

Drop Dead University:

The Fight for Free Education at the City University of New York

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Historical Paper

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Every revolution has an impact, but the word “reaction” in this year’s NHD theme invoked the idea of a reactionary movement in response to a revolutionary movement. Since the theme was released, I knew I wanted to research a reactionary movement, not just a revolution with an impact.

As a high school senior, I have had to navigate the selective, expensive college admissions process and the stress that accompanies it. While applying to the City University of New York (CUNY), I learned that, in the early 1970s, the university had free and open admissions. Surprised and curious about the history of tuition and admissions at CUNY, I read Joshua Freeman’s *Working-Class New York* and Kim Phillips-Fein’s *Fear City*, which would become the basis for my knowledge of the 1975 Fiscal Crisis. My central conclusion was that the city’s financial restructuring, including the imposition of tuition on CUNY, was as much politically, as it was financially, motivated. Soon after, I decided to write my paper on the end of free tuition at CUNY. The battle over admissions and tuition at CUNY was a microcosm of the national conservative reactionary movement: protests by Black and Puerto Rican students had won open admissions, enrollment for all students at no cost, which sparked a backlash at a local and national level from conservatives who saw free higher education as the mark of an irresponsible government unfairly favoring poor and non-white citizens. The Fiscal Crisis allowed this reactionary movement to transform its ideological opposition into material change by reshaping the city’s spending, reversing the gains of the revolutionary movement under the guise of “reform.” The end of free tuition marked the shift from public, accessible higher education to the highly privatized higher education that I, and all high schoolers in the United States, face.

Reading Freeman's *Working-Class New York* introduced me to journalist Jack Newfield's *Abuse of Power*, an account of the involvement of the banks in restructuring the city's finances during the Crisis, which provided the basis for my knowledge of the Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC). Newfield's direct quotations from MAC meetings prompted me to explore the MAC archives, now found at Baruch College. Much of the materials are digitized, but for undigitized materials, I reached out to the Baruch librarians and requested scans. Kim Phillips-Fein's chapter "Washington Politics" in *Fear City* provided an in-depth account of the Ford Administration's central figures and political philosophies and also prompted me to explore the Ford Presidential Library's archival materials on the Fiscal Crisis. The archive that I used the most, however, was the CUNY Digital History Archive (CDHA), which provides digitized documents from the eras of CUNY municipal expansion, open admissions, and retrenchment, and informed my timeline of events with a wide range of sources.

This research has transformed my understanding of the United States college system. College is increasingly expensive, exclusive, and inaccessible. However, turning to the history of higher education at institutions like CUNY shows that this is not inevitable and, by extension, not unchangeable.

Shock Impact

From 1968 to 1970, a wave of revolutionary change transformed the City University of New York (CUNY). Through protest and demonstration, Black and Puerto Rican students successfully pushed for an open admissions policy, which guaranteed admission to any CUNY applicant, regardless of race, gender, or class. This victory sparked backlash from the national conservative movement, the banking establishment, and the Ford administration. They claimed that fiscal tightening was necessary to teach the city a lesson in sustainable budgeting, which closely aligned with their ideological commitments to limited government. This reactionary movement found its crucible in the 1975 New York City Fiscal Crisis. The disarray and desperation sparked by the crisis allowed Washington conservatives, in collaboration with the city's financiers, to restructure the city's budget, cutting funding for public education and imposing tuition on CUNY, ending the city's 130-year-long tradition of free higher education. Austerity, under the guise of responsible reform, marked the ideological victory of conservatives over New York City's working class. It sent a message to the rest of the nation: the era of free, public higher education was over. Ushering in the widespread disinvestment of the public sector in the following decades, these reforms set a new standard in higher education, creating the highly privatized world of college that students face today.

Revolution at CUNY

At its founding in 1847, the Free Academy, located in Manhattan, defined itself by its tuition-free admissions to anyone, regardless of wealth. It was lauded as proof that higher education could be “successfully controlled by the popular will, not by the privileged few.”¹ The

¹ Horace Webster, “Address of Horace Webster,” in *Addresses Delivered Upon the Occasion of Opening the Free Academy*, (WM. C. Bryant & Co., 1849), 27.

popular will consisted of mostly white working-class men, initially of German and Irish, later Italian and Jewish, descent.² This institution formed the basis for City College and what would become the City University of New York after decades of municipal expansion.

By the early 1960s, the CUNY system had expanded to include four senior colleges and three community colleges. While CUNY's mission remained the education of the city's working class, the demographics had changed. Black southerners fleeing Jim Crow and Puerto Rican migrants spurred by the Great Depression now comprised large portions of the city's working class. Between 1954 and 1964, Black and Puerto Rican students went from 29 to over 50 percent of the city's public-school attendees. CUNY's non-white undergraduate enrollments, by contrast, plateaued at 6.2 percent.³

In 1964, CUNY Chancellor Albert Bowker announced the need to diversify CUNY to educate what he termed "undiscovered college potential." This would require looser admissions policies and active outreach to poor communities.⁴ In 1966, the Board of Higher Education (BHE) committed to providing higher education to every high-school graduate—open admissions—set for implementation in 1975. Bowker cheered for "the children of the newer migrations to rise to fill the newer needs!"⁵ Despite the length of the BHE's projected timeline, Bowker's efforts brought about the addition of four four-year colleges and two community colleges, each built in poorer areas of Manhattan and Brooklyn. Plans were made to do the same in the predominantly Black South Bronx and Harlem.⁶

² Michael Fabricant and Stephen Brier, *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 183.

³ "A Long-Range Plan for the City University of New York, 1961-1975," June 18, 1962, CUNY Digital History Archive, <https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/3162>, 92.

⁴ "A three-pronged experimental approach to the problem of undiscovered college potential among the young men and women of New York City," February 7, 1964, CUNY Digital History Archive, <https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/6972>, 162.

⁵ Joshua B. Freeman, *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (The New Press, 2000), 229.

⁶ Newt Davidson Collective, *Crisis at CUNY*, 1974, CUNY Digital History Archive, <https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/16>, 59.

Expansion, however, could not hasten the slow pace of implementing open admissions and could not conceal the gaping problem of segregation in higher education. In 1969, only 14 percent of CUNY's incoming students were Black, and only 6 percent were Puerto Rican, despite together constituting around half of the city's high school students. CUNY students were outraged by the under-representation of the city's non-white population, and in February 1969, echoing the surge of civil rights protests across the country, Black and Puerto Rican students began occupying campus buildings, leading sit-ins and strikes, demanding that CUNY be desegregated.⁷ City College student leaders drafted a list of demands for the administration: the establishment of schools teaching Black and Puerto Rican history, orientations geared towards non-white students, a proportionate representation of the city's racial demographics in the student body, and required courses in Black and Puerto Rican history, as well as Spanish language, for all education majors. "We pay [taxes] for the colleges and are excluded from them," the document read, "we demand that this abuse stop."⁸ On April 21, one thousand mostly white City College students rallied in support of the five demands, leading to the addition of "open admissions for all" to the list of demands. As protests and sit-ins spread across CUNY campuses, the message was clear: students wanted free, open admissions "*now*, not in a decade."⁹

On July 9, after weeks of negotiations, the BHE agreed to the student demands. The administration was "impressed by the arguments made by students and faculty that equal opportunity should be a reality now and cannot wait until 1975." Open admissions would be implemented in 1970, only a year away.¹⁰ Between 1968 and 1972, the number of Black students

⁷ Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 229.

⁸ "Five Demands," May, 1969, CUNY Digital History Archive, <https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/6952>.

⁹ Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 230; Newt Davidson Collective, *Crisis at CUNY*, 66.

¹⁰ BHE Statement, CUNY Digital History Archive.

at CUNY increased from 16,529 to 44,031; Puerto Rican students, from 4,723 to 13,563; and white students from 106,523 to 125,804.¹¹

Backlash and the Banks

Open admissions sparked a backlash inside and outside of CUNY. A newspaper reported complaints that “[the new students are] ungrateful; they get in here without the marks everyone else has to have...they’re the ones causing all the trouble.”¹² Some professors regarded the change as a threat to CUNY’s “high standards” and “poor man’s Harvard” reputation.¹³ The consensus among apprehensive CUNY community members was that the university was harming more deserving students by favoring poorer, non-white students.

In Washington, similar hostility towards New York City’s support of the working poor was growing. Gerald Ford had taken office in August 1974 following the resignation of Richard Nixon, who ran on a platform appealing to the “silent majority,” the white middle class dissatisfied with the civil rights program of Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society.¹⁴ Aid to the poor and funding of public services were seen as handouts that unfairly favored the non-white population and encouraged over-reliance on the government.¹⁵ From his early political career, Ford had propounded fiscal discipline and warned against the dangers of a big government that could “do everything for you” and “take everything away from you.”¹⁶

¹¹ “Report of the Fall 1972 Undergraduate Ethnic Census,” CUNY Data Book 1972-1973, CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

¹² Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 235.

¹³ Fabricant and Brier, *Austerity Blues*, 218.

¹⁴ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, Scribner, 2008, 748.

¹⁵ President Richard Nixon, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” January 22, 1971, The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/240562>.

¹⁶ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Fear City: New York’s Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics* (Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2017), 92-93.

CUNY was the prototype of the welfare state that this growing reactionary movement loathed. In 1970, Nixon's vice president, Spiro Agnew, railed against "Black student militancy" at CUNY, and decried open admissions as the vessel "by which unqualified students are being swept into college on the wave of the new socialism."¹⁷ Ford and his administration echoed the sentiment, viewing CUNY as "the ultimate symbol of municipal largesse, the embodiment of its most utopian promises."¹⁸

As the city's finances worsened, CUNY faced opposition from an unexpected source: the banks. For much of the post-war period, the city's debt had been kept afloat by the banks, which kept the city's notes and bonds in their own accounts. Banks favored city borrowing for public projects. Municipal bonds were highly profitable, low-risk, and exempt from federal income taxes.¹⁹ Commercial banks were some of the largest buyers of city debt until the 1970s, when alternative investments like overseas tax credits became more profitable.²⁰ As the city's debt grew, with short-term loans being paid off through more borrowing, the banks became wary of municipal bonds. Buying city debt no longer seemed stable or profitable.

At the same time, in reaction to the anti-capitalism and criticism of corporations by the New Left, the financial establishment felt the need to take an active role in politics. Walter Wriston, head of Citibank, argued that to protect banking interests, banks would have to directly fight the New Left.²¹ Banks began to see their interests directly at odds with the city's support of poor and working-class populations. This polarization intensified in the mid-1970s, as bankruptcy seemed on the horizon for the city. When it came time for the city to pay back its

¹⁷ Spiro Agnew, "Threat to Educational Standards," speech at Republican fundraising dinner, Des Moines, Iowa, April 14, 1970, in Immanuel Wallerstein and Paul Starr, eds., *The University Crisis Reader: The Liberal University Under Attack* (Vintage Books, 1971), 320.

¹⁸ Phillips-Fein, *Fear City*, 100.

¹⁹ Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 257.

²⁰ Jack Newfield, *Abuse of Power: The Permanent Government and the Fall of New York* (Viking Press, 1977), 45.

²¹ Phillips-Fein, *Fear City*, 78.

debts, the banks' credit would be weighed against the public payroll. Financiers needed to know that, were the city to default, their credit would take priority. Between the creditors' money and city employees' wages, it was a zero-sum game.

Between the local racial backlash against open admissions, the growing hostility towards public institutions by the banks, and the ideological war against free education from Washington, the revolutionary gains made at CUNY were facing mounting threats from all sides. In each direction was a force waiting for the perfect political, financial, and ideological opportunity to strike.

Ford to University: Drop Dead

In 1975, New York City suffered a fiscal crisis. The international recession of 1973 had hit the city hard as its citizens began to move out to the suburbs, decreasing tax revenues and shrinking the workforce.²² By the end of 1975, the city's outstanding debt had reached over five billion dollars.²³ The banks, which no longer viewed the city as financially credible, refused to buy any more municipal bonds.²⁴

Forced to ask the federal government for short-term loans, New York City Mayor Abe Beame met with Ford. If the city did not receive aid, he explained, it would default. Ford responded that the city, through its irresponsible spending, had brought the crisis upon itself.²⁵ Ford's decision to leave the city floundering shocked the nation, captured by the *New York Daily*

²² Newfield, *Abuse of Power*, 12-18.

²³ "Report: Congress of the United States, Congressional Budget Office, New York City's Fiscal Problem: Its Origins, Potential Repercussions, and Some Alternative Policy Responses," October 10, 1975, MAC_S10_b002_f05, Box 2, Folder 5, Municipal Assistance Corporation for the City of New York (MAC) Collection, Baruch College Archives, William and Anita Newman Library, New York, New York. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.38409378>, 6.

²⁴ Phillips-Fein, *Fear City*, 86-87.

²⁵ Meeting, James M. Cannon Files.

News's bold headline "FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD."²⁶ The Ford administration hoped a default would make an example of the city, demonstrating "the perils of government spending." For Vice President (and former New York governor) Nelson Rockefeller, the crisis was an opportunity to "force the city to transform itself."²⁷ With the city vulnerable, Washington and the banks could restructure the city's finances and send a clear, ideological message.

If the Fiscal Crisis was the opportunity the reactionary movement needed to reshape New York City, the Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC) was the tool to reshape it. Created with support from the banks and the state, MAC was composed of a board of businessmen and bankers and chaired by investment banker Felix Rohatyn. MAC would be a state-controlled agency that would market bonds on behalf of the city, backed by sales taxes that, previously paid to the city government, would go directly to MAC. Given broad leverage over city finances, MAC could withhold money from the city if it deemed its spending irresponsible or its priorities misplaced.²⁸ MAC's duty was twofold: on the one hand, it had to refinance the city's debts; on the other, the board had to regain the approval of the banks and Washington. MAC had to prove to the nation that the city was leaving behind its era of "fiscal irresponsibility" for good. "It was technically a financing vehicle," writes historian Kim Phillips-Fein, "but its real purpose was political."²⁹ Hoping to transform the ideological movement against the city into tangible change, MAC used fiscal reform as its vessel.

On July 17, 1975, Beame met with the MAC board and leading bankers. Despite Beame's having already cut city spending and laid off thousands of city employees, the bankers were not satisfied. According to the meeting minutes, Rockefeller criticized Beame for continuing

²⁶ Frank Van Riper, "FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD," *New York Daily News*, October 30, 1975, <https://www.nydailynews.com/2015/10/29/ford-to-city-drop-dead-in-1975/>.

²⁷ Phillips-Fein, *Fear City*, 96.

²⁸ Newfield, *Abuse of Power*, 179-181; Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 260-261.

²⁹ Phillips-Fein, *Fear City*, 128.

“business as usual.” He emphasized the need for “immediate,” “dramatic,” and “highly visible” change. In response, Rohatyn raised the possibility of ending free tuition at CUNY.³⁰

Ending free tuition was a necessary “overkill,” Rohatyn explained, “if for no other reason than the shock impact.” Beame pointed out that CUNY tuition and budget cuts would barely make a dent in the city’s debt.³¹ Unwieldy and ineffective as the gains would be, within a year of the meeting, tuition was imposed across the university system, alongside a hike in city transit fares with similarly minuscule yields.³² Considering the urgency and financial demands of the Fiscal Crisis, the imposition of CUNY tuition for “shock impact”—an immaterial message with little material benefit—was baffling. But when Rockefeller demanded a “highly visible” change—a change that would signal to the banks that the city no longer prioritized public payroll and services over their credit, and that would prove to Washington that New York City was leaving behind the welfare state—cutting free education at CUNY became the perfect choice.

In October 1975, CUNY began to adopt a policy of austerity. Budget cuts and a wage freeze slashed CUNY funds by millions. To lower costs by restructuring the university, the administration proposed that six out of the now eight community colleges be shut down.³³ Student protests erupted again. Stationed in the Financial District, students held up signs reading “We Live Here, Banks Don’t,” and “While Hostos [Community College] is Falling Down, Chase Manhattan is Making Pounds.”³⁴ In winter 1976, CUNY announced that four colleges would be turned into two-year colleges or shut down entirely. Three of the four colleges, students pointed

³⁰ “Minutes of the Meeting of Board of Directors,” July 17, 1975, MAC_S2_b001_f09, Box 1, Folder 9, Municipal Assistance Corporation for the City of New York (MAC) Collection, Baruch College Archives, William and Anita Newman Library, New York, New York (hereafter cited as Minutes, MAC Collection).

³¹ Minutes, MAC Collection.

³² Newfield, *Abuse of Power*, 186.

³³ Phillips-Fein, *Fear City*, 245.

³⁴ Photograph of student protests, “While Hostos is Falling Down, Chase Manhattan is Making Pounds,” November 1975, Hostos Community College Archives, CUNY Digital History Archive, <https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/6232>.

out, had majority non-white student bodies.³⁵ The final blow came on May 29, 1976, when CUNY could no longer afford to meet its payroll, and the university had to shut down.

On June 1, the BHE voted to impose tuition, formally ending the 130-year-long history of free education at CUNY. While open admissions remained, the slashing of free tuition dramatically reversed the demographic trends of open admissions. Thousands of teachers who were hired during the implementation of open admissions were fired. As the teaching body shrank, class sizes increased. “The City University is falling apart,” one student reported. Others expressed fears that they would no longer be able to afford an education at CUNY.³⁶ Through the late 1970s, CUNY enrollment decreased by 62,000, and by 1980, incoming Black and Hispanic numbers had halved from 1976.³⁷

Legacy

The end of free tuition at CUNY marked the fall of free higher education in New York City and, more broadly, spelled the privatization of higher education that would accompany a neoliberalism championed by Ronald Reagan in the following decades. From the 1990s to the 2010s, state funding for CUNY per student dropped by 40 percent. Across the country, state funding of public universities and colleges in real dollars per student dropped by 2.3 percent. Tuition was raised to meet the increasing budgetary needs. Average tuition for four-year public universities more than doubled, and nationwide student debt surpassed one trillion dollars in 2012. Student loan debt disproportionately burdens the poorest students, making up, as a share of

³⁵ Flier advertising a demonstration, “Black Students Union and Black Organizations Demonstration Against Genocide and Racism,” April 9, 1976, Hostos Community College Archives, CUNY Digital History Archive, <https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/4472>.

³⁶ Leonard Buder, “CUNY Cuts Bring Anger and Despair,” *The New York Times*, November 14, 1976. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1976/11/14/94195736.html>

³⁷ Freeman, *Working-Class New York*, 271.

household income, 24 percent for the lowest quintile, at least twice the amount of any other quintile.³⁸

Today, the cost of higher education falls mostly on students, who pay out-of-pocket or take out loans; wealthier private institutions provide aid. This privatized system that high school seniors face is drastically different from the post-war model of education, in which the government shouldered the responsibility to fund educational institutions through tax dollars. The dismantling of free education at CUNY not only transformed education for New Yorkers, but it also set a precedent for the public disinvestment of higher education nationwide that has extended into the 21st century. From then on, the belief in and promise of higher education as a universal right, embodied by CUNY in its earliest iteration as the Free Academy, was cast aside. The philosophy of higher education was fundamentally changed as college came to be treated as a personal investment rather than a universal right. This new philosophy promised students that their tuition investment would be repaid with a salaried job after graduation. The quality of that investment followed from how much the students, their families, or their benefactors had, or did not have, to invest.

³⁸ Fabricant and Brier, *Austerity Blues*, 232-234; 240.

Primary Sources

Agnew, Spiro. "Threat to Educational Standards," speech at Republican fundraising dinner, Des Moines, Iowa, 1970. In *The University Crisis Reader: The Liberal University Under Attack*, edited by Immanuel Wallerstein and Paul Starr. H.W. Wilson, 2007.

This speech by Vice President Spiro Agnew provided me insight into the ideology behind the opposition to open admissions. Hearing this ideology espoused by Spiro Agnew, a prominent conservative outside of the Ford administration, also made clear that this opposition was not a stance limited to the Ford administration, but was held by the 1970s conservative movement as a whole.

Board of Higher Education of the City of New York, "Statement of Policy by the Board of Higher Education." CUNY Digital History Archive.
<https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/6922>.

This account of the Board of Higher Education (BHE)'s decision to implement an open admissions policy, which makes mention of student protests, showcases the direct impacts of student activism on administration policy. The reconciliatory tone of the statement further emphasized the power and effectiveness of the student protests, indicating not only policy change but a concession to the opinions of students after years of their denial by the administration.

Buder, Leonard. "CUNY Cuts Bring Anger and Despair," *The New York Times*, November 14, 1976. <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1976/11/14/94195736.html>

Buder's direct reporting on the fallout from the slashing of CUNY funds gave me anecdotes about how students were reacting to the changes in policy, conveying the fear and uncertainty felt by the CUNY community. With research so focused on details of finances and policy, looking into the personal and emotional accounts of students gave me a more holistic sense of austerity's impacts.

Committee of Ten, "Five Demands," CUNY Digital History Archive.
<https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/6952>.

This list of five demands made by the students of City College informed my writing on the grievances and goals of CUNY's Black and Puerto Rican students. It sheds light on the level of segregation at CUNY and the inaccessibility of CUNY before Open Admissions.

CUNY Black Students Union and Black Organization, "Black Students Union and Black Organizations Demonstration Against Genocide and Racism." Hostos Community College Archives, CUNY Digital History Archive.
<https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/4472>.

This flyer is one of many used to organize student protests. It gives insight into the impacts of CUNY's policies of austerity, as well as students' reactions to them. It also demonstrates the disproportionate impacts on Black and Hispanic students of austerity policies.

CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. "Report of the Fall 1972 Undergraduate Ethnic Census," CUNY Data Book 1972-1973.

https://www.cuny.edu/irdatabook/rpts3_AY_archive/DBook1967_1998/CUNY%20Data%20Book%201972-1973.pdf

This census report from 1972 provided me with data comparing CUNY enrollment in 1972 and in 1968 by race, including data for white, Black, and Puerto Rican students. It shows the impact of open admissions in terms of numeric data.

Holy, Thomas C., "A Long-Range Plan for the City University of New York, 1961-1975," CUNY Digital History Archive. <https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/3162>.

This report and plan showed me the disparity between the populations of non-white New Yorkers and actual non-white representation at CUNY in the 1960s in quantitative data. When juxtaposed with the jump in admissions to non-white students in 1972, it emphasizes the dramatic impact of open admissions on the demographics of the CUNY student population.

"Minutes of the Meeting of Board of Directors," Municipal Assistance Corporation for the City of New York (MAC) Collection, Baruch College Archives, William and Anita Newman Library, New York, New York.

These MAC meeting minutes show that plans for city budget cuts were both financial and political, as the board concerned itself with the symbolism of their actions, not just the financial gain. It served as a narrative jumping-off point for me in explaining the ideological basis of imposing tuition on CUNY.

Municipal Assistance Corporation for the City of New York. "Report: Congress of the United States, Congressional Budget Office, New York City's Fiscal Problem: Its Origins, Potential Repercussions, and Some Alternative Policy Responses." The Municipal Assistance Corporation for the City of New York (MAC) Collection, Baruch College Archives, William and Anita Newman Library, New York, New York. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.38409378>.

This report from MAC provided an overview of the financial impacts of the 1975 Fiscal Crisis. It illustrated the extent of the crisis in dollar amounts.

"New York City Finances - Meeting with the President, Vice President, Beame, and Carey, May 13, 1975," James M. Cannon Files, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

This set of documents from and leading up to Mayor Beame's meeting with the Ford administration shows that Ford was strongly opposed to aiding the city in any way. They show Ford's conservative political philosophy in practice.

Nixon, Richard. "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union." January 22, 1971. The American Presidency Project, University of California Santa Barbara. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/240562>.

President Nixon's State-of-the-Union address, which outlined ending welfare programs as a central goal, showed me that Nixon ran on a platform directly opposed to the welfare programs of Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society. It also corroborates the idea that Ford

was not alone in his hostility towards social programs, but rather part of a larger political movement.

Office of CUNY Chancellor Albert Bowker, “A three-pronged experimental approach to the problem of undiscovered college potential among the young men and women of New York City,” CUNY Digital History Archive. <https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/6972>. This plan of action, devised by Chancellor Albert Bowker, provided me with an early iteration of what would become the CUNY open admissions policy. Bowker’s distinct mentions of racial demographics demonstrated that there was, among the administration, not just student protesters, a movement to desegregate higher education.

Van Riper, Frank. “FORD TO CITY: DROP DEAD.” *New York Daily News*, October 30, 1975. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2015/10/29/ford-to-city-drop-dead-in-1975/>. This bold headline encapsulated the shock of the city and the nation at President Ford’s decision to let New York City default. While Ford did not actually say “drop dead” in his speech, the message was clear: the city was on its own. “Drop Dead University” is a play on this iconic headline, concisely capturing the hostility that the city and CUNY faced from the national reactionary movement.

Webster, Horace. “Address of Horace Webster,” in *Addresses Delivered Upon the Occasion of Opening the Free Academy*. WM. C. Bryant & Co., 1849. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc_arch_free/15/. This speech on the founding of the Free Academy, the single college that would eventually evolve into the entire CUNY system, illustrated that the policy of free tuition at CUNY was part of its mission since its beginning. It provides context for the fight over tuition and shows the historical precedent set by the imposition of tuition.

“While Hostos is Falling Down, Chase Manhattan is Making Pounds.” Hostos Community College Archives, CUNY Digital History Archive. <https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/6232>. This photograph of students protesting the austerity policies at CUNY illustrates the outrage of the student body in response to budget cuts. The slogans depicted, in reference to the targeting of colleges with largely Black and Hispanic populations, also show that the policies of austerity heavily impacted non-white student populations.

Secondary Sources

Fabricant, Michael, and Stephen Brier. *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016.

This book, which gives a broad account of the rise in austerity in higher education across the United States, provided me with the quantitative data to link the end of free education at CUNY to the lasting impacts of austerity still present today. It showed me how austerity policies escalated following their implementation at CUNY, and the impact they had on admissions, tuition, and debt in the decades that followed.

Freeman, Joshua B. *Working-Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II*. The New Press, 2000.

This book about the broad history of working-class movements and social programs in New York City gave me a general overview of the context surrounding the 1975 Fiscal Crisis. It served as my entry point into my topic, and brought me to the MAC archives at Baruch College, one of the most important resources in my research.

Newfield, Jack. *Abuse of Power: The Permanent Government and the Fall of New York*. Viking Press, 1977.

This book served as the basis for my understanding of the interplay between banking interests and the actions taken by MAC. It showed me the immense influence the financial establishment had over financial decision-making in the city following the Fiscal Crisis. Newfield's background in journalism was apparent to me, and his inclusion of unedited excerpts from MAC meeting minutes inspired me to include direct quotes from the meetings.

Newt Davidson Collective, *Crisis at CUNY*. CUNY Digital History Archive.
<https://cdha.cuny.edu/items/show/16>.

This pamphlet, composed by a collective of CUNY faculty, gives an extensive account of the fight for open admissions from the perspective of CUNY professors and students. I used it, supplemented by my other sources from the CUNY Digital History Archive, to provide a timeline of events leading up to the adoption of open admissions. The pamphlet is vocally in favor of the student protesters, demonstrating to me that the movement for open admissions found support among CUNY faculty, who were also impacted negatively by austerity measures.

Perlstein, Rick. *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*. Scribner, 2008.

Perlstein's biography of Richard Nixon served as my foundation for my sense of Nixon's political philosophy and the concept of the "silent majority." Along with sources on the Ford administration, I used this book to inform my account of the national rise in conservatism and its position in reaction to the Great Society and the New Deal.

Phillips-Fein, Kim. *Fear City: New York's Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics*. Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2017.

This book on the 1975 Fiscal Crisis helped me understand how the Fiscal Crisis began and escalated. Along with Newfield's book, it elucidated clearly the financial details that I struggled to understand, like the way municipal bonds worked and how the banks benefitted from them. However, for my paper, I mostly drew from the book's account of the Ford administration and its role in the restructuring of the city's finances. The book gave me a mental picture of the personalities and political philosophies of the key figures of the administration.