

**TESTIMONY OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY  
TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE AND  
ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE  
ON THE PROPOSED 2007-08 EXECUTIVE BUDGET FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

*DELIVERED BY DR. BARBARA BOWEN, PRESIDENT*

Good afternoon, Senator Johnson, Assemblyman Farrell, honorable members of the Legislature, colleagues and members of the public. As president of the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, I thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today and to represent the 20,000 college faculty and professional staff at the City University of New York. I am honored to be joined by my colleagues from NYSUT and UUP.

We start from a different place this year, not only because we have a different governor, but because you, the Legislature, heard our message. In your budget last year, you demonstrated that you understood the importance of public higher education, you registered that public higher education in New York has historically been underfunded, and you were willing to invest political capital in starting to make up that deficit. Thank you. It's not often that a pattern of funding really begins to change. Rejecting the notion that public higher education can be restored through tuition increases, you refused the requests from the Governor and from CUNY for increased tuition. Instead you provided millions of dollars in increased operating aid to CUNY, raised FTE funding for the community colleges by \$175 and restored full funding to the TAP.

**Build on This Year's Higher Platform**

In a year of cuts in student aid, proposed tuition increases and insufficient operating budget, you stepped in to ensure that the State provided more. This year, when we begin with a higher platform in the Executive Budget, we ask you to build on that platform and make an investment that would make a difference. Because the Governor's budget this year does not call for tuition increases, does not reduce TAP and does not underfund mandatory costs, the Legislature has the opportunity to do more than bail CUNY out. For the first time in a decade, you have an opportunity to make CUNY great. I am here to ask you to do that.

But I will be frank with you. Restoring CUNY, lifting the University out of poverty—because that's where it is—will take more than minor adjustments. It will take a visionary investment. The PSC supports CUNY's request for additional funding but differs with Chancellor Goldstein on the nature of the crisis in our institution. It is true that the faculty, staff and students do more and more with less; it is true that we publish books and produce prize-winning students and make major contributions to the state's economic, intellectual and cultural life. But we do that in spite of the conditions in which we work, not because of them.

A month ago, several CUNY professors traveled to Albany to speak to the Assembly Higher Education Committee. The bipartisan members of the Committee, all of whom are long and

serious students of CUNY, professed that they were shocked to hear what the underfunding of CUNY has meant. Dr. Jonathan Buchsbaum reported that half of the faculty members in his department—Film and Media Studies at Queens College—were actively seeking other jobs because of the low pay, heavy workload and lack of support for research at Queens. Marcia Newfield, a 71-year-old woman with two Master’s degrees and six published books who is working as an adjunct, reported that she cannot afford to retire because her pension will be \$4,000 a year and CUNY provides no post-retirement health insurance for its 10,000 part-timers. And Dr. Martha Nadell, a young faculty member with a Ph.D. from Harvard, reported that many of the young faculty that CUNY has been actively recruiting are already leaving for other positions because they cannot live and work in CUNY’s conditions.

These are the stories—and not even the most extreme ones—of an institution subjected to chronic underfunding. I say this not to undervalue the quite heroic efforts many of you have made to restore CUNY funds, but to demonstrate that it will take more than modest increases, more than business-as-usual, to turn the situation around. None of us created the problem, but it is our responsibility—and in a sense, our privilege—to fix it.

Fortunately, we have before us this year a powerful model of what can be done by going beyond business-as-usual. Building on the courageous grass-roots effort of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Governor Spitzer has pledged a major new investment in K-12 education. His proposal for a massive infusion of funds recognizes historic inequities and responds to the need for a dramatically different approach. This is the education year for New York State. Make it the investment year for CUNY.

This turning point in the educational history of our state offers an opportunity to renew the City University of New York. Hundreds of thousands of children in New York will be educated each year in new programs designed to prepare them to enter college. College has never been more necessary than it is today; a college education is increasingly the prerequisite for even entry-level jobs. Yet over the past several decades, CUNY has lost thousands of full-time faculty, seen its resources for classrooms, labs and libraries dwindle, and become an institution in which scarcity is the norm. Despite some notable successes, CUNY remains a severely under-funded university. Those who suffer most are our students.

CUNY is the only college within economic reach for the majority of the students who will be served by the enhancement in the public schools. And CUNY has by far the state’s largest enrollment of students of color and students from new immigrant families. 72% of CUNY students are people of color; nearly two-thirds are from families whose total annual income—in New York City—is under \$30,000. It is no accident that this is the population whose educational opportunity has been jeopardized by years of disinvestment in CUNY.

If New York is to attain the real value of its new investment in education, an investment in CUNY must be part of the plan. Not to invest in CUNY at this critical juncture is to put at risk both our children’s future and the state’s historic investment in education.

### **Relation to CUNY’s Budget Request for FY 2007/08**

CUNY has requested a 7.74% increase in State funding for FY 2007/08. While the PSC supports the University's request for increased funds for mandatory and programmatic costs, we believe that the current strategic moment calls for an approach with more vision. The proposed CUNY "Compact" relies on a mix of limited State funding increases, increased tuition and enrollment, private philanthropy, and internal cost-savings to reach its goal. The message of the "Compact" is that a marginal increase in State funding will provide adequate support and that the majority of programmatic improvements can be funded through tuition increases.

But decades of under-funding cannot be reversed with marginal public investment. That is in part the lesson of the CFE lawsuit and the importance of Governor Spitzer's watershed proposal to provide increased funds to the public schools. Increases in public funding for CUNY at the 8% level, even coupled with additional funds from private sources—such as tuition—are not enough in the current moment. The CUNY "Compact" would essentially maintain the under-funded status quo; it would 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. This year CUNY experienced a net increase of only 69 full-time faculty. 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.

We support CUNY's request for State funding for mandatory and programmatic increases for FY 2007/08 as a beginning of the investment needed for CUNY. The requested State support, however, does not fund the full amount of CUNY's programmatic initiatives or the full amount needed in support to community colleges.

On capital funding, we fully support CUNY's request for additional funds and acknowledge the importance of the State's five-year capital plan. An accelerated investment in both new buildings and maintenance of current facilities is critical to our students' educational experience. Further, the PSC supports the decision in last year's budget not to shift even more of the costs of college education onto students in the form of tuition increases. CUNY students are statistically among the poorest college students in the nation, yet their share of total CUNY funding has almost doubled since 1990. They should not be asked to pay more. The Professional Staff Congress believes that there is still a place for CUNY's original mission of educating "the children of the people, the children of the whole people," as Horace Webster defined it at the opening of the Free Academy in 1849. This is the strategic moment to renew that mission and renew the City University of New York.

### **A Modest Investment Would Be Transformative**

The good news is that a relatively modest investment in CUNY would be transformative. While the funds needed to enhance opportunity in the public schools are in the billions of dollars, an additional investment of \$83 million beyond the Governor's proposed budget 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. It is within your power to create a university worthy of the twenty-first century's "children of the whole people."

The PSC supports the proposals advanced by NYSUT and our sister union, UUP, and requests that you invest in six major priorities for CUNY.

### **#1: Funds for Programmatic Improvements**

While the Governor's budget proposal excludes tuition increases this year, it does not provide the funds CUNY is seeking from increased tuition. The PSC applauds your refusal to increase tuition last year and requests that the Legislature's budget restore the \$37.7 million from expected tuition and enrollment increases. These are the critical funds for operating costs, for programmatic initiatives, for putting books back on our library shelves and providing research support that will allow our talented young faculty to stay at CUNY.

We are pleased that the Executive Budget proposes increased funds for the landmark opportunity programs SEEK and College Discovery, and we join our colleagues at SUNY in calling for further enhancements for these programs and for the Educational Opportunity Centers. The Educational Opportunity Centers, operating in the heart of districts like Harlem and Jamaica, Queens, serve a population that aspires to college but often includes ex-offenders, chronically unemployed persons and new immigrants. These centers are the difference between success and failure in their lives; years of stagnant budgets have left them severely underfunded.

### **#2: Aid to Community Colleges**

The Governor has proposed an increase in State aid to community colleges, but after years of underinvestment, even the Executive proposal for an additional \$100 per full-time-equivalent student will not bring the State near its statutory requirement for community college funding. More than any other institutions at CUNY, the community colleges change the life-chances of thousands and thousands of New Yorkers. My own belief is that much of the success of New York City as a city of immigrants, as the state's mighty economic engine, comes from the ability of CUNY's community colleges to provide a two-year college education on a mass scale. The community colleges are at the forefront of CUNY's unique mission of democratic access, yet they suffer from crowded classes, severe shortages of full-time faculty, inadequate staffing by advisers and often embarrassing physical facilities. We ask the Legislature to increase the per-FTE funding by an additional \$150 beyond the Governor's proposed increase, at a total additional cost for CUNY of \$9.4 million.

### **#3: Full-Time Faculty: "Scholars for the Whole People"**

Our sharpest need is for 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. Incremental hiring initiatives in the past few years have raised the total of full-time faculty to 6,334, but the number is still far too small for our growing student body. In fact, enrollment growth in the last few years has meant that the *ratio* of full-time to part-time faculty has *declined*—because the number of part-time faculty has skyrocketed. More than half of CUNY courses are still taught by part-time faculty.

CUNY's part-time faculty show enormous dedication and have kept the university afloat as its budget has shrunk. They have often been heroic in their commitment to CUNY. But nothing

can replace full-time faculty. A recent study by Professor Dan Jacoby of Washington University has confirmed that institutions with higher percentages of full-time faculty members have higher completion rates for students. Professor Richard Light of the Harvard Graduate School of Education has identified one-on-one contact with faculty as a primary factor in the success of students' college experience. Why should CUNY students be deprived of this opportunity? Forty-six percent of students who attend college in New York City attend CUNY; the one thing that would go furthest in giving them an equal chance is restoration of the full-time faculty.

Adequate staffing by full-time faculty means smaller classes, more mentoring of students, better academic progress, greater student retention. A part-timer who is rushing to the subway to teach her next course on a different CUNY campus simply cannot provide the kind of support our students—and all students—need. Arguably, CUNY students have a special need for one-on-one support: 59% of all CUNY students come from homes with an annual family income of less than \$30,000; 72% of our community college students are in this position. Forty-six percent of all CUNY students speak a native language other than English. If New York's goal is to enable students to graduate from college, there is no logic to depriving them of the most essential element of a college education.

CUNY needs a staggering 5,000 additional full-time faculty to return to the staffing levels of 1975. As a down payment on that investment, we request that the Legislature support \$25 million to hire 500 additional full-time faculty this year—a special cohort of “Scholars for the Whole People.”

- **Increase Racial and Ethnic Diversity**

A significant component of this restoration, we believe, must be increased racial and ethnic diversity. Diversity within CUNY is not just a goal; it is a statutory requirement, codified in the New York State Education Law enacted in 1979:

Only the strongest commitment to the special needs of an urban constituency justifies the legislature's support of an independent and unique structure for the university. Activities at the city university campuses must be undertaken in a spirit which recognizes and responds to the imperative need for affirmative action and the positive desire to have city university personnel reflect the diverse communities which comprise the people of the city and state of New York. (Section 6201)

CUNY has yet to approach this goal, especially in the higher ranks of faculty and professional staff. Currently, 72% of CUNY students are either African-American, Latino, Asian-American or Native American. The full-time faculty is far less diverse: racially, it does not come close to reflecting the student body. Thirty-six percent of full-time faculty are persons of color: 16.7% are Black or African-American, 10.4% are Latino, and 8.9% are Asian or Pacific-Islanders. But most of these faculty members are clustered at the lowest full-time faculty rank. Whereas Black or African-American faculty comprise fewer than 3% of the highest faculty rank, Distinguished Professor, they make up 30% of the lowest-paid rank, Lecturer. A total of 48% of Lecturers are people of color. Despite considerable new hiring in the past few years, CUNY's inability over several decades to hire substantial numbers of faculty of color has meant that our students rarely

have the opportunity to study with senior scholars who are African-American, Latino or Asian. This is both an intellectual and a personal loss—for white students as well as students of color.

CUNY is to be commended for developing several initiatives in recent years to increase the faculty and staff of color, but only a systematic commitment will make a difference. We propose that racial and ethnic diversity be an essential component in the recruitment and selection of the 500 new “Scholars for the Whole People”; the commitment to diversity has to be integral, not simply a series of isolated initiatives. We also propose a variety of approaches—such as upgrading Lecturer positions and converting some part-time positions to full-time—that would build on CUNY’s current minority faculty and staff. Part of the funding to support new faculty would provide research support and seed money for childcare, both of which are essential to recruiting top-quality faculty of color and to recruiting all junior faculty in an increasingly competitive market.

#### **#4: Additional Full-Time Professional Staff**

Professional staff are often the CUNY personnel whom students meet first and who have the most direct contact with students’ daily lives. They are key figures in influencing whether a student graduates. Academic advisors and counselors, financial aid and admissions advisors, directors of academic support centers, laboratory technicians and other professional staff provide direct assistance to students. Yet as CUNY enrollment has grown just since 2000 by 25,000 students—the equivalent of two colleges—the number of professional staff has not grown at a similar pace. We propose that CUNY be funded to hire 50 additional professional staff, at a cost of \$2.5 million, in positions that directly serve students—both to respond to the increased enrollment and to provide a richer base of support for our students.

CUNY students face pressures unknown to most students at traditional residential colleges: many of them are raising families, struggling to live in New York City on limited incomes, holding down a job, serving as translators for parents and grandparents, and navigating tricky psychological and cultural waters as they enter a new culture in college. It is a measure of what a college education means to our students that they persist and succeed at the rates they do. But we seek to increase student retention and end the disparity between retention rates of white students and students of color. A higher concentration of professional staff is essential to this goal. Achieving racial and ethnic diversity is at least as important in professional staff hiring as it is in the hiring of faculty; we further propose that increased diversity be an essential part of this hiring initiative.

#### **#5: Student Mentoring Fund**

We propose the creation of a new fund to support intense, hands-on mentoring of CUNY students, with an investment this year of \$5 million. In this element as in the other elements of our proposal, we are seeking to provide to CUNY students some of the conditions for learning that are routine for the country’s most successful students. The CFE investment in public education is all about giving students an equal chance to enter college and succeed in their professional and personal lives. As the university that enrolls thousands of New York public school graduates—and educates the vast majority of New York City public school teachers—CUNY should be funded at a level that allows it to give its students the support they need.

One of the secrets of small private colleges and large elite universities is that they work to ensure that their students do not fail. They provide an array of programs and initiatives, advisors and mentors to ensure that their students have adequate support. Some CUNY students are fortunate enough to participate in programs that include mentoring—such as the Honors College, the CUNY B.A. or the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship—and when they do, their rates of retention and success are high. We believe that every CUNY student is entitled to mentoring; mentoring should not be reserved for students who have already shown in high school that they can excel.

We propose a fund that would be available CUNY-wide, to support a variety of “best practices” in student mentoring. The proposal signifies how seriously the faculty and staff—whom we represent—want to invest time in our students. The money in the fund would be allocated to provide time and material support to mentoring programs. CUNY already has a patchwork of mentoring initiatives, some funded by outside support and some funded directly from the Chancellor’s Office. Many, however, are unfunded. Across the University, exceptional faculty and staff have created their own mentoring initiatives, often with no available institutional support: an academic advisor at Queens College has conducted a support group for Black male students for more than a decade; a professor at Medgar Evers finds outside funding to take his students to academic biology conferences; a chemistry professor at Queensborough Community College develops students to assist in his lab and to prepare for careers in science. The CUNY Mentors Fund would provide the support to allow faculty and staff across the University to replicate these initiatives and develop initiatives of their own. It would include a requirement for accountability from participants and a component for tracking the impact of its projects on student success and retention.

#### **#6: Support for Graduate Students**

The final element of the PSC proposal is for increased graduate student support, at a cost of \$5 million. More than one-third of the Ph.D. programs at the CUNY Graduate Center are ranked in the top twenty in the nation; several are ranked in the top five. The CUNY Graduate Center is among the leading institutions nationally in the number of Ph.D.s awarded to underrepresented minorities. High numbers of first-generation college students also receive doctoral degrees from CUNY, as do many traditional graduate students who choose CUNY after undergraduate careers at the country’s top colleges. Yet CUNY is almost the only research university in the United States that does not routinely offer tuition relief for doctoral students who teach or work as researchers. SUNY’s budget includes dedicated funding for this purpose. In recent years, CUNY has assembled a patchwork of programs to provide graduate student fellowships, but needs a dedicated budget line that would make funding secure.

At almost every other graduate institution, certainly at institutions whose programs rank as high as CUNY’s, doctoral students receive full tuition fellowships, plus stipends and health insurance. CUNY is unable to offer any of this. As a result, our students are forced to take on large teaching loads, sometimes paying tuition out of their small adjunct earnings, and to fund their own health insurance—or simply go without insurance at all. These burdens slow their progress through the doctoral program and place sometimes insurmountable obstacles in their path to completion. It is a tragedy that an institution that succeeds in attracting one of the largest cohorts

of minority doctoral candidates in the country does not have the resources to allow them to maximize their academic development and complete their doctoral education in a timely way.

CUNY's inability to cover graduate tuition costs and health insurance has made it increasingly difficult for the University to recruit the top candidates in their fields. Potential students frequently report that CUNY was their first choice academically but that the low level of support made it impossible for them to attend. The quality of doctoral candidates affects the quality of instruction throughout the entire University. Graduate employees regularly teach undergraduates; the quality of these teacher-scholars has a critical impact on undergraduate success. Further, the University's ability to sustain top-ranked graduate programs is a major factor in its competitiveness in recruiting outstanding full-time faculty at the colleges. Many of CUNY's most distinguished faculty come to the University and stay at the University because of the chance to teach intellectually exciting graduate students. The underfunding of graduate programs jeopardizes these opportunities and risks undercutting CUNY's recruitment of top faculty nationally and internationally.

We cannot afford to lose the next generation of scholars, teachers, scientists and artists. A small investment, of \$5 million annually, would stabilize graduate student support and allow the University to offer these students healthcare. The ripple-effect on the entire University—and on the academic profession—would be profound.

### **Conclusion: A Vision of Renewal**

**O**n behalf of the faculty, staff and students of the City University—and on behalf of the people of New York State—the PSC requests additional funding in these six areas: programmatic enhancements, community college base aid, full-time faculty, professional staff in student services, a student mentoring program, and graduate student support. The total amount of our proposal is for \$84.6 million beyond the Executive Budget's proposed increase of \$82.1 million. That may sound ambitious—a doubling of the Governor's proposed additions—and it is. But small plans will not lift CUNY out of decades of enforced poverty. Governor Spitzer said in his State of the State address that “we must begin an effort to make our higher education system the best in America.” After twenty years of disinvestment, it is a delusion to imagine that that can be done without significant funding.

I wish I could tell you that the Executive Budget's welcome increases for CUNY were enough. But you can't create the best higher education system in America on the cheap, especially after years of disinvestment. Last year, the Legislature stepped up and invested far more than the \$83 million we are calling for this year. Because the Executive Budget allows us to start from a higher platform this year, a smaller investment will allow CUNY, for the first time in decades, to rebuild.

We are pleased to hear that Governor Spitzer has called for a commission on higher education in the state, and we hope to be part of that group. But we know now, even without the years of study a commission might undertake, the fundamental needs of public higher education in New York. There is no mystery about what it takes to provide a great college education: small classes, time with professors, support by counselors, books in libraries, equipment in labs,

buildings that work for teaching. This is exactly what our students do not have—or at least do not have routinely. The Professional Staff Congress believes that CUNY students, no less than students at Columbia or Cornell, are entitled to a great education, and we seek to provide it. But we cannot do so if the University continues to exist on minimum funding. We believe that an underfunded university is not adequate to meet the challenges of the enhanced public school system envisioned for twenty-first century New York. Some of the gains of the CFE funding will be lost if students' only option financially is a university that is chronically poor. The vision of an educated population, prepared to contribute to the life of New York State, will not be fulfilled. We offer this proposal as a way of fulfilling—and extending—that vision.