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RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Why the History of CUNY Matters: Using the CUNY Digital History Archive to Teach CUNY's Past

by Stephen Brier



"TWO PHOTOGRAPHS FROM 1969 DEMONSTRATION," COURTESY OF CUNY DIGITAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

The CUNY Digital History Archive

Consonant with the theme of this issue of *Radical Teacher*, this essay will indicate some of the ways various historical sources contained in the CUNY Digital History Archive (CDHA)¹ might be utilized by teachers and students to help them undertake critical study of the history of their own college or university system. In 2013, a group of City University of New York (CUNY) faculty, staff, librarians, digital producers, historians, and students met to consider how to study, collect and preserve CUNY's history. The American Social History Project provided an institutional home for CDHA, with Andrea Vasquez serving as Project Director; I serve as Project Historian.² Our goal was to create a publicly accessible resource that could help convey the rich history of the largest urban public university in the country (and the third largest public university system in the United States). Four years later it has become a robust and growing digital archive that contains more than 450 discrete items and a dozen collections. Scores of contributors, curators, archivists, retirees, and CUNY librarians as well as students from the Graduate Center's programs and the Queens College Graduate School of Library and Information studies have made up the ever-widening group working on CDHA.

The CDHA is designed as an open, participatory digital public archive and portal that gives the CUNY community and the broader public online access to digitized archival materials related to the long and consequential history of what became the City University of New York. It can be approached in several ways, including chronologically, institutionally via specific collections, and thematically. Over the past three years we have worked to create and contextualize a range of documents and collections on topics as diverse as:

- the free speech struggles at CCNY in the 1930s;
- the evolution of the free tuition policy at the municipal colleges and, after 1961, at CUNY, and the relationship of free tuition to the demographics of student admissions at CUNY in the 1960s;
- the battle for Open Admissions across CUNY in 1969-70;
- the creation and survival of new CUNY colleges (e.g., Medgar Evers and Hostos colleges);
- the rise of the Women's Studies program at Brooklyn College in the 1970s;
- academic unionization efforts; and
- ongoing student activism to fight state budget cuts.

We believe that open and flexible online access to materials that document the history of CUNY—including collections only available on the CDHA site as well as digital links to existing online resources and collections held at

several CUNY libraries and archives—provides teachers, students, researchers, and the public with a vital resource. The archive makes possible an examination of the larger meaning of the City University's history in the context of the history of the city, state, and nation and can also be used creatively in classrooms to teach various aspects of CUNY's past. In addition, the CDHA team plans to ask teachers, students, and researchers to participate in and curate the ongoing development and production of new collections and historical resources that can be used to integrate CUNY's history into a range of social science and humanities courses taught across CUNY at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.³

In what follows I will explore some of the rich history of NYC's public colleges and the special contribution that CUNY has made over the past half century to the development of democratic and open pedagogy in higher education.⁴ I will highlight several examples of collections and resources currently available in the CDHA archive and portal that either have been or can be used by teachers and students interested in learning more about CUNY's history and its connection to contemporary issues in public higher education. I will also briefly describe several innovative digital programs and initiatives that have helped catapult CUNY to the forefront of the development of digital and open pedagogy in higher education nationally and even internationally over the past half dozen years.

The History of New York City's Municipal Colleges

A dozen years before the Civil War the city of New York made a singular educational and political commitment. Its citizens embraced the concept of public, tuition-free, and municipal taxpayer-supported higher education. Approved overwhelmingly by a referendum of city voters, the Free Academy, initially a preparatory high school, opened its downtown Manhattan campus in 1847; the Free Academy changed its name to The College of the City of New York (familiarily known as CCNY) in 1866. Its mission, in the words of its first president, Horace Webster, was simply stated in 1849:

The experiment is to be tried, whether the children of the people, the children of the whole people, can be educated; and whether an institution of the highest grade can be successfully controlled by the popular will, not by the privileged few.⁵

The children of the whole people for most of CCNY's first century were almost exclusively white middle-class and working-class young men. They were drawn in the school's first half century from the city's public schools in older immigrant neighborhoods, especially the German and Irish ones, as well as areas of the city where native-born New Yorkers resided. The direct link between the city's public schools and its municipal colleges was therefore established at the outset and the two systems' fates remained wholly intertwined: how well CUNY undergraduates did and continue to do in college was and remains in the present closely tied to the quality of the primary and secondary school education they received in

the New York City public schools. City College was joined in 1870 by the Normal College of the City of New York (Hunter College after 1914), which educated, also tuition free, young women to become teachers in the city's public schools.

New York City's dramatic population growth and ethnic transformation beginning in the late 19th century (especially the huge influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe) changed the demographic characteristics of the student body in CCNY and Hunter and pushed the city's Board of Higher Education (established by the state legislature in 1926 to govern the two municipal colleges) to expand beyond its two Manhattan-based campuses. New four-year colleges were approved by the state legislature and launched in Brooklyn in 1930 and Queens in 1937.

The city government continued to make a substantial and sustained investment of municipal tax dollars in its public higher education system in the decades prior to World War II, paying more than 90 percent of the system's total operating costs out of the city's tax coffers. Beginning in the 1930s the four tuition-free senior college campuses now admitted young men and women together, almost all of whom were white. Admission to the municipal colleges was based on high school class rankings and grades and remained tuition free for full-time day students (part-time and evening students paid tuition). That meritocratic system would face significant demographic, financial, and political challenges, however, in the post-World War II era.

The postwar years witnessed an enormous expansion across the country of state-based public higher education systems, including both senior and community colleges. The State of New York finally created its own state university system (SUNY) in 1948, making it almost the last state in the Union to do so. SUNY would not be significantly expanded, however, for another decade when Nelson Rockefeller became governor in 1959. Following the fourteen years of the Rockefeller governorship SUNY had grown from a handful of colleges to nearly 60 campuses across the state, enrolling more than 350,000 undergraduates, making it the largest state university system in the country.

While the rest of the country aggressively built community colleges to meet the spiraling postwar public demand for higher education access, the Board of Higher Education and New York City, which was still responsible for providing the lion's share of funding for its four municipal colleges, did so only reluctantly. The first municipal community college in New York City finally opened on Staten Island in 1955, with two more to follow in the Bronx and Queens over the next four years. And unlike the full-time students who attended the senior colleges tuition free, community college students were initially required to pay tuition.⁶

The Founding of CUNY

In 1961 Governor Rockefeller and the state legislature, in response to growing demographic and political pressures in the city, agreed to combine the seven existing senior

and community municipal colleges into a single entity, the City University of New York. New York State also agreed to provide substantial operating funding for CUNY's senior colleges beginning in 1960 as well as much-needed capital funding to allow the new CUNY system to begin to build new campuses. CUNY did manage to open nine new college campuses over the course of the decade following its creation in 1961.

Though the city's municipal college system continued to be lauded in the 1950s and 1960s as the "the poor man's Harvard," especially because it remained tuition free, the New York City public colleges, despite state support, could not expand sufficiently or quickly enough to meet the skyrocketing demand for higher education among the city's population, as SUNY had begun to do statewide. Totalling nearly 8 million residents, New York City experienced a major demographic transformation in the postwar era, with nearly one million African Americans and Puerto Ricans replacing an equal number of white New Yorkers who had moved out of the city to nearby suburbs during the 1950s and 1960s.

Despite these demographic pressures, as late as 1964 CUNY's *total* undergraduate enrollment remained relatively small at only 49,000 students (SUNY's enrollment, by comparison, already reached 138,000 by 1967, only eight years after the Rockefeller administration undertook to expand it). But despite its efforts to build new campuses as the decade of the 1960s unfolded, CUNY remained a largely exclusive enclave, requiring an ever-higher high school average to secure entry into the system's senior colleges (a 92 high school average, or an A-, was needed to gain admission to CCNY, for example, in 1965) and even to gain admission to its community colleges. That continuing exclusivity helped assure that the municipal colleges remained overwhelmingly white (undergraduates attending Brooklyn College as late as 1968, for example, remained 96 percent white), increasingly middle class, and largely Jewish throughout the 1960s.

CUNY's second chancellor, Albert Bowker, understood the impending demographic changes and pressures that the CUNY system now faced, not only from the large number of the city's baby boomers demanding access to its public colleges but also from the insistent calls of Black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers for increased access to the city's still exclusive public institutions of higher education. Those political pressures were especially acute in Brooklyn, where community activists and parents argued that CUNY's proposed expansion plans needed to include poor and working-class communities of color. That pressure led ultimately to successful efforts, beginning in 1966-67, to form "Community College No. 7" (which would later become Medgar Evers College) in the Bedford-Stuyvesant community of central Brooklyn. The CDHA contains a major collection of 33 items on the "Founding of Medgar Evers College," developed by CUNY emerita professor Florence Tager (see screenshot below). CUNY faculty at Medgar Evers College (MEC) and elsewhere can use this CDHA collection of primary sources materials (including reports, memos, letters, and telegrams as well a short history of the founding of the college) to explore the special connection that MEC had and continues to have with the

Bedford-Stuyvesant community and the political and institutional struggles undertaken by community residents, faculty and students to force the CUNY central administration to launch and sustain the college in its early years.



writing has been carried forward in our own time by a number of dedicated doctoral student writing fellows who are part of the thriving CUNY composition and rhetoric community of scholars. One great resource to explore that early history is English doctoral student (and now William Paterson University faculty member) Sean Molloy's website of oral history interviews with early SEEK pioneers.⁹ We have invited Sean to work with us to curate a special CDHA collection that features his oral history interviews, in this case using the CDHA as an open portal to allow CUNY Composition teachers to access Sean's oral history interviews with early SEEK instructors as well as other documents to sharpen and deepen their own pedagogical practice in their Composition classrooms.

The Struggle for Open Admissions at CUNY

SEEK's innovative qualities and lasting impact could only support a relatively small number of new CUNY undergraduates in the 1960s, however. The BHE and Bowker had assumed they had until 1975 to fully transform CUNY's admissions policies and remedial teaching practices to adjust to the city's changing ethnic and racial make-up. But they were, in fact, sailing toward a major confrontation between growing public demand for public higher education access and anger over continuing racial and class inequalities on the one hand, and the still deficient supply of CUNY instructors as well as campus facilities on the other. This confrontation would play out on many CUNY campuses during the 1969 spring term in a fight for Open Admissions that would reshape the look and very purpose of CUNY. The larger implications of that struggle are felt throughout the system to this very day.

The decade of the 1960s was marked by widespread social and political turmoil centered on the historic struggles for voting and human rights in the South and calls for racial justice in the North and West, including major confrontations over desegregation of public institutions, alongside battles to end the deeply unpopular war in Vietnam. Much of this militancy was the result of student activism centered in the colleges and universities across the country. In the spring of 1969 this wave of student activism swept across CUNY as students of color and their white allies fought for broader access for all New York City residents to public higher education.

Students of color across the CUNY system, inspired in part by the intensification of the civil rights struggles and urban unrest and by a wider embrace in the 1960s of Black Power, ethnic pride, and grassroots activism, mobilized during the spring 1969 term. They organized to defend and expand both the modest presence that students of color had managed to attain in CUNY as well as remedial programs such as SEEK that had helped support minority student success. The growing gulf between increased political demands for access to college education and the CUNY system's restrictive admissions policies could be traced, in part, to endemic political resistance to allocating sufficient city and state monies to fund CUNY's expansion. But it also can be traced to the entrenched commitment to

CUNY Chancellor Bowker had already begun to pressure CUNY's BHE to adopt an "open admissions" policy, guaranteeing a seat somewhere in CUNY for every New York City high school graduate. That open admissions policy, finally approved by the board in 1966, was not scheduled to officially take full effect until 1975, however.

At the same time, Bowker also helped sustain a series of innovative pedagogical experiments at CUNY. He supported the launch of two nationally renowned remedial education programs—College Discovery and SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge)—to provide needed educational support and assistance to students entering CUNY from the city's troubled K-12 system academically underprepared to undertake college-level work. Especially important was the SEEK program's approach at CCNY to teaching what was called "basic writing" to students of color. The CCNY SEEK program's responsive pedagogy was the brainchild of legendary CUNY writing teacher Mina Shaughnessy, who hired talented writers and poets, including June Jordan, Tony Cade Bambara, Adrienne Rich, and Audre Lorde, to work with the new cadre of students of color entering CCNY after 1966.

SEEK's responsive pedagogy developed in these years helped motivate a generation of composition and rhetoric students at CUNY and beyond and inspired the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program that CUNY launched at the turn of the 21st century.⁷ WAC and SEEK continue to this day to spark curricular innovation across the CUNY system, including exciting new forms of digital pedagogy in undergraduate instruction through the [CUNY Graduate Center's Writing Fellows program](#) and the [Interactive Technology Fellows program at the Macaulay Honors College](#).⁸ The history of SEEK's approach to teaching

the idea of meritocracy that rewarded the best and the brightest (which, in practical terms, meant the whitest) with tuition-free access to CUNY's colleges, despite the institution's historic claims to want to "educate the children of the whole people." In response to this profound disjuncture over the meaning and purpose of taxpayer-supported public higher education in New York City, early in the 1969 spring semester African American and Puerto Rican students at the City College of New York demanded that the college administration create special programs to meet the needs of entering Black and Puerto Rican undergraduates, including the development of new black and Puerto Rican studies programs; the continued underwriting of existing academic support programs such as SEEK; and the admission of larger numbers of Black and Puerto Rican students to CUNY. The Black and Puerto Rican students at CCNY were soon joined by fellow CUNY students, both those of color as well as white students, in open conflicts that erupted across the CUNY system.

A series of mass rallies and physical confrontations over the next several months culminated in student strikes and building occupations at CCNY, Brooklyn College, Queens College, and Bronx Community College and the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC). New York City police were called in on several campuses to retake occupied buildings by force. Boycotts of classes quickly followed, led by students of color, and supported by many white students and faculty members, disrupting the remainder of the spring 1969 term. Several CUNY campuses were patrolled by the police for the remainder of the spring term.

The Early Years of Open Admissions at CUNY

CUNY administrators, who were in active negotiation with student protesters as well as the city's political leaders, were under intense pressure to respond to the striking CUNY students' demands. Mayor Lindsay and Chancellor Bowker quickly announced their support for dramatically expanded access to CUNY. The BHE voted to accelerate its original timetable and implement the CUNY Open Admissions plan immediately in the fall of 1970, five years ahead of schedule. Earlier steep barriers and formal academic requirements for admission to CUNY were lifted, guaranteeing every city high school graduate a seat somewhere in the CUNY system (dependent still on high school class ranking). The primary goal of the BHE's decision was nothing less than "the ethnic integration of the university," in the words of the BHE's resolution accelerating Open Admissions, a striking change from the meritocratic ideal that had defined the municipal colleges for the previous 120 years. To help convey the impact of this striking expansion of the CUNY system, the CDHA has conducted several oral history interviews with CUNY faculty members who participated in the struggles for Open Admissions across the CUNY system. One such interview, with full transcription (see screenshot below), was completed with long-time BMCC faculty members Bill Friedheim and Jim Perlstein (now both retired) who joined the faculty of the Manhattan Community College (later

named BMCC) in 1968. Both taught at BMCC for more than 45 years.



This shift toward an Open Admissions policy essentially remade the CUNY system overnight. The rapidity of the change and the breadth of CUNY's actions in support of open admissions were unprecedented steps in American public higher education and served as a model nationally and even internationally. In Fall 1970 the first "Open Admissions" entering class was 75 percent larger than the previous year's; one year later Black and Puerto Rican student enrollment in CUNY's colleges was already 24 percent of the total as contrasted to half that number a year earlier. White, working-class students, many of Italian and Irish descent, who had been unable to gain admission under the old, highly restrictive admissions standards, also benefitted from CUNY's new Open Admissions policy. By 1975, CUNY had created a much more racially and ethnically diverse pool of 253,000 matriculating undergraduates (a 55 percent increase in total enrollment since 1969), all of whom attended tuition-free if they were enrolled full-time. CUNY had also agreed to the development of a series of ethnic and Black Studies programs and centers on many of its campuses (including at CCNY, Brooklyn College, Hunter College, and Queens College and the Borough of Manhattan Community College), which contributed substantially to the growth of more diverse university curricula and programs nationally. CUNY had thus thrust itself to the forefront of national efforts to make tuition-free public college education available to any high school graduate who wished to attend college, to remake the traditional curriculum with broader, more inclusive attention to questions of diversity and identity, and to continue its pioneering remedial education programs. Once again it should be noted that not only CUNY but also the contemporary American university as a whole could trace many current policies to those consequential decisions about access and curricular transformation at CUNY in the late 1960s.

With this critical era in mind, I am using the CDHA in the history of public education seminar that I am teaching this semester (Spring 2017) for first-year doctoral students

in the Urban Education PhD program at the Graduate Center. We will spend two class sessions near the end of the term discussing the long history of the city's municipal college system and then the creation of CUNY in 1961, using as a basic text the two historical chapters (chapters 2 and 3) on CUNY in Mike Fabricant's and my recent book, *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2016) as well as primary source materials either contained in the CDHA's eight historical periods or available through CDHA's direct links to digital source materials (for example, campus-based student newspapers) held by various CUNY archives and libraries. For their final paper in the doctoral seminar the students will be asked to use CDHA resources to research the creation and/or subsequent development after 1961 of one or several campuses in CUNY or the central CUNY system as a whole, to find and examine other historical documents and oral history interviews held at various CUNY libraries (e.g., CCNY, Hunter, Hostos, and LaGuardia Community College's Wagner Archives), and then to write a 15 to 20 page research paper on various historical issues or developments relevant to the evolution of that campus or the CUNY system. These topics could include student, faculty, and/or staff activism; curricular innovations, local community input and struggles, or local or city-wide administrative and political action or inaction that encouraged or hampered institutional or pedagogical developments and transformations. The learning objective is for doctoral students to incorporate historical thinking and primary historical sources and methodologies into the ways they understand and write about the history of higher education.

Despite CUNY's demonstrated successes and important steps toward democratic inclusiveness, opposition to its transformative Open Admissions policy quickly emerged. The opponents ranged from traditional faculty members who lamented Open Admissions while nostalgically recalling CCNY's "high standards" and reputation as the "poor man's Harvard," to conservative politicians, ideologues, and business leaders in New York and across the country vehemently opposed to expanded use of public funds to pay for publicly supported higher education. These conservative voices were soon amplified by breakdowns in the implementation of the Open Admissions system in its first few years, ruptures that could be traced to the persistent inadequacy of state and city funding that had hampered CUNY's ability to meet the educational needs of a newer, much larger, and academically more challenged student population. Despite facing such immediate and long-term challenges, Open Admissions remained a triumph. It had helped transform CUNY into the most open and perhaps most envied higher education system in the country by the early 1970s.

One measure of that triumph was the spread of Black, Puerto Rican, and Women's Studies programs across the CUNY system after 1970. One of those pioneering programs was launched by women faculty members at Brooklyn College (BC) in 1971. BC librarian Yana Calou has curated a CDHA collection of more than 30 items, drawn from BC archives, including oral history interviews with BC Women's Studies pioneers Renata Bridenthal and Tucker

Pamela Farley, that conveys the struggles of women faculty members, in the face of strong institutional opposition, to establish both the Women's Studies Program and Center at the college.

The screenshot shows the CUNY Digital History Archive interface. At the top, it reads 'CUNY DIGITAL HISTORY ARCHIVE' and 'A participatory project to collect and preserve the histories of the City University of New York - A work in progress'. Below this are navigation links: HOME, ABOUT US, PARTICIPATE, BROWSE, EVENTS. The main content area features a collection titled 'Brooklyn College Feminist Trailblazers of the 1970s'. It includes a description of the collection, a list of featured items, and a 'Go to all 30 items in collection.' link. The featured items include an oral history interview with Renata Bridenthal and a Women's Studies Program Catalog. The interface also has a sidebar with 'COLLECTION', 'SUBJECTS', and 'TIME PERIODS' sections.

Despite Open Admissions (or perhaps in part because of it), CUNY continued to suffer enormous budgetary constraints and deficits throughout the 1970s. One result of this underfunding was that two-thirds of the students, many of them poor and working-class, who entered CUNY in the early 1970s left the system within four years of admission without graduating, a problem we continue to have at CUNY to this day. Faculty workloads varied widely among CUNY campuses and the number of adjunct faculty hired across the system also increased dramatically. By 1974, adjunct faculty comprised one in three of the teachers at CUNY, especially at the newer senior and community colleges, again a situation that has only worsened four decades later in CUNY today, where more than half of the undergraduate teaching is done by contingent academic labor.

The 1976 New York City Fiscal Crisis and Its Impact on CUNY

These fault lines and tensions inside CUNY intensified as state and city officials sought to rein in CUNY spending in the mid 1970s and get the BHE finally to impose tuition on CUNY undergraduates. The battle between the state and city forces over CUNY's budget seasawed for several years without clear resolution until the worldwide economic crisis that began in 1973 with the OPEC oil shock, which wreaked havoc on the overall U.S. economy, especially New York City's.

Mayor Abe Beame announced massive layoffs of city workers in 1975-76, targeting many of the city's innovative social experiments. The expanding CUNY system and the now 130-year old free tuition policy were especially vulnerable. One prominent example, drawn from the CDHA, would be Hostos Community College, which opened

in 1970. Longtime Hostos faculty member Gerry Meyer has gathered a collection of more than 60 items detailing various battles throughout the 1970s fought successfully by Hostos faculty, students and the surrounding Puerto Rican community to "Save Hostos!" (as they called their movement) from sharp funding cuts and even total elimination of the college.



In June 1976, with CUNY's budget in tatters after a failed effort to get the federal government to provide a bailout, the Board of Higher Education finally approved the imposition of tuition on CUNY's full-time students in exchange for a total state takeover of senior college finances (the community colleges would still largely be carried on the City's budget). The silver lining in this dark cloud was that the state had finally accepted the argument that city politicians had made since the early 1960s that CUNY senior colleges should receive state financial support comparable to SUNY's four-year schools. Despite the state takeover, all capital construction at CUNY was halted and nearly 5,000 faculty and staff members were laid off, albeit temporarily. While formal Open Admissions at CUNY remained in place for more than two decades after 1976, the decision to charge tuition and tighten admissions standards, especially at the senior colleges, dramatically eroded the underpinnings of CUNY's truly open admissions policy. The abandonment of free tuition was tied to a resurgence of major obstacles facing the city's poor and working-class residents to secure access to public higher education, including diminished public support and growing poverty in the city. It is hardly an accident that CUNY's free tuition entitlement ended a short half dozen years after the institution opened its doors to large numbers of students of color.

One powerful pedagogical possibility is to use the CDHA to link CUNY's past history with its present circumstances. One of our CUNY colleagues, Marcia Newfield, an adjunct instructor at BMCC, employed this approach. She had two of her freshmen English intensive writing courses in Fall 2016 read and discuss several recent newspaper articles (including my own piece¹⁰) considering calls for a return of free tuition at CUNY (which ended after

the 1976 fiscal crisis). Marcia then asked her students to choose two of the eight historical periods included on the CDHA website, study the primary historical materials available on those two historical periods, and write in response to the following question: "What part did struggle play in creating changes in CUNY?" (see Appendix A for the full assignment). The BMCC students were then asked to consider what future struggles might be necessary for CUNY students to engage in (and, as Marcia reported, many responded that the fight for free tuition was now essential).¹¹

What happened at CUNY over the next four decades, though that is a story that can and should be told and must be linked to the broader history of public higher education in the contemporary era, exceeds the bounds of this essay. We are hopeful that the CDHA will continue to collaborate with CUNY faculty, staff and students in the coming years to develop collections of digital materials for the archive related to the post-1976 fiscal crisis era at CUNY, including creating lesson plans and pedagogical approaches to teaching about CUNY's past. Suffice it to say, CUNY and its students, faculty, and staff have struggled right down to the present with straitened financial circumstances brought on by uncertain state and city budget allocations and the antagonism of various governors, including the current one, Andrew Cuomo, toward CUNY and its unique public educational mission to serve the needs of a diverse urban constituency. Such fiscal uncertainty and political hostility, tied to increased use of exploited adjunct faculty, decaying physical structures, and regular attacks from conservative and neoliberal politicians and policy mavens intent on undermining CUNY's radical experiment in democratic, public higher education, have converged at this especially fraught moment in the City University's history and in the broader history of public higher education institutions and systems across the country. Nonetheless, the history of CUNY sketched above hopefully reminds us that only through a commitment to progressive ideas, mass action, political will and organization, and, last but certainly not least, innovative forms of teaching and learning, can an institution like CUNY be sustained and enhanced in the coming decades.

Appendix A

English Intensive Writing: Fall 2016 – BMCC, CUNY. Marcia Newfield/adjunct lecturer

I encourage you to write all three essays/responses separately. Then show them to me for feedback. Then combine them into one essay.

Response 1. Journal: Your experience of education so far.

Response 2. Readings: Stephen Brier, "Free College for All: An Idea Whose Time Has Come (Again)," (www.independent.org #213, March 4, 2016); *NY Times* Opinion Room for Debate, "Should College Be Free?" (January 20, 2016)

Essay: What is the argument for free tuition and how persuasive are the arguments against making education free? Interview someone who has gone to CUNY or another college to find out what they know and where they stand on public higher education.

Response 3. Readings: CUNY Digital History Archive (cdha.cuny.edu)

Essay: Compare two periods in CUNY's history. What part has struggle played in the history of CUNY? How have these struggles created change? What do you think is next?

Notes

¹ <http://cdha.cuny.edu/>.

² I'd like to thank Andrea Vasquez for her thoughtful suggestions and edits on an earlier draft of this article.

³ Anyone interested in contributing digital material to the CDHA or curating a special collection should contact Chloe Smolarski, Collection Coordinator, at cuny.dha@gmail.com.

⁴ The history of CUNY that follows is drawn from Michael Fabricant and Stephen Brier (2016). *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press), 50-57; 65-72; 80-88.

⁵ <http://www.nycbar.org/member-and-career-services/committees/reports-listing/reports/detail/part-1-remediation-and-access-to-educate-the-children-of-the-whole-people>.

⁶ Mayor Robert Wagner would finally remedy the inequity in 1965 when he eliminated tuition charges for CUNY's community college students.

⁷ A report on the initial decade of WAC work that describes the origin and evolution of the program can be found here: https://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/ue/wac/WAC_10YearReportJune2010.pdf.

⁸ Information on the Graduate Center's Writing Fellows program can be found at: <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/About-the-GC/Provost-s-Office/Governance,-Policies-Procedures/Detail?id=4936>; information on the Macaulay Instructional Technology Fellows program can be found at <http://www.macaulay.cuny.edu/academics/technology.php>.

⁹ <https://compcomm.commonsgc.cuny.edu/cuny-oral-histories/>.

¹⁰ <https://indypendent.org/2016/03/04/free-college-all-idea-whose-time-has-come-again>.

¹¹ Email communication, Marcia Newfield with the author, February 14, 2017.



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