

# THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK: An Institution Adrift

REPORT OF  
THE MAYOR'S ADVISORY TASK FORCE ON  
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City University of New York (“CUNY”) is adrift. An institution of critical importance to New York and the nation, potentially a model of excellence and educational opportunity to public universities throughout the world, CUNY currently is in a spiral of decline. Its graduation rates are low and students who succeed take a long time to earn their degrees. While enrollment in New York City’s public schools (“NYCPS”) and at other public universities is increasing, CUNY’s senior colleges are losing enrollment. Accountability is largely ignored in its governance processes, and there is virtually no strategy or planning in the way it allocates its resources. Academic standards are loose and confused, and CUNY lacks the basic information necessary to make sound judgments about the quality and effectiveness of its programs. CUNY is inundated by NYCPS graduates who lack basic academic skills, but it has not made a strong effort to get the public schools to raise their standards. Its extensive remediation activities proceed haphazardly, and there are no objective measures of which remediation efforts are, or are not, succeeding. CUNY’s full-time faculty is shrinking, aging and losing ground. Many of the top administrative positions at CUNY are open and proving difficult to fill. Mistrust and confusion dominate CUNY’s governance processes.

CUNY’s downward spiral can be and must be reversed. At the eve of a new century, the United States urgently needs a model of the urban public university, and CUNY should be that model of excellence. CUNY’s historic mission—to provide broad access to a range of higher education opportunities of quality suited to New York City’s diverse population and to the City’s needs—will be more important in the 21st century than ever before. In the age of information and in a global economy, a college education is the essential foundation for a life of opportunity. For cities, states, and nations, the educational capacity of their citizenry will be more and more the decisive factor in prosperity and the quality of life. This is especially the case for New York City. The Mayor, the Governor, the political leaders of the City and State, the business, arts, and professional communities, all must join in a concerted, long-term strategy to make CUNY the preeminent urban public university in the world.

## **ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE**

CUNY is not currently carrying out its academic responsibilities with the quality and consistency its vital mission deserves and requires. Central to CUNY’s historic mission is a commitment to provide broad access, but its students’ high dropout rates and low graduation rates raise the question: “Access to what?” There is tragic personal loss and institutional waste implicit in CUNY’s high dropout and low graduation rates. Moreover, the absence of clear standards of academic achieve-

ment tied to admissions and graduation permits doubts to fester about the value of CUNY degrees, even for the minority of students who achieve them. Educational opportunity becomes an empty promise if it is not rooted in clear standards of achievement. Public education at all levels in New York City has been terribly eroded by the absence of clear standards. CUNY must lead the effort to restore the standards that are essential to meaningful educational opportunity.

CUNY currently does not offer the full range of educational opportunities that public higher education in New York City should provide. No other public university system in the United States even close to CUNY's size has organized itself without several top-tier colleges among the range of educational opportunities afforded. Currently, CUNY does not have a single four-year college that is in the top tier of public institutions nationwide in the academic quality of its entering students. Similarly, based on the limited information that is available, not a single CUNY senior college has a graduating cohort that would rank above average among American college graduates.

CUNY must reinvigorate its commitment to excellence, while maintaining its commitment to providing broad access. CUNY must design a university system that includes top-tier senior colleges, first-rate graduate programs, and institutions that continue to provide broad access at both the associate and baccalaureate levels. The selective senior colleges must have admissions and recruitment policies that ensure diversity within the context of high standards. The more broadly accessible senior colleges at CUNY should have admissions standards that are more open, but which ensure that admitted students are capable of college-level work and are likely to succeed in four-year degree programs. The community colleges should continue to offer open admissions for all with high school diplomas or their equivalent, but they should take care that students are not admitted to associate programs who lack the basic skills for academic and professional success.

The University must organize itself and all its institutions and programs around clear, objective standards. These include:

- clear and objective admissions standards for all CUNY colleges that include a nationally normed, standardized test such as the SAT;
- clear standards of readiness for entry into college-level work and corresponding clear exit standards for students moving from remediation to college-level work; and
- clear standards of performance as a condition of graduation from all degree programs.

## **REMEDIAL EDUCATION**

CUNY conducts remediation on a huge scale: in 1997, 87% of community college freshmen and 72% of senior college freshmen failed one or more of CUNY's remediation placement tests, and 55% of CUNY freshmen failed more than one. These tests measure whether incoming CUNY students can read, write, or understand math at low- to mid-high school levels. When colleges undertake remediation, as CUNY does, it is vitally important that remediation be done right. If remedia-

tion is not effective and underprepared students proceed into college-level courses, the costs will be substantial, including:

- students who confront life without basic skills;
- the waste of unprepared students' time in classes that are incomprehensible;
- poor use of prepared students' time, to the extent that courses are watered down;
- the distraction of professors from college-level teaching; and
- the erosion of standards that will result.

While CUNY's commitment to providing remediation is laudable, we believe that in many respects the way CUNY goes about remediation is flawed. Thirty years after the implementation of open admissions, CUNY has not yet established valid and reliable remediation tests. It does not carefully diagnose students' remedial needs. It does not measure objectively what students have actually accomplished in remediation, nor has it promulgated systematic and valid standards to determine when students may exit remediation.

As NYCPS makes the transition to higher standards, CUNY should continue to offer remedial education at the community college level – on the following conditions:

- CUNY must replace its current student assessment program with one that is consistent with modern assessment science. CUNY must diagnose students' remedial and ESL needs with precision, measure skill improvements, and compile the student outcome information required under a performance-based funding system.
- CUNY must evaluate the effectiveness of its various remedial programs according to objective standards, and must hold administrators and instructors accountable for results. Information about the effectiveness of different remediation programs must be available to all concerned, especially students.
- Students who require remediation should be given a range of remediation options funded by education and training vouchers from a mix of public sources, so they can obtain remedial education services from the provider of their choice without depleting their college financial aid. As the first step towards implementation of the remediation voucher program, CUNY and the City should conduct a pilot project in outsourcing remediation services, in order to stimulate competition and generate performance data from the various providers.

New York State's financial aid rules and CUNY policies push severely underprepared students to matriculate full-time in college programs and take college-level courses. This is bad both for students and for CUNY. It undermines the effectiveness of remediation, erodes standards in college programs, overwhelms underprepared students, and lowers graduation rates for students who succeed in remediation because they run out of financial aid before they can complete their college programs. The Mayor and the Governor need to work together and with the State legislature to revamp financial aid policies to ensure that students can obtain remediation without depleting federal or state financial aid that is intended to support college-level work.

## CUNY AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Improving public education at all levels is the most important public policy issue facing New York City. Policymakers should view the improvement of public education in New York City from a kindergarten through college, K–16, perspective. This requires CUNY and NYCPS to forge a new relationship:

- CUNY must clearly communicate its admissions standards; undertake early testing and intervention for prospective students; establish College Now in all high schools; and help NYCPS become a standards-based school system.
- NYCPS must end social promotion; arrange for effective remediation starting in elementary school; obtain comprehensive, objective, and timely information about student performance – including requiring all high school students to take the PSAT and SAT; and use that information as the basis for deploying resources to address students' needs.
- CUNY must give urgent attention to the quality of its teacher education programs. As the system enters an era of massive teacher recruitment, CUNY, the main source of teachers for NYCPS, must ensure that its graduates who pursue education careers are well prepared for their critical responsibilities.

## CUNY'S BUDGETING, FUNDING, AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

CUNY's current budgeting, funding, and financial management processes are ineffective. There is no strategic planning, no effort to invest in excellence, no incentives for good performance or disincentives for bad, no focus on institutional mission. The consequence of this in a time of budgetary stringency has not been inertia. On the contrary, CUNY's passivity has resulted in a dramatic shift in resources: between 1980 and 1997, the senior colleges and the ranks of the full-time faculty have eroded, while the community and comprehensive colleges, part-time faculty, and administration have mushroomed.

CUNY must order its priorities, define specific and differentiated academic missions for each CUNY institution, promote systematic assessment of performance, and use resource allocation to reinforce campus accountability. Both the central administration and the individual campuses must be encouraged to develop new sources of revenues. CUNY's record of external funding and philanthropic support is anemic. No CUNY institution or program should be supported if it does not provide clear, objective information about the quality and productivity of its efforts. The Mayor, the Governor, and the State legislature should institute multi-year, performance-based funding policies for CUNY to reinforce accountability.

Finally, CUNY must invest in a university-wide technology infrastructure and create integrated management information systems that can support rational planning and budgeting, track student progress and outcomes, assess faculty productivity, and provide better and more accessi-

ble management information. At present, CUNY lacks information for effective decision-making. In such a setting, it is not surprising that, in the words of former Baruch President Matthew Goldstein, “on any measure of performance, CUNY maximizes the variance.”

## **THE CUNY COLLEGES AND SYSTEM GOVERNANCE**

CUNY, as a university system, has never surmounted its history as a group of separate institutions founded at different times for different purposes. When it became a system in 1961, there was no planning addressed to its system architecture or its system governance. Since then, CUNY’s haphazard evolution – characterized by rapid expansion and contraction, sudden change of academic direction, and frequent administrative turnover – has resulted not in a coherent university, but in an amorphous confederation of individual colleges. CUNY must wake up to the present and invent itself as a university system, one which focuses the academic missions of its various campuses to offer a range of higher education opportunities appropriate to the needs of New York, one which encourages excellence and efficiency, reduces redundancy, and creates a whole greater than the sum of the parts. No public university system in the country has such great potential advantages of system and scale. CUNY’s lack of coordination is leaving untapped enormous reservoirs of academic energy.

## **LEADERSHIP**

All of the Task Force’s recommendations are contingent upon the establishment of dynamic leadership at all levels of university governance. The Mayor and the Governor should support strong leadership for CUNY, including a Chancellor empowered to reconstitute CUNY as an integrated university system and Trustees whose mandate is to provide strategic direction, based on clear accountability for all programs and institutions.



# II. Introduction

## A. AN INSTITUTION ADRIFT

The City University of New York is adrift. Its graduation rates are low, and the relatively small number of students who succeed take longer to earn degrees than in other public universities. At a time when the public schools and most other public universities are increasing enrollment, most CUNY senior colleges are losing enrollment. Accountability is largely ignored in its governance processes, and there is little strategy or planning in the way it allocates its resources. Academic standards are loose and confused, and CUNY lacks the basic information necessary to make sound judgments about what works and what doesn't. It is inundated by graduates of the New York City Public Schools who lack basic academic skills, but it has not made a strong effort to get the public schools to raise their standards. It conducts remediation on a massive scale, but lacks objective information about the effectiveness of its remediation efforts. Its full-time faculty is shrinking, aging and losing ground. Part-time faculty has increased by leaps and bounds and now delivers the majority of CUNY's teaching, which almost guarantees institutional anomie. An institution of critical importance to New York and the nation, potentially a model of excellence and educational opportunity to public universities throughout the world, CUNY currently is in a spiral of decline.

CUNY has never really come to grips with what it means to be a university system. Its very constitution, its system architecture, remains to be drawn out of the inertia of the past. To illustrate, CUNY is unique among public universities anywhere of size, in having not a single four-year college that is in the top-tier of public institutions nationwide in the academic quality of its entering students. Every other system of size has multiple campuses in this category. The State University of New York ("SUNY") has ten. California, nine. Florida has five public institutions that are top tier. Wisconsin, five. CUNY has never articulated a strategy that New Yorkers are less in need of top-tier public institutions, among the range of higher education opportunities provided, than are the citizens served by other large public university systems in the country. Nor could it. It just happened. Institutional outcomes of such fundamental importance should be the result of thoughtful planning not drift. This is only one symptom of CUNY's failure, in contrast to other public university systems, to embrace mission differentiation among its various institutions.

This downward spiral can be and must be reversed. CUNY can be and should be a model for the nation of urban higher public education. The improvement of public education at all levels, kindergarten through college, and especially in our cities, is America's most important public policy objective. Nothing is more important to the future well-being of New York City. At the eve of a new century, the United States urgently needs a model of the urban public university. CUNY can and should be this model. The creation of first-rate urban higher education opportunities is as crucial to our nation in the 21st century as was the creation of the great land-grant universities in the 19th century.

New York City requires a public university system that is excellent by any standard and is among the strongest public university systems anywhere. This Task Force rejects the notion that CUNY should be satisfied to be average or typical of urban public higher education in the United States. On many measures of performance, CUNY appears to be below average for public universities. But that is not the point. New York City would never be satisfied if its public schools were simply up to the average of public education in Washington, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Detroit, Atlanta, or Miami. Even less should the City be satisfied with average public higher education. Urban public education in America is in serious trouble. Public higher education in our cities is similarly beset with problems and low standards. CUNY must be a leader. It should set the standard in its field.

CUNY has impressive assets on which to build a future of distinction, but each of these assets is imperiled:

- CUNY's faculty includes distinguished scholars and teachers who are devoted to CUNY's dual mission of educational opportunity and excellence. Yet to an alarming extent, full-time faculty members have been supplanted by part-timers. The competitive position of CUNY's faculty salaries has eroded. As the full-time faculty ages and shrinks, CUNY faces a daunting challenge of faculty renewal.
- CUNY's more than 200,000 students are an extraordinarily diverse and ambitious group. Yet most come to CUNY with severe deficiencies in the basic academic skills needed for college-level work. CUNY's commitment to opening the doors of educational opportunity to these students presents it with substantial challenges in adhering to high standards.
- CUNY has the incomparable advantage of being located in, and serving, New York City and State. The City's unique vitality and variety, its constant renewal through immigration, its central importance in the arts, finance, communications, medicine, law, and indeed all the learned professions, give CUNY unparalleled opportunities and responsibilities for educational leadership. Yet New York City's public schools are troubled and extremely uneven in educational quality, passing on to CUNY large numbers of students whom the schools have failed. Similarly, the City's immigrant population, many of whom look to CUNY for educational opportunity, also includes large numbers of educationally deprived.
- In addition to its faculty, students, and location, CUNY has great potential advantages of system and scale. Its 19 campuses offer hundreds of academic programs taught by thousands of faculty to more than 200,000 students—all within a single metropolitan area served by unified public transportation. This is a unique environment for higher education excellence. CUNY has exciting opportunities for academic synergy and diversity, for institutional focus, for selective excellence at the campus level contributing to abundance, diversity and choice at the system level. But CUNY today takes little advantage of such opportunities. Its governance processes are a shambles, the relationships among its various campuses are uncharted, its system architecture a muddle. "Incoherent" is the word most CUNY leaders have used in describing CUNY as a system to the Task Force. "Neglect" is a close second. This is intolerable. This is also CUNY's historic opportunity. Bringing coherence to such a university system in such a City will produce tremendous academic benefits.

## B. AN ESSENTIAL MISSION

At the outset, the Task Force wishes to emphasize its absolute commitment to CUNY's historic institutional mission: to provide access to first-rate college and graduate-degree opportunities for all New Yorkers ready and able to take advantage of community and senior college education in the liberal arts, sciences, and the professions. The Task Force applauds CUNY's special commitment to students who, by reason of jobs, family responsibilities, or lack of financial means, must struggle to avail themselves of higher education opportunities. We believe this mission embraces a special openness to New York's immigrant population and to adults who wish to resume their education after some years in other pursuits.

This is not casual rhetoric. The Task Force has considered whether CUNY's historic mission may be less necessary or compelling in the 21st century than it has been in the 20th. We have considered whether other institutions, public or private, could perhaps better serve CUNY's purposes. We have asked ourselves whether CUNY might be better off as part of SUNY, or whether it should be disintegrated, leaving its constituent campuses to go their own way. Our response is clear.

CUNY's historic mission has never been more critical to the well being of New York and the nation; access to higher education of quality will become more and more important as time goes on. For individuals living in the age of information and the global economy, a college education is the essential foundation for a life of opportunity. For cities, states, and nations, the educational capacity of their citizenry will be more and more the decisive factor in prosperity and the quality of life. This is especially the case for New York City.

The City is gaining population, and gains are especially large among young people who need a first-rate education. During the 1990's, NYCPS enrollment increased by over 100,000 students, an increase of 12.5% (**SEE FIGURE 1, PAGE 15**). More than one-third of New York City's graduating high school seniors will look to CUNY for their opportunity for higher education.

The ethnic composition of New York City is undergoing dramatic change. During the 1990's, the white population of New York City declined by 19.3%, while the black, Hispanic and Asian populations have risen by 5.2%, 19.3%, and 53.5%, respectively. These trends are projected to continue into the next century. For the past three decades, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians have been over-represented among CUNY's students, relative to their levels in the labor force (**SEE FIGURE 2, PAGE 15**). New York City must improve the educational opportunities available to all its citizens, but this is most urgently the case regarding disadvantaged students and blacks, Hispanics and immigrants. Because so many low-income and minority students look to CUNY for their college opportunities, these demographic shifts and existing patterns of educational deprivation mean that CUNY will be even more vital to the City's well-being in the future than it has been in the past.

New York City's unique characteristics as a labor market also point to the growing importance of higher education. The City is an extremely tough environment for those without a college education, just as it offers the greatest opportunities in the nation for those who are well educated. Recent decades have seen a restructuring of the City's economy from one based on manufacturing to one

driven by services. Finance, insurance, and real estate dominate the marketplace and account for disproportionately high shares of income. Along with medical services, business services, and communications and entertainment, these are the prime sources of good jobs. Advanced technology counts for an increasing share of the City's employment. Just the other day, a report of the City Comptroller pointed out that jobs in software firms more than doubled between 1992 and 1997. Each of these sectors of job growth is relentlessly competitive, requiring high-level academic skills for success. Meanwhile, as Table 1 shows, with certain exceptions such as tourism, traditional jobs requiring less education are declining. Jobs in manufacturing have been dropping at about the same rate as jobs in services have been increasing. In the 1990's, as the City's economy has dramatically improved, the shift to services is even more pronounced.

TABLE 1

Industry Composition of NY City Payroll Employment, 1977-97

By Average Total Employment and by Total Wages

	Year	Total: All Industries	Manufacturing and Construction	Wholesale and Retail	Transportation, Public Utilities and Public Administration	Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	Services (Business, Medical, Social, Educational)	Agriculture, Mining, and Other
Average Total Employment (# of Persons)	1977	2,766,907	21.6%	22.1%	12.4%	14.9%	28.6%	0.4%
	1982	3,282,092	16.3%	18.1%	15.6%	15.1%	34.4%	0.5%
	1987	3,518,270	14.0%	17.7%	14.5%	16.0%	37.2%	0.4%
	1992	3,220,445	11.6%	16.6%	15.4%	15.4%	40.6%	0.4%
	1997	3,333,919	10.6%	16.8%	14.3%	14.6%	43.1%	0.5%
Total Wages (\$ Millions)	1977	\$38,160	21.5%	19.3%	16.1%	16.9%	25.9%	0.3%
	1982	\$67,880	16.1%	15.3%	19.2%	18.7%	30.2%	0.4%
	1987	\$101,097	13.6%	13.7%	16.0%	24.2%	32.2%	0.3%
	1992	\$128,132	11.0%	11.9%	15.4%	27.7%	33.7%	0.2%
	1997	\$163,347	9.9%	10.9%	13.4%	30.9%	34.6%	0.3%

(Source: NY State Department of Labor)

FIGURE 1

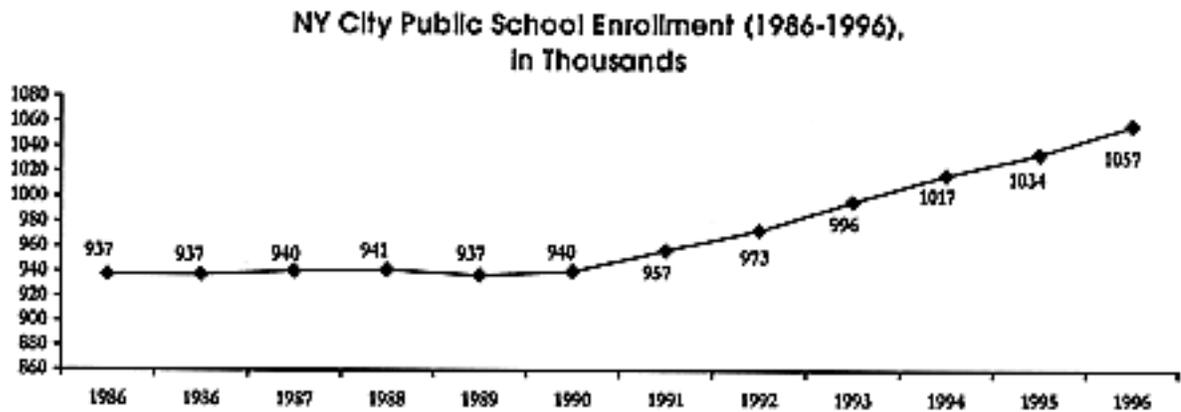


FIGURE 2

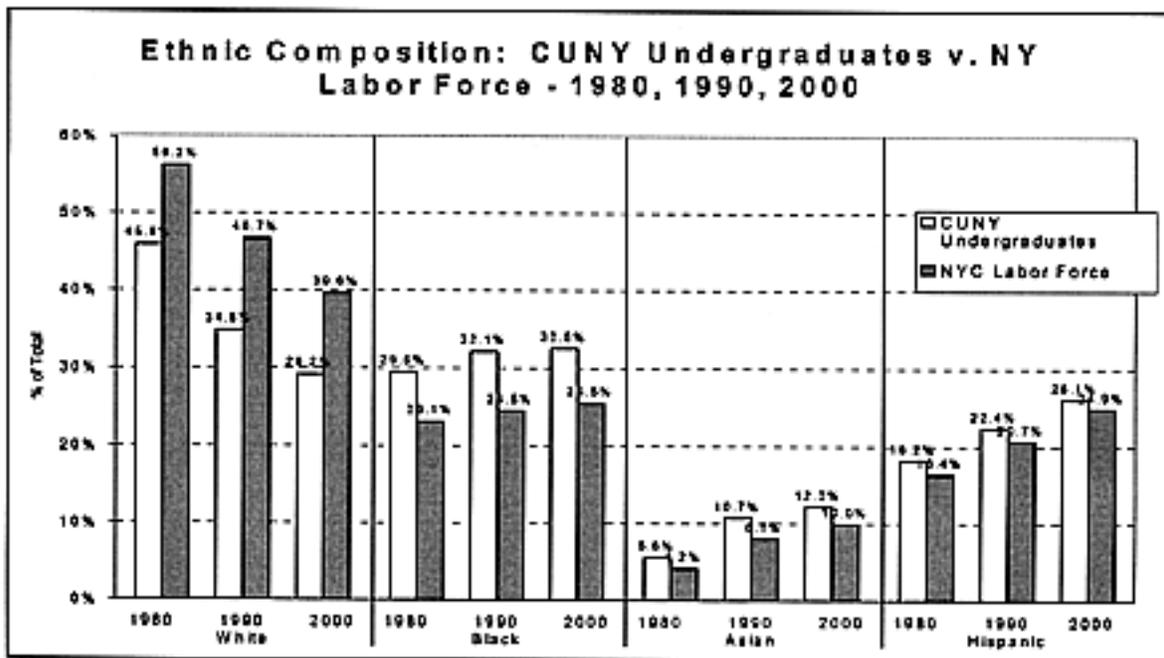


FIGURE 3

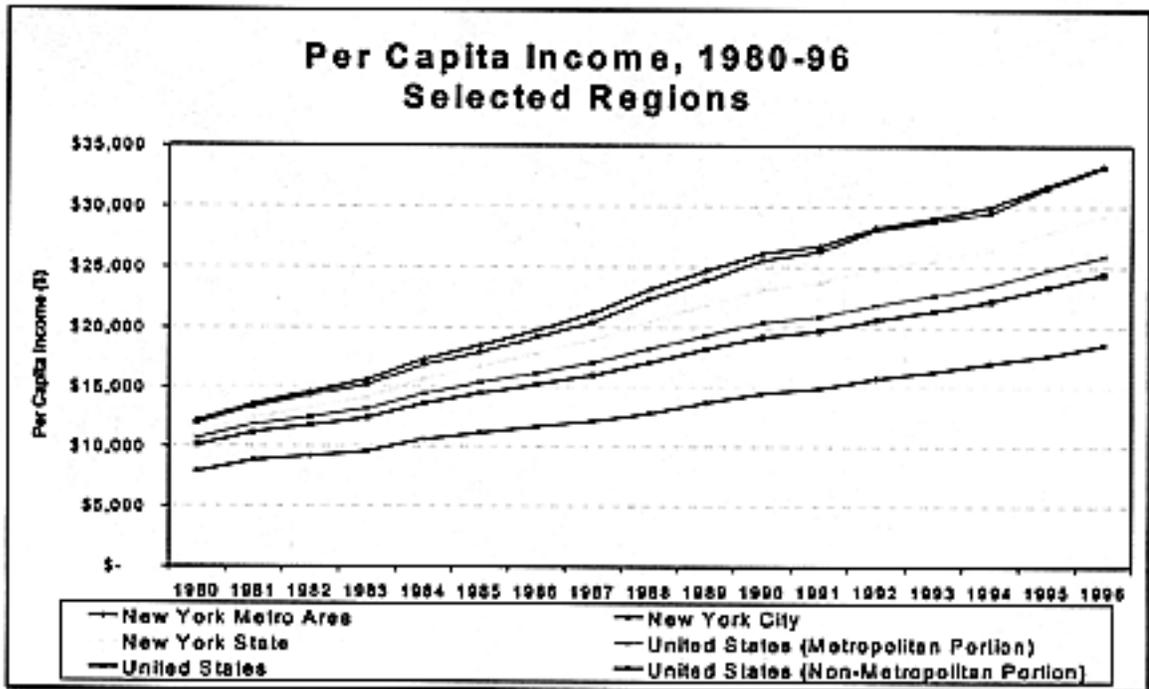
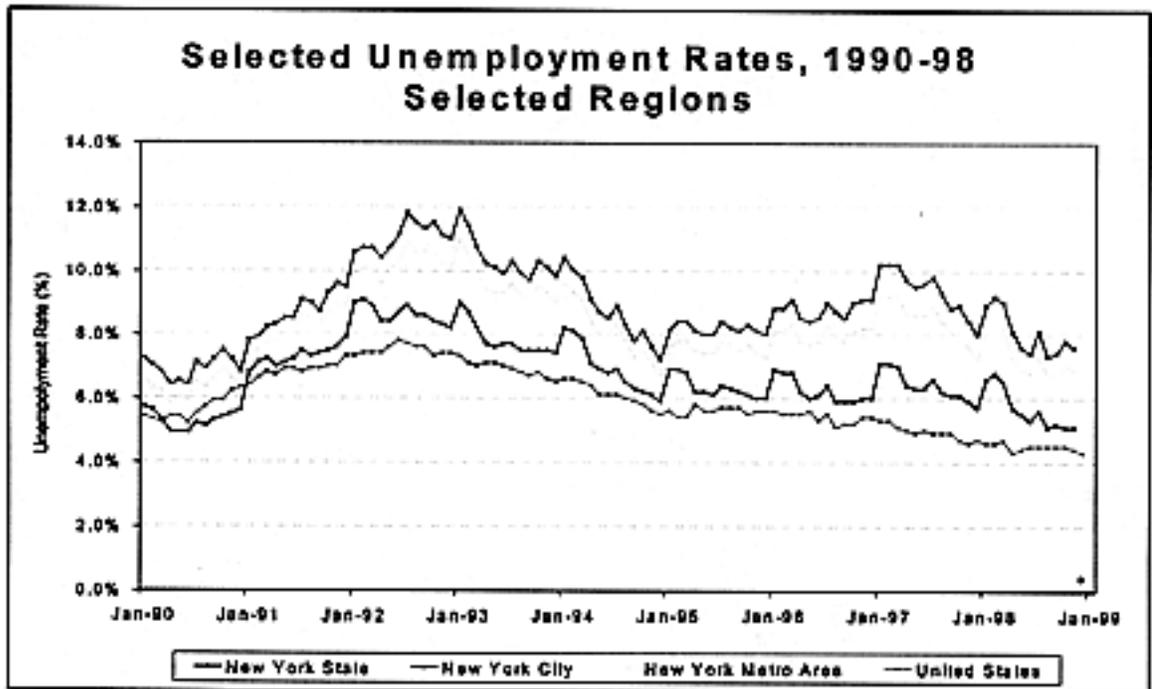


FIGURE 4



Income disparity in New York City is greater and growing much more rapidly than in the nation as a whole. As in the nation, income disparity in New York City is more and more dramatically tied to education. Figure 3 shows that New York City residents have historically enjoyed relatively high levels of personal income. Yet the 1990 census reports that 28.7% of the City's households had annual incomes of \$10,000 or less, more than twice the national average of 12.5%. Figure 4 shows that the mid to late 1990's have seen dramatic improvement, as the unemployment rate in the City has moved from its peak above 11% to less than 8%. The City has fully restored the 360,000 private sector jobs it lost in the recession of the early 1990's. But the City still has disproportionately large numbers of very low-income households. The City also has the highest number of wealthy households in the country. It is easy to see why, when the average salary in the financial sector in 1997 was \$106,040 and the average salary in the software business sector was \$69,250. The City has more college graduates than the nation (23% vs. 20% in 1990), and yet also has more people who have not finished high school (32% vs. 25%).

Recent improvements in the City's economy cannot be sustained without improving and broadening education. Opportunities for less-educated workers are likely to keep declining, while continued increases in the services sector will bring more good jobs to people with computer skills who are literate, can write, and are well-grounded in science and mathematics. New York City urgently needs the most effective possible public education system, including public higher education at CUNY, to build a robust economy for the future.

Finally, New York City is and will continue to be the center of immigration in America. There is a critical need for higher education which addresses the special needs of immigrants, especially those not fluent in English. For all these reasons, CUNY can play an even more important role in the 21st century than it has in the 20th.

New York City is unique in many respects directly pertaining to the kind of higher education opportunities appropriate to its people. Accordingly, the Task Force supports CUNY's continuance as a discrete and independent public university system focused on New York City's special needs and opportunities. CUNY's sheer size—it is the third largest public university system in the United States—its geographic concentration in a single, unified polity, and the unique characteristics of its students are among many factors which counsel against the notion that because the State provides most of its funding, CUNY should be incorporated into SUNY. And yet CUNY's separate status as the public university system serving New York City demands special attention to issues of accountability and governance. Given that fiscal realities make the State the dominant source of CUNY's public funds, it is all too easy for CUNY to become the state's neglected higher-education step-child, while the City's lesser status in funding and governance leaves CUNY in a netherworld so far as political accountability is concerned.

## C. CUNY AND THE NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Any thoughtful appraisal of CUNY, and any effort to chart a strategic vision for its future, must take account of the interdependence of CUNY and the New York City Public Schools (NYCPS). These two enterprises together constitute public education in New York City. They vitally shape one another, for better or for worse. As there is nothing more important to the future of the City than public education, so it is critical that CUNY's relationship with the public schools be mutually reinforcing rather than mutually destructive.

Many of CUNY's problems are directly attributable to the failure of NYCPS and its students to achieve minimal standards of literacy and mathematical understanding before leaving high school. Most of CUNY's students come directly from the City's public schools. Three-quarters of them need remediation, and half need it in more than one basic skill. If the public schools were doing a satisfactory job, these students would be vastly more successful in college, rates of graduation would be higher, and time to degree would be reduced. CUNY could free large instructional resources now devoted to teaching what should have been learned in school. CUNY's standards could be higher and more consistent. Most important, CUNY students could expand their opportunities through higher education of greater breadth and rigor. The City would reap the benefits of a more capable and enlightened citizenry.

CUNY does not bear the prime responsibility for the failures of the public schools. That there is a need for remediation for so many students coming to CUNY is not mainly CUNY's fault. But there are important contributions that CUNY could make to improve student achievement in NYCPS. CUNY could send a clear message to students and teachers as to what levels of academic preparation are essential for senior college or community college admission to various degree programs. CUNY could insist that standards of admission be measured in objective ways that would put CUNY applicants and NYCPS students on notice and in a clear national context. CUNY could provide NYCPS with clear examples of what courses and content meet college-preparation requirements. CUNY could provide NYCPS with well-prepared teachers who are graduates of CUNY's education degree programs. And CUNY could provide effective professional development and instructional support for NYCPS teachers.

CUNY currently is failing the public schools in most, if not all, of these respects. In failing to provide leadership to the schools, CUNY is failing itself. CUNY can play an important role in raising standards in the public schools. Such leadership is well within CUNY's capacity and is essential if the University is to serve its great historical purposes.

The Task Force has a number of recommendations directed to CUNY's role in improving public education. Because CUNY'S fate is tied directly to the performance of the public schools, the Task Force also offers a number of recommendations to the Chancellor and Board of Education. We recognize that our mandate does not extend to the public schools, but the fact is that CUNY must be seen in the perspective of the totality of public education in New York City, kindergarten through college, of which CUNY is the apex and, potentially, an important leader.

## D. A FINAL COMMENT

The focus of this Task Force report is broad and strategic. Our concerns about CUNY at this level should not be understood as meaning that nothing good is happening at CUNY. At the level of individual faculty and students, there is much that is good and even exciting. During the period of our inquiry, two Queens College students won Marshall Fellowships, the first from that College ever so honored. Two CUNY professors won the Pulitzer Prize for a splendid history of the City of New York entitled *Gotham*. These are only a couple of examples among many of outstanding achievement by CUNY students and faculty.

There are encouraging signs at the institutional level as well. The Graduate Center continues to offer a number of highly-ranked doctoral programs, particularly in the humanities. Graduation rates at CUNY's senior colleges are inching upward. Several of the senior colleges, especially Baruch and Queens, have taken steps to raise the academic levels of their incoming students. Interim Chancellor Christoph Kimmich has moved toward multi-year budgeting and has started the process of bringing the campus presidents together to talk about system architecture. The Trustees have insisted on phasing out remediation at the senior colleges, and some of the senior college, in particular Baruch and Queens, have been moving independently in this direction. This move by the Trustees does more than simply deal with remediation. It sends a clear message that CUNY must embrace a sensible differentiation of academic mission as between the senior and community colleges and that the senior colleges must be colleges rather than the passive receiving ends of eroded standards and failed policies of social promotion in the public schools. The Trustees deserve praise for insisting on their positions, despite the predictable furor raised by defenders of the status quo.

Moreover, we have been impressed with the insight and candor of many of CUNY's leaders at both central and campus levels. Most have been scathingly frank about the problems they and their institutions face, and most in fact agree with the need for CUNY to reconstitute itself. In particular, we wish to commend Interim Chancellor Christoph Kimmich and Acting Deputy Chancellor Patricia Hassett for their cooperation, their diligent efforts to help us get information, and the candid insights about CUNY and its governance processes which they have shared.

The Task Force has tried to develop a set of broad, strategic recommendations for CUNY that are sound, achievable, and consistent with CUNY's historic mission of providing broad access to college programs of high quality. We have tried to base our conclusions on facts and objective analysis.

At the same time, we wish to stress the limits of our capacity and our wisdom. CUNY is an extremely large, diverse, and confusing agglomeration of individual institutions shaped over many decades and by local and often parochial interests. Its information systems are poor. The data necessary to make informed judgments about quality and productivity are often lacking or inconsistent. We have had neither the time nor the resources to assemble an independent factual construct of CUNY, and perforce have had to rely on the information currently available at CUNY. No group of outsiders working with limited resources over a period of months on such complex issues can hope to

do more than identify critical issues and offer the broad outlines of institutional strategy for the future. We suspect that we have been more successful in identifying problems that need urgent attention than in fashioning particular solutions. Moreover, we are acutely aware that the issues we address—how to reconcile access and excellence in higher education, how to create effective governance in public universities, how to bring accountability to higher education, how to manifest high standards in urban public education, how to assure that education serves rather than frustrates equal opportunity—are among the most daunting and controversial questions facing our society. Accordingly, the Task Force has tried to approach its work with an appropriate humility and what Learned Hand liked to call “the spirit of liberty—the spirit that is not too sure it is right.”

But an appropriate humility in the face of issues of profound importance must not lead to continued drift. It is time for action. CUNY is in peril. Our investigations, the advice we have received from many quarters, and our analyses of the data that is available all point to the need for decisive, systematic reform. CUNY’s drift must be arrested by a comprehensive strategy of institutional renewal. Clear, rigorous standards of academic achievement must be the foundation of CUNY’s commitment to educational opportunity. In view of the critical importance of CUNY to New York City, the State, and the Nation, we must follow the wisdom of another great American, Louis D. Brandeis: “If we would guide by the light of reason, we must let our minds be bold.” The time is ripe.

# III. Rethinking Open Admissions and Remediation

When open admissions was inaugurated three decades ago, CUNY recognized that many students entering CUNY were not prepared for college work at either the baccalaureate or the associate degree level, and it resolved that the University should undertake to help those students succeed. The Task Force believes that remediation is still an appropriate and valuable endeavor for CUNY community colleges to undertake. We salute CUNY's willingness to step into the breach for high school graduates whom the schools have failed, immigrants, and returning adults.

## A. DISCUSSION

While CUNY's commitment to providing remediation is laudable, we believe that in many important respects the way CUNY goes about remediation is flawed. Indeed, the whole remediation enterprise seems slapdash and symptomatic of the acute problems in CUNY's governance. In the first place, CUNY has failed to do its part in reducing the need for postsecondary remediation; we discuss this problem in detail in Part IV, "CUNY and the Public Schools." In addition, the Task Force has identified the following problem areas, which we discuss below:

- the extensive remedial needs of CUNY's incoming freshmen;
- problems with CUNY's student assessment testing program;
- CUNY's failure to institute systematic, objective remedial exit standards;
- CUNY's failure to ensure that remediation is effective;
- the relationship between financial aid and remediation; and
- the costs of remediation at CUNY.

### 1. CUNY's Incoming Freshmen

The fact that significant numbers of CUNY students are underprepared may not be surprising. Indeed, the poor performance of the City's public schools, in combination with CUNY's failure to institute clear, objective admissions standards, effectively guarantees this unfortunate circumstance. But the Task Force has been shocked by both the scale and the depth of CUNY students' remediation needs. Because 60% of CUNY's incoming freshmen are NYCPS graduates, our description of CUNY's incoming students is largely a description of the public school system's graduates. The data points to an urgent need to help the City's public school students acquire verbal and math skills long before they arrive at CUNY.

Although it might be tempting to argue that the characteristics of CUNY's incoming students excuse CUNY's low graduation rates and poor performance on other outcome measures, to do so

would be irresponsible. CUNY does not fulfill its access mission merely by opening its doors and giving needy New Yorkers a “shot” at a college education. Providing meaningful access requires ensuring that the open door does not become a revolving door.

Accordingly, while the educational level of CUNY’s incoming freshmen constitutes a baseline against which one might assess the value added by a CUNY education, and while it may help to explain why CUNY’s graduation rates are so much lower than national and state averages (see Part V), it should not be construed as providing excuses for the system’s failure – over the course of three decades – to provide effective programs or demonstrate positive student outcomes.

**a) Scale and depth of remediation**

CUNY conducts remediation on a huge scale (**SEE FIGURE 5, PAGE 27**). Nationally, about 40% of public community college freshmen take one or more remedial courses, compared with the 87% of CUNY’s community college freshmen who failed one or more of CUNY’s remedial placement tests. About 22% of the freshmen attending public four-year colleges take one or more remedial courses, compared with the 72% of CUNY senior college freshmen who failed one or more placement tests. At public institutions with high minority student populations, about 43% of freshmen take remedial courses; the percentage of CUNY freshmen who failed one or more placement tests is almost double that. This means more than 9,000 entering community college students and more than 10,000 entering senior college students go into remediation each year at CUNY. In sum, remedial activity at CUNY is roughly three times the national norm for public colleges and universities.

Perhaps even more disturbing is the fact that 55% of CUNY freshmen fail more than one remediation test. Moreover, Figure 6 shows that fully half of all entering CUNY students (61% at community colleges, 43% at senior colleges) are deficient in reading, the most basic of the basic skills. Thus, it is the depth of CUNY students’ remediation needs, as well as the absolute scale of remediation activity at CUNY, that reveals the appalling educational deprivation of so many entering CUNY students. (**SEE FIGURE 6, PAGE 27**)

It is very troubling that most of the entering students requiring such heavy remediation are recent graduates of New York City public high schools. The scale and depth of remediation at CUNY should be a call to arms for the City’s public schools.

**b) SAT data**

The Task Force wanted to have solid, objective information about the academic levels of incoming CUNY students in order to put their academic promise and their remediation needs in a national perspective. It must be emphasized here, as at many points in this report, that one of the most troubling problems undermining the effectiveness of public education in New York City at all levels, including CUNY, is the absence of reliable, nationally comparable information about academic performance. Objective data are available for the approximately one-third of CUNY’s Fall 1997

entrants who took the Scholastic Assessment Test (“SAT”). The SAT – which was conceived by the College Board, and which the College Board administers nationwide to college-bound high school juniors and seniors – consists of a math section and a verbal section. Research has shown the SAT to be a reliable, objective indicator of students’ academic readiness for college; accordingly, it is required for admission to many public colleges. At least 26 U.S. public postsecondary systems require an admissions test, and that, of these, all require either the SAT or its main competitor, the American College Test (“ACT”). We strongly recommend that CUNY require the SAT for all applicants.

RAND found that the SAT scores of the one-third of CUNY freshmen who took the SAT correlated reasonably well with the scores those students got on the reading and math tests (the RAT and the MAT) CUNY gives all freshmen to determine who needs remediation. Using the fall 1997 entering classes, the latest group on which comprehensive data was available, RAND was able to extrapolate from the RAT and MAT test scores taken by all CUNY freshmen to create a comprehensive academic picture of CUNY’s incoming students. RAND found that the CUNY colleges fell into four groupings, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
Estimated Mean  
Total SAT Score  
of Fall 1997  
CUNY Entrants\*

College and Estimated Mean Total SAT Score	National Percentile Range
Baruch - 968 Hunter - 946 Queens - 942 Staten Island (baccalaureate) - 926 Brooklyn - 924 City - 918	30th–40th
John Jay (baccalaureate) - 864 York - 847 Staten Island (associate) - 859	20th–25th
Lehman - 811 Medgar Evers (associate) - 810 Kingsborough - 809 Queensborough - 809 BMCC - 808 N.Y. City Tech - 800 John Jay (associate) - 794	13th–17th (a full standard deviation below the mean)
LaGuardia - 776 Hostos - 747 Bronx - 717	1st–12th

Sources: Klein & Orlando, 14-15;  
College Board website.

\* Information on Medgar Evers’s baccalaureate students not provided due to their small numbers.

The average SAT scores of CUNY students in the top grouping—Baruch, Hunter, Queens, Brooklyn, City, and baccalaureate students at the College of Staten Island—were in the 30th–40th percentile range, compared to college-bound high school seniors nationwide. The average SAT scores of baccalaureate students at John Jay and York and associate degree students at the College of Staten Island were in the 20th–25th percentile range. The average SAT scores of Lehman students and the remainder of associate degree students were in the 13th–17th percentile range, a full standard deviation below the mean. In the bottom tier, the average SAT scores of students at LaGuardia, Hostos, and Bronx Community College were below the 12th percentile.

According to a “college qualification index” developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (“NCES”), which measures students’ academic readiness to attend a 4-year college or university, an SAT score between the 50th and 75th percentile would be used to classify a student as “moderately qualified”; an SAT score between the 25th and 50th percentile (the average for most CUNY baccalaureate programs) would be used to classify a student as “minimally qualified”; and an SAT score below the 25th percentile (the average for John Jay, York, and Lehman baccalaureate students) would be used to classify a student as “marginally or not qualified.”

The SAT data on the 1997 entering classes point to important conclusions about incoming CUNY freshmen. First, the academic levels of CUNY freshmen entering the community colleges are very, very low. Second, the mean SAT at John Jay, York, and Lehman is in the bottom quarter nationwide, which means that large fractions of students in those institutions—probably one-third or more—have preparedness at rock-bottom levels. Third, even CUNY’s most selective college, Baruch, attracts freshmen with a mean SAT score well below the national average. **(SEE FIGURES 7 & 8, PAGES 28 & 29).** The Task Force is aware that several senior colleges, most notably Baruch and Queens, are making strong efforts to raise the SAT levels of their entering freshmen and are reporting recent success. We applaud these efforts, but lacked comprehensive data with which to assess them.

Although CUNY clearly attracts some top students, in 1997 not a single CUNY senior college was attracting a student body that would fall into the top half of college student bodies nationwide in academic promise for college. CUNY is starkly unique among American public university systems of any size in having not a single senior college whose entering students are on average in the first or second quartile of academic achievement and promise. Moreover, no other public university system in America even close to CUNY’s size serves students overall with such low levels of college readiness. If CUNY were the product of rational planning, which it plainly is not, one would have to conclude that policymakers were of the view that the only public higher education opportunities needed by New York City residents were at the lower ends of the spectrum of academic preparation. This is obviously not the case. This must change. CUNY must give at least two of its senior colleges a mandate to become flagship institutions which can attract student bodies of high academic promise.

### c) Student Demographics

There is a widespread impression that CUNY's extraordinarily high levels of remediation, as well as other features such as longer time to degree and low graduation rates, are a result of certain unique characteristics of the CUNY student body: that it is "nontraditional" in being much older (many more adults and parents with family responsibilities), that it includes many working students, that the students are disproportionately poor, that there are higher percentages of immigrants for whom English is not their native language, and that there are higher percentages of racial minorities. There is some truth to these points, but the characteristics of CUNY's students do not explain CUNY's problems.

The Task Force does not dispute the incredible diversity of CUNY's student body (we present the relevant statistics in the following paragraphs). But in the thirty years since open admissions was established, CUNY has done far too little to tailor the traditional college model to its "nontraditional" student body. (See Section A.3, which discusses CUNY's failure to institute systematic ESL tests, and Section A.5, which discusses the fact that CUNY students are encouraged to matriculate full-time in a degree program, with little or no regard to their educational goals, remedial need, or employment commitments.)

Black and Hispanic students each make up just under one-third of CUNY freshmen, whites make up one-quarter, and Asian students one-eighth. Thirty percent of CUNY students reported that they are or have been married, and almost as many say they are supporting children. Half of CUNY's freshmen are foreign-born, though only 16% report that they are most comfortable in a language other than English.

The high average age of CUNY's undergraduates is a frequently cited statistic. This phenomenon is not wholly attributable to high numbers of students delaying enrollment more than one year after high school graduation, however. (In Fall 1997, 77% of CUNY's senior college entering freshmen were 19 years old or younger, and 76% were current high school graduates; the comparable figures for community college freshmen were 50% and 46%.) Rather, the high average of CUNY undergraduates is due in large part to the fact that both NYCPS and CUNY students take much longer than average to graduate. It is also interesting to note that CUNY's older students require remediation at slightly lower rates than the younger students.

The percentage of CUNY students reporting household income under \$20,000 is just over one-third at the senior colleges and just over one-half at the community colleges. About one-third of all CUNY students reported household income between \$20,000 and \$39,999; 10%-15% reported household income between \$40,000 and \$59,999; and the remainder said their household income was \$60,000 or more. Almost three-quarters of CUNY students reported that they are either not employed or working only part-time, while just over one-quarter said they work 35 or more hours per week.

Roughly three-quarters of CUNY's freshmen enroll full-time (**SEE FIGURE 9, PAGE 30**). The percentage of senior college students who attend full-time is about ten percentage points less

than the national average, but the percentage of CUNY community college students who attend full-time is double the national average.

## **2. College-readiness and remediation exit standards**

The most important problem with the way in which CUNY conducts remediation is its failure to establish clear standards to determine college readiness and parallel standards of academic capacity necessary to exit remediation. Instead, exit standards are set by each college's remediation instructors. Standards of college readiness also vary; not until Fall 1998 was a university-wide minimum passing score applied to the Reading Assessment Test, and CUNY has never tried to determine whether the cutoff scores for any of its assessment tests are valid. In combination with CUNY's failure to assess the skill gains of its remedial students and its failure to evaluate the comparative effectiveness of its various remedial approaches (see Sections 3 and 4, below), this situation leaves CUNY's college programs vulnerable to the presence of large numbers of students who are not prepared to do college-level work.

## **3. Student assessment testing**

CUNY is to be commended for requiring all students to take tests to assess whether students have basic academic skills in reading, writing, and math to do college-level work. Such tests are absolutely necessary when high school records and diplomas are unreliable as they are in New York City. None of our criticism of CUNY's remediation efforts should be taken to suggest that CUNY should not measure basic skills and attempt to remedy skills deficiencies. But CUNY's remediation efforts suffer from multiple problems:

- The tests do not meet generally accepted scientific standards of reliability, validity, and fairness. The CUNY writing assessment test, in particular, is highly unreliable. An inability to write is obviously crippling to the possibility of successfully pursuing a college education and must be addressed. But CUNY's failure to implement an effective and reliable writing test with which to assess entering students prevents it from accurately identifying those who require remedial instruction.
- Despite the large numbers of foreign-born and Puerto Rican students at CUNY, the University has not made any systematic provision for assessing students for whom English is a second language.
- None of CUNY's remediation assessment tests typically is used to make careful diagnostic assessments of what remedial students need to correct their deficiencies.
- The tests are currently being administered under inadequate security conditions, and this problem is likely to increase unless changes are made.
- CUNY has no systematic, objective way to measure student progress through remediation, or to determine what students have actually accomplished in remediation.

FIGURE 5

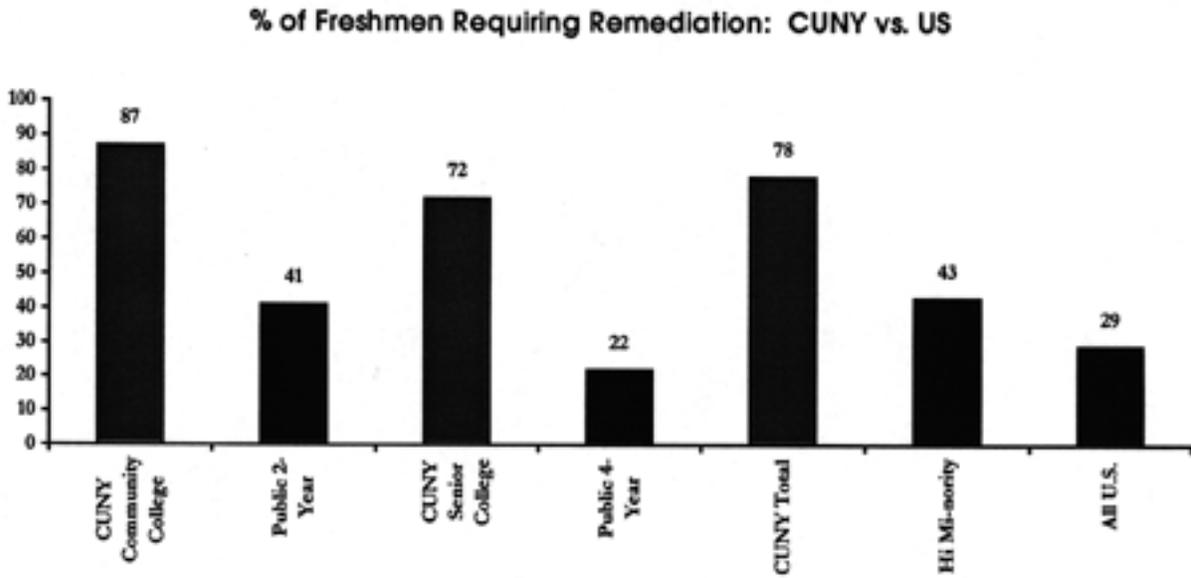


FIGURE 6

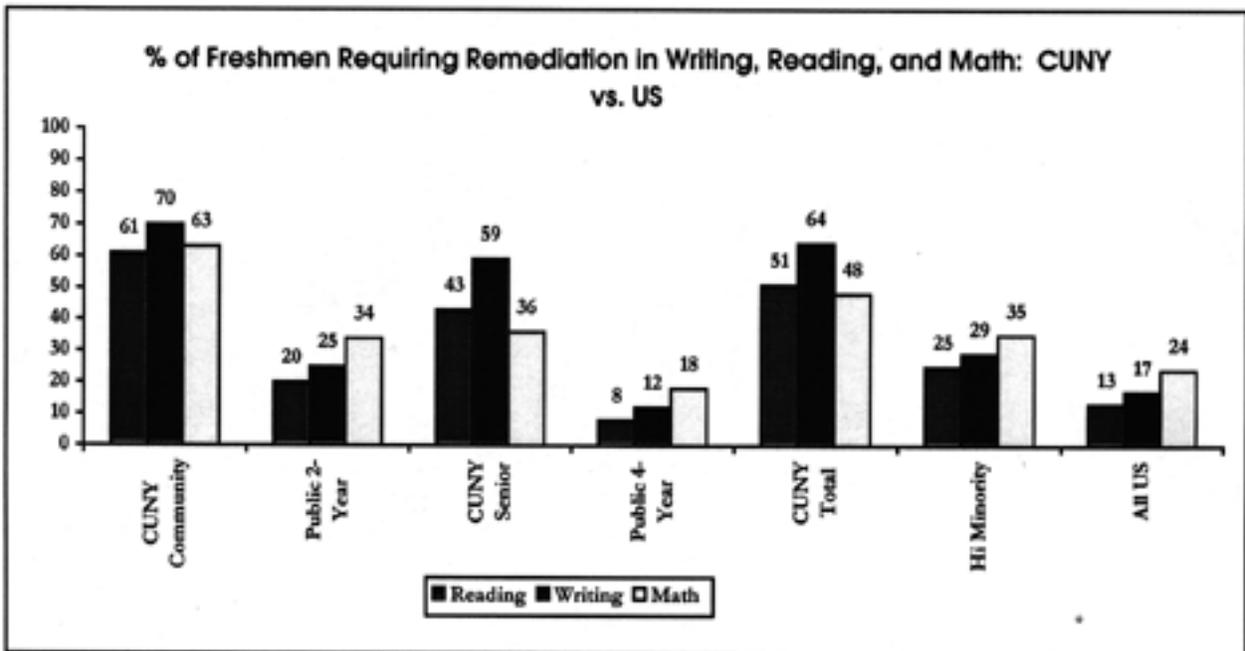


FIGURE 7

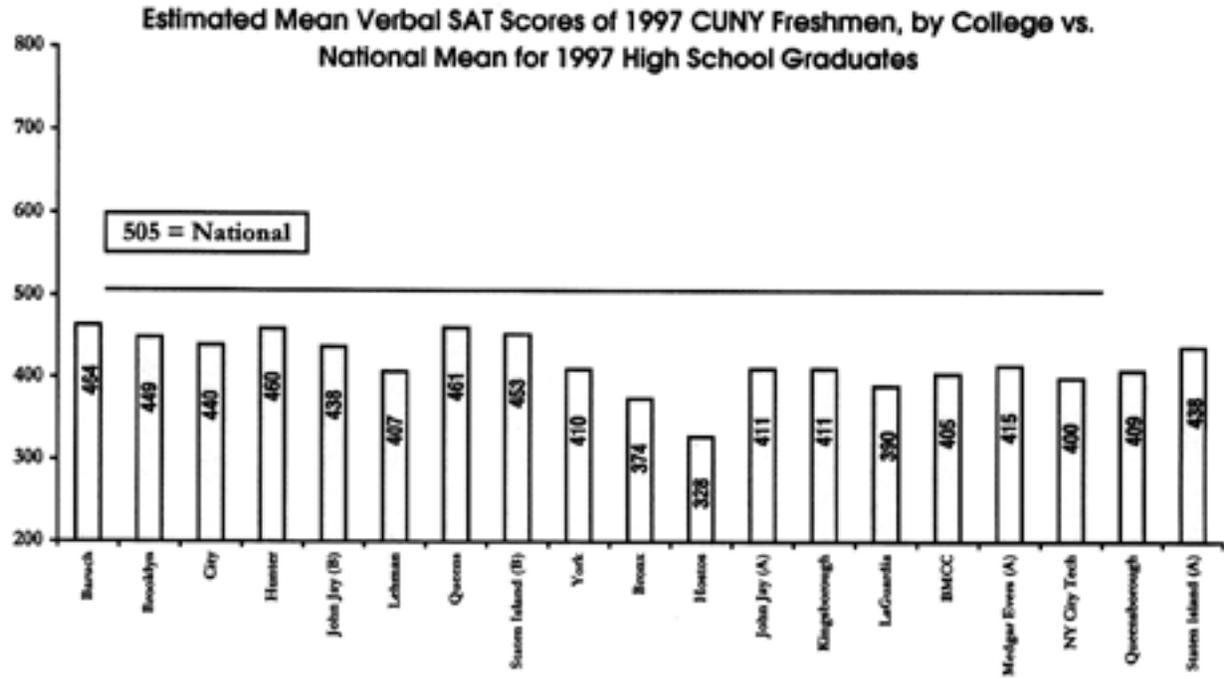


FIGURE 8

Estimated Mean Math SAT Scores of 1997 CUNY Freshmen, by College vs. National Mean for 1997 High School Graduates

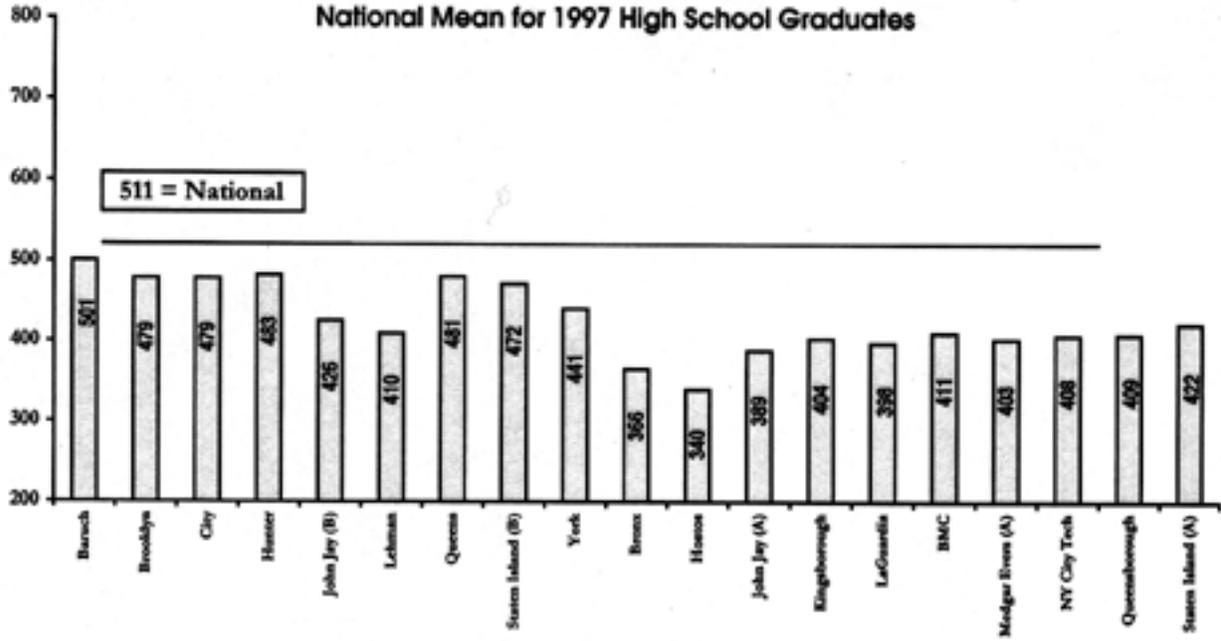
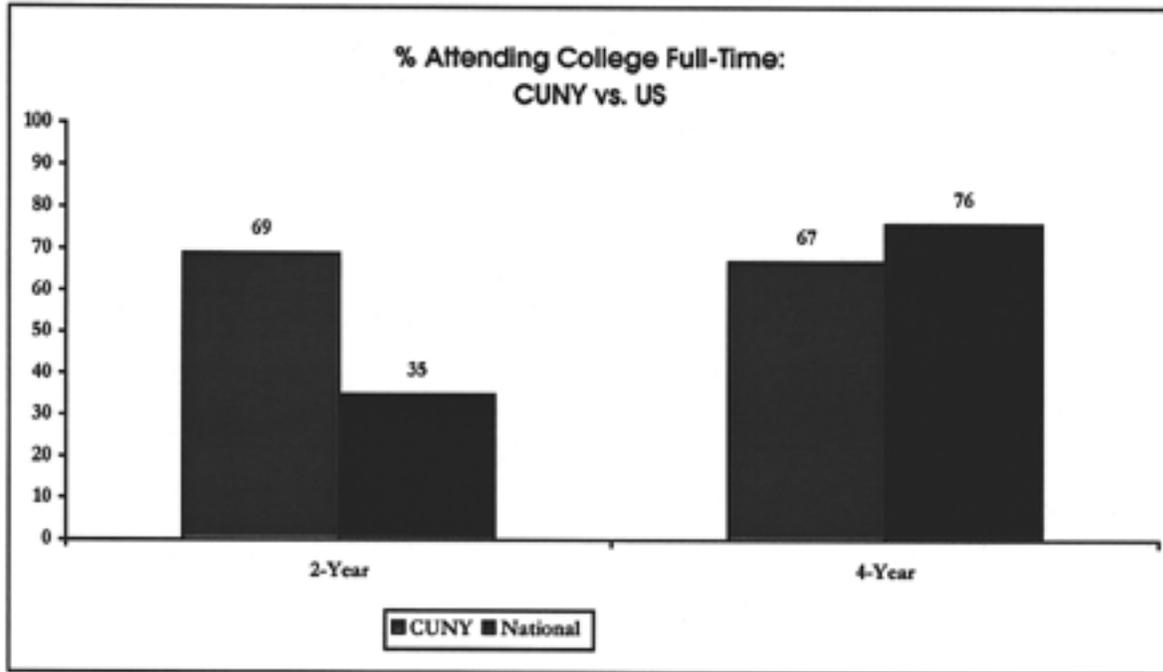


FIGURE 9



#### 4. Research, accountability, and quality control

Remediation at CUNY is a black box in terms of useful information. It is virtually inevitable that a black box in terms of information will turn into a Pandora's Box in terms of academic standards in CUNY's college programs.

CUNY's different campuses each employ a wide variety of remedial approaches. For example, some campuses believe in immersion and strict time limits, while others believe remediation works best over longer periods of time if students work on basic skills while they are taking substantive, college courses. Moreover, CUNY's remediation instructors are largely free to design the courses they teach. There is nothing wrong with a system of institutions such as CUNY approaching remediation in different ways. A healthy competition among approaches will produce innovation, efficiency, and choice. But this only happens if there is an effort to measure what works and useful information about outcomes is made available.

Given the large scale and variety of its remediation efforts, CUNY ought to be the world's leading repository of knowledge about

- the cognitive needs of different types of remediation students;
- which instructional methods are most effective;
- which professors with what kind of training are most effective; and
- which institutions are best able to focus their energy and skills on remediation programs that work.

*Is a professor at a senior college, with a Ph.D. from a leading research institution, trained to teach college and graduate students, and expected to participate in important research, likely to be more or less effective in teaching basic skills than a developmental skills instructor or a former high school teacher?*

*Is a senior college organized for teaching and research in the liberal arts and sciences likely to do as well with remediation as an institution focused on two-year career education?*

*What are the different opportunity costs of having various individuals or institutions pursuing remediation at the expense of other things?*

*Is remediation best pursued in concentrated form and under constraints of time, through immersion, or is it preferable to "mainstream" remediation students in regular college courses while still in remediation?*

*Does the answer change depending on what a given student's academic deficit is, whether it is math only, for example, or lack of fluency in English?*

Curiously, CUNY as a system appears to be agnostic about these questions. CUNY has made little effort to determine which approaches work well or badly for particular student populations. Neither we nor CUNY knows whether and how many remediation students are in fact mastering basic academic skills sufficient for college readiness. Moreover, there has been little analysis to determine which of CUNY's various institutions and programs are best suited to provide which types of remediation,

based on their academic missions and their track records. Remediation is an obvious case for a coherent system to commit itself to careful institutional mission differentiation, based on which institutions and programs succeed and are most productive, and which institutions and faculties should be given responsibility and support. The information that does exist tends to be anecdotal or unreliable.

No doubt much of the practice of remediation at the individual campus level has merit in terms of student outcomes and efficiency. But because objective, reliable exit standards for remediation are not required, and because no other objective information about student outcomes is systematically assessed, it is equally likely that much of the practice of remediation is ineffective and wasteful. CUNY cannot say with any confidence whether the skills of its remedial students have in fact improved – much less make discriminating judgments about which programs and approaches best serve the particular needs of particular students. Because CUNY has no way to judge which of its remediation programs are working well, it is impossible to tell whether remediation is worth the substantial resources CUNY is investing in it (see Section 6, below). CUNY has not succeeded in addressing these questions through normal avenues of academic planning, which is why the Trustees have felt bound to intervene.

Against the paucity of information about the effectiveness of remediation at CUNY, several realities loom large. The fact that on most campuses, time to degree is high and graduation rates are low, are probably a sign of ineffective remediation. Less measurable, there is a chorus of complaint, from CUNY professors, employers of CUNY graduates, and outside observers to the effect that large numbers of CUNY students who pass through remediation are not prepared for college work.

## **5. Paying for remediation**

One cannot make sense of CUNY's remedial problems without understanding the influence of state and federal financial aid laws. Because many of CUNY's remedial students are economically disadvantaged and rely on financial aid in order to attend college, the academic eligibility requirements of the major financial aid programs have an enormous impact on remediation at CUNY. This impact is magnified because CUNY conducts remediation on such a grand scale. The two largest sources of financial aid for CUNY students are New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) awards and federal Pell grant awards. We estimate that in 1997–98, CUNY's basic skills students received \$91.8 million in TAP and \$96.8 million in Pell funds.

Recognizing that many high school graduates need remediation at the postsecondary level, the federal Pell legislation allows students taking remedial courses to receive federal aid for up to one year of purely remedial coursework. New York State's TAP regulations, by contrast, contain a number of requirements that make it difficult for postsecondary students to finance remedial work:

- TAP awards are generally limited to four academic years of study.
- Only full-time, degree students who are taking at least three college-level credits during their first semester and at least six college-level credits in each subsequent semester are eligible for TAP.

- In order to maintain satisfactory program pursuit and academic progress, students must complete a specified number of courses, accumulate a specified number of college-level credits, and achieve a certain minimum GPA. These standards are ratcheted up with each passing semester.
- Students who fall behind on the program pursuit or academic progress requirements and want to restore their TAP eligibility have limited options, including taking a leave of absence of at least one calendar year or transferring to another college.

The State's financial aid rules have serious drawbacks for CUNY students. The rules drive CUNY's remedial students to matriculate full-time in a degree program and sign up simultaneously for remedial and credit-level courses in order to be able to afford to attend college. This effect is dramatically illustrated when one looks at the proportion of CUNY undergraduates who begin college as full-time degree students. The majority of CUNY students attend full-time and are matriculated in degree programs, and about three-quarters of degree-seeking freshmen are enrolled full-time. The percentage of CUNY community college students who attend full-time is double the national average.

In turn, the presence of large numbers of underprepared students, TAP-dependent freshmen matriculated full-time in degree programs drives CUNY to design – and advise these students to sign up for – undemanding courses that carry at least three college-level credits. Despite such efforts, however, large numbers of incoming CUNY students are unprepared to handle even a watered-down full-time course load. In Fall 1997, for example, one-third of all baccalaureate freshmen and almost half of all associate degree freshmen failed one or more courses during their first semester. Clearly, the combination of financial aid rules that tighten each semester and CUNY policies that allow severely underprepared students to enroll full-time and take credit-level courses can overwhelm students.

When these overwhelmed students fall behind on TAP's academic requirements, State law provides that they can restore their TAP eligibility by taking a leave of absence of at least one calendar year or transferring to another college. These rules go a long way toward explaining two otherwise mysterious phenomena at CUNY: the “stop-out” phenomenon, whereby students take six, eight, or even ten years to earn their degree because they only attend every other year or so; and the phenomenon of students apparently dropping out of CUNY in bad academic standing, only to resurface the following semester as incoming transfer students at another college. Both of these phenomena undoubtedly contribute to CUNY's poor graduation rates (see Part V). These TAP eligibility requirements create an extraordinarily perverse set of incentives to stretch out a college program.

In addition to the program pursuit and academic progress requirements, TAP has strict time limits. Regularly-admitted associate degree students can receive up to six semesters of TAP; regularly-admitted baccalaureate students can receive up to eight semesters; and special program students (College Discovery and SEEK) can receive up to ten semesters. Thus, when students use TAP to finance their remedial courses, they may find that their financial aid eligibility is exhausted before they have accumulated enough credits to graduate.

## 6. Costs: Visible and Hidden

Given the very low levels of academic preparation of most CUNY students, it is not surprising that CUNY devotes considerable resources to remediation. As we discuss in Section 1.a), above, roughly three-quarters of all incoming CUNY degree students fail one or more of the remedial placement tests – 87% of all incoming community college students and 72% of senior college students – and the vast majority of those enroll in one or more basic skills or ESL courses. If we add to them all of the non-degree students served in CUNY’s various adult and continuing education basic skills and ESL courses, literacy and GED preparation courses, immersion programs, and basic education institutes and collaborative programs, the total remedial courseload amounts to roughly 15% of CUNY’s total instructional activity – about 29% at the community colleges, 13% at the comprehensives, and 6% at the non-comprehensive senior colleges. PwC found that CUNY spends about \$124 million on remediation, which is about 8% of all CUNY expenditures, and about 11% of all related CUNY expenditures (*i.e.*, excluding auxiliaries, the law school, the graduate center, construction funds, and scholarship pass-throughs).

It is difficult to put CUNY’s remediation levels in a clear national context. Remediation data are notoriously unreliable and subject to conflicting definitions. However, it seems pretty clear that CUNY does much more remediation than any comparable public university system. The leading analysis of the cost of remediation in colleges nationwide estimates remediation expenditures at between 1% and 2% of all higher education expenditures, compared with between 9% and 11% at CUNY. In sum, not only is remedial activity at CUNY roughly three times the national norm for public colleges and universities, it is at least four times more costly in its totality.

The figures above concern remediation efforts and expenditures that can be measured. It must be emphasized that the hidden costs of remediation are almost certainly greater than the costs that are visible and can be measured. Hidden are the costs associated with having under-prepared students in regular college programs, because such students either were passed through remediation programs without having actually learned basic skills necessary for successful college work, or were not correctly identified as needing remediation in the first place. Because (1) CUNY has never determined whether the cutoff scores on its assessment tests are valid, (2) CUNY’s writing assessment test has an unacceptably low degree of reliability, and (3) CUNY does not have objective remedial exit standards, it is impossible to know how many unprepared students pass through to CUNY’s college programs. The Task Force suspects that the number is high, probably close to one-third of CUNY’s college students who embark on college programs. (The percentage of unprepared students in more advanced courses will drop, of course, because attrition of unprepared students will tend to be higher.) These students will be unable to read with understanding an original source document in American history or a chapter in an introductory economics textbook, or to write a coherent paper about anything.

The fact that the costs of having unprepared students in college programs are very difficult to measure does not mean they are insubstantial. The costs include the following:

- students who confront life without basic skills;

- the waste of unprepared students' time in courses and classes that are incomprehensible;
- poor use of prepared students' time, to the extent courses are watered down or classes distracted because of unprepared students;
- the distraction of professors from college-level teaching; and
- the erosion of standards that may result.

## B. RECOMMENDATIONS

The problems concerning remediation at CUNY do not prove that CUNY should cease to provide remediation. On the contrary, the Task Force recognizes that the continued provision of remediation at CUNY is both necessary and appropriate. Even if CUNY and the NYCPS implement significant reforms aimed at reducing the need for postsecondary remediation, such as those we recommend in Part IV, raising standards in the public schools is the work of years. Unfortunately, therefore, CUNY will continue to be presented with large numbers of high school graduates who lack basic academic skills for several more years at least. We believe these students should have opportunities for remediation and, if successful, for college programs.

Moreover, even when the public schools raise standards to the point that a high school diploma actually signifies high school levels of proficiency in reading, writing and math, there will continue to be students who have academic potential but who nevertheless require remediation as a prelude to matriculation in college programs, as well as in continuing education and vocational training programs. For example:

- Immigrants and other new arrivals to New York City may have the capacity and commitment to succeed in college programs but may not have had opportunity to go to good primary and secondary schools.
- Other immigrants may have solid academic credentials for college but lack fluency in English; they should have the opportunity to get the language skills they need to take advantage of higher education.
- Adults returning to college after years away from academic work may well need some brush-up in basic skills—especially in math—and yet be strong candidates for college programs.

The Task Force believes that it is appropriate for at least some of CUNY's community colleges to provide remediation for these students – but only on certain conditions:

- CUNY must recognize remediation for what it is: an unfortunate necessity, thrust upon CUNY by the failure of the schools, and a distraction from the main business of the University.
- CUNY must do everything in its power to minimize the need for remediation by strengthening education in the K-12 system. We discuss this issue further in Part IV, below.
- CUNY must rethink open admissions to locate responsibility for remediation at the commu-

nity college level and to ensure that CUNY's senior colleges admit only those students who are prepared to succeed in college-level work.

- CUNY should set appropriate time limits for remediation.
- CUNY must establish clear standards of college readiness appropriate to the academic proficiency required by different CUNY institutions and programs. Only those students who are prepared to succeed may enroll in college-level courses. CUNY must also establish parallel exit proficiencies for its remedial programs.
- CUNY must overhaul its student assessment testing program to ensure that students are placed at the appropriate level, that their specific remedial needs are diagnosed, that they progress and improve their skills at an acceptable rate, and that they have achieved remedial exit proficiencies.
- CUNY must determine which of its various remedial programs and approaches are most effective at meeting students' diverse educational needs; must hold administrators and instructors accountable for improving students' skills; and must ensure that its remedial program offerings are consistently of good quality.
- Students must be able to obtain remediation without depleting their college financial aid.
- Finally, prospective CUNY students must be afforded a variety of remediation options that meet their individual needs.

At present, remediation at CUNY meets none of these conditions. The following sections address each condition in turn.

## **1. Reinventing Open Admissions**

In the context of objective information about student preparedness (see Part IV), the Task Force supports the principle of open admissions, in the sense that CUNY as a system should provide educational opportunity for all New Yorkers who have completed high school. However, because remediation is so far removed from the institutional mission of senior colleges, and its pedagogy so foreign to the academic preparation of professors trained to teach college and graduate students, placement of the remediation function in a large, complex university system should reside in the community colleges, not in senior colleges. In this Section, we detail our recommendations for reinventing open admissions to locate responsibility for remediation at the community college level and to ensure that CUNY's senior colleges admit only those students who are prepared to succeed in college-level work.

We believe that CUNY should provide a range of senior college opportunities to all New Yorkers who have the academic preparation in reading, writing, and math to benefit from and participate constructively in baccalaureate-level programs of study. This range should run from top-tier highly selective institutions, to middle-tier institutions, to less selective four-year institutions. We believe that community colleges should offer admission to associate degree programs to persons who have preparation levels that will enable them to succeed. Beyond that, community colleges should offer appropriate remediation, adult education, and vocational programs to persons who need education in basic skills

and are not prepared for senior college-level programs. In reinventing open admissions, CUNY must recognize that it is demoralizing to all concerned and depressing of standards for students who lack basic academic skills to be admitted to college programs. Students should not be admitted to college courses of study at either senior or community colleges unless they possess the capacity to participate in such programs and the academic ability to have a reasonable likelihood of success.

Degree programs in senior and community colleges have extremely important work to do with very limited resources of money and time. Any baccalaureate program worthy of the name must educate students broadly in the humanities, the natural sciences and the social sciences; encourage a critical independence of intellect and judgment; enable lucid writing and speaking; and require in-depth study of at least one major academic discipline. Students who cannot read or write at college levels, or lack mathematical understanding necessary to study the natural sciences, economics, or political science, will not only be frustrated in their own efforts, but will undermine the ability of other students and faculty to pursue their work. If they are awarded degrees, their degrees will lose their value as educational credentials. As Dr. Lois Cronholm, Baruch's interim president, has written: "I defy anyone to find faculty members teaching college courses who would deny the depreciation of standards that comes from trying to teach underprepared students. And too often faculty members find themselves blamed if they fail to pass these students; too often entire colleges are castigated for a poor graduation rate when policy requires them to admit underprepared students. Small wonder that eventually many lower their standards for graduation as they attempt to meet the impossible conditions thrust on them. Curricular deflation and grade inflation are two of the highest cost we are paying for these policies."

Admissions standards should be different for community college associate's degree programs, but are no less essential. Associate's degree programs prepare students for critically important careers in which success absolutely depends on certain basic academic skills. To paraphrase John Gardner, a first-rate nurse is infinitely more valuable to society than a second-rate philosopher. Nurses, x-ray technicians, real estate brokers, bookkeepers, computer programmers, and secretaries all need to know how to read, to handle numbers, to manage technical documents, to communicate effectively orally and in writing. The academic skills may be less than those required for baccalaureate programs for accountants, financial analysts, teachers or those preparing for graduate study, but it is equally critical that standards be clear, be assessed, and be satisfied.

Accordingly, one of the most constructive steps that CUNY can take to renew itself and to help NYCPS raise standards is to promulgate a spectrum of clear, objective admission requirements, keyed to the academic preparation required for different types of institutions and programs.

1. To assure that New Yorkers have the opportunity for public higher education of the highest quality, CUNY should mandate that at least two senior colleges adopt rigorous standards of admissions. These should include requirements of the Regents Diploma, SAT scores in the vicinity of 1200 and high school class rank in the top 10 to 15 percent. SAT scores and class rank should be mutually offsetting. These colleges should be encouraged to raise their admissions standards if student demand allows. The aim should be to assure

that CUNY offers students college options as excellent as the top colleges in other large public university systems.

2. A second tier of senior colleges should have admissions standards that are somewhat more relaxed but that still ensure that students have the capacity for baccalaureate programs of clear and consistent quality. For example, requirements might include SAT scores in the vicinity of 1000 and high school class rank in the top 25 percent. Again, these should be offsetting, with higher class rank justifying admission with lower SAT scores, and vice versa.
3. A third tier of senior colleges and baccalaureate programs in hybrid institutions should be available for students whose preparation levels are minimally sufficient for success in four-year programs. Admissions standards for such institutions might be set as requiring SAT scores in the range of 800 and class ranking in the top half.
4. Community colleges should be open to all other high school graduates, either for associate degree programs or remediation. Associate degree programs should have clear standards of admissions, keyed to the requirements of those programs. Students who require remediation should not be admitted into associate programs until they have passed objective remediation exit standards.
5. Finally, CUNY should ensure that all students who are initially placed into remedial or lower-tier programs have opportunities to demonstrate that they can satisfy explicit admissions standards and proceed to higher levels of college study or basic skills preparations. In this way, the clear, objective admissions standards we recommend in Part IV.C.1 will serve to enhance opportunity as well as support and academic achievement.

## **2. Rethinking remediation's place at CUNY**

CUNY must recognize remediation for what it is. Remediation at CUNY may be necessary and legitimate to keep open the doors of opportunity. But in the case of high school graduates coming directly to college, remediation is an unfortunate necessity, thrust upon the colleges by the failure of the schools, and a distraction from the main business of the University.

It is too obvious for argument that the best time and place for students to learn to read and write and to understand math is in school. Primary and secondary schools that fail to equip their students with these basic academic skills are not only failing to prepare them for college, but denying them an elementary education as well. Students who arrive at college unable to read, write or compute have already wasted much of their opportunity for learning. The fact that CUNY should not abandon such students does not diminish the tragic failure of educational opportunity such students have already suffered.

By the same token, every hour and every dollar spent by CUNY teaching recent high school graduates what they should have learned in school is time and money diverted from CUNY's central mission. CUNY was not conceived to be a second-chance high school. The City and the State have invested CUNY with a different mandate: to offer first-rate college-level programs to those who are prepared to succeed. Accordingly, remediation should exist in due proportion to the central work of the University.

We stress these obvious points because attitudes matter. Acknowledging that the need for remediation for a majority of CUNY students represents the failure of the K-12 system is the first step towards helping the schools improve. We agree with Dr. Lois Cronholm, Baruch's Interim President, who has written "It is our education system, and not the student, that is most in need of remediation." In sum, CUNY must reconceptualize remediation in order to reform it.

### **3. Standards of college readiness and congruent remediation exit proficiencies**

There are many reasons why CUNY ought to insist on clear standards and accountability in its remediation programs.

- CUNY devotes a lot of resources and faculty energy to remediation, and many students devote a lot of their time and resources. These resources ought to be spent efficiently.
- Even more important, if remediation fails to work and students are passed through to college programs, the consequences for the student and for the institution are likely to be demoralizing and corrosive of standards in ways that will cause many other students to suffer. Where remediation is an avenue to matriculation in college programs, it must be successful; the integrity of college programs should not be eroded by the presence of unprepared students.
- The Task Force has come to appreciate that effective remediation is hard, complex work; it requires pedagogical expertise and institutional focus. CUNY needs standards to improve the quality of its remediation efforts, and to judge what works and what doesn't.

Accordingly, CUNY must establish systematic standards of college readiness and corresponding exit standards for remediation.

### **4. Student assessment testing**

With the guidance of independent experts, CUNY must replace its current student assessment program with one that is consistent with modern assessment science. There must be objective, reliable, and informative assessment at every stage of CUNY's remedial education programs, especially at the entry and exit points. In particular:

- CUNY must replace its current tests with valid and reliable instruments that enable it to diagnose students' basic skills and ESL needs with precision, measure skill improvements, and compile the student outcome measures required under a performance-based funding system (see Part VI).
- CUNY should immediately discontinue use of the WAT and, as a stopgap measure, replace it with either the College Board's Accuplacer or ACT's Compass writing assessment test.
- CUNY must also replace the RAT and the MAT with independently designed, nationally normed instruments.
- CUNY must implement specialized assessment for ESL students.
- CUNY must back its remediation exit standards with valid and reliable post-tests that can determine whether students are in fact ready for college-level work.

## 5. Paying for remediation

The Task Force believes that students in need of remediation should not have to use their college financial aid dollars to pay for it. Accordingly, we make the following recommendations:

- New York State should review and revise the rules of the Tuition Assistance Program (“TAP”) to eliminate the availability of college financial aid dollars for remedial education.
- At the same time, New York City and New York State must recognize that remedial education is an unfortunate necessity that is not going to disappear in the short run, and the Mayor and the Governor must work together to identify funds that can be used to finance it.
- New York City should coordinate the budgets of the many publicly-funded vocational, adult education, literacy, workforce development, and related programs already operating throughout the five boroughs, and identify which funds could be leveraged to finance remedial education for prospective CUNY students. Examples of programs that might be tapped to fund remedial education include the City’s Employment Preparation Education program and the federal government’s Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, Welfare-to-Work, and Workforce Investment programs.
- New York City should consider shifting the costs of postsecondary remediation of recent high school graduates to the K-12 system, as has been proposed in Texas, Florida, New Jersey, Montana, and Virginia. In this way, the budget of NYCPS would be linked to its success in improving the college-preparedness of high school graduates. (See Part VI, which contains the Task Force’s recommendations for linking CUNY’s budget – and the budgets of the individual colleges – to their success in achieving institutional goals).

Freeing remediation from TAP’s full-time matriculation requirements will enable CUNY to offer a variety of remediation options tailored to meet students’ educational needs. While many of CUNY’s remedial students want to prepare to enter an academic degree program, others want to prepare for vocational training, or to enhance their general literacy or English fluency as goals in themselves. For these latter groups, CUNY should expand remedial offerings outside the context of its undergraduate degree programs. Students also vary in their abilities: some students’ basic skills deficits are so deep that it is highly unlikely they will be successful in reaching levels of preparation necessary for college study. Such students should be given remediation options that are less ambitious in their educational objectives. It is far better that such students get the skills need for vocational training, for general literacy, or for English fluency, without wasting their time and money in remediation programs that aim to teach quadratic equations or how to write at college levels of sophistication, when such outcomes are extremely unlikely.

## 6. Competition and choice of remediation

We believe that other entities should be encouraged to provide remedial education alongside CUNY’s community colleges. Students in New York City deserve the opportunity to choose among remediation programs of proven effectiveness, tailored to suit their diverse needs. In addition, stu-

dents deserve the opportunity to obtain remediation before they leave high school. The introduction of competition and choice would benefit students directly, by providing them with a range of options, and indirectly, by stimulating innovation, improvement, and accountability in the public educational system.

The Task Force recommends that CUNY and New York City implement a managed competition model of providing postsecondary remediation services: students who need remediation should be given educational vouchers (funded by a mix of public sources) and permitted to purchase remedial education services from the provider of their choice. Providers should be required to use assessment methods that objectively quantify student achievement. They should demonstrate that they offer proven curricula that enable each student to build a solid foundation in basic skills; and instructors trained to deliver those curricula. In a competitive environment providers would offer remediation programs of varying lengths, in a variety of locations, and in a variety of formats, such as lecture, small group, and computer-based instruction.

Students would benefit from a system in which providers of basic skills and ESL instruction compete to offer better quality, in convenient formats, at lower prices. There is some evidence that remediation is a profit center for CUNY, effectively cross-subsidizing other programs. If this is so, creating competition in remediation should lower costs and create the right incentives. CUNY institutions could compete directly in this voucher market, as well as continuing to offer remediation as they currently do. Student choice and performance-based payments for all providers in such a competitive market would increase CUNY's accountability for the quality of its remedial programs. In addition, the quality of student preparedness in CUNY's degree programs would improve, thereby enhancing the quality of the college experience for all students.

The idea of encouraging competition in remediation is not unprecedented. For example, in Florida a recent state law requires community colleges to provide students with the names of third-party providers of remediation—including other academic institutions, adult education programs, and private providers—so that students may shop for less expensive or more effective instruction alternatives. The Florida law is intended to provide students with expanded opportunities while, at the same time, helping them to save money.

The Task Force believes that many organizations could potentially participate in remediation – including for-profit education companies, local independent colleges and universities, publicly-funded adult education programs – and, of course, CUNY itself.<sup>1</sup> Several potential providers have special features that would appeal to certain student populations currently underserved at CUNY. For example, certain private providers offer sophisticated ESL assessment that goes well beyond anything currently offered at CUNY. Many providers offer small-group instruction for as few as three to eight students—ideal for students who require extra attention. Most offer immersion courses, so that students can concentrate on improving basic skills prior to enrolling in college; CUNY's current year-round

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<sup>1</sup> It should be understood that The Edison Project has no interest in participating in such activities.

immersion program is limited to ESL students. And a handful offer open-entry/open-exit courses, so students can fit remedial work into busy schedules. Moreover, several potential providers currently charge less per remedial course than CUNY does, and it is very likely that some of the others would provide greater skill improvements per dollar of tuition than CUNY.

The Task Force has investigated the feasibility of engaging private companies in New York City's postsecondary remediation efforts. Our review indicates that there have been a number of promising small-scale remediation efforts undertaken by several national educational companies such as Kaplan and Sylvan Learning. However, the record is too sparse to demonstrate empirically whether private companies can be successful in this area, whether competition from such companies makes schools or colleges do a better job, and whether private initiatives produce higher quality or lower costs. It seems to us that these questions are important enough to try to answer.

Accordingly, as the first step towards full implementation of managed competition, we recommend that CUNY and the City sponsor a carefully designed and monitored demonstration to test whether a variety of private, non-profit and other public enterprises can improve the teaching of basic skills in public education in New York City by adding their efforts to those of NYCPS and CUNY. We describe how such a competition should be designed and managed in the Task Force staff's report entitled *Analysis of Remedial Education Outsourcing Alternatives: Report to the Mayor's Advisory Task Force on the City University of New York*.

The demonstration we propose must be designed to generate data about remediation success and failure, and insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the various providers. For example, some organizations or CUNY departments might be most effective at teaching ESL, while others might be stronger in math; still others might excel at teaching the students with the very weakest skills. The ultimate objective would be to enable future students to make informed choices and to help CUNY identify both best practices and areas needing improvement in its remediation efforts.

## IV. CUNY and the Public Schools

The Task Force found time and again that the path to understanding and strengthening CUNY led back to NYCPS. We recognize that our mandate does not explicitly extend to the public schools, but the fact is that CUNY and NYCPS together constitute New York City's public education system, and – for better or worse – they shape one another.

The Task Force found that many of CUNY's problems are directly attributable to NYCPS's failure to ensure that its students achieve minimal standards of literacy and math proficiency. Most CUNY students come directly from the City's public schools. About four-fifths of NYCPS graduates who come to CUNY need remediation, and half need it in more than one basic skill. If the public schools were doing a satisfactory job, these students would be vastly more successful in college, rates of graduation would be higher, and time to degree would be reduced. CUNY could free large instructional resources now devoted to teaching what should have been learned in school. CUNY's standards could be higher and more consistent. CUNY students could expand their opportunities through higher education of greater breadth and rigor. The City would reap the benefits of a more capable and enlightened citizenry.

It must be emphasized that the poor performance of significant numbers of New York City's public schools is a longstanding problem rooted in decades of neglect and failed policies. Chancellor Crew has made strong efforts to raise standards and we applaud him. He deserves full support. Because CUNY's fate is tied directly to the performance of the public schools, the Task Force offers, with respect, a number of recommendations to the NYCPS Chancellor and the Board of Education. These are presented in Section B, below.

At the same time, the Task Force rejects any implication of determinism arising from the K-16 perspective that might tend to lower expectations for CUNY. We grant that CUNY does not bear the prime responsibility for the failures of the public schools, nor is the fact that so many incoming CUNY students need remediation mainly CUNY's fault. For too long, however, CUNY has been a passive receptacle for the cumulative failures of the public schools – or, even worse, a contributor to those failures. There are important steps that CUNY could – indeed, must take to improve student achievement in NYCPS. CUNY is not merely the apex of New York City's public education system; it is, potentially, an important leader of that system. Thus, in Section C, the Task Force recommends:

- that CUNY take steps to strengthen its own standards and programs that will have the added benefit of raising standards and performance in the public schools; and
- that CUNY do much more in cooperation with the schools to help them raise standards, which will lead to better-prepared college applicants.

## A. DISCUSSION

### 1. High school background of CUNY's incoming freshmen

Each year, about two-thirds of CUNY's full-time freshmen are recent graduates of New York City's public high schools. This group makes up about 35% of all NYCPS graduates. The large number of NYCPS graduates at CUNY does not indicate that CUNY is the institution of choice for New Yorkers. On the contrary, for most of them CUNY is simply the institution of last resort. Very few of the graduates of the City's high performing high schools elect to attend CUNY, while CUNY receives a very large share of graduates of the most troubled high schools. In every identifiable subgroup within the cohort of NYCPS graduates, it is the weaker students in academic performance who wind up at CUNY. **(SEE FIGURES 10 & 11, PAGES 45 & 46)**

### 2. Objective, comprehensive student performance information

There is a paucity of objective information about academic performance within NYCPS, which undermines efforts to raise standards. It is remarkable how little information is available. A big part of the reason that information about student performance in NYCPS is so hard to come by is that the tests given are constantly changing, and no one can agree on how the scores on one test relate to scores on another. Another reason is that large numbers of students are exempted from testing requirements, according to special education, ESL, and attendance guidelines that are constantly in flux. Accordingly, the Task Force finds that objective, comprehensive student performance information that can be put in a national context is desperately needed. NYCPS should begin to provide such information by requiring all its students to take the SAT.

### 3. Relationship between K–12 preparation and the need for remediation at CUNY

Despite the difficulty of obtaining student performance information, the Task Force tried to analyze how students' experiences in the public schools affects their performance at CUNY. The results are set out in the staff report, *Bridging the Gap Between School and College*. This report documents in dismal detail how the problems of remediation now inundating CUNY are in fact glaring for most students in elementary school, how the passivity of the school system essentially makes these early problems irrevocable, and how CUNY has failed to provide the school system with the leadership and cooperation to break this cycle of frustration. On the other hand, the remarkable patterns that emerge from this report offer hope for the future. There is no mystery about why students fail in high school and college. For most, the roots of failure lie in elementary school, and the time for remediation is before the eighth grade.

Given what we know about the importance of building a solid foundation in basic skills in elementary school, the latest test scores of New York City's third graders are particularly disturbing. Not only did their 1998 State reading and math scores continue to lag far behind the rest of the State; in almost every district in the City, the gap had widened from the previous year. In 1998, 89% of the

FIGURE 10

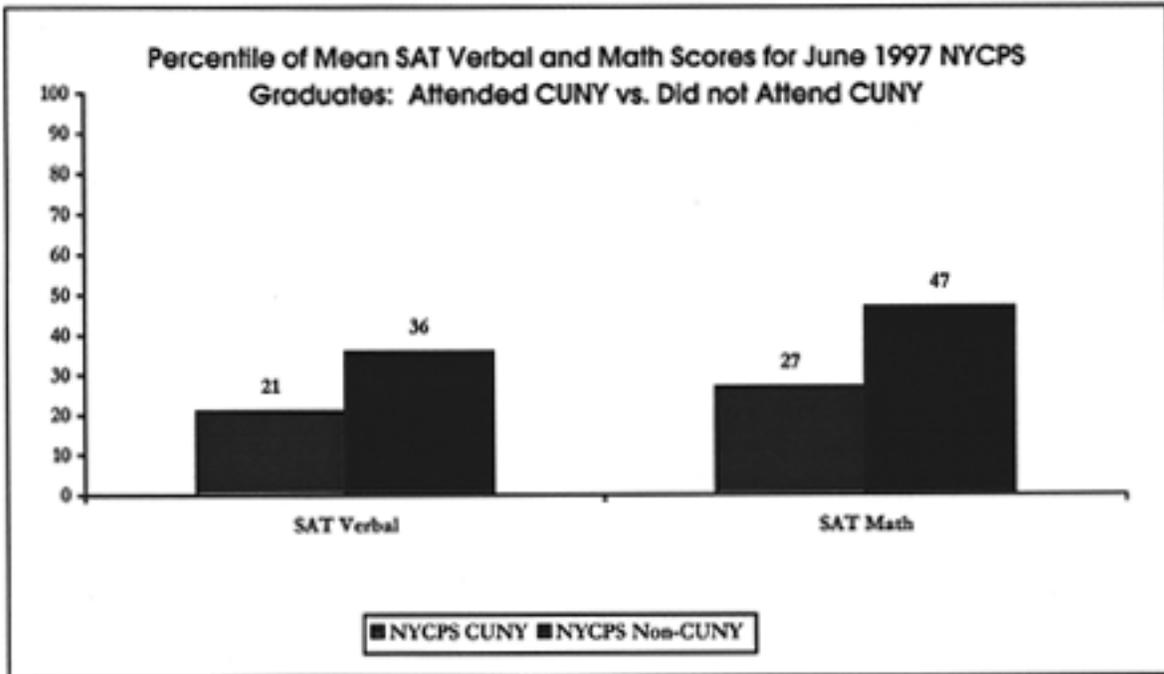
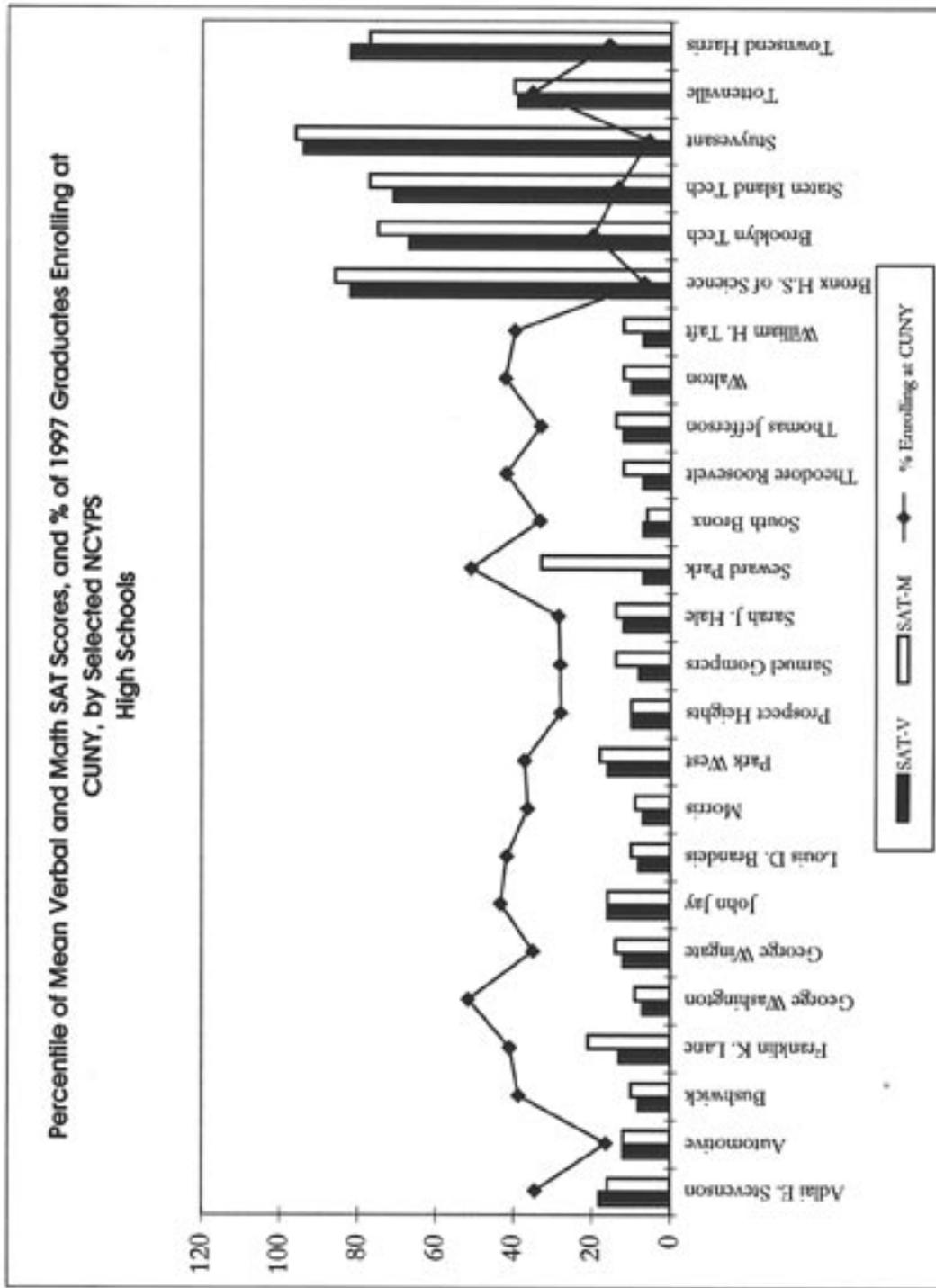


FIGURE 11



City's third graders met minimum standards in math, compared to 99% in the rest of the State. And while two-thirds of the rest of the State's third graders scored at or above grade level in reading in both 1997 and 1998, only one-third of New York City's children scored at grade level in 1998 – down more than 3% from 1997. On the new statewide fourth grade English Language Arts test, 67% of New York City public school students failed to meet the state standard, compared with 44% of students in the rest of the state. Twenty-one percent of the city's fourth graders fell into the worst category, compared with 6% in the rest of the state.

The academic failure that takes root in elementary school explains why fewer than one-quarter of NYCPS high school graduates earn Regents diplomas. Our research indicated that students who functioned below grade level in math or reading at the end of elementary school struggled in high school. They scored at or below the passing threshold on the Regents English and math exams, while non-remedial elementary school students scored at or above the threshold. Moreover, NYCPS students are taking longer to graduate—if they graduate at all. More than a quarter of the graduates of the New York City public school system now take five or more years to get through high school. One-third never graduate.

Using the SAT as a yardstick, we can put the poor performance of NYCPS students into national context. This group's SAT scores are far below the national average; the average scored at about the 32nd percentile in 1998. Only about 30% of NYCPS seniors take the SAT, and it seems a fair assumption that these tend to be higher achieving students in the system. If all seniors took the SAT, as we recommend, the results would surely reveal even greater weaknesses.

#### **4. Teacher education**

CUNY graduates constitute about 25% to 30% percent of all NYCPS teachers, but there is strong evidence that these CUNY teachers are not as well prepared as they should be. These teachers are heavily represented in many of the City's most troubled schools, but tend to be present only in small, single-digit percentages in the City's best high schools.

Based on their performance on the past several administrations of the New York State Teacher Certification Exams (“NYSTCE”), many CUNY students pursuing education degrees are wanting in basic academic knowledge. In Part V, we show that the pass rates of CUNY's teacher hopefuls on all written sections of the NYSTCE compare very unfavorably with those of SUNY and private university students in New York State. The poor performance of CUNY students is not limited to the sections of the NYSTCE that cover pedagogy, foreign language proficiency, or the candidate's major field of study; in each year for which results are available, thousands of CUNY students failed the Liberal Arts and Sciences portion (“LAST”) – which tests very basic general knowledge that any college sophomore should possess.

#### **5. CUNY's admissions policies**

##### **a) History**

The Task Force staff's report entitled *Open Admissions and Remedial Education at the City University of New York* demonstrates what a slippery euphemism "open admissions" has become

over the decades since its chaotic introduction in 1970. As originally planned by the Board of Higher Education in the mid-1960's, open admissions was to operate as a four-tier system:

- the top 25 % of high school graduates would be admitted to one of the senior colleges
- the next 40% would be admitted to associate degree programs in the community colleges;
- the next 10% would be admitted to “special programs”; and
- the remaining (lowest) 25% would be admitted to vocational and basic skill centers.

This sensible plan was scrapped because of protests aimed particularly at City College demanding that its student body reflect the racial composition of the City's high schools. After various compromises ran into political problems, the Board ultimately adopted a simple two-pronged approach to admissions:

- high school graduates in the top half of their class or with averages of 80 or above were admitted to senior colleges; and
- all other graduates were admitted to the community colleges.

The most obvious change this entailed was the opening of the community colleges. Previously, a high school average of 75 or better had been required for admission to community colleges' liberal arts “transfer degree” programs, and 70 or better was required for entry to two-year career education programs. Students with averages less than 70 had not been eligible for admission. But the new plan had an even more dramatic impact on senior college admissions. The senior colleges had required a Regents diploma, 11.5 academic units in required subjects, and a high school average in the mid-80's to mid-90's. The new plan gave equal weight to Regents and non-Regents diplomas, and admitted students with 80 or better averages or in the top half of their class regardless of average. This effectively delegated to the high schools CUNY's senior college admissions standards. It devalued the Regents diploma and the high schools' college preparatory programs. It also guaranteed that senior colleges would be inundated with students who were unprepared for college studies. Still, it is important to note that even in the beginning, open admissions was never intended to open the senior colleges to all with high school diplomas.

Nor has it since. CUNY's senior colleges have always required certain levels of high school performance for admission, and in recent years a number of the senior colleges have raised their standards. But the standards have not been clear, they have not been rigorous enough to support the senior colleges' missions, and they have not given New Yorkers who are truly college-ready the opportunity for a top-tier public senior college education.

#### **b) Current practice**

CUNY's current admissions policies continue to suffer from two fundamental problems. First, CUNY relies solely on grades and degrees conferred by the New York City public schools, or other schools, when in many cases these degrees and grades are unreliable. Social promotion, lack of standards, failure of assessment, and grade inflation have eroded the meaning of grades

and degrees in many New York City high schools. The policy of open admissions was not intended to operate in a context in which high school diplomas were conferred upon students lacking even rudimentary academic skills. A rational policy with respect to admissions standards cannot rest on quicksand.

A second, related problem is that CUNY's current admissions policies neither convey nor elicit clear, objective information about the academic standards necessary for college work. Reliable information widely disseminated is in many respects the key to meaningful academic standards. Students who understand what standards are expected and are given accurate, timely information about where they stand are much more likely to meet the standards than are students kept in the dark, much less students who are lulled into complacency by grades and diplomas that convey a false impression of academic progress. Teachers need to know what their students are expected to learn. Clear objective information is also the key to accountability, for people and for institutions. Yogi Berra's adage, "If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there," is especially true of education.

The Task Force believes that CUNY should maintain its policies of open admissions, in the sense that all high school graduates should have some opportunity at CUNY for postsecondary work. But we believe the original open admissions plan adopted by the Board in the 1960's is far more educationally sound than what took its place. It is time to return to policies of mission differentiation, and to fix admissions standards to those policies.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS – NYCPS**

The New York City Public Schools need to mobilize on all fronts to prevent the need for postsecondary remediation. The crucial elements of such a mobilization are six:

- 1) aligning standards across the K-16 continuum;
- 2) solid, objective information about academic performance in reading, writing, and mathematics for all students;
- 3) providing early intervention with effective special programs for students who fall behind;
- 4) an all-out effort to build English fluency for ESL students before they begin high school;
- 5) ending social promotion by requiring clear standards of academic achievement as a condition of student progress through school; and
- 6) expanding capacity to meet the challenge.

CUNY can provide important assistance in each of these endeavors.

### **1. Aligning standards across the K-16 continuum**

Under the leadership of Chancellor Rudy Crew, NYCPS have begun a serious effort to raise standards. As

we have noted before, he deserves the fullest support. But we respectfully urge him and the Board of Education to accelerate and broaden their efforts. First and foremost, NYCPS and CUNY should join in a comprehensive effort to set explicit academic standards that align the curriculum in core subjects from kindergarten to college. These standards must be congruent with the new Regents high school diploma requirements, and every public primary and secondary school in the City must be held accountable for meeting these standards.

We applaud the commitment recently expressed by the leadership of the United Federation of Teachers to help develop a comprehensive, standards-based curriculum for NYCPS. The Federation can play a vital role in this essential endeavor.

The Task Force is also aware that the Regents are in the process of implementing new competency tests and high school exit standards that are planned to become requirements for graduation starting next year. We support this effort to impose meaningful graduation standards on New York's high schools, and we urge the Regents and New York State Commissioner of Education Richard Mills to be steadfast in the face of the powerful pressures to water down these standards they will have to endure from apologists for the status quo.

## **2. Objective, comprehensive student performance information**

It is axiomatic that NYCPS – like CUNY – cannot implement realistic standards or target its resources efficiently in the absence of reliable information about students' academic achievement and school effectiveness over time. (See Part VIII, which discusses how a lack of information has been an obstacle to decisionmaking for CUNY's Trustees.) NYCPS must overhaul its student assessment program to yield comprehensive, nationally benchmarked, and timely information about student achievement, starting in elementary school. NYCPS should begin using this information as the basis for resource deployment and early intervention decisions.

We strongly recommend that NYCPS use the SAT battery – beginning as early as the 8th grade – to measure the academic status of every secondary school student (in contrast with the relatively small 30% of NYCPS students who currently elect to take the SAT). Using the SAT battery will give students, teachers and the school system invaluable information about students' basic academic skills; about whether students are likely to be ready for college by the time they graduate; and whether students should apply to more- or less-selective postsecondary institutions.

Beyond this, we recommend that NYCPS retain a leading academic assessment enterprise to provide an annual independent “academic audit” of student performance at all levels.

## **3. Early, effective intervention**

Even more important than intervention in high school is a refusal to let academic failure take root in elementary school. Every public primary and secondary school in the City should be held accountable for student learning. Students who score poorly on academic tests should be given a variety of

remediation options, starting in primary school. For example, innovative after-school and summer programs focusing on basic skills and English language development should be required of all students who would otherwise be headed for remediation at CUNY or elsewhere. Rather than simply requiring more of the same, however, NYCPS must redesign schools and instruction methods and recruit top teachers in order to ensure that children get the skills they need.

If there is a single educational achievement that most critically determines later academic success or failure, it is learning to read well by the end of third grade. Children who do not acquire basic skills in reading and writing during primary school will be unlikely to make up for lost time. Students who fail to make the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” find themselves falling even farther behind.

#### **4. English fluency**

In addition to clear standards and early intervention, our analysis indicates that large gains in academic performance would follow from an all-out effort to make students with limited proficiency in English fluent as quickly as possible. LEP students were the most likely to have broad remedial needs—29 times more likely to have remedial needs than students fluent in English. This indicates the critical strategic importance of teaching English fluency immediately upon entry to the system (at whatever point).

#### **5. Ending social promotion**

To reinforce standards and to underline the necessity for early intervention is to end social promotion. Social promotion has had the consequence of passing along academic failure, and the swamp of remediation at CUNY is the end result. A snapshot of the system in 1997 illustrates the problem. That year, 96% of all elementary and middle school students were promoted, even though 53% were below grade level in reading and 40% were below in math. As Diane Ravitch has written, social promotion is no favor to failing kids. It sends them the message that they have passed, but their confidence is bound to be damaged when they realize that they are floundering; moreover, as they advance to higher grades without the proper foundation in basic skills, gaps in their knowledge are formalized and their chances of ever catching up grow dim. Social promotion is also a disastrous policy for kids who are meeting academic standards, when they are surrounded by disengaged and demoralized students who cannot keep up.

Social promotion is also corrupting for systems. It allows them to conceal their failures, to postpone early intervention to current problems, and ultimately to pass them on. The system is never held accountable, nor does it hold students accountable.

#### **6. Expanding capacity**

New York City’s public schools face a daunting task over the next several years as they struggle to raise standards. There will be unprecedented strains on the system as it strives to produce graduates who

can achieve Regents Diplomas and meet clear standards of admissions to CUNY. Until these new standards become embedded in the curriculum and in the expectations of students from an early age, NYCPS is going to need help.

We recommend that the Board of Education enlist the aid of CUNY, of private colleges and universities, of private and parochial schools, and of the private sector, to provide special after-school and summer-school interventions to help students who are not meeting standards. Private sector providers should be enlisted to help students learn basic skills and become fluent in English. All should be engaged under performance-based contracts that ensure accountability.

## **C. RECOMMENDATIONS – CUNY**

New York City needs a great public university that is more, much more, than a safety valve for schools in which social promotion has eroded standards. CUNY must work to prevent the need for postsecondary remediation in the first place. This must be CUNY's highest priority – indeed, it should be the highest priority for public education generally in New York City. It is essential that CUNY take the lead in helping the public schools to raise standards and improve educational outcomes. Such leadership is well within CUNY's capacity and should be viewed as an exciting opportunity for the University to serve its great historical purposes.

CUNY has developed some admirable approaches to raising standards in the schools, such as College Now and the College Preparatory Initiative. But these approaches have been sporadic and piecemeal. CUNY must develop a comprehensive institutional strategy for raising standards and improving student achievement in NYCPS, including the following key elements:

- CUNY must insist on objective admissions standards that put CUNY applicants and NYCPS students in a clear national context, and must put students and teachers on notice as to the levels of academic preparation required for admission to the various CUNY degree programs.
- CUNY must collaborate with NYCPS to obtain objective information about students' achievement early and often in their academic careers; to provide remediation as soon as warning signs appear; and to provide clear examples of what courses and content meet college preparation requirements.
- CUNY must strengthen the quality and consistency of its teacher education programs and provide NYCPS with well-prepared teachers.

### **1. Clear, objective admissions standards**

The most helpful step that CUNY can take to strengthen the public schools and to reduce the need for remediation is to adopt new admissions standards for its various campuses. These new standards must:

- reflect the diversity and range of the various academic objectives of the different CUNY campuses, including the high academic quality of the flagship senior colleges, and effectively serve those objectives;
- convey to students and teachers in New York's public schools and elsewhere, in clear, objective terms, precisely what levels of academic preparation are necessary for various programs of college work;
- ensure that students admitted to college programs are capable of participating in their education in meaningful ways and have a reasonable probability of successful completion of their studies; and
- offer opportunities for students with a wide range of academic potential and educational goals, consistent with CUNY's commitment to serving a very large and diverse urban population.

We believe such a step by CUNY would be a major boost to the effort to raise standards in the public schools, and would, over a period of a few years, substantially reduce the need for remediation of entering CUNY freshmen.

These standards should include an objective component, in order to enable CUNY to evaluate the preparation levels of NYCPS students and other applicants in a clear national context. Thus, in addition to recommending that NYCPS require all high school students to take the SAT, we strongly recommend that CUNY require that all applicants take the SAT. This simple but essential step would go a long way to shed light about student achievement.

## **2. Building on existing collaborations**

Cooperation between CUNY and NYCPS is currently haphazard and unsystematic. This must change. Cooperation on many levels between CUNY and NYCPS is essential for the future well being of New York City.

As a first step, CUNY should build on its existing collaborations with NYCPS. For example, CUNY should extend its College Now program to every high school in New York City. In addition, CUNY should become systematic and open in its College Preparatory Initiative and inform every high school precisely what the curriculum requirements of college preparedness amount to in reading, writing, and mathematics. Finally, assuming that CUNY can provide reliable evidence of pre- to post-test gains resulting from its own programs, CUNY should offer NYCPS technical assistance in the provision of summer immersion remediation.

## **3. Strengthening teacher education**

The New York City public schools are embarking on the greatest recruitment drive for new teachers in the history of the City. The wave of retirements of the thousands of NYCPS teachers who began teaching in the 1960's, combined with the recent wave of rising enrollments, is forcing NYCPS to recruit some 40,000 teachers in the next five years. This represents one of the greatest opportunities in CUNY's history to serve both the City and its graduates. If CUNY could improve the quality and con-

sistency of its education programs and ensure that its education degree graduates are well prepared to be successful teachers, NYCPS would see substantial benefits within the next few years. CUNY students would benefit as well; well-educated teachers are in great demand in New York City and elsewhere, and the teaching profession can expect enhanced compensation and working conditions in the years ahead. Accordingly, the Task Force recommends that CUNY promptly strengthen the quality and consistency of its education programs. In particular, CUNY should:

- assess all education students at the beginning of their course of study to determine whether they meet Regents diploma standards; those that do not should be given limited special instruction in immersion programs, but no student should be admitted to education degree programs who cannot pass the Regents exams with at least a score of 70 or better;
- require all education students to become highly proficient in at least one basic academic discipline, such as math, history, English literature, or the life sciences;
- require all candidates at the beginning of the final year of study to pass the New York State Teacher Competency Exams;
- offer significant financial incentives, funded by foundation and other external sources, to attract strong students into education degree programs; and
- eliminate education degree programs that fail to prepare teacher candidates to achieve consistent, high levels to proficiency.

# V. Accountability and Outcome Assessment: CUNY Compared

## A. DISCUSSION

The absence of clear standards and lack of accountability that surrounds CUNY's various remediation programs is unfortunately characteristic of CUNY's academic programs in general. Only in degree programs for certain professions, such as teaching and nursing, where there are licensing or certification exams administered by the state or by professional groups, is there objective, reliable information about the quality and effectiveness of CUNY's academic programs. Some of this data raises serious questions about whether CUNY's higher-level baccalaureate and masters' programs are meeting adequate standards of quality and consistency.

CUNY is the only large public university system in the United States whose campuses all fall within a single zone of student and faculty mobility. It is located in a City that prides itself, among all cities of the world, in being on the cutting edge in virtually all fields of maximum pertinence to higher education, and which is, to boot, the world's center of educational philanthropy. It is a City, moreover, with a rich and diverse tradition of higher learning, from eminent research universities, to small, first-rate liberal arts institutions. For much of the 20th century, particularly with respect to baccalaureate education, CUNY and its precursor colleges ranked in the top echelon of public colleges, as measured by the quality of education offered and the range of access to opportunity provided. For reasons we have already discussed, in the 21st century it is critical to New York City that CUNY represent a standard of excellence for urban public higher education in the United States. To settle for average performance would be to measure CUNY by a standard of failure.

Still, it is instructive to compare CUNY to other large public university systems. The point is not that CUNY should be held to a standard of imitation. CUNY is as unique among public universities as New York is among cities. But comparison is often a way to gain useful perspective. Just as New York City at times has something to learn from other cities, so CUNY may benefit looking to the strategies and approaches of other public university systems.

We have already noted one of the most singular aspects of CUNY: It is alone among all the large public systems in having no colleges in the first tier as measured by the academic readiness of students enrolled. Indeed, although the academic preparation levels of incoming CUNY students are hard to discern because CUNY has not required applicants to take objective, nationally-normed, assessments, our research indicates that no senior CUNY college receives students who are, on average, even in the top half of entering college students nationwide. This is not to say that there are not some very able students at CUNY. Clearly, there are. In this academic year alone, for example, Queens College had the unusual distinction of having two of its seniors named as Marshall Scholars. But averages tell a lot.

The word is out about CUNY in this respect. CUNY gets very few students from New York City's best high schools. Students with choices go elsewhere. This is not good for CUNY or for New York City. There are undoubtedly many well qualified high school students in New York City who need public higher education opportunities. The evidence clearly indicates that these students believe they have to find a private college or leave the City. Choices are good for students. Among the choices New York City students should have is the choice of a top-tier public college education at home.

Whether students in college learn more from one another than from their professors may be debatable in non-residential colleges such as CUNY's. But in all settings, students learn much from one another, and, moreover, the levels of sophistication at which professors pitch their teaching is likely to be affected by their sense of the academic readiness of most of the students in their classrooms. Thus, it is not just a desire for "prestige" or to be able to claim "flagship institutions" that has led every other large public university system in the nation to include among its offerings colleges for well-prepared students as well as colleges for those less prepared or even needing remediation in basic skills. It is a recognition that well-prepared students need educational opportunity too, that top-tier colleges can provide inspiration and "lift" for the system as a whole, and that their presence in a system can provide examples and standards to which faculty and students throughout a system can aspire. CUNY should follow the example of every other large public university system and create flagship senior colleges of high quality.

The establishment of academic centers of excellence need not and should not mean that CUNY, as a system, is any less committed to broad access to higher education, than is SUNY, the California public university system, or the systems in Texas, Florida, Michigan, or Wisconsin. All of those systems offer broad access to community colleges, to non-selective four-year colleges, and to middle-tier as well as to top-tier institutions. CUNY should follow suit. For CUNY to offer excellent, selective senior colleges among the opportunities it provides is no way incompatible with its commitment to educational opportunity. On the contrary, this would significantly broaden CUNY's contribution to educational opportunity. Opportunity is not served by leveling across the system.

Probably the hardest aspect of CUNY to appraise and to compare with other public university systems is academic quality and productivity, measured by student outcomes and academic value added. Higher education in the United States is notorious for the absence of objective and reliable measures of student achievement. Most colleges and universities determine whether students deserve degrees on the basis of courses taken and passed, which effectively delegates graduation standards to the cumulative judgment of individual faculty members. This has been CUNY's approach.

Lacking objective data about student academic achievement in either specific courses or in entire college programs, most universities fall back on various not-very-satisfactory proxies for measuring academic value added, such as retention and graduation rates, how college graduates do on various exams required for graduate work, or how graduates do on licensing and professional exams. A few universities go farther and survey students and graduates to get their impressions of the quality of academic programs. Some also try to follow their graduates' employment histories, to try to judge how well they have been prepared for the labor market.

## 1. Graduation Rates

CUNY systematically tracks only retention and graduation rates. These are analyzed in detail in the Task Force staff's report entitled, *Beyond Graduation Rates: Assessing the Outcomes of CUNY's Open Admissions and Remedial Education Policies*. CUNY's senior college graduation rates lag far behind SUNY's and other public four-year colleges'. The four-year graduation rate at CUNY's senior colleges has hovered between 6% and 7% percent for the past decade, though the past two years has seen a slight increase. Six-year graduation rates for students entering CUNY senior colleges have risen about six percentage points from the class entering in 1978 to that entering in 1991. However, CUNY's six-year graduation rate (roughly 30%) is still only about half of SUNY's (roughly 60%). **(SEE FIGURE 12, PAGE 63)** The gap closes some over time. CUNY's eight-year graduation rate is about 42%, while SUNY's is about 65%.

These rates do not include students who begin at CUNY but transfer out and graduate from another institution. CUNY has never maintained comprehensive data on transfer students, but a survey of CUNY's Fall 1990 first-time baccalaureate entrants who transferred out prior to completing a degree projected that, if the transfer student's five-year graduation rate (8.6%) were added to the five-year graduation rate of students who remained at CUNY (26.1%), CUNY's total five-year graduation rate would jump to 34.7%. A national clearinghouse recently published transfer rates for CUNY students that were significantly lower than those reported in the aforementioned survey, which raises the possibility that the transfer and graduation rates reported in the survey were inflated. Even if we assume that the survey projections are accurate, CUNY's five-year graduation rate of 34.7% is much lower than the comparable national figure, which is 54.3%.

The graduation rates for CUNY's associate degree programs, which are offered both by CUNY's comprehensive institutions and its community colleges, also trail SUNY's by significant amounts. Only about 1% of CUNY's associate degree entrants graduate in two years. About 17% of CUNY's first-time, full-time entrants to associate degree programs graduate within four years, compared to roughly 35% of SUNY's. In its associate degree programs, CUNY is closer to national averages, however. Public community colleges nationally graduate 26% of their first-time, full-time students within five years. Figure 13 shows that two CUNY community colleges exceed the national rate, Kingsborough at 32% and La Guardia at 27%. The others are well behind, and the rates of graduation in associate programs in the CUNY comprehensive senior colleges is extremely low.

**(SEE FIGURE 13, PAGE 63)**

Overall, CUNY's senior college graduation rates are clearly low. It takes CUNY's college students much longer to graduate, and they do so in significantly smaller numbers, than their counterparts at SUNY and at public four-year colleges nationally. The costs of this for CUNY's students are substantial. Educational credentials matter a lot for job opportunities as well as for many other purposes, personal as well as professional. Degrees—not educational persistence served or courses taken—are the currency of educational credentials. Students who receive bachelor degrees will earn \$20,000 to \$30,000 more per year than students who attend college but don't graduate, and this

earnings gap is widening exponentially. The earnings gap between associate degree holders and those with high school diplomas is smaller, but still very significant in terms of individual opportunity. Thus, CUNY's low graduation rates are a sign of real trouble for the large numbers of CUNY students who don't receive degrees. These low rates also hurt the City, State, and Nation, to whose prosperity and well-being these students contribute.

CUNY's low graduation rates also mean that most CUNY campuses spend a much greater portion of their resources on students who leave without graduating ("leavers") than do other public institutions. The Task Force estimates that CUNY's annual expenditures on leavers (not counting stop-outs who eventually return to CUNY) are about \$145.7 million, or one-eighth of CUNY's total related expenditures of \$1.15 billion for 1996-97.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, CUNY's unusually long "time to degree" results in significant costs for both CUNY and its graduates.

What is not so clear is how much responsibility for these low graduation rates rests on CUNY as opposed to the New York City Public Schools. The graduation rates at SUNY and other public colleges may be higher simply because the college readiness of their students is higher. Our discussion comparing the SAT scores of entering CUNY students with those at SUNY and other large public systems shows how large is the academic deficit of most entering CUNY students. Table 3, opposite, shows that when CUNY's graduation rates are compared with those of colleges serving students with comparably low levels of academic preparation upon entry to college, CUNY's six-year graduation rates are fairly comparable. For example, Baruch's estimated average total SAT of 968 falls in the middle of San Francisco State's 820-1100 range, and the two colleges have graduation rates of 41% and 39%, respectively. Similarly, York's estimated average total SAT of 847 falls in the middle of Chicago State's 760-930 range, and both colleges have graduation rates of 22%. But these comparisons serve to emphasize how far down the public higher education spectrum one has to go to find institutions comparable to CUNY. For reasons already discussed, New York City should never be satisfied with such a comparison. Moreover, looked at from the perspective of the totality of public education, kindergarten through college, in New York City, CUNY's graduation rates like the levels of remediation required, represent nothing less than individual and societal tragedy.

Issues of interpretation aside, CUNY's graduation rate data points to several conclusions. First, whatever the relative responsibilities of CUNY and NYCPS, New York City's public education system on a K-16 basis is failing far too many New Yorkers. Second, CUNY's remediation programs are not effectively compensating for the deficiencies in academic preparation of CUNY's entering students. CUNY's low graduation rates almost certainly reflect the failure of remediation to get many students up to basic skills levels necessary for college work and to get them at such levels quickly before they deplete their financial aid. Third, CUNY's senior colleges need to make improving graduation rates

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<sup>2</sup> We calculated this figure by estimating the cumulative effect of losing students from each freshman cohort at each college over time. For example, we estimated that CUNY spent \$18.7 million on the 3,644 (34%) of its 10,635 Fall 1984 bachelor's freshmen who left CUNY without graduating, and \$35.4 million on the 9,596 (54%) of its 17,892 Fall 1984 associate freshmen who left without graduating. By totaling the expenditures associated with every cohort at every college, assuming constant rates of attrition, we arrived at the annual total of \$145.7 million.

TABLE 3

## SAT Scores of Entering Freshmen and Six-Year Graduation Rates of CUNY Senior Colleges and Peers

CUNY College	Estimated Average Total SAT Score	6-Yr. Grad. Rate: 1991 Full-Time Baccalaureate Entrants (%)	Peer College	Total SAT Score: 25th-75th Percentile	6-Yr. Grad. Rate: 1991 Entering Class (%)
Baruch	968	41	SUNY Buffalo	1020-1230	59
Hunter	946	31	Florida International	1040-1200	40
Queens	942	37	SUNY Purchase	930-1170	37
Staten Island	926	41	Georgia State	960-1140	25
Brooklyn	924	36	San Francisco State	820-1100	39
City	918	21	Jersey City State College	750-950	30
John Jay	864	26	Chicago State	760-930**	22*
York	847	22	SUNY Old Westbury	690-930	28
Lehman	811	22	Univ. of Texas El Paso	930†	24
			Northeastern Illinois	810-850**†	13*

Sources: Klein & Orlando, p. 15; U.S. News & World Report, 1999, "America's Best Colleges"; 1997 Data Book, Vol. II, pp. 49-50, 53, 87-99; PwC, Report III to Task Force, 17.

\* Average of the most recent four years' worth of 6-year graduation rates.

\*\* Converted from ACT using College Board Online conversion scale.

† Average score, not 25th-75th percentile.

both in number and in time a high priority. CUNY's selective senior colleges should move four-year graduation rates to above 30 percent and their six-year rates should be above 60%. There should be strong incentives, subject to academic standards, to move higher than that. And finally, CUNY must compare not with the best other large public university systems, but with the least.

### 2. The Quality of CUNY Degrees

The Task Force staff's report entitled *Beyond Graduation Rates* pulls together all the data we have been able to assemble that would offer insight into the academic achievement represented by successful completion of CUNY degree programs. For the relatively small percentage of CUNY students who do graduate, what is the academic value of their degrees?

The most important statement one can make about this question is how little is known about it. CUNY is typical of most public and private colleges and universities in not assessing its degree candidates

by external objective measures of academic accomplishment, either in basic academic skills or in knowledge of particular disciplines. The Task Force strongly believes that CUNY should change this situation, routine though it is, and assess its degree candidates by objective exit standards. This is one of many ways in which CUNY should start providing leadership in urban public higher education.

Currently, the only way to judge the quality of CUNY degrees is by looking to the performance of CUNY students and graduates on external examinations of various kinds. These fall into several categories. There are national proficiency exams given to candidates for graduate or professional study, such as those for prospective students in law, medicine, or business; there are state licensing exams for various licensed or certified professions, such as teachers, nurses, X-ray technicians, etc.; and there are professional exams given by professional groups, such as those for accounting and law.

Although a few CUNY colleges and graduate programs keep track of some of this data, there is no systematic effort at CUNY to collect or make use such data. This is in fact typical of the shortcomings of CUNY's information systems in allowing for judgments of accountability. We reiterate here one of our most important recommendations: CUNY must start collecting and analyzing information about its academic and financial performance that make judgments of accountability possible.

#### **a) Graduate admissions tests**

The data we have been able to find points to mixed results. On the LSAT, the exam for prospective law students, only Baruch, Hunter, and Staten Island keep multi-year data. The data indicate that the average applicant from a CUNY college would be in the bottom half of the entering class at CUNY's own law school. This is disturbing since Baruch and Hunter are CUNY's two most selective senior colleges and the LSAT is typically taken by more ambitious and successful students. On the MCAT, the medical school exam, the results are somewhat better. About 400 CUNY students (virtually all of them seniors) take the MCAT each year. Most fall somewhere in the third quartile nationally. Students from Brooklyn College consistently outperform other CUNY students on the science sections of this test and often show in the top half of MCAT takers. Very few CUNY students score in the top quartile.

#### **b) Professional and licensing exams**

On the various nursing exams, CUNY graduates tend to underperform state and national averages by between ten and thirty percentage points. **(SEE FIGURE 14, PAGE 64)**

The performance of CUNY's teacher certification hopefuls has been much in the news lately. New York State gives a teacher certification exam in three written parts, which it recommends that students take at different points in their college careers. When all CUNY students who take the different parts of this exam are compared to all students from other colleges, the results for CUNY are disturbing. **(SEE FIGURES 15, 16, & 17, PAGES 64 & 65)**

On the other hand, if only students who are "recommended" by their colleges are counted, CUNY's results look markedly better. **(SEE FIGURE 18, PAGE 66)**

At this time, the State Education Department is not sure what to make of this disparity and has cautioned that the results for “recommended” students should not be used to predict how CUNY’s teacher education programs will fare under a new Regents policy requiring the deregistration of programs with pass rates below 80%. The Task Force is convinced, meanwhile, that the consistently poor showing of CUNY baccalaureate students on the Liberal Arts and Sciences portion (“LAST”) of the teacher certification exam – which tests basic academic knowledge that any college sophomore should possess – is a reflection not only on the caliber of students entering CUNY’s teacher education programs, but also on CUNY’s admissions and remediation policies more generally.

The one bright spot, in terms of CUNY students’ showing on external professional exams, concerns the national CPA exam. The CPA exam has four sections and passing all four in the first sitting is considered to be a benchmark of excellence. Nationally, pass rates on all four sections in the first sitting have ranged from 12% to 17% in the past five years. CUNY’s pass rates have been higher, between 15% and 20%. This is not a big difference, but this is the one field we discovered in which CUNY students generally exceed national averages on any kind of exit exam.

### **c) Job Placement**

As a condition of accepting certain federal funds, CUNY is legally required to survey all associate and certificate degree recipients’ six months after graduation to determine their employment or educational status. CUNY has conducted this survey for every graduating cohort since 1993. CUNY has never systematically collected employment or education data for its baccalaureate degree recipients. In January 1999 CUNY announced plans to track such data in the future. We strongly recommend that this be done.

The data on a representative class of CUNY certificate and associate degree holders indicate that six months after graduation 72% were employed, 48% in a field more or less related their degree; 16% were continuing their education; and 12% were neither employed nor continuing their education. John Jay certificate and associate degree holders far outpaced the field, with 92% employed and 66% in employment related to their training (recall, however, that John Jay’s associate degree graduation rate is among the lowest). The college whose graduates fared least well in employment were Bronx, Medgar Evers, and Hostos, with two-thirds employed and only about 40% in training related jobs.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Task Force is well aware of the absence of clear, objective standards of accountability linked to student performance in most of American higher education. CUNY is not unusual in leaving to indi-

vidual faculty judgment whether students have passed particular courses, which usually determines whether credits have been amassed sufficient to progress through academic programs and ultimately to receive degrees. In most of American higher education, the absence of clear objective standards of student performance of accountability is offset by abundant diversity and vigorous competition—for students, for faculty, for funds. CUNY's response to competition has largely been to let students with real choices go elsewhere and to be the institution of last resort for the rest. This is not a sound strategy for the future.

There are many reasons why CUNY should take the lead among public university systems in embracing external, objective assessments of students' academic progress. By embracing strong, transparent standards of accountability, CUNY will be able to claim the support that is due to institutions that are truly productive and accountable. The case for investment in effective education is compelling, but the public has a right to know whether educational achievement according to appropriate standards is actually occurring. Moreover, objective assessments of academic quality and productivity will enable CUNY to allocate its financial resources most effectively. Faculty, students, administrators, and Trustees can be informed systematically about the quality of programs and institutions. Problems can be addressed rather than being allowed to fester. Critics can be answered with evidence rather than assertions. And graduates will earn degrees that are more valued for having demonstrated worth. As with our call for CUNY to take the lead in improving standards and demanding objective information about academic achievement in the public schools, so also we call upon CUNY to take the lead in assessing its own programs by objective, clear standards of accountability. This is one of many areas in which CUNY can be a model for the nation.

FIGURE 12

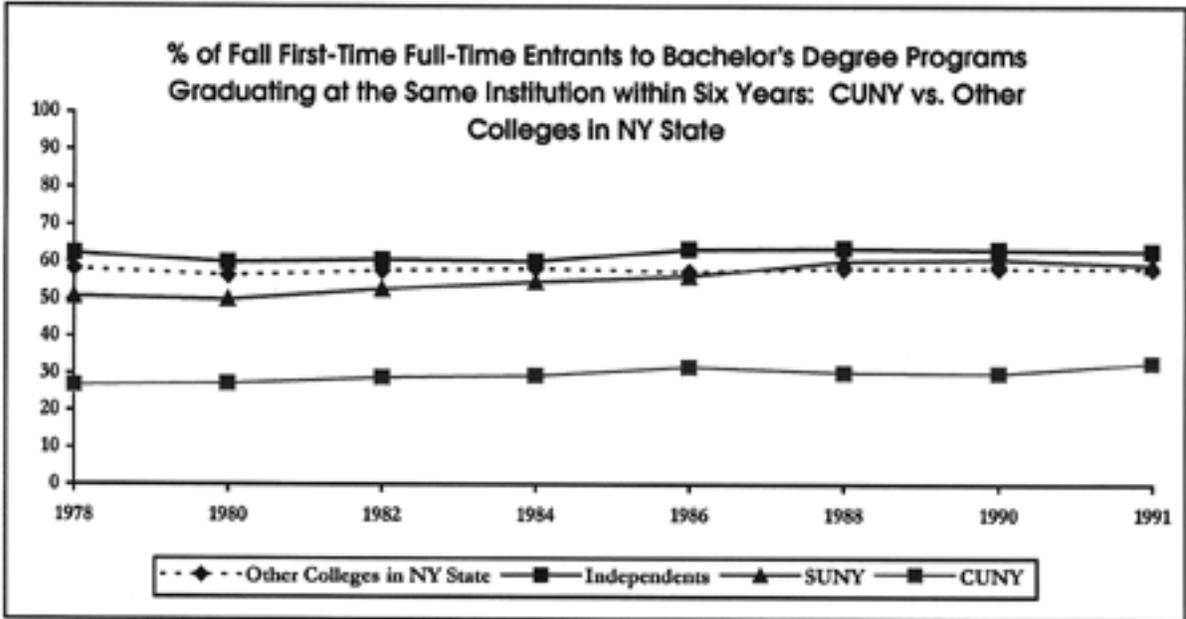


FIGURE 13

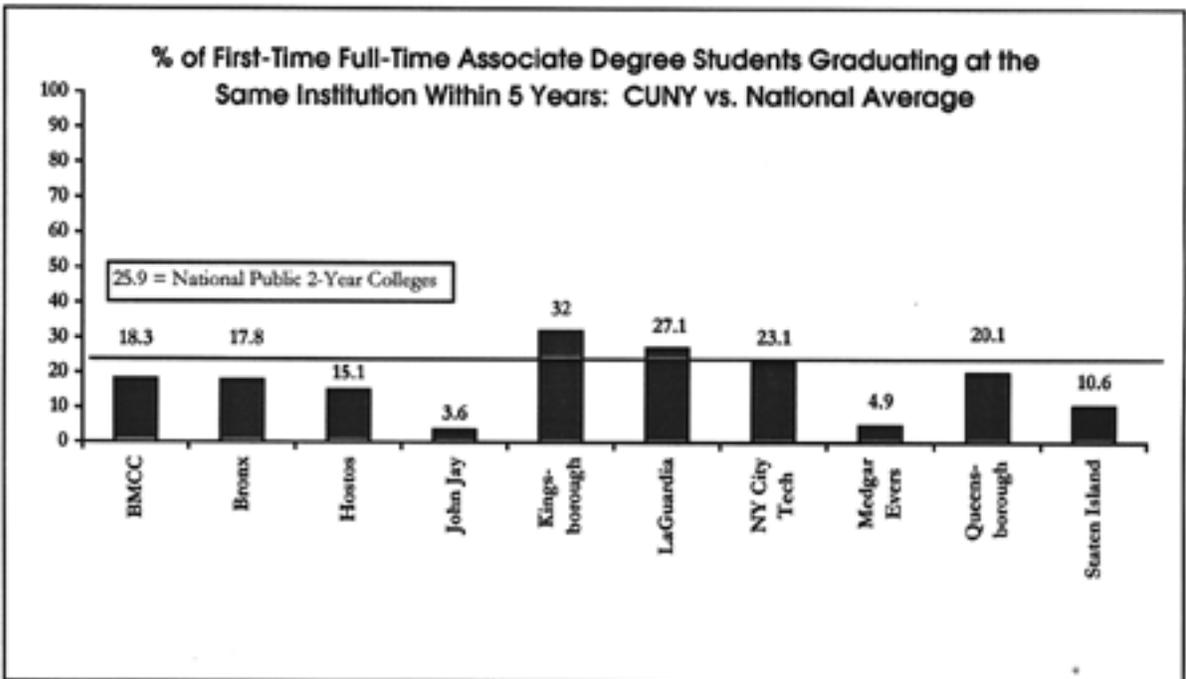


FIGURE 14

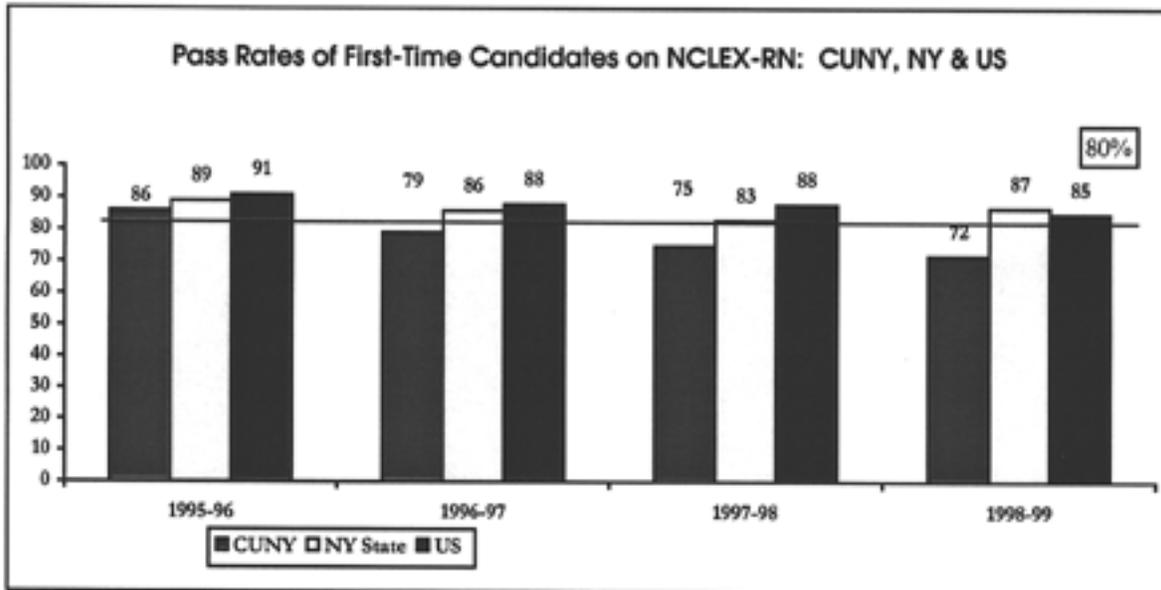


FIGURE 15

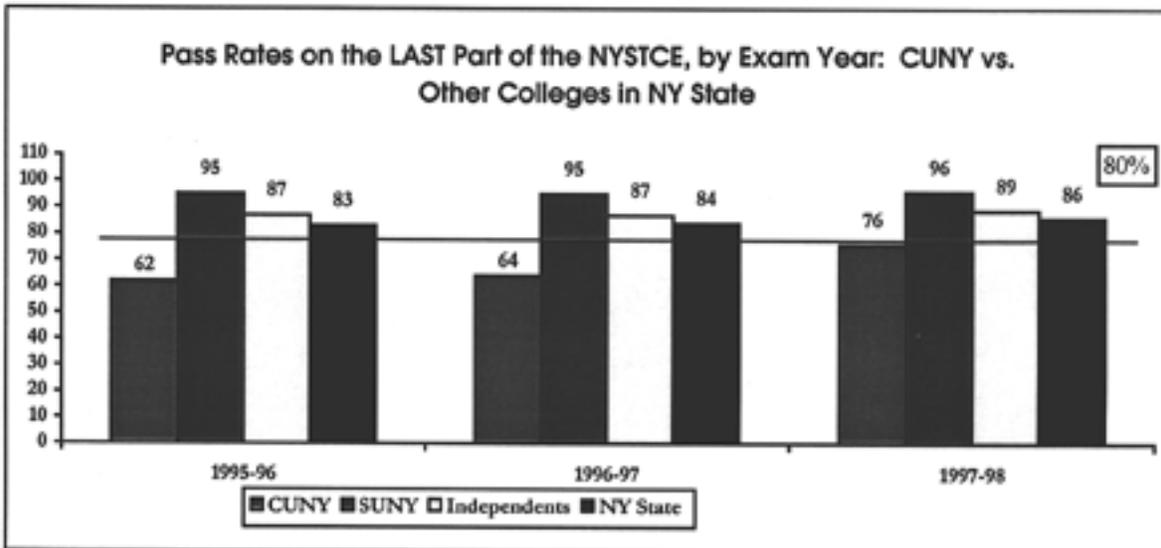


FIGURE 16

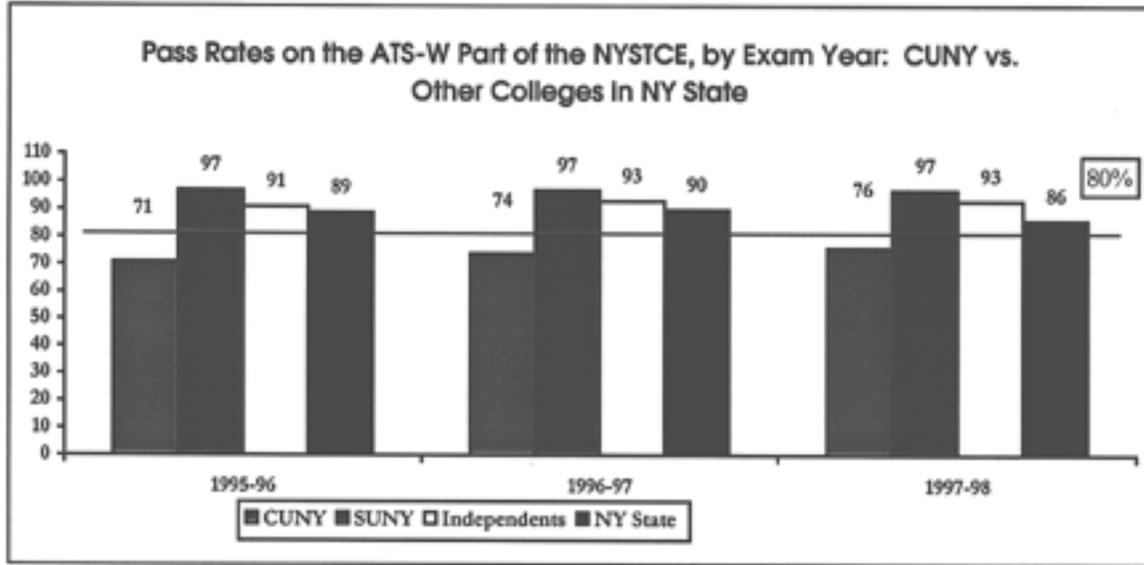


FIGURE 17

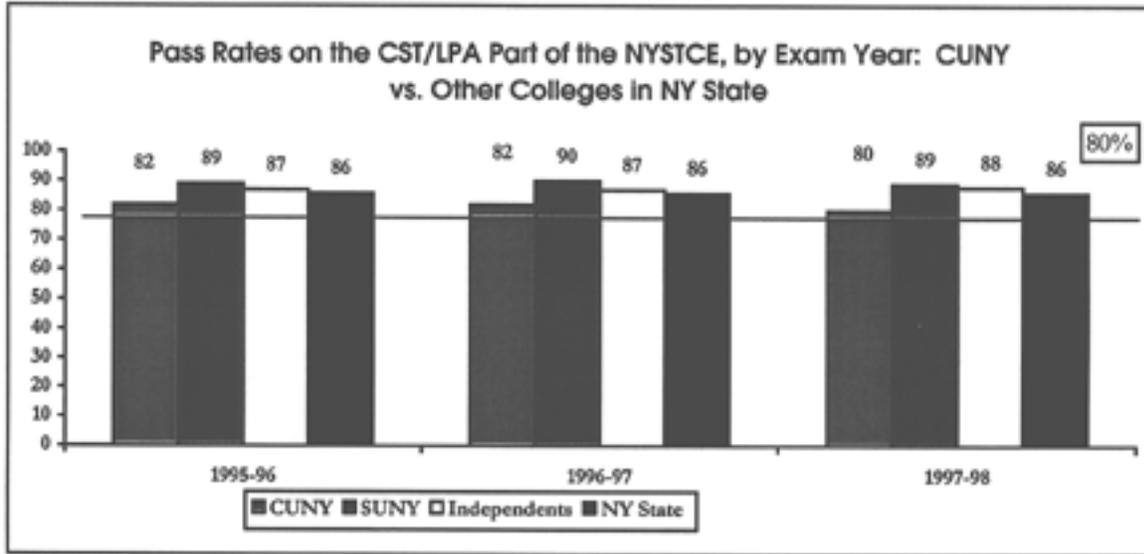
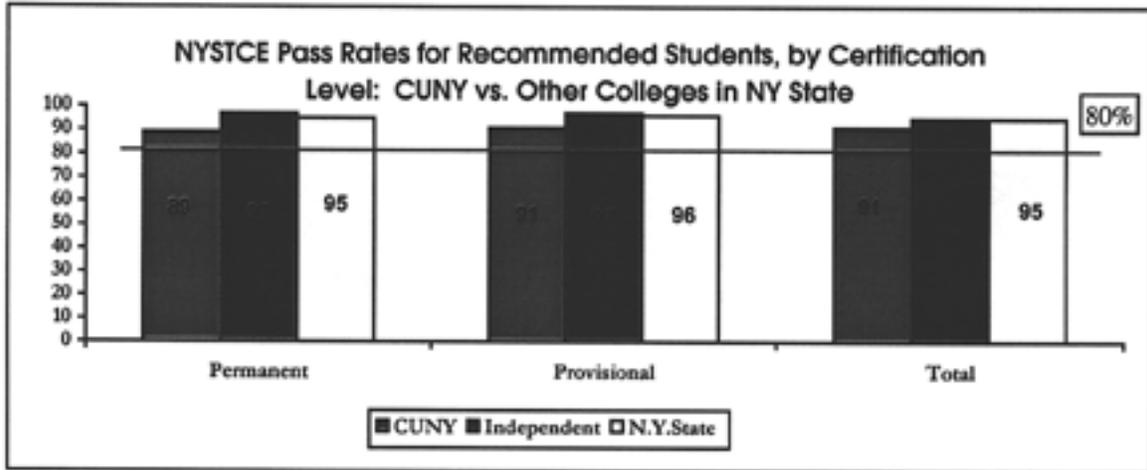


FIGURE 18



## VI. CUNY's Budgeting, Funding, and Financial Management

In order to gain an understanding of CUNY's budgeting and finances, the Task Force commissioned three studies from PricewaterhouseCoopers. Due to limitations of time and resources, the Task Force could not assemble an independent factual construct of the University or generate information about CUNY's finances independent of the University's own reporting systems. Nevertheless, we believe that these reports constitute the most comprehensive financial analysis of CUNY ever assembled.

PwC's conclusions are far-reaching and disturbing. The Task Force asked PwC to state its own judgment about the significance of what it had found, and received the following alarming response:

***Lack of overall strategic direction.** Probably the most compelling conclusion from all phases of the studies developed for the Task Force by PwC, RAND, and the Task Force staff is the rudderless state of the City University of New York. Multiple issues have contributed to this state, including ineffective planning, fragmented policies, unclear governance relationships, ineffective leadership,<sup>3</sup> disjointed fiscal management, inadequate management information systems, and a paucity of management information.<sup>4</sup>*

This lack of strategic direction has not merely caused CUNY to tread water, however. To the contrary, PwC and RAND found that CUNY's budget "drift" has resulted in a dramatic shift in resources: between 1980 and 1997 (the only years for which data was available) the senior colleges and the ranks of the full-time faculty have eroded, while the community and comprehensive colleges, part-time faculty, and administrative staff have mushroomed.

We must emphasize that this shift in resources was not the result of strategic planning or any announced change in institutional priorities. Rather, it resulted from a combination of factors, including the strategic vacuum just described; outmoded State and City funding formulas that fail to provide incentives for quality or productivity; and CUNY's failure to hold the individual colleges accountable for overspending or effectively managing their budgets.

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<sup>3</sup> We address the problems of "unclear governance relationships" and "ineffective leadership" in the following Parts of this report.

<sup>4</sup> Phillip Goldstein, Partner, and Gregory Lozier, Principal Consultant, PricewaterhouseCoopers, letter to Benno C. Schmidt, Jr., Dec. 21, 1998. This letter is reproduced in full and annexed to PwC's three reports to the Task Force.

# A. DISCUSSION

## 1. Budgeting

As a result CUNY's lack of strategic direction, CUNY's current planning and budgeting process is ineffective. Whereas, at dynamic institutions, budgeting is inextricably linked with strategic planning, CUNY has no university-wide strategic plan. Instead, CUNY allocates financial resources via an opaque process that is heavily centralized and characterized by mysterious cross-subsidization decisions. In this process, there are no incentives for good performance or disincentives for bad. Finances are not tied to long-term strategy, either at the system or individual campus level. Central budgeting gives the campuses neither the incentive nor the means to engage in strategic planning at the campus level.

Moreover, CUNY's financial management and institutional research infrastructures are inadequate to support strategic planning and budgeting. Without adequate performance outcome information, the University is unable to evaluate its own effectiveness, much less base budgeting decisions on performance.

Because CUNY lacks a strategic vision at the University level, budgeting is driven from above – at the level of the City and State legislatures – and below – at the level of the individual colleges. From above, CUNY's current planning and budgeting process is driven by City and State funding formulas, described in the following section. From below, direction is set by the individual colleges' policies. These policies, and consequently the spending priorities of the different colleges, are not coordinated, rarely complement each other, and accordingly do not support a university that is greater than the sum of its parts.

## 2. Funding

The Task Force believes that the State, the City, and CUNY need to reexamine and reinvigorate the funding process. Whereas the State's financial aid programs simultaneously foster access – by distributing funds where the need is greatest – and accountability – by letting students make their own choices about higher education,<sup>5</sup> the State and City appropriations processes need improvement. Currently, these processes are characterized by a one-year time horizon and economic and political unpredictability; such features can only discourage CUNY from adopting a strategic investment approach to institutional planning. Moreover, the State and City funding formulas – which mire senior college funding in the inertia of historical appropriations, while basing community college funding on the ebbs and flows of enrollment – reflect outdated policy priorities.<sup>6</sup> Today, the emphasis must be on coupling access with standards and accountability.

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5 See Section III.A.5 for a discussion of the negative educational incentives New York State's financial aid program creates for remedial students.

6 Pursuant to State law, the State's funding of CUNY's senior colleges is historically based, with annual incremental changes; the majority of new funding is provided through lump sum appropriations for special programs. State law also governs the City and State funding of CUNY's community colleges, as follows: The State funding level is determined according to a formula based on enrollment, with some lump sum appropriations for special programs. The City funding level is currently capped at a constant amount, in accordance with a statutory maintenance of effort requirement.

Meanwhile, CUNY has not been effective in diversifying its funding base. Over the past two decades, real government financial support to CUNY has declined (even if we take into account increases in State-funded tuition assistance for students). This decline in funding, and the possibility of future funding fluctuations, increase the importance to CUNY both of improving its management of its existing resources (discussed below) and of increasing revenues from alternative sources, including fund-raising and extramural funding for grants and contracts. Yet CUNY's success in generating alternative revenues through contracts, grants, and private fund-raising is extremely variable across the CUNY colleges. Moreover, in many instances, CUNY's efforts lag far behind those of peer institutions. For example, although the community colleges receive numerous workforce training grants, CUNY's senior colleges and graduate center generate nowhere near the level of philanthropic and federal research funding that one would expect at a major research university. CUNY should make a concerted effort to attract New York City's unique philanthropic community.

In sum, CUNY's failure to respond appropriately to tightening government purse strings is ample evidence of dysfunction in its strategic planning capacity. Rather than first attempting to streamline – through right-sizing, mission clarification, or increasing efficiency – or to significantly diversify its funding base – by aggressively pursuing research grants or philanthropic support – CUNY's primary response was to raise tuition and replace full-time faculty with part-timers.

### 3. Financial management

PwC found that CUNY's financial management is characterized by an inadequate understanding of the sources and uses of its funds. First, CUNY does not use an “all funds” approach to financial management. Figure 19 shows that revenues from alternative resources make up about 25% of the University's operating budget, yet they are viewed as supplemental rather than integral to the University; accordingly, they are not fully factored into the planning and allocation process. An “all funds” perspective is needed to provide a comprehensive understanding of resources and operations and to support effective fiscal management. **(SEE FIGURE 19, PAGE 73)**

Second, CUNY lacks the technological infrastructure to enable a rigorous analysis of program expenditures. Indeed, the Task Force's consultants and staff were hampered by CUNY's often poor and inconsistent data collection policies and information systems. While we have tried to reconcile conflicting data and fill gaps whenever possible, a number of inconsistencies remain. CUNY's Trustees and administrators face similar obstacles when they seek to make policy decisions. Without basic financial and program information, CUNY cannot make informed decisions – at any level, from the individual department to the University as a whole. Coupled with the lack of student outcome information described in Part V, this has led to a management information vacuum.

### 4. Consequences

CUNY's drift has permitted several disturbing trends to develop unchecked:

- Figure 20 shows that enrollment at the senior colleges has gradually decreased between 1980

and 1997, while the community and comprehensive colleges have experienced significant increases. These enrollment trends have led to an overall level of instruction at CUNY that is heavily weighted toward lower-level education<sup>7</sup> **(SEE FIGURE 21, PAGE 74, & FIGURE 22, PAGE 75)**. Moreover, because community college funding is driven by enrollment, CUNY's community colleges have seen their revenues more than double over this period, while the senior colleges' historically-based revenues have increased more slowly. **(SEE FIGURE 23, PAGE 75)**

- Student- and instruction-related expenditures at the senior colleges decreased by 3.1% between 1988 and 1997, in contrast with a 21% increase in such expenditures at the community colleges. Figure 24 shows the impact of this shift by college **(SEE FIGURE 24, PAGE 76)**
- Figure 25 shows that, within student- and instruction-related expenditures, there has been a dramatic decrease in per-full-time-equivalent-student expenditures for direct instruction – i.e., teaching and direct pedagogy. Between 1988 and 1997, these expenditures decreased by 26%. **(SEE FIGURE 25, PAGE 77)**
- From 1980 to 1997, there has been a decided shift in expenditures from the academic mission to academic and administration and support services **(SEE FIGURE 26, PAGE 77)**. Over the same period, the ratio of full-time faculty to full-time staff went from 1:1 to 5:7. **(SEE FIGURE 27, PAGE 78)**
- Figure 28 shows that, between 1980 and 1997, CUNY lost almost 1,400 full-time faculty members, and the full-time:part-time faculty ratio flipped from 60:40 to 40:60. **(SEE FIGURE 28, PAGE 78)**
- Despite large decreases in the number of full-time faculty at the senior colleges between 1980 and 1997, the number of full-time faculty at several community colleges increased – by as much as 25% – over the same period. **(SEE FIGURE 29, PAGE 79)**

The collective impact of these shifts has been to change the internal focus and the external perception of the CUNY colleges to associate level study.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Budgeting**

The Task Force believes that CUNY must implement a performance-based budgeting process, based on a strategic vision of university priorities. The Task Force recognizes that the move to planning- and performance-based budgeting will require a paradigm shift. Nevertheless, we believe that the best way to ensure quality and accountability is to use the budget as an incentive for the colleges to attain university goals. CUNY's performance-based budgeting system must require the colleges to

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<sup>7</sup> Lower-level education includes the first two years of baccalaureate study, as well as associate, certificate, non-degree, and remedial programs.

justify and prioritize their needs, and to document their performance using objective measures. In turn, this will enable the University, the students, and the public to determine whether they are getting what they pay for.

## **2. Funding**

First, the State and the City must follow CUNY's lead in adopting a performance-based funding system with a multi-year time horizon. We note that this recommendation is not unprecedented. According to a recent survey by the State Higher Education Executive Officers, seven states currently use performance measures in allocating resources, and another 15 states are considering doing so.

Second, the University must do much more to increase alternative revenues. To realize its fullest potential in generating alternative revenues through contracts, grants, and private fund-raising, CUNY must establish university-wide policies, incentives, and infrastructure. Specifically, CUNY should allocate tuition revenues to the colleges that generate those revenues; encourage colleges to seek out new sources of revenues by rewarding colleges that generate additional support through fund-raising, grants, contracts, educational services, and auxiliary operations; and establish a central pool of dedicated start-up funds to help colleges develop new programs that respond to student needs or market opportunities.

## **3. Financial management**

CUNY must gain a clear understanding of the sources and uses of its funds. To achieve this, CUNY must adopt an "all funds" approach to budgeting and fiscal management. In addition, CUNY must invest in the development of a coordinated, university-wide technology infrastructure and the implementation of integrated management information systems capable of automating the planning and budgeting process, integrating planning and budgeting with other administrative processes, and providing better and more accessible management information. Finally, CUNY must establish university-wide fiscal management policies, and must give individual campuses the responsibility to spend funds according to those policies; before CUNY can require budget accountability, however, it must ensure that campus business managers have access to the information they need to be responsible and accountable for funds received.

FIGURE 19

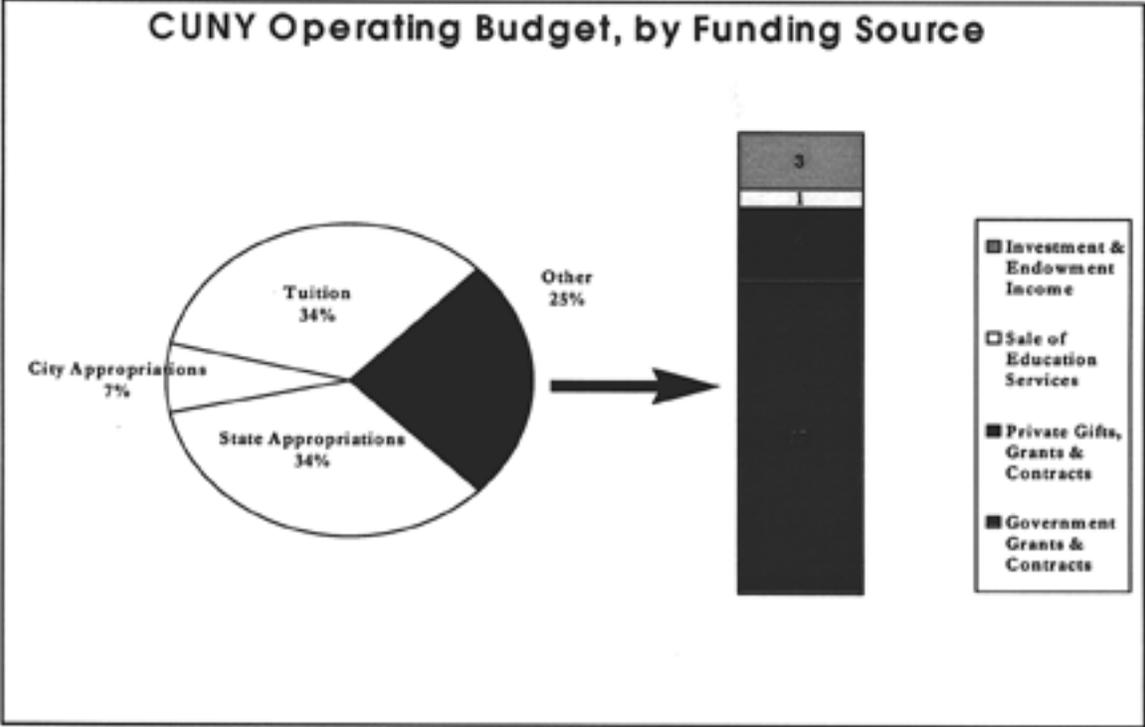


FIGURE 20

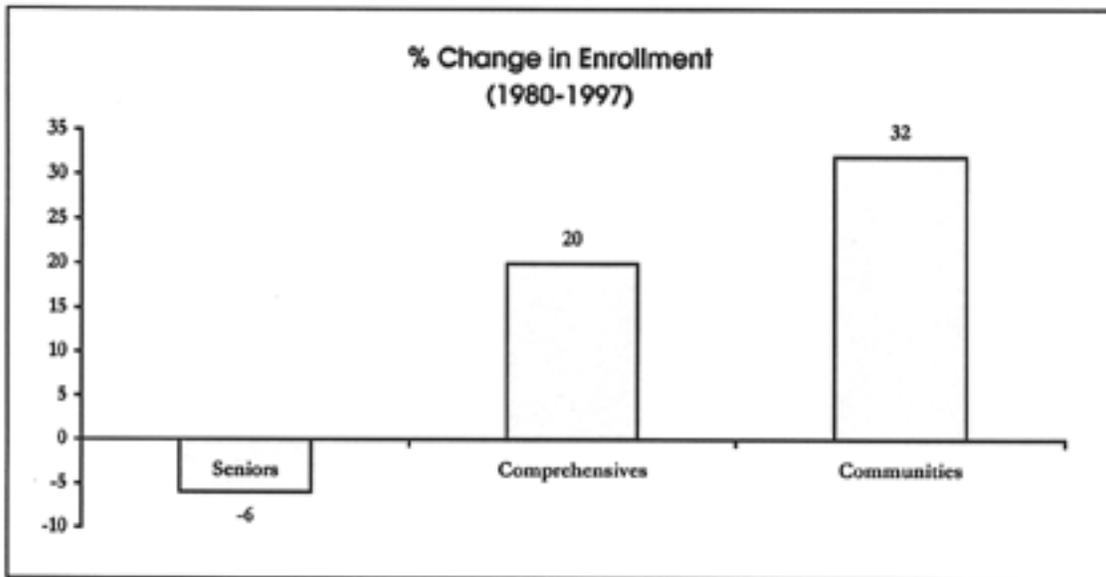


FIGURE 21

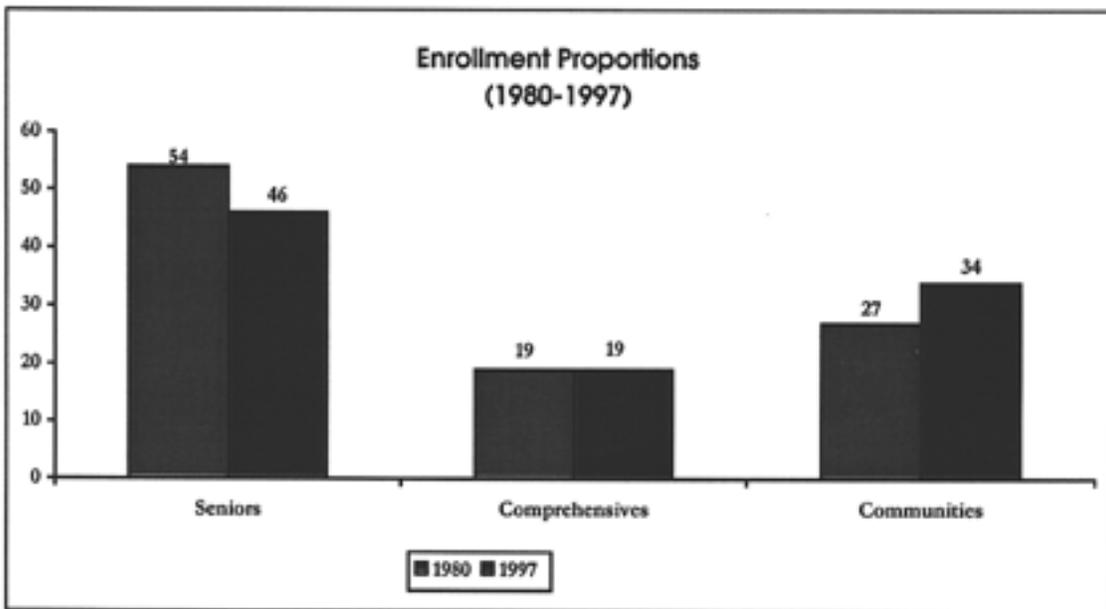


FIGURE 22

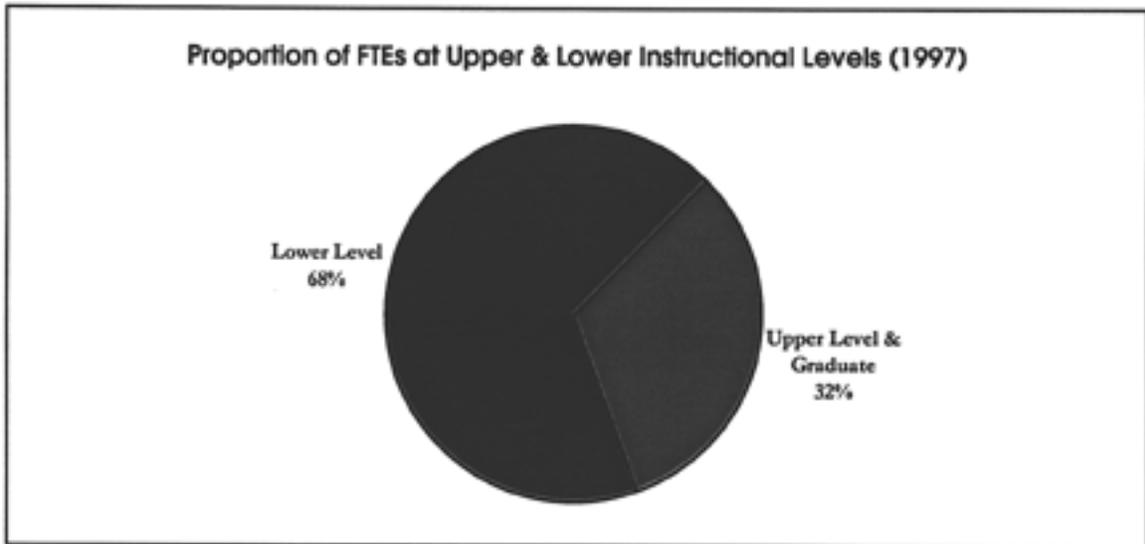


FIGURE 23

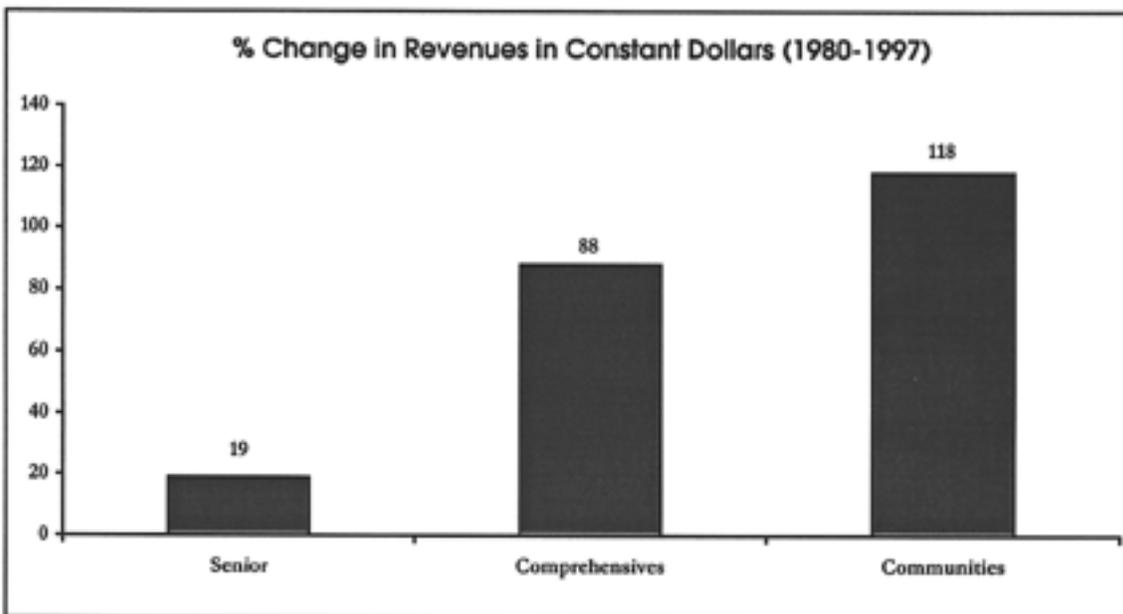


FIGURE 24

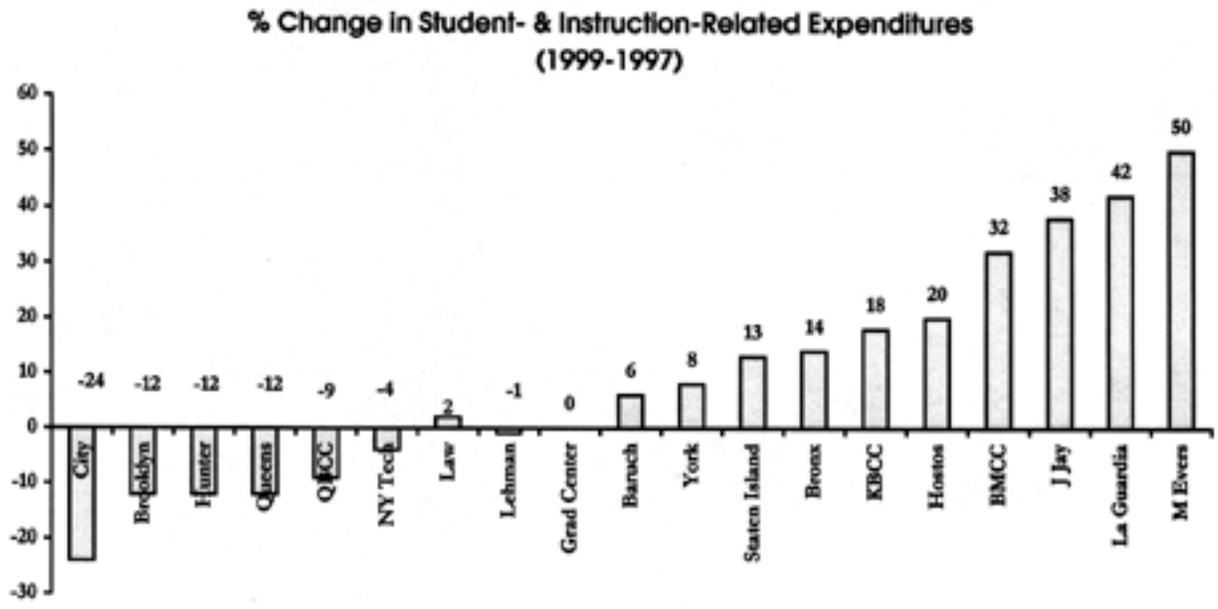


FIGURE 25

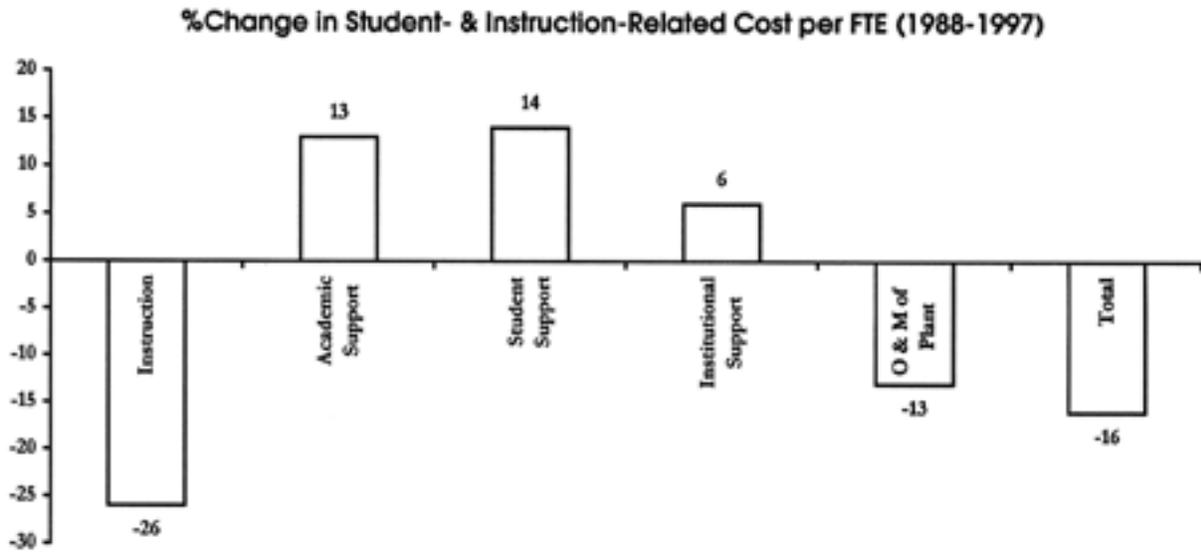


FIGURE 26

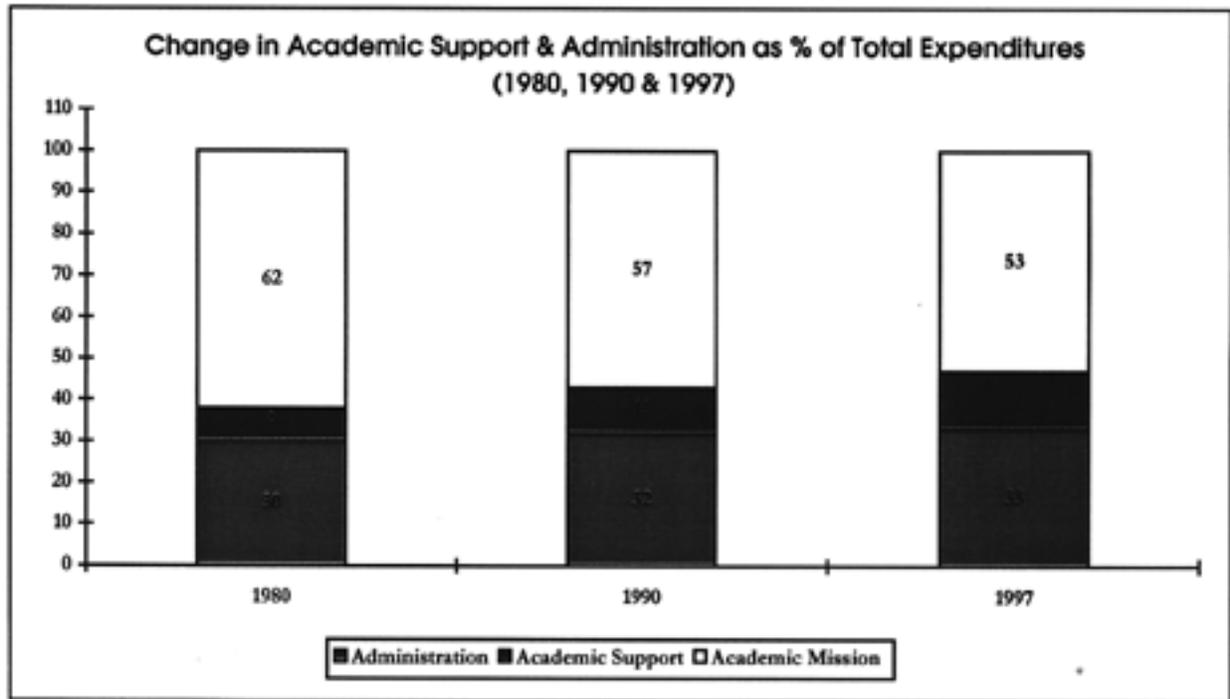


FIGURE 27

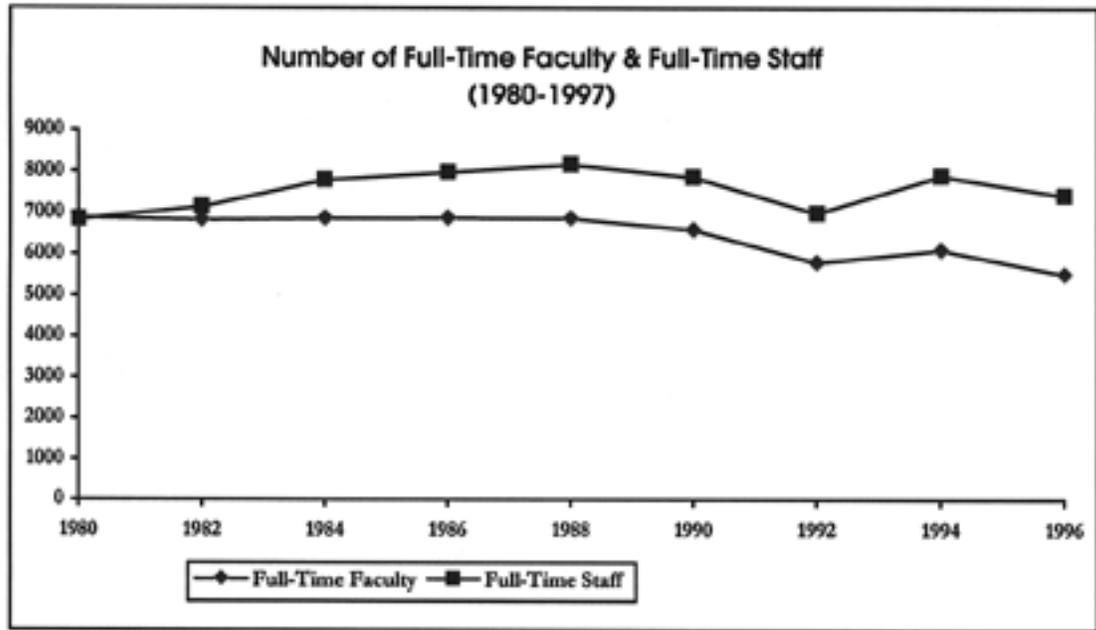


FIGURE 28

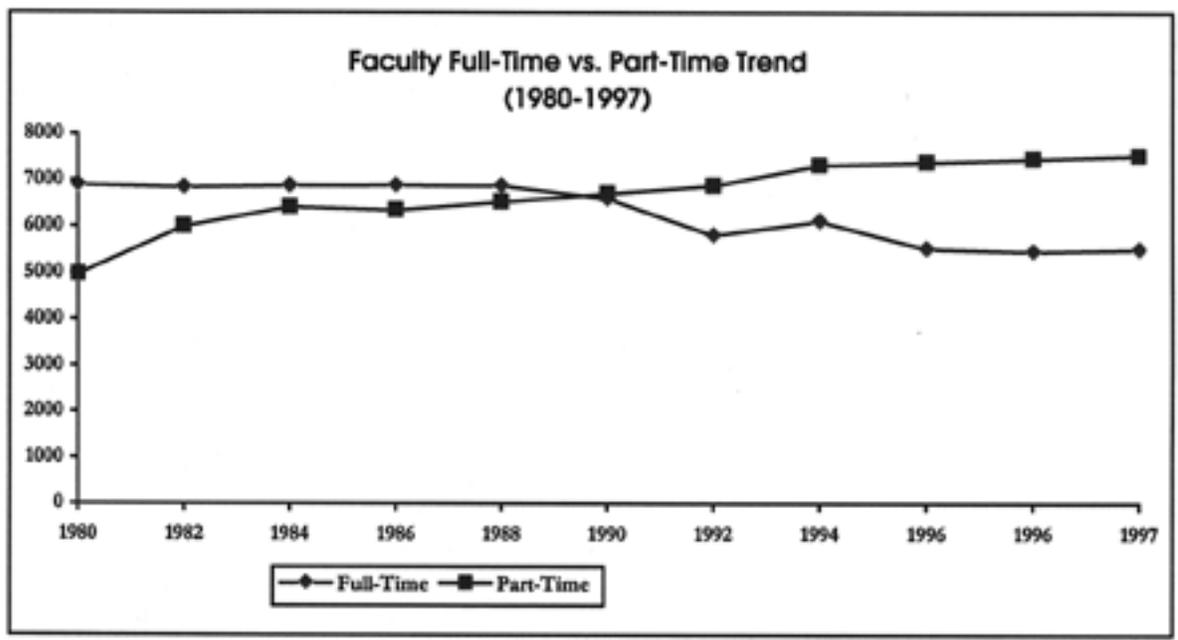


FIGURE 29







# VII. The CUNY Colleges

## A. DISCUSSION

CUNY is a system that has never forged an institutional identity. Indeed, for most of its 150-year history, it was not a system at all. The original municipal colleges, City College and Hunter, which were founded in the 19th century, were not joined by Brooklyn and Queens colleges until the 1930s; in turn, those colleges were not united with the College of Staten Island, Bronx Community, and Queensborough under the CUNY banner until 1961. In the decade that followed, the University expanded so rapidly – with the addition of ten new colleges – that it never took the time to coalesce thoughtfully. Then, in 1970, less than a decade after the University was officially created, CUNY adopted its “open admissions” policies without planning or forethought, and was overwhelmed by the enormous influx of new students, many of whom were severely underprepared. CUNY’s haphazard evolution – characterized by rapid expansion, sudden change of academic direction, and frequent turnover at the administration level – has resulted not in a coherent university, but in a loose confederation of individual colleges.

Today, the CUNY colleges find themselves in an unenviable position: the central administration provides them with no strategic guidance, yet burdens them with procedural rules and regulations that impede independent action. In the preceding Part, we have discussed the ways in which CUNY’s budgeting and financial management policies fail to set up appropriate incentives or require campus managers to be accountable for the use of resources. In this Part, we will discuss:

1. ways in which centrally-imposed procedural requirements constrain colleges from pursuing their particular academic missions;
2. the colleges’ understandable, yet problematic, resistance to legitimate initiatives by the central administration; and
3. the leveling trend and anti-meritocratic mindset that have skewed the balance of power at the campus level.

### 1. Procedural burdens

There are numerous centrally-imposed procedural requirements that constrain colleges from pursuing their academic missions. For example:

- A college that wishes to create a new academic program must obtain the approval of not only its own leadership, but also the CUNY administration, the Board of Trustees, and the Regents. This has created the incentive for colleges to maintain programs that have no students, in an attempt to avoid the bureaucratic hassles of reestablishing a program if interested students should appear.

- While the individual colleges have historically had some leeway in establishing admissions criteria, the processing of undergraduate admissions applications is centralized; this hampers individual colleges from deploying the admissions process in support of any particular academic mission. Many colleges have also complained that the centralized admissions and placement testing process is too slow and that, as a result, they lose their most promising applicants to non-CUNY competitors.
- Human resources policies are centralized, so that the hiring of secretaries and laboratory assistants depends on central approvals that are thick with delay and red tape.
- The CUNY Research Foundation is another central bureaucracy that imposes substantial procedural burdens on faculty members who are doing funded research; together with CUNY's rigid salary structure (discussed below), the burdens that CUNY imposes on funded research serve to discourage faculty scholarship.

## **2. College resistance to central initiatives.**

In view of the central administration's historically clumsy handling of the budget process and top-down imposition of burdensome regulations, it is not surprising that the college presidents and faculty greet most central initiatives with cynicism. PwC reported a widespread culture of mistrust throughout CUNY. Campus leaders routinely use terms such as "neglect," "incoherence," and "lack of communication" to describe their relationship to CUNY's central administration. Most report having had no serious discussions of academic or institutional policy with university administrators.

The fact that many of the individual colleges developed strong institutional identities prior to their incorporation into the CUNY system contributes to their sense of independence – even immunity – from the mandates of the central administration. The Task Force believes that this resistance has led to serious deficiencies in the areas of intra-CUNY transfer and system-wide academic planning.

When the University was first established, the Trustees recognized that, in order to create a true system that served students' needs, they had to ensure that students could move freely among the University's various programs and colleges. By 1973, the Trustees had enacted a comprehensive university-wide policy governing the transfer of credits between the community and senior colleges. Although 26 years have passed, CUNY has not yet fully implemented this policy. Because the 17 colleges view themselves as self-contained institutions, many of their practices, while in technical compliance with the Trustees' policy, violate its spirit. Transfer agreements must be negotiated one-by-one between individual departments, because the faculty fiercely protect their right to withhold credit for courses taken in other colleges. In addition, the colleges have bickered over who should shoulder the responsibility for administering the required certification tests to students wishing to transfer; some of the senior colleges have even insisted on placing incoming transfers into remediation, even though those students had already completed remediation and achieved certification at the community college level.

It is easy to understand, and even to sympathize with, the colleges' lack of cooperation when they

are concerned that academic programs at their sister institutions lack standards and are not supported by objective assessment. Yet these and other violations of central administration policy have made CUNY inhospitable to students wishing to move from the community college level to a baccalaureate degree program; indeed, the Task Force found that in some cases it is easier for a CUNY community college student to transfer outside the CUNY system than to another CUNY college.

The consequences of the colleges' intransigence are perhaps best illustrated by the story of the most ambitious attempt to bring coherence and system efficiencies to CUNY in the last quarter-century. In 1992, in a time of shrinking university resources, the administration sought to set system-wide academic priorities, to consolidate duplicative or under-enrolled programs, and to demand greater differentiation in the missions of the various colleges. The Chancellor appointed an advisory committee chaired by Leon Goldstein, then-president of Kingsborough Community College, to make recommendations aimed at increasing efficiency. The committee's report recommended reducing redundancies in college programs, focusing particular programs in the institutions best able to support them, encouraging students to take programs at various campuses, and approaching CUNY's academic objectives as a system.

Because the committee's report (known as the "Goldstein Report") was thought to threaten faculty jobs and directed a number of its consolidation recommendations at liberal arts programs, the college faculties voiced strong opposition and characterized the report as an assault on liberal education. In the face of such passionate criticism, the administration and Trustees backed away from the goal of university-wide planning, instead adopting policies that lacked teeth.

### **3. Leveling and anti-meritocratic mindset**

A salient characteristic of CUNY's institutional culture is a strong leveling tendency that has hampered CUNY's campuses from developing focused academic missions, and has hindered CUNY, as a system, from offering an appropriate range of academic institutions and programs. With respect to the student body, this is manifested in the vagueness and lack of standards of the admissions policies CUNY adopted in the early 1970s. With respect to college governance, the leveling tendency and anti-meritocratic mindset have their origins in CUNY's statutory mission and bylaws, its political and historical dynamic, and its collective bargaining system. For example:

- Pursuant to the bylaws, the appointment of college presidents is made via a centralized process that tends to be dominated by small groups of Trustees, often based on borough representation, in which any notion of overall CUNY strategy or the pursuit of specific academic missions is foreign to the process.
- The presidents of all the colleges earn the same salary, whether they are administering the largest senior college or the smallest community college.
- Whereas the vast majority of universities appoint department heads on the basis of scholarly distinction or programmatic goals, CUNY's bylaws provide that department heads are popularly elected by departmental faculty.

- The bylaws provide that the department is the primary locus of control over matters of curriculum. This is problematic in those departments that are responsible for remediation, because it is the remediation instructors, rather than content-area faculty, who determine what remedial students need to learn.
- CUNY's bylaws and the State Education Law provide for an unusually short tenure clock as well as strict retrenchment rules, which have resulted in an entrenched faculty. The proportion of CUNY assistant professors who are tenured is more than double the national average for public institutions, and 86% of CUNY's full-time lecturers have virtual tenure (**SEE FIGURE 30, PAGE 85**). Moreover, the University's retrenchment rules constrain college presidents from removing unproductive faculty members, even in times of fiscal austerity; within departments, faculty must be retrenched in reverse order of seniority, without reference to the college's academic priorities. In part as a result of these policies, CUNY's faculty is aging. For example, Figure 31 shows that the average CUNY assistant professor is approximately 48 years old (**SEE FIGURE 31, PAGE 85**). In recent years, CUNY's efforts to stimulate faculty turnover by offering early retirement incentives have had unpredictable results — sometimes leading to the decimation of important program areas. In sum, CUNY's tenure and retrenchment policies undermine efforts to promote academic priorities.
- Pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement between the University and the faculty union, CUNY's faculty wage scale requires that all professors of the same grade be paid the same salary — regardless of field, institution, scholarly productivity, or responsibilities. Thus, for example, a professor of remedial reading at a community college makes the same salary as a professor of molecular biology at a senior college. This creates serious difficulties in recruiting and retaining high-quality faculty in fields such as business and engineering, where market rates are higher than the scale permits. The fact that CUNY has no nationally ranked doctoral programs in the physical sciences or engineering may also be attributable to the University's inability to pay competitive salaries. The latest faculty union contract permits up to 239 CUNY professors or other instructional staff to be paid one-time bonuses of \$5,000 for distinguished service. But this allows for fewer than 1% of professors to receive these bonuses. Obviously, this small gesture does not begin to allow for true differentiation or competitiveness.

Many CUNY administrators believe that CUNY's faculty union generally opposes efforts to measure and reward faculty productivity. If this is so, it is extremely shortsighted.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Outcome-based accountability**

Rather than attempting to control the colleges by legislating procedures — an approach that engenders frustration and stifles innovation — the central administration must shift toward a system of outcome-

FIGURE 30

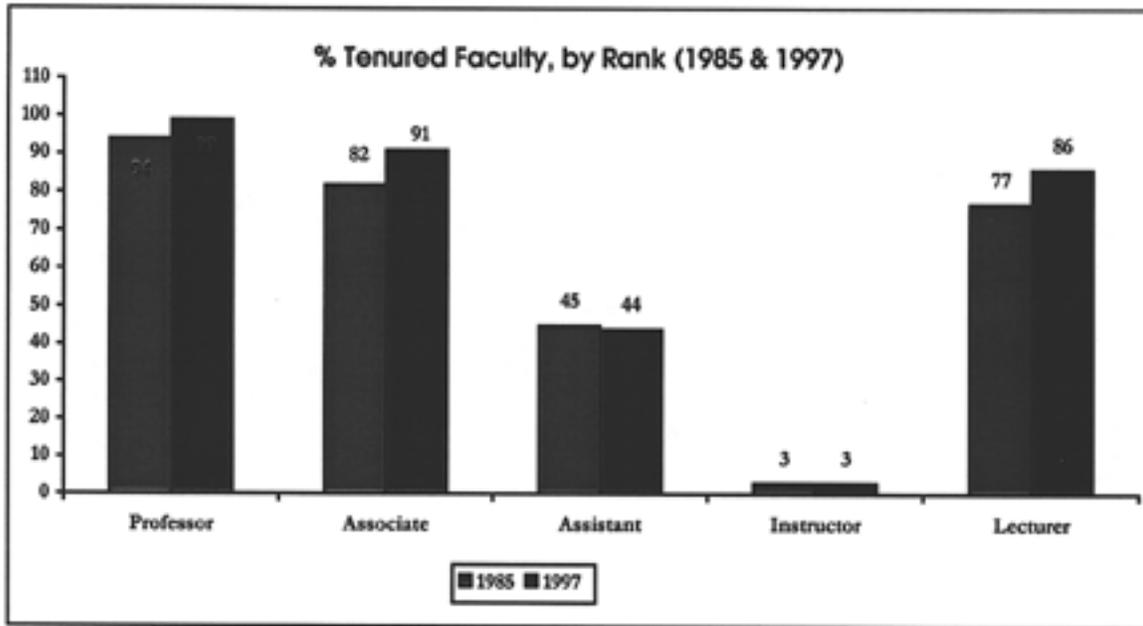
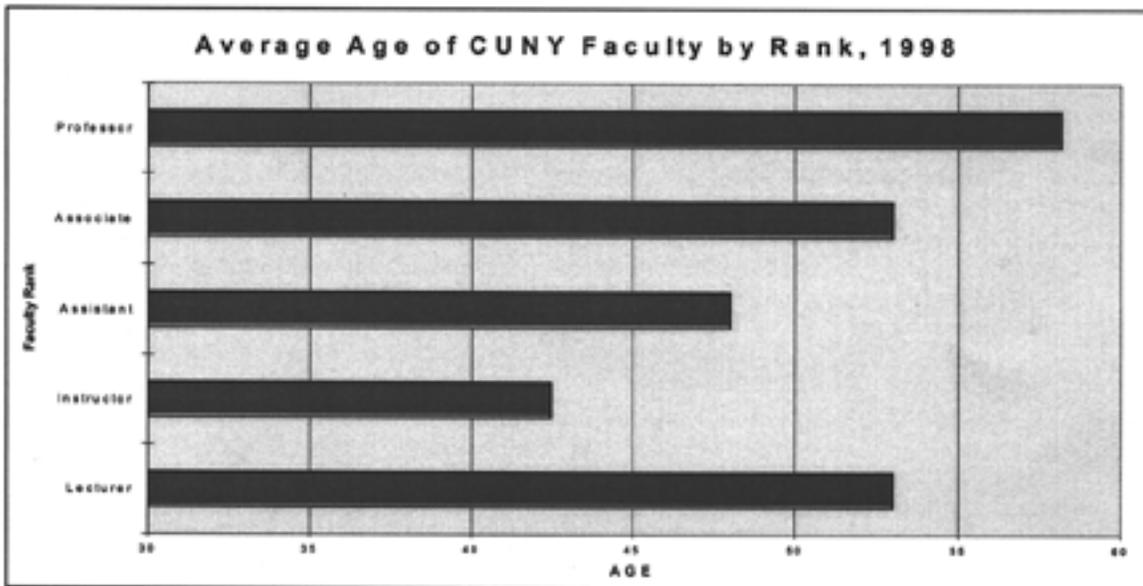


FIGURE 31





based accountability. Under such a system, the University leadership would govern by setting goals and rigorous academic and financial performance standards. The University would then establish incentives for the colleges to achieve the desired goals and standards — through whatever means they chose.

Campuses should be encouraged to develop clear, focused plans for the renewal and improvement of academic program offerings; for deploying resources in support of academic priorities; for maintaining high academic standards; and for advancing inter-college cooperation and the achievement of system-wide priorities. Campuses should be rewarded for the quality of their strategic vision and implementation.

In a complex system such as CUNY, where the goals and preparation levels of incoming students vary widely from college to college, performance standards must attempt to measure the value added by the college, accounting for baseline differences in student populations and reflecting appropriate differences in the academic missions of CUNY institutions.

CUNY's new performance-based budgeting process, instituted by Interim Chancellor Kimmich, represents a step in the right direction. If it is to be more effective than previous efforts to set system-wide priorities, however, it must carry more than marginal consequences for performance and non-performance. In addition, it should reward both continued high performance and performance improvement; colleges that are already performing well should not be penalized for their success.

## **2. Commitment to a system that is greater than the sum of its parts**

It must be the responsibility of each campus president, working with the Chancellor and the central administrative staff, to ensure a good fit between CUNY's overall institutional strategy and policies and the particular plans and priorities of the individual campuses. Once constructive working relationships are in place, the campus presidents and the faculty must no longer be permitted to undermine — or even ignore — legitimate university-wide policies and initiatives. Presidents and faculty who fail to enforce university policies — such as those governing student transfers and program duplication — should be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal.

## **3. The pursuit of excellence**

While maintaining its commitment to providing broad access, CUNY must reinvigorate its commitment to excellence. First, CUNY's leaders must design a university system that includes top-tier senior colleges, first-rate graduate programs, and institutions that continue to provide broad access at both the associate and baccalaureate levels. The selective senior colleges must have policies that ensure diversity within the context of high standards. Second, administrators and faculty must work together to modify bylaws and collective bargaining provisions that thwart the pursuit of excellence. The implementation of a system of outcome-based accountability that rewards colleges for improving their national ranking or attracting research funding will go a long way towards encouraging such modifications.



# VIII. Central Governance at CUNY: The Need for a Fresh Start

## A. DISCUSSION

### 1. Strategic vacuum

As we have discussed throughout this Report, university-wide strategic decision-making at CUNY is moribund. In Part VI, we discussed the relationship between this problem and CUNY's funding environment, budgeting, and financial management practices. In Part VII, we discussed how this strategic vacuum contributes to a culture of campus resistance to central initiatives. In this section, we turn to the relationship between strategic planning and CUNY's central governance.

It is not an exaggeration to say that confusion reigns about the most basic questions of institutional decision-making at CUNY. CUNY has no planning process designed to integrate the activities of its various campuses or create an overall system architecture; no strategic focus defining the particular institutional missions of its campuses; and no accountability mechanisms to assure the quality or productivity of its institutions and programs. Resources are allocated without strategy or rationale. Crucial appointments are made without even discussion of institutional priorities or goals. Not surprisingly, the very notion of long-range institutional planning elicits cynicism from CUNY insiders.

### 2. Unclear relationships

CUNY's strategic muddle results from the fact that its key institutions and leaders have no agreed understanding about their most important roles and responsibilities. At most universities, Trustees have broad general powers over fundamental policy matters. The Trustees, in turn, invest the Chancellor with broad chief executive responsibilities for implementing university policy and exerting leadership across campuses and programs. Responsibility for defining the University's mission and setting major policies may rest with either the Trustees or the Chancellor, depending on the institution. Either way, effective leadership requires the two entities to agree on these goals, as well as their respective responsibilities.

At CUNY, by contrast, the administration does not have a healthy working relationship with either the Trustees or the individual colleges. Moreover, there is utter confusion about the responsibilities of the Chancellor, both in relation to the Board of Trustees and in relation to the various campuses and programs. The traditional powers of a university chancellor are, at CUNY, infringed from both above and below:

- State law invests CUNY's Trustees with the power not just to set policies, but also to administer those policies and approve all expenditures over \$20,000.<sup>8</sup> In addition, CUNY's bylaws

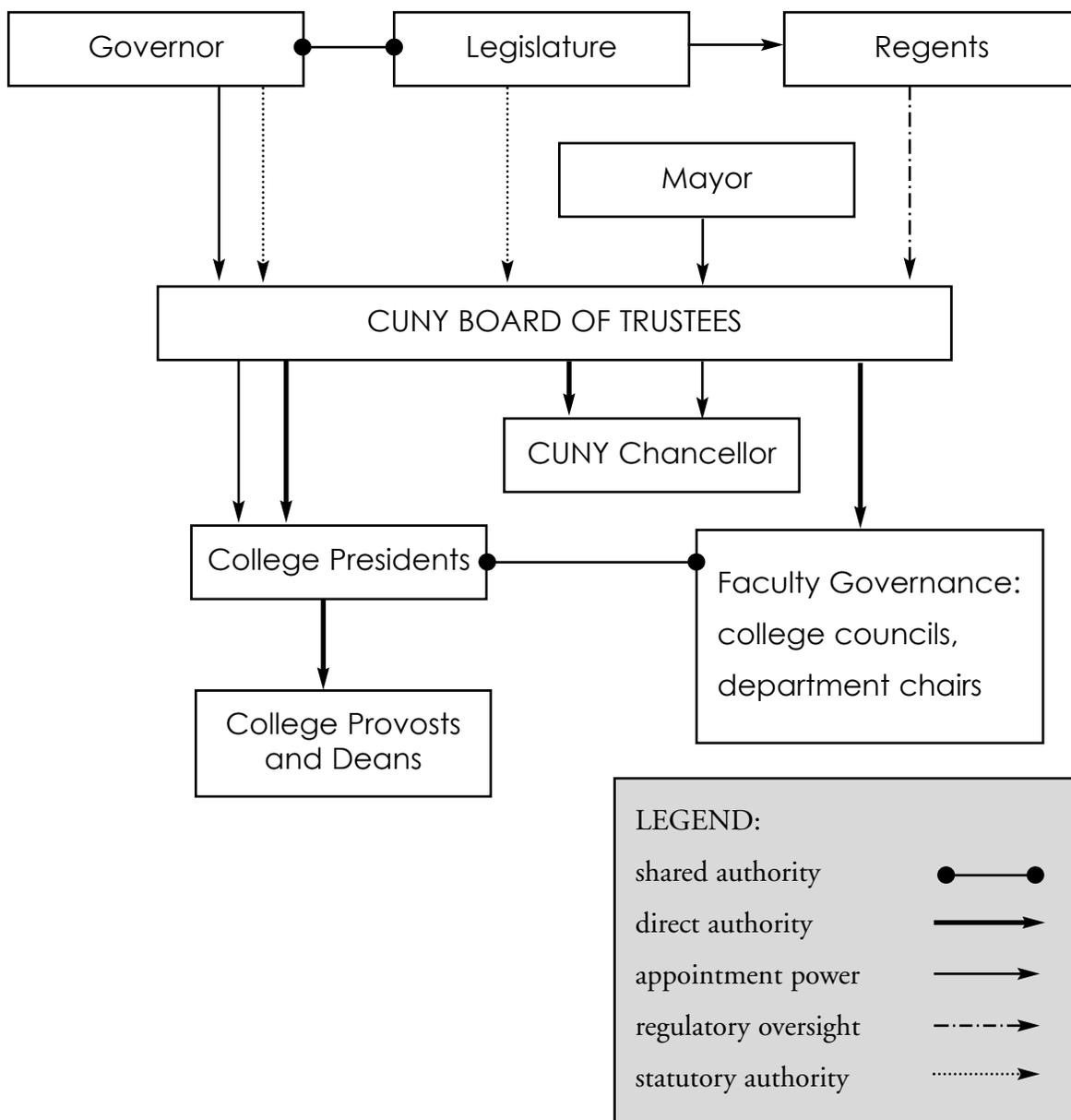
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<sup>8</sup> N.Y. Education Law, §§ 6204, 6218.

establish that the college presidents report directly to the Board, rather than through the Chancellor (**SEE FIGURE 32, BELOW**). In practice, the Trustees devote substantial time to trivial administrative details such as individual course descriptions and service contracts.

- CUNY’s bylaws and the Trustees’ *Manual of General Policy* strictly limit the Chancellor’s power over the various colleges. The individual college presidents have unabridged authority over major decision-making.

FIGURE 32  
Formal Channels of Authority at CUNY



### **3. Lack of management information**

The poor state of CUNY's information systems also impedes centralized government. Without timely, accurate, and integrated financial and academic information, judgments of accountability are extremely difficult, if not impossible.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Rethinking system governance**

Now, as in the past, CUNY's Trustees and administrative leaders are persons of energy, ability and goodwill. But they have functioned in a system where responsibility is diffuse, the missions of the various campuses are confused, and management information is nonexistent or unreliable. It is extremely difficult to exercise effective leadership in such a system. It is extremely difficult to achieve unity of purpose. It is well-nigh impossible to insist on accountability. The Task Force believes that this situation is intolerable. Without a new governance structure founded on the principles of performance, standards, and accountability, CUNY will be unable to meet the challenges it is currently facing, much less seize opportunities for educational leadership.

The disarray in CUNY's governance processes has led some CUNY leaders at the campus level to urge that the best solution is to disintegrate the system, freeing each campus to fend for itself. The Task Force appreciates the very real frustrations that give rise to such sentiments by those striving for initiative at the campuses. However, we are convinced that there are compelling reasons for CUNY to strive to become a unified, coherent, integrated public university system, even though this difficult undertaking is unprecedented in its history.

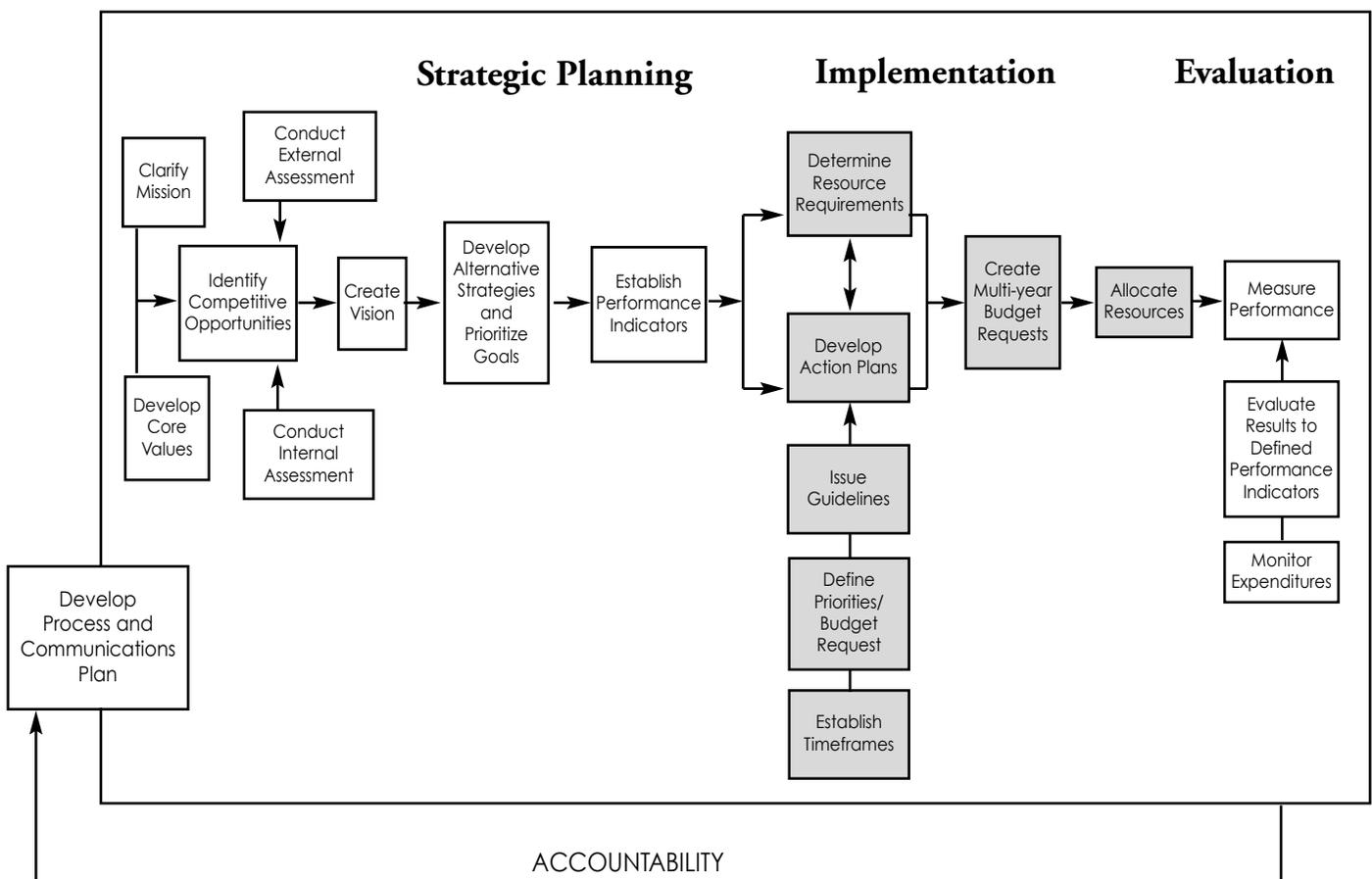
Of course, the institution or elimination of a particular form of governance is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. The Task Force believes that CUNY can best carry out its inspiring mission of balancing opportunity and excellence by constituting itself as an integrated system. No other public university system in the world has CUNY's potential advantages of scale, institutional diversity and focus, mission differentiation and harmony, program range and reinforcement, teaching and research cooperation, and array of academic choice, all within a single metropolitan area served by an effective public transportation system. If ever there was a public university that ought to be greater than the sum of its parts, it is CUNY; yet, at present, it is only with respect to graduate education that CUNY functions successfully as a whole. CUNY's most urgent task is to constitute itself as a workable and responsible system so it can deal effectively and creatively with the challenges it faces.

Accordingly, CUNY's leadership – as well as the architects of CUNY's new governance structure – must keep the following ends in view:

- To steer CUNY into the 21st century, by setting institutional strategy and establishing corresponding budgetary priorities;

- To ensure that CUNY meets the full range of the educational needs of diverse New Yorkers – including the need for educational programs of the highest excellence – by encouraging mission differentiation and coordination among campuses and programs;
- To ensure that CUNY’s mission of providing broad access to college programs of high quality is met, by holding all CUNY institutions and programs to clear standards measured by educational outcomes;
- To establish appropriate incentives and minimize bureaucratic red tape, by allocating financial resources rationally and in accordance with system priorities;
- To ensure that public dollars are managed responsibly, by holding all CUNY institutions and programs to clear standards of fiscal accountability;
- To ensure that managers and policymakers at every level have access to the timely and accurate information they need to make strategic decisions, by coordinating and assuring the integrity of CUNY’s academic and financial information systems;
- To reduce the need for postsecondary remediation, by viewing the problem from a K-16 perspective and ensuring that CUNY does its part to help the public schools achieve appropriate standards.

FIGURE 33  
Planning & Budgeting Flow Chart



The Task Force recognizes that in the absence of a sound governance process, various entities in the University may be compelled to take on responsibilities that would not be theirs in a well-functioning university. The following recommendations concern how CUNY should function when it is working well.

## **2. The Trustees**

CUNY should have a strong Board of Trustees, composed of persons committed to academic standards and institutional excellence with experience in the governance of complex institutions. The Chairman must be a person of demonstrated, successful leadership in complex organizations who understands how a strong board should relate to an effective chief executive officer and administration. The key responsibilities of the Trustees are:

- i) to affirm and monitor broad educational policies and institutional strategy;
- ii) to select, empower, and hold accountable a strong, effective Chancellor;
- iii) to assure sound stewardship of university resources;
- iv) to assist the Chancellor in politics, fundraising, and public outreach;
- v) to assure the integrity of information and information systems; and
- vi) to intervene in crises where the normal management system breaks down.

The Trustees can carry out their responsibilities systematically and effectively only through the leadership of the Chancellor. Accordingly, the Trustees' most important function is to select, empower, and advise a strong, effective Chancellor. The process of selecting a Chancellor may appropriately be led by a search committee of the Trustees, but all Trustees must have access to information about the search and should have the opportunity to be engaged in it.

The other essential precondition to sound leadership by the Trustees is good information. The Trustees should assure that there is independent auditing and reporting of key financial and academic information, and the Trustees should have direct access both to this information and to those responsible for gathering and analyzing it.

## **3. The Chancellor**

CUNY should have a strong Chancellor who is empowered to:

- i) formulate and recommend institutional policies to the Trustees;
- ii) hold the central staff accountable;
- iii) oversee and hold accountable campus leadership;
- iv) lead the University in both its internal and external affairs;
- v) recommend all key appointments, including the leaders of the various campuses (with the advice, consent, and oversight of the Trustees); and
- vi) formulate and recommend operating and capital budgets, administrative structures, and essential institutional and academic strategies for CUNY as a whole and for each campus (subject to the approval by the Trustees).

Ample authority over budgets and key institutional leaders is essential if the Chancellor is to assure institutional quality, cohesion, and adherence to Trustee-approved strategies and policies.

#### **4. City and State leaders**

The transformation the Task Force envisions will not be easy. It will require sustained determination by the City's and State's political leaders, especially the Mayor and the Governor, to insist that CUNY embrace the courageous, effective leadership that is necessary for CUNY to constitute itself as an integrated system that is greater than the sum of its parts.

# IX. Vision for the 21st Century

## A. ACCESS AND EXCELLENCE

Throughout CUNY's history, people have debated the best way to achieve the University's dual goals of academic excellence and the provision of equal access and opportunity. These goals have often been understood as mutually incompatible and requiring tradeoffs: at any given levels of funding and productivity, improvements in quality were thought possible only at the expense of access, and vice versa.

CUNY's history over the last thirty years would appear to support that "zero-sum" view. In 1969, CUNY did not merely decide to expand and increase access for racial and ethnic minorities while maintaining its commitment to excellence. Rather, the Trustees viewed ethnic integration as synonymous with "academic integration" – i.e., the distribution of severely underprepared students throughout the system's 17 colleges. This vision of an "academically integrated" university, combined with a total failure to evaluate the effectiveness of its access and remediation policies, has seriously undermined CUNY's historic commitment to excellence.

A very different vision is possible, however. Consider that one of the challenges of providing "access" in New York City is meeting the very diverse needs of the City's residents. Then consider that one of CUNY's strengths is the fact that it has 17 colleges spread throughout the five boroughs, with multiple campuses in every borough but Staten Island. Rather than blurring the distinctions among the colleges by promoting academic integration and maintaining a full range of programs at each college, CUNY must capitalize on its physical decentralization by working with each college to define a distinct, mutually complementary mission. In the 21st century, the CUNY system must include top-tier senior colleges, first-rate graduate programs, and institutions that continue to provide broad access at both the associate and baccalaureate levels. Thus, CUNY will continue to provide access to a broad range of students, with the major difference that each college will be free to pursue excellence on its own terms – in relation to the needs and abilities of its particular student body and in service of its individual mission.

## B. THE ECONOMIC FUTURE OF NEW YORKERS

In New York City's changing economy, access to high quality postsecondary education is of growing importance. Recent decades have witnessed a restructuring of the City's economy, from one based on manufacturing to one driven by services, and many traditional jobs that require less education are disappearing. Finance, insurance, and real estate dominate the marketplace and account for disproportionately high shares of income. Along with medical services, business services, and communications and entertainment, these are the prime sources of good jobs. But these sectors are relentlessly compet-

itive and require learning for success.<sup>9</sup>

CUNY has a long history of offering students a “pathway out of poverty” by providing them with access to an excellent education,<sup>10</sup> and today’s students still have faith that attending CUNY will improve their economic prospects. But in an economy that demands well-educated employees, merely attending college will not be sufficient; colleges must ensure that students are gaining the skills and knowledge that employers and graduate schools demand.<sup>11</sup> The Task Force found that although CUNY tracks graduation rates, it collects almost no information to indicate whether the attainment of a CUNY diploma or certificate represents the knowledge and skills students need, or whether graduates are meeting the standards of employers and graduate schools; still less is known about the skills of the more than half of CUNY students who leave the University without graduating.

In the next century, CUNY must begin measuring its own success in terms of the economic successes of its students. The University must:

- greatly expand relationships with employers and graduate schools;
- work closely with employers and graduate schools to anticipate their demands; and
- be flexible enough to adapt to changes – both projected and unanticipated – in the City’s student population and economy.

To encourage the individual colleges to focus on these goals, the University must define appropriate student outcome measures (other than simple graduation rates), promote systematic assessment of performance, and use budget policies to reward the campuses that are most effective in promoting student success.

## C. TECHNOLOGY

CUNY will need modern computer technology if it is to track its changing environment, deploy its resources strategically, and tailor instruction to meet individual students’ needs more efficiently in the next century. Until now, however, rather than embracing and investing in new technologies, CUNY – like many of New York City’s public institutions – has resisted change. CUNY’s failure to keep pace with the demands of the digital age has reduced institutional effectiveness and harmed students.

With respect to information systems, PricewaterhouseCoopers reported that the poor quality of CUNY’s technology infrastructure:

- reduces efficiency and effectiveness;
- raises the costs of routine operations; and

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<sup>9</sup> Alan G. Hevesi, NYC’s Labor-Force Challenges, 10.

<sup>10</sup> David Lavin, Changing the Odds, 71; see also N.Y. Education Law, §6201(4).

<sup>11</sup> Some have argued that higher education has traditionally had little to do with training students for work; rather, the process served to identify talented students and provide them with a credential, with little of substance in between. But at CUNY, where the admissions process does not “sort out” underqualified applicants, a diploma that does not guarantee that a student possesses measurable skills and knowledge risks total devaluation.

- inhibits the campuses from sharing resources or collaborating on programmatic or administrative improvements.

With respect to educational technology, a technology task force established by CUNY's Trustees in 1997 found that:

- the distribution of technology, both within and across colleges, is dramatically uneven;
- much of the technology that is available is based on antiquated equipment; and
- the use of technology in classroom instruction is still mostly experimental, and is touching few students' lives.<sup>12</sup>

CUNY's position as one of the largest urban public universities; its location at the center of the world economy; and its commitment to serving students with diverse needs should impel it to become a leader in the use of technology to manage information and deliver instruction. CUNY must invest in the development of a coordinated, university-wide technology infrastructure, including:

- integrated management information systems capable of automating the planning and budgeting process, integrating planning and budgeting with other administrative processes, tracking student progress and outcomes, and providing better and more accessible management information; and
- network-based instructional support strategies that enable students, faculty, and staff to access educational materials and assistance any time and anywhere.<sup>13</sup>

## D. K-16 CONTINUUM

In 1970, CUNY sought to expand educational opportunity by offering an open door to all New York City public school graduates. The overarching lesson of this bold experiment is that merely offering an open door to higher education is not enough: true opportunity requires that students be prepared to cope with the academic requirements of college studies. This, in turn, requires that every effort be made to help students gain basic skills in the earliest grades. The Task Force's research confirms that students who do not gain a solid grounding in primary and secondary school are unlikely to make up for lost time in college.

Yet the New York City public schools continue to promote and graduate students who are under-prepared for college, lacking basic reading and writing skills and English fluency, and without a solid foundation in rigorous math and science courses. Moreover, although the public schools and CUNY share a largely overlapping student population and face many of the same educational challenges, they have few common educational strategies. Their goals, curricula, and evaluation protocols are incongruent.

In the 21st century, the City can no longer afford an ad hoc approach to public education. In order to fulfill its obligation to its citizens while remaining competitive in a world market, New York City must begin strategically deploying its educational resources according to a long-term vision that

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<sup>12</sup> City University of New York, University Library and Educational Technology Task Force, 10-1-97, Final Report, 10-11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

encompasses the K-16 continuum and beyond.

- CUNY must communicate clear, objective standards of college readiness, undertake early testing and early intervention for prospective students, establish College Now in all high schools, and provide excellent teacher education.
- The New York City public schools must end social promotion; arrange for effective remediation starting in elementary school; obtain comprehensive, objective, and timely information about student performance and achievement – including requiring high school students to take the PSAT and the SAT; and use that information as the basis for deploying resources to address students' needs.
- Together, CUNY and the schools must build an assessment program that bridges the two systems and establish congruence between the curriculum and the demands of college-level study.

## **E. LEADERSHIP**

In our opinion, CUNY plainly needs help in forging its institutional destiny for the coming century. Political leaders, the business community, and professional groups must give CUNY sustained attention and insist that CUNY constitute itself as an effective system, based on high standards and accountability. But CUNY must get itself organized to take responsibility in defining its academic and institutional strategy.

No first-rate university system can confront the fundamental institutional questions CUNY must address without the active engagement of the key elements of the University—especially the faculty. But the politics of mistrust and contention must give way to strong, empowered leadership at both the system and campus levels which can create and carry out a unified strategic vision for the University as a whole. The faculty must be engaged in ways that inform but do not paralyze the process.

For CUNY to do what it has to do, it is imperative that the University be led by a strong, empowered Chancellor. The Trustees must give the new Chancellor a comprehensive strategic mandate with which to lead. CUNY cannot tolerate continued confusion regarding the role of the Chancellor. The Chancellor must enjoy the confidence of the Trustees. The Mayor and the Governor must be engaged and must actively assist the Chancellor in a comprehensive strategy of institutional renewal. This is not because CUNY needs central micromanagement. To the contrary, it is to encourage initiative and energy at the campuses, subject to a unified strategic vision of the system as a whole and to clear standards of accountability. The next Chancellor of CUNY will take on one of the most challenging and important responsibilities in all of American higher education. The Trustees of the University must fashion and support an institutional renewal that gives New York City the preeminent system of urban public higher education in the world. The Trustees and the Chancellor must be equal to these tasks and must be given the tools to succeed.

# X. RECOMMENDATIONS

**1. Reconciling access and excellence.** CUNY's leaders must design a university system that includes top-tier senior colleges, first-rate graduate programs, and institutions that continue to provide broad access at both the associate and baccalaureate levels. The selective senior colleges must have policies that ensure diversity within the context of high standards.

**2. Clear, objective standards.** CUNY must organize itself and all its institutions and programs around clear, objective standards:

- CUNY must insist on clear and objective admissions standards that put CUNY applicants and NYCPS students in a clear national context, and that put students and teachers on notice as to the levels of academic preparation required for admission to the various CUNY degree programs. These new standards must include a nationally normed, standardized test such as the SAT.
- CUNY must establish clear standards of readiness for entry into college-level work and corresponding remedial exit standards.
- CUNY must establish clear standards of performance as a condition of graduation from all degree programs.

**3. Rethinking remediation at CUNY.** Before CUNY can reform remediation, it must recognize remediation for what it is: an unfortunate necessity, thrust upon CUNY by the failure of the schools, and a distraction from the main business of the University.

**4. Reinventing open admissions.** CUNY must reinvent open admissions to locate responsibility for remediation at the community college level and to ensure that CUNY's senior colleges admit only those students who are prepared to succeed in college-level work.

**5. Competition and choice of remediation.** Prospective CUNY students must be afforded a variety of remediation options that meet their individual needs. Students who require remediation should be given education vouchers, funded by a mix of public sources, so they can obtain remedial education services free of charge from the provider of their choice without depleting their college financial aid. As the first step towards full implementation of the remediation voucher program, CUNY and the City should experiment with outsourcing remediation services, in order to stimulate competition and generate performance data from the various providers.

**6. Student assessment testing.** CUNY must replace its current student assessment program with one

that is consistent with modern assessment science. CUNY must place students at the appropriate level, diagnose their basic skills and ESL needs with precision, measure skill improvements, and compile the student outcome information required under a performance-based funding system. CUNY should immediately discontinue use of the WAT and, as a stopgap measure, replace it with either the College Board's *Accuplacer* or ACT's *Compass* writing assessment test. CUNY must also replace the RAT and the MAT with independently designed, nationally normed placement, diagnostic, and post-test instruments.

**7. Research, accountability, and quality control.** CUNY must determine which of its various remedial programs and approaches are most effective at meeting students' diverse educational needs; must hold administrators and instructors accountable for improving students' skills; and must ensure that its remedial program offerings are consistently of good quality.

**8. Paying for remediation.** Remedial education should be financed differently than it has been in the past, so that students are able to obtain remediation without depleting their college financial aid:

- The New York State legislature should revamp the rules of the Tuition Assistance Program to eliminate the availability of college financial aid dollars for remedial education.
- The Mayor and the Governor must work together to identify funds that can be used to finance remedial education.
- New York City should coordinate the budgets of the many publicly-funded vocational, adult education, literacy, workforce development, and related programs already operating throughout the five boroughs, and identify which funds could be leveraged to finance remedial education for prospective CUNY students.
- The City should shift the costs of postsecondary remediation of recent high school graduates to the public school system. In this way, the public school system's budget would be linked to its success in improving the college-preparedness of high school graduates.

**9. Aligning standards across the K-16 continuum.** Together, CUNY and NYCPS must build an assessment program that bridges the two systems and establish congruence between the K-12 curriculum and the demands of college-level study.

**10. Objective student performance information.** NYCPS must obtain comprehensive, objective, and timely information about student performance, starting in elementary school – including requiring all high school students to take the PSAT and SAT – and must use that information as the basis for deploying resources to address students' needs.

**11. Early, effective intervention.** NYCPS must arrange for early intervention with effective basic skills, ESL, and other programs for students who fall behind.

**12. English fluency.** NYCPS must launch an all-out effort to make students with limited proficiency in English fluent immediately upon entry to the school system, at whatever point.

**13. Ending social promotion.** NYCPS must end social promotion by requiring clear standards of academic achievement as a condition of student progress through school.

**14. Expanding capacity.** We recommend that the Board of Education enlist the aid of CUNY, of private colleges and universities, of private and parochial schools, and of the private sector, to provide special after-school and summer-school interventions to help students who are not meeting standards. Private sector providers should be enlisted to help students learn basic skills and become fluent in English. All should be engaged under performance-based contracts that ensure accountability.

**15. Building on existing collaborations.** CUNY must collaborate with NYCPS to obtain objective information about students' achievement early and often in their academic careers; to provide remediation as soon as warning signs appear; and to provide clear examples of what courses and content meet college preparation requirements.

**16. Strengthening teacher education.** CUNY must strengthen the quality and consistency of its teacher education programs and provide NYCPS with well-prepared teachers.

**17. Performance-based budgeting.** CUNY must convert to performance-based budgeting. The University must define its priorities, promote systematic assessment of performance, use budget policies to reinforce campus accountability and encourage campuses to develop new sources of revenues, and reward the campuses that are most effective in promoting student success. No CUNY institution or program should be supported if it does not provide clear, objective information about the quality and productivity of its efforts.

**18. Reversing the effects of budget drift.** CUNY must make student instruction and assessment the center of its financial priorities. The University's extensive reliance on part-time faculty and failure to control non-instructional costs threaten the integrity of CUNY's academic programs. CUNY must make the hard choices necessary to renew its full-time faculty.

**19. Performance-based funding.** The Mayor and the Governor must work together and with the City and State legislatures to define educational priorities, promote systematic assessment of performance, and use multi-year, performance-based funding policies to reinforce accountability.

**20. Increasing alternative revenues.** The University must do much more to increase alternative revenues. To realize its fullest potential in generating alternative revenues through contracts, grants, and

private fund-raising, CUNY must establish university-wide policies, incentives, and infrastructure. CUNY should:

- allocate tuition revenues to the colleges that generate those revenues;
- encourage colleges to seek out new sources of revenues by implementing policies that reward colleges that generate additional support through fund-raising, grants, and contracts, other educational services, and auxiliary operations; and
- establish a central pool of dedicated start-up funds to help colleges develop new programs that respond to student needs or market opportunities.

**21. All-funds management.** CUNY must adopt an “all funds” approach to budgeting and fiscal management.

**22. University-wide fiscal management and accountability.** CUNY must establish university-wide fiscal management policies, and must give individual campuses the responsibility to spend funds according to those policies; before CUNY can require budget accountability, however, it must ensure that campus business managers have access to the information they need to be responsible and accountable for funds received.

**23. Outcome-based accountability.** CUNY must reorganize itself around a system of outcome-based accountability for all programs and institutions:

- CUNY must set goals and rigorous academic and financial performance standards, then establish incentives for the colleges to achieve the desired goals and standards through whatever means they choose. Performance standards must measure the value added by each college, accounting for baseline differences in student populations and reflecting appropriate differences in the academic missions of CUNY institutions.
- The campuses should be encouraged to take creative initiatives for achieving system-wide priorities, and should be rewarded for the quality of their strategic vision and implementation.

**24. Bylaws and contracts.** Administrators and faculty must work together to modify bylaws and collective bargaining provisions that thwart the pursuit of excellence.

**25. Rethinking system governance.** CUNY must strive to become a unified, coherent, integrated public university system, for the first time in its history. CUNY must rethink its architecture as a university, to focus the academic missions of its various campuses to offer a range of higher education appropriate to the needs of New York, to encourage excellence and efficiency, to reduce redundancy, and to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts. It must be the responsibility of each campus president, working with the Chancellor and the central administrative staff, to ensure a good fit between CUNY’s overall institutional strategy and policies and the particular plans and priorities of

the individual campuses. Once constructive working relationships are in place, the campus presidents and the faculty must no longer be permitted to undermine — or even ignore — legitimate university-wide policies and initiatives. Presidents and faculty who fail to vigorously enforce university policies — such as those governing student transfers and program duplication — should be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal.

**26. The Trustees.** The Mayor and the Governor should invest the Trustees with a mandate to:

- provide strategic direction and monitor the implementation of broad educational policies;
- ensure stewardship of university resources; and
- ensure the integrity of information and information systems.

**27. The Chancellor.** The Mayor and the Governor should create strong leadership for CUNY, including a Chancellor who enjoys the confidence and support of the Trustees, and whose mandate is to reconstitute CUNY as a coherent, effective university system. To carry out the mandate, the Chancellor must be empowered to:

- formulate and recommend policies to the Trustees;
- hold the central staff accountable;
- select, oversee and hold accountable campus leadership;
- lead the University in its internal and external affairs;
- recommend all key appointments, including the leaders of the various campuses; and
- formulate and recommend operating and capital budgets, administrative structures, and essential institutional and academic strategies for CUNY as a whole and for each campus.

**28. The economic future of New Yorkers.** In the next century, CUNY must begin measuring its own success in terms of the economic successes of its students. The University must:

- greatly expand relationships with employers and graduate schools;
- work closely with employers and graduate schools to anticipate their demands; and
- be flexible enough to adapt to changes – both projected and unanticipated – in the City’s student population and economy.

**29. Information and education technology.** CUNY must invest in the development of a coordinated, university-wide technology infrastructure, including:

- integrated management information systems capable of automating the planning and budgeting process, integrating planning and budgeting with other administrative processes, tracking student progress and outcomes, and providing better and more accessible management information; and
- network-based instructional support strategies that enable students, faculty, and staff to access educational materials and assistance any time and anywhere.

**30. Coordinated citywide education policy.** In order to fulfill its obligation to its citizens while remaining competitive in a world market, New York City must begin strategically deploying its educational resources according to a long-term vision that encompasses the K-16 continuum and beyond.

# APPENDIX

## I. THE EXECUTIVE ORDER

On May 6, 1998, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani issued Executive Order No. 41 (the “Executive Order”) establishing the Advisory Task Force on the City University of New York (the “Task Force”). The Task Force was charged with examining the City University of New York (“CUNY” or “the University”). Specifically, the Mayor directed the Task Force to examine (1) the uses of City funding by CUNY; (2) open admissions and remedial education at CUNY; (3) the possibility of arranging for third parties to provide remediation services to prospective CUNY students; and (4) the implementation of other appropriate reform measures. The Executive Order authorized the Task Force to conduct public hearings and to retain consultants and staff. A copy of the Executive Order is annexed to this Appendix as Exhibit 1.

## II. TASK FORCE MEMBERS AND STAFF

Members of the Task Force included:

**Benno C. Schmidt, Jr., Chair**  
Chairman, The Edison Project

**Herman Badillo**  
Chairman, CUNY Board of Trustees  
Partner, Fischbein, Badillo, Wagner, Harding

**Jacqueline V. Brady**  
Vice President of Structured Finance, Nomura Securities International, Inc.

**Heather Mac Donald**  
John M. Olin fellow, The Manhattan Institute  
Contributing Editor, City Journal

**Manfred Ohrenstein**  
Former New York State Senator and Democratic Minority Leader  
Partner, Ohrenstein & Brown, LLP

**Richard T. Roberts**

Commissioner, New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

**Richard Schwartz**

President and CEO, Opportunity America

The Task Force hired an Executive Director:

**Roger Benjamin, Executive Director**

President, Council for Aid to Education (an independent subsidiary of RAND)

In addition, full-time staff included:

**Sally Renfro, Director of Research**

General Counsel, New York City Department of Employment

**Allison Armour-Garb, Associate Director of Research**

Assistant General Counsel, New York City Department of Employment

**Miriam Cilo, Research Associate**

**Mary Grace Eapen, Director of Fund-Raising**

**Rose King, Administrative Assistant**

New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development

### **III. THE TASK FORCE'S METHODS**

#### **A. Consultants**

The Task Force retained the following consultants to augment its research and to prepare certain reports:

- PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (“PwC”)
- RAND
- Bruce S. Cooper, Ph.D., Fordham University Graduate School of Education

#### **B. Interviews**

The Task Force, consultants, and staff conducted hundreds of interviews. Interviewees included CUNY administrators – including the Chancellor and all the college presidents; hundreds of CUNY faculty members; New York City Board of Education officials; City and State officials; outside experts; and other interested constituents and members of the public.

#### **C. Document Review**

The Task Force, consultants, and staff reviewed thousands of documents – including financial records, reports and memoranda, scholarly articles and books, statistical printouts, court papers, and historical records – obtained from CUNY and a variety of outside sources.

#### **D. Task Force Meetings and Briefings**

The full Task Force met more than 20 times – approximately biweekly – to discuss the status, direction and results of its inquiry, and to hear briefings from staff members and consultants. In addition, the Task Force Chair consulted regularly with the staff and with the consultant groups.

#### **E. Public Comment**

The Task Force invited written and spoken comments on the following issues:

- Governance
- Admissions Standards
- Remediation
- Funding and Resource Allocation
- Academic Mission and Institutional Focus
- Testing
- Academic Standards and Accountability

The Task Force held four public forums, at which all interested members of the public were invited to speak:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
January 5, 1999	Hunter College, Manhattan
January 6, 1999	Hunter College, Manhattan
February 3, 1999	New York City Technical College, Brooklyn
February 10, 1999	Queens College, Queens

Lists of the people who offered their spoken and written comments at the public forums are annexed to this Appendix as Exhibit 2.

In addition, the Task Force solicited written comments. Approximately 200 letters and electronic mail messages were received.

## **F. Fund Raising**

The Task Force raised a total of \$300,000 from foundations to pay its Executive Director and consultants. The following foundations awarded grants:

<b>Foundation</b>	<b>Amt. of Grant</b>	<b>Grantee</b>
The Achelis Foundation	\$25,000	Council for Aid to Education (RAND)
The Bodman Foundation	\$50,000	Council for Aid to Education
The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation	\$25,000	Council for Aid to Education
The J.M. Kaplan Fund	\$10,000	Council for Aid to Education
The Henry Luce Foundation	\$40,000	New York City Public Private Initiatives
The John M. Olin Foundation	\$25,000	New York City Public Private Initiatives
The David & Lucile Packard Foundation	\$50,000	New York City Public Private Initiatives
The Starr Foundation	\$75,000	New York City Public Private Initiatives

The Task Force is continuing to raise funds to defray costs of consultants, publication costs, and various administrative costs.

## **G. Reports Submitted to the Task Force**

The consultants and staff submitted 11 separate reports to the Task Force. These reports contain the factual findings upon which the Task Force's recommendations are based.

### **PricewaterhouseCoopers submitted the following reports:**

- *Report I: Financial Analysis of Remedial Education at the City University of New York*
- *Report II: Planning and Budgeting at the City University of New York*
- *Report III: Review of the City University of New York's Revenues and Expenditures*

### **The Task Force staff submitted the following reports:**

- *Open Admissions and Remedial Education at the City University of New York*, Sally Renfro and Allison Armour-Garb
- *Beyond Graduation Rates: Assessing the Outcomes of CUNY's Open Admissions and Remedial Education Policies*, Sally Renfro and Allison Armour-Garb
- *Analysis of Remedial Education Outsourcing Alternatives: Report to the Mayor's Advisory Task Force on the City University of New York*, Miriam Cilo
- *Bridging the Gap Between School and College*, Miriam Cilo and Bruce S. Cooper

### **RAND submitted the following reports:**

- *The Governance of the City University of New York: A System at Odds With Itself*, Brian Gill
- *Financing Remediation at CUNY on a Performance Basis: A Proposal*, Arthur M. Hauptman
- *CUNY Statistical Profile, 1980-1998*, Mary Kim
- *CUNY's Testing Program: Characteristics, Results, and Implications for Policy and Research*, Stephen P. Klein and Maria Orlando

