

January 2007

Statement of the Hunter College (68th St. Campus) Science Faculty on the “site exchange” plan creating a new Hunter College Science/Health Professions Building and a new Julia Richman Education Complex:

Over several decades, members of the Hunter College science faculty have built remarkably strong research, education and training programs. These activities have produced breakthrough discoveries in cancer mechanisms, drug design, preventing neural damage and diagnostic imaging, as well as generations of new scientists whose first research experiences were in Hunter laboratories. Hunter’s research strength and excellence, coupled with its geographic and financial accessibility to the students of New York, has made it a national leader at increasing the ethnic diversity of the nation’s scientific workforce. However a crisis is building from the increasing conflict between the limits of Hunter’s antiquated research infrastructure and the ever-escalating demands of modern science. New science facilities are critical to ensuring the long-term survival of cutting edge research at Hunter College.

Hunter’s science faculty strongly support the plan for a new Hunter Science and Health Professions building at 68th St. and 2nd Ave. The Hunter College community has long insisted that such a science building be close to our main campus. Hunter’s mission to provide a strong liberal arts and sciences education to our 20,000 students demands that the sciences be near to the rest of the College. Hunter students face many challenges aside from the rigorous curricula they undertake. Forced "double commuting" between our main campus and a distant science building would represent an unfair and unacceptable obstacle to their timely progress. It would be an even greater burden to students training in research labs who need the blocks of time between classes to carry out experiments for their research projects. Converting their precious lab time to wasted commute time would reduce student retention and success. A distant Hunter Science building would solve our infrastructure problems but would weaken our ability to meet our core mission, training the scientists of the future. For us, such an option is untenable.

When their brand new facilities are ready for occupancy, the plan proposes moving the Julia Richman Education Complex from their current location to a new home on 25th St. and 1st Avenue. The JREC schools have expressed heartfelt concern about this plan and what it might mean for the future of their group of small schools. We expect them to be provided with an environment in which to thrive and continue to be an inspiring model to the small school movement. We urge that the JREC schools be given the solid guarantees they deserve and need in order to have confidence that this plan will lead their programs to an even brighter future. Hunter College and the JREC schools share the mission of developing the talents of New York’s youth in all its diversity. We urge all parties and relevant authorities to work together, with all deliberate speed, to seize this rare opportunity to invest in the future of New York City Public School students. The potential benefits of this plan to New York City are enormous. The potential damage of further delay and inaction is incalculable.

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Biological Sciences
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