Dear Chancellor Goldstein and Members of the CUNY Board of Trustees,

We transmit to you the College of Staten Island response to the Pathways draft of November 1, 2011, passed by the CSI Faculty Senate on November 10, 2011. In view of the overwhelming rejection of the Pathways Initiative by the CSI faculty and students expressed in this document, and the massive opposition to this program at our sister colleges, it is clear that the Board of Trustees should immediately withdraw the Pathways Resolution and find a more reasonable and educationally sound means of addressing issues of transfer.
Coordinated CSI Campus Response to the Pathways Proposal

Approved by the CSI Faculty Senate November 10, 2011

The College of Staten Island rejects the Pathways project in its entirety and affirms that the Pathways Project cannot be redeemed by mere cosmetic changes to individual components.

In its meeting of September 22, 2011, the CSI Faculty Senate approved a motion that its Executive Committee appoint a subcommittee of five to draft the Coordinated Response to be presented at a special meeting on November 10, 2011. A subcommittee was formed in October, including faculty from both divisions, all of whom have curricular experience, several having served on the General Education Committee. Their names were announced in a campus-wide email. The Executive Committee hosted and moderated a Town Hall Meeting on October 19, 2011, and there was a subsequent Town Hall on November 2, 2011, hosted by the General Education Committee, and moderated by the Provost. An email address also was set up after the first Town Hall Meeting for campus members to send comments to the committee.

That committee contacted CSI Student Government and the chairs of all academic teaching departments and programs, encouraging them to discuss Pathways with their constituencies and provide input that expressed the will of each group. The committee also contacted the Council of Chairs and the College General Education Committee and members of the academic administration along with CSI’s two distinguished professors. The committee collected detailed notes from the two well-attended Town Halls and from the special e-mail account for campus feedback. Because of the short time frame, the committee received most of the resolutions and other responses a few days before the November 10 Faculty Senate meeting.

Out of the seventeen academic teaching departments, twelve passed resolutions opposing the Pathways Initiative; three letters of opposition were also received from three interdisciplinary programs. Two academic departments expressed a neutral position, and one viewed the Pathways general-education component acceptable if it were modified in specific ways. The CSI Student Government and the CSI General Education Committee also passed resolutions opposing Pathways.

Summary of Resolutions Opposing the Pathways Project:
The student government’s resolution expressed the opinion of the majority of faculty that “this proposed curriculum limits the knowledge and skill level expected of students and does not reflect the high standards of education, which the institutions of CUNY strive to provide.”
There was widespread agreement that Pathways
(1) lowers educational standards at CUNY, severely damaging its reputation for academic excellence;
(2) violates legally defined and traditional prerogatives of faculty to determine curriculum; and
(3) departs from recognized norms of academic freedom, exposing CUNY to national condemnation.

The faculty was outraged that such a sweeping revision of the university curriculum could be imposed on such an accelerated timetable. The General Education Committee, part of CSI's governance structure, which has representation from all academic departments and student government, in its resolution rejecting Pathways, observed that “The breakneck pace of the deadline Pathways imposes on CUNY Colleges and the Colleges’ governance committees makes it impossible for such a radical change of our general education program to be given proper analysis and evaluation,” and that the committee would be forced to “make major curricular decisions without guidance from the departments, the Curriculum Committee, and the Faculty Senate,” violating the College’s own governance.

In contrast to the haste with which the Pathways Initiative attempts to transform the university curriculum, CSI has been rethinking, revising, and modifying its general education requirements, based on students’ needs, for close to two decades. The College has created a rich and academically rigorous set of general education courses (in the lab sciences, mathematics, humanities, social sciences, foreign languages) that prepare students for their eventual majors and for lifelong learning. Of this, the CSI faculty is extremely proud. In 2006, then University Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Selma Botman noted in a letter to CSI President Marlene Springer that “CSI’s approach to General Education reform is a model for the University.”

In resolutions and Town Hall discussions, the campus community rejected the university administration’s argument that Pathways is necessary to resolve issues on transfer between the colleges. CSI strongly urges the central administration to find alternate methods of dealing with transfers that do not involve such drastic revisions of the university-wide curriculum.

**Specific Suggestions on the Common Core Draft:**

Many departments, individual faculty members, the Provost's Council of academic administrators, and various attendees at the Town Halls made specific suggestions, which will be forwarded to the General Education Committee for its consideration, and to the CSI faculty representatives on the Pathways Task Force.

When one examines the specific suggestions *in toto*, their clear intent is to salvage as much as possible of the general education program now in place at CSI. This rich general education program would be replaced by Pathways, a program the CSI
community regards as arbitrarily imposed, poorly conceived and educationally unsound, a belief detailed in the resolutions and responses from students, departments, and programs that form the final section of this report.

College of Staten Island
of the
City University of New York

Student Government Association

November 3, 2011

Resolution on the Pathways to Degree Completion Initiative

Whereas, The College of Staten Island Student Government Association (CSI-SGA) acknowledges the dire need for a CUNY policy, which allows for the efficient transfer of credits between the CUNY Colleges and stresses that such a policy would be in the best interest of students; and

Whereas, After considering the current proposal to fill this need, namely the “Pathways to Degree Completion Initiative,” specifically the four proposed areas in the “Flexible Common Core” –“World Cultures,” U.S. Experience in its Diversity,” “Creative Expression,” and “Individual and Society” – the CSI-SGA has determined that this proposed curriculum limits the knowledge and skill level expected of students and does not reflect the high standards for education, which the institutions of CUNY strive to provide; and

Whereas, The CSI-SGA is supported in its position by a majority of the CUNY faculty as well as such scholarly organizations as Phi Beta Kappa; so be it

Resolved, That while the CSI-SGA appreciates the effort by the Pathways Task Force to consider the needs of CUNY students; it suggests that the Task Force take time to reconsider the structure of the Common Core and make certain that it corresponds to the quality educational standards of CUNY.
Resolution of the CSI General Education Committee
November 7, 2011

The breakneck pace of the deadlines Pathways imposes on CUNY Colleges and the Colleges’ governance committees makes it impossible for such a radical change of our general education program to be given proper analysis and evaluation. Despite its best efforts, the General Education Committee cannot give due consideration to even this first stage of the Pathways master plan under this kind of pressure. The timetable would oblige the General Education Committee to overstep its bounds of authority by having it make major curricular decisions without guidance from the Departments, Curriculum Committees, and the Senate.

We have been made aware that the student government and a growing majority of departments have made known their opposition to Pathways on pedagogical, social, legal, and ethical grounds in formal resolutions.

For these reasons, the General Education Committee of the College of Staten Island believes the Pathways Proposal should not be implemented unless it is ratified by all of the CUNY Colleges in accordance with their governance procedures on curricular change.
Passed with no dissenting votes, November 8, 2011
Biology

The following comments re the Pathways Project were approved by the Biology Department faculty in the November 3, 2011 meeting.

The CSI Biology faculty is committed to the active learning experience provided in laboratory classes and therefore, support the adoption of a four credit science course in the common core. We also note the learning goals listed emphasize understanding the process of science and therefore, are best achieved in courses with a laboratory component. However, to broaden the knowledge of the student thus creating a more educated citizen and potentially recruiting students to careers in science, we strongly urge the inclusion of a second science course within the twelve credit college option. The Biology Department accepts Pathways with the assumption a second science course will be added.
Our department discussed Pathways extensively during our meeting on 11/3. Following is a summary of our conclusions.

We have no departmental position on the consultation process leading up to Pathways. The Business Department does not offer General Education courses and was not involved in early discussions about Pathways GenEd requirements.

Overall, we anticipate that the impact of the Pathways GenEd requirements on our department will be neutral. We can work within many different GenEd frameworks to maintain quality education in business.

We recognize the concerns of those departments whose disciplines may be negatively affected by Pathways. We hope that all departments can work together to maintain a strong General Education curriculum. High standards in math and English are especially critical to the success of our students.

We recognize that our department may have to revise our pre-major and major requirements as a result of Pathways changes to GenEd. Although the specific changes are not yet clear, we anticipate that they will be workable.

We are concerned that inadequate time is being allowed for discipline committees to choose common courses for transfer in the major. There already appears to be some differences of opinion between the faculty of different colleges. In particular, our accounting faculty are concerned about maintaining proper course sequencing in the pre-major so that accounting students can complete their degree requirements within four years. The discipline committees could make more effective decisions on these and other issues if more time were allocated to their deliberations.
Computer Science Department

The Computer Science Department is concerned that the Pathways Project is not aligned with the well thought-out General Education goals that were recently passed by our CSI faculty. These goals were formulated over months of work and with the consultation of many faculty members.

We feel that the ramifications of the proposed changes can pose problems for various majors, especially those majors with many requirements. We recommend further study before the implementation of such a major revision in General Education across the university.
Resolution from the Department of Education

November 2011

On November 3, 2011, the Department of Education, College of Staten Island, voted unanimously in favor of the following resolution on the Pathways initiative of the City University of New York:

Whereas, the Pathways initiative for general education undermines the essential grounding in liberal arts and sciences that distinguishes general education at CSI and thoroughly prepares its education students to become classroom teachers;

Resolved, the Department of Education objects to the Pathways initiative and urges the Board of Trustees and Chancellor to work through faculty leadership and consider a better mechanism for easing student transfer throughout CUNY.
Department of Engineering Science and Physics

The following resolution regarding the Pathways project was approved by the Department of Engineering Science and Physics on November 9, 2011.

WHEREAS: It is essential for all college students to be better educated in Knowledge of the Physical and Natural World, Critical Thinking, and Quantitative and Mathematical Reasoning (hereforth, “scientific knowledge and skills”),

AND WHEREAS: Laboratory science courses as general education requirements often provide the only opportunities for most liberal arts students to develop scientific knowledge and skills, which are essential to success in the economically competitive, technologically advanced world in which we live,

AND WHEREAS: The College of Staten Island and other CUNY senior colleges have always required two semesters of laboratory science courses for all majors,

AND WHEREAS: The improvement of education in science and mathematics is essential for the United States to continue as a leading nation in the world,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: The Engineering Science and Physics Department at the College of Staten Island opposes the Pathways project in its current form.
Department of English

Two Resolutions on the Pathway Initiative

Resolution 1:

The Department of English opposes adoption of the General Education plans proposed by the Pathway Initiative. The faculty believes that the initiative is pedagogically unsound, threatens Academic Freedom, violates shared university governance and is illegal.

Rationale:
Curriculum belongs to the province of faculty of responsibility and privilege. The Pathway Initiative threatens Academic Freedom.

According to AAUP statement “On the Relationship of Faculty Governance to Academic Freedom,” which states

. . . since the faculty has primary responsibility for the teaching and research done in the institution, the faculty’s voice on matters having to do with teaching and research should be given the greatest weight. From that idea flow more specific principals regarding the faculty’s role . . . Since such decisions as those involving choice of method of instruction, standards of student competence in a discipline, subject matter to be taught, policies for admitting students, standards of student competence in a discipline, the maintenance of a suitable environment for learning, and standards of faulty competence bear directly on the teaching and research conducted at an institution, the faculty should have primary authority over decisions about such matter – that is, the administration should “concur with the faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail.”

b. The Pathway initiative violates Section 8.6 of the CUNY Bylaws, which operationalizes the concept of shared governance at CUNY:

The faculty shall meet at least one in each semester, or oftener, upon call by the president, or by petition of ten per cent of its members. The faculty shall be responsible, subject to guidelines, if any, as established by the board, for the formation of policy related to the admission and retention of students including health and scholarship standards [italics added], therefore student attendance including leaves of absence, curriculum, awarding of college credit, granting of degrees. It shall make its own bylaws, consistent with these bylaws and conduct the educational affairs customarily cared for by a college faculty.
Section 8.6 of the CUNY Bylaws:

The faculty shall meet at least one in each semester, or oftener, upon call by the president, or by petition of ten per cent of its members. The faculty shall be responsible, subject to guidelines, if any, as established by the board, for the formation of policy related to the admission and retention of students including health and scholarship standards, therefore student attendance including leaves of absence, curriculum, awarding of college credit, granting of degrees. It shall make its own bylaws, consistent with these bylaws and conduct the educational affairs customarily cared for by a college faculty.

Section 8.13 CUNY Bylaws:

There shall be a university faculty senate, responsible, subject to the board, for the formulation of policy relating to the academic status, role, rights, and freedoms of the faculty, university level educational and instructional matters, and research and scholarly activities of university-wide import . . .

c. The Initiative violates the Policy approved by the CUNY Board of Trustees on November 24, 1997, which the Board stipulated in settlement of litigation previously undertaken by the PSC, and which

RESOLVED, that the Board, in the exercise of its authority to govern and administer the University pursuant to N.Y. Education Law 6204[1], in conjunction with the Board’s making of educational policy, recognizes and reaffirms that the faculty, in accordance with CUNY Bylaws 8.6, shall be responsible, subject to guidelines, if any, as established by the Board, for the formulation of policy relating to the admission and retention of students including health and scholarship standards, therefore, student attendance including leaves of absence, curriculum, awarding of college credit, and granting of degrees; that this responsibility is to be exercised through the college faculty senates pursuant to Board Bylaws or the University Faculty Senate in accordance with CUNY Bylaws 8.13 which states: “There shall be a university faculty senate, responsible, subject to the board, for the formulation of policy relating to the academic status, role, rights, and freedoms of the faculty, university level educational and instructional matters, and research and scholarly activities of university-wide import. The powers and duties of the university faculty senate shall not extend to areas or interests which fall exclusively within the domain of the faculty councils of the constituent units of the university” and that such policies will then be considered by the Board or its appropriate committees in making policy decisions relating to educational matters.

d. The Pathway General Education plan is pedagogically unsound. It goes
against the guidelines of the Association of American Colleges and Universities: 
1. to proceed incrementally; 2. to spread the reforms over a long period of time; 3. 
to secure the buy-in of all constituencies affected.

At considerable expense the College sent a delegation to an Association of 
American Colleges and Universities conference on general education in 
Vermont. A topic that pervaded the conference was an examination of 
what works and what doesn’t work in reforming general education. We 
were guided by the well-known AAC&U publication on the topic, Gaston 
and Gaff, Revising General Education. In particular we attended seminars 
that compared success and failure in reforming general education, and 
developed] key ingredients for a successful revision of general education.

e. The Pathway Proposal does not allow for future reforms of the General 
Education program:

In addition to the lengthy procedures already in place at each college for 
faculty approval of new and revised courses for Gen-ed, the Pathways 
proposal adds a new CUNY Committee. It appears that every change in 
these courses will need to go through the same process. How much time 
will this add to the approval process?

We advise the Board to “do the math”: if each college submits all of the 
courses to be approved for Gen-Ed, how much time can this CUNY 
committee actually spend reviewing each course? How long will it take to 
review each? Given that the plan encourages flexibility among the 
campuses, this process seems unworkable and of little value.

Overview:
No data that we know of has assessed the degree-completion time of transfer 
students within CUNY, nor shows clearly that this plan will improve the ease of 
transfer. Moreover the 30+12 credit structure, together with the varying number 
of college-option credits each transfer student must satisfy, will make advising 
transfer students no easier than it is now.

We believe that transfer students presently must complete extra credits because of 
pre-major requirements or prerequisites to major courses, not because their gen-ed 
credits are not accepted.
Resolution 2:

If the Pathways Initiative is implemented, we call on the College administration to respect faculty authority over all curricular changes that may be necessary.

History

Whereas the problem of transfer facilitation can be addressed without the imposition of a destructive new curriculum on the colleges of the City University and

Whereas the Pathways initiative has shown a total disregard for the legally defined and traditional rights of faculty governance over curriculum and

Whereas the imposition of a curriculum by a board of trustees, so contrary to the national best practices of curricular reform, will make CUNY an outlier in the educational community, and so will erode the national reputation of the university and

Whereas Pathways would cut the general education curriculum in half, thus debasing the students’ education and devaluing their education and the reputation of the College of Staten Island and the City University of New York and

Whereas Pathways undermines the College’s stated goal of developing “a richer array of rigorous undergraduate… programs that meet students’ educational and professional aspirations” and

Whereas Pathways threatens to make the College less able to recruit and retain outstanding scholars due to a higher teaching load and

Whereas the contempt shown to the faculty in the discussion of Pathways undermines the college’s stated goal of becoming “a more vibrant center of intellectual and cultural exchange through community partnerships”

Therefore the Department of History concludes the Pathways Project cannot be redeemed by tinkering with its individual components and rejects Pathways on pedagogical, social, legal and moral grounds.
As director of the International Studies program at CSI for the past decade, I write to express my rejection of the proposed Pathways initiative. I have arrived at this position for three reasons, each one of which seems sufficient to dispose of this project on its own merits. These are: Pathways’ disregard for faculty’s role in designing and implementing curricula; its haphazard and anti-intellectual assignment of disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses into ill-defined “outcomes” categories; and, finally its flagrant violation of CSI’s mission to create a well-informed global citizenry. Since the faculty’s position on the first point seems to have been clearly articulated in numerous forums, I will focus on the second and third areas.

As an interdisciplinary program, International Studies profoundly respects the integrity of the traditional academic disciplines. One cannot – as the Pathways proposal mandates – simply exchange a course in the social sciences for one in the humanities. In the same light, one cannot substitute within these areas (i.e. a course in anthropology does NOT achieve the same outcome, or provide the same knowledge, or the same critical thinking skills as a course in economics.) It is a grave disservice to CUNY students to fail to make this distinction.

In the same light, the proposal omits any consideration of the unique Contemporary World category. The requirement’s rationale is extremely clear, and the vague menu of unrelated courses described in Pathways pales by comparison. In my view, the most compelling case for this requirement lies in its description in the CSI catalogue:

Courses fulfilling this requirement are designed to provide an understanding of global and regional contexts… The courses will emphasize the interactions of societies along political, economic, and cultural dimensions. Courses will cover the development, formation, and impact of the global context and ways in which different nations, societies, and cultures influence and are influenced by global forces. Students will use comparative and historical analytic frameworks for understanding the contemporary world.

In this increasingly interconnected world, our students need a solid educational foundation to compete in the professional marketplace and to co-exist with the global community. For the former, they must leave college with the basic tools possessed by their educated peers. CSI students’ current understanding of geography, politics, economics, history and foreign languages places them at a competitive advantage. If the foundation of their education is stripped away, they will suffer professionally. As for the latter point – global citizenry – one has only to take a cursory glance at world events (ranging from prolonged military conflicts to critical financial crises) to comprehend the urgency of our liberal arts agenda.

The College of Staten Island, as a comprehensive institution, is uniquely qualified to educate New York City’s finest citizens. We have demonstrated an ability to help disadvantaged students with the most limited preparation reach intellectual heights beyond their wildest expectations. At the same time, we have shown that CSI students can successfully compete for opportunities in graduate schools, scholarships and jobs that place them at the level of the nation’s best and brightest. The Pathways proposal, if passed, will irrevocably alter this fine achievement.

Sincerely,

Jane Marcus-Delgado, Ph.D., Director, International Studies Program
Department of Mathematics

Resolution on Pathways; approved unanimously, Nov 3, 2011.

The CSI Department of Mathematics is opposed to the CUNY Pathways Project, which replaces all current general education programs with a 30-credit Common Core, and 12-credits chosen by each College, and will also determine the pre-major requirements for “high-transfer” programs (biology, English, teacher education, et al).

CSI, along with every other Senior College has worked for many years to create a thoughtful general education program that is appropriate for its students. Pathways dismantles these programs and replaces them with a minimum-credit program written in great haste, without respect for traditions or evaluation of consequences.

The Pathways framework has been imposed by the Board of Trustees, despite widespread faculty opposition. Every part of the Pathways Project is determined by committees that are appointed by the Chancellor, rather than by the University Faculty Senate, the appropriate body for university-wide changes in curriculum. This takes away the faculty’s traditional rights and responsibilities on an important matter of curriculum and transfers them to the Chancellor, violating CUNY’s governance procedures, and undermining its faculty.

The Pathways Project essentially takes minimum degree requirements and turns them into maximum allowable requirements. The philosophy of the project puts ease of graduation ahead of educational quality, which we believe will greatly damage CUNY’s reputation.
Department of Media Culture

Resolution of the Department of Media Culture, College of Staten Island, on Pathways, passed on November 4th, 2011

"Whereas the problem of transfer facilitation can be addressed without the imposition of a arbitrary new curriculum on the colleges of the City University of New York and

Whereas the Pathways initiative has shown a disregard for the legally defined and traditional rights of faculty governance over curriculum and

Whereas the imposition of a curriculum by a board of trustees, contrary to the national best practices of curricular reform, will make CUNY an outlier in the educational community, and so will erode the national reputation of the university and

Whereas Pathways would cut the general education curriculum in half, thus debasing the students’ education and devaluing their education and the reputation of the College of Staten Island and the City University of New York and

Whereas Pathways undermines the College’s stated goal of developing “a richer array of rigorous undergraduate... programs that meet students’ educational and professional aspirations” and

Whereas Pathways diminishes the General Education goals, especially critical and creative thinking, and intercultural knowledge as they pertain to the understanding of human cultures through the study of languages, arts, social sciences and humanities and

Whereas Pathways threatens to make the College less able to recruit and retain outstanding scholars due to a lack of coherence and rigor in the overall program and a college wide vision of excellence and

Whereas the contempt shown to the faculty in the discussion of Pathways undermines the college’s stated goal of becoming “a more vibrant center of intellectual and cultural exchange through community partnerships”

Therefore the Department of Media Culture concludes the Pathways Project cannot be redeemed by amending its individual components and rejects Pathways on pedagogical, social, legal and moral grounds.

Voting for the Resolution: 11
Voting against the Resolution: 0
Abstentions: 2
Interdisciplinary Program of Modern China Studies

Whereas the Pathway proposal dilutes General Education by reducing the number of required credits and diminishing BOTH breadth and depth of studies;

Whereas the Pathway proposal reflects a complete disregard for disciplinary integrity in its subject categories;

Whereas the Pathway proposal reflects little understanding of the educational needs of our students, especially at the College of Staten Island;

Whereas the Pathway proposal will result in overall diminished knowledge of our current world, the languages with which to communicate in a multi-cultural society, and the skills to understand and navigate in our technologically advanced society;

Whereas the Pathway proposal reflects a violation of faculty governance and threatens academic freedom;

Therefore, the members of the Executive Committee of the Interdisciplinary Program of East Asian Studies at the College of Staten Island are resolutely opposed the Pathway General Education proposal.
Department of Nursing Pathways Discussion

The Department of Nursing discussed the Pathways Initiative at our Faculty Meeting, Thursday, November 3, 2011. The discussion centered around the Pathways Proposal and feedback from the Disciplinary Committee appointed to review the proposal related to the discipline of Nursing. While faculty recognized the seriousness of changes to the CSI General Education requirements and its impact on student education, the consensus was that it would seem that we would be able to work within the proposed changes to meet the program outcomes for nursing curricula and the requirements of disciplinary accreditation. That being said however, we do support our colleagues in the other disciplines and their concerns about changes particularly in the areas of Science and Language.
Department of Performing and Creative Arts

On November 3, 2011 the Department of Performing and Creative Arts voted unanimously in favor of the following resolution on the Pathways initiative of the City University of New York:

Whereas the Pathways initiative has shown a total disregard for the legally defined and traditional rights of faculty governance over curriculum, and

Whereas the problem with transfer credits in no way speaks to historical precedence at the College of Staten Island as a comprehensive college within CUNY where two/thirds of its transfer student population are internal transfers who rarely encounter any problem whatsoever with transfer credits, and

Whereas the remaining problem of transfer facilitation can be resolved technically and without the imposition of a less rigorous new curriculum on the colleges of the City University, and

Whereas the imposition of a curriculum by the Board of Trustees, so contrary to the national best practices of curricular reform where more, not less, general education is called for, will erode the national reputation of the University, and

Whereas the timeline for revising the University's curriculum is far too short and impedes thoughtful consideration, and

Whereas Pathways would cut the general education curriculum at the College of Staten Island by 17 credits making them less competitive in a difficult job market or adequately prepared for graduate study, devaluing both their education and the reputation of the College of Staten Island and the City University of New York, and

Whereas the inclusion of a category “Creative Expression” in the proposed Core Curriculum of Pathways allows for classes in the academic analysis of the arts, but does not allow for classes in the practice of making studio art, photography, theatre, music or dance, thus debasing the significance of the arts as foundational to a liberal arts degree, and

Whereas Pathways more generally threatens to make the College less able to recruit and retain outstanding scholars due to a diminished commitment to excellent academic standards, and

Whereas the contempt shown to the faculty in the consideration of Pathways undermines the college’s stated goal of becoming “a more vibrant center of intellectual and cultural exchange,”

Therefore be it resolved that the Department of Performing and Creative Arts affirms that the Pathways Project cannot be redeemed by mere cosmetic changes to individual
components, categorically rejects Pathways on pedagogical, social, legal and moral
grounds, and stands in solidarity with our colleagues in other disciplines.
Department of Physical Therapy

The following comments re the Pathways Project were approved by the Department of Physical Therapy faculty at the November 9, 2011 meeting.

The faculty of the Department of Physical Therapy opposes the CUNY Pathways Initiative based on the following reasons:

1. A broad background in general education is needed for anyone considering a career in the health or medical sciences.
2. Accreditation standards require that students enter the professional program with a balance of course work in the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. Limiting general education requirements could adversely affect their preparation for entering the profession.
3. It is important that any and all curriculum decisions be kept within the domain of the faculty at their respective institution. This is exigent to faculty rights and responsibilities.
Department of Political Science, Economics, and Philosophy

Resolved, That the Department of Political Science, Economics, and Philosophy strenuously objects to the Pathways General Education proposal in both process and form, and calls on the CUNY Board of Trustees to reengage the faculty in a more thoughtful, deliberative process of change consistent with the legal and professional requirements of faculty governance.
Psychology Department
Response to the CUNY Pathways Proposal

The Psychology Department has a number of concerns about the proposed CUNY Pathways initiative to standardize the general education curriculum across campus. Our department has been highly involved in the development of the existing General Education curriculum at CSI, offering more than 10 courses with a general education designation.

The current proposal being drafted by the CUNY pathways task force includes a common core with broadly defined areas (English Composition: 7 credits, Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning: 4 credits, Natural and Physical Sciences: 4 credits). This common core excludes broadly defined courses in the humanities and social sciences even though 100% of CUNY’s senior colleges currently require one social science course and one humanities course.

Instead, the humanities and social science courses will be required to fit within themes designated by the task force (e.g. World Cultures, U.S. Experience in its Diversity, Creative Expression, Individual and Society). This is problematic because the humanities and social sciences will not be afforded the same flexibility provided to the English, Math, and Natural and Physical Sciences disciplines, and will require a substantial restructuring of many of our existing general education courses to converge with these themes.

Furthermore, the suggestion has been made, and a straw poll has been taken, indicating most, if not all, of the common core courses that are not math, English or the physical and natural sciences, should be offered at 3 credits. This will impact all but one of our current general education offerings and weaken the learning experience of our students. Our experience as faculty is that students need 4 hours a week per course in order to learn the material covered in the courses.

As the second largest major on campus, we feel a responsibility to present a clear curriculum to our over 900 majors. The drastic curriculum changes proposed over a very short time frame could reverse all of the work our department has done to ensure that our students understand the curricular requirements of our major. Moreover, the proposed CUNY Pathways initiative would have a significant negative impact on our majors if key courses are restructured to reduce the material by 25% and to revolve around the common core themes. Additionally, the curricular changes would lead to our students being required to take more classes to reach their overall 120 credits and the 38 credits needed for a BA or 42 credits needed for a BS in Psychology. This could have an adverse effect on the retention and graduation rates of incoming students.

The impact will be so great on our department that some members of our faculty have advocated withdrawing all of our general education offerings, and focus on continuing to present the curriculum that was designed by our faculty.

Our faculty is also critical of the Pathways Initiative in that it is undermining the faculty’s role in determining the curricula of the college.
Resolution on Pathways, passed at the November 3, 2011 faculty meeting

Pathways reduces General Education requirements to 30 credits CUNY-wide and an additional 12 credits that will be set by each campus. The argument has been made that Pathways eases transfers within CUNY, in that a student completing the 30 credit CUNY-wide Gen Ed requirement will be able to transfer those 30 credits elsewhere in the system with no need to seek course equivalencies. Each school will designate courses that fit into designated “buckets,” so that a Hunter student taking a course in Bucket A and transferring to CSI will have net the CSI Bucket A requirement at even if CSI has no precise equivalent.

After discussing Pathways, the SASW faculty concluded that:

1. Whereas Pathways reduces a carefully crafted Gen Ed plan by 17 credits, thus defeating several purposes for which Gen Ed was either originally established, including the production of well-rounded citizens with sufficient knowledge of the larger social and physical world so as to be able to follow developments in that world and make informed decisions about it, and

2. Whereas the reduction deprives students of the opportunity to explore different areas prior to selecting a major by requiring no more than one course from any department in the Flexible Core, and

3. Whereas the buckets lack intellectual integrity in terms of the way they have been constructed, and

4. Whereas languages get short shrift in the sense that the 30 credits contain space for one 3 credit semester of a foreign language, with dire implications for the Department of World Languages and Literatures, as well as for tolerance, understanding and democracy in one of the most linguistically diverse cities on earth, and

5. Whereas students left on their own with an additional 17 elective credits cannot, in general, be trusted to select wisely but in many cases will gravitate toward the easiest, least demanding courses, without concern for their overall intellectual and personal development, and

6. Whereas CSI students will be disadvantaged on leaving the college vis-à-vis persons graduating from other institutions with more rigorous General Education requirements, and

7. Whereas Pathways represents a “dummying down” of CUNY requirements and a concern with quantity (number of people graduating in x amount of time) over quality
lending the oft-cited “student success” concern an ever more quantitative and thus technocratic character, and

8. Whereas the process violates the faculty role in the determination of curriculum

Be it resolved that the SASW Department opposes implementation of Pathways and urges that General Education requirements be maintained in their current form.

Voting for the Resolution: 14

Voting against the resolution: 0

Abstentions: 1
Science Letters and Society (SLS)

The Science Letters and Society (SLS) program at CSI-CUNY was created to serve as the major for students enrolling in elementary and early childhood education programs offered by the Education Department at CSI-CUNY. The Mission Statement of the SLS program (adopted in 2010) states that:

"It is the mission of the Science, Letters and Society (SLS) Program to provide a challenging liberal arts major, and to work closely with Education faculty to enhance students' participation in the acquisition and facilitation of learning. The SLS Program reinforces the CSI-CUNY General Education objectives of: critical and creative thinking, reading, writing and quantitative reasoning, global knowledge and intercultural skills, information literacy and communicative skills, and ethical judgment and personal responsibility, whilst also providing the SLS major with a broad knowledge of subject matter and disciplinary methods in the Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences. Our teaching philosophy is grounded in the belief that the best teachers are those who receive a quality education, since in order to be a good educator one must be well educated in a broad range of subjects and disciplines."

To fulfill its academic mission, the SLS program has not only created a challenging liberal arts major that provides students with a grounding in the Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences, it has also developed a set of prerequisites/pre-major requirements embedded in the present CSI General Education curriculum that support the learning goals of the SLS major. These account for 15 credits and introduce students to key foundations in disciplines (literature and critical writing in the humanities; foundations for math and science; U.S. history and critical writing in the social sciences; and global awareness through a geography course). With this major structure and pre-major/prerequisite courses in place, the SLS program has proven highly successful in its academic mission over the years, being one of the largest majors at CSI (over 600 majors) and having a graduate pass-rate in the NYS teacher certification examination of 98% on the LAST, 90% on the Multi-Subject CST, and 99% on the Elementary ATS-W.

As the present Director of the Science, Letters and Society Program, I have attended town hall meetings about the CUNY Pathways initiative, I have read the Pathways reports that have been made available, most recently that released on November 1, and I have discussed Pathways and its implications with many faculty colleagues. Having examined and reflected upon the Pathways proposals, I can only see Pathways as undermining the general education preparation of SLS majors, and thus of threatening the academic mission of the SLS program. The reduction to the so-called 'common core 'of 30 credits, even with the so-called 'college option' of an additional 12 credits, is a willful and destructive diminution in general education, which goes against national norms and best practices. CUNY students do not deserve the intellectual and academic deficit that will result, and they will be inevitably less well prepared to enter the SLS major. SLS pre-major requirements/prerequisite courses will be diluted if not abolished by the Pathways "one size fits all" approach, while the so-called 'flexible core' option categories show a perverse disregard for the academic disciplines that frame the SLS mission and major. SLS faculty will also lose their fundamental right to determine appropriate curriculum in support of the SLS major, a fact
that strikes at the heart of academic freedom and governance. The flagrant disregard, if not contempt for faculty governance and input and that has accompanied the development of Pathways, and which continues in efforts to implement it, is unworthy of a great university, the teaching and academic reputation of which depends on its faculty.

I therefore cannot but reject and deplore the CUNY Pathways initiative on academic, legal, and moral grounds as a flawed and hostile imposition on the university, its students and its faculty.

Professor Eric A. Ivison

SLS Director
Resolution from the Department of World Languages and Literatures
November 2011

Whereas the problem of transfer facilitation can be resolved technically and without the imposition of a destructive new curriculum on the colleges of the City University, and

Whereas the Pathways initiative has shown a total disregard for the legally defined and traditional rights of faculty governance over curriculum, and

Whereas the imposition of a curriculum by the Board of Trustees, so contrary to the national best practices of curricular reform where more, not less, general education is called for, will erode the national reputation of the University, and

Whereas the implementation of Pathways will provide even less incentive for the public schools to adequately prepare students for college-level work, and

Whereas the timeline for revising the University's curriculum is far too short and impedes thoughtful consideration, and

Whereas Pathways would cut the general education curriculum in half, thus debasing the students’ education, making them less competitive in a difficult job market or adequately prepared for graduate study, devaluing both their education and the reputation of the College of Staten Island and the City University of New York, and

Whereas the proposed inclusion of second language acquisition falls vaguely under the "World Culture" section among a wide variety of disciplines, and ignores the nationally defined standards of outcomes, goals, and assessments in second language learning which drive pedagogy as well as the creation of textbooks, and

Whereas Pathways undermines the College’s stated goal of developing “a richer array of rigorous undergraduate…programs that meet students’ educational and professional aspirations” by lowering standards and, in many cases, eliminating pre-requisites, and

Whereas Pathways more generally threatens to make the College less able to recruit and retain outstanding scholars due to a diminished commitment to excellent academic standards, and

Whereas the contempt shown to the faculty in the discussion of Pathways undermines the college’s stated goal of becoming “a more vibrant center of intellectual and cultural exchange,” and

Whereas Pathways is also charged with working on a University-wide common core of pre-major courses in certain disciplines, beyond the General Education requirements, and
Whereas community and four-year colleges are ultimately being asked to turn over decisions about the content of forty to fifty percent of the students' undergraduate curriculum to the central administration,

Therefore be it resolved that the Department of World Languages and Literatures affirms that the Pathways Project cannot be redeemed by mere cosmetic changes to individual components, rejects Pathways on pedagogical, social, legal and moral grounds, and stands in solidarity with our colleagues in other disciplines.