



UNIS Queens Campus to Close at the End of the 2021-2022 School Year

FAQs

Why has UNIS decided to close the Queens campus?

A consistent downward enrollment trend has made it fiscally impossible to continue to operate this campus and the small class sizes negatively impacts the student experience. The Board of Trustees has been monitoring the enrollment trends for several decades. There have been multiple studies during this period, all concluding that UNIS Queens was an excellent school but needed to enroll more students to “break even”. While the number of applications and acceptances per year remained consistent from 2010-2016, there was a significant decrease in the number of students attending. Thus while interest in the School remained steady, outside influences such as the implementation of Universal Pre-K and changing demographics in the surrounding areas, negatively impacted enrollment.

In the 2020-21 school year, the Board’s Finance & Audit Committee did a further study on the sustainability of the Queens campus in light of the continuing decline in enrolment. While UNIS Queens had for many years operated with a deficit, it was now evident that this deficit had grown significantly and was expected to become even more dire in the coming years. By the end of the 2020-2021 school year, the estimated deficit of UNIS Queens amounted to approximately \$1.8 million dollars.

Currently, there are 104 students enrolled at UNIS Queens. There are 38 students in the elementary school with four students in Kindergarten, five students in the second grade and four students in the third grade. Though it was a difficult decision to make, it was made in the long-term interest of UNIS as a whole, a School that must be sustained for the future. Regrettably, this decision is final and not open for reconsideration.

What measures were taken to try to address this problem earlier?

Our efforts have included multiple direct mailings to the community; large advertisements in local papers and key online educational spaces; production of a Queens UNIS marketing video shared with potential parents at the United Nations; consistent community fair presentations, open houses, and contact with local preschools as well as an increase in the Financial Aid budget for the campus.

Who made this decision?

The UNIS Board of Trustees, in consultation with the UNIS administration, came to the decision after having discussed the issue of the sustainability of the Queens campus on several occasions. The Board considered many factors in its deliberations, including historical data, existing trends, financial projections and various scenarios of possible future enrollment.

Why didn't the School take into consideration the recommendations of the study on Queens concluded in 2016?

The School did indeed follow many of the recommendations made by the Queens working group, including increasing marketing and the amount of financial aid offered to Queens families. However, the projections foreseen in the 2016 study were overly optimistic and many of the assumptions and financial calculations underpinning the study were unrealistic. For instance, the projections foresaw yearly tuition increases of over 5%, which would have been untenable. It was also assumed that 10 more students would be added each year. The study concluded that Queens would need a total of 156 students to break even. Despite efforts to increase enrollment, the total number of students at Queens continued to decline, and is now at only 104 students. This is a level that not only entails a growing financial deficit but also falls below what would foster an optimum conditions for academic excellence.

Is the Manhattan campus also experiencing a decline in enrollment?

No. We have seen a modest but manageable dip in Junior School enrollment which has likely been exacerbated by the pandemic. However, the number of middle and high school applications and enrollments has never been higher.

Are other schools in Queens experiencing a similar decline in enrollment?

Yes. All the independent schools in Queens, who are cited as competitors to UNIS, all have noted a decline in enrollment despite any and all of their marketing efforts.

What will happen to the Queens students next year?

UNIS Manhattan will welcome and accept all UNIS Queens students currently enrolled in grades JA-M4, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year. UNIS will provide transportation to and from the Manhattan campus for Queens students to support this transfer. This will include travel at no cost to the families.

What is UNIS doing to support Queens' students' emotional wellbeing in the transfer to Manhattan?

All families and students have been made aware of the current supports that are in place on the UNIS Queens campus. Efforts are being planned to transition the students who choose to attend Manhattan next year by connecting them with student mentors and trusted adults on the Manhattan campus. As would be the case with any student who might be experiencing unusual difficulties UNIS offers counseling support when needed.

How will this impact Manhattan students? Is there enough space in the Manhattan building?

We have looked carefully at the numbers and are confident that we can safely and comfortably accommodate any and all Queens students who choose to make the transfer.