NYU 2031 Testimony

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My name is Amanda Alampi. I am a masters candidate at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at NYU and also an alumna of NYU. I received my bachelors in journalism and history in 2011. I am currently studying public and nonprofit management and policy.

I've been at this university for the last five years now and NYU has changed a great deal since I first stepped foot on campus. More importantly, I've changed a lot because of NYU. Our university prides itself in being a private university in the public interest.

I really didn’t understand what that meant until I spent a year working at the Islamic Center at NYU. It was 2009 in the midst of the economic crisis and I couldn’t find a job so I bargained with Imam Khalid Latif, who also serves as the NYPD’s muslim chaplain, for an opportunity to work as his public relations assistant.

I had the chance to see how a university’s faith house served not only students, faculty and staff but Greenwich Village’s Muslim community too. Students prayed next to cab drivers and restaurant owners and New York’s finest. When the Imam has events, meetings or media appearances, he isn’t just serving NYU, he is serving New York City. Since NYU is so interwoven into the fabric of this City, that’s just how everyday business operates at our university. We don’t think twice about it.

And NYU has provided me with a number of opportunities to serve this City. I’ve had the chance to work in not only the New York City government with Comptroller Liu but up at Turtle Bay at the United Nations. I also serve this City as a journalist. All thanks to NYU.

But in order for NYU to continue to produce public servants, innovators and entrepreneurs that will serve and enhance this City, we ask that you help us because NYU is busting at the seams. Our Islamic Center at NYU, up until a few weeks ago, was housed in the basement of St. Joseph’s Church. Every time students wanted to pray, we had to roll out rugs hidden away in closets and corners because the basement also functions as a soup kitchen and a special events space for the church.

Our classrooms are filled to the brim too. I remember classes during my academic career where there weren’t enough desks for the students enrolled in the class. The last few years, our residence halls have been filled to capacity, one semester even overflowing into a hotel in midtown, because we have so many students living on campus.

Not having a large enough classroom or an appropriate dorm room or a proper place to pray, greatly impacts the quality of education. Sure, NYU students are New Yorkers. We are tough as nails because we dodge cabs on the way to class! But that doesn’t mean we aren’t entitled to expanding our campus in order to ensure that our students receive the best education possible.

If you support NYU 2031, you are giving students, like me, an opportunity to give back to this City, the same way NYU has been doing for years. Thank you for your time.