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February 17, 2021

The Honorable Thomas P. DiNapoli  
Comptroller of the State of New York  
Office of the State Comptroller  
Division of State Government Accountability  
59 Maiden Lane - 21<sup>st</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10038

Dear Mr. DiNapoli,

In accordance with Section 170 of the Executive Law, The City University of New York (CUNY) hereby submits its 180-day report on the implementation of the recommendations, made in the New York State Comptroller's audit report (2019-S-19), *CUNY Course Offerings Report, as follows*

I am pleased to submit the following updates to the responses to the recommendations presented in the OSC CUNY Course Offerings Report. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost

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Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo, New York State Governor  
Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Majority Leader of the Senate  
Hon. John J. Flanagan, Minority Leader of the Senate  
Hon. Carl E. Heastie, Speaker of NYS Assembly  
Hon. Crystal D. Peoples-Stokes, Majority Leader of the NYS Assembly  
Hon. William A. Barclay, Minority Leader of the NYS Assembly  
Hon. Liz Krueger, Chair of NYS Senate Finance Committee  
Hon. James L. Seward, Ranking Minority Member of NYS Senate Finance Committee  
Hon. Helene E. Weinstein, Chair of NYS Assembly Ways and Means Committee  
Hon. Edward P. Ra, Ranking Minority Member of NYS Assembly Ways and Means Committee  
Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Chancellor, The City University of New York  
Hector Batista, Executive Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer, The City University of New York  
Richard R. White, Vice Chancellor for Risk, Audit and Compliance, The City University of New York  
Catherine Rodriguez, Interim Director of Internal Audit and Management Services, The City University of New York  
Mr. Kenrick Sifontes, Audit Director, Office of the State Comptroller

1. **Ensure that CUNY students have opportunities to register for elective courses and courses required for their programs of study.**

**Response**

- CUNY has completed scheduling and catalog implementation of **Curriculum and Event Management System (CEMS)** that has already unlocked significant benefits across CUNY's class scheduling. Through real-time integration with various CUNY information systems, CEMS is already providing increased efficiencies, insights, and analytics to ensure informed scheduling based not only on historical analysis but also on future demand. CEMS scheduling portion is complete and for all Colleges.
- University Student Schedule Builder, fully implemented at all CUNY Colleges, is an application tool that enables students to plan and register for courses that meet their degree requirements, schedules, and personal constraints (work and/or family obligations). This application shows courses listed in the University's course schedule (i.e., CUNYfirst) and allows students to select those courses based on degree requirements, education plan, desired time, location, availability, and personal preference.

2. **Require that department officials responsible for scheduling courses formally survey students in their respective departments about required and elective courses.**

**Response**

- Determining and scheduling a department's courses for an academic year is a complex task that is the responsibility of the chair. Colleges that have implemented Course and Event Management system, Scheduling function, are using demand forecasting to assess need and adjust scheduling based on data from CUNYfirst and DegreeWorks. As noted in the Comptroller's report, doing so successfully includes scheduling more courses on evenings and weekends, putting more courses online, and ensuring that courses required to maintain academic momentum and to make progress towards graduation are offered sufficiently and sustainably. Due to scarce resources, this is a delicate balancing act that, as noted by the data, can leave some students without their desired course(s). To that end, CUNY has launched a University-wide effort to provide training and professional development opportunities for chairs. This includes the second annual, Introduction to Being a CUNY Department Chair, a program designed to provide new chairs with some of the basic tools they will need to lead their departments. This program covers topics including the essential duties of chairs; mentoring and motivating faculty at every level; dealing with difficult faculty and staff; understanding enrollment management and the role of chairs in retention and course management; use of standard and new technology tools such as Degree Works, CourseDog (CEMS) and Schedule Builder, and features a panel of experts. The Central-hosted professional development program for chairs is complemented by similar chair training programs at the colleges, tailored to local culture, practices and needs. More training and professional development opportunities, as well as content, are in the process of being developed in an effort to ensure that the University's department chairs are fully prepared to effectively schedule courses in ways that are aligned with student demands.

3. **Improve advisor training to keep them up to date on degree requirements.**

**Response**

- To ensure that advisors have the critical skills needed to support students in the distance learning setting and beyond, CUNY Academic Affairs launched a set of professional development offerings

on best practices in remote advising. Managed and provided by CUNY's signature student success program Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), the three-part Best Practices in Remote Advising webinar series ran from May-June and was open to all CUNY advisement staff. The series focused on current effective remote advising practices within ASAP and college advisement centers and highlighted how technology can be harnessed to guide advisement teams and engage students. Topics include managing and supporting advisement teams; enhancing student engagement via individual and group contacts; developing strategies to deliver new student intake activities virtually; best practices for documenting advisement services.

- To date, 900 unique advisors across the University (including but not limited to professional advisors, ASAP, ACE, CUNYStart, SEEK/CD) have participated in the live webinars, which have also been recorded and disseminated for asynchronous use. Smaller discussion forums will be hosted throughout July to allow advisors to discuss webinar content, challenges, and best practices. Discussion forums will be moderated by college practitioners identified through the CUNY Academic Advisement Council and CUNY Academic Affairs/ASAP leaders who organized the webinar series.

**4. Track students' progress toward graduation and their financial aid eligibility. Provide appropriate and timely academic advisement to those students while alerting them of the danger of exhausting their financial aid eligibility.**

**Response**

- University is in the middle of implementing Academic Momentum Campaign, a comprehensive vision and set of strategies that will result in greater success for students. CUNY's Academic Momentum Campaign is aligned with Complete College America's (CCA) three strategies of: corequisite support models, credit accumulation (Take 15/30 campaigns), and degree maps with proactive advising.
- A key element of the Academic Momentum Campaign is degree mapping. Degree maps are tools that provide students with clear measures and targets to complete their degrees on time. Guided by a semester-by-semester plan of degree requirements, students will understand how prerequisite courses build on each other, when gateway courses should be taken, and how all requirements fit together. When students follow degree maps, they avoid taking unnecessary classes, save time and money, and stay on course for employment after graduation.
- Degree maps are visual, term-by-term representations of the academic path students can take toward **successful and timely completion of their chosen courses of study**. As degree maps are guides, they will be used in conjunction with advisement, the catalog, and degree audits. Degree maps can and is also playing a key role in **proactive course scheduling and planning**.
- Each CUNY college already has a team in place to manage and provide oversight of implementing their Academic Momentum Campaign. The teams are composed of key college stakeholders with expertise in relevant areas, including faculty, advisors, registrars, admissions staff, and IT staff.
- Faculty and academic departments engage in the creation and approval of the degree maps. The process forces good **planning** ahead in terms of **courses and scheduling— departments can more clearly determine which courses need to be offered when and for how many students**, and degree maps provide students with clear information about **what will be available when**.
- The Office of the Registrar, as the holder of student data, ensures that timely and accurate information is entered into the student information system (CUNYfirst), which feeds DegreeWorks (Advisement and Degree Audit System), EAB/Starfish (Student Success Management Systems). The registrar is involved in degree mapping to inform stakeholders of the

implications of degree maps regarding ***credit accumulation and graduation rates***. For students to successfully use degree maps, course catalog information—including prerequisites/corequisites, frequency of course offering (fall only, etc.), financial aid eligibility (FACTS), and applicability of course towards degree requirement (DegreeWorks)—are accurately maintained by the Office of Registrar.

- **Financial Aid Eligibility and Certification Tracking System** is a Web-based financial aid tool designed to determine student eligibility for New York State’s Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), Excelsior and other state aids. It is available to all degree-seeking undergraduate students. Advisors, faculty, and selected staff have access ***for the purpose of monitoring student eligibility through their academic careers***. Based on current and/or prior registered course(s) FACTS ***determines and alerts*** student eligibility for New York State financial aid program. FACTS display course enrollment financial aid eligibility indicator; is accessible online 24 hours/7 days a week; provides transcript summary identify courses eligible for students’ degree and financial aid; and overall financial aid eligibility and financial aid certification information