

Testimony of Emma Handte

CUNY Board of Trustees Hearing

December 5, 2022

Hello and thank you for hearing my testimony today. My name is Emma Handte, I work part time for the Research Foundation and part time as a non-teaching adjunct here at LaGuardia in the library. I am a native New Yorker and remember a formative moment when a favorite high school teacher of mine said he had gone to CUNY and referred to CUNY as “the people’s university.” That stuck with me and influenced my decision to go to the Graduate Center for my master’s degree. So I’m a CUNY grad and now a CUNY staff member.

I love getting to work with students at LaGuardia and find both of my jobs to be very rewarding. However, we are doing a disservice to our students by adjunctifying and splitting full-time jobs into multiple part-time positions. At both of my jobs, I have colleagues who are also part-time who are doing the exact same work that I do. Don’t get me wrong, I very much appreciate my colleagues, but the amount of friction caused by having 6 people doing work part-time that could be done at full time is detrimental to the work that we are doing that is ultimately very crucial to our students.

My work as an NTA in the library centers around helping faculty members switch to zero cost open educational resources instead of costly course textbooks. We work to save millions in student spending on course materials. Shouldn’t this vital task that is so central to student success and retention be done by someone able to dedicate full time attention to the matter?

In my job with the Research Foundation, my supervisor wanted to hire me for both part-time positions associated with the grant because she recognized how well I was doing in my position, but she was unable to because then I would have to get benefits from the Research Foundation. And on a human level, the fact that I am in two part time positions, one at the Research Foundation and one at LaGuardia, means I will not have access to health insurance through work until March next year. I have a chronic illness and not having health insurance through work is a huge strain. This distracts from my ability to focus on serving students.

The Board needs to advocate for the funding to offer ALL adjuncts full-time lines so that we can focus fully on why we are here: to serve the students of the university as best we possibly can.