CUNY to Tighten Admissions Policy at 4-Year Schools

A Fundamental Change

Students Must Display Skill in Reading, Writing and Math to Enter Senior Colleges

By KAREN W. ARENSO

Trustees of the City University of New York last night voted to exclude any student from the university's four-year colleges who cannot pass proficiency tests in reading, writing, and mathematics, marking the most fundamental change in entrance standards since instituting open admissions nearly three decades ago.

At a meeting broken by loud protests from students, faculty members and others of all ages, the board voted 9 to 6 to approve a new system first proposed by Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani more than a year ago and later backed by Gov. George E. Pataki.

After the vote, Mr. Giuliani praised the trustees as "courageous." In a statement, Mr. Giuliani said that the trustees "were under tremendous pressure to defeat the proposal, and they should take great pride in their action." Their vote sends a powerful message that CUNY is starting the important and difficult process of restoring its reputation as one of the great public institutions of higher learning in the country.

Anne A. Paolucci, the board's chairwoman, said, "We have had a period of 30 years of neglect." Talking to reporters after the board meeting at CUNY's administrative headquarters on East 89th Street, Dr. Paolucci added, "We are cleaning out the four-year colleges and putting remediation where it belongs.

Critics, some of whom demonstrated outside the meeting, assailed the vote as destructive. "It's going to be the dismantling of the university and its whole purpose," said the Rev. Michael C. Crimmins, a trustee who voted against the proposal.

Although may critics said the vote was tantamount to ending open admissions, in fact, that concept has been broadly misunderstood. The 11 senior colleges in the system have always had some restrictions on admissions, but a few senior colleges have had standards so loose they in effect had open admissions. In addition, the 6 two-year community colleges have accepted any student with a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Unless detailed by legal challenges, the plan will be phased in over three years, beginning in September 1999, and could affect nearly half of the students entering CUNY's bachelor's degree programs -- about
New Rules May Cost CUNY Millions

By DAVID ROHDE

Eliminating remedial classes at the City University of New York will affect as many as 13,000 freshman and transfer students each year and could cost the university hundreds of millions of dollars in tuition revenue, according to CUNY estimates.

The plan, if not overturned by legal challenges, is to be phased in over three years, beginning in September 1999 at Baruch, Brooklyn, Hunter and Queens Colleges. After those colleges end remedial classes, five others — City College, Lehman, John Jay, Staten Island and New York City Technical — are required to end remedial classes by September 2000. Medgar Evers and York Colleges have until 2001.

Richard F. Rothbard, CUNY's vice chancellor for budgeting, estimated in March that the university could lose $80 million in tuition revenue in the first year, and more in succeeding years, as students who need remedial work are barred from enrolling.

Mr. Rothbard has also said that setting up and running the remedial programs outside the college's existing curricular structure could cost $10 million to $15 million. CUNY's total budget is $1.3 billion.

The largest impact on new enrollment would occur at John Jay in Manhattan, according to estimates. Officials say the changes would result in a 64 percent drop in new enrollment there in the 2000-2001 school year. The least affected would be Baruch, with an estimated 34 percent decline in new enrollment in fall 1999.

TRENDS

Turned Away

The City University of New York approved a proposal yesterday that will bar students who have not passed proficiency exams. The new policy will be phased in over three years at CUNY’s 11 four-year colleges. The trustees voted to exclude any student from its four-year colleges who cannot pass proficiency tests.

Chester Higgins Jr./The New York Times

Police officers arresting protesters outside a meeting of the trustees of the City University of New York. The trustees voted to exclude any student from its four-year colleges who cannot pass proficiency tests.

*Totals for transfer students at City University of New York. Source: City University of New York.