

Testimony of George Emilio Sanchez, 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

My name is George Emilio Sanchez and I am a professor and chairperson of the Performing and Creative Arts Department, and chapter chair of the PSC, at the College of Staten Island. As you all know we have continued to work under an expired contract for four years. I am here today to speak to the University's Budget Request and to relay what all our membership want and merit as part of a new budget: a new contract. In all honesty, I actually believe most of the presidents and the administrative personnel on our campuses want and support us in demanding a new contract. The CUNY workplace is a central bloodline to the life and sustainability of this great city of ours. Since our contract expired in October 2010, the faculty and staff have steadfastly adhered to our belief and responsibility to the mission of CUNY and public higher education by going to work. As the Board of Trustees gathers today to consider the University Budget Request, we urge you to hear our plea, to support our voices and to work with us in meeting the 21st century challenge of providing our students with the best education possible. A new contract means long overdue raises for the hardest working faculty in the country; it means improved working conditions that foster better teaching and learning in the classroom; it strengthens our ability to recruit and retain the best faculty and staff; it helps further develop CUNY faculty and staff professionally and economically; and it improves the professional conditions of our treasured part-time faculty. As I have little time to address the Board today, I have elected to stress the urgent need to offer an economic package immediately. We urge you to work with the governor and the mayor to give us what we rightly deserve, an equitable and fair contract to honor our work and who we are.

What I want to stress today is the need to address the current faculty workload. I have a passion for teaching. I love what I do. And I have a deep understanding of what it means for our students to be surrounded by people who care about them as people. One of the hidden factors of our current workload is how much time we need to mentor and give guidance to our students. This means there is an unacknowledged world of mentoring we are constantly engaged in. As is often stressed, if we want to nurture life-long learning in our students, this type of engagement and this cultural value must start now, not later, when our students need to get it right. When I started teaching at the College of Staten Island, we had seven declared majors in Dramatic Arts. Due to our redesigned curriculum and its direct relevance to our students, their passions, and possible jobs, we now have between 70-80 declared majors! But this increase in our “numbers” does not take into account how much time we need to spend with each student outside of the classroom, as well as inside the classroom. Although I am a chairperson who oversees a department of 18 full-time faculty and 50-60 part-time faculty, I also teach two classes of a total of 40 students. We need a new contract that will equitably recognize the type of outreach and support each of our students deserve. We need a new contract that will respectfully honor the time and labor that goes into fully mentoring our up-and-coming artists and professionals. We need a new contract that will make CUNY the best place to get an education.