

**Testimony of Jonathan Buchsbaum, Professor
Before the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York**

**Concerning Funding for Adjunct Health Insurance
In the CUNY Budget Request (Calendar Item 3.A.)**

21 November, 2011

I would like to begin by thanking the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees for the opportunity to speak today.

I have been teaching Media Studies at Queens College for over 30 years. When I began, there were over 30 full-time members of the department. Now there are 12. At the same time, the number of majors has risen to over 700 students, and our courses are full. As you must know, these numbers are typical throughout the university.

How has the department coped with this downsizing? Some time ago, the department suspended its Master's Program in Media Studies, for the department was unable to staff the courses needed to offer the M.A. To cover the undergraduate courses, however, the department has relied on the valuable contributions of part-time faculty. Some of whom have joined the full-time faculty, some of whom have continued as indispensable and popular part-time teachers, even after completing their PhDs, for they have been unable to find positions in a shrinking tenure-track job market.

One of those colleagues, who teach a wide range of courses, just had his third child. He informed me recently that without health care provided through the Welfare Fund, he would have to choose between food and health insurance. In short, he is one of 1,800 part-time faculty members who depend on health care provided by the Welfare Fund. Given that the health care system in our country is based on health care provided by the employer, if the City University of New York (CUNY) does not take responsibility for that coverage, one that currently in fact draws the best part-time teachers to CUNY, those teachers will face imminent loss of the protection of health insurance.

I want to impress upon you the urgency of Chancellor Goldstein's commitment to seeking adequate funding from the state and/or city to retain these teachers. CUNY has always justifiably prided itself on the quality of its faculty. While the number of full-time faculty has fallen by half since I started at Queens, the university has replaced those lost full-time positions with part-time teachers. Some years ago, CUNY's master plan approved by the Board of Trustees, called for raising the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty from 50 to 70 percent.

CUNY remains far short of that goal. It must recognize that fully half of all courses are taught by thousands of highly qualified part-time professors. Failure to resolve this challenge of providing health care for them would not only drive many into the kinds of choices facing my colleague, but would do serious harm to the quality of instruction our students expect and deserve.

Thank you for your attention.