

ADJUNCT

CUNY PART-TIME FACULTY LETTER

JOHN JAY LEX 5/7/73

From the Executive Committee of the
Adjunct and Part-Time Faculty Caucus

As the long and angry dispute between the faculty union, the PSC, and the Board of Higher Education continues, many students seem to be increasingly convinced that the CUNY faculty neither needs nor deserves a higher salary. This attitude is understandable in view of the substantial income enjoyed by much of the senior faculty. But it overlooks the situation of the adjunct and part-time faculty who, based on past experience, expect few gains from the current contract negotiations.

These negotiations have only served to make adjuncts more aware of the contrast between the important role they play at CUNY and the deplorable treatment they receive. They believe that it is in the interest of the students as well as themselves that the university operate equitably from top to bottom.

There are approximately 7,000 adjuncts and part-time faculty members who form the base of the CUNY pyramid. Their low salaries—averaging about \$4,000.00 annually—make possible incomes for the senior faculty of \$25,000.00 and up. Generally, an adjunct has two-thirds of the teaching load of a full professor but gets less than one-seventh of his pay. Moreover, adjuncts have little or nothing to say about the educational policies affecting the courses they teach. They are denied health coverage and other benefits; their job security is practically nil; they are cheap labor and made to feel it.

There are reasons for differences in pay and rank based on seniority, responsibility, and individual achievement. But adjuncts see no justification for moving closer to a feudal hierarchy with every new contract. Why, they ask, is nearly half the total teaching staff submerged so far beneath the levels of pay and dignity which are generally supposed to prevail at CUNY?

Adjuncts teach many of the same courses as the full-time faculty, even including advanced tutorials and graduate level courses. Yet, judging by departmental observations and student evaluations, there are no notable differences between the two groups.

Most adjuncts live largely on their CUNY salaries, although most are forced by their inadequate pay checks to find supplementary income. It is true that some of them hold professional positions beyond the campus, such as writers, psychologists, accountants and lawyers. These adjuncts bring to CUNY an enriching contact with urban reality that deserves better treatment than it has so far received.

The fact that they are professionals with outside incomes hardly constitutes an argument for using them as cheap labor, and for the majority of adjuncts, teaching is their only possible source of income because of their academic specialties. Adjuncts are just as concerned about problems on their campuses as are the full-time faculty and they want to be a part of the decision-making structure of the university.

Recently, adjuncts have been pressing the union to work more vigorously for their interests. But whether or not the new contract will reflect these efforts depends in part on you. Adjuncts need all the help they can get. They are asking you, along with the community at large, and the senior faculty, to support the stated union position calling for a fair system of pro rata pay, health coverage, and a decent measure of job security. Basically, they are asking for the right to be regarded as full members of the university community. The adjunct and part-time faculty does not believe this is an unjust demand.