

**Testimony of Rebekah Johnson, Assistant 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.)**

Dear Esteemed Members of the Board of Trustees,

I speak for myself and for my fellow LaGuardians on **the University's Budget Request and the need for a budget that includes funding for a collectively bargained reduction to the teaching load.** I am particularly speaking about faculty experience in the community colleges, since that is the perspective I have and know from my colleagues.

When I arrived at LaGuardia, I was proud that the school promoted faculty scholarship and emphasized faculty participation in curriculum design and governance, because I wanted to both serve the CUNY student population – providing access to education to all New Yorkers, a matter of social justice – and still do research and be a scholar. But we have heavy workloads that do not give us time to pursue our passions and publish.

I have seen the expectations for tenure and promotion of junior faculty increase during my brief time at LaGuardia. The bar has been raised at community colleges and we are expected to do similar work to faculty at senior colleges, when in fact students at community colleges need MORE help than other students. We have been increasingly requested to do more advisement for our students. The expectations about scholarship and publication have been increasing. We are also expected to serve the college by participating in committees, and these meetings take much of our time. **But we are invested in serving our students.** When we teach the requisite 27 hours per academic year, which translates to 9 courses (5 in fall and 4 in spring, or vice versa), in addition to our participation in curriculum and governance and our attempt to produce quality

scholarship, something has to give. **The purpose of the University** is to teach students and provide them with quality education, but our teaching suffers when we don't have enough time to prepare for all of our classes and create meaningful and interactive class lectures and class activities. When we don't have time, we cannot meet with students and answer their questions, work through their difficulties, be their counselors, and just connect with them in ways that they need. We can't properly advise students on their courses and educational plans without ample time, and we can't give our attention to quality feedback on their assignments when there is no time left for that.

**It becomes a LOSE-LOSE-LOSE situation. The faculty lose, the college loses, and most importantly, the students lose!** *We, the faculty, LOSE*, because we are overworked (and underpaid! Fair Contract Now!) and cannot perform ANY of our duties in quality ways. We are stressed, and can't do all of our tasks well AND sleep enough or have quality time with family. The work-life balance is not there at all. And we cannot find time to do our research. *The College LOSES*, because they want us to teach quality classes, produce quality scholarship, and help students so that students stay and graduate. And, *most importantly, the Students LOSE* – they do not get the individual attention they need in advisement, in class quality, in feedback on their assignments (especially their written assignments and digital work like ePortfolios), and they don't feel that their professors are available to answer questions, whether about class content or life difficulties and career plans.

**We must find a way to resolve to this dilemma.** We at CUNY serve the students of the City, and many of these students come to college ill-prepared and they need additional help, counseling, advising, nudging, tutoring, caring, and TIME from us. We need workload relief in the form of a teaching load reduction to better serve the University and, most importantly, to better serve our students.

I work long days teaching 3 classes back-to-back and squeezing in lunch when I can. I find myself needing to stay later at the office to take care of emails and tasks for committees. Then I go home and try to spend limited quality time with my 18-month-old son, reading with him, speaking and interacting with him. I know how important early language development is – after

all, I'm a linguist and teach this in my Intro to Language courses! I want to make him laugh, hug him, and stimulate his thinking every day. I often need to feed him and put him to bed soon after arriving home because of the work I must do. I need to put him to bed and get up late at night to do my work – so I'm often working from 12am-2am to get more student papers corrected, some committee tasks done, or work on my research or publications. Then I need to get up while it's still dark, check my emails, get ready for work, and leave the house before my son is awake. I spend every minute on the subway correcting papers – I can't afford to waste any time. On the days I don't teach, I must prepare lessons, correct papers, and especially do research writing, but I sometimes can't, as childcare is an issue. **As a single mother, living in a very expensive city, I cannot always pay for childcare** when I can be home, and so I find myself up late at night again, doing work, after taking care of my son. **This is not a quality life.**

Many of my colleagues have also said that there is no balance. They work on weekends, in the evenings, and stay late at the office, but still can't get everything done. We cannot devote enough time to research and publication, while attending committee meetings, and still prepare for our classes. Ultimately, the students lose out (we cut corners on feedback on papers, or we can't prepare really dynamic lessons) and we do not continue our important scholarship, due to the drudgery of the daily routine – the meetings, tough schedules, and insufficient time. We deserve to have lives outside of work, less stress at work, and **our students deserve better from us, too.**

In spite of all this, I have taken the time to stand here before you to represent all community college faculty in our request for **a teaching load reduction and a living wage. FAIR CONTRACT NOW!**

Thank you.