

York College
94-20 Guy R. Brewer Blvd.
Academic Core AC-3D01 (In-person)
12:15-1:50 pm
Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2025

SENATE PLENARY

Minutes

1. Call to Order (Quorum 36)

Administration: Schrader, Brazill, Rios, Fellows

Faculty: Braithwaite, Bratton-Robinson, Burke, Buxenbaum, Chirico, Barley, Dan, Forrester, Githuku, Hartman, Henry, Hornung, Lee, McGee, McNeil, Meddeb, Moore, Musumeci, Penn, Preiser, Radhamohan, Richards, Scheidlower, Smith-Sanchez, Thompson, Wang

Students: Bishundayal, Daniels, Dorismond, Eghaghe, Fordjour, Gueye, Ibeh, Kargbo, Khamis, Latour, Maharaj, Matthew, McLaren, Mohan, Ogueri, Richard, Sarasty, Sinclair, Singh, Taylor, Toumba, Van Velzen

Guests: Lee, Howel, Allie, Hajitano, Singh, Rodgers, Clarke, Scott, Roebuck, Alexandre, Mohamed, Jackson, Palmer, Owen, Dervisevic, Rodriquez, Boyle, Pratt, Haggler, Salnave, Rampersaud, Ayes, Utle, Becker, Homes, Dinsman, Saad, Garley, Salek, McDowell, Metallinos, Garcia, Crew, Store, Peal, Nwaweluozo, Aderibigbe, Skinner, Wright

2. Approval of Minutes for February 25, 2025

3. President's Report (Schrader)

February might be the shortest month of the year, but it is not short on our mission-centered efforts such as expanding resources, increasing enrollment, enhancing institutional effectiveness, advancing student success, and improving facilities. These are in no mean disparate efforts, but instead they are intricately intertwined.

Funding Requests and Advocacy

In late February I provided testimony at the annual Queens Borough Hearing and made a request to Borough President Richards for \$2.5 million dollars for the renovation of the Academic Core Union Hall Plaza and landscaping. The project would renovate the York College Union Hall Plaza and will include new walkway pavers, seating, softscape, lighting, and sculptural elements that are artistic in type. Upon completion, the Union Hall Plaza will provide an outdoor place of wellness and gathering area for students, faculty, staff, and guests. We also made a request for \$2 million dollars for the renovation of Lecture Hall 1M06. The lecture hall has a seating capacity of 138 chairs with tiered seating original to the building's construction. The newly renovated lecture hall will have state-of-the-art audio video capabilities that provide users with access to the latest advances in multimedia presentation platforms. Features will include, but not be limited to, the ability to support streaming media, large room size displays for all to share and mirror content, distance learning, and ergonomic seating with outlets for charging and USB connectivity. In addition,

renovation updates will comply with the latest governing regulatory requirement that include ADA accessibility.

Yesterday, I provided testimony to the Queens City Council Delegation: Requests were made for:

- For the purchase of Common-Area Seating and Furniture for Students and Landscape Upgrades and Outdoor Seating (\$340,000) to provide students, faculty and staff with additional areas to relax, study, and connect with classmates and colleagues throughout the day.
- Operational support to open the York College Track and Field to the public (\$50,000)
- Funds to Preserving Cultural Treasures: An Initiative to Conserve York College's Iconic African American Art Collection - Restoration \$30,000. Currently, the Academic Core houses an essential collection of 11 public artworks, including six pieces by celebrated African American artists—Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Houston Conwill, Sam Gilliam, Richard Hunt, and Martin Puryear—and a painting by Sicilian American artist Frank Stella.

This month I also attended the ACE on the Hill which provided me the opportunity to meet with Congressman Meeks to amplify York's voice in advocating for resources and thank him for his support.

I also had the opportunity to attend the NYS Association of Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislators Conference alongside 16 York College students, who represented us exceedingly well. They volunteered at Registration, attended workshops bringing their voice to the conversation and networking and they were hard to miss in their Cardinal Red blazers.

Career Development/Internships

They represented us so well that early last week I received a text from Tasheka my former KCC Chief of Staff who shared that her best friend was on a panel at Caucus and after some interaction with one of our students who left a deep impression on her. Deep enough for her to ask Tasheka to reach out to me to see if I could put her in contact with the student because she wanted to discuss a potential internship opportunity. Tasheka added in her request to me, that the student was wearing a red blazer, to which I responded that they all had on red blazers. So, I sent a picture of the group and her best friend identified Berlan-Dhiny. I trust by now that they have connected and I look forward to the fruits of this connection.

Career Development and Student Transfer are two important Chancellor initiatives. Earlier this month, Provost Brazill, Dean Becker, Nyisha and I met with representatives from the Central office. The meeting was the first step in being considered to participate in the CUNY College Model for Career Success Initiative. The Central Office team wanted to share more about the model and gain a deeper understanding of our career success environment. While every campus will take part in the initiative, the first wave of this work will kick off this summer. This meeting will help them to determine which campus will most benefit from being a part of the first wave. Campuses will find out their status in late March.

Meanwhile last semester at York, while in the process of the Marketing and Communications department trying to identify students who were completing internships as part of a linked in marketing campaign, they discovered that there was no central repository of internship information. To this end, Greg and his team developed a data base that will collect data on internship activity, number of students, hours, paid/unpaid status, site locations. More information will be forthcoming.

Scholarship Management

We are making improvements in the administration of our Scholarships and have submitted a request to hire a full-time Scholarship Manager which is currently pending CUNY

approval. The Scholarship Manager will be a student-facing role and will be responsible for submissions, website management and marketing of scholarships.

The Scholarship Manager will work in concert with Janine Scott Director of Institutional Advancement to ensure effective scholarship management. In this capacity, Ms. Scott will have oversight of donor stewardship, prepare reports and ensure that scholarship audit requirements are met. She will work to continuously evaluate the scholarship program to identify opportunities for growth, while improving the student recipient and donor experience. She will also serve as the lead of the newly established Scholarship Committee which will include the Scholarship Manager, and representatives from Institutional Advancement, Financial Aid, Bursars Office, and Business Office. In addition, the scholarship website will be updated to reflect current scholarships available and instructions on how to navigate the portal (NexGen) to apply. More updates will be shared once the Manager is hired. Please know that Institutional Advancement is in the process of reviewing all current foundation scholarships and funding sources.

Enrollment

With regards to enrollment, there's not so good news and great news. We fell short of increasing TOTAL enrollment over Spring 2024, but our First-Time full Time semester retention rate is roughly 5 percentage points higher than the 2023 cohort, that is 82.4% in Fall 2023 cohort and 86.8% for the Fall 2024 as of Form A last week. Not only did we exceed our overall enrollment target, but we exceed our Continuing Undergraduate, Freshmen, Readmit, Continuing graduate students and High School non-degree targets. It is also important to note that this Spring, Graduate student and first-time freshmen enrollment are the highest they have been since Spring 2021; and Continuing Student enrollment exceeds that of Spring 2024. I want to give a special thank you everyone, because we all play a role in enrollment efforts, but especially want to thank VP Williams and the Enrollment Management team and all faculty and staff advisors for your unmatched efforts in mentoring, supporting, coaching and advising students.

It is important that we continue to make progress in recruiting and retaining our students.

On the recruitment side, Marketing and Communications is working to ensure that recruiters and the college has the right tools in our tool box to attract and recruit students. We typically market the college as a whole, or focus on certain programs, but we need to ensure that we market all programs (by department/ school/as a collective/ or individually) as well as market to each student cohort. The reality is that what we want to impart to freshmen, will be different than what we impart to transfers, that's different than how we attract graduate students, and how we ensure that our continuing students are retained.

At caucus I had the pleasure of having breakfast with our contingent of students. When asked why they chose York, many indicated that it was close to home and some even indicated that they had planned to transfer after the first year. But now that they are here, they couldn't imagine being anywhere else. York is their home. It is important that we continue to add value to the place they and we all call our academic and professional home. Hence the requests to made to both borough president and the Queens delegation for seating in common areas in all of our buildings, outdoor furniture and landscaping on 160th and the Union Hall Plaza, reestablishment of a game room and identifying lounge space for faculty and staff.

Budget (Process)

I am not sure how long it took us to get into a deficit, but it will probably take us an equal amount of time to get out of it. It is also especially difficult with enrollment challenges, as well as inadequate staffing levels. VP Rios will provide a more cogent update on all things

budget as well as all things facilities in his report, but I wanted to provide you with an important update on our budget process. VP Rios will provide a more cogent update on all things facilities and the status of our budget, but I wanted to provide you with an important update on our budget process. I've been here for over a year, and Ed, for 10 months, it has been quite the learning experience. In November as we approached the end of another year, I do what I typically do, that is reflect on challenges and opportunities. I also thought about our future as we were in the midst of finalizing our MSCHE committees. In the spirit of my own personal assessment and reflection I shared with Ed and then with cabinet at our January retreat, the need to be more in line with our charter, that is-- sharing not only information but sharing responsibility as well for the development of our budget as called for in College's charter and the CUNY Bylaws (8.7c).

As such, effective this spring we will institute a process that will include

- (1) Budget calls for each division- Respective VPs will work with their units
- (2) Once divisions have been completed their draft budgets and submitted them to the Budget Office, the Budget Office will disseminate to the Resource Committee and the Personnel & Budget for review, input and recommendations for consideration prior to submission to the Central Office. As I indicated, Ed will fill you in on specifics.

A Culture of Assessment

Having started my higher education administration career in the area of Assessment, one can say that I am always in an assessment head space. Like now, I am thinking about our visit in 2027 and how important it is for us to develop a deeper culture of assessment. Assessment is not for the faculty and staff who are on assessment related committees, it is for all of us. Having served on a number of MSCHE teams, and chairing one, I can say that sharing findings that an institution does not meet the standard is painful, so I can only imagine how it feels to be on the receiving end in 2018 when the college was put on warning. It is not a place we need to or will return to in 2027.

Thank you!! to all those who are serving on MSCHE Committees and other related committees, those of you engaging in assessment in your respective areas, those of you using data to drive improvements in your teaching and work, thank you for documenting and sharing your efforts within your departments, offices and classrooms. And I thank you in advance for attending to VP Hoeffner's emails and for your planned participation in her Office's new series: *Let's Talk Data!* Each month, a new topic will be discussed. The first LTD where the topic will be Retention and Graduation Rates will be held on March 4 from 12:30-1:30 via Zoom.

Staff Updates

Friday, February 21 marked Arlene Petersen's last day as our Interim CDO. I am grateful we had the opportunity for her exemplary leadership and service to York College as Interim CDO and a member of my cabinet. She leaves big shoes to fill at a critical time. Thank you to the Search Committee for their efforts in identifying someone to fill them. To this end, please welcome Dr. Danielle Holmes as York's new Chief Diversity Officer. Dr. Holmes has held key leadership roles across higher education and secondary institutions, including as Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the Academy of the Holy Angels. She has extensive experience in change management, conflict resolution, program development, Title IX compliance, equitable hiring, and DEI assessment. Throughout her career, she has worked with student affairs, legal teams, faculty hiring committees, and executive leadership to drive policies that promote inclusive hiring, equity-based programming, and institutional accountability. She is a sought-after speaker and facilitator, having led seminars on anti-racism, diversity and inclusion, student engagement, equity filter utilization, and culturally responsive teaching.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Finance and Business Administration, a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership from Rider University, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Saint Peter's University. Dr. Holmes will be an incredible asset to York College and our work in advancing our mission of student and institutional success. For the next few weeks, Arlene will be working part-time to effectively transition Dr. Holmes.

She can be reached at dholmes@york.cuny.edu/ 718 262 2141/ Ext 2137. Also please remind that you may utilize the University-wide [HR Discrimination and Retaliation Report Portal](#) on the CUNY website to report incidences of discrimination and retaliation.

As many of you may know, Dr. Earl Simons was offered and decided to pursue a wonderful opportunity at Medgar Evers College. For 19 years, Earl served with distinction in various roles at York, and most recently as the Executive Director of Government Relations and Strategic Initiatives. In this capacity, he worked closely with local, state, and federal government entities and representatives, coordination advocacy and funding efforts consistent with York's mission and priorities and managing constituent relations. While I am sad to see Earl go, I am grateful to have both had the opportunity to work with him and that he will remain as part of the CUNY family.

Earl leaves big shoes to fill, and York is fortunate to have Stephania Cleaton to fill them. Stephania currently serves as York's Communications & Marketing Director. She has more than 20 years as a media professional, nearly 10 years working as a communications director for two NYC council members, and 4.5 years as the college government relations manager at Kingsborough Community College. In this role, Stephania was the primary college representative to elected officials, advocating for the college on the federal, state, and local levels of government and working to address issues and requests elected officials make to the college. Also, she served as a liaison between the college and external community stakeholders, including attending the local community board meetings, the Chamber of Commerce, and various local civic groups to develop, support, and sustain relationships and collaborations with constituencies that add value to the mission and strategic goals of Kingsborough Community College. During that time, examples of her efforts include securing over \$7M in capital funds from elected officials. Given her experience and knowledge of governmental relations as well as processes and procedures at CUNY she will hit the ground running at York College as our Director of External Affairs and Communications.

Stephania is no stranger to New York government relations; before joining Kingsborough, she was the communications director for NYC Council Members Debi Rose, Staten Island, and Andy King, Bronx. Additional experience in college government relations includes coordinating community events with neighborhood stakeholders. Her contact information remains the same via email scleaton@york.cuny.edu and by phone: 718.262.2305/cell 929-342-8802.

Dr. Simons also maintained executive oversight of the Small Business Development Center, the Queens Educational Opportunity Center and the York College Adult Learning Center, and Start-Up NY. These areas will report to me for the remainder of the Spring and summer semesters.

Welcome to Mario Acosta, York's new Chief Administrative Superintendent of Buildings & Grounds. Mario comes to us from Lehman College where he served as Administrative Superintendent for over 5 years. He also served as the Custodial Supervisor at Columbia University's Irving Medical Center, as well as the Commercial Superintendent/ Building Manager for Industrial Building Corp/ Taconic Investment Partners. He has a reservoir of expertise in facilities management including custodial, plumbing, electrical systems, locksmithing, HVAC, cooling towers, chillers, and boilers; construction budgeting; planning and design execution; resource allocation and contingencies; and an understanding of construction equipment, including

safe operating practices and signs of maintenance issues, as well as local, state and federal building and construction regulations. I am looking forward to taking my regular walk throughs with him.

I am pleased to share that York College will be participating in the University's Constructive Dialogue initiative. As part of the CDI, we were asked to identify one member of the college community who has been trained as a facilitator to work with members of our college community on resolving conflicts and using constructive dialogue as a tool to combat hate. Thank you to Dr. Rachael Walton, accepting the invitation to serve as the York CDI facilitator.

Immigration Protocol and Resources

Finally, as a reminder should any law enforcement agency, including federal immigration authorities, request to conduct enforcement activities on campus, the immediate points of contact are Chief Assmann, Russell Platzek and I. Public Safety will also consult with University and College legal counsel to ensure all legal requirements are met at every stage. In addition, our Student Affairs team continue to be available to provide needed support.

Public Safety continues to follow already established protocols and are proactively preparing for potential scenarios. We are enhancing officer training and continuing to work closely with the Administration to address unforeseen situations should they arise. Additionally, the College will continue to provide timely guidance and share resources to support our community during this time.

To further support our students, York College and the City University of New York (CUNY) offer the following resources:

- CUNY Undocumented Student Support: Provides guidance and resources to help undocumented students know their rights and thrive in their educational journey. <https://www.cuny.edu/current-students/student-affairs/cuny-immigrant-student-success/undocumented-student-support/>
- CUNY Immigrant Student Success: Offers financial, legal, mental health, and social support to empower immigrant students. <https://www.cuny.edu/current-students/student-affairs/cuny-immigrant-student-success/>
- CUNY Citizenship Now - York College Immigration Center <http://www.cuny.edu/citizenshipnow> Phone: (718) 262-2983 Fax: (646) 664-393
- York Counseling Center: <https://www.york.cuny.edu/counseling-center>
- York Public Safety, Academic Core Building, Room 1M02/ Phone: (718) 262-2222/ york.cuny.edu/public-safety

Federal policies continue to change almost daily. We will continue to work in tandem with the University in responding to these changes. As always, it is our foremost priority is to ensure a safe and secure environment for all members of our campus community.

4. Faculty Caucus Report (Chirico)

The world has turned on its axis since we last met . . .

Welcome to the new SGA president, Akkeem Polack. As always, the Faculty Caucus looks forward to working with our student leaders, especially in this time of uncertainty within higher education.

Issues continue with attendance at committees of the Senate. This is not just about missing occasional meetings; it is about the collegiality of responding to committee chairs. This applies to faculty and students. The work of the College rests on the work of the committees. If a schedule has changed or participation has become a challenge, please let the committee chair know so that a replacement may be elected.

The campus has been informed the next president of York College will be announced at the CUNY Board of Trustees meeting on April 14th. The protocol is that all Executive Compensation Plan appointments are first considered at the Finance and Administrative Committee, which meets on March 24th.

As mentioned in December, both the Faculty Caucus and the union have objected to the inability to have candidates come to campus. We also objected to the interviews occurring on days when students and faculty were in class; the interviews were held on the last day of Monday classes and then during Monday final examinations. It is the intention of the Caucus, once the search is over, to once again express our dissatisfaction with a search process that limits the participation of students and faculty.

I also reported in December that Bill Thompson, the chair of the CUNY Board of Trustees, addressed the University Faculty Senate primarily to assure faculty that the Board would take all steps possible to protect students given the current press to deport immigrants.

However, neither the Board nor the Chancellery have issued clear statements or provided guidance beyond the procedures that were already in place.

CUNY-wide, the Council of Faculty Governance Leaders has been working diligently to share campus-specific communications. Locally, a member of the Caucus has been collecting this information. This is not just about contacting Public Safety should a member of the campus community be approached by a federal agent – guidance is needed about what to do should an agent not report to Public Safety as required or approach someone on the fringes of the campus.

The number one priority is always students, not only your academic progress but your mental health and personal safety.

5. Student Caucus Report (Polack)

Greetings everyone,

My name is Akkeem Polack, and I am honored to stand before you today as the newly elected President of the York College Student Government Association. I am an international student from Jamaica, now studying here in Jamaica, Queens. Stepping into this role is not just a personal achievement—it is a responsibility, one that I carry with deep respect for every student, faculty and staff member who makes up this institution. My presidency follows the departure of Joah Josephs, who has taken on an incredible opportunity in Albany as an intern for a New York State Senator.

Similarly, our former Vice President, Nadia, has also made her way to Albany, further demonstrating the opportunities available to students who take an active role in leadership. But with transition comes new leadership. Today, I am proud to introduce our new Vice President, Faith Ibeh, who will serve alongside Aurelie Ndengue Toumba, ensuring that our executive team remains strong and dedicated.

And perhaps the most exciting development—we now have a full Student Government Senate. Thanks to our outreach efforts and recent special elections, we have seen an increase in student engagement. More students are stepping up, eager to lead, advocate, and shape the future of York College.

Senators, please stand. Please be seated.

These are our student representatives, our advocates, our peers. Their presence here reflects something greater—a movement. A movement of students who are no longer waiting to be heard but are demanding a seat at the table. But let me remind every student leader in this room: that we are, first and foremost, members of this academic institution. Our commitment

to leadership should never come at the expense of our commitment to our studies. And I ask that we all, in our respective roles, support students in balancing both.

A Strong Start to 2025 This semester, we have wasted no time. In February alone, SGA has taken major steps to ensure that York College remains actively engaged in conversations that impact higher education:

- 54th Annual Legislative Conference – We traveled to Albany to advocate for policies affecting students, particularly those from minority backgrounds.
- 28th Annual Black Solidarity Conference at Yale – We engaged in discussions on issues affecting the African Diaspora alongside over 500 students from across the country.
- Community Engagement – We participated in Career Day and Read Aloud Day, inspiring young students and reinforcing the role of education in shaping futures.

Beyond these external efforts, we have also been laying a strong foundation for the remainder of the semester, developing an operational plan to ensure every initiative is intentional, structured, and impactful. York College: A Story of Resilience York College is not just a school. It is a story—a story of resilience, of determination, of a community that refused to let this institution fade away.

During the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, there were real discussions about shutting York College down. It was seen as expendable. But the people of Jamaica, Queens, thought otherwise. They fought—not just with words, but with action. They pressured the city. They refused to let York be erased. And in 1978, their efforts paid off. The CUNY Board reaffirmed York's permanence, securing its future. That same spirit, that same relentless advocacy, must live in us today. Because while York College is standing, we know there is still work to do. We must fight—not for survival, but for excellence. Not just to exist, but to thrive.

SGA's Advocacy Priorities

This semester, our advocacy will focus on real, tangible improvements for students:

- Better Advisement Services – We need advisors who are accessible, well-trained, and responsive to students' needs. Course planning should not be a guessing game.
- Cafeteria Access & Affordability – No student should have to choose between eating and affording textbooks. We are pushing for lower prices and exploring new vendor options.
- Free Metro Cards for CUNY Students – Transportation should never be a barrier to education. Our advocacy is working—the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Caucus has included Free Metro Cards for CUNY students in their proposed budget. This is a direct result of students raising their voices.
- AI Policy for York College – Technology is evolving, and York College must evolve with it. We are pushing for clear, fair guidelines on AI use in classrooms so students are not left at the mercy of inconsistent policies.
- Enhanced Student Support Services – Financial Aid, Academic Support, and other student services must operate more efficiently.

Students should feel supported, not frustrated.

To make all of this work more effective, we are working with the relevant personnel to finalize structured schedules for committee meetings. Governance must be accessible, organized, and intentional. If we truly believe in student engagement, we must create structures that make participation possible.

Upcoming Events & Engagement. Because advocacy is not just about policy—it is about engagement. Here’s what’s ahead:

- February 26 – Blood Drive (Atrium, 11 AM)
- March 4 – Town Hall
- March 7 & 21 – Movie Nights
- March 11 – Before Midterms Party
- March 21 – March in March Advocacy Event
- March 27 – Watch with SGA: Volleyball
- March 29 – Health Awareness Women’s Forum

I will also be returning to Albany for Higher Education Action Day, where CUNY USS, NYPIRG, SUNY, and the CUNY Rising Alliance will continue to push for student-centered policies—including Free MetroCard for CUNY students.

A Call to Action: The Future of York College

There is a phrase that echoes throughout history: “We are the ones we have been waiting for.” It means that change does not come from waiting. It comes from doing. From standing up, from taking action, from refusing to be silent when something is wrong. York College exists because people fought for it. Its future will be shaped by whether we are willing to continue that fight—not just in moments of crisis, but in moments of growth, in moments of progress, in moments of transformation.

SGA is not just here to represent students. We are here to fight for them, to build for them, to uplift them. And we cannot do it alone. We need every person in this room. Faculty, staff, administration—your partnership, your commitment, and your support will determine how far we can take York College.

So let’s stand together. Let’s push forward. Let’s make this college not just a place of education, but a place of empowerment, of opportunity, of legacy. History has shown us that when we work together, we win. Now, let’s get to work. Thank you.

6. Standing Committee Reports

- a. Committee on College Curriculum (Dinsman)
 - i. Course Changes: passed with 91% support
 - ii. Pathways: passed with 91% support
 - iii. Major Design: passed with 94% support
 - iv. Program Closure: passed with 81% support
- b. Campus Environment: Francois (held over)
- c. Library & Technology: Vega (held over)

7. Guest Presentations:

- a. Rios: Facilities Update (held over)
- 8. Old Business
- 9. New Business
- 10. Announcements
- 11. Adjournment