Statement by the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Alexandra W. Logue on Correcting Professional Staff Congress Press Release

The CUNY community—faculty as well as staff—is working diligently in the implementation of the Pathways resolution passed unanimously by the Board of Trustees last June.

CUNY has 24 colleges and free-standing professional schools, including 19 that offer undergraduate programs. All 19 are working actively on their Pathways plans towards the Pathways implementation date of September 2013.

Wide, unprecedented, public discussion of the problems with transfer at CUNY began in fall of 2010. There were over 70 meetings of members of the central office and campus representatives to discuss the issues. A draft Board resolution was posted in January 2011 for public comment. There were also multiple email communications and newsletters, as well as an informational webinar and a public hearing. A website was established as a repository for all data and information related to Pathways, and an email address established for people to express their views electronically. Since the Board unanimously passed its resolution in June 2011, the work of all of the implementation committees has also been posted on the website, including the meeting agendas, meeting summaries, and draft as well as final committee recommendations.

It is difficult to characterize faculty views on Pathways. Many CUNY-wide faculty bodies have not passed resolutions regarding Pathways, and in many cases those that have have simply asked that the project timeline be lengthened. Yet under the current timeline, it will be three years from the initial discussion of Pathways until the first Pathways courses are offered, four years until the first student transfers under Pathways, and five years until the first student with an associate degree transfers from a CUNY community to a CUNY senior college.

The CUNY faculty body is extremely large and diverse. There are approximately 20,000 full-time and part-time faculty and continuing education teachers, plus another 5,000 staff who may occasionally teach, plus about 4,000 retired faculty, totaling close to 30,000 persons. Lists of names stating that those names consist of individual faculty who feel this way or that way should be verified with appropriate care.

During the past year and a half that Pathways has been under discussion at CUNY, although there have certainly been statements that it should be repealed, there has not been a single viable alternative presented by faculty leadership, nor has there been any such proposal over the more than 40 years that transfer has been widely recognized as an extremely serious challenge facing CUNY students, who transfer among our colleges at very high rates. One criticism of Pathways is that the number of general education credits (30 for associate-degree students and 36-42 for baccalaureate students) is too low. However, this number of credits is consistent with general education requirements around the nation, including at many of our country’s most highly respected public and private institutions. Keeping
general education credits at this level allows students the opportunity to take more advanced courses—electives and courses for minors and double majors.

Approximately 250 full-time, tenured faculty from across CUNY have participated, or are currently participating, on committees to develop the CUNY-wide Pathways curricular standards. All Pathways courses are being selected, or developed, and reviewed by committees of faculty. Courses that will be part of the Pathways Common Core for all undergraduate colleges will be reviewed by, not only the usual campus faculty governance entities, but also by a CUNY-wide faculty review committee. This work by the faculty includes not only the curricular content but the standards by which that content will be assessed. The learning outcomes that have been specified for the Common Core were developed by a Task Force of 47 tenured, full-time faculty, 4 students, and 4 campus-based administrators. Specifying courses according to their learning outcomes allows campuses flexibility in designing the courses to meet those learning outcomes, makes CUNY accountable for achieving the outcomes, allows CUNY to use the actual outcomes to improve future instruction, and is an approach at the very least endorsed, and often required, by every major higher education accreditor in the United States.

To repeat, the Pathways general education structure allows campuses considerable flexibility. Campuses most definitely can, if they wish, require their students to have laboratory science, languages other than English (up to two years at senior colleges), American History, and other subjects that they may deem particularly important for their students (see the Pathways Possibilities document at http://www1.cuny.edu/mu/academic-news/2012/02/14/general-education-at-cuny-pathways-possibilities/ ). Yet even with this high degree of campus flexibility, students’ general education credits will transfer seamlessly among the campuses.

Throughout the entire Pathways process, beginning in fall 2010, CUNY students have been strong supporters of this initiative, with the University Student Senate passing a resolution supporting Pathways in spring of 2010. Students have been active participants in discussions and on committees.

In addition to facilitating transfer, Pathways will ensure that students have a rigorous, accountable education that allows for exploration of multiple advanced interests. Pathways provides our students with a route to academic achievement.