

I'm Martin Burke, and I teach history and American Studies at Lehman College and the Graduate Center. I am testifying this evening on behalf of the New York Association of Scholars (NYAS) and the CUNY Association of Scholars (CUNYAS), the state-wide and university-wide chapters of the National Association of Scholars (NAS).

The pending resolution on "Creating an Efficient Transfer System" seeks to identify and remedy problems faced by undergraduate students in transferring from community to senior colleges. In particular, it focuses on the costs of students accumulating excess credits and delays in completing their degree programs in a timely manner. We've heard a good deal about these problems at today's hearing. Informing and framing these issues are the university's chronic dual dilemmas of enrolling poorly prepared students from New York City's public schools, and of failing to graduate a majority of them after six or more years in college.

Yet rather than propose solutions to the serious operational issues involved in student transfer, retention and graduation, the Chancellery has chosen to solve them through the reform of general education policies on the respective campuses. Instead of pursuing the expensive, but effective, path of hiring more counselors, improving often woefully inadequate academic support services, and providing necessary IT resources, the Chancellery is going to change the curriculum. And, in our opinion, change it for the worse. Among the recommendations of the "Pathways Proposal" are ones that will dismantle current general education standards and graduation requirements at a number of the senior colleges, including Brooklyn College's celebrated Common Core, and the demanding programs at Baruch, Hunter and Lehman.

Both the New York and the CUNY Association of Scholars are extremely concerned that reductions in required general education courses and the elimination of graduation requirements

will severely undermine academic standards and rigor at the senior colleges. We are concerned, as well, that shifting the general education burden onto the community colleges will overwhelm their already strained resources. Thus we recommend that the Board of Trustees either defer these dramatic, and potentially destructive, changes, or vote them down. We call upon the Board to ensure that CUNY's commitment to a quality liberal arts education for all undergraduates not be compromised. We do not wish to see hard won standards of academic rigor be sacrificed for administrative expediency. In 1999, the Schmidt Report warned of "An Institution Adrift." In 2011, we face the prospect of "An Institution Seriously Diminished." The tuition paying students and parents, and the tax payers of the City and State of New York, deserve much better from you. In their name, and in ours, we respectfully demand it.