

Hostos Community College

of The City University of New York

News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Testimony attached)
February 11, 1972

Contact: Anne Grosso

HOSTOS PRESIDENT ASKS FOR RESTORATION OF CUNY BUDGET

Testyfying in Albany before the joint fiscal Committee on the Executive Budget, Hostos President Cándido de León asked for "a commitment to restore \$33.7 million dollars in the 1972-73 City University budget ... to insure the continued operation of the University."

Budget reductions below the level certified by the City, he said, "would cripple the new colleges such as Hostos Community College." He charged further that "it is fraudulent to admit students to college ... through open enrollment and to simultaneously deprive them of the help they need to correct ... serious academic deficiencies....Without additional funds, President de León said, Hostos would be unable "to train [the] new faculty and to implement [the] new programs" that are required to insure student success in college.

Pointing out that "the major burden of the public school system falls on the community colleges," and that most of the students in community colleges such as Hostos are from economically "disadvantaged backgrounds," President de León appealed to the Committee not to "abandon this commitment to open enrollment and keep the poor in their place."

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STATEMENT TO THE

JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEE ON THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET

ON FEBRUARY 9, 1972

BY

Cándido Antonio de León, President
Hostos Community College of the City University of New York

Your commitment to restore 33.7 million dollars in the 1972-73 City University budget is essential to insure the continued operation of the University. Any substantial reduction of the City University budget below the level certified by the City will reduce the effectiveness of the entire University and will cripple the new colleges such as Hostos Community College.

It is fraudulent to admit students to college through the encouragement of open enrollment and to simultaneously deprive them of the help they need to correct the serious academic deficiencies they bring with them. If we ignore their past experiences in the public school system and fail to provide these students with the additional attention they require, we are only pretending to offer them higher educational opportunities. We will not be giving them anything new; we will just be giving them more of the same deceptions which have plagued them in the past.

Hostos Community College requires additional funds to train new faculty and to implement new programs. It is impossible to talk about educating open enrollment students without providing for the additional training of faculty to handle the special problems of these students. Additional training requires more funds, not reductions in the budget.

While the entire University has been straining under the added burden of open enrollment, the major burden of correcting the failures of the public school system falls on the community colleges. The overwhelming majority of students with economic and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds are in the community colleges. Reducing the budget continues to penalize these students who are defenseless. The distribution of students at Hostos Community College demonstrates this quite clearly. Approximately forty per cent of the students are Puerto Rican or of other hispanic origins, and another forty per cent are Black. The majority of these students are South Bronx residents who would feel the impact of any budget reductions acutely. Sixty-seven per cent of the Hostos students, the highest percentage in the City University Community Colleges, are students with high school averages of 70% or lower. Approximately 72.7% of all students at Hostos are receiving financial aid. If we talk about increasing faculty workloads to cut financial corners at this college, we are really talking about depriving the most disadvantaged students of the minimal individual attention they require to progress through a college program and gain some control over their lives.

The choice before you is clear: Either you honor the commitment to provide higher educational opportunities at the City University or you abandon this commitment to open enrollment and keep the poor in their place. If your conscience fails to move you, let your ambition for political survival focus your energies on restoring the 33.7 million dollars to the City University budget. On behalf of the Hostos family I ask you for that commitment today.
