basis for restoring a university built on the premise of access.

I wish I could sit here and say that the 2006-07 budget has lifted CUNY out of crisis mode. I know this Committee wants to see a vibrant, thriving City University. But the level of funding provided in 2006-07, which in itself represented an increase over previous years, was simply not enough to allow for significant hiring of new full-time faculty, or to guarantee student access, or to end the abusive system of adjunct labor, or to fund basic provisions like childcare and graduate student health insurance that are not so basic at CUNY. The current CUNY budget offers a powerful lesson, precisely because it *does* represent an increase: CUNY is still poor—that is the overwhelming daily experience of everyone who works or studies there, as you will hear from my colleagues later in the day. I applaud the Committee for raising the question of the impact of the current year's budget. The most important thing we can learn from the fiscal experience of 2006-07 is that a new level of investment is needed.

### **A Net Increase of Only 69 Full-Time Faculty**

In 1975, when CUNY enrollment was close to its current level, CUNY employed 11,268 full-time faculty. By 1996 that number had dropped to 5,457: the University had lost *more than half* of its full-time faculty. Since the year 2000, the total number of full-time faculty has begun to grow, particularly because of new positions funded by tuition increases in the community colleges. But with only marginal increases in public funds, the total has risen just 12% since 2000. The 2006-07 budget, even with an increase, allowed for a net addition of *just 69 full-time faculty*.

What did rise was the number of part-time faculty. In the same period, between 2000 and 2006, the number of part-time faculty at CUNY rose by 1,577, for an increase of 25%. The number of part-time faculty has increased at twice the rate of full-time faculty. As a result, the years since 2000 have seen a *decline* in the ratio of full-time to part-time CUNY faculty. CUNY enrollment has grown by 25,000 just since the year 2000. That's the equivalent of two whole colleges. Without funds to hire adequate numbers of full-time faculty, CUNY has relied on a growing army of adjuncts. No other public institution would tolerate a staffing situation where more than half of its professionals were underpaid, under-supported part-timers.

Clearly, the crisis in full-time faculty, with its huge impact on student achievement, is not being solved by the current approach. CUNY students, many of whom already overcome tremendous odds just to be in the classroom, should not have to rely on faculty without offices in which to meet them, without computers on which to prepare their classes, without time to provide the one-on-one attention that is the essential component of college education. How can we expect our students to be competitive with other students nationwide if their education is undermined from the start?

Nor does the current level of funding allow for the provision of basic needs such as health insurance for graduate students, doctoral student tuition waivers, childcare facilities for faculty and staff, travel money for research, support for new library books or lab equipment. As you will hear later today, a significant number of the full-time faculty CUNY has been able to hire are actively seeking to leave. We are in danger of losing exactly the young faculty CUNY has just added, as well as some of our most distinguished senior colleagues. They are alienated by the effort of finding housing in New York City on salaries that compare unfavorably with those at other universities, without employer-provided childcare or even maternity leave. All of these are “luxuries” in the impoverished world of CUNY.

As always, the deepest impact is on our students. The current approach to CUNY funding, despite the exceptional work of the Legislature last year, essentially maintains the under-funded status quo; it will not transform an institution where too many students are forced to study in over-crowded classes, with too few full-time faculty and glaringly inadequate physical facilities. CUNY is the only college within economic reach for thousands of working people in New York. It is a lifeline for the city. And CUNY has by far the state’s largest enrollment of students of color and students from new immigrant families. The message telegraphed to our students every time they walk into a decrepit building or try to work with lab equipment that is twenty years out of date is that their education is not important; their future does not matter. The PSC believes it is time for a different message—especially now, as New York prepares for an unprecedented expansion of educational opportunity.

This generation of lawmakers did not create the problem at CUNY, but this generation must solve it. By the next generation, it will be too late. If New York wants what Governor Spitzer has called for—the best higher education system in America—then New York will have to fund it.

### **“The Debate Will No Longer Be About Money”**

There was a remarkable moment in Governor Spitzer’s State of the State address, where he announced a sea-change, fifteen years in the making, in New York’s approach to K-12 education: “The debate will no longer be about money.”

In higher education, the debate is still very much about money. The PSC calls on the Legislature and the Governor to change that: develop an equally visionary approach to higher education. Take the issue of money out of the debate and then watch how we build a university that lives up to CUNY’s mandate to educate “the children of the people, the children of the whole people.” There is not one person on the faculty and staff of CUNY who does not long for that opportunity.

This is the strategic moment to renew the City University of New York. We are at a turning-point in the educational history of our state; with the resolution of the Campaign for Fiscal

Equity lawsuit, New York has an unprecedented opportunity to renew CUNY. While the funds needed to enhance opportunity in the public schools are in the billions of dollars a year, an investment on a much smaller scale would remake the City University of New York. Because of CUNY's historic importance to the project of public education, the renewal of CUNY would also be a landmark educational achievement nationwide. Dramatic under-funding of education cannot be solved by incremental increases. On behalf of the CUNY faculty and staff, I ask you to lead the state to a dramatic re-investment in CUNY.