

**Testimony of Jennifer Hayashida, Director of the Asian American Studies Program  
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**

My name is Jennifer Hayashida, and I am the Director of the Asian American Studies Program at Hunter College. Having health care was central to maintaining my commitment to CUNY: I started at Hunter as an adjunct in 2006 and obtained health insurance one year later, while also teaching at another institution to supplement my CUNY income. When I had the option of pursuing a better-paying position at the other institution, I opted to instead take on greater administrative responsibilities at Hunter, not only because I felt that I was making valuable contributions to the students there, but primarily because that was the institution through which I had health insurance. Had it not been for CUNY's commitment *to me* at that point, I may have left to pursue a less contingent position elsewhere; instead, I stayed and was able to contribute to Hunter by assisting in the reestablishment of their Asian American Studies Program. The only program of its kind at CUNY, Hunter's Asian American Studies Program offers valuable courses in the history and experiences of Asian Americans, the fastest growing ethnic group in the nation. By educating students in a history of immigrant experience in the U.S., our courses satisfy important graduation requirements and ensure that students are well prepared to navigate a complex global society.

Adjuncts are central to the functioning of the Asian American Studies Program. Over 80% of our courses are taught by outstanding adjunct instructors, many of whom are renowned artists, poets, scholars, and filmmakers. If I can no longer offer potential candidates the promise of health insurance after two semesters of teaching, I am afraid to think of what kind of turnover that would lead to among our adjunct faculty – and the ones who would suffer the most would be our students, who benefit from the kind of attention, mentorship, and letters of recommendation our adjuncts provide. Adjuncts are the core of our program, and their health insurance is essential to ensuring the survival of our program and maintaining the reputation of CUNY as an attractive

place for bright and dedicated educators to teach the city's students. CUNY students should have teachers with the same protections as SUNY students.

As an administrator, I am extremely sympathetic to how difficult it is to ask for anything during these grim economic times, but I urge you to maintain the Chancellor's commitment to prioritizing adjunct health insurance. Adjunct instructors help make it possible for us to educate the city's finest students: to take away their health insurance coverage would send the message that CUNY doesn't care about 60 percent of its teachers, and it would undermine the stability of a workforce that we desperately need to be more, not less, committed to our institution and our students.