

# 2009 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY Questionnaire for NYC Candidates

Candidate for **City Council**

City Council District: **20**

Borough: **Queens**

Name: **S.J. Jung**

Campaign Address: **163-10 Northern Blvd, Suite 201**

**Flushing, NY 11358**

Telephone #s: **718-353-0304**

Email Address: **sjjung4citycouncil@gmail.com** or contact Lenny at **718-353-0304**

Political Party Affiliation: **Democrat, and endorsed by Working Families Party**

Occupation: **Board President of YKASEC and Founder & President of a small business**

Current Employment / Employer: **Eastra Inc.**

Are you an incumbent: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No **X**                      Number of years in office **N/A**

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

Education:

High School: **Hansung High School (Seoul, South Korea)**

College: **Korea University (Seoul, South Korea)**

Graduate / Professional: **N/A**

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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%.<sup>1</sup> 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?

**I'm concerned by the decrease in aid per student. During an economic downturn, support for higher education is more important than ever. Investment in public education provides students with a better job and improved productivity of New York workforce.**

**As a steering committee member of the One New York coalition, I fought hard against devastating budget cuts made on the backs of our working families and other vulnerable communities and in favor of fair share tax reform. As a member of the City Council, I expect to be an advocate for increased investment in CUNY.**

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?

**Since increasing tuition is one of the harmful side effects of the general underfunding of the public higher education system, addressing the tuition hikes is inseparable from addressing the overall funding situation. At the macro level, support for public institutions of higher learning must take place at all levels of government from Federal, to State, to City government.**

- 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?

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

**As the cost of education skyrockets, too many students are burned by the crippling debt of student loans. While student loans can be a part of the financing of higher education, I strongly believe that higher education should be accessible and manageable to as many students as possible. In this spirit, the cost of education must be kept at bay, with ample opportunities for need-based and merit-based scholarships. Any loans that are made should come to the extent possible directly from government sources and be offered under favorable terms.**

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?

**While much needs to be done at the Federal and State level to support public higher education, at a city council level, some of the discussion again comes down to revenue generation. A permanent progressive income tax is one of the possibilities for sources of additional revenue necessary to maximize CUNY resources and enable it to hire more full-time faculty and staff.**

- 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?

**As a lifelong supporter of the labor movement, I'm a champion of collective bargaining rights for part-time adjunct faculty. I congratulate President Bowen for the significant gains for part-time adjunct staff including professional development grants, 100 new full-time positions, and paid sick days for non-teaching adjuncts. As a member of the City Council, I plan to stand with PSC in future contract negotiations to win additional gains for adjuncts including regularized and remunerated office hours**

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?

**During this time of economic crisis, we should not be making budget cuts on the backs of working men and women, immigrants, the poor, the disabled, senior citizens and others in need. As a member of the City Council, I would not only strengthen government investment in our communities, but would also fight to implement revenue generating measures like a fair and progressive income tax system.**

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

**In current recession, we need to make good use of the Federal stimulus funding that New York State is receiving. On the city level, we need to do our best to cut away any needless outside contracts while fighting to preserve core public services by raising revenue through progressive means. Any cutbacks that may have to be made need take place with full participation from public sector unions that represent hard working men and women who make New York possible.**

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

**At a time of economic crisis, many New Yorkers are making the rational choice to return to school to hone their skills and emerge better prepared to take advantage of economic opportunities. The current economic downturn is therefore a particularly important moment to invest in higher education. Investment in public education is a necessary means of increasing the productivity of the New York State workforce and laying the ground for recovery.**

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 agree that colleges and universities serve the public interest by being places where all ideas get a public hearing. As a grassroots community advocate who made it my trademark to bring diverse voices around shared goals, I have long avoided divisive rhetoric for short-term political advantage. I plan to be reasonable in my approach to any unpopular or controversial speech.**

- 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?

**Academic freedom is a cherished principle that should guide our approach to higher education. It is certainly the faculty that is best placed to make determinations about pedagogical practices, curricula, and program decisions although there is room for input from student bodies and parent associations. With respect to academic standards and major program decisions, college administrators have a clear role to play, together with faculty. I believe that while lawmakers can use their public profile to advance causes of interest to them, they should steer clear of entangling themselves in specific curricular and program decisions that are best left to faculty and college administrators.**

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

**I believe that while it's a path of last resort especially in the case of public workers, the right to strike is a cherished core of the labor movement. I'm concerned that the current Taylor Law limits the right of public unions to strike but does not provide government agencies the incentive to negotiate contracts on a timely basis and negotiate the terms of the contract in good faith.**

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.

**As a friend and champion of the labor movement, I have long been a defender of public services and the working men and women who make them possible. I believe that we should do our best bring up the wages and benefits of all working people rather than pit public sector workers against private sector workers as is done all too frequently. I will be a champion for maintaining and where necessary enhancing the wages and benefits of public workers, while also helping maintain parity of private sector employees.**

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

**N/A**

13. 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**

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

**N/A**

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

**I have repeatedly stood with the men and women of labor, including the PSC, to oppose devastating budget cuts and in favor of measures that will maintain public services by enhancing state revenues. In addition, under my leadership, YKASEC's Immigrant Worker Legal Services has taken on unscrupulous and exploitative employers on behalf of low income immigrant workers. We have recovered about one million dollars in court victories, settlements, unpaid wages and unemployment benefits on behalf of immigrant workers.**

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](mailto:amagalhaes@pscmail.org)

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

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Barbara Bowen  
President  
NYSUT PSC/CUNY  
61 Broadway, 156<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10006

Dear President Bowen,

I am writing to introduce myself as a candidate for the 20<sup>th</sup> City Council District in Queens.

At this pivotal moment for economic development, diversity, and quality of life in Queens, we need local leaders who are able to unite diverse communities around common causes like creating and maintaining good jobs, increasing affordable housing, improving our public schools, and preserving the livability of our neighborhoods. I am running for City Council because I believe I can provide that unifying leadership.

I would deeply appreciate PSC's support in this endeavor, and would like to request a meeting with you to discuss my candidacy and platform, and to answer any questions that you might have.

I have spent twenty years working in the Flushing area as a community organizer, nonprofit leader and small businessman.

When I immigrated to America from Korea, I struggled to learn a new language and find work. I began volunteering with a Flushing-based community organization, YKASEC, and eventually became the group's Executive Director.

YKASEC provides job skills development, English language training, housing counseling, and a host of other services for immigrant and working-class families in Queens. As Executive Director, and as a member of the Board of Directors of the New York Immigration Coalition, I have worked directly with thousands of Queens residents to help them achieve success and pursue their dreams.

In 2005, I also started my own small business in Flushing and successfully built it from the ground up. This experience taught me to manage a budget, control spending, and keep my eye on the bottom line – knowledge that is very much needed on our City Council.

Most recently, my commitment to progressive values and diversity has led me to serve on the Steering Committee of the One New York Coalition, which fought hard to protect middle class New York families from devastating budget cuts; and for two years in a row I have been invited

to address the plenary of the *Building Bridges between African American and Immigrant Communities* Conference, which promotes ongoing cooperation and dialogue between immigrants and the African American community.

In my two decades of service in Queens, I have learned firsthand what our community needs:

- expanded skills development and job placement programs;
- stronger support for struggling homeowners and renters;
- full funding for schools and health care centers;
- real solutions to traffic congestion and transportation challenges;
- and smart, sustainable development that benefits the whole community.

These will be my top priorities on the City Council. And to ensure the success of this agenda, I will work every day to engage all residents of the district – across lines of ethnicity, age, religion and gender – to create the unity we need to bring about real progressive change.

I'm proud to have earned the endorsements from:

- Assemblyman José Peralta
- Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras
- Working Families Party
- SEIU 32BJ
- CWA District 1
- UFCW Local 1500
- United Auto Workers
- Workers United
- Over 100 local community leaders

During my 20 years of community leadership, I have fought for policies that improve the lives of Queens residents and all New Yorkers. It is these rich and varied life experiences – as an immigrant, community organizer, entrepreneur and bridge-builder – that have motivated me to run for this position, and will inspire my work when I am elected as a member of the New York City Council.

I hope to meet with you soon and discuss my platform in greater detail. I look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully,

S.J. Jung  
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CC: Steve London, First Vice President