

**Testimony of ANUPAMA KAPSE  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR,  
QUEENS COLLEGE, CUNY**

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

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I am writing to express my strong and emphatic support for the **Faculty Partnership for Student Success Initiative**. The Initiative would allow a restructuring of the full-time faculty workload to enable more time with individual students, leading to greater student success and a richer educational experience.

Our current undergraduate teaching contact hour workload is among the highest of peer institutions, making it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to provide the kind of attention our students need, as well as for faculty to enhance their research. I have not been able to complete writing my book *Film as Body Politic* (under contract with Indiana UP) because of the time I spend serving my students and my institution as Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Their success is my success, just as my failures are their failures. Completing the book will in turn provide me with the time and resources I need to complete research to apply for grants for faculty development and to advance to professorship. This in turn affects my students by denying them access to the latest knowledge in the field. Workload is a major but invisible hurdle that has a visible and serious impact on faculty retention. We lost two faculty members, Heather Hendershot and Ellen Scott, to MIT and UCLA respectively because they offered a reduction in workload to enable them to produce knowledge that makes a full impact in the classroom and in the field.

CUNY students often struggle with work and family responsibilities that leave them unprepared for the rigor of college life. Not assigning an advisor to each student is detrimental to the performance of CUNY students in more ways than one. Most students are unaware that they can ask for an advisor and come to seek advice from professors only at last minute at the time of, or immediately before graduation, when it is too late to avail of the excellent advice faculty can give to them. A three-hour release from the current contact hours would allow CUNY to assign an advisor to **each** student from the getgo, an advantage and resource that every liberal arts college pledges to its students but is **denied** to CUNY students. Dedicated advising would ensure that every CUNY student has the resources to navigate the challenges of selecting and completing a major that cater individually to each student. Advising sessions are critical to help students choose an emphasis on the basis of their unique strengths, talent and ability. This is possible only with consistent, repeated and *required* advising that enhances student aptitude during the first and second years of college. Our students need faculty support to complete required core and

elective courses in a well-sequenced, and well-paced manner to graduate on time with the skills they need to succeed in their chosen careers.

One of my students was an underpaid, exploited musician who left the industry for college simply to get away from unpaid work. CUNY gave him an education that enriched his intellectual life and put him on a path to professional self-expression and development. I mentored him closely to develop his aptitude in film studies. Our students simply don't know how good they are until faculty members tell them. He is now pursuing a PhD at NYU because of the time and attention I could give to him. Another student is pursuing film-making at SFSU because of the time I could give to her outside of class. One my best students is a graduate student at Yale. Another a nurse-practitioner. Others have not only joined graduate programs at premiere institutions, they have found work as school teachers, nurse practitioners, physical therapists, media producers and TV professionals because of the time I spent with them. They would not be where they are if we as faculty had not helped them to overcome their underprivileged economic and social conditions. If working-class colleges have become vastly larger engines of social mobility, it is because of the sacrifices CUNY faculty like myself make, as we commit to doing so much with so little. Funding for higher education has plummeted, and this needs to change:

[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/opinion/sunday/americas-great-working-class-colleges.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/opinion/sunday/americas-great-working-class-colleges.html?_r=0)

A restructured workload committed to teaching, advisement and research will be a strong tool in the hiring and retention of faculty. It offers faculty institutional support so their commitment to students and to research that can thrive. The Faculty Partnership for Student Success Initiative embodies CUNY's core mission to offer quality education to the whole population of the city. The initiative acknowledges the needs of our students, a large majority of whom are economically underprivileged, immigrants and racial minorities. I write to express my strong support of CUNY's request for 35 million dollars to fund the **Faculty Partnership for Student Success Initiative**, to CUNY's continued excellence as an institution, in order to provide us with the best tools for success, and to fight economic and racial inequalities.