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At long last when the demand for free tuition and universal healthcare have gained real momentum in the broader political climate, it is disheartening to see CUNY's continued reliance on the logic of austerity. The university cannot be sustained by offloading its costs on to our students, our working class students who already make tremendous sacrifices to be able to pay their current tuition and make the time to receive a college education. It may sit easy on your conscience to call it a "predictable" raise – but the predictability does nothing to ease the burden on students more than half of whom have family income of less than \$30,000 a year. As for a so-called wellness fee – given that fundamentally what ails our students are financial troubles, connecting yet another *bill to wellness* is just wrong.

The university's budget request remains starkly incommensurate with the needs on our campuses. You make a request for only 10% of the TAP gap, and yet, filling this structural gap is bleeding college budgets. At my campus, John Jay, the cost is close to 8 million, at Hunter, nearly 8.5 million, at CSI, nearly 5.5 million and so forth. These are dollars that should have gone into expanding programs, hiring support staff, and a *genuine* investment in student wellness. Similarly, while it's encouraging to see the university requesting 500 new full-time faculty lines over four years, it falls woefully short of the needs of departments and students. The PSC demand has been for 4000 new full-time lines to address student needs.

Even as the university has requested some new funding in key areas, the glaring shortages still means that we have to rely on cannibalizing our meager resources. But for how long? Clearly, such management of austerity is not a sustainable model. There is another path, dear Trustees – be bold. The time is right in Albany. A wave of progressive legislators are committed to demanding a well-funded and free CUNY with meaningful investments in faculty, staff and capital maintenance. It's a New Deal that we need to protect our great institution and make it thrive. But for such legislation to succeed, it needs the robust support of the CUNY Board and management. Now is the time to end the unjust reliance on tuition, and instead call for an investment that would be a down payment on the university we deserve.