

BOT Hearing Oct 16, 2023

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Trustees need to know that an ambition of CUNY, to have a legitimate Climate Center for the pursuit of Environmental Justice and Sustainability is endangered by the structural problem of adjuncts lacking genuine power in programs.

Adjuncts, despite undeniable strengths and contributions, are being treated as “less than” others, and the coming losses hurt students.

The Climate Center has been launched and a “cluster hire” of 3 new full-time faculty has now begun teaching at John Jay. They were told that they could develop their own courses, but they are having to teach pre-existing courses to the exclusion of adjuncts who have been sustaining the program until now.

In defiance of 1-year appointments that the adjuncts all earned, the pre-existing core faculty of Environmental Justice and Sustainability were told 3 weeks ago that they would have no courses the coming semester. After asserting their rights to at least one such course a piece, they’ve been assigned courses with timing and modes that these experienced faculty suspect will not fill and run.

I draw on the remarks and observations of these 3 adjunct faculty at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The sum of their years of teaching at the college is nearly 50, and between them they have more than 60 years’ experience teaching CUNY undergraduates. They are all dedicated to the field of Environmental Justice and Sustainability, commonly referred to as EJS.

CUNY leadership needs to make good on its stated goal of growing EJS into a major and meanwhile keep the minor afloat. Similar programs in the US expand enrollment by offering non-degree Sustainability Certificates to people not enrolled in degree programs or on other campuses.

“We EJS adjuncts were a core of a Community of Practice and Shared Governance of adjuncts and full-timers teaching EJS electives and supporting the program up until a change of program leadership in which, as adjuncts, we had no input. Previously, we were a model of adjuncts and Full Timers working together by consensus on the program, which is a minor....

“The core EJS adjuncts have been in mourning of the loss of our Community of Practice and classes.

This core has chronicled the work they have done for this program, the college, CUNY as a whole and in the field of Environmental Justice and Sustainability; that is coming in the fuller written testimony I will submit.

They represent effort, expertise, and institutional memory. Yet this year may be the last they teach in the program or at John Jay at all.

Paul Bartlett writes:

We all worked with students and staff to get John Jay committed to the Association for the Advance of Sustainability in Higher Education’s (AASHE’s) Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS), for which the College received a Silver Rating and get Environmental and Climate Justice into the John Jay strategic plan.

Another EJS Adjunct and I developed an Ethic of Care framework for the Sustainability Core Competencies to incorporate into EJS curriculum and learning objectives. We shared with colleagues in CUNY faculty development workshops and presentations at conferences of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, AASHE, the Assessment Network of New York (ANNY), and World Environmental Education Congress, with work published in this line of inquiry with the Sustainable Development Goals.

I have worked with the Teaching Learning Center to organize and lead faculty development two-semester seminars on Environmental Justice Case Studies with Project Based Learning and presently on Indigenous Knowledge, Perspectives and Justice across the curriculum. We are grateful for these opportunities.

I engage in collaborative research in Socio-Scientific Reasoning in Civic Engagement (published in *Science Education* journal) and present at meetings of professional societies Ecological Society of America and National Association for Research in Science Teaching.

My main area of research is on chemical pollutants on Global, Arctic, and Local scales with affected populations (e.g. Arctic Inuit) under the auspices of the Arctic Monitoring Assessment Program, the UN Task Force on Hemispheric Air Pollutants and in the past with the North American Commission on Environmental Cooperation serving directly policy makers on behalf of affected environmental justice communities. I share these real-life work on environmental justice with our students.

Mary Ting has combined her talent, knowledge and insight in the Art and Music department and EJS for two decades. This list below has representative time-consuming actions she has embraced, far beyond the time in the classroom that she was compensated for. Any reading of it shows that Mary has been tireless in sharing with students and the larger community the urgency of the environmental crisis we are in. She writes:

"Curated the art exhibition, **ENDANGERED!** at the **Presidents Gallery** which included the work of five visual artists and photographers on the theme of looming extinction and biodiversity loss. As the curator, I also gave 11 tours of the exhibition to other John Jay EJS classes.

Organized and presented ENDANGERED Guest speaker series:

- **Kathy Lynn Austin, former UN weapons expert, presented RHINO BATTLE ZONE**, her investigation on the international weapons trade arming the poachers
- **Earthjustice and Friends of the Earth** panel on their work and advocacy.

Two former EJS students received the **ReWild Your Campus (formerly Herbicide Free Campus) Fellowship** and are actively working to make the John Jay's green roof pesticide-free.

I worked with the Fellows to put native plants in the containers on the green roof.

Along with five EJS students I attended the ***Ivory Crush at Central Park*** and got to personally crush confiscated illegal African elephant ivory from our NYC stores (typically only VIP were invited to do this). Students were interviewed and appeared in local news.

Four John Jay College students and I did the data collection and research for the Born Free Foundation publication ***Downloading Cruelty*** on the exotic pet trade in the US. This was a 3-month project of daily data collection.

Zoom Presentation on "Grief and Ecological Collapse, Art into Action" for John Jay school wide during the pandemic, sponsored by the John Jay Sustainability Council and Environmental Education Fund (EEF).

Presented at John Jay with a **Program on International Criminal Justice on China and Wildlife Trafficking**

Presented at the **Teaching Learning Center with EJS adjunct faculty** on including Climate and Sustainability in curriculum.

Organized the John Jay schoolwide presentation, **WILDLIFE CRIME INVESTIGATIONS** with **NYS Dept of Environmental Crime (DEC)** and **Wildlife Investigations Training Alliance (WITA)**. Every semester in my EJS class students have met with Captain Jesse from **DEC**, **along with Senior Attorney from Earthjustice** and someone from NYSERDA or Corporate Accountability to understand the fields of environmental law, enforcement, and policy and for future career possibilities.

Unofficially mentored many of my students who have gotten into Columbia's Climate Institute graduate program.

Karen Malpede is an acclaimed playwright and theater teacher. Despite a year of profound personal loss, she created a profound new way to dramatize issues of climate justice for her students and theatergoers, incorporating cultural markers of education which have persisted across millennia.

"Troy Too" received unanimous audience acclaim and great reviews in April and May of 2023, the [reviews are here](#). John Jay students followed the play from text and read *The Trojan Women*. They came to understand the process of adaptation of a classic to a modern use of choruses about COVID, BILM and building community.

These tireless academics express that they feel discarded, when a wiser course would be management's recognition that the collaborative approach that formerly helped establish the program is the wisest way to proceed.