

# ManhattanTimes

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## MODEL NEW YORK SENATE

# 20 years

# RIGOR

*It started as a small question twenty years ago, one that might have gone untended elsewhere.*

### What if?

*What if* educators and administrators from the nation's largest urban public university, the City University of New York (CUNY), came together with New York State legislators and community leaders on a daring legislative experiment?

*What if* CUNY sought another unique way to enrich its diverse student body beyond the classroom door?

*What if* the immersive program yielded an authentic understanding of policy-making and governance?

*What if* the sessions inspired a new generation of leadership in elected office and in civic life?

Two decades later, the "What if?" is now "What's next?"

The experiment, the Model New York State Senate (Model Senate), is ensconced as an institution within the CUNY legacy of reach and rigor.



# and REACH

Casting students from all walks of life in the roles of Student Senators has resulted in more than 1,200 individual stories of learning, compromise and debate.

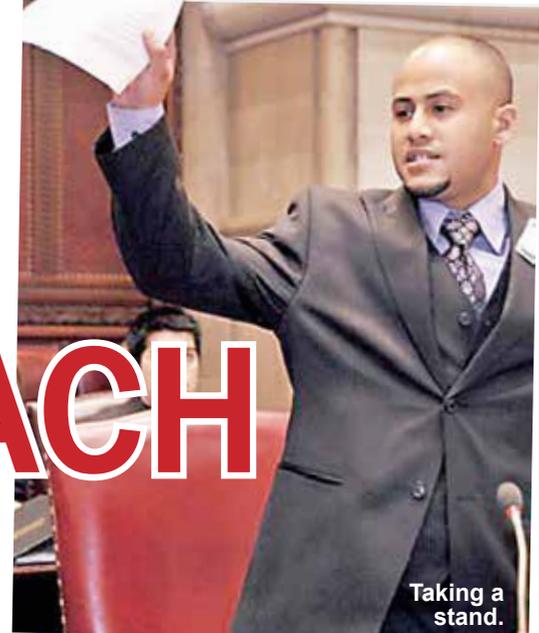
The Model Senate program is administered annually by CUNY's Edward T. Rogowsky Internship (ETR) Program, in collaboration with the Puerto Rican and Hispanic Task Force of the New York State Legislature and the 1997 State University of New

York (SUNY).

Founded in 1997 by CUNY Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson, in partnership with Task Force leaders, including then-Assemblymember Roberto Ramírez, the program is led by Program Director Dr. Anthony Maniscalco and Assistant Director Ernesto Malavé, Jr.

Each year, more than 60 CUNY and SUNY students come together for a series of intensive training seminars on representation, state policy formulation, and law-making.

"This contingent of ambitious and talented students receives unique



Taking a stand.

insight on the state legislative process, access to Albany's powerbrokers, and hands-on training," explains Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson.

The ETR Internship Program coordinates the selection process and the development of participants from students to Model Senators.

"Students change the way they make decisions," says Malavé. "They begin to understand that if you ever want to speak for the public, you need to listen first."

Model Senate alumni include Senator José Peralta, who participated in the inaugural program, and Senator Gustavo Rivera, who has served as a faculty member and mentor for over a decade.

He notes, "This provides the resources and knowledge to approach the political and policy processes that affect them and their communities."

*What if, indeed.*



CUNY Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson.



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Public Advocate Letitia James with a Model Senator.



Ready to lead.

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**Saint Mbakop A Boui**  
Hostos Community College

## best in business

“I have an entrepreneur’s mindset,” says Saint Mbakop A Boui of the Bronx. The Business Administration major says that after Hostos, he hopes to continue his studies at Baruch College.

Debating the issue of paid leave has proven instructive for the budding businessman.

“This program has shown me how laws are made and what the process is.”

He says it’s also helped him look at the big picture.

“This bill affects everybody – an employee working at a company to someone looking to open their own business.”

## a new standard



**Damaris Rodríguez**  
Lehman College

Damaris Rodríguez knows just how critical – and how hard – it is to care for family. “With my children, I have had to use my vacation and sick time,” she says. “Returning to work was difficult to manage.”

The Lehman College student is majoring in Health Education and Promotion, with an eye towards teaching families about preventing obesity and diabetes.

She has sought to immerse herself in learning how the Senate can affect change.

“You learn about the differences in districts regarding health, poverty and race,” says Damaris. “Understanding how policy works and how laws are passed are important.”

The decisions of the legislative body, she observes, have real-life consequences.

“At any moment, a loved one could get sick.”

## seeking to serve



**Pedro Díaz**  
Bronx Community College

Pedro Díaz of Washington Heights is looking far ahead.

The Political Science major from Bronx Community College sees a future in public service – possibly in union leadership or in education.

“I am learning how the inside of Albany works.”

And the issue of paid leave is far from theoretical for Pedro.

“My own mother, when she had my brother, she had to take vacation days off to supplement her off time.”

His work as a Model Senator has deepened his interest – and has served as motivation.

“Seeing how students, staff and former Model Senators have progressed has been incredibly inspiring.”

## impact with intuition



**Jolisel Vargas**  
Baruch College

“I’ve always wanted to run for office one day,” says Jolisel Vargas.

The decision to train as a Model Senator was a natural choice for the Baruch College student, who has opted to major in Public Affairs with a minor in Law and Policy. The sessions have yielded a greater understanding of government and the competing interests that lawmakers must constantly negotiate.

Jolisel is eager for the debate ahead, noting that the bill, should it pass, would have impact for all families across the state.

“There are a lot of things that come into play when passing a bill. The districts range between people that are well off and people that are low-income.”



## fighting fair

“I’d like to be an advocate.”

Randi García has chosen to major in Psychology at Bronx Community College to better help identify and treat mental health conditions afflicting underserved communities.

“We need to look at minority residents [more closely]. We need to ask, how will this benefit the community as a whole?”

She said she and her colleagues needed to fully vet the bill’s consequences for all residents and safeguard against undue harm.

Randi notes that her working class neighbors are vested in the bill’s outcome.

“In my community, diapers feel like they cost as much as tuition. This is not just about income, it’s also about sustainability.”



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## On the Floor: Paid Family Care Leave

Is it time for leave?

**M**odel Senate participants will debate and vote on a bill to provide paid family care and parental leave to employees throughout New York State—up to 12 weeks leave for employees to care for a newborn child or ailing relative.

Supporters say the bill will ensure that employees can care for their family members without risking their incomes or job security. As the bill would expand the state’s current Temporary Disability Insurance program, they note there would be no new administrative requirements or costs to employers.

Instead, employees would pay a small paycheck tax.

Opponents argue that the legislation places undue burdens



on employers, particularly small business owners, who would be forced to hire and train replacement workers to cope with a new entitlement program. They say New York would have the most expansive and least business-friendly paid family leave law in the nation.

Of note – The United States is one of only three countries without paid family leave. The other two are Suriname and Papua New Guinea.



## Abierto a discusión: Licencia pagada de cuidado de la familia

¿Es hora de la licencia pagada?

**P**articipantes del modelo del Senado debatirán y votarán sobre un proyecto de ley para proporcionar y licencia paterna pagada a empleados de todo el estado de Nueva York por hasta 12 semanas de permiso a los empleados para cuidar a un niño recién nacido o un pariente enfermo.

Los partidarios dicen que el proyecto de ley asegurará que los empleados puedan cuidar de sus familiares sin poner en riesgo sus ingresos ni su seguridad en el empleo. Dado que el proyecto de ley ampliaría el actual programa de Seguro de Incapacidad Temporal del estado, señalan que no habría nuevos requisitos administrativos ni costos para los empleadores.

En lugar de ello, los empleados tendrían que pagar un pequeño impuesto de su sueldo.

Los opositores argumentan



que la legislación impone cargas indebidas a los empleadores, en particular los dueños de pequeños negocios, quienes se verían obligados a contratar y entrenar a trabajadores de reemplazo para hacer frente al nuevo programa de ayuda social. Dicen que Nueva York tendría la más extensa ley de la licencia pagada familiar —y menos amigable con los negocios— de la nación.

De destacar: Los Estados Unidos es uno de los tres únicos países que no tienen licencia familiar pagada. Los otros dos son Surinam y Papúa Nueva Guinea.

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## “Do More and Do Better”

“We were looking to make sure that our undergraduates would have access to the same types of experiences that students get at Yale, Harvard, Princeton, when they participate in model programs,” recalled Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson.

Edward T. Rogowsky had joined CUNY TV in 1992, serving as City Editor and host of the weekly discussion program *MetroView*.

When the idea for the model legislative program was sparked a few years later, CUNY leaders knew just the person to turn to.

Rogowsky had been appointed to the City Planning Commission in 1990, where he was



credited with helping to revitalize downtown Brooklyn. From 1988 to 1989, he had served as Project Director for a study of the development block grant process and as a member of the *National Civic Review's* editorial board.

And so in 1995, Rogowsky was named Director of the CUNY



Professor Edward Rogowsky.

Internship Program in Government and Public Affairs, during which he helped implement the Model State Senate. Rogowsky graduated from Brooklyn College-CUNY, where he later served as Professor Emeritus of Political Science, as well as director of the Graduate Center for Worker Education from 1989 to 1995.

The center has since been renamed in his honor.

So too has the leadership program that has trained and engaged over 1,200 CUNY students.

“Ed was about making sure young people stayed engaged in their communities, and in the politics of the city and the nation,” said Ester Fuchs, Professor of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University. “He inspired all of us to do more and to do better.”



SOMOS el Futuro

## Outstanding Community Service Award *The Honorable Cesar A. Perales*

*The Outstanding Community Service Award will be presented at the SOMOS El Futuro Conference to former New York State Secretary of State Cesar A. Perales by CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken.*

Perales has spent over 50 years in various roles in distinguished public service.

In recent years, Perales, the son of a Puerto Rican father and a Dominican mother, has been a forceful advocate for The DREAM Act.

In May 2015, he spoke directly to DREAM CUNY students who had been awarded scholarships to pursue their academic goals and lauded their persistence.

“[You] contribute an enormous amount to our culture, our society, and our state,” he said. “I thank you for inspiring me.”

As co-founder of the Latino Justice Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (now known as the Latino Justice PRLDEF), Perales served as its first Executive Director and returned later in his career to serve as its President and General Counsel.

Perales has held numerous positions in both public and private sectors throughout his



Chancellor James B. Milliken.

distinguished career, including

- Founder of the first Brooklyn Legal Services Office
- General Counsel for the Model Cities Administration, under Mayor John V. Lindsay
- Assistant Secretary at the Department of Health and Human Services, nominated by President Jimmy Carter
- Commissioner of the New York State Department of Social Service, appointed by former Governor Mario M. Cuomo
- Deputy Mayor of New York City under Mayor David N. Dinkins
- Senior Vice President for Community Health at The New York-Presbyterian Hospital
- Senior Fellow at Baruch College School of Public Affairs

As Secretary of State of New York, Perales led the oldest agency in the New York State government.

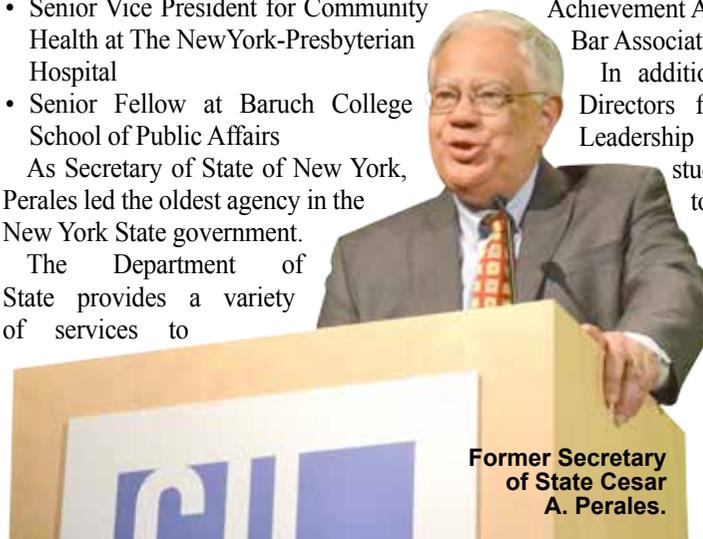
The Department of State provides a variety of services to

citizens, community organizations, businesses and local governments. With over 17 divisions, the Department is one of the state’s most diverse agencies, and the broad nature of the Department’s work has an impact on all New Yorkers.

Perales earned his B.A. from City College of New York in 1962 before enrolling at Fordham Law. Throughout his career, Perales has been recognized for his dedication to community development and social justice. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Lehman College, the Thurgood Marshall Award from Seton Hall University Law School, and the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hispanic National Bar Association, among other distinctions.

In addition, the LatinoJustice Board of Directors founded the Cesar A. Perales Leadership Institute to provide Latino students with the opportunity to make a difference in their communities and to provide them with comprehensive services and develop their leadership capacities.

“Latinos are beginning to see themselves as a group, as a community,” said Perales in 2008. “There is a coming together of identification in a common struggle.”



Former Secretary of State Cesar A. Perales.

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