

Dear Board of Trustees,

I am an untenured lecturer at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. I have worked there full-time since August 2019. Prior to that, I was an adjunct lecturer there and at City College. I may offer a unique perspective since my previous career was in not-for-profit and public finance. I have directly witnessed the struggles of CUNY educators and students to persist and succeed against enormous environmental, economic, and bureaucratic hurdles. I also recognize the potential for financial decisions to directly address these challenges even as they illuminate and manifest the organization's true values.

In my experience, the key obstacle to students' and educators' success is funding. At the beginning of this semester, I polled my students as to their weekly work obligations. These include paid work outside the home, unpaid labor at home, and schoolwork. I was shocked at the results. Among the 32 who responded, the median number of weekly hours worked was 55, the first quartile was 63. Some work more than 80 to make ends meet and complete their degrees.

How can a student working such long hours hope to complete a degree in a reasonable amount of time or take the time to authentically learn what they need to compete effectively in the labor market?

These survey results understate the problem because many students work hours that are unpredictable and under difficult working conditions. This adds stress on its own and complicates their efforts to attend class, office hours, and tutoring. In addition, advisors urge students to complete their degrees as soon as possible under the theory of academic momentum. In contrast, students in programs such as YearUp receive stipends and support, resulting in much higher persistence and graduation rates.

Therefore, CUNY should work to increase funding of financial aid, expand mentoring and other support programs that provide financial support to students so they can work less and focus on learning.

I also encourage CUNY to seek additional public funding to support faculty salaries. Thanks to years of slow salary increases relative to high urban inflation, the vast majority of faculty can no longer afford to live in New York City. The median rent in New York City is \$3,185. This would require a \$127,000 salary to be affordable and for a landlord to consider the renter acceptable, assuming a typical 30% rent-to-income ratio. Many faculty are forced to seek additional employment to make ends meet. Economic stress can impair our ability to perform at the best of our abilities for the benefit of students. It also limits recruitment and retention of qualified and diverse faculty who make lack required resources to live on below-market salaries.

Finally, I hope that CUNY will consider increasing the share of full-time versus adjunct faculty. While adjunct faculty's work is often heroic, they perform under this work under precarious conditions since they are subject to annual contract renewals, often receive last-minute notice of classes they are assigned to or cancelled. They receive less institutional support and noisy and uncomfortable working conditions e.g., a "bull-pen" room of cubicles. This can make it difficult for even the most dedicated adjunct faculty to do their best work for students. I noted much better working and teaching conditions when I was hired full-time. While the hourly salary remained unsustainable, I found much greater opportunities to learn and develop the craft, with

greater support from the institution and peers. I have no doubt that I am a better instructor as a result.

In conclusion, CUNY's core values include impact, excellence, equity, and teamwork. Only reasonable financial support of students, fair pay to faculty, and a commitment to permanent faculty positions can make these values real.