

Lehman Mutual Defense Resolution

**Resolution to Build a New York State Alliance in Defense of Higher Education,
Academic Freedom, and Research as Public Goods in a Democratic Society¹**

Whereas, recent and escalating politically motivated actions by governmental bodies pose a significant threat to the foundational principles of American higher education, including the autonomy of higher education governance, the integrity of scientific research, and the protection of academic freedom and political speech; and

Whereas, the Federal Government and various political actors have targeted individual institutions with legal, financial, and political attacks designed to undermine their public mission; silence dissenting voices; and/or exert improper control over academic inquiry; and

Whereas, the City University of New York is comprised of 25 colleges (11 senior colleges, 7 community colleges, and 7 graduate, honors, or professional schools) spread across all five boroughs of New York City, and currently serves approximately 240,000 students, employs approximately 40,000 faculty and staff; and has positively impacted the lives of countless New Yorkers throughout its history as a public institution of higher education; and

Whereas, the CUNY system is part of an immense network and proud tradition of public higher education, serving as “an essential component of New York City and New York State’s economy—generating growth, economic mobility, and tax revenue”² and providing education and opportunity to generations of New York residents; and

Whereas, the preservation of one institution’s integrity is the concern of all, and an infringement against one public college or university in the State of New York shall be considered an infringement against all; therefore

Be it resolved that, the Lehman College Senate urges the CUNY Chancellor to formally propose and take a leading role to establish an “Alliance in Defense of Higher Education, Academic Freedom, and Research” that is open to all colleges and universities of New York State, and

Be it further resolved that, under this alliance, all participating institutions shall cooperate to support any member institution under direct political or legal infringement by mobilizing to educate their constituencies about these attacks on their fundamental rights to higher education and to preserve the public institutions and resources they have built; and

Be it further resolved that, participating institutions shall make available, at the request of the institution under direct political interference, the services of their legal counsel, governance experts, and public affairs offices to coordinate a unified and vigorous response, including but not limited to: legal representation and countersuit actions; strategic public communication; amicus briefs and expert testimony; legislative advocacy and coalition-building; related topical research as needed; and

Be it further resolved that, the Lehman College Senate urges the Governor of the State of New York, working with the governing boards of all colleges and universities in the state, to commit meaningful funding to a “Higher Education Defense Fund” that shall be used to,

(1) provide ample legal support to students, faculty, and staff who are personally targeted and attacked by authorities of the Federal Government for exercising their rights to free speech, political affiliation, immigration status, or academic freedom as part of their participation in an institution of higher education in the State of New York, and

(2) engage in legal actions against the Federal Government to defend the integrity and principles of higher education in the State of New York, and

(3) replace funding losses to colleges and universities resulting from Federal attacks on higher education in New York; and

Be it finally resolved that this resolution be transmitted to the leadership of all New York State colleges and universities and their respective governing boards and shared governance bodies, and to the Governor of New York State.

¹ This resolution is based on the “Hunter Mutual Defense Resolution,” passed by the Hunter Senate on April 23, 2025. In the spirit of solidarity and coordination, most of the language herein was adopted directly from that source.

² Comptroller report 2024, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/spotlight-cuny-and-the-new-york-city-economy/>