

Pursuant to Cal. 4. A
October 16, 2017
Professor Susan F. Semel
The City College of New York



I arrived at City College, September, 2001 having previously taught at two private universities, Adelphi and Hofstra. As a historian of Education, I was excited and proud to teach at what was once known as "The Poor Peoples' Harvard." Although I expected there to be differences in the maintenance of the physical plant, I was not prepared for what I encountered and what has worsened during my tenure at City.

My building, the North Academic Center, is in a consistent state of decay. Escalators are out of service weekly. The elevators skip floors and their indicators work sporadically; a serious problem for handicapped students who depend on working elevators to get to their classes. The bathrooms flood regularly, there is no hot water in the faucets, soap dispensers go unfilled, and toilet paper is often a rare commodity. Moreover, many of the stall doors do not lock, thus creating a lack of privacy and safety. These issues are particularly problematic during flu season when sanitary conditions are of paramount importance. We also lack hand sanitizers, normally present in restrooms and hallways of other public universities. The cleaning staff is overwhelmed; I have it from good authority that they have been cut to the bone (from 55 to 14). Moreover, they lack vacuum cleaners and other equipment to do their work properly.

We have a vermin problem. Attributing this to being in NYC is not adequate; I also teach at the Graduate Center where I have never seen a roach or a mouse. I might also add that the GC has hand sanitizers. As a former chair of two departments in the School of Education for 15 years, I regularly encountered dead mice in various stages of decay in my offices.

The lack of consistent and sufficient state funding makes CUNY colleges uncompetitive with other similar public institutions in recruiting and retaining faculty, in particular, faculty of color. We cannot promise them an 18 credit load at tenure, as you have not acted upon it; we cannot adequately support faculty who now have a much higher bar for tenure and promotion. Moreover, we cannot retain faculty, who once they have attained tenure, can find work in nearby public and private universities that have higher pay scales and lower teaching loads.

Clearly, we remain here for our students, in spite of our decaying and dirty surroundings, not for the lack of support staff that has been so drastically reduced that in addition to our faculty roles in the School of Education, we are advisors, registrars, admissions directors. Yes, there are people who perform these roles but they cannot do it all, given their lack of resources. So we pick up the slack for the good of our students.

For all these reasons I urge you to urge Gov. Cuomo to sign the bill to provide continuous funding to CUNY and SUNY and not to veto it as he has in the past.