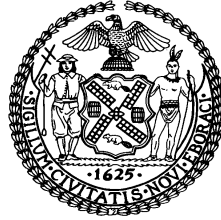


Staff: Baaba K. Halm, Counsel
Shauneequa Owusu, Policy Analyst
Shadawn Smith, Finance Analyst
Nathan Toth, Finance Analyst



THE COUNCIL

BRIEFING PAPER OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION
ROBERT NEWMAN, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
CHARLES BARRON, CHAIR

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OVERSIGHT: Update and Progress on Council Funded Diversity Initiatives at CUNY

On Thursday, June 7, 2007, at 1:00 p.m., the Committee on Higher Education, chaired by Council Member Charles Barron, will conduct an oversight hearing on the “Update and Progress on Council Funded Diversity Initiatives at CUNY.” The hearing will focus on the implementation of university-wide projects by the City University of New York (CUNY), which fulfill the purpose of diversity initiatives funded by the New York City Council. The Committee has invited members of CUNY’s Administration, representatives from CUNY schools, and other interested parties to testify.

Background

CUNY is the largest urban university in the nation and serves more than 226,000 degree-credit students and 230,000 adult, continuing and professional education students.¹ The number of graduates discharged by CUNY into the labor market is quite significant- at least one-third of college educated New Yorkers are CUNY graduates.² CUNY's student body reflects the diversity of New York City. The makeup of the undergraduate student body is 30% African American, 28% White, 27% Hispanic, 16% Asian and less than 1% American Indian.³ Forty-five percent of CUNY undergraduates work more than 20 hours a week and 62% attend college full-time, while almost 25% support children.⁴ Sixty-one percent of undergraduate students are female and more than a third (31%) are 25 or older.⁵

Today, the Committee will be given an update on Council funded diversity initiatives at CUNY, including the Black Male Initiative (BMI), the Dominican Studies Institute, and the Center for Puerto Rican Studies.

The Black Male Initiative

Despite the benefits of higher education, enrolling and graduating from college has proven to be difficult for many students. BMI was created in response to national and local statistics, which show that Black males lag behind other groups in attaining post-secondary degrees. According to the 2000 census, there are over 34 million Blacks in the United States, 8.1

¹ CUNY has 11 senior colleges, six community colleges, the CUNY Honors College, the Graduate School and University Center, the Graduate School of Journalism, the Law School and the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education. See, "About CUNY," available at <http://portal.cuny.edu>.

² "About CUNY," available at <http://portal.cuny.edu>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

million of whom are living below the poverty line.⁶ Of the total Black population, 16.4 million are males.⁷ As of March 2004, nationwide, 17.6 percent of Black Americans 25 years and over had attained bachelor's degrees,⁸ representing 16.6 percent of the national numbers as compared to 18.5 percent of their Black female and 32.9 percent of their White male counterparts 25 years and over who had attained bachelor's degrees.⁹ In New York City, there are an estimated 2.1 million Blacks residents, 44 percent of whom are males.¹⁰ Of this population, 9.8 percent of Black males 25 and older had a bachelor's degree compared to 10.5 percent of their Black female and 21.1 percent of their White male counterparts.¹¹

In the 2004-2005 school year, 31 percent of CUNY's 188,000 undergraduates were Black and of those students, women out-numbered men 2 to 1.¹² CUNY reports that only 27 percent of Black men who start at its four-year institutions and 15 percent who start its community colleges earn a bachelor's degree six years after enrolling.¹³ In response to these figures and the above-noted national statistics, CUNY's board of trustees approved as part of its 2004-2008 Master Plan, the creation of the "Chancellors Initiative on the Black Male in Education," to address the "disproportionately low-percentages and numbers of Black men within higher education."¹⁴

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Demographic Profile Highlights: Selected Population Group: Black or African American alone, available at <http://factfinder.census.gov>. As previously noted, generally, poverty rates are linked to lower levels of education and employment, See, Rogelio Saenz, "Beyond New Orleans: The Social and Economic Isolation of Urban African Americans," Population Reference Bureau, 2006, available at <http://www.prb.org>

⁷ See, supra, note 13.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, available at <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/race/black/ppl-186/tab7.pdf>.

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, available at <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/race/black/ppl-186/tab7a.pdf>.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey, available at <http://www.factfinder.census.gov>.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF3), available at <http://www.factfinder.census.gov>.

¹² Scott Jaschik, "The Missing Black Men," *Inside Higher Ed*, December 5, 2005.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ City University of New York, "Master Plan 2004-2008," available at

With funding and support from the New York City Council, CUNY has implemented this initiative on its campuses. Now in its second year of operation, BMI projects “promote recruitment and/or college success of students from underrepresented groups, with an emphasis on Black males; survey attitudes about education among individuals in a variety of settings; provide mentoring for adult literacy students in CUNY GED programs; and survey health disparities within male populations.”¹⁵ Such projects currently exist on all of CUNY’s 17 campuses and at the Graduate School and seek to serve approximately 1,250 students by the end of the year.¹⁶

The Dominican Studies Institute

The CUNY Dominican Studies Institute (CUNY-DSI) is an interdisciplinary research unit housed at City College.¹⁷ CUNY-DSI was established in 1992 as a pilot project through a grant provided by CUNY’s Chancellor. In 1994, CUNY-DSI was officially accredited by the CUNY Board of Trustees and became an organized research unit of the university.¹⁸ CUNY-DSI is the first and only university-based research institution in the United States which focuses on the study of Dominican life in the U.S.¹⁹ Specifically, the mission of CUNY-DSI is to gather, produce and disseminate academic knowledge on the human experience of U.S. residents who trace their ancestry to the Dominican Republic, and to advance research and teaching at CUNY, focusing on the

http://www1.cuny.edu/portal_ur/content/2004/chancellor/masterfinal.pdf.

¹⁵ New York City Council funding for this initiative in FY’07 was \$1.5 million, *see* CUNY 2nd Quarter Report to New York City Council, on file with the Council’s Finance Division.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ The City College of New York: Dominican Studies Institute *available at* www.ccny.cuny.edu/dsi/about.htm

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

Dominican population in the United States.²⁰ The institute sponsors research projects covering areas such as education, migration, language, literature, history, economics, woman's issues, politics, youth, cultural identity, sports, performing arts, and visual arts.²¹ According to CUNY-DSI an average of 60 conferences and symposia have been sponsored by the institute since its inception.²²

During the 2006-2007 fiscal year, the New York City Council allocated \$470,000 to CUNY-DSI.²³ CUNY reports that the funding has been used to cover expenses associated with library and archive units, as well as, the CUNY Citizenship and Immigration Project.²⁴ The Citizenship and Immigration Project provides citizenship education and naturalization services primarily to residents of the Washington Heights community.²⁵ Additionally, funding provides assistance to various research projects, including processing archival collections and creating a number of videos concerning the lives and contributions of prominent Dominican New Yorkers.²⁶

The Center for Puerto Rican Studies

The Center for Puerto Rican Studies/ Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos (Centro) was established in 1973 and is currently housed at Hunter College.²⁷ Its mission is to collect, preserve, and provide access to archival and library resources documenting the history and culture of Puerto Ricans and to produce, facilitate, and disseminate interdisciplinary research about the diasporic

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ Status Report for the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute: Memorandum from John Kotowski, CUNY Director of City Relations, on file with Committee on Higher Education.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ Center for Puerto Rican Studies: "About Centro" *available at* www.centropr.org

experiences of Puerto Ricans.²⁸ Centro also seeks to link this scholarly inquiry to social action and policy debates.²⁹ Centro sponsors and co-sponsors events every semester related to the Puerto Ricans/Latino experience in New York City and the United States.³⁰ Centro features the work of Puerto Rican and Latin artist twice a semester and hosts a paper bag series, which provides an opportunity for scholars in the social sciences and humanities to present published work and works in progress.³¹ Additionally, Centro publishes the Centro Journal, which is reportedly the only peer-reviewed journal dedicated to Puerto Rican issues.³² According to the latest data available by Centro, 16,000 people were served by Centro in 2004, and more than 600 researchers have utilized its archival collections since the center's inception.³³

In FY '07, the New York City Council allocated \$469,000 to the Center for Puerto Rican Studies.³⁴ Centro reports that it used this funding to support research and archival projects such as writing the guides for archival collections available in the Centro library; conducting research in cultural studies, visual arts, and education; reconstructing the Centro website; and retaining an expert to design a plan for the expansion of its facilities.

Conclusion

At today's hearing, the Committee will seek to learn more about the university-wide projects CUNY has implemented to achieve the goals of the Black Male Initiative, the

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ FY 07 Council-funded Initiative Center for Puerto Rican Studies: 3rd Quarter Report, on file with Committee on

Dominican Studies Institute, and the Center for Puerto Rican Studies.