

## Two Public Officials Support CUNY/SUNY Systems; Oppose Governor Pataki's Proposed 1997-1998 Executive Budget.



Assemblyman Edward C. Sullivan 69th Assembly District, NYS



Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes  
Photo by Christopher Griffith

### Conference Speakers Denounce Budget Cuts.

Higher education is a right, not a privilege. A conference held at the Brecht Forum on March 14th and 15th trumpeted this notion and lamented the recently proposed budget cuts that would increase CUNY's tuition by \$400. The conference speakers, among them Sandi Cooper, Chair of the University Faculty Senate, and Edward Sullivan, Chair of the Committee on Higher Education in the New York State Assembly, analyzed the political motivations behind the cuts. A student activist from SUNY New Paltz talked about how his fight against the cuts recently led to his arrest.

The Brecht Forum, located at 122 West 27th St., organized the conference to explore the reasons behind what it calls the recent attack on public higher education. On the first day of the conference, Assemblyman Sullivan chastised Governor George Pataki and other Republicans for making policies that attempt to reduce the number of students enrolled in CUNY schools.

"They want to take away education as a right; they want it to be a privilege or a gift or a handout," Sullivan said. "The intention here is to take the poor kids of New York City and instead of educating them, train them." While Sullivan blamed Republicans for trying to drive students out of four-year colleges and into vocational schools, he also criticized Democrats for

"sleeping" instead of trying to change society.

Sandi Cooper agreed that Democrats deserve some of the blame. Ex-Governor Mario Cuomo did not do that much more for CUNY than Pataki is doing, she argued. That is because both Democrats and Republicans in the New York State government focus too much on economics to be helpful to CUNY. "The only way you can defend yourself to Albany is to show how good you are for the tax base," Cooper said. In other words, CUNY schools have to justify their reception of state funds by showing, for example, that their students tend to stay in New York after graduation.

This economic focus is dangerous, said Steve London, the Brooklyn Chair of the Professional Staff Congress. "If you justify education only by an economic rationale, it leads to debasement of the liberal arts," he said. Other speakers elaborated on this point the second day of the conference. Camille Rodriguez, President of the Puerto Rican Studies Association, argued that people of color these days wind up in "dead-end jobs" because they tend to enter

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### Higher Education Cuts Threaten State's Economic Vitality.

- Charles J. Hynes

*Editor's note: Two of Mr. Hynes's children attend CUNY. One is a graduate student at the Hunter College School of Social Work, while another goes to CUNY Law School.*

The recent appeal by the presidents of New York's 19 major public colleges and universities for a restoration of the cuts proposed in next year's Executive Budget should be a warning that our system of higher education is in danger.

Our public institutions of higher learning are a valuable asset. They help prepare tomorrow's leaders and enable us to compete successfully in the global economy. They need to be nourished, not neglected.

Reductions totalling \$136 million are being recommended in three major areas: general operating funds (\$77 million); capital construction (\$23 million); and community colleges (\$36 million). These cuts are significant when compared to other areas in the budget which propose substantial spending increases.

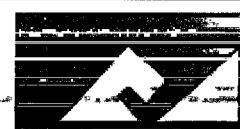
For example, an increase of \$626 million in capital expenditures for the State Department of Correctional Services is proposed. While some of this money may be necessary to improve the existing physical plant, the bulk of it is intended for the design and construction of nearly 7,000 new prison beds by the year 2000. New Yorkers may question the wisdom of spending \$90,000 per inmate to build new prison cells at the expense of state universities and community colleges.

The impact of the cuts would fall heavily on the middle class and working class families who are the backbone of our State's economy. The difference will be made up in part by a tuition increase, the sec-

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## EDITORIAL PAGE



### Losing Sight of Education's Purpose.

-Mark Petras

Sometimes I disagree with my professors. It is natural. We are different people with different opinions. When I hand in papers to them knowing they will disagree with the viewpoint I present, I do not worry about my grade. I believe my professors will grade me on how well I support my argument, not on whether they agree with it.

I went through my entire undergraduate and master's education with this mindset. During my freshman year in college, a student in my Introduction to Communications class once asked the professor if his grade in the course would be affected by the political views he expressed. What a ridiculous question, I thought. It seemed obvious to me that a professional educator would never penalize his students for defending their opinions. The professor confirmed my belief. He said, that in his class, students' political views would not affect their grades.

Recently, however, I talked to some students at the Graduate Center who said they take their professors' political opinions into account when writing academic papers. In other words, in their papers these students will not defend political views that contradict those of their professors. Instead, students' modify their arguments, so they do not conflict with those of their professors.

When I heard this, I could not believe it. I could not understand why intelligent, free-thinking students in an institution of higher learning would refrain from expressing their views if supported with sufficient evidence. The students I talked to, however, insisted that there are professors at the Graduate Center and elsewhere who automatically lower students' grades if they disagree with students' political perspectives.

One Graduate Center student told me he found it easier to get good grades in courses taught by conservative professors. The student, who is conservative, said he once refrained from taking a summer history course at Georgetown University because it was taught by a liberal professor. The student feared he would not do well in the course simply because his political opinions differed from those of the professor. Another Graduate Center student told me it is common in her home country of Argentina for instructors in graduate schools, colleges and high schools to let their political opinions affect their grading.

Not every student I interviewed on this subject said he or she has had professors who grade subjectively. Some students I talked to said their professors always have been completely objective and fair in their grading. Nevertheless, I am disturbed by the thought that some students at the Graduate Center alter their political perspectives to appease their professors. We are in school to learn, to think for ourselves, and expand our minds. Once we begin to suppress our views for fear of penalty, that is when we have lost sight of education's purpose.

### The Advocate

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### The Advocate Seeks to Organize CUNY Student Newspaper Press Corps at the GSUC.

-Andrea Zimmermann

The Advocate wants a few good journalists committed to serving on a CUNY-wide collaborative project. We want to organize the reporters and editors of CUNY's student newspapers into a bona fide News Service and Press Corps. Interested individuals are encouraged to contact our office (212) 642-2852 to discuss the role of student newspapers in framing issues that affect the future of the City University such as, for example, the cut backs to higher education - a devastating prospect for both the university and students. It would be nice to confer with student journalists about the viability of using our newspapers as a medium for defending CUNY in light of political and public vilification of its many fine institutions.

By organizing into "one big union" we can create an inter-communications network among all CUNY newspapers. In establishing a CUNY Central News Service and Press Corps, we could professionalize and lend greater credibility to the way in which we issue press releases to the mainstream broadcast and print media on matters affecting CUNY on the city, state and federal levels. Student reporters and editors would be encouraged to write analytical articles about various university issues - the new CUNY ID Card, for instance; and other events, student struggles, factions, organizations, and affiliations.

The Advocate aims to create a special office at the GSUC in conjunction with the

DSC with on-line capabilities to engage in a continuing investigation of: a) the Board of Trustees; b) CUNY Central and the Chancellor's Office; c) various college administrators and administrations; d) the activities of the University Student Senate; and e) the voting records of city, state and federal elected officials viz-a-viz CUNY's past, present and future situations. Through funding from internal or external grants, we might be able to establish an internship here at the Graduate Center for undergraduates who want to enhance their journalism experience. After all, we are all in this together!

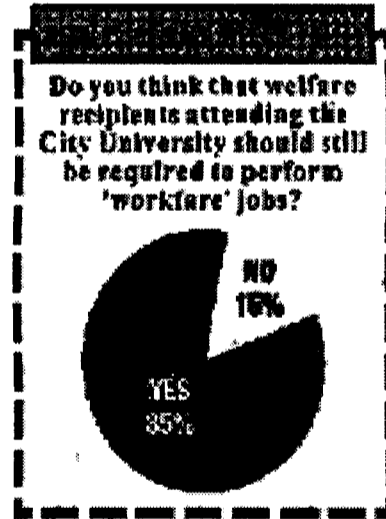
### CUNY Students on Public Assistance Should Do Workfare, Reports a Newspaper Poll.

- Andrea Zimmermann

The free weekly newspaper, Our Town, which circulates around the posh Upper East and trendy West Sides of Manhattan, is known more among readers for its dial-a-sex "900" telephone numbers and erotic massage parlor advertisements than for any Pulitzer Prize winning journalism.

So, it came as quite a surprise that during its March 26th printing, Our Town editorialized on the benefits of workfare in general and for CUNY students on public assistance in particular. The call-in question of the week to its readership was: "Do you think that welfare recipients attending the City University should still be required to perform workfare jobs?" Our Town published the results of its thoroughly unscientific poll the following week on the 2nd of April.

Not surprisingly, only 15% called in to register their objections to workfare, while 85% of readers voted affirmatively that CUNY welfare students



should do workfare as a "public service" to the taxpayers who fund their "entitlements."

The poll results demonstrate an inherent contradiction, however. On the one hand, it is apparent that Our Town's poll taking methodology is flawed since it is not a random representative sample of East and West Side residents. On the other hand, it also seems that the callers' responses to the poll are indeed representative, if not quantitatively at least qualitatively, of the political climate of some Manhattanites fed up with exorbitant income, school, and real estate taxes. Moreover, if the poll by Our Town is any accurate indication, it will be quite some time in the future before workfare goes out of popular fashion. Nor is it likely that the Republicans, Democrats, or CUNY Central will be effective in exempting PA students from that onerous obligation - no matter how often the Ramirez-Marchi Bill is submitted to Governor George Pataki. He will simply veto the legislation every time.