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INSPECTOR GENERAL

August 6, 2020

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez
Chancellor
The City University of New York
205 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017

Re: NYS IG 0736-172-2019

Dear Chancellor Matos Rodríguez:

In March 2019, The City University of New York (CUNY) alleged to the Office of the New York State Inspector General that [REDACTED] at York College (York), issued students invalid cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certificates and utilized an invalid CPR certificate to gain employment at York. Specifically, CUNY alleged that on February 6, 2019, three students reported to York that they discovered the CPR certificates provided to them by [REDACTED] were invalid after reviewing them on the American Red Cross (Red Cross) website and finding that they were issued to another individual. Furthermore, CUNY alleged that [REDACTED] submitted to York CPR certificates in his name, one of which was fraudulent. The Inspector General investigated these allegations and found several instances of misconduct by [REDACTED]

The Inspector General's investigation found that [REDACTED] who was not an authorized Red Cross CPR trainer, provided forged Red Cross CPR certificates to at least

eight now former York Students.¹ Moreover, the investigation found that these certificates were actually filed with the Red Cross under the name [REDACTED], York's [REDACTED] and contained a Certificate ID that had been issued by the Red Cross to [REDACTED].² Although [REDACTED] provided each of the students with a purported Red Cross CPR certificate bearing the student's name, the certificates were merely forged reproductions of [REDACTED] certificate.

Each of the eight students needed a CPR certificate to meet graduation requirements for his or her major. The Inspector General questioned four of the eight students. Three confirmed that they attended a class taught by [REDACTED] at York's facilities, paid him between \$25 to \$40 for the class, and received a Red Cross CPR certificate. A fourth student stated that [REDACTED] provided him a Red Cross CPR certificate although the student had not attended a CPR class. Although the students were required to obtain CPR certification as part of their graduation requirements, York failed to confirm the validity of CPR certifications before allowing these students to graduate. Notably, during the relevant time period, [REDACTED] was not certified to teach any Red Cross courses.

The investigation further found that [REDACTED] provided an invalid CPR certificate to at least one individual not affiliated with York. Pursuant to New York State Social Services Law (section 390-A) and New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations, at least one employee of a day care must hold a valid CPR certification. According to a woman who operates a licensed day care at her home, in 2012, [REDACTED] provided her with a Red Cross CPR certificate after she paid him \$75 and attended his CPR training class at York on a weekend. The day care operator reported that [REDACTED] CPR class was attended by 15 to 20 individuals. The day care operator took the training again in 2015 and 2018, when she needed to renew her certification. In 2018, her mother, an employee of the day care, also took a CPR training class with [REDACTED] and was provided with a Red Cross CPR certificate. The investigation found that the Red Cross CPR certificate issued to the mother, which she filed with OCFS, was invalid and was, in fact, issued to [REDACTED].³ The Inspector General reviewed the Red Cross website and found no CPR certificate was issued under the day care center operator's name from 2015 to the present. Again, [REDACTED] was not certified at this time to teach Red Cross CPR courses.

The investigation also found that [REDACTED] is a certified CPR instructor through the Emergency Care & Safety Institute (ECSI) and has provided CPR certifications to at least 80 former students and coaches affiliated with York from March 2014 through March 2019. Although York is identified with ECSI as the "Education Center" at which these CPR classes are offered, York advised it is unaware that [REDACTED] taught CPR at York and that his classes were not part of the formal CUNY class structure. According to some

¹ Given the confidential nature of the Inspector General's investigation, investigators did not inform these former students that their certificates were invalid.

² The investigation did not determine if [REDACTED] was aware his Red Cross Certificate ID was being misused by [REDACTED]

³ The Inspector General advised OCFS of the mother's invalid CPR certificate. Given the confidential nature of the Inspector General's investigation, investigators did not inform the mother or daughter that the mother's CPR certificate was invalid.

student who took [REDACTED] CPR training, many (if not all) of these classes took place outside the formal class structure in “pop-up” classes that [REDACTED] taught at York. Five students who took [REDACTED] ECSI CPR classes at York advised the Inspector General that they each paid [REDACTED] between \$50 and \$200 for the class and received an ECSI CPR certificate. The investigation was unable to determine if [REDACTED] provided ECSI CPR certificates to any individuals who had not attended CPR classes.

Additionally, although one witness advised the Inspector General of rumors that CPR training equipment owned by York was missing from the campus, the investigation did not substantiate this claim. The investigation did find that [REDACTED] taught ECSI CPR classes to individuals not affiliated with York from at least January 2018 through May 2019, and that these classes were not held on the York campus.

The Inspector General also reviewed bank records for accounts associated with [REDACTED] and found evidence he received money from teaching CPR classes from at least one York student and others unaffiliated with the college. Specifically, the review found seven checks deposited into [REDACTED] bank account from April 2015 to April 2018 totaling \$410, which reference “CPR” in the memo line.

Of note, although CPR certificates are valid for two years, [REDACTED] personnel file contained only two such CPR certificates for his almost two decade tenure at York. Additionally, according to the Red Cross website, [REDACTED] was issued a CPR certificate in March 2016. However, the Red Cross advised this certificate did not authorize him to teach Red Cross CPR classes.

The investigation also found that under York policy, [REDACTED] was not deemed a “policy maker” and therefore was not required to seek approval for his outside employment as a CPR instructor. However, as his classes often took place on the campus, utilized York resources, and York was the listed “Education Center,” [REDACTED] should have sought approval from York for the same.

Given the above, I recommend that York discipline [REDACTED] as appropriate. Additionally, I recommend that York contact those former and current York students and employees who received CPR certificates from [REDACTED] and advise those individuals to confirm the validity of their certifications. Lastly, I recommend that York review its process for confirming the validity of CPR certifications submitted as part of the graduation requirement process.

Please advise me of any action taken by your agency in response to these recommendations within 45 days of the date of this letter. If you require further information, please contact Deputy Inspector General Jessica Silver at 212.635.3150.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
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Inspector General

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