

**Testimony of Bill Friedheim, Retiree**  
**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*

My name is Bill Friedheim. I am chair of the 2,600-strong retirees chapter of the Professional Staff Congress. I am speaking on Item 3F, CUNY's Budget Request.

The retiree members of the PSC have logged over 80,000 cumulative years at the University as educators, professionals, scholars and champions of public higher education. For many of us, CUNY was -- and is -- a cause.

We developed curriculum, built governance structures and served what may be the most diverse university student body in the world.

We marveled at the success and drive of our students, many who worked -- sometimes two or three jobs -- and raised families while going to school.

CUNY has transformed lives and empowered students ever since Dr. Horace Webster, the first president of City College, then the Free Academy, proclaimed in 1849:

The experiment is to be tried, whether the children of the people, the children of the whole people, can be educated; and whether an institution of the highest grade, can be successfully controlled by the popular will, not by the privileged few.

But in an age of austerity for the many and great riches for the “privileged few,” the democratic mission of CUNY, so eloquently articulated by Dr. Webster 165 years ago, is under assault.

Dr. Webster never had to confront the consequences of diminished public funding coupled with rising tuition, for a quarter-century; it’s a double-edged whammy that undermines opportunity for “the children of the whole people” and threatens the educational and support structures that generations of CUNY faculty and professional staff nourished.

Years of budget cuts have come at great human cost. Modest budget increases requested by CUNY are a start, but these increases rely too heavily on tuition hikes and don’t compensate for the decades of starvation funding from those who should be the providers of first resort for a public university -- the state and city.

Where’s the public funding needed to recruit and retain quality educators, scholars and professional staff?

From personal experience, retirees know that CUNY salaries in the past were among the highest among public universities in the US.

We’re dismayed by just how low those salaries have sunk.

We’re dismayed that faculty turn down CUNY job offers because the pay is too meager;

We’re dismayed that faculty and professional staff leave because their families cannot afford to live in NYC on CUNY salaries;

We’re dismayed that a university that retirees helped to enrich is now one of New York’s biggest employers of low-wage and contingent workers;

We’re dismayed that there are adjuncts who apply for food stamps to survive on their meager CUNY pay;

We're dismayed that faculty and professional staff have worked for four years without a contract and five years without a contractual raise.

Ladies and gentlemen: Retirees want to add our voice. Where's the money? CUNY NEEDS A RAISE!

**Prof. William Friedheim**  
**Chair, PSC Retirees Chapter**  
**Retired, BMCC**