

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: 49

Borough: Staten Island (North Shore)

Name: Deborah L. Rose

Campaign Address: P.O. Box 30117
Staten Island, NY 10303

Telephone #: 8608578251 Camp.Mgr_(cell)

Email Address: deb2badd@aol.com

Political Party Affiliation: Democrat

Occupation: Educational administrator

Current Employment / Employer: Executive Director of the Liberty Partnership Program at the College of Staten Island

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? n/a

Education:

High School: Port Richmond High School, Staten Island, NY

College: Hofstra University, B.A. in History and Secondary Education

Graduate / Professional: Post-graduate counseling courses at the State University of New York

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

- Pell Grant
- NYS Tuition Assistance Program
- X Scholarship
- X Student Loans
- Family
- Self
- X Other Source HEOP (Higher Education Opportunity Program, NOAH (New Opportunities at Hofstra), Federal Stafford Student Loan

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

Response: Up until 1975, when the city was embroiled in a fiscal crisis, CUNY was able to offer quality, tuition-free education to the students of New York City. We need to seriously consider examining the benefits of that model that provided talent to all levels of national, state, and local government and business institutions.

(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?

Response: We need to change our priorities. I read recently that it would cost \$25 billion to pay the tuition and fees for every U.S. student currently enrolled in public colleges and universities. That sounds like a huge number until you think about the \$787 billion stimulus package and the \$1 trillion that the Iraq war is expected to eventually cost U.S. taxpayers. One way to increase the public investment in education is to re-direct dollars from the military budget to education, at the federal level. At the city and state level, we must consider higher education a priority and be willing to support it with our tax dollars.

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?

Response: We need to look for a variety of ways to relieve the burden on students attending CUNY by expanding programs that assist students and rolling back tuition increases..

- 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?

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

Response: *A government policy that expects students to finance their own education puts a disproportionate burden on working families and prevents many students from attending schools of higher education at all.*

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?

Response: *As legislators we need to push for the funding of more full time lines and programs that convert part-time positions into full-time positions throughout the CUNY system.*

- 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?

Response: *Policies should move in the direction of part-time faculty and staff having the same benefits as full-time employees doing the same type of work. One example of this would be to provide unemployment insurance currently to adjuncts (see bill in NYS S4123-A/A0613).*

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?

Response: *I advocate fair share tax reform that fairly and progressively distributes the tax burden across income levels. We also need to make sure that there is accountability and no waste and no corruption in the spending of tax revenues. NY State taxpayers need to know that they are getting their money's worth.*

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

Response: *Maintaining key public services during the recession will position the city to do well when the recession ends. The city should eliminate wasteful spending and weed out corruption at the same time keeping its schools and health systems strong, supporting public transportation, and providing economic opportunities for its citizens.*

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

Response: *The CUNY system is a priceless asset and should be a top priority of the City of New York. It is the key to preparing our children to function in the new economy they will face.*

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?

Response: Yes, I affirm and will defend the principle of academic freedom at CUNY and other colleges and universities (i.e., "the freedom to conduct research, teach, speak, and publish, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth and understanding may lead").

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?

Response: The college community, including faculty and administration, should uphold the principle of academic freedom. The college community has a responsibility to continually educate the community, business, and public officials about why it is important to protect academic freedom.

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

Response: The NYS Taylor Law should be revised to promote effective collective bargaining between city government and its employees. The law should provide incentives for a public employer to negotiate timely contracts with its labor partners.

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.

Response: Rather than looking to curtail the benefits of public employees, we need to look at a public health insurance program that benefits everyone, regardless of employer. I support a single payer health care program.

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

Not applicable.

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:

Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

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

Response: I supported and continue to support the legislative agenda of the Working Families Party, running as their endorsed candidate in a Special Election for City Council in February 2009 and now in the Democratic Primary in September 2009.

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@psccmail.org

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

Debi Rose - Biography

Debi Rose is a second-generation Staten Island native who has devoted her adult life to the betterment of the entire North Shore Community.

In a wide range of professional, elected, and volunteer positions, Debi has proven an effective advocate for issues around public health, education, senior services, youth programs, the environment, economic development and housing.

A graduate of Hofstra University, Debi received her Bachelors of Arts degree in History and Secondary Education. Subsequently, she has taken courses towards a master's degree in counseling at the State University of New York.

Since 1990, Debi has served as the executive director of the Liberty Partnership Program at the College of Staten Island, a state-funded dropout prevention program. Under her guidance, over 4,500 at risk high school students have achieved an 92% graduation rate through special counseling, tutoring, and mentoring.

Pursuing her mission for better education on Staten Island, she was elected to the Community School Board in 1996, where she fought for new and improved schools for the North Shore, petitioned the Chancellor for a fair and equitable admission policy for the Michael Petrides School, and helped win the placement of the first handicapped hearing and visually impaired evaluation unit on Staten Island.

In 2001, she ran a groundbreaking race for City Council that brought thousands of concerned voters out to the polls in one of the closest primary races in the history of Staten Island. In that election, Debi set the agenda with an issues-based campaign. She stood early with Rosebank residents concerned about the health risks from the toxins released into the air by the 44-megawatt power plant built right in their midst. She proposed a new high school on the North Shore that would alleviate overcrowding -- currently at 150% capacity at Curtis High School. She proposed a comprehensive zoning plan for the North Shore that would protect communities as well as foster the smart, contextual growth that still eludes our communities.

Debi led the Coalition to Save Bayley Seton Hospital that met, petitioned, marched, and called attention to the health care crisis breaking out all over Staten Island. When her mother, Muriel Carrington, was suddenly stricken with Alzheimer's disease, Debi put her political career on hold to care for her but continued her advocacy for more health services on the North Shore. She stood with the residents of the Markham Gardens community as they faced demolition of their homes and helped secure their right of return to the new construction now being completed in West Brighton. Debi came back into electoral politics in 2008, becoming a winning delegate for

Barack Obama to the Democratic Convention and then setting up a headquarters office that helped galvanize volunteers to participate in the 2008 presidential campaign.

Debi has had a long-time commitment to several community groups, including her leadership roles with Community Board #1, Staten Island Mental Health Society, NY Urban League, National Council of Negro Women, Staten Island African-American Political Association, Census Advisory Committee, and the American Cancer Society.

In February 2009, Debi ran as the Working Families endorsed candidate in a Special Election for City Council, missing being Councilwoman for the 49th District by only 341 votes. In this campaign, she broadened and deepened her coalition to include major unions, including DC37 and 1199SEIU, progressives, moderate Republicans, and immigrant communities.