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## State's 'brain drain' pondered

Lawmakers and CSI students discuss why young people leave New York for opportunities  
**Wednesday, September 17, 2008**  
 By JUDY L. RANDALL  
 ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- A group of Assembly Republicans, meeting with students at the College of Staten Island to learn why young people leave New York, got an earful from one young man who told them they have to do more to make higher education affordable in order to retain the local workforce.

Sociology major Jeff McGraham of Stapleton told Assemblyman Lou Tobacco (R-South Shore) and his GOP colleagues that by "voting to cut CUNY by 7 percent" they had "put the budget burden on the people who can least afford it."

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Tobacco contended that McGraham was "injecting a partisan flair" into the proceedings, and upstate lawmakers noted that community colleges had suffered cuts as well.

But CSI President Tomas Morales, who was present, lent credence to the student's aid argument, telling lawmakers: "There has to be a significant investment in CUNY and SUNY. ... Every dollar the state invests in higher education, you are going to get that back tenfold."

The afternoon forum was part of an effort by the group RemainNY to interact with young people around the state to seek advice on how to keep them living and working in New York.

McGraham told the Advance he probably would look to relocate to seek more diversified job opportunities.

English major Rhagina Chislom of Mariners Harbor said she wants to "live and work in Jersey" upon graduation -- in part, because when she reviews job and housing opportunities in the classified section and online, "it's Jersey jobs and real estate."

"That's where we want to go," she added. "There are more opportunities there, jobs, housing, nightlife. Jersey has it all. Manhattan, who wants to travel? Going back and forth, two hours on the ferry, the tolls going up ..."

Joining Tobacco were Republican Assemblymen Rob Walker of Hicksville, L.I.; Jack Quinn of Hamburg, and Marcus Molinaro of upstate Red Hook.

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Staten Island, NY



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They said a "brain drain" from New York has made the state No. 1 in overall outward migration, with 1.2 million people lost, according to the last census.

Tobacco said that, while the borough's population increased 17 percent in the 1990s, there was a 5 percent decline among 18- to 34-year-olds during that period. He said the high cost of housing and poor transportation options here may be contributing factors, but deflected a question about whether that relatively low local percentage could be viewed from a perspective of young people simply wanting to test their wings away from home.

Quinn said the main reason why young people leave the Buffalo area, which he represents, is to look for work. While his area offers educational options, affordable housing and no real traffic concerns, jobs are in short supply, he said.

Dr. Morales told the Advance that one way to keep students on Staten Island after they graduate is by "improving the quality of career services," which he said CSI does, "through career counseling, job placement, internships, fellowships and scholarships."

The forum, held in the student lounge, was free and open to the public; about 40 students, faculty and administrators were in attendance. A similar forum was held last night with the Staten Island Chamber of Commerce in the CYO center on the grounds of Mount Loretto.

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