

**CUNY Board of Trustees Public Hearing - March 20, 2023**  
**James Davis, President - Professional Staff Congress**

The savings plans and VRB are destabilizing and disrespectful. They should not be implemented. They should not have been announced to begin with, because the message they send is that CUNY can absorb additional cuts. We cannot - new operating aid is needed from the state and city. Demonstrating our projected savings of \$128 million in FY2024 means \$128 million they don't need to invest.

The state budget will be finalized in two weeks. It's unclear why the university didn't wait for the enacted state budget to take stock of the financial outlook and engage the university community in any necessary planning. Instead, savings plans and VRB were announced as requirements, and the only input that the campus communities are permitted is a nominal voice in reaching the required savings targets. My colleagues have experienced this as disempowering at best, and many of them fear for their jobs.

Take Queensborough Community College for example. QCC is running a \$7.5 million deficit this year, all of it covered by federal stimulus funds. Those funds will expire, but QCC is projected to end the year with a balance of over \$2 million thanks to CUTRA and reserves. Nevertheless, CUNY has directed QCC to find \$3.15 million in new savings on top of the \$1.8 million they saved in the current fiscal year. These cuts go deep and set off compounding dislocations. Adjunct CLTs and non-teaching adjuncts are being non-reappointed, and full-time CLTs are being relocated from their home departments to the Academic Computing Center. These are skilled workers with expertise in their disciplines. Like faculty, they're appointed to a department and are eligible for statutory tenure in that department. The CLTs at QCC have a proud tradition of helping to lend support in the areas of greatest need, but they're incensed at being uprooted from jobs that they've performed admirably for 10, 15, 20 years. And for what? To save \$100,000 per year. These savings plans must not be implemented.

Full-time faculty searches are stalled or canceled. Killing an academic search in process has real consequences. It makes CUNY look terrible when scholars on the job market progress to the final stages, only to have the search pulled. And it undermines the faculty on the search committees, who invest their time and energy in a vital process that's turned into an exercise in futility. Full-time faculty searches that were already authorized after a rigorous review should proceed unhindered - whether or not they're funded by the earmarked funds in this year's state budget. You heard from 164 chairs of academic departments in their letter of March 12; because of the VRB, they "feel disrespected and discounted by people whose role should be inspirational and visionary." As they continued, "We need and deserve an administration that works collaboratively and shares in the sacrifices it imposes on others. We need and deserve an administration that shows respect for us and our efforts to serve our students and community. Academic hiring decisions are the purview of the colleges."

The college savings plans were due to CUNY central last Friday. My expectation is that when the state and city budgets are complete, those plans are shelved and never see the light of day.