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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Youth, Education & Libraries Committee
Monday, November 23, 2020 - 6:30 PM
This meeting was conducted via Zoom

Minutes:

Special Guest Speaker: Jennifer J. Raab, President , Hunter College

CB8 Members Present: Peter Patch (Chair), Taina Borrero, Alida Camp, Tricia Shimamura, Barry Schneider, Marco Tamayo, Gregory Morris, Vanessa Aronson, Russell Squire, Rebecca Dangoor, Rami Segal (Public Member).

Taina Borrero organized the session and served as Moderator.

City Council Member Ben Kallos cited the \$350K for laptops from discretionary budgeting that he helped distribute to schools in our community with Peter Patch, which represented an important supply of laptops when the schools closed in March.

Councilman Kallos thanked Hunter President Jennifer Raab for her almost two decades of service. He described President Raab's vision to build a new facility for nursing, long before COVID created a severe shortage of nurses in the city. If we had listened to President Raab, we would have a Hunter College School of Nursing especially for people of color. Then then we would have a nurse for every school.

Remarks from President Jennifer Raab of Hunter:

Hunter's motto, in English, states: "The Care of the Future is Mine." Hunter is liberal arts college, but the school offers a business certificate so students can compete for jobs in business after graduation.

President Raab expressed pride in what the college has accomplished, in response to the sudden arrival of the COVID pandemic, and the mandate to provide remote education for 24,000 students in 3000 individual classes.

25% of Hunter students didn't have their own computer, or adequate WIFI bandwidth. A working camera, or the need to share a computer with a sibling were additional challenges for some. So Hunter raised \$300,000 to get new laptops to students along with WIFI boosters, as long-term laptop loans.

Students also face a life that is intense. Many students have 1-3 jobs. There is economic pressure on students, including paying for rent and daily expenses. Hunter raised a \$1 million fund to help students pay rents, and other expenses.

Hunter expanded the food pantry with a mobile unit that distributed food and technology close to students' homes. The mobile unit also delivered barrels for dance students and electronic drums and keyboards for music students so they could practice at home.

Students are showing up on time to receive advising online, both one-on-one and group counseling. This suggests that online student support might be a good way to expand services after COVID ends.

The transition to remote learning – both synchronous (in real time) and asynchronous (with student assignments and responses posted online) – has been a challenge, largely successful. But remote learning is not the same as online learning, and is proving particularly difficult for some students. Faculty can teach remotely from the Hunter facility as needed. There are complications with giving tests. Childcare is important and is now provided for faculty as well as for students.

One positive surprise: Given the limited options for student activities (jobs, internships) in the summer, there was a 39% jump in undergraduate summer school enrollment in 2020. As added motivation, Hunter paid for half the tuition for students taking summer courses.

While the general rule was – and remains – “please stay home,” this fall, safety plans were put in place to allow for about 8% of student classes and essential activities to take place at the school. This included:

- Bring students back to research labs in chemistry, biology, and physics labs;
- Reopened bench research labs for 47 science faculty;
- Art students are going to the Tribeca facility, where there are 121 studios and 115 students who have safely returned to art studies;
- Nursing and physical therapy classes - today they were working on transferring patients from wheelchair to table - you can't do that remotely;
- Two floors of the library are open for 100 students to take remote classes in a safe space;
- The music practice room is open, and there is the possibility of opening dance studios next semester; and
- Brookdale dorms have been opened to 200 students, with special agreements to ensure safety regarding Covid.

In addition, a program of COVID testing for students has begun as those students leave for Thanksgiving.

Hunter also operates its primary and secondary schools, which have adapted to hybrid and remote learning during COVID. Grades 9-12 have been relocated to the Social Work building in East Harlem. K-6 go to school 4 days/week, while grades 7-8 come to campus 2 days/week on campus. At the school, safety precautions include the use of masks, desks that are 6 feet apart, social distancing, the availability of sanitizers, and review of ventilation.

President Raab invites the community to check out Hunter@Home programs through the website: <http://hunter.cuny.edu/hunter-on-demand/>.

Classes include: The Nazi Menace (Hitler, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin and the Road to War), The Beatles' Legacy, Inside Van Gogh's Creative process, among the wide variety of classes offered.

Hunter has convened a task force on Systemic Racism, which is looking at related issues, including how to enhance the curriculum. Programs include: Speaking of Justice and Conversations on Race, Racism, and Reform.

CUNY is currently operating without a specific, detailed budget this year. In part because of reduced NY State funding, Hunter is operating on a monthly budget that has been- reduced by 20%.

President Raab expressed special pride in the distinguished performance of several students, including Valedictorians for 2020. There were two Yale Law School acceptances, including Edward Friedman '18, the Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs Coordinator at the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), and Said Zahiri '19. There are two Schwartzman Scholars – who receive one year of funding for graduate school - as well as one on the waiting list. President Raab is also looking to members of the community to identify for internships for her students.

Special thanks to Tali Sigal for providing minutes of the meeting.

Peter Patch, Chair