

Sunday, January 24, 2021

Dear President Mason and Provost Li --

We [wrote to the two of you](#) on January 15, 2021 encouraging you to prioritize our students' needs by protecting spring semester course offerings to avoid disrupting their path to success amid the relentless pandemic. Since then, we have learned of drastic cuts to course offerings below the cap of fifteen students.

As you know, the COVID pandemic has dramatically affected us all. Many of our students, faculty, and staff have been personally affected with virus-inflicted illness, suffering, and loss of family members. The resulting necessary public health measures, including the 'lockdown' and the suspension of in-person classes, have taken great personal tolls on many of our students, and dramatically altered their educational experiences. While the college has focused on faculty training in online educational platforms, there are other ways to help students continue their education, including improved advisement, more student guidance and support on online education, and reducing class sizes to allow for more one-on-one virtual interaction.

In recognition of the centrality of “student success” to John Jay’s mission, we call on you to be “fierce advocates” for our students and defend the vitality and well being of our John Jay community in the following ways.

- We urge you to demand that CUNY and New York state release the considerable federal funds allocated to John Jay in the CARES Act and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) that have not yet been forwarded to the institution. According to CUNY’s own reporting to the federal government, as of 12/30/2020, CUNY had only accounted for \$33,168,425 of the \$125.5 million it had received through the CARES Act for institutions. You should demand that the CUNY’s Chancellor explain why our students must suffer further and have their academic progress impinged when this money remains unallocated and unspent after nine months.
- We urge you to demand that CUNY forward the available funds from the CRRSAA to the campuses instead of keeping the money from the institutions. According to the US Department of Education, John Jay will receive \$19,975,839 in institutional funds as part that can be used for “Defraying expenses associated with coronavirus (including lost revenue, reimbursement for expenses already incurred, technology costs associated with a transition to distance education, faculty and staff trainings, and payroll).” Our institution needs this money in order to survive and continue to serve our students.
- We urge you as the academic leaders of the college to relax the minimum enrollment requirements on courses to facilitate student progress toward their degrees and minimize course cancelations for the duration of the pandemic to foster student success.

- We urge that John Jay College institute a moratorium on Bursars' holds on students that keep them from enrolling for the duration of the pandemic.

As faculty and staff we see directly our students' challenges, and how they have struggled during the pandemic. Canceling classes, starving our institution by design when there is available federal money is not merely short-sighted. It flies in the face of our institutional values of "equity," "integrity," "justice," and "respect," and our claims to be "fierce advocates for justice."

John Jay needs to take the lead and be "fierce advocates of equity" for our students. If we will not fight for equity for the wellbeing of our institution, how can we face our students who live the societal effects of racialized austerity that has amplified their suffering during the pandemic?

Joining with you in wanting the best for our students and our institution,

John Pittman and Zabby (Elizabeth) Hovey, Co-Chairs  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice Chapter, PSC

*Sent by email 4:06 pm, to the email addresses of President Karol Mason and Provost Yi Li.*