

Greetings to the CUNY Trustees and Chancellor Matos-Rodriguez. My name is Craig Bernardini; I'm a professor of English at Hostos Community College, where I've worked for almost two decades. I'm a previous chair and deputy chair of my department, and a long-time member of our college senate. I'm currently serving as Hostos-PSC Chapter Chair.

On my campus I recently reached out to HEOs to find out about how their work lives have changed since the pandemic began. I asked them, among other things, whether the number of people working in their offices had shrunk over the last five years, and if so, by how many. About 85% of those who have responded thus far said that they have fewer people working in their office than before the pandemic. In some cases, this bleeding out of full-time staff has been stanchied by low-wage, part-time College Assistants. Many HEOs report that their offices have shrunk by 30, 40, even 50%. Of course, the work has not shrunk; there's just fewer people to somehow get it done.

As with HEOs, so with faculty. As always, the brunt of austerity falls on the most vulnerable: adjuncts. I've watched chairs and coordinators perform heroic acts of solidarity to keep adjuncts employed and insured, but in a regime in which they're called upon to manage austerity there's only so much they can do. Right now, for fall semester, adjuncts who typically carry three classes have only two available for registration. I should emphasize that many of these are stand-alone classes, not "mirror" sections. Should those classes remain closed, adjuncts stand to lose about a third of their HCC income.

And what about students? Despite clear registration trends demonstrating the very high percentage of students who register late, this data has had seemingly no impact on decisions about when to cancel classes. Last summer, class cancellations began almost a month ahead of

the beginning of Fall semester. When a class cancels, students, many of whom are already overcommitted with family, work, and school obligations, have to rearrange their schedules—if that’s even possible—often with the guidance of their already-overworked advisors and success coaches.

From understaffed offices to lost work for adjuncts to students without classes at the times they need to register, the logic of austerity impact every aspect of the college.

What can the Board do right now? First, you can stop “betting against” CUNY, as a colleague of mine put it, in the form of savings plans and Vacancy Review Boards. The Vacancy Review Board should be immediately dismantled—laid to rest—ended. We need to be increasing the number of full-time faculty, not penny-pinching for lines to remain unfilled, and more work done by adjuncts paid poverty wages. You can also come to the table and start bargaining with my union, so we can settle a contract that offers real raises, safeguards the professionalism of faculty and staff, and treats everyone in my bargaining unit with the respect and dignity we deserve. Thank you.