

2009 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY Questionnaire for NYC Candidates

Candidate for City Council
(Borough President, City Council, Comptroller, District Attorney, Mayor, Public Advocate,)

City Council District: 19

Borough: Queens

Name: Kevin D. Kim

Campaign Address: P.O. Box 604903
Bayside, NY 11360

Telephone #s: (718) 224-4922

Email Address: Kevin@votekevinkim.com

Political Party Affiliation: Democratic

Occupation: Deputy Director of Community Affairs

Current Employment / Employer: United States Representative Gary L. Ackerman (D-Queens-L.I.)

Are you an incumbent: Yes _____ No X _____ Number of years in office _____

Under the current term limits law, how many more additional terms, after this one, will you be able to serve? 2

Education:

High School: Townsend Harris H.S. @ Queens College '88

College: Stanford University (B.A.) '93 (co-terminal degree)

Graduate / Professional: Stanford University (M.A.) '93
Columbia Law School (J.D.) '99

1. I received support to pay for college from:
(Please check all that apply)

- Pell Grant
- NYS Tuition Assistance Program
- Scholarship
- Student Loans
- Family**
- Self**
- Other Source _____

2. In my view, paying for public higher education (CUNY) should primarily be the responsibility of:

(check only one)

- Students
- Parents / Family
- Government
- Employers
- All of the above**

(Please attach additional sheets as necessary to answer the following questions.)

3. Public funding to public higher education has fallen sharply over the last two decades. Since 1991, NY State funding per student for CUNY senior colleges fell 14% and, for CUNY community colleges, it fell by 25.6%.¹ Though NY City began to restore funding to CUNY community colleges five years ago, proposed budget cuts this year will eliminate this advance. What would you do to increase public investment in CUNY?

As a member of the New York City Council, I would vote against the Mayor's plans to cut CUNY's budget. In these tough economic times, the CUNY system becomes all the more important to the residents of our City because the schools serve as a means to save on tuition for not just recent high school graduates, but for many adults seeking to return to school. As a Councilmember I would advocate for greater funding for CUNY schools. Indeed, investing in CUNY is an investment in New York's future.

4. More than 50% of CUNY students come from households with annual income below \$40,000, but students will pay 15% more on average next year to attend a CUNY senior college and 14% more to attend a community college if tuition hikes go through. Overall, student tuition makes up 40% of CUNY's total operating revenue and the CUNY Master Plan ("CUNY Compact") calls for regular, annual tuition hikes.

4a. Do you support or oppose the current tuition increases?

Oppose

4b. Do you support or oppose the CUNY Compact's call for annual tuition increases?

Oppose

4c. What would you do to relieve the burden on students and families to pay for CUNY?

First, I would fight plans to cut CUNY's operating budget. Second, I would advocate for increases in state funding that reflect increases in student enrollment. Finally, I would seek means of reducing the CUNY's overhead expenses. As a member of the NYC Council I will advocate for the creation of a partnership with private businesses. For example, if we can find private donors to purchase the equipment for computer labs in return for some public recognition, the money saved can be used to mitigate tuition hikes. Programs like this are already in place at colleges and universities across the country, why not use this proven method here in New York City in our CUNY system?

4d. Some economists argue that earning a college degree enables a student to get a good-paying job upon graduation, and, therefore, government policy should be structured around an expectation of students to finance their education by taking out loans. Do you agree or disagree with a higher education financing policy that is structured around students taking out loans to finance tuition increases? Why or why not?

I disagree with an educational financing policy structured solely around students taking out loans to finance tuition increases. The cost of tuition is already a prohibitive factor for many seeking higher education; forcing students to take out loans against a future job with an unknown salary amount is a

¹ Fiscal Policy Institute Report: "New York State's Underinvestment in Public Higher Education," January 15, 2009

major obstacle for many students to pursue higher education. Overwhelming debt concerns should not be the deciding factor in a person's educational opportunities; however, I do believe in having students/families contribute partially to their education by either paying a portion of the tuition or have an effective subsidized loan program.

5. CUNY enrollments are higher than at any other time in its history, but in 1975 (the last enrollment peak), CUNY had 11,500 full-time faculty and now it has 6,800. Similarly, there has been a decline in the number of professional and support staff. CUNY now has 9,000 adjunct faculty and 1,000 adjunct professional staff who are part-time and low-paid. The dramatic decline of the full-time workforce and reliance on an exploited and over-stretched part-time workforce compromises the quality of education and the University's ability to deliver educational services to students.

- 5a. What specific policies would you advocate to provide CUNY with the resources to hire more full-time faculty, counselors, professional and other staff?

I would fight for increased funding from the state government to help pay for more full-time staff. Furthermore, I would support shifting many of CUNY's part-time faculty and professional staff into full-time employees.

- 5b. What specific policies would you advocate to improve the wages and working conditions of part-time adjunct faculty and staff that currently provide half the instruction at CUNY?

Beyond supporting measures to transition adjunct faculty to full-time positions, I would advocate for salary increases.

6. What are your views on New York City's current tax structure? If you are elected, what specific tax and revenue policies would you advocate?

I believe New York City needs a progressive tax structure and not the regressive one currently in place, where those with less are forced to pay a greater percentage of their income. If elected I would support tax cuts for those earning less than \$40,000 a year and increases for those earning over \$1,000,000 a year. The current tax structure places too large a burden on working families.

7. What fiscal policies would you advocate to help New York City maintain public services during the current recession?

I would advocate that the City government not only maintain, but expand public services to protect families and help prevent the economy from taking a deeper turn. Furthermore, I would support action to "green" government agencies. By mandating agencies to "go green," we can create new jobs and cut long-term costs for the City.

8. In your view, where does CUNY stand, as a priority, in New York's economic development and economic recovery?

CUNY is a critical part of New York's economic recovery. By offering an affordable education for local residents, we can help student receive the skills they need to compete in the global economy and lead us out of the current recession.

9. Academic freedom is important because adherence to it allows colleges and universities to best serve the public interest. For this reason, the university must be a place where all ideas, even those that are unpopular, may be freely expressed and debated without interference from management, trustees or public officials. Yet, for short-term political advantage, politicians have undermined academic freedom by publicly attacking unpopular speech by faculty and calling for punitive action by college or university managements. Such public calls go beyond simple disagreement.

- 9a. Do you agree that it is necessary to uphold academic freedom at CUNY and other colleges and universities? Will you agree to avoid taking unfair political advantage of unpopular speech on campuses?

I believe academic freedom to be a crucial piece of education. While there will always be unpopular thoughts in the world of academia, they should never be prohibited. Indeed, banning dissent from public forums can only inhibit the greater discussion and rob students of aspects of the debate.

- 9b. Academic freedom also extends to pedagogical practices, academic standards and curriculum and program decisions. Who do you believe is best placed to make determinations about these matters: faculty, college administrators, community organizations, private businesses, or public officials?

While I believe all should have a voice in any discussion, at the heart of it, the only consideration regarding pedagogical practices, academic standards and curriculum and program decisions should be what has been proven most effective (though room must be allowed to foster new practices).

10. Do you believe that public employees should have the same right to strike as private employees? Please explain?

Public employees are a critical part how our society operates. While I believe most public employees should have the right to strike, I cannot support strikes for employees working in the area of public safety (e.g. Police Officers and Firefighters).

11. In general, public employees have had more generous health and pension benefits than private employees. Some politicians have used this disparity to argue for a diminution of public employee benefits and blamed New York's fiscal problems on such benefits. Do you believe public employees' health and pension benefits should be maintained, reduced, or enhanced? Please be as specific as possible.

I oppose reductions in benefits for public employees.

12. Incumbents, please list your committee and subcommittee memberships and indicate if you are chair:

n/a

Please list the bills you have introduced or co-sponsored in support of CUNY and higher education, or other actions you have taken in this cause:

n/a

13. Please list other legislation that you have introduced or co-sponsored in the last two legislative sessions:

n/a

14. Please describe other actions you have taken in support of union-related initiatives:

n/a

Return completed questionnaire and brief personal biography to:

Professional Staff Congress / CUNY
61 Broadway, Suite 1500
New York, New York 10006
(212) 354-1252
Fax: (212) 302-7815

Attention: Amanda Magalhaes
amagalhaes@pscmail.org

We encourage you to send the questionnaire and attachments via email or by fax.

FRIENDS OF KEVIN KIM

P.O. Box 604903
Bayside, New York 11360

Meet Kevin Kim

Kevin grew up in Bay Terrace, and is a proud product of the NYC public school system (P.S. 150, I.S. 25, Townsend Harris H.S. at Queens College).

After excelling in athletics and academics in high school, Kevin attended Stanford University where he received his B.A. in East Asian Studies and his M.A. in Sociology. In 1999, Kevin received his J.D. from Columbia Law School, where he was a Senior Editor of the *Columbia Law Review*.

Kevin currently works as the Deputy Director of Community Affairs for Congressman Gary L. Ackerman (D-Queens/L.I.). His previous professional experiences include working as a federal law clerk, a corporate attorney at Davis Polk & Wardwell, and a founding partner of Yoon Suh & Kim LLP.

His community involvement includes serving on the boards of various non-profit organizations, including Friends of Thirteen, Inc., American Red Cross - Queens, Korean American Association of Queens and Organization of Chinese Americans (LI). He is also a Certified Community Mediator through his participation in the Black-Korean Mediation Project.

In August, Kevin and his wife, Clara, will welcome their first child.