Chairwoman Stavisky and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee:

thank you for inviting The City University of New York to testify before you today. I am Howard Apsan, CUNY’s Director of Environmental, Health, Safety and Risk Management, and I am pleased to share some additional details about CUNY’s response to the H1N1 threat.

My primary role has been to coordinate CUNY’s efforts to prevent the spread of influenza on our campuses, a role that has both external and internal facets.

As Executive Vice Chancellor Dobrin mentioned, CUNY follows the lead of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene—and I follow up to make sure that we do. But there are many other valuable sources of information that we try to tap. There are State agencies, such as the New York State Department of Health and the State Education Department; City agencies such as the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and the Office of Emergency
Management; higher education associations such as the University Risk Management and Insurance Association (URMIA) and the Campus Safety Health and Environmental Management Association (CSHEMA); other New York colleges including SUNY and a number of private universities; and of course the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. With information rapidly changing, it is imperative that we stay informed and up-to-date.

Internally, with 23 campuses, coordination is also a significant challenge. We have to take the information from the various sources that I just mentioned, and ensure that it is being shared throughout the university in a clear and consistent manner. As you heard, we work individually and collectively with campus administrators, but we also coordinate with those who have hands-on responsibility for implementation. We coordinate with our environmental health and safety officers, our student affairs leaders, our health and wellness centers, our risk managers, our employee unions and anyone else that can be instrumental in flu prevention. Influenza doesn’t respect organizational boundaries, so we have to make sure that we are all in sync.

To promote a uniform strategy, we have developed CUNY’s Influenza Response Plan, a dynamic preparedness tool that we continue to review and revise.
Originally developed for the Avian Flu in 2006, it incorporates flu plans developed by other colleges and universities and information from various government sources and higher education associations. It provides for incremental levels of response depending on the influenza’s severity and spread. It is regularly reviewed through our Risk Management Council and campus stakeholder committees, and it serves as our strategic plan for combating the spread of H1N1.

CUNY has also finalized and disseminated a Protocol on Infectious Disease Notification to facilitate the reporting of infectious diseases that can be spread through casual contact. The Protocol, which is designed to support the efforts of the Health Department, went through a thorough review process, incorporating comments from internal groups as well as our employee unions.

As I suggested when I began my remarks, the volume of information about H1N1 can be overwhelming. That is why we had to develop communication tools that could provide everyone with the information that they need, and still ensure that CUNY speaks with one voice to minimize confusion. Our primary tool is the CUNY Flu Page, [www.cuny.edu/flu](http://www.cuny.edu/flu), which consolidates current information from a wide variety of external sources and links to many helpful H1N1 web sites. We have to make sure that it is comprehensive and up-to-date because our campus web
sites link to it, our community relies on it for critical information such as where they can obtain flu vaccines, and it provides us with handy resources like the posters and flyers that are now ubiquitous on our campuses.

And although the web provides broad based access, there is still no substitute for personal communication. That is why I make sure to visit the campuses regularly, spot check to make sure that we are meeting all of the prevention commitments that you have heard about today, and brief our executives, administrators and line managers regularly. I also make sure that an H1N1 update is part of each meeting of CUNY’s Risk Management Council, Environmental Health and Safety Council, Business Continuity Committee, and Emergency Preparedness Task Force, and I address the equivalent campus meetings whenever I can.

In conclusion, preventing the spread of influenza at CUNY is a shared commitment, and one that we have taken very seriously. That is why I am very proud to sit with my colleagues today and share our approach with you, and very appreciative that you have given us this opportunity.

Thank you.