



# Free City College Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes **DRAFT**



**Members:** Hong Mei Pang (Co-Chair), Alan Wong (Co-Chair), Win-Mon Kyi, Heather Brandt, Patrick West, Calvin Quock, Maria Su, Dr. Lisa Cooper Wilkins, Alisa Messer, Jill Yee, Conny Ford, Malinalli Villalobos

**Date and Time:** Friday, January April 5, 2024, 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
**In-Person Location:** City College (Main Campus) - Multi-Use Building (MUB),  
Rm 140 50 Frida Kahlo Way, San Francisco, CA. 94112

## I. Call to Order and Roll Call

- A. Meeting called to order at 10:04 AM.
- B. Members Present: Hong Mei Pang (Co-Chair), Alan Wong (Co-Chair), Calvin Quock, Maria Su, Dr. Lisa Cooper Wilkins, Alisa Messer, Patrick West, Jill Yee
- C. Member(s) Absent: Win-Mon Kyi, Heather Brandt, Conny Ford, Malinalli Villalobos
- D. Member Comment: Member Brandt shared that both she and Member Villalobos were at a conference, and asked if there could be a standing item for [AB 2449](#), which allows individuals to attend remotely under certain circumstances. The expectation is to meet in person to meet quorum, but wanted to make sure we're being as inclusive as the law permits or allows.

## II. Adoption of the Agenda

- A. Agenda adopted.
- B. Member Cooper Wilkins motioned.  
Member West seconded.

## III. General Public Comments

- A. Public Comments:
  - Thea Shelby: Vice Chancellor Cooper Wilkins shared data on the percentage of Free City students accepting the Pell Grant and completing the FAFSA at the same or higher rate than non-Free City students and they are taking more units. Vice Chancellor Cooper Wilkins also shared the amount of the expenditures for Free City versus the revenues. We were trying to see if there was a possibility of adding another use for the funds, and that use would be transit passes for free city students. It does appear that there's quite a bit of funding left over on a yearly basis. The Student Transit Pass Team would like to connect with the committee to start a conversation on whether free transit passes could be included.
  - Brenda Chiu - Student at City College: As transit is a basic need and an equity issue, students may not be getting access to education because they have to choose between the bus and breakfast, or books and other basic necessities. Would love to continue this conversation and work together to make public transit more accessible and equitable for all city college students.
  - Angelica Campos: Would just like to encourage this body to look into the possibility of using some funds for transit passes for students that qualify for Free City because we are also looking at different revenues to accommodate the students who don't qualify under Free City. This is one of many basic needs our students face that sometimes doesn't get covered by current financial aid or current funds that we as students receive from the college.

- Amelia – Student Vice Chancellor: Have been seeing a lot of Free City student who's struggling to afford some basic needs, and one of them, the most important thing, is transportation. Because of that, I would like to ask for the committee to use the reserve fund to support the transit for the Free City students.
- Heather Brandt – CCSF Student Trustee: I'm just here in support of our students who are in attendance, expressing what their needs are and just to encourage this this body to look into the use of reserve funds for transit for our Free City College students.

#### **IV. Review and Approval of January 2024 Minutes**

- A. Minutes approved.
- B. Member Cooper Wilkins motioned.  
Member Su seconded.

#### **V. 24-25 FCCOC Meeting Schedule**

- A. The first meeting date on August 23<sup>rd</sup> may change due to a scheduling conflict. It may end up being August 30th. Co-Chair Wong asked that we make sure we let everybody know ahead of time.
- B. No Member Comments.
- C. No Public Comment.

#### **VI. Changes to the Free City College Application**

- A. Dr. Cooper Wilkins reviewed the prior application before sharing the changes to the application.
  - Old application did not adequately explain what Free City was and students were answering some questions inaccurately (example shared on residency status) which impacted their eligibility for the program. A concern was that students would be more focused on registering for their classes and therefore not reading through the Free City document well enough to recognize there are fees associated with the program.
  - The updated application aims to reduce questions and inform students what is not covered by Free City. Some of the changes include:
    - Explanation of what it means when you get free tuition.
    - Students can immediately click into Free City to learn more information about the program.
    - It's more important to know if the student actually lives in San Francisco because there are other systems in place at the college that can check for their California Residency.
    - If they are not eligible for Free City, they will be directed to where they can get assistance to determine if there was a mistake either in their questions or to find out more information.
    - We noted that we should likely give a link to our financial Aid office and let students know if they do apply for financial aid that it is likely, in addition to getting Free City. Granted there may be other aid available to help cover fees.
    - Added what is not covered by Free City so students will know if they drop classes they would need to repay, as well as other fees that may not cover be covered by Free City. A check box was added to select they understand what is not covered. A recommendation was made to have students take a photo of these pages, so that later they can go back and reference the information.
  - These changes are already in effect, and we hope that they will have a positive impact on students. Will continue to refine it, as we determine that there may be other tweaks.
  - We will be soliciting feedback from students through a series of focus groups that are going to be happening later this month.
- B. Member Comments:
  - Member Yee asked for clarification on if the application will include asking students to take a photo of what's not covered by Free City. Member Cooper Wilkins confirmed it would.

- Member Messer shared there is a lot of backend work that is being done. Students won't even see the Free City page unless we think that they are eligible.

C. No Public Comment.

## VII. Unfinished Business

### A. Outstanding Fees Fund Balance Update presented by Dr. Cooper Wilkins.

- The total number of students whose debt has been paid is 10,668. Total amount spent on debt relief to date is \$1,627,189. Amount of funding remaining: \$444,329. There are outstanding fees for students from Spring 2023-Spring 2024. In Spring 2024, there were 301 students who came back and enrolled in classes, 271 persisted and 30 dropped.

#### 1. Member Comments

- Member Yee asked is the debt relief program a one off? Will this be an ongoing program? Member Su reminded the committee that the original debt relief funds were allocated for a specific period. It took almost a year to advocate for those dollars to be available for the students from Fall 2017 to Fall 2022.
- Member Messer asked for clarification because at the last committee meeting, we discussed the possibility of asking whether or not we could extend it, because clearly there's still funds left over. Does that mean that we have a clear, no? Member Su responded she is working with the Mayor's Office to see if we could extend it. Unfortunately, when we did create the MOU to allocate the dollars, we put time bounds on it. So, there's no definitive answer.
- Member Yee asked how you decide who gets the remaining funds if we do cover some amount of the new outstanding fees. Also, is it a concern that perhaps this is not equitable for the students who did pay their outstanding fees? Member Cooper-Wilkins responded students who did pay their fees would not show up in the report so it would be difficult to know how much we would owe them. Member Messer shared not to set students up to be in debt in the first place, that's the most equitable thing. Member Yee agreed it would be nice to see that Free City included all fees but would need some data to see if that is fiscally possible.
- Co-Chair Wong asked what is the total amount of fees that would typically cost for a student and if there's enough ongoing funding to be able to cover them on a regular basis. Member Cooper Wilkins shared there are a number of different fees, but consistent ones are student activity fees and student representation fees. Then different fees like class fees that come based on the type of class that they are taking. Can get the list of the standard fees and share. Chair Wong followed up with are there any legal barriers or policies that prohibit Community Colleges from having someone pay for the other fees. Member Cooper Wilkins responded not any she is aware of but will check.
- Member Yee shared it would be consistent with the MOU, because we are trying to remove barriers, but is it fiscally sustainable and reasonable.
- Member West asked were students notified about their debt relief. Member Cooper-Wilkins responded yes, through emails and text messages and through the new marketing campaign. The concern is for those students back in Fall 2017. It's probably more likely that we don't have current information for them. The marketing campaign that just started will focus more on those students.
- Co-Chair Pang thanked everyone for the robust conversation and Dr. Cooper Wilkins and her team for getting the information together. We are in the midst of a very dynamic and complex budget process in the City. It would be helpful to get additional information as this conversation evolves and continues to develop. We want to be very thoughtful about how we are being fiscally responsible and all the different responsibilities we have towards children, youth, and families.

#### 2. Public Comment

- Shane Robinson: All the rules are in the MOU. Don't think there's a need to go back and ask for new money. It would just be the two parties (DCYF and CCSF) coming to an agreement to amend the MOU to see if we can change how the funds are spent. The money is already allocated.

- Member Yee asked does the current pot of money have enough money to cover the fees, like health fees, student activities fees. Could it be something that we can at least explore?
- Chair Wong shared that if there is enough surplus money left in the Free City fund (at the end of the year) the City can take it back. Would be interested in seeing for our current 15 million plus that's going to Free City each year, how much of that we're using for tuition. Recalled the first two years were like 6 to 8 million dollars a year that was spent. The dollar amount is a little bit over that right now, but still not reaching the total of 15 million. Would like to see whatever's left over, how much is available for these other fees.
- Member Su shared it could be useful to do more research, and maybe do an MOU 101 session with the committee. Really look at all the equity work the committee is working on. Maybe this is the right time to start thinking about how better and more appropriately we use these dollars to really support students who really need it the most.
- Member Messer shared it would be helpful to learn what we are able to do with it and what we would like to do with it (left over funds). The transit conversation is clearly a basic need for students but not something that was in our previous equity discussion. What about undocumented students? These are so important when we think about this program taking down barriers for students.

**B. Financial Stability and Sustainability of the College Update by Co-Chair Wong.**

- Co-Chair Wong shared CCSF has a balanced budget with a 5% reserve. Will have some financial challenges in the future (25-26). To overcome these challenges, will need to increase enrollment by 8%, keep spending flat or a combination of these strategies. Personally, in support of a mixed strategy. Recently approved mailing out the CCSF catalog for this semester after a push from community members. This will help many of our older adults sign up for classes.

**1. Member Comments**

- Member Yee shared concerns about the fact that the accreditation of City College is placed on warning. The committee must follow up on the current accreditation status because we are giving a lot of money to the college. Concerned that the response of Chair Wong did not include anything about the accreditation and what steps are being taken so that we will get full accreditation. Chair Wong shared this was a focus on the financial sustainability of City College. In terms of the accreditation, he's been in communication with Co-Chair Pang, and they don't think that this committee has purview over this item.
  - Member Su appreciated Member Yee's comment and shared the purview for this body is very much focused on the Free City funds and oversight. There are other bodies and other avenues for that conversation, which is extremely important, but there are other places for that conversation. Member Messer agreed with Member Su's comment.
  - Member Yee shared the MOU requires the college to be solvent to continue receiving Free City funding. The Board has not submitted a 3–5-year fiscal plan that indicates there will be a balanced budget. If the Board of Supervisors asked this committee about spending and Free City funding, the accreditation issue is not relevant to this committee? Member Yee absolutely disagreed with that.
  - Member Messer absolutely disagreed with Member Yee's statement. We all think accreditation is important. We are giving millions of dollars to students at City College, and to me as somebody who helped formulate and think about this, it was at a time when I really didn't think that the college needed millions of dollars. Our students needed millions of dollars. And that's what we do here. And if we have questions about the finances of what Free City is doing for students, or what the college is doing with that money for students, then we should look at that. But I don't think that's what's in question here. I think we have built a program that serves students and yes, other things need to be in place to make that continue.
  - Member Yee shared students are receiving funding to pay for their tuition. In order for City College to keep its doors open, it must receive full accreditation. It is relevant for us to discuss the

accreditation status and concerns.

- Member Su shared as the administrator for these funds, and essentially the staff that operates and what manages this body, it is outside of the purview of the members of this body. The primary role and responsibility is to ensure that Free City College programs and funds are allocated appropriately, according to the MOU. The role that is held in this body is held to Free City College, not accreditation.
- Member Yee asked if we are making recommendations to include enrollment fees, isn't accreditation relevant? Member Su responded that accreditation is always relevant. However, there are other places Chair Wong has alluded to where the Dean and members of the Board of Trustees are having conversations. Once again, our role is limited to Free City College. It is out of our scope to ensure the college is solvent.
- Member Yee shared we cannot make or require that the college is solvent. In terms of the funding of Free City, if it is perceived that the college is not going to be able to balance its budget, then City College is not going to be able to be solvent, based on certain fiscal decisions that has bearings on our recommendations and our management of Free city, doesn't it? Member Su responded no, that will have bearings on the Mayor and members of the Board of Supervisors. This body's role is only limited to how we implement the Free City College program.
- Member Yee asked as a committee, are we just rubber stamping any requests that the college makes? Member Su responded does not believe that's to be the case as the administrator for these funds. There is a lot of work that this body is a part of and engages in that is very relevant to the Free City program and the initiative, and that is limited by the scope of work.
- Chair Pang suggested it might be helpful to build this into some of the conversations we were just having around revenue planning and thinking through what that means in terms of impact.

2. No Public Comment

**C. Financial and Non-Financial Benefits of Free City Update by DCYF.**

- To plan for the June meeting, Member Messer will develop the discussion questions/activities within the Equity Subcommittee and add it as a part of the Equity Committee report out in June. The report-out will include current updates on the equity work, the goals for next year, and what progress was made.

1. Member Comment

- Member Cooper Wilkins asked do we need to have an extended meeting or separate meetings. The Free City College Secretary responded we can discuss further. We extended the time of a previous meeting to accommodate agenda items without having separate meetings.

2. No Public Comment

**VIII. Future Agenda Items**

- A. Member Messer asked if we agree that we want to have a conversation about decreasing barriers for students, how do we do that? Co-Chair Wong reviewed what we do currently to add future agenda items. Member Su suggested for this item we start with the MOU 101 session for everybody and then we can engage in a deeper conversation about what it means to support all students.

**IX. Adjournment**

- A. Member Messer motioned.  
Member West seconded.
- B. The meeting adjourned at 11:24 AM.