ENSURING THE CUNY PROMISE
A STUDENT AFFAIRS STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2013–2016

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CUNY is committed to enhancing opportunities for students to engage more deeply in their academic experience.

— Investing In Our Future: The City University of New York’s Master Plan 2012-2016. Approved by CUNY’s Board of Trustees and Chancellor Matthew Goldstein in June 2012.
Vice Chancellor’s Introduction

ON BEHALF OF THE ENTIRE Central Office of Student Affairs (COSA), I am delighted to present the 2013–2016 Student Affairs Strategic Action Plan, Ensuring the CUNY Promise. With the generous support and encouragement of The City University of New York’s Chancellery, COSA has spent the last 18 months reimagining the role and function of Student Affairs at America’s premier urban university. The purpose of this document is threefold:

1) to establish a clear vision for Student Affairs at CUNY,
2) to articulate essential priorities for the immediate future, and
3) to communicate strategic action items aimed at advancing the University’s student learning and service enterprise.

In accordance with CUNY’s 2012-2016 Master Plan, the 2013-2016 COSA Strategic Action Plan has been developed to support CUNY’s 270,000 degree-seeking students and the 24 colleges and professional schools that serve them. This plan is intended to provide a road map and tactical approach for advancing the overall quality of the CUNY student experience. Our deliberations with students, administrators and staff have identified approaches for strengthening vital student services, improving essential policies and making critical investments for CUNY. Further, this process has established clear principles for action in which the academic mission informs the learning enterprise and where students’ talents and dreams are realized.

The COSA leadership and I hope this 2013-2016 Student Affairs Strategic Action Plan will provide a thoughtful and meaningful vision for the future of Student Affairs at CUNY. Since the beginning of one of America’s truly great universities, CUNY students have demonstrated a determination, resilience and spirit in pursuit of a brighter future. It is my hope that the following strategic plan will further inspire our students while ensuring the promise of a high quality and extraordinary collegiate experience. Indeed, our students deserve it and Student Affairs stands ready with the entire CUNY community to deliver.

Frank D. Sanchez, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
Elevating the Importance of Student Affairs

The evolution of the Central Office of Student Affairs (COSA) at CUNY, a consideration for this strategic planning process, is not unlike that of other student affairs organizations nationally. Across the country, student affairs operations have emerged within higher education institutions as vital yet often misunderstood administrative necessities. For the last four decades, following the in loco parentis paradigm, student affairs practitioners have quietly spurred American higher education to address the complexities of the student experience (Dungy and Gordon, 2010). Often in response to heightened public accountability and governmental mandates, student affairs professionals have adopted flexible and responsive approaches to managing the needs of an ever-changing student community. Arguably, student affairs professionals and other non-academic functions have had their greatest influence on contemporary higher education policy over the last half century. Below are a few selected developments that have shaped and, in some cases, transformed today’s CUNY landscape:

• Assessment of learning and effectiveness of student success, retention and engagement programs
• Residential programming and auxiliary enterprises
• Partnerships with academic affairs (e.g. learning communities, service learning, study abroad)
• Compliance with federal legislation such as the Higher Education Reauthorization Act; Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; Title IX, assistance to undocumented students
• Threat assessment and emergency response protocol
• Enrollment and customer relations management
• International students and programs; SEVIS reporting post-9/11
• Monitoring virtual, digital and social media communities and emerging personal learning networks
• Educational opportunity support programs (TRiO, EOP, SEEK/CD)
• Career skills, training and workforce development
• Veteran student transition, support and services
• Student health and wellness procedures, protocol and prevention

Colleges and universities have invested in student affairs operations in an effort to provide responsive services and a dynamic co-curricular experience. Now, more than at any other time in history, student affairs practitioners must be viewed as essential partners in the administration of student learning, quality assurance, and service effectiveness (Bresciani, 2010, Dungy, 2011, and Zemsky, 2009). The design of a vibrant, multifaceted student experience depends heavily on the skill and professionalism of a highly competent student affairs staff working in close partnership with the entire university and college community.
If academics are the heart of an institution then students are the lifeblood.

— UNKNOWN
Student Affairs at CUNY

Reporting to the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, the Central Office of Student Affairs enhances the quality of the CUNY student experience while finding innovative ways to optimize critical student services and resources. In addition to central administrative support for assessment, communications, student advocacy and the University Student Senate, COSA manages an extensive portfolio of offices. These offices guide system-wide councils with the primary purpose of providing support, resources, services and innovation to Student Affairs operations across CUNY. These services and operations include:

- Black Male Initiative
- Career Centers and Internships
- Child Care Centers
- Counseling Services
- Disability Resources and Services (ADA, LEADS)
- Health Centers
- International Student Services
- Percy Ellis Sutton SEEK and College Discovery Programs
- Single Stop
- Student Life and Activities
- Veteran Affairs
- Women’s Centers

COSA also has an active role in the shared governance of CUNY and staffs several standing committees, councils and task forces including:

- Board of Trustees Committee on Student Affairs and Special Programs
- Council of Presidents Committee on Student Affairs
- Council of Chief Student Affairs Administrators
- Chancellor's Veteran Student Services Task Force
- Hurricane Sandy Relief Council
Student Affairs practitioners must be viewed as essential partners in student learning, quality assurance, and service effectiveness.
Planning Principles and Assumptions: An Environmental Scan

The Central Office of Student Affairs Strategic Action Plan takes into consideration an evolving student profile, emerging service delivery and changing higher education landscape across CUNY. COSA is mindful of and responsive to a shifting student profile as well as to the service needs, expectations and trends facing CUNY colleges. This action plan considers a variety of factors and assumptions that directly impact the future of our work, are specific to the CUNY student community, and are intended to provide a context from which COSA’s work will emerge.

Changing Student Profile

- CUNY enrollment will grow primarily in traditional-aged and undergraduate populations. In fact, in 2002, almost 40 percent of CUNY students were 25 or older; in 2010, that number dropped to approximately 25 percent.
- 70 percent of all CUNY students work fewer than 20 hours a week.
- 90 percent enroll directly after high school.
- 44 percent of all CUNY freshmen in 2011 were first-generation college students.
- 42 percent of all CUNY freshmen in 2011 had a native language other than English.
- Students, parents and the public will demand and create more pressure for campus safety and security measures and protocol.
- CUNY will continue to see larger numbers of women attending the University as compared to men.
- As the number of traditional-aged students grows, the University will see an increase in parental involvement, particularly in university life areas.
- 19.1 percent of students have no health insurance.
- The number of students identified with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) will increase as will the need for accommodations inside and outside the classroom.
- Students’ heavy investment in social media networks, applications and gaming technology may result in deficiencies in social skills and interpersonal problem solving. Efforts to build a strong campus community may also be hampered.
- Campuses will experience an increase in veteran enrollment and the leadership, social, psychological, emotional and physical needs of veterans.
- Increasing numbers of low-income students will present additional challenges with housing and food security issues.
**Changing Service Delivery**

- Students will expect technology to be embedded in curricular and co-curricular offerings.
- As the number of residential students grows, more students will expect services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- As Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and other virtual learning options continue to grow, the gap between traditional methods of teaching and the way students expect teaching to occur will broaden.
- The nationwide economic uncertainty will result in increased demand for more career and placement services.
- An increase in the number of low-income students may prompt expansion of services addressing housing, food and other basic needs. (e.g. Single Stop)
- Larger numbers of traditional-aged students will demand and expect more traditional campus life activities, opportunities, and experiences.
- Campuses will need to develop creative ways of responding to the new health care legislation as it relates to health service and counseling centers.
- Student and academic services will need to be accessible 24/7 and via the Web and online.
- Students will expect University communications via technology in a timely and effective manner. Student Affairs staff will need to know how to leverage technology in order to build student community and connection with the University, often virtually.
More than ever, today’s CUNY students enroll after high school, attend full time and work less than 20 hours per week – and demand more engaging campus activities and experiences.
Changing Higher Education Landscape

• Over the next five years the number of high school graduates in New York will plateau.
• University budgets will be stable between 2012 and 2016.
• Due to physical space limitations on the majority of CUNY campuses, there will be greater pressure to reduce time to completion.
• Accrediting bodies will place attention on learning outcomes inside and outside the classroom.
• In response to the recently adopted federal health care legislation, schools and colleges will have greater external pressure to increase enrollment in health professions.
• As enrollment grows there will be increased pressure for investment in basic student service infrastructure.
• Non-resident and international students may offer colleges a financial alternative as residential living increases on campuses.
• Human and financial resources will not be able to keep pace with enrollment growth and competing academic and facility needs.
• Investment in staff development will be essential to meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse and changing student population.
• Greater investments in technology will be necessary.
• Student affairs will have to be entrepreneurial in its development of revenue generators and public/private partnerships.
• Graduates will need to work effectively on a global landscape and to compete with graduates from around the world.
Vision, Mission and Core Values

Vision
By 2016, the Central Office of Student Affairs will become a national model for leading the development of resources, information and innovation designed to create an unparalleled student experience across the City University of New York.

Mission Statement
The strength of The City University of New York is derived from the diversity of its students and from each college’s distinct institutional character. Each college offers discrete campus-based services and programs which reflect its unique mission, character, and student populations. The Student Affairs divisions of each college provide quality services and programs which support the academic mission of the University and enhance student learning and development. The primary objectives of the services and programs are to support students’ academic achievement and persistence to graduation; to provide opportunities for career development: to enhance students’ intellectual, aesthetic, and social growth; to facilitate critical thinking skills, and to promote civic responsibility (Board of Trustees, 1997).

Core Values

STUDENT-CENTERED
The student-centered philosophy places students (prospective, current, alumni) as our primary purpose, priority and mission. As student affairs professionals, we design services, programs, policies and relationships which purposefully guide and enhance student growth, engagement, satisfaction, access, learning and success.

EVIDENCE-BASED
The Central Office of Student Affairs and divisions of student affairs across CUNY must create a culture of evidence where we engage in data-guided decisions by gathering, studying, analyzing and disseminating information as well as responding to actionable intelligence that improves program and service quality, effectiveness and student impact.
ETHIC OF CARE

All Student Affairs staff should possess an authentic ethic of care for students. This core value ensures that regardless of students’ values, attitudes, appearance, behavior, background or personal difference from ourselves, we strive to nurture, protect, assist, include and otherwise care for every student in the best way possible.

PROFESSIONALISM

This core value supports the belief that innovation and best practices will guide our professionalism across the University. We should expect and support all professionals to actively pursue campus, city, state, regional and national development opportunities and excel as campus leaders for individual areas of responsibility.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

Student success is most likely to flourish in a community that embraces diversity, inclusion and equity. The Central Office of Student Affairs will powerfully affirm diversity as a core value and celebrate differences in students’ values, attitudes, backgrounds or individual stations in life. Inclusion promotes an environment where all students feel welcomed, engaged and respected. Equity acknowledges the inequities in educational opportunities based on individual and group differences and creates new opportunities for those who have been adversely affected.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration means cooperation, teamwork and partnerships. The Central Office of Student Affairs is committed to working together within the department, across divisions and with colleges. The Central Office of Student Affairs believes in developing partnerships with professional organizations as well as with the private and government sectors to develop and promote programs and policies that foster student success.

TRANSPARENCY

The Central Office of Student Affairs abides by the belief that information be shared openly, honestly and widely across a broad spectrum of stakeholders, unless confidentiality is required. We are committed to the dissemination of news and information to promote student success and to facilitate an information and data exchange for the benefit of students, the university community and external constituencies. We pursue and widely share new knowledge and expand the understanding of existing knowledge.
The student-centered philosophy places students—prospective, current, alumni—as our primary purpose, priority and mission.
2013–2016 Strategic Plan Priorities

On October 13, 2011, the Central Office of Student Affairs (COSA) hosted a retreat with the Chief Student Affairs Officers (CSAOs) at the Macaulay Honors College. Deliberations at the retreat emphasized the relationship of COSA with the colleges’ Vice Presidents of Student Affairs as well as strategies to enhance COSA’s value to Student Affairs professionals across CUNY. The most salient deliverable of these conversations was a series of priorities identified by COSA leadership and the Vice Presidents of Student Affairs. These priorities were later reaffirmed during the October 11, 2012 retreat. The following Student Affairs Strategic Plan priorities emerged directly from these deliberations, in consultation with the University Student Senate, and were guided by the University Master Plan:

Student Success

Student success and degree completion will be a top COSA priority throughout the duration of this plan. COSA will invest in the expansion of effective practices, policies and programs for all student populations to succeed. For example, this coming year the Central Office will facilitate focused conversations with the Chief Student Affairs Officers as well as national experts in developing standard “Expectations of Student Success.” These expectations will guide COSA on focused areas of investment and support for Student Affairs leadership and administrators.

Campus Life and Engagement

The CUNY student profile has changed dramatically over the last decade. More than ever before, today’s CUNY student enrolls after high school, attends full-time and works less than 20 hours per week. As a result more students are interested in and have time to participate in campus life activities. While national studies have shown direct correlations with student success and the quality and quantity of student engagement, many of these studies show even greater outcomes for underserved and low-income student communities (Kuh, 2003).

Technology

Today’s increasingly digital-savvy student expects basic access to services via technology. While state and city funding have stabilized somewhat, CUNY’s current funding for student services will likely not allow campuses to hire enough advisors, counselors or student services staff to deliver the quality of services our students deserve. Consequently, campuses must examine new technologies not only to deliver high quality, scalable student services but to gain administrative efficiencies.
Assessment and Effectiveness

In the coming years, CUNY Student Affairs professionals will be expected to gather, analyze and otherwise measure program and service effectiveness. COSA will work to create a culture of evidence by expanding the use of assessment and evaluation while measuring effectiveness. In particular, the central office will develop a Quality Indicator System (QIS) for monitoring effective programs, performance and service quality as well as highlighting actionable intelligence for execution.

Professional Development

In the next three years, COSA and Student Affairs professionals across CUNY will strive to become regionally dominant and nationally prominent in the Student Affairs profession. Subsequently, COSA will make significant investments in providing training and skills development on national best practices and compliance with state and federal regulations. In particular, COSA will advance professional knowledge and skills through the creation of a Middle Management Institute and by advancing in leadership roles in regional and national Student Affairs associations. In the coming years, CUNY will host a significant regional and or national Student Affairs conference.

Entrepreneurial Collaborations

In the past year, COSA initiated and received more than $2.8 million in external grants, sponsorships and gifts to support our campuses and the students they serve. In the coming years COSA expects to significantly increase this amount by actively investing in public/private/governmental partnerships as well as in new strategies for sponsorships. By cultivating city, state and national resources, initiating grants and innovative partnerships COSA will generate $10 million to further support our Student Affairs operations and student success across CUNY.
Student Affairs professionals must create a culture of evidence, engaging in data-guided decisions.
Student success and degree completion will be a top priority.
VII.

Strategic Action Items

**PRIORITY 1.0  Student Success**

1.1 Expectations of Student Success: The Central Office of Student Affairs will identify expectations for student services to support student success across CUNY. These expectations will support standard best practices and administrative effectiveness throughout student service operations.

1.2 Increase Peer Mentoring: COSA will increase the number of peer mentors across colleges while providing high-quality mentor training and development. Peer mentors will assist with first-year students’ social and academic transition to the University.

1.3 International Students Success: COSA will improve the international student experience, satisfaction and retention rates for international students across CUNY.

1.4 Principles of Excellence for Veteran Students: The COSA Veteran Affairs office will lead the implementation of the recent Executive Order 13607 Principles of Excellence supporting veterans on all college campuses.

1.5 Expanding Opportunity Programs: COSA will develop a coordinated strategy to identify and apply for federal grants and private foundations to complement college efforts in serving low-income and first-generation students.

**PRIORITY 2.0  Campus Life and Student Engagement**

2.1 Invest in High-Quality Campus Life: COSA will provide greater support and resources for campuses working to improve the quality of student activities, athletics, student clubs and organizations as well as support for student government associations.

2.2 Civic Education and Democratic Leadership: COSA will promote students’ involvement in civic education opportunities and the democratic process by inviting all CUNY colleges to participate in the NASPA Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement initiative.

2.3 Leveraging NYC Opportunities: COSA will identify and promote free/low cost educational opportunities in the city including but not limited to access to cultural centers, museums, concerts, theater and speakers.

2.4 Coordinate Residence Life Practices and Policies: COSA will invest in the coordination and support of high quality housing administrative practices and programming across CUNY.
2.5 Establish Staffing Standards for CUNY Athletics: COSA will work with Athletic Directors to develop a blueprint towards achieving national athletic personnel standards as defined by the NCAA and other federal guidelines.

**PRIORITY 3.0 Assessment and Effectiveness**

3.1 State of Students Report: COSA will develop and widely disseminate a “CUNY State of Students” Annual Report highlighting trends in student data including enrollments, profiles and needs.

3.2 Quality Indicator System: COSA will work with the Council of Chief Student Affairs Officers and Student Affairs Councils to develop measures of quality and effectiveness among student services and campus life programming.

3.3 Assessment of the First-year Student Experience: COSA will work with the central Office of Academic Affairs and colleges to develop a first-year student experience assessment strategy. This strategy will examine student services, policies/practices, satisfaction and other quality indicators of the first-year student experience.

3.4 Enrollment Formula for Child Care Centers: COSA will develop an enrollment-based allocation model for child care centers in order to better meet the demands of students with child care needs. Developing this funding formula will enable COSA to maximize existing resources and support for students.

3.5 Enrollment Formula for Disability Resources and Services: COSA will develop an enrollment-based allocation model for centers serving students with disabilities. Developing a rational funding formula will enable COSA to maximize existing resources and further support for students with disabilities.

**PRIORITY 4.0 Technology**

4.1 Enhance Communications, Technology and Media: COSA will develop a communication plan to leverage current technology and social media as well as identify technology service strategies for the future.

4.2 Advance Hobson’s Technology: COSA will develop a centralized plan for using Hobson’s products (Connect, Retain etc.) while supporting campuses with implementation and use.

4.3 Support *In Your Class* Technology: COSA will work with Student Affairs administrators to improve communications between students and faculty via *In Your Class* technology.
CUNY will strive to become regionally dominant and nationally prominent in the Student Affairs profession.
Student success is most likely to flourish in a community that embraces diversity, inclusion and equity.
PRIORITY 5.0 Professional Development

5.1 Midlevel Managers Institute: COSA will develop an in-house Student Affairs institute for training select midlevel Student Affairs professionals across CUNY. The institute will provide insight on CUNY's shared-governance structure, institutional culture and effective practices as well as examination of effective approaches toward leadership and management.

5.2 Student Affairs Professional Development Training Series: COSA will establish a professional development training series focused on current practices, effective programming and expert consultation on issues facing Student Affairs professionals across CUNY.

5.3 Standardize Student Conduct Processes: COSA will update and implement specific training on policy, protocol and procedures involving student conduct across CUNY.

5.4 Host Major Student Affairs Conference: COSA will host one of the national Student Affairs associations (NASPA/ACPA) national or regional conferences.

PRIORITY 6.0 Entrepreneurial Partnerships

6.1 Development of Health Services and Partnerships: COSA will respond to the Health Care Reform legislation by developing a plan for future CUNY student health services centers.

6.2 Internship and Service Expansion: COSA will invest in expanding internships and service learning opportunities through federal work-study as well as public, private and governmental partnerships.

6.3 Increase External Collaborations and Resources: COSA will significantly increase new revenue streams through external grants, sponsorships and gifts to support college campuses Student Affairs operations and student services enhancement.
Concluding Remarks

The Central Office of Student Affairs and Student Affairs operations across CUNY are vital to delivering on a longstanding promise to students—a relevant college education. In many communities, there are clearly growing questions about the value of a college degree. Across the country, the general public is reacting to increasing tuition costs. Student debt is at an all-time high, and there is uneasiness with the job market; such questions are understandable. Even so, higher education institutions must respond by not only delivering high-quality instruction but also providing extensive, beyond-the-classroom experiences for students aimed at providing relevant competencies, skills and choices beyond college.

Today’s CUNY graduates should not only have options to pursue employment in their communities or boroughs, but should have the talents, strengths and competencies to find competitive employment on a state, national or international stage. This vision requires our colleges to examine all aspects of the campus life experience and the quality of engagement extending far beyond classroom walls and new textbook editions. How students learn and how they receive and synthesize information can no longer be exclusive to the traditional curriculum. Student Affairs operations and the out-of-classroom experience have proven too powerful to ignore, in substance, resources and personnel.

The University’s mission of access and excellence together with the tenets discussed above are the foundation upon which the 2013–2016 Strategic Action Plan, Ensuring the CUNY Promise, has been shaped. The plan is designed not only to enhance the quality of the CUNY experience today but to strengthen its relevance for CUNY graduates tomorrow. While the Student Affairs mission advances student success and exceptional student services for all CUNY students, COSA must position itself for a viable future and in a preemptive fashion, prepare for a higher education landscape that is changing with unprecedented speed.

References


This plan provides a road map and tactical approach for advancing the overall quality of the CUNY student experience.
How students learn is no longer exclusive to the traditional curriculum—Student Affairs operations and the out-of-classroom experience are too powerful to ignore.
IX.

Governance Councils and Committees

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Zina Richardson, University Director for Career Services and Internships
Lenora Wade, Communications Associate
Central Office of Student Affairs Councils

Behavioral Intervention Team Council
Black Male Initiative
Career Council
Childcare Council
Council of Athletics Directors
Council of International Student Scholar Services
Counseling Centers Directors Council
Health Services Advisory Council
SEEK/CD Directors Council
Student Activities Directors Council
Student Conduct Council
Veterans Council
Women's Center Council

Council of Chief Student Affairs Officers

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Marcela Armoza, Vice President for Student Affairs, New York City College of Technology
Eija Ayravainen, Vice President for Student Affairs, Hunter College
Michael A. Baston, Vice President for Student Affairs, LaGuardia Community College
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This plan is designed not only to enhance the quality of the CUNY experience today but to strengthen its relevancy for CUNY graduates tomorrow.
CUNY’s Student Affairs operations are vital to delivering on a longstanding promise to students—a relevant college education.