



DSC Response to the Campus Response Request for the CUNY Master Plan 2008-2012

Provost Edwards:

Thank you for inviting us to respond to the **Campus Response Request for the CUNY Master Plan 2008-2012 Planning Process** document that has circulated our campus these past few weeks. We are delighted to enclose a variety of student responses that highlight the unique concerns of the graduate student community at the Graduate Center.

In November, 2004, when the University launched its “Invest in CUNY” campaign, the cornerstones of potential investment were established as follows, per http://www1.cuny.edu/portal_ur/content/invest/the_campaign.php:

The Colleges will be seeking your investment in the following core areas:

Student Support - Help the Colleges attract top students, encourage diversity, endow new scholarships and educate the leaders of tomorrow;

Faculty Support - Assist in the recruitment and retention of top scholars, scientists, artists and professionals as full-time faculty for our students;

Research and Innovation - Foster a research environment, promote interdisciplinary approaches, recognize and promote new work, leverage the connections to industry and utilize the latest educational technologies;

Facilities and Equipment - Supplement public implementation of the Master Facilities Plan, create an environment that fosters the work of students and scholars, renovate our buildings, equip new scientific facilities and create interaction with the community.

Keeping aligned with these core areas necessarily means a fortified Graduate Center community. One of the most unique aspects of the CUNY experience is the separated college experience, which allows individuated identities among the colleges while a unified identity under the CUNY umbrella. That unity is most embodied in the dual citizens of the Graduate Center: faculty who are often holding status at both the Graduate Center and a sister CUNY institution, and students who concomitantly teach at sister CUNY institutions. Our faculty and students provide the backbone of the entire university—driving curriculum, establishing innovative research, bolstering our international reputation. The recently released Faculty Scholarly Productivity Index placed ten of the Graduate Center’s Ph.D.

Programs among the top ten in the country, and six were ranked in the top five. In the “broad” category of humanities, the Graduate Center was fourth; the first three were Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.

Supporting our faculty & students with renewed emphasis on facilities, equipment, and professional development not only reinforces the goals of the “Invest in CUNY” campaign but enhances the entire university. Some of our core concerns include:

- Holding a GTF (a prestigious designation) should not be a punishment in its lack of access to health insurance available to non-GTF adjuncts. Creating better health insurance options must be made paramount at a University-wide level in order to ensure the best possible options at the Graduate Center—whose 4521 students may represent only about 1% of the CUNY population, but whose continued success ensures the smooth operation of the entire University.
- The Mina Rees Library, operating with limited space and a collection less than 1/10 of NYU’s Bobst Library, needs considerable attention to bring crucial resources in-house to students already attenuated by their commitments on multiple campuses and often let down by the inconsistent holdings of the CUNY library system and the occasional lapses in execution in the new CLICS system, of which the Graduate Center appears to be the primary user.
- Online degrees undermine the reputation of the Graduate Center and CUNY. The tremendous possibility of intellectual property violations and onerous demands on faculty teaching twice as many students (with more emphasis on interpersonal interaction) is not conducive to the rigorous, academic-minded environment that the Graduate Center and CUNY stands for.
- Student housing continues to be a need, particularly for students arriving with limited resources and contacts in New York City. According to our own website, http://www.gc.cuny.edu/current_students/tuition_currt_stdnts.htm, the average “single, independent” student should expect to spend \$5,083 per academic year on housing. \$564.78 per month for housing in New York City? Other schools provide resources for procuring housing—up to and including having dormitory space—and the Graduate Center, in its need to maintain its current academic reputation, must put an emphasis on developing resources to ensure students have safe spaces to live and work in, and realistic numbers from which to draw on before and during their stay at the Graduate Center.

Investing in the Graduate Center is a smart investment in CUNY. We hope that our comments help in the formulation of a Master Plan that institutes support of our continued success into significant institutional support of the building that drives accomplishment in the CUNY system.

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Faunce, Co-Chair for Communications
For the Doctoral Students Council

cc: President William Kelly
Associate Provost Julia Wrigley

From Michael Broder, Classics:

- How can your campus most effectively improve retention and graduation rates?
 1. Improved funding for doctoral students
 2. Provision of health care
 3. More teaching opportunities (funded)
- Beyond retention and graduation rates, how does your campus measure student success, and how will your campus assess and support such success in the next year?
 1. Get more of us out the door in 5 years by fully funding us
- What should your institution's commitment to research look like in 2012?
 1. Full funding for all doctoral students
 2. Improved library resources
- What specific investments would make the most far-reaching strategic differences in the uniqueness, stature, and ranking of your campus's most important academic departments or programs?
 1. We were #2 nationwide in Classics in the last faculty productivity survey, but we minted barely half a dozen PhD in Classics in 20 years; more funding for more students to get out in 5 years would improve the stature of this highly ranked program
- How big should your campus be in 2012, and what does enrollment management need to do to serve that goal?
 1. Program sizes should be big enough to be taken seriously but small enough to allow full funding for all doctoral students
- What role should professional master's degree programs play on your campus in 2012?
 1. The GC should offer an MFA and/or a PhD in Creative Writing

Please address any of the next questions from a **University-wide** perspective.

- Which academic goal should be the chief focus of this Master Plan, and what are the budgetary and infrastructure implications of that goal?
 1. 90% first-time pass rate on the CPE
- What is the best way for the University to assure the public that a CUNY diploma represents a high level of academic and professional training and sound preparation for competing in the global marketplace?
 1. Increase first-time pass rates on the CPE to at least 90%
 2. Increase the proportion of CUNY undergraduates who go on to graduate and professional school
 3. Increase the proportion of CUNY graduates who become employed in their first year after graduation
 4. Increase the average starting salary of CUNY graduates who enter the workforce
- How can we best advance the goal of the "Integrated University," and what would be the most important benefit arising from that advance?
 1. Institute a CUNY-wide ID so that all students can freely enter all campuses and use all libraries

- What should the University's most crucial infrastructure (including IT infrastructure) priorities be over the next four years?
 1. Housing for out-of-state and international students
- How do we foster and sustain a culture of accountability within the University?
 1. Support faculty governance and student participation in governance

From Cori Gabbard, English:

According to the proposed master CUNY plan, the GC apparently doesn't exist since the needs of the GC community are never acknowledged, let alone addressed. One presumes, therefore, that whoever came up with this plan has no intention of addressing the myriad needs of the GC. While I certainly agree that strengthening the primarily undergraduate campuses of the CUNY system is important, it is also integral to CUNY's vitality that it continues to improve the quality of its most successful programs so as to keep them competitive with their better-funded rivals.

One of the biggest weaknesses of the GC is the size of its library collection. The GC library collection is in no way adequate to the needs of serious, doctoral level scholars. Being able to peruse through the stacks of a well-stocked library makes scholarly research convenient and efficient. Having to wait for books to arrive via ILL is inefficient. Having to wait half a day at the NYPL for one's call slip to come up is also a waste of time, as is having to photocopy the books that are available via the NYPL because they can't be taken off library premises. While I certainly understand that the size and quality of, say, Columbia's Butler Library is owing in part to the fact that Columbia's collection has accrued since its eighteenth-century founding and in part to the fact that it is a well-endowed private institution, the fact is that the GC library collection is inferior to that of a mid-sized, not especially elite (read: not especially rich) liberal arts college. There is no excuse for not making the expansion of the GC library a major priority.

The other main problem that needs to be addressed is student funding. While it is my understanding that packages for incoming students have been more comprehensive in the last few years, student funding needs to be even better if the GC intends to attract even more of the best students. In addition, generous financial aid still needs to be available to students who entered the GC before the later, more generous packages were offered. People would probably finish their programs more quickly if they didn't have to teach 2-4 classes per semester and/or work several part-time jobs or in some cases one full-time job while going to school.

From Agnieszka Kajrukszo, Political Science:

The two most important things are not addressed, or perhaps I missed it:

We must provide quality health insurance to all GC students and update IT (technology) computers from the antiquated system we have now.

These issues matter to me and those colleagues I spoke with much more than fancy buildings, or building “partnerships”... You simply cannot function without a basic assurance of wellbeing and of course technological capacity.

From Annelies Kamran, Political Science:

One of the chief attractions of this institution is its reputation for a diverse and cosmopolitan student body. I came here because I wanted difference. However, in important ways, my needs are not being met. One of these ways comes under the broad heading of “diversity.” There are many approaches to interpreting diversity, but there is one category that concerns me the most: the lack of variety in faculty and incoming students’ ascriptive backgrounds.

Nonwhite students should be able to see themselves in a classroom. I see few role models, and more importantly, existing professors do not look at me and see a potential colleague. While seldom put into words, the lack of respect is palpable. The sense is that a CUNY graduate would not be hired for a CUNY position -- which does not say much for the training this institution provides.

I should have access to mentors who have some idea that there is more than one kind of academic experience. There is the privileged existence at a well-funded private school where you are explicitly groomed, and the experience that most of us at CUNY have in struggling to pay for necessities without any encouragement whatsoever.

CUNY’s faculty do not reflect CUNY’s students, and for the most part do not know how to advise us on the stresses we face as a result of being a member of a racial or ethnic minority, a woman, LGBT, or an international student; having family responsibilities, coming from a working class background, having a disability, or being a non-traditional student.

If there is a problem in the “pipeline” leading up to admissions/hiring, we are it. If CUNY does not accept or hire minorities and make it possible for them to succeed, no one will. This is a critical part of the public mission of this university, and if you believe in meritocracy and democracy, you must take responsibility for seeing diversity encouraged across the board -- in the senior colleges and community colleges as well as at the graduate level.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that diversity is NOT “one of each.” It is a process, not an end. Simply hiring a faculty member or accepting a student does not fulfill the need for diversity. CUNY has far fewer material resources, and so must make the most of the human resources we can get.

From Anton Masterovoy, History:

As a library-loving historian, dare I suggest that we need library expansion and more money for the humanities? And that the University should hit up Albany as well as the students for money?

From Christine Pinnock, Anthropology:

I think the Master Plan looks good on the surface, but as a graduate student of color who also teaches at a CUNY school, your plan is missing some key issues/factors. I think there is a dearth of faculty of color, as well as financial resources. Some major issues that students on both a graduate and undergraduate level have are **funding**.

- I also think that outside of the places like the writing center in undergraduate institutions there needs to be a larger effort in making other support services available to students and making sure that students are aware that they exist on their CUNY campuses.
- I feel like there is a huge gap between honors student and other students who are struggling both financially and academically.
- Actually provide resources for adjuncts and GTFs to teach ESL students, as well as pertinent information to help students adjust to living in a different country as well as coping with a language barrier.
- There should be a universal logon/id for accessing the different campus websites, if you teach at more than one campus you are forced to walk around with several different ids/passwords.
- Aggressively recruiting minority faculty and students, as well as recruiting junior faculty for tenure track positions.
- I would also like to see more minorities employed within the various college administrations.
- Provide more money for GTFs and adjuncts with wages that people can actually live on!

From Mariya Radeva, Anthropology:

Is the goal of health insurance for grad students an appropriate goal for the master plan?

As for me, I think it's one of the most important issues affecting grad students.

Do you think the master plan is a good place to voice this concern?

Do you know anyone who's campaigning for this?

From Kathleen Schnaars Uvino, Biology:

Here is a summary of concerns with the “proposed” changes, from the Biology Executive Committee as well as science students from Queens College, City College, Brooklyn College and Lehman College.

The administration is effectively creating two classes of students, the Haves and the Have-nots. New incoming science students get \$24,000 with health insurance and no teaching their first year. Campuses will pick up the students in their 2nd year and must guarantee that level of funding. Current science students must teach and work in the lab and the majority receives much less than \$20,000, and has no insurance. (I personally taught 4 courses over 2 semesters and put 20 hours/week in the lab for \$14,000). Jillian Small was asked about this two tiered structure at a meeting with the Biology Ph.D. executive committee. Her response was that 'current students are not our concern'. She also indicated that this level of funding for new students is required to attract BETTER QUALIFIED students. (Should we be further insulted?). These are her comments - if you need verification I'll see what I can get from the members on that committee. As far as the big picture goes - how will each of the majors feel about having two classes of students? And being told effectively that 80th Street does not consider current students to be of the caliber they would like to attract in the future. Finally, Ms. Small stated that this level of funding was necessary to compete with NYC institutions. The reality is that Rockefeller, NYU and Columbia offer much more than \$24,000, have a max of a 2 course teaching load over 5 years (!!) and they have a name in the sciences. Perhaps the other majors are not aware of the changes in the sciences. I think it would enlighten them as to what is coming down the road for them.

From Chong Wojtkowski, French:

As a Humanities student who has seen resources for her department (like money to recruit qualified doctoral students and to retain them, money for colloquium and conferences, funds to support student travel and research for conferences) slowly disappear, I cannot help but be suspicious of the language used in the Master Plan which suggests that in order for CUNY to be competitive, it must prioritize investment in Science Degrees and funding for Science students. While it is important not to pit one department or field against another, it is important also to not prioritize funding for “money-making” fields like biomedics, science, and criminal justice simply at the expense of humanities.

What is distressing is how The GC administration boasted so about the recent NRC rankings (my department French came in 2nd in the country) but did not offer any financial investment in the programs in order that they stay competitive. French may be second in the country, but when students are paying out of their own pockets to hold talks, conferences, and seminars for professional development, something is terribly wrong.

For Humanities, our professional development is precisely attending and presenting at conferences, not learning new programs on the computer or working in a lab. Yet, funding for our professional development is completely non-existent. The fact that students at John Jay receive plane tickets and hotel rooms in order to present their research at conferences, while French students must take out emergency government loans and go into debt is a travesty. Are conferences any more important to Criminal Justice students?

Profs need to be allowed release time in order to act as mentors. Mentorship is an important aspect of doctoral students' training and yet students have to wait in line to talk to their advisers, mostly because Executive Officers are busy doing stuff like buying wine and cheese for conferences and answering emails all day. Advisers need time to advise.

For improving efficiency, the bureaucracy needs to be slashed in half. There are so many useless positions on 80th street that suck money and resources out of the school.

Online education-- my answer “hale no”. Not only would that diminish CUNY's reputation and academic integrity, but our Info Technology dept will not even let us forward email- what makes them think they can handle online courses?

Professional programs: while I have tremendous respect for them, I do not feel that they are at the same caliber and academic rigor as humanities or hard/social sciences PhDs). What is next: CUNY Gun Repair or A/C Repair Degree? We are in the business of training doctoral students, not trades people (again-- my tone is in no way elitist or condescending, I am speaking as someone who dedicated themselves to academia and does not want to see CUNY turn into a trade school. Professional Programs belong somewhere else).

Regarding retention rates and graduation rates: more money. That is all.