



UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE TESTIMONY

Joint Legislative Public Hearing on 2014-2015 Executive Budget Proposal:
Topic "Higher Education"
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ORAL TESTIMONY

Good morning, Chairperson LaValle, Chairperson Glick and members of the committee. My name is Muhammad Arshad, and I currently serve as the Chairperson of the University Student Senate (USS), the official governance organization for students at the City University of New York (CUNY). I also serve as a Trustee for the City University of New York.

Today, I stand before you, advocating for my most essential title; the title of student.

College Now

As a student, I understand the pressures and expectations that come along with attending college. The transition from a senior in high school to a freshman in college is never seamless, however programs such as College Now provide the necessary support for students making that transition. College Now is CUNY's largest Collaborative Program with over 400 NYC public high schools in its mission to help prepare students for high school graduation and success in college. The program provides a variety of opportunities, including college-credit courses, college-preparatory courses and activities, experiential-based summer programs, and access to campus facilities and cultural offerings. In the 2011-12 academic year, College Now provided over 28,000 courses/activities and served more than 20,000 students across the city. Given the extraordinary work to be done to uplift retention and graduation rates in the public high schools, and the extensive collaboration programs between CUNY and the NYC public schools which have yielded encouraging results, a college readiness working group should be established to examine how best to replicate successful models. Studies have indicated that students participating in College Now have higher retention and graduation rates, rates of progress, and grade point averages than their non-College Now counterparts.

CUNY Start

Another amazing CUNY program that assists in these efforts is CUNY Start. CUNY Start began in 2009 and provides an intensive pre-matriculation academic program for students admitted to CUNY with significant remedial needs in reading, writing, and math based on their scores on the CUNY Assessment Tests. CUNY Start seeks both to minimize the amount of required remedial coursework students must take and to foster higher levels of persistence and graduation once students matriculate into an associate degree program. Students temporarily delay their degree studies to participate in a 15 to 18-week program and pay only a \$75 fee to participate, thereby preserving financial aid for credit-bearing coursework. Close to half of all of the students who entered CUNY Start complete the semester having no further remedial needs, enabling them to begin college-level work in the following semester. At the same time, they did not use up their financial aid eligibility. CUNY Start helps students significantly reduce or eliminate their remedial needs. From Fall 2009 to Spring 2013, 67% of full-time students entered CUNY having failed all three subjects on the CUNY Assessment Tests and 33% had failed two subjects.

After completing the program, 48% were proficient in all three subject areas, 32% were proficient in two subject areas, and 14% in one area. Once students enter a degree program, they take and earn more credits with higher GPA and have stronger retention over time than similar students who did not participate in CUNY Start. Although the goal for Fall 2014 is service for almost 4,000 new students, every effort should be made to dramatically expand this program..

Accelerated Study in Associate Programs

CUNY's ASAP (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs) was launched in 2007 to help community college students earn their degrees as quickly as possible, with a goal that has been achieved of graduating at least 50 percent of participants within three years (nationally, urban community graduates graduate less than 25% in three years). Features of ASAP include required full-time study, consolidated course schedules, cohorts grouped by major, and comprehensive advisement, academic support, and career development services. Financial incentives include tuition waivers for financial aid-eligible students whose aid awards do not fully cover rising tuition and fees, and the free use of textbooks and monthly Metro cards for all participants. ASAP is one of the most successful community college programs in the country with a current three-year graduation rate is 51% vs. 22% for similar students. Additionally, students who start ASAP with some remedial needs also graduate at high rates: After three years, 47% of ASAP students with remedial needs graduated vs. 19% of similar comparison group students. Students who enter ASAP with no remedial needs do even better, with 56% of such students graduating within three years vs. 28% of similar non-ASAP students.

ASAP helps students at six CUNY community colleges to successfully address challenges associated with full-time attendance and timely associate-degree completion. It provides the comprehensive academic, social, and financial support that students need to graduate with an Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, or Associate in Applied Science degree within three years. This program will be serving approximately 4,000 students this fall and should be expanded based on the results to cover as many community college students as possible.

One example of ASAP success is Amanda Loka, an ASAP student at Borough of Manhattan Community College studying business administration. When Amanda joined ASAP in summer 2012, she was unsure about college and how she would make it through. A young mother with a two-year-old child and no job, she knew that if she wanted to secure a successful future for herself and her daughter, she would need to go to college. Amanda enrolled in BMCC, but had no idea of what to do next. She was the first in her family to attend college and had no one to turn to for guidance.

Amanda believes that she would have dropped out of college after her first semester if she had not enrolled in ASAP. She describes her advisor Stephanie Ramsey as her biggest inspiration, and credits ASAP with keeping her on track and providing her with the support she needed to navigate college as a single mother. She met regularly with her advisor to identify strategies for balancing life as a student and mother. When Amanda wanted to drop a required course because of low exam scores, her advisor provided Amanda with the tools she needed to speak with her professor and subsequently pass her course. Amanda has applied lessons learned to all of her courses and presently maintains a 3.0 grade point average. Amanda became an ASAP student leader in fall 2013 and regularly shares her story with prospective students in an effort to give back to the program that has given so much to her. Amanda is on target to graduate in spring 2014 and plans to transfer to a CUNY senior college in the fall to study business.

Last year, the State of New York Adopted Budget for 2013-14 included \$1.7 million to expand CUNY's ASAP and provided \$1.7 million for the establishment of a similar program at SUNY. Following a review of this initiative by the City and State, including the independent verifications made of ASAP by external organizations, funding should be calibrated to ensure the ramping up of ASAP to cover the majority of community college students.

In addition, I am requesting additional community college base aid where our enrollments are particularly soaring. Community colleges are essential to economic recovery. They are a pipeline to jobs and a critical engine of economic development. Please support at least a \$250 per FTE funding increase for community colleges. These funds will support among other things CUNY's ASAP, CUNY START, and Single Stop programs that provide remedial assistance and support services to community college students in order that they earn their associate degrees in a timely manner. Many of the CUNY students graduating from the New York City high schools are in need of remediation and these programs give the students the support they need to do college level work.

I ask that you consider all the students that have succeeded in achieving their dreams through this program, and I also ask you to consider all the students who COULD achieve their dreams; the very students that these programs were created to reach but cannot because of inadequate funding. One of those students could very well be the next Deborah Glick, Kenneth LaValle or Gustavo Rivera, representing the great constituents of New York, attending a public hearing on higher education, listening to the pride and passion of the future of CUNY.

Sincerely,

Muhammad Arshad
Chairperson, University Student Senate

CUNY STUDENT AGENDA 2014-2015 STATE OPERATING BUDGET PRIORITIES

Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP)

\$1.7 million

CUNY launched ASAP in 2007 to help community college students earn their degrees as quickly as possible. ASAP graduation rate is more than three times the national three-year graduation rate for urban community colleges. CUNY wants to expand enrollment to 4,000 students for Fall 2014. Unfortunately, funding to enhance this program was not included in the Executive Budget.

Single Stop

\$1.0 million

In 2009 CUNY partnered with Single Stop USA to support a Single Stop office at each community college to increase retention by connecting low income students with government benefits and services. From 2009 to 2012 Single Stop helped CUNY Students access benefits that helped them save \$66 million. In order to expand Single Stop to senior colleges at CUNY funding is needed.

Black Male Initiative

\$2.5 million

The Black Male Initiative was instituted to address education, retention, graduation, and underrepresentation challenges in 2006. Over the years, BMI has amassed an impressive record of mentoring, outreach, placement, and related activities aimed at maximizing student success. Historically, only the City of New York, through the City Council, has provided funding. The State should match the City's allocation.

Graduate State Tuition Tax/Credit Deduction

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that jobs requiring master's degrees and professional degrees will grow by 22% and 20%, respectively, from 2010 to 2020. Unfortunately, New York State completely eliminated Graduate TAP in 2009. If implemented this program will allow eligible graduate students to receive the State Tuition tax/credit deduction currently offered to Undergraduates and alleviate the costs of a student population in need.

DREAM Act Reform

\$20.0 million

In 2002, New York became the fourth state to offer undocumented students in-state tuition rates at public universities. Today, California, New Mexico, and Texas offer undocumented youth access to state financial aid programs. The Office of the State Comptroller estimates that the initial cost of providing TAP awards to these students would likely be offset by the additional taxes paid over the course of their working lifetimes as a result of their ability to obtain higher-paying jobs and likelihood of residing in New York after graduation.

CUNY LEADS

\$1.5 million

The Linking Employment, Academics, and Disability Services (CUNY LEADS) program is a unique partnership with the State Education Department, and was established to facilitate successful academic and career outcomes for students with disabilities.

Legislative Restorations

\$1.0 million

The Executive budget does not include funding for SEEK/College Discovery of \$0.5 million, a program previously provided by the state legislature and reduced Childcare funding at the Community Colleges by \$544,000. Fifteen percent of all CUNY Undergraduates support children and quality care is essential to the retention and success of these students.

College Readiness: CUNY Start and College Now

\$5.0 million

CUNY Start provides students admitted with significant remedial needs with an intensive pre-matriculation academic semester program to complete remedial classes before beginning college-level work the following semester and preserving their financial aid. College Now serves 20,000 students annually in over 400 public high school programs in NYC. Studies have shown that College Now students have higher retention and graduation rates than other students. Funding is needed to expand both of these successful programs.



