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STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

July 3, 2003

Dr. Matthew Goldstein
Chancellor
City University of New York
535 East 80th Street
New York, New York 10021

Re: City University of New York
Progress in Improving Student
Results on Teacher Certification
Examinations
Report 2002-S-29

Dear Dr. Goldstein:

Pursuant to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article V, Section 1 of the State Constitution; and Article II, Section 8 of the State Finance Law, we have audited the City University of New York's progress in improving student results on New York State teacher certification examinations. Our audit covered the period of September 1, 1997, through November 26, 2002.

A. Background

The City University of New York (CUNY) is the largest urban university in the United States operating 11 senior colleges, a Graduate School, a University Center, a Law School and 6 community colleges. Nine of CUNY's senior colleges offer programs in teacher education (See Exhibit A). CUNY is the largest single source of teachers for the New York City Department of Education's (DOE) school system. To become a certified teacher in New York State, an applicant must pass two examinations administered by the New York State Education Department (SED), the Liberal Arts and Science Test (LAST) and Assessment of Teaching Skills (ATS-W).

In the past, CUNY's students in education programs performed poorly on the New York State teacher certification examinations. According to data supplied by SED, in the 1997-1998 school year, the CUNY-wide passing results (percentage of students receiving a passing grade) on the ATS-W examination was 76 percent (less than 80 percent of the students from City College, Lehman, Medgar Evers and York passed), while the CUNY-wide passing results on the LAST examination was only 70 percent (less than 80 percent of the students from Brooklyn, City College, Lehman, Medgar Evers and York passed). However, since then, the CUNY-wide passing results for

both components have been steadily rising based on various reasons, including CUNY's focus on raising the standards for student enrollment and retention in the education programs.

B. Audit Scope, Objective and Methodology

We audited CUNY's progress in improving student results on New York State teacher certification examinations for the period September 1, 1997 through November 26, 2002. The objective of our performance audit was to determine whether CUNY is making adequate progress towards improving the passing rates for students taking the LAST and ATS-W examinations. To accomplish our objective, we interviewed CUNY Central Office officials as well as select Campus officials and representatives of the New York State Education Department (SED). We also reviewed applicable New York State education laws and education program guidelines and documents, and we analyzed LAST and ATW-S test results for CUNY education program students.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Such standards require that we plan and perform our audit to adequately assess those operations of CUNY that are included within the audit scope. Further, these standards require that we understand CUNY's internal control structure and compliance with those laws, rules, and regulations that are relevant to the operations that are included in our audit scope. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting transactions recorded in the accounting and operating records and applying such other auditing procedures as we consider necessary in the circumstances. An audit also includes assessing the estimates, judgments and decisions made by management. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our findings, conclusions and recommendation.

C. Results of Audit

According to SED statistics the CUNY-wide passing results improved for the 1999-2000 and the 2000-2001 school years, over the 1997-1998 year. Overall, 88 percent of CUNY education graduates passed the examinations in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001. However, within such overall improvement in test results, there were three schools where further improvements are needed. Medgar Evers, York College, and New York City Technical College need to improve.

CUNY officials agree with our recommendation. CUNY stated that the CUNY-wide passing results improved for the 1999-2001 school years over the 1997-1998 year. They are in the process of implementing a comprehensive master plan that reflects improving teacher education.

D. Test Results

In September 1999, the New York State Board of Regents adopted new statewide requirements for teacher education programs. These requirements, set forth in Subdivision 52.21(b) of Commissioner's Regulations, state that SED shall conduct a review of a colleges teacher program in the event that fewer than 80 percent of students, who satisfactorily complete the school's program and also apply for certification, pass each of the required examinations in order to obtain a New York State teacher certificate. Colleges not meeting the 80 percent requirement must submit a corrective action plan (to SED) within four months of being notified of such by SED. If the plan is

approved, then SED will define a timeframe for its implementation and will then assess the effectiveness of the plan within three years of the initiation of the plan. If the schools do not improve teacher certification examination scores, their teacher education programs can be suspended or discontinued by SED.

For the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years, the CUNY-wide examinations passing results stand above the 80 percent threshold established by SED. However, within such success, there are some schools whose examinations results are in need of improvement. The two-year CUNY-wide examination results are shown below.

Summary 1999-2000 School Year Examinations Results

CUNY College	Number of Students			%
	Completed Program	Taking Exams	Passing	
Brooklyn	550	463	395	85
City	123	107	87	81
CSI	90	89	85	96
Hunter	307	277	255	92
Lehman	121	88	77	88
Medgar Evers	46	42	30	71
NYC Tech	20	14	13	93
Queens	547	462	425	92
York	41	37	22	59
Totals	1,845	1,579	1,389	88

Summary 2000-2001 School Year Examinations Results

CUNY College	Number of Students			%
	Completed Program	Taking Exams	Passing	
Brooklyn	611	498	424	85
City	246	205	169	82
CSI	45	43	36	84
Hunter	361	324	310	96
Lehman	154	105	90	86
Medgar Evers	51	46	26	57
NYC Tech	16	11	5	45
Queens	571	540	514	95
York	39	37	20	54
Totals	2,094	1,809	1,594	88

Note: The statistics in both charts above came from SED through their testing company and are unaudited.

1. Low Student Program Completion/ Examinations Statistics

York, Medgar Evers and New York City Technical Colleges had low student program completion and examinations passing statistics in their education programs. For 1999-2000, York had 41 students complete the program, 37 took the teacher certification examinations (LAST or ATS-W or both) and 22 passed, giving York a 59 percent examination passing result. Medgar Evers had 46 students complete the program, 42 took the test and 30 students passed, giving Medgar Evers a 71 percent passing result. The 79 students who sat for the test at these two colleges account for only 5 percent of the total population of students in CUNY who sat for the teacher certification examinations that year.

For 2000-2001, York had 39 students complete the program, 37 sat for the examinations and 20 passed, giving York a 54 percent passing result. Medgar Evers had 51 students complete the program, 46 took the examinations and 26 passed, giving Medgar Evers a 57 percent passing result. New York City Technical College had 16 students complete the program, 11 took the examinations and 5 passed, giving New York Technical College a 45 percent passing result. The 94 students who sat for the examinations at these three colleges makes up only slightly more than 5 percent of the total population of students CUNY-wide who sat for the teacher certification examinations that year.

2. Corrective Action Plans

The three deficient Colleges have filed annual corrective action plans with CUNY Central and their plans have been approved by SED. SED informed us that they are satisfied with the progress that these schools are making to bring themselves into compliance with its 80 percent passing results program criteria. According to the comments noted on their plans, these schools hope to be in full compliance by the following dates:

- York College - Spring 2003
- Medgar Evers - May 2004
- New York City Technical College - Within three years of their corrective action plan dated November 2002

3. Raising Standards/Increasing Test Scores

According to SED officials, test results can be improved if you raise program admission standards. CUNY schools have done so to improve deficient schools. For example, Medgar Evers Action Plan, dated April 5, 2001, increased the minimum grade point average for program admission from 2.5 to 2.7. Scores also improved as more full-time faculty were hired. Also, CUNY has made a conscious effort to ensure that some of the new teachers hired have been placed into its teacher education program. CUNY officials also believe that results have improved due to the establishment of the Office of Teacher Education under the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, which coordinates efforts to develop and maintain higher standards, including a focus on examinations scores.

CUNY officials pointed out that, in its University system and specifically at York and Medgar Evers Colleges, there are many students for whom English is a second language. They said the LAST test is especially challenging because students must write an extended essay in English. Also, much of the content is likely to be unfamiliar to someone who completed high school in another country. Additionally, since the three deficient schools have relatively small programs, the 80 percent passing results requirement can be met by having only a relatively few extra students pass the teacher certification examinations. For instance, to improve grades, Medgar Evers is planning on emphasizing writing skills, raising admission standards, monitoring test results and assisting students with preparatory classes.

With CUNY improving its students' teacher certification examinations results, there is a greater likelihood that it will be able to provide qualified teachers to DOE. However, if CUNY is unable to improve LAST and ATS-W students' examinations results for the deficient colleges, SED may stop CUNY from offering education programs at these schools.

Recommendation

CUNY's Office of Teacher Education should continue working with its campuses and SED on maintaining and improving students' teacher certification examinations passing results.

A draft of this report was provided to CUNY officials for their review and comments. Their comments have been considered in preparing this final report and are included as Appendix A. City University of New York officials agree with our recommendation.

Within 90 days after the final release of this report, as required by Section 170 of the Executive Law, the Chancellor of the City University of New York shall report to the Governor, the State Comptroller and the leaders of the Legislature and fiscal committees, advising what steps were taken to implement the recommendation contained herein, and if the recommendation was not implemented, the reason therefor.

Major contributors to this report were Bill Nealon, Anthony Carbonelli, Marc S. Geller, Joe Giaimo, Bebe Belkin and Marti Madory.

We wish to thank the management and staff of the City University of New York for the courtesies and cooperation extended to our auditors during this audit.

Very truly yours,

Steven E. Sossei
Audit Director

cc: Louis Chiacchere
Deirdre Taylor

CUNY Senior Colleges offering programs in Teacher Education

Brooklyn

City

Hunter

Lehman

College of Staten Island

Medgar Evers

New York City Technical

Queens

York

Exhibit A

The City University of New York



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April 14, 2003

Mr. Steven Sossei
Audit Director
Office of the State Comptroller
110 State Street
Albany, NY 12236

Dear Mr. Sossei:

I write in response to your request for comments regarding the results of your audit of The City University of New York's progress in improving student results on New York State teacher certification examinations (2002-S-29). The attached response was provided by the University Dean for Teacher Education. The response includes the latest test score data for the period of 2001-2002. Unfortunately, this data is subject to the disclosure requirements of the New York State Board of Regents, and cannot be issued publicly until the Regents release it this June.

As your draft report indicated, CUNY-wide passing results improved for the 1999-2000 and the 2000-2001 school years, over the 1997-1998 year. The intensive efforts to improve the success rate of our teacher education students continues to show results as reflected in the attached statistics for 2001-2002.

CUNY is proud of its status as an urban University, one that has enabled all New Yorkers to meet their personal and professional goals. As the largest source of teachers for the City's public school system, CUNY is committed to strengthening the quality and consistency of its teacher education programs. Since 1999, when the Mayor's Advisory Task Force raised concerns about the poor performance of CUNY students on teacher certification examinations, the University has moved aggressively to initiate activities to raise teacher education program performance and to ensure that all State requirements for teacher education programs are attained.

The University is in the process of implementing a comprehensive Master Plan that reflects the priorities and policies of the University in areas such as improving teacher education. Activities to promote training and standards in the teacher education

Appendix A

programs include University-wide initiatives such as the Teacher Opportunity Program (TOP) and the Teacher Fellows program, both developed in collaboration with the New York City Board of Education. In addition, the Teacher Empowerment Zone initiative uses technology to expose students in the early stages of teacher preparation and links college teacher education classes to classrooms in the New York City public schools via two-way video conferencing.

In addition, the colleges have raised teacher education program admission standards and established progressive criteria that require students to demonstrate the ability to assume a professional role in the schools. The colleges' programs are ensuring consistency among coursework, the State Learning Standards and public school curricula, and using the State Teacher Standards and Teacher Education Standards as guides to curriculum structure and content. The University Office of Teacher Education will continue to work with the colleges and extend close cooperation with the New York State Education Department to ensure that the highest standards of teacher education are developed and maintained.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit the attached response and comments indicated above for inclusion in your final report. If you have any questions, please call me at (212) 997-5820.

Sincerely,


Louis Chiacchere

c: Chancellor Matthew Goldstein
Executive Vice Chancellor Louise Mirrer
Senior Vice Chancellor Allan Dobrin
Vice Chancellor Ernesto Malave
University Dean Nicholas Michelli

IA#1441

April 11, 2003

Mr. Steven Sossei
Audit Director
Office of the State Comptroller
110 State Street
Albany, NY 12236

Dear Mr. Sossei:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to review the report of the audit conducted by the Office of the State Comptroller regarding CUNY's progress on improving student scores on the New York State Teacher Education examinations. Your description of the issues involved is accurate. CUNY has made significant progress in improving the pass rates. Data that we have received since the auditor's finished their work shows that the passing rate university wide went up again, to 94% for the ATS-W, 92% for the LAST, and 90% for the summary data. While federal regulations require that we not reveal the actual pass rate for The New York City College of Technology because the number of students in the pool is below 10, we know that rate was above 90% for both tests. The three colleges that the auditors focused on have very small programs, accounting for about 3% of CUNY's students. Programs that represent the vast majority of our students are all above the state mandated passing rate. We are enclosing the latest data, which cannot be released publicly until June when the Regents release it.

Your recommendation is that, "CUNY'S Office of Teacher Education should continue working with its campuses and SED on maintaining and improving student's teacher certification examinations passing results." We will, of course, do that.

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