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Report of the Ombudsperson of the City College of New York

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It is in the power of the Ombudsperson (Article XI of the CCNY Governance Plan) to review administrative processes and recommend changes. In this report I wish to call attention to the non-existence of realistic capacity planning at CCNY, and its consequences, and recommend that admissions policy be guided by capacity plans for each department and major.

The admissions office implements the admissions criteria decided by school or college, and each applicant that meets the criteria is admitted. There is no consideration of the ability of the departments and programs to serve the admitted number of students; the guiding assumption of CCNY's policies is that the more students we admit, the better for us. The departments frequently deal with these student numbers by hiring a large number of adjuncts, which they are ill-equipped to manage: finding qualified adjuncts is difficult, and there is no faculty time to supervise them. As a result many classes are taught by adjuncts who do not teach the expected material, and many students do not experience contact with faculty, which would be important for proper guidance to their studies and career.

For graduate programs, the situation is further complicated by many new programs that were started without the necessary faculty available; they are essentially designed to be taught by adjuncts. Finding qualified faculty to teach graduate classes is even more difficult, and graduate students need even more guidance and support from full-time faculty. Also the New York State Department of Education mandates (Regulations of the Commissioner 52.2(b)(5)) that who teaches a graduate class must have a PhD or equivalent qualification, usually a terminal degree in the discipline in which they are teaching.

I urge that the following measures should be adopted:

(1) The capacity of each degree program must be planned in such a way that all upper-level courses can be taught by full-time faculty, and all lower-level courses have at least one section taught by full-time faculty. Admission must be determined by capacity.

(2) Sections taught by adjuncts must be supervised; at least midterms and finals need to be reviewed by full-time faculty that teach the same class. Each department should create a plan to supervise its adjunct-taught sections.

(3) Graduate classes must be instructed by full-time faculty; if the necessary faculty are not available, it must be considered whether the size of the graduate program justifies hiring the necessary adjunct faculty.

(4) The College should produce each semester a report giving for each department the percentage of lower level, upper level, and graduate classes that are not taught by full-time faculty.

(5) The College needs to provide guidance for the amount of teaching credit given for teaching large sections.