

**AN OPEN LETTER TO CHAIRPERSON SCHMIDT
ON THE FIRST ANNUAL REVIEW OF PATHWAYS**

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August 15, 2013

Benno C. Schmidt, Jr.
Chairperson, CUNY Board of Trustees
The City University of New York
205 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Dear Chairperson Schmidt:

I write on behalf of the 25,000 faculty and staff at CUNY whom I represent as president of the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY. Our position on Pathways has not changed: the Board's resolution on "Creating an Efficient Transfer System," passed in June 2011 in violation of the law, should be rescinded. Further, the Board should act on the 92% vote of No Confidence in Pathways conducted among full-time faculty this spring. The necessary steps should be taken to repeal the June 2011 resolution and replace Pathways with a curriculum developed by the elected faculty representatives.

Your June 26 reply to my letter on the No Confidence vote mischaracterizes the referendum as a "poll" and fails to provide any substantive response to the demand represented by the No Confidence vote. The thousands of full-time faculty who participated in the referendum will understand your reply as a refusal to listen to and respect the faculty of CUNY.

Your letter suggests that the Board intends to move forward with Pathways until the legal case is decided, even though you have lost the confidence of the faculty on the essential issue of curriculum. Should the Board continue the implementation of Pathways, the June 2011 resolution mandates that "all of these pathways policies and processes, including the Common Core, be reviewed and evaluated . . . to modify them as necessary to improve them or to meet changing needs." The first review is to be in 2013. The resolution is silent on who will conduct the review and how it will be conducted.

As I am sure you will agree, it is in the best interest of the University that the review be unbiased and that it have absolute integrity. An unbiased review is especially important in the context of a vote of No Confidence. The CUNY community and the broader public will not accept as legitimate a review process controlled by those who have an interest in maintaining Pathways over the objections of elected faculty bodies. The reviewers must be independent and the process transparent.

American Federation of Teachers Local 2334

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American Association of University Professors • New York City Central Labor Council



To ensure independence, the PSC leadership strongly recommends that you consider including reviewers from institutions outside of CUNY, provided that they meet the necessary qualifications and have shown an ability to make honest professional judgments. Regardless of whether inside or outside reviewers are selected, more than half of the reviewers must be named by CUNY faculty governance, given the faculty's academic expertise and the special responsibility of faculty governance for curriculum. Reviewers must have strong academic credentials and demonstrated expertise in university curriculum, academic quality and student transfer. Of signal importance is that reviewers have a proven commitment to *public* higher education, and to CUNY's mission in particular. The review panel must not be chaired by a CUNY administrator.

In order further to ensure independence, the review panel should be staffed by personnel who do not report to CUNY managers directly responsible for the development of Pathways. To the extent that quantitative data about transfer of student courses is available at this stage, it should be collected and analyzed by an independent research firm.

The legitimacy of the review also depends on the process the reviewers employ. The interests of both the University and the community are served if the panel conducts a comprehensive review, one that reports honestly on both dissent and support. Faculty, staff, students and administrators must be free to speak openly; there can be no repetition of the use of threats and coercion by CUNY administrators that we witnessed last year. At the center of the review process should be public hearings, held on multiple CUNY campuses. Every member of the University community must be welcome to testify without fear of retribution, and all testimony must be made public.

A thorough review will also include interviews of those with relevant experience and knowledge. Elected faculty leaders should be prominent among those interviewed, as should professional staff with responsibility for registration and advising. The views of students affected by Pathways are also, of course, essential. Faculty governance and PSC chapter leaders at each college must also be invited to comment, as should the University Faculty Senate and PSC leadership. The public also has an interest in knowing the cost and staffing implications of Pathways, including whether CUNY colleges have systematically non-reappointed part-time faculty as the curriculum is reshaped.

Finally, the review panel must be asked to recognize in their framing of questions and their final assessment that an unprecedented vote of No Confidence in Pathways has already been taken. (Despite former Chancellor Goldstein's attempt to discredit the vote in the letter you attach to your June 26 response, the facts are clear. The referendum was conducted by an independent third party willing to stand by its methods; the 92% vote was decisive, representing an absolute majority of CUNY's full-time faculty.) The panel's review of Pathways must evaluate the initiative in the context of the overwhelming opposition it has generated.

I have shared this letter with the CUNY community and the broader public because of the importance of ensuring that this first, pivotal review of Pathways be legitimate. The future of undergraduate education at CUNY is at stake; the initial assessment of a sweeping curricular change must be independent, transparent and fair.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Bowen".

Barbara Bowen, President