

*This statement is in response to CUNY's proposal to cut and/or layoff all 29 Hunter College art department college assistant staff.*

I have worked in the Art and Art History Department at Hunter College of the City University of New York since 2011. My college assistant position title is Undergraduate Sculpture Area Manager. In this position I have overseen the function of day to day operations of large wood, metal, and casting facilities that see a high use of volume of approximately 45-60 students per semester. It entails safety training for students, maintenance of equipment, targeting and ordering of necessary supplies, developing open hours schedules and training of assistants to monitor our shop safely. We are only open when staff is present due to the dangerous nature of the equipment on site. I also co-ordinate with both full-time faculty, adjunct faculty (of which I am also a member) and the school to keep the shop in-line with and supportive of the curriculum being taught. I am the foundation and meeting point between a semester to semester change in sculpture faculty, teaching assistants, and staff. I also serve a unique function in that I work directly with students in realization of class projects and report back from these interactions how better we may serve our student body by upgrades to both material requirements and how the shops function. It is a part-time position, one with which every minute of every hour of every shift of every semester is squeezed to its capacity of my duties. I also do this at below market wages in a compromise because of its benefits of health insurance. I rely on this position for health insurance which is always in a precarious balance due to the nature of hours required to keep it and the year to year budget cuts that eat away at the ability to meet those requirements. This year, due to those cuts, and the delay (and possible non-reappointment) in college assistant contracts for our 2020-21 fiscal year my health insurance was taken away in a pandemic, the same week I was run over by a van, dislocated my shoulder, and broke my collarbone. I have no idea how I am going to pay medical bills and physical therapy in relation to this accident now. I also have a rare anemia that destroys the very red blood cells required to heal and requires regular medical monitoring. I stay in my positions in the art department despite these difficulties because I truly believe that our students are special. We have the most diverse student body that is representative of not only our five boroughs but the entire country and world and being able to provide visual art instruction and access to the means to create art in the most affordable quality art school in New York City is essential. To deny them this access and help is to draw clear class lines, it is essential that college assistants keep their one year appointments to allow this to happen and provide students the things they need, we are what makes the department function and provide these opportunities.

Sincerely,

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