

## Testimony - offered by Esther Llamas

**October 16, 2023 - Board of Trustees/City University of New York**

Good Afternoon Board of Trustees. My name is Esther Llamas. I am a long time New York City resident, a CUNY graduate, a staff member at Medgar Evers College, as well as a PSC HEO delegate at Medgar Evers College.

I come before you today to offer my perspective as a Higher Education Assistant working in the department of Student Success and Enrollment Management, and to convey my dismay at the lack of professional advancement in CUNY's "non-promotional" HEO series and the lack of structure exhibited in the reclassification process once a bid is submitted.

This month I am celebrating my seven-year anniversary at Medgar Evers College. Prior to my position at CUNY, I have worked at the New York City DOE, as well as for education ministries outside of the United States. I also possess work experience in corporate and network media in New York City and abroad. It is this varied amount of professional work experience and perspective which leaves me perplexed by the "non-promotional" status of HEO positions. I can't help but ask: *Why would an institution prevent professional staff from promotion?*

As in any other professional positions held, I am committed to my duties. Yet despite my professional commitment, development, and success, promotion remains elusive. Such a limited professional trajectory often forces me to re-assess a future career path at MEC, despite the kismet I often feel when working with CUNY students.

I am a good example of a HEa who has remained in the same classification for 7-years at CUNY while my job description has changed four times, and with the complexity of my work portfolio being increased each time. This past June I was finally able to apply for reclassification. Preparation for such a bid required a great deal of time and effort and once I submitted my Reclassification packet, little insight was extended; no confirmation of receipt, no timeline for review, no timeline for outcome notification, and to my understanding, no rationale *if* denied. Furthermore more, no guidelines for STEP increases are made, therefore any potential salary amount seems highly untethered and random. Fortunately, upon my request, I finally did receive a confirmation of receipt.

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I hope to be able to report a better outcome to my experience with reclassification in the future. However, I have been able to witness the shortcomings of the process through direct experience, as well as through accounts of other HEOs who have experienced difficulties in the process. I ask the Board of Trustees to consider creating a clearer framework around the reclassification process requiring Reclassification Screening Committees to provide more transparency with their processes, such as providing timelines, and constructive rationale for acceptance or denial. Such transparency would only strengthen and validate the body and ensure an equitable and fair process is experienced by ALL. I also urge the Board of Trustees to revisit the “non-promotional” status of HEO positions. We are committed professionals who deserve the same opportunities for promotion as is the norm in other institutions of higher education and in other professional sectors.

Thank you very much for the platform.