



**STATEMENT
OF
DONAVAN BORINGTON
UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE DELEGATE
LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BEFORE THE
STATE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, STATE ASSEMBLY
COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS,
STATE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, & STATE SENATE COMMITTEE
ON FINANCE
February 11, 2013
ALBANY, NEW YORK**

Opening Statement

Good Afternoon Distinguished Members of the State Senate and Assembly.

My name is Donovan Borington. I am a delegate of the University Student Senate representing LaGuardia Community College part of the City University of New York. Thank you for allowing my colleagues and me the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the more than 269,000 students who we represent. I am joined by my fellow student leaders Luis Gutierrez, Camille O'Brien, Charles Harding, and Carolina Vasquez.

Today, we are here to express support for CUNY's Legislative Budget Proposal. It is our hope to ensure continued access and assistance for current and future students that desperately rely on student support services to pursue and complete their education.

We are aware of the economic climate and understand the tough budgetary decisions that state legislators have to make. However, we are here to ask you to support critical programs like CUNY Leads, academic advisement, counseling, childcare and Veteran services. Our Graduate students are facing tremendous debt due to the elimination of Graduate TAP. Community Colleges, statewide, are suffering due to the insufficient amount of base aid, which needs to be returned to the level it was few years ago.

We appreciate your support of higher education and hope that you will continue to work with us to ensure that we all have access to necessary support services.

Closing

Thank you for listening to my colleagues. We hope we have provided insight into the importance of investing in higher education; it is an investment in our future and the future of our state. Support for Graduate TAP, CUNY LEADS, Childcare and veteran's services will increase our state's economic development. President John F. Kennedy once said, "Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation."

We thank you for your time today.



CCSD
CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities



**STATEMENT
OF
LUIS GUTIERREZ
UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE VICE CHAIR OF GRADUATE AFFAIRS
CUNY COALITION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES CHAIR OF
RECRUITMENT**

BEFORE THE

**STATE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, STATE ASSEMBLY
COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS,**

**STATE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, & STATE SENATE
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

**February 11, 2013
ALBANY, NEW YORK**

Good Afternoon. My name is Luis Gutierrez, and I serve as Vice Chair of Graduate Student Affairs for the University Student Senate (USS), the official governance organization for students at the City University of New York (CUNY). I also serve as the Chair of Recruitment for the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities (CCSD).

I am here today speaking on behalf of the needs of CUNY's more than 30,000 graduate students. One of the most pressing issues facing our graduate students has been the combination of skyrocketing tuition and a lack of an adequate financial aid safety net. Very briefly: there are two remedies we would like the state legislature to consider.

First, we ask you to consider restoring & enhancing Graduate TAP. A restoration of this program would be extremely helpful for students at CUNY, SUNY, and our State's private colleges and universities. However, of even greater importance to CUNY graduate students would be

allowing part-time students to be eligible for Graduate TAP. According to CUNY's Office of Institutional Research, more than two-thirds of CUNY graduate students are part-time students. Moreover, since many of our graduate students are already part of our State's workforce, expanding the state tax credit for undergraduate students to include our graduate students would be of tremendous assistance.

As you know, many fields now require graduate degrees to be competitive for entry-level employment. Therefore, whatever you can do to help keep graduate school affordable will certainly help prepare New York State residents for a constantly changing job market.

Finally, I would like to shift gears slightly and take a moment to thank the members of the state legislature for including a line for CUNY LEADS in the CUNY operating budget. My colleague, Washieka Torres, USS Vice Chair for Disabled Student Affairs wasn't able to make the trip to Albany today, so I agreed to add this important item to my testimony.

Students with disabilities rely on CUNY for the support and innovative programs that are crucial to helping us compete for jobs in the face of a staggering 44 percent unemployment rate and 70 percent jobless rate among New Yorkers with disabilities. Specifically, we rely on programs like CUNY LEADS.

At a time when the State is feverishly searching for innovative ways to grow its economy, CUNY LEADS has proven to be a significant stimulus. Indeed, a modest investment of roughly \$10,000 to develop and place a CUNY LEADS student in competitive employment saves New

York State \$14,312 per year in disability benefits alone. Over the course of a 30 year work history, this represents a total savings of \$418,222 in NYS disability benefits for each LEADS job placement. Clearly, CUNY LEADS is a modest investment that yields a maximum return to New York State.

On behalf of all City University students with disabilities, I ask that you support the University's request for a \$1.5 million increase in 2013-14 to fully fund CUNY LEADS. We desperately need your leadership to sustain this crucial program. Students with disabilities' independence, opportunities, and hopes for better lives, hang in the balance.

I urge you to address the needs of New York State's graduate students & students with disabilities during your budget deliberations.

Thank you.



**STATEMENT
OF
CAMILE O'BRIEN
UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE VICE CHAIR OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS**

BEFORE THE

**STATE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, STATE ASSEMBLY
COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS,**

**STATE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION, & STATE SENATE
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

**February 11, 2013
ALBANY, NEW YORK**

Good Afternoon Distinguished Members of the State Senate and Assembly.

My name is Camille O'Brien and I am a CUNY student attending Baruch College. I also have the honor to serve as the Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs for the University Student Senate. It is a pleasure to testify today in support of CUNY's Legislative Budget request.

Increased funding will provide greater resources to improve counseling services for our students. Many CUNY students were harshly affected by SuperStorm Sandy; some lost their houses, family members, and friends. The current budget request will allow us to enhance student counseling services.

Furthermore given the increase in violent acts in college, we believe that the current CUNY Legislative Budget request will allow CUNY to provide proactive counseling. College life can be very stressful and often students require additional support to assist with this transition.

Unfortunately, some students give up or retaliate putting their lives and those of their peers in jeopardy .

An example of this is my friend Kaitlyn Hammerin. We were in band together and she led the choir. She chose to attend college at Virginia Tech, to pursue a major in international affairs, in an effort to make the world a better place. She never got the chance to fulfill her dream. She fell victim to campus violence on that infamous day in April 2007.

Increased, proactive counseling is a necessary service on the modern campus. It helps students in need of services that will aid them in persisting and completing their education, as well as, contribute to maintaining and fostering a safe environment for all members of the campus community.

I ask that you support the CUNY Legislative Budget request which would provide more resources for proactive counseling initiatives.

Thank you for your time today.



**STATEMENT
OF
CHARLES HARDING
CUNY ERNESTO MALAVE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
BEFORE THE
JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2013-2014 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL:
TOPIC "HIGHER EDUCATION"
FEBRUARY 11, 2013
ALBANY, NEW YORK**

Good afternoon honorable members of the New York State Senate and Assembly.

My name is Charles Harding and I am a student at Bronx Community College. It is a pleasure to testify before you today in support of the CUNY Legislative Budget priorities. The current budget request includes \$21.4 million for community college student aid. These additional resources are instrumental to the professional and academic success of our students. I am among the students that have benefitted greatly from these services.

Upon my arrival to BCC, I was integrated into the COPE (College Opportunity to Prepare for Employment) program which provides mentoring, tutoring, advising, and financial aid for students who are on public assistance.

Last semester, while juggling academically rigorous courses, I was laid-off and was unable to afford housing. I had nowhere to live and was unable to focus on my course work. Remaining in school seemed impossible and pursuing my dream of becoming an attorney faded before my eyes. However, before giving up on my goal, I decided to meet with the Assistant Student Life Director at BCC, Manny Lopez. He listened to my story and motivated me. Manny helped me secure housing and receive the counseling support I desperately needed. Without dedicated staff and services, such as the COPE program, at community colleges, students like me would not be able to graduate on time, if at all. I am proud to say I will be graduating from BCC this May and continuing my education at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. My dream is to work as a criminal defense attorney and contribute to this great state. My ultimate goal is to become a Supreme Court Judge. I, like many students, come to CUNY in pursuit of their dreams but have to overcome multiple challenges. CUNY is the gateway to the middle class, for the 40 percent of undergraduates whose household incomes are below \$20,000. These resources are not only important to the academic success of community college students, but are important to the economic prosperity of the State of New York.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



**STATEMENT
OF
CAROLINA VASQUEZ
CUNY ERNESTO MALAVE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
BEFORE THE
JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2013-2014 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL:
TOPIC "HIGHER EDUCATION"
FEBRUARY 11, 2013
ALBANY, NEW YORK**

Good Afternoon Distinguished Members of the State Senate and Assembly.

My name is Carolina Vasquez, and I am a junior at John Jay College, majoring in Criminal Justice with a concentration in law. My career goal is to pursue a law degree or work in the criminal justice system with a federal or state agency. I joined the Navy right after graduating high school. After serving, it was difficult for me to adjust not only to the civilian world, but also to life as a college student.

Despite the challenges I faced while reintegrating myself into civilian life, it would have been impossible for me to participate in campus life without the resources afforded to me by my

campus' Office of Veteran Affairs. When I arrived at John Jay, I was not sure for which benefits I was eligible; fortunately, I found assistance and support through this valuable campus resource.

Your support of CUNY's budget request would allow the university to expand the current staffing levels and expand resources to support veterans. This would help to facilitate our smooth transition into college life. Veterans encounter considerable challenges as they transition from military service to college, making them a high-risk for attrition. Veterans and reservists must adjust to college culture and endure the academic and social disruption of being called to active duty. Increased support services would allow individuals that have served our country and protected the American dream, to fulfill their professional and personal goals.

Furthermore, increased funding will allow for greater cross-functional training among departments. For instance, we have found that often it is difficult for veterans to translate their service experience into marketable skills. This funding would allow for greater training of individuals within career advisement. Increased services for veterans would mean that the transition from the military to a college education would be much smoother.

Thank you for your time and consideration.