

**Testimony of Carl Schlachte  
Adjunct Lecturer, Brooklyn College  
Before the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York**

**Concerning the Pathways Initiative**

**June 18, 2012**

My name is Carl Schlachte, and like so many others gathered here today, I am here to discuss the dire situation that the proposed Pathways curriculum changes have created for CUNY students and the CUNY system. Specifically, I want to talk about some of the proposed changes to the core system.

As an adjunct, teaching both semesters of freshman composition at Brooklyn College, I deal with students who will be directly affected by Core Curriculum changes every day. The term “freshman composition” is something of a misnomer, however, because a minority of my students have been freshmen. Most of them are further along in their college careers, and are taking my class because they need to pass it in order to graduate on time. Many of them have taken the class before, but did not pass, and thus need the additional attention that having a fourth contact hour provides. As the situation currently stands, some campuses have the choice to offer a fourth contact hour but are not doing so. But this is not a workable stance on such a crucial aspect of teaching composition. If the Pathways changes are at all concerned with student graduation rates, core composition classes must be allowed to maintain a fourth contact hour, for the sake of the students’ performance.

There's a reason why composition classes are required for all students—the material covered is crucial to any college and working career. These classes teach students how to read, analyze, and discuss any text presented to them. But, they're also very demanding classes, and the fourth contact hour allows me to give personal attention to students who need help to pass the class, beyond what I can offer in the actual class period.

For example, I have had several ESL students in my classes. Regardless of their writing abilities, by virtue of the fact that they're still learning English, these students tend to face persistent (but unique) grammar issues. One of my students, whose native language is Russian, was having difficulty with article usage. This makes sense, as Russian is a language that does not use definite articles, but it wouldn't make sense to do an entire lesson on article usage for the whole class. The time that the fourth contact hour gave me allowed me to do a whole lesson for this student, individually, on the usage of articles in English.

This isn't the only benefit to the extra time that the fourth contact hour provided. I was also able, at one point, to meet individually with all of my students regarding their individual topics for their research essays. By focusing closely in this way, I was able to offer specific comments to each student about his or her topic that would be able to help him or her directly with the actual paper that he or she was working on at that time.

I could list many more such examples. But in the time allotted to me, it is crucial to stress that the fourth contact hour given to the composition classes allows for exactly that—a fourth hour of

direct contact with my students to help them personally with issues they are facing. Without it, I have no doubt that their abilities would suffer.