MEMORANDUM

To: Chancellor Matthew Goldstein
The City University of New York

From: Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Ph.D.
President

Date: November 15, 2011

Re: Pathways Initiative

Below is Hostos Community College’s institutional response to the draft of the Pathways Initiative. We hope our comments and concerns help strengthen the process of producing the best possible framework for our work as an integrated University.

College Consultation

Prior to receiving the final draft of the Pathways initiative for CUNY, the Hostos faculty, staff, and administration engaged in various discussions about its potential impact on the college. The draft was sent to the college community on October 31st. To insure full input, faculty members from all academic departments were asked to review this document, focusing particularly on the impact it might have on students and curriculum. Furthermore, everyone was encouraged to attend the open forum on November 7th. Several college committees and governance bodies also held meetings to discuss the Pathways initiative:

- Nov. 2nd: A Steering Committee representative presented the initiative to the General Education committee.
- Nov. 2nd: A meeting was held with personnel of the Advisement and Assessment offices so they could give feedback from their perspectives.
- Nov. 7th: A Steering Committee representative presented the initiative to the Academic Council.
- Nov. 7th: Steering Committee representatives presented the initiative in an open forum to which all members of the college community were invited. (There were over 50 participants.)
- Nov. 8th: A Steering Committee representative presented the initiative to the College-wide Curriculum Committee.
A common staff and faculty concern has been the short period of time we have to consider the Pathways initiative’s ramifications for all our degree programs and to make informed decisions. We are very excited by this opportunity to address the issues surrounding transfer; however, two weeks has not been sufficient time to consider all the issues and potential consequences of the suggested changes. The faculty members overwhelmingly expressed the need for additional time to engage in further investigation and a sustained discussion. Another central concern is the likelihood of students accumulating basic liberal arts courses that already can be transferred, thereby encouraging their premature transition from community colleges after earning the initial thirty credits rather than completing their associate’s degree program.

We are also concerned about the resources that will be needed to conduct appropriate student academic advising when the changes become operational. Faculty and staff will have to be trained on how to advise new students, as well as current students who might otherwise continue to follow the previous set of rules. The Chancellor’s Office should consider allocating additional funding so that adequate staffing resources are made available to ensure proper advisement, including training for current faculty and staff.

*Required and Flexible Core Recommendations*

The seven credits for English and four credits for Mathematics or Quantitative Reasoning does not align with our curriculum. At Hostos, all English courses are for three credits, and all degree programs require six credits of English. Most of our Mathematics courses are also for three credits. Only some of the STEM-related Mathematics courses are for four credits. If the draft remains as is, Hostos would have to revise all of its degree programs (including the AAS degrees) to accommodate the extra credit of English and the extra credit of Mathematics. The increased credits would also reduce essential credits in other areas of the degree. Changing of credits would also affect scheduling, room availability, and advisement, and increase the need for additional adjuncts. Such curriculum revisions, within a narrow timeframe, would present a significant challenge for the College’s governance process.

The Hostos faculty recommends changing English and Mathematics to a range of credits. English should be 6-7 credits, and Mathematics should be 3-4 credits. Therefore, the Flexible Core would be 15-17 credits. This would provide the flexibility necessary for each campus to meet these requirements without changing its programs with the New York State Education Department.

Concrete examples of interdisciplinary courses also need to be included in the Flexible Common Core, such as ENG223/WST223 - Women in Literature and PSY 140 - Psychology of Women.

College governance bodies should be allowed to determine the eligibility of a course for inclusion in the Flexible Core on the basis of the institution’s disciplinary designation.
Impact on Degree Programs

There needs to be more extensive investigation of the impact on degree programs, particularly if there is a change in the number of credits for English and Mathematics. There are also certain degrees that will not be able to accommodate the fifteen credits of liberal arts courses within the Flexible Core. Examples of this are our four dual-degree programs in engineering. Existing transfer options and articulations should be preserved.

At the most recent meeting of the College-wide Curriculum Committee, which includes representation from every discipline, the group highlighted many of the concerns on campus and adopted three motions for modification of the draft proposal. We share with you the motions:

- Motion One: The issue of transferability of sequence of courses (i.e., science and foreign language) has not been sufficiently addressed. A mechanism needs to be developed and implemented that will support transferability beyond the thirty credits.

- Motion Two: Credit allocation should be revisited in Mathematics and English to minimize the negative impact on credit distribution for program majors or concentrations.

- Motion Three: The timeline is operationally unfeasible. As this needs to be done in a realistic time frame, an extension is warranted.

Many of our suggested modifications from college governance are consistent with Pathways objectives, including maximizing flexibility for the campuses, bolstering the basics, strengthening critical thinking skills, and providing for broad curricula exposure.

C: Provost Carmen Coballes-Vega