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Both bills were designed to strengthen the state's Freedom of Information Law. The first would have awarded attorney fees to plaintiffs when judges found they were improperly denied records by state agencies; the other would have shortened the time an agency could drag out an appeal after it lost a court case requiring them to release records.

Reformers had viewed these as among the best bills to come out of this year's session.

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"We think they're mom and apple pie bills," said John Kaehny of Reinvent Albany in October. "There's no opposition to them whatsoever and, really, they're about increasing transparency of state government."
After the veto, Kaehny chose to underscore the irony of the fact that Cuomo chose to nix both in the middle of the night following the conviction of former senator Dean Skelos.

"The governor was given a clear choice between being part of the problem in Albany or part of the solution," Reinvent Albany said in a release signed by eight other groups. "These vetoes call into question the governor's commitment to transparency and Freedom of Information."

Cuomo pointed to opposition from the state's Office of Court Administration and said the sponsors shouldn't be concerned with strengthening transparency only in the executive branch.

"[These bills are myopic in their scope and focus only on one branch of government,]" the Democratic governor wrote in his veto message. "This would only serve to perpetuate a fractured system of transparency and data production by intentionally excluding other branches of government."

This mirrors the rhetoric from his office after he was criticized for an automatic email deletion policy earlier this year. Alphonso David, the governor's counsel, responded to attacks from legislators by calling on them to voluntarily open themselves up to FOIL. The governor hosted a "transparency summit" to explore changing regulations throughout state government, but leaders of the Senate and Assembly declined to participate.

Cuomo indicated that he isn't done fighting for changes in the Legislature.

"I will be advancing comprehensive FOIL reform in the next legislative session that applies equally to the Executive and the Legislature, improves transparency, and increases accountability," he wrote in his veto message.

The FOIL bills were among 75 pieces of legislation that Cuomo acted on late Friday. He signed bills dealing with the reacquisition of abandoned cemetery plots and authorizing paramedics to transport police dogs injured in certain circumstances.

He vetoed a "maintenance of effort" bill that would have obligated the state to pay for cost increases at the City University of New York related to collective bargaining, rent or utilities. Labor unions led by the Professional Staff Congress, which represents CUNY faculty, have been urging Cuomo to sign the bill, but he explained in a veto message that it created a fiscal obligation that should be dealt with during negotiations on the overall state budget.

"The MOU provisions in current law were specifically negotiated in 2011 in the context of a larger higher education agenda," Cuomo wrote in his veto message. "Isolated changes should not be made outside of the context of broader discussions about higher education policy. Further, given the potential negative impact on the state's financial plan, the issues raised by this legislation are better dealt with in the context of
negotiations for the upcoming state budget."

Another Cuomo veto nixed a bill sought by the owners of Empire Wine in suburban Albany, who have been dinged by the State Liquor Authority for shipping their wares to customers in states where such direct purchases are unlawful. The legislation would have prevented the SLA from acting against a New York business based on the laws of other states.

"I am fully committed to advancing and promoting New York's alcoholic beverage industry. However, signing this bill would jeopardize the state's achievements by sending a clear signal that New York is a haven for entities intent on breaking other states' laws, avoiding other states' legitimately imposed taxes and regulations, and selling to minors with impunity," Cuomo wrote in his veto message. He promised, though, to look at issues of e-commerce for alcoholic beverages next year.

Here are Cuomo's approval messages:http://bit.ly/1lDMAeG

Here are his veto messages: http://bit.ly/1lDMfX9

And here is a link to our latest Bill Tracker: http://politi.co/1lDKSyl
Step 2: How NY can help cover your in-state college costs

By Post Staff Report

If you stay in state for higher education, there's plenty of ways New York can help cover your costs.

Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

The state's Tuition Assistance Program provides grants that can be used for most schools in the state, public and private, ranging from $500 to $5,165 in 2016. You don't have to pay this money back.

To qualify, the student's parents must have a New York state net taxable income of less than $80,000. TAP is also available for part-time students at SUNY and CUNY who earn 12 credits a semester and maintain a C grade average.

When you finish the FAFSA application, you'll be prompted to apply for TAP. Or you can visit https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/apply-for-financial-aid/nys-tap.html

CUNY

The City University of New York, publicly funded by the state and the city, is made up of 24 colleges, including seven community colleges.
CUNY estimates that the average New York City resident who lives at home would pay $16,397 in the 2015-16 academic year, including a tuition of $6,330. But that can decrease significantly with federal and TAP aid. In fact, 65% of full-time undergraduates attend CUNY tuition-free.

Students who live outside of the city can still get the city rate if they do a "county charge back," that is, their county picks up the difference. (The local school district can arrange this.) Keep in mind that cost of tuition does not cover housing in most cases — a not insignificant expense in New York. CUNY's estimate for a city resident jumps to $25,952 if you're living away from home.

**CUNY's Search for Education Elevation and Knowledge program (SEEK)**

New York City funds some financial support for low-income students for tutoring at community college through the Search for Education Elevation and Knowledge program (SEEK). It offers academic and student support services: financial assistance, counseling, tutoring, special courses and workshops. Plus a study hall and computer lab for the exclusive use of SEEK students. Application is through the University Application Processing Center at the time a student applies to CUNY.

**SUNY**

Much like CUNY, the State University of New York is publicly funded, though its campuses are spread throughout the state. (You also can qualify for its low tuition by being a resident anywhere in the state, not just the city.) For the 2015-2016 academic year, the Standard SUNY Tuition Rate was a maximum of $6,470 per year. Costs are only slightly above CUNY, with an estimate of $16,660 for state residents living at home in 2015-16 and $24,020 for those living on their own.

**NYS STEM Incentive Program**

SUNY will grant full tuition to the top 10% of students from each New York high school, as long they pursue a degree in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM). Graduates must also agree to live in New York state and work in a STEM field for five years after graduation.

**Non-New Yorkers**

Being in-city, in-state and out-of-state greatly affects tuition at private and public colleges.

In-state students at CUNY four-year colleges are charged $6,330 a year, while out-of-state students will pay an estimated $16,800.

CUNY students who reside in New York state but not in the city may be eligible for the city price if they move here and can offer proof of residence.

There is no reciprocity between New York and New Jersey and Connecticut.

**Ivy Aid**

Private universities New York University and Columbia do not offer reduced-rate tuition for students from New York state. However, some private colleges have some "statutory" colleges where certain majors are partially subsidized by the state of New York, leading to lower tuition. These include the college of Ceramics at Alfred University and some schools at Cornell.

The College Board's CSS/PROFILE form (short for College Scholarship Service Profile) is used by 400 different colleges and programs (including most of the top institutions of the country) to determine eligibility to institutional aid.

Some Ivys actually require you to fill out a PROFILE form in addition to a FAFSA. Be warned, however, that it costs a minimum of $25 to fill out the form and deliver your financial information to the colleges. Visit [https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile](https://student.collegeboard.org/css-financial-aid-profile)
New York - Learn a language online by playing games for free — that’s the selling point of Duolingo, a startup designed especially for people in developing countries, many of whom are learning English to improve their job prospects.
The founders of Duolingo — Luis von Ahn and Severin Hacker — were inspired to create a language program because they believed that "free education will really change the world." For many people, existing programs like Rosetta Stone and Open English (a South African system) were too costly. (Online Rosetta Stone membership runs about $200-$300 a year.) So they made Duolingo available online for free. (Rosetta appears to be targeting Duolingo in an online ad which declares: 'Rosetta Stone – More Than Just a Free App'.)

A computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon, von Ahn, 35, is considered to be one of the pioneers of crowd sourcing. He achieved a measure of fame (and a good chunk of money) for co-inventing the CAPTCHA security system — the often difficult-to-read letter and number sequence computer users are required to duplicate to prove that they're not a bot. After selling two companies to Google, he had enough money to retire. Instead, he decided to try his luck educating people who were struggling to better their lives.

"It has a lot to do with where I grew up because I did grow up in a very poor country, in Guatemala," he told The Guardian, "Something amazing happens when everyone can have access to the same education."

The thirst for language education is enormous: currently there are 1.2 billion people learning another language, but while Americans and Canadians may want to learn a new language for travel or as a hobby, non-English speakers in the developing world — some 800,000 of them — have a more compelling reason: they want to escape poverty, get a better job and make more money.

Von Ahn knew nothing about the language education business when he started Duolingo three years ago. He consulted "French for Dummies," enticed by the promise of attaining fluency in no time flat. As he told attendees at a recent Quartz conference in New York, each book he picked up claimed to offer the best system for learning a language. He concluded that no one really knew what worked or how people really studied and learned a new language. Was it better, for example, to learn plurals before adjectives or vice versa? Von Ahn decided that there was only one way to find out: see how students responded and see what worked and what didn't.

Since he was a computer engineer, not a teacher, he did what computer engineers do: he used algorithms to test users' experiences on various exercises. The resulting app asks users to answer multiple-choice questions and type in phrases. Those people who do better on the tests were presented with different questions than those who didn't do as well. But von Ahn also wanted to make learning fun. So he designed Duolingo to function like a game. He didn't want to make it feel like "going to a gym." Every question in the "game" has either a right or wrong answer; by amassing right answers you can collect points and reach higher levels. By analyzing the data from thousands of users, Duolingo is able to optimize the system.

The app was meant to function like an especially attentive tutor who could learn from students as well as teach them. That goal hasn't been achieved yet. "We are nowhere near as adaptive as a human tutor who, by looking at your facial expression [sees] you are a little hesitant on something," von Ahn told The Guardian. "They may bring [that] kind of human touch to it and we are not as good as that but I think we could be. It will take a really long time to get as good as a human tutor, to be honest." He doesn't see Duolingo as a
also attracted about $40 million in venture capital.

"My main philosophy is that everyone should have equal access," von Ahn says, expressing his belief that the major beneficiaries of his language program will be people throughout the world who would otherwise lack the language training they need to improve their lives. He acknowledges that people still have to afford a phone and a data plan to use his program. "But it is the closest I know how to get equal access."
In New York City, Police Stops and Crime Are Both Down

Studies show less aggressive policing can coexist with continuing drop in crime levels

By THOMAS MACMILLAN
Dec. 11, 2015 6:06 p.m. ET

New York City may not have to choose between less aggressive policing and continuing reductions in the crime rate, according to two reports issued this week.

New analyses of crime and enforcement by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the New York Civil Liberties Union show that even as police stops of pedestrians have declined sharply in recent years, New York City has continued to see a drop in crime.

“We are entering a new era of policing,” said Richard Aborn, head of the Citizens Crime Commission of New York City, a public safety policy organization. Through the use of tools like real-time data to determine where to deploy officers, law-enforcement officials are able to keep crime rates low while also minimizing negative contacts between police officers and civilians, particularly young minority men, Mr. Aborn said at a presentation of the data Friday morning.

John Jay researchers tracked the arrests and stops made and criminal summonses issued by New York City police between 2003 and 2014. They found that these law-enforcement actions by city police increased dramatically in the early 2000s, then dropped suddenly after 2011. Throughout that time, New York City saw a continuing drop in crime from peak levels in the 1980s.

The steep rise and fall of enforcement activity mirrors the rise and fall of the police tactic known as “stop, question and frisk,” a controversial practice that critics said unfairly targeted young men of color. Mayor Bill de Blasio was elected in 2013 on a platform of reining in the use of stop-and-frisk.
According to the report, records show that pedestrian stops began to rise sharply in 2003, increasing from 160,851 annually to a peak of 685,724 in 2011. By 2014, they were down to 45,787 a year, a 93% decrease, researchers found. This change was felt most acutely by the city's young minority men, who were disproportionately subject to law-enforcement activity, the report states.

A spokesman for the New York Police Department noted that along with a decline in crime rates and stop-and-frisk encounters, the number of civilian complaints filed against officers has also decreased.

"The concurrent decline in these three categories tends to contradict the claims by some that fewer stops will necessarily result in more crime. In fact, these studies clearly indicate otherwise," the spokesman said.

In all, 2014 saw about 800,000 fewer law-enforcement actions—including arrests, stops and summonses—than in 2011, according to the report.

The 800,000 drop tracks closely to a prediction made by Commissioner William Bratton, said John Jay President Jeremy Travis. In March, Mr. Bratton said that police would have 1 million fewer law-enforcement contacts in 2015 than several years earlier, at the height of stop-and-frisk, the fruit of what he called a "peace dividend."

Police are exercising more discretion in interactions with civilians, while keeping crime at bay, Mr. Travis said. "What we're seeing so far is that we can have both. We can have lower enforcement rates and low crime rates," he said.

A report by the New York Civil Liberties Union reached similar conclusions, finding that stops fell by 93% between 2011 and 2014, as crime fell or remained flat.

"Contrary to the fear-mongering of some, the dramatic declines in stop-and-frisk have not spawned a crime wave," said NYCLU head Donna Lieberman. "That's good news for all New Yorkers, but especially for those who were the main targets of the policing excesses of the last decade, young blacks in particular."
December 13, 2015 9:05 p.m.

Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders, and the Political Appeal of a New Yawk Accent

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

Left: Donald Trump as a toddler in Queens. Right: Brothers Larry and Bernie Sanders in Brooklyn, c. 1944. Photo: Facebook (Trump), Courtesy of Larry Sanders (Sanders)


Early in October, Donald Trump was in the midst of a speech at the Electric Park Ballroom in Waterloo, Iowa (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjbsVcY5rig) (“I love Eminent domain”), when from the audience a man yelled out that Trump was going to be president. It was early enough in the Trump phenomenon that one’s thinking the tycoon might actually win seemed a mark of minor instability: too much life wasted in comments sections or maybe just being drunk. Trump smiled, a little dismissively, let his tiny eyes disappear into a coy tuck. He held up his hand: “I don’t want to get too braggadocious.” Braggadocious! What New Yorker still talks like that?

All through the summer and fall, Trump, who was born in Queens, and Bernie Sanders, who was born in Brooklyn, kept up an impenetrable outer-borough code-talk: The irony was that the most cynical and vile presidential candidate in recent years and the most yearning one spoke with nearly the same voice. The refusal to pronounce initial h’s seemed ideological. Trump called things he liked yoooge, spreading his arms and beaming, and Bernie called the endangered species he was running to protect pootman beings, narrowing his features and looking pained. Second-syllable consonants emerged drowned in spit, barely recognizable. S sounds stuck to every t and d. When
Sanders said billionaire class, he gave the final s an extra hiss; when he said America could learn something from Denmark, the r was lost somewhere in his sinuses. The spaces between words seemed compressed, hurried, as did the man. Sanders's father was a paint salesman, and Sanders also seems to operate on the city's frantic commercial schedule. "We don't have an endless amount of time," he said, cutting short the press conference at which he announced his candidacy for the most powerful office in the world. "I've gotta get back."

The Donald is an especially perfect case study: How is it that voters have been seduced by a man who is, so routinely, so anxious? One (very partial) theory: Whatever he's saying, you can still be charmed by the way he's saying it. "Americans have come to associate New Yorkers, and so New York accents, with saying what you mean, intense emotional talk, and not worrying too much about whom you offend," a Queens College linguist wrote this fall (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/09/opinion/how-a-new-york-accent-can-help-you-get-ahead.html?r=1). Possibly, though "intense emotional talk" didn't do much to build a national attachment to Rudy Giuliani, nor "saying what you mean" for Chuck Schumer. And whatever their New Yorker-iness has given Sanders and Trump, they have given a great deal back to the city. The more natural response of a New Yorker to seeing the presidential race shaped by men who talk like Mike Francesa's callers is a certain possessive kind of thrill, like when it turned out that the whole country was in on the joke of Seinfeld's parents. Our maniacs are now the country's maniacs.

But to hear Sanders's and Trump's voices is to realize what a rich history is embedded in that accent, and to realize how encased each of those politicians is in a particular moment in time. In Sanders, there is the early, slightly prudish Greenwich Village of Max Eastman and Joe Gould, of very intense arguments had very early in the morning. In Trump, there is the jaded cruelty of Bo Dietl and Don Imus and dreadful preppy bars on upper Second Avenue. The fascination is in the pairing, of dry social uplift and opulent racism, each in its own way a response to the dense human city. New Yorkers can't honestly claim ownership of one and disavow the other.

A few weeks ago, after it was mentioned, a bit sneeringly, in the press, I tracked down the folk album (https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/BooPJUM34M?) that Sanders cut in 1987. It's a strange, compelling little record, Sanders sing-talking over tracks a little too fast and very nasally, an alte kaker Gil Scott-Heron, a man whose love of his country survived even what seemed like a monumental head cold. I found it strangely moving. Over the strumming opening to "This Land Is Your Land," Sanders began to intone the lyrics: "As I went walking that ribbon of highway..." You could hear the Brooklyn clearly, right away: Wawking. There may never have been a more fully American sound.

*This article appears in the December 14, 2015 issue of New York Magazine.
City Takes Look at Diversity of Arts Groups

Report coming in January; ‘the emphasis is more carrot than stick’

Patrons at the Metropolitan Museum of Art during an event this fall. PHOTO: FILIP WOLAK/THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

By JENNIFER SMITH
Dec. 13, 2015 9:11 p.m. ET

An effort to measure whether New York City’s cultural organizations reflect the famously diverse metropolis they serve has focused fresh attention on a concern that has bedeviled some in the arts world for years.

National surveys indicate that employees at U.S. museums, for example, are predominantly white, even as the broader population becomes more racially and ethnically diverse. In New York City, non-Hispanic whites account for about one-third of the total population, according to the U.S. Census.

“Think about who are our audiences, and who are working in our cultural institutions,”
said Anne Pasternak, director of the Brooklyn Museum. “There does seem to be a disconnect.”

In January, the city’s Department of Cultural Affairs plans to release a report showing how New York City’s museums and performing-arts groups stack up. The results are based on survey data gathered this year on diversity among the staffs, boards and audiences at cultural organizations that accept city funding, from the stone behemoths along Museum Mile to off-Broadway theaters and community-based arts groups.

Those hoping for a juicy report card ranking individual institutions will be in for a disappointment.

The results will be broken out by categories, such as large visual-arts organizations, said city officials. There are no plans to boost or cut funding based on the results—and in fact, the outside group that gathered and analyzed the data, Ithaka S+R, isn’t sending individual responses to the cultural-affairs department.

“The emphasis is more carrot than stick,” said Edwin Torres, the city’s acting Cultural Affairs commissioner. The idea, he said, was to uncover practices that boost diversity and share them with other groups, “versus an interrogation for the sake of finger-pointing.”

Some are skeptical that the city’s effort will make much of a dent.

“Without any enforcement policy attached to it, what does it mean?” said Dr. Marta Moreno Vega, president and founder of the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute and a former director of El Museo del Barrio. “The discussion of diversity gets recycled every five to 10 years without systemic, implementable policies to create change.”
The findings will be factored into the city’s first comprehensive cultural plan, which is now being developed, a spokesman for the Department of Cultural Affairs said. The plan will tie the diversity initiative and other new arts programs “to real benchmarks informed by constituents from across the city,” he said.

Leaders at a number of major museums and performing-arts groups said they welcomed the city’s effort. Many already have diversity-related initiatives in place, ranging from educational programs for public schoolchildren to neighborhood arts workshops or special community nights.

“The classical-music world is not a very diverse world at the moment, and I have long felt it should be for everybody,” said Clive Gillinson, executive and artistic director at Carnegie Hall.

Next summer, for example, the organization is expanding its National Youth Orchestra program to include a two-week summer training session, NYO2, with a major focus on attracting students from groups underrepresented in classical music.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has made similar efforts when recruiting for its internships and fellowships, while a museum-education and employment program for young adults at the American Museum of Natural History is intended to reflect the city’s diversity. Such programs can be a gateway to staff positions.

At Creative Time, the public-arts organization that Ms. Pasternak led before joining the Brooklyn Museum this year, broader intern recruitment was bolstered by a commitment from a board member to support paid internships. That way, people who can’t afford to work for free could be part of the recruitment pool, she said.

Diversifying the top ranks may be more challenging.

White non-Hispanics account for 84% of curators, conservators, educators and leadership jobs at U.S. art museums, according to a survey out this year from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation that looked at museum staff by census category.

By contrast, 6% of those jobs were held by people of Asian ancestry and 4% by blacks. White Hispanics and staffers of two or more races each accounted for 3% of such positions.

The American Museum of Natural History has “made real progress on the curatorial side,” but less so on the scientific side and in senior-governance roles, said Lisa
Gugenheim, senior vice president of institutional advancement, strategic planning and education. The museum is joining with the City University of New York and Columbia University to improve exposure to astrophysics for urban and minority populations, she said.

At the Met, curatorial and conservation staff remain relatively homogeneous despite success recruiting diverse candidates to programs pitched at the high school and undergraduate level, said Thomas P. Campbell, the museum’s director and chief executive.

“The diversity really falls away” when it comes to fellowships and recruitment of people focused on becoming museum professionals, Mr. Campbell said. The Met, he said, needs to “figure out why that is and toss the net wider.”

Governance is another area of challenge, said Francie Ostrower, a professor of fine arts and public affairs at the University of Texas at Austin who focuses on philanthropy, nonprofits and arts organizations. “Boards are a critical part of this question because that is where organizational policy is made.”

Some large organizations have stepped up board diversity in recent years. New York City Ballet now has four African-American directors among its 48 trustees, said Darren Walker, a City Ballet vice chairman and president of the Ford Foundation. The foundation provided $100,000 toward the next phase of the diversity initiative, when the city plans to hire a consultant to evaluate successes or failures and share effective strategies for making cultural organizations more inclusive.

“It changes the conversation at the board table,” Mr. Walker said.

Others say it isn’t enough to just integrate staffing and governance.

“Diversity lends itself to more brown bodies and brown faces in offices and boards, but not necessarily to community engagement,” said Sade Lythcott, chief executive of National Black Theatre in Harlem and a co-chair of the Coalition of Theatres of Color.

Bill T. Jones, artistic director of New York Live Arts and a co-founder of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, said he was glad the city is collecting the data but called diversity “a kind of jargon” that may oversimplify a complicated issue.

“Why is it so difficult in my field to get an audience that is as racially diverse as the city is?” said Mr. Jones, who is African-American.
“It’s like saying that I want everybody to love what I love. That’s a heavy lift. Do I want everyone to be tolerant and serious? That seems within our reach.”

**Write to** Jennifer Smith at jennifer.smith@wsj.com
Fighting the US STEM Crisis With All-Day Robotics Endoscopy and Monster-Making

Mon, 12/14/2015 - 8:53am
by Cynthia Fox, Science Writer
Get today's life science headlines and news - Sign up now!

"The school day has been the same since the Roosevelt era—the Teddy Roosevelt era," said Michael Zigman, founder of i2 Learning. "Silos of classes, unrelated to each other? Today's school day comes from an era where everything was an assembly-line. Today, the world is collaborative and interdisciplinary, demanding thought, not just absorption of fact. The school day needs to be changed."

So, he told Bioscience Technology: "We are changing it."

Zigman started small. He and friend Ethan Berman, a technology entrepreneur formerly with JP Morgan, launched a highly innovative, hands-on STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) summer program in 2013 for middle schoolers in two empty schools. The initial reason was simply that Berman's kids needed something to do, and "liked science over soccer." The duo chose Boston's Roxbury Latin (RL) because Berman was on the RL board and there was space there. They added a
second school—Chapin Academy in New York—because Berman’s daughter went there.

Then they contacted people they knew at area colleges and museums, from MIT and the Boston Museum of Science to the New York Hall of Science, to design innovative courses that might give kids real-life-like science experience—that beat soccer. Together, they and their enthusiastic new partners—from some of the most advanced science institutes in the world—easily whipped up 30 novel classes.

As soon as that summer of two, four-to-six-week science camps was over, the two felt they had something compelling on their hands. They had attracted over 350 kids, 25 percent of whose tuition was paid for by scholarships, and most of whom had reacted to science more as fans than as students.

The i2 crew decided to expand into the school day—immediately.

“No programs have focused on absolutely immersing middle-school kids in science during the school day before,” explained Zigman, who had been a technology investment banker for 17 years, and is a New York Academy of Sciences (NYAS) board member. There are a lot of science camps for high schoolers. There are Citizen Schools for under-privileged kids after school. But there was nothing highly immersive during the school day, “nothing rigorous,” for kids in the extremely formative grades of four through eight, he said.

From CSI to surgical techniques to interactive monsters

So they immediately expanded to a week during the 2013-2014 school year at the above two schools, and one public school in Port Chester, NY. Seeing immediate success there, they attracted more collaborators, including Harvard University, Bose, and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute. Having created more than 65 courses, they brought their novel intensive science program into the 2014-2015 school year, to 23 schools across the country, from New York to Boston, Connecticut to California.

The program ran a unique full week of five science-only school days. All the teachers in middle-school grades were trained and enlisted in many cases. “Non-science teachers too,” Zigman told *Bioscience Technology*. The program generated another unexpected benefit: “We got some non-science teachers very interested in science.”

The courses were, and are, far from standard science fare. One course teaches children how to engineer prosthetics. Another teaches them robotics. Another teaches them indoor, LED-lit, stacked farming. Another is a CSI (crime scene investigation) course, “taught by real FBI guys. Everybody loved that one—including the FBI guys.” Another course teaches surgical techniques, from suturing to endoscopies.

A personal favorite of Zigman’s is a course in which children learn how to build “interactive stuffed
monsters using sensors and conductive thread,” he said. “The thread has a current running through it so that you can create monsters that speak or sing when you squeeze them.” As that course makes toys “come alive,” as its tagline suggests, it is a favorite among Zigman’s smaller followers, as well.

**Stellar report cards from colleagues—and kids**

Last month, the Columbia University Teacher’s College wrote a review of a program that i2 ran in the Port Chester school. “The level of student engagement was high across the observed classrooms,” read the report. “Students would frequently lean forward, exclaim with excitement, and generally showed on-task behavior. The evaluator noted that students would ‘groan’ when they had to go to other classes (electives), lunch, or when school ended for the day. Some teachers indicated that the project-based work was engaging for students that normally were not so engaged.”

The report also noted students in i2 Learning “participated in engaging and authentic [educational development] projects. The student level of on-task behavior and enthusiasm was extremely high. Students had unique opportunities to collaborate, innovate, and problem-solve throughout their experience in the four-day i2 Learning curriculum.”

Continued the report: “Evaluators consistently noted that students were deeply engaged in the design process.”

One teacher told the reviewers: “All students rose to the challenge—just incredible!”

**Spreading immersion?**

Schools have used “language immersion” for years to better teach children second languages. Language immersion in the past took the form of semesters abroad. More recently, it has manifested in the teaching of non-language courses in second languages in select US schools. Such “dual language” schools have been increasing. The *New York Times* (*NYT*) recently reported that, in New York City, there were 39 new or expanded dual-language programs this fall alone, for a total of 180 programs that offer immersive language training in Arabic, Chinese, French, Haitian-Creole, Hebrew, Korean, Polish, Russian and Spanish.

In Utah, the *NYT* reported, nine percent of the state’s public elementary students were participants in dual-language programs. In Portland, Oregon, one in five kindergartners and 10 percent of all students are enrolled in such programs. Delaware and North Carolina are also pursuing the approach.

Arguments for immersive dual-language programs range from the fact that the global economy demands bi-lingualism, to the fact that dual-lingualism may sharpen cognition and stave off dementia in later life.
"Science immersion" is far less common. But Zigman is far from the only person arguing that, one way or another, more intensive science education may be even more important—and soon.

For instance, the NYAS reports that 75 percent of jobs will require some kind of science training by 2018. The Best Schools, looking at Department of Labor stats, found that at least 17 of the top 25 paying jobs in the US already involve extensive science training.

Now that it costs less than $1,000 to sequence the human genome, Big Data jobs may increase so fast there will soon be a shortage of between 140,000 to 190,000 people with the proper analytical skills to translate it—let alone a shortage of 1.5 million managers and analysts who use it for key decisions, says Forbes.

And then there is the simple fact that science inspires.

“One reason we went immediately from a camp—which we still do—to the school-year day: in the summer you only get the kids who raise their hands,” Zigman said. “In the winter, you get them all, including the kids who don’t give a hoot about science. You can open their eyes, get subject matter in front of them they do not normally see, change their lives.”

More importantly, he said, when you do that immersively, “so that science is all that they are doing, they can better acquire scientists’ ability to dare to fail, leave fear of failure at the door, lose themselves in subject matter. That is everything, but you can’t it get in a 40 minute period, where you are just getting into things when the bell rings.”

The future
Zigman’s team is working with a few schools on his next goal: launching an even more immersive program that would devote half the school day to science for an unheard-of one-to-two months.

In 2015-2016, 13 of 15 of i2’s school-year programs are being held in public schools. The team is in 30 to 40 schools total for week-long school-day programs so far.

They are in some 40 schools in the summers, when they are also able to lure in professional scientists in to give one-off talks.

“A full 75 percent of all jobs may not require science training by as early as 2018,” Zigman concluded. “But we are moving that way fast. There is no turning back from that.”

Other immersive science programs for kids include: W.M. Keck Science Department’s week-long summer programs for college-bound high school students (projects include the analysis and of the genome and proteome of a bacteria); a high school girls’ summer immersion computer program sponsored by CUNY and Girls Who Code; SUNY Oswego’s summer youth programs for high school students; Deep River Science Academy’s six week science program for high school students; and Jump Start, a one-week, University of Maryland science program for 50 top high schoolers.
Testimony regarding the establishment of the Murphy Institute as a new CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies

DECEMBER 10, 2015

Testimony submitted to the New York City Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor and the Committee on Higher Education

The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) wishes to thank the committees on Civil Service and Labor and Higher Education for the opportunity to share our views on formally establishing the Joseph S. Murphy Institute as a new City University of New York School of Labor and Urban Studies. We commend your committees for taking the time to evaluate and recognize the impact that the Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies has had on laying the foundation for an educated and empowered workforce.

On behalf of the 200,000 members of the UFT, we strongly support elevating the Murphy Institute among the ranks of CUNY’s highly regarded graduate schools.

Our union is deeply committed to worker education and professional learning, as was the Institute’s namesake, the late Joseph S. Murphy. A former CUNY chancellor, Murphy was a champion of workers whose legacy of achievements includes childcare for working students, expanded worker education and adult literacy programs.

Organized labor fights not only for workers’ rights but also to help workers in their quest for educational and professional advancement. For more than three decades, the Murphy Institute has supported that work through its programs in higher education and its academic resources, opening its doors to workers and their aspirations for social justice and economic equality.

Each year, the Murphy Institute enrolls over 1,500 workers in its undergraduate and graduate degree programs, as well as its certificate programs. That number includes over 400 members of the New York State United Teachers members, many whom are also UFT members. The rest of the student body includes many community advocates who seek to advance their academic certification and to strengthen their vocational skills.

The Murphy Institute is unique within the City University system. While in many ways a traditional
institute of higher learning, it operates via strong collaboration with New York City’s labor unions. Union members derive the dual benefit of earning advanced credentials while becoming well educated in the policy issues and practices that have a social and economic impact on them and their coworkers.

The Murphy Institute offers a full master’s program in both Labor and Urban Studies, as well as certificate programs and intensive semester-long union internships for undergraduate and graduate students. At the core of what sets the Murphy Institute experience apart from other schools is that these union internships immerse the students in all aspects of union life, including political and policy work. Interns spend the day in a real life application of their craft, and then spend the evening working on their academics. The Murphy Institute of Labor and Urban Studies trains the next generation of union activists, adding value whether in the rank and file jobs, mid-level staff or leadership positions.

Our union has in fact hired some of the interns who have joined our ranks via the Murphy Institute’s internship, and they bring with them a keen grasp of the issues, a solid foundation in labor history and an ability to organize at the grassroots level. UFT interns have secured jobs in our communications and political departments. One former Murphy Institute intern transitioned from his UFT staff job to managing a political campaign and now serves as the chief of staff for one of our New York State Senators.

Equally compelling, continuing education and master’s degree students who are in the workforce gain access to the Institute’s world-class faculty — Josh Freeman, Ruth Milkman, Frances Fox Piven, Ed Ott, Penny Lewis, Stanley Aronowitz and others — on par with candidates in doctoral programs at CUNY’s Graduate Center. It’s a testament to its genesis as an educational institution promoting economic and social justice that all students have the opportunity to interact with such high-caliber talent. Its partnership with the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) provides support from a nationally recognized and highly selective graduate labor relations program. The Murphy Institute’s noteworthy symposiums and its publication, the New Labor Forum, produce scholarly work and showcase relevant and timely research and analysis.

For over 30 years, the Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies has offered higher education programs for union members and working adults and has served as a resource center to labor, academic, and community leaders seeking a deeper understanding of labor and urban issues. We believe the time is right to formally establish it as a fully recognized graduate school and to give it the complete rights and accreditations befitting this distinction.

The erosion of private- and public-sector unions in the past few decades has weakened the middle class and had a negative impact on the national economy. New York City’s middle class has suffered too, but the strength of our trade union movement has helped mitigate the damage. For many of our newer rank and file members, who are from a generation without a strong union connection or even the knowledge of what a union is, the Murphy Institute provides a wealth of information, a community of thinkers and leaders and in-depth internship experiences to bridge that gap.

We thank both committees for their oversight of the issues and institutions that shape our city and affect the lives of students and working men and women who seek to develop their skills and advance in their knowledge and careers.
University Affirmative-Action Admissions Policies Are Toxic

By Robert Cherry — December 14, 2015

Last week, the Supreme Court began hearing arguments in the latest round of the Fisher vs. University of Texas case over whether race can be used as a criterion in college admissions policies. The defenders of affirmative-action admissions policies have generally been unwilling to discuss the impact these policies have on black students. Indeed, when Justice Antonin Scalia raised the possibility in oral arguments that these policies actually harm black students by placing many of them at schools that are too demanding, he was immediately vilified.

“Justice Scalia Suggests Blacks Belong at ‘Slower’ Colleges,” ran a typical headline at Mother Jones. Senate minority leader Harry Reid called Scalia’s line of questioning “racist,” and Georgia Democratic congressman John Lewis said Scalia’s “evident bias was very troubling,” leading him to question Scalia’s “ability to make impartial judgments.”

Here is what Scalia actually said:

There are those who contend that it does not benefit African Americans to get them into the University of Texas where they do not do well, as opposed to having them go to a less-advanced school, a less — a slower-track school where they do well. One of the briefs pointed out that most of the black scientists in this country don’t come from schools like the University of Texas.

The brief in question was submitted by UCLA law professor Richard Sanders. A one-time proponent of affirmative action, Sanders changed his position when he studied its effects on black students at American law schools. Sanders found that, because of these
schools' commitment to increasing diversity, the median black student accepted by them placed in the lowest decile of white students admitted — and this translated into low class rankings and low rates of passing the bar exam for these black students. Sanders presented evidence that if black students who had attended a top-tier law school had instead attended a lower-tier school, they would have been more likely to pass the bar exam.

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It’s important to understand that this “mismatch thesis” in no way implies an inability of black students to succeed at top-tier academic institutions, as Scalia’s critics have disingenuously implied. It suggests only that affirmative-action admissions policies disproportionately accept students with lower-than-average test scores and grades. As a result, they are not adequately prepared for the rigors of top-tier universities. This sets these students up for potential failure where they might otherwise have succeeded. Simply put, the mismatch thesis asserts that affirmative action is doing more harm than good for many of the black students admitted as a result of these policies.

While recent evidence strongly supports his conclusion, Sanders’s brief detailed how the educational arm of the law community has done everything possible to undermine studies of the mismatch thesis. When scholars sought to use the California Bar’s database, the Society of American Law Teachers and deans from California law schools strongly objected. Indeed, the Law School Admissions Council stopped sending LSAT scores to the California Bar in order to assure that any effort to study bar examinees after 2008 would be crippled by incomplete information.

Just as at law schools, many selective colleges dramatically lower admissions standards to meet their diversity goals. At Duke, the median SAT score of black students admitted in 2002 was 140 points below that of white students, placing the median black student’s score within the lowest 10 percent of white student scores.

**RELATED: Casting for Affirmative Action Votes in Fisher v. University of Texas (Fisher II)**

In a similar vein, before the Supreme Court forced changes to the University of Michigan’s admissions policy, the school placed little importance on SAT scores in order to provide maximum freedom to assemble the ideal “diverse” student body. As a result,
only half of the black students admitted had an SAT score of at least 1000 — while virtually all white students admitted scored at that level.

SAT scores are a strong predictor of college performance. At the University of Texas there is a strong positive correlation between SAT scores and freshman academic performance: Low SAT scores translated into a C average while high scores translated into an A- average. At Michigan, for the class of 2003, one-quarter of black students had a C- or lower average and half were on academic probation at some point in their university careers. By contrast, three-quarters of the white students achieved at least a B average. At the Ivy League schools and most selective liberal arts colleges, a study found that only one in eight students with an SAT score below 1200 obtained an A- average while almost half of those with at least a 1300 SAT score did so. The evidence clearly shows, then, that students who enter college with lower SAT scores will on average perform worse there than their peers; weak academic preparation results in weak academic performance.

The court was presented another brief — summarized in a New York Times essay by Sheen S. Levine and David Stark, Headlined “Diversity Makes You Brighter” — which argued that having a diverse student body improves the learning and performance of white students as well. “Diversity improves the way people think,” Levine and Stark wrote. “By disrupting conformity, racial and ethnic diversity prompts people to scrutinize facts, think more deeply and develop their own opinions. Our findings show that such diversity actually benefits everyone, minorities and majority alike.” These benefits are derived, according to the authors, from the interactions between members of different racial groups.

A similar argument was offered a decade ago in support of the University of Michigan’s admissions policies.

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Unfortunately, current affirmative-action programs have not generated diversity in the classroom. Weakly performing black students are discouraged from majoring in some fields and demanding courses. These students avoid courses in which they fear that they will be expected to give the “black” viewpoint. In addition, studies find that students tend to form the strongest friendships with students who have similar academic preparation
and interests. As a result, poor academic performance reduces black and white student interaction. This helps explain the troubling fact reported by Levine and Stark: At the University of Texas there is “zero or just one African-American student in 90 percent of its typical undergraduate classrooms.”

When forced to confront this data, affirmative-action proponents point to a study by former Ivy League school presidents William Bowen and Derek Bok, which found that black students were more likely to graduate if they attended more selective schools. But the study seemed unconcerned with measures of performance other than graduation—even though the authors had data that black students earned much lower grades than white students while in school and that class rank had a strong influence on future earnings. In particular, 20 years after graduation, black men who ranked in the top third of their class were found to earn 70 percent more than black men who ranked in the lowest third.

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Bowen and Bok’s study was based on data from the 1976 and 1989 entering classes. In order to update their work, in the mid-1990s, Stephen Cole and Elinor Barber were selected to assess what could be done to encourage more black students to pursue academic careers. They found that though entering black students were more likely to express interest in a teaching career than white students, their weaker class performance made it less likely they would receive the mentoring and positive reinforcement to continue on that path. Unfortunately, even though Harvard University Press was obligated to publish their findings in 2003, the executive secretary of the Council of Ivy Group Presidents told the Chronicle of Higher Education to discount the findings because of the authors’ ideological biases.

Cole and Barber’s findings dovetail with the conclusion of Sanders and others that black students at the most selective schools are less likely to complete science majors than comparable students who attended slightly less selective schools, as Scalia alluded to in his line of questioning. Indeed, when the American Economics Association commissioned two economists, one a proponent and one a skeptic, to summarize the evidence on the mismatch theory for their prestigious Journal of Economic Literature, that conclusion was unavoidable. “The evidence suggests that racial preferences are so aggressive that reshuffling some African American students to less-selective schools
would improve some outcomes," wrote authors Peter Arcidiacono and Michael Lovenheim. "The existing evidence indicates that such match effects may be particularly relevant for first-time bar passage and among undergraduates majoring in STEM fields."

The current university affirmative-action admissions policies are favored by a predominantly liberal faculty uncomfortable with the prospect of teaching only privileged white students — but that should not excuse the result that these policies have harmful effects on the very students they purport to help. Current aggressive affirmative-action policies harm the career selection and earnings potential of many black students by placing them in situations for which they are academically unprepared; they also create a toxic campus environment. While ideally diversity can be beneficial to social interaction, the opposite occurs on most selective campuses. Weakly prepared black students gravitate to safe courses, safe majors, and safe social settings and have heightened sensitivity to perceived and real racial slights. And unfortunately, the poor performance of underprepared black students only reinforces the negative stereotypes many white students hold — further increasing tensions on campus. It is time to take a hard look at the downside of affirmative-action programs and find better ways to help black students move forward.

— Robert Cherry is the Stern Professor of Economics at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center.