

To Whom I May Concern,

I work for an opportunity program called SEEK in Queens College and I would like to write a letter advocating for the importance of programs of this sort in the higher education sector.

This year, CUNY is facing major budgets cuts that will detrimentally impact faculty, staff, but most importantly, students. We are still recovering from the impact of the pandemic. Many students lost hope in the power of higher education and with active and pending cuts in the CUNY budget, many feel hopeless, lost, and unsure of their place in the world.

We need to make education a priority. It isn't just a means to gain employment, it is, quite literally, and brand-new world full of possibilities. Why are young people being made to feel as if something that is rightfully theirs is inaccessible? Higher education is one of the few moments in one's life where you can be exposed to a variety of ideas in a structured setting and learn to see the world through your own lens. You meet people from all walks of life and have access to a plethora of opportunities that are designed to elevate you. Speaking frankly, on my campus I have seen funds allocated to frivolous and unnecessary endeavors; money seems to be moved around to ensure that certain higher ups maintain or gain a surplus in salary while students suffer. I ask myself why. Why are students being robbed of a once in a lifetime opportunity while others line their pockets with money that is not theirs? The future is the youth, we should make it easy for them and give them what they need to thrive because they can thrive, given the opportunity.

The program I work for is an opportunity program. It specifically serves students that fall on or below the poverty line who may not have had the opportunity to attend college otherwise. I have seen the power that support of this kind can have on students. Many have gone on to gain employment in prestigious financial institutions, join the senate, work for NASA, and the list goes on. When given the space and right support, all youth seize the opportunity to better themselves. I have never seen a college education have a negative impact on anyone. The negative impact comes when we block them from receiving the financial help that they are rightfully due.

Financial aid is the right of every student who qualifies for it. Higher ups do not get to decide how that money is spent. No one wants to be poor, and students certainly should not be punished in such extreme ways for something that is out of their control. We should not be creating mules that work minimums wage jobs that fuel the economy, we should be creating leaders that change and shape our world. We certainly need more of that.

The state of society is due to the poor decisions of those of the past, we need to make way for newer minds to try and right the wrongs of the very people who are trying to keep them down. Higher education is the path to change, please give young people the chance to become what they are meant to be by ensuring they have access to adequate financial aid.