

CUNY BOT Testimony 4-1-24

My name is Helen Pfeffer. I started teaching as an adjunct more than 20 years ago, in the fall of 2003, and I joined the Brooklyn College part-time faculty in 2016. It will come as a surprise to exactly no one in this room that it isn't easy to make a living solely as an adjunct – the pay is low, the job security tenuous, the benefits rare. So why do any of us do it? In my case, teaching felt like something I was meant to do. I came to it with a good deal of real-world experience in my field, and I wanted to pass that knowledge along. Working with students to achieve their academic and creative goals, and adapting to the changes this world has thrown at all of us in recent years has been an immense source of personal and professional satisfaction for me. I'm certainly not alone. In the two decades I've been teaching, the dedication of my fellow adjuncts, who go above and beyond what's required of them, who freely give of themselves both to their colleagues and their students, is a source both of pride and of awe to me.

We are now being challenged as never before. All of us have seen our courses eliminated or reassigned to full-time faculty. We're being asked to teach at less desirable times. We have little assurance of continued employment – less than in prior years, in fact - and perhaps most damagingly, because of all this, it is now almost certain that I will lose the health insurance that took me years to qualify for.

However, I won't say I feel unappreciated. The full-time faculty I teach alongside, and the succession of department chairs I've answered to, have not been reticent about letting me know that I am valued. Which is very nice. But. I note here that my area of expertise is television writing and production. And I teach my students that to be effective at this, you need to show, not tell. It's time to show us what you and we know to be true – that we are essential to the success of Brooklyn College. And the way you do that is by matching our commitment with yours.