



April 5, 2024

CUNY Chancellor Felix Matos Rodríguez
205 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017
CC: Board of Trustees Chairperson William Thompson

Dear Chancellor Matos Rodríguez and Chairperson Thompson,

No trend has shaped public colleges and universities more profoundly over the past two decades than the shift toward contingent employment.* This shift has created an underclass of low-wage academic gig workers, eroded academic freedom and shared governance, and threatened educational quality. The research is clear that student outcomes correlate directly with their contact with faculty members who have job stability and fair wages and benefits, of which contingent faculty are generally deprived. The Professional Staff Congress (PSC/CUNY) has been among the leaders nationally in charting a course in collective bargaining and advocacy to contain the “adjunctification” of the higher education workforce. They have been effective in pursuing better wages, job stability, health insurance, and other forms of support for contingent faculty, and have partnered with lawmakers to secure increased state funding for CUNY to hire more full-time faculty.

When the PSC reached an agreement with the CUNY administration to pilot a multi-year appointment for the university’s longest-serving teaching adjuncts starting in fall of 2017, it was a breakthrough for higher education everywhere. More than 11,000 adjuncts teach at CUNY, and the pilot program recognized that those on whom the colleges rely most heavily, year after year, deserve more in return than a short-term, totally insecure appointment - and they deserve reliable health insurance coverage. Over the eight academic years of the pilot program, more than 3,000 adjunct faculty members have received multi-year appointments. The overwhelming majority of those eligible for such appointments - 19 of every 20 candidates - have received a favorable decision in their department’s professional review procedure.

It would be disastrous for the City University of New York, whose mission has been to serve the working people of New York, to walk away from the progress made for thousands of contingent employees. And given the national prominence of this issue and CUNY’s positive steps, it

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ALBANY OFFICE:
307 Legislative Office Bldg.
Albany, NY 12247
Phone: (518) 455-2529
DISTRICT OFFICE:
74-09 37th Ave., Ste. 302
Jackson Heights, NY 11372
Phone: (718) 295-3881

would constitute a move against labor at a broader scale as well.

Because of its clear record of success, enhancing the multi-year adjunct appointment agreement is a PSC/CUNY priority in their ongoing contract negotiations with CUNY. But the CUNY administration intends to eliminate multi-year appointments or diminish the program severely. Instead of deepening contingency, the administration should recognize the dedication and professional skill of the individuals in these positions and the benefits of a more job-secure teaching workforce to educational quality and student outcomes. Moreover, health insurance eligibility for CUNY teaching adjuncts depends on maintaining at least 6 contact hours per semester, so clear health principles are at stake.

New York State made significant new investments in CUNY in recent budget cycles because strong public university systems are critical for our collective success. CUNY cannot achieve its full strength without a more job-secure academic workforce that supports high-quality education. We strongly urge the university administration to broaden access to multi-year appointments for teaching adjuncts, not undermine or eliminate them.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Ramos". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Ramos, New York State Senator, D-13