

From: CUNY UFS Announcement-only list [<mailto:UFS-NEWS@LISTSERV.CUNY.EDU>] **On Behalf Of**
William Phipps
Sent: Wednesday, September 19, 2012 12:30 PM
To: UFS-NEWS@LISTSERV.CUNY.EDU
Subject: Statement of the UFS Executive Committee

FYI, Below is a Statement of UFS Executive Committee, passed unanimously yesterday:

The UFS Executive Committee strongly deplores the recent actions of the Queensborough Community College administration and other instances of intimidation at CUNY colleges in regard to Pathways.

The English Department at Queensborough Community College voted last week to retain in its Composition Course a single extra hour of instruction which had proved necessary over the years to provide their students, many of whom are ESL speakers, adequate preparation in writing. This vote ran afoul of a mandate from the central office of CUNY, never convincingly explained and never approved by the Trustees. The mandate said that every CUNY course must be only 3-hours long, be it a science lab, a language course, or a writing course, where affording students a little extra time for experiment or practice had been routine. This was one of many Pathways mandates gutting curricular quality that have been inflicted on the campuses without consultation with the appropriate elected faculty, or with the faculty who are actually teaching CUNY's diverse students.

The Queensborough Provost responded to this single faculty vote with threats of shutting down the department, firing the faculty, and dropping English Composition from the curriculum. Such lightning bolts have no place in universities, which by long agreement value cooperative, respectful, and deliberate decision-making. The faculty were carrying out the official duty for which they were hired, participating in valid shared governance, and making an academic judgment that they are uniquely qualified to make.

In no one's memory has such a rash and incomprehensible public action been taken by any official at CUNY. It was in the worst tradition of managerial bullying and the abuse of authority, and it undermines everything that is sacred at universities. Unfortunately the situation at Queensborough, while more public, is not unique. At other campuses threats and intimidation with regard to Pathways have also taken place.

The combined impact of these actions is to create a climate of intimidation that violates the faculty's right to exercise its professional judgment without animus and retaliation at all of CUNY's campuses.

We urge a return to a more civil dialogue informed by the traditions of shared governance, in which the commitment of the faculty to curricular rigor can be freely expressed and never again shut down by force.

September 18, 2012

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