

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: **22**

Borough: **Queens**

Name: **Peter F. Vallone Jr.**

Campaign Address: **22-45 31st Street, Apt. 2**

Astoria, NY 11105

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Email Address: **Vallone4NY@gmail.com**

Political Party Affiliation: **Democrat**

Occupation: **NY City Council Member**

Current Employment / Employer: **The City Council of New York**

Are you an incumbent: Yes ___X___ No _____ Number of years in office ___**8**_____

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

Education:

High School: **Mater Christe**

College: **Fordham**

Graduate / Professional: **Fordham Law**

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

Pell Grant

NYS Tuition Assistance Program

Scholarship

Student Loans

Family **X**

Self **X**

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 **X**

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 the father of two girls attending public school, I know first hand how important it is that every child have a positive learning environment and a chance to get a well-rounded, quality education. Being able to attend an affordable college is key.

For too long, New York City has been treated unfairly by the state when it comes to financing. I have led the fight for the city's fair share when it comes to education. I will continue to make sure that our elementary, high schools and colleges receive the money they need.

In addition, I have pushed for continued funding for the Vallone Scholarship, which helps students pay for their college education and is awarded based on merit. Without my leadership and persistence, the Vallone Scholarship wouldn't have been possible at the level it was during these trying financial times.

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? **NO**

4b. Do you support or oppose the CUNY Compact's call for annual tuition increases? **NO**

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

See Question 3

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? **Partially agree**

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

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

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?

See Question 3

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?

See Question 3

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 oppose tax increases of any type.

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

Fiscal restraint; elimination of waste; and fair funding from Albany

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

As is evident in Question 3, CUNY is a high priority of mine.

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?

Professors have the right to hold unpopular opinions, however, they do not have the right to have their own set of "facts" that might harm students (i.e. racist, ill-informed, etc.)

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?

All of the above.

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

No. As Public Safety Chair, I will never support any employee whose job involves the safety of the public to strike.

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 believe our present financial situation will require a level of sacrifice from both our private and public employers.

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

Public Safety (Chair); Education; Environmental Protection; Fire and Criminal Justice; Governmental Operations

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:

Question 3. In addition, I have supported virtually every measure that have come before the City Council that would affect CUNY.

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

See council.nyc.gov.

I have sponsored and passed more legislation than virtually any other Council Member, which includes the landmark legislation to provide school crime data to the public.

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

I have a long history of support for union initiatives, which includes saving 396 civilian police jobs in this year's budget.

Return completed questionnaire and brief personal biography to:

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