

**Testimony of Diana Rickard, Assistant Professor
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Before the New York City Council Committee on
Higher Education**

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I am writing in support of CUNY's request for \$35 million dollars to fund the **Faculty Partnership for Student Success Initiative**. I am a full-time faculty member at Borough of Manhattan where I teach nine courses a year (4/5). The semesters when I teach four are incredibly challenging, and the semesters when I teach five are beyond challenging. The high teaching load makes it difficult to be an engaged and effective professor, scholar, and community member.

I have approximately 170 students this semester. As you know our students come from diverse backgrounds and underserved communities. They need and they deserve quality education which includes having professors who are there for them, who can address their individual learning styles, who can catch students who are falling behind and try to help them achieve success. They deserve professors who know their name. But with 170 students it is a challenge to just know every student's name (although by the end of the semester I will), let alone work with them outside of class. It is a challenge to catch students who might be slipping through the cracks. I know at BMCC there is concern about the high D/W/F rate. I am certain this could be addressed by a reduced course load.

I am fortunate that I teach at a campus that provides many opportunities to improve pedagogy, through a vital CETLS program. However, I cannot participate in many activities and programs that I am interested in because I simply do not have the time. In this way my ability to grow as an educator is negatively impacted by the high teaching load

My teaching load makes it so I can only write and conduct research during the summer. Even our January break, with administrative assignments and 15 hours of required advising, does not allow adequate time for research. While being able to work and write in the summer is better than nothing, it makes us fall behind other scholars in our fields who can write grants and conduct research throughout the year. In this way the high course load negatively impacts my research and scholarship.

The high teaching load also negatively affects my ability to participate in campus life and to serve my institution adequately. For example, I am on an important and demanding committee. Because we all are teaching all the time we have had to meet from 7-9:30 on a weeknight, and from noon-3:30 on Sunday. There are many events at BMCC sponsored by different organizations, including a social justice conference sponsored by two programs, events sponsored by the LGBTQ Pride Month committee, a symposium on the consequences of Trump's election sponsored by the social science department, a panel discussion of DuBois' contributions to sociology as part of African History Month – these are just several of many

events I would have liked to participate in and attend but was unable to because of the demands of my teaching schedule.

I want to end by emphasizing the impact the high teaching load at CUNY community college has on our students. It makes it challenging to reach out to students, challenging to have time for them outside of class, and challenging to provide them with the ongoing feedback on regular assignments. All of this is so critical to students' academic success. Without reinforcement from available professors, students lose out on opportunities to truly learn and it detracts from the sense of community that is so vital for institution of higher learning.

Thank you for considering my testimony.