



New York City Comptroller
John C. Liu

NEWS RELEASE

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LIU: UNMANAGEABLE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR CASELOADS JEOPARDIZING STUDENT SUCCESS

*Proposal Calls for Annual Investment of \$176 Million
to More Than Double the Number of Guidance Counselors*

NEW YORK, NY – Comptroller John C. Liu today called for redirecting education dollars in order to expand college counseling in the City’s public high schools — in light of alarming statistics that show that NYC’s workforce lags behind other major American cities in educational attainment and that four out of five public high-school students don’t graduate from college.

A report released today, “The Power of Guidance: Giving Students the College Counseling They Need,” builds on Comptroller Liu’s ambitious new “Beyond High School NYC” initiative by outlining ways to increase college counseling and mentoring, expand early-intervention efforts, and create more partnerships between high schools and area colleges. It proposes investing nearly \$176 million annually to more than double the number of school counselors and reduce the counselor-to-student ratio to 100:1.

“A high school diploma is no longer sufficient to meet the demands of the 21st century economy. If we are serious about increasing the number of public school students who graduate from college, we must invest in meaningful college counseling,” Comptroller Liu said. “Shortchanging students by providing them with little to no counseling might save some money in the short term but is a ‘penny-wise, pound-foolish’ strategy detrimental to the City’s long-term economic interests.”

The “Beyond High School NYC” initiative seeks to increase the proportion of New Yorkers with higher education to 60 percent by the year 2025 through strategic investments in public education.

The Department of Education’s Fiscal 2013 budget is \$20 billion, or nearly a third of the City budget. The Comptroller’s Audit Bureau has consistently found ways the department could have done more to eliminate waste and capture cost savings — including \$133 million for universal pre-K that went unused and had to be returned to the state, and \$80 million for the glitch-prone

ARIS data system, which has led to no discernable improvement student learning and is so faulty that it is being replaced. By investing more in hands-on efforts, such as college counseling, City schools can get more bang for their buck in terms of increasing college readiness, enrollment, and graduation, the report found.

The report's key recommendations include:

- Significantly expanding the number of school counselors and encouraging principals to separate counseling functions and create dedicated college counselors in each New York City public high school.
- Using early intervention systems to help students stay on track for college, including early-warning indicators for poor attendance, poor behavior, and failure in English or math.
- Expanding collaborative programs with CUNY and other area colleges. For example, each public high school would be teamed with a "sister college" in the New York City area.
- Leveraging the thousands of undergraduate and graduate students in New York City to mentor high school students.
- Investing in summer programs that assist college-bound high school graduates and ensure they matriculate.

The report also found that a majority (74%) of New York City public school students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch — a common measure of poverty — and that most public school parents (71%) do not have college degrees. "A comprehensive college counseling program would significantly increase the odds in favor of those students who would be the first in their families to attend college," Liu said.

"Our guidance counselors are bogged down with paperwork and data entry, instead of the counseling that they are supposed to do," said **Michael Mulgrew, President of the United Federation of Teachers**. "The crisis intervention, helping students returning from suspension, work with at-risk students, and conversations on college preparation are often pushed to the side because Tweed needs more data."

"All too many of our NYC public school students reach for the brass ring of college and career success without the same advantages as students from affluent schools," said **Ernest A. Logan, President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators**. "In calling for more school counselors with separate specialties, including college counseling, NYC Comptroller John Liu strikes right at the heart of the matter. We take it for granted that wealthier youngsters will be guided every step of the way on the path to college, but we shouldn't rest until we know that all of our students share that advantage as well as many other resources that are necessary for the college-bound."

“Increasing college readiness for our high school students has been one of my primary areas of focus as Chair of the Higher Education Committee,” said **Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez**. “The sad reality is that only 1 of 5 New York City students graduate from college. As Comptroller Liu has highlighted in this report, an investment from the New York City Department of Education is necessary, and it begins by increasing the ratio of counselors to students in schools across the city. I hope to see additional steps taken to increase college readiness, particularly in the areas of early childhood education and after-school programs, so that our students can be fully immersed in a strong educational culture, one that carries with it an expectation of college graduation.”

“The New York City Parents Union completely supports Comptroller Liu's recommendations,” said **Mona Davids, President of the New York City Parents Union**. “For too long, our students have not received the support they need to address personal, family, and academic issues or the guidance to complete college applications. Guidance counselors are overburdened with too many students. We need more guidance counselors. Increasing the number of guidance counselors is a common-sense first step to ensuring student success in high school and graduation from college.”

“The Comptroller’s recommendation to increase the amount of college counselors and funding for Student Success Centers will have a big impact in the future of New York City's youth,” said **Jose Lopéz, Make the Road New York Youth Coordinator**. “As someone who coordinates our college access work at Make the Road, I see firsthand the need for our youth to obtain college educations.”

“‘The Power of Guidance’ is an excellent report. It identifies real problems and its recommendations promise real solutions,” said **John Garvey, former Dean of the Teacher Academy & Collaborative Programs, City University of New York**. “It has the virtue of being concise and precise.”

“Guidance counselors provide critical support, allowing students to successfully transition from high school to college or other post-secondary education,” said **Zakiyah Ansari, Advocacy Director, Alliance for Quality Education** and a mother of eight. “It is no wonder that our students are not succeeding when their guidance counselors are forced to juggle unrealistic caseloads. The educational debate is not focused on the resources that will actually prepare students for college. The result is that only 20% of our students are college-ready. With this proposal, Comptroller John Liu is refocusing the education debate on what is necessary to help our students succeed in college and in life.”

The full report and more on the “Beyond High School NYC” initiative are available at www.comptroller.nyc.gov.

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