

Senate Standing Committee on Civil Service and Pension

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DRAFT TESTIMONY of
The City University of New York

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Good morning, Honorable Chair Jackson and members of the Senate Standing Committee on Civil Service and Pension. Thank you for the invitation to speak on retention and recruitment for civil service jobs in New York State and the New York State pension fund.

My name is Lauren Andersen, and I, and my colleague Ludwig Vouitsis, are proud to represent The City University of New York here today.

I have the honor of serving as the University Associate Provost for Careers & Industry Partnerships and Chief Workforce Officer at CUNY. In this capacity, I oversee an office that was recently elevated to report directly to the Chancellor as well as the University Provost. This is a reflection of the importance that CUNY places on ensuring our students can successfully launch careers, while helping to fuel the growth of New York employers.

In July, CUNY released a strategic plan entitled *CUNY Lifting NY*. We chose this title deliberately, in recognition of the role that CUNY plays as a leading engine of inclusive economic mobility in New York City and New York State.

New York's economic growth must be equitable. It has to lift all New Yorkers, particularly communities of color and residents who were underrepresented in critical careers long before the pandemic. No other institution is better positioned to lift up all New Yorkers than CUNY.

Advancing economic mobility at scale is in our DNA. It was instilled 175 years ago with the founding of CUNY's progenitor - a school called the Free Academy. It was created to educate and provide access, equity and opportunity to people from families of modest backgrounds and qualify them for "usefulness hereafter".

Through decades and generations, CUNY has shaped and transformed the city and state's professional and middle class. It has gained a national reputation for propelling more graduates up the economic ladder than all Ivys, Stanford, Carnegie Mellon, and MIT combined.

Today, with 400,000 degree and non-degree-seeking students served across 25 campuses, CUNY continues to commit to transforming itself into the higher education system our city and state needs at this moment and in the decades to come.

Central to this transformation is an effort to ensure that even more CUNY students have the exposure, preparation, experience, and connections needed to fuel an inclusive and thriving workforce – including in the public sector, which serves as an essential backbone of our City and State.

CUNY is an unparalleled talent pipeline for the City and State public sector. Over 40 City and State entities hired CUNY students this past spring. Our top employer of undergraduates is the NYC Department of Education, where nearly a third of new teachers each year come from CUNY.

And CUNY is actively working to grow this pipeline through three key strategies:

*** Expanding Paid Internship Collaborations with public agencies.**

As of today, 13 City agencies partner with the *CUNY Internship Program* to introduce hundreds of students into the public sector workforce while they are still in school. This effort recently expanded with additional internship partnerships with the NY State Department of Information Technology and the MTA.

And students are hungry for the chance to work for the institutions that keep their City and State running. In our first round of recruitment for MTA internship positions, *over 16,000 students applied for 150 spots*. We've continued to grow this essential partnership, and have connected over 350 students to MTA internships since the collaboration began.

Moreover, managers of CUNY interns have realized what an essential pipeline our campuses can be. Many have sought to convert these interns into full-time Civil Service positions once they graduate.

However, they quickly learned how difficult this can be. Even with a Bachelor's degree, many interns did not meet the two-year experience requirement needed to qualify for roles.

So, we built it into our programming. In 2022, CUNY relaunched the Civil Service Pathways Fellowship with NYC's Department of City-wide Administrative Services. This fellowship built in a three-year pathway for students to work and learn while working to qualify for full time Civil Service titles. As a result of this program, students can now more seamlessly transition into Civil Service roles at agencies that are delighted to have them.

***Integrating connections to public sector career paths into the curriculum...**

Beyond internship opportunities that exist outside of a student's degree path, CUNY is also working to integrate exposure to the public service as part of a student's classroom experience. The Edward T. Rogowski Public Affairs Internship Program integrates public service directly into the classroom by coupling a credit-bearing course with the opportunity to intern in the State legislature.

*** Expanding access to full time Civil Service hiring opportunities.**

In addition to efforts to build early talent pipelines, in the past year CUNY has also worked to ensure that full-time opportunities are more accessible to students.

For instance, this year, CUNY campuses hosted hiring fairs for City Civil Service roles in partnership with the City of New York, making public sector positions and career paths more visible to students and the community.

This is the work CUNY has embarked on to expand opportunities and partnerships that will enable students to pursue rewarding careers in the Civil Service. We are eager to do more and expand our collaboration to other State and City agencies.

In the meantime, we also recognize CUNY's invaluable role as a civil service employer, ourselves. At this point I will turn things over to my colleague Lou who can speak to this.