Testimony of Rachel Channon
Before the New York City Planning Commission
for the Public Hearing on the New York University Core Project

Dear Chair Burden and fellow Commissioners,

Throughout my four years at NYU, I have been involved in the planning of numerous events through the Bronfman Center for Jewish Student Life and have dealt firsthand with the lack of usable space. With 20,000 undergraduates on campus, we always have the vision of drawing in large numbers for the educational, religious and social events we plan, but, unfortunately due to the cramped spaces and time necessary to reserve space in advance, our programs are often scaled down or subject to available space.

A few weeks ago I co-chaired Shabbat for 2000, a Friday night dinner for 2,000 students on campus. Shabbat for 2000 is the largest student-run event in the country! Two years ago, when I chaired the same event, we held it at the Puck building because there was no space on campus to accommodate 2,000 students. This year, we held Shabbat for 2000 at the Coles gym because Puck was no longer available. I’m proud to say the event was a complete success. We brought together almost 2,000 students with diverse backgrounds from every corner of the campus to unite in a communal dinner. We have hopes of making Shabbat for 2000 even larger and incorporating even more students, but unfortunately Coles is the largest space we have and it cannot accommodate any more students.

Despite its large student body and bustling buildings, NYU can be a very anonymous place. Community is not built in to NYU in the same way it is at smaller, campus-based schools. When students participate in sports, clubs or events at NYU it provides a sense of community and security that most 18-22 year olds need to fuel self-discovery and promote self-fulfillment. When students attend a dinner like Shabbat for 2000 they build relationships, participate in unfamiliar experiences, and expand their worldview. The
only thing standing in the way of student leaders being able to build dynamic programming is the lack of available and usable space.

NYU is training the leaders of tomorrow. Please encourage community building at NYU for all the future leaders by voting for more space.

Rachel Leah Channon
New York University
847-372-0887
rlc331@nyu.edu