April 20, 2012

Chair Amanda Burden
City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair and Commissioners:

I am writing in support of the NYU 2031 plan. In the time that I have had the privilege to serve as Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science at NYU, I have come to appreciate the many disciplinary strengths we have as well as the challenges we face as one of the most compact universities (not only on a square footage per student, but also per research active faculty) among our peers. Our faculty and students greatly benefit from close interaction, but we are becoming progressively strained for space as we continue to grow as a natural consequence of our increasing strength as a premier research university. Thus we have reached a point where our existing capacity to grow and develop is significantly limited. While the university is seriously considering remote locations (such as the East Side health corridor and Downtown Brooklyn), there is a need for expansion in our core at Washington Square. Over the past seven years, the Faculty of Arts and Science has grown by over 100 faculty and we plan to continue with over 50 new faculty in the sciences in the next few years.

Without the continued investment in additional space over the last few years, NYU and Arts & Science would not have been able to attract the kinds of top students and world class faculty, achieve the kinds of successes, or build upon the cutting edge research that has been developed over the past decade. Permit me to illustrate just a few of these recent successes within the Faculty of Arts and Science:

- New interdisciplinary studies involving faculty from our English and Neural Science departments (http://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2012/04/16/aesthetic-appeal-may-have-neurological-link-to-contemplation-and-self-assessment-nyu-researchers-find.html);
- Center for Cosmology & Particle Physics, bringing together collaborators devoted to integrated study of cosmology, observational astronomy, fundamental and phenomenological particle physics, gravity, plasma physics, high energy astrophysics, black holes and computational physics;
- Center for Brain Imaging (a shared facility), dedicated to research and teaching in cognitive neuroscience;
- Center for Soft Matter Research, with close ties to researchers in chemistry, mathematics, biology, biomaterials and biomimetics, and engineering studying materials at the atomic or molecular scale;
- Molecular Design Institute which combines key areas in chemistry, physics and biology to examine self-assembly and hierarchical organization of complex materials;
• The development of a new Environmental Studies Program to meet the needs of our students and build upon our efforts in becoming a greener employer in NYC;
• Creation of the premiere Center for Experimental Social Science research which involves multiple disciplines (economics, neural science, political science, psychology);

To continue this growth and to maintain and extend our research and teaching missions, over the next decade Arts & Science will need additional space to accommodate and house not only our new science faculty, but also the laboratory space that will be needed to support students and postdoctoral researchers working with them.

Key areas for faculty hiring in the Science Departments alone include:
• Biology: Genomics, Molecular & Cellular Biology, and Developmental Biology
• Chemistry: Molecular Design, Biomedical Chemistry
• Physics: Soft Condensed Matter, HCM/AMO, and Quantum Phenomena
• Psychology: Cognition and Perception, Social Psychology
• Neural Science: Systems Neuroscience, Decision Making.

Each of these endeavors will require important expansion in space in the next few years.

In addition to the Sciences, there are critical space needs in the Humanities and Social Sciences as well. Our classrooms are incredibly over-subscribed, and the space needed for our Humanities and Social Science scholars to carry out their research is becoming progressively inadequate.

For example, we have just hired a world-class philosopher, David Chalmers, to develop a Mind-Brain Institute that will include scholars from around the university, including Linguistics, Philosophy, Neural Science and several Departments in the Social Sciences and the Humanities. This exciting opportunity will certainly place new space demands on the Faculty of Arts and Science.

Other examples of critical space needs for our faculty include colleagues in the Departments of English, Music, East Asian Studies, Environmental Studies, Anthropology, and Hebrew and Judaic Studies, to name just a few.

In conclusion, to continue to realize the full research and teaching potential of one of the premier universities in New York City, and thus contribute to the City’s vitality in any number of ways, we critically need the ability to grow, while remaining respectful of our neighbors in Greenwich Village. I am convinced that the NYU 2031 plan has the capacity to realize these dual and interrelated goals. I thus fully support the plan and urge you to adopt it.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Carew