

December 5, 2003 Testimony
Presented to the New York City Council Higher Education Committee
On Executive Pay Raises at the City University of New York

Testimony by James Seymour, Ph.D.
Adjunct Assistant Professor
Queens College

As an adjunct professor at Queens College with a Ph.D. from CUNY, a former professor at UNC-Chapel Hill with over 20 years experience in his field, I come to this hearing in solidarity with more than half of the faculty of my CUNY college, as we seek some form of pay equity with full-timers. At this crucial juncture in the history of an important university system, I appeal to the City Council to consider the message we send to the city when an adjustment in six-figure incomes is more important than beginning to provide a living wage to more than half of the CUNY staff and teachers now referred to as contingent faculty – contingent on what, one may ask. Isn't it time to begin to right some of the wrongs of the past twenty years' progression towards a wage-class system at nearly every university in the country? Shouldn't CUNY, as the leading liberal educational institutional in the country, be in the lead when it comes to making our secondary education system more equitable?

No one on this PSC committee suggests that provosts, deans, and chancellors don't deserve a salary that is more competitive with other positions at first-rate institutions, but we cannot forget that City University was originally intended to first satisfy the less fortunate students of this city who deserve the best education. How can we promise a job in education to the education students of today when they see that the majority of faculty at their own institution are earning app. one-third per class taught than that of full-time faculty?

Yes, progress has been made. There is insurance available and there have been attempts to address the problem of student-teacher contract, but the gigantic gap in salaries is unconscionable. Should the chancellor's raise really come out of those funds generated by faculty and staff, when so many of those individuals have nothing close to salary equity?

I urge you to reconsider the spending of these funds and to begin to seriously address more pressing issues that plague this greater university.