

Clarion

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JULY 2015



LOOKBACK Tireless fighter

Steve London
on 15 years
as First Vice
President.

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Michael P. Farrell/Albany Times Union used by permission

LEGISLATURE ACTS ON CUNY FUNDING MOVEMENT IN ALBANY

A cheer went up at a PSC Delegate Assembly as President Barbara Bowen announced the news that, in an overtime session, lawmakers acted on funding the CUNY system. PSC members were rewarded for their persistence when the Senate passed a “maintenance of effort” bill that would

fund the future mandatory costs of operating CUNY colleges, addressing the problems crumbling buildings and infrastructure, and other presently unfunded fundamental costs. It’s a “huge step,” Bowen said, while stressing that the deal isn’t done until the governor signs the bill.

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BARGAINING RF Field Unit wins extension

As PSC RF members upped their mobilizing game, management came through with an offer that is now up for ratification.

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WHO’S ON FIRST? Softball activism

They may not be the Bronx Bombers, but PSC members at BCC found solidarity with students in the love of the game.

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JUDGMENT CALL Evaluating course evals

In colleges that moved to online-only assessments of courses and faculty by students, response rates have dropped dramatically.

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T-SHIRT DAY Wearing the message

Faculty and professional staff came to work in shirts designed to spark dialogue about how lack of a contract hurts students.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006. EMAIL: PHOGNESS@PSCMAIL.ORG. FAX: (212) 302-7815.

Yacht exemption debated

● Regarding “New York’s yacht tax break” (*Clarion*, May 2015): To better understand the reason for special tax breaks for expensive yachts, you have to know the history of the yacht tax. In the 1970s there was a 10 percent luxury tax on yachts. The thinking was that if you were rich enough to buy a yacht, you could afford another 10 percent tax. (A luxury tax existed on many other items also.)

Well, the rich didn’t buy yachts, at least not in the U.S., and many shipyards closed, putting 250,000 shipbuilders – carpenters, plumbers, painters, office workers – out of work. This is not counting the businesses outside of the shipyard, restaurants, groceries, dry cleaners, etc., who lost a great deal of trade. This is why the 10 percent tax was rescinded.

It has taken all these years for the shipyard business to be built up again, and your legislators in Alba-

ny wisely want to keep the business here and growing. Those who think that “our government is working for the wealthy” are probably too young to know this history, because in this case the opposite is true.

People have to understand that the rich have the money to spend and can spend it anywhere. They create jobs, and we should not drive business away with high taxes.

Doris Bluth (emerita)
Bronx Community College

Clarion editor Peter Hogness responds: *Thanks, as always, for writing.*

The recent action of the New York Legislature was not about any special tax on yachts – rather, it gives yachts a special exemption from the general sales tax that must be paid on books, banjos, bicycles and most other consumer purchases. As we reported, the new tax break specifically “eliminates sales tax on the

cost of a yacht above \$230,000.”

It’s hard to see an economic argument for singling out pleasure boats for this exemption, or for limiting this privilege to boats that only a millionaire could afford. As Ron Deutch of the Fiscal Policy Institute pointed out, “Your average Joe in New York who wants to go out and buy a small 16-foot bass fishing boat” will still pay sales tax on the full price. It’s also hard to blame a sales tax, charged regardless of where something was made, for a shift of production overseas.

In fact, the decline of the U.S. shipbuilding industry in the 1970s and 1980s was not in any way limited to yachts. From yachts to tankers to tugboats, the entire industry was in freefall. From 1981 to 1985, 25 out of 110 shipyards in the U.S. closed their doors – including the General Dynamics shipyard in Quincy, MA, where friends of mine lost their jobs. The causes of this broad decline

were many, but a sales tax on yachts was not one of them.

But even if Prof. Bluth’s account was valid, there is a large price to be paid for handing out this kind of special tax exemption. “America’s state tax laws are riddled with carve-outs and loopholes aimed at attracting or retaining businesses,” a writer for The Atlantic observed in May. “In aggregate, they produce an impossibly convoluted and regressive tax code.... And governments end up starved for the very revenues these tax cuts are often aimed at securing.”

Labor and Bernie

● The 2016 Democratic primary has something pretty nifty: an outright “Democratic Socialist” named Bernie Sanders in the running. Now this white-haired U.S. senator, veteran of countless fights, isn’t what we tend to look for in a presidential candidate. He’s not

tall, a little old, and from one of the smallest and whitest states in the Union. So it’s a little bit of a surprise that he was able to out-raise every single other candidate in his first-day fund-raising totals. His launch event was attended by thousands of adoring fans, no small feat in rural Vermont. A grassroots movement launched to support him in tandem with the official campaign, resulting in more than 100 meetups from Florida to Hawaii to Alaska to Maine. One supporter called in from Antarctica. (Really!)

A national “Labor for Bernie” effort is underway, and here in New York there is a very active branch, including our PSC members. Disgruntled teachers, angry at the assault on public education, are likely to be strong supporters of Bernie for his unabashed support for teacher unions in the face of attacks from all sides, including the corporate wing of the Democratic Party.

So this year, I’ll be active in local and constituency groups in support of my candidate so it’s clear that I’m building a stronger, more progressive base for candidates in Brooklyn, New York City and New York State.

Charles Lenchner
Murphy Institute/SPS

CUNY IN BRIEF

CUNY Prep to Get New Name

Derrick Griffith, the beloved CUNY dean known for his passionate advocacy for disadvantaged students, was one of the eight people killed in an Amtrak train derailment in May. CUNY Newswire reported his age as 43.

Chancellor James Milliken announced that he will ask the Board of Trustees to rename CUNY Prep, of which Griffith was the founding director and principal, in the late dean’s honor. A scholarship newly established in his name will commemorate his legacy.

Griffith, who was Dean of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at Medgar Evers College, dedicated his career to improving educational access.

“He’d go to bat for students,” Medgar Evers student Sean Pryor told the *Daily News*.

With CUNY Prep, Griffith established a different kind of educational institution – one designed to help youth who left high school without graduating gain access to college. A doctoral student in urban education at the CUNY Graduate Center, Griffith had just successfully defended his dissertation on the educational outcomes of low-income black students before the derailment took his life (see: tinyurl.com/griffith-dissertation).

“You told me to keep my head up. Now, I’ll never look down,” wrote Ayesha Adeel at an online tribute page set up by Medgar Evers College. “I wish you were here to see me succeed because you are the reason for my success.”

PSC wins Research Foundation contract extension

By ADELE M. STAN

It was a win initially deemed likely to take months when CUNY Research Foundation management sat down with the bargaining team of the PSC RF Field Units Chapter, which represents RF staff at three campuses: LaGuardia Community College, New York City College of Technology, and the CUNY Graduate Center. But the PSC RF team came away with an agreement on a three-year extension of the five-year contract that was set to expire. The extension includes continuation of the 2 percent per year wage increases for each of the next three years and management agreeing not to increase the contribution rate for employees to their health-care coverage.

“It was better than we thought [it would be] because, originally, they were asking for concessions,” said Calvin Patterson, a member of the PSC RF bargaining team.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

In the end, PSC RF negotiators held the line at 19 percent on their health plan contribution rate, while Research Foundation employees on campuses not represented by PSC will have to contribute some 21 percent of the cost of their health insurance premiums.

At the final bargaining session, “management agreed that the contractual 2 percent [annual] raises

Mobilization yields results



PSC RF members (l to r): Tracey Counts, Olga Jimenez and Lynne Turner.

constitute a floor...,” reported Arsenia Reilly-Collins, PSC coordinator of contract administration and outreach, who worked with the bargaining team. “Where they can, we hope PIs will pay larger increases.”

In addition to Patterson, the PSC RF bargaining team includes Olga Jimenez, Lisa Molero, Darren Kwong and Donna Thompson-Ray at the Graduate Center; Roxana Astorga and Martie Flores at City Tech; and Eric Guzman, Frederick John, Migdalia Ramos and Miosotys Rivera at LaGuardia.

The key to getting to yes, said Pat-

terson, was mobilization.

“When people teach you mobilization, you learn to quantify support, interest and solidarity – which is really difficult to quantify,” Patterson told *Clarion*. “But when the groundwork has been done, when you organize and bring people on board, it’s visible, and you can share those numbers.”

PSC activists began organizing in the months leading up to negotiations by simply making themselves visible, wearing red PSC buttons in the workplace. They then escalated to wearing red T-shirts bearing the

message: PSC MEMBERS ARE THE REAL FOUNDATION OF CUNY.

Members also signed a petition that was re-imagined as a handbill-sized piece of graphic art, printed on red stock and filled at all angles with the signatures of those who backed the petition. The text read, in part: “We the undersigned proudly stand with our colleagues on the bargaining team as they negotiate with the CUNY Research Foundation....”

CREATIVE ACTION

Some 85 percent of PSC RF members – comprising both full-time and part-time staff – signed that statement of support.

“Since this was a public petition, members thought it would be good to put it together in a way that would stand out [when] plastered on campus, on bulletin boards or passed around at gatherings,” said Reilly-Collins. “We thought it would be great to have it reflect the creativity of so many of our members.”

Of the surprising timing of management’s offer, Patterson, an applied client services manager at the City Tech Workforce Development Center, said with a laugh: “I’m kind of disappointed that we didn’t get to have those rallies that we had planned.”

Ratification ballots have been mailed to RF union members and are due back at the PSC Office on July 9 to be counted.

Arsenia Reilly-Collins

Albany & NYC move on CUNY increase

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

In a tough legislative environment, pressure from PSC members created momentum for measures that, if signed into law, would increase funding for CUNY, and ensure that the State covers the university's mandatory cost increases in the future.

After the legislature extended its session, the State Senate approved, by a vote of 62-1, a bipartisan "maintenance of effort" (MOE) bill that would require annual funding starting in 2016/17 for operating cost increases at CUNY and SUNY – including contractual raises for future years – a version of which earlier passed unanimously in the State Assembly. News of the Senate's action broke while PSC elected leaders from across the CUNY system were gathered at a previously scheduled Delegate Assembly meeting. "We just got a message from Albany that our MOE bill passed," PSC President Barbara Bowen announced to the assembly in the union hall. "We tried and tried to get that bill passed...and sometimes you actually do win."

Whether the bill becomes law is now up to Governor Andrew Cuomo, who will review bills sent to him throughout the summer. If enacted, the law will require future funding for the mandatory cost increases incurred in running the CUNY colleges and institutions, beginning with next year's State budget.

"[The bill] covers only future years, not retroactive pay, so we will continue our fight for the State to fund retroactive pay," said Bowen a day after the bill passed both chambers. "It is a huge step forward."

CITY STEPS UP

There was also movement at the City level, where Mayor Bill de Blasio reached agreement with the City Council on an overall budget deal. The Mayor had proposed, in his executive budget, a net increase of \$15 million for CUNY, largely for STEM expansion and for the ASAP program in the community colleges and for CUNY Prep. The final budget reportedly also includes expanded funding for the scholarship program established by the City Council. At press time, the deal awaited a Council vote.

PSC First Vice President Mike Fabricant said that the union worked hard on several fronts with key allies, including borough presidents Eric Adams and Ruben Diaz Jr., as well as the Hispanic Task Force in the Assembly, in order to get the MOE legislation passed. "We had a chorus of voices repeating the same message, 'Adequate funding is necessary for quality higher education,'" Fabricant told *Clarion*. Passing the legislation, he said, demanded a months-long effort that involved repeated meetings with lawmakers who moved from simply understanding the problem of government disinvestment in higher education to making

Fight continues to close the deals

Lawmakers respond to PSC pressure



Assemblymember Latrice Walker meets with a group of PSC members from Medgar Evers College, including (from left) Roger Green, Eugene Pursoo, Shakia Brown, David Thompson, and Paul Washington.

the issue a priority that required action.

PSC members kept the heat on lawmakers for passage of the funding legislation, visiting with State and City legislators in their district offices, making countless phone calls to legislative offices and sending more than 6,000 letters in six days to their elected representatives.

Taking action on an issue separate from the bill that would guarantee future funding for CUNY, the union also pushed for money for retroactive pay from the State's current budget surplus.

Assemblymembers of the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus signed on to a letter urging the governor and legislative leaders "to support a one-time investment of \$240 million to allow CUNY to provide salary increases to its faculty and professional staff for 2010 at the same level as the increases received by other New York State public employees." The governor and the State legislature have so far failed to deliver on that investment, but throughout the summer the union will continue to meet with lawmakers, stressing the need for adequate funding for CUNY.

CONTRACT FIGHT

Funding, however, is but one aspect of the contract fight. After union members applied strong pressure on CUNY Chancellor James Milliken, he testified at a City Hall hearing that CUNY faculty and staff have worked without a contract for "far too many years," and publicly supported "a swift and fair resolution" to collective bargaining.

"I hope we can realize that end so that CUNY can be competitive and retain and attract the faculty and staff who do so much for New York," he told City Council members in a May 29 Executive Budget Hearing. When pressed on whether he would ask for tuition increases, Chancellor Milliken said, "Given what has happened with the State budget I see very little other flexibility in our budget." The PSC maintained that tuition hikes are not the way to fund CUNY, or a PSC-CUNY contract. "There are surpluses in both the State and City budgets," said Bowen. "There is enough money to fund a fair contract for the people who make CUNY work."

Without the work we do at CUNY, New York doesn't work."

The PSC's goal this session was to bring the attention of elected officials to CUNY's need for increased public investment. The PSC's letter to legislators stated: "Without sustained and adequate public investment, CUNY cannot hire the additional faculty needed to improve its dismal full-time faculty-to-student ratio.... In the absence of a commitment by the State to meet mandatory maintenance-of-effort costs, CUNY is also unable to provide enough counselors for students or improve working conditions for the majority of its faculty – who are part-time adjunct instructors."

Inside the bill

The State legislature passed a bill (see tinyurl.com/moe-bill) that would guarantee future funding for costs at CUNY and SUNY that are deemed mandatory, including such collective bargaining costs as salary and benefit increases. Also classified as expenses covered by the guarantee are those that cover the general maintenance of facilities and other fundamental needs. If signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo, the law would begin to apply for fiscal year 2016-2017, which begins in April of next year.

BIPARTISAN EFFORT

Deborah Glick, a Manhattan Democrat and graduate of Queens College, and State Senator Kenneth LaValle, a Long Island Republican whose district includes

SUNY-Stony Brook, sponsored the maintenance-of-effort bills in their respective legislative bodies, where each chairs the chamber's higher education committee. The bill, if signed by the governor, modifies the maintenance-of-effort language in a law known as NYSUNY 2020, which sets a minimum level of annual State funding for CUNY and SUNY at no less than the previous year's allocation. When SUNY 2020 passed in 2011, it also enacted five years of tuition hikes at CUNY and SUNY; lawmakers said the increases would go toward improvements to the education system – such as the hiring of additional faculty and staff and other educational enhancements. Instead, increased tuition revenues

Radio spots produced by PSC ran some 600 times in Albany and New York City, and brought to the personal level, through the voices of CUNY graduates, what the lack of funding for a contract for CUNY faculty and staff means for students.

ON THE AIRWAVES

"CUNY changed my life. When I started college, I could hardly speak English, but I dreamt of a successful career. Today, I'm an IT expert at a Fortune 500 company," said Mirkeya Cappellan, an alumna of Hostos and Hunter College, one of five CUNY graduates featured in the spots. "I owe everything to professors like Lewis Levine and Bette Kerr." (See more on page 6.)

Members also individually met with elected officials. Shakia Brown, who works in the budget office of Medgar Evers College, was part of a PSC group who met with Assemblywoman Latrice Walker in her district, where the campus lies. Highlighting the more than 3,500 CUNY graduates and 100 PSC members and retirees who live in Walker's district, PSC members demonstrated CUNY's local impact.

LOUD AND CLEAR

"We broke it down to all the different elements [that show] why we need more funding for CUNY. We explained how it would help students, how it would help recruit and retain the best faculty and how it would help keep the great staff," said Brown. "[Walker] totally understood. She knew that investing in CUNY [means] investing in the City's future."

Brown, along with other PSC members, will continue to meet with elected officials throughout the summer. The PSC, according to Fabricant, will continue to push on all fronts in the fight for a fair contract for faculty and professional staff, and adequate funding for the CUNY system as a whole.

were diverted to stopgap measures to address problems presented by crumbling buildings and general operating costs. The current State budget leaves CUNY with \$63 million in unfunded mandatory costs.

The bill now awaits the signature of Governor Cuomo, who, throughout the summer, is expected to review bills passed by the legislature in the session is concluding as we go to press. While the MOE bill would guarantee future funding for CUNY, the union is working on a separate proposal – a one-time \$240 million investment in CUNY – that would cover retroactive salary increases. If secured per the terms of the proposal, the money would be drawn from the State's budget surplus, and would help to fund a settled contract once an agreement is reached.

The Golden Keys of Hostos

By CLARION STAFF

Lizette Colón, a faculty counselor at Hostos Community College, knows what it means to be flexible. The educator is accustomed to working inside and outside the classroom, but last spring found her meeting with students in the hallway after she was shut out of her faculty office.

At issue was Colón's refusal to pay a fee she found exorbitant for the replacement of her keys, which were stolen out of the door lock during a moment when her back was turned.

"I went [into the office] for less than two minutes to give a T-shirt and an appointment to a student," Colón told *Clarion*. "When my student and I came out from the office to the hall, the keys were no longer there."

INSULT TO INJURY

The administration refused to accept her report of the keys as stolen, Colón said, and when she asked administrators to review footage from the security camera in the corridor, she was told that the camera was not functioning. She was asked to pay \$100 to replace the "lost" key.

Adding insult to injury, when she was first assigned the office, Colón was given a choice between having a key lock or a key pad for access to her office. She requested the key

Counselor protests pricey fees for replacements



Faculty Counselor Colón worked in the hallway after access to her office was denied.

pad, which was installed, only to be removed a week later and replaced with the lock.

To Colón, the high replacement fee seemed a bit unusual. Colón not-

ed that she wasn't the only Hostos employee she knew of dealing with this issue. An employee on the support staff, whom Colón did not wish to name, was socked with \$200 in

fees for two lost keys, one of which was a key to a restroom.

Colón did some checking around and found that Hostos was the only college in the CUNY system that

charges such high fees for replacement keys: many, in fact, imposed no fee at all. The highest fee found by Colón for a replacement key at a CUNY college other than Hostos was at John Jay College, where an employee was required to cough up \$10 for a key.

When Colón asked administrators why the key replacement fees at Hostos were so high, she said they told her the fees were set as incentives for key-holders to treat their keys responsibly. "But the truth is that people [only] find out about the cost when they lose them," she told *Clarion*. "The majority of us are not cognizant of the cost."

PASSIVE RESISTANCE

Colón refused to pay the fee, prevailing instead on colleagues or staff with master keys, or calling the security office to request that they send someone to let her in. At first, she said, security personnel were cooperative in opening her office to her when she needed access, but then, she said, as the weeks went by, the office began delaying sending an officer to help her. So, she began meeting with students in the hallway outside her locked office door.

Then, mysteriously, after her weeks of hallway sessions, Colón received word to come pick up her new key. No fee required.

"I never learned who paid for it," Colón told *Clarion*.

Today, the Hostos key policy, with its high fees, remains in place. But it gave Colón the opportunity to demonstrate the tactics and results of passive resistance to the students who met with her in the hallway.

Plaque honoring beloved adjunct removed by City Tech

By CHRISTOPHER CARBONE

Timothy Driscoll, an adjunct faculty member who taught for decades at City Tech, was remembered by his colleagues with a plaque commemorating his long service to the school. But the attempt to honor a devoted educator got lost in a bureaucratic maze when the college administration ordered the plaque be taken down the next day.

On March 17, faculty at the NYC College of Technology held a modest ceremony to honor the work of Driscoll, who taught in the college's social science department and who passed away last year after teaching at City Tech since the 1970s. As part of the event to celebrate his life and work, a plaque was put up in the hall outside an office shared by the department's adjuncts, dedicating the room to his memory.

LOVED BY ALL

"After news of his death was announced at a department meeting last year, I volunteered to lead the way in getting the memorial made," said Howard Sisco, an associate professor of psychology. "Tim was loved by all."

The inscription on the plaque

Ran afoul of 'naming policy'

reads, "This room is dedicated to the memory of a man who had a heart bigger than the baseball stadiums that he loved; a man who liked everyone and embraced diversity; a man who always had a twinkle in his eye and a joke on his lips."

GOOD INTENTIONS

"In his over 40 years at Tech, Tim made a lot of friends who appreciated his incessant storytelling and his wonderful sense of humor," agreed Costas Panayotakis, a professor of sociology. Driscoll was an aide to former New York Governor Hugh Carey as well as a Vietnam veteran; colleagues say he would regularly draw on this broad life experience to make a point. "He talked in terms of stories," Panayotakis recalled, "whether it was to explain or to entertain, Tim always had a story."

The moving dedication ceremony was well attended, Panayotakis told *Clarion*. "One other adjunct wrote and read a poem for the occasion."

The day after the ceremony, the plaque was removed on orders of

the college administration. According to a statement from the office of City Tech President Russell Holtzer, proper protocol had not been followed. Although the administration refers to the room at issue as a "classroom," Sisco says it is a windowless room used as office space by the adjuncts.

"With good intentions, but perhaps a lack of information, a plaque was hung in one of our classrooms to honor the long service of an adjunct instructor. It constitutes, in effect, a naming of that classroom," wrote Stephen Soiffer, special assistant to the president of City Tech, in response to a question from *Clarion* in April. "There is a very specific policy of the Trustees of The City University of New York about namings, which can be found on the CUNY website. It is contained in Article VIII in the trustees Manual of General Policy. That policy includes a requirement that namings be carefully vetted and formally approved by the Trustees. It is a policy to which this college, as other CUNY campuses, must conform."

Soiffer did not elaborate on why hanging a plaque in a hall was necessarily the same as naming a room. "Logically, it doesn't seem the same," commented another faculty member. "You could put up any number of plaques, but a room wouldn't therefore have multiple names. It seems like a stretch to equate the two."

"We were unaware of any protocol," said Sisco, who sought input from faculty in his department for the plaque and shared an office with Driscoll for six years. "I think the administration was fine with the plaque," he told *Clarion*, "but there was likely a complaint from someone and they had no choice but to tell us to take it down."

A room with no windows shared by adjuncts

The policy referred to in the City Tech administration's statement is Section 8.04 of CUNY's Manual of General Policy, titled "Naming." Most of its text is concerned with naming of campus facilities in exchange for "a significant gift" to the college. Specific amounts, ranging from \$25,000 to \$15 million, are cited for naming things from scholarships to departments to buildings; naming of

rooms is not specifically discussed. The policy also provides for "namings...with no financial gift" in order "to honor distinguished service," which requires "a thorough review by the campus to ensure appropriateness."

Sisco said that department members will try to get the plaque put back up with official permission. "We are going to try to go through a formal channel, hopefully one that will not cost thousands of dollars," he told *Clarion*.

SWIFT ACTION

Some in the department contrasted the administration's swift removal of the plaque honoring Driscoll with its slow response to cases of Nazi graffiti on the college's walls. "Swastikas in a college elevator were not removed for weeks after I reported them this semester," said Panayotakis. "Another time, a couple of years ago, swastikas in a men's room were reported at a labor-management meeting, but were not removed for nine months." Colleagues have wondered, Panayotakis said, why Nazi hate symbols can be tolerated for months, but a plaque honoring a long-serving adjunct must be immediately removed.

Student surveys under scrutiny

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

At most CUNY colleges, the paper version of the student course evaluation is a thing of the past.

PSC members at several campuses have raised concerns that the low response rates from on-line-only evaluations provide an incomplete and skewed assessment of a class. The union has also noted, regardless of whether an evaluation is done on paper or on-line, a greater reliance on student evaluations in making tenure and reappointment decisions – which makes the effectiveness of the evaluation forms a matter of concern for many faculty.

Today only a few campuses, including LaGuardia Community College, City Tech, Bronx Community College and City College, conduct student course evaluations on paper rather than online. And with the shift to digital evaluations, faculty at campuses across CUNY say that the submission rate of completed evaluations at their schools has dropped dramatically.

LOW RESPONSE RATES

“If student evaluations are placed in front of students at their desks, they are much more likely to complete these feedback forms with helpful commentary than if they have to remember to go to a computer terminal and complete an online form,” Paul Gammarano, an adjunct lecturer at Kingsborough Community College, told *Clarion*.

Other factors contribute, as well, to dismal rates of course evaluation completion. Students who neglect to activate their campus email accounts never receive the evaluation. Those who lack personal computers and rely on phones to receive their email are left to deal with an evaluation form that is not mobile-friendly.

In the end, those most motivated to complete an evaluation are students with strong opinions about the course and faculty member they’re asked to assess.

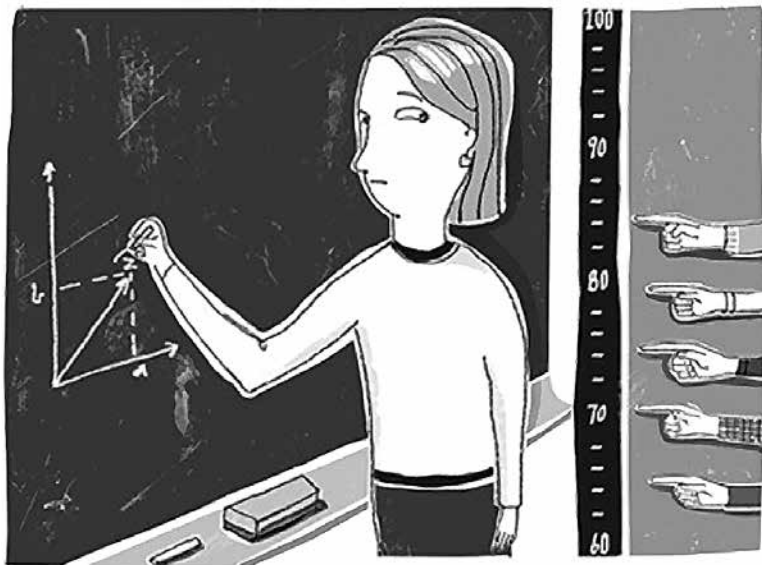
BIASED EVALUATIONS

“Most responses come from the extremes of the bell curve,” James Saslow, a professor of art history at Queens College, told *Clarion*. The feedback he receives, he said, usually falls into one of two categories: “[It’s] either ‘art history changed my life and he’s cute,’ or ‘he’s too demanding and nasty’ – the latter usually identifiable as the one student who earned a negligent failure.”

In the language of statistics, what Saslow described is termed “voluntary response bias,” and its effect on online student course evaluations is profound, he said. “I seldom see ratings of general competence or average performance,” Saslow explained.

Kingsborough’s PSC chapter suggested that, for scores to be considered meaningful and included in faculty files, a benchmark must

Disinclined to respond



be met for a minimum number of submitted evaluations. The administration agreed that for classes that garner a low submission rate, scores should not be counted. However, Kingsborough administrators did not commit to a minimum threshold for the number of submissions, or to exclude evaluations from classes with low response rates from faculty files.

After PSC members at York College raised concerns over response rates for the new online assessments, the administration began notifying faculty when online course evaluation forms are posted and available so that they could prompt their students to fill them out.

At the Borough of Manhattan Community College, the administration cited an improved college-wide response rate since the move to online evaluations last year, saying it now gets evaluations from students in a greater number of classes. But BMCC faculty members told *Clarion* that the response rate in certain individual classes has often gone down by 15 percent or more since the switch.

Kathleen Offenholley, associate professor of mathematics at BMCC, says that fewer of her students are submitting the evaluations, and now, with the shift to online forms, students rarely submit written comments when evaluating her class.

Since the evaluations went online, she said, comments have only been offered by about one student per class.

FUZZY MATH

City College switched back to using paper forms in Spring 2011 after using online forms for five years, according to City College officials. PSC Chapter Chair Alan Feigenberg recalls that when CCNY used the online forms, the response rates were “terrible,” dropping to less than 20 percent, according to City College officials. Faculty, department chairs and deans all raised concerns about the dismal completion rates, Feigen-

berg said. Now that the college has gone back to paper evaluations, according to the college, the response rate is 80 percent.

Survey results show extremes of opinion

Feigenberg, a professor in CCNY’s School of Architecture, notes the arbitrary nature of how different departments use the evaluations in their own assessments. “Sometimes it’s looked at as an important issue and sometimes less so,” Feigenberg said, adding that there is not always a clear explanation or rationale for the difference.

While the PSC-CUNY contract does not explicitly mention the use of student course evaluations as a criterion for reappointment and promotion, Article 18 states that teaching faculty shall be evaluated on teaching effectiveness, and student course evaluations are currently used by colleges as one potential measurement of success.

Many faculty members say they have seen a trend toward a troubling reliance on numbers alone, without context or interpretation. A case in point is LaGuardia, which

still uses a 55-question Scantron multiple-choice evaluation form that is tabulated by Educational Testing Service. Faculty take issue with LaGuardia’s recent policy change mandating that specifics from student evaluations be included in faculty personnel files.

Before the new policy was implemented, “the chair would analyze and contextualize the numbers,” PSC LaGuardia Chapter Chair Sigmund Shen told *Clarion*. “But now the administration wants the exact number that is given by [ETS] to be part of your document.” That “exact number,” Shen explained, is simply an average of all the scores to questions in each section in the evaluation.

“Almost every introductory statistics textbook will tell you: ‘Don’t take an average of that kind of data because the numbers that you assign to those categories are arbitrary,’” said Offenholley. A more accurate and useful approach, she suggested to BMCC administrators, would be to avoid reliance on overall averages and instead cite percentages, as City College does – stating the percentage of students who “strongly agree,” “strongly disagree,” etc., with each item on the questionnaire.

HEIGHTENING INSECURITY

Robbed of context or interpretation, and with each question arbitrarily given equal weight, the use of such averages heightens the insecurity experienced by adjuncts and non-tenured full-time faculty, some of whom feel increasing pressure to go soft on grades. With universities increasingly adopting corporate models of management, students are often referred to as a college’s “customers” – and many members of the CUNY faculty say that some administrators conclude that “the customer is always right.” In fact, a recent report on student course evaluations by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) refers to the typical student

course evaluation not as a measure of teaching effectiveness, but one of “student satisfaction.” (See sidebar.)

Margaret Savitzky, an adjunct assistant professor at York College, says she got nervous when she received a negative evaluation: She was afraid that it would have an outsize effect on the assessment of her teaching overall. Savitzky told *Clarion* she didn’t understand why one student had said she was never available, even though, despite not having paid office hours, she makes a point of coming to class early and staying after class to answer students’ questions, and she diligently replies to student emails. Luckily, she had the support of her department – but not every adjunct does.

EFFECTIVE DESIGN

City College’s School of Education revamped its evaluations several years ago in order to make them more meaningful and more in line with the department’s mission. “The best possible assessment is one that informs teaching and supports learning,” Beverly Falk, a professor in the early childhood education program who helped write the new assessment, told *Clarion*.

The revamped evaluation includes more descriptive questions that get at specifics of teaching, such as to what extent “the instructor encouraged candidates to inquire, to problem-solve, to question their assumptions, and to think critically.”

“I think the folks who do the work and are in the classroom are the ones who should do the work of evaluating people’s chances for tenure and promotion and definitely be the main voice on whether or not people are reappointed,” said Shen, the chapter chair at LaGuardia, where PSC activists are pressing for reform.

“Faculty are best positioned to decide how student evaluations should be designed and used,” he said.

New research raises questions on how surveys are used

Results from a recent survey and two studies indicate that evaluations by students of courses and their instructors should be interpreted with care.

A survey of its members conducted by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) found that while 69 percent of respondents said they saw a need for student course evaluations, only 47 percent deemed the survey regimes at their institutions to be effective, according to a report in *Inside Higher Ed* (with

which AAUP has a partnership). The evaluations, said Craig Vasey, who sits on the committee that issued the AAUP report, amount to little more than “student satisfaction surveys.”

Evaluations reflect ‘student satisfaction,’ not learning

Respondents to the AAUP survey numbered some 9,000 who answered an invitation sent to 40,000 of the organization’s members.

The AAUP heard similar complaints to those reported by PSC members about low response rates

to online evaluations forms and an outsize reliance on the evaluation forms by administrators when assessing faculty performance. Faculty at institutions that use online forms estimated the rate of return at between 20–40 percent, while those at colleges and universities where paper forms are used estimated response rates at around 80 percent.

INTERPRET WITH CARE

In a report on the survey issued by AAUP’s Committee on Teaching, Research and Publication commit-

Continued on page 8



(right) Laura Blitzer talks to a Brooklyn College student.



(right) Sau-Fong Au, director of The Women's Center, meets with a student.



BCC members sport T-shirts at a chapter meeting. (top, from left) Sharon Persinger, Sharon Utakis, Megan Maiello, Lenny Dick, Peter Kolozi, Alex Wolf, an unidentified student and Randi Shane (bottom row, from left) Kerry Ojakian, Nikki McDaniel, Hissine Faradj, Jawied Nawabi and Crystal Rodriguez.

PSC pushes for c

By ADELE M. STAN and SHOMIAL AHMAD

At City Hall, and in the halls of the state legislature and CUNY colleges, PSC members are mobilizing for significant action in the fight a fair and just contract, even as progress is seen in bargaining.

"We have finally seen real movement at the bargaining table," said PSC President Barbara Bowen.

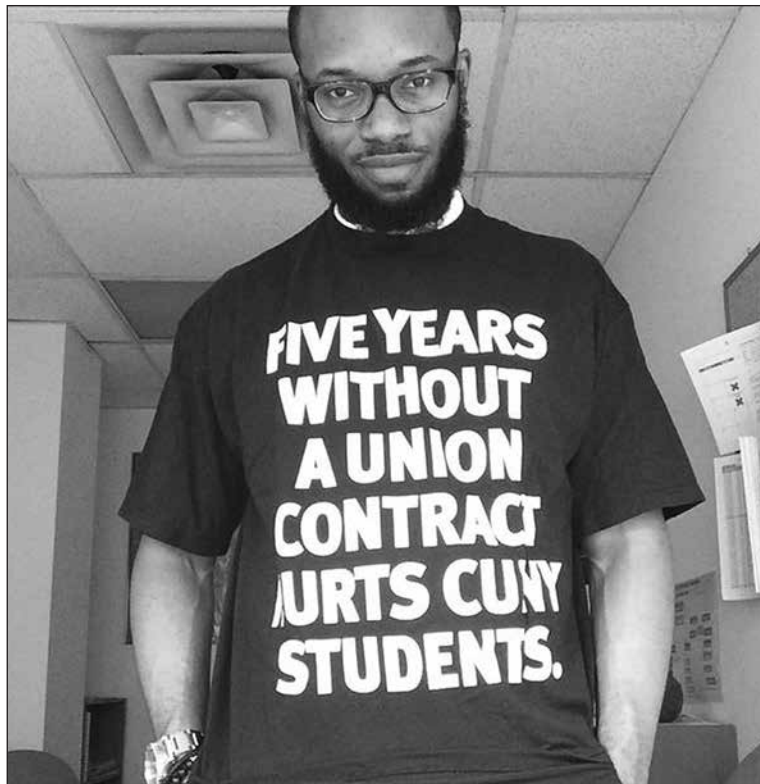
Movement at the bargaining table

"For the first time, CUNY representatives have engaged in meaningful discussion of our major demands on non-economic issues." These include job advancement for HEOs, and job security for adjuncts.

On May 11, with no economic offer yet made by CUNY, the PSC presented to management an economic proposal for salary increases that would total about 20 percent over six years. These would include a 4 percent increase, retroactive to 2010; an additional 3 percent increase, retroactive to 2011; three 2 percent annual increases, retroactive to 2012, 2013, and 2014; a 2.5 percent increase in 2015, and a 3 percent increase in 2016. Bowen stressed that this is a proposal, *not* an agreement.

UNDER ADVISEMENT

"CUNY management's response was that the proposal is overly ambitious, but that they would take it under advisement," Bowen wrote to members, noting that any result-



Member tweets: 'Can't keep & attract talent without a new contract....'

T'd off: five

Hundreds of PSC members brought the contract campaign to their campus by wearing union T-shirts emblazoned with the message: FIVE YEARS WITHOUT A UNION CONTRACT HURTS CUNY STUDENTS. ASK ME WHY. Designed to spark conversations with students and build solidarity with colleagues, the black tees became a strong campus presence on May 12, when PSC launched a system-wide "Teach in Your T-Shirt Day." Members tweeted photos of themselves wearing the T-shirts in their own style – one wore a bow tie with his T-shirt, others wore button-down shirts under the black shirts, and one wore a red button, stating, DO THE RIGHT THING, CUNY! Here, several PSC members talk to *Clarion's* Shomial Ahmad about the conversations initiated by their sartorial activism. (Comments have been edited for space and clarity.)

Alex Wolf

Assistant Professor, Biological Sciences Department (Bronx Community College)

I wore the T-shirt to class, and talked to students about the lack of a contract. Once I got the ball rolling, the students began to ask questions and connect our lack of a contract with their own struggles. They saw it in terms of disrespect. It's very much connected to the same disrespect that students are experiencing with tuition increases, cuts to financial aid and inadequate classrooms. I happen to be teaching in a classroom where the ceiling tiles are missing and wires are hanging down. I told them the money from their tuition increases was supposed to go toward improv-

Contract at all levels

le ing action at the table will likely be a compromise. Settlements with other public employees in this round of bargaining typically have been considerably lower than the PSC proposal—yet PSC negotiators commented that their proposal was still not enough to make CUNY salaries truly competitive. PSC called on Albany to use some of the surplus funds in this year's State budget to ensure that long-delayed raises for faculty and professional staff would be at a level in line with salary increases received by state employees. (See page 3, "CUNY increase")

Bowen emphasized that the current union proposal to CUNY covers only salary increases. "[T]here are other important economic demands, such as relief in the teaching load, that would require substantial additional funding."

Proposal put forward for raises

"Just having one less class would have a major [positive] impact on all of the professors," Natasha Yanacendo, assistant professor at Hostos Community College, told *Clarion*, and would improve the learning environment, she said, by allowing them greater availability to their students.

On May 12, members arrived on campus wearing T-shirts bearing the message: "Five Years Without a Contract Hurts CUNY Students." On the back of the shirt is an invitation to "Ask Me Why."

"A DISGRACE"

At Hunter College, some PSC members wore their T-shirts to graduation, handing out flyers to newly-minted graduates. Eliza Tom, who works in the registrar's

office at Baruch College, said her T-shirt facilitated a surprising interaction with a student she didn't know as they passed each other in a hallway. "Everyone needs to know

about this so it's not hidden," the student said to Tom. "And she said it was a disgrace."

In 60-second radio spots carried during the first two weeks of



CUNY adjunct Rafael Mutis leaflets Hunter College graduation.

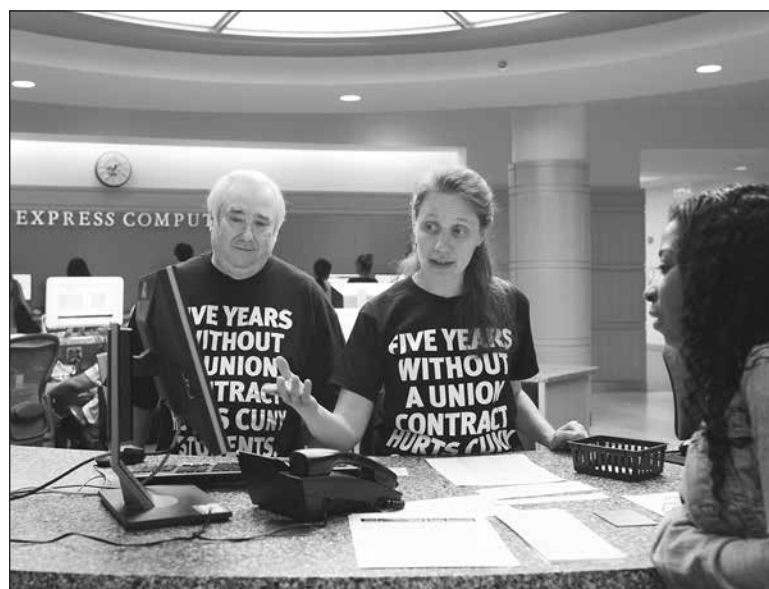
June on six stations in Albany and three major stations in New York City, CUNY alumni spoke of how individual faculty members helped them "reinvent their lives."

Listen to the ads on the web at: tinyurl.com/PSC-radio-ads.



Hostos faculty member Iris Mercado.

Five years without a contract is five years too long



(from left) Bill Gargan and Mariana Regalado work the reference desk.

ing the university, like reducing class size [by hiring more professors] and bringing more mentors for students. In fact, their tuition increases are being used to pay the light bill, rent buildings and maintain university infrastructure. There was a lot of nodding and agreement. My students could see that we were on the same side and that we needed to do something about it.

Michele Doney Director, Math & Science Resource Center (John Jay)

I direct the Math and Science Resource Center, and a lot of the students who come in know some CLTs really well. Days that I've worn the T-shirt, I've had a couple of students immediately ask me what the shirt was about. They're kind of horrified that their lab

techs have not had a cost of living increase in a while. They get mad right away. And without my having to say it, they are like, "My rent goes up, the MTA fare goes up." They just list all the things that have gotten more expensive since 2009. I didn't really have to do much to convince them. The challenge for me is convincing the students that what they can do will matter. A lot of students don't vote. They don't think it matters because they think they're just one person. I tell them to call and email all their elected officials: their city council member, the mayor, their state assembly representative, their state senator and the governor's office. I told them a group of a thousand people is made of a thousand "just one persons." I think I've convinced two students to write to their elected officials, so that's a good start.

Veronica Manlow Associate Professor, Finance and Business Management (Brooklyn College)

Students who see me wearing the T-shirt ask me why I'm wearing it. They ask, "What's this about? What is the contract? How does that affect you?" They really don't know anything at first, but once I explain, they ask what they can do as students. I'm the faculty advisor to two clubs—Marketing Society and Fashion Marketing Society—and members from both clubs really took to the T-shirts. They started posting pictures on social media. Officers from the club started emailing me, asking me what they can do. They're looking for new things, a new direction. They're not just thinking about their careers. They're thinking about how they can make changes on campus.

Marilyn Cortell Associate Professor, Dental Hygiene (City Tech)

I've been wearing my T-shirt every day and students freely ask what it means whenever I wear it. I teach seniors who are graduating and entering the workforce. They know what it's like to feel good about what they do and be valued for their work performance, so I can speak to them at a very high level. I explain all the responsibilities that I have, and how we've been without a contract for more than five years. I tell them if they've been working for the same employer for five years, and if while at that job they did not compromise their work performance, they would feel undervalued and unsupported for

the lack of recognition and the lack of a raise. Working without a contract is just not fair. It does diminish the sizzle, the energy, the passion and the desire to go the additional mile. I could just give in, and say to students who need more, "I don't have time" or "We will have to reschedule." But I don't do that. I continue to remain positive and supportive when they need me. The students get it. They know that CUNY faculty is fully dedicated to what they do.

Scott Sheidlower Associate Professor, Library (York College)

I've been wearing the T-shirt a lot. When I do wear it, I get a lot of interest from CUNY staff who be-

long to other unions...security officers, administrative assistants, buildings and grounds staff and custodial staff who belong to DC 37 and the Teamsters. When they see me wearing the T-shirt, they start asking questions. Their immediate reaction is asking, "Can I have one?" They're just excited to see us doing something that's so visible, so in-your-face. As chapter chair, I keep everyone at York—regardless of which union they belong to—up to date on our contract fight, because it's in everyone's interest. What's different is that I'm usually the one asking questions, trying to spark a conversation. Now they really read the T-shirt and think about the effect of working without a contract. It helps activate them.



Alex Vitale speaks at the Stated Meeting of the Faculty at Brooklyn College.

New law targets unexpected medical bills

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

New York State's Department of Financial Services receives thousands of complaints every year about unexpected medical bills received by people who thought their expenses were covered by their insurance plans. In fact, it's the No. 1 complaint the department receives on health-care issues, according to *The New York Times*.

Last year, state lawmakers passed legislation designed to allay such unforeseen expenses, which can often lead to consumer medical debt. On March 31 of this year, the Emergency Medical Services and Surprise Bills law went into effect. Chuck Bell, programs director for Consumers Union, which advocated for the reform, says that the state has created "one of the strongest laws in the country" on this issue.

FINANCIAL STRAIN

"These comprehensive, carefully formulated provisions are a huge step forward for preventing unexpected medical bills, which put significant financial and psychological strain on New York patients and their families," Bell told *Clarion*.

In the lead-up to the law's passage, advocates shared with state lawmakers more than 100 stories from patients who are hit with unexpected bills. Such post-procedure sticker-shock often affects patients who are inadvertently treated by out-of-network providers when visiting an emergency room, hospital or physician's office.

But there are many situations in which patients have little or no

Limits on out-of-network costs



Jud Gutierrez

control over which doctors treat them.

"I had lung cancer surgery by an in-network surgeon in an in-network hospital. But I was billed by the anesthesiologist who was not in-network. I had no choice," wrote Lester from New York City, who is identified only by his first name in

the story he shared with Consumers Union. "[What] was I supposed to ask when introduced to him in the operating room, 'Do you accept Atlantis...?'"

The situation Lester describes is not uncommon and is shared by thousands of New Yorkers who go for a procedure at an in-network

provider, only to find out, after the fact, that a specialist like a radiologist, or pathologist or anesthesiologist is not part of the insurer's network.

Under the new law, someone facing one of these unexpected out-of-network bills could be "held harmless," or free from legal responsibility, according to an overview of the law prepared by the Consumers Union. For emergency services, patients cannot be held responsible for more than the usual in-network co-pays. When these charges come up, the law shifts responsibility to insurance companies and doctors. A state mediation board set up by the law will facilitate agreements between an insurer and doctors who do not participate in that insurer's network.

DUKE IT OUT

"[The patient] can basically say, 'Look, doctor, I'm giving you this claim [to take] against the insurance company. You and the insurance company can duke out how much you get paid,'" Mark Scherzer, a health insurance attorney who advocated for the law's passage, told *Clarion*. Scherzer wrote a blog post (see tinyurl.com/scherzer-blog-post) detailing the provisions in the new law. "It's very helpful to get the consumer out of the equation."

The law also requires insurance companies to meet new standards – "network adequacy rules" – for their provider networks. With those rules in place they could help someone like Melissa, who wrote to the Consumers Union about the absence of allergists or immunologists in her insurer's network within 20 miles of her home.

'ADEQUATE NETWORK'

"I'm not in the boondocks," she wrote. "So do we wait for the allergic asthma to send my child to the ER [because there's a] lack of a specialist?"

Patients are often socked with surprise costs

Under the new law, if a network is determined to be insufficient, the insurance companies will be responsible for giving in-network rates for out-of-network providers. Details of the law, such as the definition of an adequate network, will be determined by a work group appointed by the governor. Even with the new protections, affordable health care advocates advise those insured under HMO or PPO plans to ask whenever possible whether all providers seen in a medical visit will be in-network, and to be ready to challenge unfair medical billing. Formal complaints may be filed with the NY Department of Financial Services (see tinyurl.com/dfs-complaint).

The New Caucus prevails

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The New Caucus swept the April election for leadership of the Professional Staff Congress with a slate that ran unopposed. PSC President Barbara Bowen, first elected to the post in 2000, won re-election, and Michael Fabricant, formerly PSC Treasurer, won the post of First Vice President. He succeeds Steve London, who, after 15 years as First VP, decided to return to the classroom. (See Steve London story, page 11.) Two new officers won principal leadership posts: Nivedita Majumdar, recently co-chair of the John Jay chapter, is the new union Secretary, and Sharon Persinger, the recent Bronx Community College chapter chair, succeeds Fabricant as Treasurer.

MEMBERSHIP POWER

"I'm interested in building our local chapters because that's where membership power is," Majumdar told *Clarion*. Majumdar, who has

Barbara Bowen re-elected

also worked at Hunter College and City Tech, says she's also interested in governance issues and helping to build alliances with students.

The officers assumed their roles on Wednesday, May 27. The election was conducted by mail, and results were certified by the PSC Elections Committee on May 12.

Fabricant moves up to First VP

In addition to the four principal officers, 23 other members were elected to the Executive Council, which will have 11 new members (including Majumdar).

New EC members include Senior College Officers George Sanchez and Clarence Taylor; Community College Officers Lizette Colón and Anthony Gronowicz; Part-Time Personnel Officer Lenny Dick; University-wide officers Alan Feigenberg and Alia Tyner-Mullings; Cross-Campus Officer Jacqueline Elliot; Retiree Officers Glenn Kiskack and Steve Leberstein.

Officers reelected to the EC include Michael Batson, Lorraine Cohen, Iris DeLutro, Susan DiRaimo, David Hatchett, Penny Lewis, Steve London, Alan Pearlman, Michael Spear, Andrea Vázquez, Blanca Vázquez, Alex Vitale and Paul Washington.

THREE-YEAR TERMS

The elected PSC leaders will serve three-year terms. The next union-wide election will be in the Spring of 2018.

In related news, Anne Friedman, who served as PSC's Vice President for Community Colleges for 15 years, was re-elected to her second term on the National Council of the American Association of University Professors. Friedman told *Clarion* that she looks forward to working on issues that are central to the PSC, from fighting the corporatization of higher education to creating better working conditions for part-time faculty.

Continued from page 5

tee, the writers noted that some women and people of color reported receiving comments reflective of prejudice. The "abusive, bullying effects of anonymity that are today pervasive on websites... [make] their way into student evaluations," the committee reports.

'BOSSY' V. 'BRILLIANT'

While based on anecdotal evidence, that assertion is in line with the findings of Benjamin Schmidt, a professor at Northeastern University, who analyzed 14 million reviews on the Rate My Professors website and found that men were more likely to be described as "brilliant" or "awesome," while women were more likely to be characterized as "bossy" or "annoying."

Based on the results of its survey, the AAUP committee also calls for the end of the use of numerical scores drawn from student evaluations as a measure of teaching effectiveness, as such scores fail to account for factors beyond faculty control. For instance, a report by Philip Stark, a statistics professor at UC Berkeley, detailed how student satisfaction varies by size of the class, the course level and the strictness of a teacher. The Berkeley

study goes on to recommend better ways to incorporate student evaluations in assessments, from not averaging scores to relying more on peer classroom observation. The PSC contract requires peer observations for faculty without tenure at least once per semester, with certain guarantees of fair procedure. The contract stipulates that such evaluations must last a full classroom period, and that faculty must be given at least 24 hours' notice.

Calling for the end of numerical scores

Though faculty have raised a range of concerns regarding the current design and use of student evaluations at CUNY, they aren't asking for their elimination. Faculty interviewed by *Clarion* said the assessments can provide useful feedback and have helped them determine whether a text was accessible or instructions for an assignment were clear.

STUDENT VOICES NEEDED

"I think student evaluations are very important. It's essential that student voices are heard and valued," commented Nancy Stern, chair of the Teaching Learning and Culture department at City College. "But student views are not the only measure of good teaching or learning."

—SA

AAUP censures Urbana, condemns Walker proposal

By JAMES DAVIS

The June 2015 annual meeting of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) marked the centennial of the organization, whose principles of academic freedom, tenure and shared governance established standards for colleges and universities around the country. Fittingly, the centennial was an occasion to put those fine ideals to the test, as members were asked to consider a number of matters of contemporary concern reminiscent of the challenges facing the professoriat at the association's inception. Among these matters are "trigger warnings," a statement about which now appears on the AAUP website, and "civility," the supposed transgression of which has been cited by administrators seeking to deprive faculty members of due process rights. On civility, the AAUP has bundled a number

'Flagrant violations' of academic freedom at UI

of policy documents on its website to address the problematic concept, whose definition is unclear and contested. The AAUP's *Journal of Academic Freedom* will devote a special issue on civility this fall.

Delegates meted out special opprobrium to Scott Walker, the Wisconsin governor and chief engineer of proposed legislation to strip away long-standing, hard-won tenure and due process rights for faculty in the multi-campus University of Wisconsin system. A resolution was put forward from the floor of the meeting that condemns Walker's legislative proposal and calls on the university administration to work to defeat it. Colleagues from around the country were enjoined to show solidarity with Wisconsin faculty, who again find themselves on the threshold of the national assault on public education. Two professors from the University of Wisconsin –

Whitewater spoke in vigorous support of the resolution, which passed unanimously.

But the most anticipated moment was a resolution to censure the University of Illinois – Urbana/Champaign, which came to the membership at the recommendation of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure (Committee A). After extensive investigation of the university's rescinding of its 2014 offer to Steven Salaita of a tenured position in the department of American Indian Studies, Committee A found flagrant violations of AAUP principles and deplored the chancellor's refusal to complete the final stage in Professor Salaita's appointment because of the incivility of his tweets during the latest war in Gaza.

NELSON AT ODDS

Several faculty members from the University of Illinois spoke to the resolution, including the chair of the faculty union, two professors of Ju-

daic Studies, and a historian, Bruce Levine. Remarks from Salaita were read in his absence by the executive director of the Illinois state conference of the AAUP. The censure resolution's only vocal opponent was Cary Nelson, the University of Illinois English professor whose public statements against Salaita and in support of UI Chancellor Phyllis Wise are by now well known. It is surely one of the most interesting ironies of recent AAUP history that Nelson, the immediate past president of AAUP, is now so sharply at odds with Committee A and the overwhelming majority of those in attendance at the AAUP annual national meeting who voted for censure on this key case of academic freedom. Nelson sits on the association's National Council and was the lone dissenting vote when the resolution reached that body in advance of the annual meeting. Three other administrations – the University of Southern Maine, Felician College and MD Anderson Cancer Center –

were placed on the official censure list at the 2015 AAUP national meeting, and one – Yeshiva University – was removed.

SOME GOOD NEWS

There was good news on membership recruitment with the Collective Bargaining Congress making solid gains and the Advocacy chapters also reporting increases. After facing some challenging times with falling membership and troubled finances, the AAUP, in its centennial year, has turned around its financial problems and is growing once again under the leadership of Rudy Fichtenbaum, AAUP president, and Howard Bunsis, chair of the AAUP Collective Bargaining Congress. The PSC has been a strong supporter of the current AAUP leadership and PSC representatives were instrumental in enacting current policies. Anne Freidman, recently retired from the Borough of Manhattan Community College, continues to serve on the AAUP National Council and on the Council's Executive Committee. Also, the PSC sent 10 delegates, newly elected this spring, to the Annual Meeting.

James Davis, associate professor of English at Brooklyn College, just finished a four-year stint as an officer-at-large on the AAUP Collective Bargaining Congress.

Scott Walker's war on the University of Wisconsin

By ALICE OLLENSTEIN
ThinkProgress

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN – When the University of Wisconsin's Board of Regents gathered at UW-Milwaukee in early June to discuss how to deal with the onslaught of provisions in Governor Scott Walker's budget that would slash the university system's budget and rewrite its tenure rules, those voicing criticism of the plan were confined to a roped-off "protest area" at the back of the hall.

The demonstrators, dressed in academic robes and wearing tape over their mouths, held signs reading, BUDGET CUTS HURT STUDENTS and NO REAL TENURE=NO FREE SPEECH.

NO DUE PROCESS

One protester, UW-Whitewater history professor Nikki Mandell, refused to stay in the protest area, and positioned herself at the front of the room. While she expressed hope that the university administrators would stand up to the legislature and push back on the changes, she reported that she was "troubled, disappointed and fearful that they seem to be moving in the opposite direction."

On June 4, her fears were confirmed. The Board of Regents, most of them appointed by Governor Walker, voted against a resolution telling the governor and state legislature to back off the tenure changes. Those changes would allow tenured faculty members to be fired or laid off without due process "when such an action is deemed necessary due to a budget or program decision." Cur-



Faculty protesters at the Board of Regents meeting were roped off.

rent law says tenured faculty can be removed only for just cause and only after due notice and a hearing.

Current professors are speaking openly about fears that they could lose their jobs because of their political views or for voicing criticism of the state administration. Already, UW campus chancellors are sounding the alarm about top faculty being poached by other universities as a result of this change.

Meanwhile, some campuses are already laying off or offering buy-outs to faculty they won't be able to afford to keep if the cuts become law. Hundreds of staff positions may also be eliminated.

After a groundswell of protest over Governor Walker's proposal to cut \$300 million dollars from the UW budget, the Republican-con-

trolled Joint Finance Committee revised the cut down to \$250 million. The cut would not only be one of the largest in the university's history, it would be one of the largest cuts to higher education in the country.

ALREADY BEHIND

While the budget proposal extends the current tuition freeze for two years, some lawmakers predict a massive tuition spike when that expires in 2017.

Wisconsin already trails its Midwest neighbors in higher education spending, according to new figures released by the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau. The state, under Governor Walker, spends less per student than the national average, and Mandell says she's worried the cuts would exacerbate this trend.

"The UW is funded by taxpayers and should be here not only for past taxpayers but their children and grandchildren," she said. "The additional \$95 million the university asked from the state legislature, which is absolutely critical for maintaining the system at a bare minimum, has now turned into a \$250 million cut. That doesn't work."

But UW System President Ray Cross had a different reaction. He released a statement saying he and his fellow administrators "appreciate" the slight reduction of the budget cut and: "Overall, we are pleased."

Student activists who have been protesting in the state capitol, including recent UW-Green Bay graduate Paul Ahrens, are not pleased.

"That's like, 'Oh, thank you, you beat me six times instead of 10.' No! Stop beating us, period," he said. "I want to see the cuts gone, or at least reduced to less than \$100 million dollars."

Ahrens also took issue with another controversial policy written into the new budget that strips students and faculty of much of their "shared governance" rights that give them a say in campus decisions, including how to spend student fees. The change would further concentrate power in the hands of the governor's appointed regents – the newest of whom recently compared the universities to manufacturing plants and suggested eliminating some majors and degree programs.

"I don't mean this in a religious way, but shared governance is sacred," Ahrens said. "They're

changing it from [students] having responsibility in these decisions to just making recommendations. Now, for example, they could say, 'You know what? I don't like that political group. Stop funding them.'"

'THIS IS NEOLIBERALISM'

Mandell agreed, adding, "There's nothing to restrain more administrative creep. This will steal students' money by allowing the chancellors, in times of short budgets, to take the segregated fees students and their families are paying and use them for other purposes."

Ahrens was recently accepted at UW-Madison for a dual master's program in public administration

and urban planning, but due in part to impending budget cuts, the program was unable to offer him funding. This fall, he will be going to Cornell University instead, and said he is sad to be leaving the state, but plans to attend rallies and meetings to fight the budget cuts over the next few weeks. At press time, Governor Walker's budget seemed stuck in committee, and protesters see a possible opening to win further revisions.

"This is neoliberalism. This is privatization. I haven't seen a lick of evidence this will help anybody," he said. "There is no middle ground when they're trying to destroy this institution, because without education, there is no democracy."

This article originally appeared at the website ThinkProgress: www.thinkprogress.org.

'No! Stop beating us, period!'

Alice Ollenstein

LOOKBACK

Cermele, DeSola recall early days

Two veteran members of PSC's New Caucus stepped down from leadership positions in May: Athurine DeSola, who leaves the post of secretary as Nivedita Majumdar steps in, and Bob Cermele, who exits the role of vice president for senior colleges. Here they recall some of their most memorable fights, discoveries and triumphs in nearly 15 years serving as PSC officers.

BOB CERMELE

Vice President for Senior Colleges, 2006-2015

Senior College Officer, 2000-2006

I first was elected as a senior college officer in April 2000, following a long and intense campaign in which the then-insurgent New Caucus slate under the leadership of Barbara Bowen won a majority of the seats on the PSC's Executive Council. While the four principal officers – president, first vice president, secretary and treasurer – were elected decisively, not all members of the New Caucus slate won election. The vote for one

position was especially close: at first showing a one-vote margin, that contest ended in a tie after one ballot was disqualified.

WINDS OF CHANGE

At the first Delegate Assembly that I attended after that election, the results of the vote were scheduled to be certified by the DA. There was a debate about the one contested ballot for community college officer, a position that in the end was not filled until a later election. The meeting was highly contentious, with a portion of those in attendance walking out of the meeting, denying the assembly a quorum. We lived through a year of such lively meetings until the next PSC elections in the spring of 2001, when elections in several chapters – including City Tech, where I was elected as chapter chair – were won by New Caucus slates, which changed the makeup of the Delegate Assembly.

I remember vividly the first time that I visited the PSC offices on 43rd Street after the election in 2000 was certified following a raucous Delegate Assembly. I was surprised to be greeted by name by the receptionist as I exited the elevator on the fifth floor. I was there to meet Stanley Aronowitz, distinguished sociologist and PSC officer-at-large at the Graduate Center to review the records of past contract

negotiations with CUNY management. Our contract was about to expire in a few months and we had to begin negotiations with CUNY. Those past negotiation records consisted of a cardboard box filled with loose pieces of paper. We worked for several hours, with little to show for our efforts as those pieces of paper were often undated and sometimes incoherent. We worked in the president's office, without access to a computer; nor did there seem to be other computers available or any Internet access.

Those were heady times, as winds of change coursed through the union and through CUNY. The next fifteen years amply demonstrated why an election can matter.

ARTHURINE DESOLA PSC Secretary, 2006-2015

When I was elected as PSC secretary in 2006, I was the first member of CUNY's professional staff to become one of the union's four principal officers. It's been an honor to serve. It was a new level of responsibility, and at first it was a little overwhelming. In fact, it was a trial by fire! But over time you adapt, you learn, you get more comfortable with the role.

Anything we've been able to accomplish, is because of the efforts of PSC members. One of my favorite moments in the past nine years was to see the reaction of management when a group of members brought their children to a bargaining session. They came on a cold Friday morning in January, all with their children – even newborns. I think this was totally unexpected for management.

BABIES AND BARGAINING

These were new faculty, who had been recruited by CUNY but were not yet tenured. Several were high-powered researchers, with grants in excess of \$1 million. They told management they had assumed that CUNY had paid family leave like the universities they had come from, and they'd been shocked to find out that CUNY did not provide this. Management's negotiators were actually embarrassed to meet these union members in person and hear their stories. It was very powerful testimony, and it did a lot to help us to win.

I've visited CUNY campuses regularly, speaking with union members at all the colleges within the University. The PSC has so many different constituencies – full-time faculty, both tenured and untenured; Higher Education Officers (HEOs); adjunct faculty;



Arthurine DeSola

College Lab Technicians (CLTs). It's a very diverse bargaining unit. It's important to be fair to everyone, to make sure every group's needs get attention. That can be difficult, but there's nothing more important.

AN AMAZING RIDE

The professional staff are critical to the whole CUNY system, you can find them in every aspect of the University. Some HEOs are heads of programs or institutes: Many are in student-service areas like registration or financial aid. CLTs are also very diverse. They are often thought of as the people who set up the beakers or test tubes in a chemistry lab – but CLTs also work in theater departments, computer labs and art studios. Without HEOs and CLTs, you wouldn't have a City University of New York.

Looking forward, there's one piece of advice I'd offer every PSC member: take a contract training! In my time in office I've seen that too many members don't know what's in our contract – and you can't protect your rights if you don't know what they are. [Ed. note: Contact Debra Bergen or Albert Munoz to be notified of future contract training sessions: dbergen@pscmail.org or amunoz@pscmail.org]

For the new members of the Executive Council, I'll say this: Have fun, work hard, and hold on tight – you'll be on an amazing ride.

Queens College Honors Goodman

Queens College celebrated its 91st commencement last month by posthumously awarding an honorary doctorate to civil rights activist Andrew Goodman, who studied at the college. Goodman, along with fellow activists James Chaney and Michael Schwerner, was slain by members of the Ku Klux Klan 51 years ago in Philadelphia, Mississippi, for daring to help African Americans register to vote.

"The story of Andrew Goodman is inexorably linked to all of you," David Goodman, who accepted the award on his brother's behalf, told the Class of 2015. "You own this story. This story belongs to America."

"Andy had the idea he could be a meaningful participant in our democracy, an idea that flourished right here at Queens College," Goodman continued. "My brother graduates with you today."

It was a poignant moment, calling attention to the brevity of Andrew Goodman's life; he was still a college student at the time he was kidnapped and brutally slain. And he was aware of the danger, Queens College alumna Barbara Omolade, who helped recruit Goodman to the 1964 Freedom Summer voter registration campaign, told *Clarion* last year.

"Everybody was aware that Mississippi was dangerous," Omolade told *Clarion*. "People had been killed. Medgar Evers had been murdered [in Jackson, Mississippi] the year before."

After accepting his brother's award, David Goodman was hardly resting. On June 25, he joined U.S. Representative John Lewis as the Georgia congressman and civil rights leader entered the text of the Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015 into the Congressional Record. The legislation, which at press time was slated for introduction by Democrats in both the House and Senate, is designed to restore parts of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that were struck down by the Supreme Court in the 2013 decision, *Shelby County v. Holder*.



Bob Cermele

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A testament to why elections matter

LOOKBACK

The CUNY ideal

By STEVE LONDON

Editor's Note: This article was adapted from a speech delivered to PSC members and staff by London at PSC headquarters on the occasion of his stepping down from the role of PSC first vice president in May, after serving for 15 years in the position.

Thanking others is important – in part because it is a reminder that we do not achieve things of value alone, but as part of a community and a collective.

Anything I've accomplished has only been possible as part of a collective fabric of love, support, effort and struggle, woven by my family and friends, staff of the PSC and the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund, and the officers and members of our union.

A number of those who've contributed to those collective achievements are no longer with us, and now is a good time to remember them. Jane Young, who was chapter chair at BMCC, was an eloquent and fierce advocate for members. Mike Vozik, whose heart was always in the right place, spoke out again and again on the great injustice of the adjunct system of employment. Bill Mulholland, who quietly worked in contract enforcement, kept the grievance operation running smoothly, and was a gentle and peaceful presence in our bustling office. Steve Levine, who died just recently, contributed his passion for politics and justice and his sound advice to our collective political efforts. My friend and mentor Bart Meyers, with his incisive mind, organizational abilities, passion for justice, eloquence, kindness and his famous black book that contained just about every progressive activist in CUNY, was instrumental to the formation and success of the New Caucus leadership.

BIG IDEAS

The first New Caucus platform statement was largely drawn from a document drawn up by the Reform Caucus of the UUP [United University Professions at SUNY] in the 1980s. Two of its principal authors – my late wife Mary Edwards who taught at Purchase and Francis Mark who taught at Old Westbury – are no longer with us, but they helped give us a vision.

The PSC has become a stronger union because of all their efforts. I owe them my deep gratitude, as do we all.

I am privileged to have served as part of a collective leadership with outstanding principal officers and union administrators, all of whom are thoughtful, progressive and committed to social and political justice. I spent much too much time with all of them in meetings, but you do get to know folks pretty well during all those hours. I've benefitted from their commitment to justice and deep appreciation of the possibilities CUNY affords our students, and it was a real honor to have served with them.

When I first ran for chapter chair at Brooklyn College as an insurgent 22 years ago, and won, I had big ideas and a bold vision. We could change the adjunct system of employment, establish a progressive academic union that would advance our profession, bring new resources to CUNY to better serve our students, promote racial and economic justice, help lead the labor movement out of its defensive posture and declining base of power and unleash the power of the membership to achieve these goals.

I am proud that during three major reces-



Steve London at the NYC Labor Day march in 2003.

sions, the aftermath of 9/11, ongoing wars and intensification of the neoliberal austerity regime, this vision has been nurtured and kept alive by the union that we have built. It is obvious that we have not achieved all these goals, nor could we do so alone. But we have scored some significant victories, both in defending rights that were under attack, and in advancing to new ground.

No struggle has defined our leadership more than the 14-year battle to stabilize financing of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund and maintain and win lasting financial support for adjunct health insurance. We had to help change mayors to get it done! This was a multifaceted and intense campaign of the whole union that saved health insurance for 2,000 of our members. It took persistent struggle, and we achieved a change that we'd often been told was impossible.

The Welfare Fund staff worked hard and served members well throughout these difficult years, making sure members received life-saving medical care and drugs, and I look forward to continuing to work with them as executive officer and a trustee of the Welfare Fund.

In the last 15 years we've worked to develop a more strategic approach to contract enforcement. This has led to victories like enforcing the 35-hour workweek and right to compensation for overtime for HEO-series employees. We won a settlement in our grievance on misuse of the substitute title, limiting and controlling the abuse of non-tenure-track appointments.

CONTRACTUAL GAINS

We've made other important contractual gains over the last 15 years. We won equity pay increases for adjunct faculty, assistant to HEOs, lecturers, and college lab technicians. Other advances included paid parental leave, the paid adjunct office hour, 80 percent pay for sabbaticals and junior faculty reassigned time. These changes haven't made CUNY the university that we and our students deserve, but they have made a real difference in the working – and learning – conditions on CUNY campuses.

We have strengthened our union's pres-

ence in political action and legislative work, expanding recognition and influence of the PSC in Albany and City Hall. We were the first public employee union to endorse Bill de Blasio for mayor, and *The New York Times* coverage of our endorsement noted that while our union is not as big as some, the PSC punches above its weight. With this expanded influence, we have won additional resources for CUNY, and have challenged the trend of decades of disinvestment in public higher education.

PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP

We have worked closely with faculty governance leaders in the struggle to support faculty control over the curriculum, academic freedom and quality education for our students. While Pathways has been largely implemented around the University, there is still resistance to the administration's plan. We helped build a clear faculty consensus against this watering down of curriculum, and the struggle has increased the CUNY faculty's level of unity and organization around these issues. As academic unionists, we will continue to make a clear case that faculty governance is central to quality education.

But I believe that one of the important goals of a progressive leadership in this historical period is to build institutions that can provide a material foundation for advocating that another reality, a more just and equal social order, is possible. Possible and necessary.

The PSC has participated in and helped to build some of the most important movements of the 21st century, from the movement against the Iraq war to Occupy Wall Street. We were part of the pre-history of OWS and an early backer in labor; I remember one Delegate Assembly adjourned with members heading up to Zuccotti Park to convey our support. More recently, we've joined in the People's Climate Change movement, and the Black Lives Matter movement. Along with our partners in UUP and New York State United Teachers [NYSUT] we have been leaders in the anti-testing revolt, especially as it has manifested itself in the teacher preparation field. We have worked in coalition for any number of progressive causes and joined

the Working Families Party.

We have made a real difference in our affiliate organizations. We added a progressive academic union program to the American Federation of Teachers and NYSUT and spearheaded the anti-war positions of both organizations. We have been instrumental in a change in NYSUT's leadership that has moved it toward becoming a more militant and member-centered union. We also were instrumental in supporting the leadership change in the American Association of University Professors, moving it more in the direction of an organizing union.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

And we have made the PSC into an exemplary union that serves its members well through a democratically based and professional contract enforcement operation; a largely volunteer legislative organization supported by a professional staff; a democratically based chapter leadership supported by a professional organizing staff; and carrying out other important membership functions like retirement counseling, membership services, and an award-winning newspaper and communications staff.

All of these actions have fostered the conditions for resistance and helped build the power to bring about change.

There have been many memorable moments along the way. Who could forget that car ride coming back from Albany with Barbara Bowen and former principal officers John Hyland and Cecelia McCall in the car negotiating, via cell phone, an additional week of annual leave in 2001 with CUNY's chief negotiator while speeding down the Thruway? Or adjunct leader Diane Menna donning a turkey suit at college presidents' offices to advocate for a full 15 weeks of pay for adjuncts at all campuses? Or Debbie Bell, at two o'clock in the morning in 2005, propping her chair against the door to block CUNY negotiators from storming into the room where we were caucusing at the end of a difficult negotiation session? Or the parents and kids attending the bargaining sessions on paid parental leave? That was certainly a first in CUNY history.

Through all these years, what has consistently motivated me, and I believe what has held our union together, is our common devotion to the ideal of CUNY.

CUNY as an ideal stands for much more than a pathway to a job. It stands for higher education as a public good. It stands for providing a liberal education to working class students, students of color and immigrants. It stands for the ideal of free higher education. It stands for creating a more equal, just and democratic society. It stands for lively intellectual discourse and debate among a diverse faculty, professional staff and student body. It stands for the creation of new knowledge by an empowered faculty.

Even though CUNY has not always realized these ideals, the ideals are felt in the daily life and the history of the City University – and the union is an important pillar for sustaining this vision. It was this vision that drove me to become a union insurgent and help build a powerful union that would fight for these ideals and thereby serve our profession, our students and our city. I am proud of my service and my work with others for the progress we've made. Too often, we have been locked in defensive struggles, but I believe that we have maintained these ideals and vision as we continue the struggle and pass them along to others. For this I am grateful.

Steve London served as First Vice President of the PSC from 2000 until this June. He is now a University-Wide Officer on the union's Executive Council, and continues to serve as a trustee and Executive Officer of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund.

The PSC 'punches above its weight'



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Tell PSC Your No-Raise Story

You have a story to tell, and we need elected officials and management to hear it. Has your department missed out on a promising new faculty recruit because of CUNY's uncompetitive pay? Have talented colleagues left CUNY for higher paid positions or lower-cost cities? Are you thinking seriously about leaving because your CUNY salary hasn't kept up with the city's sky-high cost of living? What will it mean for your

department if you go or if you lose another colleague? What will it mean for your students? Share your insights via the website: psc-cuny.org/LowPayStories. Anecdotal information collected via this webform will be used in the contract campaign. Contribute your comments in confidence; the union won't publish or share stories with personally identifying information without your permission.

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NEWS

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Softball in the Bronx

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

On a sunny, windy April day, political scientist Peter Kolozi hit the first – and only – home run at Bronx Community College's (BCC) first annual PSC faculty/staff pizza picnic/softball game and membership meeting. Union members cheered. Players from both teams wore the PSC "uniform": black-and-white union T-shirts declaring, FIVE YEARS WITHOUT A CUNY CONTRACT HURTS CUNY STUDENTS (see pages 6-7). The game was a friendly match, and it took place on a softball field on top of the hill where BCC sits.

ORGANIC COMMUNITY

Kolozi, an associate professor in the college's social science department, was one of the architects of the idea that pizza, picnicking and play would make the union chapter stronger. Unstructured time in the sun is a good thing, he told *Clarion* as he stood on the grassy field: "We get to stand around and talk, and I think it brings us together." Speaking as a political scientist might, Kolozi said the game was a way to foster "organic community and organic solidarity."

Two dozen PSC members turned up to BCC's April meeting; besides fun in the sun, the main order of business was to elect a new chapter chair. Outgoing Chapter Chair Sharon Persinger presided over the meeting from the top of the green bleachers.

FROM THE BLEACHERS

"I've enjoyed this job. If I hadn't enjoyed it so much, I wouldn't take on another role," said Persinger, who will be assuming a union-wide role as PSC treasurer, after running unopposed in the PSC elections this spring.

Lenny Dick, a longtime member of the BCC chapter's executive committee, nominated Sharon Utakis to take on Persinger's old role. Dick described Utakis as someone "who gets the job done." Discussion ensued, and many voiced agreement that Utakis was the right person to

Students and faculty join forces in the field



At the pitcher's mound, Associate Professor Peter Kolozi gives up a hit.

lead the chapter forward. Once Utakis was voted in, Persinger ended the formal part of the April meeting.

"I'm literally stepping down," she said, as she stepped down from

the bleachers. "Have pizza and play softball!"

Karen Taylor, an associate professor in the math and computer science department, came planning to

attend the meeting, grab a slice and go. "I didn't plan on staying," said Taylor half an hour later, standing on BCC's Ohio field with a softball mitt in hand, "but I got caught up

in the game." Taylor said she plays softball "every 20 years or so," and this year she decided at the last minute to play ball.

The lone player in outfield was adjunct assistant professor Stefan Bosworth, who said he quickly found out that "my catching is better than my throwing." Megan Maiello, who teaches criminal justice, was putting her time spent playing softball in high school to good use. Maiello was pitching, and said she'd joined the game for a simple reason: "They needed someone."

BUILDING FRIENDSHIP

Another veteran on the field was District Council 37 member Mercedes Giménez, an office assistant in the math and computer science department and former catcher and third-base player for her Bronx high school's softball team. Jawied Nawabi, an assistant professor of economics and sociology, said he's more of soccer guy, but he played catcher in his black-and-white contract T-shirt and jeans. "It's good to be out here. It breaks the ice with the faculty," he said. "You see each other in a different light, in a lighter light."

On the sidelines before the game was BCC head baseball coach, Adolfo De Jesus, a chief CLT who recently coached the Bronx Community College Broncos to a CUNY championship win. "This is a good way to build friendship," De Jesus commented, noting that many of the players that he's coached have stayed friends for 20 years or more.

WHO'S COUNTING?

With one inning to go, both teams took a break to take a group photo. But after the photo, the players didn't return to the field. The game didn't resume and no winner was declared.

When an inquiring reporter asked the score, one player responded, "Let's just say it was 8-7," he said, without saying which team was ahead. "Just say it was a really close game." A player on the other team added, "It was more like 8-8." No one seemed sure, or very concerned. The sun was shining, the pizza was eaten and that was enough.



Newly elected PSC Treasurer Sharon Persinger at her last meeting as BCC chapter chair.