

Board of Trustees

The City University of New York

205 East 42nd Street

New York, NY 11017

Monday, May 8, 2023

Good evening. Many of you know me from my work on the Student Life Committee of the Board of Trustees and I apologize that you must listen to me tonight in another setting, but I was asked to testify, and I rarely turn down an opportunity to speak.

I began my career at LaGuardia almost 30 years ago (officially September 1994), working for the Liberty Partnership program teaching photography to high school students; something special for them to do after spending a Saturday morning preparing for their SATs. I was paid \$25 an hour for two hours a week. I was then hired as an adjunct lecturer, even though I was entitled to be an adjunct assistant professor; I have a terminal degree. I didn't reach the adjunct associate professor rank until the late 90s and I spent half of my career as an adjunct augmenting my salary, working as a professional photographer, educator and waiting tables for longer than I would like to admit.

In the last years of the Matt Goldstein regime, I was given an opportunity to do a lecture conversion line, technically taking a demotion, and was hired full-time at one of the lowest rates of anybody in my department. I moved to the professorial line, achieving tenure and full professorship some years ago. Some of the folks on this stage voted for me, whether you realized it or not. I am slowly working through the stepped raises process and will most likely top out some time before I retire at age 70 or 10 years from today. I told my wife I don't believe I can afford to retire and have given instructions to be stapled to the podium of my classroom, if I ever get to the point that I can't stand up to lecture.

But I'm one of the lucky ones, an entitled person, working full-time and receiving fringe and benefits. The majority of my adjunct colleagues will never be afforded this opportunity, even though, for a time, sixty percent of the instructional staff of CUNY was made up of contingent faculty, a student's chance of having an adjunct instructor in front of their classroom was two out of three. For decades, they carried this institution on their backs, helping students to afford a good low-cost education. Now we turn our backs on these colleagues, dismissing them at a time when it is financially inconvenient to keep them. My own personal goal would be to reduce the number of part-time faculty by hiring them as full-timers. I believe this is possible through slow attrition as existing full-time staff retire, and/or folks move on. Just letting them go, showing no loyalty or thanks, would create a shadow on this institution that I would not want to live under, and I hope you feel the same way.

I sincerely thank you for your time and attention,

Hugo Fernandez, Professor, LaGuardia Community College