

Good evening

My name is Tanya Serdiuk and I am the Director of Accreditation and Quality Assurance at Medgar Evers College. I also serve as Medgar's PSC CUNY HEO Grievance Advisor.

I am speaking tonight on a health and safety issue that is not as obvious as crumbling infrastructure, rampant mold, or other unsafe working conditions. Rather, I am speaking on the toll that chronic understaffing and consequent work overload takes on the physical, mental, and emotional health of HEOs. I won't detail the physical and mental harms that arise from these workplace stressors: they have been well documented by OSHA, the NIH, and the American Psychological Association. Note that the top workplace stressors are unrealistic workloads and deadlines, poor communications, and toxic workplaces.

We have a 35-hour workweek, yet how often do we work through lunch, stay late and bring work home? Some even work during obligatory but pointless ZOOM meetings! For many in student facing offices, leaving the office during lunch is simply not possible since there is no other knowledgeable person to cover the office. For offices that have only one HEO, vacations simply mean that the work piles up and emergency last minute deadlines can't be met.

In 2019 - the pre-COVID 19 pandemic year - Medgar employed 192 HEO series employees. By 2025, that number had dropped to 158, a loss of 34 positions. The positions disappeared, but the workload didn't. By contrast, the number of CUNY-wide HEO series employees numbered 5,567 in 2019 and by 2025, the number reported was 5,947, an increase of 380 HEO positions. Meanwhile, we are at an all-time high of 586 CUNY ECP positions. So why is Medgar bleeding from the cuts?

Understaffing has become the norm at Medgar Evers College. While many factors have contributed to this current reality - from the 2023 Vacancy Review Board guidelines, on through to our current status as a college of concern - our understaffing has been continuously undergirded by a rudderless leadership that balances their budget on the backs of HEOs. Compensatory time and reclassification appear to be granted only to the favored few, if at all.

We know that enrollment drives our budget. Yet it was just a few weeks ago, that this administration in office for five years disseminated its Strategic Enrollment Plan. Critical offices remain under- or unstaffed, including our long vacant Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, and Director of Communications. Other offices such as advisement and freshman year programming have been gutted beyond recognition,.

Who suffers? Our students. Who carries the burden of invisible and uncompensated work? Our HEOs. Medgar deserves better leadership!

Thank you.