



The Society for the Study of Social Problems
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October 1, 2013

Dr. William Kelly, Acting Chancellor
CUNY Graduate Center
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Dear Chancellor Kelly:

On behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), one of the oldest and most prestigious social science organizations in the country, I have been asked to provide you with a copy of a resolution on "Pathways," passed unanimously by SSSP members at the Society's annual meeting this past August in New York. As you can see, the resolution expresses serious concerns not only about the curriculum changes proposed, but also about the process, which appears to have ignored or shortchanged a long-held tradition in higher education, including at CUNY, of shared governance, *especially* on curricular issues, the principal province of the faculty. Also, as an organization made up principally of academics, we are very concerned with austerity measures such as these and the potential harm that are likely to cause to already vulnerable groups in society, including students from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.

While we appreciate the work of Boards of Trustees and their enormous contributions to higher education, Boards historically, and correctly, have relied on their faculties to make decisions about the curriculum and what is best for their students academically, since this is the faculty's area of expertise. Chancellors and Boards turn to experts all of the time – financial advisers, engineers, architects, etc. Why would this be any different? Who is in a better position than faculty to make these decisions, especially when you consider that it is these scholars and teachers who work with these students, day in and day out, and are able to observe what works and what doesn't work? Why would CUNY not rely on the expertise of their faculty on curricular issues if the ultimate goal is to provide the best education to their students? The fact that 92% of the CUNY full-time faculty who participated in a referendum this past May voted "no confidence" in *Pathways* is difficult for us, and should be difficult for you, to ignore.

If you wish to contact me by e-mail, please write to me at hector.delgado49@gmail.com, or if you wish to call, please call me at 909-448-4475. We hope, and trust, that you and the Board will reconsider your position on Pathways and allow the faculty's elected representatives, experts on the subject, to make curricular decisions.

Sincerely,

Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.
Executive Officer, SSSP

Cc: CUNY's Board of Trustees

Enclosure: Approved Resolution

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.