

clarion

NEWSPAPER OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS / CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



OCTOBER 2016



NEW BOOK The neoliberal campus

PSC activists
explain austerity in
public higher ed.

PAGES 6-7

WOTTE NOV. 8

This election matters – at the local level as well as the national. Working people must organize to bring about real economic and political change, but this election presents a clear choice. During this entire election cycle, it has become evident that everyone who cares about the future of higher

education, who rejects racism and misogyny, must resolve to defeat Republican nominee Donald Trump on November 8. In this election section, PSC members look at what's at stake this year, and how to move forward in the months and years beyond.

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CUNY RISING

Students' bill of rights

Building on the last contract fight, a city-wide coalition has put forth an agenda to keep CUNY affordable and robust with a full-time faculty.

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An ambitious and tenacious movement of faculty and students seeks to pull University assets out of fossil fuel companies. Impossible? Hardly.

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CUNY's trailblazing American Social History Project celebrates 35 years of documenting history through the eyes of working people.

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CAMPUSES

Showing CUNY's disrepair

PSC activists armed with digital cameras took part in an online day of action to document the poor physical state of classrooms and colleges.

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Bonus money, at last

By CLARION STAFF

This month, full-time PSC members received their \$1,000 contract ratification bonuses and part-time faculty received their bonuses of varying amounts. Many members were disappointed by how much tax the administration withheld (see note at end). Nevertheless, members from across the University system and in many different titles spoke to *Clarion* about how they were going to spend their bonus money. Here's how some of them are looking forward to using the extra cash.

Eben Wood
Professor of English
Kingsborough Community College

I plan to use my ratification bonus, along with the anticipated back pay – when it's finally disbursed – to add to the savings I've managed to make since being hired at CUNY in 2004. As housing costs eat up an increasing percentage of our actual earnings, and as the New York City housing market continues to intensify, building equity through apartment or home ownership is more and more an imperative. The inability to adequately invest in that equity is one sad consequence of the long-term starvation of CUNY as an institution, with effects felt not just by faculty seeking affordable housing in the areas of the city in which they work, but on the overall demographics of the city.

Amy Jeu
College Laboratory Technician
Hunter College

The \$1,000 ratification bonus will come as a small relief to replenish my rainy day fund and pay bills, but a significant portion will be spent on photography and videography equipment. Learning a trade and being skillfully proficient at it requires time and money for training and first-rate equipment. To me, it's an investment in myself, lifelong learning, developing marketable and transferrable skills and advancing my career. I will also use the money to further my hobby in paper quilling.

Samir Chopra
Professor of Philosophy
Brooklyn College

I'll just put that \$1,000 in my daughter's 529 savings account. I have no idea how we are actually going to pay for her education down the line given the continuing attack on public education, but I'm hoping to prepare as best as I can for the worst. Alternatively, we could use it to do some much-needed repairs on our apartment.

Robert Nelson
Higher Education Officer
Graduate Center

What I am doing with my bonus, or actually what's left after taxes, is putting it into my retirement savings. For those of us in the Optional Retirement Plan (TIAA, Halliday), our pension is determined by how much we have been able to sock away over the years. But the long delay in winning raises

A little can go far for members



Robert Farrell

has cost us dearly in lower retirement savings. When we get our bonus in October and retroactive pay in January, CUNY will pay the same percentage of it into our retirement fund as it pays for every paycheck. But we will never see the growth our pension accounts would have achieved with that money during the years our raises were delayed. That's a significant loss. So in September, I increased the amount that is being withheld from my paycheck and put into my retirement savings by as much as I possibly can afford.



Amy Jeu

Robert Farrell
PSC Chapter Chair, Lehman College

Many staff and faculty are depending on their ratification bonus to cover essential expenses given that we won't receive our raises or back pay until January. But others may be in a position to use it in other ways. I'm going to donate my bonus to the PSC's militancy fund and I'd like to encourage others who can to do so, too. We know that our collective action is what won us our contract. Now is the time to invest in the actions that we'll need to take

going forward. The fund provides some level of support for members to engage in designated militant actions of the union.

Laurel Kallen
Adjunct Lecturer in English
Lehman College

The sober reality is that it will go toward paying our monthly bills, including student loans that have been plaguing us for decades. Alas, our weekend in Paris will just have to wait.

Donna Scimeca
Higher Education Officer
College of Staten Island

I'm going to be treating my partner to a romantic getaway weekend right outside New Paltz. We wanted something romantic and historic, so we'll rent bikes and do one of those rail trails. His birthday is at the end of October.

NOTE: Claiming it is unable to calculate 35,000 employees' revised biweekly tax withholding rates, CUNY followed IRS rules for applying a standard federal withholding rate (25 percent) along with standard state and city rates to each employee's gross bonus amount (totaling approximately 39 percent). Combined with regular Social Security withholding, pension, TDA, transit and union dues deductions, the net value of many employees' bonuses dropped to less than half of the gross. Most employees will get the higher withholding back or will be credited at tax time.

New benefits for higher ed officers

From the new contract

By ANDREA VÁSQUEZ

The union is assisting in building HEO labor management (LM) committees on all campuses, which is where the application process begins. We are preparing material that will clearly instruct members on the difference between a reclassification request and the \$2,500 "assignment differential" request. We will notify everyone and post the material when it is ready.

We will also hold information sessions at the PSC and on campuses and carefully train all PSC members who will serve on the HEO LM committees. Additionally, we will form a new HEO advisory committee to give grounded guidance to members who are considering applying for reclassification or the differential. Positive recommendations from the labor management committee are passed on to the College HEO (Screening) Committee and then to the college president.

HEO reclassification demystified

The system of reclassification remains in effect for those whose duties fall primarily under a higher title. With new changes to the guidelines that open the door for more HEOs to be eligible to apply, it is now recognized that a significant increase in the volume of work a HEO performs can transform the nature of the position and can be considered a factor for reclassification. Also, an Associate HEO can no longer be denied reclassification to full HEO solely because there is already a full HEO working in the office or department. And lastly, self-nomination for reclassification will now go directly to the College HEO (Screening) Committee.

Assistants to HEO, HEO Assistants, and HEO Associates who are not eligible for reclassification but have completed one or more years

of service at the top salary step will be eligible to nominate themselves, or be nominated by their supervisors, for a discretionary assignment differential. This \$2,500 increase to their base pay is in recognition of "excellence in performance or increased responsibilities within the title." The process will be detailed in upcoming material, but the newly formed HEO labor management committees will accept and consider application.

IMPLEMENTATION

In closing, unfortunately, not everyone will be eligible for these gains, but we hope that implementation goes smoothly for those who apply and that many HEOs will show that they deserve these new opportunities and receive these hard-won advancements.

Andrea Vásquez is the PSC chapter chair for higher education officers.

Coico out at City College

The sudden exit of City College president Lisa Coico on October 7 came on the heels of a federal probe and a *New York Times* investigation into her handling of the school's funds.

The *Times* reported in October that since taking on the role of CCNY president in 2010, Coico had rankled some faculty members by cutting the school's budget beyond what the CUNY administration had requested. In addition, it reported on various financial improprieties that had plagued her reputation, including using the school's 21st Century Foundation funds for personal expenses such as housekeeping and purchasing furniture. Some faculty have remained public in their support for Coico.

QUESTIONABLE FINANCES

The paper reported, "By August 2011, according to an email between two school officials, the college had begun to itemize more than \$155,000 of her spending in three categories – 'college,' 'personal' and 'iffy.' Another email later discussed the need to 'recoup the funds.'"

"She was later ordered by...CUNY's general counsel...to repay the college \$51,000, or roughly one-third of the expenses in question, because she had not received prior approval for moving and other expenses. She fulfilled that obligation by January 2016."

The investigations drew the attention of CCNY benefactor and former Secretary of State Colin Powell. In leaked emails obtained by Wikileaks, Powell questioned CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken about the articles regarding Coico, to which he responded, "Stranded at O'Hare [Airport] and trying to get home tonight. Happy to talk anytime convenient. Reluctant to say much in email. Putin might get it and release it."

Editor's Note

In the September issue of *Clarion*, on page 11, we incorrectly stated the union had endorsed Yuh-Line Niou, who won her primary election for a Lower Manhattan Assembly seat. The union had, in fact, backed Paul Newell, who lost. We also neglected to mention on the cover that in addition to faculty members and higher education officers, college laboratory technicians testified at the September 19 CUNY Board of Trustees hearing on the pay delays. We regret these errors.

Clarion is eager to hear from members. Please send letters to the editor to apaul@pscmail.org.

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'CUNY Rising' issues student bill of rights

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

Free public university in New York City. More full-time faculty. Lower caseloads for academic advisors and mental health counselors. More updated technology. This isn't a wish list. These are the demands of a growing student and labor coalition. And it's only the beginning.

CUNY Rising, a coalition of the PSC and other community and student allies, has built on the energy of contract campaign and the movement to invest in CUNY and has issued "A CUNY Student Bill of Rights," launching a petition campaign to support investment in higher education and holding a series of "call-to-action" meetings on how to ensure quality and affordability in public higher education.

AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE

"This is a vision of what students are entitled to at a university," said PSC First Vice President Mike Fabricant, who helped draft the student bill of rights. "This is an agenda for students of New York City, who are largely poor and of color, and it is part of an effort to create a more level playing field for students during a time when inequality is increasing."

The bill of rights also includes a demand for aid for books and class materials for those in need, a fair pay and workload for faculty and expansion of classroom space in order to alleviate overcrowding.

CUNY Rising was born out of the successful resistance from the CUNY community against Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposed austerity budget for CUNY earlier this year. In March, more than a thousand people from the coalition rallied outside of Cuomo's Manhat-

A union-backed proposal for higher ed



Chika Onyejiukwa, of the University Student Senate, is part of a growing coalition of labor, student and community groups that is organizing around the needs of public higher education.

tan office to protest a staggering \$485 million cut in the state's allocation to CUNY, which he had proposed to shift to the city – a proposal the governor abandoned after labor and student pressure.

CUNY Rising began this academic year with plans to expand its base and organize around the bill of rights, which outlines basic needs in higher education, including free tuition, quality instruction, support for college retention and completion and safe and modern learning environments. (The group has also worked on a white paper detailing

solutions for the points outlined in the bill of rights.)

The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYP-IRG), one of the coalition's partners, has been a key force in fighting off tuition hikes and was part of a successful effort in the last legislative session to ensure that tuition did not increase at the state's senior colleges.

"It's very empowering and encouraging for students to know that it's because of their advocacy and organizing that we were able to get a tuition freeze," said Emily Skydel, the higher education campaign organizer at NYP-

IRG. "Now we're building off that momentum and making sure that tuition doesn't go up and that we see real investment from the state."

Along with the Hispanic Federation, CUNY's University Student Senate will be hosting one of the call-to-action meetings on November 21 at City College of New York. Chika Onyejiukwa, the interim chairperson of the University Student Senate and the only student voting member on the CUNY Board of Trustees, says that the coalition isn't only about raising awareness, but about taking the necessary steps – "speaking up, demonstrating and holding key

decision-makers accountable" – to create change.

CUNY Rising activists hope to use these forums to provide momentum for the bill of rights, ensuring that it's not simply a one-time policy proposal, but a movement for student justice that CUNY and the state must address.

'A NEW NORMAL'

"Because many of our students were born in the era of divestment in higher education, it has become normal for us to have to fight against yearly tuition hikes, for our faculty and staff to go without contracts for years at a time, or for our legislators to continue to cut our budgets," Onyejiukwa told *Clarion*. "We need to strive toward a new normal."

Attend an upcoming CUNY Rising call-to-action meeting:

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16 at 6:00 pm
BMCC Richard Harris Terrace at 199 Chambers Street

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21 at 6:30 pm
CCNY Faculty Dining Hall at 160 Convent Avenue

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22 at 6:00 pm
Hearing Room, Brooklyn Borough Hall at 209 Joralemon Street

RSVP at cunyrising@gmail.com

A growing coalition

The PSC is excited to work closely with the University Student Senate in the CUNY Rising coalition. The coalition is reaching out to more groups to join.

For now, here's who else's involved:

- Hispanic Federation
- Black Youth Project 100
- Young Invincibles
- New York Communities for Change
- New York Public Interest Research Group
- Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies
- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation
- Citizen Action of New York
- Alliance for Quality Education of New York
- Working Families Party
- VOCAL-NY
- Make the Road New York
- New York State Youth Leadership Council
- District Council 37
- NYC Coalition for Educational Justice
- Community Voices Heard
- Henry Street Settlement
- Urban Youth Collaborative
- Students for Educational Rights
- Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition

A CUNY Student Bill of Rights

Every New Yorker should have access to a free, high-quality public higher education, the surest path to economic opportunity, financial security and intellectual and personal growth. For a half-million students a year, that path starts at CUNY – The City University of New York.

CUNY students, mostly people of color from low-income families, reside in every borough of the city and come from every corner of the world. They attend CUNY seeking a high-quality, affordable education after graduating from high school or after years of working. CUNY is often the only option for undocumented students. CUNY graduates add significantly to the city's workforce, its culture and civic life and the economy as business leaders, scientists, teachers, nurses, elected officials, writers, artists and more.

Yet, for all its accomplishments, CUNY, a once free opportunity, is falling far short of its potential because of years of public disinvest-

ment. The decline in public funding per student and increases in tuition are compounded by the rising costs of transportation, food, housing and childcare in New York City. Many students are struggling, and these challenges contribute to particularly lower completion rates for low- and middle-income people of color.

CUNY's full-time faculty and staff are overstrained and underpaid, and more than half of CUNY courses are taught by low-wage adjunct faculty hired on a per-course basis. The quality of a CUNY education is threatened because of greater difficulty in retaining full-time faculty and diminished access to instructors in and out of the classroom. This affects the quality of mentorship, retention and success of students. Campus buildings often lack public spaces for students to gather, and too many buildings are deteriorating.

Albany and City Hall must invest in CUNY. Students have the fundamental right to:

FREE PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

- Public universities should be free for all New Yorkers, through lower costs and increased need-based aid.
- Aid for books, class materials, transportation, food, child care, housing and other costs of attendance should be available to those who need it.

HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION

- Students should receive instruction from expert faculty who are reflective of the cultural composition of the student body.
- Faculty must be fairly compensated and have workloads and class sizes that enable individualized student support.
- Full-time faculty need to teach a majority of courses and adjuncts should have secure positions and pay parity with their full-time colleagues.

SUPPORT TO AID RETENTION AND COMPLETION

- Academic advisors and mental health counselors should have manageable caseloads and sufficient resources.
- Opportunity programs that provide tutoring, guidance, and other holistic support must expand to meet the needs of all who require them.

SAFE AND MODERN LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN GOOD REPAIR

- Critical maintenance projects should be completed quickly to protect everyone's health and safety.
- Maintenance staffing levels should be increased so minor repairs can be made efficiently.
- Facilities should be equipped with state-of-the-art technology that is updated regularly.
- New construction should expand classroom space and course offerings to prevent overcrowding and provide communal spaces for academic, cultural and social activities.

Divesting from fossil fuels at CUNY

By REBECCA NATHANSON

Hunter College graduate Ana Paola White believes getting universities like CUNY to divest from fossil fuel companies isn't as impossible as it might sound. Quoting author and activist Rachel Carson on her efforts in the 1960s to ban the pesticide DDT, she said, "Even if it looks like it can't be done, it probably can. We just have to overcome a few obstacles."

White, a leader of CUNY Divest, was speaking on September 22 at the Graduate Center about the campaign's effort to divest the University's endowment from the top 200 fossil fuel companies, and was joined by PSC members and State Senator Liz Krueger, who is seeking legislative action in Albany on fossil fuel divestment at CUNY and SUNY. The CUNY Divest campaign, which has been active for three years, may be gaining new momentum.

CUNY RESISTANCE

As White explained, the main obstacle faced by CUNY Divest has been the policies of the CUNY Board of Trustees. CUNY Divest was formed in March 2013, when students across the country were starting similar groups as part of environmental organization 350.org's "Go Fossil Free" campaign. It has spent more than three years trying to convince the board to divest. In May 2013, the group filed a Freedom of Information request to obtain documents on the University's fossil fuel holdings, but the administration denied it.

In August 2013, the CUNY administration invited the group to discuss the University's investments. Two months later, administration officials told students that divestment was out of the question. In September 2014, the board discussed CUNY's fossil fuel holdings at a meeting of its Subcommittee on Fiscal Affairs. At the time, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that fossil fuel investments comprised about \$10 million of CUNY's \$241 million endowment. Since then, CUNY Divest members have continued to testify at public board and borough meetings, but the board has not budged, arguing that divestment could limit investment returns and hurt financial aid scholarships.

ORGANIZING AT CUNY

Student and faculty activists, however, refute that claim. At least 15 groups – from student government associations to the PSC to the Graduate Center's Doctoral Students' Council – have passed resolutions in favor of fossil fuel divestment. The University Student Senate has done so three times, most recently in May 2015.

While CUNY is a public university system, with a smaller endowment than those of most private colleges that doesn't lessen its ability to make an impact with divestment, campaign organizers said.

Think globally, act locally



Ashley Dawson speaking at the panel, as Ana Paola White, right, looks on.

"This is a moral issue," White said. "We know that we are participating in perpetuating climate change if we continue to have investments in these companies."

Given CUNY's student population of over 500,000, she said the

social impact of spreading information makes up for any financial shortcomings.

The involvement of CUNY's many different constituencies has proven vital for the movement, including the PSC's resolution in

support of divestment. "Working people have to be brought along in the shift to a sustainable society," said Ashley Dawson, a professor of English at the College of Staten Island and the event's moderator. "It's a majority working-class, people-of-color institution in a city where working-class, people-of-color communities are disproportionately threatened by climate change."

POLITICAL PRESSURE

Professors, too, have a role to play, Dawson continued. "Those of us who are fortunate enough to fight for tenure and get it, we shouldn't be afraid to be raising our voices and challenging the refusal of people like the CUNY chancellor and the people who surround him to accept divestment," he said.

Divestment would not be new for CUNY. In the 1980s the board approved a resolution to divest from companies with operations in South Africa under apartheid, and in 1990 it voted to divest from tobacco stocks. "When we divested from tobacco, it was a really strong statement saying that we're not going to support companies that are blatantly lying," said

White, drawing a comparison to ExxonMobil, which is under investigation by New York's attorney general for lying about its climate change research.

Organizers hope to add fossil fuels to the list of successful divestment campaigns and are ready to try a new approach that takes advantage of CUNY's ties to city and state government. While appealing directly to the Board of Trustees has not proven fruitful, pressuring the university through the governments that fund it might. Senator Krueger, one of the event's panelists, supported a bill calling for divestment of the state's pension funds from fossil fuel companies,

Campaign continues to organize despite resistance.

and plans to support an upcoming bill requiring that CUNY and SUNY do the same. Whether that would clear legislative hurdles is unclear, but such action offers another potential route to divestment after years of being stonewalled by the board.

Despite frustrations over the slow pace of progress, organizers remain steadfast in their belief that divestment is the only option. As White put it, "It's important as a university to support the right side – because we know what it is."

Union backs application fee waiver

By CLARION STAFF

The PSC welcomed Mayor Bill de Blasio's announcement on September 26 that CUNY would end its \$65 application fee for low-income applicants, a benefit that will affect an estimated 37,500 families.

"The members of the PSC join me in congratulating Mayor de Blasio on this creative and necessary initiative," said PSC President Barbara Bowen as the administration unveiled its plan at Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School in Brooklyn. "Education – including college education – should be a right, not a privilege. Anything that removes initial barriers to access is a gain for all New Yorkers. Some of my own best students have come to CUNY from lives of extreme poverty and dislocation; the University will be richer for the presence of students whose initial access will be smoothed by the application fee waiver. And all New Yorkers gain when more New Yorkers have access to CUNY."

ONE LESS OBSTACLE

According to the mayor's office, "The CUNY application fee waiver allows a student to complete and submit an application listing up to six CUNY schools free of charge. Currently, over half of college-bound graduates of NYC public high schools enroll in CUNY colleges."

The mayor said that the cost of the fee waiver would be about \$2 million,

A gain for the city's students



Mayor Bill de Blasio with students at Franklin Delano Roosevelt High School.

which would be split between the city budget and CUNY. He added that the move would give a free application process to an estimated 37,500 families, up from nearly 6,500 in previous years.

"Now, CUNY is where more than half of our public school students go to college. It's the most important opportunity for higher education for most New York City public school students," Mayor de Blasio told reporters. "Well, we want to see a lot more kids make it. We want to see

a lot more kids have the experience of succeeding, of getting to college and then flourishing in college.

Tens of thousands of families could benefit.

And that's why we are so focused on making sure that the application fee is not an impediment."

He continued, "And I can tell you that for families all over this city who are struggling to make ends meet, application fees for college are a big challenge, and especially if you have more than one child. So, we have to go head-on at that problem, take

another burden off the hardworking New Yorkers and eliminate that application fee. That was something we knew would make a difference. It would encourage kids to apply to CUNY. It would make it easier for them. It would say to them that we're not going to let anything stand in their way."

Chancellor James B. Milliken said, "This dramatic increase in fee waivers eliminates a hurdle for thousands of low-income students seeking higher education and is consistent with CUNY's historic mission to increase access to quality higher education."

PEF settles 3-year pact

The second largest state-employees union, the 54,000-member Public Employees Federation, announced a tentative 3-year contract with the Cuomo administration on October 19 with 2-percent raises in each year of the agreement.

PEF President Wayne Spence said the union's contract team "worked hard and tirelessly over the past two years on this contract" and that it unanimously recommended ratification. At press time, other details of the agreement had not been released.

The myth that raises cause tuition hikes

By ARI PAUL

If someone tells you there isn't enough money in the city and state to fund raises for CUNY faculty and staff *and* keep tuition affordable, don't believe them. That's the message the union and students are sending.

There is a belief that any raise for PSC members must always be funded by tuition hikes. It is true that CUNY gets its funding from only a few sources. For example, last fall, as the PSC was struggling for a fair contract, Chancellor James B. Milliken told the CUNY Board of Trustees that funding for collective bargaining agreements comes from government appropriations, budget reallocations in the existing budget and tuition, and that no one can "dispute the possible sources and availability of funding."

NO ZERO-SUM GAME

But the PSC and many students believe we can work for good salaries and affordable education at the same time.

That's why with the contract ratified and ready to be implemented, the PSC began the semester reaching out to both members and students to make clear that the fight to keep CUNY affordable and to raise wages for CUNY workers is the same fight, and that there are other, fairer ways to fund public higher education in New York.

"We did get a raise and that's great, but it shouldn't be at the expense of the students," said Gerard Frohnhoefer, an adjunct lecturer in

'Same struggle, same fight'



Students and PSC members marching together on September 28 outside LaGuardia Community College.

sociology, during a September 28 rally at LaGuardia Community College.

Chanting slogans like "free tuition at CUNY, pay the workers now" and "students, faculty, staff unite, same struggle, same fight," dozens of PSC members and CUNY students rallied together outside the Long Island City campus to demand

at the very least a tuition freeze and for the CUNY administration to stop the delay of raises and retroactive pay for faculty and staff.

Frohnhoefer suggested that it was wrong for anyone in the administration to insinuate that raises for faculty and staff should be funded by tuition increases. "I'm sure they've heard

that," he said of students, dismissing it as propaganda, and suggested that CUNY be funded with new taxes on the wealthiest. "We need to change the tax laws. The money is there."

Youngmin Seo, also an adjunct lecturer in the social sciences department, said that it was important for PSC members to demonstrate forcefully for a tuition freeze because so many students supported the union's struggle for a fair contract over the last year. "This time, we need to give them something back," he said.

Librarian Francine Egger-Sider said that part of the reason she came out for the demonstration was to let "students remember that the moment we have an election in Albany there's going to be a tuition hike," so it was important for faculty and staff to "align ourselves in the struggle with students."

MORE STATE INVESTMENT

The action came soon after news hit that while raises and retroactive pay in the PSC contract with CUNY were ratified in August, members would not actually see their increases until January. PSC members demanded action to speed up the process at a CUNY Board of Trustees hearing in September.

The union has also marched with students in the past demanding tuition freezes, noting that the University had a duty to remain affordable for working-class and low-income students. The PSC has held firm in its stance that tuition costs should

not be affected by faculty and staff pay, and that the answer to addressing both student and worker needs is a net increase in funding from the state and city.

DELAY IN PAY

Members and students also used the demonstration to protest the upcoming code of expressive conduct that many in the CUNY community believe may infringe upon students' and faculty's freedom of speech on campus.

'Align ourselves in the struggle with students'

Miguelina Rodriguez, who was until recently an adjunct sociologist and has now come on full-time at LaGuardia, said she believed lowering or freezing tuition was important because "my students pay tuition out of pocket."

PSC President Barbara Bowen told the crowd, "The message is clear. There is enough money in this very rich state to pay for our contract and serious investment in CUNY, and to have free tuition."

She admonished the CUNY administration and Chancellor James B. Milliken for not doing enough to ensure that the raises and the retroactive pay in the contract that was ratified this summer would come before January.

"The delay shows disrespect for the faculty, disrespect for the staff and deep disrespect for the students. If CUNY management really cared about the students of CUNY they would make sure that the faculty and staff who have waited this long for a raise get their raise on time," Bowen said.

Hostos faculty bring out the youth vote

By ARI PAUL

Standing before a group of students in the cafeteria of Hostos Community College, Hector Soto pointed to a set of questions around which those assembled would start a conversation. Armed with their cell phones, the students were to start a digital dialogue with others around the country about the upcoming presidential election. The idea, Soto said, was "to create digitally the kinds of conversations that used to happen in barber shops and grocery stores."

DIGITAL OUTREACH

The "talk, text and vote" event was part of a national effort on September 27, National Voter Registration Day, by the National Institute for Civil Discourse at the University of Arizona, which not only wants to engage young voters in political discourse, but also analyze their answers and conversations in order to better understand the concerns and interests of this often mischaracterized demographic.

Registering and engaging students



Hector Soto, right, and Lizette Colón, PSC chapter chair at Hostos, left, led the 'talk, text and vote' event on September 27.

"Young people need to be involved in the decisions," said Soto, an assistant professor of behavioral and social sciences. "This is really about engaging people's consciousness, about civic engagement."

Lizette Colón, the PSC chapter chair at Hostos, helped organize the event. "Our students are so busy, but there's so much at stake," she said as students came by her table to get voter registration cards. "We

forget you just have to ask them."

The PSC chapter, among other campus groups, sponsored a voter registration drive with tables around campus as well as the "talk, text and vote" event.

For PSC members who came out that day to get students signed up and talking about current politics, the effort was clearly a labor issue. "The union can't just be about contracts and rallies," she said, noting that political discussions such as these brought people together in a very positive way.

IMPROVING TURNOUT

Rupert Phillips, a lecturer in behavioral and social sciences who has been doing voter registration at Hostos since he himself was a student there, said, "The union, historically, and politics go hand in hand."

Phillips added that he believed it's important to get young people voting because they are often seen as a low-turnout demographic. "The students should see that their future rests on the choices they make," he said.

For Soto, the registration and the discussion were only part of a broader plan. As he put it, young people don't have an organized constituency that forces politicians, both on the local and national level, to listen and address their needs in the way that groups such as the American Association of Retired Persons does.

"The young have to have a voice as powerful as theirs," he said.

How cost-cutting and austerity a

By MICHAEL FABRICANT & STEPHEN BRIER

The conventional narrative of globalization is all too familiar. The economy of the United States and every other nation must fit into a global architecture of economic development. There is no alternative to this scaling up; the only two options are to fit in or die. It is on this basis that US public higher education is especially susceptible to increasing demands for profit-making on public goods in the new global marketplace. Higher education offers a market that some believe, in this era of austerity and privatization, must be reassembled and distributed through the circuitry of emergent online technologies. Consistent with this belief, higher education is especially well positioned to develop partnerships with the private sector in online knowledge dissemination, with a particular emphasis since 2012 on massive open online courses or MOOCs. Venture capitalists have largely been responsible for underwriting, distributing and marketing these online higher education products. Their investments were predicated on an assumption of large revenue streams and profits generated by MOOCs and other distance-learning “solutions,” even as they were originally touted to the public as making higher education more broadly accessible by serving hundreds of thousands of students online.

CORPORATE ONLINE LEARNING

Various high-profile efforts to employ MOOCs at colleges and universities across the country illustrate the tactics used by marketplace entrepreneurs to monetize public higher education. Like K-12 charter schools, privatized online forms of higher education cast the experiences of exemplars as normative. MOOCs were described as maximizing the prospects for positive learning outcomes while they were intended to legitimate the transfer of public dollars to privately managed profit-making ventures in online education.

The momentum for this rapid redistribution of public money into private, corporate online learning has consistently grown over the past decade. What accounts for the growing support for this explosive, rapid change in agenda? Locating and exploiting new sites of profit-making in a moment of economic crisis is one of the driving forces for the long-term transformation of public higher education. As noted in chapter one [of Fabricant and Brier’s new book *Austerity Blues*], the 2013 Davos conference specified higher education as an especially important and emergent profit-making center globally. The fit between higher education and global profit-making aligns with the expansive “consumer reach” of a growing raft of distance-learning

The neoliberal university at work

courses and programs. Equally important, the transformation of some national economies into global knowledge centers such as Singapore and Abu Dhabi elevates the importance of universities in the further commodification of knowledge. Finally, the hunger for elite degrees – particularly within emergent international economic powers like India and China – makes US distance-learning course offerings especially attractive.

HIGHER ED FUNDING TRENDS

The commodification of higher education has particular salience for the United States. The US economy has few sectors that have



Stephen Brier

remained internationally competitive. Certainly, technology and higher education are two areas that remain robust. High-tech corporations are a growing part of the US economy, but 47 percent of all profits are earned by the financial sector. These trends do not bode well for the overall economy. In effect, too much profit-making is located in an essentially unproductive sector of the economy. The commercialization of higher education, however, does represent an important corrective for the economy. It promotes profit-making in a sector of the US economy that is recognized internationally as dominant, as the United States can still claim 47 of the 100 “best” universities worldwide.

Another spur for the restructuring of public higher education is heightened uncertainty regarding its financing in an era of austerity. Over the past decade, public university systems in New York and California have shouldered a disproportionate share of state budget cutbacks. Increases in tuition and in the numbers of enrolled students have provided a partial corrective to this revenue decline. Increased revenue provided by tuition is imperiled by both shifts in policy-making and demographics. President Obama, in his 2013 State of the Union address, pointed his

audience to a college scorecard of universities and their relative cost or tuition alongside graduation rates. The president has subsequently proposed a ratings formula for higher education that emphasizes positive outcomes based on these metrics as a precondition for continued federal funding, including student financial aid programs such as Pell Grants and student loans. These metrics may prove as important in redefining public higher education as standardized testing has been in restructuring K-12 public schools.

Present trends suggest that as a matter of policy, public universities will increasingly be assessed on the basis of their ability to contain tuition increases while graduating a greater percentage of their undergraduates more rapidly. That is a recipe for both fiscal and curricular degradation, especially if the tuition caps are not accompanied by increased infusions of public operating funds. The lack of access to increased dollars from tuition will create evermore desperate fiscal circumstances for public universities. When combined with the decline of particular demographic cohorts of students producing some of the expanded enrollments in public universities in the recent past, the situation is exacerbated. Within this context, alternative sources of revenue from fully online, stand-alone courses, which also promise to increase both the geographic reach of the university and, in turn, the number of enrolled students, take on increasing importance. The opportunity to reduce costs by having one teacher, rather than two or even 10, instructing ever-larger numbers of students is especially attractive to academic managers and corporate profit-seekers. The combination of reduced costs and increased revenue in a parched fiscal environment is accelerating the movement of public universities into privatized partnerships, often involving distance learning.

CHANGING THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Public higher education is faced with increased competition for a stable population of students with little wiggle room on tuition costs alongside intensifying public disinvestment. The growing stratification or differentiation of elite from non-elite universities across the globe will continue to affect funding. Elite universities are likely to be the most popular choices for mass consumers and producers of online curricula. Where does this leave non-elite public higher education institutions situated in the second and third tiers? In all probability, these schools will increasingly find themselves struggling

simply to sustain their operations. Higher education will no longer be insulated from [economist Joseph] Schumpeter’s dictum regarding the creative destructive properties of capital. As market dynamics create conditions for the rapid proliferation of various forms of online technology and education profit-making, for example, these forces of change will simultaneously destroy (or at least undermine) traditional methods of communication and instruction.

Massive change in public higher education

It is within this context that the rapid disappearance of traditional sources of revenue, when combined with the more pronounced competitive disadvantage of non-elite schools in the higher education marketplace, will result in accelerated closings and mergers of greater numbers of schools. Like Rust Belt industrial towns and cities of the Midwest in the 1980s, colleges and universities are more likely to be abandoned because of a lack of resources and an absence of political will to redefine and sustain public institutions in a period of rapid change.

We have outlined a very bleak political and economic landscape of intensifying scarcity, competition, privatization, rapid technological change and recalculation of the meaning and value of a college degree. We are in a new moment of massive change in public higher education. It is the new K-12, the primary battlefield in the reconstitution of the public sector. Change – rapid disruptions and privatized attacks on public higher education as a public good – will increasingly be the new normal. How can or should university faculty and staff respond to these changes? What roles can or should we play to slow or alter the present direction or momentum of change? Many vexing questions animate the thinking of those interested in preserving access, public investment, complex learning, sustained commitment to the needs of challenged learners and investment in faculty. What we do know, however, is that this more muscular, steroid-fueled form of convergent neoliberal policies is rapidly transforming both the learning culture and economic underpinnings of public higher education.

ELITE POLITICS AND ECONOMICS

Jane Wellman, the director of the Delta Cost Project, has indicated that by 2008 the 50 percent mark had been passed in public four-year institutions, with student tuition comprising more than half of operating expenses. As public financing rapidly declines, the privatized costs of increased tuition and personal debt have soared. Ordinary American families are required to pony up more and more of their meager



incomes to acquire the necessary certifications that public higher education provided for little or no tuition in the past.

Across the mainstream political spectrum there is growing consensus that tuition hikes are no longer a viable political or economic option. Articles in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time* magazine and *The New York Times* have lamented increases in student tuition and debt. The story lines consistently cite the experience of the middle class as having greater and greater difficulty meeting the cost of tuition. Consequently, there is an ascendant policy discourse emphasizing fixed or limited increases in tuition. Simultaneously, the pressure to graduate more public university students increases. This policy conversation ignores, however, the economics of debt, greater student need for part-time employment and investment in college readiness as external factors affecting time to degree and graduation rates. It is instead assumed that rates of graduation can be inexpensively accelerated in an austerity environment through internally devised, efficient business models promoting greater productivity on

ffect our schooling



the part of faculty and staff (Kelderman 2013).

Like the prior policy discourse about K–12, the goal is to limit costs while achieving simple quantitative indices of success. For public higher education leaders, the metric of choice is graduation rates. Although this metric has significant legitimacy, it has been uncoupled from continuing disinvestment in public higher education. How can spikes in graduation rates be achieved in the absence of policies that attend to the learning and financial needs of students? And yet that is precisely what is being recommended through both college rating schemes and political rhetoric. As with K–12 testing reforms, the desired collegiate outcomes – whether through testing or faster graduation – are expected to be driven by efficiencies achieved through some combination of market principles, digital technology and/or outsourcing of teaching labor, all of which are expected to increase productivity.

This argument leaves no room for actual public investment or discussion of larger contexts. The Lumina Foundation, one of the most powerful and influential higher education

charitable organizations, publishes analyses and recommendations each year and has had a significant influence on regional and national policy-making. It has consistently endorsed higher and more rapid graduation rates but remains silent on the attendant necessary social investments to make that possible.

Reducing time to degree and increasing graduation rates are clearly laudable goals. No one wants students to take longer to complete their degrees or to drop out. However, public higher education is facing ever-starker revenue generation choices. According to US Department of Education projections, enrollment in colleges will continue to grow until 2021, although the increases will be flatter than the steep climbs seen in the previous decade. The greatest declines will be among students from 18 to 24 years old and least for those over 35. Consequently, public higher education is in a fiscal vise, as it is being asked to manage the contraction of its most stable and expansive sources of privatized revenue-tuition increases and historic rates of expansion of student enrollments while continuing to endure public disinvestment.

This fiscal picture is accompanied by a demand to graduate an increasing number of students, who are expected to reach graduation more quickly as the budgets of public universities are ever more imperiled. This policy agenda is being legitimated by both conservative and liberal media, from columnists such as David Brooks to politicians such as Congressman Paul Ryan, and at the other end of the political spectrum, by official statements of the Obama administration and editorials in *The New York Times*. There is a broad, mainstream consensus that tuition needs to be curbed and graduation rates increased. Regressive tax policies codifying debt, cutting public services, and enforcing austerity are accepted by both media and policy makers as necessary if not essential to achieving these goals.

THE CURRICULA OF AUSTERITY

Across the nation, policy makers and administrators are increasingly emphasizing a realignment of public higher education curricula to meet the new demands of austerity policy-making. A primary and laudable objective is to expedite a seamless transfer of students from community colleges to senior colleges to promote efficiencies such as accelerated time to degree.

Policy makers and legislators have articulated concerns about the excess credits accumulated by community college students intending to transfer to senior colleges. Those excess credits are described as being a drag on increasingly scarce dollars available for state investment and rapid progress toward attaining a degree. Seamless transfer by integrating senior and community colleges' curricula and paving new

pathways to graduation is seen as a remedy to these inefficiencies. To the extent that students can graduate at higher rates and reduce time to completion without compromising the quality and rigor of their college experience, such policy-making is both rational and laudable.

INCREASING GRADUATION RATES

One of the Lumina Foundation's core proposals to achieve higher graduation rates is to increase the percentage of Americans holding "high-quality degrees" and credentials to 60 percent by 2025 from 38.3 percent in 2010. It is on this basis that the foundation is advocating legislation to promote seamless transfer. We are left wondering, however, how this goal can be achieved through policies of disinvestment and privatization. Both the logic and the evidence suggest that more rapid movement to graduation accompanied by policies of disinvestment can only be achieved over the long and short term through cut-rate forms of curricula and devalued degrees.

An especially compelling example of how this dynamic is diluting curricula occurred at CUNY. The CUNY central administration developed a program in 2011 called "Pathways" to expedite undergraduate transfer within its extensive, 24-campus system of community and senior colleges. This initiative required a reconfiguration of CUNY's general education curriculum.

The problem as articulated by administrators was that "of CUNY's 240,000 undergraduates, more than 10,000 transfer from one college to another each fall." A high-level CUNY administrator noted that "for more than 40 years, students' difficulty in transferring their cred-

its was a recognized difficulty that sometimes delayed and even derailed their graduation, a common problem in American higher education." Alexandra Logue, executive vice chancellor for academic affairs and one of the architects of Pathways, indicated that CUNY required a centralized, system-wide solution to fix this problem. Management therefore proposed that a uniform general education curriculum be instituted across the whole CUNY system. Only in this way, she asserted, could lost credits and, consequently, greater time to degree be corrected. Management argued that the magnitude of lost transfer credits justified a dramatic reconfiguration of the general education curriculum.

Their logic was challenged by faculty. To quickly achieve this goal, the CUNY administration decided to bypass established faculty governance structures in both developing and implementing Pathways. This unilateral decision, legitimated by faculty committees handpicked by CUNY management, resulted in a groundswell of faculty resistance on a number of campuses. Faculty governance structures on five CUNY campuses refused to approve Pathways courses. It was within this context that dozens of faculty resolutions rejecting

A push to dilute curriculum

the process of Pathways' implementation and the content of the courses passed. Finally, a vote of no confidence in the Pathways curriculum, sponsored by the faculty union, the Professional Staff Congress in the spring of 2013, produced a dramatic outcome. Of the 7,200 full-time faculty at CUNY, more than 4,300 voted, and 92 percent voted no confidence.

FACULTY RESISTANCE

Why did such staunch faculty resistance emerge in response to management's articulated and seemingly benign intention to solve systemic transfer problems for CUNY undergraduates transitioning from community to senior colleges? To begin with, faculty

objected strenuously to the decision to bypass existing governance structures. They argued that it was indicative of management overreach and a violation of a basic precept of university governance embraced widely over the last century that faculty expertise is the linchpin for curricular development and revision. Once that pin is loosened, curricula can be unilaterally changed on the basis of managerial fiat or centralized diktats emphasizing matters of efficiency rather than the historic push-pull between the administrative drive for efficiency and the faculty's commitment to quality in course structure and content. CUNY faculty also argued that the Pathways curriculum cheapened the general education of CUNY undergraduates.

ERA OF AUSTERITY

It is necessary to cite a few facts about Pathways that link it to the discussion above about the metrics of graduation rates aligning with cheapened forms of curricula during an era of austerity. CUNY management's claims regarding Pathways are belied by the following facts:

Management never quantified the extent of the transfer problem between CUNY colleges or across the University. This is especially curious given the sweeping changes proposed by Pathways in the name of seamless transfer.

The impressionistic data cited in relationship to the excess credit problem in the primary management document emphasized the lack of availability of course offerings to fulfill graduation and/or major requirements. When combined with a need to take a full load of courses to remain eligible for student grants and loans, the incentives to take additional courses are clear. The latter point was consistently stressed in the Wrigley report as the primary reason for students' accumulation of excess credits.

Continued on page 11



PSC First Vice President Michael Fabricant participating in a civil disobedience action against austerity at CUNY.

Dave Sanders

PSC joins national fight to 'reclaim our schools'

By CLARION STAFF

PSC members joined students on October 6 in a national day of action, documenting ceiling leaks, cracked walls, brown water from drinking fountains and other evidence of physical neglect on CUNY campuses. The photos were shared on Twitter and Instagram with the hashtag #ReclaimOurSchools.

The PSC said, "The physical disrepair at CUNY is only the tangible evidence of a deeper pattern of underinvestment. Adjusted for inflation, per-student state funding for CUNY senior colleges declined 14 percent from 2008 to 2015. The result of such disinvestment is that classes are overcrowded, the ratio of students to full-

Showing campus disrepair

time faculty is far below acceptable levels, and facilities show the signs of endlessly deferred maintenance. Despite the heroic efforts of faculty, professional staff, maintenance staff and students, education suffers."

NEEDED REPAIRS

The PSC continued, "Tangles of wiring hanging from ceiling gashes, ceiling leaks with jury-rigged drip catches, broken windows, discolored drinking water and broken smoke detectors and fire alarm boxes were among the most disturbing images."

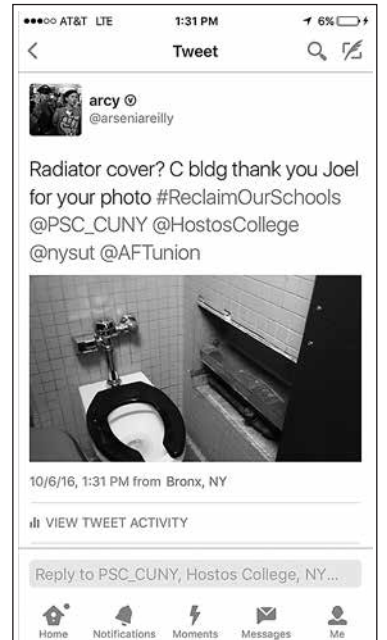
Bronx Community College PSC Chapter Chair Sharon Utakis said,

"Our local representatives in Albany and the City Council have helped make important investments in critical maintenance and capital improvements, but so many more repairs and upgrades are needed. Our hardworking staff do the best they can under the circumstances, but there are still so many things that need to be fixed after decades of neglect."

This latest cyber campaign was the third of its kind nationally in collaboration with the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools. Activists took part in 200 cities across the United States on October 6.



Students and PSC members around CUNY documented problems, including this discolored water from a drinking fountain.



Participants in the day of action tweeted out their photos.



Bathroom disrepair.

One chapter and its struggle for a safe campus

By JEAN GRASSMAN and
TIMOTHY SHORTELL

Broken desks and unusable chalkboards. Out-of-order toilets and sinks covered in plastic for months at a time. Rooms that are chronically too hot or too cold, equipment like fume hoods in science labs that do not work or need frequent repairs, water leaks from labs into classrooms and hallways, missing ceiling tiles and holes in walls, broken doors that take months to repair.

The PSC Brooklyn College chapter raised health and safety problems with the administration in meeting after meeting. Water fountains that never work (often next to vending machines where students were expected to buy water), unreliable and broken technology. The list goes on and on.

CONCERNS IGNORED

But the administration's response was always the same. It shrugged and offered standard excuses. There is no money to fix these things. The campus is old and difficult to maintain. This is a bad budget year.

These problems were not just a morale problem for faculty, staff and students, but were actively interfering with the academic mis-

Fixing 'Broke'-lyn College

sion of the college. A deteriorating campus sends a message about how students are valued, and on a campus populated in large part by people of color, that smacks of inequity. We needed to push the administration out of its habitual response. We had to make them understand the urgency of the situation.

To do this, we needed to get the entire campus involved. So, we created a social media campaign, using the hashtag #BrooklynCollege – that's "Brooklyn" as in "broke" – to document the challenges of teaching and learning in a place that was breaking down and falling apart. We created a website to support the campaign. Faculty, staff and students contributed reports and photographs of the broken furniture, toilets wrapped in plastic, leaks, broken doors and many other pressing problems. We proposed an inclusive campus-wide task force to develop a comprehensive plan to assess and respond to these problems.

The administration was so stuck in the austerity routine that it didn't

even see the need to develop a plan. Their response was to continue to shrug, "Well, this is CUNY."

The challenges of chronic underfunding of public higher education are well known. We were living

'Conditions that are downright dangerous'

with the consequences of decades of deferred maintenance and staffing shortages. But this learned helplessness from the administration, while not a surprise, was clearly part of the problem. The campaign was intended to force them to pay attention.

The campaign certainly got the administration's attention that complained that raising issues in this way was unprofessional, that there was no way to verify that the problems in the pictures were what we said they were or that they were even at Brooklyn College. The administration complained that none of the pictures ever showed the things that had been repaired. (In fact, there were occasional posts that documented some repairs, generally noting the length of time it had taken for a problem to get fixed.) The administration realized the power of a social media

campaign, but their response was only to repeatedly ask us to take it down.

How are conditions now? The administration has made efforts at fixes – for instance, it is now able to report on the number of water fountains and their state of repair. And some long-awaited important capital repairs have been made. For example, the roof of Ingersoll Hall was replaced this past August after 13 years of leaking.

ONGOING CONCERNS

Students, staff and faculty continue to face conditions that are downright dangerous. In September, a lecture room in Ingersoll was so hot that a student suffered heat illness and an ambulance was called. One might be tempted to write it off because of unusually hot weather, but a similar incident happened in a nearby lecture room in September 2015.

In early August, the TV Center in the basement of Whitehead Hall experienced leaks and flooding in several areas, closing down the studio and conference room and necessitating the collection of falling water in buckets in the storage and scenic/prop areas. The leak in Studio B managed to breach the

ceiling tiles underneath an electrical grid carrying more than 20,000 amps of electricity. The source of the leak has still not been determined, and in addition to the danger of the water mixing with electricity there are accompanying concerns about compromised ceiling tiles as well as mold and asbestos-related issues. This has forced the closure of the studio, displacing two required television and radio classes this semester. The 50-year-old facility also has a lack of fresh air related to long-standing HVAC issues.

So, while the #BrooklynCollege campaign was effective, it wasn't enough. That's why we participated in the #ReclaimOurSchools Day of Action by continuing to call on CUNY to bring our campus up to standard as if our lives depend on it. Because they do.

Jean Grassman is an associate professor of health and nutrition science at the CUNY School of Public Health and Timothy Shortell is a professor of sociology at Brooklyn College. A version of this article originally appeared at Voices on Campus, a higher education blog published by the American Federation of Teachers.

A CUNY history project makes history

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

It was 35 years ago that the American Social History Project (ASHP) at the Graduate Center set out to popularize a new way to look at American history: rather than focus on presidents and generals, it would tell the nation's story from the perspective of ordinary Americans who were involved in shaping turning points in history. And it would tell those stories through different types of media – with soundtracks and carousel slide shows, illustrations and primary source documents – and make it accessible to students and working people.

“[We] were challenging the reigning interpretation of American history at the time, which is consensus history, which for all intents and purposes meant disagreements had always been ironed out,” said Joshua Brown, who has been with the project since its beginning and is the current executive director of ASHP, which is now officially called American Social History Project/Center for Media and Learning. “Our vision was much more complicated. We needed to learn from the past, and that includes how [social movements] screwed up in the past.”

A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

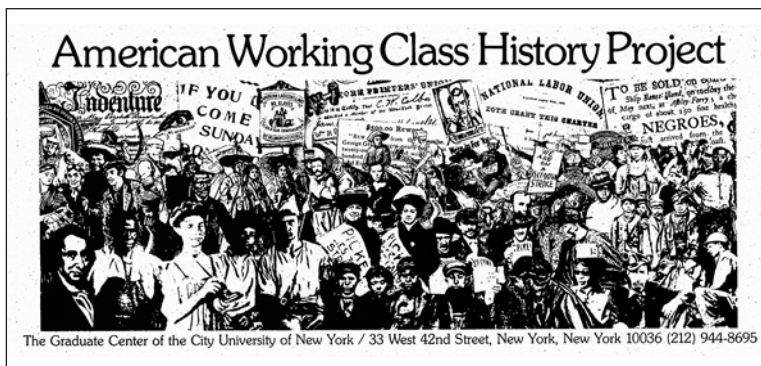
This year, the ASHP – a public history project that has earned national acclaim and had a big impact on scholarship at CUNY – celebrates its 35th anniversary. It was founded in 1981 by the late Herbert Gutman, a history professor at the Graduate Center and a pioneer in new labor history, and Stephen Brier, who is currently a professor in urban education at the Graduate Center. Originally named the American Working Class History Project, the concept grew out of summer seminars that Gutman and Brier led on teaching labor history to union members, including steelworkers, retail clerks, teachers and carpenters.

Over the decades, ASHP grew, convening seminars for faculty and high school teachers on how to teach social history and experimenting with all kinds of new media. ASHP used technology that was at the time cutting edge. It created slide-show documentaries on slavery resistance and female mill workers, a CD-ROM with tens of thousands of pages of text, images and sound, an online database of teaching techniques and primary source documents, a 3-D re-creation of P.T. Barnum's American Museum, and an interactive video game where players assume the role of a young person during important moments in US history. Using all kinds of materials to show the making of history, according to Brown, makes history relatable.

A MULTIMEDIA PROJECT

“It's very exciting for students to realize that people were complicated in the past and they had similar experiences to their own,” Brown

Celebrating 35 years



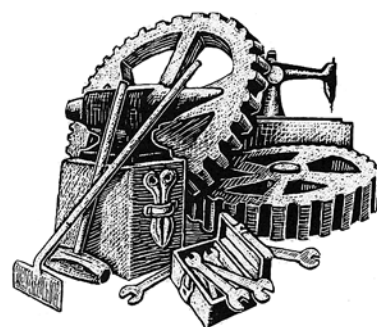
(above) An early brochure of the project
(right) ASHP's logo in the 1980s
(far right) ASHP's logo in the 1990s

said. “It's not detached from them. It's not something that only famous names did, but that, in fact, this was experienced by everyone.”

One of ASHP's early projects was, *Who Built America?: Working People and the Nation's History*, a two-volume social history of the United States that drew on some of the latest academic research in new labor history and also used images, diary entries and journalism of the time to contextualize the historical moment. Joshua Freeman, who is now a distinguished professor in history at the Graduate Center and at Queens College, was one of the historians hired in the mid-1980s to write the book.

“Rather than picking off some little, particularly small area, here I was working on telling the story of the United States in all its complexity. [We were] trying to tell it differently and doing it collaboratively,” said Freeman. “What could be better? It was a very exciting thing.”

Ordinary people and their impact on history



What ASHP was doing at the time wasn't necessarily unique, Freeman said. Many historians were breaking new ground and looking at pieces of American history from the perspective of ordinary people. But, for Freeman, what made the project unusual for its time was its ambitious nature: collecting these different pieces of historical scholarship and synthesizing them, as well as the project's extensive use of primary source documents for an introductory-level history book.

In 1993, after the book was in circulation for several years, ASHP worked with a leading electronic publisher and released a CD-ROM



supplement to *Who Built America?*, which had tens of thousands of additional documents, from images to original recordings of speeches. For CUNY colleges that have limited library collections, digital access to archival materials had “great meaning,” according to Bill Friedheim, who taught in the department of social sciences at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. Making historical materials more accessible and exploring new ways to teach history, Friedheim reflected, were two major reasons for the

project's success. Friedheim led ASHP workshops for high school teachers and college faculty on teaching with technology at a time when student-centered curriculum was not a prevailing method. Leading those workshops ultimately changed Friedheim's own approach in the classroom.

CLASSROOM IMPACT

“Like most traditional teachers, I believed that you give lectures and that the teacher is the source of all wisdom,” Friedheim said. “I think a historian has an obligation – even to students who aren't going to be history majors – to initiate students into the terms of how we construct history and [how] it's indeed contested turf.”

In its three decades, the program has been recognized nationally for its work, winning awards from numerous bodies including the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Historical Association and the National Council on Public History.

For Marci Littlefield, an assistant professor in social sciences at BMCC, the ASHP has given her tools to teach her classes with a rich set of materials. In the summer of 2015, Littlefield attended a two-week seminar on “Visualizing the American Civil War.” During the seminar Littlefield examined black women's agency during the war, by looking at photos, paintings and newspaper illustrations. The interdisciplinary nature of the workshop allowed Littlefield to learn new methods, and as a result, Littlefield said, the workshop “re-framed” her research and teaching.

“I use a lot of art to teach. It becomes a visual way for students to connect with the material in a way that just reading about it doesn't do,” she said.

CONTINUED INNOVATION

For its 35-year anniversary, the ASHP is holding a symposium with leading thinkers and innovators in public history, in which participants and audience members will reflect on the project's accomplishments and discuss new ways to engage the public. Brown is not sure what form some of their new projects will take. “Part of the discovery is in fact not knowing where we are going,” he said. But the project will continue to stay true to its history: charting new scholarship, telling history in new and innovative ways and training others on how to effectively teach these materials, so that students have a critical understanding of the past, and thus, a better understanding of the present.

“*The Past and Future of Public History*,” a symposium honoring ASHP's 35th anniversary will be held on Friday, October 21, from noon to 4 pm in the Elebash Recital Hall at the Graduate Center. For more information, go to the program's website at www.ashp.cuny.edu.



From left: The current staff of the American Social History Project: Gretchen Rodríguez, Isa Vásquez, Donna Thompson Ray, Peter Mabli, Ellen Noonan, Joe Kirchhof, Pennée Bender, Joshua Brown, Andrea Vásquez (not in photo: Marco Battistella)

Dave Sanders

DEFEATING 'TRUMPISM'

An opportunity to push the nation—and Dems—forward

By STEVE LONDON

How we vote on November 8 will be the first step in a long process of building a new economic and political order in New York State and in the United States.

It is important to vote for Hillary Clinton for president on the Working Families Party (WFP) line, as well as other down-ballot candidates on the WFP line for several reasons, ranging from the importance of advancing a progressive policy agenda at the state level to defeating the white nationalist “Trumpism” that will live on politically even if Clinton is elected president.

WORKING FAMILIES PARTY

First, the WFP is an independent progressive political party that in New York State can run progressive candidates who are endorsed by both the WFP and the Democratic Party. This is called fusion voting. Hillary Clinton will appear on both the Democratic Party line and the WFP line, and a vote for Clinton (or any other candidate) on the WFP line will be credited toward the candidates’ total vote count. By voting on the WFP line, however, you will be sending a message about the future politics of the state and country. Both the PSC and the New York State United Teachers are institutional members of the WFP.

Second, this election is taking place in the aftermath of the Great Recession and in the wake of unbearable inequality being experienced by many Americans. Forty years of neoliberal policies (e.g., government austerity, privatization, bad trade deals, reduced taxes on the wealthy and anti-democratic governance including a racist criminal justice system) have left the US



PSC members phone-banked for union-backed candidates in state and national races.

hollowed out with declining incomes. Only in the last year have we seen the beginning of a turnaround.

Across the political spectrum, there is a palpable discontent with the status quo. Popular movements on the left such as Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, Fight for \$15 and the Dreamers, and on the right, the Tea Party and the anti-immigration movements, express the anger, frustration and desire to overturn the existing political order.

Clearly, Bernie Sanders’s primary campaign captured the spirit of the popular resistance to this state of affairs on the left. The WFP endorsed Sanders in the

primary elections and supported his call for breaking up the big banks, taxing the wealthy, canceling trade deals, increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, campaign finance reform, environmental justice, free public college, single-payer health care, an end to austerity policies and criminal justice reform. The WFP also has a set of similar policies that apply to New York State – and has made progress in securing a \$15 per hour minimum wage plan and a 12-week paid family leave mandate. Significantly, the WFP was an important and strong supporter of the PSC’s fight for a fair contract.

A dangerous GOP wing emerges

A DIVERSITY OF TACTICS

Elect Hillary—then fight like hell

By FRANCES FOX PIVEN

Where do the movements that fueled the Bernie Sanders campaign – Occupy, the Fight for \$15, Black Lives Matter, the Dreamers, Moral Mondays, LGBTQ rights – go from here? These movements deserve a good part of the credit for Sanders’s extraordinary attack on oligarchy in the United States. Now, for these movements to grow, we need to elect Hillary Clinton as president of the United States.

Why? Not because Clinton is our candidate or shares our deepest political commitments, but because left movements gain influence when the regime in power depends on them for support. Clinton is unlikely to win without significant support from Sanders’s core voters. The coalition of progressive youth and left-leaning liberals be-

hind the Sanders candidacy has forced the Democratic Party to accommodate change, and a Clinton presidency would be vulnerable to activist efforts in the future.

There is another reason: The rhetoric of a vulnerable regime also gives movements courage. Think of Obama’s comment that “if I had a son, he’d look like Trayvon.” Or that if he worked in a fast-food restaurant, he’d join a union. Or his statement about the Dreamers, that “these kids are Americans just like us and they belong here.”

MOVEMENT BUILDING

Finally, the hesitation to deploy the police affords some protection to movements. On this point, those who think a Trump victory would somehow be better for the left because it would stiffen our resistance ignore history. A Trump victory would expose our movements not only to official repression, but to mob violence.

To be sure, there is the very real concern that the Democratic Party, with its serpentine machinations and big-money donors, might smother these movements. But does this really have to be such a worry? We vote for Clinton not to gain access to the inner sanctum of the Democratic Party, but to gain time and position for movement politics. If the movements build on their distinctive capacities for raising the issues politicians want to suppress, and creating the disruptions they can’t ignore, Clinton’s very opportunism may make her a good target. So we should vote for the Democrats who need us to win, and then work for the movements that make trouble for them.

Frances Fox Piven is a distinguished professor at the Graduate Center. This article is republished with permission from The Nation.

In the end, the Clinton campaign won the Democratic Party nomination and the entire contest pushed the party to the left by agreeing to support a progressive Democratic Party platform that reflects compromise positions on the policies Sanders and his supporters campaigned on.

A PROGRESSIVE COALITION

This center-left political coalition can become a new political force in the American political landscape, and it has the possibility to rewrite political and economic policies that will lead to a more prosperous and just future for all Americans. If Clinton wins, we will need to continue to fight both within that coalition and outside it to see to it that the Democratic Party platform is implemented. Voting on the WFP line will help build a strong political institution on the progressive left that will continue to fight to implement the full agenda.

Third, in winning the nomination, Trump has exposed tensions within the Republican Party coalition. Trump now leads a white nationalist political formation within the Republican Party, bringing “alt-right” leadership into his campaign staff. His primary campaign was explicitly anti-immigrant, racist and based on economic nationalism. In winning the primary, Trump asserted the white nationalists’ dominance over the corporate, fiscal conservative and social conservative wings of the party. Trump attempted to unify the Republican leadership, placating fiscal and social conservatives by adopting much of their program (e.g., the Ryan budget and the pro-life agenda). Consequently, Trumpism is the attempted fusion of the Republican fiscal and social conservative social bases with a white nationalist social base.

Trump’s explicitly racist, misogynist, xenophobic and authoritarian statements along with his increasingly erratic behavior, however, have alienated some key Republican constituencies (white, suburban, educated and married women) and narrowed the Republican electoral base. Republican political leaders (25 percent of national and state elected Republican leadership as of this writing), fearing electoral defeat, have refused to endorse him. Of course, these very same Republican leaders were happy to have a white nationalist wing of the party as long as they were not in positions of power, but simply delivering votes to the party.

UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT

Having a white nationalist political formation as the dominant force of one of the two major political parties is scary and unprecedented in recent political history. The Dixiecrats of the 1940s and the 1960s and 1970s Wallace candidacies were largely regional expressions of white nationalism. Trumpism, on the other hand, has become a national political force.

As the election stands as of this writing, national polls and election forecasting gurus like Nate Silver indicate that Trump

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Trumpism

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will lose the election, but that doesn't mean Trumpism will be defeated. Especially at the state and local level, Trumpism may continue to be an expressive form for those who feel alienated from existing political and social institutions. Just as conservative talk radio has become a potent political force, Trumpism may emerge after the election in various forms. That is why it is important to continue to build a vital progressive force at the state and local levels. Voting for "down-ballot" WFP candidates is an effective way to build local and state leadership that can confront white nationalism and Trumpism and put into effect policies that will be seen as concrete alternatives to the misdirection of Trumpism.

BEYOND THE ELECTIONS

Fourth, both major party candidates and their campaigns have made the strategic choice to focus on the personality and "fitness" of the other candidate. Trump's fitness is a real issue and with everything from his sexual predatory behavior to his outrageous outbursts to the constant stream of reports about his questionable business practices, he has provided the Clinton campaign with much material. Clinton, alternatively, has been in the public eye for over 30 years and there is an entire industry of "Clinton hatred." Many Republican politicians have spent their careers targeting Clinton scandals and attacking everything the Clintons touch. This plays right into Trump's wheelhouse: the politics of personal destruction and identifying Clinton's persona with the status quo.

Not surprisingly, much of the popular media coverage of the presidential campaign has focused on the personalities of Trump and Clinton. The resulting horse race and scandal reporting and negativity of the campaigns have turned off voters and obfuscated the serious political choices at hand.

This election presents us not only with a choice between two very different candidates but also between two very different sets of policy choices, and two very different political formations that underpin both the candidates and their policies. Voting on the WFP line will help strengthen progressive policies and the left in the coalition supporting the Clinton candidacy. Ultimately, this election is not about either of the candidates, but about us and what we are willing to do to shape our future beyond November 8.

Steve London is a former first vice president and current university-wide officer at the PSC and an associate professor of politics and visiting fellow at the Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies. He is also a member of the Working Families Party state committee.

Brooklyn College prof gets debate Twitter fame

Every election cycle has its characters who emerge out of the woodwork and become part of the election story, like Joe the Plumber eight years ago and Ken Bone this year with his famous red sweater.

Add Moustafa Bayoumi, Brooklyn College associate professor of English, to that list.

During the second presidential debate in St. Louis, which was staged as a town-hall forum, Republican candidate Donald Trump, whom many later mocked for seeming to hover ominously near Democrat Hillary Clinton, called on Muslims to report suspicious things they see in their community.



Moustafa Bayoumi's online following ballooned during the second debate.



Bayoumi took to Twitter, saying, "I'm a Muslim, and I would like to report a crazy man threatening a woman on a stage in Missouri."

Shared more than 90,000 times, media dubbed it the night's most viral tweet. As a result he went from around 1,500 followers before the debate to over 15,000 afterward.

"A lot of supporters felt like I had encapsulated the election for them," Bayoumi told *Clarion*.

He said that at the time he was inspired not just by the way Trump seemed to hover over Clinton but the absurdity of the notion that Muslims had to police themselves.

EXPOSING BIGOTRY

"Part of the reason the tweet was so successful was it somehow manages to ridicule Trump by making fun of misogyny and his Islamophobia at the same time," he said. "It connects those two groups he has been very bigoted against."

It wasn't just that Bayoumi's words carried far and wide in cyberspace. He reportedly inspired an entire tweet-storm, via the hashtag #Muslimsreportstuff, by Muslims mocking

The most viral tweet of the debate

Trump's call for the Islamic community to police itself. For example, poet and activist Zainab Chaudry tweeted, "Creepy orange clowns sighted recently across the country. Some say they saw one pacing the debate stage tonight."

Bayoumi said he was motivated particularly by the way Trump seemed to physically threaten Clinton throughout the debate, but his choice to bring some levity to the situation seemed to make his tweet soar.

But Bayoumi wasn't able to bring his humor to the final debate. At press time, he was scheduled to be flying to Canada during the third debate.

Austerity and schooling

Continued from page 7

Quick and incomplete studies conducted by CUNY faculty on credit transfer issues indicate that the problem is modest when compared to other public universities. The data still do not support the assertion by CUNY management that Pathways is a solution to the problem of transfer.

If Pathways does not solve the problem of transfer, then why was it introduced at all? The answer to that question is, unsurprisingly, embedded in the mushrooming demands of an intensifying regimen of austerity education.

COLLEGE READINESS

In New York City, 70 percent of public high school graduates attending college enroll at CUNY. The conjunction between this fact and issues of the college readiness of this substantial cohort of public school graduates has had powerful consequences, particularly for CUNY community colleges. *The New York Times* reported in 2011 (about the time Pathways was being conceived) that the number of "remedial students has now swelled so large that the university's six community colleges – like other two-year schools across the country – are having to rethink

what and how they teach, even as they reel from steep cuts in state and local aid." According to one estimate, eight of every 10 New York City public high school graduates

More public investment in academic development is needed.

who enter CUNY require remediation in English or mathematics. To move students more quickly to graduation requires a specific strategy. On the one hand, government can invest more money

to promote academic development and encourage faster progress to graduation. This has been done to a limited extent for community college students at CUNY through its Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). This enriched remedial program, although expensive, significantly lifted community college graduation rates and reduced time to the associate's degree for participants. ASAP, although very successful, has not been scaled up through enlarged investment, with fewer than seven thousand students admitted since its inception in 2007. Rather, it languishes at the margins of the educational experience for the vast majority of students attending CUNY's community colleges. In an era of intensifying austerity, the probability of such a major investment in the short term is highly unlikely. This point is further illustrated by

recent policy decisions in Florida and Texas to further disinvest in remedial education.

If investment is not an option for most students requiring remedial education, what policy alternatives exist to reduce time to degree and increase graduation rates? The answer to that question for policy leaders is the same as it was for K-12: narrow and cheapen curricula to create a better fit between reduced funding and the need to demonstrate increased productivity. In K-12 the metric of choice is high-stakes testing. In higher education it is time to degree and graduation rates.

A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

As we have seen with Pathways, we are also left to wonder how virtual learning can transform the very meaning of a college degree. How does online learning harmonize with the project of offering a complex and challenging college education? If a college education is entirely or largely structured, for example, through online MOOC-type courses, we can be reasonably certain that per unit costs will sharply decline because of the potential number of students who can be included in a single class along with a declining need for both faculty and students to be in physical classrooms. In turn, the decline in per unit costs and the MOOC form that produces it increases both the profit margins for private companies and expected revenue streams

for starved public universities. Alternatives such as blended learning, which uses online instruction to complement embodied classroom experiences, may not be as attractive because of their greater costs and diminished or entirely absent profit margins.

Pathways and various forms of online learning, although dramatically different in structure and articulated objectives, have a common thread. They are implemented by administrators as the public university is asked to do much more with much less. It is within this context that Pathways was born, and the use of online learning will likely continue to grow. The incentives to use such programming and technology to generate increased private revenue, improve graduation rates and assure institutional survival in an era of austerity are substantial. Such a dynamic in turn tends to dilute curricula for students who deserve and require better strategies for improving higher education.

Michael Fabricant is first vice president of the Professional Staff Congress and a professor of social work at the Graduate Center. Stephen Brier is a professor of urban education at the Graduate Center. This essay is adapted from an excerpt from their new book Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education, available from Johns Hopkins University Press.



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Election phone banking

The stakes are high for the November 8 general election, not only for the presidential race, but also for down-ballot federal and state races that may determine the future of national higher education policy and state funding for CUNY. Every Wednesday from now until Election Day (from 3 pm to 8 pm), the

PSC will host phone banks at the union office to turn out voters who support Hillary Clinton and the union's other priority candidates. Be a part of these phone banks and help elect leaders who defend public higher education. To join us at the phone banks, contact Tiffany Brown at tbrown@pscmail.org.

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PROGRESS IN A LONG FIGHT

We all have a stake in adjunct appointments

By BARBARA BOWEN
PSC President

CUNY survives constant underfunding for two main reasons – it shifts costs onto students and it grossly underpays half of its core teaching workforce. Without a workforce of 11,000 adjuncts doing work for which full-time instructors would be paid at three times the rate, there would be no CUNY as we know it. Adjuncts are not just underpaid: until now, their jobs have been completely contingent, without any security.

That's why the structure for adjunct job security in the new contract is a breakthrough. CUNY's entire labor system rests on underpaid work – by all of us, whether we are full-time or part-time. We cannot allow it to rest also on job insecurity.

Throughout the past month, as the other union officers and I have been pressing CUNY to expedite payment of contractual increases, we have also been meeting with long-serving adjuncts and department chairs, listening to their concerns and helping to make the new adjunct appointments work. What stands out for me in these meetings is the depth of commitment to CUNY's mission among adjuncts who have worked at the University for years and the dedication of department chairs, who labor to create meaningful academic life under untenable conditions.

THE FRONT LINES

These two groups are on the front lines of implementing the new system of adjunct appointments, but we all have a stake in their success. Why? Because introducing even limited job security strikes a blow to the heart of the system of radical contingency that gives all the power to management. CUNY's negotiators understood that the new system is a dramatic break with the past – that's why they resisted it until the final hours of bargaining.

Over months of contract talks, we hammered out a pilot program for a totally new approach to adjunct appointments. The new structure will provide greater stability for adjuncts and their departments, and greater academic continuity for students. The



Justice for adjuncts was a major part of the union's last contract campaign.

basic idea is that adjuncts who have been appointed repeatedly by the same department to teach a significant number of credit hours every semester should receive multi-year appointments, and those appointments should be secure.

STRUCTURE, NOT AN OPTION

The key to the new system is that it is a structure, not an option, just as tenure or the certificate of continuous employment for full-time faculty are structures. But for adjuncts the appointment will be part-time, and it will be for three years. Every adjunct who meets the length-of-service requirement must be considered by the department personnel and budget committee for the three-year appointment, just as every full-time faculty member who reaches the service requirement for tenure must be considered for tenure. Once an adjunct receives the three-year appointment, the department must provide the adjunct every semester with at least six credits of teaching or an alternative assignment. Thus, the adjunct has guaranteed income and the department has a more stable workforce.

The plan also includes a transitional two-year appointment that does not involve a review and does not provide the same job security as the three-year appointment.

The new system may sound complicated,

but its premise is simple: adjuncts deserve to be treated as professionals from the day they are hired, and everyone at CUNY will benefit from their increased professional treatment. The prospect of a secure, three-year appointment after extensive service will gradually change the way adjuncts are hired, mentored and integrated into department life.

The plan is the first program for any kind of real security for adjuncts in CUNY's history. Apart from the overall economic settlement, it was the hardest part of the contract to win.

On the last night of negotiations, CUNY management's representatives announced at 3:30 am that they could no longer accept the agreement on adjuncts we had reached through long and difficult negotiations. The PSC bargaining team stood our ground. The union membership had given us the power to insist on a systemic change on job security by authorizing the executive council to call a strike.

The issue was not money, it was control. CUNY negotiators recoiled from anything that interrupted their absolute freedom to refuse an adjunct a job, no matter how long and how well she or he had been teaching. While the CUNY administration laments the lack of funding that leads them to rely on an underpaid workforce of adjuncts for half of the University's courses, the truth is

that management *likes* the system's radical insecurity. Merely putting a dent in that system required the whole power of the union.

One way of accommodating to economic scarcity is to demand a completely flexible workforce – one that can be hired and fired at will. Look at fast food industry and just-in-time production and every other industry that shaves costs by keeping employees on unpredictable schedules. In a period of austerity for public institutions that CUNY management has failed to challenge successfully, the ability to hire and fire at a moment's notice has become a preferred way to manage the budget.

COMPLETE CONTROL

That's why everyone who works at CUNY has a stake in making the new adjunct appointment system permanent and a success. As long as the central University administrators can continue to employ more than 11,000 colleagues who have no job security, they will continue to have an incentive to shift more and more work to positions over which they have complete control.

The proof was the most recent round of bargaining. CUNY management has consistently sought to weaken job protections for HEOs, and Chancellor James B. Milliken's number one demand this time was to allow an explosion in the number of full-time faculty positions with no job security. CUNY already has a limited number of *full-time* faculty who are not on the tenure track, but these positions are designed to be used for special cases, such as for clinical practitioners. Management's demand was to allow an unlimited number such positions, all without tenure, without any job permanence. Tenure would soon be a thing of the past if that were to occur.

The union pushed back and sharply curtailed the expansion, but I expect to see this demand return in the upcoming round. University management's agenda is clear: more contingency, more insecurity, more control.

Against this backdrop, the introduction of job security for CUNY's least secure workers is a milestone. I applaud those who are trying to make it work: the adjuncts who have taught for 10, 20 or 30 years at CUNY simply because they believe in our students and in CUNY's potential to transform lives, and the department chairs who straddle the needs of faculty and students.

The new system is not perfect: it is not as inclusive as the union's original proposal, and it will not reach every adjunct who deserves support and security. Like everything else in the contract, it was a compromise. But the three-year appointments for adjuncts are a powerful start on a long-overdue change, a change as important – for everyone – as any we have negotiated.

'The hardest part of the contract to win'