RESOLUTION 1: Call for SSSP to Oppose the National Movement to Impose Austerity on Public Higher Education and Support the Resistance of CUNY’s Faculty to Pathways, A Diminished, Austerity Curriculum
Submitted by Eileen Moran and Barbara Katz Rothman, Sponsored by the Educational Problems Division

Whereas, Pathways, a top down revamping of CUNY’s core curriculum, undermines both faculty governance and the quality of the education CUNY’s 400,000 students will receive; and

Whereas, the CUNY administrators and Board of Trustees bypassed CUNY’s Faculty Senates, the elected bodies charged with curriculum development, to impose Pathways in September of 2013 over the strong objection of these faculty bodies; and

Whereas, after years of declining public investment and growing enrollments, CUNY is pressed to graduate more students faster, to reduce costs and increase productivity, thus to impose an austerity education; and

Whereas, the college completion agenda is part of a national movement to corporatize and ration public higher education; and

Whereas, curricula comparable to Pathways, some even called Pathways, have already been implemented or proposed at other public colleges and universities (1); and

Whereas, well financed foundations, particularly the Lumina Foundation, are in the forefront of imposing austerity nationally, by lobbying public university Boards of Trustees as change agents (2); and

Whereas, the conservative American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) also has an agenda for higher education that furthers austerity by tying public funding to outcomes, including testing, graduation rates and employment after graduation; (3) and

Whereas, fourteen states have already passed legislation to implement ALEC’s accountability measures, and Governor Cuomo has attempted to include such measures in his 2014 budget proposal in NYS (4); and

Whereas, under the guise of facilitating student transfers at CUNY, Pathways, with its three credit limits, offers diluted classes and reduced requirements such as basic science courses without laboratory hours and eliminates four-credit language and English composition courses, and

Whereas, austerity higher education seriously undermines the life chances of poor, working class, older adult students, and students of color who are most likely to attend public institutions; and
Whereas, states’ disinvestment in public higher education has already reshaped public higher education policy, beginning with the presidents who have prioritized workforce development and accountability while paying only lip service to former goals of affordability and access; and

Whereas, in a confidential referendum, sponsored by the Professional Staff Congress, CUNY’s faculty-staff union, 92% of faculty participants voted no confidence in Pathways; and

Whereas, public higher education’s mission to develop students’ critical thinking in order to promote participation in a democratic, diverse society is undermined by austerity measures; therefore

Be it resolved, that the Society for the Study of Social Problems communicate to CUNY’s Acting Chancellor William Kelly and to CUNY’s Board of Trustees its support for academic freedom and faculty governance at CUNY, and its support of the faculty’s demand for a moratorium on Pathways; and

Be it Further Resolved, that SSSP communicate its opposition to the imposition of Pathways and austerity education to the NYC media and the national media addressing higher education issues (NYT, Daily News, Wall St. Journal, CHE, Inside Higher Education, and others); and

Be it Further Resolved, that SSSP provide information to its members on its website about this national movement to impose austerity higher education; and

Be it Further Resolved, that going forward SSSP make its opposition to the austerity agenda being advanced and support its members, confronting and resisting such processes on other campuses.

Notes

1. A Google search of Pathways and higher education curriculum produces pages of citations including Colorado’s Pathways curriculum, SAS an online resource for K-16, and a mix of scholarly critiques as well as global patterns in higher education.

2. See Lumina foundation at www.luminafoundation.org and Jamie P. Merisotis, President and CEO of Lumina Foundation keynote address to The Pennsylvania Association of Councils of Trustees (PACT), Harrisburg, PA, April 16, 2013.

3. See www.alec.org “Ten Questions Legislators Should Ask About Higher Education”. Fourteen states currently tie funding to performance and many more require an assortment of measures of student engagement, efficacy or productivity.

4. In the budget for 2013-14 Governor Cuomo included funding tied to outcomes, but it was modified by the legislature due to the efforts of the PSC and other union affiliates of New York State United Teachers.

TABLED
RESOLUTION 2: Resolution Expressing Concern that Portions of the USA Patriot and Homeland Securities Acts Pose a Direct Threat to the Liberties and Civil Rights Protected by the United States Constitution and the Human Rights Protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Submitted by Luis Esparza
RESOLUTION 3: Racial Disparities in Drug Law Enforcement  
Submitted by Joyce Bialik and Heather MacIndoe on behalf of the Sociology and Social Welfare Division, Sponsored by the Drinking and Drugs Division

Whereas racial disparities in incarceration have been documented for decades, the most problematic being for Black men currently imprisoned 6.4 times the rate of White men;

Whereas drug offending and discriminatory police and sentencing practices have been major factors in this racial disparity, while particular issues in New York City and State are police-stop-and-frisk practices and a loophole in state law that in 1977 decriminalized possession of marijuana;

Whereas this loophole criminalizes possession when marijuana is “open to public view.” When someone complies with a police officer’s directive to “empty your pockets,” during a stop-and-frisk encounter (even though one is not legally required to do so), the individual is then charged with the crime of possessing marijuana “open to public view;”

Whereas because of this loophole and police stop-and-frisk practices more than 600,000 New Yorkers have been arrested for marijuana possession since 1996, including more than 45,000 people in 2012 alone;

Whereas these arrests predominantly affect young people with no prior criminal involvement;

Whereas more than 84 percent of those arrested for possession were people of color – even though young whites use marijuana at higher rates;

Whereas these arrests and imprisonments have significant consequences, such as creating barriers to employment, financial aid, housing, and civic participation; and

Whereas these arrests cost NYC taxpayers $75 million last year and over $600 million dollars during the last decade;

Whereas NYC’s Mayor Bloomberg, NYC Police Commissioner Ray Kelly, and all five NY District Attorneys have supported legislation to fix the marijuana possession laws;

Be it resolved that Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) opposes the discriminatory application of “stop, question, and frisk” which affects more than a half a million New Yorkers each year and unfairly targets Black and Latino youth;

And be it further resolved that SSSP supports the Joint Remedy Process in Judge Scheindlin’s decision that seeks input from New York residents directly affected by stop and frisk abuses;

And it be further resolved that SSSP supports the Community Safety Act, a police reform legislative package aimed at ending discriminatory policing and bringing accountability to the NYC Police Department;

And be it further resolved that SSSP supports efforts to standardize the penalties for possessing a small amount of marijuana in New York so that possession in public view would be a violation punishable by a summons and fine, not arrest and jail;

And be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution with a cover letter be forwarded to the governor, legislative leaders in Albany, the Mayor of NYC, District Attorneys of NYC, members of the NYC Council and any other individual or body that the Executive Officers of the SSSP determine.

Resources

RESOLUTION 4: School to Prison Pipeline, Affecting Low Income Students of Color, Especially Black Males

Submitted by Joyce Bialik and Heather MacIndoe on behalf of the Sociology and Social Welfare Division, Sponsored by the Educational Problems Division; Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division; Racial and Ethnic Minorities Division; Disabilities Division; and the Sport, Leisure, and the Body Division

Whereas more than one-half of Black men in low-income urban areas do not finish high school, which studies show greatly increases their risk of incarceration;

Whereas by the end of the 1990s a Black male who lacks a high school credential, born 1965-69, had nearly a 60 percent chance of serving time in prison;

Whereas research shows that current school discipline policies which rely on suspensions, widespread police presence, and other punitive practices do not reduce conflict, and instead increase the likelihood that students will fall behind, drop out and/or become incarcerated;

Whereas punitive policies disproportionately affect low-income students of color and students with disabilities, with Black male students impacted more than any other group;
Whereas youth with disabilities are over-represented among youth pushed out of the school system and funneled into the juvenile justice system and are not given the necessary services and supports to stay in school successfully.

Whereas these practices have a negative impact on school climate by undermining positive relationships between students and trusted adults and contributing to conflict on school campuses;

Be it resolved that the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) calls for New York City to support reducing suspensions and school-based arrests and implementing positive alternatives to protect students’ human rights to education and dignity;

Be it further resolved that SSSP supports the creation of safe and supportive school climates in all New York City public schools without the need for school police or metal detectors, where young people are not suspended and removed from class, and where teachers and students have training and support to prevent and resolve conflicts in positive ways;

Be it further resolved that SSSP calls on the Mayor, the New York City Department of Education, the New York State Education Department, and City and State legislators to:

1. Implement and fund positive school-wide discipline policies in all schools by incorporating approaches such as restorative practices, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and peer mediation.

2. Begin implementation in the highest need schools by providing resources, training and technical assistance for schools. Highest need schools include schools that are heavily policed, schools with metal detectors, cameras, and large numbers of School Safety Officers, schools with high suspension, expulsion, and arrest rates, schools with a population of students at risk of dropping out, and Impact Schools. They also include schools in low income communities of color, where we see a correlation between the criminalization of students inside and outside of schools.

3. Fund, designate, and train a staff person in each school, beginning with the highest need schools, to serve as a Restorative Discipline Coordinator who will help develop and oversee implementation of a school-wide plan, and provide ongoing support and coordination for teachers and students.

4. Require training for all teachers, principals, counselors, school aides, and other support staff on how to implement positive interventions, and engage students, parents, and educators to help design and lead the trainings.

5. Consult regularly with students, parents, and other community members about the development of school discipline, climate, and safety practices to involve the entire school community.

6. Create and train a Restorative Discipline Team at the NYC Department of Education to ensure that schools are implementing and sustaining positive school-wide discipline policies, and to provide technical assistance and support.

7. Reduce suspensions by no less than 50% by the 2013 – 2014 school year, eliminate suspensions of more than 10 days, and reduce school-based arrests by revising the Discipline Code, Chancellor’s Regulations, and other policies.

8. Require the use of positive interventions, such as mediation, counseling, restorative circles, or fairness committees, instead of suspensions except where suspensions are required by law.
9. Adopt a policy that schools must take certain steps before they can suspend a student, such as using positive interventions, or meeting with the student and/or the student's guardian to discuss disciplinary options.

10. When a student returns from a suspension, require that schools provide academic support and implement positive interventions to reintegrate the student into the school community.

11. Require schools to strictly uphold students' due process rights and provide remedies for violations of those rights.

12. Decriminalize students by minimizing police presence and arrests and giving schools control over school safety.

13. Continually monitor and evaluate the use of suspensions, removals, arrests, and positive interventions in all schools.

14. Hold schools accountable for reducing high suspension and arrest rates, not through punitive measures, but by providing technical assistance and support to implement positive approaches.

15. Ensure that schools do not use suspensions in cases prohibited by the Discipline Code, such as wearing a hat and other infractions under Level 1 of the Discipline Code.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution and cover letter shall be forwarded by the SSSP Executive Officer to the Mayor, the New York City Department of Education, the New York State Education Department, and City and State legislators

References

Advancement Project. (2010). Test, punish, and push out: how 'zero tolerance' and high-stakes testing funnel youth into the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Advancement Project, 14.


Mukherjee, Elora. 2007. Criminalizing the Classroom: The over-policing of New York City schools. NY: New York Civil Liberties Union

RESOLUTION 5: Expression of Gratitude

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