November 15, 2011

Michelle Anderson, Dean and Professor of Law  
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65-21 Main Street  
Flushing, NY 11367

Dear Dean Anderson:

As per your email sent on October 31, 2011, I am providing Borough of Manhattan Community College’s (BMCC) coordinated response to the proposed 30-credit Common Core for all campuses across the City University of New York (CUNY).

Overall, we endorse the concept of a CUNY-wide General Education Core that will enable our students to transfer seamlessly to our sister institutions. As part of the review process we have engaged and consulted with the chairs of our academic departments, who have discussed the Common Core with their faculty and forwarded to us their observations, issues and concerns. The Common Core was also reviewed through our governance process. Chairs of the standing committees in our Academic Senate met with their committee members to discuss the Core and shared their concerns and observations at their Executive Committee meeting held on November 9, 2011.

Upon review of the various responses from the academic departments and Academic Senate participants, as well as in consultation with my Cabinet members, the following salient concerns about the Common Core were identified:

- **Seven Credits Required for English**

Many senior and community college English courses are three (3) credits and no pedagogical rationale or assessment to support the increase in credit was offered in the Common Core document.

- **Speech and Language Arts**

A number of academic departments and standing committees voiced concern about the absence of required Modern Language and Speech Communications courses in the Common Core, especially since the current job market has stressed the need for both written and oral communication skills with a global perspective, i.e., proficiency in more than one language. Therefore, faculty have suggested that a fifth theme entitled “Speech Communication and Language Arts” be added to the Common Core, in which courses in speech and modern languages could fulfill the requirement. We fully support this suggestion.
• Revision of the Theme-based Flexible Core

Many members of the standing committees observed that the areas of the flexible core are oriented towards courses in the social science disciplines. While the social sciences are important to a student’s general education, part of the purpose of a General Education Common Core is to provide students with both depth and breadth of experience; therefore, it should not rely heavily on the social sciences. It was proposed that the theme-based core be revised to include areas other than the social sciences.

• Technological Skills

One possible area that would enhance the theme-based flexible core is technology. Faculty stated that it is a myth that all CUNY students are adept technologically. Our students’ proficiency in technology falls at all levels on the continuum. Their knowledge of and facility with technology, including the several varieties of social media, cannot be taken for granted. There must be university/institutional encouragement for all students to focus on this area as part of their General Education. Therefore, another theme that may be added to the flexible core is “Technological Skills.” E-learning courses, technology-enhanced courses, and computer science courses that improve students’ technological skills at the basic and advanced levels may be used to fulfill the requirement.

• Curriculum Revision

There was some concern expressed by academic chairs and members of the standing committees that the Common Core will force changes in our current curricula that will have a negative effect on the goals and articulation agreements of the programs, especially for those in the sciences. For example, the A.S. degrees in our Science for Forensic Science, Biotechnology and Engineering Science programs provide the basic science courses for the first two years of science programs at CUNY senior colleges, such as John Jay College of Criminal Justice and York College. However, the proposed Common Core would necessitate our replacing some of the foundation science courses with other liberal arts/general education courses to meet the learning outcomes of the Core. This, in turn, would force the senior colleges to require the students to take more foundation science courses in the third and fourth year, and possibly have an unintended consequence of students taking more than eight semesters to complete the baccalaureate because the foundation science courses are pre-requisites for many of the third- and fourth-year science courses. This is especially disconcerting since the University has identified these current ten years as “CUNY’s Decade of Science.”

• Articulation in the Common Core

Some faculty have raised concerns about how the Common Core will affect current articulation agreements and accreditation in A.A.S. degree programs, such as Nursing, Respiratory Therapy, Health Information Technology, and Media Arts and Technology. There should be an on-going review of such programs with respect to the Common Core.
BMCC has in place a General Education Assessment Plan. It is based on the college’s seven General Education Outcome Goals that were approved through our governance process. It would appear that the proposed General Education Common Core will supersede our General Education Outcome Goals, and that all academic departments will revise their syllabi to incorporate the new general education learning outcomes associated with the Common Core.

I appreciate the opportunity that the University has given BMCC to share our observations, issues and concerns about the proposed General Education Common Core. Equally important, we appreciate being involved in a process that will ultimately benefit all of the students within CUNY.

Respectfully yours,

Antonio Pérez
President