

CAMPAIGN OFFICE OF



June 29, 2020

William C. Thompson, Jr.
Chairperson, Board of Trustees
The City University of New York

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez
Chancellor, The City University of New York
205 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Dear Chairperson Thompson and Chancellor Matos Rodríguez:

We write as elected officials of New York City and New York State who strongly support The City University of New York. We want to express our concern about plans announced by CUNY colleges to lay off potentially thousands of adjunct faculty by June 30 and cut course offerings for the fall by as much as 35 percent.

This is the wrong time—morally, politically and fiscally—to cut CUNY. Millions of people around the world are rising up and rightly demanding an end to systemic racism. Among their demands is investment in the community resources that work against systemic racism and inequality. CUNY at its best is among the most important of those resources.

New York must not turn its back on CUNY now. We call on you, as leaders of the City University system, to be a voice against the destruction of CUNY. We ask you to defend CUNY at this critical moment in history, not find ways to dismantle it.

New York will need CUNY more than ever as we seek to rebuild the economy and create a more just world. The communities that have borne the greatest loss of life and employment during the pandemic are exactly the communities whose members rely on CUNY and who will turn to CUNY to rebuild their lives. New Yorkers from all parts of the city and surrounding region will need CUNY as they seek to gain new skills and earn college degrees. Reduced course offerings, fewer faculty and over-sized classes will leave CUNY under-prepared to support the students whose need for

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support is greatest. A strong and fully staffed CUNY is a unique and essential resource for New York's recovery and an essential part of addressing systemic racism.

While we are painfully aware of the budgetary crisis facing the City and State, we believe that the CUNY administration should pursue every alternative before even considering major budget cuts. The CARES Act allocated more than \$100 million to CUNY for institutional support during the crisis, with an explicit provision about keeping employees on payroll. To date, CUNY has made no announcement of how those funds are being used. The University should provide complete transparency about its proposal for and allocation of the CARES Act funds. Budgetary relief at the state and city level may also come in the form of additional stimulus money from Washington.

The layoff plans announced by several colleges would mean that thousands of adjunct faculty and other hourly employees would lose their jobs. Many of these faculty members have taught at CUNY for decades, enabling CUNY to keep colleges open despite shrinking public funding.

The damage done to CUNY by pre-emptive and disproportionate budget cuts will not be easily undone. We call on you to rise to the demands of this unprecedented moment in New York's history and chart a new course that protects CUNY students, CUNY workers and the communities CUNY serves.

Sincerely,

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, NY-14