

The Chief

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CUNY Adjuncts Want Full Pay in Finals Week

By MEREDITH KOLODNER

Adjunct professors at five City University of New York colleges held a series of rallies last week aimed at convincing administrators to pay them for a full week's work in the final days of the semester.



BARBARA BOWEN:
Stop chiseling
adjuncts.

About 2,000 adjuncts at the five colleges receive a paycheck that is one-third lower than their regular weekly pay for the 15th week of each semester. The last week is traditionally finals week, when exams are given in place of classes. The other 12 colleges in the system pay their adjuncts for the full week. CUNY management says that it is willing to discuss the matter at current contract negotiations.

'I'm Getting Cheated'

"This is the busiest time of the year for me," said Gail Graves, an adjunct at Baruch College, one of the five colleges that has the lower-pay policy. "I'm frankly surprised that they do it that way. I am getting cheated, but it doesn't mean I'm not going to grade their exams."

Adjuncts are paid based on the number of class hours they teach. A typical course meets three hours per week, and the pay scale ranges from \$58.14 to \$68.54 per hour. The "hourly" amount takes into account the time spent outside of class to prepare lessons and grade papers and homework. Many adjuncts teach more than one class.

The five colleges base their pay policy on the fact that during the final week, a two-hour exam period usually takes the place of the three hours of classes.

"It profoundly misunderstands the nature of teaching," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "Teaching is much more than standing in front of the classroom. They have to grade the exams, write final assessments, meet with students; it's typically one of the heaviest weeks of the semester."

CUNY: Let's Negotiate

Last May, an arbitrator ruled that each college could continue to follow its own policy, based on past practice. The five colleges involved are Baruch, Queensborough Community College, Kingsborough Community College, Bronx Community College, and the College of Staten Island.

"The PSC is entitled to bring this matter up in our ongoing collective-bargaining talks," said CUNY spokesman Michael Arena in an email. "We are hopeful that they will."

But the PSC maintains that the issue should be decided outside of bargaining.

"Contract negotiations have often been long and complicated," said Ms. Bowen. "This cannot wait to be settled until the contract is bargained. They work for 15 weeks - they should be paid for 15 weeks."