

**Testimony of Luis Fernández,
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(Mathematics)**

**Before the New York City Council Committee on
Higher Education**

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I moved to New York City to work at CUNY in August 2007. Originally from Spain, after finishing my PhD in Mathematics at Washington University in St Louis, I worked in Puerto Rico, Colombia, and the United Kingdom. After living in so many places I came to New York City because I had the dream of being in the most multicultural and diverse city in the world, and I was enthused to work in an inner city college like Bronx Community College (BCC). Having been mostly at research institutions before then, I really liked the project of teaching basic mathematics to disadvantaged students and minorities.

What I found at BCC was not what I expected. My teaching load of 27 credit hours per year was overwhelming, and did not leave me the time that my students deserved, or let alone, my research. Each day, after having taught for several hours, attended students, graded, and prepared materials, I would go home and spend the rest of the evening doing research. This is the only way I (and most professors) are able to advance in their research. Thanks to these efforts I was appointed to the doctoral faculty of the Graduate Center, where I am currently teaching a course. The Department of Mathematics at BCC is peculiar, as 5 of its professors are in the Doctoral Faculty of the Graduate Center; this is more than several 4 year colleges.

The faculty at CUNY has an enormous potential. A lot of this potential is wasted, especially for the faculty at community colleges, where the teaching load is at least 3 more hours (and actually 6 more hours in most cases) than 4 year colleges. CUNY has the luxury of boasting that most of the faculty at community colleges has a PhD. This is unheard of in most community colleges in the country. These professors can write grant proposals for research in education or in their particular field. However, after the first few years, the overwhelming teaching load takes a toll and the research activity gets diminished. And without research activity there cannot be grant proposal. This a great loss for CUNY both academically and economically; it is important to note that a good part of the revenue of research universities comes from grants. CUNY could do much better in this aspect if professors, especially at community colleges, had more time for their students and especially for their research.

CUNY's \$35 million dollar budget request for the Faculty Partnership Student Success Initiative will certainly help remedy this situation. It will also revert into the university. A lower full-time faculty teaching load will improve the learning environment and well being of students by enhancing the time that professors can dedicate to each student. It will also improve the research output of the university and produce new grant initiatives for the advancement of science and the humanities.