

TESTIMONY FOR HEARING

ON

NEW YORK'S 2012-2020

STATEWIDE PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

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**Testimony for Hearing on New York’s 2012-2020 Statewide Plan for Higher Education
Dr. Marcia V. Keizs, President, York College/CUNY, November 29, 2012**

Good morning Chancellor Merryl Tisch, Commissioner John King, Regent Charles R. Bendit, Deputy Commissioner John D’Agati and members of the State Education Department, I am Marcia Keizs, President of York College of the City University of New York, where over 8,000 students are currently enrolled pursuing baccalaureate degrees in over forty-five major areas and the Masters Degree in Occupational Therapy. I am delighted to join my colleagues, Executive Vice Chancellor Lexa Logue and President Regina Peruggi of Kingsborough Community College, to provide testimony and comment on the Regents Statewide Plan for Higher Education for 2012-2020. The Statewide Plan lays out an appropriately ambitious agenda for education spanning K-12 and higher education for our state. In CUNY and at York, we are ready to deliver on the ambitious set of goals.

My testimony will focus on some of the themes in which CUNY will take a leading role and where York College, as a senior college within the system, expects to lead and contribute in significant ways to assure the effective achievement of the four overarching themes of the CUNY Master Plan. In particular, we see three areas for focus and growth—areas that have engaged us for the last ten years and where York College is positioned to make good contributions:

1. Engaging partnerships to expand and enhance access and quality in higher education;
2. Improving and enhancing undergraduate academic outcomes including degree completion;
3. Expanding commitment to academic excellence by broadening the base of Masters offerings to meet market needs.

**Engaging Partnerships to Expand and Enhance Access and
Quality in Higher Education**

As you may know, York College, at 45 years old, is the youngest of CUNY’s senior colleges established as a liberal arts and science undergraduate institution to offer a comprehensive array of degrees in the liberal arts and sciences, and then, as well, in the professions. York’s Jamaica location was cemented when a group of Queens advocates, political and legislative leaders and university authorities secured the institution’s academic future by

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building what we now call the Academic Core Building in which we conduct eighty percent of instruction. Throughout its history, York College has enjoyed strong local and regional partnerships with education, government, and business sectors. From those early beginnings of York, it was clear that the town-gown relationship would be a key element of remaining academically vibrant. Hence, over the years, partnerships—of various sorts—have been sought by all with the goal of extending the academic reach of the institution to appropriately link with the economic, business and intellectual demands of the immediate and surrounding community.

In that vein, the York College faculty and staff created partnerships with the NY/NJ Port Authority, which funded the creation of the CUNY Aviation Institute; the Northeastern Regional Laboratory of the United States Food and Drug Administration, which is located on York College’s campus; partnerships through the small business development program to support small business development through the Adult and Continuing Education Division; the regional public and private schools, hospitals and health care organizations; and in 2012 with the introduction of the ROTC program partnership with the service branches of the federal government. Leveraging these partnerships, York College has implemented educational programs and outreach activities that promote the university’s mission and provide career pathways for New York City and State residents and other students.

Working with the New York City Department of Education, and through the College NOW partnership, York College promotes student recruitment for university and college degree programs, especially in the STEM fields. In the last five years, some 8,500 high school students have participated in college level instruction during the school year and another 500 have participated in summer programs. Specifically in the STEM field, our faculty and staff have organized an Annual Mathematics and Science Exposition for high school students every spring term where over 300 high school students and their mentors participate. In collaboration with the National Academy of Applied Sciences, through a grant from the United States Department of Education, York College organizes the New York City Metro Junior Science and Humanities Symposium selecting the region’s delegates to the national symposium. Supporting these activities through external funding, York College has instituted a summer research program, (primarily for STEM), for high school and undergraduate students. More than 30 high school students and over 25 undergraduate students are funded every summer to participate on campus

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research projects mentored by York College faculty. All of CUNY and York expect to continue these partnerships in the coming years; indeed we expect to grow them.

Improving and Enhancing Undergraduate Academic Outcomes

The challenge of retaining and graduating students in a timely way continues to be a problem nationwide and in CUNY. Though we have made significant gains over the last five years, much yet needs to be done. Accelerating success on this front, is in part, one of the motivating factors that impelled our Board of Trustees to enact the CUNY Pathways General Education Project that has as its base, a clear and unobstructed core of general education credits that provide a foundation for all of our undergraduates, while at the same time, providing a seamless pathway for all CUNY students as they make their way from freshman to senior, no matter what path they choose: the direct path of entering one senior college and persisting to graduation there; or by starting in a community college, completing the associate degree and transferring to a senior college for completion of the Bachelors. The York College community has embraced this General Education Pathways, not so much because we see this as the pure solution to the graduation rate problem, but because we accept the logic that a clear, transparent, seamless, shared general education path will be beneficial to the completion efforts of the large percentage of transfer students that we admit each year. Each fall, York College typically admits about a thousand new first year students; each fall, we admit about eight hundred transfers, representing more than 40% of our new enrollment. Most of these transfer students come from within CUNY and especially community colleges. So, we see the Pathways effort as holding great promise in the goal to effectively retaining and graduating students in a timely and effective manner.

A second contributing factor in student persistence is the role of world class faculty. So our chance to continue to hire, (through the COMPACT funding), and to help our faculty develop into excellent teachers (benefiting from York's Center for Excellence in Teaching) as well as good mentors in all the disciplines and professions are important elements in making our students competitive as they apply to graduate schools or seek to start in their chosen profession. Over the last five years, York College has been able to hire and retain a large cohort of faculty growing from 157 in 2007 to 195 in 2012.

Speaking of faculty brings me to my third point as it relates to improving academic

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outcomes: that is providing students the opportunity to participate in undergraduate research experience that gives them a step up. York College has been developing an intentional co-curricular activity as a hallmark of the York College student experience. On April 19, 2012, for the third consecutive year, York College students, supported by their faculty mentors, created a buzz on campus at the Undergraduate Research Day with presentations across the disciplines from Accounting to English, Geology, Theater Arts, Business, Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics and Technology and beyond. Some two hundred and twenty-three students participated (roughly 15% increase over last year) with their research posters, seminar and panel presentations, dominating the Health and Physical Education Complex, usually reserved for athletes. Student research was supported and guided by more than forty-five faculty mentors and external funding through NIH, NSF, and DOE. The Council on Undergraduate Research accepted proposals from three students in the Business and Economics Department for presentation at the annual conference that was held at The College of New Jersey last summer. Further supporting these undergraduate efforts are partnerships with CUNY and non CUNY colleges. For instance, York’s Biology Department has a partnership with Brown University to recruit York graduates for Brown’s Ph.D. programs, funded by NIH, where five York College alumni are well along the way to Ph.D.s under the guidance of the NIH principal investigator and York Alumnus Professor Andrew Campbell.

Expanding Commitment to Academic Excellence by Broadening Masters Offerings to Meet Market Needs

As mentioned earlier in my testimony, in part as a result of external partnerships, York College has developed unique and robust niche academic offerings within CUNY: BS/MS in Occupational Therapy, the BS in Physician Assistant, the BS in Social Work, BS in Aviation Management and the BS in both Pharmaceutical Sciences and Bio-Technology. The latter two programs have already been developed into dual registration/joint degree programs with local sister community colleges, thus fueling enrollment expansion to 175 Pharmaceutical Science majors (since 2009 introduction). Our BS/MS in Occupational Therapy is only one of a cohort of complementary niche degrees in the health and affiliated areas that include Physician Assistant, Social Work, Psychology, Health Education and other education programs including STEM areas. During the academic year 2011-2012, spearheaded by the CUNY Aviation

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Institute, York's business faculty reorganized a degree program to introduce a major in Logistics and Supply Chain Management and created student internship opportunities with the regional airports JFK and LaGuardia and other organizations that employ large numbers of people related to the industry. With these programs, York is positioned to contribute to CUNY's strategic objectives of expanding Masters offerings in any of a number of areas as identified in the CUNY Master Plan and demanded by New York City & State labor trends.

In closing, I want to assure you that York College and CUNY are ready programmatically to lead solutions to the challenges in all of the areas I have identified in this testimony: in partnerships to expand and enhance access; in assuring improved undergraduate academic outcomes to retention and graduation; and in forging new areas of Masters preparation. We are ready with accredited programs, outstanding faculty, and well prepared, eager, dedicated and growing student body. York's growth in population from 6,727 in 2007 to 8,420 in 2012 is the reason that CUNY is so strongly supporting York's capital project, the only new construction in over 26 years that will expand our physical facility with a new state of the art 160,000 square foot building to house the School of Business and provide much needed student support and learning space as well as a Conference Center that will be open to the community.

Chancellor Goldstein, Executive Vice Chancellor Logue, all of the colleagues and presidents have engaged in the visionary thinking as outlined in the CUNY Master Plan. On all of our campuses, we stand ready to execute these plans.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.