

BOT Testimony, 10.16.23. Nancy Romer, Ph.D., Professor Emerita, Brooklyn College, CUNY

I was a full professor in the psychology department of Brooklyn College, hired in Sept. 1973. I taught thousands of students, created community-based grant-funded programs and researched adolescent social and political development over a 42-year career at Brooklyn College. I loved my work, my students and my colleagues.

Over those years I witnessed what can happen to individuals and institutions with budget cuts and the massive shift to a marginalized, part-time workforce. My part-time colleagues were well-educated, highly prepared, dedicated and gave a great deal to their students. But because they were not consistently available from semester to semester, year to year, our wonderful, hard-working students could not get the benefit of their relationships with these many adjunct professors. Once adjunct faculty were laid off or went to other colleges and universities to pursue their careers, our students were left without their valued guidance and support. Students almost never ask if a faculty member is part or full time-- students created relationships where and when possible. Statistically speaking, half of their opportunities for relationships with faculty would be with adjuncts who were ultimately less reliable mentors, due to no fault of their own. The long lines waiting for conversations during faculty office hours bore testimony to our students' hunger to develop these deeper relationships with their professors, people who serve them as role models, sources of information, and support for their educational and career aspirations over the years.

Though I retired eight years ago, I still get requests from former students, some of whom I taught in the late 1980's, for career advice, recommendations for new job and educational applications and sharing their publications and personal announcements. These relationships tie us together as people and as a university. They build trust, care and shared purpose. These are exactly the kinds of experiences that support our students as they move into the middle class, assume important positions in their jobs and communities and families. If you can't find your old professor, you've lost a connection to your university and to your past.

Our excellent part-time faculty need to have the stability of long-term appointments with decent salaries so that they can fully participate in this transmission of knowledge and support at CUNY. We have the honor of taking the best and the brightest of working-class New York and helping them achieve their dreams and aspirations, elevating their families and communities through their own education. Trustees, the support you give to our adjunct faculty, their job security, working conditions, economic stability, are gifts to our students, their families, their communities and to our city. Let's not educate our students on the backs of low-paid, precarious labor, but through great relationships to help them achieve their dreams. Part-time faculty need multi-year appointments with full-time work, good salaries, clear tenure or Certificates of Continuous Employment processes and secure status. We have a strong, smart and willing workforce ready to take that on and students who need them. Thank you.