

APPENDIX III Report by the President

The following is a summary statement of President Caputo's report to the Senate. He said:

"Let me tell you briefly about the meeting at 80th Street. People have always told me that CUNY was different. Today's meeting was certainly different and perhaps it set new highs and new lows depending on your vantagepoint. The Mayor had a press conference this afternoon and announced that he has appointed a new commission to study CUNY community colleges. However, he did indicate that CUNY in general would be included. Benno Schmidt, the former president of Yale and now a member of the Edison Institute, is the chair of the commission. Richard Schwartz who was a political advisor to the Mayor is on it, and so is Heather MacDonald. We had hoped that there would be some reconciliation, or at least not an attempt to continue to turn up the flames under CUNY, but that did not happen. The key thing that happened at this Long Range Planning meeting, and this was all carefully orchestrated at the press conference, was a proposal by Vice Chair Badillo which, if passed, would eliminate or reduce our first year class next Fall by about 47%. The proposed resolution says that there will be no remediation at the senior colleges beginning in 1999, and that students have to pass all three Freshman Skills Assessment Tests before they are allowed to enroll. The way the resolution was introduced there was no effort to keep SEEK students from the requirement. The Vice Chair did say that this would not cover them. Also, the resolution does not apply to ESL students who received a secondary education abroad and who otherwise are not in need of remediation. After two hours of discussion the end result was that the committee voted against the resolution. However, the Chair pointed out to the committee that they could vote whatever way they wanted to vote, but this would still be the subject of a public hearing and that she was taking it to the meeting of the Board of Trustees in May. There was ensuing discussion and every President there, who spoke, spoke against the resolution with only one arguing that the Board needed to do something. Most of us took the position that the resolution that was on the floor was in fact inappropriate and not helpful. There was an attempt by Trustee Morning to introduce a resolution calling for the Chancellor to come back with a resolution, which in essence would have three ingredients to it. That there would be individual autonomy at the campuses to go from one semester to one year with the understanding that there would be an attempt to reduce the amount of remediation on each campus, and that there would be accountability in terms of each of the Presidents. That appeared to have a 6 to 2 affirmative vote. But as the meeting began to wind down people got confused and tired, and it was not taken as a formal vote. There was a move to adjourn with the understanding that this could come to the floor at the May Board meeting, but since it had not been voted on by the committee it cannot be a calendar item. There is some confusion whether or not this would then become an item for the public hearing. Needless to say it was a very interesting meeting and well attended by the media. I had to decide do I do a media interview or come here, and I decided to come over here because the suspense about the Charter amendment was killing me. I know at times people have said why aren't the presidents speaking out. The presidents were most eloquent in terms of opposing just about every aspect of what was on the table with this. Where we go from here will depend on what the subject of the public hearing is. Even the Vice Chair indicated that his proposal, which had been defeated but is still going forward, was an attempt to find out the worst case scenario and that there would be modifications.

As far as the budget goes, I don't think that there will be a successful attempt to override. Now the key point is whether or not there will be a supplementary budget request since the Governor has vetoed most of the increases including the new faculty lines. It appears that basically for next year we will have this year's budget, which means a 3 to 7% reduction because of inflation, etc."

President Caputo concluded the report by answering questions from the floor.