

4.1.24 BoT testimony by Andrea Vásquez, PSC First Vice President

While the CUNY administration often says that their paramount concern is the education and welfare of our students, and you lavish praise on faculty and staff, CUNY's contractual demands deliver a very different message.

In a set of proposals presented to the PSC bargaining team last Wednesday and previously, CUNY put forward changes to the conditions of employment of our thousands of Higher Education Officers that would be harmful to us and to the students we serve. Across titles, CUNY has missed the mark, missed the opportunity, to help our students thrive by strengthening, and not undermining, the conditions under which they learn, and we work.

It was terrible to hear CUNY's report to the New York City Council just last week, detailing how understaffing has had devastating effects on our ability to provide basic and crucial programmatic services to students.

Despite these facts that revealed the need for adequate staffing to provide for the whole student, you introduced proposals in contract negotiations that would do nothing to attract or retain faculty and staff and instead would eliminate job security, increase turnover, and deny us the professional development and respect we seek. You already have ways to discipline staff and that is an extremely rare occurrence. But why not make all 5,000 HEOs feel that they can be booted in as few as 6 months if that is to their administrations liking?

The same value that President Davis already spoke about when teaching adjuncts are assured of work over three years, can be applied to other titles who work decade after decade with no job security provision. CLIP and CUNY Start instructors, for example, Continuing Ed teachers... All of these members make CUNY what it is and help our students make it through college.

When we call for investment in CUNY, we want you to direct funds toward our students' future by creating new professorial lines for doctoral lecturers and adjunct faculty, raising wages, and making our jobs secure.

Chair Thompson and board of trustees, we believe that you want to sign off on a PSC-CUNY contract as soon as possible. We ask you to take seriously not only our need for raises, but also the conditions under which we can best do our jobs and help our students make a life for themselves. We ask you replace empty words of praise, with action. Invest in our students. Invest in your instructional staff. Withdraw your regressive demands and let's get to a just PSC contract.