

**Testimony of Charlotte Brooks, Professor  
Baruch College  
Before the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education**

**March 3, 2017**

My name is Charlotte Brooks, and I am here to testify in support of CUNY's request for \$35 million dollars to fund the Faculty Partnership for Student Success Initiative. I am a professor of history at Baruch College, where I've taught for a decade, always carrying a 3-4 load: 3 courses one semester, and 4 the next. At comparable schools with comparable requirements for tenure and promotion, history professors almost always teach a 2-2 load and sometimes a 1-2 load. At liberal arts colleges with lower tenure and promotion requirements than CUNY, professors routinely teach a 2-2 or a 2-3 load. In other words, the teaching load at CUNY is almost unique, and not in a good way.

My research and teaching specialties are popular—they include 20<sup>th</sup> century America, Asian American history, and modern Chinese history—so my courses routinely fill to 40 students each, which is as much as most Baruch classrooms will hold. Since we have no TAs at Baruch, I do all my own grading. This grading isn't easy. I don't believe in using multiple choice exams, which only teach students to memorize and regurgitate answers without context or argument. My bluebook exams and papers require students to make clear arguments, show change over time, marshal evidence to back up their points, and demonstrate a deep knowledge of a particular period. They also require students to learn to read critically and write well. These are skills our students desperately need to develop both for their careers and to be good citizens. Most do not have the chance to develop these skills in their high schools, which are often overcrowded and underfunded. Furthermore, English is frequently not our students' first language. That means our students require intensive investments of time from professors to help

them build the skills I've described. And they deserve that investment of time. They deserve a real, thorough, and competitive college education.

Any decent historian will tell you that part of being a good teacher is being an active scholar and researcher. This has been my approach at Baruch. In addition to teaching a 3-4 load without TAs and without multiple choice tests, over the past eight years I have published two books and several articles, all of them deeply researched in multiple languages. I routinely bring my research findings and materials into my classrooms to share with my students and to help them understand why the past matters.

At the risk of sounding immodest, I will tell you that I and many of my colleagues are actually more engaged and productive than lots of our peers at Ivy League universities and flagship state schools. This helps create the kind of environment that CUNY's largely immigrant and working-class students deserve just as much as their peers at Harvard and Yale. But it has not come without a cost: I am burned out after ten years of trying to be the teacher and researcher that my students deserve. A recent New York Times study showed that CUNY schools, especially Baruch, offer our students an extraordinary degree of economic and social mobility. Like my colleagues, I want to keep giving our students this kind of mobility; I don't want to go look for an easier job at another school. But I can't keep doing what I've been doing without a teaching load reduction—it is just too exhausting.