

BoT testimony – 10.16.23

Andrea Vásquez

My name is Andrea Vásquez and I am a HEO at the Graduate Center and the PSC First Vice President.

How easy it must seem this afternoon for you to distance yourselves from your employees who wish to communicate with you about one issue or another.

But, speaking particularly about the upcoming year, we will not let you distance yourselves because there is too much at risk for us and for the university.

Today, I am speaking about the risk you, yourselves, pose when you put forth your Value-driven Contract for the Community. Your bargaining agenda that was introduced this summer in contract negotiations with the Professional Staff Congress is yours. The Board owns it, and it is deplorable.

This agenda may be value driven, but it is not values driven. It reflects neither the value of quality education for masses of New Yorkers who have come to expect this for more than 150 years nor the value of the faculty and staff who have helped to make futures for those generations of poor, immigrant, people of color, and working-class New Yorkers.

Without even putting a single cent on the table for raises, you have said we should have no retroactive pay. This is unacceptable.

Out of one side of your mouths you have lavished praise and appreciation for all that staff and faculty have done during and since the pandemic and out of the other side of your mouth you look to eviscerate job security for so many of us in such a creative range of ways.

From seeking to increase the number of non-tenure track lines to eviscerating 13.3b protections for HEOs you seek an insecure and disposable workforce. We need and deserve more security, not less. Our students deserve full-time, secure faculty.

We deserve safe and healthy work environments, and we need remote and flexible work options.

Your agenda is anti-union and seeks to limit our ability to represent our members and defend our contract. Instead of finding ways to support staff, you have presented us with 18 demands that relate to misconduct and non-reappointment!

Later this month, I will receive my certificate of appreciation for 30 years of employment from the Graduate Center. Actually, it's been 32 years but there have been no acknowledgements since 2020 so they're making up for the lost years.

I am honored to receive this certificate because I am CUNY through and through. And I'm not alone in this, in my family. Both of my parents, my only sibling, and two of my children have attended CUNY and my husband has taught here for more decades than I care to admit. We chose CUNY and we chose to stay at CUNY because of what it did for us and for what we have seen it do for so many generations of New Yorkers.

If, as you have stated, you wish to settle a contract within a reasonable amount of time without disruption and upset, I suggest you study our bargaining agenda again and work to make it a reality.