



**Testimony of the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY  
Felicia Wharton, Treasurer, Doctoral Lecturer in Mathematics at  
Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center administered by City Tech  
New York City Council Committee on Higher Education  
Oversight - Racial Equity at CUNY  
June 17, 2026**

Good afternoon, I'm Felicia Wharton, a Doctoral Lecturer in Mathematics at the Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center administered by City Tech, and PSC Treasurer, testifying on behalf of the 30,000 faculty and staff of Professional Staff Congress/CUNY.

Thank you very much, Chair Joseph and members of the Committee on Higher Education, for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I am going to be direct. After reviewing three years of hiring data from 2022-2024, the picture that emerged is that there is a racial inequity problem at the City University of New York. As such, I will identify five areas, among many, where action should be taken:

1. **CUNY needs more full-time faculty to properly serve our students.** A 2021 study by the University Faculty Senate, found that white students, concentrated at SUNY, have significantly greater access to full-time faculty than Black and Brown students, who are concentrated at CUNY. I will submit a copy of this report with my testimony today.

2. **CUNY salaries have eroded significantly across decades of under-funding and our workload is greater than at comparable institutions.** There exists a limited pool of Black and Brown faculty in university professions, in part because of the educational debt one may be required to take on and lower pay compared to other professions. **We are frequently unable to compete to attract and retain Black and Brown faculty at CUNY, where faculty work more and are paid less than our public peers.** From 2022 to 2024, Black faculty representation at CUNY went from 15.0% to 15.1%. A gain of 0.1% in three years. This is not progress. This is stagnation, and it is unacceptable.
  
3. **CUNY students should have access to faculty who look like them, to whom they relate, and who function as role models.** Faculty from different racial and ethnic backgrounds bring intellectual diversity to the classroom. When Black and Brown students at CUNY do not see Black and Brown faculty in the classrooms, they are receiving a message that they are not full members of the community. We need to attract and retain more Black and Brown faculty and professional staff in key areas such as mental health counseling and advising immigrant students. CUNY should also focus strongly on the retention of faculty of color. We are losing ground. From the data, some CUNY colleges have lost Black and Brown Faculty. For example, at my home campus, City Tech, in 2022, 13.6% Black Faculty compared to 2024, 11%, a change of 2.6%. Hostos Community College also lost Hispanic faculty members. CUNY is losing faculty through attrition.

4. **There are long-term staff shortages and vacancies among Higher Education Officers and College Lab Technicians – the professional staff that keeps CUNY running. As such, many are overworked.** Some are expected to do the labor that should be assigned to two or three full-time employees. CUNY has lost experienced, excellent employees because of workload and fiscal austerity. According to CUNY's 2025 Staff Facts report, more than a quarter of the non-teaching instructional staff in these titles are Black; more than 70% are people of color.
  
5. **Faculty of color experience what's called "cultural taxation" – a greater service burden placed upon us to perform Diversity Work.** These faculty members serve on many more committees than others early in the tenure process, based on culture or identity. And we serve, even if they are spread thin, as we support the mission and vision of the university and the students we serve. This expectation is never stated when one is recruited or during the hiring process. This becomes overwhelming and taxing over time. Studies have shown the impact of that extraordinary service can hamper promotion, research, and a healthy work-life balance. Faculty of color are often expected to speak in moments of crisis and conflict, which can place a larger burden on their mental health. In the PSC/CUNY's last round of bargaining, the union advanced a demand won by the union representing faculty and staff in the California State University system. Those faculty of color may now apply for occasional release time, a reduction in their teaching load, tied to performing Diversity Work. The PSC may advance this proposal again when we return to the bargaining table next year.

CUNY has a diversity problem, and the time for incrementalism is over. Our students deserve better. CUNY can and should do better. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.