

Testimony of Duane Tananbaum, Associate Professor of History, and Chair of the Lehman  
College Senate Governance Committee

CUNY Board of Trustees Hearing, Hostos Community College, 6/20/2011

The impression has been given here today that all CUNY students support the Pathways proposal, but this is most definitely not the case. I am here today to present a resolution passed unanimously on April 6, 2011, by the Lehman College Senate, comprised of faculty, administrators, and students.

Members of the Lehman College Senate understand and appreciate the many obstacles faced by our students in obtaining their undergraduate degrees in a timely manner. However, the Lehman College Senate believes that the transfer and General Education issues are separate matters that need to be considered separately, that reducing the General Education requirements at Lehman and the other senior colleges will not solve the problem of students accumulating excess credits, but will, instead, take time and resources away from resolving the real issues causing problems for transfer students.

The Lehman College Senate recommends that if a task force is convened to create “a common general education framework for the undergraduate colleges,” said task force should include representatives nominated by local college governance authorities

New York State Assemblywoman Deborah Glick recently stated in the Albany Times-Union (January 16, 2011) that the “main mission” of CUNY and SUNY was: “honing critical thinking and exposing students to new areas of study and interest.” But reducing the depth and breadth of the colleges’ General Education curriculum will deprive our students of that depth and breadth of study.

The current CUNY General Education curriculum supports the university’s mission, standards, and reputation by exposing students to the shared intellectual heritage of our diverse culture; teaching critical thinking; encouraging accurate and effective communication; emphasizing the integration, synthesis, and application of knowledge; and, through the study of the liberal arts and sciences, helping all undergraduates develop the multiple views and general intellectual abilities that provide a foundation for independent, responsible living. We are doing a great disservice to our students if we diminish all this.

Everything that Pathways’ proponents claim they want to accomplish for transfer students can be done without reducing General Education at the senior colleges, perhaps by making the College Core a minimum requirement, as is the case at SUNY, rather than a hard and fast limit.