

**Testimony of Emily Schnee, Associate Professor of English,
Kingsborough Community College
Before the New York City Council Committee on Higher Education**

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My name is Emily Schnee and I am an Associate Professor of English at Kingsborough Community College. I teach English composition as well as developmental English (also known as remedial English) and I want to speak with you today about what my current workload looks like and what a restructured workload would mean for me and my students, many of whom, as I'm sure you know, come to Kingsborough academically underprepared for the reading and writing demands of college. In addition to teaching 27 hours (an average of 9 courses per year), I spend much of my work life providing feedback on student essays. In order to help our students graduate with the reading and writing skills necessary for success in careers and further education, I, like most of my English department colleagues, assign a draft of an essay nearly every week of the semester.

In my almost 10 years at Kingsborough, I have gotten more adept and efficient at providing the copious feedback students need to improve their writing. I now use an electronic portfolio and type my comments because it is faster, but even if I dedicate just 10 or 15 minutes to every student's essay with an average class size of 27 students x 9 classes per year x 12 weeks in a semester x 15 minutes per student, well, you can do the math. The end result is that English professors, and the faculty in other disciplines who teach required writing intensive courses, spend many working hours every week teaching students to write outside of class time.

Despite my best efforts, written feedback on student essays often is not enough. My students need to meet face-to-face with me to review drafts, clarify ideas, and understand what they need to do to improve their writing if they are to successfully complete the course. I attempt to create time for individual conferences with students in a variety of creative ways: when available, I hold class in a computer lab and while students are busy drafting, I circulate and grab a few private minutes with as many students as I can; sometimes I extend class hours and have every student sign up for an individual 15 minute conference where I speed talk them through revisions on their essays. It is always catch as catch can and rarely feels like enough, especially for those students teetering on the brink of academic failure.

Lastly, writing is an intensely personal act and students often reveal intimate details of their lives to their writing instructors. It is through student essays that I have learned that one student has relapsed after a 10 year struggle for sobriety and been kicked out of his home or that another student is experiencing paralyzing anxiety over her parents' undocumented immigration status. These are needs that must be attended to swiftly, thoughtfully, and individually. Investigating appropriate campus-based referrals and following up to make sure students have accessed the help they need is a time-consuming task, but one that faculty must take on if we want our students to succeed, both personally and academically.

A restructured faculty workload that accounts for the teaching, learning, and advising that must happen *outside of class hours* would enable me to be the professor I aspire to be and would afford our students the academic experience they deserve. It is imperative that the committee support

CUNY's request for \$35 million dollars to fund the Faculty Partnership for Student Success Initiative.