

Good afternoon, I'm Andrea Vásquez, PSC secretary and a HEO at the Graduate Center's American Social History Project / Center for Media and Learning.

One year ago, in a PSC-CUNY labor management committee both parties agreed that defending our students from the federal government's targeting of immigrant and non-citizen students and employees was something we could and should work together on.

In January of this year, PSC launched its Immigrant Solidarity work that has involved hundreds of members and allies in courageous and collaborative efforts to defend the rights of immigrants and, by extension, the rights of all of us. Our petition directed at CUNY garnered 7300 signatures to demand ICE stay **off** of our campuses and that more resources be allocated to immigrant defense. PSC has also—every week since May—brought members into the federal immigration courts to support neighbors as they attempt to safely navigate the cruel system.

Last semester CUNY began what would be a successful fundraising effort to provide rapid response advice to CUNY students, staff, and faculty. We hear it is going well and we commend you on this program.

And, without going into details, over the past few months, PSC members and CUNY staff and administrators have cooperated to assist vulnerable community members.

But I am here to bring to you what I believe is a significant gap and hindrance in CUNY's ability to meet its responsibility to its non-citizen students.

How is it that we still have only four colleges with paid fulltime staff, physical space, and programming devoted to helping students with the many issues related to their immigration status? (these colleges are JJAY, Brooklyn, Hunter, and CCNY)

This has meant that students are sometimes prioritizing attending one of the four staffed colleges or they are transferring to colleges with centers. But this is most often NOT a possibility and so they remain vulnerable and must navigate college on their own.

Also, four campuses have initiatives but these are staffed by “volunteers” or part timers, and those are Queens, Baruch, Guttman, and BMCC.

**“volunteers”** meaning unpaid labor from your employees! And how can a parttime non-teaching adjunct possibly do what a permanent fulltime HEO is doing elsewhere?

CUNY has also announced that each campus has been assigned a “liaison” to assist students. But some of these, too, are full time staff who are **volunteering** to do this work on top of all their other responsibilities.

Centers like the ones at the four campuses help lead to higher enrollment, retention levels, and overall student success because the full time staff members have the time, skills, and resources to **consistently** meet the needs of our remarkable students who should be guaranteed **full** support and not partial or make-shift help.

We often say that budgets are political documents that demonstrate what we care about. I fully understand that CUNY has many needs and we are historically underfunded but right now there is an existential threat to our institutions because our **students and their families** are experiencing an existential threat each and every day. We must continue to work together whenever possible but relying on the unpaid labor of our members does not demonstrate your commitment or fulfill your promise. Every CUNY college must be staffed with **at least** one fulltime person who is fully devoted to leading an office that provides support services to the immigrant and non-citizen students and workers at that college.