

Testimony of Robert Cermele, Associate Professor
Before the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York
Concerning the University Budget Request for FY 2015-2016 as it
Relates to the PSC-CUNY Collective Bargaining Agreement
(Calendar Item 3.F.)

24 November, 2014

Good evening, my name is Robert Cermele. I am an Associate Professor of Mathematics at New York City College of Technology. I am also the PSC Vice President for Senior Colleges. I am here to talk about the need to provide advancement opportunities for employees in the HEO title series and why that is important to CUNY's Budget.

Typically, when discussing the University, what comes up is the professoriate, the teachers who provide the instruction who are the backbone of the academy. There is, however, another group without whom CUNY could not function. I am speaking of the Higher Education Officers (HEOs) who staff the various administrative offices, provide support and counseling to students, and do the many things that need to be done to make CUNY work. As a long-time member of the faculty and as PSC chapter chair at City Tech, I am especially aware of the value that the professional staff add to the college.

Just as with the professoriate, there are several ranks in the HEO series. However, unlike the professoriate, HEOs have no opportunity for promotion. One stays in one's job forever or until one's job description changes significantly, a fairly rare occurrence. Faculty who perform their primary duties exceptionally teaching, research/scholarship and service—can apply for promotion and often achieve it.

In the current round of collective bargaining, the PSC has put forward a plan to provide some relief for HEO staff who are at the top of their salary schedules and have no further salary steps

to look forward to, even if they perform their duties above and beyond the normal expectations and even if their volume of work has increased dramatically. The inability for HEOs to be promoted, in the offices and colleges where they currently work, is a morale issue. It hurts the whole University because it deprofessionalizes HEOs and undermines them in their important work. The union's proposal for salary advancement does not change the current structure that only allows for reclassification. Instead, it provides for an opportunity for a truly outstanding, long-term employee to be moved to the next higher salary schedule while remaining in the same classification.

As a faculty member, I ask you not to resist this proposal because it is new and imaginative. If you allow yourselves to consider it fully, I am confident that you will find it to be the right thing to do.

In Spring 2014, 21% of HEO Associates, 12% of HE Assistants and 10% of Assistants to HEOs were on the top step of their respective salary schedules. They represent about 10% of the 4,600 HEOs employed by CUNY. The union proposal would affect only those at the top step and only those performing their duties at a level beyond expectations. The cost would be quite small, but the acknowledgement that work for CUNY which goes far beyond expectations over the long-term could be rewarded would have a value for the HEO workforce that far exceeds the dollar cost.

I urge the Trustees to seek funding in the University Budget Request to permit recognition through salary advancement for the HEO workforce.