

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: _____29_____

Borough: ____Queens_____

Name: _____Lynn Schulman_____

Campaign Address: _____72-11 Austin Street, #341, Forest Hills, NY 11375_____

Telephone #s: _Campaign at 718-989-5745; John Gutierrez at 212-505-6633; Jessica Way at 917-689-1862_

Email Address: _____lschulman2009@gmail.com_____

Political Party Affiliation: _____Democrat_____

Occupation: _____Public Relations/Communications Specialist_____

Current Employment / Employer: _____not employed_____

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? ___if elected, this would be my first term and I would be eligible for one additional term under the current term limits law___

Education:

High School: _____Newtown H.S., Elmhurst, Queens_____

College: ___attended Baruch College for 2 years and received BA from NYU___

Graduate / Professional: _____Juris Doctor from Brooklyn Law School_____

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

- Pell Grant
- X NYS Tuition Assistance Program
- X Scholarship
- X Student Loans
- Family
- X 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
- X 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?

Investing in higher public education is critical to the future of NYC. As a CUNY student for 2 years, and as someone who comes from a working family, I fully understand the importance of giving our city's youth the ability to obtain a college education so they have an increased opportunity to compete in the global marketplace.

To increase public investment in CUNY, I would propose maintaining the optional retirement program, and support a progressive city income tax that would increase taxes for the top 5% of wage earners. In addition, I would support TAP reform (as a former TAP recipient, I understand how much TAP means to a student who does not have other means to pursue a college education) that would expand the ability of students to stay in college.

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? I oppose the increases. Tuition hikes erode the concept of "public higher education."

4b. Do you support or oppose the CUNY Compact's call for annual tuition increases? I believe there are other ways to fund CUNY than through tuition hikes that will price the average student out of a college education._

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

I would urge the State to pay its state mandated one-third of community college funding New York State has failed in the past to deliver adequate financial support to SUNY and CUNY. In addition, I would explore potential business opportunities that would secure funding in return for providing research and development through the CUNY system. The current economy may not be particularly conducive to private funding opportunities, but they should certainly be explored. In addition, I would work with my colleagues in the Council and Congress to encourage the use of federal stimulus monies to fund the

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

educational future of our city's college students. Our tax base can only survive and thrive if we continue to further higher public education and make it accessible to everyone.

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?

CUNY students already are responsible for a significant portion of their education costs, more than 35% -- an astronomically high figure for a public institution, which serves a large portion of the city's working poor. Enabling undergraduates to fund more of their education through borrowing via federally subsidized and unsubsidized loans would create an undue burden for CUNY students, many of whom come from economically disadvantaged homes or are supporting families.

A far-reaching and long-term commitment by the government to invest more in higher education through government-funded scholarships and grants, would be more beneficial to individual students, and ultimately, society as a whole.

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 advocate for the implementation of progressive tax policies that would ensure increased revenue for the city and help provide CUNY with the resources to hire more full-time staff on all levels. We must reinvest now to meet the higher education needs of our city's youth. If we don't the city will lose its competitiveness in the marketplace, resulting in a further erosion of the city's tax base.____

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?

____ Adjuncts play a vital role at CUNY but they are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to benefits. I would support increased tuition reimbursement for adjuncts and Graduate Teaching Fellows, as well as increased access to health benefits. In addition, I would fully support efforts to provide unemployment benefits for part-time adjunct faculty and staff. Currently, adjunct professors throughout the City and State do not have good job security. They are contracted for a semester at a time, or for a school year, but have no economic support during the summer months. I would support these workers having access to unemployment benefits during these times to ensure their ongoing economic security and commitment to their work, which greatly benefits NYC students.

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?

___ The present tax system is inequitable and it is critical to the future of our City's economy that higher end earners be taxed at a rate that makes the system more equitable for all. I am a proponent of making the City's Personal Income Tax system more permanently progressive by adding new income brackets and new rates at the high end. This reform would raise approximately \$1 billion of new City revenue to protect working and middle-class families from service cuts and regressive tax increases. I would also look at creating tax-credits for faculty at CUNY who choose to live in the City. Many CUNY faculty members are unable to live in the communities in which they teach, denying the City a "Creative Class" that can spur the intellectual and economic life of the City.

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

First, I would maximize the use of the Council's oversight responsibilities to review the budgets of all city agencies to determine potential avenues for cost savings and increased revenue streams. In addition, I would advocate for an audit of all "stimulus" funds coming from the Federal government to ensure that the monies are being used to help maintain vital city services. Further, I believe that increased use of technology and investment in renewable "green" energy sources can yield significant cost savings for New York City in the short-term and increased revenue for the long-term.

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

As someone who attended CUNY, and having a parent who was a CUNY graduate, I understand how vital CUNY is for the future of all New Yorkers and the future survival of New York City as a global marketplace. CUNY must be strengthened, not weakened, and its work must be made a priority for the New York City Council. I know it is a priority for me.

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?

_____ Yes. Protection of unpopular speech is hallmark of our constitutional system and what makes our university system among the best in the world. I will oppose any attempts to circumscribe free speech at CUNY.

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?

I believe those who would be best to make determinations on these matters are faculty, as expressed by the American Association of University Professors in its 1940 Statement of Principals, which is the standard that is used by universities today.

I also believe it is important to encourage faculty and administrators to work together to create educational policies that respect academic freedom and rigor. Quality public higher education should be a matter of concern to us all and I would hope that we could increase the general public's belief in the importance of CUNY's mission.

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

_____ Yes. By not allowing public employees to strike, they are made particularly vulnerable to budget cutting attacks against them by the executive branch of government. The intent of New York's Taylor Law's intent was to provide incentives to continue contract negotiations while employees continued to work. Clearly, we saw from the Transit strike in 2005 that the Taylor Law had no effect. Thus, a different system that protects public employees and serves the people of New York must be explored.

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 that health and benefit benefits for public employees should be maintained, at a minimum, and enhanced, to the extent possible. Offering competitive benefits for public employees helps to strengthen the backbone of the City which is its middle class.

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 reside in a full-service apartment building and have supported the building workers when they have gone on strike. In addition, there have been recent attempts to harass both doormen and porters in the apartment complex, and I have approached members of 32BJ to assist these workers with their problems. In addition, as a public relations professional, I have reached out to local reporters on behalf of the building workers in my complex to advocate for media stories on their situation.

Further, I have worked with CWA Local 1180 workers at Woodhull Hospital to ensure that union members who have achieved a higher level of education and/or training are advised of and considered for job openings in upgraded positions. I have done this by advocating on their behalf to the Human Resources Department at the facility. Union workers at the Health and Hospitals Corporation have an agreement on this issue. However, the implementation at the local facilities level has not been very successful. Once I was advised of the problem, I took action to assist the union. Currently, there is a freeze on new jobs and promotions, but I intend to continue my advocacy on behalf of these workers, one of whom is a shop steward in my department.

Return completed questionnaire and brief personal biography to:

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Attention: Amanda Magalhaes
amagalhaes@pscmail.org

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