The Chancellor
April 25, 2012

The Honorable Amanda Burden (Chair)
Members of the New York City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Burden and Commission Members:

I am pleased to write in support of New York University's Core Project to expand its campus, which you are considering today.

At The City University of New York, where enrollment at our 24 colleges and professional schools is at record levels, we are well acquainted with the challenges of meeting growing student demand within a dense city landscape shared by residential and commercial neighbors. Our growth, like NYU’s, reflects the ambition and hunger for knowledge that characterizes New York City, and it should be a point of pride for all of us. The city is home to more college students—both in absolute terms and per capita—than any other city in the United States. I would argue that the presence of so many leading research universities in the city is one of New York’s major advantages; they draw the people, industries, and ideas that enrich the city socially, culturally, and economically. Higher education, both public and private, is what makes New York City what my friend and colleague John Sexton calls a global “idea capital.”

To deliver on higher education’s promise in the 21st century, universities must meet a range of urgent needs: state-of-the-art facilities and equipment for cutting-edge research; rigorous academic programs offered through different modalities; housing and specialized services for students; and expanded partnerships with the community. To NYU’s great credit, it has fully embraced this mission. Its comprehensive approach to campus planning has included a detailed analysis of needs and possible solutions and, in particular, has fully considered its key role within the communities it serves: its students and faculty, its surrounding neighborhoods, and the city itself. The university’s sensitivity to advancing its educational responsibilities while also aiming to lessen the environmental impact and disruption to the neighborhood and provide a more welcoming public space is to be commended.

For me, it is especially important to note that this plan was four years in the making, during which time it has been publicly discussed, debated, and altered in response to input from a wide array of stakeholders. In that time, we have witnessed the university’s willingness to address some of its space needs over the coming decades through locations outside of its Washington Square campus. However, it’s clear that some significant academic needs in the years ahead must be accommodated in the university’s core area. That is the Core Project that is before you for review.

The Core Project rightly takes the long view, both educationally and environmentally. It provides space for a public school. It expands the physical campus only on its own footprint, which reduces the need to spread development into the surrounding neighborhoods. And it ensures that open space in the area is more accessible not only to the NYU community but to the community at large.
The Core Project also addresses NYU’s essential need to evolve and upgrade in order to create and disseminate knowledge in the 21st century. That is its fundamental mission as a university. Particularly in the sciences, the university must have modern, state-of-the-art facilities and technologies that enable faculty and students to push the boundaries of discovery. We expect the city’s universities to be on the leading edge, and we cannot ask them to get there from centuries-old buildings and infrastructure.

NYU has carefully and collaboratively developed a reasonable and balanced long-term plan that advances the educational excellence that the city and its constituencies have come to expect of it, and that fosters an even stronger partnership with the citizens of New York.

Few projects deserve more serious attention than those involving the ability of our city’s universities to thrive and expand. Universities enhance their surrounding communities, provide long-term economic stability, and are key resources for the city, creating jobs, educational programs, new businesses, cultural opportunities, and a highly educated workforce. NYU’s initiative is more than a development project; it is a plan to shape the future of New York as a leading center of intellectual life and economic vibrancy.

I urge your fullest consideration of the NYU Core Project. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Matthew Goldstein