Minutes of
The Lehman College Senate Meeting
Wednesday, February 3, 2010


The meeting was called to order by President Ricardo R. Fernández at 3:40 p.m.

Minutes Adopted-
A motion was made and seconded to adopt the minutes of the Senate meeting of December 9, 2009. After a correction in lines 159-160 in which Dance was incorrectly listed as an approved “Liberal Arts Major” in the Business for Liberal Arts curriculum instead of the Department of Journalism, Communication, & Theatre, the minutes were approved unanimously.
a. President Ricardo R. Fernández-

1. President Fernández opened his remarks by briefly assessing the bleak 2010 budgetary environment at the State and Federal levels. The nation, not just New York State, is going through a severe economic crisis, and projections are that there are significant budget deficits at both the State and Federal levels. We are facing a very dreary fiscal year in 2010-11. Complicating the normal budgetary process is the fact that 2010 is an election year—all members of the State Legislature are up for election, as is the governor. How politics will affect the budgetary process and negotiations is unknown. Also, it is very early in the process, and we are not even sure who the players are. It does not seem likely that the New York State Budget will be approved by the end of March, which is the end of the State’s fiscal year. We will monitor developments in Albany—and in Washington.

President Fernández will be traveling to Albany next week as head of the delegation of the three Bronx colleges, and will meet with assemblymen and senators representing our borough. A list of priorities will be presented that reflects CUNY’s overall budget request. The governor has put forth a number of proposals in trying to balance the budget, but many of these will be changed. Among them is a proposed reduction in the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP); this is a perennial executive proposal, and every year legislators find ways to restore TAP. But there are a number of other significant proposed reductions as well. However, we must also examine the budgetary process in context. In the last two years, CUNY has lost more than $120 million in appropriations. The governor has proposed yet another cut of $84 million. CUNY has been able to cope with the first two reductions, but this latest one presents an additional, very significant challenge. In the past there were federal funds appropriated to assist the State in balancing its books; after next year, those funds will no longer be available. This will be a difficult year, but there have been problematic years in the past, and CUNY has always found methods of coping.

Prof. John Mineka inquired why in this very dire budget situation the College was hiring many high-level administrators. The President responded by noting that all of these positions were included in the College’s financial plan; we had set aside funding for them and these are not hires being added at the last moment. The individuals we have appointed enable us to provide more comprehensive services. That is not to say that the College is
fully funded in the areas it needs to be. But we have had to add positions in the area, for
example, of assessment. A Middle States report is due a year from this spring focusing on
outcomes assessment and institutional assessment, and we are taking this task very
seriously. The College also must provide necessary services for its students as well as
generating accurate data that gives us a better perspective on what we are doing. We must
keep moving forward because students need these services.
President Fernández added later that there is no appropriation in the 2010-2011 capital
budget for the new science building. But, he said, funding was unnecessary next year
because the building will be under construction using funds currently available. It is
important, however, that funding for Phase II of the facility be budgeted in the 2012-2013
year capital budget.

2. Senate members received two documents prior to the meeting. One was the final
version of the report of the Strategic Planning Council, which was developed by faculty,
staff, and administrators—with student representation. In essence, this document lays out
the direction the College will take over the next ten years. The goal was to have a sense of
what Lehman College might look like in 2018 (its 50th anniversary). This will serve as
our guide to growth, programs, and other activities over the next several years. The
president invited any suggestions or comments on the Strategic Planning Council Report.
The report of the Task Force on Retention, Progression, and Graduation features a great
deal of information, as well as recommendations. We need to take very specific and
deliberate steps to improve the rates of retention, progression, and graduation, and there
have already been some significant improvements in these areas. We were able to increase
our enrollment by improving our retention rate; that means we did not have to recruit so
many new students to meet our enrollment target. The report contains fascinating data
that many of you have not seen before but may be of interest to you. It provides specifics
on students, and how the College deals with its students. As you may know, we have
increased the SAT minimum requirement—first to 900, and then to 940—to obtain better
graduation rates. (Our graduation numbers are not out of line with similar institutions
across the country, and our students face extenuating factors as well.) In the current
climate of increased transparency and accountability, increased pressure is being applied
to institutions to improve, to become better than they are as demonstrated by objective
criteria. Higher education represents a major investment in New York State, and not just in the public sector, but in the private sector as well. Increasingly, people are saying, “If we are spending all this money, what are we getting in return?” We need better rates, and this report enables the College to analyze the data so as to create solutions to improve its retention and graduation figures. Funds are not available to implement all of the report’s recommendations. But many of them do not cost much, and we are taking action on some of the report’s suggestions. Others, however, will require additional resources, and as funding becomes available, we plan to implement some of them. I urge you to read both of these documents: they are very instructive and will give you a very clear sense of enrollment issues and where the College intends to go over the next ten years.

Professor Patricia Thompson made a comment regarding the English Language skills of her students. She noted that many were transfers from community colleges, and she believes that many of her students have never written a research paper; also, she thinks their English language skills need fine-tuning. Professor Thompson wondered what her colleagues had experienced in regard to student writing skills. President Fernández asked Robert Whittaker, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Online Education, to respond to her question. Professor Whittaker noted that the Strategic Planning Council report focuses specifically on the ability of students to write competently. Writing well will serve students in their professional careers, and a group of faculty and administrators is working together to assess how well Lehman College is preparing its students—both new admits and transfers—in the areas of: freshman composition; writing intensively (both for pre-60 credits and for juniors and seniors); and providing the type of learning experiences that will result in improved writing skills. The College is examining what it is doing, how well it is doing it, and how it can be improved. Members of the Senate will be hearing more about this issue, and many people involved in teaching undergraduates share Professor Thompson’s concern.

President Fernández then commented that one aspect of the report prepared by the Task Force on Retention, Progression, and Graduation is that transfer students constitute a majority of Lehman’s new students—almost 60% last fall. It is clear that if students come
here having completed an associate degree, their graduation rates are higher than if they do not have a degree. However, the president believes that many community college students have the misconception that it is better to be in a four-year school than a two-year school—even though students pay less for tuition in a two-year institution. We are working very closely with the presidents and the provosts of the two community colleges that are the College’s largest feeder schools to address the issue of writing competency and similar topics. Some of these issues cannot be fully addressed at Lehman; they need to be resolved at the community college level, and the sooner we can start a real dialogue with the students, faculty, and staff of the community colleges over these issues, the sooner we will be able to address them in an effective way.

Joann Ruiz, Student Conference secretary and a student who worked as an Orientation Workshop Leader with Amanda Dubois, Lehman’s Coordinator of New Student Orientation, commented that a major concern of transfer students in coming to the College was having to access many offices to obtain everything they needed. She praised the proposed Transfer Center, one of the recommendations in the report of the Task Force on Retention, Progression, and Graduation, and said it would provide one-stop shopping for transfer students. President Fernández pointed out that he was trying to obtain additional resources from CUNY to develop the right kind of program.

b. **Student Conference—**

1. Ms. Hyacinth Bouzalakos, Student Conference Chair, reported that the Conference held its first meeting of the spring semester on Wednesday, January 27. New senators were sworn in.

2. A special election for the Student Conference will take place on February 24. She urged faculty members to inform their students that the Conference is an effective method of becoming involved in the life of the campus and with other students. The Conference can make a positive difference in an institution that will be the students’ home for four years.

3. At the January 27 meeting, students voted positively on a constitutional amendment authorizing more Student Conference members; the organization is now awaiting the approvals required to move forward on a petition.
4. A variety of student centers are participating in the development of a Haiti Aid Week, and the Student Conference is considering donating funds to this cause.

REPORTS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES-

a. Committee on Governance-
   1. Professor Duane Tananbaum explained that the College’s governance documents and its bylaws provide for the Senate to elect an Ombudsman and the election will take place this semester. Professor Tananbaum thanked Prof. Orhan Kayaalp, chair of the Department of Economics and Business, for noting this provision. Professor Tananbaum stated that the Ombudsman’s Office has not functioned well for a long period; yet, this is an important position for the College. This spring, the Governance Committee will carry out the Ombudsman election process, as well as holding elections for membership on Senate Committees.
   2. The Governance Committee expects to have a meeting with Senate committee chairs during the spring semester to discuss how activities can be coordinated better with the individual Senate committees—such as with a liaison system.

b. Committee on Admissions, Evaluations, and Academic Standards-
   There was no report.

c. Committee on Undergraduate Curriculum-
   Professor Barbara Jacobson reported that there were three departmental proposals: from the Department of Journalism, Communication & Theatre; from the Department of Languages and Literatures; and from the Department of Philosophy. The report was moved and approved.

d. Committee on Graduate Studies-
   There was no report.

e. Committee on Academic Freedom-
   There was no report.
f. Committee on Library, Technology, and Telecommunications-
Mr. James Carney reminded the Senate that there is an early Technology Fee due date.
CUNY has moved the date up for Tech Fee Proposals to be received. They must be in the
hands of the deans by February 16; this necessitates that department chairs review the
proposals prior to that date. Mr. Carney reminded the Senate that this is an extremely
tight deadline.

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g. Committee on Campus Life and Facilities-
1. Professor Janette Tilley presented a report from the Sustainability Council sub-
committee of the Committee on Campus Life and Facilities. This group has released a ten-
year Sustainability Plan that seeks to reduce the College’s carbon footprint by 30 percent
over ten years. The areas that need to be addressed to achieve this goal are:

Energy (Replace and/or update the College’s central heating and cooling power plant;
replace all incandescent bulbs with fluorescent lighting; install solar thermal panels on the
new science building and on the APEX building for water heating; replace all window air
conditioners and other electrical devices with Energy Star-rated equipment).

Water (Recycle; install motion-activated faucets in all bathrooms; replace water meters
with transducers to track water usage; re-use “grey water” for flushing toilets in the new
science facility; replace urinals with waterless versions).

Transportation (Purchase electric and non-motorized vehicles for use by maintenance
workers on campus; seek methods that encourage the use of public transportation by
faculty, staff, and students).

Education and Outreach (Host and promote public conferences on sustainability; establish
a new interdisciplinary undergraduate major in Environmental Science; encourage student
participation in sustainability events).

Nutrition (Pulp all food waste and compost it; use new silverware service; require
sustainable practices by the College’s food service vendor; establish an on-campus
farmers’ market; provide nutritional information for all products in the cafeteria).

Procurement (Use only products made from recycled materials where feasible; require all
departments to utilize the e-procurement system and submit purchase requisitions
electronically [thus reducing paper usage]; purchase only green cleaning products; make sure that all printers and copiers are capable of two-sided printing).

**Recycling** (Practice a robust and campus-wide program; implement food-waste composting in the cafeteria and continue our yard-waste composting).

Professor Tilley asserted that Lehman College is a leader in recycling within the CUNY system—there is much to be proud of on this campus. The College has been recycling and composting, but there is a big ramp-up, and having a ten-year plan on the table gives the College something to rally around.

President Fernández expressed the belief that in the coming decade we will see new sustainable products and technologies—such as clear plastic, bio-degradable cups made of corn by-products that he saw in the supermarket.

Our food services provider has been asked to examine how it conducts business. For example, we now are using bio-degradable cafeteria trays made of cardboard. More and more, we are taking sustainability factors into account and giving the topic the seriousness it deserves. We have taken some good steps and need to keep up our momentum.

**h. Committee on Budget and Long Range Planning**

There was no report.

**i. Committee on the University Faculty Senate**

1. Professor Manfred Philipp informed the Senate of a planned memorial service for Vice Chancellor Ernesto Malavé. The Interim Senior Vice Chancellor for Budget, Finance & Financial Policy, Mark V. Shaw, is beginning his tenure, and will assume responsibility not only of budget but also of financial planning. Mr. Shaw formerly served at the Metropolitan Transportation Authority as executive director, and he has held other important positions in city and state government. He has now begun attending our Budget Advisory Committee Meetings, together with Associate Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance, Matthew Sapienza.

2. We are in the middle of evaluating the Faculty Experience Survey.

3. There was an effort by the Chancellery to change the structure of the Professional Staff Congress-CUNY Awards Program. All parties have now agreed that this topic will be handled best in contract negotiations with the Union—which has already had its first
negotiating session. In the meantime, the awards program continues as it has in the past. We are looking for people who will handle and shepherd applications through the review process. As a reminder, the University Faculty Senate nominates members of the University Committee on Research Awards (UCRA), and the chancellor picks from these nominees, so members are selected essentially from both sides. UCRA has proposed a pilot program to have a smaller number of high-dollar amount grants, starting this year. However, given the nature of the contract negotiations, that proposal is now not being acted upon.

4. The University Faculty Senate had a report on enrollment numbers. The number of transfer students has increased tremendously, particularly to the community colleges, and especially to LaGuardia Community College. The main problem that increased enrollment brings is how to maintain quality. There is a hiring boom, relatively speaking, in full-time faculty, but there is no way that the full-time faculty members can keep up with the numbers of students enrolled, and the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty keeps getting worse. We have real concerns about maintaining academic quality in this kind of situation, especially given the potential of the State to cut budget support next year and in the year following. The governor has proposed a budget that includes differential tuition for SUNY and CUNY. The CUNY chancellor is opposed to having differential tuition by college, but favors it for academic programs, because some programs are more expensive than others. Also proposed is a cut in TAP funding and for community colleges. (He referred to a chart that showed State aid to community colleges relative to how much New York City public schools receive; Professor Philipp noted that New York State’s community colleges also receive support from cities, but there is going to be an increasing disparity in this comparison.)

5. There have been a number of groundbreaking ceremonies recently. Hunter College School of Social Work’s ceremony is on YouTube.com. A funding request has been approved by the CUNY Board of Trustees for a new building at the New York City College of Technology.

6. Within the CUNY system a number of new college presidents have been appointed. Baruch College has a new acting president, and joins Brooklyn College, which has recently announced a new leader, and City College, which is in the midst of a search.
7. There is discussion in relation to the Search for Education Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) and College Discovery Programs.

8. There is a new committee to examine the CUNY Proficiency Examination (CPE). This is a very expensive exam, and the University would like to cut its costs. Ms. Mary Carroll, an English instructor, asked how it could be that many transfer students, who have earned associate degrees at community colleges, and have passed the CPE, are still unable to write functionally? A Lehman student—a graduate of Bronx Community College—pointed out that community college students prepare for the CPE with three weeks of writing workshops, “so by the time they do take the test, they pass. Three weeks later, after they graduate, they don’t have to write anymore and they don’t care.” But she asked that the Senate not give up on students and not to assume they cannot write; just help them. There are facilities on campus, writing labs, and students who need help with their writing could be informed of these; in addition, during spring, summer, and winter break—even in classes—writing workshops could be developed so that these students could learn how to express themselves more effectively.

Another Lehman student pointed out that the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program provides a writing assistant in many courses to assist students with their research papers. Professor Thompson believes that assisting students to write better is the responsibility of every member of the Senate. She pointed out that in criticizing writing, faculty members are not criticizing the students themselves. It is the faculty’s responsibility to prepare students to be competitive in the English language.

9. The School of Professional Studies has proposed its first competitive brick and mortar competition curriculum to the other CUNY colleges. It has competed in the past with online courses and also in terms of continuing education courses. The University Faculty Senate has certain concerns about The CUNY School of Professional Studies that were explored at the Plenary Meeting held yesterday evening. One issue is that it does not have the governance structure that Lehman has; they have also have withdrawn doctoral student support packages that were promised in the School’s governing document.

10. In regard to the implementation of the CUNYfirst system, department chairs at Queens College have experienced enormous difficulties, especially in terms of the hiring module for recruiting new faculty from the outside. This has also been reported at John
Jay College (although different problems were experienced there). At Queens College, the chairs have put together a group specifically dedicated to dealing with CUNYfirst issues. The CUNYfirst module for hiring new faculty has been dropped for the moment, and the process has reverted to paper. At John Jay, curriculum vitas and other records were input into the CUNYfirst system, but then disappeared; so faculty were unable to proceed with searches. CUNYfirst costs a great deal of money, and there have been special meetings to address these problems. The Research Foundation of CUNY decided not to adopt CUNYfirst primarily because of its expense; they are using a free and open-source model, and are now writing software to enable them to interface their package with CUNYfirst.

11. There will be a meeting on Monday with the Retiree’s Chapter.

12. A new advisory committee has been authorized to work with CUNY Vice Chancellor of Academic Research Gillian Small on research affairs.

13. The University Faculty Senate is in favor of public higher education in New York State prisons. Former Governor George Pataki had issued an Executive Order halting such activities. There was a meeting today on the issue, and CUNY seems to believe that this is an important subject. Members of Governor Patterson’s staff recognize that educating prisoners would save the State money, since security expenses are lower when classes are in session. There is some chance this initiative will come to fruition.

14. At the Plenary Session last night, there was an impassioned presentation by City Councilman Ydanis Rodríguez, new chair of the City Council’s Higher Education Committee. He asked that more minority scholars be appointed to CUNY’s faculty.

j. Old Business-
   There was none.

k. New Business-
   There was none.

ADJOURNMENT
The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Esdras Tulier