



**Testimony of Chancellor James B. Milliken  
The City University of New York**

**Joint Senate and Assembly Legislative Public Hearing on  
The 2017 – 2018 State Executive Budget Proposal: Topic “Higher Education”**

**Tuesday, January 24, 2017**

Good morning, Chairs Young, Farrell, LaValle, and Glick, members of the Finance, Ways and Means, staff and guests. I am James B. Milliken, the Chancellor of The City University of New York. A number of my colleagues are seated behind me and can assist me if necessary.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear today to talk with you about the goals and priorities of The City University of New York and to address any questions you may have. This is an especially meaningful time for this conversation because of a number of positive developments that augur well for our students, for the city and for our state. Despite all the challenges for higher education across the country, Governor Cuomo has staked out a position of national leadership for New York's public universities. That, together with this Legislature's demonstrated a commitment to higher education, leads me to be optimistic about the future of the nation's largest urban university.

I know you're well aware of CUNY's historic mission: to provide a broadly accessible, affordable, high quality education to all New Yorkers, but especially those from low income and underrepresented groups and immigrant populations, so they will enjoy the lifetime of benefits that a college degree can provide. Nothing is more important to the economic strength of our state than a talented, competitive workforce to attract investment and good jobs. We could not have received stronger proof of the impact of our mission than a remarkable

study released just last week by a group of respected economists that measured which universities do the best job of providing upward mobility to their lower income students. We were gratified by the compelling evidence of CUNY's success and exceptional national ranking, summarized by this sentence from an article in The New York Times yesterday: "The new data shows, for example, that the City University of New York system propelled almost six times as many low-income students into the middle class and beyond as all eight Ivy League campuses, plus Duke, M.I.T., Stanford and Chicago, combined."

The study validates the importance of the investment in public higher education and CUNY in particular, which is why I am gratified by the strong support provided to CUNY in Governor Cuomo's executive budget. The Governor's budget offers significant new support for public higher education and represents a commitment to our students and this state.

Affordable access to high quality education is the cornerstone of public higher education. And this goal has been advanced boldly this year by the Governor's Excelsior Scholarship program. That is a powerful and welcomed initiative that will put a high quality education within reach of even more lower and middle income students. In addition to addressing cost, it promotes timely completion, which is one of CUNY's highest priorities. It underscores the importance of higher education in creating unparalleled opportunities for New Yorkers and in advancing the prosperity of our state. The attention this initiative has received

locally and more broadly says to many students and their families that college is possible, and the importance of that message cannot be overstated.

We also appreciated the Governor's support for passage of the state Dream Act, which will extend financial aid and other benefits to CUNY's many outstanding undocumented students, highly valued members of the university community. This has been a high priority of the CUNY Board of Trustees. We are grateful for the Governor's commitment to the state's predictable tuition plan, too, which will help ensure financial stability for the University, allow families to plan ahead and provide important funding for academic programs and student services. There is no better use of state and city investment and tuition than to attract and retain high quality faculty.

As we look ahead, the demands of a challenging economy require that we update and strengthen our programs and strategies to better serve our students, the city and the state. We start by offering a high quality education, and we are committed to increasing the academic advising and other support that will help our students graduate on time and have the experiences they need to launch their careers when they leave.

We intend to increase CUNY's graduation rates significantly so that more students will benefit from the much higher career achievement that diplomas allow. We will work to ensure that more students graduating from city high

schools will be prepared to succeed in college-level studies. We will give students greater workplace experience and networks to improve prospects for building promising careers.

We are also reengineering our business processes to ensure a more efficient and effective administration, delivering better services to colleges, students and faculty and staff, saving tens of millions of dollars a year, which can be devoted to the classroom and student success. Our goal is to promote financial transparency and accountability, and give New Yorkers confidence that their taxpayer dollars will produce exceptional returns.

We are gratified that the Executive budget proposal includes \$36.2 million to fully fund projected fringe benefit cost increases. As you know, these are non-discretionary expenses essential to supporting the faculty and staff that serve our students. Renewal of the predictable tuition plan, sought by the CUNY Board of Trustees, will enable the University to invest in retaining and attracting faculty, while still allowing us to be responsive to our continued goal of student affordability. Even with the increases contemplated in our budget request and the Executive budget, CUNY's in-state tuition will continue to be well below the average for public universities in the country and, combined with New York's Tuition Assistance Program, it will keep college affordable to our residents.

For the community colleges, the Executive Budget recommends an overall increase of \$4.1 million. Base aid remains flat at \$2,697 per FTE, but overall support is increased due to actual enrollment gains as well as increases projected as a result of the Excelsior Scholarship initiative. The Board of Trustees has requested a \$250 per FTE increase in community college state base aid to try to regain the position lost during the great recession. The University has also committed to freezing community college tuition for the second straight year at current rates if our funding request from the State and City is met.

With regard to the capital budget, we are especially grateful for the \$284 million for critical maintenance in the Executive Budget for senior colleges. It is a necessary and much appreciated investment in facilities that are very well used by our students. The same is true of the \$80 million in matching funds for community colleges. Both are significant increases that will help meet critical needs for upgrades, rehabilitation and maintenance.

Our campuses are open seven days a week, with classes scheduled throughout the day and most evenings. We have 270,000 degree students and more than 250,000 students in continuing and professional studies. There are 55,000 more CUNY students using our facilities today than a decade ago—in other words, the equivalent of adding a university larger than Michigan in the existing facilities.

Our request includes important capital priorities at Brooklyn College, Hunter, Medgar Evers, College of Staten Island, York and more. Many of these are for facilities that would improve science and health-professions facilities, which are essential for providing great career paths for our students in a thriving New York industry and help meet the medical, science and technology needs of New York City.

Once again, we appreciate Governor Cuomo's executive budget—and particularly the Excelsior Scholarship, which will open the doors to many more students and provide the opportunity that will change families, communities and New York. We're grateful for the support of the Legislature for the programs and investment that support The City University of New York, a remarkable engine of social and economic mobility. I look forward to addressing your questions.